

Pedaling toward a postcarbon future

By Kyle Boelte, *Sierra Magazine*



My legs start to burn as I hit a hill, but the soft yellows of dawn are filtering through the city streets, and a cool breeze is brushing my cheeks. My mind is clear. At the end of my five-mile bike commute, my blood is flowing, I'm focused, and I'm excited for work. This is how I start my day: fully alive. How many Americans can say the same about their commute? I have a hunch: all the cyclists.

Until recently, bike commuting in the United States was something of a cult, mysterious to outsiders who assume it's only for the young, the superfit, and the spandex-clad. But that's rapidly changing, as urban planners are designing streets where bikes are as welcome as cars, and employers are offering bike facilities as a way to attract creative professionals. "Quality of life today is the most important tool of economic development," says Gil Penalosa, the former parks commissioner of bike-friendly Bogota, Colombia. "People save all year to go on vacation to places that are walkable and bikable. Why not live in a place where it's walkable and bikable?"

If you already bike to work, consider yourself part of the vanguard that's pushing the country toward a postcarbon future of high-density, vibrant communities. If you haven't biked since childhood, it's not too late to rekindle your passion for that most efficient of human inventions.

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