

Run-commuting

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Run-commuting is a transportation practice which involves people running to and/or from work. It is a curious form of transportation emerging in cities across the 'developed' world yet it is by no means new. At its core, running is about the traversal of space and locational displacement. Running was human's second technology for overcoming the distance of time-space and has always been a means of transportation (Bale 2004). Whilst this understanding still prevails in parts of the world (see Larouche *et al* 2014), current 'western' discourses around running have shifted away from transportation and towards sport and fitness. But this does not mean that running for transport is an extinct practice. Linger long enough at any train station and you will witness hundreds of people running to catch their train; running that may be undesired but running that is used to traverse space.

Run-commuting represents intentional instances of running being used for transportation. It is a specific idea that only came to prominence in the 2010s, emerging for a variety of personal, cultural and geographical reasons. Individuals often take up the practice as a time-saving mechanism, allowing them to harmonise the rhythms of life and work by utilising incumbent moments of mobility to fit in their running. Culturally, places where run-commuting is pervasive, such as London, hold strong aspirations for people to lead healthier workplace lifestyles, establishing run-commuting as acceptable. Geographically, dense urban cities offer the most attractive spaces for run-commuting as destinations are often not too distant; the street layout allows for many routes to be carved through it; congestion makes road-based traffic slow; and subterranean transport can be hot, hurried, and squished. There is growing public interest in run-commuting (see Kemp 2014) and this enthusiasm can perhaps be best epitomised by the trend of racing the subway; trying to outrun a subway train between stations (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PH_Z8Ghuq6E). The point? It can be just as quick and a lot more fun to get around by running.

The *International Survey of Run Commuters 2014* (<http://theruncommuter.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/2014-ISORC-Results.pdf>) provides some initial insights the 'brute facts' of run-commuting. A run-commuter is most likely to be a white male aged between thirty and forty-four and most likely to run between three and seven miles on any commute. In cases where the total commute is further than this, run-commuters will use another mode of transport to complete the rest of their journeys. The majority of run-commuters only do so two to three times a week. This often relates to the logistical complexities involved with run-commuting and the need for 'things' as well as bodies to commute. Backpacks help to overcome this but can only be used for the bare essentials given the difficulty of running with one.

Unlike historical uses, this current trend for using running as a form of transportation is one made out of choice rather than necessity – but is it any good? Run-commuting has many positives for physical and mental well-being, as well as being environmentally friendly, relatively safe and low cost. On the other hand, running can be difficult, resulting in sweaty, tired bodies severely limited in distance and speed. It is also a transportation mode that heavily relies on other modes to enable it, by completing the journeys running can't manage and transporting 'stuff' that runners can't. But perhaps most notably, many people simply do not possess the ability or proclivity to consider run-commuting. Yet there *is* need to start considering it and other modes, beyond automobility, and although there are currently no formal policies for run-commuting, a whole range of creative, community, and business-driven solutions have been established around the world to begin to fill the gap. In the UK a lobbying group has been founded called *run2work* (see www.run2work.com) who lobby workplaces to provide sufficient facilities, petition government for tax-exemptions, as well as host monthly awareness-raising *run2work* days. The difficulty of running with a backpack has seen the rise of cycle escorts, such as Home Run London (see www.homerunlondon.com), who will transport your bag for you as you run. The loneliness of the run-commuter is also being mitigated through the establishment of run-commuting groups or running-buddies as seen in the Brazilian initiative *corrida amiga* (<http://corridaamiga.wix.com/corridaamiga>). However, as run-commuting continues grow, many are calling for more comprehensive strategies to tackle the logistical difficulties, infrastructural necessities and normalisation of the practice to help the transportation mode flourish.

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