

Transcript

Virgil

Welcome, Caleb. First question here, what do you like about biking?

Caleb

So, I've been biking in one way or another since I was four years old or so. [What] really kind of got me interested in it was the actual bike itself and a lot of the hardware that goes into it. I thought it was a really neat machine. And so, I'm pretty, well-versed in the mechanics side of it too.

But now, more so, what I love about it most is: I would describe it as one of the more freeing activities, and like cardio activities. So, people will run. People will, you know, do all these different things, but it's a great way to get exercise and also go out and see a city, or see a new place, or look at the season change, or all of these different things.

There's definitely a meditative component there for me personally; that's why I do it so much.

Virgil

It's a pretty interesting perspective, yeah! Getting out there and enjoying nature, and also that cardio aspect - I like it.

As we're coming up on Bike to Work Day, some people might be thinking, "yeah, the meditative and that sort of thing, that's neat", but they would want to know the meat of it. Why do you think it would be important to bike to work specifically?

Caleb

There's one main one that I'm a huge advocate for, which is sort of the environmental side to it. Where you have rarely that much carpooling to work. Buses are great, but if you're just one person to a car driving back and forth from work every day, it's a lot. I think it's really important to make your contribution, especially in the spring and summer and even into the fall months. It's not a huge sacrifice, but you're actually adding a lot. Or in this case, reducing a lot on the emissions front.

The second one that's a little tangential to that is the community aspect. For me personally, I've met people through NIH on my ride to work. I bike – I *try* to bike – almost every day in the in the spring and summer. That doesn't always happen. But it's a great way to associate yourself. I mean, a lot of the people here are working really long hours, pretty high-pressure stuff. Meeting colleagues doing the same thing as you: [biking is] a great way to do that. So, the community aspect as well comes into play.

Virgil

I feel like a lot, when you're working at NIH, can kind of get siloed, so it's nice to meet other folks.

Caleb

Absolutely.

Virgil

I would say that's a pretty interesting benefit; I want to dive into that a little bit more. What are some benefits and also challenges that you think there are associated with biking to work?

Caleb

I'll start with a few of the challenges and leave it on that slightly sweeter note. The main ones that come to mind are weather, obviously. It's really not fun to bike to work when it's raining. It's also not the safest thing to do – or snowing. You do have to monitor that and plan accordingly and make sure.

Also, road quality. On top of other drivers being pretty dangerous, you have to be aware of construction and things like that [which] really prevent you from going on your typical path. [It] can be a lot of work and an unpleasant surprise if you don't check it beforehand.

The other thing, to speak more to the challenges, and I think NIH and the Bike Club specifically is doing a really great job at this, is: places to lock your bike and showers as well. So, you show up to work, [and] depending on how long your bike [route] is,

you don't want to be start your day really sweaty. You probably want to take a shower, so having those resources available [is important].

Then yeah, locking it. People steal bikes. I've had bikes stolen. I've seen bikes stolen. So, make sure that you have a good lock and a good place to do it.

To the benefits, I'd already spoken to a few of these, but you mentioned how siloed NIH is, even within institutes, there are sub-departments there and you don't necessarily always interact with these other people. Whereas this is everyone under the roof NIH, [they] can overlap here. It's a great way to meet people you might not otherwise talk to and maybe even become friends or colleagues.

I'm not sure if everyone would relate to this, but I feel unbelievably good and energized after starting the day with coffee and a quick bike ride to work. So that's definitely a big plus, and if you can work through the challenges that I had mentioned previously.

Those are that the Bike Club is really working to basically give information or reduce the amount of logistics that someone has to go through in order to bike to work on a regular basis. Trying to get those in check. But yeah, I think it's a great, great thing.

Virgil

I feel like coffee and a bike ride is a lot healthier than coffee and donuts in the morning, so maybe that might be a good one to go for.

Caleb

Yeah, definitely!

Virgil

We've mentioned it quite a bit here; the Bike Club. I wanna dig into that a little bit. You are the president of said club. What's it like being the president of the Bike Club?

Caleb

Yeah, sure! So that's a pretty new role for me in the last month, but I've been loosely involved in things. [I've been] in information sessions gauging what they do for quite

some time. Now, on top of the existing events we have like the Bike to Work – part of I think they gave me that role is because I'm really interested in that community building side of [the Bike Club]. So finding people that either have never biked and are interested, or bike a lot and don't necessarily know that this exists.

Doing something both as a more regular 'getting people to bike to work', but also outside of that, like after work or on the weekends. [Having] club rides that are not these big, scary, fast things, but just a great way for people to decompress a bit. Meet other people that work at NIH that also bike. Really [build a] community-forward, open and accepting environment.

The people that are there come from a lot of different departments, do a lot of different things – that's fantastic. Everyone I've met has been great. I'm already having a lot of fun. I think there's gonna be some new events that the club's going to do this spring quite soon that are gonna be open to anyone and everyone. [We] encourage people to try it, definitely.

Virgil

If somebody was interested or curious about the Bike Club in any way, what would you say to them? What would you tell them?

Caleb

I say this because I experienced this at first, especially in DC, is that there can be this impression that cycling in any format is a really exclusive, high-strung, competitive community. And there are people like that. And that is not us.

That is not the goal here. The goal is not how fast can you go. The goal is: can we get people together outside that have some interest in biking?

Join the [listserv](#), emails will go out through there. But also track the [website](#) and keep an eye out for any events that you might be interested in, whether that's Bike to Work Day, whether that's DIY how to maintain your bike mechanic stuff, information about weather, road closures, new bike lock stations on campus, things like that.

There's a lot of good information there. The people, myself and everyone else, are really passionate about this. So we're trying to make it as fun and open as possible.

Virgil

I wish you the best of luck and I really do hope that this article will help people at least start biking to work, if not go ahead and join the bike club too.