

Boston Bulletin: Rozzie Resident Biking Across USA

By Ariane Komyati

Avid cyclist and Roslindale resident, Alan Wright, is biking from Boston to Portland, Oregon to help promote greener transportation and climate justice. Wright left Boston on Saturday, May 22 after attending Boston Cyclist Union 'Build Back Bikeable' rally at Government Center the night before and dipping his bike wheels into the Boston Harbor. Wright will end his trip by dipping his bike wheels in the Pacific ocean near Portland, Oregon in late July.

Wright's biking itinerary includes the Erie Canal bike path, Kalamazoo, Wright's home state of Illinois, St. Louis, Route 66, the Katy Trail on the Missouri River, Kansas, Wyoming, and up the Columbia River. Along the way, he will be staying with friends and family, at hotels, and at campgrounds. He will fly back from Oregon.

"My route is partly based on Adventure Cycling's and Rails-to-Trails routes with some customization. I expect to cover 70-80 miles per day on flat routes, 50-70 on hilly terrain, and 30-50 in the mountains," Wright stated in a letter to Parkway, West Roxbury, JP and Roslindale bike groups.

This adventure has been a dream of Wright's since he was a teenager. "I've gone on shorter rides, and I've helped organize the Boston Cyclist Union's annual ride to Montreal. But I have always wanted to do cross country. Now that I am retired, I have the time and I still have the physical health to be able to do it. I was actually going to do it last year, but because of the pandemic, I decided I wouldn't. But I saw that Scott Edwards [Harvard ornithologist] did it [biked from Boston to Portland, Oregon] in the midst of the pandemic and I was greatly impressed. I followed him everyday on Twitter [@ScottVEDwards1] and he did a really great job of highlighting his trip and posting pictures. It was a fascinating posting that he did on a daily basis," said Wright.

Most people bike from the East coast to the West coast due to the winds, and Wright's original plan was to fly to Oregon and bike back to Massachusetts. But after seeing Edwards' bike from the east to the west, he decided he would give it a shot. Wright is also making sure to pack rain gear in case of inclement weather.

In addition to visiting family and friends, Wright has two main goals with this trip - promoting bicycling as a transportation solution, and raising awareness about climate change. "My primary concern is about climate change. It is rapidly increasing and it is going to disrupt civilization much more with every passing year. I'm 67 years old, so I don't have too many more decades to live, but the younger generations are going to spend the rest of their lives dealing with worsening

climate change. It doesn't have to happen. We could stop the damage that's occurring," Wright explained. "But to do that, we have to change a lot of our habits that have to do with using fossil fuels. About forty percent of CO2 emissions in developed countries like the United States come from transportation. About seventy percent of that comes from people driving cars."

Wright explained that most of the car driving is to or from work, or just going to run errands just a few miles away. He said that it doesn't have to be that way. "We should be using public transportation in much larger numbers. We should have bus routes and rail lines everywhere," he said. "I bike all the time in the city. I have been bicycling in the city for many decades - to work, to school, for errands. People who don't bicycle tell me it's too dangerous to bicycle. We ought to make it so people feel safer bicycling. If they did, they might bike to the grocery store instead of driving a car." Wright listed the Netherlands and Denmark as great examples of bicycle infrastructure.

While on his cross country trip, Wright will post daily to his Twitter account (@AlanBikeClimate) and his Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/alnwright>) by sharing pictures and videos, accounts of his travels, snippets of conversations with new people, and observations about climate change. Wright will have signs on my panniers asking "Have you experienced climate change?". On Wright's social media, he will have links to bicycle and climate change organizations for followers to learn about and donate to. These organizations include World Bicycle Relief, Bikes Not Bombs, Greenpeace, Climate Reality Project, and Citizens Climate Lobby.