Presented by the Brilliant School Road Safety Project based on information found on the Arrive Alive Campaign website.

Bicycles: Transport for Health?

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### ADVANTAGES OF BICYCLE COMMUTING

The introduction of a culture of bicycle commuting in South Africa has not come at a more critical period in our history. We are presently involved in conflict and areas of concern on many levels regarding the environment, safety ( ) and transport. Cycling is a form of exercise that is friendly on the condition of the roads, is friendly on the environment, requires no petrol and provides a viable transport alternative to motorized transport. Have you ever thought of riding to work or school? There are lots of great reasons to use your bicycle for your daily commuting.

#### ****Bicycle commuting is fun****.

You'll enjoy the fresh air and arrive at work invigorated and full of energy. You'll get exercise on the way to work. Save yourself the hassle of expensive, time-consuming workouts at the gym, and turn your commuting time into your exercise time. Oh, by the way - bicycling is one of the very best ways to lose weight. Ride to work every day and you'll probably never have to worry about dietting again.

#### ****You'll save money.****

Bicycle commuting is free (once you have the basic equipment) so you'll save on car wear-and-tear costs, petrol, parking, bus and taxi fares, etc.) No more parking hassles. Bicycle parking is easy, mostly free, and often plentiful. You might even be able to take your bike into the office with you, or park it on the school ground.

#### ****Bicycles are reliable****.

If you keep your bicycle in good shape it'll be more reliable than your car, the train, the bus, or any taxi. No big repair bills, no waiting for the bus, and no more missing the train or taxi.

#### ****Bicycling is good for the environment.****

You'll be part of the solution instead of part of the problem. Bicycles do not pollute the environment in any way. Bicycles are also far lighter then motorised forms of transport, and thus result in far less road damage.

#### ****Bicycle commuting is fast.****

For short to medium distances, bicycle commuting is often faster than driving to work. International research has illustrated this point. In a Canadian study, it has been demonstrated that three commuters, one on a bus, another in a car and the third on a bike, leaving from the same intersection and commuting to another specific location in the city, had the cyclist invariably arriving first.

#### When you decide to use your bike to commute, it may seem like there's a lot to figure out.

#### Where do I park my bike?

#### How do I get my clothes to work without getting wrinkles in them?

#### What if it rains?

#### Is it safe to cycle in traffic?

These are relevant questions addressing many common concerns. If more people cycled to work we would have cleaner air and quieter streets that require less maintenance. We would be creating a climate, or culture, of cycle commuting that would help change the mindsets of other road users, and thus make commuting safer. Many of those in cars would perhaps be cyclists themselves, or would have a cousin or nephew that commutes by bike, thus bringing the concept closer to home. So why not commute by bicycle?

## HERE ARE 12 COMMON EXCUSES AND 12 ANSWERS

It's too far to ride.

If you live too far from work, consider driving or using public transport part of the way and riding the rest. This is especially useful if you work in a traffic-congested area. Reducing of motor vehicle use will help the environment and becoming a bicycle commuter will create more awareness of other cycle commuters when you drive. Or you can take the train part of the way. Taking your bike along for the ride saves petrol and money.

It takes too long.

You'd be surprised! Because of traffic in urban areas, cycling generally takes less time than driving for trips of five kilometres or less and about the same time for five to eight kilometre trips. For longer trips, consider that you're saving time by combining your daily exercise with your commute. Also, don't forget your savings of time, money (and the environmental benefit) when you eliminate visits to the petrol pump.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I'd have to get up much earlier if I rode my bicycle. | If your daily commuting is less than 16 kilometres in total, the difference in commuting time will be insignificant. But even if your commuting is longer, 30 minutes of extra sleep won't be nearly as invigorating as an early morning ride. You'll arrive at work alert and refreshed. Likewise, your evening ride home should leave you more relaxed since you won't face the aggravation of sitting in rush hour traffic. And you won't have to rush off to an evening gym workout to unwind. You'll have already accomplished that! |
| I'm out of shape. | If you leave yourself plenty of time and go at an easy pace, you'll find cycling no more difficult than walking. As you ride more, you'll ease your way into better shape, building fitness that will be a regular part of your schedule. If you have health problems, consult your doctor for suggestions on getting started. |
| I can't afford a special commuting bicycle. | You don't need one. Any old bike that can be taken through a quick service will suffice if properly adjusted and maintained, and it's less attractive to thieves. If you have a recreational bicycle, you can fit it with a lightweight carrier-rack and bag or use a rucksack to carry the necessary commuting items. With the fixed cost of operating a car at around R1.50/ kilometre, the money you would save commuting by bicycle on an average 16-kilometre round trip would buy you a R2800 bicycle in six months time (not to mention the health benefits or the savings to the environment). Alternately, you can visit a BEN outlet or service centre or contact the BEN Cape Town office at 021-6714655 or visit the website - www.benbikes.org.za - where you can learn more about the ongoing programs. |
| There's no secure place for my bike. | There is probably a storage room or closet where your bike can be secured behind a locked door. Maybe you can even take it to your office - what a status symbol! Or check to see if daily storage is available in nearby buildings, at bike or sports shops, or at garages. Otherwise, lock it to an immovable object, such as a lamppost, with a strong secure lock, preferably where you can see it. |
| I have to dress smartly for work. | Some bicycle commuters simply ride in their business clothes - they seem to command more respect from motorists. Many ride in casual or cycling clothes and change when they arrive. You can carry your change of clothes in a backpack or in panniers on the bike, or even transport them back and forth on days when you don't ride. |
| I can't shower at work. | Depending on the weather, you may not need a shower if you ride at a leisurely pace. If you do, take a cloth, soap, towel and deodorant and clean up at the bathroom sink, or look for a public facility or health club within walking distance of your workplace where you can shower. Then encourage your employer to install showers where you work. |
| What if it's rainy or cold? | Begin your days as a bicycle commuter as a fair weather bicycle commuter - when the forecast is bad, don't cycle. Some people may overcome the elements and commute every day, but it doesn't mean you have to. If you only ride when the weather report is favourable, it will still make a dramatic improvement. The more you enjoy bicycle commuting, the more you'll look forward to your daily ride. You may eventually decide to invest in raingear and cold weather clothes so you can commute year-round! |
| It's not safe to ride in traffic. | You can share the road successfully with cars by riding lawfully and assertively. The fear of riding in traffic is often much greater than the actual danger. Most bicycle accidents involve children and cyclists who don't obey the law. Minimise risk by riding properly - visibly, responsibly, and following all traffic laws. In stop-and-go traffic, a fit cyclist can generally keep up with the traffic flow, so it's acceptable to maintain your place in the roadway. Hugging the pavement invites danger as cars try to squeeze past you. To help prevent injuries always wear a helmet. You can also reduce the risk of riding in traffic by using less congested secondary roads. |
| I'd have to ride in the dark. | Wear light coloured reflective clothing, use a good lighting system and choose a route that avoids major thoroughfares. There are a variety of bike mounted lights that can help you see and be seen. |
| I need my car for work. | Some jobs do require a car or truck, but many transportation tasks could be handled equally well on a bike. Meet with your employer and see if your company might not benefit from a more environmental friendly image if you conducted your business by bike. Consider that many traditional tasks adapt well to cycling, whether it's police work, meter reading, postal delivery, etc. If you absolutely cannot use a bike at work, then use your bike for personal errands at work and at home. |

### PREVENT A COLLISION BETWEEN A BICYCLE AND A MOTOR CAR

The lack of visibility is a significant factor in crashes between cyclists and cars. It is important for cyclists to do their part to make sure that they are seen. It is acknowledged by responsible cycling and biking groups that road safety is a dual responsibility. Even though you might be able to find your way in the dark does not mean that you are safe - the other road users might not be able to see you! A bike ridden in the dark or even low light must have a red light on the rear and a white light on the front. They can be flashing or steady, but they must be visible for at least 200m.

## SUGGESTIONS

Wear bright clothing and it is best if some of it is reflective.

Ankle bands attract attention because they’re moving.

Reflective material can be seen from all angles unlike lights which need to be in line of sight to be visible

A New Zealand study found that wearing white helmets and highly visible clothing would reduce visibility-related cycle collisions by 45%

Reflective vests used by riders of two-wheelers can increase visibility. However, some reflective vests used in high-income countries may be inappropriate for many low-income and middle-income countries because of the differences in climate and cost. Brightly coloured clothing or accessories may be suitable alternatives.

To increase the visibility of cyclists, many high-income countries now require that bicycles are equipped with lights and with front, rear, and wheel reflectors. Studies in the Netherlands suggest that use of bicycle lighting could reduce the incidence of bicycle collisions by 30%.

F