

Ask an Expert - Tips For Transportation, Health, and Happiness

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Is your transportation mode to work or school causing stress in your life? According to a study by Portland State



University, single-driver commuters were among the least happy in an assessment of commuter well-being. Factors taken into account were stress, boredom, congestion and travel time, among others. The happiest? Bicycle commuters. Over 75 percent of U.S. workers drive alone to work, take an average of 25 minutes to get there, and spend much of their time stopped in traffic. Depending on your commute distance, if you travelled by bike, you could save time and money by combining commuting and exercise, finding non-congested routes via bike lanes or trails, and not having to search and pay for parking.

Worried about affording a bike? Let's look at the numbers: A bicycle costs \$50-200 to maintain annually if ridden 2,000 annual miles, averaging .05 to .15 cents per mile, according to the Victoria Transport Policy Institute. In driving a vehicle, however, we accrue operating costs (gas, maintenance and tires) of approximately 19.64 cents per mile, according to AAA. With an average total daily driving distance in the U.S. of 29 miles, or just over 50 minutes behind the wheel, this works out to a costs of \$2,078.89 to operate a vehicle each year; more than 40 times more expensive than operating a bicycle. This estimate doesn't even include the cost of the vehicle itself or insurance.

Is the environment your top priority? According to the EPA, transportation accounts for 36 percent of our nation's total greenhouse gas emissions, and the largest sector of that is passenger cars. Transportation is the highest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the nation. Riding a bike as your form of transit directly decreases emissions and helps improve our air quality.

Perhaps you are most worried about your health. Did you know that the health benefits of active transportation can outweigh any risks associated with these activities by as much as 77 to 1? They also add more years to our lives than are lost from inhaled air pollution and traffic injuries.

Riding a bike is associated with increased:

- Life Expectancy
- Cardiovascular Fitness
- Strength
- Balance and flexibility
- Endurance and stamina
- Calories burned
- Cognition
- Energy

Consider changing your mode of transportation. You have nothing to lose (except maybe weight!) and everything to gain, including health and happiness.

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