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City Bike-Share Program Skirts Lower-Income Areas

New York City's program centers on major transportation hubs and more affluent neighborhoods, a study shows

By Josh Barbanel

New York City's bike-share system is centered on major transportation hubs and more affluent neighborhoods, excluding most lower-income neighborhoods, a new study shows.

The survey, by New York University's Rudin Center for Transportation Policy and Management, found that less than a fifth--18%--of Citi Bike rental stations are in areas with median household incomes of less than \$50,000 a year, even though nearly 4.2 million people, or just more than half the population, live in those neighborhoods.

In 2015, the median New York City household income was \$53,373.

"Providing service to all New Yorkers presents a challenge to Citi Bike," according to the study by Sarah M. Kaufman and Jenny O'Connell.

Serving remote, lower-income and lower-density neighborhoods could require new sources of private and public funding to pay for capital expenses and operations, the study said.

Citi Bike, the survey noted, has taken steps to reach out to lower-income neighborhoods.

For example, for the two years it has been working with community groups in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant section to expand service and usage.

The system also has attracted 2,000 members through a program that offers deep discounts to residents of New York City Housing Authority developments. Residents eligible for the discount pay \$5 a month, while others who use the program must spend \$163 for an annual membership.

Citi Bike is by far the largest bike-sharing system in the country, with 14 million trips taken in 2016 and 115,000 annual members. But 83% of the trips begin and end in Manhattan, with the busiest stations concentrated around major transportation hubs, the study said.

The bike system could serve outlying neighborhoods better by linking residents to bus routes or the end of subway lines, the report suggested.