The Centre Region Employer Guide to Biking to Work

How your business can benefit and the steps to becoming a Bicycle Friendly Business

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A note of thanks…

The following groups provided feedback on this document, and it is appreciated.

- CentreBike: https://centrebike.org/
- Centre Region Bicycle Advisory Committee (CRBAC): https://crbac.weebly.com/
- Centre Region Planning Commission: https://www.crcog.net/crpc

Thank you for supporting Bicycling in the Centre Region.

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How Bike to Work Benefits Employers and Employees

Why Should You Encourage Your Employees to Bike to Work?

Good Corporate Citizenship – Support for bicycle commuting promotes your company as a community-oriented and environmentally responsible employer. It tells the public that your company wants to work toward reducing traffic congestion and improve the wellbeing of your employees.

Reduced Strain on the Environment – Bike to Work programs can reduce dependence on crude oil, help businesses reduce vehicle emissions, and show a company's concern for the environment by supporting clean air alternatives for commuting. Link for more information: https://www.c2es.org/content/reducing-your-transportation-footprint/

Reduced Health Care Costs – Moderate physical activity (such as bicycling to work) can save on annual medical costs. Cycling is a great low impact exercise, and regular exercise reduces the risk of long term health issues such as heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Bicycling can also help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Link for related information: https://www.cdc.gov/workplace-health-promotion/media/pdfs/2024/08/PhysicalActivity-EmployerGuide-508.pdf

Increased Fitness – Biking to work is one of the best all-around exercises for all ages. It leads to increased muscle strength and mobility and doesn't put as much strain on knees and ankles as running. Bicycling keeps the back strong and can help prevent injuries by exercising the small muscles surrounding the spine. Link for more information: https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-and-physical-activity/three-types-exercise-can-improve-your-health-and-physical

Increased Productivity – Bicyclists may arrive at work more invigorated than those who commute by automobile and may also be more likely to arrive on time since they are less likely to be held up in traffic. Link for more information: https://www.peopleforbikes.org/news/bicycling-participation-report-2024

Decreased Absenteeism – Physical activity is believed to be one of the few factors that contribute to reducing absenteeism. Physically fit employees are absent an average of two fewer days per year and maintain jobs where they can remain physically active. Reference: https://www.cdc.gov/active-people-healthy-nation/php/tools/employers.html

Reduced Parking Costs – It's not unusual for employers or employees to spend up to $100 a month to park a car in Centre County for commuter parking. (https://statecollegepa.us/168/Parking) Considerable savings can be achieved when employees use alternative means of getting to work. Encouraging staff to swap the car for the bicycle means you can reduce parking expenses, demand for parking spaces, and free up space for customers.

How Does Bike to Work Benefit Employees?

Healthier Employees – Even a small amount of bike commuting helps to meet the 30 minutes a day of exercise 5 days a week as recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And by asking your employees to ride a bike to work, your company can take pride in knowing that they are contributing to meeting this recommendation and the physical health and well-being of the employees that participate.

The Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging, America's Longest-running Study of Human Aging, has shown that exercise can also help maintain mental agility.

More Free Time – Employees can multitask save time by combining exercise with their commute.

Lower Cost of Living – Even a partial bike commute can save commute costs like vehicle maintenance, gas, insurance and parking fees.

How to Encourage Your Employees to Bike to Work

Encouraging your employees to Bike to Work can be a part of your company's overall "green strategy" or simply a way to help your employees stay fit.

Plan Around an Existing Theme – Launch your program around a pre-existing theme like Bike Month or Earth Day and then add another one in the fall to build on the pre-existing themes. The idea is that employees will take the challenge, overcome any obstacles, and will hopefully want to incorporate bike riding into their routine commute to work.

Make Bicycling to Work Part of the Corporate Culture – A Bike to Work program can be part of your company's overall strategy of becoming "greener." Bicycling to work gives staff an opportunity to participate in the company's philosophy of becoming more eco-friendly.

Consider setting up a bike sharing or bike loan program or providing a fleet of bicycles for employees to use for short errands or trips. Locally SPIN does allow employer sponsored rides.

Actively Promote Bike Commuting – Your business can inspire employees to participate in a bike commuting program by offering:

"Brown Bag" or "Lunch-and-Learn" Workshops – Some employees may be hesitant to try bicycle commuting for a variety of reasons. Potential topics for bike commuting workshops could include:

- The Basics of Bicycle Commuting
- How to Buy and Fit a Bike
- Introduction to Bicycle Maintenance
- Nutrition and Hydration for Bicycling
- Bike Safety
- Bicycles and the Law

Coordinate a Bike Buddy Program – Some employees would like to bike to work but need help getting their confidence levels up. They may need help finding a comfortable route or they may need to learn more about dressing for the commute, carrying gear, or navigating traffic. Employers can help new bike commuters by encouraging them to team up with experienced cyclists who know the routes and can provide tips or advice for novices.

Sponsor Bike to Work Days – Encourage your employees to participate in Bike to Work events during National Bike Month in May. The League of American Bicyclists has also prepared a step-by-step guide to help your business organize successful Bike to Work days throughout the year. Organizing a Bike to Work Day might consist of:

- Appointing a Bike to Work Day Coordinator.
- Providing funds for food (drinks and snacks) for Bike to Work day commuters.
- Making information available about company provisions for bicycle parking, changing, and shower facilities for employees.
- Issuing a Bike to Work Day challenge to a neighboring employer or among departments.
- Giving special recognition for the longest distance biked, oldest/most interesting bicycle, bicyclists who integrated a CATA bus trip into their commute.
- Raffling off bike gear and other prizes.

Offer Rewards and Incentives – Employees who regularly bike to work may save your business money on workplace parking and free up parking spaces for your customers. If that is the case the following cash incentives may be offered as a way of increasing participation in a bike commuting program:

- Providing free bicycles or offering bikes for sale "at cost"
- Provide basics of bicycling such as spare tires, bike helmets, and/or bike lights

Reduce Barriers to Cycling – Making it easy for employees to bike to work is fundamental to encouraging and maintaining levels of bicycle commuting. Bicycle commuters need to know if their bikes will be secure. They may have concerns about having a place to freshen up or change before work, or they may worry about getting "stuck" due to mechanical problems or bad weather, or about being able to respond to family emergencies. A study found in Science Direct indicates the more support provided to employers the higher likelihood of riding a bike to work. Link: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2214140519300520?via%3Dihub. Some of your employees' biggest concerns about bike commuting can be addressed by making small investments in workplace amenities such as:

Education - Offer bicycle-related training to employees. Suggested topics include safe riding skills, bicycle maintenance, and driver training on how to share the road with bicycles.

Provide other educational tools to employees outside of classes or clinics, such as information on route planning, safe bicycling, proper bicycle equipment, safe vehicle driving and how to share the road with bicycles.

Allow employees to give cycling a try during work hours.

Bike Parking/Storage – Having a dedicated area where bikes can be safely stored during the workday provides employees with a sense of security. Surveying your employees will help determine the amount of parking you will need. The following factors should be considered when considering your company's bike parking facilities:

Secure Parking Area – Knowing that their bikes are safely parked during work hours is of very importance to bicycle commuters. Consider investing in bike lockers, bike racks, or setting aside a secure area in a parking area, storage area or other location within a building. Bicycle parking should be sufficiently separated from automobile parking to prevent damage to parked bikes or cars.

Location of Racks – Bike racks, changing facilities and shower facilities should be located as close to the building entrance or main hallway as possible. Choose frequented areas that are easily observed in several directions and be sure the area is well lit if it is likely to be used outside of daylight hours. Bike racks that are scattered, remote, or hidden will increase the chance of bicycle theft or vandalism. Additionally, poorly located racks tend not to be used and other items such as sign posts or building columns may be used instead.

Protection Bikes from the Elements – Bicyclists can spend hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars on their bicycles. They will be more likely to commute if they know their bikes will not be exposed to harsh sunlight or sudden downpours. Cover can be provided by an existing overhang or by constructing a simple shelter. If your company has its own parking lot or garage, consider converting a stall near the entrance to a parking space for multiple bikes. Eight to twelve bicycles can park in the space required for one car.

Allow Employees to Bring Bikes into the Building – For many cyclists, indoor storage is the ultimate in security and convenience. Consider allowing employees to store their bikes in a locking storage closet or spare office or allowing them to keep their bikes in their own offices, by their desks, or in nearby low traffic hallways.

Visitor Bicycle Parking – Provide free secure bike parking for customers or clients and offer other incentives to customers or clients who ride bicycles, such as special discounts or promotions.

Changing Facilities & Lockers – Bicycle commuters may need a place to freshen up or change before work. Providing a place for employees to shower, change, and store clothing makes biking to work a more practical alternative.

Consider installing showers and changing facilities – Showers and changing facilities sometimes can be retrofitted into buildings but can also be expensive. This type of facility will also be appreciated by those who walk, jog or work out during lunchtime.

Make arrangements with an adjacent local health club or neighboring business for use of their shower facilities – If installing your own facilities doesn't seem possible or cost effective, arrange for employees to shower at a neighboring business or try to find a way to subsidize the cost of a "shower pass" at a nearby health club for employees who pledge to bike to work on a regular basis.

Allow the use of restrooms for freshening up – A shower isn't always necessary following a typical early morning commute, when the air is cool and sweat evaporates quickly. Body wipes may be all that is needed to feel clean and refreshed.

Accommodations for Professional Attire – While some commuters (usually those who don't have far to travel) won't hesitate to hop on their bikes in more formal clothing, many potential bike commuters cite the need for professional attire as an obstacle. Some employers address these concerns by:

Providing a place for bicycle commuters to keep up to a week's worth of clothing – Storage locations might include spare closets, empty offices, standing wardrobes or lockers, or hooks in the employee's office or on the back of employees' office doors.

Relaxing the company dress code – Many companies have a "Casual Fridays" policy or have already reduced the dress code requirements that could be used to simultaneously promote bicycle commuting.

Bike Repair Stations and Supplies – Some bike commuters may worry about getting "stuck" due to flat tires or other mechanical problems. Consider keeping a stock of replacement tubes for different types of bicycles, patch kits, tire irons, maintenance supplies, tools, and a pump, along with a how to guide for completing the maintenance item.

Offer a "Guaranteed Ride Home" Program – In the event of a mechanical failure, bad weather, or a family emergency, arrange for bicycle commuters to be given a ride home, borrow a company car, or be reimbursed for their ride-sharing service or a CATA bus fare.

Employee Incentives

Successful bike commuting programs have the commitment of senior management and are promoted on a regular basis. By substantiating their endorsement with financial or other incentives, employers demonstrate that their commitment is sincere and that they regard bicycling as a legitimate and professionally acceptable mode of transportation.

Giveaways:

Offer a free "starter kit" to bicycle commute program recruits, such as

- ***PA Bicycle Driver's Manual***
- ***ABC quick check bookmark***
- ***PennDOT 4 foot to pass sticker***
- ***Tire patch kit***
- ***Reflective stickers for bikes and/or helmets***
- ***Bike lights (red for taillight, white for headlight)***
- ***Water bottle***
- ***Bike route map***
- ***Bright socks***

Hold monthly prizes or during annual May Bike Month drawings for program participants, perhaps in conjunction with "brown bag" or "lunch and learn" bike workshops.

Have t-shirts made featuring your company logo and a bike-friendly design or slogan and give these away to your bicycle commute program participants.

Offer free or subsidized tune-ups at a local bike shop or bring the bicycle shop to the office to complete the tune ups.

Special Events:

- Participate in local Bike Month events. Appoint a worksite coordinator to handle registration. Offer free food, prizes, or on-site bicycle adjustments to employees who participate.
- Implement a "commuter challenge" contest with employees or other area businesses.
- Hold a "Pedal with the Boss" day.
- Stage a bike rodeo for employees' children.
- Sponsor recreational rides and races.
- Conduct and subsidize a Safe Cycling class.

Acknowledgements:

- Recognize bicycle commuters in your company newsletter or on a bulletin board display or monthly activity report.
- Give awards to "dedicated bicycle commuters" who ride more than 30 to 50% of workdays during a specified period.

Information Sharing:

- Add bicycle related information to employee newsletters
- Provide bicycle information on company webpage
- Provide bicycle related information to New Hire materials and/or orientation
- Include bicycle related information at company health, wellness or safety events

Other Programs and Incentives:

- Provide a changing room and perhaps lockers to store clothing
- Provide a bicycle repair station
- Provide more or covered bicycle parking on site
- Provide a shower room
- Provide a map of the company facility to show bike parking and bicycle routes
- Provide discounts or subsidies on the purchase of bicycles, helmets, or other commuting equipment
- Provide financing or payroll deductions for bicycle purchases
- Provide travel reimbursement (such as $0.10/mile) to bicyclists
- Allow flexible dress code when employees cycle to work
- Allow employees to earn ¼ hour vacation time per day of bicycle commuting
- Some health insurance providers may offer incentives through their wellness program.
- Offer flextime or a fifteen-minute grace period for bicycle commuters

How Can an Employer Become a Bicycle Friendly Business?

The League of American Bicyclists supports employers to support employees to ride a bike to work. The Leagues work is to do this through encouragement, engineering, education, evaluation & planning. (Link: https://bikeleague.org/sites/default/files/Attributes_of_BFB.pdf)

Recognition by the League runs in 4 year cycles with an online application that can be found here: https://bikeleague.org/bfa/business/. Applications are typically received three times a year. There is no limit on the number of employees you need to have to be eligible to apply. Application fee is required and charged based on the number of employees employed at the business.

A sample of items the application asks a business to provide are:

- Point of contact and general company details
- End of Trip Facilities – Bicycle parking/storage, changing room, maintenance supplies, etc
- Employer Activities and Incentives to support biking – Bike to Work Day, Bike Buddy Prorgram, supply bicycle related equipment (helmet, bike light)
- Is the company located in a Bicycle Friendly Community (The answer is yes for the Centre Region municipalities)
- Education – Partner with CentreBike or other local bicycle groups to hold a bicycle class
- Metrics and Goals – for example tracking the number of employees who ride a bike to work
- Provide bikes for use by employees to travel to meetings.

What Happens After Application is Submitted?

The League will review your application, and you will be recognized for your efforts. An email will be sent to the point of contact from the application confirming your level. The League will also post your company on their webpage, and you can use the information provided to share your success.