SIDEWALK RIDING

Sidewalk riding is very dangerous — you are invisible when on sidewalks!
Motorists are looking in the road and not for sidewalk traffic moving at high speeds such as bicyclists. They often don’t see bicyclists there, especially at driveways and intersections.

Sidewalks themselves don’t pose dangers to bicyclists. Poor maintenance, uneven surfaces, gaps, and pedestrians make sidewalks difficult and dangerous for bicycles to navigate. Bicyclists were never required to use sidewalks or side paths. If you must ride on a sidewalk (and local ordinance does not prohibit it):

- Yield to pedestrians and walk bikes in crowded areas.
- Provide an audible approach warning by ringing your bell or calling out “passing on your left.”
- Watch for inattentive motorists; never assume they see you.
- Ride with the direction of traffic (on the right side of the road).

League of Michigan Bikers recommends children under 10 ride on sidewalks, as they may not be mature enough to make decisions necessary to safely ride in the street. Extra caution should be used at driveways and intersections, following the same rules as if they were on-road.

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

1. Wear a properly fitted helmet every time you ride. Wearing a helmet can prevent brain injuries.
2. Wear bright-colored and/or reflective clothing to be as visible as possible.
3. Carry a tire pump, tire levers, patch kit, and spare tube.
4. Carry fluids using a water bottle holder (often called a cage).
5. Equip your bike with a white front headlight as well as a red rear reflector and light for riding in twilight, darkness, and poor weather conditions.
6. Carry identification and pertinent medical information.
7. Carry a cell phone in case of an emergency and to document issues.

HELPFUL EQUIPMENT

8. Install a mirror on your handlebar, helmet, or glasses to improve your overall awareness and to trailing vehicles and riding companions.
9. Carry a lock to secure your bike.
10. Wear reflective leg bands to keep long pants away from your chain.
12. Install a saddle bag rack over your rear wheel to carry items.
13. Install a bell or horn to warn others of your approach, especially on trails.
14. Carry a multi-tool to help with basic repairs. A crescent wrench is helpful with certain bikes.
DEALING WITH DOGS

Dogs can sense fear, so try to remain calm if you encounter an angry canine. You'll feel more confident, and the dog likely sense this, too. Dogs tend to be territorial. Once you leave "their" territory, they will usually lose interest. However, if a dog does chase you, here are some options. Think ahead of time about which are right for you.

- Don't try to outrun the dog unless you are a very strong rider. If you can't completely outrun it, the dog may catch your wheel and knock you down.
- While on the bike, don't try anything beyond your bike-handling skills.
- In a loud, firm voice say, "No!" "Bad dog!" "Go home!" or other common commands.
- Carry pepper spray. Practice reaching and using it while riding. Protect your eyes from "blowback" by not aiming it into the wind. Don't carry or use anything illegal in Michigan.
- Carry an "English Bobby"-style or dog-training whistle; they can often stop charging dogs in their tracks and send them home.
- Just stop. If you do, the dog may also stop, allowing you to walk or ride slowly away.
- Get off your bike quickly; if the dog attacks, use your bike as a barrier.
- If a dog is a repeated problem, try to photograph it. Send a polite complaint letter with the photo to the owners, with copies to the police and local animal authority. In the letter say that, if the dog hurts someone, the letter constitutes notice to the homeowners, which may be used in a lawsuit against them.