

BIKING

WITH RYAN

My name is Ryan Guelff and I live in Lolo and commute to the Westside neighborhood. During the spring/summer/fall seasons, I usually commute via bike about three days a week. I either telecommute or drive the other days, depending on other day-to-day things I need to coordinate like childcare drop-off or errands. **My commute takes me about 40 minutes each way, which is only 10-15 minutes more than driving takes me depending on how congested the roads are.** For me, that is a minimal time investment considering the mental and physical benefits.

The only time in my life I haven't been an active commuter was high school when the novelty of having my own driver's license and car was irresistible. That novelty wore off quickly when I needed to save more money in college, and nowadays, I choose to ride my bike or walk as often as I can. Lolo's proximity can make bike commuting a little less

practical, but **the routes available make up for the additional distance with the Bitterroot Trail and Missoula's fantastic bicycling network.**

I bike commute for a few reasons, the biggest being I just enjoy riding my bike and being outside. When I ride my bike to work, I get some exercise, I feel more present and connected to the places around me, and it helps define the beginning and end of my workday. **All these things end up supporting a mentally and physically healthier me, where I “enjoy the ride” and end up with a greater sense of appreciation in simply getting to and from the places I need to go.** The sustainability element is icing on the cake.

Many people consider biking dangerous. While there is inherent danger in any form of moving around, most risk can be mitigated by planning routes, being aware of potential conflicts, and respecting traffic control laws and devices. **Missoula is continuously planning and implementing bike route improvements that make the system safer and more comfortable for people of all skill and confidence levels.**

My advice for new bicyclists? Start small, **every routine trip you can make that doesn't require hopping in your car is probably good for you.**

Look at Missoula's bike map and plan a route that feels reasonable. If you don't want to ride on a busier, faster street, then choose a slightly out of direction route on a neighborhood greenway or trail. **Take your time and enjoy noticing the things you can't from behind a windshield!**

One recommendation for improvements I have is better snowplowing. **Snowplowing can be tough on bicyclists and pedestrians, and I'm hopeful Missoula can continue investing in innovative ways to enhance bike and pedestrian safety and accessibility throughout the winter seasons.**

I have lots of great memories commuting by bike in Missoula. In the summer, mornings are generally cool enough that I don't overheat on the commute in, but a quick dip at the Buckhouse bridge feels so good on some of those very hot afternoon/evening rides home. Plus, **I've now won downtown gift cards for simply logging commute trips during challenges with Missoula in Motion.** Keep up the good work MIM!
