

The Future is on Two Wheels

By Trevor Sweener

What is the problem?

As most people know, there is a global issue on this planet. We as humans have not been giving the beautiful planet that we live on any help. As humans, we have only deteriorated the places that we call home. Almost everything that we have and use on a day-to-day basis has had a negative effect on the Earth. As we know, there is no alternate planetary option to go to. We are stuck here with Earth and all the problems we have created. Global Warming is causing major factors that might lead to the downfall of human life on Earth. The CO₂ emissions that we produce everyday from engines are slowly deteriorating the land around us. Mass deforestation only increases the number of emissions that build up. So how do we slow or stop this global problem. The solution is a simple design and an overall easy to use mode of transportation.

Bicycles

Many people have ridden a bike or seen one. These genius machines are easy to use and a great way to move around with the least amount of effort. A bicycle, also called a bike or cycle, is a human-powered, pedal-driven, single-track vehicle, having two wheels attached to a frame, one behind the other. This is the best mode of transportation. It wont move you from one side of the US to the other, although it can, but rather it makes all the smaller trips less dependent on automobiles and public transportation. The large number of emissions saved just by removing cars for 5-mile trips would be enormous.

Why Bicycles?

Bicycles are regularly praised for their energy efficiency and potential contribution to the development of more sustainable cities, but what exactly are the benefits, and how do they help cities? And what about the environmental impact and benefits of the infrastructure required for cycling in the city to thrive?

Cycling has become popular for a variety of reasons. It helps to reduce the risk of diabetes, some forms of cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and depression. Research from the United Kingdom found that cycling to work is linked with a 45 per cent lower risk of developing cancer, and a 46 per cent lower risk of cardiovascular disease, compared to commuting by car or public transport.



Forty percent of all trips from home are less than two miles in length – perfect distance for bicycling versus driving. Bicycles can be ridden by people of nearly all ages. I have personally seen bike riders from toddlers to age 90+. Bicycles provide humans with low impact exercise, health, and fitness benefits without adversely impacting the Earth. Bicycles ride quietly, which limits noise pollution and disturbances to nature. Bicycles encourage human interaction, communication, and connectivity. Bicycles are affordable and accessible to people with limited means. Bicycles do not require large expanses of impervious surfaces to be parked and/or stored. Bicycles are easily adaptable for nearly all types of riding surfaces and climates.

How would this help preserve Earth?

Switching from a car to a bicycle saves 150 g of CO₂ per kilometer. Each 7 km by bicycle will save an emission of 1 kilogram of CO₂ as compared to the same distance covered by car. In a five-year period, Dutch people avoided 1.41 million tons of CO₂ each year through cycling. This saving is equivalent to 54.4 million trees being planted each year. The climate value of cycling in the wards of Stone Town, Zanzibar was estimated to be 1,062.4 tons of CO₂ per year, which corresponds to US\$20,994, if it were traded on the carbon markets. An amount approximately equivalent to 10 times the average income in the country.

A bicycle's environmental sustainability is about more than just lower energy requirements. For each person who switches from a private, polluting mode of transport to a bicycle – a zero emission form of transport when in use – a city experiences reduced carbon emissions and improved air quality. Should enough people switch to cycling, the benefits become more tangible for those in the city.

Every person who switches from driving a car to riding a bike ends up with a reduced personal carbon footprint, and lower carbon emissions. If cycling becomes a real and compelling alternative to other forms of transport – as it is in some cities already – then achieving such a modal shift would be more likely. An improved bicycle network is an integral part of this and, if combined with a city's other cycling needs, improved air quality could become a reality.

Pollution is about more than just emissions. Noise levels in cities can also be considered a pollutant, with associated long term health risks: Noise can increase the levels of stress hormones such as cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenalin in the body, even during sleep. The longer these hormones stay in circulation around the bloodstream, the more likely they are to cause life-threatening physiological problems.

Conclusion

Bicycles are the mode of transportation for the foreseeable future as they have almost zero downside other than humans not wanting to be physically active. Bicycles have zero emissions and take very little to build and maintain. They are cheaper than even the cheapest cars, they last longer than your average car, and they do not constantly need to be recharged or refueled at a station. Human power is the way of the past and now the way of the future. They save the planet one pedal at a time.



References

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