

BIKE WINTER SERENITY PRAYER

God grant me the serenity
to accept that every time I walk in the door
to my office building in the Winter
wearing my bike gear
someone is going to be shocked and ask me
if I really rode my bike here
they're going to ask the same questions
and make the same comments.

God, I thought I was a patient man.
Help me to think of myself as a pioneer
and an ambassador, and an innovator.

Grant me the patience to smile
and explain to them why it's okay
that biking keeps me warm, and that I enjoy it.
Help me to prepare a standard statement
or at least lift one off Bike Winter
that I can recite to them day after day
after day after day
every time I walk in the door.

Amen.

-Matt Gilbert (chicagocriticalmatt.blogspot.com)

THE DERAILLEUR

An unofficial publication of Chicago Critical Mass

AUGUST 2009



Illustration: Robert Higdon (http://www.bummyhank.com)

Special Bike Winter Preview Issue

Why cycle in the winter?

Why do people ride when the days are short, wet, and cold?

* Winter cycling can be surprisingly comfortable. Assuming that you are dressed correctly, the physical act of cycling will warm you up faster than you would be if you're waiting for your car's heater to warm up.

* Winter cycling can be surprisingly convenient. Suppose you need to travel a couple of miles to the store. On your bicycle, you might have already made it to the store and back in less time than it would take to scrape your windshield and dig your car out of the snow.

* Winter cycling allows you great flexibility in getting around. You can't get stuck in a snow bank or on a patch of ice, since you can just simply pick up your bike and carry it with you. If you get a flat on your bike, you can have it repaired and be on your way in less time than it would take a motorist to contact their motor club.

* Cold weather can paradoxically improve traffic conditions. Since many people bunker down in the winter, traffic tends to be a bit lighter and calmer. When conditions are slick on local roads, many motorists reduce their speed significantly. This is good news for cyclists – when motorists are going at sensible speeds, the chances of getting into a fatal

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collision with a car go down tremendously. In addition, roads aren't torn up by road construction like they are in the summertime.

* Winter cycling is FUN. You can get the same endorphin rush that winter skiers get. However, whereas most skiers only ski a handful of days throughout the winter, you can bicycle throughout the entire winter.

* Exercise staves off winter poundage and blues. If this is the season when your main physical activity is walking to and from the omnipresent platter of holiday cookies and when the lack of sunshine sends your spirits plummeting, even a short daily bike commute can keep you in fair physical and mental health.

* Year-round cycling keeps your momentum going and builds your cycling skills. If you don't stop riding, you never have to experience a sore butt after getting back in the saddle after a long hiatus. You don't have to reacquaint yourself to the rhythms of traffic. You just keep getting more nimble, strong, fast, and confident.

* Year-round cycling helps you live life more indulgently. You can eat at your favorite restaurants more often if you aren't constantly spending \$10-\$20 to use a parking ramp. You can hang out with friends at your favorite coffee shop

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all-season bike commuter, doesn't think winter cycling is such a big deal. "I see all these sweaty, gasping cyclists on August ozone action days—to me, that's much more extreme than biking through crisp, snow-calm January evenings. In fact, during inclement weather, my bike is the most reliable and comfortable way of getting around town. Sure, I have invested in a few items to keep me warm and dry, but they were cheaper by far than car payments or transit passes." To inspire and equip cyclists to use bikes for transportation year round, Kilgore and other veteran winter cyclists will lead this free class. Workshop topics will include winter biking attire with the ever-popular "get layered" strip tease demo; riding safely through wind, snow, and ice; gear and maintenance tips; and even a visit from jolly old St. Nick! Free door prizes will feature cycling accessories that will help make all-season cycling a breeze. Visit bikewinter.org or call 773.252.4657.

Bike Winter Kick-Off Planning Meeting

Directly following the One Million Less Cars rally. Let's aim to make this year ALL fair-weather cyclists stay in the saddle through the longest, coldest nights.

7:00 p.m. Tuesday, September 22, 2009

Billy Goat II (309 W. Washington)

Contact: Gin 773.252.4657

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Welcome to the August 2009 issue of The Derailleur, an unofficial publication of Chicago Critical Mass. This month's issue is all about Bike Winter, a grassroots series of educational, social, and activist events encouraging all-season cycling since 1999. (Yes, winter is almost here and yes, we have Chicago Critical Mass in the winter. It's fun!) To contribute to future issues or to host an assembly party, write to TheDerailleur@gmail.com. THANK YOU! Logan Square Farmers Market Grassy Knoll (SE corner of Logan Blvd. & Milwaukee Ave.)

Get Layered: Winter Cycling Tips & Tricks

A free workshop to promote biking as year-round transportation in Chicago

11:00 a.m. Sunday, October 11, 2009

Logan Square Farmers Market Grassy Knoll

(SE corner of Logan Blvd. & Milwaukee Ave.)

As Chicago parking meter fees soared this summer, record numbers of Chicagoans left their cars in the garage and began biking to work, to the store, and even to grandma's house. With autumn upon us, veteran cyclists are now sharing Chicago's best-kept transportation secret—there's no need to banish your bike to the basement this winter. With a little preparation and know-how, all-season cycling is no sweat! Gin Kilgore, a longtime

Robert Higdon, xoxo—willow

Wilson, Kevin Womack, and other BW folks), Matt Gilbert, and Kilgore, Daniel Kopald, Bob Mater, Eve Feyl, Lisa Phillips, Alex bikewinter.org (Bighorn, Mr. Bike, Tim Casady, Jane Healy, Gin assembly party, write to TheDerailleur@gmail.com. THANK YOU!

more often if you aren't constantly spending \$25-\$35 to fill up your gas tank. You can more easily take a trip to Europe if you don't have to deal with \$1,500 automotive engine repair bills. Cycling helps you live richly, even if your income is limited.

* Year-round cycling helps you make it comfortably through lean times. In Illinois, the costs of car payments, car maintenance, gasoline, auto insurance, etc. can easily eat up more than 50% of the maximum unemployment insurance benefit that you are eligible to collect. If you have the misfortune of being laid off from your job, you will feel much better if your money is going to support you and your family instead of simply supporting your car.

* Variety is nice. I personally enjoy the sounds and smells of leaves swirling under my tires; if the stiff winds are slowing me down, I look forward to speeding on the return trip. A dark rainy day can be soothing; the ride is smooth, the streets quiet, and the light delightfully spooky. I'd rather feel the snow on my face than brush it off a windshield. We are lucky to live in such a weather rich area; a bicycle provides a front row seat for enjoying it.

* The weather is usually not always so bad. When the thermometer hits 60 degrees in February, my bike and I are ready to take advantage of it.

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Yes, Virginia, there is Winter Biking! Tips from Winter Cyclists

I'm no cycling guru whose blood has been thickened on arctic expeditions. I'm just an urban bike commuter who, through experience and advice from friends, has gone from being a fair weather to all weather cyclist. The process was gradual. The first winter I didn't invest in special gear; I just piled on what I had. I learned how to ride in a range of weather conditions simply by doing it and watching my friends. Winter biking isn't something difficult, something you need to equip for. The only equipment you really need is the willingness to do it. —Gin Kilgore

The following tips are compiled from a variety of winter cyclists. If you attend a Bike Winter class, you will see the tips covered more extensively, with demonstrations of the tips, as well as question and answer periods.

Winter biking gear:

- * Willingness
- * Waterproof, windproof outer jacket (does not need to be insulated—you'll generate plenty of warmth)
- * Warm, waterproof glove/mitten combos that do not compromise your dexterity
- * Warm, waterproof shoe/boots with warm socks and room for toe wiggling

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- * Warm, but thin head covering that will fit under your helmet and protect your ears
- * Wicking base layers, like silk or synthetics
- * Worn brake pad replacement and weekly chain lubing
- * White headlight, red backlight, and reflective tape
- * Fenders
- * Waterproof, windproof pants
- * Armpit zippers in the jacket to help prevent overheating
- * A sense of adventure

Dressing for Winter Cycling

For most folks, the key to getting through the winter is personal climate control. Your torso generates plenty of heat while your extremities suffer—sort of like an apartment with a central heater. The warmth just never seems to make it to the bathroom.

* Head: The wind can be brutal on our ears and eyes. A thin scarf wrapped around your head and neck under a helmet is all many people need during brisk fall days. (If you do wear a scarf, it should be a short one or one that you wrap around you well enough that the ends do not dangle. You don't want even the slightest chance of the scarf getting caught in your own wheels or caught up on a passing vehicle.) For colder weather, try a balaclava (face mask) that covers everything but the eyes. Use non-metal

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Chicago Bike Winter Weather

Isn't it crazy to bicycle in Chicago during the winter?

Aren't Chicago winters too dreadful for even going outside, let alone bicycling?

Isn't there too much snow to bicycle?

The Chicago Bike Winter season is defined as the 181 day period between November 1st and April 30th. During that period you can expect 117 days, or 65% of the time, to be +21F or warmer. That means the LOW of the day will be +21F or warmer.

Typically the difference between the daily low and daily high temperature is 15 degrees. So on a day when the low temperature is in the low 20's, you can expect the high temperature to be in the mid 30's.

That is an excellent temperature range for outdoor activities like cycling and cross country skiing. In the winter of 2000-2001, the low temperature was +21F or warmer on 121 days, or 67% of the period. On 26 of those days the high temperature was above +60F! The winter of 2000-2001 had more total inches of snow (52.5") than normal (38.1"), but there were only 12 days when it snowed 1" or more. And thanks to a

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wrap sun-glasses or goggles to protect those.

* Glasses: On frigid days, treat the lenses with a bit of gel toothpaste to prevent fogging. This toothpaste trick is a much cheaper alternative than getting the expensive lens spray sold at skiing stores. However, do not use a toothpaste that has baking soda in it or you will scratch the lenses.

* Feet: On days with snow and slush, get some waterproof boots that are tall enough to prevent slush from easily spattering onto your socks. On days where the temperatures are very cold, wear wool socks or ski socks; on frigid days, your toes may get numb quickly if you are wearing cotton socks or dress socks. Make sure that your boots or shoes are big enough to accommodate thick socks; you want enough room for a warm air pocket. When your toes get cold, wiggle them or get off your bike and run briefly. Some cyclists prefer to have synthetic liners between their boots and their shoes. If you are using your bike to commute to work, you may want to leave a pair of regular shoes at your work location or else use shoe covers.

* Hands: The main challenge here is staying warm without losing dexterity. You need to be able to brake and lock or maintain your bike. A glove liner with mittens can work. You can use lobster gloves, which are somewhere between

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phenomena I call the "Bilandic Effect", that snow was plowed and salted away from the streets quickly.

We had a little less rain (13.58") than normal (14.61"), and there were only 32 days when 1/10 of an inch or

Chicago Bike Winter 2009 Weather Update

Statistics by Bob Matter,
Bike Winter Meteorologist

Month	Days in Period	Max/Min/Avg Temperature	Number of days +21F or warmer	Number of days temp. rose over +60F	Days with 1/10" or more of rain	Total Rainfall (Inches)	Days with 1" or more of snow	Total Snowfall (Inches)	Average wind speed (m.p.h.)
November, 2008	30	73 / 17 / 39.5	30 / 100%	5 / 17%	4	1.81"	0	0.6"	10.1
December, 2008	31	61 / -6 / 23.0	26 / 84%	1 / 3%	9	5.77"	7	21.9"	12.0
January, 2009	31	38 / -18 / 16.1	19 / 61%	0 / 0%	3	1.16"	6	21.5"	9.7
February, 2009	28	61 / -4 / 28.5	26 / 93%	1 / 4%	5	3.39"	1	4.5"	11.1
March, 2009	31	74 / 14 / 39.8	31 / 100%	8 / 26%	7	5.20"	1	2.1"	10.4
April, 2009	30	84 / 27 / 47.5	30 / 100%	11 / 37%	10	5.19"	1	2.1"	11.2
Total/Avg	181	84 / -18 / 32.3	162 / 90%	26 / 14%	38	22.52"	16	52.7"	10.8

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a glove and mitten. Some cyclists prefer to use a simple winter glove; choosing ones that have an insulation layer on the inside will help keep your fingers warm on long rides. If you use leather gloves, be careful of ones with dyes that smudge easily; you'll arrive at your destination with smudges under your nose, not realizing that you had been wiping it!

* Torso: Many cyclists swear by the three-layer approach. The innermost layer is the wicking layer/base layer, the middle layer is the insulation layer, and the outer layer is the wind/rain/snow protection layer. Avoid cotton base layers because they retain moisture and will leave you cold and clammy. Instead, use synthetic or silk or cashmere fabrics that wick moisture away. The middle layer keeps you warm. It can consist of one or more sweaters, fleece shirts, etc. A waterproof windbreaker is useful as the outer layer. I like coats with armpit zippers to prevent overheating and a bit of a tail to cover my bum. One advantage of the layer approach is that you can add or remove layers as needed to keep you comfortable on the ride.

* Legs: The layer approach can also be adapted to your legs. Rain pants or techno-pants can block the wind, keep you dry, and protect you from road spatter. Thus, they can work well as an outer layer on bad weather days. Some of

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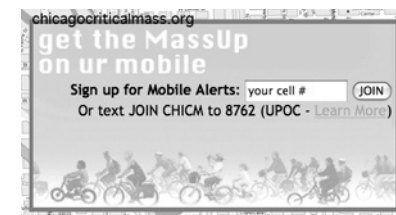
more of rain fell. There are a handful of days when the temperature drops below 0F, and a handful of days when heavy snowfall or rainfall makes cycling unpleasant. On those days, walking or taking the bus or train may be more appealing.

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these pants are also heavy enough to serve as insulation. Tights or light pants can serve as a middle layer. Synthetic long johns make a good base layer.

Where can you get stuff?

- * Thrift stores
- * Army Surplus
- * Kmart type places
- * Local bike shops (Cycle shops that give attention to commuter cyclists and year-round cyclists often have some great winter clothing.)
- * Swanky sporting goods places
- * For big array of silk stuff: wintersilks.com
- * For reasonably priced outdoors stuff: campmor.com
- * For women tired of not finding stuff that fits them: titlenine.com



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But as the data here shows, there are plenty of good cycling days in Chicago during the winter. It's crazy not to take advantage of them!

—Bob Matter

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