

Moving Together: Getting Around A-Town



Get on your bike, and do what you like

By Jack Johnson

Arlington, Mass. —

Bicycling is a fun, healthy, fuel-efficient, economical and green way to get around town. Here are some ideas for taking your bike on longer trips beyond Arlington this summer.

Ride a different bikeway

The Minuteman Bikeway is one of the most popular rail-trails in the U.S., but it's always nice to visit new places for a change of scenery. You might take your bike to another bike-path system sometime this summer. Suggested paved paths in Massachusetts include the Nashua River Rail-Trail (Ayer to Pepperell), Bruce Freeman Rail-Trail (Chelmsford), Cape Cod Canal Path (Bourne to Sagamore), Cape Cod Rail-Trail (Dennis to Wellfleet), and the Ashuwillticook Rail-Trail (Berkshires). For additional bike-path info, see www.mass.gov/dcr/recreate/biking.htm.

Bike to the beach

Various freshwater beaches are within easy bicycling distance from Arlington, including the Arlington Reservoir Beach (Lowell Street, Arlington) and Sandy Beach on the Upper Mystic Lake (Mystic Valley Parkway, Winchester). For a longer ride from Arlington, consider bicycling to Walden Pond in Concord, where free bike parking is available even after the car lot fills up.

Take your bike on the 'T'

Combine the pleasure of riding your bicycle with the convenience of using public transportation to get where you need to go. With some restrictions, bikes are allowed to travel on MBTA buses, subway trains, and commuter-rail trains at no extra cost. You can also ride your bike to Alewife Station (or another transit station) and lock it while you take the "T" into Cambridge, Boston — and beyond. Bicycle parking is free at Alewife Station, compared to \$7 a day to park a car there. You and your bike could also take the commuter rail to North Shore or South Shore beaches for a weekend day trip. For example, Crane Beach is located 4.5 miles from the Ipswich commuter-rail station — a long walk, but an easy distance for most bicyclists. You will also save money by riding your bike to the beach and not paying for car parking. For details on the MBTA's "Bikes on the T" program, see www.mbta.com/riding_the_t/bikes.

See Boston on two wheels

Bicycling is a great way to experience Boston in a new way. Once rated as the worst city in America for bicycling, Boston now aspires to become a "world class bicycling city." This past May, Boston was designated as a silver-level Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. If you are comfortable riding in city traffic, check out the many miles of

bike lanes that Boston has installed in recent years. For a more leisurely ride, enjoy the summer breeze along the Charles River paths. You could also take a guided bike tour of Boston sites with Urban AdvenTours (103 Atlantic Ave., Boston) or register for the citywide Hub On Wheels ride on Sunday, Sept. 25. And later this summer, the City of Boston is planning to launch its Hubway Bike-Sharing system, with more than 600 cruiser-style bikes available for short-term rentals. For more info on bicycling in Boston, see www.cityofboston.gov/bikes.

Take your bike on vacation

Bicycle touring is a great way to see New England — or to discover America and the world beyond. As a local example, the annual Mass BikePike Tour is an organized bike/camping tour scheduled for August 11-14 this summer, starting in Northampton and featuring bike routes in the Berkshires (www.massbikepike.org). For more ideas, search for “bicycle touring” on the Internet.

Leave the car at home

Consider bicycling for short-distance destinations this summer. Have more fun getting there, stop for an ice-cream cone along the way, save money on gas, and enjoy free and easy parking when you reach your destination. For bike-route suggestions, try out Google Bike Maps on the Internet sometime. Just use Google mapping directions as you would for car-driving directions, but click on the “bike” icon to get bicycling directions instead.

Brush up on your bicycling-safety skills

As always, ride your bike responsibly and safely on both roadways and paths. For MassBike’s online guide to safer bicycling, “Same Roads, Same Rules,” see www.sameroadssamerules.org.

Jack Johnson is a founding member of the Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee.