

Braving the elements- winter bike commuting

Just because it is cold and snowy outside doesn't mean you have to hang up the bike until spring arrives. Madison is a great place to ride no matter the season! Here are a few tips to help you keep riding.

Ease into it. Don't feel like you have to ride every day. Start by riding on the more mild winter days when the roads and paths are in good condition. Build up your confidence to riding on colder days or days with wintry weather.

Give some thought to a good route, as the best route in the summer may not be the best route in the winter. Madison does a great job of clearing the bike paths but some roads may have snow that extends into the bike lanes or are narrowed because it is hard clear snow and ice from around parked cars. If you cannot ride on a cleared path, try to find streets that have enough traffic to clear the snow and ice, but not so much traffic that you feel uncomfortable riding in the path cleared by the cars. You may want to ask other winter bike commuters in your neighborhood or at your office for route suggestions.

Dressing to bike in the winter is not as difficult as you might imagine. If you live in Wisconsin you probably already own items appropriate for colder temperatures. If your commute isn't too long and the temperatures are not arctic you can probably get away with just adding wind pants and a jacket over your normal work clothes. Add to that some winter boots, warm gloves or mittens, and a scarf or balaclava and most days you'll be set. On the coldest days you may want to add in another layer. In reality once you get pedaling you will warm up especially if you have some hills in your route. In addition, a pair of goggles or sunglasses with clear lenses is a great addition when it is cold.

You can probably ride the same bike you have been riding all summer. It can be helpful to switch out slick tires for knobby tires or a studded tire on front so you don't have to worry as much about ice. Given the sloppy winter weather that Madison can have putting fenders on your bike can also make your ride more comfortable. Don't forget that with darker winter weather having good lights and reflectors are extremely important.

One last important point is to provide your bike with a little extra TLC during the winter season. The extra salt, slush and grime on the roads is hard on bike parts. You will need to keep your chain well lubed and pay attention to wear and tear on items like brakes.

If the idea of riding in the winter sounds interesting Madison holds a Winter Bike Week each year organized by [Madison Bikes](#).