

A Ride Leader Primer

For those of you who have considered leading a ride but have avoided doing so because you are unsure about how to go about it or intimidated by the process, let me assure you that it is not all that difficult and can really be a lot of fun. Here are a few tips to help make the experience a little easier and less mysterious.

First of all, if you would like to begin with a minimum amount of effort, the club has a rather extensive library of rides which are available to all club members. You may choose one of these, modify it if you desire, and be on the road in no time.

If you are a bit more adventurous and would like to lay out a new route, that would be even better. You may find it easiest to start with a route that you are familiar with, one that you ride yourself in your own area. While many members do lead rides from their homes, keep in mind that parking may be a problem. It might be a good idea to modify your route slightly to start from a public lot, such as a school or mall. As a rule, it is better to have a route go clockwise so that there are more right turns, but this is not an absolute.

I find it easiest to drive the route the first time in my car, even though I ride it frequently on my bike. It may be a bit easier to make notes or dictate into a tape recorder from the comfort of your car. In any case, you should note the mileage at each turn, any significant landmarks, traffic signs and signals, and road hazards. If the route turns out to be longer or shorter than you had planned, it is generally a simple matter to vary it slightly, especially if you are in familiar territory.

Rest stops or places to regroup are a good idea but keep them to a minimum. Most riders do not want to stop too frequently. If you can plan the rest stop where there is food or water, so much the better.

When you type up the cue sheet (I have some guidelines for that, if you're interested) indicate the mileage in intervals between turns, as well as the cumulative mileage, generally in the first two columns. The route directions should be as concise as possible. Keep in mind that it's not easy to ride and read at the same time. Generally speaking, the bolder and simpler the typeface, the better. Make sure you include any hazards you noted.

After you have the route typed out, it is essential that you ride it on your bike. This will give you a better feel for the ride and enable you to check the mileage. The terrain is always different from the perspective of those two narrow tires! Make sure to carry a pencil, or a tape recorder to note any corrections to the route.

As the day of the ride approaches, it's a very good idea to drive or ride the route to make sure there are no surprises, such as new road construction. These can make for some pretty anxious moments, particularly for novice riders or those unfamiliar with the territory.

I hope I have made the process somewhat less formidable and encouraged some of you to jump in and try your hand. If you have any questions, please contact the Activities Chairperson or a member of the Board.

Vic Dietz