

Bicycle Commute Guide

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Bicycle Commute Guide

The Sacramento area is the ideal place to bicycle commute—with its mild weather

and relatively flat topography. However, many potential riders may lack the confidence to try bicycling as a commute mode.

This Bicycle Commute Guide explains step-by-step:

- If bicycling is a commute option for you
- How to dress for bicycling, yet still be professional for work
- What equipment you may need
- Rules of the road
- How to choose a route
- Where to turn for more information

Whether bicycling everyday or just once in a while, you will still experience the benefits of a less stressful commute, save money on gas, reduce wear and tear on your car, and get exercise at the same time.

Benefits of Bicycling

Whether you're a beginner, a "weekend warrior," or a seasoned bicyclist, biking offers many benefits over driving:



- **Improved health and fitness:** Biking is a low-stress, low-impact exercise that can be performed by people of all ages and fitness levels.
- **Saving money:** The only fuel you need is food. Cut your insurance costs by driving fewer miles in your car too.
- **Easier & less expensive parking:** With the proper locking device, you can park your bike safely much easier; you can park your bike closer to your destination and for free.
- **Environmentally friendly:** Biking reduces the number of cars on the road, reducing traffic congestion. It is also a non-polluting mode of transportation.

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Getting Started

Now that you've decided to give bicycle commuting a try, here is a quick reference of the key elements to get you on the road.

How far & how long?

Base your decision on how far to bike on your experience, confidence, and abilities.

Distance: Typically, 3-5 miles is an ideal distance for bicycle commuting; although, some seasoned riders go much further.

Time: Riding 10 miles per hour won't break a major sweat, and you can cover 3 miles in less than 20 minutes. You might be able to average 12-15 miles per hour, and if conditions (and your fitness!) are right, average speeds over 15 miles per hours are possible.

Mix it up!

Even if you live far from work, you can still incorporate bicycling into your commute:

- You can take your bike with you on many buses and light rail trains, or you can store your



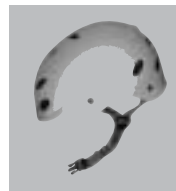
bike in a locker at light rail stations. Contact your local transit provider to find out about their bicycle programs.

- Ride your bike to meet up with a carpool or vanpool.
- See the “Transportation Alternatives” section for more information on transit and carpool/vanpool options.

What should I wear while biking?

Afraid of spandex? Here’s some help:

- Shield your eyes from bright sunlight, road debris, wind, and insects by wearing protective eyewear.
- Your clothing should be comfortable and should not get caught in your bike. For short commutes, regular clothing is adequate – just be sure to strap your right pant cuff to keep it from getting caught in the bike chain.
- Gloves can make your riding more comfortable and protect your hands.
- For longer trips, many prefer to wear clothing specifically designed for bicycling such as shorts, tights, and jerseys. Experiment with what works for you and invest in quality pieces over time.



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- You will need special clothing for riding in cold weather or the rain.
- The most important part of your bicycling attire is a properly fitting helmet. Helmets can prevent head injuries, so wear one every time you ride. Your local bike shop will be glad to help you find a properly fitting helmet.

Looking good for work

It IS possible to ride your bike and still look professional for work, all it takes is a little planning.

- Consider taking in a week's worth of clothes to work on a day you don't ride; store them in a locker or in another secure place.
- You can carry your clothes with you on your bike by using a garment-bag type pannier. Experiment with packing your clothes; options include rolling your garments or folding them in tissue paper to prevent wrinkles.
- If your worksite doesn't have shower facilities talk to your employer – showers can help employees who exercise dur-



ing lunch or after work as well as bike commuters. Consider joining a health club nearby or see if a neighboring business has an available shower.

- Be sure to have a fresh towel, washcloth, and other toiletries for quick clean-ups.

Ideal bikes for commuting

Just about any bike in good condition will be suitable for bicycle commuting, depending on your personal needs.



- Mountain bikes have fatter tires and endure rough streets, but they are heavier and don't provide for the fastest commute.
- Road bikes are the fastest but the dropped handlebars may be uncomfortable for novices, and high-pressure tires are unsuitable for some streets.
- Hybrids are similar to mountain bikes but have tires and gears suited for city streets.
- Cruiser or city bikes are often simple, one-speed bikes that work great for short trips.

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Inspecting your bike

Regardless of what kind of bike you're riding, take a few minutes to do a quick safety check to give you more riding confidence.



- **Brakes:** While standing next to your bike, push your bike forward while squeezing each brake lever individually to be sure they are capable of locking up the wheel. Inspect pads for wear; replace if there is less than $\frac{1}{4}$ " of pad left. Check brake lever travel; there should be at least 1" between bar and lever when applied
- **Wheels:** Wheel nuts and quick release levers need to be tight, and the wheel should not wobble. Check for loose or broken spokes. Lift each end of your bike, spin the wheel to ensure your brakes do not rub tire or dive into spokes.
- **Tires:** Check your tires for the manufacturer's recommendations on air pressure. Use a pressure gauge to ensure proper pressure, and a hand pump to avoid overinflation. Check for damage to tire tread and sidewall; replace if damaged.

- **Seat:** Your seat should be positioned so your knee is slightly bent when the pedal is at the bottom of a pedal stroke.
- **Handlebars:** Make sure your handlebars can't move side-to-side when you are holding the front tire still.
- **Pedals and Cranks:** Your pedals should be securely attached to the crank arms. Check for loose bearings by trying to wobble a crank arm side-to-side.
- **Gears:** Gear cables should slide easily and should not be frayed or rusty.
- **Chain:** Be sure to lubricate your chain regularly, especially if you have been riding on wet streets or in the rain. Check your chain for wear; 12 links should measure no more than $12 \frac{1}{8}$ inches. If your chain skips on your cassette, you might need a new one or just an adjustment
- **Reflectors and lights:** You must have a white light to illuminate the road and a rear reflector while riding at night. See your local bike shop for recommendations for your needs and budget. Ensure that all reflectors are clean and properly aligned.
- **Before a long ride** take a quick ride to check if derailleurs and brakes are working properly; inspect the bike for

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loose or broken parts, and tighten, replace or fix them; pay extra attention to your bike during the first few miles of the ride.

- **Be sure** to take your bike to a shop once a year for routine maintenance.

Carry a tool kit

You can be prepared for minor repairs and adjustments on the road by carrying a few key tools, and knowing how to use them:

- Tire pump for your type of valve
- Tire levers for removing the tire easily off the rim
- Spare inner-tube to fit your size tire
- Tube patch kit
- Carry a multi-tool with allen wrenches, screwdriver, and chain tool
- Small adjustable wrench
- Spoke wrench to fit your bike's needs
- \$1.50: A dollar bill will prevent your tube from protruding through a tire gash and 50 cents will let you make an emergency phone call
- Again, your local bike shop can recommend a tool kit best suited for your bike

Lock it up!

Whether you have a top-of-the-line bicycle or something just to get you around town, it's important to keep it locked up.



- Always lock up your bike, no matter how short-term you may need to park. Lock it to a stationary object in a highly visible place. U-locks are best but can be heavy. A chain or cable in combination with a U-lock complicates things for a thief.
- You may also wish to lock up (or take with you) any easily removable components like your wheels and seat.
- Talk to your employer about securing a location for your bicycle if no facilities currently exist.
- For more information about bicycle parking in Sacramento go to <http://www.sacbike.org/sacbiking/>

Accessories for your bicycle

To make your ride more comfortable and easy, consider the following accessories for your bike:

- **Baskets/racks/bags:** You'll need to put your stuff somewhere, so think of which items you will need (briefcase? books? clothes?), and select the stor-

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age device best suited for your needs.



- **Water bottle/cage:** Staying hydrated is of paramount importance when biking, so be sure to carry water with you.
- **Bells & horns:** Any kind of sounding device can alert others of your presence, especially when passing (you can also use your own voice).
- **Rear-view mirror:** Although you must always look over your shoulder to check for traffic when changing lanes, a rear-view mirror is a good supplement. Different styles allow mirrors to attach to your bike, your sunglasses, or even your helmet.
- **Fenders:** Stay clean and dry in wet weather by affixing fenders to your bike.
- **Lighting:** If you ever ride in the dark, you must use lights. Check with your local bike shop for your own needs.

Getting there

You've checked your bike, customized it for your needs, packed your clothes for work, and are decked out in some new threads—you're ready to roll. If you don't know what route to take, map out your commute and see what options are available.

- Streets with low traffic volume and lower speeds are ideal for novice riders and most pleasant with less noise and exhaust.
- 
- Look for roads with wide shoulders, wide curb lanes, and bike lanes so there is enough room for cars and bicycles.
 - Check for good pavement condition. Avoid potholes and uneven pavement.
 - Ride your route on non-work days prior to your initial bicycle commute to see how long it will take you and to make any necessary modifications to your route.
 - Be careful of drainage gates that can trap your wheels.
 - As you gain experience, try different routes.
 - You might find that a route that works well in the morning is not as good in the afternoon.

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Links To Bike Maps

- Sacramento Area Bikeway Map—
<http://bikewaymap.com/>
- Yolo-Solano—
http://www.sta.dst.ca.us/publications/bikelinks_map.pdf
- Placer County Bike Maps—
<http://www.pctpa.org/onlinebikemap.htm>
- UC Davis—
<http://www.taps.ucdavis.edu/bicycle/general/bikemap.pdf>
- City of Davis—
<http://www.city.davis.ca.us/gis/bikemap.pdf>
- City of Folsom—
http://www.folsom.ca.us/upload/files/Folsom_BikeMap.pdf
- City of Roseville—
http://www.roseville.ca.us/upload/files/bikemap_new.pdf

The rules of the road



Although bicyclists legally have the same rights and responsibilities as automobile drivers on the streets, bicyclists are much less visible and need to ride defensively. Most veteran bicyclists recommend assuming that drivers do not see you at all while you are riding.


- Ride in the same direction as traffic in the right-most lane.
- The same rules that apply to motorists also apply to cyclists, so obey all traffic control devices, such as stop signs, traffic signals, and lane markings.
- Always use hand signals to communicate your intention to stop or turn to motorists and cyclists.
- Be courteous to other cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers.
- Be as visible as possible by wearing bright and reflective clothing, using lights at night, and avoiding areas with poor lighting.
- Make eye contact with motorists to let them know you are there.
- Be predictable in your riding.

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Other safety tips

Some other pointers for a safe ride are:

- Watch that door!
Look out for people getting out of their parked cars as you're riding along in the right lane—it's best to stay out of "the door zone" as you don't have time to watch for doors and react appropriately.
- 
- Watch for vehicles turning right. Leave space for cars to turn right by moving to the LEFT part of the right lane as a courtesy at signalized intersections.
 - If a bus is at a bus stop, avoid passing the bus on the right; otherwise, you run the risk of colliding with passengers getting off and on the bus.
 - Always carry identification.
 - Carry a cell phone or change to make any necessary phone calls for help.
 - If you need to stop your bike in an emergency, use both brakes and apply the front brake a little harder than the rear. If your rear wheel starts to skid, ease up on the front brake. When braking hard,

sit far back on your seat to bring weight to the back of the bike to avoid getting pitched over your handlebars.

- Ride perpendicularly across railroad tracks.

Honing your skills

You can quickly increase your skills and confidence by taking a class on bicycling. Even veterans of cycling can continue to sharpen their skills and learn more. A widely recognized and respected program is BikeEd sponsored by the League of American Bicyclists. League-Certified instructors teach road position, emergency skills, minor maintenance and road safety. Contact the Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates at 916-444-6600, <http://www.sacbike.org> for more information on cycling education. Or, visit the League of American Bicyclists' web site at www.bikeleague.org.

Bike Buddy

If you've thought about bicycling to work but are not sure how to get started, talk to someone who's already done it. That's the idea behind the Bike Buddy match.

Use the experience gained by others to find the best route and how to work out other logistics.



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Register online at www.1800commute.org or call **1-800-commute** to request a list of other bicycle commuters interested in bike commuting with other people.

Report Hazards

You can quickly and easily report hazards you encounter, such as potholes, broken glass, worn bike-lane striping and missing signs, by using the Hazard Reporting system at <http://www.sacbike.org/hazard>. Your report will be forwarded to the appropriate agency for correction.

Transportation Alternatives

Carpool & Vanpool Information



Combine riding and carpooling; ride to a coworker's house and carpool to work. The Rideshare program serves commuters traveling to or from Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, Yuba, Placer, or El Dorado counties. Commuters are matched up based on trip origin, destination, and schedule. Everyday or just once in a while, carpooling can help you reduce the stress in your commute. Vanpools are best suited for commuters who travel 20+ miles each way and have a set schedule. Register online at www.1800commute.org for your free personalized matchlist or to request additional information. If you don't have a computer, call **1-800-commute**.

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Transit

Amtrak

1-800-USA-RAIL

<http://www.amtrakcapitols.com/>

Auburn Transit

530-823-4172

http://www.auburn.ca.gov/dept/dept_pw_trnst.html

CSUS Hornet Express

916-278-5483

<http://www.csus.edu/utaps/hes/hes.html>

Davis Community Transit

530-757-4408

<http://www.city.davis.ca.us/pcs/transit/>

El Dorado County Transit

530-642-5383

<http://www.eldoradotransit.com/>

Folsom Stage Line

916-355-8395

<http://www.folsom.ca.us/index.asp?page=160>

Lincoln Transit

916-645-8576

<http://www.lincolntransit.com/>

Paratransit, Inc.

916-429-2009

<http://www.paratransit.org/>

Placer County Transit

530-885-BUSS (2877)

<http://www.pctpa.org/transit.htm>**Roseville Transit**

916-774-5757

<http://www.roseville.ca.us/index.asp?page=169>**Sacramento Regional Transit**

916-321-BUSS (2877)

916-483-HEAR (4327) –TDD

<http://www.sacrt.com/>**South County Transit Link**

209-745-3052

<http://www.sctlink.com/>**Yolo County Transit**

530-666-BUSS (2877)

530-666-5842 –TDD

<http://www.yolobus.com/>**Yuba-Sutter Transit**

530-742-BUSS (2877)

530-634-6889 –TDD

<http://www.yubasuttertransit.com/>

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For More Information on Bicycling

UC Davis Medical Transit

916-734-2687

http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/parking/transportation/shuttle/shuttle_txt.html

Unitrans

530-752-BUSS

<http://www.unitrans.com/>

Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates

<http://www.sacbike.org/>

California Bicycle Coalition

<http://www.calbike.org/>

Sacramento Valley Cycling

<http://www.saccycle.com/>

League of American Bicyclists

www.bikeleague.org/


California Bike Commute

www.bikelink.com

SACOG's Rideshare partners include the capital region transportation management associations and other public agencies.

Caltrans District 3

Website: www.dot.ca.gov



City of Roseville

Phone: 916-774-5293

e-mail: transportation@roseville.ca.us

website: www.roseville.ca.us/transportation

50 Corridor Transportation Management Association

Phone: 916-351-3975

e-mail: Rebecca@50corridortma.org

website: www.50corridortma.org

McClellan Park Transportation Management Association

Phone: 916 808-7735

E-mail: info@northnatomastma.org

North Natomas Transportation Management Association

Phone: 916 808-7735

E-mail: info@northnatomastma.org

Website: www.northnatomastma.org

Placer County Transportation Planning Agency

Phone: 530-823-4029

E-mail: ssabol@pctpa.org

Website: www.pctpa.org

Point West Area Transportation Management Association

Phone: 916-922-2440

E-mail: rebeccag@inreach.com

Power Inn Business and Transportation Association

Phone: 916-453-8888

E-mail: becky@pibta.org

Website: www.pibta.org

Sacramento Transportation Management Association

Phone: 916-441-7074

E-mail: sacramento-tma@pacbell.net

Website: www.sacramento-tma.org

South Natomas Transportation Management Association

Phone: 916-646-0928

E-mail: mightymaus@aol.com

Website: www.southnatomastma.org

Yolo Transportation Management Association

Phone: 530-669-1446

E-mail: bill@yolotma.org

Website: www.yolotma.org

Our mission:

Delivering transportation projects, providing public information, and serving as a dynamic forum for regional planning and collaboration in the greater Sacramento metropolitan area.

Produced by



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