

ALYSSA

I'm your host Make-it-Green Girl, and today we'll talk about a few of the places you can save gas, thereby saving yourself money and saving the Earth pounds of air pollutants. In America, the automobile has become the ultimate symbol of our most cherished values-- individualism and freedom. You can express your individuality by the kind of car you buy, how you drive it, and where you go. You are also freed by the personal car from relying on others or on public transportation to get you to far off places or haul around your stuff. However, if you, like many Americans, are starting to see the undesirable results of your driving, not to mention the gas prices, this episode is for you.

MARTINO:

As a bicycle commuter, I have a unique perspective on driving. In a sense, I am my own engine, and my bicycle is my chassis. There is a lot to be learned by thinking of a car in the same way you think of a person on a bike. If you don't ride often or at all, you'll have to use your imagination. But if you even remotely remember riding a bicycle, which we allegedly never forget, the analogies I'm about to make between your car engine and a bicyclist will make a lot of sense.

The same rules of thermodynamics apply to mechanical systems, like your engine, and biological systems, like bicyclists. And May as Bike Month, after all. In bike terms, the more work you do, the more spaghetti and meatballs you want to eat when you get home. In car terms, the more work your engine does, the more gasoline it will want to drink.

For many drivers though, fueling up has turned from an errand to a headache. \$4 a gallon, they grumble. Will this roller coaster never end? As prices continue to rise, many people want to cut back on their consumption. The most obvious way to avoid the pinch at the pump is to drive less.

As a biker, sometimes I just don't want the chocolate chips bad enough to want to drag my bike out to the store. Or I'm too hungry from the ride home that I'll eat whatever's around, so I just don't go. You too can avoid temptation, and luckily you're not alone in this endeavor. According to the Federal Highway Administration, miles driven in America peaked in 2006 at three trillion miles. Starting in November 2007, the total vehicle miles traveled began to fall. March 2008 came in 11 billion miles short of March 2007.

Great job, green guys and gals. This means that about nine million tons of greenhouse gases

did not go into the atmosphere. According to the EPA's carbon equivalent calculator, this is the equivalent of planting over 200 million tree seedlings and growing them for 10 years. You can read the FHWA press release and play with the EPA carbon calculator by following the links in the transcript.

So the next time you're tempted by the ease and convenience of your car, think back to the price at the pump. Do you really need to go to the store to get ice cream tonight right this instant? It probably feels like it with your doe-eyed kids pleading for this sweet or that video game, but why not try something else? How about taking the family for a nice brisk walk to get some ice cream together, or putting it on the list for the next grocery run? If you absolutely must cave in to that spontaneous outing, just don't make a habit out of it.

Another way for you to get the most out of your engine is to combine trips. As a bike engine, this saves me time since I'm not constantly donning and doffing the gear, dragging my bike up and down the stairs, locking it up outside, yada yada yada. But I also find that it's a lot easier for me to do all my trips in one go, especially if I don't stop for too long and hop right back on. Why? Because my muscles are still warm. It's really hard to get going again once you've been lazing about at the coffee shop for an hour.

This advice is good for car engines too. Your car is at its most efficient when the engine is warmed up, so combining trips fools your car into thinking it's doing less work, even if it drives the same miles. Better efficiency means better gas mileage. Why not combine your errands into a single trip or with your commute? Why not stop at the grocery store on the way home tomorrow, since you're already out and driving to and from work? The engine can be turned off for about an hour before the engine block starts cooling off.

Regular tune ups for your car are also important when it comes to gas mileage. Imagine riding a bicycle whose gears don't work properly. The brakes are worn and the parts not well lubricated. Sounds like the recipe for a crash, or at least some slow biking. So your car will get lots better gas mileage if it's properly looked after, as the engine doesn't have to work so hard to do its job.

Another less well-known, or at least oft forgotten thing, you can do on the cheap is to fill up those tires. That's right. If you or anyone you know has ever ridden a bicycle to the bike store or the gas station with wilted tires, filled them up to 40 pounds per square inch, and taken off again, then you'll know what I mean. It is so much more difficult, uses so much more of your

energy to pedal that bike with those wilty 15 PSI tires. The feeling of freedom and speed with properly inflated tires is palatable, the change instantaneous. Just by filling your car's tires up to the manufacturer's specified pressure, which may cost you all of \$0.75, you can go a long way towards easing the burden on your car.

Thanks everyone for tuning into this episode of *Make-it-Green Girl's Quick and Dirty Tips for an Earth Friendly Life*. There are a lot more green driving tips to come in future episodes, so be sure to keep listening. Send your questions and comments to greengirl@quickanddirtytips.com or leave me a voicemail at 206-600-3051.

Be sure to check out all the Quick and Dirty Tips podcasts at www.quickanddirtytips.com. If you're a fan of Grammar Girl like me, the first book from A Quick and Dirty Tips Podcast host will be in stores soon. *Grammar Girl's Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing* by Mignon Fogarty will be available wherever books are sold on July 8. Reserve a copy now or preorder one from your favorite online retailer.

MAN: You ever have one of those days where everything goes right? First, I get the best parking space at work. Tonight, I have a date with the very lovely Rachel. And today, I gave a killer presentation in Sydney, finalized a contract in London, and demoed our new product in Boston online from my desk with WebEx. WebEx lets me take meetings and give presentations from my desk. I just talk to clients on the phone, and they watch what's happening on my desktop from their desktop. So I can travel the world and still be here for my date tonight with Rachel.

ANNOUNCER: Travel less, meet online. Go to webex.com, and try WebEx free. Just click the radiographic and enter promo code Cisco to get a free trial and a free webcam too. Remember that code, Cisco, to qualify for the free webcam. WebEx, now part of Cisco, and used by more than five and 1/2 million people every month.

Give it a try free. Go to webex.com and enter the promo code Cisco-- webex.com. Free web cams available while supplies. Last terms and restrictions apply. See website for details.