

## **Leave your car behind for a day Bike to Work promotes use of alternatives**

By Robin Nichols

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With rising gas prices, it's not tough to find a reason to want to drive less. And when there are incentives like prizes, it's even easier.

Enter Bike to Work Week.

This annual event, organized by Commute Connection, encourages community members to take a day (or more) off driving and hop on bikes or use public transit to ease the problems of traffic congestion and air pollution.

"The mindset we try to put into (residents') heads is just try it, try it once," said Anne-Marie Poggio, a regional planner in Stockton. "A lot of times you just don't realize how easy it can be. If they try it and enjoy it, they'll keep on doing it."

And as big as the benefits are to the cities, there are also personal perks.

"I really think that we live in a really beautiful place, and (we want to get) people out of their cars," Poggio said.

If your office is too far for a bicycle commute, there are alternatives.

"If they do have a long commute and a challenging route, there is also the option of driving to a park and ride lot that may be closer to their workplace, and they could cycle from that lot to the employment site," Yvette Davis, an associate regional planner in Stockton, said.

The events are as follows:

- » Lodi: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday, Postal Plaza Corner of Oak and School streets.
- » Stockton: 6:30 a.m. Wednesday, starts at David's Pizza, Hammer Lane and Alexandria Place, before moving to Janet Leigh Cinema Plaza, 222 N. El Dorado St.
- » Tracy: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, Tracy Transit Station, 50 E. Sixth St.
- » Stockton Mayor's Bike and Hike Event: 8:30 a.m. May 28 at the DeRosa University Center, University of the Pacific; benefits the Emergency Food Bank. Information: (209) 464-7369.

Commute Connections, part of the San Joaquin Council of Governments, will hold drawings to give away \$2,500 worth of R.E.I. gift cards and other prizes. To enter the drawing to win a \$250 gift card or a "Smart Commuter" gift basket, pledge to bike or walk at least one day this week, either to work or to a the public transit that leads to work.

To register, call (800) 52-SHARE (74273) or go to [www.commuteconnection.com](http://www.commuteconnection.com).