



Winter Cycling Workshop for Population & Public Health Employees
Hosted by Cathy Watts, Saskatoon Cycles



Cathy discussed winter cycling from 3 points of view. NOTE: these are her recommendations based on her experience and preferences. Use these as guidelines for your own purposes and do what works for you!

1) The Bike

- Pick a bike and style that you like
 - Eg. mountain-type bikes are hard on her shoulders and neck, and she likes to be sitting upright, with her spine and pelvis all aligned
- Recommends not to use a new bike for winter cycling
 - The salt and added wear and tear from the snow are hard on a bike
- Do not overinflate bike tires in the cooler temps as this prevents the tire from “splaying” and maximizing how much of the tire/tread/studs are gripping the ice
- “Must haves”
 - *Winter tires* – she strongly suggests both front and back; some people suggest only the front tire but from her experience (and others in the room), the back tire can slip easily from out under you and lead to a fall
 - *Lights* – red for the back, “white”/clear for the front. Strongly suggests to invest in lights (her back one was \$60 and her front light that she has mounted on her helmet was \$160)
 - *Lock* – need a lock for obvious reasons but she puts a sleeve of material around her U-lock in the winter as then her hands do not have to come into contact with metal (especially if they are a bit sweaty from the mitts)
 - *Helmet* – she has a different helmet that she uses during the winter than non-winter months. She uses a snowboarding helmet as it has the ears covered (with warm material) and doesn’t have to fit toque on underneath usually (just uses a balaclava)

2) Self

- Layers work the best
 - Except, she doesn't wear "long johns" (uses a wind/rain pant in Fall and winter pants in colder temps) as she then does not have to worry about removing the "long johns" when she arrives and is spending time indoors
 - This also makes the ability to make multiple trips during the day on her bike a challenge
- Winter pants after -10°C
- Waterproof jacket (layers with lighter fleece underneath)
- Winter boots (regular ones)
 - She does have some with carbide tips for days when it is very icy
- Rubber boots/water-proof boots on cooler Fall days
- Balaclava; additional neck warmer for very cool days
 - A workshop participant has one that covers her nose as well and just has the holes for the nostrils
- Goggles – suggests ones that are yellow-tinted as this allows you to see the contours of the street, snow, etc)
- Lighter mitts (finger gloves) underneath a wind-resistant, water-proof mitt
- Safety gear – lights, helmet, she wears a reflective vest since it is often dark in the morning and later afternoon

3) Strategy

- Baby steps that you are comfortable with
 - Set a goal (eg. goal to try it once a week)
 - Set a temperature threshold that is your limit that is comfortable to you
- Plan your route beforehand; do not plan the route according to how you would drive it (i.e. avoid arterial roads, etc)
- She stays on residential/local streets as much as she can and does sidewalk ride in the winter whenever she does not feel safe
 - "sidewalk riding is a sign of poor infrastructure and/or winter maintenance"
- Utilize the Meewasin trail system whenever possible – they do a good job of keeping this cleared during winter
- Multi-use trails are often pretty good/clear as well
 - These get cleared if calls are made/complaints are made to the City after snow falls
- She keeps her transit pass with her as a back-up – sudden inclement weather, flat tire, etc
- Make sure you are taking your turns slower
- Avoid ruts and ride on top of them if at all possible
- The "brown sugar" sugar (packed snow that has been "fluffed up" by intersections when it gets warmer out)
 - This is hard to get through, often ice underneath – so be careful
- Use your lighter gears
- Give yourself more time to reach destination as it is a slower ride
- Enjoy yourself, notice your environment & the changes that happen with winter and it is a great opportunity for connecting with others/chances for social interaction on your way to your destination that would have otherwise been missed!