



Re: Cycling

To Promote Bicycling as an Enjoyable, Safe, Healthy,
Environmentally Friendly Activity for All Ages and Abilities

Otsego Regional Cycling Advocates (ORCA) 547-4020

Cycling is Environmentally Friendly by Martha Clarvoe

Pedaling is preferable to polluting!

In this series on cycling, many benefits to riding a bicycle have been discussed. Yet another, often overlooked, benefit is energy savings. We may not feel as though we are saving energy when we are peddling uphill, but when we bike instead of turning on the ignition, we are reducing the use of fossil fuels and we are not creating pollution. In environmental jargon, we are decreasing our carbon footprint – something we all need to be doing to slow global warming.

Car emission facts and comparison data provide ample motivation to use a bicycle for short trips. Please consider the following:

- 60 percent of the pollution created by automobile emissions happens in the first few minutes of operation, before pollution control devices can work effectively. Since "cold starts" create high levels of emissions, shorter car trips are more polluting on a per-mile basis than longer trips (League of American Bicyclists).
- Manufacturing a bicycle takes less energy and creates less pollution than an automobile.
- Driving 10 miles to work every day in a car that gets 22 miles per gallon emits 1,863 pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere – the equivalent of approximately 5 percent of the average two-household family's yearly carbon dioxide emissions. (U.S.E.P.A.)
- The 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (The Bureau of the Census) found that:
 - 25% of all trips in the U.S. are made within one mile of home;
 - 40% of all trips are within two miles of home;
 - 82% of trips within 5 miles of home are made by personal motor vehicle.

So why not take a bicycle instead of a car? No fuel used. No idling fumes while waiting in traffic or looking for a parking space. My nine-mile ride from Hartwick to Cooperstown eliminates more than 30 pounds of carbon dioxide round-trip. If I bike to work five days a week for 6 months, I will have reduced my carbon dioxide output by 3,600 pounds, or nearly 1.6 metric tons. That's a lot!

Although it may initially seem counter-intuitive, by biking to work, I also save time since there is no need to go to exercise class any day I ride. For my 70-minute bike ride, I must also take into account the time it would take to drive, park and walk to my destination. For me, that amounts to at least 35 minutes in round-trip driving time. So, in reality, the biking only takes an additional 35 minutes. Exercise class could come out of that time, too. With a 75-minute class at the gym twice a week, I'm all but breaking even!

Many errands can be done on a bike. I used to carry my mother-in-law's weekly groceries in panniers, or "saddle bags," from the Great American to Cooper Lane Apartments. I have even carried a can of paint home on my bike. The trick to carrying things is to keep the load balanced, low, and at the back of the bike.

Added benefits to biking include reduced stress, personal gratification in providing your own form of transportation – and feeling like a kid again! So, as far as I'm concerned, the benefits more than balance out the input.

Given the considerable contribution of gasoline emissions to global warming, compounded with the high price of gasoline, there are plenty of reasons to get out that bicycle, check the brakes, find a helmet, and hop on. I hope to see you out there pedaling – instead of polluting!

Next Week: What type of bike should you choose?

To join ORCA or to obtain more information about Bike to Work Day, May 13, call Martha Clarvoe, OCCA President, at 607-547-4020



Caption: With the help of his ninth grade physics students, Dave Ames, a science teacher at Cohasset (MA) High School, built a 27-foot cube to give a clear visual image of one metric ton of carbon dioxide, or 2,204 pounds.