

# Safe and Courteous Group Riding

Based on the principles taught in the League of American Bicyclists Bike Ed program.

Cycling with friends, traveling rapidly and safely with confidence in your companions, is a joy. However, there is a certain cycling etiquette, or Rules of the Road, of which you should be aware whenever cycling in a group.

## Getting along with other bicyclists

- 1. Be Predictable** - Group riding requires even more attention to predictability than riding alone. Other riders expect you to continue straight ahead at a constant speed unless you indicate differently. Being predictable will keep you safer and make motorists happier.
- 2. Use Signals** - Use hand and verbal signals to communicate with members of the group and with other traffic. Use hand signals for turning and stopping. Extend left arm for left turn and right arm for right turn. Put left hand down at the side with fingers extended for STOP. When moving left to avoid an obstacle such as a parked car or debris signal by extending your arm to the left to tell cars and cyclists behind you that are moving left.
- 3. Give Warnings** - Warn cyclists behind you well in advance of changes in your direction or speed. To notify the group of change in path, the lead rider should call out "left turn" or "right turn" in addition to hand signals.
- 4. Change Positions Correctly** - Generally, slower traffic stays right, so as a rule pass other cyclists on their left. Say "on your left" to warn the cyclist ahead that you are passing. If you need to pass someone on the right, say "on your right" clearly since this is an unusual maneuver. Before pulling off the front of a group, signal to riders behind that your turn at the front is finished by tapping your waist in the rear. Then accelerate slightly to insure your rear wheel is clear of riders behind you, move to the left, and allow your bike to decelerate to allow the group to pass on your right.
- 5. Announce Hazards** - When riding in a group, most of the cyclists do not have a good view of the road surface ahead, so it is important to announce holes, glass, gravel, grates, and other hazards. The lead rider should indicate road hazards by pointing down to the left or right and calling "hole", "bump", "road kill", etc. where required for safety.

*Ride Leaders—Please take the initiative to educate your riders about and continually remind them of the rules of the road. It takes only a minute or two to emphasize one or two of these points at each ride. Educated riders are safer and have fewer conflicts among themselves and with motorists*

## Getting along with motorists

- 1. Watch For Traffic Coming From The Rear** - Since those in front cannot see traffic approaching from the rear, it is the responsibility the riders in the back to inform the others by calling out "car back". Around curves, on narrow roads, or up hills it is helpful if those up front call out "car up" to those in the back. When you hear "car back" move right to become a single file line, especially on roads with few passing opportunities. Be courteous to motorists.
- 2. Watch Out At Intersections** - When approaching intersections that require vehicles to yield or stop, the lead rider will say "slowing" or "stopping" to alert those behind of the change in speed. Do NOT say "clear" to indicate no crossing traffic. This is a dangerous practice that should be avoided. Each cyclist is responsible for verifying that the way is indeed clear.
- 3. Leave A Gap For Cars** - When riding up hills or on narrow roads where you are impeding faster traffic, leave a gap for cars between every five to ten bicycles. That way a motorist can take advantage of shorter passing intervals and eventually move piecemeal around the entire group.
- 4. Move Off The Road When You Stop** - Whether you are stopping because of mechanical problems or to regroup with your companions, or just shooting the breeze with someone you haven't seen in a while, move well off the road so you don't interfere with traffic (both cars AND other cyclists). When you start up again, each cyclist should look for and yield to traffic.
- 5. Ride One or Two Across** - Ride single file or double file as appropriate to the roadway and traffic conditions and where allowed by law. Most state vehicle codes, including Michigan's, permit narrow vehicles such as bicycles to ride double file within the lane. Even where riding double is legal, courtesy dictates that you single up when cars are trying to pass you.

