

Hello again,

I hope some of the safety tips we discussed in our last article have been helpful to you as you blaze the streets and trails in your communities.

There have been a few requests to address the topic of pace line riding, and tips that can add to your comfort and safety as well as the safety of the entire pace line.

It is no secret that each and every rider in a group ride is responsible for the safety of all the other riders. It is even more critical when riding a single pace line configuration, where each person's front wheel is 12"-36" away from the rear wheel of the rider in front of them. It is no surprise that when one person falls, it is likely that two or three others will also go down in back of the fallen rider.

Here are a few tips that skilled pace line riders have found helpful in maximizing the safety of the group.

- Ride in the **middle of the bike lane**. Some cars and trucks love to ride close to our lane and truck mirrors can be safely concern.
- Call out all **road hazards**. All riders point to every road trash, not just the first rider. A rider toward the back of the line may not be able to see the first rider's point to road trash.
- Don't ever **overlap wheels**; that's a recipe for disaster. Give yourself 6"-8" more distance from the wheel in front of you to increase your comfort level.
- Regardless of your position in the pace line, keep a **steady speed** so that you do not create any gaps in the pace line, especially if you are the lead rider. Fluctuations in speed create gaps that necessitate other riders speeding up to close the gap and then applying brakes when the gap is closed. This is a frequent cause of accidents.
- Another situation that creates gaps is for the lead rider to accelerate quickly out of turns, stops or slow downs. Lead rider, **take your time reaching cruising speed** so the riders in the back of the line can keep a tight line.
- When exiting the lead (pull), **signal your exit to the rider behind you** by tapping your hip or with an elbow "flap" several seconds before you exit to the left. Maintain your cruising speed as you pull off to the left, as should the next rider who takes the lead. Move to the rear as quickly as possible to get back into the pace line. This forward rotation of riders can happen every 15 sec. or as long as 3 minutes. The rider on the front can decide how long he/she stays there, depending on their comfort level. Don't overtire yourself; that creates a safety issue when you return to the rear and try to catch the last wheel. Avoid getting off the lead near a stop sign or red light. Always do so way before or after the pace line has regained speed.
- The pace line, ideally, should **move as if the bikes were connected**, i.e., in a straight line with no gaps. It takes practice and skill, but it is a goal worth attaining. Watch the pros do a team time trial and you will see what I mean.
- All left **turns** should be made with the entire pace line in the left hand car tire tracks and right turns with the pace line in the right hand car tire tracks.
- If the pace line slows but is not going to stop, "**soft pedal**," i.e., keep your pedals moving without any pressure creating less chance of a breaking reaction for the rider in back of you.

Enjoy and ride safely.