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2020 RIDE GUIDELINES:

Group riding, by definition, is a collective experience requiring a certain degree of harmony and cooperation between the participating cyclists. In many ways it's like a group dance where the better everyone understands the various steps the safer and more fun the whole ride experience is. In this case the steps are not difficult but what's essential is that everyone is doing the same dance at the same time. And that's what this article is about. We at the Echelon Cycling Club (ECC) would like to define how we ride so everyone is on the same page.

First some prerequisites:

1. As per OCA rules all participants must be a ECC club member or a declared guest of an OCA/UCI affiliated club.
2. You need a road bike in good working order.
3. Be self-sufficient. Do not rely on others for flat repairs, water, food etc. Bring a charged cell phone, ID, emergency information and the proper clothing for the day.
4. You need to have a certain minimal level of fitness. Members should be able to ride for 1.5 hrs at 20km/hr.
5. You need to have a basic understanding of group riding skills. If you don't we offer beginner group riding skill sessions in the early season.
6. You need to be familiar with and willing to abide by our ride guidelines, be courteous and respectful of other cyclists and road users.
7. If the Ride Leader determines that a rider is not prepared for a ride, as per above, the ride leader has the discretion to refuse to allow participation in that day's ride.

RAIN POLICY

Ride cancellations are communicated via our twitter feed on our website – www.echeloncycling.ca

Please be aware that club rides will be cancelled as a club insured & sanctioned ride due to weather if:

1. *It is raining at the start of the ride.*
2. *There is a forecast of 70% POP or more of rain or lightening or extremely high winds (50kph+) on the day of the ride.*

Of course that doesn't mean you can't ride, it just means that we don't recommend you ride and that Ride Leaders will not be attending in that capacity. You're welcome to ride in any sort of weather but for safety reasons we can't authorize it.

HOW WE RIDE

1. Our groups meet at the south west corner of Lower base & 6th line during the week and at Brittany Glen Plaza at Thomas & 10th line on weekends. Times vary seasonally. Check the website for start times and the route of the day.
2. Groups are defined by speed and distance. There are A, B and groups. The "A" groups are the fastest and longest (29km/h+ average), then "B" (26-28km/h) and finally "C" (22-25km/h) being the slowest/social group (18-21km/h average).
3. We attempt to have all groups led by a designated club Ride Leader. These volunteers know the route, carry a cell phone and have been instructed on how we ride. Most importantly the Ride Leader explains all this information to the group before they depart. Repetition of our ride practices week after week is key to members absorbing the information but also necessary to identify new riders and inform them of our ride practices. Nothing ruins a group ride quicker than a new rider not knowing the rotation and being out of sync. It's all about everyone being on the same page.

RIDE FORMATION AND HOW WE ROTATE

The Basic Ride Formation: **“Tight and to the Right”**

Our goal as a disciplined and well organized club is to share the enjoyment of the road with our club members as well as the general public. We are well aware that we have to share the road with motorized vehicles. To reduce the potential conflict between these two groups we travel at off peak hours; Saturday and Sunday mornings and we frequent only the least travelled roads possible at all times. In order to further protect ourselves we travel two abreast or in a double paceline. This is an internationally recognized cycling formation used by professionals and amateurs around the world. The main objective of the double paceline is to reduce the length of the line of cyclists in order to allow vehicles to pass with greater ease and increased safety. It encourages drivers to make full lane changes when passing which provides a safer gap between the passing vehicle and the cyclists. The idea is to take a traditional two abreast formation and position it as far right as is safely possible. ***Our goal is to accommodate the approaching driver with a clear view forward so that they make a clean and safe pass as soon as possible.***

In order for us to accomplish this, we as a club, are required to ride in a formation that is ‘tight’ and well disciplined. By ‘tight’ we mean that the cyclists are to be 2-3ft apart laterally at the shoulders, and 2-3ft apart front to back (wheel to wheel). The group’s primary goal is to maintain the cohesion of this formation. It is the individual discipline of each rider to hold their position in a smooth predictable manner and not create gaps or overlaps which jeopardize the ride quality.

HOW WE ROTATE

We use two methods to rotate cyclists within a basic “tight and to the right” formation. One we refer to as a Social Paceline and the other as a Rotating Paceline. The Ride Leader will call out the appropriate formation for the needs of the group but any cyclists within the group can call out a suggestion.

SOCIAL PACELINE

This is our standard rotation used while warming up or just cruising along. In the Social Paceline we start from the premise of the two abreast formation where everybody is 2-3ft apart laterally and fore/aft. The two leading cyclists are breaking the wind and setting the pace. The lead cyclist on the right, after a reasonable period of time (ie 1- 2 minutes, it's flexible) asks the cyclist on their left to "Cover Me". That means the leading left cyclist will gently ride forward and fade right to shelter the right side of the group. In turn the left side of the group will gently advance forward to the front of the group beside the right line. Those two riders will now lead the group for whatever time they feel comfortable with, again it's negotiable. All passes are to be done smoothly and gently and make sure that your rear wheel is clear before you fade right.

A very important point to rotating a group : While you are in front of the group, the group is at your mercy. Anything you do, good or bad, will effect the entire group. If your pass is smooth and steady, then the group will remain smooth and steady. If you accelerate aggressively it will start to shatter the group and create gaps and confusion. If you half wheel the lead rider beside you it will offset the whole group or create gaps. We all have a responsibility to the riders behind us to move in a smooth and predictable way and watch the road surface ahead.

ROTATING PACELINE

This rotation is different from the Social Paceline in one fundamental way: The act of rotating is constant. There are no static moments. When the left lead rider moves smoothly and gradually forward and clears the right line of riders, he/she then gently fades to the right. The transitioning lead rider must be careful not to touch wheels with the passed rider's by checking under their arm for the rider's wheel. The right rider can assist by calling out 'clear' when the passing cyclist is safely ahead. As soon as that first rotation is complete the next one begins as if all the cyclists in the group are part of the same chain. In the Rotating Paceline all the cyclists should be moving through the rotation at the same speed.

Here are some important points to remember when executing the Rotating Paceline properly:

1. Do not attack or surge off the front when it is your turn to pull. You are supposed to go slightly faster than the receding line. Surging or attacking will cause gaps and jerk the speed of the line around. Pull smoothly and gently to the front and be there to shelter the riders behind you, not gap them.
2. Do not leave gaps within the line when you are in the back of the rotation. All riders need to focus on maintaining the same gaps all the way around the rotation.
3. Riders wishing to miss a rotation can do so by sitting a bikes length back of the group and allowing the group to rotate through. It's best to call out to the rider ahead that you are not pulling through to avoid their hesitation.
4. It's also helpful for the last rider on the advancing side to call out to the last rider to remind the last receding rider that they need to transition next. Gaps often happen when the last rider misses the transition.
5. The rotation can go from left to right or vice versa. Experienced cyclists will tailor the rotation so that the advancing line is sheltered from a crosswind. We generally opt for the left to the right rotation because the HTA specifies passing on the left.

SINGLE FILE PACELINE

We make every effort to ride on the quietest roads at the quietest times. In the event that for some unusual reason we are forced to travel on an excessively busy road we will ride single file to get past the congested section. We also will ride long descents single file, more on that later. Otherwise all our group rides are two abreast.

ECHELONS

This is a formation where the cyclists are spread diagonally across the road to gain shelter from a crosswind. This formation is unacceptable for group riding in our community. It completely blocks the lane and is counter to our “Tight and to the Right” strategy where the driver is to be given a view up the left side of the lane.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is absolutely critical to the success of all group rides. It starts right from the beginning even before the group leaves: The rider needs to communicate with their group or Ride Leader to determine which group and pace of ride they want. On the road riders need to communicate the ride formation, rotation and pace. Riders at the front need to call out road hazards and traffic situations. Riders at the back need to call out cars approaching from the back. The bottom line is that the quality and safety of the ride is dependent on frequent and clear communications between all the riders. Never assume everyone in the group knows a car is approaching or that the group is turning. Everything that can affect the group needs to be called out.

One final but important point regarding communication. We have Ride Leaders who are there to try to maintain the quality of the ride but the best way to keep us all at our best is when we all communicate best ride practices. So if you see someone riding inappropriately ie overlapping wheels, surging off the front we all should say something. Be polite but make it known that that was not proper. We all own these rides and if someone does something dangerous it's in everyone's best interest to correct it. So don't let bad habits go unaddressed. Say something before it's too late. We all have a responsibility to the riders around us. When we are at the front we are responsible to the riders behind to provide a smooth and steady pull and to point out hazards. When we are at the back we are responsible to call out cars coming from the back and to maintain the integrity of the group by not allowing gaps. So don't wait for the Ride Leader to say something, we all own the ride equally.

Keep Safe, have fun and thanks for riding with Echelon Cycling Club