

BICYCLING AS TRANSPORTATION

A how-to guide for Twin Cities bike commuting.




 **Metro Transit**

a service of the Metropolitan Council

metrotransit.org/bike

Bicycling as Transportation
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Many people think of bicycles as equipment for recreation, not vehicles for transportation. The truth is they're both.

Bicycling saves money, saves time and improves fitness. Plus, a bicycle can provide a trip to work, school, the store — virtually everywhere someone might drive. Traveling by bicycle reduces traffic congestion and has little impact on the environment. And bicycles are fun!

Bicycle commuting is easy but it does require some adjustments to your routine. Read on for useful information for anyone — from the curious to the committed — on bicycle commuting in the Twin Cities (and beyond).



GETTING STARTED

The Route

Learning a good, safe route will be key to the quality of your commute. Develop a route to your liking by researching different ways of getting to your destination. Maybe one route is better on the way there and another is better on the way home. To get comfortable with the timing and feel of the route, practice on a weekend or during low-traffic periods.

Resources for navigation include Cyclopath — an online route finder — and free bicycle maps for some metro-area counties, cities and even neighborhoods. See metrotransit.org/bike for links to those resources.



The Law

The Minnesota Department of Transportation's Share the Road campaign distills safety guidelines and much of Minnesota bicycle law and into eight simple points:

- 1 Bicyclists may ride on all Minnesota roads, except where restricted.
- 2 Bicyclists should ride on the road, and must ride in the same direction as traffic.
- 3 Motorists must at all times maintain a three-foot clearance when passing a bicyclist.
- 4 Bicyclists must obey all traffic control signs and signals.
- 5 Motorists and bicyclists must yield the right-of-way to each other.
- 6 Bicyclists must signal their turns and should ride in a predictable manner.
- 7 Bicyclists must use headlight and rear reflectors when it is dark. To increase visibility, add a rear flashing light.
- 8 Bicyclists should always wear helmets.



Visit sharetheroadmn.org for more in-depth information and a summary of all Minnesota bicycle laws.

GETTING STARTED

Safety



Wearing a helmet can be the difference between life and death or serious injury in a crash. Red reflectors (or lights) and white headlights are required by law and are especially necessary for nighttime or poor weather riding. Light-colored, bright or reflective clothing makes you more visible to motorists.

A mirror can also improve your traffic awareness. Always carry personal identification.

Security



You'll want a good lock (or locks) to protect your bicycle. Even if you can store your bicycle indoors or in a garage, it's still a good idea to lock it to something. Combining a U-lock and a cable lock provides extra protection.

Lockers are available for rent through Metro Transit, the City of Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota and some employers. Find locations nearest you at metrotransit.org/bike.

Comfort

Shoes and clothing can make a big difference in how your ride feels. Dressing for the weather and in removable layers allows you to adapt to conditions throughout the day. Fenders keep roadway water and grime from spraying you.



SAFE BICYCLING

“Cyclists fare best when they act and are treated as the drivers of vehicles.”

John Forester, author of *Effective Cycling*

Although bike paths are prevalent in the Twin Cities, it is likely that you will need to become comfortable riding on streets in traffic when commuting by bicycle. Riding on sidewalks is illegal in business districts and some other areas and is often the more dangerous option. Riding lawfully, predictably and confidently — while indicating your intentions to other vehicles — is essential for safety.

Traffic Tips

In general, ride in a straight line in the same direction of traffic. Ride to the right of faster moving traffic and at least three feet from the curb, parked cars or other obstructions to make yourself visible and to avoid roadside hazards. When riding alongside parked cars, signal and move into the lane far enough to avoid opening doors. Always pass other vehicles on the left.

If you must use a sidewalk or crosswalk, consider walking your bicycle or ride very slowly. Always yield to pedestrians and let them know you are approaching when passing. Be especially cautious when transitioning to and from the roadway.



Cross train tracks, sewer grates and other obstructions at a right angle and transition your weight toward the back of the bicycle to prevent getting your wheel caught. Cross railroad tracks only at marked crossings. Expect a train from any direction, on any track at any time. Always look and listen before crossing tracks.

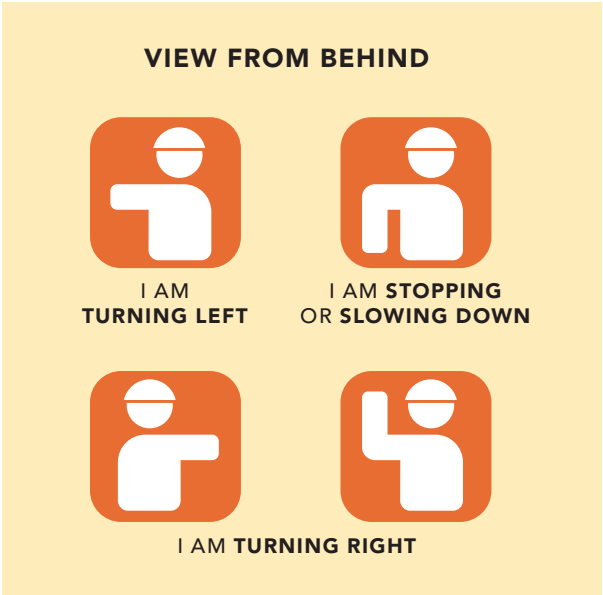
Safety Around Buses

- » Before passing a bus or making a lane change, make sure the driver can see you and be sure to signal. If you can't see the bus mirrors, the driver can't see you.
- » Never pass on the right side of a bus. Buses make frequent stops, so always pass on the left. Never turn in front of a bus at an intersection — wait until the bus has left the stop.

SAFE BICYCLING

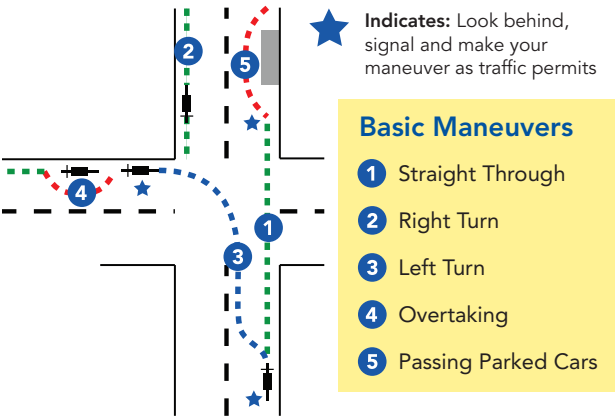
Turn Signals

When preparing to turn or to make a lane change, plan ahead to avoid a last-minute decision. Signal about 100 feet before turns or lane changes.



Lane positioning

The diagram below shows the correct lane positioning for a variety of different scenarios.



Graphic courtesy of Commuter Connection

Other safety tips

- » **Eye contact:** A simple way to acknowledge — and be acknowledged by — motorists.
- » **Point:** Clearly indicating where you intend to ride can be a useful signal in ambiguous situations.
- » **Scan:** Briefly looking over your shoulder prior to signaling is a good way to both assess the traffic situation and indicate your intentions to motorists behind you.
- » **Put your foot down:** When approaching an intersection with traffic from other directions, taking a foot off of your pedal while braking is often the clearest and easiest way to signal your intent to stop.



- » **Sound off:** Using a bell, horn or your voice when passing others or in other situations is also a good skill to develop.
- » **Caution behind:** In certain situations like narrowing streets or tight/blind turns, the “stop/slow” signal can be effectively used to warn motorists of a change ahead. It can be used effectively along with . . .
- » **Taking the lane:** If you can ride the speed of traffic or traffic can’t pass you safely, pulling into the center of the lane is generally the safest way to ride.



READY FOR WORK

Appearing presentable at work after a ride is a concern for many considering bicycle commuting. Here are some ideas:

- » If your trip is short or you can ride at a relaxed pace, you may be able to ride in your work clothes (an ankle strap will keep your pant leg out of the chain).
- » Store your bicycle in a rack on the bus or train on the way to work then pedal home (p. 14).
- » If you need to change clothing, you can either leave clothes at work or carry them with you.
- » Your employer may have shower and locker facilities available or you may be able to find facilities nearby your workplace (in the same building, for instance).
- » Your employer may have a room where you can privately change into work clothes and clean up.
- » Changing in the restroom and freshening up is always an option. You may want to bring or store toiletries and a towel ("pack" towels are super absorbent, small and light). Some bicyclists use baby wipes to freshen up.



CONNECTING WITH TRANSIT

Bicycle Lockers

These lockers provide safe, weatherproof storage — it's like a garage for your bicycle and equipment. Bike lockers are available at many Park & Ride lots, light-rail stations and other Twin Cities locations.

For Metro Transit lockers, annual rental (April 1 through March 31) costs \$48 plus a refundable \$40 damage deposit. For details, visit metrotransit.org/bike or call 612-373-3333 and choose "bicycling programs" from the menu.



Nice Ride MN is the Twin Cities public bicycle sharing program with many stations located close to transit connections. Learn more at niceridemn.org.

Guaranteed Ride Home



With the free Guaranteed Ride Home program, you won't have to worry about being stuck somewhere without a ride. It's easy to use.

Registered participants can request reimbursements up to four times per year or \$100 in value, whichever comes first, for eligible trips with valid documentation.

Commuters who bicycle and/or ride the bus, train, carpool, vanpool or walk at least three days a week to work or school are eligible. Sign up today at metrotransit.org/grh or call 612-373-3333 for more information.

CONNECTING WITH TRANSIT

Bicycle Racks on Buses and Trains

All Metro Transit buses and trains have free bicycle racks on them so you can pedal part of the way and ride the rest.

Why use bicycle racks?

- » To increase the number of transit connections and eliminate transfers
- » For one-way commuting
 - Ride into work on a bus or train if you're dressed for work and don't want to change clothes
 - Pedal in for a morning energy burst and take transit home from work if you're tired at the end of the day
 - If one direction of your route is mostly uphill, consider using transit for that portion
- » During poor or dangerous weather
- » For an equipment failure, such as a flat tire
- » For recreational outings

Other things to know:

- » Only two-wheeled, non-motorized bikes are permitted.
- » Racks will hold many wheel and frame sizes — standard-frame bicycles with wheels from 20 to 29 inches in diameter generally fit.
- » Call Metro Transit Lost & Found at 612-373-3333 if you have left your bicycle on a bus or train.
- » Metro Transit is not liable for damage to bicycles, except if Metro Transit is found to be negligent or at fault in an accident. Theft, damage, injury while loading and unloading, acts by a third party and all other incidents are solely the responsibility of the bicyclist and not Metro Transit.



Pre-boarding tips

These tips apply to Metro Transit — policies may vary by transit provider.

- » Consider practicing loading your bicycle on a practice rack. Visit metrotransit.org/bike to find locations.
- » Always approach the bus from the curb — never ride around to the front of a bus from the street side. Wait with your bicycle on the curb for the bus to come to a complete stop
- » When it is dark outside, consider using a flasher light to hail an approaching bus.
- » Consider locking your bicycle's rear tire and frame together before loading your bicycle on the rack. Bring any loose items with you and remove water bottles and bags from your bicycle.
- » You do not need to speak with the bus driver before loading your bicycle on the rack. But, do make eye contact to make sure you are seen as you move in front of the bus to load your bicycle.
- » Use a kickstand to stabilize your bicycle or position the bicycle between yourself and the bus and just reach over it to begin loading.
- » Note: By policy, bus drivers cannot leave their seat to assist you with loading.

CONNECTING WITH TRANSIT

Loading your bicycle on the rack

Step-by-step loading instructions are printed on the rack.

If yours is the only bicycle:



Always load the bicycle directly in front of the bus or from the curb — do not expose yourself or your bicycle to passing traffic. Hoisting the bicycle by the seat tube and stem provides good leverage and keeps the bike stable.

4

Pull the support arm out completely and then up and over the front tire



5

Secure the arm as closely to your fork or fender as you can



Do not place the arm on top of a fender or brake — it should be in contact with the tire directly.

If there is already a bicycle on the rack, hoist or roll your bicycle into the available slot and proceed as above.

If the rack is loaded with two bicycles, you may ask the driver if you may bring your bike aboard. The driver **always** has the discretion to determine whether or not your bicycle can be safely accommodated on that trip.

CONNECTING WITH TRANSIT



Unloading your bicycle from the rack

- » Notify the driver that you will be unloading your bike.
- » Exit the bus through the front door.
- » Unload your bike by simply reversing the loading procedure.
- » If yours is the only bicycle on the rack, squeeze the handle and return the rack to its upright position.
- » Return to the curb with your bike.
- » Never cross in front of a bus — wait until the bus has left the stop.

Riding the bus with your bicycle

- » Hop on and pay your fare. There is no additional charge for your bicycle.
- » If possible, sit near the front of the bus where you can check on your bike.

If the driver determines that you can bring your bicycle inside the bus:

1. Allow other passengers to board first.
2. Quickly remove any sand, snow, water or debris from the wheels.
3. Cautiously hoist or roll your bicycle onto the bus.
4. Ask the driver where you should sit or stand with your bike — generally this will be the rear of the bus.

Loading your bicycle on a light-rail train

- » Walk — do not ride — bicycles at stations, on platforms and on trains.
- » Bicyclists are required to use elevators or ramps (where available) to access station platforms.
- » Pay your fare on the platform. After paying, walk your bicycle to the boarding area and wait behind the line.



- » As a train approaches, position yourself to board. Bike racks are located inside the vehicle near the doors.
- » Wait for those getting off the train, then let others board before rolling your bicycle through the doors.
- » There are two upright racks. If available, load your bicycle in the one farthest from the door.

**See an instructional video
on bikes and transit at
metrotransit.org/bike.**

CONNECTING WITH TRANSIT

- » Position the rear wheel between the hoops of the lower rack and hook the front wheel at the top.



- » Remove any unsecured items and collapse your seat post if possible.
- » Stand with your bike or take a nearby seat.
- » As you approach your stop, prepare to remove your bike from the rack as soon as the train stops moving.
- » Allow others to exit before you unload your bicycle.

To ensure safety, Metro Transit reserves the right to limit onboard storage of bicycles during special events or when trains are crowded. If there is no room for you and your bicycle on the train or the bike racks are full, wait for the next train.

Loading your bicycle on a Northstar train

- » Walk — do not ride — bicycles at stations, on platforms and on trains.
- » Bicyclists are required to use elevators or ramps (where available) to access station platforms.
- » Pay your fare on the platform. After paying, walk your bicycle to the boarding area and wait well away — *behind the yellow line or further* — from the approaching train.
- » As the train approaches, position yourself to board. Each train has two doors. Load your bicycle at the door marked with the bicycle symbol.
- » Allow others to board and exit the train before lifting your bicycle through the entrance.



- » You will see the storage area a few feet away. Instructions are printed above the foldable seat.

CONNECTING WITH TRANSIT

- » If necessary, fold up the seat and place your wheel in the bracket closest to the folded seat. Secure the wheel tightly with the yellow strap.



- » When your bicycle is secured, stand with your bike or take a nearby seat.
- » As you approach your stop, prepare to remove your bicycle from the rack.
- » Allow others to exit the train before you exit with your bicycle.

Plan a bicycle adventure on Northstar! Go to metrotransit.org/bike for recommended bike routes and trains near Northstar stations.



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Learn about all of the ways Metro Transit is Going Greener at metrotransit.org/gogreener



metrotransit.org/bike



- Commuter Services**
494corridor.org



- St. Paul Smart Trips**
smart-trips.org



- Anoka County TMO**
anokacountytmo.org



- Commuter Connection**
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