

# Ride Leader Guidelines

Smoky Mountain  
Wheelmen  
Bicycle Club • Knoxville, TN

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We'd like to have your ideas on how to make this booklet more useful or complete. If you have any suggestions, please send a letter or email to:

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## Why lead a ride?

We wanted to start with some words of inspiration, some explanation of why you'd want to lead a ride. Someone said, "Why *do* we lead rides?" and there was a pause. "Because it's fun." Another pause. Then a wild, careening peloton of ideas burst from nowhere:

- You get to choose the route, the pace, and the food stops. This means that you get to share *your* favorite destinations and routes, ride at *your* preferred pace, and bring a lot of people to *your* favorite eateries.
- You meet new people who share at least one of your interests. This expands your pool of potential riding partners (and friends), particularly folks who like to ride the same way you do.
- You can inspire people, motivate them, get them excited about bicycling. Ride leaders who lead regularly have countless tales of novices who can barely shift gears on their first ride but who blossom into avid cyclists by the end of a season.
- You can exercise your creativity in finding a route, writing the ride description, designing the map or cue sheet, and creating the event.
- You get to contribute something to the community.
- Leading a ride makes you go riding yourself.
- Other people have to call you "Leader."

## What's in this booklet?

If you've led rides for the Smoky Mountain Wheelmen Bicycle Club in the past, some of the information in this booklet will already be familiar to you. However, we've expanded a great deal on the information passed out to ride leaders in the past. As a result, you'll probably want to look through these guidelines for ideas on how to make your rides even safer or more fun, and as a refresher on the basics of ride leading.

If you *haven't* led rides before, this booklet will give you a good introduction to how you go about leading a safe, enjoyable ride. You'll find information on how to select a route; what to do before, during, and after the ride; how to handle problems and accidents; and how to make a ride more fun. At the end, you'll also find tips on safe cycling..

These guidelines are primarily intended for one-day rides. If you'd like to lead overnight rides, please contact the Road Captain (listed in the club newsletter *Pedal Notes*).

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**Don't be daunted!** We don't expect you to read the entire booklet cover to cover and memorize it as if for a test. More likely, you'll want to use it as a reference for detailed information on specific topics.

**See the checklists at the back:** We included a couple of day-of-ride checklists at the back, which give a quick summary of the items you may want to bring to a ride and what to do before and during the ride.

**Not all guidelines apply to every ride:** These guidelines are written for all SMW rides, but the focus is on the most common types of rides — social rides at a slow or moderate pace with regular rest stops. You may need to adapt the guidelines to fit your ride, especially if you lead faster rides with few or no stops.

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## If you've never led a ride before

If you've ridden on a lot of club rides, you already know much of what you need to know to lead a ride of your own. Not everything about leading rides is intuitively obvious, though. You also can co-lead a ride with an experienced ride leader. Just ask any of the club's ride leaders if you can help with their next ride, or ask if they'll help you plan a ride of your own. If you'd like to get to know a

ride leader better, volunteer to *sweep*, which means that you ride at the back and help the slower riders. You can also contact the Road Captain (listed in the *Pedal Notes*) and ask for the name of someone who could give you a hand getting started.

Finally, you can sweet-talk a friend who has never led rides into jumping in with you. Calmly explain that it's *easy*, it's a great way to get or stay in shape, and it's the *best* way to meet the person of your wildest dreams.

## What kind of ride do you want to lead?

Before you can select a route or make any of the other preparations necessary for a successful ride, you need to decide what kind of ride you want to lead. Here are some issues to consider:

- Decide who you want to ride with — racers, who never stop for anything; parents with children, who stop for every butterfly; or average riders, who slow down when riding up hills and stop for a great view or a snack.
- Decide on a pace, and be sure it matches the folks you want to ride with. If you want to keep the company of parents and their children, you won't be leading a fast ride. Also, be sure the pace you choose is one that you can *very* comfortably maintain for the duration of the ride. If you're already at the outside edge of your abilities and you drop back into the pack to check on one of your riders, you may have trouble catching the front of the group.
- Decide on a distance. As with the pace, tailor the distance to the people you want to ride with. Only a small fraction of the club's members can comfortably ride 50 miles in a day (or believe they can), and fewer still can ride 80 or 100 miles.
- Think about what time the ride should start. If it's an after-work ride, keep in mind that most folks won't be able to make a start earlier than 6 p.m. Consider, too, that a Saturday ride starting at 10 a.m. tends to draw a larger crowd than a ride starting earlier.
- Consider the season, particularly with respect to the probable weather and the amount of available daylight. Most folks don't think of riding in a cold, dark rain as being all that much fun.
- Be sure you're not conflicting with anything that could make your ride *very* unpleasant. For example, you wouldn't likely be happy with the results if you were to try to lead a ride from Townsend Visitor's Center to Cades Cove (or anywhere else) on the 4th of July.

## Selecting a route

It's easy, right? You just draw lines on a map and make a bunch of copies. Close, but there are one or two things you should consider first.

### General considerations

- Regardless of the means you use to choose a route, you should pre-ride or pre-drive it so you know everything you need to about road conditions; mileage; and water, lunch, and restroom stops.

If you've been on the route but not recently, you may want to go over it again to ensure that nothing has changed significantly — no long detours over gravel roads, for example.

If you're using a route that you've never ridden or that you're designing on your own, it's even more important that you travel it before the ride, preferably on a bicycle. Many of us have painful memories of the hills on a route that the ride leader chose from behind the wheel of a car.

- Choose a starting point that people can find easily and that has ample parking. If possible, the starting point should also have nearby restrooms.
- Consider food, water, and restroom breaks. Everyone needs to eat and drink, and some bladders are weaker than others. If you're planning to stop for a lunch break, there's a psychological advantage to stopping after the midpoint rather than before. The riders who are feeling a bit tired can take solace in the knowledge that you're over half way.

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**Note:** If you're planning a restaurant stop, choose somewhere that serves both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes. The vegaphobes among us can have a tough time making a meal of the offerings at a vegan restaurant.

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- Stay off in-city trails as much as possible. These trails aren't built for speed, and they *certainly* aren't built for crowds. A dangerous portion of the traffic on trails is children and people wearing headphones.
- Wherever you go, remember to respect private property, and ride only in places where bicycles are welcome.

### Using an existing route

The best choice for a route is often one that you've ridden and enjoyed. Ride leaders rarely mind if someone repeats one of their rides, so you needn't worry about plagiarism. Feel free to add your own variations; just because you're borrowing someone else's route doesn't mean that you can't give it your own touch.

### Designing your own route

If you decide to design your own route, here are a few suggestions. These suggestions apply most of all to slow rides with inexperienced riders. If you're leading faster, more experienced riders, adjust accordingly.

- Safety is the deciding factor for all route-related decisions. If you can't find a safe way to get somewhere, don't go there. Keep in mind that riding with a group is *much* different from riding by yourself, and rarely is it easier.
- Avoid intersections that are too close to a hill or a curve if the opposing traffic isn't required to stop. You want your riders to have an ample view of oncoming traffic and vice versa.
- Avoid streets that are too narrow for cars to pass unless you'll only be traveling there for a short distance. For example, some streets with medians only have enough room for one lane of

traffic in each direction. Some streets with traffic diverters only have enough room for one lane of traffic, period.

- Avoid crossing busy streets except at controlled intersections (those with stop signs or stop lights).
- Avoid heavily traveled, multi-lane roads whenever possible. If you find yourself with no good alternatives, at least try to avoid making left turns. Even with the best of riders, getting a group safely across two lanes of traffic so they can make the turn is a dicey proposition. With inexperienced riders, it can only get worse.
- In general, avoid taking a group on sidewalks. On occasion, a short stretch of sidewalk is clearly the safest, best way to get from point A to point B. However, if we're to be taken seriously as operators of vehicles, we can't be spending a lot of time on the sidewalk like a bunch of six year olds.
- Unless you're leading a mountain-bike ride, avoid difficult riding surfaces whenever possible, for example, rough or rutted roads, cobblestones, bridges with metal decks, railroad tracks, dirt, gravel, grass, stairs, and so on. However, don't miss out on a stunning overlook or a ride along the water just because the path is a short stretch of gravel. Simply suggest that people walk if they'd rather.
- Try to avoid surprises. Suppose, for example, that you choose a route on which there's a steep uphill just after a turn. If you don't remember to warn riders in advance, they'll all be so distracted trying to get into the correct gear that they won't watch out for one another or for traffic. With an inexperienced group, some riders will simply stop, with no thought to whether anyone might be behind them.

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**Note:** If you can't circumvent a problem that may stymie your riders, try to warn everyone during the ride, possibly at a stop immediately before you get to that location.

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- Study maps in search of promising back roads. However, be sure you pre-ride these roads before the day of the ride, so you don't run into a washed-out bridge or 20 miles of rough gravel.
- Explore. The best way to find spectacular views, pedestrian over- and underpasses, wooden bridges, unusual houses, beautiful gardens, or anything else that won't show up on a map is by traipsing around.
- In the city, "dead end" and "local traffic only" signs often apply only to cars.
- If you know a ride leader who has led rides in the area where you want to go, call and ask for suggestions on roads to use or avoid, good places for mid-ride snacks, scenic overlooks, mean dogs, and other relevant details.

## **Making maps and cue sheets**

When you submit a ride description for publication in the *Pedal Notes* (see "Submitting a ride description form," immediately following), you'll indicate whether or not you'll be providing riders with a map or cue sheet. In general, giving riders a map or cue sheet is a good idea unless the route is short and simple. In all likelihood, *someone* on your ride has never been on some or all of the route you've chosen and could easily get lost if separated from the group. Even if you lead a ride over the same route week after week, you should have a map or cue sheet for riders who have never been on your ride before.

Choosing between maps and cue sheets is primarily a matter of personal preference. With a map, riders who somehow miss a turn can find their way back to the route (or back to the starting point), assuming they haven't ridden off the map. On the other hand, the details of a map are more difficult to grasp while you're moving; it's easier to glance at a cue sheet and see that the next turn is a left onto Madrona. With a cue sheet, you can also describe quirks of the route that won't be obvious from a map ("at the pedestrian crosswalk, turn right onto the wooden footbridge"). Ideally, you'd provide both and let people choose for themselves, but that's a lot of extra work.

**Note:** The club reimburses ride leaders for reasonable copying expenses. Please try to keep the cost low by making only as many copies as you expect to need and by avoiding color copies, fancy paper, and the like.

Just accumulate your receipts until you have \$5.00 or more in copying expenses, then mail the receipts to “Treasurer” at the club address listed near the front of this booklet. Include a note that tells what the receipts are for, and remember to include your name and address, so we know where to send the check.

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## **Making a map**

The simplest and most common way to make a map of your route is to get a map of the area, photocopy the relevant portion, mark your route on the copy, and then photocopy the marked copy. If you choose this method, here are a few suggestions:

- Try not to run the route right up to the edge of the map. If your photocopied map includes some of the neighborhood outside the route, riders are less likely to ride off the map if they happen to miss a turn.
- If you highlight the route with a highlighter, map details will show through when you make photocopies. This may not work with all colors of highlighter or all copiers, so you may want to experiment first.
- Include directional arrows, so riders know which direction they’re supposed to be riding. This is even more important if the route crosses itself at some point.
- If you know the total distance, mark it on the map somewhere. You also might want to include a brief description of the terrain, for example, “hilly” or “flat.”
- Play with the density setting on the copier until you get good results.

You might also want to augment a cue sheet with a quick, hand-drawn map. You don’t need to show every turn; just include enough to give folks a rough idea where you’re headed. If you choose this alternative, be sure the relative proportions are at least a vague approximation of reality, and be sure that north, south, east, and west don’t meander unduly.

## Making a cue sheet

A cue sheet is a set of written instructions on how to follow a route. In its simplest form, a cue sheet includes the distance from one place to the next (“1.8 miles” or “2 blocks”), where the next place is (“Madrona Avenue”), what you do when you get there (“turn left”) and maybe the total distance up to that point in the ride. Following is a short (fictional) example.

Distance	Total	Direction	Notes
			Starting point —parking lot at Magnuson Park
0	0	L	Onto Baker Avenue
0.1	0.1	R	Onto 15th Avenue
0.3	0.4	<b>Warning!</b>	<b>Big pothole at 103rd Street</b>
1.6	2.0	L	Onto Madrona Way (bottom of the hill). <b>Heavy traffic. Ride single file.</b>
0.3	2.3	R	At the pedestrian crosswalk, cross the wooden pedestrian bridge. <b>Ride slowly and yield to pedestrians.</b>
0.1	2.4	L	At the far end of the wooden bridge
0.2	2.6	L	At the next intersection (no street sign)
0.4	3.0	Stop	Carkeek Park. <b>Rest stop, restrooms, water fountains.</b>

Here are some suggestions on what to include on a cue sheet. If the route is long or circuitous, not everything suggested here will fit:

- **The starting point:** Six months from now, when you look at this cue sheet again, you’ll want a reminder of where the ride started, so you don’t have to decipher it from the details. To make it easier for your riders to use the cue sheet later, you may want to include directions to the starting point from some known location (“from Knoxville...” or “from I-40...”).
- **Clear instructions:** Be sure there’s no mistaking what you’ve instructed riders to do. For example, at a five-way intersection, there may be two left turns. Make it clear whether folks should make a hard left or a soft left.
- **Mileage:** Include the distance between landmarks and the total distance as of each landmark. If you forgot to note a distance as you were pre-riding the route, you can always estimate from a map.
- **The important things in life:** Include restrooms, water fountains, regrouping points, rest stops, and so on. You also might want to include bike shops close to the route and, for long trips in the country, places where riders can get refreshments.
- **Road hazards:** Point out blind curves, dangerous intersections, narrow roads, and similar potential problems. Make recommendations for safe riding as appropriate (“ride single-file”).
- **Points of interest:** Mention scenic overlooks, eagles’ nests, noteworthy art or architecture, a bakery where you can get a really good brownie, the place where your mom and dad first met.
- **Frequent landmarks:** If you travel a long distance on the same road, include landmarks every few miles or so, just so folks know they’re still heading in the right direction. Tired riders who don’t have a bike computer will have a tough time telling the difference between 15 miles and 20 miles.
- **Readily visible landmarks:** Wherever possible, use big, obvious landmarks, especially when it’s a long distance between landmarks. You don’t want riders to spend miles wondering whether they’ve already passed the mailbox that looks like a little barn.

- **Unchanging landmarks:** If you plan to use the same cue sheet again some day, try to use landmarks that are unlikely to change. For example, don't tell riders to turn left at the big white house, or someone is sure to repaint it pink. Likewise, watch out when specifying business names, a number of stop lights or stop signs, and alterable natural features. "Left at the third light" has a new meaning if the city adds another light, and big trees can be cut down.

Here are some suggestions on how to make a cue sheet:

- **Make the text big:** If you're using a computer to produce the cue sheet, so you're able to change the size of the font, make the text **BIG**. Folks will be reading your cue sheet at 15 or 20 miles an hour. Don't make it hard for them. 14-point type is a good size. This sentence is in 10-point type, and that's too small for a cue sheet.
- **Make the important stuff stand out:** Again, if you're using a computer to produce the cue sheet, you can change the font to **bold**, *italics*, or **both** to make it stand out better. Just don't overdo it, or nothing will stand out.
- **Use standard abbreviations:** Instead of spelling everything out, use "L" (left), "R" (right), and "S" (straight) to indicate directions. Some folks also use "BL" and "BR" (bear left and bear right), but that's a bit obscure.
- **Lay out the cue sheet for easy folding:** Divide the cue sheet in half or in quarters, label the parts, and try to avoid putting instructions on the folds, for example:

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### Including the "Tips for safe riding" and the membership form

It's a good idea to copy the "Tips for safe riding," at the end of this booklet, onto the back of your map or cue sheet. The list of tips is short, simple, and a good reminder for people who haven't ridden a bicycle since they got out of grade school.

If there's room on the back, you might also want to include the Smoky Mountain Wheelmen Bicycle Club membership form. Many rides attract a lot of non-members, who will be more inclined to join if it's easy.

## Submitting a ride description

To have a ride listed in the *Pedal Notes* and on the bicycle hotline, just contact the Road Captain by the deadline, which is currently the fourth Monday of the month for the following month's newsletter. You can also submit a ride description to any officer, or you can bring it to the Smoky Mountain Wheelmen Bicycle Club general meeting (third Tuesday of the month).

As you describe the ride, err on the side of conservatism. If you don't know the exact mileage, it's better to overestimate than underestimate, so no one is unpleasantly surprised. Also, a ride that you

may think of as only a little hilly may be *very* hilly to some riders. Finally, be realistic about the pace that you intend to ride at. If you're very comfortable riding at 18 to 20 miles an hour when you ride on your own, you'll really need to rein yourself in to lead a group at 12 to 14 miles an hour.

In your ride description, remember to include any cautions, quirks, or special requirements for your ride. Don't identify anything as "required" unless you intend to enforce the requirement; instead, make "requests" or "recommendations." Here are some examples of items worth including:

- If you're planning a lunch stop, indicate whether people should bring a lunch or bring money for lunch.
- If the ride begins or ends after dark, note that riders should bring headlights and taillights. (Be conservative. If there's a reasonable chance that you won't finish riding until after dark, include that information in the ride description.)
- If you're climbing three mountain passes in the same day, *warn* people in the ride description so you don't get riders who aren't up to it.
- If you're planning to spend three hours at an antique fair in the middle of a 15-mile ride, mention this so potential riders know that the ride isn't just a quick loop.
- If you're taking a route that's shy of amenities like restaurants and restrooms, caution people so they can bring their own food and toilet paper.
- If you're leading a ride that starts in a remote location, try to encourage carpooling. For example, you might specify a carpooling place and time and then either arrange for someone to drive by that location or pass by yourself on the way to the starting point.

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**Important!** If you want to include any non-cycling activities as part of the ride, make these activities optional. Riders must be able to choose between participating in extra activities and waiting for the ride to resume.

This applies to all non-cycling activities, but it especially applies to anything hazardous, including activities that involve alcohol (winery and brewery stops) and activities that require special training or skills (rock climbing, kayaking, and so on).

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## Fielding phone calls from prospective riders

The ride description form asks you to provide a phone number so riders can call with questions before the ride. Typically, callers will want to know whether they can handle your ride. How you answer this question depends on the difficulty of the ride and on your preference as a ride leader.

If the ride is difficult, you'll obviously want to be clear with callers about the distance, the speed, the number and size of hills, and so on. If the ride is less strenuous, you have more discretion. For a slow, short, social ride, you may want to encourage anyone who isn't wheezing into the phone to come along. After all, everyone needs to start somewhere. If you take this approach, you must be prepared to wait patiently at the top of every hill for the sightseers. Your reward is the chance to meet delightful people who don't happen to be great cyclists and to make occasional riders into better, stronger, more enthusiastic cyclists.

If you're not prepared to wait for everyone who needs to be waited for, by all means make that clear to callers. Convincing folks that they can handle your ride and then leaving them in the dust is a great way to discourage them from ever joining a Cascade ride again (and a pretty good way to make them drop their membership.)

From time to time, you may get a phone call from a parent who wants to bring one or more children along. The club doesn't forbid children on rides, but a parent must sign the liability waiver for anyone under age 18. In addition, unless you're just riding around the parking lot at Anchor Park, be cautious about encouraging parents to bring children along on a ride. Parents don't always have a realistic perception of how far or how fast their children are able to ride, or how safely the children are able to ride in a group.

## Before the ride

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**If you cancel a ride:** If you cancel a ride, show up at the starting point or have someone else go and announce that the ride has been canceled, unless it's obvious from the weather conditions that the ride is canceled.

**If you can't lead a ride:** If, for some reason, you can't lead a ride yourself, try to find a replacement. The Road Captain may be able to help you find someone.

If you advertised the ride in the newsletter as including a map or cue sheet, be sure your replacement has them.

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### Remember to bring everything

The items on this list also appear on the "Day-of-ride checklist," at the back of this booklet.

Show up at least 10 minutes early with the necessary stuff:

- Your bike and helmet.
- Plenty of copies of the map or cue sheet if you advertised that you'd provide one.
- Two copies of the Smoky Mountain Wheelmen Bicycle Club liability waiver.
- A couple of pens.

You may also want to bring:

- Food and full water bottles.
- Basic tools (you can probably leave the truing stand at home), a pump and tire gauge, an extra tube or patch kit, and tire levers.
- A rudimentary first-aid kit. See "What to carry in a first-aid kit" under "Handling injuries," later in this booklet.
- A bike lock. If you bring a cable lock, you can lock several bikes together.
- A bike computer to monitor your pace.
- A cellular phone, if you have one.
- Membership forms.
- Newsletters to give away.
- An extra helmet, if you have one.
- Rags, WetWipes®, or something of the sort for cleaning up after road-side repairs.
- Toilet paper or tissues, if you're planning to be away from basic amenities like toilets for very long.
- Name tags and a felt marker.
- A watch.
- Money, including change for phone calls.

### Get signatures, check on helmets, and get a count

- Have everyone sign the liability waiver for the ride. On a large ride, you can't know whether everyone has signed, but make a good-faith effort. You may want to announce that this is a liability waiver and that riders should sign even if they're not members of the club.

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**Important!** A parent or legal guardian must sign the liability waiver for any rider under 18 years old. If you have doubts about whether the child will be able to safely complete the ride without holding up the group, you should discuss it with the parent. You may refuse to allow a child on the ride if you believe the child's participation would be unsafe or disruptive.

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Carry the liability waiver with you on the ride in case of an emergency, and mail it to the Smoky Mountain Wheelmen Bicycle Club office promptly after the ride.

- Don't let anyone ride without a helmet. The club requires all riders to wear helmets on all rides. In addition, in most of the local area, helmets are required by law. If someone arrives without a helmet, you can ask if any of the other riders has a spare. You can also suggest that the helmetless rider try the nearest bike or skate shop; most shops rent helmets.

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**Important!** If someone refuses to sign the liability waiver or insists on riding without a helmet, make it clear to other riders that the uncooperative rider is not part of the group. Thankfully, this problem rarely occurs.

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- Count the riders in your group so you can determine if you have everyone at regrouping points and when leaving rest stops.

## Make a pre-ride announcement

Here's a pretty long list of topics to try to cover in a short pre-ride announcement. If you chatter on for too long, people will stop listening, so try not to turn it into a lecture. However, particularly for slow rides that attract a lot of beginners, these are topics that bear repeating time and again. It doesn't hurt to offer a few reminders to fast, experienced riders, either.

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**Note:** The items on this list also appear on the "Day-of-ride checklist," at the back of this booklet.

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- **Introduction:** Introduce yourself, and identify your sweeps, co-leaders, and other helpers. If the ride will be breaking into two or more groups, explain who will be leading each group. If you don't already have someone to ride sweep, you may want to ask if anyone wants to volunteer. For more information on sweeps, see "The benefits of having a sweep" in the next section, "Leading the ride." If the group is small, you can also ask the riders to introduce themselves. If the group is larger, you may want to pass out name tags.
- **Welcome to new riders:** Ask if there are any riders who have never been on a Cascade ride and, if so, welcome them to the group. In addition, encourage the regular riders to check in with the newcomers during the ride and ensure that they're doing all right. In a group that rides together regularly, a new rider, shy or not, may not feel welcome if the regulars spend the entire ride talking among themselves.
- **Waivers, maps/cue sheets:** Ask if everyone has signed the liability waiver and has received the map or cue sheet.
- **Pace:** Announce the pace and explain what it means. If you don't intend to wait for slow riders, you should announce this, too.
- **Stick-togetherness:** Indicate whether the ride will stick together, regroup at the top of hills, or regroup at a specified point.
- **The route:** Briefly describe the ride, including food and rest stops, difficult hills, unusual or dangerous conditions, the first regrouping point, and hazards and tricky turns before that point.
- **Safety:** Talk about safe riding, and remind riders that each person is responsible for his or her own safety. They may have heard it all before, so say it some amusing or vivid way that they can't forget. You might emphasize that riding like lemmings is not a good idea. Or that just because the rider ahead of you made it through an intersection without being run over doesn't mean you can, too. Or that cars kill cyclists one at a time. You get the idea. You can't teach safe cycling in the three minutes you have before people stop listening, so vary your safety announcement to fit the hazards of the ride. If you lead rides regularly, rotate topics from time to time. Point out the safety tips that you copied onto the back of your map or cue sheet, or that you provided on a separate sheet.
- **Traffic regulations:** Remind riders that a bicycle is a vehicle and that bicycle riders are, therefore, expected to obey traffic regulations.
- **Courtesy:** Ask riders to be courteous. Drivers who are impressed with the courtesy of a group of cyclists will be more inclined to treat other cyclists with respect.
- **Group riding techniques:** For the benefit of new riders, mention group riding techniques, including:

- **Riding single-file in traffic:** Make it clear that riders are *not* to block traffic by riding two or more abreast.
- **Riding on trails:** If you'll be riding on trails, remind riders to stay on the right half of the trail and to be considerate of other trail users.
- **Hand signals:** Remind riders to use hand signals for turning or stopping. It's also a good idea to point out road hazards.
- **Voice signals:** Give riders a quick overview of voice signals: "Car up/back/left/right," "On your left" to indicate that you're passing another rider or a pedestrian, "Glass/pothole/etc." to indicate road hazards (combined with hand signals as appropriate). Emphasize that "Car back" means a car is coming from behind, so riders should start riding single file.

Discourage riders from calling out "Clear" at intersections to indicate that no cars are coming. "Clear" is a subjective and temporary condition, so riders should always look for themselves.
- **Other cyclists:** Remind riders to watch out for one another. On a group ride, they're much more likely to have an accident with one another than they are with a car.
- **Stop lights and stop signs:** Caution riders not to run stop lights or stop signs out of fear of being left behind.
- **Special equipment:** Remind riders about any special equipment that's required for the ride (for example, lights or lunches).
- **Keep the leader informed:** Ask riders to pass the word if someone leaves or breaks down, and to notify you if they're planning to leave the ride before the end.
- **First-aid kit, first-aid training, or cellular phone:** Ask if anyone has a first-aid kit, first-aid training, or a cellular phone.
- **After-ride refreshments:** If you're going somewhere after the ride for a meal or a snack, tell everyone where you're going now. You probably won't get a chance after the ride because everyone will scatter to the four winds.
- **Questions?** Ask if there are questions.

## Leading the ride

Every ride is different, so it's impossible to anticipate everything you might encounter on a ride. Here's a quick list of some items to attend to.

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**Note:** Not all of these items apply to all types of rides. For example, if you haven't promised to keep everyone together, you don't have to worry about whether everyone made it through the last stop light.

**Also note:** The items on this list also appear on the "Day-of-ride checklist," at the back of this booklet.

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- **Set a good example:** Ride safely, be kind to strangers, pet dogs, kiss babies, and remember that you represent the Smoky Mountain Wheelmen Bicycle Club.
- **Courtesy:** Anticipate situations where your group may inconvenience others. For example, when you stop to regroup, be sure your riders aren't blocking the road or the sidewalk. When you re-enter the roadway, wait until there's a break in traffic, so drivers aren't forced to slow down for your group.

If you're taking the group on a trail, especially a busy, in-city trail, ask everyone to stay on the right half of the trail, regardless of how wide the trail is. This may mean that everyone must ride single-file, which will make socializing more difficult. However, having to shout to one another is better by far than forcing other trail users off the trail and leaving them with an indelible bad impression of group rides and riders.

- **Unsafe riders:** Unsafe riders endanger everyone around them, ruin the experience for others on the ride, and give cyclists a bad image. If you're uncomfortable with a rider's actions, quietly and politely explain your concern. If the situation doesn't improve, ask the rider to leave the group.
- **New riders:** Check in with each of the new riders periodically to ensure that they're getting along all right and that they feel welcome.
- **Pace:** Ride at or near the front to lead the way and *set the pace at the advertised speed*. (A bike computer can help.) Make sure riders know that, if they get ahead, they're on their own. Your responsibility is to lead the ride you've advertised and to keep track of the people who are doing the same.
- **Stop lights, stop signs, and crosswalks:** Stop for red lights, stop signs, and pedestrian crosswalks. Not stopping endangers your riders, opens you to liability in the event of an accident, and gives onlookers the impression that cyclists are a bunch of scofflaws.

Don't stop too close to the intersection to wait for the group to catch up. Drivers have enough to cope with at intersections without having to worry about a gaggle of cyclists.

At a stop sign or stop light, join the line of cars. Don't pass cars on the right and make your way up to the intersection. The cars will just have to pass you again after the intersection, and this *really* makes some drivers *mad*.

- **Unforeseen problems:** If you run into unforeseen problems (new construction, bad weather, unusually heavy traffic, a closed bakery), be creative. Change the route, take shelter, ford a stream, choose a different rest stop. Consider safety above all else, and don't be afraid to ask for suggestions from your riders. They may know the area better than you do. However, you're in charge, so don't let yourself be railroaded into something that you think is unwise.
- **Too-fast and too-slow riders:** At the first regrouping point, if some riders are clearly too fast or too slow for the group, consider splitting into more than one group. You can also ask the fast or slow riders if they'd prefer to take off on their own or return to the starting point. (This suggests that the first regrouping point should be relatively close to the starting point, so riders can find their way back to the start on their own, if necessary.)
- **Mid-ride announcements:** At each regrouping point, announce the next regrouping point. Re-emphasize safety, especially related to upcoming conditions. For example, if you'll need to move into the left lane to make a turn, remind riders to *look* before they change lanes. If there's a steep uphill immediately after a turn, try to warn riders in advance. If you're getting

onto a trail, remind riders to stay on the right half of the trail and to be considerate of other trail users.

- **Restaurant and restroom stops:** Whenever you stop somewhere with your group, encourage your riders to be considerate of the non-riders around you. Try not to leave folks with the impression that cyclists are a bunch of ill-mannered ne'er-do-wells. If you happen to inconvenience someone, apologize profusely and do your best to rectify the situation immediately.

When it's time to start riding again, announce your departure enough in advance that everyone has time to stash their extra cookies, get their helmets and gloves on, and untangle their bikes from all of the other bikes leaning against the same tree. In addition, be alert for riders who have wandered off or are in the restroom.

- **Messes:** Wherever you stop, make sure you and your riders clean up after yourselves. Don't make your mark on the world with banana peels, PowerBar® wrappers, and dead inner tubes.
- **The slow and the lost:** You can't always keep track of all riders, but do the best you can. Assess how the riders at the back of the group are doing, and adjust the ride as appropriate. Try not to leave anyone behind or lose them. However, you're not obligated to go back and look for anyone.

You may want to have someone ride at the back of the group to encourage and keep track of the slower riders. For more information, see "The benefits of having a sweep," later in this section.

- **Helpers:** Delegate helpers to fix flat tires, to pump air into tires, to give shifting lessons, or to be "corner people," riders who wait at corners and point riders in the right direction until everyone has passed. (See "Using corner people to keep riders from getting lost," later in this section.)
- **Good will:** Smile, wave, and call out thanks whenever anyone (especially a driver) is even unintentionally helpful to your group.
- **Riding after dark:** If you're riding after dark, slow down and keep the group together. A group of cyclists, each one properly lit with a headlight and taillight, is much more visible after dark than an individual rider.
- **Injuries and other problems:** If one of your riders is injured, follow the guidelines under "Handling injuries," later in this booklet. For information on handling a variety of other problems, see "Handling other problems," also later in this booklet.
- **Have a good time yourself:** Some rides are a joy to lead, while others are unadulterated drudgery. If you aren't having a good time yourself, think about what you could do differently next time. Moreover, if you aren't having fun, some or all of your riders probably aren't either. Be bold and ask *them* how you could make the ride more enjoyable.

## Leading from the front or the back of the group

You don't necessarily need to lead a ride from the front of the group. As long as you've passed out a map or cue sheet, you may be able to serve your riders as well by leading from the back as you can from the front. Some ride leaders spend the ride making their way back and forth between the front and the back of the group, checking to see that everyone is doing all right. Other ride leaders choose to spend the entire ride at the back of the group. This ensures that they'll eventually come upon anyone who has stopped for any reason.

If you choose not to lead from the front, here are a couple of things to watch out for:

- If it's a stick-together ride, remind everyone what the pace is and ask them to maintain that pace.
- If you want riders to stop in a particular location, be sure everyone understands where that location is.
- Remind riders to watch the map or cue sheet carefully and stop if they have any doubts about which direction they should be going.

## The benefits of having a sweep

If you lead from the front, you may want to have someone ride *sweep*, meaning the rider stays at the back of the group. On most rides, the chief advantage of having a sweep is that the leader knows when everyone has arrived at a regrouping point (assuming no one in the middle of the group missed a turn). However, if you have unusually slow riders, mechanical problems, or an accident on your ride, a good sweep can be invaluable, serving as cheerleader, mechanic, or nurse, as required.

If you're leading a short, slow ride, which will attract a disproportionate number of inexperienced riders, having *any* sweep is better than having *no* sweep. Ideally, though, you should try to find someone who can successfully change a tire, who doesn't pass out at the sight of blood, and who will happily slow down and encourage the riders who are having a tough time on the uphill.

## Using corner people to keep riders from getting lost

If you want to keep your group together during the ride, you may want to try using *corner people*. At the beginning of the ride, explain to your riders that, whenever you turn a corner, you'll ask the person closest to you to be the corner person. This person then stays at the corner and points riders in the proper direction until the sweep comes by. (Be sure everyone knows who they're watching for.) If you don't have a sweep, you can count the riders before you start the ride, which is a good idea regardless of whether you're using corner people. Then you can tell each corner person how many riders to wait for.

A few suggestions:

- Try to spread the duty around a little bit, so no one starts to feel put upon. Rather than designating corner people, you might also want to call out "Any volunteers for corner person?" Almost always, someone will call back "I'll take it."
- If you designate a corner person, make sure that person hears you and stops.
- Even though you have corner people pointing the way, stop from time to time and regroup. Otherwise, you may end up with corner people peppered all over town waiting for the sweep, who is helping someone fix a flat.
- If you're leading a slow ride and only part of your group gets across at a stop light or stop sign, you may want to leave a corner person behind so the riders who were caught know they haven't been abandoned.
- If you're leading a large number of riders, you may want to ask a corner person to limit the number of riders who leave a stop sign at one time. If you don't have someone stay at the intersection and say "Next five riders," everyone will probably cross at once, thereby annoying the drivers who are forced to wait.
- If you're leading a ride out in the country, where groups tend to spread out a bit, some riders will resent being asked to wait for the five or ten minutes that it may take for the last rider to pass. In this case, you can use a rotating corner person. The corner person only waits until the next rider comes along, then the new arrival becomes the corner person.
- Don't use corner people under unfavorable conditions. If you try to designate a corner person in a cold rain, you'll be courting mutiny.

## Controlling pace lines

In general, the club doesn't encourage pace lines because they can be dangerous, especially for riders inexperienced with pace lines and for rides on public streets, regardless of the riders' experience. However, if you're going to allow pace lines on your ride, here are some suggestions for safe riding:

- Stop at stop signs. Even at high speeds, the last person in a pace line is a second or two behind the leader. This is a *long time* when the group is in danger of being broadsided by a fast-moving truck.
- Call out stops, hazards, and changes in direction loudly, clearly, and early.

- Don't allow riders to lead a pace line if they don't know the course, particularly on descents.
- Don't allow riders to ride in a pace line if they're using handlebars that keep their hands far from the brake levers. In a pace line, the ability to stop quickly is paramount.
- Be extra careful if you have single bicycles and tandems in the same pace line. A tandem with two riders weighs *a lot* more than a single bike and rider, so it isn't as maneuverable in an emergency.
- Limit pace lines to a reasonable length, preferably eight or fewer.
- Recommend that riders check the quick-release levers on their wheels to ensure that the levers aren't sticking out. If riders overlap wheels and one gets a quick-release lever in the spokes, at least two people will be stopping faster than they might like.

## After the ride

Immediately after the ride, you should:

- Check to make sure that everyone has returned safely.
- Thank riders for coming along.
- Ask for comments or suggestions. Did riders enjoy the ride? Did they like the route? Is there anything you could have done differently?

When you get home, you should call any rider who was injured or lost during the ride. If you get home too late in the evening to call, be sure you call the next day.

## Handling injuries

### Handling severe accidents

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**Important!** If a rider has an accident and lands on his or her head, neck, or shoulders, you must consider the possibility of a neck or back injury.

- ***If the person is conscious:*** Ask if the person has neck or back pain, weakness, or loss of limb function or sensation. If so, you should suspect spinal cord injury and have the person stay very still.
- ***If the person is unconscious:*** You have no way to know what injury the person may have suffered, so ***do not move an unconscious person.***
- ***If an unconscious person regains consciousness before help arrives:*** Keep the person as still and quiet as possible. You may need to be firm. Someone who is in shock or suffering a concussion isn't the best judge of what to do at the moment. Be sympathetic but firm.

If someone may have a neck or back injury, you should ***almost never*** move the person. You could cause irreparable damage to the spinal cord, possibly resulting in ***permanent paralysis.***

If the injured person is in a roadway, divert or stop traffic rather than move the person, and wait for help to arrive.

In the ***rare case*** where you must move the injured rider, get help from as many people as possible. Make every effort to maintain the ***current*** position of the person's back and neck. ***Do not try to straighten someone out.***

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### What to do if one of your riders has an accident and is injured

1. ***Stay calm:*** You're no help to the others if you're frantic. Pause, take a deep breath, and survey the situation before you act.

2. **Divert or stop traffic:** If the injured rider is in the roadway, have other riders divert or stop traffic until you can determine if the person has a possible neck or back injury. Get all other riders and their bicycles off the road.

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**Important!** If you determine that the person has a possible neck or back injury, continue to divert or hold up traffic until help arrives. **Do not move the person.**

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3. **Determine if the person is injured seriously enough to require medical attention:** The injured rider should get medical attention if he or she:
- Is bleeding heavily.
  - Has a head injury and lost consciousness even briefly.
  - Can't remember what happened.
  - Has obvious pain when moving an injured limb.
  - Has trouble opening his or her jaw.

If you don't know much about first aid yourself, ask if anyone in your group does.

If the person has no obvious injuries, you still should pay careful attention to determine if the person is confused or disoriented, which could also indicate a head injury.

4. **If necessary, send someone for help:** If there is *any* question about whether professional medical attention is necessary, call 911 immediately. If no one has a cellular phone and you need to send someone to call, make sure the person who is going has change for a pay phone and can accurately describe where you are. If possible, send two riders: one to direct the ambulance to your location (if necessary), and another who can return to the group when 911 has been reached, so you and the others know that help is on the way.

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**Important!** If you have an emergency and you aren't near a phone, remember that bus and cab drivers, utility crews, and construction crews all have radios that they can use to call for help. In addition, many drivers now carry cellular phones.

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5. **Care for and reassure the injured rider until help arrives:** Be as helpful as possible given the situation and the available materials. In particular, keep the person as warm and dry as possible.

Regardless of the rider's condition, act calmly, speak in reassuring tones, and be sure that everyone around you does the same. Ask everyone who isn't helping to stand well back, so the injured rider isn't looking up into a mob of worried or horrified faces. Also, caution the others not to discuss the rider's injuries; no one who is injured wants to hear the words "Wow! Look at all that *blood!*"

6. **Make sure the person's contact information and helmet get into the ambulance:** If an injured rider is taken away in an ambulance, be sure the rider's contact information and helmet go along. Someone at the hospital will probably want to examine the helmet to determine the likelihood of head injuries. Ideally, you'll get the ambulance crew to take the rider's bike, too, so you don't need to worry about it.

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**Important!** Be sure *you* know the rider's name and contact information, so you can call later to check on his or her condition, send a get-well card, return the rider's bike.

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## Other concerns in the event of a severe accident

In addition to taking care of the injured rider, you need to be concerned about the other riders and about the injured rider's bike and gear:

- **Continuing the ride:** In some cases, you may need to continue the ride before the injured rider has recovered enough to start riding again or before the ambulance has arrived. For example, if it's evening and you're running out of daylight, you'll need to get the other riders back to the starting point.

You shouldn't leave the injured rider alone unless he or she is clearly all right and has a way to get back to the starting point or back home. If the other riders can find their way back to the starting point, you and someone who knows first aid should stay with the injured rider.

Otherwise, you should ask for volunteers to stay, again including someone who knows first aid.

- **What to do with the injured rider's bike and gear:** If you need to leave the rider's bike where it is, lock it up and take all of the removable gear with you (bike bags, headlights, and so on). Return for the bike as soon as possible (preferably before nightfall), and let the rider and the club office know that you have it. Alternatively, you may be able to leave the bike at a nearby fire station or bike shop, or at the home of one of the local residents.

## Who to notify in the event of an accident

The liability waiver includes a line for an emergency contact phone number. If an injured rider is taken to the hospital unconscious, and if the person provided an emergency contact phone number, call that number immediately and calmly explain what happened. If the rider is conscious, he or she can decide who to contact and when.

If someone was seriously injured, call the club president and the Road Captain as soon as possible. The current president and Road Captain are listed in the *Pedal Notes*. This applies regardless of whether the person was one of the riders in your group.

If no one was seriously injured, calling the club president is sufficient. In this case, you can wait until the next day to call.

## Hypothermia

If you're riding in cold or wet weather, keep an eye on all of your riders to ensure that no one is suffering from hypothermia. Mild hypothermia is characterized by shivering, and can be treated by getting the person out of the cold and into dry clothes. If there's nowhere to get out of the cold, try sharing body heat. More severe cases are characterized by confusion and lack of coordination; in this case you need to get the person to medical care.

## Heat exhaustion and heat stroke

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke can be caused by riding in hot weather or by dressing inappropriately when riding in cooler weather. As a cyclist, you need to dress so you can dissipate heat and perspiration. In addition, you need to drink plenty of fluids, so you don't become dehydrated.

**Heat exhaustion** is characterized by pale, clammy skin, profuse perspiration, and extreme tiredness or weakness. The person may have a headache and may vomit. With heat exhaustion, the person's body temperature is approximately normal.

The treatment for heat exhaustion is rest. If the person is alert, offer oral fluids, preferably water or sports drinks. Don't give the person coffee, tea, or alcoholic beverages.

**Heat stroke** is far more dangerous. The body's temperature control system has stopped working, so the person doesn't sweat anymore. Body temperature may rise so far that brain damage may result.

The symptoms of heat stroke include hot, red skin; no perspiration; extremely high body temperature; dizziness; nausea; headache; rapid pulse; and confusion, disorientation, or unconsciousness.

Get the person out of the heat immediately, and cool his or her body quickly. Soak the person in cool but not cold water, or pour water over the body. Stop and observe the person for 10 minutes, then cool some more if the person's body temperature is still above 102°.

If the person is alert, offer oral fluids, preferably water or sports drinks. Don't give the person coffee, tea, or alcoholic beverages.

If heat stroke develops, the rider will need medical care, possibly including intravenous fluids.

## Road rash

If one of your riders falls and leaves some skin on the pavement, the person should clean the wound thoroughly, apply some antiseptic cream or ointment, and cover it with clean gauze. If there isn't a nearby source of clean water, using water from water bottles is better than not cleaning the wound at all. If the edges of a deep cut won't fit back together or if the wound is in a place where motion will prevent it from healing, the rider should get medical attention as soon as possible. For open cuts or abrasions, the rider should seek medical care if he or she hasn't had a tetanus immunization in the last five years.

## What to carry in a first-aid kit

If you decide to carry a first-aid kit for the occasional minor injury, here are some suggestions on what to include:

- Large gauze squares for cleaning road rash or as protection from further harm.
- A roll of gauze for covering larger areas of rash.
- Non-adherent sterile pads.
- Antiseptic cream or ointment.
- A roll of tape to secure bandages.
- Band-Aids® for small cuts and blisters.
- Second Skin for open blisters.
- Ibuprofen or Tylenol® to minimize swelling or general minor pain.
- A triangular bandage.
- Antihistamine, in case someone has an allergic reaction.
- Latex gloves.

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**Note:** If you have first-aid training, you may want to add other items to your first-aid kit, for example, Epinephrine®, which is good for severe asthma, as well as for bee stings or any other anaphylactic reaction. This depends on your level of knowledge and your willingness to carry the extra weight.

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## Handling other problems

Here are some problems that you may encounter on your rides and some suggestions on how to handle them.

### Riding in the rain

In a light rain, you can probably keep riding, but you need to be especially careful on downhill, wet leaves, railroad tracks, and metal bridge decks.

In a rain that's heavy enough to affect visibility, you should consider stopping *off the road* until the rain slows. However, standing around somewhere while you're wet and cold is a good way to get hypothermia, so you need to weigh the odds of getting run over against the odds of freezing to death.

In a heavy rain, you're probably best off finding a nice, warm bakery where you can glut on chocolate until the weather improves. However, be sure you have the permission of the proprietor, be careful not to inconvenience other customers, and be sure you and your riders all *buy* something. Also, recognize that the weather may not improve before sunset, and that you may have to set off in the rain again.

## Avoiding lightning

If you happen to encounter lightning, use the “Flash-To-Bang” method of measuring lightning distance. This is the amount of time that elapses between when you see the flash and when you hear the thunder. For each five-second count, lightning is one mile away, so at 25 seconds the lightning is five miles away. At a count of 15 seconds (three miles) take immediate defensive action:

- Where possible, find shelter in a building or in a fully enclosed metal vehicle such as a car, truck, or van with the windows closed.
- Avoid water.
- Avoid metal objects such as *bicycles*, electric wires, fences, machinery, railroad tracks, tent poles, and so on.
- Don’t stop beneath small open-sided rain shelters or isolated trees.
- Avoid hilltops, open spaces, ditches, and depressions.

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**Important!** If you need to take shelter, make every effort to keep your riders calm. You don’t want folks crashing into one another in a mad rush to get away from the lightning.

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If your hair is standing up, you have a tingling sensation, the count between flash and bang is less than five seconds, or lightning is striking nearby, you should:

- Remove all metal objects.
- Crouch down, and put your feet together and your hands on your knees.
- Avoid direct contact with other people.

## Dangerous drivers

If you have trouble with a dangerous driver, get everyone off the road, and wait until the driver goes away. Don’t antagonize the driver in any way. In addition, get the vehicle license number and a description of the *driver*, and contact the police. If you can’t describe the driver, the owner of the car can simply claim not to have been driving the car at the time of the incident. If someone happens to be carrying a camera, this might be a good time to use it.

## Dangerous riders in your group

If you have a careless rider in your group, and the person continues to be troublesome after you’ve spoken with him or her about being more careful, insist that the rider leave the group. If necessary, stop the group and wait until the rider leaves before you continue.

## Mechanical problems

If someone has mechanical problems, you can:

- Check with your riders to see if anyone has the parts and the expertise to make the repair.
- If there’s a nearby bike shop, car repair shop, or hardware store, you might take the group on a detour. You could also suggest that the rider go alone, and provide instructions on how to rejoin the group later, if possible.
- Suggest calling home or calling a taxi.
- Suggest the bus. All buses in King County are now equipped with bicycle racks, as are buses in many of the surrounding areas.
- Send someone back for a car.

Some problems are not as severe as they might seem:

- *Broken spokes:* Generally, if you don’t have too far to travel, you can just ride with a broken spoke. If you can, remove the parts of the spoke, otherwise tie or tape the broken parts to

adjacent spokes. If breaking the spoke also affected the true of the wheel, you may also need to loosen the brakes. Emphasize that the rider should avoid potholes as much as possible.

- *Broken chains:* If someone has a chain tool along, you can simply remove the bad link and put the chain back together. Because the chain will then be shorter, the rider should avoid using the large chainring (in front) or the large gear (in back).
- *A hole in a tire:* If you have a small hole in a tire, you can keep the inner tube from bulging out through the hole by slipping something inside the tire to cover the hole. A dollar bill works fine, and a section cut from an old tire works even better, but it's just a temporary fix. You should replace the tire as soon as you can. If the hole is in the sidewall, take extra care because a sidewall cut can cause the tire to fall off the rim; use this trick just long enough to *slowly* limp home or to a bike shop.

## **Making a ride more fun**

Consider choosing a theme. If you live for sweets, lead a ride that takes in several bakeries or candy shops. If you're fascinated with defunct streetcar lines, lead a ride to Ballard by way of the Counterbalance, and stop along the way to point out where the streetcars once traveled.

Key into special events. For example, you might want to lead a ride to Folklife or Bumbershoot, to the bicycle races at the Marymoor Velodrome, to a street fair or community festival, to a music festival, to a small-town event, or to some similar gathering. However, if you've never been to the event yourself, you probably should ask around to ensure that the crowds and traffic won't interfere with safe riding.

Have fun with the ride description. People will be more inclined to show up for a ride whose description captures their imagination.

Do something out of the ordinary. Ride through back alleys, cross wooden bridges, meander through parks, stop at yard sales and interesting houses, and visit trolls and viewpoints.

Wave at *everyone*, talk with kids as you ride past, *stop* and talk with kids who seem unusually excited about what you're doing, and pose for pictures with tourists.

Take a break at some little out-of-the-way place where the food is especially good and the proprietors grateful to have the extra business.

Be playful. Attach playing cards to your front fork with clothes pins, and attach streamers to your handlebar ends. Attach a beanie propeller to the top of your helmet. Get a kids' license plate with your name on it, and attach it to the back of your seat. Stop off at the grocery store on your way to the ride, and get a big bag of Tootsie Rolls to share.

Get name tags and pass them out before a ride. This makes it easier for riders to get to know one another, which is the main reason most people ride with groups.

Take pictures and submit them to the *Pedal Notes*. Be sure you include a caption that names the ride and the folks in the picture (if you know everyone's name and if the crowd isn't too big). If something interesting happened, you could also write an article for the newsletter.

## Tips for safe riding

### Traffic regulations

- Observe all traffic laws. Your bicycle is legally considered a vehicle, so you're subject to the same traffic laws as the drivers of motorized vehicles.
- Use hand and voice signals when turning or stopping.
- Ride with traffic. Motorists don't look for bicycles going the "wrong way."
- Don't wear headphones while you're cycling. It's dangerous and, in some places, it's illegal.
- When riding at night, state law requires you to have, at a minimum, a white front head lamp and a red rear reflector, each visible from a distance of 500 feet. It's also a good idea to have a red taillight or blinker and to wear reflective clothing and safety vests to increase visibility. Flashing lights are not legal headlights.

### Hazards

- Make eye contact with drivers so you know that they've seen you.
- Cross railroad tracks at a 90° angle.
- Look ahead for road hazards (glass, potholes, wide cracks, metal grates, gravel, and so on), and point them out to other riders. This is extra important when the road is wet.
- Check for traffic yourself. Scan the road in front of you, behind you, and around you.
- Watch for car doors opening in your path.

- Use voice and hand signals to communicate with other riders, especially when you're riding close together.

### Courtesy

- Take a full lane when safety dictates. If you're delaying five or more vehicles, pull off the road at the next turnout to allow them to pass.
- If you stop for any reason, move yourself and your bicycle *completely* off the road or trail.
- On multi-use trails and sidewalks, yield to pedestrians. Slow down when other people are present, and slow to a walking pace if safety dictates.
- Pass on the left, and use a bell or your voice to alert others that you're passing.

### Other good ideas

- Wear an ANSI- or Snell-approved bicycle helmet. (Required by law in some places.)
- When there's traffic behind you, ride single-file so cars can pass.
- Limit pace lines to eight or fewer.
- Before every ride, make sure your bike is in good condition.
- Bring a pump, spare tube, patch kit, tire irons, and a full water bottle.
- Eat before you're hungry, drink before you're thirsty.

## Day-of-ride checklist

### Stuff to bring

#### *Mandatory*

- Your own bike and helmet
- Plenty of copies of the map or cue sheet (if you said you'd provide one)
- Two copies of the Smoky Mountain Wheelmen Bicycle Club liability waiver, a copy of the CBC Incident Report, and a copy of the CBC Witness Report
- A couple of pens

#### *Optional*

- Food and full water bottles
- Basic tools, pump and tire gauge, extra tube, patch kit, and tire levers
- Rudimentary first-aid kit
- Bike lock
- Bike computer to monitor your pace
- Cellular phone, if you have one
- Membership forms
- Newsletters to give away
- Extra helmets (if you have spares)
- Rags for cleaning up after repairs
- Toilet paper or tissues
- Name tags and a felt marker
- A watch
- Money, including change for phone calls

### Stuff to check on

- Does everyone have a helmet?
- Has everyone signed the liability waiver?
- How many riders do you have?

### The pre-ride announcement

- Introductions
- Welcome to new riders
- Signatures on the liability waiver
- Maps, cue sheets
- Pace of the ride
- Whether the ride will stick together
- The route
- Ride safely
- Obey traffic regulations
- Be courteous
- Ride single-file in traffic
- Ride on the right half of trails
- Use hand and voice signals
- Watch out for other cyclists
- Special equipment required (lights?)
- Keep the ride leader informed
- Ask if anyone has a first-aid kit or cellular phone
- After-ride refreshments
- Questions