

## **Bike/Walk Midland and Traffic Awareness**

The safety of non-motorized transportation users depends on traffic awareness by all involved. A recent study shows that bicyclists contributed to the cause of car/bicycle injury accidents only 2% of time by disobeying a stop sign or traffic light. Wearing dark clothing at night was a potential cause in about 2.5% of cases, and failure to use lights at night was mentioned 2% of the time. Some motorists are not looking for cyclists, and cyclists are expecting motorists to see them when in fact the drivers don't. Distracted driving (cell phone use, among other activities) only makes this problem worse. Unfortunately these same issues exist for pedestrians, and the key for pedestrians and bicyclists alike is to assume that drivers may not see them and take appropriate defensive actions.

All sidewalk users are considered pedestrians, even if they are riding a bike, in-line skating, or using a power chair. They must practice traffic awareness at intersections and crosswalks in anticipation that some drivers are not looking for them on the sidewalk. Drivers need to scan the sidewalks on both sides of the street they are on and the street they are crossing to anticipate pedestrian behavior. A bicycle on the sidewalk can easily be traveling at 10 mph, so drivers need to "look ahead" and anticipate.

At the same time, sidewalk users need to be aware of motorist behavior and not just assume that the cars will yield appropriately. It does the pedestrian no good to be legally in the right but hit by a car. Curb cuts have been a great benefit for disabled sidewalk users, but they tempt sidewalk bicyclists to blow through street crossings and can create a hazard if the bicyclists are not traffic aware.

When road users and pedestrians make traffic awareness their first priority, everyone's safety will improve dramatically.

For more information: [www.midland-mi.org/government/departments/planning/Planning/planninghome.htm](http://www.midland-mi.org/government/departments/planning/Planning/planninghome.htm)