

Ride for the Planet in May

By Kara Vernor

I often meet people who care about climate change or identify as environmentalists, but who do not regularly ride a bike for transportation. Yet, on-road transportation is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Napa County. Riding a bike to reduce these emissions is an easy choice for so many of our trips. Over one-quarter of all trips are under 2 miles, and around one-third are under 3 miles, a very bikeable distance. Our great weather and flat valley floor also make for comfortable riding conditions. And if that's not enough, e-bikes make getting around by bike more accessible than ever.

Perhaps some who are concerned about climate change feel that driving an electric vehicle is the best way to reduce transportation-related emissions. But the carbon footprint of an EV is 700% higher than that of an e-bike. Electric vehicles are important tools in mitigating climate change, but experts recognize that EVs alone will not get us to our greenhouse gas reduction goals for transportation. Walking, biking, and transit are essential pieces of the puzzle as well.

If you're interested in shifting some of your short car trips to bike trips, May is the perfect time to start. It's Bike Month in Napa County, filled with opportunities, resources, and support to get riding.

One place to start is by making a commitment. If bicycling feels unfamiliar or pushes you a little outside your comfort zone, a commitment can help you follow through. That's what the Napa County Bicycle Coalition's online **Pledge to Ride** is for. When you pledge to ride your bike this May, you're not only setting an intention, but also automatically entered into NCBC's weekly prize drawing for bike-related gear – things like baskets and bags to help you carry groceries or other cargo. All just for taking the pledge.

Do you need a bike or some gear to get started? Come to **Bikefest** on Sunday, May 3, at Oxbow Commons. You'll find great new and used bikes, plus a wide range of accessories to help you haul cargo. If you are fortunate enough to own an expensive bike but worry about theft, you might find a solid used commuter bike for around \$150 – something you can ride around town with less anxiety.

If you just need to dust off the bike you already have, stop by the free **Ask a Mechanic** booth at Bikefest. Local bike shops also offer professional tune-ups and more in-depth services, and can make sure your bike fits you properly. An ill-fitting bike is not only less safe, but it can make riding much harder and less enjoyable.

Still feeling uncertain? NCBC's **free bike coach** is here for you. Her sole focus is helping people swap some car trips for bike trips. She can help you map and practice routes, taking advantage of Napa Valley's many lower-volume, lower-speed roads – as well as cut-throughs available only to cyclists and pedestrians – so you can minimize time on busy roads. She can also help you set up your bike for cargo, explain how to reduce the risk of theft, review the rules of the road, and even walk you through changing a flat tire.

A great day to ride is May 14th, this year's **Bike to Work & School Day**, part of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Bay Area-wide Bike to Wherever Days program.

Around 40 “energizer stations” throughout the county – hosted by schools, businesses, public agencies, and nonprofits – will greet bicycle commuters with snacks, bike lights, tote bags, and plenty of encouragement.

Riding a bike is one of the most direct and tangible things we can do to reduce our carbon footprint, one trip at a time. Plus, psst, it’s super fun! This May, take advantage of the support available for going by bike. More information about all of these events and services can be found at napabike.org and napabikefest.org. We look forward to seeing you out on two wheels.

Kara Vernor is Executive Director of the Napa County Bicycle Coalition, committed to making bicycling accessible, safe, and convenient for the entire community.

Photo credit: Napa County Bicycle Coalition

Photo caption: Costco shopping by cargo bike

