

*Complete Connectivity –
Promoting Non-Motorized Transportation in Sheboygan County*

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By now you have probably heard at least some news about the efforts of Sheboygan County regarding the Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Project (NMTPP). Knowing that the county strives to promote bicycle transportation as part of its focus, and with the recent warm weather and the promise of more to come, maybe you, like many, are thinking of getting out the old bike and putting it to use again.

We all know the benefits of bike riding. Cycling is good, healthy, low impact exercise, and its practical and cost effective transportation. Cycling is also good for the environment, a short four mile trip keeps roughly a pound of pollutants out of the air we breathe. And, if you have not ridden in a while, you will quickly remember, it is a lot of fun.

One of the goals of the NMTPP is to promote a transportation mode shift. This means encouraging individuals to walk or ride a bicycle instead of using an automobile in appropriate situations. These might include cycling to work, to school, to the store, or running simple errands. Before hitting the road again, there are a few things to remember in order to make the most of the bicycling experience.

Your bike should be in good, safe, operating condition. Whether you have ridden lately or you are getting it out of the basement for the first time in years, before each ride complete a short safety check. If you are not mechanically inclined or if serious work on the bike is necessary, take it in for a tune-up to one of the fine bike shops in the area. Some questions to ask are: Do all rotating parts (wheels, chain, cranks, pedals) turn smoothly? Is there lubricant on the chain and gears? Are the brakes functioning properly? Check the condition of the rubber tires. If they are badly worn or quite aged the tires should be replaced.

Also, tires inflated to the proper pressure are essential to an enjoyable ride. Riding on under inflated tires will make you feel like you are riding uphill and into the wind all the time! A more serious result of riding on low tires, however, will be damage to the inner tube at the valve stem, potentially causing a flat tire.

Always, no matter where or how far you are riding; wear an approved bicycling helmet. Studies have shown the risk of severe head injury is greatly reduced. Helmets are not just for protecting kids; adults need to wear them too. As the Iowa DOT slogan states, “You don’t want to hit the road without one.”

Bicycling, of course, is exercise, so as with any form of exercise, be realistic in how much you can or want to do on your initial outings. Make short trips at first. If you are thinks of biking to work, do a couple of trial runs. See how long it takes. For any ride, you might want to plan a route different from your usual automobile route.

There is a great deal more to know about dressing for the weather, new equipment, rules of the road, safe riding habits and much more. For now make a promise to yourself to get the bike back on the road.

Most importantly, many thanks to Dave Smith for his help in writing this article!