

Safety Check ✓

From the Safety Chick

Finally, I had the pleasure of taking part in a club ride on a Saturday. My schedule hasn't allowed for much club riding this year so I was pleased to see many riders making an effort to ride safely. As suggested by Gary in a recent newsletter, the ride leader introduced herself to the group, explained the route and a few specifics about the day's ride. Since it was a large group, the ride leader made a few safety decisions and announced them to the group.

1) She divided us into two groups; assigning a leader for the first group, she stayed with the second group. 2) Explained how to safely go through intersections. 3) Changed the route to avoid construction and unsafe riding areas.

I don't know if anyone was specifically thinking about how to ride safely but everyone did a great job. The group "rolled" through a few stop signs, but only when cars and other traffic were not in the area. On busy roads, everyone rode single file.

The only safety concern that I noticed was on the side streets. Riders rode 3 or 4 abreast and occasionally a rider was riding on the wrong side of the street. Many riders, especially, those on the Tuesday night rides, have mentioned this particular issue to me. Riding on the wrong side of the street is an obvious problem for an oncoming car but it can also be a problem if a car is trying to pass the group. Also, cars exiting driveways or side streets will be looking to their left not their right for traffic in their lane.

Below are portions of two articles that talk about safe bicycling.

Bicycling Street Smarts by John S Allen (www.bikexpert.com)

THE SAFETY COCOON

Imagine a "cocoon" of space around each bicycle in your group of riders. It's easy to think that you can safely pass closer to a bicycle than a car, because the bicycle is smaller. But the bicycle can turn to the side just as fast as a car. Keep 3 feet of clearance when you're passing another bicyclist - more at high downhill speeds.

At any time, one of your riding companions might be about to pass you, so be especially careful to ride in a straight line. You don't have eyes in the back of your head, and you can't constantly trace the position of bicyclists behind you as you ride.

When you're about to pass another bicyclist, it's your responsibility to do it safely. The other members of your group can't read your mind to know that you are about to change position in the group. Check behind you before you change your

lane position. Call out, "On your left" to the bicyclist you're passing, and pass on the left.

Never sneak past another bicyclist on the right - if you do, you force the other bicyclist farther toward the middle of the road without warning.

RIDING SIDE BY SIDE

Bicyclists often like to ride side by side so they can talk with each other. Riding two abreast is legal in most places. It's okay on a straight, flat road. There, drivers can see you from behind, and you can usually see or hear them approach.

Side-by-side bicyclists occupy a whole lane. On a multilane road with light traffic, cars can pass in the next lane. On a narrow road or with heavier traffic, be courteous! Don't make drivers wait for you. Pull into a single line well before cars reach you. It takes only one thoughtless rider out to the left of the group to endanger the whole group. Call out, "Car back" to let the group know it's time to single up.

A rear-view mirror helps you to check on the cars behind you. With a mirror, you can ride side by side more often and still pull back into a single line to let the cars pass you.

Never ride side by side on a hilly or winding road. Don't make yourself into a last-moment surprise to a motorist coming around a curve or over a hilltop.

HOW NOT TO GET HIT BY CARS, by Michael Bluejay (www.Bicyclesafe.com)

Don't ride against traffic. Ride *with* traffic, in the same direction.

Riding against traffic may seem like a good idea because you can see the cars that are passing you, but it's not. Here's why:

1. Cars which pull out of driveways, parking lots, and cross streets (ahead of you and to the left), which are making a right onto your street, aren't expecting traffic to be coming at them from the wrong way. They won't see you, and they'll plow right into you.
2. How the heck are you going to make a right turn?
3. Cars will approach you at a much higher relative speed. If you're going 15mph, then a car passing you from behind doing 35 approaches you at a speed of only **20** (35-15). But if you're on the wrong side of the road, then the car approaches you at **50** (35+15), which is 250% faster! Since they're approaching you faster, both you and the driver have lots less time to react. And if a collision does occur, it's going to

be ten times worse.

4. Riding the wrong way is illegal and you can get ticketed for it. Bruce Mackey says that 25% of cycling collisions are the result of the cyclist riding the wrong way.