

Biking to Work Interview Transcript

Virgil

It's good to hear you biked in today! Was it an easy ride or did you run into complications?

Jeffrey

No, it was an easy ride. I take the Rock Creek Trail; it's really easy. Thanks.

Virgil

Good, good! So, why did you begin biking to work so frequently?

Jeffrey

I exercise daily and I find that when I get to work I've finished half my day's exercise. *laughter* The biking adds about 20 minutes to my commute. It's a way to get exercise and it's a way to enjoy the ride in. When I drive in, there's a lot of traffic and stress and everything. When I'm biking on the trail, it's just really pleasant.

Virgil

Nice, that does sound good. Why don't we dive into that a little more? Could you tell me some more of the upsides of biking outside of environmental things? So, you said it's good for exercise, it's good for stress relief; has it helped in meeting others?

Jeffrey

Not as much meeting others. In terms of the upsides: at the end of the day, I have a job that's very busy. I have a lot of employees that I'm in charge of. At the end of the day, it really relieves my stress, meaning I have an hour bike ride home. I get home and a lot of the adrenaline that's been built up during the day and stress is relieved just by getting out and exercising.

When I'm on the Rock Creek Trail, I'm off the road and I'm not breathing in all the car fumes. I don't have to deal with the traffic. Really, the major thing with me for biking is that, if it's an hour each way, I have an hour to actually think. At work, I am getting literally hundreds of emails every day and people are in and out of my office and everything. [But with biking,] I have an hour each way to think about research I'm doing and other things. Since I've been biking, I have these two hours [each] day to think about things, which is something very precious to me.

Virgil

That's awesome! [So,] biking [has] a lot of good upsides, but are there any challenges that you face? Any sort of difficulties? Maybe getting started or even nowadays. Any rough patches that you run into?

Jeffrey

Yeah so, the major issue for me is I have a lot of meetings at 8:30 or 9AM. For me, it's making sure I can get to those meetings on time. But what's interesting is, when I drive in, there can be accidents on the road, and it's unpredictable [for] exactly how long it's going to take to get in every morning. [However,] when I bike to the trail, I've yet to have an interruption in terms of biking in that has delayed me.

Virgil

Huh!

Jeffrey

It's very predictable in the trail; for me, it's *exactly* an hour to get in, plus or minus minutes depending on traffic lights, whereas when I drive in, there can be traffic incidents, road work, things like that, and it's actually less predictable. As long as I get to the trail at the right time, it's very predictable and I get to my meetings on time.

Virgil

Oh, nice. That's pretty good.

Jeffrey

Yeah. The major challenge I face is in terms of when Daylight Savings Time ends. When I have very short days, I don't like the bike in the dark.

Virgil

Mmm...

Jeffrey

It gets dark at 5PM, [and] it's extremely difficult for me to leave work before 4PM. *laughter*

Virgil

laughter Right!

Jeffrey

So that, and the weather of course.

Virgil

Right.

Jeffrey

I never used to look at the weather like I do, twice [per] day before I leave to go biking. So I do pay a lot more attention to the weather. Yep.

Virgil

Well, nice. It seems like, holistically, a good thing to turn to from how you're describing it! What would you say to someone who's curious about starting to bike to work for themselves?

Jeffrey

I would say: try it once and you won't realize what you've been missing. Until I read about Bike to Work Day and tried it, I just thought: "it's gonna take too long", "it's gonna be too much preparation", "it's going to be difficult to do this". And I tried it once [on] Bike to Work Day and got hooked right away. It was so enjoyable and it [only] delayed my commute by 20 minutes. So if I get up 20 minutes earlier every day, I have a lovely ride in instead of sitting in traffic.

Virgil

Hmm!

Jeffrey

So try it once and see how it works for you.

Virgil

Well, that's nice, yeah! Thank you for sharing all of those insights. Whenever I go into these interviews, I go in with a limited perspective. There are sometimes questions that I could ask that I wouldn't know to ask. Is there anything else about this topic that you'd like to share it all?

Jeffrey

Only that I wished I'd started biking sooner. Again, I thought being 10 miles away was going to be too much time and unpredictability. But once I tried it once, I just wish I'd been doing it for the first 20 years I was at NIH instead of the last 10 years I've been at NIH. *laughter*

Virgil

Well, that's awesome! Fantastic, thank you so much for sharing!

Jeffrey

You're very welcome! Obviously, there are environmental things and I just wish more people gave it a try. Thanks for talking with me today.