 Click to Print

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

\$4M Bike Rack Not Ready for Car-Free Day

Union Station bike program starts Oct. 2

By [JIM IOVINO](#)

Updated 8:27 AM EDT, Tue, Sep 22, 2009



flickr.com/brownpau

It's Car-Free Day in D.C., so it's time to check in on our favorite \$4 million bike rack at [Union Station](#).

Bikestation at Union Station is scheduled to open on Oct. 2 and [is now signing up members](#). The cost: \$96 for a year, or \$12 for a monthly service plan, and there's also a daily plan. An annual \$20 administrative fee is also tacked on.

The nifty design ("1,600 sq. ft. of free-standing ultra-modern glass and steel!") makes it easy on the eyes, but some think the price tag isn't easy on the wallet.

Take [the Cato Institute](#), for instance:

... at a cost of \$4 million, it comes out to around \$25-\$30 thousand per bike. And, yes, I recognize that the "1,700-square-foot building west of the station will also have changing rooms, personal lockers, a bike repair shop and a retail store that will sell drinks and bike accessories." But the ultimate purpose is to hold bikes. In my mind, the extra extravagance merely reflects the

fact that taxpayers are picking up the tab.

Of courses Cato is going to be against the federal government picking up the tab for a bike rack, and some good points are made. But to counter that, [we turn to Matthew Yglesias](#):

I look forward to the day when the [Cato Institute](#) does a blog post denouncing each and every publicly financed parking lot or garage in the [United States of America](#). Somehow I think that if we equalized public funding for car park and bike parking at \$0 that would on net work to the advantage of non-drivers.

And Rebuilding Place in the Urban Space [weighs in as well with a counter to Cato](#):

But here's the thing that bugs the s*** out of me... Automobile use is massively subsidized in (at least) two ways.

1. Roads are paid for by gasoline excise taxes, registration fees, tolls AND GENERAL TAX MONIES. Revenues from gasoline taxes, fees, and tolls pay about 60% of the cost of roads. ...

2. Free Parking or very very cheap parking. As long as parking is provided for free or at low cost, driving is subsidized and people don't pay their own way, driving is over-encouraged, and it makes it extremely difficult for transit to be competitive.

[TheWashCycle compares](#) the D.C. Bikestation to one in [Chicago](#), which used \$3.1 million to house 300 bikes on parkland five years ago. While the Chicago station is cheaper, WashCycle thinks D.C. did pretty well for itself:

Again it's possible DC could have built a bike station that parked more bikes or cost less and built it at a major transit hub like Union Station and at the terminus of a bike trail. I'm just not sure how. But then I'm not a budget expert.


Oh, and if you're wondering how D.C.'s Smart Bike program compares to others across North America, [Richard Layman](#) has your answer: [not so good](#).

Happy Car-Free Day!

First Published: Sep 22, 2009 6:28 AM EDT

Find this article at:

<http://www.nbcwashington.com/around-town/events/4M-Bike-Rack-Not-Ready-for-Car-Free-Day-60225657.html>

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.