

Tulsa Bicycle Club

Ride Leader Training Manual
promoting cycling in Tulsa since 1972
Spring, 2010

Introduction

Although we use the title **Ride Leader**, it might be more accurate to think of yourself as the **Ride Organizer**. You are not expected to ride at the front of the group and lead people around your course. You are expected to plan, organize, and start your ride. Depending on the size of the group and riding conditions, you may want to recruit others to help you with activities like route marking, welcoming riders, asking non-members to sign the liability waiver and consider joining the club, giving the safety talk, starting small groups of differing speeds, and so on.

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Selecting a route

General considerations

Regardless of the means you use to choose a route, you should ride or drive it before the day of the ride so you know everything you need to about road conditions; mileage; and water, lunch, and restroom stops. For routes which are used frequently, this is not always needed. However, 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.

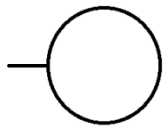
Stay off heavily used trails (for example, River Parks trails) as much as possible. These trails aren't built for speed, and they certainly aren't built for crowds. On the Riverside trail during the summer, there's often already too much traffic without you and a slew of other cyclists adding to the hubbub, and a dangerous portion of the traffic is children on tricycles, dogs on leashes, and people wearing headphones. Our other trails, such as the Osage Prairie Trail and the trail to Broken Arrow, on the other hand, are often nearly deserted. Wherever you go, remember to respect private property, and ride only in places where bicycles are welcome.

Using an existing route

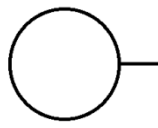
The best choice for a route is often one that you've already ridden and enjoyed. Ride leaders rarely mind if someone repeats one of their rides, so you needn't worry about plagiarism. Feel free to add your own variations; just because you're borrowing someone else's route doesn't mean that you can't give it your own touch. Numerous routes, complete with maps and cue sheets are contained on the TBC web site.

Route Marking

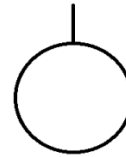
TBC uses the Dan Henry marking system, approved by The League of American Bicyclists. This system makes following the route easier, makes marking more consistent, and also makes route marking guidelines clearer and easier to understand. The symbols used are:



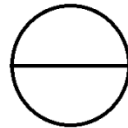
Turn Left



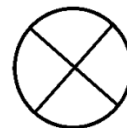
Turn Right



Straight Ahead



Caution



Wrong Way

All circles will be 10" in diameter. Directional lines should not extend inside the circle. In most instances, the turn symbols will be painted on the pavement close to the right shoulder of the road. The route markings inside city or state parks may be placed on signs located on the right shoulder of the road, when it is not permissible to paint the symbols on the pavement. The route markings will be a visible color, such as yellow or orange, and will be as follows:

1. The workers responsible for marking the route will be instructed to use the following guidelines when placing the markings on the pavement:
2. Place the first route marker 100 feet prior to the turn. The second route marker will be placed 20 feet prior to the turn. The third route marker will be placed on the pavement 10 feet after the turn. Some turns, like those on downgrades or difficult intersections, will have four markers on them. The spacing will be 150 feet prior to the turn, 100 feet prior to the turn, 20 feet prior to the turn, and 10 feet after the turn.
3. Some sections of the route may have rough pavement and/or bridges that may require proceeding with extreme caution. Place the caution warning(s) on the road surface, to warn of upcoming hazardous conditions. Additional information (rough road, narrow bridge, railroad tracks, etc.) may be painted on the road surface as well.
4. On occasion there will be a long stretch of road that does not have any turns. If this occurs, workers marking the route will place a straight-ahead marker every five (5) miles to let riders know they are still traveling in the right direction.
5. At times, it may be necessary to have the route markings for two different days on the same roads, presenting a confusing situation at some intersections. Therefore, workers will use a different color of paint for each route. For example, one route would be yellow, and the other

would be orange. Route maps can be color coded so riders will know which color to follow that day.

6. There are times when the road situation will necessitate a deviation from the standard route marking procedure. This may occur when two turns are in close proximity to each other, when there is a Y intersection, when the upcoming turn is on a hill, etc. The workers assigned to route marking will be instructed to use their common sense in selecting the most appropriate method of marking the route when a deviation from the standard route marking procedure is necessary. A can of black or gray paint is handy for correcting marking errors and erasing confusing and unneeded marks.
7. Marks should not be placed on the pavement inside city or county parks or inside residential areas having brick or other ornamental streets. Such areas should either be marked on the ground or with a sign containing the Dan Henry mark. Alternatively, a person can be designated to direct traffic at unmarked areas where the route is not obvious and where placing a mark would be inappropriate.

Alternative to Route Marking Policy:

As a means of reducing the amount of paint on roadways, the following optional marking policy is offered. This policy amounts to using the same Dan Henry marks discussed previously but using the bare minimum number of marks necessary to keep riders on the route. In general, a single mark will be placed before the intersection whenever a decision to turn or leave the present road is involved and no confirming marks are used. This is an acceptable way to mark a route where the following conditions are present:

1. The route is one which has been used previously and is familiar to some of the riders; and
2. The ride is not one on which a large number of novice riders is expected.

Inclement Weather Policy

All rides revert to "show up" rides when inclement or dangerous weather exists. Any riders who do show up will ride at their own risk. They may then choose their own leader, route and destination -- this may be very different than the ride scheduled. Any of the following may define inclement weather:

1. Hail
2. Snow
3. Rain or thunderstorms
4. Sleet
5. Ice
6. Lightning
7. Temperatures below 32 degrees at start
8. Temperatures above 100 degrees at start

Maps & Cue Sheets

It is useful to have maps and / or cue sheets for the bike route. Numerous maps and cue sheets already exist on the TBC web site so it is a good idea to look there to see if they already exist for the route you have chosen. If not, a variety of ways exist to make them including the following:

Maps

Maps are sometimes made by marking a preexisting map with a pen or pencil. Some riders prefer to use a software product, such as Mapquest, and some have created routes by overlaying a GPS track onto their electronic maps. You are encouraged to do whatever you are most comfortable with in this regard. Another option is to use one of the internet mapping services such as Bikely.com, which prepares the cue sheet at the same time the map is being prepared.

Cue Sheets

If you must manually prepare a cue sheet, a spreadsheet, such as Excel, is an easy way to do it. A few tips regarding cue sheets are shown below.

1. If you are preparing a cue sheet with mileage designations, specify the mileage readings to .1 mile as recorded on your own bike computer.
2. A cue sheet with no mileage readings is better than inaccurate readings or estimates. If you are referencing street names be sure the street signs are actually in place. "Left turn onto Smith Street" is useless if there is no sign for Smith Street.
3. Note major landmarks when applicable. They help people confirm their location.
4. Use all street names, and in the case of a missing sign, note this as well. The reason for the street name in this case is that if it appears at another point on the particular roadway riders will be able to confirm they are on the correct route.

Sags & Sweeps

It is advisable to have SAG vehicles on rides of 50 miles or more and on rides where a high probability of involvement by novice riders exists. SAG vehicles should be able to carry one or two bicycles and their riders. Standard equipment on the SAG vehicle should include a floor pump, a few basic bike repair tools, and a cooler of water. The SAG driver's cell phone number should be made available to riders unless another contact point for assistance has been specified.

The day of the ride

Maps and Cue Sheets

Be sure you have enough maps and / or Cue Sheets for the expected size of the group.

Arrive early to coordinate pre-ride activities

1. Be sure sufficient parking is available. If necessary designate someone to direct riders as to where to park if it is not immediately apparent.
2. Be available to answer questions about the ride, mileage, lunch stops, food, etc. Point out trash receptacles if they are on the site.

3. Leave yourself "space" and time to formulate your pre-ride speech.
4. Be sure maps/cue sheets are handed out by yourself or a designated individual.

Ride Leader Release Form

All riders who are not TBC members must sign a release form in order to participate in TBC rides. The forms are available on the TBC web site. Signed release forms should be forwarded to the TBC Vice President after completion of the ride. The ride leader should circulate among the riders as they arrive and endeavor to have all required signatures before beginning the pre ride briefings. On a well attended ride, it is advisable to enlist an assistant for this activity.

The Pre Ride Briefing

The briefing should be composed of two principal sections, safety and ride particulars. The following topics are recommended.

1. Safety Talk - Maximum 3 minutes.

Welcome everyone on behalf of TBC. Keep the safety talk brief. At a minimum, the following points should be emphasized.

- a. Approved helmets are required on all TBC rides for all riders. There are no exceptions. Most helmets are currently approved by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission. In the past, most were ASTM or Snell certified. Helmet certification by any of these entities is evidence of an acceptable helmet.
- b. All non-members must sign the Liability Waiver. As a ride leader, you cannot be held responsible for making sure every non-member signs the document, but you must ask for their signature in your pre-ride talk. Ask for a show of hands of those not currently members of TBC. Ask them to sign the liability waiver form. This is also a good opportunity to welcome new guests and suggest that repeat guests join the club and support our work. Completed liability waivers should be sent to the TBC Vice President.
- c. On bikes we are subject to the same laws as motorists, including observing red lights, stop signs and one-way streets. Obey all traffic laws: stop signs, traffic lights, pedestrian crosswalks. Avoid blocking "right turn on red" traffic lanes, etc.
- d. Pay attention to all road conditions, traffic, and other riders.
- e. Signal your intentions! Use hand and voice signals for all your moves. Yell out "stopping," "slowing," "passing," "left turn", etc. Let other riders in your group know what is happening.
- f. Call out Conditions! Sand, Runner up, Dog, Horse, etc. Use hand signals as well whenever it is safe to do so. Point out road hazards to riders behind you.
- g. Encountering Cars. Riders near the rear of a group should call out, "Car back!" when any vehicle is approaching from behind. Riders near the front of a group should call out "Car Up!" when any vehicle is approaching from the front. Be courteous to motorists and relinquish the right of way. On a narrow road, when you can see it is clear ahead, slow down and move to the far right side of the road to let the vehicle pass.
- h. Ride in Single File! Stay in single file when there is automobile traffic, not two and three abreast. Communicate with other riders in your group to also do so. Do not ride in pace lines as they are inherently dangerous and very difficult for motorists to pass.
- i. Display safety and ride courteously. Pass other riders on the left only. Ride on the right side of the road, not in the middle. Call out, "On your left!" to let riders ahead of you know you are behind them and about to pass.
- j. Move completely off the road whenever stopping, even if only briefly. Stop only where traffic approaching from either direction can see you clearly.

- k. Limit groups to 6-8 riders. When more than 6-8 riders are involved in tight groups, there is increased risk of accidents among riders, and it is significantly harder for cars to pass the group.
 - l. Remember, in any accident with an automobile, **YOU LOSE!!**"
2. Announce in closing "We can be an overwhelming presence on the road and in the small communities we pass through. Please help TBC with our community relations. Make an extra effort to be courteous to one another and to local citizens. Thank you and have a great and safe ride."

Ride Information - Maximum 3 minutes

The following topics are recommended.

- a. Be Brief. No one wants to hear about every pot hole and every traffic light. Cover only major points of interest and major problem areas.
- b. Describe the Dan Henry marks so everyone will know what they look like. Make note of any problem areas where the marks may be hard to see.
- c. Inform the group of the approximate route distance and where the convenience stores or other restroom facilities are located.
- d. Be sure to emphasize any danger spots; such as a turn at the bottom of a downhill, gravel on the road, busy intersections, bad railroad tracks, rough bridges, etc.

Starting the Ride

1. If the group is small, announce the start and let riders filter out.
2. We recommend staggering ride starts for groups exceeding 30 to 40 riders. Staggering your ride start lessens impacts on traffic and is safer. Announce that you will release riders in three groups based on average riding speed: 1) 18 mph and over, 2) 16-17 mph, and 3) under 16 mph. If you prefer, you can simply define the three groups as 1) fast, 2) medium, and 3) casual (or leisurely). Allow a full 90 seconds between group releases. Time this rather than estimating. If you leave it to riders to self-stagger, you'll simply get a steady stream of cyclists departing. You may need to encourage the first group to start, and then encourage the others to wait their turn. Most riders won't deliberately foil the process, but some don't listen carefully and may get confused. Don't be afraid to exercise your leadership skills and be insistent. People will generally respond. Use the time between group releases to provide additional safety/group riding information.
3. Unless an assistant has been enlisted to do so, the leader should expect to provide a sweep for weekend rides. Ride leaders are encouraged to leave the starting point a few minutes after the group in order to check on and chat with slower riders as they are passed. Leaders are not expected to wait at the end of the ride to make sure everyone has returned but reasonable care should be taken to ensure that inexperienced riders are not left unaccounted for.
4. Police the area after most of the riders have returned.

Additional Considerations for the Ride Leader

Accidents

In the event of an accident the Ride Leader should first attend to any injured persons. Unless the injuries are minor, emergency medical help and the police should be summoned. Any accident involving another vehicle should have a police presence. The Ride Leader should contact persons known to the rider at the number provided on the waiver form or on file in the TBC roster. The Ride Leader should secure the riders bicycle and equipment. Contact the club's ride coordinator (currently Larry Thompson) as soon as practicable after the accident.