



The Oregonian

No belt, no bra, no pants? You're in good company

Stores see bike commuters coping with a common equipment failure: forgotten clothing

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Todd Brugger usually forgets his belt on the day he's packed a pair of pants missing a button.

But the financial analyst for Northwest Permanente who jogs or bikes to work has a quick fix.

He staples his pants closed.

Most folks take a more obvious approach, darting to department stores, discounters or second-hand shops for socks, underwear, bras, shirts or pants.

Forgetting is a natural part of bike or foot commuting, enthusiasts say. So it stands to reason that Portland - the nation's most bike-commuter-populated city -- has its fair share of shoot-I-forgot-it shoppers.

As more commuters catch on to the environment- and health-friendly practice -- 5.4 percent of Portland residents surveyed by the city last summer said they used bicycles to commute -- retailers see a tiny bump in business, especially during the warm-weather peak.

"We get a lot of them in when our downtown stores open," Liisa Thorson said. Thorson trains Nordstrom's lingerie clerks, who see similar morning rush hours in Seattle and San Francisco.

Lynne Mutrie of the Bicycle Transportation Alliance recalls ducking into Meier & Frank for a replacement undergarment after her hourlong bike commute from Lake Oswego.

Sometimes, however, she doesn't bother.

"It really depends on the length of skirt you're wearing, and how cold it is," she said.

Men also go without underwear, socks or undershirts. Some use loaners; others turn used skivvies inside-out.

A few athletes at the Metro YMCA in Southwest Portland forget gear each week, said Zach Lyons, the gym's supervisor.

"People come in gym shorts and realize they've forgotten pants," he said. Or, they arrive in suits without sweatpants.

That's easily fixed with a trip to the gym's store. Cyclists say they've bopped into the Bike Gallery or REI for needed gear.

Scott Bricker, the Bicycle Transportation Alliance's executive director, stashes back-up suits in his office, yet occasionally overlooks socks.

He doesn't sweat buying a new pair.

"If you're not paying for parking or gas," he said, "spending \$10 for some socks isn't the worst thing in the world."

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