

**BEDFORD
STUYVESANT
RESTORATION
CORPORATION**

**A progress report
of the NYC
Better Bike Share
Partnership**

CEMENTING AN EQUITY FRAMEWORK FOR MICROMOBILITY



**Beth
Heyde**

IN MEMORIAM

We dedicate this report in memory and celebration of Beth Heyde. An original member of the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership, Beth was a fierce advocate for bike share and brought important questions and insights to the partnership table.

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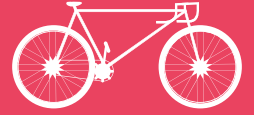
ABOUT RESTORATION



Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation is the nation's first community development corporation. Created in 1967 through grassroots activism and the bipartisan support of Senators Robert F. Kennedy and Jacob Javits, Restoration serves 50,000 people annually as an advocate, coalition-builder, and direct service provider with a focus on the predominantly minority and low-income communities of Central Brooklyn. Restoration's mission is to relentlessly pursue strategies to close gaps in family and community wealth to ensure all families in Central Brooklyn are prosperous and healthy.

In alignment with Restoration's mission to disrupt and close the racial wealth gap in Central Brooklyn, and recognizing the virtuous cycle of health and wealth, Restoration's Center for Healthy Neighborhoods (CHN) aims to change the structural conditions that drive the inequities in chronic disease, focusing on policies, systems and environmental change. CHN's work directly addresses health, including access to affordable and healthy food, opportunities for an active lifestyle, and mental health and wellness. Moreover, every strategy also addresses the social determinants of health such as neighborhood conditions, employment, business opportunities, finances, transportation, education and housing.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (Restoration) became the inaugural community-based grantee of the Better Bike Share Partnership in 2015. Restoration then set out to better understand the barriers to bike share use and develop tactics to increase ridership among low-income New Yorkers and in communities of color. We convened what became the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership (Partnership), a collaboration between Restoration, Citi Bike, NYC Department of Transportation, and NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. In 2017, Restoration partnered with the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) to release the report “Bringing Equitable Bike Share to Bed-Stuy.” The 2017 report detailed the development of the NYC Bike Share Partnership, lessons learned, and goals for the next phase of the Better Bike Share Partnership.

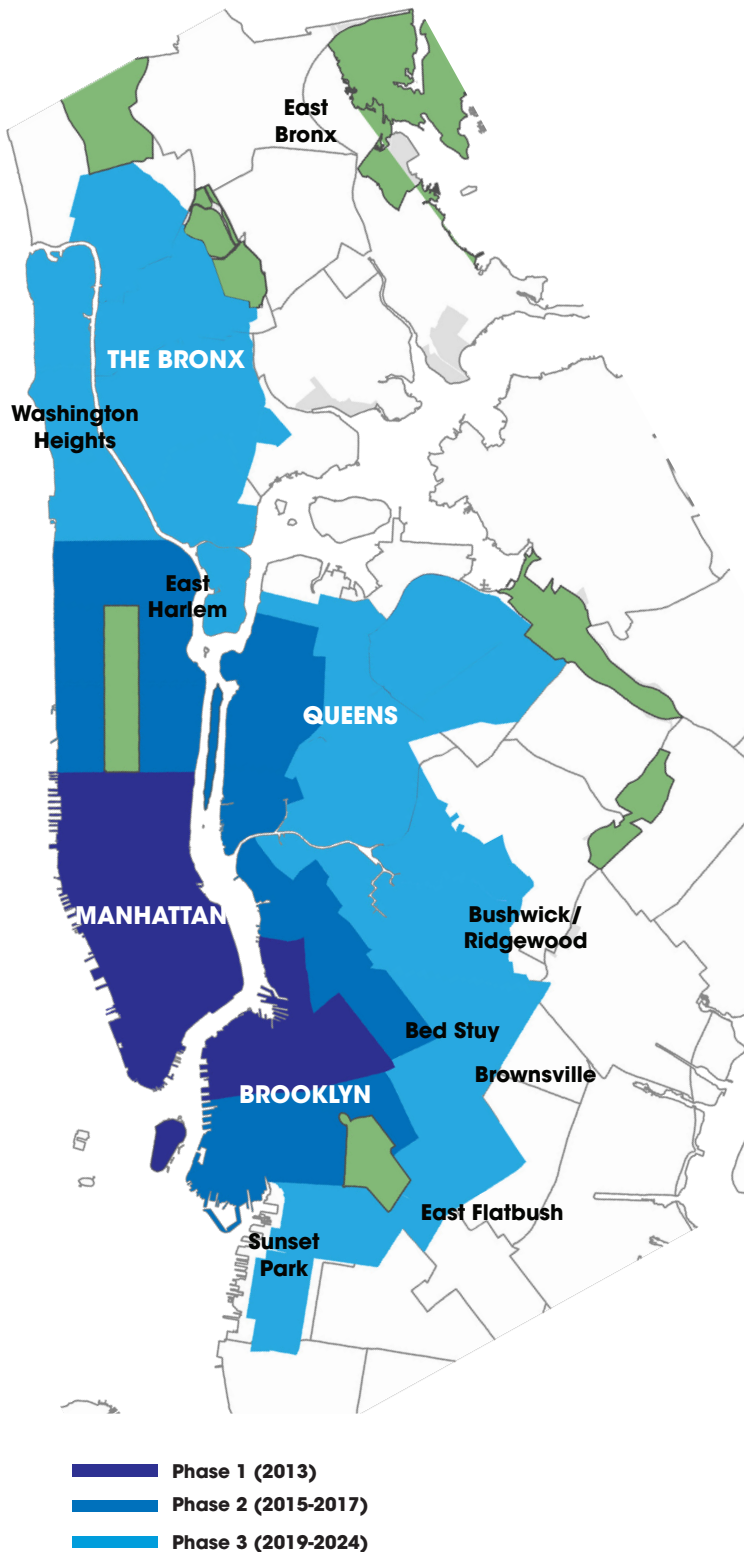
This report covers the work of the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership between 2017 and 2020, detailing how the Partnership created an equity-driven mission, vision, and principles for themselves and the Citi Bike bike share system, as well as policy goals to work towards. These policy goals pushed the Partnership’s work beyond just Citi Bike and into the broader realm of transportation equity. The Partnership achieved some notable milestones in service of these policy goals, including the launch of Reduced Fare Bike Share, presented by Healthfirst, bringing new partners to the table, and surfacing diverse champions for the bike share system.

As we celebrate these successes and continue to work towards the ambitious policy goals the Partnership set, Restoration has prioritized focus on two policy goals: increasing opportunities for people of color within the transportation and micromobility industries; and increasing the safety of people of color on bikes. 2020 highlighted the deep inequities embedded in our society and the systemic racism at the root. Our push towards equity has grown beyond NYC’s bike share system to include how we think about and plan our entire transportation network.

INTRODUCTION



Citi Bike Service Area & Planned Expansion 2013 - 2024



New York City launched its bike share system, Citi Bike, in May of 2013. Inaugurated with 332 stations and 6,000 bikes, Citi Bike quickly became a popular way to get around town, breaking many national ridership records in its first few years. However, data showed that people riding Citi Bike were overwhelmingly white and male, similar to national trends. In 2014, the Better Bike Share Partnership (BBSP) emerged as a national effort [“to increase access to and use of shared micromobility systems in low-income and BIPOC communities.”](#)¹ The City announced, together with Motivate, Citi Bike’s operator, that they were going to double the size of the system, and that the expanded service area would include Bedford Stuyvesant (Bed Stuy). In anticipation of this expansion, Restoration applied for, and was the only community development organization to receive, funding from the Better Bike Share Partnership to explore how to get more people of color and low-income New Yorkers riding Citi Bike.

Restoration’s interest in Citi Bike was several fold. First, we saw Citi Bike as a vehicle to address health disparities by increasing physical activity among Bed Stuy residents. We also recognized Citi Bike as a much needed additional transportation alternative for a neighborhood underserved by public transit. Additionally, Restoration’s Economic Solutions Center, now the Center for Personal Financial Health, was focused on workforce development, financial literacy and benefits, and recognized Citi Bike as both a potential source of employment and as a potential strategy for improving financial health by reducing transportation costs. Further, as Citi

Bike expanded into Bed Stuy, Restoration felt the need to engage with the community on how the system could benefit long term Black and Brown residents. This was especially needed in the face of palpable tension around the history of bike share serving primarily white and affluent neighborhoods. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we wanted to be in a position to ensure that the system was actually serving the needs of our community. We anticipated this proactive engagement would create an opportunity to bring in the voices and interests of the Bed Stuy community, who had increasingly been experiencing gentrification and displacement. Holding the neighborhood context as primary to our involvement, Restoration moved to convene what became the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership: a coalition that launched with Citi Bike, the NYC Department of Transportation (NYC DOT), and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

In its first few years, the Partnership focused on understanding the barriers to bike share use, specifically among people of color and low income residents. The Partnership then developed programming to proactively address these barriers, which included an ambassador program activating residents to influence their peers, twice weekly group rides, community-wide cycling events, advocacy, and an intensive marketing campaign, which included both digital promotion and social media as well as printed ads on buses, bus shelters and subway platforms. Leveraging its work as boroughwide convener for the Partnership for a Healthier Brooklyn, Restoration brought on community-based grantees like Interfaith Medical Center and Myrtle Avenue Restoration Project to develop and test innovative strategies.

In 2017, Restoration partnered with the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) to release the report [“Bringing Equitable Bike Share to Bed-Stuy.”](#)² The 2017 report detailed the development of the Partnership, lessons learned, and goals for the next phase of the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership.

At the time the “Bringing Equitable Bike Share to Bed Stuy” was published, Citi Bike had expanded its service area further into Gowanus and Bed Stuy, up through Williamsburg and Greenpoint, and to the Upper East and West Sides in Manhattan. As the Bed Stuy expansion concluded and planning began for the expansion into Harlem, East Harlem, and Red Hook, all neighborhoods feeling the pressure of hyper gentrification happening in NYC, communities continued to express dissatisfaction at the lack of inclusion during the roll out process. Although there had been such a strong effort by the Partnership to highlight riders of color and build up community champions to speak about the many benefits and uses of the bike share system, residents still questioned the need for Citi Bike and why it was coming to their neighborhood. To continue moving the needle on its work, the Partnership had to push itself to think beyond “butts on bikes” and dive deeper into a discussion about equity.

This report takes up where the previous one left off, recounting the Partnership’s progress to date, assessing the progress on the goals projected in the 2017 report, and taking a deep dive into the equity framework and policy goals at the center of the Partnership’s current work.

In 2020, as this report was being written, a global health pandemic disrupted the world, and its disproportionate impact on communities of color further highlighted the systemic racism embedded in our society. As the Partnership looks ahead, it is refocusing on centering equity beyond the bike share system and to our entire transportation network, working to better plan *with* communities instead of *for* them.

BUILDING A BLUEPRINT FOR EQUITY



Restoration engaged PolicyLink, a national research and action institute dedicated to advancing economic and social equity, to work with the members of the Partnership, which by that time had formed strong and trusting relationships rooted in over two years of work and accomplishments. The goal of working with PolicyLink was to develop an equity-driven mission for the Partnership and create a strategic plan for the group.

Forming the initial equity blueprint for the Partnership proved to be a “helpful, grounding exercise for everyone getting on the same page,” Anne Krassner, then Equity and Community Programs Manager at [Lyft](#),³ shared. It helped the partners reflect on the questions posed during the workshop: *What is an equitable bike share*

program? What tools are needed to be successful in your work? Who’s at the table? Whose voice matters?

Shaquana Boykin, a Brooklyn community leader and a member of the Partnership, found the process “both educational and inspiring because it was not about right or wrong, it was about experiences and responding to the neighborhood context.” What resulted was a mission and vision for the Partnership that would guide its work moving forward, representing the priorities of the Partnership as a collective, how it sees Citi Bike serving New Yorkers, and the roles the various members would play.

To further guide how it worked as a collective, the Partnership developed a set of operating principles. As the Partnership evolved, the mission, vision,

and principles were used to ground the ever-changing membership with a clear focus.

Policy Goals for Institutional Change

With a solid foundation on how to operate and an ambitious mission and vision as its north star, the members of the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership identified five equity-driven policy goals.

The partners divided into subcommittees, with members taking the lead on the policy goal they could best impact and shape. The partners then iterated on strategies and tactics to achieve each policy goal and got to work.



NYC Better Bike Share Partnership's 2017 equity training with PolicyLink

Mission

The NYC Better Bike Share Partnership aims to develop inclusive programs and policies to promote equity through bike share and increase the diversity of bike share riders to improve health and financial outcomes of NYC neighborhoods. The Partnership is a community driven collaboration of diverse stakeholders who influence transportation, health, and economic opportunities by leveraging the NYC bike share program.

Vision

Every New Yorker recognizes bike share as a community asset that is available and accessible for their use, with the potential to improve their health and support their daily lives by connecting them to community, services, and economic opportunities. As a result, the people using bike share will mirror the composition of the communities the system serves across income and race.

Operating Principles

- We work to reduce economic and health disparities by addressing social determinants of health and acknowledging historical and current day inequities rooted in systemic racism.
- We assess the work of the partnership and ask “Who benefits?” and “Who pays?” for all aspects of the bike share program including, but not limited to, ridership, job opportunities, and docking station placement.
- We strategize for equitable active transportation options, advocating for the community, and authentically and intentionally engaging people throughout the process.
- We are solution-driven and committed to assessing and disrupting organizational culture to promote equity.
- We lift up resident leadership and power by acknowledging and leveraging strengths, assets, and capacities of partner organizations and community voices.
- We assess the partnership regularly, critically examining data to inform bold innovations and approaches.
- We recognize everyone brings equal yet different strengths and we operate with honesty, respect, and transparency.

Policy Goals

1. Increase membership in existing discount programs and participation in community engagement programs.
2. Grow and scale discounted programs to reach low-income and underserved populations that are not currently a community of focus or reached.
3. Increase job opportunities for people of color.
4. Increase the number of safe places to ride in NYC community districts that are historically underserved.
5. Integrate bike share into the workplace as wellness tool for employers, employees, and clients.

WINS & MILESTONES



As its work developed, the Partnership achieved several key milestones, getting closer to its policy goals and vision. Namely, the Partnership helped expand the Citi Bike discount program to include SNAP recipients, extended its work to more neighborhoods to build a citywide bike share equity movement, surfaced diverse leaders and champions for the Citi Bike system, and built a supportive community between the different agencies and organizations working on bike share equity.

Expanding the \$5 Membership Option Beyond NYCHA

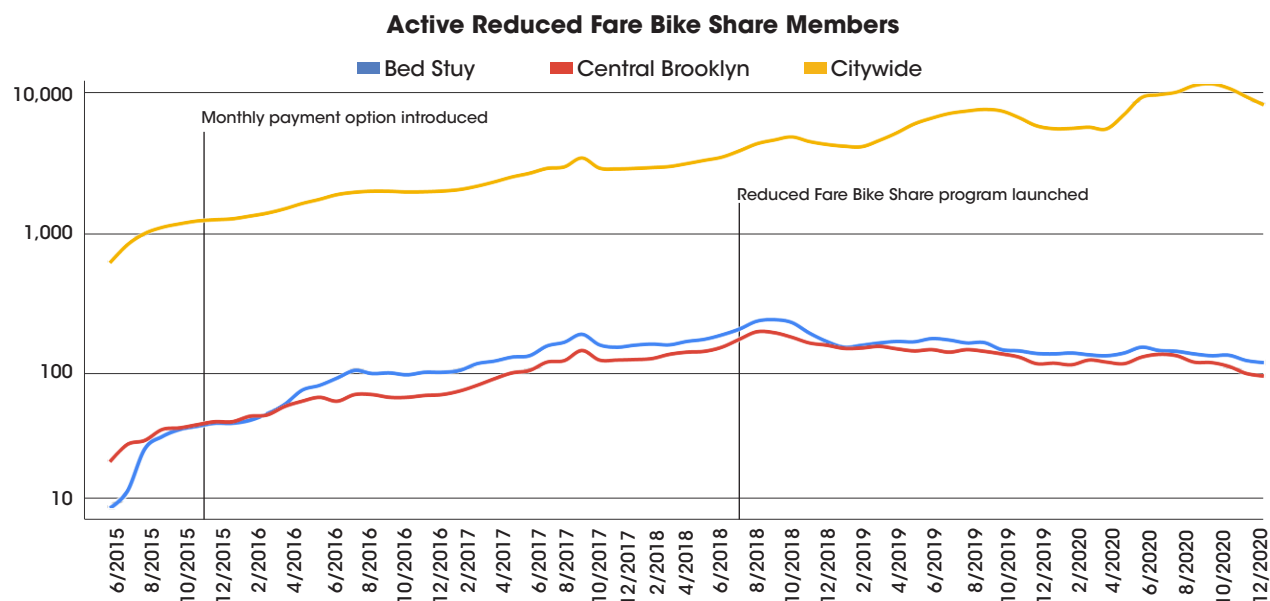
One of the greatest successes of the Partnership to date has been scaling Citi Bike's discount program to reach more low-income New Yorkers (Policy Goal 2). For the first five years of the program, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents were the

only large group of New Yorkers eligible for Citi Bike's \$5 monthly membership option, with an annual commitment. The Partnership recognized that many other low-income New Yorkers could not afford to pay full price for a Citi Bike membership, and brainstormed other mechanisms to grow the number of people who could access this discount. They identified Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients as a natural fit for expansion of the discount program.

Once that was determined, the various partners working on Policy Goal 2 got to work to make it happen. Anne Krassner worked internally to get the go-ahead from the Citi Bike and Motivate teams; Tracey Capers, Executive Vice President of Programs at Restoration and the Partnership's convener, established a connection with the City's Human Resources Administration (HRA), which

administers the SNAP program, to get them on board with extending the discount to SNAP recipients. The DOHMH, who runs several programs aimed at promoting healthy eating among SNAP recipients, helped structure focus groups with SNAP recipients so that Citi Bike could better understand SNAP recipients' wants and needs and how they perceived Citi Bike.

Citi Bike signed on Healthfirst, New York's largest not-for-profit health insurer, to sponsor the discount program, rebranding the \$5 membership option as Reduced Fare Bike Share, and extending the discount to the 1.6 million New Yorkers who receive SNAP benefits. The NYC DOT organized the announcement of the program and partnership with Healthfirst in July of 2018, which culminated with a press conference at Restoration Plaza and





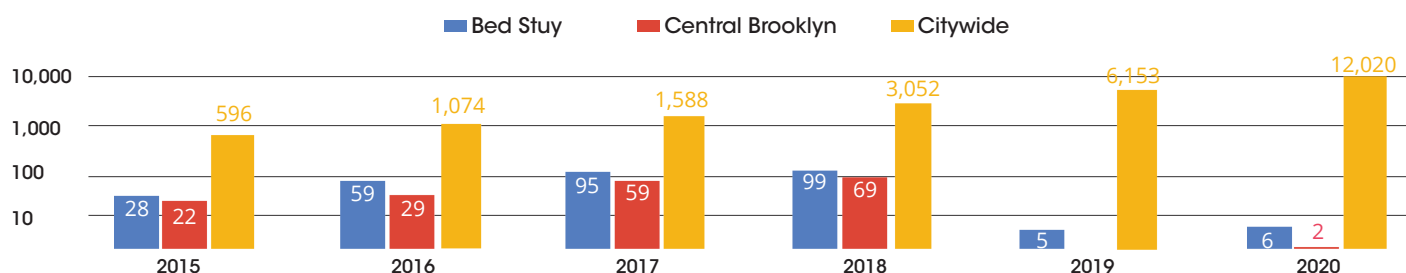
Healthfirst, Brooklyn Borough President, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Restoration, and NYC Better Bike Share partners gather at the launch for the newly expanded Reduced Fare Bike Share program hosted at Restoration Plaza | Photo credit: Lyft

a ride to a local Healthfirst community office. Citi Bike's equity team and ambassadors hit the ground running to promote this new program, attending hundreds of events and block parties. Focus groups with SNAP recipients helped shape the strategic marketing campaign, informing the social media and digital and print advertisement strategies and content. Additionally, the focus groups indicated that a free trial would be a great way to get people to try Citi Bike for the first time, so Citi Bike piloted a free month offer with the New York City Public Library systems. Since the launch of Reduced Fare Bike Share, more than 16,000 New Yorkers who receive SNAP benefits or live on NYCHA campuses have taken advantage of the Reduced Fare Bike Share program, presented by Healthfirst.

When the program launched in July of 2018, the reach of the \$5 membership increased dramatically. In its first year (between July 2018 and July 2019), 5,795 SNAP recipients and NYCHA residents bought a Citi Bike membership for the first time, a 257% increase in first-time members from the same period the previous year. Despite this growth of first-time system users overall, Bed Stuy saw a 55% decrease in first time members. Though this decrease was likely caused by several reasons, we suspect that the lack of expansion further into Central Brooklyn coupled with the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership's shift from engaging in neighborhood-based direct outreach to focusing on larger policy efforts contributed to this decrease.

In its first few years, the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership's work was heavily focused on events, bike rides, and other direct outreach in Bed Stuy which resulted in major increases in new memberships in Bed Stuy and Central Brooklyn. These major increases were happening along with Citi Bike's expansion into Central Brooklyn which concluded in 2017. In 2018 and 2019, the Partnership began to focus on policy-driven work and expanding their focus citywide. While unintentional, this shift, combined with lack of Citi Bike expansion, likely resulted in a lag in new members and membership growth overall in the neighborhood.

First-Time Reduced Fare Bike Share Members



Building a Citywide Effort

Who leads? Who benefits? Who is harmed? Whose voice matters? These questions push the Partnership’s work to expand the role of community in shaping bike share in New York City. And as Citi Bike expanded further Uptown in Manhattan to Harlem and East Harlem, south in Brooklyn to Park Slope, Gowanus, and Red Hook, and to Astoria in Queens, it became important to include more voices and perspectives at the table.

As a response to Citi Bike’s expansion into East Harlem, and inspired and informed by the Partnership, the DOHMH’s East Harlem Neighborhood Health Action Center created the community cycling initiative El Barrio Bikes. “We saw the community’s response to the roll out in Bed Stuy and made sure to capture the lessons learned in the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership when we convened El Barrio Bikes,” says Caitlin Falvey, Community Coordinator with the East Harlem Neighborhood Health Action Center shared.

This new community-led coalition incorporated the Partnership’s equity framework while being responsive to the organizations and residents in East Harlem. Caitlin shared that the group “needed something responsive to their [East Harlem] partners that had longevity.” Founding El Barrio Bike members included Children’s Aid Society, Uptown Grand Central, Randall’s Island Park Alliance, Cada Paso, New York Academy of Medicine, Concrete Safaris and other organizations serving neighborhood residents. The work plan developed for El Barrio Bikes aligned with the work that most of the participating partners were already doing or had an interest in. For example, they organized group bike rides to yoga classes happening at Randall’s Island and community events like Party on Park that closed Park Avenue from 116th to 125th Streets to cars and opened it up to people. Now in its third year, Party on Park brings out thousands of East Harlem residents for a fun day of activities, including arts and crafts, exercise classes, samples from local businesses, free helmet



El Barrio Bike riders take a snack break during a ride uptown | Photo credit: El Barrio Bikes

giveaways, and free Citi Bike rides. To date, El Barrio Bikes has engaged over 8,000 participants through 183 unique activities including ride leader training, group rides, and other community events.

Building on an earlier grant program launched by the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership Citi Bike launched a Community Grant Program that dedicated \$300,000 of funding to community groups and organizations working on bike share equity in their community in 2019. Grantees included existing partners like Urban Upbound and Red Hook Initiative, and welcomed new organizations like El Puente and Union Settlement, to their effort.

Restoration was the convener, providing technical assistance to partners, engaging them in the Partnership's policy goals, and co-creating ambassador training guides. The first grant year was one of capacity building, where organizations trained up ride leaders, built internal champions for bike share, and spread the word about Citi Bike at community events. In its second year, the Citi Bike Community Grant Program worked to engage organizations in its expansion neighborhoods, further expanding the reach of the Partnership.



Urban Upbound clients and staff gear up for a community bike ride | Photo credit: Urban Upbound

Surfacing Diverse Leaders and Champions

From the onset of the Partnership's work, it was important to identify and lift up people of color, particularly in Bed Stuy, who were already using Citi Bike. The partners connected with longtime cyclists, people who were new to bike commuting and who joined Citi Bike because of convenience, and others who saw Citi Bike as a fun activity to do with friends on the weekend. These early adopters provided valuable insight into how Bed Stuy residents were using Citi Bike, and as they became more involved with Restoration and the Partnership's work, grew to be strong bike share champions and Citi Bike advocates. Surfacing these riders of

color served to both diversify the voices advocating for Citi Bike and combat the existing narrative that people of color don't ride bikes.

For example, when the City Council was debating the merits of investing public monies into expanding the Citi Bike system in 2017, champions like Kweli Campbell, Omar Arias, and Mark Wiltshire testified on behalf of Citi Bike. They spoke to the role of bike share in their lives and helped validate that funding Citi Bike to expand to more low-income neighborhoods would have a positive effect on those communities. Additionally, it took 3

years of sustained advocacy from our internal champions at Woodhull Hospital to launch the Prescribe a Bike program to their patient population. While the program to "prescribe" Citi Bike members to get patients with high blood pressure and diabetes to increase their physical activity and improve their health launched in 2016, the first cohort of Woodhull patients got riding in May of 2018. Fostering such powerful champions and building these relationships has helped the Partnership better understand how Citi Bike is impacting different communities and reach more people through trusted voices.



Omar (pictured left) speaking at an event at City Hall

Omar Arias, Transportation Equity Leader

Omar Arias' evolution into working in transportation began when he found himself paying more attention to his experiences "while being out there on the road," the plaza, and on the bus. After graduating from college in 2016 with a math degree, he began seeing more and more ads for the Citi Bike's discount for NYCHA residents. He signed up for a membership, and found himself enjoying the experience. After signing up, Omar saw the job opening for a Citi Bike Community Champion at Restoration that would give him an opportunity to work in the community and connect others to this new transportation resource. Omar's role expanded at Restoration as he was kept on to share the benefits of bike share and expand Restoration's outreach to more low income and communities of color. Through this work, he was able to understand more about the field of transportation and was encouraged to apply to a job at NYC DOT. Omar joined DOT as a Street Ambassador and quickly moved up in NYC DOT through this program and was quickly promoted to Outreach Coordinator, where he now works to manage in-person and virtual outreach events and marketing campaigns to encourage bicycling, teach bike education and gain support for Street Improvement Projects (SIPs). In this role, he is also managing bike infrastructure projects from development to implementation, helping to expand the New York City bike network and increase dedicated space for cyclists.

Ride leader Kweli (pictured right)
and community riders
Photo credit: Kweli Campbell



“This partnership consisted of a diverse group, the majority of whom were women, at all stages of their careers coming together, listening to each other and creating a space that allowed for honest conversations.”

- Lisa Morasco
BBSP member, NYC DOT



NYC Better Bike Share Partnership meeting turns into a birthday celebration

Mutually Supportive Community

On the programmatic side, Restoration and NYC DOT staff led bike rides in Bed Stuy, Citi Bike was active at community events, and Restoration enhanced the Prescribe a Bike orientations with content for participants about financial planning tips for participants on how their membership could support savings and budgeting. The community bike rides and events brought together a diversity of over

a thousand residents across the years who showed up wanting to get comfortable with riding bikes on the roads, meet new people, or to add some physical activity to their weekend routines. What emerged from these rides were group chats, riders leading their own rides outside of the planned programming, and a sense of support and care for each other while on the road.



NYC Better Bike Share Partnership members Omar Arias and Tracey Capers | Photo credit: Margot Jordan

The members of the Partnership built a trusted community among themselves. As they iterated on the mission, vision, and principles, the partners needed to be comfortable being honest with their challenges in working toward equity. These discussions were lively and passionate, an exercise for partners who all came to table with their own agendas to build a shared vision for a cross-sector partnership, involving

city agencies, community based organizations, and a private bike share operator. At times, it was not easy and the partners continue navigating the often bureaucratic challenges. Lisa Morasco, a senior planner with NYC DOT's Bike Share Unit, shared that the Partnership was really a "labor of love," where the partners were able to create bonds and still have hard conversations with each other.

Shifting the Conversation

When the NYC Better Partnership first came together five years ago, the community was questioning 'why have bike share in my neighborhood?' As Tracey Capers put forth,

*"We wanted to change neighborhood conversation from focusing on gentrification to exploring how bike share can help residents achieve their personal goals. Changing the conversation meant real discussions with residents on their perceptions and aspirations and it also required Partnership members to do business differently—including looking at our own organizational practices, how we engage the community and how we collaborate with one another."*⁴

In November of 2018, Lyft acquired Motivate and announced a \$100 million investment to expand Citi Bike, doubling the size of its service area and going from 12,000 to 40,000 bikes in the next five years. While the 2014 announcement of Citi Bike's expansion was met with serious pushback, the reaction to this expansion struck a dramatically different tone. As Urban Upbound co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Bishop Taylor expressed,

"It's not just the use of the [Citi Bike] product, but getting equity from the product. It's thinking about: 'How do we foster the development of more businesses, and cooperatives of businesses, to service the expansion

*of Citi Bike in all the areas Citi Bike is expanding to?' They will need more people to fix the bikes and more people to service the bikes—why can't they be minority-owned companies?"*⁵

In the span of four years, the Partnership saw the conversation shift from 'why is Citi Bike coming to my neighborhood?' to 'when is Citi Bike coming to my neighborhood?', and when the Mayor announced the projected reach of the expansion, the reactions in the press were largely that the system's expansion was, according to Streetsblog NYC, a 'slow rollout.'⁶

This shift in perception and wide recognition that Citi Bike is a transportation option that should



Lyft equity team in front of newly painted mural marking the system's expansion into The Bronx | Photo credit: Lyft

be available in all New York City neighborhoods, especially in low-income communities and communities of color, reflects the impact of the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership. Restoration's leadership, a legacy non-profit with deep roots in the community and a mission to support the lives of long-term residents of color that are bearing the brunt of ever increasing costs of living and limited transportation options by focusing on systemic challenges, has made Citi Bike's efforts a national model for working to achieve equity in bike share *with* community.

The Citi Bike Equity Advisory Board is one sign of a shared commitment to achieving equity by working with

communities. Convened by Lyft and NYC DOT in December of 2019, the Citi Bike Equity Advisory Board intentionally brought community organizations into the fold to provide guidance on plans for expansion and best practices for working within a community context. It is composed of community leaders, disability advocates, and representatives from borough presidents, city council, and city agency offices.

A novel concept for not just a bike share system, but also in the world of transportation, the Equity Advisory Board is charged with helping to ["create an even more accessible bike share network for New Yorkers by](#)

[advising, evaluating, and promoting Citi Bike's bike share equity efforts."](#)⁷

These organizations, including both long-time and new partners of Citi Bike, have been brought on as trusted partners working on the ground in communities whose residents need improved transportation options. The goal is to leverage them to inform and enhance Citi Bike's equity work and Lyft's and NYC DOT's internal processes, making sure they are proactively addressing current inequities and systemic racism as it intersects with NYC's bike share system.

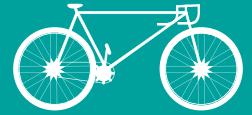


Restoration's Tracey Capers joins Lyft, Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, NYC DOT, and other community leaders at the opening of the Citi Bike Station at Broadway Junction. | Photo credit: Lyft



Ride leader and ACCESS co-founder, Alan Minor, leads a tour of nine subway station with closed access points in Bed Stuy

THE PATH AHEAD



The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated shifts away from an already troubled public transit system in NYC, along with cuts and further declines in reliability and convenience, and more cuts likely on the horizon. Essential workers and low-income communities of color, who make up the majority of transit users, are the hardest hit by these cuts.

Those who still have to get around are finding other ways to do so. While personal motor vehicle use has increased, so has the use of micromobility such as bike share and electric scooters. [As reported by Streetsblog in March 2020, Citi Bike saw 517,768 rides from March 1 through March 11, 2020, 80% more rides taken than during the same period of March 2018.](#)⁸ Purchases of bicycles, scooters, e-bikes, and e-scooters also increased at record numbers.

Further, shared micromobility services are gaining ground. Citi Bike is on schedule to double its service area and triple its bike fleet by 2024, installing its first stations in The Bronx in the summer of 2020. [The NYC DOT has also released an RFEI for an e-scooter share pilot program in October of 2020 and in April 2021 announced the pilot would launch in the East Bronx in summer 2021 with three companies: Bird, Lime, and Veo.](#)⁹

These developments will bring additional transportation options into neighborhoods that have more low-income residents and residents of color, such as Washington Heights, Sunset Park, and The Bronx. However, without an intentional approach grounded in equity, the expansion of micromobility in New York City runs a high risk of perpetuating inequities among racial lines related to access and potential associated economic opportunities.

As a response, the Partnership has welcomed new partners also committed to transportation equity, including Sam Schwartz, Workers Transport Global Kids, and Transportation Alternatives. Currently, the Partnership is prioritizing the goals of increasing economic opportunities for, and representation of, people of color in the micromobility and transportation industries and better supporting the safety of people of color. Focusing on these two goals will bring the partners closer to their vision of leveraging bike share, now updated to micromobility, to improve the health and financial outcome of New York City neighborhoods and make sure no one gets left behind.

Increasing Economic Opportunities for People of Color

As the Partnership began its work, Restoration worked with Citi Bike and urban planning consulting firms to place people in jobs, in mostly operations and hourly or seasonal roles. Citi Bike's leadership and management, like most other companies in the micromobility industry, remained mostly white and male. As the Partnership deepened its commitment to equity, the members realized that work needed to be done to elevate people of color into leadership and decision-making positions in the micromobility industry. Further, the Partnership recognized the need, and opportunity, to ensure that people of color are benefitting from the economic opportunities within the growing micromobility industry. What began as a policy goal to increase job opportunities for people of color has since been refined into a two-pronged strategy: (1) increasing economic opportunities for people of color in the micromobility industry; and (2) increasing the representation of people of color in decision-making roles in the transportation planning industry.

To increase economic opportunities for people of color in the microbility industry, a key strategy will be to build the share of cooperative or minority-owned businesses operating in this sector. The Partnership's approach will include:

- Building capacity within cooperative or minority-owned businesses, such as BBSP partner Worker's Transport, by providing business development and
- Supporting cooperative or minority-owned businesses in responding to bids and securing contracts in the micromobility industry by gaining a greater understanding of contracting opportunities within the Citi Bike expansion and e-scooter pilot.
- Working with government agencies, subcontractors, and micromobility

companies to facilitate, incentivize, and, as appropriate, encourage legislation requiring an increase in contracts with cooperatives or minority-owned businesses. A regulatory requirement to work with cooperatives or minority-owned businesses will encourage micromobility companies to seek out new partners and contractors, spreading their dollars to a more diverse cohort of businesses.

LifeCycle

NYC Better Bike Share partner LifeCycle Biking is a Brooklyn-based community based organization focused on promoting physical & emotional health primarily for womyn/ femme identified individuals, people of color, LGBTQIA+ identified persons and low-income communities. Their program Freedom Riders is a micromobility workforce development and mentorship program for minority women and young adults with incarceration history, providing developmental stimulation through hands-on learning, teaching management of individual stressors, and providing the opportunity for future employment.



Photo credit: LifeCycle Biking



Workers Transport Cooperative

NYC Better Bike Share partner
Workers Transport is a bicycle services cooperative. They provide bicycle maintenance and bike share operations consulting. They run The Bed-Stuy Bike Shop at Restoration Plaza and operate maintenance for SUNY Stony Brook's Wolf Ride. Their primary goal is to provide livable wage jobs to community-driven bike advocates.



Photo credit: Workers Transport

The Partnership will also work to increase the representation of people of color in the transportation industry in NYC by exploring and creating career pathways. NYC DOT, Restoration, and Citi Bike have done research and strategy sessions with local planning firms and brainstormed around increasing job opportunities for people of color. The partners honed in on the need to have more people of color in leadership positions across the transportation industry, and identified different pathways and contexts through which to reach and get people interested in this work.

NYC DOT has made some strides, connecting with the City University of New York's Service Corps to build work experience in transportation early on, and the Global Kids mentoring program for a combination mentorship/summer internship program. Both programs provide a direct pipeline to students not traditionally represented in transportation planning. While it is too early to discern whether their work experience has impacted their career choices, it certainly provided a transportation-centered lens for questioning and understanding the built environment around them.

The Partnership will also explore the different pathways and points of entry for people without advanced degrees or work experience in transportation to ensure that the pathways created have the maximum impact. It will focus on creating career opportunities within the NYC transportation ecosystem, partnering with and supporting transportation and urban planning firms that are led by people of color in addition to those with goals for improving diversity, equity and inclusion among their leadership. Developing these career pathways would complement NYC DOT's ongoing work building partnerships, introducing youth and young professionals to their work, and offering training and career opportunities to lower skilled entry-level workers so they can gain management status and decision-making power.



Bike ride led by The Brown Bike Girl and El Barrio Bikes showing the impact of redlining on East Harlem | Photo credit: El Barrio Bikes

Increasing the Safety of People of Color

From the outset, the Partnership recognized that increasing the number of safe places to ride meant not only improving bike infrastructure to improve traffic safety, but also working to reduce policing of Black and Brown bike riders. [People of color, particularly Black New Yorkers, are disproportionately stopped by the police while riding](#),¹⁰ and safety from police profiling is a major barrier to cycling. As Tracey Capers noted in her op-ed in Streetsblog in the summer of 2020, [“safety in public space is experienced differently by people of color—that, for Black and Brown bodies, safety in public space means freedom from being overpoliced and, worse, murdered.”](#)¹¹ In September of 2020, Dijon Kizzee was stopped by the police in Los Angeles for an alleged “vehicle code” violation while on a bike and ended up fatally shot, painfully reminding us that people of color, particularly Black people, are disproportionately targeted by police across the country.

The Partnership has undertaken some efforts to address police profiling, including developing “Know Your Rights” materials to educate Bike Share for Youth participants on

how to navigate their interactions with the police. Further, the Partnership looked into decriminalizing certain bike infractions, and began a conversation with the NYPD, educating police precincts about the Bike Share for Youth program and discussing over policing of Black and Brown people on bikes. However, it is clear that different approaches are needed to reduce police profiling.

Restoration reinforces that while we continue to build out infrastructure, decrease traffic violence, and encourage more people of color to ride bikes, it is imperative that we dedicate ourselves towards improving the physical safety and protection of people of color in public space. This is increasingly relevant to the work of the Partnership as Citi Bike and other micromobility services expand to more diverse neighborhoods, as bike and scooter use continues to grow, and as the City makes a concerted effort to increase cycling in communities of color. As such, the Partnership is currently reflecting on the most effective strategies for addressing the myriad of safety issues in a rapidly changing environment.

“ Equity means just and fair inclusion. An equitable society is one in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. ”

- PolicyLink

Strategies being discussed include decriminalizing petty infractions such as jaywalking and cycling on sidewalks and in parks, which are currently considered criminal offenses and for which violators can be arrested. Furthermore, the Partnership is discussing what it could look like to remove traffic safety from the purview of the NYPD and delegate it to a non-police force.

With regard to traffic safety, the Partnership is looking into how mode shifts and different uses of street space since the onset of COVID-19 may influence community demand for infrastructure such as bike lanes in neighborhoods in Central Brooklyn.

Analyzing available data and collecting additional data as needed will be paramount to understanding mode shift and advocating for infrastructure in neighborhoods where it is most needed, including those underserved by transit. Restoration aims to work with NYC DOT to ensure that infrastructure projects are planned in concert with communities and in response to their voiced needs.



Community bike ride kicking off at Ft. Greene Park | Photo credit: Kweli Campbell



Transportation Alternatives
Brooklyn Organizer Dulcie
leading Restoration's
community bike rides
Photo credit: Dulcie Canton

CONCLUSION



The New York City Better Bike Share Partnership has made tremendous strides in making Citi Bike more inclusive of people of color, extending its reach to more low-income New Yorkers, and advocating for important policy changes. With the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership having set national standards on developing bike share as a community-driven resource, the road ahead for the Partnership expands on past learnings and looks at the career and economic opportunities, and to the broader issues of protection from both traffic and police violence for Black and Brown communities.

Restoration's leadership in the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership has provided a steady pulse on the efficacy of equity efforts. As an organization with diverse programming reaching tens of thousands of individuals and families, Restoration strives to leverage both social and financial capital to ensure the Partnership continues making strides toward transportation equity. Restoration does this by leveraging strong relationships to support reaching the Partnership's policy goals, participating in press conferences and events, and [writing op-eds](#).¹²

Through a global health pandemic, painful instances of police brutality, Black Lives Matter protests, and calls for justice bringing hundreds of thousands to the streets, 2020 has highlighted the structural racism embedded in our society. Our push towards equity transcends the NYC bike share system, and should be at the forefront of how we approach every aspect of our transportation system. A transportation system can only be equitable when it is rooted in collective decision-making with special emphasis empowering those from historically disadvantaged groups. Co-creation and planning with rather than for communities, ensures that all stakeholders feel equally invested in its outcomes, and benefit fully from the system.

Bringing together content and context experts during decision making is key to ensuring results benefit the communities being served. Agency and organizational leaders must represent the communities being impacted and communities must be empowered to bring in their lived experiences in order to create a sustainable system that reflects the true need of users.



Photo credit: LifeCycle Biking

NYC BETTER BIKE SHARE PARTNERSHIP



Report Contributors

Alexis Harrison
Anne Krassner

Sarah Wolf
Tracey Capers

Contributing Partners

Bedford Stuyvesant
Restoration Corporation

Beryl

Shaquana Boykin

Citi Bike

El Puente

Interfaith Medical Center

LifeCycle Biking

Lyft

Motivate

National Association of City
Transportation Officials

NYC Department of Health
and Mental Hygiene

NYC Department of
Transportation

New York City
Housing Authority

Randall's Island

Sam Schwartz

Transportation Alternatives

Woodhull Hospital

Workers Transport

Funding provided by:

Anthem Medicare | Department of Health and Mental Hygiene



Empire BlueCross BlueShield Foundation

ENDNOTES



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