

**MARBLEHEAD REPORTER****CYCLE SENSE: Ride ready****Thomas Regan**

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Once in a while, I come upon a cyclist whose bike has broken down on the side of the road or notice one walking his bicycle on an otherwise fine day for riding. Usually, I glance at the tires to see if one is flat or look for some other obvious problem. If I can, I offer to help. Most of the time, whatever the situation is could have been avoided with either a quick bike check before the ride or by carrying some basic tools and supplies on the ride. It can be a long walk home if your bike is unrideable and you cannot repair it or call someone to rescue you.

“Ride ready” is a simple discipline to check the bike before each and every ride and to carry the necessary tools and supplies appropriate for your particular ride that day. Inspect your bike using the “ABC quick check” to ensure it is in good condition. A stands for air: Make sure the tires are inflated sufficiently and check them for damage or loose threads. B is for brakes: The pads should be checked for thickness and the squeeze of the brake levers should not come close to the handlebar. C is the chain: It should be clean, not rusty, and when pedaling backwards, make sure it turns freely without hanging up or squeaking. “Quick” is a reminder to make sure all quick release levers (for wheels and seat if applicable) are secure, not loose. Finally, before starting out, “check” by taking a brief, slow ride to make sure your bike feels and sounds right and is working properly. A short League video of ABC quick check is here: [https://youtu.be/mQ1\\_yx\\_6B-U](https://youtu.be/mQ1_yx_6B-U).

Another part of “ride ready” is carrying the tools and supplies needed for your ride. It is generally a standard list, and all the items can fit in a small saddle bag, your pockets and on the frame. Most riders include the basics like a spare tube or a patch kit with pump, tire levers and a cycling multitool. A secure bike lock should also be standard equipment and used every time you leave the bike, even if only for a short time. Depending on the length of the ride, water and a snack or some money are generally good to have along. Of course, no one goes anywhere without their cell phone. And most importantly, wear your helmet!

The town is moving quickly and making exciting progress on a redesigned Rail Trail. Although substantial improvements were made to the trail in 2018, a recently awarded

\$41,000 Mass Trails grant provides funding for a complete redesign of the trail. The Board of Selectmen has already awarded the contract. Work on the design is expected be completed by October 2020, in time for the town to submit the Complete Streets funding application for construction. The new Marblehead Rail Trail will connect with a recently completed section of the Swampscott Rail Trail that travels from the town line to Beach Bluff Avenue. Although only a small section of the Swampscott Trail is completed, it is exciting to envision the possibility of traveling on a multi-use path through Swampscott and beyond. Design of the Swampscott Trail is completed; however, fundraising is needed to complete its construction. The Marblehead and Swampscott Rail Trail sections are part of the East Coast Greenway, a project planning to connect almost 3,000 miles of trail from Maine to Florida.

*This is the seventh in a series of articles about bicycling and bicycle safety. The author is affiliated with Sustainable Marblehead (<http://sustainablemarblehead.org>), BIKE Marblehead, MassBike (<http://massbike.org>), and is a League of American Bicyclists certified instructor (<http://bikeleague.org>). Source material from LAB appears in this article.*