

# Bike to Work

by Elisha Marshall



## Why bike to work?

- Your health. National health statistics show that when you're more active, you decrease your risk for cancer, heart disease, obesity and diabetes.
- Your budget. Fewer car trips save you money. AAA estimates the cost of operating a new car at \$4,900 to \$10,000 per year, parking may cost as much as \$250 per month.
- Faster. Why get stuck in rush hour traffic or crowded trains? Most trips in Boston take less than 30 minutes.
- It feels good. Endorphins pump while you pedal. You know you're doing something good for your body, your community and the planet when you drive less and bike more.

**Spare yourself the hassle of rush hour traffic and crowded trains and ride your bike to work with these helpful tips:**



**1. Plan Your Route.** Seems obvious, but the route you would take by car or bus may not be best by bike. If you work far from home, buy a bike map and find the safest roads. Take a test ride on the weekend.

**2. Dress Appropriately.** Biking in a business suit can be a bad idea, but for short routes you should be fine in your normal clothes. For longer routes, pack your work clothes in a messenger bag or panniers and ride in appropriate bike gear. Boston's frigid winters may seem intimidating, but your body heat will keep you warm.

**3. Stay Tuned Up!** Regular tune-ups are critical when biking every day. Save some cash and do the job yourself. Broadway Biking School and Bikes Not Bombs offer bike repair classes so you can do all maintenance yourself. You'll also learn how to repair a flat tire, which could come in handy on your way to the 9 to 5.

**4. Carry Tools.** Keep tools, a pump, and tubes with you on your commute. You may never need them, but you or a fellow commuter will be happy to have them if you do.

**5. Water!** Even if your workplace, class, etc, is only a couple miles away, bring water with you always.

**6. Know When to Say No.** Not every day is a biking day, at least not when you're starting out. On days that are scorching hot or filled with never-ending rain, keep the bike at home and take the bus. You might be a badass biker, but don't be stupid.

### Spice up your biking routine:

- Go for speed! Try to out-race the bus.
- Take the long way. Wake up early and take a leisurely scenic ride to work.
- Practice strength training. When you'd normally change gears up that big hill, don't and enjoy the burn.
- Explore the neighborhood. Make an excuse to try that coffee shop you see along the route.
- Interact with your fellow commuters. Wave, say hello, talk about the potholes. If you're biking on Beacon St., look for me headed west on my green Lemond.

# A Piece of the Road

A new hope for bike lanes in Boston  
by Pete Stidman



Next spring, the new crop of pedal-pushing students and the old die-hard commuters of the city may, upon entering Commonwealth Avenue, feel a little warmth in the cockles of their hearts. "The city cares about me," they may think to themselves, wiping away a tear.

There—from Kenmore Square to the BU Bridge—will be bike lanes, promised Jim Gillooly, director of planning at the Boston Transportation Department.

"The key factor is that we're taking opportunities like this as we can seize them," said Gillooly Oct. 3. "We're not going to wait till we have the whole puzzle solved. We'll put in the pieces as we go."

It's a bike-positive way of talking that seems to be spreading throughout city government ever since Mayor Thomas Menino began riding a silver trek every morning. This morning ride might be the reason former Olympic cyclist Nicole Freedman has been re-assigned to be bike coordinator for the city.

But Gillooly has talked about bike lanes before. His boss, BTDC commissioner Thomas Tinlin, promised bike lanes on Comm. Ave. in the Boston Globe back in September, 2006. This earlier strain of talk likely owes more to the work of the LivableStreets coalition and director Jeff Rosenblum than to the current administration.

To get them to consider lanes wasn't easy, said Rosenblum. He first discovered reconstruction plans for Comm. Ave. in a January, 2006 Globe article.

"It's an effort to make Commonwealth Avenue much more pedestrian-friendly," Mass Highway spokesman Jon Carlisle was quoted as saying. Upon closer inspection of the actual plans, Rosenblum thought different. "I saw that it was designed like it was 1965," he said. "There was a lot of

nice window dressing, some nice benches and lampposts, but if you got into it, it was a automobile-centered design."

State laws require pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, so Rosenblum convinced the state's Executive Office of Transportation to halt construction on the project in April, 2006. This prompted a meeting a week later between BTDC, the city's Public Works Department and advocates in LivableStreets, MassBike, Walk Boston and Adaptive Environments, an accessibility advocacy group.

At that meeting, said Rosenblum, the city promised to include bike lanes. He's been bird-dogging them to follow through ever since. Earlier this month, after a year and a half of stalling, BTDC finally produced some real signs of doing the work (probably thanks to Menino). Now all that remains is making sure Beta Group, the consultancy hired to design the lanes, does it right.

Rosenblum's struggle with city agencies has taught him a thing or two, and he has new strategies in mind for here on out. His early tactics included coordinating various advocacy efforts on street and sidewalk design into one coalition. Acting on its own in the past, MassBike promoted the use of a 14-foot wide "shared" traffic lane instead of bike lanes in the city. This could be one of the main reasons Boston has so few while other cities have built miles of them. He also searched for key government decision makers with the idea that one of them might tip the scales towards multi-modal streets.

Rosenblum has now come to the realization that continuing road design problems are systemic and much more complex to solve. He says neighborhood and civic associations could be a key part of the solution in Boston.

"Because there is limited staff in the transportation department there's limited opportunities for the public to get involved," he said. "Getting involved in a neighborhood association could have a big impact. They could drive policy."

"Given the opportunity, they really don't want to hit you."

- J. Ferris, common advice