



# **Ride Host Handbook**

Greetings,

Rides are the heart and soul of Lake Country Cyclists, and Ride Hosts are a necessary component to those rides being successful. Whether you are new at hosting rides, an experienced ride host, or somewhere in between, we thank you for your interest in volunteering.

There aren't always right and wrong ways of doing many things; and that includes hosting rides. We all have our own styles, likes and temperaments. The Board of Directors put this handbook together to share what we know works well as well as reinforcing a few practices that need to be followed to protect the club from liability.

Refer to this handbook as you plan, develop and host the best rides you can. Should you have any or need assistance with your ride planning contact one of the following Board Officers:

Ride Chair- [ridechair@lakecountrycyclists.com](mailto:ridechair@lakecountrycyclists.com)

President- [president@lakecountrycyclists.com](mailto:president@lakecountrycyclists.com)

**If you are interested in hosting a ride in 2024, sign up here:**

Monday & Thursday Rides:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0949ADA922AAF9C25-48874592-lcc2024>

**Additional information about LCC rides:**

Lake Country Cyclists Website <https://www.lakecountrycyclists.com/>

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## Preparing for Your Ride

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### WHY HOST A RIDE?

#### A chance to give back to YOUR CLUB

LCC is a cycling club (membership organization) dedicated to the safety, recreation, and education of all types of cycling and skill levels. One way that we achieve this is through group rides. For 2024, there will be approximately 45 Weekly Rides as well as other Special and Destination Rides. These rides would not be possible without club members taking turns to host and coordinate.

Members taking turns hosting offers variety. As the ride host you pick the route, which means you may choose a ride in a route or destination that is not often used by other ride hosts.

You get to decide! As host, you get to determine the ride details. You choose the route, destination, stops, overall distance, etc. You also have the freedom to make adjustments along the way if needed.

### BUT WHAT ABOUT...?

#### You don't know any interesting routes / Not sure you can design a good ride

If you are hosting a special or destination ride—no need to worry your route is already planned. If you are hosting a weekly group ride there is a wealth of knowledge among LCC members for local ride routes.

#### Mechanical problems

Mechanical problems are rare – flat tires are the most common. (And really, we should all be able to handle a flat tire.) The ride host is not expected to be a mechanic – there will likely be someone else on the ride who can help out.

#### People problems

Most people are out to have a good time and will be supportive of the ride host, but it's good to set expectations at the beginning of each ride. *See Lake Country Cyclists' Club Rules starting on page 8 for more details*

## STEP 1: CREATE YOUR ROUTE

When you start planning your route, think about the following:

- Where do YOU want to go?
- Is there an interesting place or destination such as a park you'd like to ride to?
- What about riding to a local event such as a festival or live entertainment?
- A scenic route
- Avoid trails that are known to be closed. Due to liability, no club rides should ever use a close portion of a trail or road, even if the surface seems usable.

As you start narrowing down your route, don't forget the following:

- Monday and Wednesday rides depart from the Ankeny Market & Pavilion (AMP) located at 715 W 1st Street, and Thursday rides will depart from the Albaugh Family Community Center located at 150 NW Ash Street in Ankeny.
  - If you would like to start a ride from a different location this decision must be made several days beforehand to assure there is time to publicize the location. Before publicizing the changed location, contact the Ride Chair at [ridechair@lakecountrycyclists.com](mailto:ridechair@lakecountrycyclists.com) to confirm a change for that date is alright and for help making sure the change is communicated in all of the appropriate locations.
- What is the distance, pace, and route type specified by the LCC ride description? For Monday and Thursday rides, the LCC website states the following:
  - All rides are no-drop, meaning there is always a designated "sweep" to make sure no one is left behind.
  - Ride lengths vary from 15 to 30 miles depending on time of year and availability of daylight.
- The day of the week and time of day the ride will start. Is the ride "after work" for most people? How much daylight will be left?

Help planning your route

If you are struggling to determine a route, contact the Ride Chair or use a website such as mapmyride, Strava, or Google maps.

## STEP 2: PUBLICIZE YOUR RIDE

### Newsletter

The LCC Ride Chair will post ride dates in the newsletter each month. If you have details for an upcoming ride you are hosting, email them to [RideChair@LakeCountryCyclists.com](mailto:RideChair@LakeCountryCyclists.com) as soon as they are known and they will be included in the newsletter whenever possible. This step is not required, but will be included whenever possible.

## Facebook

The LCC Ride Chair (Mark) will create recurring events on the public Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/LakeCountryCyclists>. There will be a separate event for each day of the week- Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The Ride Host (you) is asked to supplement this by going to the date of the ride you are hosting and “Share” it through a post within the member-only Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/lakecountrycyclists>. The first post or two should share ride details, and the post the day or two before should be a reminder of the meeting place and departure details.

Information to include in your Facebook posts:

- Describe the route, or at least general direction you will head. Include the total mileage and if the route is trail, highway/streets, or combination. Keep the description brief, but long enough to be descriptive.
- Where we will stop for lunch, breaks, etc. (if applicable).
- Reminder of starting location and time to arrive (vs. departure time).
- Ride is no-drop (no one left behind).

If you do not use Facebook please contact the Ride Chair at [RideChair@LakeCountryCyclists.com](mailto:RideChair@LakeCountryCyclists.com) to post on your behalf.

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## Day of the Ride

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### PRE-RIDE EXPECTATIONS OF RIDE HOSTS

#### Arrive early

Ideally, the ride host is the first to arrive. Plan to arrive approximately 15 minutes before the publicized departure time so that you can get yourself ready to ride and then be available to greet riders, sign people in, introduce the ride, and answer questions.

#### What to Bring as Ride Host:

- Sign-in sheet and pen.  
<https://www.lakecountrycyclists.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/LCC-Sign-In-Sheet.pdf>
- Cell phone in case of emergencies

#### What riders will expect of you:

- A safe ride.
- That you know the route.
- Alternatives in case of construction, detours, or weather changes.
- That you are making it easy for them.
- That the ride will be within the advertised distance and pace.

### ROLE OF RIDE HOST AT THE START OF THE RIDE

#### Sign-in and Contacts

The sign-in sheet will provide the ride host with each rider's cell phone number in case you need to contact them during (they get separated or go "missing" during the ride) or after the ride and an emergency contact if needed during the ride. While the club does have liability insurance, the sign-in is an additional step to provide an official record of who was on the ride and if they are a member or not. Before the ride departs, all riders will sign-in (check-in) and provide an emergency contact that is not on the ride. Signing in is required, however providing an emergency contact is voluntary, if a rider does not want to provide an emergency contact they are still permitted to ride. Bringing a pre-printed sign-in sheet will help this process greatly. TAKE THE SIGN IN SHEET WITH YOU so you have access to phone numbers while on the ride if needed.

After the ride send a copy of the sign-in sheet or a list of riders to [ridechair@lakecountrycyclists.com](mailto:ridechair@lakecountrycyclists.com). This can be either a computer scan or a clear photo taken with a cell phone.

## **Liability Waiver**

By submitting a membership form through the website, all paid members have already “signed” a liability waiver. These waivers are on file with the Board of Directors. If a non-member wants to ride, ask them if they have completed the online waiver. If they say yes, take them at their word, if they say no, ask them to take a few minutes to pull it up on their cell phone and fill it out, OR better yet ask them if they want to join the club and have them fill out a membership form on the website and pay the \$20 dues (DO NOT ACCEPT A CASH PAYMENT FOR DUES).

The waiver can be found at <https://www.lakecountrycyclists.com/participation-waiver>. Keep in mind that guests are limited to 2 rides as a non-member, after which they need to join to continue riding.

## **Designate a Sweep**

The sweep’s job is to help you maintain contact with the back of the group – check in periodically and make sure no one is “dropped”. Ideally, the ride host will ride LAST or close to the back of the group to make sure no one is “dropped” and that slower riders feel welcome and not pressured to keep up with faster riders.

Whether the ride host should be the sweep or not is a judgment call. The ride host is responsible for both making sure the group knows how to navigate the route they have chosen and to make sure no one is left behind. Making sure the group knows how to navigate does not necessarily mean the host has to ride in the lead or go first. If a group is particularly large it may be necessary for the host to ask for another member to volunteer to help and split the navigation and sweep duties. Ultimately, it is the hosts responsibility to make sure no one is left behind and that everyone makes it back to the starting point. Whatever is decided, make sure the group knows who the sweep is.

## **Headcount**

Before departing, take a headcount and compare it to the sign-in sheet to make sure they match. If there is another member serving as sweep, make sure they also know the headcount. Take another headcount at each regrouping or turnaround point, and again when the ride returns (if individuals have not already communicated with you that they are departing on their own).

## **PRE-RIDE INTRODUCTION**

Before departing, the Ride Host should cover the following information. If necessary make notes or open this document on your phone to help you remember what to cover.

### **Introduction and description of the ride:**

- Introduce yourself and any co-hosts.
- Introduce the ride – pace, where you are going, where the rest/food stops are, easy to miss

turns, dangerous spots.

- If there are more than 10 riders participating, divide the group (no more than 10 in any group) for a staggered start. The purpose of breaking up the group is to make sure we are sharing the road/trail, especially during high trail use times and locations (such as heading north on HTT on a weeknight). *See more on this topic under "Safety" on page 9.*

### **Set expectations/your policy regarding:**

- Stragglers (regroup as needed or everyone must maintain the listed pace).
- Peeling off (must tell you in advance, otherwise you could spend your time looking for someone who isn't lost).
- Mechanical problems (does the group stop and wait or not).
- How long you intend to stop (are you dictating this or will you leave it to the group?).

### **Lake Country Cyclists' Club Rules for all rides:**

- Wear a properly fitting helmet.
- Iowa law states, a bicycle operated between sunset and sunrise must be equipped with a white light on the front, and red light or reflector on the rear, both visible for a distance of at least 300 feet.
- Earbuds or other earphones are not permitted during LCC rides. External speakers are allowed, however the volume should be kept at a level that the rider can hear others approaching and to not disturb other riders along the route.
- Riders may choose to use a bell to alert others of their approach. Iowa law states "No bicycle may be equipped with a siren or whistle."
- Don't run red lights or blow through stop signs. Not only is it hazardous and illegal, it can also be damaging to LCC's reputation and disrespectful to the members who are working hard to convince our communities to improve cycling infrastructure and enhance cyclists' safety.
- Do not call "clear" when approaching an intersection. This is a dangerous practice that encourages riders to let others do their thinking for them. Each cyclist needs to be responsible for his or her own safety. LCC Board research found that if there were an incident on an organized club ride there is the potential for the club and individual riders to be held liable. In addition, many clubs are discontinuing this practice. This article gives additional information. <https://www.roadbikerider.com/to-clear-or-not-to-clear-that-is-the-question-dl/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWhen%20passing%20through%20an%20intersection,practice%20that%20should%20be%20abandoned.%E2%80%9D>.
- Always yield to vehicles that have the right of way. Do not block traffic or stand in the roadway to allow cyclists to cross without stopping (if there is a stop sign or light). This practice has the potential to become a liability issue for the club and it can also be damaging to LCC's reputation and disrespectful to the members who are working hard to convince our



communities to improve cycling infrastructure and enhance cyclists' safety.

- If someone is behaving inappropriately, call it out. It doesn't matter if they are faster than you, on a better bike or seem more popular – their actions can impact us all.
- We aim to ensure that all members and guests are treated, and treat others, with dignity and respect. We expect all ride participants to uphold the highest standards of personal behavior at all times. LCC will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment, demonstrating antagonistic, hostile, or unfriendly behavior towards others including road users or walkers, or inappropriate or derogatory remarks about any person. Individuals violating this will be asked to leave and may result in not being allowed to participate in future club events or revocation of club membership.

### **SAFETY – The Ride Host should always review the following with ride participants!**

- Know and obey Iowa's traffic laws. A person riding a bicycle on the street or highway has all the rights, and is required to know and obey all traffic laws and rules of the road, applicable to the driver of a motor vehicle. [Bicycle laws](#)
- STOP at all red lights and stop signs.
- Use both verbal and hand signals to call out hazards, slowing, stopping, passing, etc.
  - o If there is a hazard on the trail or in the road way, such as a hole or larger crack, point at the hazard and verbally warn those around you.
  - o Iowa law dictates hand signals for left turn, right turn, and slow down/stop are to be made with the left arm. The following signals should be used.



- Alert riders around you about cars, other bikers, and walkers that you will come into close proximity to.
  - o Bike/walker "up"- Means there is a bike or walker coming toward the LCC group heading the opposite direction. This means you need to move as far right as is safe to assure the groups can pass each other without a head-on collision. Note: When riding on a street or highway there is no need to announce "car up" (or bike up) if you are following traffic laws and riding as far right as is safe.

- o Bike/car “back”- Means there is a bike or car behind the LCC group that is moving at a faster pace. This means you need to move as far right as is safe and let them by. When possible be sure there is ample space between LCC riders to allow the faster (passing) person to move in between should another walker or bike be heading toward you.
- o Bike/walker “right”- Means there is a bike or walker ahead that is moving the same direction as the LCC group but at a slower pace. This means you need to be prepared to pass that person. When passing, call out to the person “on your left” and pass them when safe.
- o Bike/car “left” (or “right”)- Means there is a bike or car approaching the same intersection or crossing as the LCC riders coming from your left (or right). This is a cue that you may need to slow down or stop if the other bike/car has the right of way. If you have the right of way, this cue is used to alert riders to watch and be prepared to stop in case the other bike/car does not yield to you.
- Repeat calls and hand signals those around you have called. It is often best to relay signals by hand as long as your hands can be safely taken off the handlebars. When using verbal cues there isn’t a need for 10 people to all yell ‘hole’, instead have every other or every few people repeat the call. Several riders shouting commands is a community awareness and etiquette issue, it has the potential to confuse other trail users (especially walkers or children that may not be familiar) and make more noise than necessary.
- Ride to the right, single file, be predictable to cars and others on the ride.
- Do not pass cyclists or cars on the right side – they are not expecting or looking for you there.
- If there are more than 10 riders participating, divide the group (no more than 10 in any group) for a staggered start. Have the first group start, wait a few minutes for the next group, and keep repeating until all riders have gone. If more than one group gets stopped at a stop light, stop sign, or crossing, cross the road and then stagger start again. Use a staggered start anytime the group is taking off, such as leaving a regrouping point or the destination/turnaround point.
- Leave a gap for cars/faster cyclists to pass. Leave a gap every three to six cyclists. This will allow others to pass without having to race around the entire group or potentially meeting another bike or car head-on and not being able to move over.
- Special instructions regarding extreme weather (see Extreme Weather section for advice).

### **Group Ride Etiquette**

- Communicate with other riders using both hand signals and verbal cues. When communicating with verbal cues speak loudly, especially when signaling those behind you. If it is safe, turn your head slightly to speak more directly to those behind you.
- Stay off the brakes. When you are going to need to adjust your speed (slow for a road crossing, etc.) it’s better to coast and slow naturally than to brake, especially with other riders behind.

## **Rides with cyclists either new to riding or new to group riding**

- Particularly stress the group etiquette and safety points above (e.g.: inexperienced cyclists may not be familiar with hand signals if they haven't participated in group rides)
- Ask more experienced cyclists to help instruct with proper positioning on the road, gearing, shifting, etc.

## **THE RIDE**

### **Daylight**

Plan a route that will get you back a bit before dark in case there's a mechanical or other problem during the ride. You can always add a few miles at the end if desired. (See sunset chart on page 17). If dusk falls and a rider does not have a tail light, place a rider with a tail light behind them.

### **Weather policy/practice**

One of the goals of the club is to provide safe rides for our members. Unfortunately there are times when riding may not be safe due to weather conditions. If the National Weather Service issues any sort of warning, watch, alert or advisory, the scheduled ride should be canceled. Some examples include: excessive heat warning, heat advisory, tornado watch/warning, thunderstorm watch/warning, and wind advisory.

Otherwise, consider the following:

- Whatever you're comfortable with (e.g., below freezing, wind, etc.).
- Best to list it as part of your ride description (e.g.: temps below 40 at start time cancel, call if weather is questionable).
- What's happening outside is not necessarily what will happen at the start time or during the ride. Check detailed forecasts (hourly forecast, radar map) if questionable.
- If a ride is canceled due to weather, the Ride Host should post an update on Facebook as soon as a determination has been made.
- Have a bailout plan in case the weather turns nasty.

### **Regrouping**

It is natural for a group to space out when riding. Plan for and announce before leaving where you will regroup. Will the regroup spot be the half-way/turn around spot, or somewhere else?

When picking the regroup location consider if the location is a safe spot, if all riders can get off the roadway/trail to not block other traffic, if that particular spot will cause anyone to lose momentum (ex. near the top of the hill, but not quite all the way up), or if there are comfort amenities available such as restrooms and water.

## **PROBLEMS DURING THE RIDE**

### **The rider who would be king/queen**

If they want to host a ride, suggest they sign up to host their own ride – this is your ride. Such a rider may claim they know the right answer because they're more experienced than you. Seek another experienced rider's advice. You may get some backup, or you may learn that you're wrong. Either way, you may be closer to a solution.

Use democracy to your advantage:

Argue your case, then ask for consensus or call a vote. You'll most likely win, since you're the host. If you lose, you have a graceful exit on that issue, majority rules.

Use dictatorship to your advantage:

Be the host. When all else fails, deliver an ultimatum; it's me or you (it's unlikely that a person will buck the crowd).

### **A rider shows up who refuses to wear a helmet or has none, or a rider is using earphones, or someone calls "clear" during the ride.**

Club policy prohibits all these. You can't let them on the ride without a helmet, or with earphones. There are liability concerns to you and the Club.

What if the person insists on joining the ride anyway? You can't prevent such people from riding with you. Explain in front of witnesses they are not permitted on the ride, can't sign the liability waiver, you will not be looking out for him, they are in no way considered to be part of the ride. Be as forceful and assertive as possible. The same holds true if, during a ride, they stop wearing their helmet, or start using their earphones or call "clear" during the ride.

### **Mechanical problem – To stop or not to stop**

Announce prior to the ride what your policy is. E.g.: We stop for flats but reserve the right not to stop for other problems.

Assess the problem quickly (or get someone else more knowledgeable to do so).

Consider how close the group is to the end of the ride or a rest stop. If it's a serious problem, see if the individual can get a ride, or see what public transportation alternatives are available. Consider leaving one or two volunteers behind to help, ride with the individual once the problem is resolved or wait with them until they are safe.

Mechanical problem – Who fixes (the rider, the host, or another rider)?

Balancing act: that rider wants to fix vs. other riders want to get going.

Monitor progress: you must be willing to “bail out” slow person/repair (is someone on the ride more experienced/quicker at fixing the problem?)

If the person insists on their own (but SLOW) repair, point out that everyone else is waiting.

### Mechanical problem you can't solve

Ask for help from the group – someone may know what to do.

Locate a nearby bike shop:

Another rider may know where it is.

Could scout out the area prior to the ride.

Some maps have bike shop locations on them, or you can use your phone.

### **Crash or injury**

Assess the situation:

Condition of rider (physical and mental).

Key question: Should the rider be moved? (If there is ANY chance there is a back or neck injury – NO!)

- Condition of bike (try it out, or ask another rider to try it out).
- ASK the rider if it's OK to help them.
- May need to assign riders to act as traffic cops to divert traffic around the accident scene/site.
- Communicate conditions to others; don't assume they know as much as (or what) you know.

Balancing act: victim/rider vs. the other riders vs. the public (e.g.: other cars).

You may discover that someone else takes charge:

- Some people are experienced at crisis management and are good at it.
- Ask if there is a medical professional on the ride (who may or may not volunteer).
- You are still the “leader” and need to take as much responsibility as needed and within your capability.

Whom to call?

- Emergency contact – refer to the sign-in sheet, that's why it's there. If not listed, check the rider's phone for an ICE number.
- 911- An emergency vehicle will have medical equipment on board and the injured rider will probably be seen more quickly in an emergency room if brought in by an emergency vehicle.

It's recommended that you do not divulge any information to an insurance company without advice of counsel.

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## SAFETY AWARENESS AND ISSUES

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There is nothing more important than our rides being safe for all participants and that proper safety etiquette is observed by the group.

### **Iowa Rules of the Road for Bicyclists**

A person riding a bicycle on the street or highway has all the rights, and is required to know and obey all traffic laws and rules of the road, applicable to the driver of a motor vehicle. [Bicycle laws](#)

### **Observe riders for unsafe practices:**

- Improper positioning on the road and at intersections.
- Turning from the incorrect lane.
- Not yielding to vehicular traffic.
- Sudden stopping or slowing.
- Not signaling one's intentions to traffic or fellow cyclists.
- Parked cars – Maintain 3 feet clearance to avoid "Dooring".
- Stay out of drivers' blind spots.
- At lights, don't pass cars on the right (they are not looking there).

Often better to bring to the "perpetrator's" attention as their actions affect others on the ride, and all cyclists in general. Usually best done in private, sometimes proper to be done with witnesses. On rides with new or less experienced cyclists, explain or have others on the ride explain some of the basics, either as part of the ride or when observed.

## **WEATHER EXTREMES**

### **Preparation**

- Submit/update the ride with an alternative destination/distance in case of the possibility of extreme weather.
- Be the lookout for problems from the start.
- Rely on medical professional/experienced riders, if any.
- Be prepared to shorten the ride at any time should conditions deteriorate.

### **Cold weather (in the 40's or less)**

- Don't schedule very long rides unless you and others are experienced at riding in the cold.
- Consider the wind chill factor (remember the false wind you create by riding).
- Do NOT assume people know how to dress correctly – observe obvious problems:

- o Cotton layers, no head covering, gloves too flimsy, no shoe covers, etc.
- o Principle: You lose the most heat through the extremities (head, hands, feet)
- Be aware of symptoms of hypothermia:
  - o Look for visible signs of chilling (shaking at rest stops, etc.).
  - o Shivering, slow breathing, drowsiness, mood changes, irritability, poor coordination, confusion, slurred speech.
- Rest stops should be at places w/shelter, warm drinks, etc. Try not to stop in exposed places.
- Be careful not to stop for an extended period as it's hard to start up again in the cold.

### **Hot weather (above 85/90 and/or high humidity)**

- Don't schedule long rides unless you and others are experienced at riding in the heat.
- Do NOT assume people know how to hydrate correctly.
- Clothing is rarely the problem, water is!
  - o By the time you feel thirsty, you may already be dehydrated.
  - o Be especially aware of people who say they don't drink or need much water (it's possible, but be skeptical).
  - o Women may tend to drink less because it's less convenient for women to urinate in the woods.
- There may be debate regarding specific products, but electrolyte replacement is important when the ride is longer than an hour.
- Remind people to drink when stopping: lights, stops signs, etc.
- Look for visible symptoms of sunstroke, heat exhaustion, and/or dehydration (cramping, disorientation, lightheadedness, not sweating, etc.).
- Rest stops should be in the shade when possible and should be taken more frequently.
- Encourage people to refill their water and sports drinks.