

# Google **How Google Kept Employees Riding and Grew its Global Bike Community During a Pandemic**

## Q&A with Carolyn Hernandez & Dan Smedley

### **What strategies did you use to sell investment in cycling infrastructure to your leadership?**

As mentioned during the discussion, our leadership from the Founders down were supportive of bicycling from the beginning. That said, I think the best thing you can do is to find allies. Over the past several years, we have worked closely with our sustainability colleagues, who have supported our efforts to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips to campus. Given Google's 2030 carbon neutral goals, the sustainability team is an important ally!

### **What services, of the ones offered online, were the most popular/utilized?**

The marquee events, such as Bike to Wherever Week and the Ride Bright Challenge have remained the most popular.

### **What type of prizes did you reward Googlers with if they participated in the 'Take a Break' section of the Biking at Home website?**

They received a digital badge for their internal team profile page or a gift card.

### **How were miles tracked for the virtual events? Was there an app or technology used?**

We use various methods to track miles and trips. Many employees have already linked apps, such as Strava, to our existing commute management platform. Where we did not have a commute management platform available, we asked users to self-validate by completing a form.

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### **What's the biggest barrier you are trying to remove for the 60% of cyclists who are interested but concerned?**

1) Lack of biking amenities on campus, such as secured bike parking rooms, showers, lockers. Although most Google buildings in the US have these features, facilities that don't have these amenities often have lower bike commute rates. 2) Trepidation with taking that first pedal stroke (inability to find a good commute route; help avoiding obstacles like bad roads; etc). We have a commute concierge and bike buddy program to help overcome these challenges.

### **What were some of the challenges you faced in both technology and labor hours dedicated to the projects?**

The company was invested in employee wellbeing while working from home, so there was no issue dedicating resources to Biking at Home.

### **How do you reach out to employees to let them know about the site and various campaigns you're running?**

We use internal sites, email lists, our internal social media page, and other marketing tactics, such as cards that are posted on the general internal Google site page, alignment with other internal initiatives.

### **Very impressive and inspiring programs. How large is your staff for transportation options?**

Our global transportation team has 18 full time employees. We also have vendor partners that we also use to deliver Transportation services.

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### **Is there any collaboration between Google and the municipalities that offices are located in when it comes to transportation / infrastructure improvements outside of Google campuses?**

Yes. We work with municipalities frequently to enhance ped & bike infrastructure to promote safe alternative commutes. Many of the projects are focused on improving bike lanes (width, stenciling, visibility, etc). Some larger work has been done. If you are in the Bay Area, I recommend viewing the work done on Moffett Park Drive in Sunnyvale on both sides of Mathilda Ave.

### **Do you collect data on where Google employees are traveling to and from? Do Googlers come from communities with good bike lanes? If not, do you also encourage multi-modal transportation with Google Buses or public transit?**

Yes. Yes. Yes. Data on employees is all

anonymized. Many of our Googlers do have adequate to good bike connection pathways, whether that is bike lanes or paved trails. And, we do encourage multi-modal and use of public transit. We are all about providing as many options as possible to reduce SOV trips.

### **Q: What are some of the best ideas you got from overseas folks?**

We heard from the teams in Japan that it's more common and accessible to walk than bike and they love participating in Bike to Work Day, but by walking. This really sparked the inclusive nature of all of our events going forward to include other micromobility options to have a greater reach. Additionally, the folks in Europe shared their ode to Le Tour de France, as Le Tour de Google and organized a month-long challenge to mirror the race.

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### **Do you offer any financial incentives for Googlers to bike to work?**

We're limited in what we can share, but we do offer modest financial incentives for some of our programs at times.

### **Many employees have new pets that are part of the new home office. Has Google explored combining the pet support programs and biking? Google used to have a dog-friendly shuttle that allowed Googlers to bring their dogs to work. Have you created material about how to bike with a dog and bring the new furry office partner to work?**

We do know that a lot of employees have grown their family with pets. While we haven't created any specific new content on pets and bikes, the Global Programs teams have created a lot of pet-friendly and pet-inclusive programming, even an upcoming pet howl'oween virtual costume parade. Additionally, many pets were included in the Bike to Wherever Week photo submissions.

### **Did you survey employees to determine what percentage was not biking regularly (to work or other places) before but indicates they would bike more regularly post-event?**

Our approach has been different. Embedded in many of our Biking to work and Biking at home programs is the idea of "making a commitment" to ride. In exchange for participating in games, events, and programs, we typically ask our users to commit to biking.

### **What targets have you set for next year for Googlers engaging in your biking program?**

We're still waiting on the return to the office and what that might look like in a new hybrid workweek to set official goals. In general, we are aiming to increase our bike mode split and decrease SOV trips.

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### **What's your end goal for Google's bike to work program? What % of people / trips?**

This largely depends on the site/city. Some regions have trip caps, air quality regulations, or parking constraints that play a part in addition to Google's sustainability goals. Ultimately, we are working to get that percentage of folks who are "interested, but concerned" — about 60% — to become enthused and confident about commuting to work by bike. (See slide 5 of the presentation).

### **Do you know the percentage of Googlers participating in the bike program?**

Google has offices all over the world, so it varies greatly by location. In 2019, the bike mode split was about 6% at our HQ in Mountain View.

### **How do you compare the importance of providing resources and guidance versus data tracking for insight?**

Resources and guidance are a key part of the support programs for bike commuters, just like showers and bike rooms. Bike commuters who are confident in what they're doing, because they know what they're doing, are better equipped for sustaining the behavior.