

Choosing a Bicycle for Commuting

When applying for a Bucks for Bikes subsidy, you should carefully consider the type of bicycle that is best suited for your commute. Choosing a bicycle that meets your specific needs for traveling to work or school will give you the best chance for continuing your bicycle commute for years to come.

Please think about the following issues when selecting a commute bicycle:

What is the terrain of your commute? – Is your commute relatively flat or are there hills you will need to climb? Are there areas where you'll ride on anything other than pavement such as gravel, dirt, or rocks? You should plan your route in advance and drive the route first to scout out how your commute will look. If possible, consider alternate routes that will keep you off busy roads.

How long will your commute take? – Estimate your commute time. Comfort while seated on your bike may become a factor for longer commutes.

What's your fitness level and physical condition? – Are you a newer cyclist hoping to improve your fitness level? Do you have any back, hip or knee injuries?

Do you have items to transport with you? – Many commuters have things to bring to their worksite. You may already need to transport a briefcase or laptop computer, but as a bicycle commuter, you may also be bringing a change of clothes and hygienic items.



Bicycle Types



Road Bike - A road bike is a good choice for someone that is looking for the fastest trip to work, has smooth terrain and is comfortable with the positioning on the bike including drop-bar handlebars. Most road bikes have no places to store items on the bike (i.e. panniers) and there is often very little or no room for fenders. The tires on most road bikes are often very skinny and can be susceptible to flats on uneven pavement or terrain.



Mountain Bike – Generally built stronger than road bikes, mountain bikes can handle off-road terrain. Shock absorbing features and lower gears enable mountain bikes to traverse steep hills and obstacles like rocks, ruts, and bumps. These qualities also make mountain bikes a durable and comfortable ride with the ability to withstand the potholes, curbs and other obstructions of bad roads. Hardtail mountain bikes are cheaper than full suspension and better suited for city riding.



Hybrid Bike – Hybrid bikes provide a compromise between mountain and road bikes. They offer smooth tires thicker than those of a road bike and thinner than a mountain bike's. In combination with an upright sitting and handlebar position, these features make hybrid bikes excellent for commuting. They position the rider higher giving a better vantage point and are overall more durable than most road bikes.



Cyclo-cross Bike – Cyclo-cross bikes are designed to travel both on and off-road and have become very popular outside of racing due to their versatility. They are typically heavier than a comparable road bike. Cyclo-cross bikes make wonderful commuters due to their durability. You can often mount racks and swap the tires to better accommodate your commute should you so choose.



Cruiser Bike – Cruiser bikes feature long handlebars, a long wheelbase, and often a well-cushioned seat. These bikes give the rider an upright position, and the thick tires give cruiser bikes increased stability and work especially well on sand and gravel paths. However, cruiser bikes are most commonly single speed and are not suited well for riding hills.



Folding Bike - Folding bikes are convenient bicycles that are perfect for travel or any application that benefits from easy transport, storage and use. Folding bikes take up less space in your closet or apartment and are easy to take up stairs or an elevator.



Electric Bike – Electric bikes contain an integrated battery-powered motor to augment human power. Electric bikes pedal and handle just like a regular bicycle and can make obstacles like hills and headwind more manageable. However, some electric bikes are not allowed on dirt trails and/or Class 1 bike facilities in California. Please check your local jurisdiction's regulations.

Bicycle Sizing

A bicycle should be sized properly for the rider. Stand over height, saddle height, and reach will determine the comfort and efficiency a bike will provide. It is best to visit a bike shop to be fitted for a bike and to ask questions and address concerns regarding your commute. Most bike shops will allow customers to test ride any of the various bikes they have in stock.

Bicycle Quality and Maintenance

Among bicycling's many benefits is the relatively low cost of owning and maintaining a bicycle. However, like with most things, the quality of manufacturing and materials of the bicycle will determine its overall life span and usability as it ages. Proper and regular maintenance of a bicycle will also have a significant influence on how long it will last.

Through the Bucks for Bikes program, successful applicants are encouraged to consider purchasing a bicycle above "minimum quality" in order to help prolong the bike's life span. Buying the cheapest bike available at a discount store may not prove to be in the best interest of your bike commute for various reasons. Purchasing a bike from a local bike store in Placer County will more likely ensure satisfactory quality, proper assembly, and adequate fit.