

Go By Bike! Commuting, shopping, banking... (And a goofy video with a soundtrack you might recognize)

(Originally posted for Bike To Work day) So have you figured out how you can ride your bike to work instead of drive tomorrow? The weather report looks good for the Peninsula, with a high of 71 and low of 48 degrees. So what's keeping you from trying the bike commute thing?

For me, it was the assumption that hauling around my "missile case", a laptop case including the keys to everything needed to run the shop (in particular the marketing end of things), and a 400ft hill at one end of the commute that just isn't much fun with a lot of weight on your back. Nevertheless, when one of the two shop vehicles died a second time (one doesn't put a third transmission into a 13 year old Dodge Caravan with 133,000 miles on it), I was left without a gas-powered weather-insulated tomb on wheels. And that's really what a car becomes when commuting... you try to pretend that you can do other things than drive, because you admit to yourself that driving is stupid, so you talk on your phone, you turn on the radio, you roll up the windows and put the air conditioning on, you eat & drink. Anything to avoid thinking about your actual surroundings, which is, of course, incredibly dangerous. And dehumanizing.

I started out with a big Oakley backpack, so big that it could swallow up the laptop case. But, riding with a heavy backpack just isn't much fun, but seemed like the only option since I don't own a bike with a rack on it. Except that I do! My Bike Friday, my travel bike for trips to France, has a rack on it. Add a grocery bag pannier like my wife uses on her Trek e-bike, and voila, no more backpack, and I get to make a lot more use of the Bike Friday than for a once-a-year trip to France.

The run to the shop is pretty easy, since it's downhill for the first mile, although I'll admit that, on a Tuesday or a Thursday, when I've just finished the morning training ride, the legs talk to me once I hit the flat part of Jefferson (especially when there's even a slight headwind). The detour to the bank seems to take less time on the bike than in the car, and there's been no issue bringing the bike inside. Without the side trip to the bank, it's about 9 minutes from home to the shop (2.7 miles). Adding the bank in brings it up to 25 or so. The trip home? Not quite so easy, but not that much slower at between 14-16 minutes, depending upon how I hit the lights. Do I feel "rested" when I get home? Uh... no. I'm 100% totally destroyed, because I can't help myself, the second I leave the back gate at the shop I turn on the timer and it's game-on. But perhaps "destroyed" isn't quite accurate, because there's this strange combination of near-death & energized that really best describes how you feel. I don't think a non-cyclist can relate to that, and perhaps it's a more-exclusive club that requires a degree of competitiveness bordering on the absurd.

Please tell us about your own commute! Submit it as a reply to this post and I'll try to organize them in a fashion that will hopefully inspire more people to Go By Bike. --Mike--