



Building Bike Lanes to Encourage Cycling Is Not Sound Policy

Published on *Show-Me Institute* (<https://showmeinstitute.org>)

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Cycling advocates in Kansas City have been looking for any good news to help trumpet the \$400 million-dollar plan to expand bike lanes. BikeWalkKC [seems to think](#) it has found one such bit of good news when it comes to daily rider counts on Armour Boulevard:

The increase from **7 to 44** people on bikes might not seem like much, but it's still early days and Armour is a short corridor that does not yet connect to any other bike lanes or trails. Upcoming projects like Charlotte/Holmes and The Paseo will start to create a network out of isolated pieces of infrastructure.

BikeWalkKC boasts that this is a 600% increase in daily cyclists on Armour. That is true but underwhelming. We're talking about 44 cyclists in a metropolitan area with more than two million people.

How do we know 44 people a day are now using the Armour bike lanes? The [post](#) didn't say. I followed up with an employee from Kansas City Public Works, who confirmed that BikeWalkKC was using data from its one-time departmental bike counts. No one knows if 44 riders is a one-time phenomenon or a daily occurrence.

Bike advocates claim that building infrastructure will create demand. Patrick Tuohey talked about this assertion in an [earlier blog post](#), citing the [demand analysis](#) BikeWalkKC published to support this project. The analysis was performed without any current cyclist counts. A demand analysis that doesn't bother trying to measure current demand to help gauge future demand seems more like guesswork than rigorous assessment.

Building bike lanes and hoping that demand will follow is not sound public policy. Data actually shows a [downward trend](#) of bike commuters in the United States. Only about [0.1 percent](#) of Kansas City's metro population commuted by cycling in 2014, and recent data from Public Works suggests that number has dropped even lower.

["If you build it, he will come"](#) was an effective line for a movie, but that idea doesn't translate to municipal policy. Kansas City has more pressing needs, and better ways to spend taxpayer dollars.

About the Author



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Kelvey Vander Hart is originally from Des Moines, Iowa, and joined the Show-Me Institute through

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[2] <http://bikewalkkc.org/blog/2019/06/city-tweaks-armour-boulevard-complete-streets-project-as-data-shows-improvements-in-safety-and-usage/>

[3] <https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/transportation/cycling-down-rabbit-hole>

[4] <http://bikewalkkc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/KCMO-Bicycle-Network-Demand-Analysis-Bike-WalkKC-Nov2016.pdf>

[5] <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/01/02/bike-work-fewer-americans-new-trails-share-programs/2319972002/>

[6] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3c_pj_CLJQ

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