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## NYC DOT Study: Street Redesign Good for the Economy

By [Kate Hinds](#) | 10/24/2012 – 12:39 pm

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Union Square's pedestrian plaza (photo by Kate Hinds)

New York City's Department of Transportation says redesigned streets have been very, very good to small businesses.

A new report says that retail sales are up along city streets that have bike paths, pedestrian plazas, slow zones, or select bus service.

In some cases, the increase is dramatic: on Brooklyn's [Pearl Street](#), where the DOT maintains retail sales have increased by 172 percent since a parking triangle was turned into a pedestrian plaza.

In [Measuring the Street](#), the DOT lays out metrics for evaluating street redesign projects. These include benchmarks like injuries, traffic speed and volume. And now it includes retail sales data along redesigned routes.

The report casts the city's street redesign in a favorable light just as hundreds of planners descend on the city for the [Designing Cities](#) conference, happening this week at New York University.

"For the first time, we have years of retail sales that were reported to the Department of Finance, and we were able to look at that data and apply it directly to the SBS corridors, the bike lane projects, etc.," said DOT commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan.

Sadik-Khan ticked off a list of streets that she said economically benefited from being overhauled.

"On Fordham Road [in the Bronx], we saw the growth in the retail sales by local businesses — and these are not chain stores — grow 71 percent following the introduction of the SBS route there in 2008, which is three times the borough-wide growth rate."

The report says that along Ninth Avenue, retail sales are up 49 percent — sixteen times the borough growth rate — three years after that street's protected bike lane went in. Manhattan's Union Square, which was [revamped](#) in 2010, reports a lower commercial vacancy rate.

Sadik-Khan said the reason for increased sales is straightforward: if you build it, the people will come. And presumably those people have wallets.

“We’ve seen anywhere between a 10 to 15 percent increase in ridership on all the SBS bus routes,” Sadik-Khan said, “amid a citywide decline of 5 percent on bus routes.” She said more riders along a route means more people getting on and off the bus, which means more foot traffic. The DOT looked at sales tax records reported to the city’s Department of Finance. The data excludes large chain stores and non-retail businesses.