

Rob English's Velomobile Journey

Engineering Protection:

EFFICIENCY & SPEED PAIRED WITH SAFETY

FINDING THE VELOMOBILE PATH

Rob's journey to velomobiles began with a frightening wake-up call. "One winter morning, I hit black ice on my regular bike and went down," he recalls. "I was sliding on the ice and completely fine until I looked up and saw a truck with all four wheels locked, sliding directly toward me."

In that split-second, Rob threw himself into a ditch and watched helplessly as his bike was crushed under the truck. Though physically unharmed, the close call demanded a search for a safer winter commuting solution.

"I'm committed to commuting under human power," Rob explains. **"So I needed to find something that would work year-round in Oregon's wet, cold winters."**

This led him to his first velomobile: a fiberglass-bodied recumbent trike that he purchased used from a builder in Canada.

Sight unseen, Rob took a train north and then rode the velomobile 500 kilometers home, learning its handling characteristics along the way.

"That bike was fantastic for my commute for many years," Rob says. "But it wasn't as refined as the one-piece designs available today."

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THE ULTIMATE COMMUTE TEST

When Rob relocated his workshop a few years ago, his commute expanded dramatically to 45 kilometers each way. The longer distance demanded something more efficient, even with electric assist added to his original velomobile.

"I started thinking about a more refined vehicle since this was essentially my car replacement," he explains.

"That's when I found Velomobile World's Bülk model." As both an engineer and experienced rider, Rob immediately appreciated the Bülk's technical advantages.

"It's incredibly efficient. I was able to hit similar commute times to my old velomobile with electric assist, but without a motor. That's how good the aerodynamics are."



"The carbon fiber shell, precisely engineered for minimum drag, allows Rob to **maintain cruising speeds between 55-60 kph on flat sections, speeds that would require significant effort on a traditional bicycle.**

"It's the perfect human scale," Rob reflects. "You're in the landscape, not just passing through it in a metal box."

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WHEN SAFETY FEATURES PROVE THEIR WORTH

Rob's appreciation for the Bülk's engineering took on new significance after an unexpected encounter on his evening commute.

"I was doing about 60 kph downhill on a section where I can hold that speed for about 5 kilometers," he recounts. **"Then out of nowhere, a deer jumped across the road and hit me."** The impact was severe. Rob briefly lost consciousness and found himself upside down in roadside bushes.

The Bülk was destroyed, but its safety features performed exactly as designed.



"That crash really proved the value of the safety features, it did its job," Rob emphasizes. "Although I did get a concussion, that's a lot of energy to dissipate. I had a few bruises and scrapes, but nothing else."

If I'd been on a regular bike and been hit by a deer, I know people who've broken bones or worse in that situation."

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LIFE AT VELOMOBILE SPEED

Beyond safety, Rob finds that **riding a velomobile offers unique social experiences**. "It's pretty interesting riding a velomobile in the US," he laughs. "It must be what it feels like to be a celebrity." This visibility brings unexpected safety benefits.

"The unusual factor makes it so much safer because car drivers don't know what it is. They slow down and give me a wide berth. I've had people sit behind me for two or three miles when it's clear to pass, just because they're curious."

Once, a sheriff even pulled Rob over, not for speeding, but simply to ask what he was riding.

"I was cruising at 55 kilometers per hour up the highway, and he just wanted to know what this strange vehicle was."

For daily life, the velomobile functions as practical transportation. "I use it like a car," Rob explains. "I can do grocery runs, stay dry in the rain, and just cruise comfortably."

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THE MENTAL LANDSCAPE OF HUMAN POWER

Beyond the practical advantages, Rob finds deeper value in human-powered commuting. "Cycling is just this incredibly efficient form of transport at a human scale," he says. **"For me, it means I never have to think about exercising because it just happens in my normal life."**



He finds the rhythm of cycling essential for his creative process. "I do all my best design work when I'm riding," Rob notes. "If you've got a problem in the back of your mind, you can just let it work through while you're pedaling. It's very calming and allows my brain to catch up with thoughts."

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LOOKING FORWARD

Despite the accident, Rob is already planning his velomobile return. **"I'm definitely replacing my Bülk with another one,"** he confirms. "I'm just going to have the same bike again with a few minor adjustments." The only significant change will be switching from tiller to tank steering. "I have a lot of high-speed cornering on my commute, and I find the input of having the more fixed steering feels better for me," he explains.

For Rob, the velomobile represents something beyond ordinary transportation, it's a philosophy built around human scale, efficiency, and connection to the environment. Despite the crash, his confidence in the vehicle remains unshaken.

"It fits how I live, how I move, and how I think," he concludes. "I'm looking forward to getting back out there and continuing to show what's possible with human-powered transportation."

EXPERIENCE THE BÜLK DIFFERENCE

The Bülk velomobile combines unparalleled efficiency, safety, and all-weather comfort in a human-powered vehicle that can replace car trips while enhancing your daily experience. Explore the Bülk and other Velomobile World models at www.velomobileworld.com or [schedule a free consultation](#) to find the perfect model for your needs.



Rob English is a custom bicycle builder and velomobile enthusiast based in Oregon, USA. He has been building custom steel bicycles for nearly 20 years and is a long-time advocate for human-powered transportation.

www.velomobileworld.com