

2009 Downtown Boulder Bicycle Count Executive Summary

The 2009 Downtown Boulder Bicycle Count was conducted to:

- estimate the demand for bicycle parking,
- understand the impact of converting parking meters to bicycle parking racks, and
- determine the need for and location of additional bicycle parking in the downtown area.

The 2009 Downtown Boulder Bicycle Parking Count was completed in August by city staff and a large crew of volunteers. This was the third annual count conducted by the city. Since the count was initiated, the downtown areas has experience a significant growth in the number of bicycles parked downtown and in many areas the demand for bicycle parking exceeds the supply.

The downtown area was divided into eight zones of four to six blocks and consisted of a total of 197 block faces. Four counts were conducted from Aug. 19 - 22 at different times of the day to estimate peak bicycle parking demand. In 2007 and 2008, the bicycle counts were done at the beginning of August, but the surveys were completed at the same times of the day as the 2009 survey.

Results

A total of 4,088 bicycles were counted for an average per count of 1,022 bicycles per day. Counts ranged from a low of 825 on Thursday morning to a high of 1315 on Friday evening. Of the 4,088 bicycles counted, approximately 72 percent were observed on racks (66.4 percent) or parking meters (5.9 percent), 22 percent were locked on things other than racks or meters, such as trees, railings, or fences, and 6 percent were left freestanding. Freestanding bicycles were primarily counted outside of the Farmers’ Market as well as other businesses or residences. Between 2008 and 2009, there was a 14 percent increase in the number of bicycles counted, and a 46 percent increase between 2007 and 2009. It is important to note that the number of bicycles parked on ‘other’ has increased significantly since 2007; up 76 percent. Clearly, there is a need for additional bicycle parking, particularly at the Farmers’ Market and at both ends of the Pearl Street Mall. See Table 1 for results.

Table 1: Downtown Boulder Bicycle Count Summary

Year	Bikes on racks	Bikes on meters	Bikes on ‘other’	Freestanding bikes	Total bikes counted
2007	1,852	275	505	164	2,796
2008	2,354	256	792	172	3,574
2009	2,713	242	887	246	4,088
Percent change 2007 to 2008	27%	-7%	57%	5%	28%
Percent change 2008 to 2009	15%	-5%	12%	43%	14%
Percent change 2007 to 2009	46%	-12%	76%	50%	46%

According to the results of the count, the areas with the highest bicycle counts, regardless of whether or not the bicycles were parked on racks, concentrate around five specific areas. The same five locations also had the highest bicycle counts in 2008, with only the Library and 11th Street between Pearl and Spruce streets switching their ranking in the top five.

1. the RTD transit station on 14th Street
2. the Farmers' Market on 13th Street
3. Pearl Street between 9th and 11th streets
4. 11th Street between Pearl and Spruce streets
5. Main Library area

The five primary areas where the counts suggest that supply is not meeting demand as measured by bicycle locked on objects other than racks or free-standing are:

1. Farmers Market area
2. Pearl Street between 9th and 11th
3. 16th Street south of Walnut
4. Alley between Broadway and 11th Street north of Pearl
5. Pearl Street between 15th and 16th Streets

Conclusions

1. The number of bicycles counted in the downtown area increased by 14 percent between 2008 and 2009, and 46 percent between 2007 and 2009.
2. The most popular areas for parking bicycles in any manner have not change substantially between 2007 and 2009. One noticeable change is a significantly higher concentration of bicycles parked at the Farmers' Market.
3. The areas where additional bicycle parking is needed are similar to the previous findings. The Farmers Market continues to have a high unmet demand of bicycle parking. Supply is also not meeting demand in the areas west and east of the Pearl Street Mall.
4. Both the 2008 and 2009 counts also showed an increased amount of bicycle parked in the alley ways north and south of Pearl Street. It is possible that there has been an increase in the number of employees commuting by bicycle to the area. Although it appears that some businesses have provided racks, additional bicycle parking is need in the alley ways.

Achieving accurate counts of bicycling is difficult. The mode is very weather dependent, bicyclists tend to self-select on surveys, and Boulder's extensive system of infrastructure means that bicyclists do not concentrate in any particular locations (such as bridge crossings). Therefore, the city uses a variety of metrics to understand bicycle use and views them mostly as a tools to track change over time. The downtown bicycle parking survey provides one set of data that indicates that bicycle use has grown in the past two years.

For further information on the Downtown Boulder Bicycle Counts, please contact Chris Hagelin, Senior Transportation Planner, at 303-441-1832 or hagelinc@bouldercolorado.gov.