

Making Ripples

Alternative Transportation Tips for Summer

by Amanda Bancroft

Alternative transportation should instead be known as the type of transportation which burns calories, saves the planet, increases social time, preserves our health, and saves money. In other words, “common sense transportation.” Here are some common sense transportation services in Northwest Arkansas:

Ozark Regional Transit (479) 756-5901 lets kids ages 17 or younger ride free all summer, and now includes free Wi-Fi on Route 54. According to their mission statement, the ORT “is dedicated to providing safe, reliable, and affordable public transportation to both the rural and urban residents of the four county area within our jurisdiction.” This includes Fayetteville, Springdale, Bentonville and Rogers. They serve almost 1,000 passengers on their fixed routes every day. For adults, the fare is \$1.25 each way and transfers are free.

For completely free bus service in Fayetteville, try Razorback Transit (479) 575-RIDE. Although their service is reduced during summer, during the daytime until 5:00pm they can get you to many different places, including the Northwest Arkansas Mall to cool off. Since July 1st, 2013, Razorback Transit has served 2,026,209 riders. The buses are air-conditioned and some have bike racks.

If it’s not a scorcher, or if you want to go somewhere in the evening, don’t overlook the bike trail! Parts of it are shaded, and in many places, the trail passes under bridges and runs alongside creeks that keep the temperature down. It’s also the perfect place to find a good picnic spot while running errands, and you can grab free snacks from the mulberry trees (the berries are ripe!). Adding a bike trailer, handlebar basket, or bike rack to your bike allows you to do grocery shopping, laundry, or haul books from the library. Wheeled bags are also easier on the back.

Carpooling is a great way to share gas costs and socialize with friends, but if you end up needing to call a cab, try Green Cab Company (479) 966-4111. Their mission is to “reduce the carbon footprint for our customers in Benton and Washington Counties by offering taxi services that are environmentally friendly, clean, technologically advanced and affordable.”

Everyone needs to eat, but especially people who are burning calories instead of driving. A cold bento box lunch is a convenient way to eat on the run, and there are many types of eco-friendly BPA-free plastic, stainless steel, or bamboo boxes out there, with or without carry cases and thermal regulation. Besides food, I pack plenty of water to keep me hydrated on hot summer days, as well as a hat, lip balm, pens, bug spray/anti-itch spray, travel toiletries (to freshen up in

public bathrooms), and anything else I might want – for example, an extra hair tie and a square of dark chocolate. Who says you can't be pampered while using alternative transportation?

Ripples is a blog connecting people to resources on sustainable living while chronicling their off-grid journey and supporting the work of non-profit organizations. Read more on this topic and others at www.RipplesBlog.org