



TRAIL TALK

By Erin Reed, Executive Director
Dickinson County Trails Board



RECREATIONAL TRAIL SAFETY & IOWA BIKE LAWS

This month we are focusing on recreational trail and bicycle safety in addition to being kind to our fellow trail users.

ATV's ON TRAILS

While ATV's are allowed on most streets throughout the Iowa Great Lakes they are not allowed on Dickinson County Trails. The Trails Board has a motorized vehicle policy that allows the use of small vehicles for those who need assistance. There is a permit required for these vehicles that can be found on our website at www.dickinsoncountytails.com. For the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists, refrain from riding unpermitted vehicles on the trails.

BICYCLING ETIQUETTE: Be Cool, It's a Bike Path by Brian Fiske (www.bicycling.com)

Multi-use paths are being added to cities across the country at an exciting rate and more people are using them. That's a great thing but crowding can lead to conflict. To stay safe, and make the experience more enjoyable for everyone, here are a few guidelines for blissfully sharing bike paths with fellow cyclists, joggers, dog walkers, and everyone else.

- 1. Get out of time-trial mode:** It is fun to go fast, but a bike path is not the place to seek a record time. Yes, you can crank things up a bit if you have clear sight lines and few other users but, as a general rule, keep it under control.
- 2. Ride right, pass left:** Act like a car in these situations. Right for travel, left for passing. And, of course, obey all traffic signals.
- 3. Slow down—and be prepared to stop—when there are others around:** People are unpredictable. Kids and pets especially, but the truth is, anyone can be so involved in a conversation or wrapped up in their own thoughts that they'll make a bad choice even if they hear you coming. Slow to a walking pace and keep your hands on your brakes.
- 4. Make some noise well before passing:** A bell is more charming (and less startling) than an "on your left!" but either is preferable to a stealth pass. Make noise—be sure you are heard—well before you reach the person you're passing.
- 5. Look around (and signal!) before passing or stopping.** Just because you are doing it right doesn't mean everyone else is. Before you swing left to pass or hit the brakes to stop, throw out a hand signal, and take a look behind you for oncoming traffic.
- 6. Don't stand in the path.** Sometimes it's nice to stop and look around and take a drink. Pull off the path when you do so, otherwise you'll block the way for everyone else.
- 7. Be nice.** It is the most important thing. You are representing cyclists as a group. Don't be a stone-faced automaton determined to maintain your 20mph pace. Treat people the way you want to be treated. Be friendly. Wave. Say hello. It will make all of our time on these super paths a little more fun.

IOWA RULES OF THE ROAD FOR BICYCLISTS

Know and Obey Iowa's Traffic Laws – A person riding a bicycle on the street or highway has all the rights, and is required to know and obey all traffic laws and rules of the road, applicable to the driver of a motor vehicle.

Ride on the Right and With Traffic – Bicyclists must ride with the flow of traffic on the right side of the roadway, except: when overtaking and passing another vehicle; when preparing for a left turn; when avoiding parked vehicles, drain grates, or debris; or when avoiding any other road conditions that may affect the operation of bicycles. Bicyclists may also ride on the shoulder or a designated bike lane. Bicyclist operating on a roadway at less than the normal speed of traffic shall ride as close to the right curb or edge of the roadway as is safe and practical.

Use Hand and Arm Signals – Bicyclists must signal their intentions to turn or stop. The proper signals are made with the left arm. To make a left-turn signal, extend hand and arm horizontally; to make right-turn signal, extend hand and arm upward; and to stop or decrease speed, extend hand and arm downward. The keys to safe bicycling include be predictable, visible and communicate your intentions to motorists.

Use a Light at Night – A bicycle operated between sunset and sunrise must be equipped with a white light on the front, and red light or reflector on the rear, both visible for a distance of at least 300 feet.

Follow Lane Markings – Bicyclists must follow lane markings and select the appropriate lane for their intended direction of travel.

Ride Only Where Permitted – Bicyclists are allowed on almost all Iowa roads with the exception of interstates, other controlled-access highways with posted minimum speed limits, and streets where bicyclists are prohibited by local ordinance.

Limit Riders to Those Your Bicycle is Equipped to Carry – Bicyclists must not carry more people on their bicycle than it is designed and equipped to carry, except for adults carrying a child securely attached to the bicycle in a seat or trailer designed to carry children.

Pass on the Left – Bicyclists should always pass on the left. To pass a motor vehicle, the bicyclist must first move to the left lane. After overtaking the vehicle, they must return to the right lane once reaching a clear distance.

Report Crashes – Bicyclists must stop and exchange information when they have been involved in a crash.

Never Ride Against Traffic – Motorists and other cyclists aren't looking for a bicyclist on the wrong side of the roadway. Riding on the wrong side increases the likelihood and severity of head-on collisions.

Bicycles and Traffic Violations – Bicyclists who violate traffic laws are subject to the same fines as motor vehicle drivers.

Be Prepared to Stop for School Buses – Bicyclists must come to a complete stop when they come upon a school bus with flashing signal lights and the "STOP" arm out.

Cars Passing Bikes – Use extra caution when passing bicycles. Move entirely into the left lane; on a two-lane road, do not pass a bicycle if oncoming traffic is near.

Be Safe and Have Fun! As always, Happy Trails to You and Yours.

Erin Reed, DCTB Executive Director

