

# **BCP RIDE LEADERS TRAINING HANDBOOK**

**Rides are the heart and soul of our cycling club, and ride leaders its backbone. Whether you are new at leading rides, very experience, or somewhere in-between, we thank you for your interest in leading rides.**

**There aren't always right and wrong ways of doing many things; and that includes leading rides. We all have our own styles, likes and temperaments. However, there are often best practices that work well. We learn them by our individual experiences over time, and by the shared experiences of others.**

**Please use this handbook as a tool help you plan, develop and lead the best rides you can. It was originally developed by Howie Weiner, and most recently updated by Howard Hochheiser. Should you have any suggestions or comments, please let us know, as we welcome them. You can contact us at [info@phillybikeclub.org](mailto:info@phillybikeclub.org).**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **Part 1: Preparing for Your Ride**

- **Why Lead Rides?**
- **Why Not Lead Rides?**
- **How to Develop Your Ride**
- **Creating Your Route and Cue Sheet**
- **Remote Starts**

### **Part 2: Day of the Ride**

- **Ride Management Style**
- **The Ride**
- **Problems**
- **Safety Awareness and Issues**
- **Weather Extremes**

# **BCP RIDE LEADERS TRAINING HANDBOOK**

## **PART 1: PREPARING FOR YOUR RIDE**

## WHY LEAD RIDES?

- You're the boss! You get to do exactly the kind of ride you like
  - You choose the pace, distance, destination, stops, etc.
  - May enjoy a route but not the ride leader's style
    - Does/doesn't wait for slower riders
    - Does/doesn't have a sit down food stop
    - Doesn't ride the advertised pace
- A chance to give something back to BCP
  - Satisfaction of a job well done
  - Help a ride leader out when they need help or are unable to lead
- Recognition
  - Listed on the QR
  - Frequent ride leaders typically mentioned at the annual awards banquet
  - Frequent ride leaders have received perks in the past such as free membership

## WHY NOT LEAD RIDES?

- Mechanical problems
  - Mechanical problems are few, flat tires are usually the worst.
  - Not expected to be a mechanic (there is usually someone on the ride who can help out)
- People problems
  - Most people are out to have a good time and will understand you are new
  - Set expectations at the beginning of the ride (will talk more about this later)

## **HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR RIDE**

- Use existing cue sheets
  - BCP ride library
  - Use other club's ride libraries (SCU, Lancaster, etc.)
  - Use other leaders' cue sheets
  - Websites such as mapmyride
  - Books of rides ("25 Bike Rides in Vermont")
  
- Create your own routes/cue sheets
  - Modify or combine existing rides (connect the dots)
  - Use detailed county maps, the Bicycle Coalition's map
  - Use websites such as mapmyride or google maps.
  
- Check for accuracy
  - Best to check the route close to the day of the ride
    - Roads may be under construction, bridges out, etc.
    - Offer a preview ride the week before the ride to check it out and familiarize yourself with it
  - Older cue sheets, no matter what the source, may be outdated
    - May have been based on detours that no longer exist
    - There may be newer traffic patterns – roads that were once safe may no longer be safe, and vice versa

## CREATING YOUR ROUTE AND CUE SHEET

- Logistics
  - Start location and destination
  - Date and time
  - Distance and pace
  - Terrain
  
- Cue Sheets
  - Adopt a cue sheet style and use it
    - There is no perfect cue sheet
    - Some types approach perfection more than others
    - (See several different types of cue sheets; discuss pros and cons)
    - Describe symbols used when there's room or appropriate (ex: beginner's or instructional rides)
  - Easily readable
    - Pick font carefully
    - Use lots of white space
  - Highlight/emphasize hazards, tricky turns and rest/food stops
  - Update and submit to the ride library after completion
  
- Accuracy
  - Drive, ride, or use GPS or web-based services such as mapmyride, bikely, ridewithgps or googlemaps to determine mileage
  - Preview the ride prior to the actual ride (otherwise, be prepared with alternatives if there's unexpected construction, detours or a bridge out).
    - Bring a draft cue sheet and map with you
    - Make corrections as you go (on the cue sheet or a recorder)
    - Finalize when you get home while its fresh in your mind
  - Review and update the cue sheet as needed next time you ride it
    - Resubmit to the ride library as needed

## **LISTING YOUR RIDE**

- Procedure
  - Login on the BCP website, and under the rides wheel, click on list a ride
  - Follow the instructions provided
  - Note that the drop down boxes will populate the listing, do not duplicate this information in the description section (i.e., time, distance, pace)
  
- Description
  - Keep the description brief, but long enough to be descriptive
  - Provide information that will help sell the ride
    - Scenic ride on low trafficked roads
    - Interesting stop or destination
  - Provide information that will help someone be prepared for the ride
    - No rest stop or limited facilities
  - Include information specific to how you run your ride
    - Must be able to keep the pace
    - Temps under XX cancel
    - Cue sheets provided or not
  - Include some information on the terrain when appropriate, particularly if hilly
  - Pre-registration sign-in (used or not) and cue sheet (used or not) are optional, but ride leaders are encouraged to use.
  
- Corrections or cancellations
  - You can delete your ride if necessary, but a rule of thumb is if the ride is in the QR, better to cancel it (no confusion, listed one day, not the next). Instructions are on the website.
  - To postpone a ride, make it part of the ride title
    - This way it's early in the listing and bold
  - You, the appropriate ride coordinator, or the webmaster can cancel or edit listings
  
- Recurring Rides
  - If your ride is reoccurring, contact a ride coordinator for instructions
  - Rides will be listed on the Weekly Ride Calendar
  - This is where to put the bulk of the detail (not necessary to repeat information in the Monthly Description that could be referred to in the Weekly listing)
    - Directions
    - Detailed description
  
- Ad hoc rides
  - Generally rides that are listed within 7-10 days of the ride
  - Listing goes to the list and ad hoc ride coordinator
  - Ride leader and ad hoc ride coordinator can cancel or edit

## **REMOTE STARTS**

- Directions
  - Have written directions prepared
  - List them as part of the ride descriptions, Email them or read them when people call
- List start of ride 15 minutes before the time you really want to leave
  - The further away, the more likely people will be late
  - Tell people you will leave on time to have some cushion
- Scout out starting place for ambiguities in directions, travel time, sufficient parking
- Offer to be the point person for arranging carpoos

# **BCP RIDE LEADERS TRAINING HANDBOOK**

## **PART 2: DAY OF THE RIDE**

### PRERIDE

- Arrive early
  - This way you are prepared to get yourself ready to ride, sign people in, introduce the ride and answer any questions
  
- Pre-ride introduction suggestions
  - Write it out if necessary using an outline (or use the cheat sheet provided during ride leader training)
  - Introduction and description
    - Introduce yourself and any co-leaders
    - Introduce the ride (the pace, where you are going, where the rest/food stops are, easy to miss turns, dangerous spots)
  - Set expectations/your policy regarding:
    - Stragglers (regroup or every must maintain the listed pace)
    - Peeling off (must tell you in advance, otherwise you could spend your time looking for someone who isn't lost)
    - Mechanical problems (does the group stop and wait or not)
    - How long you intend to stop (are you dictating this or will you leave it to the group?)
    - Traffic laws - lights, stop signs (nobody should be penalized/ostracized for following the laws, even if you or other riders do not)
  - Helmets mandatory, ear pieces not allowed (BCP club policy)
  - Special instructions regarding extreme weather (see Extreme Weather section for advice)
  - Group ride etiquette and safety (everyone is ultimately responsible for themselves, but the group's actions can help ensure everyone's safety)
    - Signaling/calling out hazards/cars, slowing, stopping, passing, etc.
    - Riding to the right, single file, being predictable to cars and those on the ride
  - Rides with cyclists either new to riding or new to group riding
    - Particularly stress the group etiquette and safety points above (e.g.: experienced cyclists may not be familiar with hand signals if they haven't participated in group rides)
    - Ask more experienced cyclists to help instruct with proper positioning on the road, gearing, shifting, etc.
    - Go over some basics prior to the ride
      - ABC Quick Check
        - A** (Air) – improper inflation is the #1 cause of flats
        - B** (Brakes) – not worn, adjusted properly
        - C** (Crank, chain, cassette) – lubed, not worn
        - Quick** (Quick release) – tight and properly positioned
        - Check** - General inspection of the bike
      - Helmet fit
      - Carry ID, ICE (in case of emergency) on cell phone

- Waiver of liability form/sign in sheet
  - Everyone must sign
  - Protects the club and ride leader from negligence and assumption of risk
  - Club has insurance (big secret)
  - You're covered if you have homeowners/renters - if not, you're probably "judgment proof," so don't worry
  - If provided, you'll have the rider's cell phone numbers in case you need to contact them during or after the ride and an emergency contact number if needed.
  - Double check to see if any info is either missing or not legible
    - Ask anyone not providing the cell or emergency number to do so (can't force them to)
  
- What riders may expect of you
  - Knowing the route (mildly embarrassing to miss turns or get lost)
    - Alternatives in case of construction, detours, or inclement weather
  - A safe ride
  - That you are making life easy for them (nothing to figure out)

## RIDE MANAGEMENT STYLES

- Laissez-faire
  - Let everyone do their own thing: if people want to ride ahead and go off course, that's their prerogative.
  
- My way or the highway
  - You're the boss: everyone obeys the rules you set and follows you.
  
- Collaborative
  - Gather consensus: make decisions based on majority of the group.
  
- Situational
  - The specific situation will dictate how things are handled.
  - There's a time and place to use each style.

## THE RIDE

- Leading from the front vs. pulling up the rear
  - Often a matter of style, but from the front is usually the norm
  - Advantages of leading from the front
    - Nobody makes a wrong turn
    - You know the route (many riders ignore cue sheets)
    - You set the pace/keep to the advertised pace
  - Disadvantages of leading from the front
    - You can lose people at the rear
    - Others get to dictate the pace
  - Compromise: Lead from the front but wait at/for traffic lights, traffic, confusing turns, stragglers
  - Lead from the front and the rear
    - Have a co-leader with whom you can switch leading from the front and pulling up the rear with them
    - Have someone ride sweep – they would be responsible for telling you that someone made the wrong turn, has a mechanical problem or didn't make a light.
  
- Weather policy/practice
  - Whatever *you're* comfortable with (e.g. below freezing, wind, etc.)
  - Best to list it as part of your ride description (ex: *temps below 40 at start time cancel, call if weather is questionable*)
  - Check detailed forecasts if questionable.
    - What's happening outside is not necessarily what will happen at the start time or during the ride
  - If people call you the day before because of the forecast, get phone numbers so you can call them back if cancelled
  
- Solicit feedback and observe other riders
  - Enables you to anticipate problems and garner respect as a ride leader
    - Pace too fast
    - People need nature stop
    - Poor/old bike is holding someone back
  
- People just want to have fun
  - If things go well, you'll get all the credit, and people will listen to you
  - If things go poorly, anticipate problems in attitude
  - Being as prepared as possible goes a long way to helping things go right

- Don't get lost [too often]
  - Occasional problems are understandable, but we've all been on rides where the leader simply doesn't know the route
    - The easiest way to lose respect
    - Makes it tough to lead as people may also start to doubt you in other areas
  - If you aren't extremely familiar with the route, ride it at least once yourself
    - Always a good idea anyway, you don't want to be surprised by construction or a bridge that's out
    - Assume an old cue sheet has problems
    - Bring a map with you as you check out the route, and the day of the ride (Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia has a good one)
    - List it first as a preview ride – people will understand that it's a test of sorts
    - Make corrections/highlights to the cue sheet ASAP while they are fresh
  - Mention before the ride or early on in the ride any questionable turns

### PROBLEMS

- The rider who would be king/queen
  - If they want to lead a ride, let them lead some other ride; this is your ride
  - Such a rider may claim they know the right answer because they're more experienced than you
  - Seek another [experienced] rider's advice
    - You may get some backup or you may learn that you're wrong
    - Either way, you may be closer to a solution
  - Use democracy to your advantage
    - Argue your case, then ask for consensus or call a vote
    - You'll most likely win, since you're the leader
    - If you lose, you have a graceful exit on that issue, majority rules
  - Use dictatorship to your advantage
    - Be the leader
    - When all else fails, deliver an ultimatum; it's me or you (unlikely that a person will buck the crowd)
  
- A rider shows up who refuses to wear a helmet or has none, or a rider is using an Ipod with earphones
  - Club policy prohibits
    - You can't let them on the ride without a helmet, or with earphones
    - There are liability concerns to you and the Club
  - What if the person insists on joining the ride?
    - You can't prevent such people from riding with you, it's a free country
    - Tell them in front of witnesses that they are not permitted on the ride, they can't sign the liability waiver, you will not be looking out for him, you will consider them non-existent
    - Be as forceful and assertive as possible
    - The same holds true if, during a ride, they stop wearing their helmet or start using their earphones
  
- Mechanical problem - To stop or not to stop
  - Announce prior to ride what your policy is
    - e.g.: We stop for flats, but reserve the right not to stop for other problems
  - Assess the problem quickly (or get someone else more knowledgeable to do so)
    - Consider how close is the group to the end of the ride or a rest stop
  
- Mechanical problem - Who fixes (the rider, the leader, or another rider)?
  - Balancing act: that rider wants to fix vs. other riders want to get going
  - Monitor progress: you must be willing to "bail out" slow person/repair (is someone on the ride more experienced/quicker at fixing the problem?)
  - If the person insists on their own (but SLOW) repair, point out that everyone else is waiting

- Mechanical problem you can't solve
  - Ask for help from the group
    - Odds are strong someone will know
  - Where is nearby bike shop?
    - Another rider will may know
    - Could scout out the area prior to the ride
    - Some maps have bike shop locations on them
  
- Crash or injury
  - Assess the situation
    - Condition of rider (physical and mental)
    - Key question: Should the rider be moved? (back/neck injury - NO!)
    - Condition of bike (try it out, or ask another rider to try it out)
  - May need to assign riders to act as traffic cops to divert traffic around the accident scene/site
  - Communicate these conditions to others; don't assume they know as much as (or what) you know
    - Balancing act: victim/rider vs. the other riders vs. the public (e.g.: other cars)
  - You may discover that someone else takes charge
    - Some people are used to crisis management and are good at it
    - Is there a Doctor on the ride (who may not volunteer)
    - You are still the "leader" and need to take as much responsibility as needed and you are capable of
  - Who to call
    - Emergency contact - refer to the sign-in sheet, that's why its there
    - 911
      - 1) Emergency vehicle will likely will have medical equipment on board
      - 2) The injured rider will probably be seen quicker in an emergency room if brought in by an emergency vehicle
      - 3) Police may be able to store the bicycle
      - 4) There should be an accident report when appropriate

## **SAFETY AWARENESS AND ISSUES**

- PA Vehicle Code: "Bicycles are considered vehicles under Pennsylvania Laws and must obey all the rules of the road which apply to vehicles" (can't only expect motorists to follow the law)
  - Should ride "as far to the right as practicable," but yield to traffic on busier roads.
  - Illegal to ride more than 2 abreast, other than on paths designated for only bicycles.
  - Permissible to take a left lane to make a left turn (be assertive, but not reckless)
- See The League of American Bicyclist's (LAB) Rules of the Road <http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/better/roadrules.php> for excellent advice on cycling safely and properly
  - Take the LAB Street Smarts course
    - Tuition reimbursed for BCP ride leader who lead 5 or more BCP rides
- Observations of unsafe practices
  - Examples: Improper positioning on the road and at intersections, turning from the incorrect lane, not yielding to vehicular traffic, sudden stopping or slowing, not signaling one's intentions to traffic or fellow cyclists...
  - Often better to bring to the "perpetrator's" attention as their actions affect others on the ride, and all cyclists in general
    - Usually best in done in private, sometimes proper to be done with witnesses
- On rides with new or less experienced cyclists, explain or have others on the ride explain some of the basics as either part of the ride or as observed

## WEATHER EXTREMES

- Preparation
  - Submit/update the ride with an alternative destination/distance in case of the possibility of extreme weather
  - Be the lookout for problems from the start
  - Rely on doctor/experienced riders, if any
  - Be prepared to shorten the ride at any time should conditions deteriorate
  
- Cold weather (in the 40's or less)
  - Don't schedule excessively long rides unless you and others are experienced at riding in the cold
  - Do NOT assume people know how to dress correctly - observe obvious problems
    - Cotton layers, no head covering, gloves too flimsy, etc.
    - Principle: You lose the most heat through the extremities (head, hands, feet)
  - Be aware of symptoms of hypothermia
  - Wind-chill factor (remember the false wind you create by riding)
  - Look for visible signs of chilling (shaking at rest stops, etc.)
  - Rest stops should be at places w/shelter, warm drinks, etc.
    - Try not to stop in exposed places
    - Be careful not to stop to an extended period as its hard to start up again in the cold
  
- Hot weather (above 85/90)
  - Don't schedule excessively long rides unless you and others are experienced at riding in the heat
  - Do NOT assume people know how to hydrate correctly
    - Clothing is rarely the problem, water is!
    - Be especially aware of people who say they don't drink or need much water (it's possible, but be skeptical)
    - Women may tend to drink less because it's more likely for men to urinate in the woods
    - There may be debate regarding specific products, but electrolyte replacement is important
    - Remind people to drink when stopping: lights, stops signs, etc.
  - Look for visible symptoms of sunstroke, heat exhaustion, dehydration (cramping, disorientation, lightheadedness, etc.)
  - Rest stops
    - Should be in the shade
    - Should be scheduled more frequently
    - Encourage people to replace their water and sports drinks
    - Buy gallon jugs of water to share with the group