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Roles and Responsibilities:

A group ride is a team effort and there are various roles required for a safe and fun group ride. Your participation directly affects those around you. Here are the definitions of the TCMC Ride Officers and Riders:

Road Captain (RC):

The Road Captain (NEVER called a Ride Captain) is in charge of rides, routes, and ride destinations. The RC designs the route, make route maps and/or assists the Ride Leader to design and map the ride.

Ride leader (RL):

The Ride Leader designs and/or leads a ride following the mapping criteria of the Road Captain. The Ride Leader AND Road Captain must be certain the route and distance is compatible with the club's abilities based on the designated ride level. The RL (and/or RC) pre-rides the route, updates the map, appoints ALL Ride Officers, and distributes copies of the route map to the Ride Officers. The Ride Leader sees that the ride leaves at or near the designated time. The RL determines and announces how long any gas, rest, and food stops will be and decides when to extend a stop because of any delays beyond our group's control.

While on the ride, the Ride Leader is in charge of the ride all the way to the final ride destination. The Ride Leader is the first bike in line, maintains a speed that allows the riders to stay together, and if needed, signals other riders to mark corners or ride officers to block intersections during the ride.

Ride Officers:

Wing Rider (optional), Tail Rider, Blockers all wear Hi-Vis vests during the ride to both identify them to the group and for them to be seen when they are performing traffic control.

Wing Rider (WR):

When the ride is larger than 15 bikes, the Ride Leader (or Road Captain) may designate a Wing Rider. The WR rides right behind the Ride Leader and assists the Ride Leader. The Wing Rider holds the group at the pace set by the Ride Leader. The Wing Rider never becomes a Corner Guard or blocker, but can set Corner Guards or blockers and continues leading the ride in the event of the Ride Leader's needs to go ahead and check out road conditions or is unable to continue to lead the ride.

At stops where the RL wants to gather blockers/corner guards from the rear, the WR will signal the following riders where to stop in order to leave room for the Ride Officers coming from the rear to join the line at the front.

Tail Rider (TR):

The Tail Rider lines up in front at the starting point and deploys as the first blocker. This lets everyone see and identify the Tail Rider/motorcycle and allows the TR to see who is in line and the line order. The TR waits/blocks there when the RL leads the ride out. The TR falls into line when the last bike in line goes by. The TR will not wait for those who are not in line. The TR holds back when approaching corner markers or blockers and signals them with a horn, wave, or blinking light to let them know it is OK for them to fall back in line. The TR does not stop if someone breaks down; the TR stays with the ride. In case of a breakdown, the Tail Rider will indicate to an assistant TR or a Ride Officer currently at the rear or the last bike in line to leave formation and pass the formation and contact the Ride Leader. If the situation warrants, the TR will employ the honking method to stop the ride. The TR will designate a TCMC officer, core member, or volunteer rider to assist with communications for the stopped rider. No rider is left until rescue is forthcoming or the problem is solved. In the case of a brief delay, where no help is required, the stopped rider will be given a ride map.

At stops, the TR may ride to the front to pass information to the RL or when an extra blocker is needed for that stop. When this happens, the TR becomes a blocker at that stop to end up back at the tail as the line clears the stop. The TR may appoint an assistant tail rider who will remain at the tail of the line during these times and collectively, they are the Tail Riders.

If you are behind the TR (except at a stop where the TR goes forward), you are NOT part of the group. If you are not part of the group, you must obey all traffic signals and NOT go through blocked intersections with the group. You SHOULD hang back at officer blocked intersections and where corner guards are posted so that you do NOT interfere with the blockers/corner guards rejoining the line.

If you wish to rejoin the group, wave at the TR (if the TR doesn't see you wave, try a short horn beep ONCE) and wave again. The TR will either: 1) slow down to create a gap, move to the right side of the formation and wave you by to allow you to re-join the group when it is safe to do so, 2) signal you to stay back if it is a bad place for you to re-join, or 3) ignore you if the TR does not recognize you as a TCMC member or part of the starting group or for some good reason doesn't want you to be part of the group at that point. If you are invited/waved to rejoin the group, do not pass anybody who doesn't wave you by especially Ride Officers wearing Hi-Vis vests until after the next stop.

Blocker/Corner Guard:

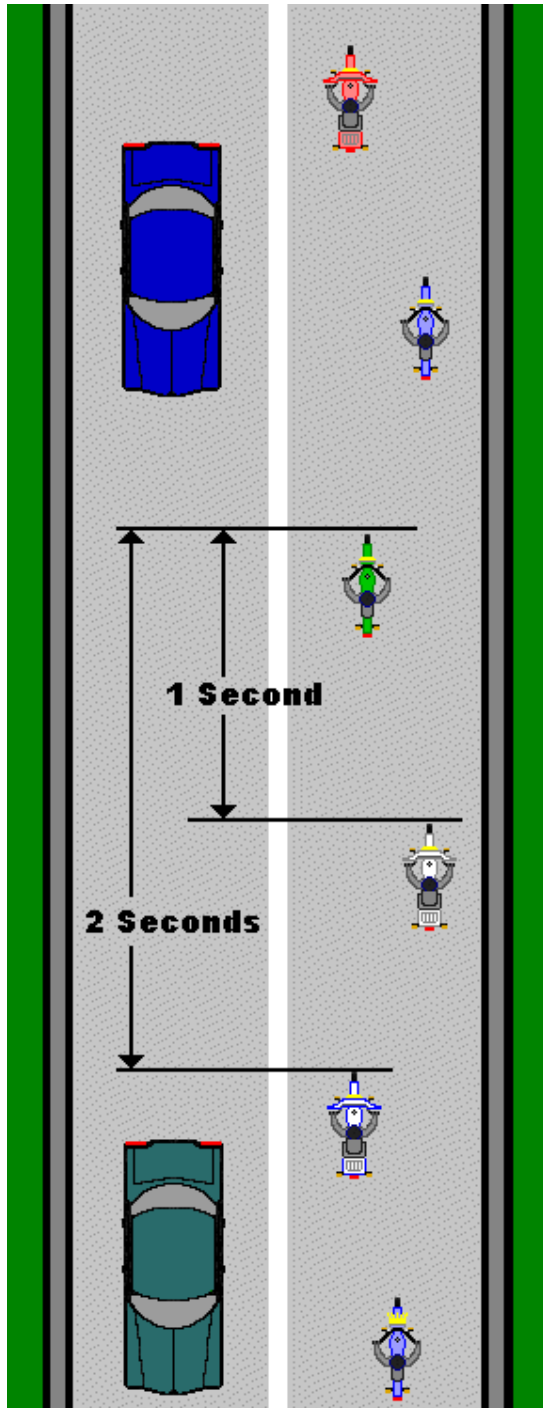
The Ride Leader and/or Road Captain choose blockers before the ride. BLOCKERS, as directed by the RL, will enter an intersection and stop to halt oncoming traffic and allow the club to proceed safely. As the Tail rider approaches the intersection, the TR will signal the Blockers to join the line and take a place in front of the Tail Rider(s). Corner Guards are rarely used. The RL may designate a specific place for the Corner Guard to stop, locate near the specified place to insure the proper change of direction. Leave your turn signal on to indicate the direction of travel of the group. Corner Guards must stay at the assigned spot until the Tail Rider signals you to leave the mark, and then do so when it is safe to pull into traffic and fall in line with the group just ahead of the Tail Rider. If you leave your spot before the Tail Rider arrives, you will disrupt the ride for all those following.

First rider (on rides without a WR officer):

If you intend to line up at the very front behind the officers, talk to the RL after the pre-ride meeting to determine if there is a Wing Rider or not. On rides without a WR when all blockers have been deployed, you end up are riding in the wing position. You need to know how the RL will signal you where to stop when the RL intends to gather blockers from the rear in order to leave enough room and when to close up when the RL is not going to wait.

Rider (everybody else riding the ride):

Always repeat the signals started by the Ride Leader (or Wing Rider) so even the last rider knows the signal. As a rider with this club, you are responsible to behave in a general socially accepted manner. If you drink too much and you are obviously impaired, you will be told (not asked) to leave the formation. If you find it hard to keep your space in line, go to the rear. If you create a big space in front of you, wave those behind you to pass you. If you feel the need to race up and down the formation or weave in and out of line, group riding is not for you and you will be told to leave. Personal confrontations should be dealt with privately and away from the club. If you can't do that, it becomes the Road Captain's business and the RC will resolve the situation in a necessary manner.



Riding in Formation

We ride in a staggered formation. As illustrated in the figure, the RL is at the front of the group. On major highways such as Interstates, US Highways, and State Highways, it is safer for a group to maintain a well disciplined formation.

When Not to Ride in Staggered Formation

- If the RC signals for a single file line
- When going through curves, in formation, widen the gap between you and the bike in front of you, go through the curve, and then reform the stagger interval after the turn or series of turns.
- In rural areas, on country roads, ride at your own pace. Formation riding is not needed. The RL waits at strategic places for the group to come back together.

Filling Holes in the Formation

We fill holes caused by blockers leaving the front of the line from the rear. We do not fill by switching sides except for the rider just in front of the tail rider and/or their assistant. Please be courteous and wave a rider by to fill a gap particularly when the hole is on the right side. When there is a hole on the left, fill it if you are waved by or when safe to pass, by using the left or oncoming lane to pass.

If a slower rider waves multiple persons around or is passed multiple times on the left to fill a large gap in the line, the riders passing should fill any inside (left side) holes in the formation first and then start alternating building the line to balance both sides of the formation.

Blockers ending up at the rear of the line will also fill gaps. Blockers filling gaps on the right need to be given space at stops to leave the line, a path to get back to the front of the line, and a place at the front of the line.

Hand Signals

When riding, it is important for riders to communicate to others. Turn signals work great for their purpose, but for a number of other things, you need to use hand (or foot) signals. If you see the RL or multiple riders in front of you giving a hand signal, you should repeat it, so that the riders behind you see the signal as well. It is particularly important if there is something on the road the group needs to avoid.

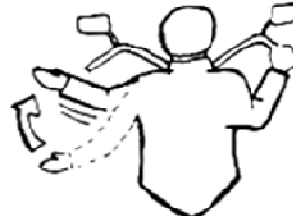
TCMC Hand Signals



Start your engines



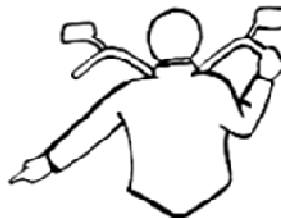
Stop



Go ahead and pass me



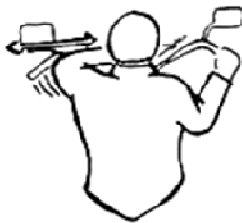
Bikers ready



Hazards on the road



Don't pass me



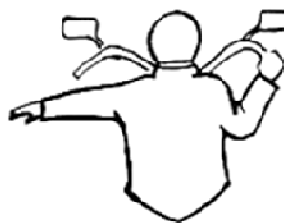
Stop your engines



Turn off your turn signals



Single riding



Left turn



Slow down



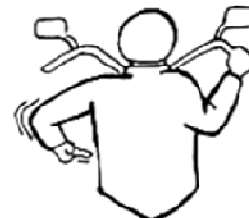
Staggered riding



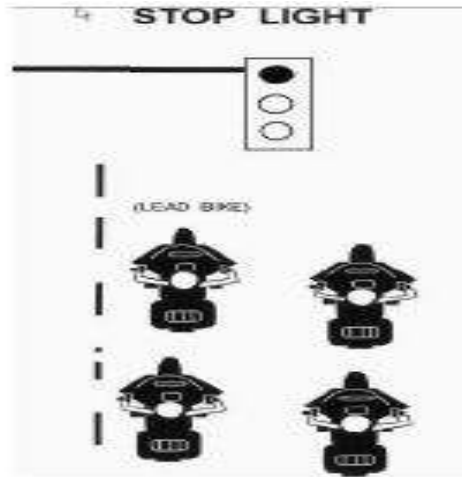
Right turn



Speed up



Time for a pit stop



Stopping at Stop Signs and Lights

When we stop at an intersection controlled by a stop sign or a red light, we compress the formation by closing forward and stopping next to each other.

At a Green light we move as soon as possible, telescoping out into formation while trying not to fragment the group. Ride Officers may be leaving the line to take up Blocking Positions as this happens so the whole group to go through should the light turn red. **DO NOT STOP** at blocked intersections!

At a 4-way controlled intersection, the Ride Leader will assign “Blockers” to stop in the middle of the cross lanes, stopping the cars until the Tail Rider approaches. A Blocker is a trained position recruited by the Road Captain (or Ride Leader if the RC is not on the ride) from the TCMC officers or core TCMC members.

As we pull away from a stop sign with Blocker controlled cross traffic, we move all at the same time telescoping out into formation.

When in rural areas, expect to be waved through stop signs without slowing (with or without blockers).

Remember! Group Riding is a TEAM EFFORT

How the TCMC Does It! This is Very Important:

When riding in busy traffic areas, aside from the basic ride formation structure, every riding club has a variation when it comes to safely moving ride groups through **traffic controlled areas**.

In the TCMC we have hundreds of members and the line of bikes can be quite large.

In order to keep our riders safe we have procedures:

1. Our ride officers wear reflective vests.
2. These officers are responsible for maintaining an intact formation.
3. Officers will block most intersections providing safe passage.
4. At some intersections (generally stop sign controlled), the ride leader might signal the line to go through. This hand signal is the old Cavalry Forward signal. Raising one arm high and repeatedly moving the arm forward. This signal is to be repeated all the way to the rear. EVERYONE stays in a close formation, maintains speed and passes through the intersection.
5. What keeps us all safe in busy traffic areas is staying close together. If you cause a space in the line, there is the imminent danger of the side traffic entering the intersection as you do. Or, the intersection closes before you arrive thus breaking the ride, making you stop and making everyone behind you very unhappy. This is a very important procedure.
6. In rural areas it is not important to keep a closed or tight formation. We stop occasionally at stop signs just to gather everyone and allow previously deployed blockers to get to the front of the line so the Ride Leader has enough blockers to get to the next stop or gathering point.

The TCMC motto – “It’s The RIDE”.

7. Our motto, “It’s the RIDE” means it’s about everybody on a ride having a safe and fun ride. Hopefully, at the end of a ride, we all think, wow what a great RIDE and group of riders to have enjoyed it with.
8. The TCMC is a large diverse group of riders with a wide range of skill levels on most large rides. We designate each ride with a ride level and expect riders to respect these designations.
9. We expect **everybody**, especially all **experienced riders** (TCMC member or guest), to set a good example and demonstrate line choices that everybody of all skill levels can comfortably and safely follow.
10. When there are road hazards (sand, gravel, road kill, and farm debris), we indicate the hazard to riders that follow by hand or foot signals.
11. Left hand corners with debris in them have contributed to a bad day for somebody on a large TCMC ride. We, as a group, need to adjust our behaviour to avoid things that may contribute incident causes. Riders on the outside (right side of the formation) in these situations SHOULD use a line that uses ALL (or most) of the lane (covered in When NOT to Ride in Formation). Even if you can safely do it with less space, ALL of the outside riders behind you may not be able to. Please demonstrate a conservative, comfortable, safe line through the problem corner. Accelerate through or out of the corner as your skill level allows. When hazards are signalled in a turn, riders on the inside (left side of the formation) SHOULD EXPECT the outside rider in front to use ALL of the lane and slow down enough ahead of time so you can negotiate the turn without changing your intended line, getting off the throttle, or worse, having to brake in the turn.
12. The Tail Rider hates to see a bunching up of bikes with brake lights on immediately before a turn because that means somebody has had a bad day, or the conditions are ripe for trouble. We all need to slow down earlier so any bunch up is well before the turn. Slowing down early prevents our attention from focusing on braking and the bike just in front, and then focusing on the hazard just in front, and not attention to POPS FAT (current TCMC official TR admits he is fat and older than our RC, so “pop’s fat” fits):
 - **P**oint out the hazard ahead of time
 - **O**bserve the path taken by the bike in front on your side of the formation
 - **P**lan your line
 - **S**etup for the turn
 - **F**ocus on the exit point
 - **A**ccelerate when you are comfortable by rolling on the
 - **T**hrottle to clear the turn catch up and reform a well spaced formation

If everybody in the line follows the example of the Ride Leader and officers at the front and keeps any bunch well back from the problem spot, the whole group will comfortably, safely, and quickly get by the hazard. If we bunch up just in front of the hazard, we definitely won’t get by it quickly and we setup the conditions for somebody to have a bad day, and should that happen, it WILL slow us down by causing an unplanned stop.

13. At stops, leave space for Blockers filling gaps at the rear to leave the formation, Blockers and TR to pass the line to get to the front, and space for Blockers to join the front of the line.

Most Common Questions

If the rider in front of me is riding too slowly, can I pass?

The best time to change position is when the group stops at a stop sign. If we are on a big road in formation, and someone has left enough space that multiple cars or trucks can get in our line, try signalling this person to close up. If that doesn't work, signal the bikes behind you, move into the next lane, passing "Slow Poke". The Tail Rider will stay behind the slow rider.

On Rural Roads, wait for a stop sign pull up to the RL to get repositioned. NEVER blast past the group to get from the back of the group to the front. If you are having a problem with another person's riding, please let an officer know.

Some cars have split the group. Should I pass them?

If it is safe and legal to do so, pass the cars. Don't worry too much about being separated, as the RL will wait for the group at the next stop sign, or turn.

I'm having a problem with another rider, or need a restroom (or tree), gas, bike problem, etc.?

Tell the Road Captain or any officer ASAP. The RL stops frequently, honk, yell or ride to the front at these stops and tell us what you need. If you decide to wait and just "talk about him/her later" you could endanger others.

I need to pull over and can't wait. How do I tell the RL?

Honk your horn, flash your bright lights, and use the "pit stop" hand signal to others near you. Do these things all at once. Everyone around you should start honking and blinking until everyone on the ride is doing it.

A ride officer will pull over with you.

The RL will see this and pull over at the very next relatively safe place.

It better be VERY important! This is like pulling a fire alarm.

I need to pull over and can't wait. How do I do it without stopping the ride?

Turn on your right turn signal and if possible give the slow down hand signal and point ahead and to the right as if there is a hazard there (because your stopped bike will be a hazard there soon). If you are on the left of the formation, make sure the bike behind on the right of the formation has made room for you to safely mover over and stop before doing so.

I only want to ride on the left or right side of the formation, how do I?

Start there. If you fall behind, keep waving people by until the hole is on the side you want to be on or you are the last bike before the tail rider(s). The tail rider(s) will adjust their stagger behind you leaving the only hole in the formation directly in front of you. Note: This may put blockers/officers in front of you. If you are ridding on the inside (left side) stagger, be sure to leave room at stops for anyone with vest on the right side to leave the formation and get to the front and then move up.

I want to ride in formation next to somebody, how do I?

TCMC doesn't accommodate that well because we deploy blockers creating gaps that we fill from the rear. If you are both experienced TCMC group riders, you should have already figured out that you can line up just behind the ride officers with vests. Otherwise, line up just in front of the Tail Rider(s) and keep up so you don't fall behind and create a large gap and be prepared to fill gaps at times and not be together until the blockers are gathered at stop.

General Tips on Group Riding

- SHOW UP ON TIME (15-30min. early)!! ON TME IS NOT 5 MINUTES BEFORE THE RIDE!! Planned/Posted departure times are kickstand up departure times with the pre-ride meeting 10 minutes before.
- Show up to the ride with a FULL TANK of gas
- Keep to the 1-2 second rule when following others
- Alert the people behind you to hazards on the road
- Don't cause a large gap between yourself and the bike in front of you.
- If you object to riding though stop signs (or red lights that we block), this club is not for you