



May is a great month to leave the car at home

Confessions of a David Douglas bike commuter

By Kathleen McDade (pictured, in the middle)

I commute by bike almost every day, rain or shine. Oh, once in a while I'll hop on a bus instead, if the weather is truly miserable or if I don't feel very well. But in general, you'll see me on my bike every day.



My bike takes the place of a second car for my family. At first, I used an old three-speed that we already owned, but it wasn't a very good commuter bike. Now I have something called an Xtracycle Radish, which is an extra-long bike that allows me to carry two kids and 4-6 bags of groceries!

The Radish is a little expensive for a bike (\$1199 retail). We could have bought a cheap used car instead, but with a bike, we don't have to pay to insure it and we don't have to pay for gas, so it's still more economical.

On a typical workday, I load up the Radish's FreeLoader bags with my backpack, lunch, and laptop bag, put my two youngest kids on the back, and head for the daycare provider's house (my eldest rides her own bike along with us). I drop the kids off, and then ride to work. At the end of the day, I pick up the two oldest kids at school, and my husband picks up the youngest at the daycare provider's house. If I need to pick up something on the way home, I can manage that, too.

I'm glad to have others at Ventura Park who are commuting by bike or on foot as well! We can support each other, because it's not always easy or fun.

Third grade teacher Rand Raynor, pictured on the left, is a fellow bike commuter. Rand admits to riding intermittently at times, but his goal is to ride three times a week. He rides a hybrid bike (a combination of road bike and mountain bike), which is common for bike commuters. A hybrid bike allows the rider to use a more upright posture, instead of leaning horizontally over the handlebars, and is more comfortable

for the average person. Raynor also has waterproof panniers (bags that attach to a rear rack) for carrying things to and from school, and he invested in a good set of rain pants and rain shoes so that he can keep riding in all weathers.

Raynor says he rides to get exercise, save money, and reduce his carbon footprint, "not necessarily in that order." He also says that "Once you start doing it, you feel great physically and mentally. You feel a sense of pride in knowing you're doing yourself and your community a favor."

Kathy Moss, pictured on the right, a kindergarten instructional assistant, lives about one-half mile from Ventura Park, and usually walks to school three days each week. "I would walk every day, except 2 days a week my daughter has very heavy bells to carry." Moss's motivation is to get some exercise and save on gas, but she also says that "It really wakes you up in the morning, and if you live within 1/2 mile it doesn't take very much time, and you don't have to fight for a parking spot."

Spring, with its warmer weather and intermittently sunny days, is a great time to start biking or walking to work, if you're not doing it already. May is National Bike Month, featuring a Bike to Work Week from May 11-May 15, and Bike to Work Day on May 15. Why not give it a try?