



# *Guidelines for Bicycle Special Events*

## Section 3

# Features of Bicycle Special Events...



- They incur a charge, and often serve as fundraisers for COP.
- They are open to the non-member public.
- Services are provided above those found on day bicycle rides: these may include food, sag support, repair support, painted arrows on the road, road marshals, communications volunteers and medical support.
- They vary in length from a few miles to hundreds of miles.
- They vary in duration from an hour to several weeks.
- They require special preparation, arrangement of facilities.
- They have management and support personnel that manage the experience, rather than share in it.
- They often do not include direct, personal leadership. Instead, they coordinate the event so that a network of support services and personnel supports the participant.
- They often reoccur yearly.
- They often include an element of unusual challenge (extreme distances, wilderness locations, challenges to endurance).



- Cycling Special Events vary widely in size, scope and audience. Some of these guidelines will pertain more to larger than smaller events, and ways of addressing problems will differ depending on their scope. In all cases, however, you should be aware of the issues identified below and plan accordingly.



# Operation of Cycling Special Events

# A.) Design a Route that Minimizes Risk



- Every bicycle area has a different blend of conditions. Use these guidelines to develop routes in your area. Most tours have certain destinations of interest, which dictate part of the route selection. In designing this tour, ask the question: Are there unacceptable risks that cannot be avoided on this route? If so, your decision must be to not hold the tour on that route.



- Guidelines

1. Look for good road conditions. When available, favor wide smooth roads. Avoid when possible, surface hazards, such as potholes, rough or acutely angled railroad crossings, pinch points, rough road surfaces, and narrow bridges.
2. Minimize dangerous intersections. Consider involving local law enforcement in route design to help determine this.
3. When possible, favor right turns, which do not require a bicyclist to cross in front of oncoming traffic. Be aware that sharp turns tax the cyclist's ability.
4. Look for roads with good sight distance.
5. Look for alternatives to congested roads.

## B.) Research the Route and Fix What Problems You Can



- What you do to prepare a route for the tour depends greatly on who is on the tour. Preparations for a cross-country tour of 16 people will differ from a night ride through a large city for 6,000 riders. Nonetheless, you can take steps to minimize risks, and let the bicyclists know what to expect



- These steps include:
  1. Know the route. Ideally, travel the route at the same time of day and week the cyclists will, going in the same direction. Take notes of what you see that will affect the riders, such as adverse road conditions. If possible, travel the route again the day before the bicyclists will, to check for changing conditions.
  2. Contact the road maintaining agency about significant problems found on the route. Ask them to address these.
  3. In urban settings, if practical, ask that streets be swept in advance of the tour.



## C.) Warn Riders about Route Hazards that can't be fixed



- When possible, verbally warn bicyclists of hazards before tour begins. Limit this verbal warning to the most hazardous situations, and be sure it is appropriate to the age of the riders. When it is impractical to verbally warn bicyclists, use handouts, signage and/or road marshals to accomplish this.
- Post warning signs when appropriate. Tell the riders what they will look like, and tell them to pay attention to them.
- When practical, sweep loose sand, gravel and glass from the road



- Mark hazards such as bumps, potholes etc. with paint on road, where legal (many bike paths and some municipalities do not allow paint markings). Check with road maintaining agency for permission for this. If practical, warn riders of these verbally beforehand.
- Consider using cones and barricades when faced with unusual problems, such as very large crowds, traffic congestion, or special road hazards. Request permission from local government beforehand.
- When practical, station a road marshal\* on the approach to a hazard.

\*road marshals will be discussed more in a moment

## D.) Devise a Sign Plan



- Signs can be very useful to warn riders about specific dangers at the site of that danger. Use recognized traffic symbols where possible, and place them sufficiently before the hazard to give riders time to react.
- Keep a record of these sign placements. Signs are sometimes used to indicate route direction. Plan beforehand for the location of these, and inform the riders.

# E.) Make sure Riders Know, Understand, & Appreciate the Risk



- Consider printing a set of safety rules on registration forms, and safety reminders on all printed materials.
- Describe the event. Give details on the terrain and mileage.
- Provide a cue sheet, if practical. This is an explicitly written text describing the route with words instead of a map (i.e., at mile 3.2, turn left onto Roberts Road). This is an excellent place to put specific warnings of hazards (mile 46.5; speed bump on pavement; walk bicycle).
- Make a route map to accompany the cue sheet. Make the scale such that the map is legible.

## F.) Use Ride Marshals



- Large events can often benefit from ride marshals, who can warn riders of hazards and respond to problems along the route.
- Marshals should receive pre-ride training and be given as much information as necessary, including all of that given and told to the riders.
- Marshals should be equipped with a first aid kit, tools for simple repairs if they know how to and are willing to do them, water and food.
- Marshals are best placed before the approach to hazards.
- It is beneficial for the marshal to have first aid skills.

# G.) Follow the Helmet Policy



- Helmets that meet CPSC standards are required on all COP rides. Make sure this requirement is on all applications and other literature. Make sure the release contains a helmet release statement, where the rider agrees to wear a helmet in order to participate.
- If an event staff person notices a cyclist not wearing a helmet, make every attempt to issue a verbal warning, in front of witnesses if possible. If they refuse, record that number XXX was warned about the dangers of cycling without a helmet and informed about COP's helmet policy and that they may no longer participate in the event because they refused to abide by this policy.

# H.) Use the Forms



- Use forms found in this manual. In a pinch, any scrap of paper can be used to gather this information, but you do need to know what information is needed.
- Prepare to respond to damages when they do occur

# I.) Know your management structure.



- Know who is in charge. Usually the Tour Director is in charge and makes the final decision.
- Know how to reach the person in charge. The Director must be visible and accessible throughout the tour, to give information and make decisions.
- Know who makes decisions when the Director is unavailable.
- Have a clear chain of command. More than one person needs to know the operations plan and have the authority to substitute for the Director if necessary.
- Make contingency plans. Assume that what can go wrong will go wrong, and plan to respond appropriately. Know beforehand who should be contacted, and who will do the contacting, who will gather information, and how.



# J.) Plan Medical Support



- On very small tours that cover great distances, this may mean informing the bicyclist how to get help, who to contact, researching the hospital locations, etc.
- On tours with large numbers of participants, it is prudent to assign a medical support team to cover the route, if possible. This could be a hired ambulance crew or a group of qualified volunteers.

# K.) Suggested Medical Team Checklist



- Special events differ in magnitude, and the medical services provided reflect this. Among the medical support that would be helpful are:
  - Medical Technician: An EMT, Paramedic or Red Cross Advanced First Aid volunteer
  - Driver: A person familiar with the area and competent in driving a large vehicle among cyclists.
  - Supplies: A large first aid kit equipped for immediate care.
  - Communications: A radio, cellular telephone, or other means.
  - Vehicle: Preferably a van marked to be recognizable as a Medical Support Vehicle, with enough space to treat patients in private and out of the elements.

# L.) Plan Mechanical Support



- Have an experienced bicycle mechanic attending the event to assist with mechanical problems. It is a common practice for a bike shop to provide a person and van free of charge with the understanding that the participant will pay for necessary parts. This mechanic may be located at the mid-checkpoint or be mobile depending on the route.



- See additional information in Office Information for Event Leaders, Appendix 12. This is updated often and posted online.