
Advocacy Column

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Tips for Riding in Groups

Winter will soon be over and our numbers at Sunday NBW rides will increase to the record levels we experienced last summer.

With more people riding in our club rides, it is important to ride safely. Here are a few tips to ensure that you and your friends will have fun and be safe when you take to the road again in 2007.

Be predictable:

Group riding requires even more attention to predictability than riding solo. Other riders expect you to continue straight ahead at a constant speed unless you signal differently. Stopping suddenly without warning those behind you is certain to have negative results.

Use Signals:

Use hand signals and verbal signals to communicate with members of the group and with cars, pedestrians, and other traffic.

Warn others of changes:

Warn bicyclists behind you well in advance of changes in your direction or speed. To warn your group of a change in speed or direction, the lead cyclist should call out the change in addition to giving a hand signal.

Pass on the left:

Just like automobile drivers instructions, slower traffic stays right. Pass on the left and call out "on your left" or "passing" before you begin to pass. Never pass on the right. It is a common reaction to pull to the right when startled and a crash could result.

Announce road hazards:

In groups, most of the cyclists following the leaders do not have a good view of the road ahead so it is important to announce holes, glass, gravel, grates and other dangers. Indicate hazards by pointing to the hazard and shouting "hole", "bump", "gravel," etc., to ensure that those behind you have time to react to the safety threat.

Watch for traffic coming from the rear:

Since cyclists cannot easily see traffic approaching from the rear, riders at the back of the pack should shout "car back" to warn those in front. Around curves and on narrow roads or steep hills, shout "car up" to warn of traffic approaching.

Be careful at intersections:

When approaching intersections that require cars and bicycles to yield or stop, the leaders should shout "slowing" or "stopping" to alert those behind to the change in speed. When passing through any intersection, do not follow bicyclists in the lead without making sure that the road is still clear. Each cyclist must make an individual decision about their safety at the crossing.

Leave a gap for cars:

When traffic calls for it, ride single file and leave gaps for cars to pass.

On hills or narrow roads where you may impede traffic, leave a gap between every three or four bicycles. Gaps adequate for a car to pass will allow motorists to take advantage of shorter passing intervals and move around the group a few bicycles at a time.

Move off the road when stopping:

Whenever you stop move your bike and your body completely off the road so that you do not block automobiles or the riders behind you. Make sure to look for and yield to traffic already in the road.

Share the Road:

Whenever we ride on the road, we are ambassadors for all bicyclists. When we ride responsibly and consider the safety and convenience of all others no matter what form of travel they choose, we are justified to ask automobiles to share the road with us. We need to show courtesy to drivers. Someday we may see automobile drivers considering bicyclists in a way to make the roads safe for all.



Obey all traffic laws, lights and signs.

STATE LAWS:

RI bike laws: www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE31/31-19/INDEX.HTM

MA bike laws: www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/index.htm
(search for "bicycle")

CT bike laws: www.ct.gov/dot/LIB/dot/documents/dbikes/cover_page.pdf