

BIKING

WITH JESS

My name is Jess. I live in the Slant Streets near the bike path and it's amazing to be there. I bike my daughter to school at Sussex, my son to Peaceful Heart Preschool, then I bike back home. I usually do that twice a day. My daughter bikes to school now on her own bike alongside me, even when it's 30° . I'm so proud of her and she loves it. I love how hardy it makes her.

I have been bike commuting for about 20 years.

When I lived in Maine, my husband and I would bike in and out of Portland, then we moved here and immediately took up biking again. It doesn't even occur to me to do it differently.

If you're just getting started, the main hurdle is just making it normal for you. Figure out the best routes- it's a learning process. We have an amazing trail system that I'm really proud of. I'd love to see some

some improvements on Brooks. I want to see more streets that are just for biking. I love that 5th and 6th Street gave up one traffic lane for a bike lane. That's one of our main connecting streets. We take that route a lot. It slows the cars down and provides a lot of room. I love the under-bridge paths connecting the two river trails, like over by the University. Wider paths on Higgins have been amazing! Higgins was off limits for me on a bike for a long time. **Everything just keeps getting better and I feel really good about it.**

It doesn't occur to me to get in my car because I'm so used to biking. Everything is set up that way and then it becomes super easy. I go out the door to get to my bike, I have my pannier - it's such my routine.

People think that it takes so much longer, but it really doesn't.

I can haul a ton of stuff on my bike, too. I've hauled these 2 blue armchairs from the side of the road. One time I carried my daughter's bike under my arm with her in the trailer after she couldn't ride herself anymore. We brought home a 5-foot-tall Cherry tree in the bike trailer next to my, then, 2-year-old. I'm really proud of the things I've hauled home!

I have studded tires so I can do a lot. Cold, ice, and rain don't bother me, but when it's an uneven snowpack or it starts to get slushy, then I have to drive a little bit more. I actually walk more as well. I have a stroller with really big wheels, so I'll push the kids in that, or our stuff, or whatever we need. **Come winter when we start walking, it's like this giant mindfulness exercise. I love how it slows you down. We can easily interact with our neighbors. It helps me stay connected to the community & the world.** I believe that connectivity is huge. What the world is missing right now is people being able to talk to each other and see each other. I'd say that's the main reason I love to commute by bike - it slows us down and connects us.

I also love my Sunday morning commute without the trailer or 100 pounds of kids. I just zoom. I disappear for the day, and I work and do my self-care. The earlier I get out the door, the better. Sunday morning at 7:00 am, the town is quiet and the light's just coming up. **To see that - and not even just see it- to feel it. It's inspiring. It keeps me healthy and sane on so many levels.**
