

Portland By Cycle
“How to Lead a Bike Ride” Training

Why lead a ride?

Show off things you love, things you know, things that you think others will be interested in

Encourage family, friends, neighbors to see their neighborhood (or other parts of town) in a new way

Encourage folks to try (or continue) biking

Have fun!

Develop the ride :

- Pick a theme and identify “features” of ride (e.g., places to stop; types of bikeway; etc.)
- Envision your audience (e.g., “confident & enthused” riders; “interested but concerned” cautious riders; families with kids in trailer or on own bike. plan for lowest common denominator or be willing to send folks home who show up under-able--shouldn’t take grandma up mount tabor on her schwinn trike!)
- Talk to “experts” on the ride theme (e.g., for a Mural Ride call the Regional Arts and Culture Council, talk to the artists who made the mural, etc.)
- Pick a time and date
 - How much traffic is likely? (Peak/off-peak, Saturday shopping, etc.)
 - What will the weather be like? (potentially cold, wet, etc.) Back-up plan? (alternate rain date; ride regardless of weather, or?)
 - How much light – when is sundown?
- Pick a start location
 - Central (easy to get to?) Well-known (easy to find)?
 - Bathroom and water fountain available?
 - Food or coffee available?
 - Shelter from weather
- Pick one: loop or line
 - If a loop, ride will return to start location
 - If a line, ride ends at a different location
 - Make sure riders know it’s not a loop
 - Find information on nearby transit options
- Enlist a partner or assistant (it’s great to have someone to “sweep” – making sure no one is left behind; helpful to have another person who can stay with a rider in case of mechanical problem). Also great to have another expert on subject matter who can add color to your commentary or suggest additional stops/activities--but could & probably should be distinct from your mechanic/sweep.

Plan your route:

- Can use paper map (e.g., PBOT’s bike maps), or online maps:
 - Google maps - <http://maps.google.com>
 - Bycycle.org
 - RideTheCity.com

- Bikely.com (great for sharing route with riders or collaborators ahead of time)
 - Plot stops or other features
 - Review bike maps (PBOT, Metro, County, etc.) for preferred route
 - Identify “hotspots”; note crossings (signalized? PBOT Bike/Walk maps show all signalized intersections)
 - Pay attention to one-way streets & other traffic features too

Test ride route about a week to a couple days before

- Note any “hot spots” (difficult intersections, railroad tracks, etc.)
- Check for areas under construction, etc.

Publicize:

- Contact “likely suspects” (groups that have an affinity for your subject)
- Posters at local coffee shops, community centers, laundromats?
- Distribute small flyers (e.g. ¼ page) at high-density bike parking locations (slide under brake cables or straps on rear rack)
- Post announcement on www.Shift2Bikes.org, www.BikePortland.org forums, other community websites (Craigslist,; CNRG; neighborhood and coalition webpage; MeetUp.com; MeetInPortland.org; etc.)
- Create a Facebook event-- make it open so friends can invite friends & encourage it!
- Use Twitter to alert folks ~2 weeks ahead of time, and to send reminders closer to date
- Tell everyone you know!

Day of ride:

- Bring
 - first aid kit
 - tire pump, patch kit and tire levers
 - walkie-talkies or cell numbers of sweep/assistant(s)
 - [sign-in sheets/waivers to the ride]
 - [route maps to distribute]

Note: these suggestions are from our City of Portland rides. Leaders of informal rides can choose what’s appropriate from the lists below.

At ride...

- Arrive 15-30 minutes before start time to help with...
 - ABC Check (Air in tires? Brakes working? Chain need lube?)
 - Helmets on riders? Fit o.k.?
 - [Pass around sign-in/waiver sheet for all riders to sign]
 - [Hand out name tags]

About 5-15 min. after “start time” ...

- Welcome riders
- Introduce leader and assistant(s), identify who is the sweep – the person who rides last and makes sure no-one is left behind
- Give a brief explanatory talk about the ride –
 - Theme
 - how long it will take
 - how many stops
 - if there will be bathroom breaks (and how soon they occur)
 - Line or loop
 - Any other unusual details

Ride leader should:

- Check-in with riders, get an idea of skill level of participants
- Explain the route, any difficult areas?
- Talk about how to negotiate intersections/stop signs & signals
- Plan for regrouping if ride separates into clumps due to traffic signals
- [During ride] Make sure group is with you on the ride (pace yourself to the group)

Assistants should:

- Be aware of less-experienced riders; engage them in conversation and be alert to “teachable moments”
- Offer expertise and tips as appropriate
- Help keep ride together – manage groups that get caught behind at red lights, etc.
- Be prepared to offer emergency assistance – fix flats, tighten brake cables, etc.
- Be prepared to lead the ride (if extra-big attendance or leader has emergency; or if rider has emergency – staff will stay with rider, assistant will stay with group, serve as sweep)

If appropriate, Give safety talk:

Everyday riding tips

- Ride predictably; follow traffic law (observe stop lights, stop signs, & other road-users’ right-of-way)
- Hand-signals demo (L turn, R turn, stopping/slowing); helpful to vocalize in congested situations (“turning” or “stopping!”)
- Watch for car doors – look through rear window of parked cars
- Be aware of traffic at intersections and make your own decision – don’t rely on other riders’ declaration of “Clear” to decide when to go through
- Keep an eye on cars to your left – watch front wheels to predict if they will turn (don’t count on drivers to signal)
- There may be times when it’s appropriate to pass cars on the right - **Always use extreme caution**
- Special tips for group riding
 - Generally we ride single file, on the right. On streets where side-by-side is o.k., yell “Car Back” and “Car Up” when necessary – means get back into single file, let the car pass (or get out of our way)
 - Help your fellow riders by signaling road hazards – hand gesture pointing which side, verbal exclamation (gravel, glass, grates, etc.)
 - If someone signals a road hazard always try to swerve *away* from traffic to avoid

hazard

- When it's o.k. to pass another rider (or pedestrian on multi-use path), use audible signal ("on your left")
- If an individual rider needs to stop, they should alert staff or assistant, pull over and out of the way

===== addendum by Chris "fool" McCraw on corking =====

corking.

on group rides, keeping the group together will improve traffic throughput for all. after considering the easy and clearly legal strategies of pacing (including waiting at roadside for group to reassemble) and routing, consider the biggest bottleneck: intersections with competing traffic. keeping the route together through a busy stop sign or a stop light that isn't long enough for the whole group by having individual riders direct traffic is called corking.

corking techniques should only be applied when necessary--that is, on big group rides at busy intersections. basic technique:

- delegate (or allow self-selection on popular rides with experienced riders) 1 rider per direction of competing traffic (typically only necessary for cross traffic).
- wait for a break in traffic, or a green light, so that ride begins to enter intersection legally
- these "corkers" stop on the outside of the ride, between oncoming traffic and stream of riders, while the ride is still behaving legally.
- corkers make eye contact with oncoming traffic and direct them to stop with hand signals and a smile. if no oncoming traffic present at first, someone should still be stopped and prepared to engage in case of arriving traffic.
- corkers monitor ride progress and keep traffic engaged with thankful, appreciative behavior (smiles & thank yous & "we'll be done soon" type exchanges)
- corkers encourage ride to hurry through as traffic waits
- when last riders approach, corkers make eye contact again & thank drivers for waiting, then bring up the rear of ride through intersection as the last rider joins them in it. don't leave your post early and endanger the last couple riders!

a few more tips:

- in case of confrontation with motorists, explain that Portland Police Bureau encourage this behavior for higher traffic flow (per officer pickett)--treat the ride as a really long truck that, once in the intersection, needs to finish going through it instead of stopping halfway. be polite and explain that this actually leads to faster traffic flow for everyone

- in case the ride is too spread out and the last riders are far enough behind the rest of the group that they aren't ready to intersection when most of the ride is through, consider uncorking AND WAITING for those last riders and helping them catch the front of the ride.