

Bicycle Commute Guide



Sacramento Region
Bicycle Info





Sacramento Region Bicycle Info

Bicycle Commute Guide

With mild weather and relatively flat topography, the Sacramento

area is an ideal place to bicycle commute. However, many potential riders may lack the confidence to try bicycling as a commute option.

This guide answers the following questions:

- Is bicycle commuting an option for you?
- How should you dress for bicycling, and still be professional for work?
- What equipment will you need?
- What are the rules of the road?
- How should you choose a commuting route?
- Where can you turn for more information?

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:** Bicycling 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.
- **Easier and cheaper parking:** With the proper locking device, you can easily park your bicycle safely, closer to your destination and for free.
- **Environmentally friendly:** Bicycling reduces the number of cars on the road. With fewer cars, there is less traffic congestion and air pollution.



Getting started

Now that you've decided to give bicycle commuting a try, here are some pointers to get you started.



Sacramento Region Bicycle Info

How far and how long?

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

Distance: Typically, three to five miles is an ideal distance for bicycle commuting, though some seasoned riders travel much farther.

Time: Riding 10 miles per hour, you can cover three miles in less than 20 minutes. Most people don't break a sweat at that pace. You may be able to average 12-15 miles per hour, and if conditions are right, average speeds over 15 miles per hour are possible.

Mix it up!

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

- Take your bicycle with you on buses and light rail trains, or store your bicycle in a locker at light rail stations. Contact your local transit provider to find out about their bicycle programs.



- Ride your bicycle to meet a carpool or vanpool.
- See the "Transportation Alternatives" section for more information on transit and carpool/vanpool options.

What should you wear while bicycling? Afraid of spandex? Here's some help:

- A properly fitting helmet is the most important piece of bicycling attire. 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.
- Protective eyewear shields your eyes from bright sunlight, road debris, wind and insects.
- Gloves can make your ride more comfortable and protect your hands.
- Your clothing should be comfortable and should not get caught on your bike.
- Regular clothing is adequate for short commutes—just be sure to strap your right pant cuff to your leg to keep it from getting caught in the bicycle chain.





Sacramento Region Bicycle Info

- Clothing specifically designed for bicycling such as shorts, tights and jerseys is more comfortable for longer commutes. Experiment with what works for you and invest in quality pieces over time.
- Special clothing is a must for riding in cold weather or the rain.

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 a week's worth of clothes to work on a day you don't ride your bicycle and store them in a locker or in another secure place.
- Carry clothes with you on your bike by using a garment-bag pannier (a pair of bags designed to fit over the rear wheel of your bicycle). 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 during 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.

- Have a fresh towel, washcloth and other toiletries for quick clean-ups.



Ideal bicycles 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 navigate rough streets, but they are heavier and don't provide for the fastest commute.
- **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 are perfect for shorter trips.
- **Road bikes** can travel faster than the other options, but the dropped handlebars may be uncomfortable for novices, and narrow, high-pressure tires are unsuitable for some streets.



Sacramento Region Bicycle Info

Inspecting your bike

Regardless of what kind of bicycle you're riding, take a few minutes to do a quick safety check. It will give you more riding confidence and prevent accidents.

- **Brakes:** While standing next to your bike, push your bike forward while squeezing each brake lever individually to be sure it locks the wheel. Inspect brake pads for wear. Replace pads if there is less than one quarter inch of pad left. Check Brake lever travel; there should be at least one inch between bar and lever when applied.
- **Wheels:** Check that wheel nuts and quick release levers are tight and the wheel doesn't wobble. Check for loose or broken spokes. Lift each end of your bike and spin the wheels to ensure your brakes do not rub the tires 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 over inflation. Check for damage to the tire tread and sidewall; replace if damaged.
- **Seat:** Position your seat 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:** Check for loose bearings by trying to wobble a crank arm side-to-side. Your pedals should be securely attached to the crank arms.
- **Gears:** Ensure that gear cables slide easily and are not frayed or rusty.
- **Chain:** 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 1/8 inches. If your chain skips on your cassette, you might need a new one or just an adjustment.
- **Lights and reflectors:** You should have a white headlamp 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.



Sacramento Region Bicycle Info

- **Before a long ride:** Take a quick ride to check if derailleurs and brakes are working properly; inspect the bike for loose or broken parts, and tighten, replace or fix them. Pay extra attention to your bike during the first few miles of the ride.
- **Once a year:** Take your bicycle to a shop for routine maintenance.

Carry a tool kit

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

- Tire pump to fit your specific valve type
- Tire levers for removing the tire easily from the rim
- Spare inner-tube to fit your specific tire
- Tube patch kit
- 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.

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 bicycle with a reliable lock, no matter how short-term. Lock it to a stationary object in a highly visible place.
- 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 www.sacbike.org/sacbiking





Sacramento Region Bicycle Info

Accessories for your bicycle

To make your ride easier and more comfortable, consider the following accessories for your bicycle:

- **Baskets/racks/bags:** Consider which items you will need (briefcase? books? clothes?), and select the storage device best suited to your needs.
- **Water bottle/cage:** Staying hydrated is of paramount importance when bicycling, so be sure to carry water with you.
- **Bells & horns:** Any kind of sounding device can alert others to your presence, especially when passing (you can also use your 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 bicycle, your sunglasses, or even your helmet.
- **Fenders:** Stay clean and dry in wet weather by affixing fenders to your bicycle.
- **Lighting:** If you ever ride in the dark, you must use lights. Check with your local bike shop for options.

Getting there

You've checked your bicycle, customized it for your needs and packed your clothes for work—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 pleasant and ideal for novice riders, with less noise and vehicle exhaust.
- Look for roads with wide shoulders, wide curb lanes, and bike lanes that provide enough room for cars and bicycles.
- Check for good pavement conditions. Avoid potholes and uneven pavement.
- Practice 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.
- Try different routes as you gain experience. You might find that a route that works well in the morning is not as good in the afternoon.





Sacramento Region Bicycle Info

Area bike maps

www.sacregion511.org/bicycling

Links to the bike maps for the following communities:

American River Parkway
Auburn
Camino & Pollock Pines
Colfax
Davis
El Dorado County
El Dorado Hills & Cameron Park
Elk Grove
Folsom
Lincoln
Linda & Olivehurst
Live Oak & Sutter
Marysville
Meadow Vista and Foresthill
Placer County
Placerville
Rocklin
Roseville
Sacramento
Sutter County
West Sacramento
Wheatland
Winters
Woodland
Yolo County
Yuba City
Yuba County

The rules of the road



Although bicyclists legally have the same rights and responsibilities as automobile drivers in the streets, cyclists 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-hand lane.
- Obey all traffic control devices, such as stop signs, traffic signals and lane markings. The same rules that apply to motorists also apply to cyclists.
- Use standard hand signals (the same signals you would use if driving a car) to communicate your intention to stop or turn to motorists and cyclists.
- Be courteous toward 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.



Sacramento Region Bicycle Info

Other safety tips

Some other pointers for a safe ride are:

- Watch that door! Look out for people getting in and out of their parked cars as you're riding in the right-hand lane—it's best to stay out of the "door zone" as you often 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.
- Avoid passing a bus on the right if it is at a bus stop. Otherwise, you run the risk of colliding with passengers getting on and off the bus.
- Carry identification.
- Carry a cell phone or change to make any necessary phone calls for help.
- Use both brakes and apply the front brake a little harder than the rear if you are stopping in an emergency. 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 bicycle 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, www.sacbike.org for more information on cycling education. Or, visit the League of American Bicyclists' website at www.bikeleague.org.



Sacramento Region Bicycle Info

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.



Register online at www.sacregion511.org or call 511 to request a list of others interested in bicycle commuting together.

Report hazards

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

Carpool and vanpool information

Combine riding and carpooling; ride to a co-worker'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 based on trip origin, destination and schedule.

Everyday, or just once in a while, carpooling can help you reduce

the stress of your commute. Vanpools are best suited to commuters who travel more than 20 miles each way and have a set schedule.

Register online at www.sacregion511.org

for your free personalized matchlist or to

request additional information. If you don't have a computer, call 511.

Transportation Alternatives





**Sacramento Region
Bicycle Info**

Transit

Amtrak
(800)-USA-RAIL
www.amtrak.com

Auburn Transit
(530) 823-4211
www.auburntransit.com

Capitol Corridor
(877) 9-RIDECC
www.amtrakcapitols.com

CSUS Hornet Express
(916) 278-5483
www.csus.edu/utaps/hornet_express.htm

Davis Community Transit
(530) 757-4408
www.city.davis.ca.us/pcs/transit

El Dorado County Transit
1-888-246-BUSS
www.eldoradotransit.com

Folsom Stage Line
(916) 355-8395
www.folsom.ca.us/depts/public_works/transit_division.asp

Lincoln Transit
(916) 645-8576
www.lincolntransit.com

Paratransit, Inc.
(916) 429-2009
www.paratransit.org

Placer County Transit
(530) 885-BUSS
www.placer.ca.gov/Works/Transit.aspx

Roseville Transit
(916) 774-5757
www.roseville.ca.us/transit

Sacramento Regional Transit
(916) 321-BUSS
(916) 483-HEAR - TDD
www.sacrt.com

South County Transit Link
1-800-338-8676
www.sctlink.com

Yolo County Transit
1-800-371-BUSS
(530) 666-5842 - TDD
www.yolobus.com

Yuba-Sutter Transit
(530) 742-BUSS
(530) 634-6889 - TDD
www.yubasuttertransit.com



Sacramento Region Bicycle Info

UC Davis Medical Transit

(916) 734-2687

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

Unitrans

(530) 752-BUSS

www.unitrans.com

Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates

www.sacbike.org

California Bicycle Coalition

www.calbike.org

Sacramento Valley Cycling

www.saccycle.com

League of American Bicyclists

www.bikeleague.org

California Bike Commute

www.bikelink.com

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments' Rideshare partners include the regional transportation management associations and other public agencies.

50 Corridor Transportation Management Association

Phone: (916) 852-7409

E-mail: Rebecca@50corridor.tma.org

Website: www.50corridor.com

City of Elk Grove Transit Services

Phone: (916) 687-3031

E-mail: transit@elkgrovecity.org

Website: www.e-tran.org

City of Roseville

Phone: (916) 774-5293

E-mail: transportation@roseville.ca.us

Website: www.roseville.ca.us/transportation

McClellan Park Transportation

Management Association

Phone: (916) 570-5353

E-mail: rideshare@mcclellanparktma.org

Website: www.mcclellanparktma.org

North Natomas Transportation

Management Association

Phone: (916) 808-7735

E-mail: info@northnatomastma.org

Website: www.northnatomastma.org

Placer County Transportation Management Association

Phone: (530) 823-4029

E-mail: ssabol@pctpa.org

Website: www.pctpa.org

Point West Area Transportation

Management Association

Phone: (916) 852-7409

E-mail: rebecca@80corridor.com

Website: www.80corridor.com

Power Inn Business and Transportation Association

Phone: (916) 453-8888

E-mail: Jerry@powerinn.org

Website: www.powerinn.org

Sacramento Transportation Management Association

Phone: (916) 737-1513

E-mail: sactma@surewest.net

Website: www.sacramento-tma.org

South Natomas Transportation

Management Association

Phone: (916) 646-0928

E-mail: info@sntma.org

Website: www.sntma.org

Yolo Transportation Management Association

Phone: (530) 669-1446

E-mail: bob@yolotma.org

Website: www.yolotma.org

Sacramento Region 511
is a service of the



S A C O G

**Sacramento Area
Council of
Governments**

1415 L Street,
Suite 300
Sacramento, CA
95814

tel: 916.321.9000
fax: 916.321.9551
tdd: 916.321.9550
www.sacregion511.org