

Peddling a Lifestyle

Monday, 5:15 a.m.: the alarm clock wakes Mitch Wegner to yet another working day in San Francisco. A bagel, a cheese stick and a small cup of coffee is enough for breakfast. Then instead of grabbing the car keys, he grabs his Specialized Expedition bike, not to go for a ride, but to ride to work. Wegner is just one of many San Franciscans who have chosen the bicycle as a vehicle of transportation.

Bikes have become popular vehicles in San Francisco for many reasons. First, San Francisco is a relatively small city, making any distance between home and work a short run. Second, the heavy traffic in the city and the 3:2 car to parking space ratio discourages many people from

using their cars. Lastly, bikes are cheaper and healthier than cars and public transportation.

"I bought a bike because I could afford it and to have a car in San Francisco is way too expensive," said Wegner.

"The public transportation system is really bad. I hate waiting for the bus because I am an independent guy," he added.

Bikes are also a great way of saving money. There is no need for gas, the maintenance for bikes is cheaper than for automobiles, and there are no annual registration fees. Finally,

using a bike relieves you of the most common car owner's nightmare: parking violations.

"I was spending up to \$200.00 a year just in parking tickets when I used to have a car. Now I just ride my bike to go to work and I'm saving a lot of money," said Luis Herrera, who also elects to ride his bike 12 blocks instead of driving to the coffee shop where he works everyday.

According to the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition web page, garage parking for bicycles is available in the Mission, Sunset,

Chinatown, Marina and even Downtown. In addition, many employees are allowed to keep their bikes in backrooms or basements of workplaces.

Sometimes cyclists move faster than cars especially in chaotic traffic downtown.

"I go everywhere quickly, I exercise and I lose the traffic around rush hour," said Mike Welch, who works downtown as a courier using his old GT.

"I also keep myself healthy and don't stress out stuck in the traffic," Wegner commented.

In fact, bikers overcome the difficulties of riding in the city thinking about the advantages that they have over drivers.

"Even though the weather is cold, especially in the morning, and San Francisco has many hills, I still go to work by bike because I save my money," said Wegner.

For more information
www.sfbike.org
www.traks.org