

Reinventing the Wheel: How do you commute?

More and more CSU faculty and staff are choosing to get to campus some other way than driving a single-passenger car. We wanted to find out how they do it, what some of the challenges are, and if they have any tips for others who want to reinvent the wheel for themselves.

This month's alternative commuter is **Emily Allen**, the community liaison between Off-Campus Life at Colorado State and Neighborhood Services for the City of Fort Collins. She bikes to work all year round and between her two offices.

How many days a week do you travel by bike? Five commuting days; additionally, I am trying to ride my bike more on the weekends and cart my kiddos with me (weather dependent).

How long does it take to commute to work? On my CSU days the morning trip takes me an average of 17 minutes (4.3 miles one way); on my City days (Old Town area) it takes me 25 minutes (6.2 miles one way).

Describe your route. I live out at Drake and Overland so I hop on the Spring Creek Trail, following it through Rolland Moore Park, under Shields and then I hop up at the Whitcomb/Prospect traffic light and on to campus.

Do you do anything along the way? Two to three times a week I work out at the Student Rec Center on campus.

How do you prepare prior to commuting to CSU? I think preparing for my day was the biggest initial challenge when I decided to commute full time. I didn't realize it would take so long. It starts the night before when I look over my calendar to find out what my day looks like. If I'm exercising I have to think about the gear I need for the gym and then what clothing I will wear for the day, plus the clothing I will commute home in. I also need to consider the type of weather I will experience in the morning, throughout the day if I'm hopping between my offices, and then for the ride home. Additionally, I think about my lunch and any items I will need to take to/from work. I have two pannier bags – one completely closes and is waterproof, the other cinches closed and allows me the flexibility to have larger items. The great news is that I have it dialed now and now it's just a part of my everyday routine.

What concerns did you have before biking to CSU? My biggest concern was being out on the road with cars. To overcome my fear

I grabbed the incredible bike map that Fort Collins has and found as many routes as possible that offered either no interactions with vehicles or limited/low volume interactions. I was impressed with how many of these different routes I could take to campus and into Old Town. Then I hopped on my bike and tried them all out so I could be more comfortable and find out the realistic time it would take me to get to commute. Now I have several different options depending on the time of day and where I am in the City.

How do you manage workday business trips without having a personal vehicle? This is by far the best part! I often times make it to meetings earlier than my colleagues who are driving in vehicles. I won't lie, though — weather can be a challenge, so it's important to find out what it looks like for the entire day so that you can prepare.

When you get to campus, how to you prepare for your workday? This was probably my second biggest concern. I love the days that I work out at the Rec because I can shower and get ready there. On my CSU days, I work in the Lory Student Center and have taken advantage of the new large bathroom that has a wonderful shower (great water pressure and temperature!). There are these hidden bathrooms with showers all over campus! Most of the time I take my shower at home and put on my commuting clothes (sports bra, wool t-shirt, sun protectant long sleeve wool hoodie, either shorts or long pants, and sneakers) and then completely change when I arrive at work. I carry around deodorant and wipes in one of my panniers.

How do you reverse the process at the end of the day to get ready to ride home? The end of the day is my favorite part because I don't care what the weather is. I just change back into my commuting clothes and hustle home. Plus, the days when it is pouring outside allow me to tap into my inner 4-year-old-puddle-jumping-child!

What advice would you give to a fellow employee who is on the fence about using alternative transportation to commute? You don't know how it will be for you until you give it a go. Pick a weekend day and try it out – many times. Don't give up – it can be challenging at first and once you get used to it you may wonder (like I did) why you didn't start sooner. I used to be the one who would drive around looking for the closest parking spot; when I do drive my car now I park in the far spots and walk. It's amazing



Emily Allen, the community liaison between Off-Campus Life at Colorado State and Neighborhood Services for the City of Fort Collins. She bikes to work all year round and between her two offices. Photo by Kyle Dueshle.

how much my perspective has changed – on everything!

And when you start riding, please wear a helmet; attach a bell and use it (if not, use your voice and share when you are coming up on the left); use your bike lights – even during the day; if you

wear headphones, please make sure you can hear others on the trail; and wear shoes that attach completely to your feet.

Tell us your alternative commuting story at csulife@colostate.edu.



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