

The Mercury News

MercuryNews.com

Opinion: Biking to work once a week can significantly help the environment

By Andy Ball
Special to the Mercury News

Posted: 05/09/2011 08:00:00 PM PDT

With the passage of California's Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, cities and counties are required to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. One of the great problems is this: Nearly 40 percent of our greenhouse gases come from transportation. By leaving the car in the garage two days a week and riding a bike to work or to the market, we can substantially reduce carbon emissions.

According to the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition, 40 percent of Bay Area commuters live within just five miles of their workplace. If every person living this close pedaled on one day alone, more than 60,000 vehicles would be off the road, reducing emissions by more than 150,000 pounds.

Good weather and flat terrain create huge cycling potential here in Silicon Valley -- but we need to turn our attention to expanding the availability of safe routes for active transportation. Designing roads that are safer for bicycles, providing more bike paths and creating safe routes to school are all needed for a successful cycling atmosphere. We must create an environment that feels safe for cycling, whether it's riding to work regularly or taking an occasional trip to the post office.

Many employers are doing their part to encourage cycling. For example, green-minded Google provides a fleet of bikes for its employees to ride between facilities.

Local governments increasingly recognize the role of cycling in achieving our greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Bay Area-wide, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission has partnered with the Air Quality

Management District and local agencies to fund a regional bike share program that will be implemented in 2012. In San Jose, aggressive bike ridership goals have been recommended in the city's general plan, which calls for continually improving projects like the Guadalupe River Trail.

Most important, cultural acceptance of bikes sharing the road is on the rise. The enthusiastic efforts of grass-roots groups have helped. So have corporate-sponsored racing events such as the Webcor/SunPower King of the Mountain and the Amgen Tour of California. By making cycling more popular, these efforts will lead to improved safety and infrastructure for cyclists, which in turn will increase their numbers.

Thursday is Bike to Work Day, an annual communitywide event designed to inspire people to try commuting by bike. It began 16 years ago in the Bay Area to address congestion and pollution challenges before these were fashionable public policy goals. The Silicon Valley Leadership Group and the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition for years have promoted cycling to the business community, and the annual day gives employers an opportunity to actively encourage cycling.

At Lockheed Martin, a hot breakfast is provided for all riders. NetApp provides cycling employees with a goody bag full of snacks, prizes and a raffle ticket for bike gear. Regional sponsor Kaiser Permanente staffs an energizer station to give maps, snacks and other treats to cyclists. Local cycling manufacturer Specialized offered Bike to Work Starter kits. As a major sponsor of Bike to Work Day, Webcor



DIRECTV has more of what you want to watch!

Switch today!

1-888-778-0985

**NO EQUIPMENT TO BUY!
NO STARTUP COSTS!**

Offer ends 2/29/11. Credit card required (except in MA & PA). New approved customers only. (lease required). \$19.95 Handling & Delivery fee may apply. Applicable use tax adjustment may apply on the retail value of the installation. Call for details.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

The Mercury News

MercuryNews.com

challenges companies throughout Silicon Valley to participate in the Company Bike Challenge (<http://bikesiliconvalley.org/btwd>), to add an element of competition.

Many Silicon Valley companies understand the environmental and human health benefits of promoting cycling. As numbers of cycling commuters increase, the air will be cleaner and our workforce healthier.

ANDY BALL, CEO of Webcor Builders, is the Silicon Valley Leadership Group board member spearheading cycling initiatives and a member of the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition advisory board. He wrote this for this newspaper.



 **DIRECTV has more of what you want to watch!**

Switch today!

1-888-778-0985

**NO EQUIPMENT TO BUY!
NO STARTUP COSTS!**

Offer ends 2/9/11. Credit card required (except in MA & PA). New approved customers only. (lease required). \$19.95 Handling & Delivery fee may apply. Applicable use tax adjustment may apply on the retail value of the installation. Call for details.

Print Powered By  **FormatDynamics™**