Constable Brajcich Bikes to Work

"I quickly grew to appreciate the beauty and scenery of Saanich," reflects Saanich Police Constable Brad Brajcich when talking about why he chooses to bike to work. When assigned to the Saanich Police Bike Unit, the constable discovered that the bike allowed him access to places he couldn't get to in a car, and to really get to know the place where he lives. Often striking up conversations with fellow riders on the trail, Constable Brajcich cycles because it keeps him connected to the community that he serves.

Already an avid mountain biker, Constable Brajcich was quick to adopt bike commuting. Surprisingly, a simple bike ride improves many aspects of his day. No stranger to job stress, he finds that the 20 minute ride home helps him to burn off energy, and to avoid what other officers call "duffel-bag syndrome." Instead the father of two arrives home to his family calm and refreshed. The trip allows him to fit a decent workout into a very busy schedule. Cycling to work 90% of the time has satisfied his eco-conscience by reducing his family's reliance on driving – they even sold their second car.

Constable Brajcich's ride of choice is a Rocky Mountain mountain bike that he can pedal year round, even in the snow. He jokes about other police officers being fair-weather cyclists, but the reality is that the Saanich police station bike locker is always full. And it was fellow officer, Sergeant Martin Pepper, who initiated the annual Cops for Cancer 'Tour de Rock' on Vancouver Island. Last year 26 riders participated in the bike tour, helping to raise over 1.8 million dollars for children with cancer.

June 2 – 8, Constable Brajcich and the Saanich police team will participate in the 14th annual Bike to Work Week. Anyone can join, and register a team to celebrate commuter cycling in Victoria. (www.biketowork.ca) Brajcich advises new commuter cyclists to start slowly: "Don't make it a primary mode of transportation right away, start with 1-2 days a week and make sure that you have the right safety equipment from the start, including a helmet." And while the helmet was top of his list of important equipment, Constable Brajcich's favorite bike accessory is his bell -- a friendly way to alert other trail users that he's coming.

Blessed with over 150 parks, connected by such multi-use trails as the Lochside, the Galloping Goose and the newly opened Centennial Trail, the municipality of Saanich is already committed to supporting bike commuters. Constable Brajcich served for half a decade on the Saanich Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Advisory Committee, headed by Councillor Judy Brownoff, which has been influential in improving bike routes. In fact, the 1994 Bicycle Master Plan and a 2001 on-street bike lane project have won a number of provincial environmental awards.

The Saanich Police has partnered with ICBC in the Safer City program which focuses on safety for all road users. Constable Brajcich observes: "Rules are there to keep people safe. If we all take some responsibility, it's amazing how well we can share the road." From his personal experience, Constable Brajcich emphasizes the importance of getting educated – saying that cyclists need to understand and follow the same rules of the road as motorists. He also notes that cyclists should keep their heads up, avoid wearing headphones and use hand signals.

Finally, the seasoned cyclist recommends taking some time to plan a route that suits your skill level and the weather. Constable Brajich's favorite spot to visit is on the Galloping Goose trail on the ridge above View Royal, and when the light hits the water just so… it's truly worth the ride.