



# Design a Lower Car Life



No matter where you live, it's possible to cut down your driving, and (if you're fortunate enough to have working arms and legs) to ride a bike too. By replacing the typical U.S. household's automobile spending (roughly \$10,000 per year) with bike transport, which costs almost nothing while simultaneously giving you a dramatic boost in health, you can end up about **\$150,000 richer every 10 years** than the "old you", the one who assumed everything had to be done by car.

Consider the following facts:

- Right now, only about **1%** of trips are done by bicycle in the US (even though most trips are under 5 miles)
- In the Netherlands, this figure is well over **30%**
- Meanwhile Mr. Money Mustache lives in a city that is close to average, and yet my bicycling figure is over **99%** (roughly 3 bike trips per day and less than one (longer) car trip per month, 3 tanks of gas per year)

Why does this disparity exist? Not through luck or enormous geographic differences, but simply because of a difference in assumptions. If you can re-design your life to cut down car dependence, there are immense benefits in store.

## Case Study: J.D.'s Trips to the Gym

JD and Kim recently made two major lifestyle changes:

- They joined a Crossfit gym part-way across town, and
- They adopted a puppy.

The gym is only 4.6 miles away by road, but because their schedule requires them to travel during rush hour, the trip by car can take up to 20 minutes. They travel by car whenever they need to take the puppy with them, which is about twice per week. J.D. has resigned himself to this hassle, figuring it is not as bad as *some* people's commutes.

The map on the next page shows their current travel situation.

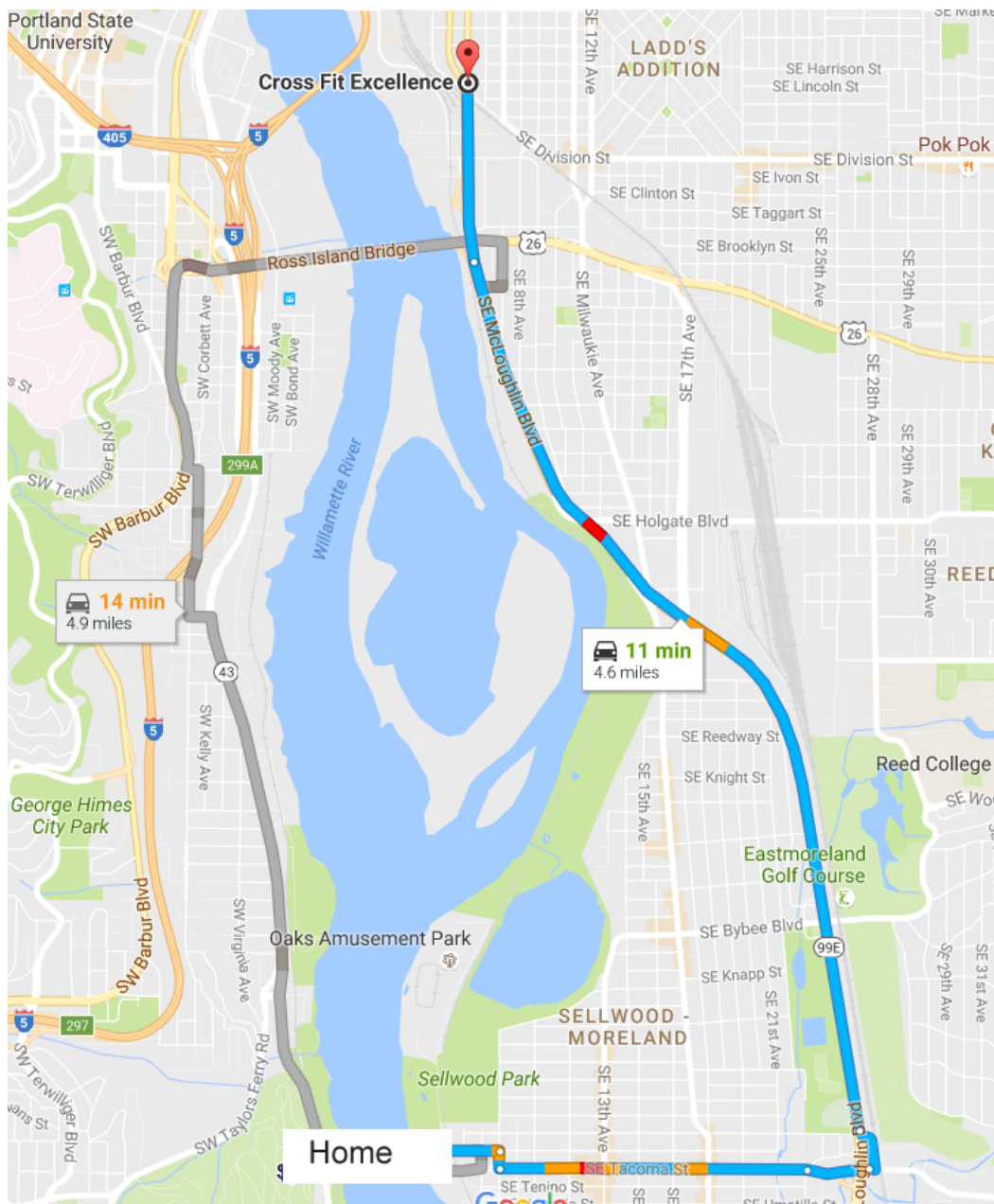


Figure 1: Taking the Car to the Gym

## Changing Your Assumptions

Probably 99% of Americans would simply accept this car errand as a necessity of life. They would look at the traffic conditions on McLoughlin Blvd and think, “There’s no way in hell I want to bike on this road. Plus I’m carrying my puppy. Case closed.” And this is exactly why we have only a 1% bicycling rate in this country!

However, if you start with the assumption that **it’s always possible to get the job done without a car**, your options suddenly open up much wider. Now consider the following map of the same commute:

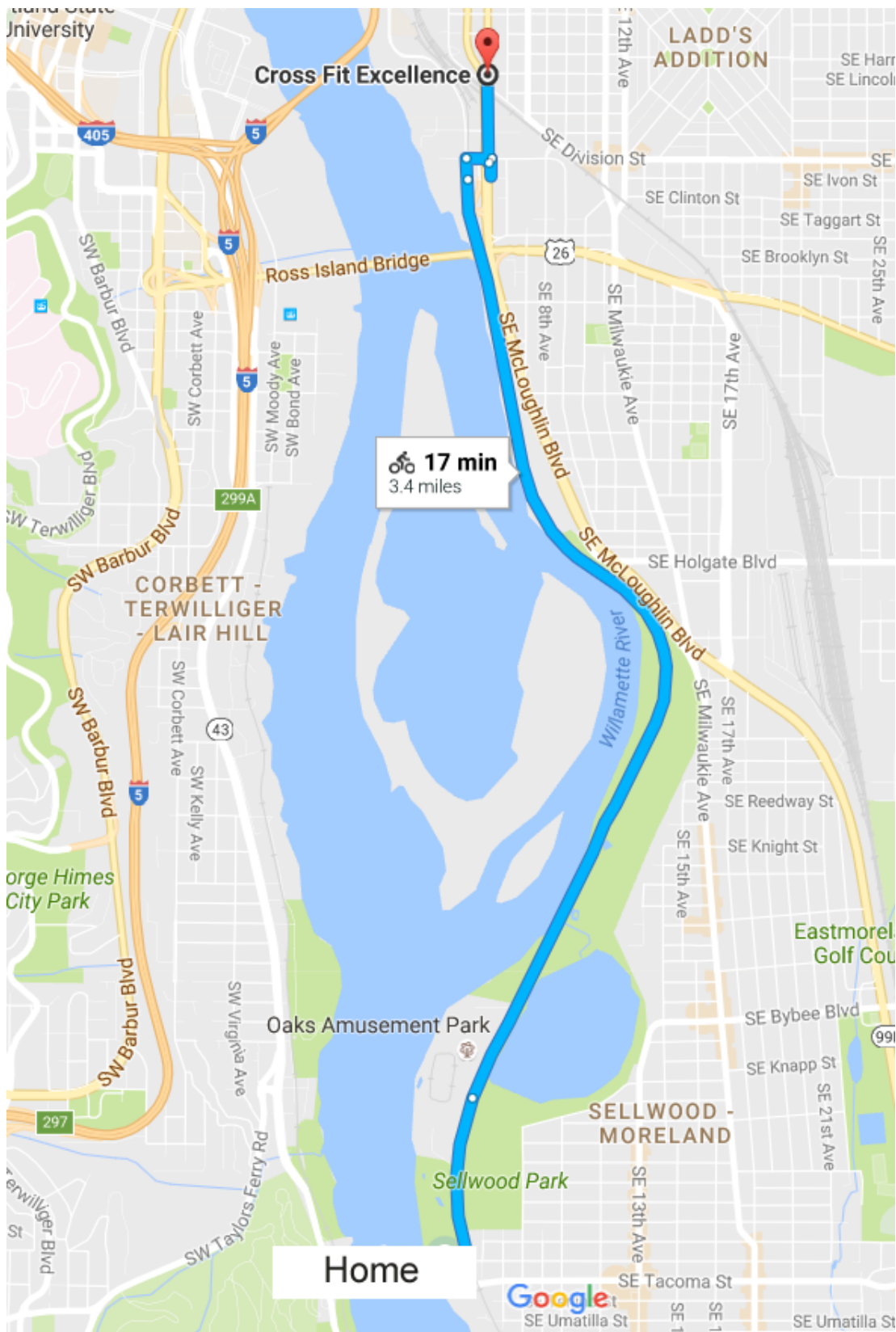


Figure 2: Taking the Bike to the Gym

Amazing! It turns out that there's a bike route to the gym that is significantly shorter than the car ride and immune to traffic. Riding 3.4 miles on a bike only takes about 12 minutes for an experienced cyclist, or 17 if you're a beginner poking along casually on a cruiser bike. Faster than a car — and much more relaxing.

And it turns out you can carry a puppy, or a couple of kids, or a couple weeks of groceries, in a bike trailer that you can find on Craigslist for about \$100:



Figure 3: the Burley D'Lite trailer. Overall lifetime benefit (if you value increased freedom and health as much as I do): over \$1,000,000. Price if purchased new: \$600. Price for a nearly-new one on Craigslist: about \$100

### **A General Recipe for Reduced Car Dependence:**

- Use Google Maps to find more bike-friendly (or walk-friendly) routes to your most frequent destinations.
- Keep your eyes open and experiment: there are often peaceful bike shortcuts even in the least bike-friendly cities — empty parking lots, alleys, parks, recreational trails, and residential streets.
- Gradually change your life to become more local. Move closer to work, or search for jobs closer to home. Make more friends in your own neighborhood and build those friendships. Prioritize local activities over distant ones.
- Embrace hardship: the harsher the weather, the more rewarding (and physically healthy) it is to conquer it by bike or on foot.