

Bike lanes inspire more cycling, says study

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Are the freshly striped bicycle lanes on many New Orleans streets enticing more people to ride their bikes? A new Tulane University study sees a big increase in cycling along St. Claude Avenue, the city's first street to get the new lanes.

Observers found a 57 percent increase in the average number of riders per day during a two-week period in November 2008 – just six months after the lanes were installed – compared to a study period in the same month a year earlier when no lanes existed. The research article, which is published in the latest issue of the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, is one of the few to examine cycling for an extended time period before and after lane installation, says lead author Kathryn Parker, assistant director of Tulane's Prevention Research Center.

“These findings suggest that bike lanes are well-suited to New Orleans,” Parker says. “Installing bike lanes is a cost-effective means of encouraging residents to be physically active for transportation and recreation.”

Observers counted cyclists in a designated area along Saint Claude for nine hours daily. Average ridership increased to almost 143 cyclists per day compared to 91 before the lane installation.

To make sure the increase could be credited to the new lanes, authors discounted other factors that could have increased [cycling](#) — fuel costs and population increases. The average price for a gallon of gas fell by almost \$1 during the two study periods; census estimates showed only a 17 percent increase in population for nearby neighborhoods during the year.

The new lanes had the biggest statistical impact on female cyclists, increasing the average daily number of women riding by 133 percent compared to a year earlier. Prior studies have shown that women prefer biking areas that are separated from traffic.

Provided by Tulane University

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