

# WAMXC Biking, Safety on the mind

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**Be: diligent, attentive, prepared, respectful, visible, position aware, helpful to others and safe.**

## No-Drop Ride

We get a head count. In the country, turns are far enough apart to simply stop and count heads. In the city, if a large group we rely upon each biker to be aware of group members behind them. If you make a turn or stop at a light and the biker behind you has dropped out of sight, we depend on you to wait for or find that rider. If a group member has an incident, whether it is mechanical or personal, the group is expected to support the member, even if we must retrace our path.

## Road Etiquette

Ride as a vehicle. Ride on the right. Signal turns. Stop at Stop signs. Be predictable. Pretend drivers do not see you. If you put a foot down at a Stop sign, motorists will often wave you on. Law permits riding two abreast. Riding single file may, however, allow cars to pass safely and not forced to follow. At times, occupying an entire lane may be safer than riding to the extreme right. Obey the law.

As example of unacceptable behavior, our rider used a digital gesture to a motorist who was irked with our obstruction of traffic.

## Trail Etiquette

We ride shared trails. Be particularly sensitive to other users, especially those traveling in the opposite direction. As another example of unacceptable behavior our rider on the left, oblivious to oncoming traffic, forced a walker in the opposite direction to step off the trail.

## Turn Lists

Where possible, turn lists are provided on WAMXC.org. Print, bring and use them.

## GPS

Files are provided for GPS devices to allow following courses.

## Lights

Lights are recommended during daytime. Front and rear flashers alert motorists, even in rural areas where a biker may not stand out from the landscape. Flashing rather than a steady light improves battery life.

## Clothing

Be visible. Be seen. Wear a helmet. To not do this is a fashion faux pas.

## Mirrors

A mirror is recommended to track motorists and other cyclists without requiring the rider to turn and face rearwards. Mirrors can attach to the bars, helmet or glasses/sunglasses.

## Hand Signals

Signal or POINT to where you are going; point LEFT for a left turn; point RIGHT for a right turn. Warn riders behind you of dangers such as holes, grates, gates, opening car doors, approaching side traffic, walkers, runners, bikers about to be overtaken, gravel, disappearing shoulder/path, etc.

Point to offending objects. Gestures are often helpful such as point down and wiggle fingers for gravel/sand/glass. To direct riders behind you, place an arm behind your back and motion with your hand to draw riders to follow you away from danger such as a parked car, object on the trail or poor pavement. Be creative but understandable. Those behind you are in your shadow and may be blind to objects you see.

Wave “Thank you” to motorists if and only if in full control of your bike and confident of riding with one hand. DO NOT ANTAGONIZE MOTORISTS. Do earn goodwill.

## Ear Buds for Music Players

Don't even think about bringing music. Sound is one of the most valuable senses while biking. Listen for traffic and bikes.

## Verbal Signals

Say these phrases loudly. Consider repeating them.

### Car UP

A car is in our path, in front of us.

### **Car Back**

A car is behind us, commonly detected with a mirror.

### **Door**

If a parked car has a door open or appears about to, warn others.

### **Gravel**

Warn others of gravel areas.

### **Glass**

If you find glass, advise others. It may be advisable to clean shards from your tire.

### **Slowing**

Approaching an intersection or other reason to slow.

### **Stopping**

Approaching an intersection, particularly with a stop sign or other reason to stop,

### **On Your Left / On Your Right**

If about to pass another biker or pedestrian or rollerblader, announce your intention. Time your announcement so as not to frighten but to provide sufficient notice so the other party does not inadvertently move in front of you.

### **Overlap**

Avoid the front edge of your wheel being in front of the rear edge of the wheel of a rider in front of you. If the two tires/wheels contact, the rider in the rear and possibly the front rider will likely to crash. If you must overlap, talk to the rider in front and let them know you are overlapping. Drafting with a side wind requires extreme awareness and concentration. Ride in a line or ride side by side, but avoid overlap.

### **Passing on the Right**

If you must pass on the right, inform the rider ahead of you. We ride on the right and wear mirrors on the left. The right side is usually a blind spot so if you creep up and overlap with another rider, do so only with that rider's knowledge and permission.

### **Drafting**

If you want to try drafting, ask. If you decide you want to draft the rider ahead of you, tell them with "On your wheel" or "Right behind you" so they know you are there. Drafting provides wonderful assistance but can have disastrous consequences.

## **Bike Path v. Road**

Bike paths are safer because they don't have cars, right? Not so fast. Bike paths may be filled with pedestrians, children, pets, gates, fences or others listening to audio and unaware of you. A transition from bike path to road is one of the most dangerous intersections a bicyclist encounters. Motorists are not accustomed to being on the lookout for bicycles suddenly entering a roadway from a path, especially at a road-road intersection. Cruising along at 10 to 25 mph on a bike path, it seems cruel to have to stop at a roadway but consider the possible consequences. Many bike paths are marked as 10 mph maximum and for good reason. If riding faster, consider whether a road might be safer.

## **Roads +/- Shoulder**

In the spring (of a normal winter with snow), roads with shoulders have gravel and sand in the shoulder area, however, motorists expect cyclists to ride the shoulder. Spring riding is, therefore, safer on roads without shoulders or wide bike lanes. Once debris is cleared from our roads, those with bike lanes or shoulders are generally safer as they give visual guidance to demarcate separate areas for motorists and cyclists.

## **Drinking**

Get used to retrieving a bottle and drinking while you ride. Move a hand on the bars as close to the center/stem as possible. Use the other hand to retrieve the bottle. Open the bottle with your mouth/teeth. Drink early and drink often. Stay hydrated. Especially in rural areas, not waiting until the group stops to drink will allow you to stay hydrated.

## **Eating**

Retrieve food and eat while you ride. Move a hand on the bars as close to the center/stem as possible. Use the other hand to reach into your bike jersey pocket to retrieve food. Another option is to use a Bento Box on your top tube to store food. Open the food wrapper with your hands/mouth/teeth. Eat early and often. Don't wait until you are hungry. Eating small amounts and nibbling, reduces the demand on the digestive system and avoids wide swings in blood sugar. Especially in rural areas, not waiting for a group to stop may be important.