

Bike to Work Day? These Employers Make It an Easier Ride

By Carmen Castro-Pagan

Posted May 18, 2018, 6:16 AM

- Employers like New Belgium Brewing getting increasingly bike-friendly, encouraging workers to spin in
- Perks can include free bikes, \$500 cash purchase incentive, indoor bikes, showers, free parking

Cyclists, get those helmets on. Large and small employers are taking big steps to make your commute to work climate-friendly, calorie-burning, and endorphin-forming.

That's great news as we celebrate Bike to Work Day across the U.S. on May 18.

Some companies, such as craft brewery New Belgium Brewing Co., energy bar producer Clif Bar & Co., and wearable-technology provider Garmin International Inc., go all the way, from providing custom bikes to creating really bike-friendly environments.

And lots of other employers are getting in on the act, from cities to professional services firms. In fact, one-third of employers offer benefits or incentives to encourage employees to bike, according to the 2017 International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans survey.

It makes sense recruitment-wise to build an employee benefit around cycling. It has become a very popular sport, with the number of cyclists growing rapidly from coast to coast, according to the League of American Bicyclists.

Since 2000, bike commuting rates in large bicycle-friendly cities—including Boston, Chicago, Portland, San Francisco, and Washington—more than doubled, according to the League.

Nationwide, the number of people who traveled to work by bike increased roughly 60 percent, from 488,000 in 2000 to 786,000 by the end of 2012, according to a 2014 U.S. Census Bureau report.

Spin and Suds

Fort Collins, Colo.-based brewery New Belgium, best-known for its flagship beer Fat Tire, gives all employees custom company-branded bicycles on their one-year anniversary, public relations coordinator Jesse Claeys told Bloomberg Law.

The company's two facilities—the other is in Asheville, N.C.—have fleet bikes that can be borrowed at anytime, Claeys said. The brewery also has showers and lockers, and onsite tools in areas where workers can do some light bike-maintenance work, Claeys said.

New Belgium, which has a cyclocross site in its Colorado facility, hosts a number of bike events throughout the year, including Bike to Work Day, Strive-Not-to-Drive, and Bike-In Cinema—a summer movie series that's a twist on the drive-in and open to employees and the public, Claeys said.

Clif Bar gives its employees \$500 to help them buy a commuter bike or make commute-related fixes to an existing bike, Dean Mayer, Clif Bar's communications manager, told Bloomberg Law. More than 400 employees have used this benefit, Mayer said.

Clif Bar also offers \$1,500 in rewards—including massages, transit vouchers, chiropractic and acupuncture treatments, and extra cash—to employees who commute by bike, Mayer added.

Best known for its organic energy bars, the company provides free bike parking, shower facilities, and a handful of free bikes and helmets that employees can use to run errands or go to lunch, Mayer said. It also offers free workshops for bike repairs at its headquarters in Emeryville, Calif., Mayer said.

Employees can also use the indoor cycling bikes at the onsite gym, which have a special feature. They've been retrofitted so the energy created by pedaling employees is converted to electricity to help power the building, Mayer said.

Workers also can expend and create energy at regular spin classes, which are very popular, Mayer said.

Don't Forget the Fitness Tracker

Garmin employees can park at their desks--their bikes, that is, Stephanie Schultz, media relations specialist at Garmin, told Bloomberg Law.

Employees also have access to an indoor gym that includes stationary bikes, and they can sign up for various workout classes throughout the week, Schultz said.

Garmin also takes part in several bike rides that support charities and encourages employees to participate, Schultz added.

Another way to get their spin in: Employees can hop on a bike during lunch hour and enjoy the trails and bike-friendly streets around Garmin headquarters in Olathe, Kan., Schultz said.

Planning and engineering firm Tindale Oliver in Tampa, Fla., offers a bike commuting program to all its employees, which includes in-office bike storage, a commuter closet for storing work clothes, free access to gym, lockers, and showers, a company-sponsored bike share account, free public transit passes, and emergency ride home vouchers, a firm spokesman told Bloomberg Law.

Project management and design firm AOA in Orlando, Fla. also sponsors a bike-sharing program that provides employees 10 bikes for their use to go to lunch, run errands, or go to the local gyms during the day, a firm spokeswoman told Bloomberg Law.

Cities like Orlando, Fla., and Boulder, Colo., also are offering employees bike-commuting incentives.

Boulder gives downtown city employees a cash bonus if they leave the car at home and bike in, a city spokeswoman told Bloomberg Law. City also offers its workers “pool” bikes, including electric bikes to use midday, as well as free tuneups and bike lights, the spokeswoman said.

Honoring the Planet

Asked why they offer these bike-related benefits, some employers pointed to sustainability efforts and how good it is for the environment.

“Choosing environmentally friendly transit options such as bikes can play a key role in addressing climate change,” Clif Bar’s Mayer said.

A bike commuter who rides four miles to work each day avoids 2,000 miles of driving and about 2,000 pounds of carbon emissions a year, or nearly 5 percent of an average American’s carbon footprint, Mayer said.

“New Belgium honors Mother Nature at every turn of our business, so bicycle is the perfect fit,” Claeys said.

“Anyone who has taken a bicycle ride on a sunny day and celebrated its conclusion with an ice cold New Belgium beer knows what I’m talking about,” she added.

**Bloomberg
Law**

© 2018 The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc.
All Rights Reserved