

WANT AMAZON'S NEW HQ IN YOUR TOWN? MUST HAVE BIKE LANES, SAYS AMAZON

September 19, 2017



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*7th Avenue in Seattle, just outside Amazon's headquarters there.
Photo courtesy Seattle Department of Transportation.*

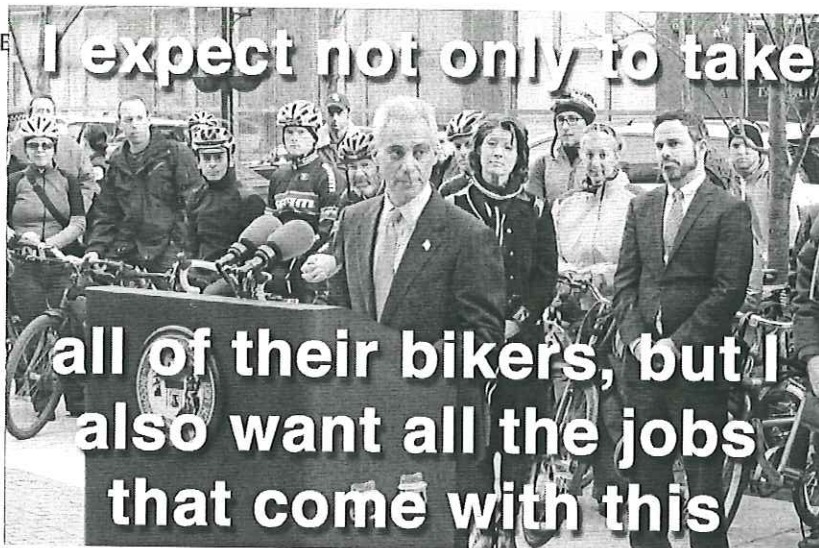
Amazon may be looking for [another city](http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2017/09/18/551773552/cities-try-convincing-amazon-they-re-ready-for-its-new-headquarters) (<http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2017/09/18/551773552/cities-try-convincing-amazon-they-re-ready-for-its-new-headquarters>) to call home, but here's one thing it's not willing to leave behind in Seattle: bike lanes.

The online retailer's Sept. 7 announcement that it's looking for a site for its "second headquarters" has turned millions of heads and great interest from cities looking for a chance at its jobs engine. But here's a line in the company's [request for proposals](https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/G/01/Anything/test/images/usa/RFP_3_V516043504.pdf) ([https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/G/01/Anything/test/images/usa/RFP_3_V516043504 .pdf](https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/G/01/Anything/test/images/usa/RFP_3_V516043504.pdf)) that not everyone has noticed yet: "Include connectivity options: sidewalks, bike lanes, trams, metro, bus, light rail, train, and additional creative options to foster connectivity between buildings/facilities."

For big employers like Amazon, it doesn't matter what city you're in — locating in a neighborhood with good bikeways makes good business sense. More bike infrastructure means more biking, which means healthier (<http://peopleforbikes.org/blog/bicycles-are-instantaneous-teleportation-devices-says-science/>), happier (<http://peopleforbikes.org/blog/how-better-biking-supports-happiness-for-rich-and-poor/>) workers; salaries that go further, thanks to lower commuting costs; and millions of dollars that don't have to be spent on garage space.

Five years ago, cutting the ribbon on Chicago's groundbreaking Dearborn Street protected bike lane (<http://peopleforbikes.org/blog/the-10-best-protected-bike-lanes-of-2013/>), Mayor Rahm Emanuel issued a challenge along exactly these lines — specifically to Seattle, in fact.

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Mayor Rahm Emanuel in 2012. Photo: Steven Vance, *Streetsblog Chicago* (<http://gridchicago.com/2012/a-great-day-in-chicago-protected-lanes-open-in-the-heart-of-the-loop/>). Caption: Tom Fucoloro, *Seattle Bike Blog* (<https://www.seattlebikeblog.com/2012/12/17/chicago-mayor-i-want-seattles-bikers-and-the-jobs-that-come-with-them/>).

“The City of Chicago moved from tenth to fifth of most bike-friendly cities in the country [according to *Bicycling magazine* (<http://www.bicycling.com/ride-maps/featured-rides/5-chicago>)] in one year,” Emanuel said. “In the same year the City of Chicago moved from fifteenth to tenth worldwide in startup economy... You cannot be for a startup, high-tech economy and not be pro-bike. [In Seattle and Portland] I want them to be envious because I expect not only to take all of their bikers but I also want all the jobs that come with this.”

Five years later, Chicago is being cited as a strong contender for Amazon's new headquarters, in part because of its unmatched pool of skilled workers (<https://medium.com/migration-issues/no-room-at-the-inn-for-amazon-effda4edc00f>).

Wherever Amazon lands, Chicago is among many cities who've been investing in their future economies by dedicating space on their streets to low-stress biking. It seems likely that one of those cities is about to see a major payoff.

(Thanks to [Randy LoBasso](#) (<https://twitter.com/RandyLoBasso/status/910156686723297280>) and the [Harvard Business Review](#) (<https://hbr.org/2017/09/what-amazons-hq2-wish-list-signals-about-the-future-of-cities>) for the tip.)

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