

The Best Way to Get Around This Summer: A guide to biking in PVD



With inflation on the rise, many people are looking for ways to cut down on their gas money spending, but this doesn't have to mean staying home all summer. There are lots of things to do locally and the City of Providence has been working to provide alternative transportation options.

Before the Great Streets Initiative, commuting by bike was not an option for many people, but now that's changing in parts of the city. It's normal to feel hesitant, according to **Liza Burkin**, a lead organizer of the Providence Streets Coalition and a strong advocate for micromobility in RI. She says, "[You] should expect it to be a skill just like anything else, like learning a language or learning how to do pottery. It's a skill that absolutely gets easier and better the more you do it. I think anybody commuting by bike for the first time is going to probably feel amazing in their body and feel more connected to nature or to their city. You're going to be able to notice things about your neighborhood and about the streets that take you from your house or your job or wherever you need to go, on a much more intimate level."

Thanks to Spin, you don't need to bring a bike with you to PVD to get around. Spin provides rental e-bikes and scooters to college campuses and various US cities — all you have to do is download the Spin app and add your payment information. There are even options if you don't own a phone or credit card through Spin Access. In PVD, Spin bikes cost \$1 to unlock and an additional \$0.32 per minute. At this rate, a ten-minute ride would cost \$4.20. Spin also offers a discounted rate for those with limited income. A map of currently available bikes and scooters can be found [here](#) or on Spin's mobile app. When you arrive at your destination, just park the bike on a rack so it can charge for the next person.

If you're planning on using a bike to get around, it's important to be prepared, especially when

commuting to work or school. The Rhode Island Department of Transportation offers many resources for cyclists, including roadside assistance. Know the limits of your rental bikes. For example, the Spin vehicles are only operational within PVD: the motor will turn off if you cross a border. Make sure to bring water on hot days, and carry an external battery to charge your phone. Spin also recommends wearing a helmet while using their bikes and scooters. When using a bike, you don't need to worry about traffic jams or parking, but you do need to accommodate for other factors. If possible, plan your route ahead of time.

If you don't know where you're going, Burkin recommends a navigation app called POINTZ. "Google Maps will give you the route that is the fastest from point A to point B and POINTZ will give you the route that's safest from point A to point B," she explains. "Get a portable Bluetooth speaker that you can attach to the handlebars or to your backpack or to your belt. Or keep one headphone in your ear." This way, cyclists can listen to directions without having to stop and look at their phones.

Another option is the Destinations feature on Spin's mobile app. A Spin spokesperson explains, "This feature optimizes routes to use bike lanes where possible, making for a safer and more comfortable ride."

Above all, cyclists should take into account the safety of themselves and those around them. Burkin emphasizes the importance of stopping for pedestrians who are also on bike paths. "Just like we expect drivers to yield to cyclists because they're more vulnerable on the road, we should expect cyclists to yield to people walking and rolling in other ways because they're more vulnerable on the road."

Biking can be a recreational activity in and of itself. Burkin is also involved in planning Providence Bike Jam, one of many biking events happening this summer. "Bike Jam is the second-to-last Friday night of every month, and it always starts at Burnside Park at 7pm and we do about 8-12 miles around the city, stopping at parks for dance parties, and it's a lot of fun." RI Department of Transportation also offers state-wide maps of recreational bike paths at ridot.maps.arcgis.com

Whether it's just for fun, or part of your commute, biking is not only a great way to exercise but also an affordable alternative to driving. It's much better for the environment too. As the Great Streets Initiative progresses, micromobility will be more accessible than ever in PVD. If you're looking for more bike safety tips, check Spin's Safety Quiz.