

BALBI'S BIKE TO WORK GUIDE

Introduction

Think of this as the Pedalist Safety Guide: a reassuring checklist for all of us and for those among us who want to cycle to work but have not been on a cycle for a long time! Check out the information below.

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Internal and External Environments

Personal Health and Wellness:

Surveys show most of us do not get enough exercise. Physical inactivity and being overweight are two of the leading causes of disease and death in Canada. The rise in prevalence of obesity and physical inactivity that compounds our risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes II, and stroke is epidemic.

A disproportionate health burden for stroke, diabetes and heart disease exists in Canada. In 2006, about 10,000 deaths and \$200 million in hospitalization costs occurred in Alberta alone. In Canada that year, poor diet and inactive lifestyles contributed to more than 25,000 deaths and \$560 million in health care costs.



It can be tough to squeeze in a workout at the end of a long day when you find yourself exhausted with a to-do list a mile long. Cycle commuting is one way to work exercise into your daily routine.

Instead of sitting in a car, you are pedaling across town on your own power, getting a low-impact cardiovascular workout while your colleagues are just stuck in traffic.

If you are concerned that you are not in shape enough to begin commuting by cycle consider driving part way to work and parking at a park-and-ride. Or alternating bicycling one day and taking the bus the other day. You will be in shape in no time!

Bicycle commuting can also eliminate the stress felt while sitting in traffic. You'll feel more relaxed and refreshed in the morning ready to make a great start. And in the evenings cycling home will provide you with some needed personal time to unwind before facing family or roommates.

A Cleaner Environment

The pollution that cars produce causes ground level ozone or smog. Smog can cause burning eyes, make it difficult to breathe or even trigger asthma attacks.

Cycle commuting helps by cutting down on the number of trips made by cars and therefore the amount of pollution released from cars coming downtown.

There are so many wonderful personal examples of significant benefits that have been happening simply by cycling to work!

Traffic and Parking:

Most people have been stuck in a traffic jam trying to come into or leave downtown Calgary. Unless you rent a parking space by the month, it is likely that you have experienced the frustration of circling like a shark in the hopes of finding a place to leave your car. Cycle commuting can help alleviate traffic congestion.

Financial Savings:

It costs over \$3,000 minimum a year to own, operate and maintain a motor vehicle! Paying for gas, parking, regular oil changes, insurance and depreciation really adds up.

On the other hand, cycle commuting is relatively inexpensive. You will probably need a yearly tune-up for about \$50. If you are in the market for a bicycle, keep in mind that you do not have to drop a lot of money on a fancy new bicycle.

Top of the line bicycles are great for racing or taking on tough mountain trails. Talk to any one of Calgary's Cycle Stores for sound advice.



Cycling Advice

Get a check up!

Both you and your bike need to be ready to ride. If you have any reason to be concerned about starting a new program of physical activity you'll want to consult your doctor before getting started. Bicycling is a great low-impact activity that can help you get your recommended daily dose of exercise without spending long boring hours at the gym.

Your bike may need a check up too. The City of Calgary has an ABC quick check which outlines some basic things to inspect on your bicycle before every ride. You can view this document at www.calgary.ca, type in key word: "Bicycle Safety". You might also want to consider having a professional tune-up. Find a bicycle shop that you trust and feel free to ask questions. Bike shops can be great resources.

Checkout our Bike to Work Sponsor links below:

www.ridleys.com www.bowcycle.com

www.thebikeshop.com; www.powerinmotion.ca www.thecyclepath.ca

Plan your route!

Getting to work by bike isn't going to be the same experience as getting there by car or bus. Check out the City of Calgary's Cycle Pathways section to learn more at www.calgary.ca, keyword "Bicycle Paths"

Follow the Rules of the Road:

For the most part Calgary law treats bicycles as vehicles just like cars, motorcycles, limos etc. So, just like a driver, there are certain laws that you have a responsibility to follow. Here are the three most important for day-to-day cycling:

1. Ride to the right of the road; go with the traffic not against it. Drivers are used to looking a certain way to see if anyone is coming before they turn. Riding the wrong direction (against traffic) makes you more likely to get hit. As you ride with traffic keep to the far right of the lane you need to use.
2. Ideally, try to give yourself about three feet between you and traffic and three feet on the other side between you and the parked cars. This way you can avoid dangers from either direction. Obey all traffic laws. Just like a driver of an automobile you must follow traffic signals and road signs. Again, this is for your safety.
3. Use turn signals. But bicycles do not come with turn signals! So use your hands. Learn proper hand signals for bicycles. The signals will help drivers predict where you're going next.

Remember the Unwritten Rules

A safe bicyclist follows the rules of the road and also abides by the following "unwritten" rules.

- Check behind you before changing lanes. This means looking back to check for cars or other cyclists. Even if you have a mirror you should still look back because the mirror has a limited field of vision and won't show you what's going on right next to you.
- Ride as if you were invisible. That does not mean BE invisible. This simply means do not expect that drivers see you. Give yourself enough room to get out of the way if a driver makes a sudden turn, pulls over or flings open a car door. Check and double check that you are noticed before making a turn yourself.
- Ride in a predictable fashion. That means following the rules of the road, and doing everything in your power to communicate to drivers and pedestrians what your next move (or stop) is.

- Be seen. Wear bright colors, reflective tape or vests, have reflectors and lights on your bike, get a bike bell. These are all things you can do to increase your visibility. Even if you do not think you'll be riding at night, lights are still a good idea. If you plan to ride through the fall it will be dark by the time you leave work!
- See the road. Periodically look 100 feet ahead for hazards in the road such as potholes or debris.

Outfit Yourself Safely

Bike riding is a lot of fun, but accidents happen. Every year, about 300,000 kids go to the emergency department because of bike injuries. Some of these injuries are so serious that children die, usually from head injuries.

A head injury can mean brain injury. That's why it's so important for all ages to wear a bike helmet; cycling accidents don't just happen to children. When wearing a helmet, it doesn't mean you can be reckless, but it will provide some protection for your head and brain in case you fall down. With the increase in cycling injuries, many provinces in Canada have made laws requiring you to wear helmets, here in Alberta helmets are mandatory for cyclists under 18 years old.

Another important (and cheapest!) accessory that a bicycle commuter will want is a pants guard, aka ankle strap.

This handy device is worn wrapped around your pants near your ankle and keeps your pants from brushing against the chain and getting covered in black grease. If you're without an ankle strap, you can always just tuck your pants into your socks.

Cyclists who plan to commute in all weather may want to consider fenders. They will help keep you from getting splashed as you ride in the rain or snow and keep you considerably dryer and cleaner.

Other useful accessories include a basket, rack, or knapsack of some sort to help carry your clothes, lunch, or that loaf of bread you pick up on your way home. A water bottle holder is also handy so you can stay hydrated on your ride. A good thermos will help folks who are used to taking a mug of coffee from home in the mornings.

Here are some other items to help with maintenance, safety, and comfort:

- A portable tire pump
- A patch kit and spare tube (especially if you have far to travel)
- A rear view mirror – some attach to a helmet, some attach to the handle bars
- A bell – not as loud as a car horn, but nice for warning pedestrians or giving a friendly hello
- A knapsack



Not all cyclists will need all of these accessories. Once you have been riding for a few weeks it will become clear which ones are right for you.

Bike Comfort Tips

Many of us have gotten used to the dry, warm, clean comfort of our automobiles. Those who choose to commute by bicycle don't have to sacrifice those comforts. It just takes a little advance planning.

What to Wear

Many cyclists choose to bike to work in their work clothes. Unless it is extremely hot or raining, this is a viable option. You can ride slowly to avoid working up a sweat.

Other cyclists choose to ride in workout clothes and bring a change of clothing with them in a knapsack (you can even get a garment bag made to fit on bicycles).

You may also choose to drive to work one day and bring several changes of clothes to the office for the days you bike.

When choosing an outfit to bike in, make sure you take into account the day's weather forecast. Layering is important during the cooler months, since you will start off cold and get warmer on your ride. Proper rain and cold weather gear is also key, if you plan to bike every day.

If you will be riding long distances to work, you might consider buying padded bike gloves and/or padded bike shorts to increase your comfort.

If you will be riding at night, light colored and reflective clothing will help motorists see you. And, of course, you're never fully dressed without your helmet!

Bike Maintenance Tips

Maintenance is not just a yearly tune-up. It means inspecting your bike every time you take it out for a ride. Listed below are quick checks to perform before heading out.

- **Tires** - Inflate tires to the rate pressure as listed on the sidewall of the tire. Use a pressure gauge to insure proper pressure. Look for any damage to the tire such as cuts, bulges, or tears. Remove small bits of glass, nails, etc. Replace the tire if it is damaged.
- **Brakes** - Check your brake pads for wear. Most new bikes have ridged brake pads; replace the pads if the ridges are entirely worn down. Check your brake pad adjustments, they should hit the rim, not rub against the tire or dive into the spokes. Check your hand brakes, they should travel at least 1 inch between the bar and lever when applied.
- **Check your cranks and chain** - Your crank bolts should be tight. Check your chain for signs of wear.
- **Grease your chain**—first with your bike upside down; take hold of your chain with a cloth. Pedal and run the cloth lightly over the chain to remove dirt. Then, keep pedaling and apply a thin layer of chain grease. Excess grease will attract more dirt. If your chain skips on your cassette you might need an adjustment.
- **Check your quick releases** - Your hubs should be tight in the frame and the quick release should engage at 90 degrees. Your hub quick release should point back to insure that nothing catches on it. Inspect your brake quick releases to insure that they have been re-engaged if you have removed your wheel.
- **Take it out for a ride** - Check to make sure the brakes and gears are working properly. If your bike will not stay in gear or can not shift to a low or high gear, get it checked out.
- **Inspect your bike** for any loose or broken parts, replace or fix them. You might even try picking your bike up and shaking it to see if anything sounds loose.

Winter Bike Care

- **Rims** - When wet, brake pads grip aluminum rims better than they do steel.
- **Tires** - Fat tires have better traction. Tires less than 1 1/4 inch wide work better on wet streets when under-inflated. Use tires with a deep tread pattern.
- **Salt Damage** - With lots of winter riding, occasionally wipe your frame, rims, spokes, and derailleur's, and lube your chain. Use a toothbrush for hard-to reach parts.
- **Fenders** - They beat almost anything to keep you dry on wet pavement. The newest plastic ones are inexpensive and light, but can break if installed wrong.
- **Bearing Damage** - After biking in wet weather put your bike indoors so bearings can dry.

- **Brakes** - Grime builds up on brake pads, making them squeak or scratch your rims. Run a rag between each pad and the rim, like shining a shoe. Occasionally remove the wheel and check pads for wear.

Choosing a Route

Getting to work by cycle isn't going to be the same experience as getting there by car or bus, so the best route for them might not be the best route for you.

Things to consider when choosing a route include: How much traffic is on a street? Quieter streets make for a more pleasant ride.

How wide is the street? Wider streets leave plenty of room for cyclists on the sides.

How many hills are along this route? Hills can be fun going down, but take some extra effort getting back up! Steep hills can be a little tricky going down, especially in bad weather.

You might also want to talk to a friend, neighbour or co-worker who bikes on a regular basis and discuss good routes.

To get started planning your own route, take a look at the maps of bikeways & pathways from the City of Calgary's web site at www.calgary.ca, keyword "Bikeways Map".