



## Bicycling for Transportation

Photo: Krysia Haag

**Bicycles provide a functional, practical, and cost-efficient means of transportation for many Georgia residents. Commuting, shopping, and running errands can all be accomplished quickly and easily, especially within distances of 3 miles.**

### Advantages of bike commuting:

**Better overall fitness.** With recent studies pointing to lack of exercise and obesity as serious health hazards, bike commuting is an easy way to work exercise into your daily routine.

Over 22% of all motor vehicle trips Americans take are less than one mile long, and 50% of the working population commutes five miles or less to work, an easily bikeable distance.

Source: [www.bikemonth.com](http://www.bikemonth.com)

**Feel better.** A cardiovascular workout before getting into the office will have you feeling more energized when you arrive at work. And as your overall fitness level improves, you'll find yourself feeling better in general.

**Save money.** The financial rewards are significant. AAA (American Automobile Association) estimates the cost per mile to drive an automobile in 2009 is 62 cents, which does not make financial sense for short distances. On a bike, you will not be paying for gas or parking each day.

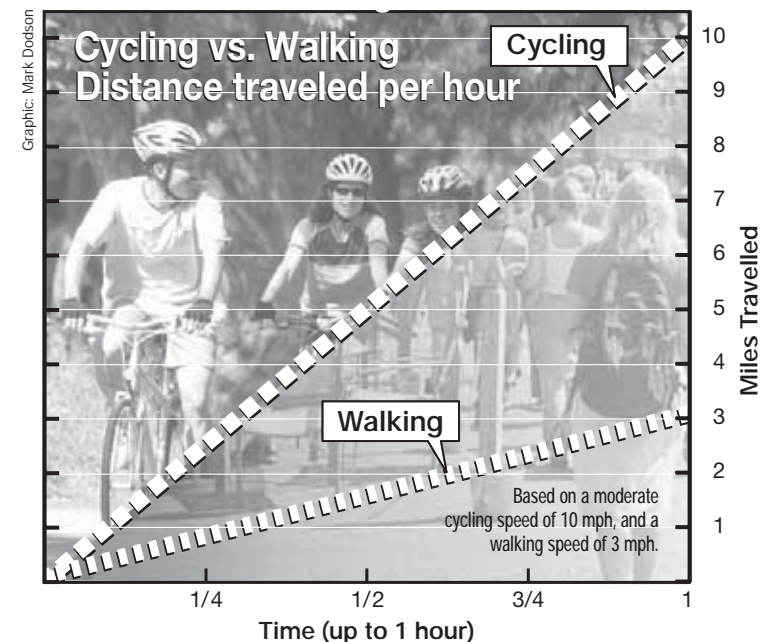
**Better for the environment.** More bicycles being used for transportation result in fewer cars on the road, which helps improve air quality, can reduce traffic congestion, and conserves our natural resources.

**No parking hassles or expense.** You'll likely be parking close to your building or destination and won't need to pay for parking.

**Get to your destination faster than walking.** A cyclist going at a moderate pace can cover ground quickly – arriving at a destination almost as quickly as an automobile in an urban environment, and considerably faster than walking.

### What type of bicycle is best?

Any type of bike will do, so long as it is equipped properly to comfortably haul you and your gear. Consider how far you have to travel, what you'll need to carry, and in what conditions you'll be riding. Fat knobby tires that are common on mountain bikes are not ideal for paved streets, so a hybrid is a good choice if you're looking for the stability of an off-road bike that retains some of the quickness of a road bike. Several manufacturers also now offer "commuting bikes," with fenders, kickstands, locks and lights included as standard equipment.



### Commuting essentials

- **Helmet.** Don't ride anywhere without it.
- **Tire repair kit:** a pump, extra tube, tire levers and a patch kit – the basics for fixing a flat. Some basic bike tools could come in handy also.
- If you'll be riding at dusk or at night, a **white headlight** and **red taillight** are essential.
- **Rear-view mirror.** Great for monitoring traffic coming up behind you.
- **Bell or horn.** Good for warning pedestrians or other road users.
- **Lock.** Lock to a sturdy bike parking rack or heavy fixed object. Never leave your bike unlocked, especially if you will not be able to see it. A u-lock is the most secure, but cable locks will deter many thieves.
- **Bright colored clothing.** This will make you more visible to motorists and other road users. Dark colors or earth tones tend to blend into the landscape and make you difficult to see.
- **Water bottle.** Essential for all riding.



Several manufacturers now offer bikes built for commuting, like this one, featuring fenders and a chainguard, plus a built-in lock, a headlight, and a rear rack.

Photo: Krysia Haag. Trek bicycle courtesy of @ the Hub Bicycles, Athens.

### Useful accessories

- **Rear rack.** A versatile piece of equipment to which a wide assortment of panniers or a basket can be attached.
- **Panniers or bags.** Many different styles are available, depending on what you need to carry and how much protection from the elements is required.
- **Fenders.** Will keep you dryer and cleaner if you're commuting in wet conditions.
- **Cycling computer.** Track your mileage, speed, and time.
- **Lights.** A white headlight and red tail light are a must if you'll be commuting at night or in low light conditions. Visibility is crucial to safe commuting.

Generally, any bike can be outfitted for commuting, provided it can be set up to comfortably transport you and accommodate anything you need to carry on a regular basis. There are some photos of bikes equipped with several types of racks and panniers later in this section.

### What to wear

Dress for conditions appropriate for the weather and terrain you'll be riding in. This will vary quite a bit from season to season. The mileage and amount of time you'll be exposed to the elements should also be considered.

There are many new "high tech" synthetic fabrics on the market. These are nylon and polyester mixes that are designed to wick perspiration away from the body and dry quickly, which cotton does not do as well.

For short commutes in warm weather, a t-shirt, shorts, and possibly a light jacket may be adequate. In the spring and fall, it may even be possible to commute in your work clothes. Try some different combinations and see what works best for you.

**Dress for visibility.** As mentioned elsewhere in this manual, visibility is important, so always wear a bright colored outer layer. Yellow, orange, and neon green are the best choices. White is preferable to dark colors and earth tones, which tend to blend into the scenery. Red can be difficult to see in low light conditions that occur at dawn or dusk.



Photo: Mark Dodson

Increase your visibility with bright colored clothing.

## You can commute by bicycle

Bike commuting is enjoyable. It's good for your health and the environment. The first big step for many would-be bicycle commuters is to overcome the excuses and get started. Here are some frequently heard excuses for not biking and how they can be overcome.

**I'm out of shape.** Start out with some short rides and gradually work up to some longer distances. You'll probably find destinations within a mile or two quite easy. Once you are comfortable with short trips, you'll find it easier to go farther as your overall fitness and confidence level increases.

**My workplace is too far away.** You may be surprised at how efficiently and quickly you can cover several miles. Trips fewer than three miles will probably seem quite easy. Trips of 4-8 miles may seem more challenging, but you may find you can cover this distance in not much more time than you do by car.

If riding the entire distance to work is too much, consider a "combo commute," combining biking with a bus or train ride, or riding your bike to a "park and ride" lot to join a carpool.

**It's too hot (or cold).** Riding comfortably is a matter of dressing properly for the conditions and altering your style of riding. In the heat of summer, you're going to get sweaty. Leaving early in the morning and riding slowly, especially up hills, will help. For winter riding, there are new fabrics that can be layered to let you ride comfortably in very cold temperatures. Most local bike shops have an extensive selection of cycling clothing.

**I don't have a good bicycle.** The latest in high-tech equipment isn't a requirement. A used or inexpensive bicycle in good working condition that fits you properly will be perfectly adequate to get around on, especially for short in-town trips.



Photos: Krystia Haag

Georgia is getting more cycling-friendly roads with wide shoulders or bike lanes.

### Planning your route

There are several factors that go into planning a route. You'll want to consider the terrain and traffic volume. The route that works best for cycling will probably be one that's somewhat different than what you'd choose to drive.

Get started by mapping out a route. A city or county map is a useful reference. Some Georgia cities also have maps available showing bike facilities and bike-friendly routes. Once you've settled on a route, plan to do a test ride on a weekend. Carry a load similar to what you'd have with you on an actual commuting day. This will give you a general idea of what it's like and how much time to allow for the trip.

Traffic patterns may vary somewhat depending on the day of the week or time of year. For

example, if your route takes you past schools where students are being dropped off by their parents or school buses, you may encounter considerably more traffic at certain times of day. So when school is out for the summer, there will be fewer vehicles on the road, at least in the vicinity of the schools. A stretch of road that is headed directly into the setting sun in the late afternoon hours may seriously compromise visibility. You might want to consider a slightly different route during this period.

Even after commuting regularly, you may think of ways to alter or improve your route. Try different variations to see what works best.

### Packing for the trip

Depending on the distance and conditions you'll be commuting in, you may want to pack your work clothes and change into them when you arrive at your destination.



Photos: Mark Dodson

Panniers or bags attached to a rear rack provide versatile and expandable carrying capacity.

Clothing can be kept neat by folding or rolling it, then inserting it into a closed bag or pannier. If you'll be carrying it in a basket or open bag, insert it into a large plastic bag that you can fold over. Pack dress shoes in a separate bag. This will keep them clean and dry.

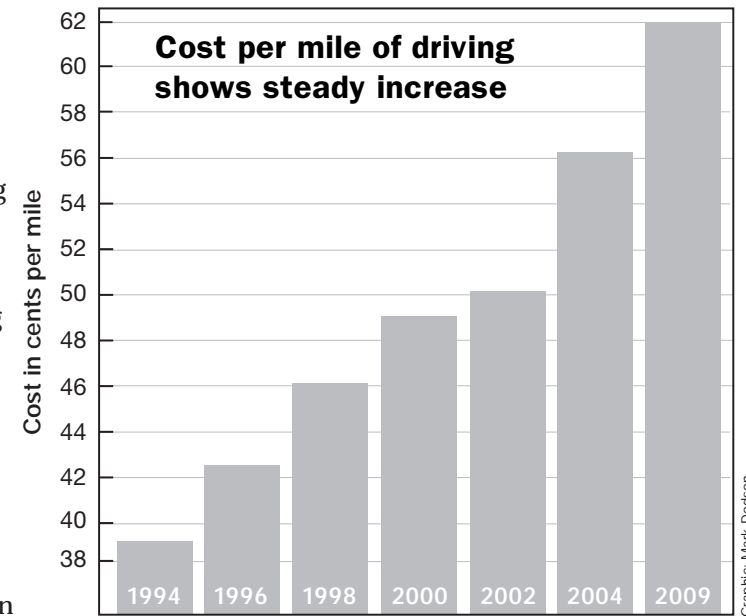
Another alternative is to deliver or drop off your work clothes ahead of time. This can be a good option for those who have a lot to carry each day and have space available to store the clothes.

Backpacks can be functional for light items; however, in warm weather or on longer trips many riders find them too hot, as the weight pressing on your back will tend to make you perspire. If you'll need the pack at your destination, a good solution is to equip your bike with an open bag or pannier that can accommodate it on your bike rather than your body.

Messenger bags, made popular by urban bike messengers, are popular among some commuters. Some riders find these are a more comfortable alternative to the standard two-strap backpack.

### Cleaning up

Some workplaces, but not many, have access to shower facilities. If yours does not, there are still other effective ways to freshen up once



Source: AAA. Cost per mile estimates compiled using a sampling of vehicles and is based on average annual vehicle depreciation, and estimated costs of insurance, fuel, tires, and routine maintenance.

Graphic: Mark Dodson

you arrive at the office. A small towel and a washcloth are useful if you only have access to a rest room sink. Baby wipes and deodorant work well for some riders for cleaning up in warm weather.

### Shopping

A commuting bike is also useful for shopping and errands. Rear pannier-style bags are available that are suitable for carrying grocery bags. Even fairly bulky items can be carried efficiently on a bike. If you are stacking items, the heaviest and bulkiest items travel best at the bottom. Fruit or more delicate items can ride on top, and lightweight durable items can be strapped or bungeed.



Photo: Byron Rushing

Bicycle racks are convenient and secure for parking and locking a bike.

### Parking your bike

Bike parking is often in short supply at many work places. Finding a good parking spot may involve some creativity on your part. If there are no racks or designated bike parking available, consider the following options:

- **Inside your office or work place.** Check with your office management to see if you can store your bike in your office, or a storage or break room. If not, be resourceful and find a good parking spot nearby.

### Bike to Work Events

**May is National Bike Month.** Sponsored by the League of American Bicyclists, it also includes **National Bike-to-Work Day** and **Bike-to-Work Week**. There are frequently bike-to-work events held in cities with active cycling advocacy groups during the month.

- **Look for spots in well-lighted areas** where there is lots of activity. Avoid dark or remote locations.
- **Bike racks** do exist in some locations. The U-shaped racks are common in newer facilities. These are secure and allow you to easily attach your bike with a bike lock.
- If there are no bike racks, secure your bike to a **railing or sturdy object**. There are places this will not be permitted, so try to check ahead of time to get an OK.
- Even if there is good outdoor parking available, also try to find a good covered area for days when there may be rain or bad weather.
- **Remove equipment.** If your bike will be unattended for a long time, consider removing the seat, front tire, headlights, or other expensive equipment that is detachable.



Photo: Krysia Haag

A U-Lock provides the best security for your bike, especially when attached to a bike rack.

**Locks:** Always lock your bike by securing it to a solid, heavy object, like a post or pillar. Be wary of signposts that could be pulled out of the ground. Small trees are not good options either. “U” style locks are the most secure, although cable locks will deter many thieves. If you have an expensive bike that you’re leaving in a high-risk area, consider using multiple locks, such as a “U” lock and cable combined.

Take stock of the facilities available at or near your workplace and determine what is most workable for you.

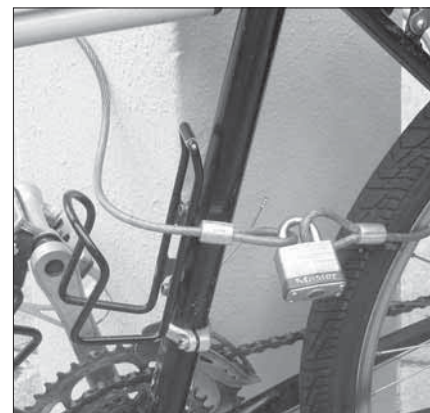


Photo: Mark Dodson

A cable lock provides less security, but allows you to tie up to larger objects.

### Safe Commuting

Many would-be bicycle commuters have some concerns about riding in traffic. By following Georgia traffic laws and taking a few basic precautions, risks are reduced significantly.

- **Be visible to motorists.** Bright colored clothing is a must. It’ll help to ensure that other motorists see you. Lights and reflectors are a must in low light conditions or at night.
- **Ride in a predictable manner.** Maintain a steady line and do not weave in and out of traffic. This helps motorists to predict your course and pass safely.
- **Interact and communicate with motorists.** Use hand signals to show your intent to turn. Make eye contact at intersections. Wave and smile when a motorist yields or lets you through.

### Some good resources for bicycle commuting and Bike-to-Work events:

**League of American Bicyclists**

[www.bikeleague.org](http://www.bikeleague.org)

**National Bike Month**

[www.bikemonth.com/](http://www.bikemonth.com/)

**Paul Dorn’s Bicycle Commuting Tips**

[www.runmuki.com/commute/](http://www.runmuki.com/commute/)

**A-Train Trip Planner**

[www.trip.atltransit.com](http://www.trip.atltransit.com)

Georgia's largest transit system, metro Atlanta's MARTA, has bicycle racks on all of its buses.

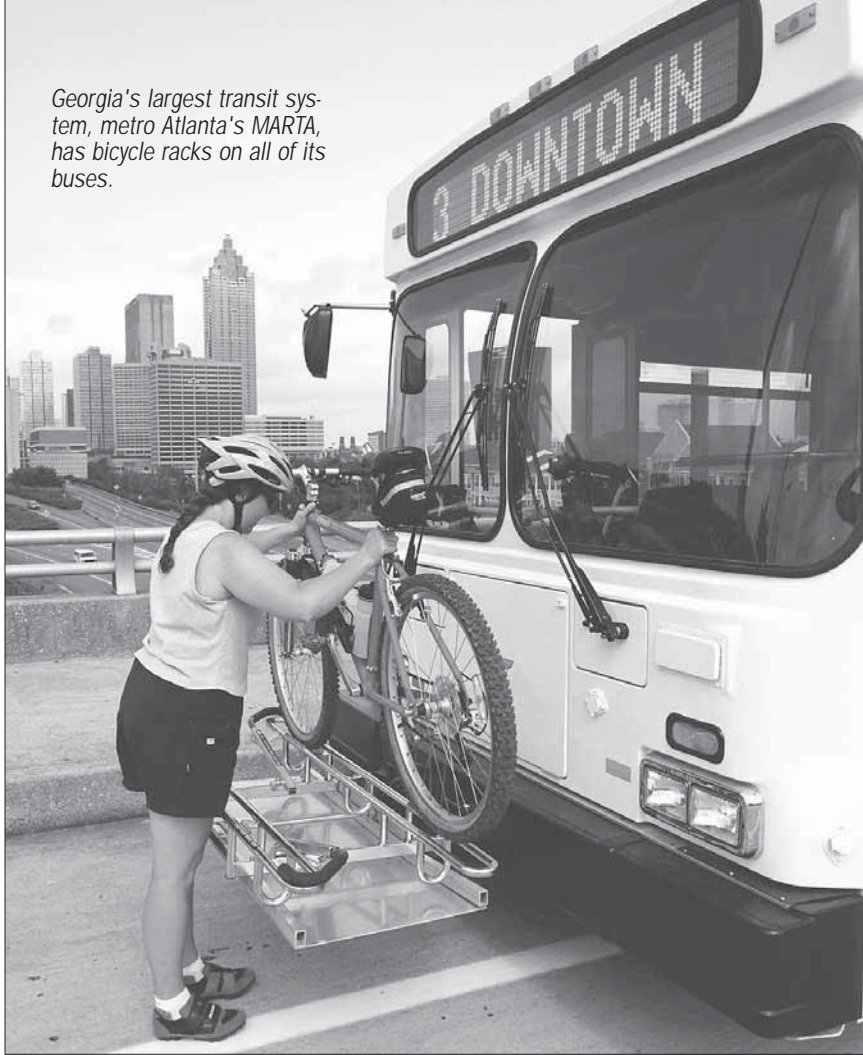


Photo: Kelly Mills, MARTA

## Bikes on Trains and Buses

Many Georgia Transit systems now accommodate bicycles, mostly with front-mounted bike racks. Georgia's largest transit system, MARTA (in the Atlanta area) also allows bikes on the trains.

Combining cycling with transit is an efficient alternative to commuting without an automobile, especially on days with bad weather in the forecast or air quality issues. The additional mileage you can cover quickly on a bus or train increases your bicycle commuting

range and also reduces some of the limitations you may encounter due to weather. For example, on a winter morning you could take a bus most of the way to your destination, then bike home during the afternoon hours when it is warmer. Or use transit to cover long stretches where terrain or traffic conditions would make cycling more challenging. In summer, take public transit home when it is too hot or air quality is poor.

A bike rack accommodating 2 or 3 bikes on the front of a bus is the most common set up. The photos

on pages 48-49 show the steps for loading your bike on a front rack. Bicycles are permitted on board MARTA rail cars at all times during the day. The first and last cars of a train are usually least crowded.

### Transit tips for cyclists

- The bus driver may be able to provide some assistance if it's your first time using the rack or you are having difficulty.
- Do not leave your helmet or anything loosely attached to your bike. Bags or panniers that are not permanently attached should be removed.
- When you arrive at your destination, be sure you have all your belongings and mention to the driver that you'll be removing your bike.
- Load your bike on the rack furthest back so that riders at



Photo: Preston Tyree

Bikes are permitted in the MARTA rail cars.

later stops can load their bikes more easily.

- Give pedestrians space on train platforms and when entering the doors with your bike. Hold on to your bike in the rail car to keep it from moving or rolling into other passengers. Do not block exits on the train with your bike.

### GEORGIA TRANSIT SYSTEMS THAT ACCOMMODATE BICYCLES

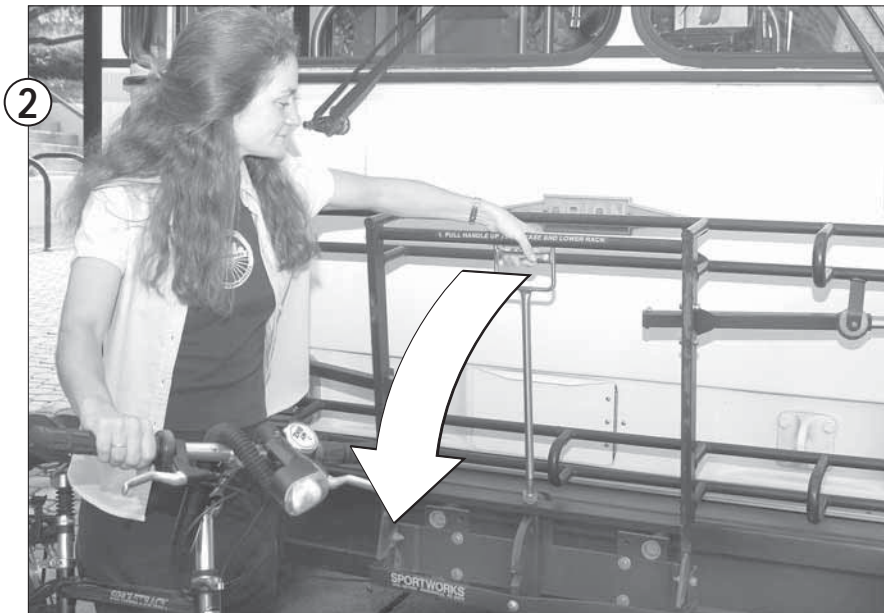
Atlanta	MARTA	<a href="http://www.itsmarta.com">www.itsmarta.com</a>
Atlanta metro	Xpress	<a href="http://www.xpressga.com">www.xpressga.com</a>
Athens	Athens Transit	<a href="http://www.athenstransit.com">www.athenstransit.com</a>
Rome	Rome Transit	<a href="http://www.romefloyd.com/EnrichingLife/Transit/tabid/105/Default.aspx">www.romefloyd.com/EnrichingLife/Transit/tabid/105/Default.aspx</a>
Columbus	METRA	<a href="http://www.columbusga.org/Metra/">www.columbusga.org/Metra/</a>
Cobb County	Cobb Community Transit	<a href="http://www.cobbdot.org">www.cobbdot.org</a>
Emory	Emory Univeristy	<a href="http://www.epcs.emory.edu/alltransp/">www.epcs.emory.edu/alltransp/</a>
Gwinnett County	Gwinnett County Transit	<a href="http://www.gctransit.com">www.gctransit.com</a>
Savannah	Chatham Area Transit	<a href="http://www.catchacat.org">www.catchacat.org</a>
Amtrak		<a href="http://www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer/Page1241267362028/1237405732517">www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer/Page1241267362028/1237405732517</a>

## Using front loaded bike racks on buses

Follow these steps to use a front-loaded bus rack. The entire fleet of Athens Transit buses (Athens, GA) shown here is equipped with racks.



1 Get ready to load: As the bus arrives and stops, make sure the driver sees you and knows you're planning to use the rack.



2 For front mounted racks like this, pull the center handle forward to fold out the rack.



3 Load the bike onto the rack by dropping the wheels in the slot.



4 Secure the bike by lifting the bar up and clamping it over the tire.

Photos: Kysia Haag