

EDITORS' NOTE

Calvin Joyce uses a narrative style—supported by his strong, independent voice—in his persuasive essay about the value of riding a bike in San Luis Obispo. How does the voice, word choice, and descriptive language help you to understand the author’s argument? Can you relate to Joyce’s use of childhood memories, and does it evoke your own memories of bicycling? What is your reaction to Joyce’s use of the second-person “you” throughout the essay? Does Joyce make a clear distinction between the importance of driving a car versus simply using a car? Does using Wikipedia as evidence enhance the argument (logos)? Will Joyce’s assertion that commuting by bike allows you to “experience the same feeling of freedom and peace” convince you to pedal?

Pedal

Calvin Joyce

Cruising down the streets of San Luis Obispo on my bike with a group of elementary school friends was the best sensation in the world. We would always cherish the opportunity to ride bikes down to the local Taco Bell for lunch. Experiencing the wind howl past my face gave me a feeling of independence. What happened to these emotions? Today most of us consider having to get somewhere on a bicycle to be a burden. When I turned 16, it was all about cars, cars, cars. I found a sense of freedom and security behind the black leather steering wheel of my green 1997 Accord. I could go wherever I wanted at whatever speed my foot desired. I forgot that this same sense of freedom and security can be experienced while pedaling a bicycle. As a freshman at Cal Poly, I decided to get around town using road bicycle. I currently have a job and am able to get everywhere I need to in an efficient manner. I am glad I made this decision and believe that if you decide to do the same next year, you too will benefit greatly. Although it may be a sacrifice of convenience, leaving your car at home and using your bicycle for transportation will save you time and money.

Problems that arise when getting around town on a bike are weather, luggage, and long distance transportation. These can all be solved by using public transportation or by getting rides from friends. The weather is not a major factor in San Luis Obispo because it rains only 29 days per year on average (“San Luis Obispo, California”). No one wants to be on a bicycle while it is raining and they should not have to. For these rare cases, you will have to use the bus system. Cal Poly students are privileged to be provided with free bus access by using their Poly ID Card, and though it may take longer than driving or riding a bicycle, it is a great way to save money. On beautiful days when you are dying to get to the beach, ask a friend with a car if he or she would want to drive to the beach. If this fails, then the Poly Canyon Pool is always a great alternative. Some of you may consider the loads that you transport to be too heavy for a bicycle. I know from experience that this is false. Everything you need to carry to classes and throughout the day should fit in your backpack. If you really need more space, then you can purchase a basket that attaches to your bike from any local bicycle shop for about \$15. Traveling home may take more time and be harder to plan, but as you will soon be able to tell, it is all worth keeping the car at home.

Now that these minor issues are dealt with, I want you to understand exactly how much money bike transportation saves you. You will save money for gas, maintenance, and parking.

When thinking about costs, you must consider the cost of a parking pass along with the money you spend on gas. You also need to take into account the cost for maintenance of things that may go wrong during the school year. Tyler Sewell, a freshman at Cal Poly said, “I spend about \$25 per month on gas.” Also during the school year he had to replace a broken fuel pump (\$800) and a broken thermostat (\$300). The average cost for car insurance is \$1,566 so I will use \$1,500 to make the math easier (“Auto Insurance Answers”). Over the span of the school year Tyler spent \$3,800 on his parking pass, fuel, maintenance, and insurance collectively. Erik Holliday—also a freshman at Cal Poly—spent \$800 this year on maintenance including a patched tire, door handle repair, and transmission repair. Over the eight month span of school Erik spent \$320 on gas. The gas, parking, maintenance and insurance cost totals up to about \$3,600. These numbers alone demonstrate that you will be saving a substantial amount of money by leaving your car at home.

The only reason left for students to bring their cars is because it will save time, but I have concluded that this is false. In college I always feel as if I need more time to work on homework and hang out with friends, so why would I want to ride my bicycle and waste this precious time of mine? In fact I would not be wasting time. Living in Poly Canyon Village, the places that will be necessary to get to are grocery stores and downtown. You will need to buy your own food because you have your own kitchen to cook in and the closest grocery store to you is Albertson’s. Let’s look at the time it will take to drive there versus riding a bicycle. According to Google Maps, it takes six minutes to get to Albertson’s in a car and seven minutes on a bicycle. This may sound like a short amount of time for a bicycle ride, but it is pretty close to true. I would estimate it would take ten minutes for me to get there. Even so, Google Maps does not take into account how long it will take to find your keys, walk to your car, and find a parking spot. I will let you estimate how long this will take for yourself, but for me these three steps combined will take 6 minutes on average. Commuting downtown for food and shopping necessities will also be important for you next year. Google Maps states that it will take 8 minutes by car and 11 on a bicycle to commute downtown to the Fremont Theater. This difference in time can also be easily neglected because it is very hard to find a parking spot downtown. It is such a relief to have parking right in front of your destination. The amount of time you will save by using a bike is definitely worthwhile. The majority of people believe traveling by bicycle will waste too much time, but this is not true. It takes nearly the same amount of time, if not less. Erik Holliday enjoys having his car, but also says, “Dealing with the car hassle-wise is kind of inconvenient.” He claims he spends a significant amount of time taking his car into repair shops and waiting for them to diagnose and fix problems with his car. Therefore time constraints should not be what is keeping you from using a bike as transportation.

A difficulty with this mode of transportation is that it is dangerous. Bicycling does come with its risks. Bicycle fatalities are 11 times higher than car fatalities (Voildand). However, pedestrian fatalities are three times as high as bike fatalities so this adds perspective to the statistics. Bike accidents can be easily avoided with knowledge about the roads and proper equipment. Some of the main things to do to avoid getting hurt are to: wear a helmet; avoid busy streets; make sure cars can see you well; ride in the bicycle lane with traffic; and obey the rules of the road. If you follow these basic guidelines, then you will be much less likely to get in an accident.

Now that you have all the necessary information, reconsider why you want to bring your car to school next year, and whether your reason is legitimate or not. If you do not own a bicycle, look on Craigslist for a used bike. A bike that will be good for college will cost you somewhere

from \$50 to \$150 (“Bicycles”). I hope you realize that the benefits of leaving your car at home greatly outweigh the hassles. This money that you save can now be used for extra college activities or to save up for your education. Joining a fraternity, going on more club trips, and eating out more often are all possible because you will save so much money. I realize that this is a big decision to make, but I am sure that you can do it because I was in the same position as you. Commute by bike next year, and I am sure that you will experience the same feeling of freedom and peace that I do now, and we all did as kids.

CALVIN JOYCE is a civil engineering major.

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