

# ONE-YEAR EVALUATION REPORT



Market-to-Midtown  
Bikeway



*Photo courtesy of M. Julie Photo*

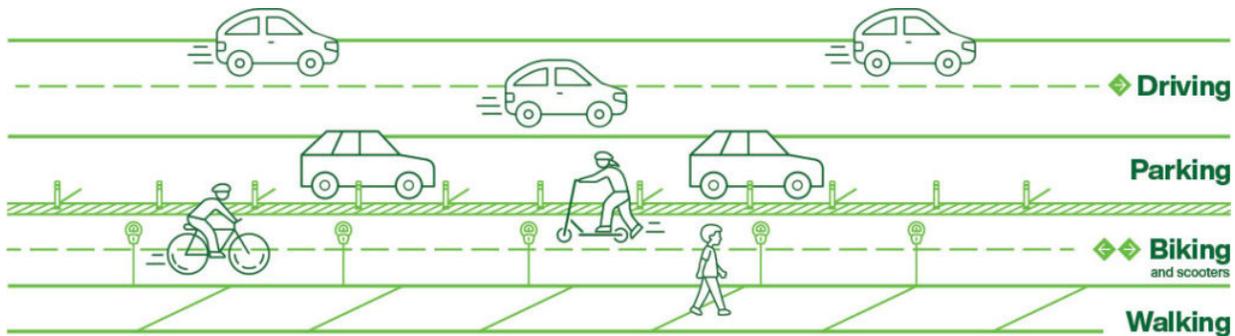


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## MIDTOWN-TO-MARKET BIKEWAY

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Graphic by Omaha By Design

July 28, 2022, marked the ribbon-cutting ceremony's first anniversary, officially opening the Market-to-Midtown Bikeway. This report focuses on data comparing use during 2021 Quarters 3 and 4 and 2022 Quarters 1 and 2, along with testimonials from regular users who provide a well-informed perspective of biking on Harney, both with and without the bikeway.

Since the beginning of the pilot project, there's been an increase in bike and scooter traffic along the Harney street corridor, with an expected decrease during winter. But while numbers were lower, the use did remain consistent, strengthening the case that bicycle infrastructure is used year-round, even in Omaha.

Consistent also describes other findings in this report. Use of the Bikeway is consistent seven days a week. The western portion of the corridor continues to see more use than the eastern portion, and riders continue to seek out the protected lane on Harney rather than riding on parallel streets with painted bike lanes or no bike lanes. This data indicates the Bikeway is being used for transportation, not just recreational riding.

The most notable statistic reported here comes from Heartland Bikeshare: the use of bikes from stations located on the Market-to-Midtown corridor has increased 69% since the start of the pilot project. Not only does this show future station locations and future protected bike lanes need to go hand in hand. It also shows that giving people an opportunity (bike rental) and a safe place to ride (bike lane physically protected from vehicular traffic) is a winning combination for our transportation system.

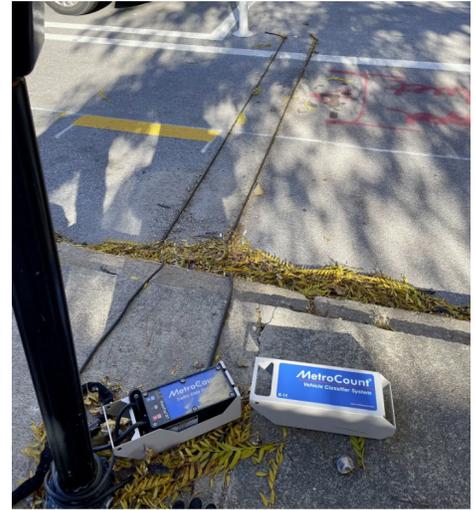
We continue to learn lessons about maintenance, and some questions remain about snow/ice removal as Omaha experienced a record low amount of snowfall in 2022. Detailed information is included about both issues.

## A NOTE ON DATA COLLECTION

As with the first evaluation report issued in early 2022, this report will rely on data from the physical counters placed along the Bikeway and data provided by the Metro Area Planning Agency (MAPA) from Strava, a ride-tracking app used by many bicyclists.

The physical counters along the Bikeway utilize pneumatic tubes placed on the pavement. Due to anticipated winter maintenance needed during Q1 of 2022, these counters were removed in order to avoid damage from snow and ice removal equipment. Fortunately, Strava data was collected during the entire 6- month period covered in this report. The physical counters were reinstalled in mid-April, providing this report with three and a half months of data.

As noted in the 6-month evaluation report, this data, like any other, has its limitations. During the collection period, a few rubber counters were disrupted, pulled off, or had punctures affecting the data. Averages were calculated using existing data and were scaled up 10 percent to account for undercounting due to disrupted counters and misclassifications. Despite the limitations, we are confident that the data accurately represents the use patterns. Supplemental data for the entire 6-month period was also provided by project partners Heartland Bikeshare (bike share checkouts) and the City of Omaha Parking and Mobility Division (scooter use).



*Photo courtesy of Bike Walk Nebraska*



*Photo courtesy of strava.com*

OVERALL

# BICYCLISTS IN OMAHA REGION

Trips ⓘ

2022, 2021, 2020, 2019 ▾  Total  Leisure  Commute

2022 Total	2021 Total	2020 Total	2019 Total
34,819	77,779	92,040	54,867

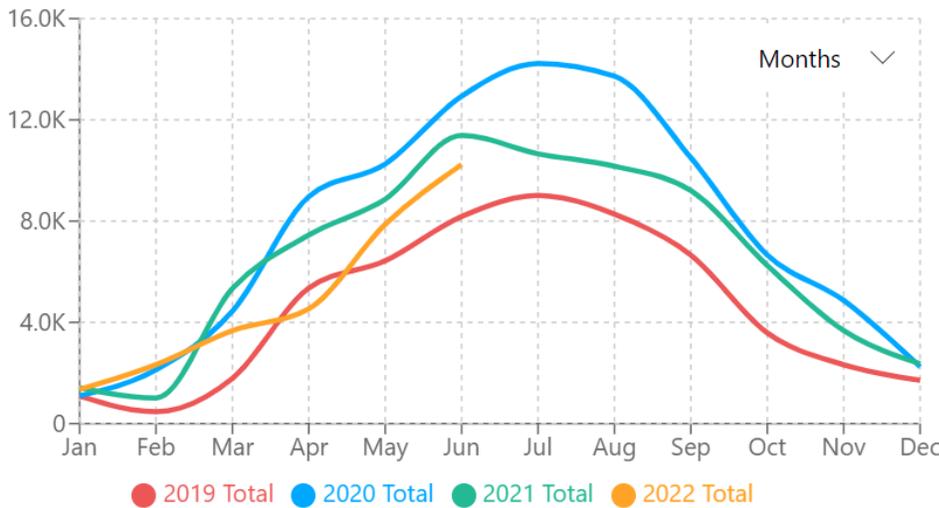


Figure 1: Comparing the numbers of rides tracked on Strava from January 2019 - June of 2022 in the Omaha region.

Strava data from the Metro Area Planning Agency and the City of Omaha’s counter data from the paved trail system help provide context for how much bicycling is happening in the region annually (see Figure 1).

The COVID lockdown of 2020 ushered in the Bike Boom nationally, and the Omaha area was not immune, as seen in these graphs showing annual bicycle usage beginning in 2019.

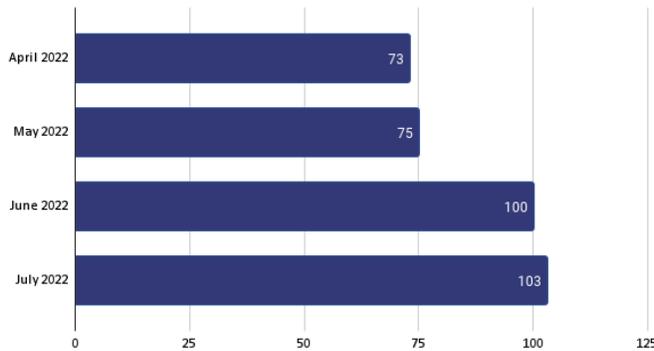
Although bicycle usage for 2022 is down slightly compared to 2021, it is still above pre-COVID levels. Use of the Market-to-Midtown Bikeway from mid-April through July 2022 is also somewhat lower than the 2021 usage, but seasonal factors certainly impact this data.

30%

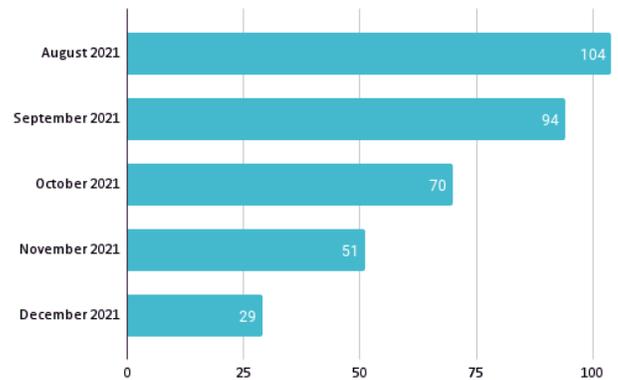
INCREASE IN RIDERSHIP IN THE OMAHA REGION FROM 2019 TO 2021

# MONTHLY TRENDS BICYCLISTS ON THE BIKEWAY

Average Daily Use by Month: April - July 2022



Average Daily Use by Month: August - December 2021



The weather certainly plays a role in the number of people bicycling in Omaha; however, it is wrong to assume that people don't ride in winter. As expected, riding was down slightly but remained consistent throughout the coldest parts of the year.

Figure 2: Average daily use by month across all counter locations. Counters were removed for winter maintenance from January to mid-April.

These graphs (Figure 2) show average monthly usage from May 2021 through November 2021 and Mid-April 2022 through Late-July 2022.



Photo by SnowyMountain Photography

## DAILY TRENDS

# RIDERSHIP ON THE BIKEWAY

**Usage is not disproportionately skewed towards the weekend, showing the bikeway is getting used for transportation, not just recreation.**

Similar to the data reported in the 6-month evaluation report, the use of the Market-to-Midtown Bikeway throughout the week shows it's being used for more than recreational purposes. Counter data (Figure 3) shows consistent use across days of the week, with a slight increase in usage on Fridays and Saturdays.

**Higher traffic counts on the west end also support that the bikeway is being used for transportation and commuting purposes.**

The daily counts (Figure 4) indicate that the western portion of the facility is used more than the downtown portion. This is another indication that the facility is being used for transportation purposes.

Counter Daily Average by Day of the Week: April - July 2022

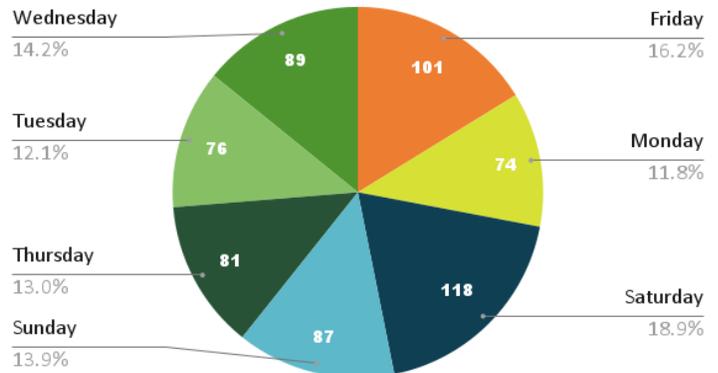


Figure 3: Counter daily average totals by day of the week.

Average Daily Use by Counter Location: April - July 2022

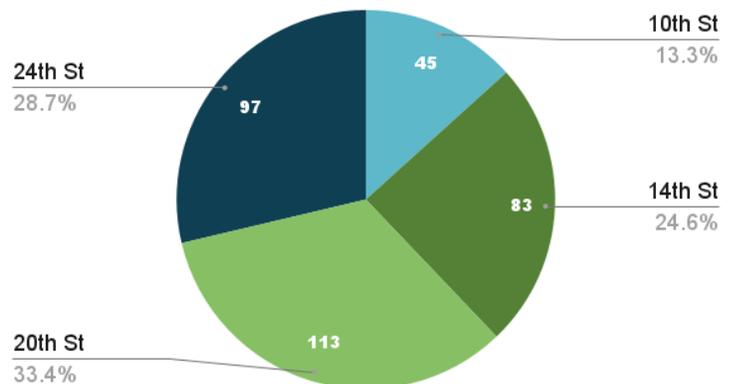


Figure 4: Counter daily average totals by location.



I have ridden my bicycle from my home in Benson to my office at 26th & Harney and back for the past three years. Before the Market-to-Midtown Bikeway was installed, Harney Street was like a drag strip, treacherous, with cars speeding eastbound down the road in the morning. Since the bike lanes are here, I feel much more safe commuting in this area – and I believe it has calmed traffic speeds here throughout the day.

KURT G.



## OVERVIEW

# BIKE SHARE ON THE BIKEWAY

2022 Heartland Bike Share Trips by Location

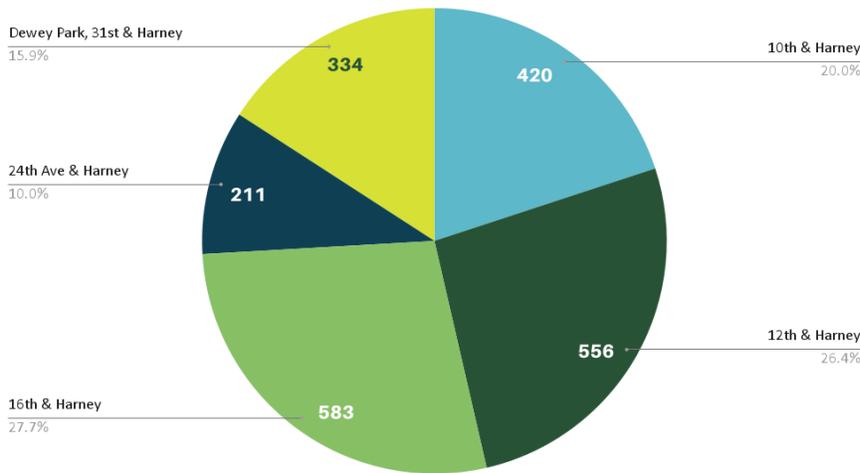


Figure 5: Total bikeshare rides from Q1 & Q2 of 2022.

### The pairing of easy access to the Bikeway on bikeshare bikes created a massive spike in usage.

Heartland Bike Share added two additional stations along Harney in conjunction with the construction of the Market-to-Midtown Bikeway (new station at 24th Ave and relocating of 10th and Farnam station to 10th and Harney) and a 5th station was added at Dewey Park near 31st Street in late 2021.

Cumulatively, stations along the Bikeway recorded a 69% increase in use after the Bikeway was installed; the station across the street from the Orpheum Theater at 16th Street recorded a 66% increase in use over 2021.

69%

INCREASE IN BIKESHARE USE  
FOR STATIONS ALONG THE  
BIKEWAY CORRIDOR

## CONTINUED: BIKE SHARE ON THE BIKEWAY

Heartland  Bike Share

Station	2021	2022	% +/-
10th & Farnam(21)/Harney(22)	326	420	28.83%
12th & Harney	569	556	-2.28%
16th & Harney	350	583	66.57%
24th Ave & Harney	na	211	-%
31st & Harney (Dewey Park)	na	334	-%
Totals	1245	2104	69.00%

Figure 6: Comparison of January - July 2021 and January - July 2022 bikeshare checkouts by stations along the bikeway. Note: 24th and Dewey Ave. stations were added after the pilot program began.

Interestingly, although the Bikeway gets more use on the western end, bike share checkouts continue to be higher on the eastern end of the corridor. This trend will likely continue to evolve as construction at destinations such as Gene Leahy Mall and the Riverfront get completed.



Before the Market-to-Midtown Bikeway was installed, Prairie Bloom Cycling Club led rides downtown utilizing busier roads (for example, Leavenworth). **Most of our rides are geared toward beginner cyclists, which made riding daunting for everyone involved.** Even if some of these roads included bike lanes, cars never seemed to pay attention to them too much. **But since the protected bikeway was built, we've been able to re-route our rides to use it, and the feedback from our riders has been fantastic.** It has easily increased confidence and, most importantly, a feeling of safety.

-JULIE B



## OVERVIEW

# SCOOTERS ON THE BIKEWAY

2022 Scooter Use by Month

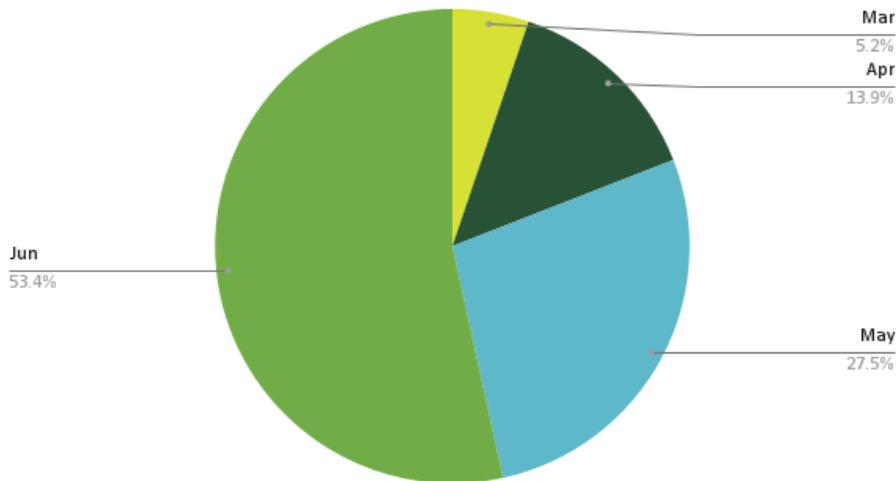


Figure 7: Scooter rides along Harney street by month.

### Signs point towards scooters staying off the sidewalks and using the bikeway.

Scooter use continues. According to the City of Omaha Parking and Mobility Division, there were 1,538 trips starting and 1,680 trips ending around the Harney Bikelane so far in 2022.

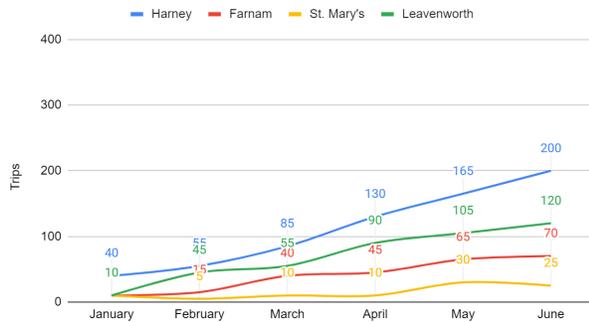
The data available cannot show specifically if these riders used the Bikeway or the sidewalk; however, in early June of 2022, volunteers manually counted the use of the Bikeway, and all scooter users observed on the corridor were recorded as riding in the lane, not on the sidewalk. This is a vast improvement over what was observed when manual counts were done in 2019.

There is not enough data to make definitive conclusions. Still, anecdotally, Omaha scooter riders appear to be following the patterns of what other cities report: giving scooter users a safe place to ride in the street will keep them off the sidewalks.

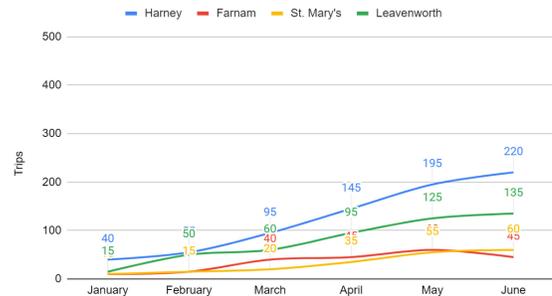
## BIKE TRAFFIC TRENDS

# BICYCLISTS REROUTE TO HARNEY

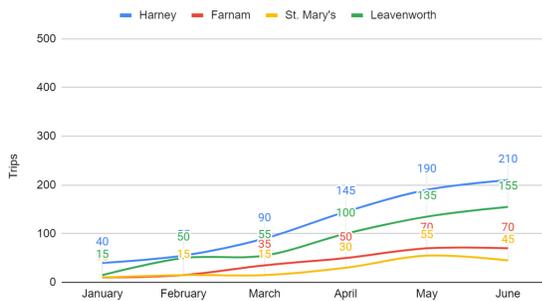
At 17th Street



At 24th Street



At 20th Street



At Park Avenue

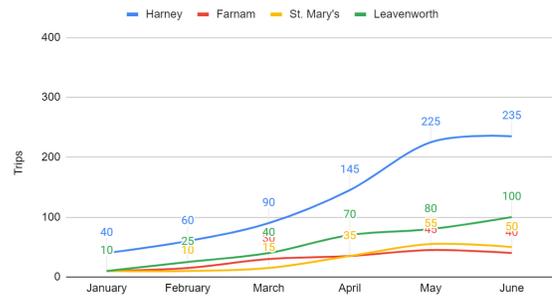


Figure 8: Comparing the number of bike trips on all documented intersections on Harney, Farnam, St. Mary's, and Leavenworth from Q1 - Q2 2022.

**Bicyclists are choosing to ride on Harney street over other, previously more frequently used, roads. It appears that riders are choosing the safer option.**

Strava data from the Market-to-Midtown Bikeway compared to parallel streets in the area shows that people continue to ride and choose the protected bike lane over roads without a similar facility. The number of rides drops in the coldest months, as expected.

## CONTINUED:

# BICYCLISTS REROUTE TO HARNEY

As we reported in the 6-month evaluation, most would choose the safer option when given a choice to ride in the lane with traffic or ride one block over in a protected lane.

It is especially telling that trips on St. Mary's Avenue and Leavenworth Street, both streets with traditional (non-protected) bike lanes, have decreased with a corresponding increase on Harney. Presumably, those previously riding on St. Mary's or Leavenworth have a higher tolerance for traffic stress.



For about 15 years, I have been a bicycle commuter, riding to and from downtown for work, entertainment, shopping, and errands during all seasons. You can believe me when I say I have spent a lot of time and energy finding the perfect routes for my rides in and out of downtown.

For me, the Market-To-Midtown Bikeway has been a dream come true. Much of the time, I am comfortable riding with vehicular traffic, but when my destination aligns with the bikeway, I choose it.

I have been a downtown commuter for almost 20 years. I have lived in midtown and downtown neighborhoods for almost 13 years. As a resident along the Harney Street bikeway, I can tell you that I frequently observe cyclists and scooter riders using the bikeway at all times of the day and night.

**It is my hope that the bikeway will serve as a model of what's possible,** and lead toward the adoption of other bikeways connecting other parts of the city and making the roads safe for all road users, whether they be on bicycles, scooters, automobiles, and as pedestrians.

- SCOTT R

## PILOT PROJECT DESIGN

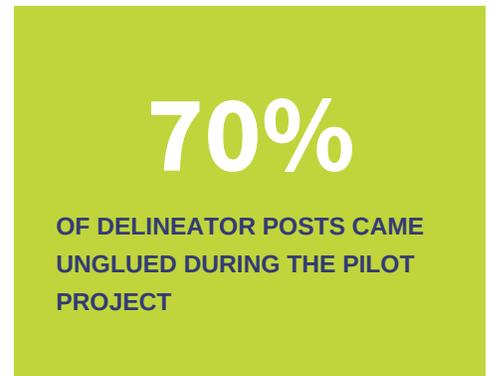
# INSIGHTS ON MAINTENANCE

### Maintenance

The maintenance issues we are experiencing now are tied to the pilot design, and would not be present in a permanent installation.

Lamp Rynerson is the engineering firm working with Metro Smart Cities to build and maintain the Market-to-Midtown Bikeway. The project coordinator provided the following notes:

- Pothole and asphalt repairs to the existing street prior to installation would be beneficial
- Try to make larger turning radius at intersections
- Additional yellow delineators at mid-block may be necessary.
- Roughly 70% of delineators and posts come unglued with about 30% may be from vehicles hitting them.
- We have a very mild winter where we did not see plows completely take out delineators or posts.



The delineators have been challenging, as mentioned above and in the previous report. Because this is a pilot project, delineators were not bolted to the pavement and, therefore, had to be glued with epoxy. This has not been effective and has increased the project's cost with frequent replacements needed.

Similar delineators are being used for the traffic calming pilot project on Farnam Street in the Blackstone Business District and Public Works approved bolting them rather than gluing; future City projects could benefit from comparing the two installation methods and the cost associated with maintenance.



The Harney Street protected bike lane is a **crucial piece of safe bike infrastructure in Omaha**. Riding in a protected bike lane is safer for all road and sidewalk users by providing dedicated space for cyclists. **The protective delineators are a constant visual reminder to drivers that this space is shared by other more vulnerable users and they must adjust their behavior accordingly.** The Harney Street bike lane is a great start to providing a network of dedicated protected bike lanes to allow cyclists a safe place to ride on Omaha's streets.

ALEX L



**Snow Removal**

**Two of the largest contributing factors are issues that can't be controlled during the pilot project: icy patches in the shade and runoff mitigation.**

For better or worse, Omaha's recent winter was one of the mildest in recent history in terms of snowfall. (Figure 9)

As such, only one real "plowable snow" event, 2.6 inches, was received on January 15, 2022. The snow removal contractor (TMG Enterprises) was able to use a standard pick up truck with a blade on the front and a small Bobcat for this work. Had there been a significant snowfall, TMG was prepared to use a Bobcat and a dump truck to remove snow piles.

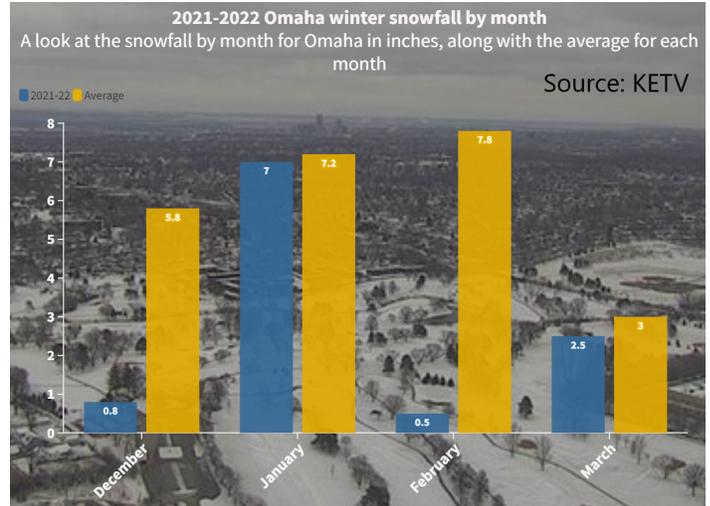


Figure 9: Comparison of 2021 and 2022 snowfall by month for Omaha in inches.

The first lesson learned with this snow event was about crosswalks: windrows of snow from the private contractor and the City plows were left in the north/south crosswalks along the corridor. When notified of this problem, Bike Walk Nebraska sent the TMG crew back out to clear these areas.

One snowplow issue that led to phone calls from two business owners (one near 20th and one near 29th) relates to private business driveways. Windrows of snow from the TMG plows and the City plows created access concerns for these business owners' deliveries and customer parking. The City's Public Works Department has requested adjustments to TMG's procedures to include clearing snow from in front of all private driveways along the corridor with future snow events. This policy will require additional consideration for the pilot project to become a permanent facility.

Another issue documented by a business owner after this snow event: City plows did not clear the right turn lane on Harney at 20th Street, causing confusion and leading some drivers to use the bike lane as the turn lane.

Snow melt and subsequent ice formation in the bikeway is another issue currently being assessed. Two of the largest contributing factors are issues that can't be controlled during the pilot project: the lane is on the south side of Harney, which keeps it in the shade from adjacent buildings along many stretches and prevents icy patches from forming and/or melting; and the design of the lane itself does not include any features that could mitigate or prevent runoff in the first place.

# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE FINAL THOUGHTS

## The bikeway meets the performance metrics outlined in the pilot project agreement.

As the end date of this pilot project approaches, plans must begin to be considered. The Market-to-Midtown Bikeway is currently meeting the performance measure outlined by the agreement approved by the Omaha City Council. (Figure 10)

The announcement of the streetcar project with a potential alignment on Harney Street is a significant development we must now consider in addition to the performance measures as the City considers how this data may inform future permanent bikeway infrastructure.

At this time, we do not know the final alignment and whether it would impact the construction of the Bikeway as a permanent facility. These questions may be answered when the final report is created this fall.

### Performance Measures

- Minimal increase in vehicular conflicts with commuters utilizing the protected bikeway and installed infrastructure;
- Minimal increase in pedestrian conflicts with commuters using the protected bikeway or as a result of installation of infrastructure supporting the protected bikeway;
- Supportive feedback from commuting public of all modes of transportation;
- Supportive feedback with minimal disruption of private business along routes;
- Minimal disruption of curbside operation within the public ROW: i.s.: Metro Transit, ParkOmaha, etc.;
- Effective snow clearance consistent with the City policy of 24-hour removal following a snowfall in excess of two inches;
- Supportive feedback from active transportation users of the facility;
- Positive results from user surveys, interviews and other formal evaluation mechanisms;
- Demonstrated use by people using bicycles, bike share and scooters.

Figure 10: Performance measures for the Market to Midtown Bikeway approved by the Omaha City Council.



I rode Harney before the bike lane as I've ridden 2000+ miles per year for the last 4 years. Most of those miles are commuting through Omaha miles.

**I love, love, LOVE the Harney bike lane.** It's so nice having a protected bike lane, as crappy as it is. It definitely feels safer. Here are the details:

- **The eastbound side is just plain scary. Sewer grates, potholes, and other crap abound.** I typically ride eastbound in the westbound lane...it's barely rideable on a road bike.
- The traffic signals are good, but require serious mental cognition... when you are going 20+ down a steep hill, it comes quick and you have to be on your a-game to mentally process everything.
- I do like the westbound option, but... it just feels awkward sometimes. The traffic signaling really sucks.
- Last comment - **we need more protected bike lanes!**

- MICHAEL K



## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

# ADVOCATE FOR THE BIKEWAY

### Email you City Council Member

**Pete Festersen** // District 1  
Pete.Festersen@cityofomaha.org

**Don Rowe** // District 5  
Don.Rowe@cityofomaha.org

**Juanita Johnson** // District 2  
Juanita.Johnson@cityofomaha.org

**Brinker Harding** // District  
Brinker.Harding@cityofomaha.org

**Danny Begley** // District 3  
Danny.Begley@cityofomaha.org

**Aimee Melton** // District 7  
Aimee.Melton@cityofomaha.org

**Vinny Palermo** // District 4  
Vinny.Palermo@cityofomaha.org

### Become a Member of Bike Walk Nebraska

With your support, we can improve safety, education, and infrastructure for all who ride bicycles in our beautiful state. Memberships start at just \$5 a month.

### Donate to Bike Walk Nebraska

Your donation helps us to advocate for policies that improve the safety of Nebraska's roadways, promote the consideration of active transportation in road design and policy decisions, and support Nebraska's trail adjacent communities in becoming more bicycle friendly.

[Learn More](#)

### Have you used the bikeway? Provide feedback.

We welcome feedback of all kinds from those who have ridden on the bikeway or even those who have driven along the corridor. Your information will help us determine how to move forward with protected bikeways in Omaha.

[Take the Survey](#)