



Embracing micro-mobility brings freedom and family fun for London dad

London Ontario dad Mike Apostol loves taking his daughter and son on cycling adventures on the city's growing network of bike lanes and cycling tracks thanks in part to his RadCity 5 Plus High-Step electric commuter bike[1]. Apostol, an energy management specialist at London Health Sciences Centre's Victoria Hospital (LHSC-VH), knows all about energy efficiency and the negative impact of climate change so it was second nature to embrace battery-powered micro-mobility as an alternative to his aging internal combustion vehicle for daily commutes.

Benefits & Drawbacks

In addition to adopting the e-bike for environmental reasons, Apostol "did it to be able to spend more time outdoors while getting a little exercise, and to help extend the life of my 12-year-old Honda. It is also a great way to spend some healthy, quality time with my kids."

He had been commuting with a non-electric bike and found that it took between 25 and 35 minutes to get to work depending on the wind, traffic, weather, and his energy level. His RadCity 5 Plus takes him a consistent 17 minutes and allows him, upon arrival, to get right to work without the need to shower and change clothes.

"I am able to wear my regular work clothes on my commute and adjust the level of battery assist on the e-bike to prevent me from being sweaty when I get to work," says Apostol. "I also appreciate the consistency of my commute time, particularly on days when I need to drop off or pick up my son from school and my daughter from preschool. She loves it and feels right at home riding in the child seat on the back of the e-bike."

From experience, Apostol knows that "with an e-bike, you simply cycle around the road traffic. Sometimes, in the afternoon with everyone leaving the hospital at the same time, it can easily take more than 10 minutes just to get out of the parking lot. Problem solved with the e-bike."

"Compared to a non-electric bike, the e-bike is just so much more relaxing and easier on the hills. Unless of course you really want to give yourself a workout. Then you can simply turn off the motor assist and lay into the peddling. It doesn't hurt that you are also doing something healthy for the environment."

When asked about the drawbacks to being an e-bike road warrior, Apostol stresses his frustration with only being able to use his bike 80% of the year due to inclement weather – snowy and icy roads in winter and heavier than normal rainstorms.



However, he says being prepared with the proper riding gear for the cold and wet weather is essential.

Users also need to be on top of battery charging and make sure there is sufficient charge to get home otherwise you lose the pedal assist on a 60-pound bike.

Once he ran out of battery power three kms from home and had to pedal without the battery assist. "You just have to think positively and say to yourself, I guess I got my workout for the day!"

Storage & Security

When not enjoying the open road, Apostol stores his e-bike indoors: at home in his attached garage or in an interior stairway at work, which he appreciates particularly during the winter months.

Because his garage is connected to his home, it remains warm enough throughout the winter to not have to worry about the temperature negatively impacting his battery. He simply plugs his e-bike in every evening when he gets back from work. His bike has a range of around 40 kilometres (km) with full motor assist on, so a fully charged battery the next morning easily gets him to and from work without concern (18 km round trip). Dropping the level of motor assist drastically increases the bike's range too.

Should he opt not to ride his e-bike for a few days, such as occurs when there is a bad snowfall or the temperature dips incredibly low, Apostol will take the battery out of the e-bike and bring it inside.

LHSC provides both covered and uncovered cages for the safe storage of bikes and e-bikes for their staff and has bike racks throughout their two campuses for visitors. Apostol encourages other organisations to make similar infrastructure available to support their biking staff and visitors.



Mike Apostol with his two children out for a ride in beautiful London, ON.

He stresses it is important to implement functional racking that is solid and correctly spaced so that the bikes are not falling all over getting damaged or creating a safety hazard. In addition, users need to know someone can't simply cut the fence and pull a bike through, so fencing needs to be robust with appropriate security measures in place.

Advice for Potential Users

Apostol cautions users to be ever vigilant of (distracted) automobile drivers with whom you are often sharing the road. "You are exposed and vulnerable and you seldom win when you go up against an automobile."

"It is advisable," he says, "to learn about the regulations governing use of e-bikes in your city or municipality before you purchase your e-bike. Some jurisdictions may have speed limits or restrict the size of electric motor you are allowed to have on a bike if you are using public roadways, sidewalks, and paths."

In London (ON), for example, a city that provides more than 350 km of pathways, bike lanes and cycle tracks, the maximum allowable speed on approved roadways is 32 km/hour.

Children under the age of 14 can ride battery-powered devices on sidewalks while some kick-scooters and cargo e-bikes are limited to roadways posted at 50 km/hour or less [2].

Some parting words from the road warrior for anyone contemplating buying, leasing, renting or borrowing an e-bike/e-scooter:

- They are a lot more fun than you think they will be.
- Wear a helmet!
- Full-face helmets are best for e-scooters as oftentimes riders go over the front of the handlebars in an accident.
- Full-face motorcycle or snowmobile helmets are also great for warmth in the winter for cycling if you're in a more upright posture on your bike.
- Carefully plan out your route(s) and find the safest one(s).
- Learn how to do basic maintenance on your bike – cleaning the chain, lubing the chain, making sure the bolts are tight, etc.

"Most of us in health care are aware of the negative health implications of a deteriorating planet. We should be trying to ensure that we're taking reasonable steps to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and preserve the environment. The impacts of global warming are increasing yearly and our personal choices can bring co-benefits to others."

- Choose an e-device with good brand name recognition and boasting high sales volume.
- Avoid "ultra-low" no-name budget brands.
- Investigate the availability of replacement parts – you might just need them one day.

Reflection

Do you know the BPMM rules and regulations in your city and province or territory?

Visit our website [HERE](#) and access our BPMM Rules and Regulations fact sheet (COMING SOON).

References:

- [1] <https://radpowerbikes.ca/products/radcity-plus-electric-commuter-bike>
- [2] https://london.ca/living-london/roads-sidewalks-transportation/cycling-active-green-transportation/cycling#:~:text=In%20London%2C%20you%20can%20ride,where%20conventional%20bikes%20are%20permitted.&ext=*Children%20under%20the%20age%20of,at%2050km%2Fhr%20or%20less

About Us: The Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care is Canada's premier green health care resource network and is leading the evolution of green in Canada's health sector as a national voice and catalyst for environmental change. Collaboratively, we strive to reduce health care's ecological impact from compassionate care delivery while providing a platform upon which to discuss and promote best practices, innovation, environmental responsibility and climate change resiliency. www.greenhealthcare.ca

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