Ben Diflo

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Eugene Han

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Agent 2 - Citi Bike

In the fabric of the Kips Bay Neighborhood in Manhattan, our first unfamiliar agent will be the citi bike. These bikes represent a unique for of travel for New Yorkers. They are normal bikes that are placed around the citi in racks, which can be used and dropped off at any rack in the citi for a price. They have become very popular, and many people have opted to use citi bikes rather than public transportation.

The first stop on the list is the East River Walkway, which is a breath of fresh air for the bike. The walkway is a continuous linear path separated from car lanes that allows pedestrians, bike riders, skaters, and rollerbladers to get away from the dense industry. The path outlines the perimeter of Manhattan, so it is often not the most effective way to get around the city. That is because it is not primarily a path for travel, but a path for wandering.

This idea of a destination juxtaposes the nature of the citi bike. The bike is meant to be picked up at one point in the city and dropped off at another point, and there are very few citi bike racks along the east river. So to the biker, the pathway is less of a destination, but a line between point A and point B. The citi bike is made to be taken, ridden, and put back

Though the bike is a more agile mode of transportation than the car, it can have a lot of difficulty maneuvering the city. Modern cities are made to accommodate cars, and in many places other modes of transportation are overlooked. New York City has a huge active biking population, however you would not think that by the bike lanes. Green paths outlined with white paint featuring symbols of bikes stretch along the sides of city streets. However, they are non continuous paths that feature breaks at many locations: curbs, intersections, construction, etc (**Rhythmic/Arrhythmic).** This is a strength and the weakness to the bike, a weakness because bike lanes are often not well taken care of and may be blocked by construction or someone who parked in the wrong spot **(Explicit/Ambiguous)**. The strength to this is that the lanes being broken allows more freedom to the biker, who must carve his own path through the asphalt. Though a bike is no match against a car, it has the ability to weave through them, and potentially get places quicker.

The Kips Bay Towers is a familiar location to the citi bike. A rack has been settled between 1st and 2nd avenue on 33rd street since citi bikes came out. Though many areas have problems with citi bike theft, this one is usually well taken care of. In fact, over time, two more citi bike racks have popped up around the perimeter of the complex. In a sense, the citi bike is similar to a taxi cab. Both are temporary, one-way modes of transportation that flow people to move around Manhattan for a fee. They are both a bit more private than the subway or the bus (**Solitary/Connected).** The bike and the taxi cab have a similar experience with the city, as they both “see” many of the same things. The road, the car/bike in front of them, and the sky ahead.

The yellow taxi and citi bike are also unique because initially, they were both only available for use in Manhattan, and none of the other boroughs **(Formal/Typographic).**  Only recently have green taxis, also called borough cabs, been introduced, as well as citi bike stations in the outer boroughs. Clearly this is representative of the social and economic statuses of the five boroughs, where Manhattan often receives the best funding **(Common/Uncommon)**. They are a luxury that many New Yorkers do not have any access too, but at the same time are icons of the city. Everyone thinks of New York City when they see a yellow cab, but is that truly representational of most New Yorkers?

Kips Bay Towers provides a threshold of privacy and security between the outside and the inside of the complex. Many residents have their bikes chained up inside the property, in order to avoid theft on the streets. Again, this is a luxury that many New Yorkers do not have, and it is extremely evident if you walk around the city for a little while. If there is a bike chained up to a post on the sidewalk, there is a good chance it has had its wheels stolen. The citi bike protects the user because they are not responsible for the product when it is not in their possession, a benefit to the consumer. If citi bikes are destroyed or damaged, then they are paid for with tax money. Interestingly, those who can afford citi bikes and have easy access to them are able to enjoy them and return them with no repercussions. When they are damaged, then the bill is split between all New Yorkers. Is this very fair to the people who cannot use citi bikes? Clearly, those who are more socioeconomically stable will have a much easier time maintaining their bike, whether it be a normal bike or a citi bike.

The HRA Men’s Shelter is similar to Kips Bay Towers in it’s threshold, keeping the residents in and everything else outside. This means that the citi bike can only view its exterior, maybe in passing along the bike lane going uptown on 1st avenue. A bus stops a just a block away from the shelter, and there is a citi bike rack just across the street. I would assume that it is incredibly infrequent for a citi bike to go beyond the gate of this men’s shelter.

There are many citi bikes in the surrounding area of the shelter, which creates an interesting opportunity for those living in the shelter. The shelter is for homeless men, who probably do not have much money to their name. A swipe for the bus or subway costs $2.75, which may seem cheap but quickly adds up. It can be difficult for someone with a lot of money to get around through the public transportation system. The Citi Bike website boasts that the user can ride for under 30 cents a day, given they get the cheapest subscription and use the bike as much as possible. You would think that this would be a better option for those with lower income, but other problems present. To get the best deal, you must pay the most, and the daily rate is $3.50, even more than a MetroCard swipe. This creates a problem when we relate the more wealthy population who can afford to save money using citi bikes, and those who are low income and do not have enough money to buy a subscription **(Diachronic).**

The problem for these individuals is not solved with a citi bike. It is an efficient, eco-friendly, fun, and cheap method of transportation for those who it is available to. However, for the rest of the population, they are nothing but rows of metal contraptions, unavailable to them. The more progressive option is only an option to those higher up, which goes against the political idea of progressivism.