

For Immediate Release:
May 21, 2019

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Highlights: Bike Shops

Nationwide, commuter cycling has jumped 60 percent in the last decade, according to the most recent U.S. census. Many riders also pedal for pleasure, exercise, or to run errands. Whether you're a serious cyclist or a casual rider, the latest issue of *Chicago Consumers' Checkbook* (Checkbook.org) will help you find a bike shop to meet all your cycling needs. Some findings from Checkbook's report:

- A shop with good repair service is likely to do a good job setting up and adjusting your bike and will help you with future repairs and maintenance.
- There are some terrific shops in the area, with several rated "superior" for the "overall quality" of their repair service by 90 percent or more of their surveyed customers.
- For repairs, tune-ups, and adjustments, Checkbook's undercover shoppers found big price differences among local shops. For example, the price for a basic tune-up on a 2016 Cannondale Trail 5 mountain bike ranged from \$50 to \$115. The price to assemble and install customer-supplied tubeless wheels and tires on a Masi Speciale road bike ranged from \$22 to \$80.
- Prices for new bicycles vary little from store to store, and you won't find big savings by buying online. Because bike manufacturers maintain strict pricing controls over retailers, Checkbook's undercover shoppers found that even a \$25 difference for major name brands is rare.

Bike shopping tips

- Avoid buying a bicycle online; in-store expertise will likely help you make a better purchase. The area's better shops take the time to fit each customer carefully—checking frame height, the angle of your legs when pedaling, and whether the handlebars are the right height and width. Even if you do buy online, major manufacturers will direct you to a local store to finalize the sale and have the bike assembled, so it makes sense to buy your bike from a highly rated shop.
- Don't purchase a bike until you've taken test rides on several.
- Before sending you on a test ride, a good bike shop will be sure the bike is fitted right. Then you need to check how smooth the ride is, how responsive the bike feels, how comfortable it is, how stable it is, and how easy it is to control, shift, and brake. The salesperson can use your feedback to make adjustments or suggest a better-suited bike.
- It is important to test bikes in a wide price range. You may find that you can get a thoroughly satisfactory bike at a much lower-than-expected price.
- Almost all bike shops will make free adjustments for a period after you buy, and some will offer this service for the life of the bike. Be sure to take advantage of this service.

Checkbook's editors are available for interviews. Please contact Jamie Lettis at 202-454-3006 or jlettis@checkbook.org to schedule.

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