Wrong-way bicycling is dangerous for all subgroups of bicyclists—including those traveling on the sidewalk, who may at first seem to be protected against collisions with motor vehicles. In fact, sidewalk bicyclists enter into conflict with motorists at every intersection (including driveways), and these are exactly the points where most bicycle-motor vehicle collisions occur.

Wrong-way sidewalk bicyclists are at particular risk because they enter the point of conflict from an unexpected direction, just as they would on the roadway.
Nonetheless, unlike the roadway, the direction of sidewalk bicycling is usually unregulated or ineffectively regulated. Off-road bicycle paths are normally intended for two-way travel, and whether intended for it or not are almost invariably used that way.
Sidewalks and paths can present risks even for bicyclists traveling in the direction of traffic..

The average cyclist in this study incurs a risk on the sidewalk 1.8 times as great as on the roadway, and the result is statistically significant . The risk on the sidewalk is higher than on the roadway for both age groups, for both sexes, and for wrong-way travel; the risk for right-way travel on the sidewalk appears to be less than that on the roadway, but this result is misleading, as explained in the Appendix.

The greatest risk found in this study is for bicyclists over 18 traveling against traffic on the sidewalk. Each of these three characteristics is hazardous in itself; combined, they present 5.3 times the average risk.

Table 5 demonstrates that sidewalks or paths adjacent to a roadway are usually not, as non-cyclists expect, safer than the road, but much less safe.
Even right-way sidewalk bicyclists can cross driveways and enter intersections at high speed, and they may enter from an unexpected position and direction—for instance, on the right side of overtaking right-turning traffic. Sidewalk bicyclists are more likely than roadway bicyclists to be obscured at intersections by parked cars, buildings, fences, and shrubbery; their stopping distance is much greater than a pedestrian's, and they have less maneuverability.

Bicyclists on a sidewalk or bicycle path incur greater risk than those on the roadway (on average 1.8 times as great), most likely because of blind conflicts at intersections. Wrong-way sidewalk bicyclists are at even greater risk, and sidewalk bicycling appears to increase the incidence of wrong-way travel.

Sidewalk bicycling adjacent to busy streets with many intersections presents special dangers, and should not be encouraged through the construction or designation of bicycle paths parallel to the street. Where sidewalk bicycling is permitted, it is desirable to maintain clear sight lines at intersections of sidewalks with streets and driveways. In some locations, it may be preferable to prohibit sidewalk bicycling altogether, or to restrict it to one-way travel.