

Be Safe & GET CONNECTED!

by Dave Smith (CATC Member)

One objective of the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Project (NMTTP) is promoting walking and cycling to work and/or school. You will be hearing more about Bike & Walk to Work Week (May 10th - May 16th), Safe Routes to School programs, and our bicycle safety efforts throughout the spring and summer. It is, of course, hoped that many Sheboygan County residents participate in these activities at some level.

If the efforts of NMTTP are successful to any degree, we should be seeing a greater number of children as well as adults walking and riding bikes when the weather improves or when gas finally gets above \$4/gallon! As motorists, we are reminded to be extra cautious when encountering children walking and on bikes. There are a number of reasons why children require special attention from us while driving.

Fifty percent of all fatal bicycle accidents involve cyclists under the age of 16. The most common accident situations are: Motorist turns right in path of Cyclist riding straight, Cyclist rides into the street from a driveway, sidewalk or curb without stopping; Cyclist moves or swerves to the left without yielding or signaling; Cyclist runs the stop sign; Cyclist is riding **against** the flow of traffic. The median age of cyclists involved in each of these situations is 11-13 years. Interestingly, the majority of accidents at lower age levels are the cyclists fault. At higher age levels, it is exactly opposite. The majority of accidents are then the motorists fault.

Why do these things happen to children and why do we need to be more cautious as adults? It is safe to say that, generally, children do not have the same view of their own mortality as, say, someone over the age of 40. They seem to do careless, foolish things. Children expect that adults will be watching out for them. They also do not have the knowledge of traffic laws or the experience to anticipate potentially dangerous situations. In addition, children have not yet developed the same amount of periferal vision as adults, nor are they as able to estimate the speed of approaching traffic.

Another safety factor involves the cycling skill level of the child. It is important for youngsters to know more about controlling a bicycle than simply being able to balance it to stay upright. It is important for them to watch for obstacles in the roadway and to be able avoid them safely. Braking, balance, and steering skills are extremely important. And, of course, for all cyclists, children and adults alike, wearing a helmet is a crucial element in safe cycling.

Children are likely to hop on their bikes and take off without thinking to first do a brief safety check. Adults may check tire pressure, wheels, brakes, pedals, and chain; while many children never give it a thought.

An excellent way to address all the aforementioned concerns is through participation in a bicycle rodeo. A bicycle rodeo provides a safe, hands on, and fun, way to teach children to be more educated, skilled, and responsible cyclists. You will be hearing more about bike rodeos and how you and your children can get involved later this spring/summer.

One last item to note. The three largest public employers in the County have challenged one another for Bike & Walk to Work Week, May 10th - May 16th. Sheboygan County employees, Sheboygan Area School District employees, and City of Sheboygan employees will compete against each other for awards in most mileage for cycling or walking by an individual, for longest commute in cycling or walking by an individual, and for most total mileage by each entity. The week should be a lot of fun.

Get your employer involved in Bike & Walk to Work Week if they are not already! Give us a call, 459-3060, we have plenty of information if you are thinking about participating.