2023 Summary of CityBike Ridership in Jersey City and New York City

Jersey City

Jersey City Citybike riders are intrepid commuters.

As is evident from the maps - by zipcode, beginning and ending stations, and by ride distance, Jersey City Riders check out bikes in the thousands - by 4,500 or more a day at some stations near the Hudson River -- , and take them by subway or ferry to all areas of Manhattan and into Long Island. In the city, they leave the bikes at many ending stations having only one or a few riders, and at others, such as near Union Square, that have hundreds, but nowhere near the clusters of riders at the big commuting stations in Jersey City.

The busiest stations are at the terminus of light rails or major turnpikes, and at ferry piers. The "Top Ten Start Stations" shows that the most popular stations to check out a bike include the Hoboken Terminal, the Hamilton Parkway, and the Grove Street and Newport PATH stations. PATH is the PORT AUTHORITY TRANS HUDSON 22 mile rapid transit rail and subway system in Northern New Jersey and Manhattan

The "Long Rides" map shows that some riders ride as many as 11.62 miles in one trip, and many more than five to cross into Manhattan. From the "Short Rides" map of rides of less than 1/2 a mile, it is evident that a smaller but significant group of riders pick up a bike at a highway or train terminus, and ride to the pier where they cross into Manhattan. Others of this group go from major commuter hubs to locations such as City Hall and the South Waterfront Walkway, and local businesses.

Some of this local ridership appears to be riding in parks such as Hamilton Park and along the waterfront on the weekends.

As can be seen in the heatmap "Rides by Day and Hour", and in the more detailed chart "Rides by Month, Day, and Hour", Jersey City Riders follow a consistent pattern regardless of the temperature. While evening ridership doubles in June as compared to January in the rush-hour and early evening hours when there is more daylight, there is much less difference in the number of morning commuters summer and winter, and some hours In mid-day or later evening where ridership is almost the same regardless of the month.

On weekdays, ridership is virtually non-existent from 2 a.m. until 5 a.m., when it begins to pick up. From 7 to 9 a.m., ridership is at its morning peak, then drops by more than half until it increases again at noon. Ridership is consistent during the early afternoon, increase slightly at 3, then more than doubles from 4 to 7 p.m., with the highest ride counts of the day from 6 to 7. From 7 to 10 in the evening, rides decrease gradually to about the level of 6 in the morning, and then dwindle until midnight. Ridership at midnight is slightly less than at 5 a.m., and then almost vanishes until the morning.

It is also notable that Mondays and Fridays have substantially more traffic than the other three weekdays at peak times, although all follow the same pattern. This could suggest that people are commuting to weekend homes in more rural areas.

On weekends, the pattern is reversed, with more than double the rides between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. than on weekdays, suggesting riding for fun in parks and along the waterfront. On Friday and Saturday nights, ridership continues at about one sixth of the level of weekday commuting peaks, but also about five times the level of weekday riders. The early morning hours from 2 to 5 a.m. see virtually no rides on either weekdays or weekends.

As can be seen in the Top Ten start and end stations charts and the Members to Casual Riders chart, casual ridership follows the same pattern of dropping ridership from January to February, then a steep increase until May, when ridership levels off. About a third of the rides taken are by casual riders, who seem to be slightly more impacted by colder weather.

It is also evident from the Top Ten charts that only casual riders have problems checking out bikes from the docking stations, going for a "docked ride" of less than a minute. While the numbers of docked rides are vanishingly small compared to the total rides for casual riders or members, signage at the docking stations, or videos on the CityBike website, might be helpful to explain how to dock and undock a bike.

Although the rides with missing start or end stations were not shown in the charts and maps, it appears that about 3 percent of rides either start from a non-docked bike or end with a bike not being checked in. From the locations of these bikes, while a few ended up in the river, many are left near a large docking station, or in the same parking lot. People may be rushed for a train, or the docking area may be crowded. For those few taken to upper Manhattan, there may not be a docking station nearby.

Thus, one improvement that CityBike officials could undertake in Jersey City and underserved parts of Manhattan is to increase the number of bike slots at the busiest locations, and to add bike stations in areas like Northern Manhattan where there are few.

New York City

NYC riders tend to stay in Manhattan, and, like the Jersey City riders, to continue riding, although in reduced numbers, throughout the winter. This is more surprising in the NYC riders, where cabs and subways and ride sharing such as Uber are readily available.

The New York City maps mirror most of the Jersey City maps. Because the ridership is vastly higher (approximately 3.3 times the number of rides in one month that Jersey City has in six), the route maps were not included for the NYC riders. In analyzing the data, it also was clear that many NYC readers go only a relatively short distance compared to Jersey City riders, so the very dense map for one month was not very informative. New York City riders, unlike Jersey City riders, are active 24 hours a day, seven days a week. While ridership is certainly lowest in the evening hours, it is constant in a way that Jersey City is not.

New York City ride starts and ends do tend to cluster at some stations, such as Union Square, the 14 Street Pier, Penn Station, Central Park, and the Port Authority. From the Port Authority and Penn Station, riders have access to trains subways going to many locations, in and out of Manhattan. Most end stations, however, have one to a few riders in any one month. Rides to boroughs such as Queens and Brooklyn are much more infrequent.

Unlike Jersey City, it does not appear that larger stations are under capacity, and in midtown and lower Manhattan there seem to be a plethora of docking stations where a rider could leave a bike. Rather, city officials should consider adding stations outside of Manhattan, possibly with enhanced safety provisions.