

Winter Bike Commuting Workshop –Jan 19, 2012

Our Panelists:

Megan Ramey-cycles roundtrip about 11 miles from Cambridge to our office at ABC on Broad Street. She also incorporates dropping off her daughter at her nanny before work.

David King-cycles roundtrip either 50 miles (if cycling all the way from Boxford) or drives to Lynnfield and cycles from there, about 30 miles roundtrip to Putnam Investments at One Post Office Square. Because the roads are so narrow in Boxford, David drives to Lynnfield during the winter months.

Essek Petrie- cycles roundtrip about 26 miles, he lives in North Grafton and drives to Weston, and cycles from Weston to HNTB offices in the Back Bay.

What to wear:

This is specific to each individual and you're comfort level in different temperatures, some people sweat more than others, some peoples' hands and feet get colder faster than others and it also depends on the distance you're travelling but you should try experimenting to see what works best for you. Generally, rainy weather is more of a nuisance then cold weather and investing in waterproof pants and jacket for the rain is very helpful.

Megan-wears skirts and dresses on her commute and finds she doesn't need to change at the office. She finds that if she bikes slowly and dresses appropriately with nothing on her back, she does not work up a sweat. On temps of 40 degrees and above, she will wear her wool coat and leather gloves. On rainy days she will wear: goretex jacket, rain boots, goretex pants, and waterproof gloves. On really cold days, she wears a [Lands End Stadium Squall jacket](#) that goes past her knees, insulated gloves, goretex pants, and ski goggles. Megan uses a [Bern helmet](#) and adds the Bern winter kit for her ears and chin and a visor with a facemask when it's less than 30 degrees out.

Essek tends to sweat a lot so he won't wear work clothes on his bike and he doesn't have showers at his office so he will wear athletic clothes and bring wet wipes, deodorant, and a towel to freshen up at the office. He uses a water-resistant shell for most of his riding, fleece pants (Performance sells inexpensive fleece, non-spandex, biking pants), cycling shoes with booties over his shoes which he found on [Performance Bike](#) for \$15 and just cut a hole in for his pedals, and a wicking long sleeve top along with a warmer long sleeve zip up thermal layer. Essek wears an inexpensive pair of ski type gloves from Marshalls. On really cold days he'll wear a balaclava under his helmet and he always tries to wear sunglasses to protect his eyes from freezing and from road debris. He thinks that you are only cold for the first two miles and then you warm up so he tries not to overdress.

David-wears 2 layers of shorts and leg warmers for temps under 60 degrees and tights for temps under 30. He thinks that having good feet circulation is important to keeping your feet warm. He will wear mittens on really cold days with charcoal hand warmers in his mittens and feet. Two wind-resistant jackets create some insulating dead air space and keep the cold from penetrating through. Overall, the audience mentioned that the [Performance](#) and [Nashbar](#) brands are a good value and investing in good rain gear and protecting your feet is important, for some people that's wearing a bootie over your cycling shoes and for others that's wearing waterproof hiking boots. Some people think having a beard keeps your face warm, you can even buy a [beard online](#) or try wrapping a scarf around your face or balaclava. You will also want something to protect your eyes-whether that's ski goggles, sunglasses, or motorcycle glasses from freezing up from the cold and visibility with the snow.

Outfitting your bike for the winter:

Megan uses a vintage Phillips three speed bike with [Schwalbe marathon pluses tires](#) and waterproof panniers from [Basil](#). She also recommends a bell, [fenders](#), and a rear rack. She has a sturdy wood basket from [Gamoh](#).

David K has a Fisher mountain bike that he has converted to a single speed with bullhorn handles, a small airhorn he has rigged on his bike, and uses [Specialized Armadillo Tires](#) which is a strong all around commuter tire. He will switch them out to [Nashbar](#) studded tires in heavy snow. David has also made a rear box for his rack out of a plastic container that his commuter bag fits in with reflective tape on his bike and his fenders.

Essek uses a cyclocross bike with stock tires. So far he hasn't had a problem or a need to switch out his tires. Just recently added [Nitelze Spoke Lit LED](#) (a light for your spokes) from LL Bean which provides good visibility to cars/other bikes approaching from crossing streets.

Necessities for the bike are: lots of lights, reflective tape if you have it, fenders or mud guard.

Maintenance of your bike:

It's a good idea to do monthly oiling of the chain or right after it rains, clean the bike monthly or if it needs it more often. Check tires for glass and other debris before every ride (glass imbedded in the tire will cause a puncture), Lube every couple of hundred miles or so, if your brakes freeze up, lube the cables with a thinner lube. Always check your brake pads for wear and tear. Snow and ice will take its toll on gears so it is recommended that you change gears less often, stick to one if you can or use a single speed bike. Chains will need to be replaced more often.

How to stay safe:

Be visible-winter means you are riding in the dark more often, make sure you have a good headlight, [Planet Bike lights](#) are good you can strap a flashlight on your handlebars and another light for your helmet. Wear a lot of reflectors on your clothing and ankles. Go slowly around ice

and be aware that roads that once had bike lanes will now be gone and 2-lane roads turn into 1.5. Remember on narrow roads you can take the whole lane, always try to ride assertively and predictably. David K recommends a helmet mirror.

Cyclists Law and Accidents:

Massachusetts law states that you need a front white light and a rear red light and the lights need to be on at least 30 minutes after sunset. Pedals are required to have reflectors but if you have the reflective ankle straps, that's ok too. Many cyclists go through pedestrian signals but technically, if you go through a pedestrian crosswalk, you should walk your bike through. If you break laws such as running through a red light, or cycling through a crosswalk and are hit, you may not receive any compensation for your injuries from the motorists' insurance. If you are doored by a car or cab, they are always at fault.

If you do get into an accident, always try to get the vehicle license plate number as a minimum, try to get witnesses names if you can.