

biking to work

The concept of biking to work has picked up speed in recent years as employees look for greener commuting options or a way to sneak in a workout.

The number of bicycle commuters increased by 62% from 2000 to 2013, and 43 of the 51 largest U.S. cities hosted Bike to Work Day events in 2010, according to the League of American Bicyclists. May is National Bike Month and includes Bike to Work Week (May 15-19) and Bike to Work Day (May 19).

Some employers are getting into gear by offering benefits and facilities to support and encourage their workers to swap their four-wheelers for two-wheelers.

Bicycle commuters who work for global pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly and Company in Indianapolis, Indiana have access to a “bike hub” at the corporate fitness center where they can store their bikes inside. “You can ride right into the building, hang your bike up on the rack, go into the locker room, shower and walk to our campus,” said Ryan Burke, associate consultant for employee service, wellness and productivity at Lilly.

For added convenience, the company also offers outdoor bike lockers that allow employees to store their bikes near the entrance of select office buildings. Additional locker rooms throughout the campus offer access to showers.

Even employees who don’t ride their bikes to work can take a spin during the day. The Lilly bike hub has 30 shared bikes available to check out at no cost and to pedal to lunch

or for an exercise break. Lilly also has a cycling club with more than 150 members.

Burke has been riding his bike to work since 2002 and said the company’s support of bicycling is “one of many different avenues to try and get our employees engaged in well-being.” It’s also a good recruitment and retention tool, he added. “We need to provide the things that our employees say they want and need so that we can continue to be competitive as we’re looking to attract and retain top talent.”

One of the crucial elements of being a bike-friendly workplace is being in a community that also supports biking through trails and bike lanes, Burke noted. In Indianapolis, several former railroad corridors have been converted into paved paths, and there are many bike lanes and trails throughout the city.

“It makes riding to work even more doable,” he said.

On its website, the League of American Bicyclists says bike-friendly workplaces have the following attributes:

- **Encouragement:** Incentives such as commuter tax benefits or cash incentives are available. Employers offer a program to guarantee rides home in case of emergency, organize staff rides and also support efforts to create a bicycle-friendly community.
- **Engineering:** Offer shared bikes to use for noncommute trips; secure, convenient and high-quality bike parking; showers, lockers and changing areas; a repair area; and easy accessibility to the business through dedicated bikeways or low-traffic streets.
- **Education:** Provide information on bike safety skills, bike maps and an on-staff cycling instructor and encourage and provide opportunities for nonbikers to learn about how to safely operate on the road with cyclists and how to reduce distracted driving.
- **Evaluation and planning:** Set goals to increase ridership, such as Bike to Work Day participation; have a coordinator for bike events; conduct surveys on employee commuting and barriers to biking; and collect internal data on bike commuting to help with benchmarking and setting goals.

Eli Lilly and Company in Indianapolis, Indiana has been recognized as a bike-friendly workplace. Members of the company’s cycling club are pictured on the Lilly campus.

