

Reprint **Island Tides**

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Mobility and The Good Life ~ Louis Vallée

You've heard me talk about alternative forms of transportation that do not rely on fossil fuels. Here's another challenge—keeping mobile and staying independent when you can no longer drive.

This can happen for all sorts of reasons, but for many of us there comes a time when we might lose that driver's license. Some communities have support groups such as 'seniors helping seniors' or those organized to give rides. Friends, Ride Share, or Car Stop programs can be used as transportation.

The loss of independence, however, is very hard to replace. To be able to leave whenever you choose, to go to your favourite place or simply visit at your leisure, requires independent transportation. There are mobility scooters, either 3 or 4-wheeled electric vehicles commonly seen on streets or sidewalks in the city. For the Islands though these scooters, are high, potentially unstable, and have limited range and climbing ability.

For those still able to pedal and balance, a bicycle is a good alternative. Tricycles can be used to compensate for balance and to carry greater loads. To overcome the hills and distances electric-assist motors can be used. Electrically assisted bicycles and tricycles can be a good alternative for the Islands and the good life.

Gasoline powered vehicles are not allowed in the 'assisted cycles category' because they require license plates and insurance. Besides, the Environmental Protection Agency latest figures state that a gas scooter driven 10 miles is equivalent, in pollution, to a late model car driven 850 miles.



LOUIS VALLEE IN HIS RECUMBENT BIKE IN THE PENDER FALL FAIR PARADE Photo: Richard Curchin

However, with the latest 'open' electric-assist, a bicycle or tricycle can be custom designed for almost anyone's ability. As long as you can still pedal, however slowly, in a comfortable, seated position these customized vehicles are now providing good alternative transportation on Island roads. These machines can be custom designed to overcome any hills and distances required.

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The benefits of exercise, open air and the freedom that comes from providing your own mobility cannot be overstated. Future designs are aimed at providing year-round protection from the elements so that winter use can be practical and comfortable.

The Islands are low-density, rural communities reflecting our desire for a bucolic lifestyle and a need for privacy and independence. Cheap transportation for everyone improves our communities and alternative transportation is essential to keep our seniors on the Islands. Ways to keep getting around enables us to continue to live the Island good life. ☺

Ed's Note: See Louis' advertisement on the Bulletin Board, p15

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