



Lessons From Bike to Work Week



I've been a recreational and competitive cyclist most of my adult life; however, during this year's Bike to Work Week I tried my hand at commuter cycling for the first time and it was a very interesting and different experience for me.

This was the first year Quesnel registered as a community in BC's annual Bike to Work Week, despite the fact there are a lot of people who have commuted by bike for many years in this town. Many of Quesnel's cycle commuters brave all kinds of weather and ride their bikes to and from work at all hours of the day, especially shift workers. Yet, Quesnel has no designated bike routes or any "share the road" signage to remind motorists that cyclists have just as much right to the road as vehicles do.

That was my first lesson: while we have some trails that can let cyclists get off the road, we have a long way to go to create truly safe routes for cyclists on our road and highway system throughout the City. Yet, riding around town, it's easy to see natural routes that can be designated for cyclists on our existing road network. With a little forethought, some minor re-engineering, some paint, and some signage, Quesnel can quickly join the growing number of communities that are making it safer for more people to get out of their cars and bike to and from work and school.

The second lesson I learned is that drivers and cyclists need to be more patient with each other in order to share our roads safely, and both need to know and obey the rules of the road so we have a clear and predictive foundation with which to engage each other on our roads. Car drivers simply need to slow down a little when approaching cyclists, give them a little beep on the horn to let them know they are approaching from behind, and pass with care. Cyclists need to stay close to the shoulder when riding, obey all traffic signals, ride single file on busy streets or when warned of an approaching vehicle, and signal their intent when turning, etc.

A little common sense and some common courtesy will go a long way toward cyclists and motorists sharing the roads they both pay for with their taxes and to which they both have a right to enjoy.

Thirdly, I learned that it takes a little more planning to bike into work: dealing with clothing changes, making sure your bike is properly set up for safety and visibility, leaving a little earlier, carrying gear, etc. But, the pleasure of fresh air in your lungs in the morning and a nice reflective ride home at the end of the day is well worth the effort. I also realized we have some work to do with our business associations to provide more bike racks, and equip more workplaces with lockers and showers, etc. but my conversations with their members suggest they are keen to jump on board.

I'm hopeful that before next year's Bike to Work Week Quesnel will make some significant advancements in enabling more recreational cyclists to use their bikes as a mode of active transportation as well as a form of recreation. Please email me your ideas for improving bike safety in our City: bsimpson@quesnel.ca.

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