

Never driven a car and don't want to

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I have never driven a car before. As a soon to be 21-year-old American in the year 2001, this is a rarity. I am one of the few, if not the only UR student that can make this claim, and I am certainly proud to make it. And although I haven't waged an all-out boycott of cars, I do avoid them whenever possible.

My reasons for all this range from the altruistic, such as energy conservation, lower greenhouse gas emission, lower transportation infrastructure costs and less traffic congestion, to the simply practical, such as saving money, saving time, getting exercise and having some fun. I probably still wouldn't drive if one of these two sets of factors wasn't there, but combined, it's an easy decision.

It would definitely be harder to avoid driving if it wasn't for bicycling. I've been biking around town for several years now, and I really would rather not have it any other way.

As far as I'm concerned, biking is a lot faster. I understand that I can't cruise at 70 miles per hour on the highway, but for going from point A to point B around town, it couldn't take less time any other way. For one, I actually get there sooner going to many nearby places — I've recently raced cars from Park Avenue and just north of downtown back to campus, and won both races.

This is because a bike can squeeze between traffic stuck at lights, ride on the sidewalk the wrong way down one-way streets and can always find a parking space right in front of the destination. Granted not everyone can bike at the same speed, but the difference becomes one of only a few minutes.

This time spent biking becomes time I don't have to take out of my schedule later for exercise.

Money better spent

Since biking is so much cheaper — think tens or hundreds of dollars instead of thousands or tens of thousands — I don't have to spend nearly as much time working to earn the money for the bike. For a college student, that money goes a long way — if I had to support a car, I would basically be broke.

Even if I had plenty of money, I'd still prefer using it elsewhere — if nothing else, I know there are charities throughout the world that could put the money to much better use than

I would get by owning a car. But take money out of consideration entirely, and I'd still rather not have a car.

To me riding in a car is just being frozen in a sitting position until you get somewhere. I'd much rather be on my bike, letting my legs churn, standing up if I want to, feeling the fresh air. If I have to go places anyway, I might as well enjoy doing it. I certainly enjoy the exercise I get in the process.

It's nice to be able to stay in shape without taking extra time out of my schedule.

Not only does biking and not driving make my life better, but it also improves those of others. On the most direct level, by avoiding a car trip, there is one less car on the road, and therefore that much less traffic. It seems ironic that my avoiding cars might actually make driving nicer for others. I guess I'm OK with that.

In addition to the environmental benefits of biking, not driving improves local society.

On a simple level, most people — like homeowners, bikers and pedestrians — would rather see a bicycle go by than a car. Cars cause noise and air pollution, and are a dangerous, high-speed obstacle, whereas bicycles don't pollute, and move at a much friendlier speed.

Supporting local businesses

By biking, I tend to support those parts of the region which are more accessible by bike. For example, I'll go out to eat on Park Avenue instead of Jefferson Avenue because it's closer, there are sidewalks and bike racks. My support helps them stay in business, making it easier for others to bike to restaurants.

I was lucky enough to grow up in a neighborhood where I could get to school, soccer practice and elsewhere on my own. My parents' lives were much nicer because of that. Keep this in mind as you graduate and move into your own neighborhood in case you want to avoid the soccer mom — or dad — trap.

Cars are often sold under the pretense that they offer the driver freedom. This "freedom" has come to mean for many a twice-daily sentence in traffic jams, plus more for every errand, including helping kids have a life outside the home.

Meanwhile, we could all be walking, biking and taking busses, and get more exercise, have more fun, save money, and help society and the environment out at the same time.

If "freedom" is being stuck in traffic, I really don't want it.

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