

Bicyclists say sharing road better than using bike paths

One thing most bike riders and engineers agree on is this: it's safer for everyone when cars and bicycles share the roads.

Bike paths are well-intentioned, but serious cyclists, but no thanks, I'd rather be on the roads.

While most cyclists feel uncomfortable riding in the roadway among bigger, motorized vehicles, bike paths cause more problems than they solve, say engineers and cyclists.

"A number of studies indicate cyclists are safer when riding on a normal road surface than on a separate bike path," said Herbert Larkin, Kalamazoo County Road Commission engineer-manager.

"Bicyclists occupying a portion of the roadway can expect the same maintenance normally afforded for the roadway," he said. "A separate bike path requires a much higher level of maintenance and is more expensive to maintain."

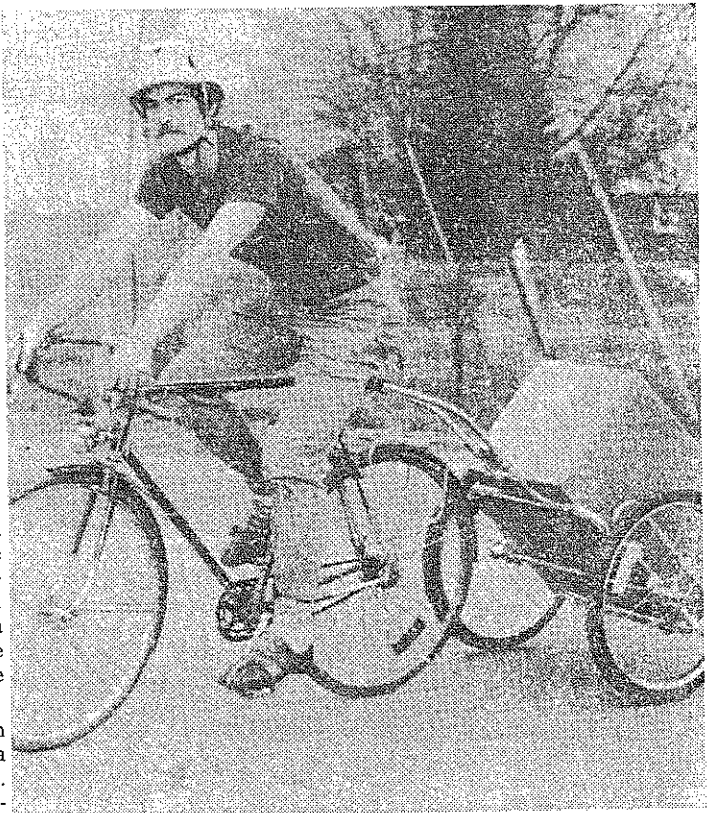
"Glass is a very great problem on bike paths," said Jim Stark, a Kalamazoo Bicycle Club member. "Bike paths are an excellent alternative, but only if they're totally separated from the roadway so the right-of-way conflict is avoided."

"The only designated bike paths in the Kalamazoo area are on West Main Street and along Oakland Avenue. Plans for a route connecting West Main Street and West Main and West Main bike path included in a Mosel Avenue bridge project have been dropped because federal funding was withdrawn, Larkin said.

"Right now all our plans that would have provided paths are, in effect, put off for a year," he said.

So, at this point, it looks like cyclists will be riding in the roadway this summer, no matter what the intentions of engineers or the wishes of cyclists.

"We feel the best alternative



JIM STARK USES BICYCLE TO HAUL THINGS
He's member of Kalamazoo Bicycle Club

—Gazette photo by Bucky Mitchell

would be for people to learn to ride together properly," said Stark.

With the bike path projects in limbo, that appears to be the only alternative.