

Group Riding Tips

By Mark Caldwell

We had a great time at the Road Captain's course this past Saturday. There were eleven people in attendance, some for the first time, and many coming for a "refresher". Special thanks to Russell and Leann for hosting the event.

There are a couple of points that came up during the workshop that I thought would be good to mention for everyone's benefit. The most important tip is one that you've heard me say before, and I'm going to keep on saying it over and over because it's that important. Above all else, **RIDE YOUR OWN RIDE!** Yes, we like to keep a nice-looking staggered formation at many times, and there are safety benefits to riding this way also, but your own personal safety takes priority over "staying with the group" and it's **your** responsibility to look out for yourself. If that means leaving the group because you don't feel safe for some reason, then do it! We would all prefer you to be safe and continue to ride rather than risk your own safety just to be with the group. Of course, it'd be even better if you raised your concern so that the whole group could learn from it and adapt, but do not put yourself in an unsafe situation.

Another important aspect of group riding is teamwork and communication. Of course the lead and the drag need to work together as a team and communicate well, but they aren't the only ones on the ride. Everyone in the group needs to join the team and communicate, such as passing back any hand signals, like switching to single-file, or pointing out road hazards. Ideally, the trip route is discussed in a pre-ride meeting with all participants. If you are "just in the middle" but you have some specific knowledge such as that a part of the route is under construction, then be a part of the team and speak up so that can be accounted for and possible alternative routes discussed. Or suppose you're riding in the middle of the group and notice the rider in front of you has a saddlebag open, speak up so a plan can be made to address it. Even though we are each responsible for ourselves, we are also a part of the team and try to look out for one another's best interests too.