



Photos by MARK M. HANCOCK/Special Contributor

Chip Tredo, who commutes to D/FW Airport, raises dedication to rare heights: He must check his bike through security and take alcohol-wipe sponge baths.

Tour de Workforce

Area residents who commute by bike can tell you: It's a concrete jungle out there

By PAULA LAVIGNE
Staff Writer

Chip Tredo is hard-core. The man rides a bicycle 25 miles — dodging traffic on busy streets and highways — from The Colony to his job at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport.

He can't shower at the airport. No problem. With a few towels and some rubbing alcohol, Mr. Tredo takes a sort-of sponge bath in a restroom of his terminal.

And that's only after he's maneuvered his bicycle through the security checkpoint.

Such ingenuity and dedication is necessary for those cycling to work in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. It's not the friendliest place for bicycle commuters.

Dallas' busy highways and inconsiderate drivers can make cycling during rush hour — or any hour — dangerous. Not having a safe place to store your bike during the day can make it risky. And not being able to take a shower can make it, well, stinky.

Even avid riders can get discouraged from pedaling to work.

But not the Chip Tredos of the world.

He and other area cyclists have made commuting to work work for them. Some are lucky enough to have biking-friendly amenities or peaceful routes, but they all have their challenges.

The commuters say their routine is actually a good time-saver because they get a workout while they're heading to work. During this time of year, that commute time might be the only daylight they have to ride.

For those intrepid riders, where's there's a wheel, there's a way.

Chip Tredo

Age: 38
Occupation: Airport baggage screener for the Transportation Security Administration
Home: The Colony, near Highway 121 and Main Street
Work: D/FW airport
Distance one way: 25 miles
Time one way: 1.5 hours
Frequency: A few times a week
Bike: Trek 5500

Why? "My whole working life, I've always wanted to be able to commute to work by bicycle. I try to spend as much of my off time on a bicycle as I can. If a day goes by and I don't get to ride, I'm in a bad mood. If two days go by, you don't want to be in the same room with me."

Barriers? What barriers? No showers. Mr. Tredo takes it easy the last couple of miles to cool

down and dry off. Using the rubbing alcohol and towels in his backpack, he'll clean himself up in a terminal bathroom before he changes into his work clothes.

Tales from the road: The safest place for Mr. Tredo to store his bike is with him, he says. That involves taking it through the passenger-screening checkpoint, which raised a few eyebrows at first because a bicycle is not exactly carry-on luggage. Mr. Tredo's solution was for the screeners to examine his bicycle using the same procedures used for wheelchairs.

Sam Montag

Age: 42
Occupation: Auto mechanic for Ray Huffines Chevrolet
Home: In Plano near West Parker Road and Alma Drive
Work: In Plano near Coit Road and West Plano Parkway
Distance one way: 6 miles (or more if he wants to add miles)
Time one way: Varies
Frequency: Every other Saturday
Bike: Trek 5500

Why? Mr. Montag is a long-time cyclist who just enjoys the ride. He used to commute on weekdays but doesn't anymore because he has to take one of his children to school in the morning. He works every other Saturday and takes his bike to work then.

Barriers? What barriers? There are no showers at work, but when you're an auto mechanic, you have other things to worry about besides smelling pretty. Mr. Montag hates to say this, but "in the summer, it's 120 degrees in the shop, and you really couldn't tell whether I took a shower anyway."

FITNESS

Tales from the road: A series of connecting trails through Plano makes it possible for Mr. Montag to avoid most of the major roads, but he does have to cross them. He also cuts through a few neighborhoods to avoid the heavy traffic.

Kathleen Jordan

Age: 41
Occupation: Paralegal for the U.S. Department of Justice Anti-Trust Division
Home: In Richardson near West Campbell and Custer roads
Work: Thanksgiving Tower, downtown Dallas
Distance one way: 12.5 miles (plus DART ride)
Time one way: One hour (plus 20 minutes on DART)
Frequency: Most weekdays during daylight-saving time
Bike: Schwinn Supersport
Why? "I was just trying to find a way to get more miles in. I wasn't able to ride in the weekends and evenings as much as I wanted to ... I do like that it's environmental. When I'm not riding my bike, I'm taking the train. Last year, 2004, I logged over 4,500 miles. Some of that was commuting, some was for fitness and for fun."

Barriers? What barriers? Though she couldn't find a feasible, safe route from the 'burbs all the way downtown, Ms. Jordan went as far as she could. She rides her bicycle from home to the Lovers Lane DART station. She stores her bike in a locker, one of several at the station available for yearly or quarterly rent.

When she gets downtown, she'll either head up to her office and get her work clothes, a set of which she'll have brought down beforehand, or she'll have her work clothes in her backpack. She showers at Quickfitwoman, a

downtown gym where she has a shower-only membership. Then it's a quick five-minute walk back to her office.

Tales from the road: A cup of coffee just can't compare to the "big endorphin rush" Ms. Jordan gets from cycling to work. Some of her co-workers assume she's a health nut or a fitness freak, she said. "But they don't see me at the convenience store when I'm getting my M&Ms and orange soda."

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RESOURCES

For more information about the League of American Cyclists Bike-to-Work Week, May 16-20, and a guide to bicycle commuting, visit www.bikemonth.com.

On DallasNews.com

To read more commuter cycling stories, visit the Texas Living page on DallasNews.com.

REAL PEOPLE, WHEEL STORIES

We know we hit upon a point of pride, and sometimes frustration, when we tossed out a question about bicycle commuting to various area cycling groups. More than two dozen cyclists wanted to share their successes and struggles about pedaling to work. And they also passed on the names of other intrepid commuters.

Even over the roar of engines and blare of horns, your voices have been heard.

Paula Lavigne



Mr. Tredo, riding through Grapevine from his home in The Colony, commutes 25 miles each way several times a week.

Paula Lavigne



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