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“BLUEbikes” Critique

The “BLUEbikes” visualization utilizes an area chart to depict the monthly number of trips with blue bikes in 2021, alongside a brief explanation of blue bikes and a few metrics regarding them. Although the visualization successfully illustrates how the trips using blue bikes change throughout 2021, it can be enhanced with the adjustment of text, removal of unnecessary text, and incorporation of a y-axis into the area chart.

The author effectively employed two distinct colors for two different groups, selected blue to represent blue bikes, and added a symbol with a person riding on a bike on top of the area chart. Additionally, the author includes a legend in the middle right section of the visualization on what each color represents in the area chart, which is needed to distinguish the two distinct types of bike users.

Preethi Lodha removed axes that display metric values and replaced them with annotations and chart labels. Even though viewers can assume the representation of the y-axis with the labels that state “least trips in a month” and “most trips in a month” with corresponding numbers, the graph could benefit from the addition of a y-axis with dotted lines because it will enable the audience to accurately estimate the monthly trip count and the difference between the two types of users (casual and member) throughout the year. In the current version, the only information that the audience can grasp is the fact that the number of trips increased as the weather became warmer and that blue bike members outnumber casual users. In other words, despite highlighting the minimum and maximum points in the graph, the lack of details prevents a deeper analysis of the data presented in the area chart.

The current visualization packs a wealth of details into every available space, incorporating various data and explanations, such as the cost, average distance, number of stations, number of bikes, etc. Such dense details combined with monotonous font demand an extra effort from the audience to comprehend the content. In addition, the abundance of information contributes to a complex visualization, impacting both clarity and effectiveness. The brief on blue bikes at the upper left corner with a small font would be more effective if it was shortened or on a document. The large numbers at the upper right corner show numerical figures of blue bikes, such as station counts, bike counts, and completed trip totals with bold and bigger fonts. Furthermore, it also contains the change in percentage compared to the previous year.

Despite the effective usage of bigger and bold fonts to help distinguish the numbers, the similarity in font style used for the explanation of the numbers and the blue bike explanation on its left prevents the intended emphasis on the significance of these figures. The majority of the text is in black, offering good contrast against the light blue background and enhancing

readability. However, the use of green for highlighting the yearly percentage change is challenging to comprehend. A darker hue instead of a light or bright color could have made the percentages stand out more effectively.

“BLUEbikes” utilizes numerous textual information regarding the details of the blue bikes and an area graph that shows the number of trips completed with a blue bike in 2021 by month. The visualization could have made a few changes (changes of font, reduction of texts, and a y-axis on the area chart) to improve the readability and clarity.