

Team Leaders

Introduction

The purpose of holding the annual Greater Victoria Bike to Work Week (GVBTWW) campaign is to grow the number of people who cycle to work and school year round. By getting people to try commuting by bike for a week in a supportive atmosphere of fun and camaraderie, Bike to Work Week helps people to become regular cycle commuters.

As a whole, BTWW serves as a public celebration of commuter cycling, showcasing the many benefits and 'do-ability' of commuting by bike.

Behaviour Change

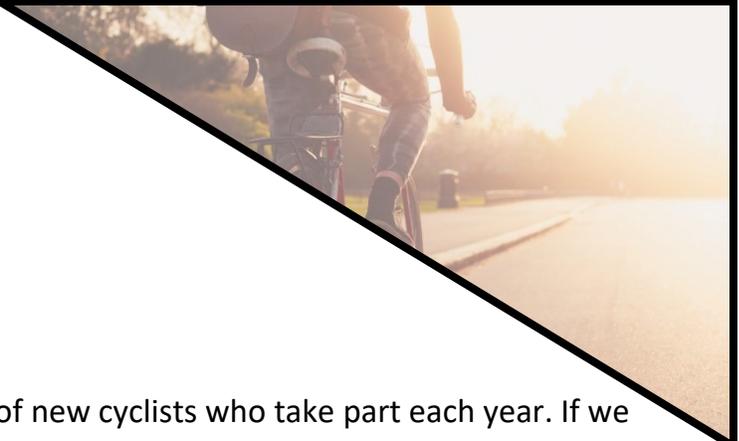
People rarely move in a single step from never cycling to work at all, to regular commuting. Rather, they begin the behaviour change process by first trying the activity which allows them to see that they can actually do it. There are plenty of reasons why trying or adopting cycling to work as part of one's lifestyle is challenging. After all, it...

- ⇒ is personally involving and consequential
- ⇒ poses physical challenges
- ⇒ requires skill acquisition (to cycle in traffic)
- ⇒ involves encounters with risk
- ⇒ demands confidence
- ⇒ competes with an attractive alternative (motor vehicle)

To help people overcome these barriers, BTWW focuses on the key messages of fun, ease, and simplicity and on peer support through team building in the workplace. Our goal is to expose people to cycling through BTWW knowing that this can translate into long term adoption of bike commuting after the event. Various factors can affect how many people actually participate in GVBTWW. These include...

- ⇒ the presence of workplace champions (that's you, Team Leaders!)
- ⇒ the extent of employer partnerships and endorsements
- ⇒ public visibility (t-shirts, posters, media attention)
- ⇒ ease of team formation/clarity of guidelines and process
- ⇒ a celebratory and supportive atmosphere
- ⇒ prizes!





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First-time Commuter Cyclists

Our key measure of success is the number of new cyclists who take part each year. If we can get someone to try cycling—even for just a week—and make it a positive experience, this will profoundly alter their personal sense of its ‘do-ability’.

Enabling as many people as possible to participate in GVBTTWW is essential to expanding cycle-commuting in Greater Victoria. Rather than trying to sell biking to work as an ‘all-or-nothing’ choice, you—the team leader—can encourage team members to cycle at least once during the week-long event. Just once. This results in an increasing number of people participating in GVBTTWW (oftentimes cycle-commuting for the first time), and falling in love with biking. For most people, taking up commuter cycling is a process rather than a straightforward choice or all-at-once event. Our goal is to make that first ride easy, fun, and celebratory. That way, the choice will more likely stick in the long-term.

In this sense, we truly believe that the amount of people cycling to work for the first time during Bike to Work Week is an important measure of success. In 2018, GVBTTWW had over 1,300 new riders!

Exposure is important because cycling is an activity that is only learned by doing. Most people have positive memories of riding bicycles as a child, currently own a bike for recreation and would like to be able to cycle more often. A positive experience during GVBTTWW can catalyze the desire for more of the same. Research shows that people who don’t cycle perceive obstacles that initially place the choice out of their reach. Distance, time, weather, and inconvenience are consistently identified as top-of-mind reasons for not choosing to cycle. Non-cyclists tend to significantly over-estimate the time and distance required for travel by bike and picture themselves using the same routes they take in their cars. Our experience has shown that for people who try commuting by bike these perceived obstacles disappear, or at least become dramatically reduced. This occurs because actual experience displaces preconceptions, which allows some of the benefits intrinsic to cycling (fitness, pleasure, lowering costs and stress reduction) to come into clearer focus!

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Event Promotion at your Workplace

The more present GVBTTW is in an individual worksite—through poster campaigns, t-shirts, internal contests etc.—the more likely people will be to consider participating. Meanwhile, those who have tried it in the past, will be energized to continue!

Another option to reduce perceptions of travel times is The Commuter Challenge event. This event consistently demonstrates that travel by bike takes no longer than by car at rush hour. At 2018's commuter challenge event, on 13 of 16 teams, cyclists won in travel time against their car counterpart.

Skills Development

Most people associate cycling in traffic with risk. Experienced commuters learn to manage this risk by applying skills and practices that reduce it. To assist cyclists who are nervous in traffic, Bike to Work Victoria has developed half- and full-day hands-on adult bike skills course that equip riders with basic traffic-cycling techniques. These courses include both classroom and on-road exercises and offer information, skills-development, and confidence-building to help beginners and experienced cyclists alike, become better cyclists. Participants rave about the empowerment these courses foster!

Making this program available to people newly exposed to commuter cycling is a powerful way to accelerate their progress in becoming regular cycle-commuters. Our Bike Skills courses are a powerful tool for building confidence because they tackle universal issues of safety head-on, teaching people core techniques that can be applied to coordinate their actions with those of other vehicles. We encourage you to take it yourself—no matter how long you've been riding—and to let newbies on your team know about this program.

Workplace Workshops

We also offer workplace workshops—one hour “lunch and learns” where we present on topics such as basic traffic safety, all-weather riding, route planning, spring or fall riding preparedness, basic bike maintenance, overcoming barriers to cycling, etc. As many employees as can fit in a presentation room are encouraged to partake. These are especially popular in the lead up to Bike to Work Week.



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Health Benefits

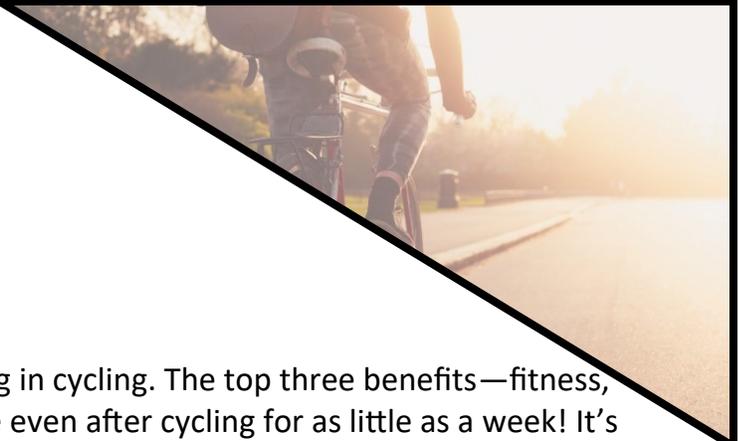
A range of benefits are inherently appealing in cycling. The top three benefits—fitness, pleasure, and convenience—are noticeable even after cycling for as little as a week! It's easy to integrate cycling into your daily routine. Considering that many people cite “not enough time” as the primary reason for not engaging in physical activities, using time already committed to commuting is a great opportunity for exercise. Health Canada recommends 20-30 minutes a day of moderate activity to achieve fitness, health, and quality-of-life benefits. Once the practical challenges of commuter cycling are addressed, the fitness dividend becomes a powerful incentive to keep with it. Other benefits of cycling include stress reduction, enjoyment and cost savings. Keep in mind that people are oftentimes only motivated to change by tangible personal benefits—i.e. what's in it for me?

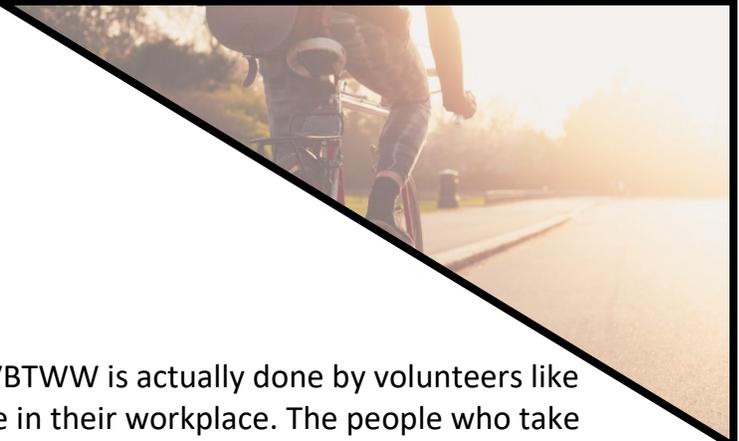
Workplace Wellness

Illness, long-term-disability, repetitive strain injury and lack of morale all affect productivity at work and run up immense lost-time costs to organizations. In many cases these conditions can be addressed through exercise. For this reason, management has a direct interest in encouraging employee wellness for the reduced costs and productivity gains it brings. Making employers aware of these connections, soliciting their support for your GVBTTWW workplace events (in-kind and as endorsement), and using managers who cycle to work as role models can all enable greater participation.

Employee Benefits

Once employers become aware of cycling as a practical fitness option, they may be more willing to underwrite access to a cycling skills course for their employees. They may even provide paid time for individuals to take the training, similar to professional development courses. Some employers subsidize fitness club memberships; others subsidize transit passes and vanpools. There's a good case to be made, then, when seeking similar assistance to create opportunities to acquire the skills that enable employees to commute by bike. Our hands-on cycling skills courses as well as our workplace workshops are attractive options for employers looking to incentivize active and healthy lifestyles among their workforce.





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Your Role

Most of the work involved in promoting GVBTTWW is actually done by volunteers like you, who bring event information to people in their workplace. The people who take part in GVBTTWW, and the ones who go on to take our cycling courses, often get there because of what you do. Without champions at work, nothing would happen on the ground, so you play an essential role in getting more people involved. Your team leader role can be as simple or involved as you would like it to be. But don't underestimate the wealth of knowledge that you have from your time as a commuter cyclist. Some obvious tips for you may be important realizations for others!

Friends, colleagues, and workplace champions who offer mentorship play a vital role in helping first-time commuter-cyclists make the change. A lot of it has to do with alerting people to choices in a way that clarifies options and enables them to select the best options for themselves. Mentorship in a GVBTTWW context is a soft approach supporting the person's own direction. Successful mentors work within their capabilities and draw on their own experience. We urge that the you refer them to our Bike Skills Courses as a primary tool for addressing all of the key barriers to change: fear of traffic, poor technique and lack of confidence.

Life after GVBTTWW is an enjoyable experience, where fun, prizes and the team's energy keep everyone going. So what happens in the critical period after the exhilaration dies down? That's when people ask themselves if they're going to continue. It is also when they may really encounter challenges. The barriers may be immediate—the bike itself, the struggle to figure out techniques, fear of traffic, poor physical condition, and issues with clothing and gear. Those who want to continue, do so because cycling is striking a responsive chord. They see that if they can master the activity then they'll obtain the benefits, and some part of them really wants to. The most valuable help in the early phases of change is to be a listening ear: gauge what obstacles the person is facing and offer encouragement to continue. For most people a little help with the basics—i.e. where to go for a bike tune-up, what route to take, which helmet and lights to choose—will keep them going. Your support is invaluable to your friends and colleagues who are transitioning into becoming regular commuter-cyclists. You—our Team Leaders & Workplace Champions—are an essential part of a larger trend towards happy, active, sustainable travel in Greater Victoria. We thank you for this important work. See you on the trails!