



THE REFLECTOR

PROMOTING HEALTH FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

A Newsletter from the OHSU Bike Commuter Group

November 2004

BIKE COMMUTERS ON THE RISE

From: Bike commuters on a road well traveled by Julie Tripp published in the Oregonian on October 21, 2004.

The number of people choosing to commute by bike has tripled in Portland since 1991. Those commuters are saving millions a year, it turns out, along with the environmental and health benefits.

This year's spike in gas prices is not yet a primary reason for car abandonment.

In Portland, the ranks of the new commuters have broadened beyond urban punksters, environmental extremists as well as drivers relegated to their bikes for breaking intoxication laws. They include attorneys in Lycra, investment managers in suits and ties, professional women in dresses, and everything in between, according to Kasandra Griffin from the BTA. "More people are biking, Griffin said. "The more that do it, the more it looks like a reasonable thing to do."

Still, among bike commuters, the number of men is double the number of women.

The Rose City has already been judged the most bicycle-friendly place in North America, according to Bicycle Magazine and the League of American Bicyclists.

It's difficult to measure how many Portlanders commute that way. However, several eastside neighborhoods within four miles of downtown record 8 percent to 10 percent of workers who ride bikes to their jobs, a very high percentage for an American city, according to Roger Geller, Portland's bicycle coordinator.



HOW DOES OHSU RATE?

I received a letter in the mail today stating that OHSU made the top ten in the category of number of new bicyclists!

In the month of September, many of us participated in the annual Bike Commute Challenge (BCC) put on by the Bicycle Transportation Alliance. The BCC is a competition between companies to increase the number of employees that commute to work by bike.

OHSU is in the category of having 500+ employees. On Marquam Hill there are about 9000 employees. Just over 1% of the employees on the hill participated in the BCC for a total of 109 bicyclists. Of those, 51 stated that they began commuting by bike during the BCC, which demonstrates the power of a challenge when it comes to biking up that hill.

If you would like to see the results from all the companies in the 500+ category, please click here.

RESOURCES FOR BICYCLISTS

Find out how much your car is costing you:
www.financenter.com/consumertools/#auto

Other useful websites for bicyclists:

A website sponsored by the American League of Bicyclists with tips for beginning a commute:
www.bike-to-work.com

A Portland-based bike advocacy group:
www.bta4bikes.com

TriMet's guidelines for bicyclists:
www.trimet.org/guide/bikes.htm

City of Portland's website for bicyclists:
www.trans.ci.portland.or.us/bicycles

Portland's connection for bike culture:
www.shifftobikes.org

A fun list of why people should go by bicycle and more: www.gobybicycle.com

LET IT RAIN

I have been steadily collecting a list of items that make it easier to bike through the winter in Portland. These answers come from a range of people, from those who are interested in gadgets to those veteran bicyclists who don't seem to notice the change in weather.

Basic rain gear is a must. Get a good water-proof (not water-resistant) jacket, to save a little money you can buy water-resistant pants. Booties are wonderful to keep water off your shoes and cut down on the windchill for feet. Waterproof gloves and socks are also available at bike shops.



To keep your head warm, you have a multitude of options, from ear bags and other high-tech ear muffs to helmet covers and skull caps. A lightweight scarf that can be wrapped around the head and neck is an attractive choice for women.

For your bike, fenders are a must, otherwise you'll have a mud stripe along your back and mud spatters in the front. Water-proof bags and panniers are great for storing dry clothes in, these are often made from the "dry bag" material used for river rafting "dry bag" material used for river rafting.

As the days get shorter and rainier, staying visible on your bike becomes more difficult. You can upgrade your existing headlight and taillight (you can now find very powerful lights called HID lights) or you can add extra red blinkers to your backpack or rack. Remember that it is illegal to ride without a headlight and a rear red reflector or red light. Another way of increasing visibility is choosing tires with reflective sidewalls. Whatever else you may decide to do, don't forget reflector tape! It is still the best and cheapest solution to being seen on the road. A final recommendation: suck on menthol lozenges before heading out to keep nasal passages clear in the cold air.

If you are interested in a winter workshop for commuters and would like to volunteer an hour or more to make it happen please contact us at the info below.

The Bike Commuter Group (BCG) promotes bicycling as a healthy mode of transportation that benefits individuals and the environment. For more information about the BCG or to find ways to get involved, contact us at bike@ohsu.edu or visit our website at www.ohsu.edu/bike/.

Need to Simplify?

This is your chance to really turn over a new leaf. The Northwest Earth Institute is coming to OHSU in December to begin an eight-week workshop on Voluntary Simplicity. The sessions are free, but they do ask you to read a book that costs \$15. The first session is an introduction, so consider stopping by to find out what VS is all about and to see if it can help you simplify the way you handle your relationship with money, time, people, and the environment. The first session will be held from noon until 1:00 pm on December 16 in the Child Development Research Center, room 3220. For more information regarding the dates and locations of subsequent sessions, write to bike@ohsu.edu. If you need more information regarding the Northwest Earth Institute or other workshops they offer, visit their website at: <http://www.nwei.org/>

Your Stories

How has bicycle commuting changed me? It has made me a poor man. Gortex, flashing lights, fancy helmet, messenger bag, and God forbid I place my butt on a saddle without one of those fancy grooves down the middle ... I'm selling my car. -Kyle Gunsul



Since I did not own my own car until my late twenties, it was the switch to driving from bicycling that made a big impact on my life. I remember that I loved that I could get places faster and with far little effort and that I felt much freer to come and go as I pleased in any kind of weather with a car. After several days of driving, however I remember feeling that my life had "sped up" somehow and that I was missing something. I have always enjoyed the "real time" feeling of moving at a rate of my own making, like backpacking and bicycling. I have found as my life continues to speed up that taking the time to pedal or walk is a luxury I miss. -Anne Tillinghast



Giving up my car and beginning a bike commute has changed everything about me. Physically, I'm stronger and I have more endurance; mentally, my ability to focus has increased because the frenetic energy of rush hour is gone; and emotionally, I have increased my awareness of my environment, including the streets of my neighborhood and the air that I breathe, which has solidified my belief that we must preserve this earth for ensuing generations. -Hannah Cross

