

## Trail Talk

By Steve Litts, Executive Director  
Dickinson County Trails Board

The Lakes Area Rescue Squad has a car on the ice in Smith's Bay – the first sign of spring? We're ready. How about you? A host of trail news to share with you this month including several interesting items focusing on safety for bicyclists.....so let's begin:

- HF 128 has been introduced in the Iowa House creating a new section of the Iowa Code 321.297A Use of Traffic Lanes by Bicycles. The bill addresses various provisions relating to the operation of bicycles on streets or highways and provides for the safety of bicyclists. The bill requires vehicles to give the safety considerations to passing bicyclists as required in passing other vehicles. A minimum distance of five feet would be required between a bicycle and a car ( this applies to both operators). The bill also requires bicycles to be registered. If passed, vehicles crossing into a sidewalk or recreation trail area must stop and then proceed without endangering either pedestrian or bicycle traffic, except when a vehicle is crossing into a recreation trail area where official signs are posted requiring the trail user to yield. (More about this below.) If you'd like to read all the provisions of HF 128 you may access the bill on line at <http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=Billbook&ga=83&hbill=HF128>
- A STUDY of KIDS' BEHAVIOR and BIKE SAFETY – the HANK Program  
The National Driving Simulator at the University of Iowa is home to the Hank Program, a software system for evaluating driving. In a project joint with the University of Iowa Psychology Department entitled "How Do Immature Perceptual-Motor Skills Put Child Cyclists at Risk for Injury," children six to ten years old ride an instrumented (but fixed in place) bicycle in a virtual environment populated with vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Data is generated which allows University faculty to assess child decision-making behavior and safety in traffic. Early data shows that when crossing the road on a bicycle, children under 18 years of age need more time between gaps in traffic to safely cross than do those bicyclists over 18 years of age. The younger children do not position their pedals early, and therefore are not ready to begin their move across the road as quickly.
- DICKENSON COUNTY TRAILS SAFETY  
Your trails board members have been aware of and concerned about safety both on and off the trail. All of us drive vehicles as well as ride bikes in the Iowa Great Lakes area. We've seen dangerous, thoughtless actions of drivers and riders alike. National street and trail designers feel placing STOP signs where YIELD signs are more appropriate only conditions bicyclists to blow through them – and through other STOP signs where it really is necessary to STOP. That is why DCTB will be assessing each STOP sign on our trails and replacing them with YIELD signs whenever it is prudent to do so. For all of you, please take heed of STOP and YIELD signs wherever you see them. It may save you a ticket, but more importantly it could save your life.
- 2009 IOWA BICYCLE SUMMIT  
The 2009 Iowa Bicycle Summit was held in Des Moines in January. Your Dickinson County Trails Board 1) presented a 30 min. program on the use of 28E Agreements to support trail activity in and across county lines, and 2) was a sponsor of the Summit's fundraising event - Bike Night. DCTB thanks The Three Sons, U of Okoboji Campus Ride, U of Okoboji Oktoberfest Ride, Spirit Lake's BRASL Ride and the new Stateline Ride for contributing silent auction items for this very successful Bike Night event. The silent auction raised \$18,000 for the support of Iowa recreational trails promotion.
- NATIONAL BIKE to WORK DAY  
May 15<sup>th</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup> Friday in May) is National Bike to Work Day. Put this on your calendars and be looking for more details as your DCTB Bike to Work team gets out our plans to make this day a fun and healthful spring event.

- PLANNING GROUP USE of TRAILS

If your organization would like to use the trail system for an event, please contact me. We will be able to keep you informed about any trail repairs or other events so your event can be a success. Knowing how many group events take place on our trails also helps us in our grant writing.

In wrapping up this month's Trail Talk we'd like to encourage all of you to take advantage of one or more of the trail events being planned for this summer. You can now find a list of events on the Dickinson County Website. Go to <http://www.co.dickinson.ia.us/> and click on Trails Board. Until next month, as always, Happy Trails to you and yours.