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MasterLink

The Magazine of the Bicycle Touring Club of North Jersey



The July 23 Heritage Trail Ride

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MasterLink

September 2026

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CLIP NOTES

By Olivia Sharp, President BTCNJ

What happens when you say yes?

Sometimes you end up doing something you never expected. Sometimes you meet people you might never have otherwise met. And sometimes you find yourself becoming much more involved than you ever anticipated.

I think that's one of the great things about being part of BTCNJ. Most of us joined because we wanted to ride our bikes. We found some rides, met some people, and before we knew it, BTCNJ became a much bigger part of our lives.

The Ramapo Rally is a great example of what can happen when people say yes.

By the time you're reading this, the Rally will be behind us, but I hope many of you had a chance to experience the day — whether you rode, volunteered, helped behind the scenes, or simply came out to be part of it.

An event like the Rally doesn't happen without people saying yes — yes to helping plan, volunteering, taking on a job that needed to be done, and all the behind-the-scenes work that makes an event like this possible.

I want to thank everyone who said yes. Your time and effort are what make events like the Rally possible, and that willingness to get involved is one of the things that makes BTCNJ special.



There will be more about the Rally in the next issue, including highlights and photos from the day.

In the meantime, I'd like to ask you to think about saying yes to something else.

We have several Executive Committee (a.k.a Board) positions coming up, and we could really use members who are willing to consider taking on one of these roles. Maybe you've never thought about being on the Board, or maybe you've wondered if it was for you. If there's something about BTCNJ you're passionate about, this could be an opportunity to have a bigger hand in shaping the club.

Don't underestimate what you have to offer. Your skills, experience, ideas, or simply your willingness to help could make you a great fit — even if you've never considered yourself a "Board person."

You might meet new people, discover something you enjoy, or find a new way to contribute to a club that has given you so many great rides, friendships, and experiences.

So maybe this is your chance to say yes.

EXECUTIVE BOARD OPENINGS

YOUR CLUB NEEDS YOU! PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING OUR BOARD.

Curious about what happens behind the scenes at BTCNJ? Come be a part of it!

Serving on the BTCNJ Executive Committee (AKA Board) is a great way to learn more about how our amazing club works and, more importantly, to have a say in where we go from here. Help us keep BTCNJ rolling and make the club even better and more valuable for you and your fellow riders.

Interested? Please reach out to [Olivia Sharp](#) or [Len Ruvolo](#), or talk to any current Board member about a position you might be interested in. Nominations can also be made in person at the September and November Membership Meetings.

The slate for the 2027 Board will be presented at the November Membership Meeting.

A few things to know:

- All BTCNJ members are eligible to run for any Board position, even if the current person in that position has indicated that they would like to continue.
- If more than one member runs for the same position, there will be a vote.
- Terms for new Board members begin December 1, 2026.
- Board members are generally expected to attend monthly Board meetings, which are held on a weekday evening beginning at 7:00 PM. Most meetings are currently held via Zoom.

Open Positions

The following Board positions are fully open. That means the current holder of the position will not be continuing after December 1, 2026.

SECRETARY (elected to a 2-year term and eligible to run for an additional 2-year term). The keeper of the minutes, the master of the details, and the person who helps make sure the Board knows what was said, what was decided, and what needs to happen next. Takes meeting minutes, maintains official records, and handles Board correspondence and other administrative duties. **If you're the person who remembers what everyone else forgot, keeps things moving, and actually knows where the important stuff is, we need you!**

Please contact outgoing Secretary [Joyce Haddad](#) for more information about this position.

TOURS CHAIR (elected to a 1-year term and eligible to run for an additional three 1-year terms). Helps make the BTCNJ tours happen! Works with tour leaders to develop and schedule tours, helps bring new tour ideas to life, and keeps the tour calendar rolling. **If you love exploring new places, planning cycling adventures, and helping other members get out there and enjoy them too, this could be the perfect gig for you!**

Please contact outgoing Tours Chair **Lou Schleifer** for more information about this position.

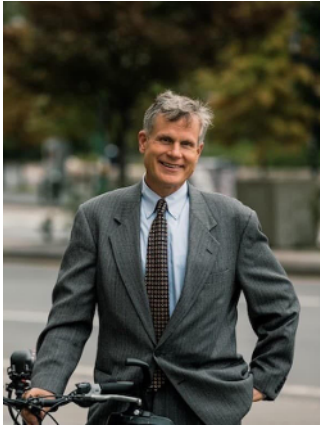
PUBLICITY RELATIONS CHAIR (elected to a 1-year term and eligible to run for an additional three 1-year terms). You're the person who makes sure BTCNJ doesn't keep all the good stuff to itself! Puts together the monthly e-Letter, keeps the Calendar filled with upcoming events, and helps keep our Social Media fresh, fun, and informative. **If you like to write, have a creative streak, or just love telling people about all the great things happening at BTCNJ, this could be your chance to take the microphone!**

Please contact outgoing Publicity Chair **Sharon Hurwich** for more information about this position.

CLUB EVENT CALENDAR

VACCARO LAW

Club Meeting Presentation



September 10, 7:30 PM Ridgewood Library

Ride smarter and with confidence! Join leading bike attorney Steve Vaccaro for practical advice on crash response, the latest New Jersey bicycle and e-bike laws, and stories from his self-contained bike touring adventures. Steve is recognized nationally as an authority on all matters bike and has presented to BTCNJ before; please join us for Steve's presentation on September 10, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.

Biography: Lawyer Steve Vaccaro has been described by the *New York Law Journal* as "New York's best-known lawyer advocate for bicyclist and pedestrian rights." He serves as a board member, advisor, counsel, and donor to leading biking and walking organizations, including Bike New York, Transportation Alternatives, Families for Safe Streets, and the New York Cycle Club. Through his legal practice and advocacy, he champions the rights of people injured in traffic in New York and New Jersey.

Cookie Ride Returns – September 26



C is for cookie, and that's good enough for us! The beloved Cookie Ride is back on Saturday, September 26 (rain date: September 27),

Expect rides for all levels, plenty of socializing, and of course—cookies...Om nom nom! More details to come... but for now, save the date and start dreaming of cookies!



November Annual Membership Meeting and Pot Luck

Thursday November 12, 2027, 7:30 PM

The November meeting will combine our Potluck and General Meeting. Due to the temporary unavailability of the Ridgewood Library auditorium, this meeting will be held at the Paramus Public Library, 116 E. Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652.

CAPTAIN'S CORNER

by Keith Schlanger



If you're like me, you've probably seen cycling accidents posted on social media, and I've noticed that there can be a lot of chaos in the aftermath.

Hopefully, you'll never need to use this, but to help everyone know what to do in the event of an accident, we have developed an Accident Response Guide.

As you'll see in the guidelines, responding to an accident is not a one-person job. Every rider should know what to do if an accident occurs. However, one person must take the lead, and that person will be the Ride Leader.

If you have medical training or experience, please let the Ride Leader know so you can assist as needed.

Please take a few minutes to review both guides. Hopefully, you'll never have to use them, but knowing what to do before an accident happens can make a big difference when it matters most.

We have created both a Full Guide and a Quick Guide, with links to both below; the Quick Guide is also included here for easy reference.

BTCNJ Accident Response - Quick Guide

BTCNJ Ride Leader Accident Quick Guide Emergency Action Plan In the Event of an Accident or Medical Emergency

EMERGENCY ACTIONS (Do First): (Make sure the scene is safe for you and other uninjured riders before approaching the incident) Designate one person to call 911 immediately if a rider is unconscious, has a suspected head, neck, or spinal injury, severe bleeding, chest pain, difficulty breathing, seizure, is confused, has heat stroke, or any life-threatening injury. Do not move the rider unless leaving them where they are would expose them to further immediate harm (for example, from traffic or another imminent hazard). When in doubt, call 911.

The safety of all riders is the highest priority. Ride Leaders are not expected to provide medical care beyond their level of training but should help coordinate a safe and effective response.

1. Stop

- Make the scene safe.

2. Call 911 immediately if:

- unconscious
- head/neck/spine injury
- seizure
- difficulty breathing
- severe bleeding
- confusion
- chest pain
- heat stroke

3. Do NOT move rider

Unless immediate danger exists.

4. Assign helpers

- 911
- Stay with rider
- Find emergency contact
- Traffic
- Gather group

5. Stay with rider

- Do not remove helmet.
- Do not give food or medication.
- Do not diagnose injuries unless trained to do so.

6. Arrange transportation if needed

7. Notify Rides Captain

Complete Incident Report, after the ride (when back home or to the start/end), not in the middle of the ride.

[BTCNJ Accident Report Detailed Guide](#)

Provides the complete accident response guidelines.

[BTCNJ Accident Report Quick Guide](#)

Provides a condensed version that can be easily referenced during an emergency

5 QUESTIONS WITH A RIDE LEADER

by Heidi Vehmas

Earliest memory on a bike.

I was around 4 years old. My parents, being German immigrants, rode their bikes everywhere, and we headed out on an evening family bike ride across town to visit my Aunt and Uncle. They had me sitting on a homemade bike seat that they attached onto my father's bike, situated between the handle bars and his seat. My feet were hanging on both sides of the front wheel. (See the picture. I'm not happy!) This of course, was all before helmets. Well, as you might have guessed, it didn't end well. My right foot ended up in the spokes and my dad and I took a tumble. My memory is more of the ambulance ride afterwards. The paramedics, as they lifted the stretcher with me on it into the ambulance, continued to ask me questions and I clearly remember singing the ABC's to them. No bones broken, just a lasting scar on my right ankle.



What are you currently riding?

Depending on the terrain, distance and/or destination, you'll find me on my new road bike, Trek Domane, AL5 or my old steel hybrid Trek Multitrack 700. You'll find me riding my loaded up hybrid, basket and pannier bags on weekdays traveling back and forth to work 15 miles total. I'm also trying my hand at bikepacking. I've done two trips, each with one overnight stay so far. I'm hoping to find more people that have an interest in bikepacking to join me on future tours.

What is in your bike bag?

I have a multitool, tube, rubber gloves, first aid kit, sunscreen, trail mix, and my click-stand to help keep the fully loaded bike upright.

What was your first bike?

Other than my red tricycle with a big metal bell on the handle bars, my first two wheeler was a yellow and green bike with a banana seat and high rise monkey bar handle bars. I was given a silver Huffy 10 speed road bike with maroon handlebar tape on my 12th birthday and this was my ride to independence as a teenager. Nothing was better than riding no hands down the Boulevard in Glen Rock on my way to Ridgewood's center of town!



Most memorable bike tour?

The 7 day Cycle the Erie tour. It was my first long distance tour, the weather was perfect the entire 7 days, and the friends from BTCNJ instantly became like family! We started out in Albany, NY with a shuttle bus to Buffalo. There we camped with "Cosy Campers" basically "glamping" so we didn't have to do any work setting up or taking down tents. The food was delicious at all the various campsites along with nightly entertainment and one venue had an indoor swimming pool that was more like a mini waterpark! Along with our group, the 600 other people were from all over the US and there was a fantastic energy from everyone all week. I highly recommend it!





Keeping Yourself and Others Safe

Part 2: Hazards Behind Us

by Anastasia Conlon

We know the roads we ride are often narrow and winding. Unfortunately, that reality can have serious and sometimes grim consequences for cyclists who share the road with motor vehicles.

Between 2001 and 2024, New Jersey's traffic fatality rate for pedestrians and cyclists increased by nearly 39%.¹ That represents an average of 181 friends, family members, and neighbors dying each year in the state. About half of those fatalities occurred within our riding area, even though it makes up only perhaps 20% of New Jersey's land area.

None of us wants to become, or have someone we know, become a statistic. Fortunately, many crashes can be prevented through rider awareness, predictability, and mutual respect and empathy on the road.

Rebecca Feldman has been a strong advocate for New Jersey's 4-foot safe passing law, which took effect in March 2022. She has observed that when she wears a "Give Me 4 Feet" cycling jersey,² drivers often appear more mindful of giving her the space we all need to be safe. Whether the jersey itself changes driver

behavior or simply raises awareness, it serves as a reminder that visibility and education matter.

Most hazards we encounter are in front of us, but collisions from behind do occur. One common situation is swerving left to avoid debris or another obstacle without first checking for approaching traffic. Before moving left, glance in a mirror if you use one (which you should!), or look over your shoulder when appropriate, and signal your intention. These simple actions give drivers more time to react and help you be seen.

Visibility also plays an important role. New Jersey law requires a rear light when riding at night, but front and rear lights can improve your visibility during the day as well. Choosing roads with lower speed limits provides drivers with more time to see you and respond safely. Riding a bit further from the curb also gives you room to move right to avoid road hazards without making sudden movements into traffic.

There are two riding behaviors that most BTCNJ cyclists already do not do but are worth mentioning for newer riders: riding on the sidewalk and riding against traffic. In both situations, motorists are less likely to expect a bicycle where you are riding, especially when turning at intersections or entering driveways. Riding with traffic and following the normal rules of the road



Keeping Yourself and Others Safe

Part 2: Hazards Behind Us

As you prepare for each ride, consider a few simple habits that can improve your safety:

- Choose wider, lower-speed roads whenever practical.
- On weekends, consider routes that avoid the busiest main roads.
- Use front and rear lights to increase your visibility.
- Wear a cycling jersey that contrasts with your surroundings.
- Use a mirror or look behind you before moving left.
- Signal your intentions clearly.
- Avoid headphones or anything else that limits your awareness of traffic.
- Align yourself with those riding in front of you and avoid sudden changes in position to enhance predictability.

No single precaution can eliminate every risk, but each one increases the chances that drivers will see you, understand what you are about to do, and have enough time to react safely. Predictability, visibility, and awareness remain three of the most effective tools every cyclist has.

¹ [The White Line - Data Center](#)

² ["Give me 4 Feet - Jersey"](#)

Pioneer Valley Memories *by Bob DeMair*

A heartfelt thank you to Joanie Brickman and Don Schlenger for again running the Pioneer Valley tour. Also, thank you to ride co-leaders Al Gaddi, Jacque DeJean, and Debby Handler. The weekend was a fabulous experience. The energy of the people and the camaraderie were evident. Most people rode the 29-mile route on Friday and the 52-mile route on Saturday. In feet per mile, the 29-mile route was hillier than the 52-mile route and, in some ways, more technically challenging, which I enjoyed. There was one moment on the 52-mile route when it started to rain in the very middle when we were furthest from our motel. I thought we were going to have to ride 25 miles in the wet, but after just 5 miles it stopped, and we were able to dry off and complete the ride comfortably. After the ride, a bunch of us jumped into cars and drove to a farm stand called the Sugar Shack for maple ice cream and maple candy. Thank you to Lou Schleifer for the pictures, which appear below.



Random rider jumping in our line

Which way do we go?



BTCNJ Tour Schedule

Ready for your next adventure? Our tours are proving popular, with many already full or waitlisted. Take a look below to see what's still available — and if you have a destination you've been dreaming about, maybe it's time to turn that idea into a BTCNJ tour! Visit the website for full details and information on signing up or leading a tour. [BTCNJ Tours Page](#)

Ride Name	2026 Dates	Tour Leader(s)	Highlights	Cost*	Status
New Paltz Gravel	May 21-25	Lou Schleifer	Gravel riding and adventure in Hudson Valley	\$445	Complete
20th Annual memorial Day W/E Tour	May 22-25	Linda Krauss	A BTCNJ tradition in Southern Vermont	\$565	Complete
Wonders of Eastern Pennsylvania (Philadelphia Tour)	Jun 5-7	Tom Wieser	Explore Philadelphia region	\$360	Complete
Chamber Music, Charlemont, MA	Jul 30-Aug 2	Jane Porges Jerry Szubin	Tent camping, Chamber Music festival not far away. Multiple rides including a view from Mount Greylock (3,491 ft.)	\$200	Complete
Pioneer Valley Tour, Hadley, MA	Aug 21-23	Joan Brickman Don Schlenger	Country roads with pastoral settings, plus miles of bike paths including the Norwottuck Trail (80+ miles)	\$330	Complete
Amagansett, NY	Sep 18-20	Robert DeMair	Ocean front hotel. Two Happy hours and a group dinner. Rolling roads sporting ocean views. Hiking and pickleball.	\$295	Waitlisted
XNHAT+ Bikepacking New Hampshire	Oct 5-9	Avrin Slatkin Jerry Szubin	Self supported pannier tour along the gentle grades of the XNHAT Trail. Lodging 2 nights at Hostel and 2 nights at hotel	\$550	Waitlisted
Cape Cod - Boston (Point to Point)	Oct 3-11	Rich Brookler Debbie Ungerleider	Relaxed coastal riding along roads and rail trails. Transit on ferries. Experience seaside towns, and the staples of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Provincetown.	\$1,300	Space for one male



TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

Sergey Arefiev	Haworth	NJ	Marilyn Kohler	Oakland	NJ
Vladimir Arefiev	Wanaque	NJ	Jay Lebet	Fairlawn	NJ
Brian Azevedo	North Arlington	NJ	Krystof Lee	Stony Point	NY
Wayne Bargiel	Saddle Brook	NJ	Monika Lee	Stony Point	NY
Emma Beyer	Randolph	NJ	Neville Lee	Stony Point	NY
John Bovio	Nutley	NJ	Stefan Leinweber	Bogota	NJ
Julio Caban	West Orange	NJ	Harvey Luk	Bayonne	NJ
Geovanna	Irvington	NJ	Amanda Mezzadri	Wayne	NJ
Tamara Caruso	Flemington	NJ	Anthony Molina	Leonia	NJ
Baowei Chang	Millburn	NJ	Tara Molina	Leonia	NJ
Elisa Cuaron	Montclair	NJ	Dickson Perez	Paterson	NJ
Jim Dwane	Kinnelon	NJ	Brian Porter	Far Hills	NJ
Melissa Garber	Madison	NJ	Paul Rabito	Fairview	NJ
Daniel Garden	Hoboken	NJ	Enrique Ramirez	Bogota	NJ
Elizabeth Graham	Glen Rock	NJ	David Salzberg	Millburn	NJ
Wayne Harper	Westwood	NJ	Jeremy Shandel	Demarest	NJ
Jason Katz	Wyckoff	NJ	Stan Tillman	Atlantic Highlands	NJ
Yariv Kaufman	Cresskill	NJ	Justin Zeik	Ridgewood	NJ
Ryan Kim	Bergenfield	NJ			
Peter Ko	Saddle brook	NJ			
Eric Koenig	Maywood	NJ			

BTCNJ Executive Board Meeting

Date: August 3, 2026

The meeting held virtually on Zoom, was called to order by Olivia Sharp at 7:00pm

Present:

Olivia Sharp, President

Joyce Haddad, Secretary

Marc Soloff, Special Events

Len Ruvolo, Treasurer

Sharon Hurwich, Publicity

Chuck White, Rally Chair

Lou Schleifer, Tours

Robert DeMair, MasterLink Editor

David Pawlyk, Webmaster

Regina Bueno, Membership Chair

Anastasia Conlon, Advocacy & Safety

Absent:

Keith Schlanger, Rides Captain

Avrin Slatkin, Vice President

Rally Update

The meeting began with Chuck White providing an update on rally registration. He noted that member registrations were slightly lower than last year, while non-member registrations were higher. The group identified key needs, including more volunteers for parking and rest stops, with Chuck agreeing to coordinate with Sharon Hurwich for a mid-month newsletter plea for specific volunteer positions. There was also discussion on finding a bike shop to service the Kinnelon Rest stop.

Olivia Sharp suggested forming a committee following the August Rally to evaluate what is working well, identify areas that may need improvement, and make recommendations for future rallies.

Special Events/Cookie Ride

The group discussed plans for the Cookie Ride and agreed on September 26, with September 27 as the rain date. Several potential locations were considered, with Continental Soldiers Field in Mahwah identified as a possible starting point due to its parking and existing facilities. Olivia Sharp will follow up with Renata to confirm that the location is suitable for D and C rides and report back to the group.

Tours

A significant portion of the meeting was dedicated to debating a comp policy for tour leaders, with the board ultimately deciding to vote on two proposed policies by email rather than making a decision during the meeting. Olivia Sharp will send out an email with the two comp policy options for the board to vote on.

Ride Leader's report

Keith Schlanger was unable to attend but reported that there were 65 fewer rides in July compared to July 2025, a 26% decrease mostly in the B and C* categories. Despite the reduction, attendance remained consistent with an average of about 8 riders per ride, the same as in July 2025.

He asked that we discuss the idea of bringing back the jersey design contest for the 2027 jerseys but suggested a need to update the contest rules to clearly define what design elements are and are not permitted. The team agreed with this. He also suggested that the 2027 Ride Leader Jersey (which Ride Leaders would receive in 2028) not include the year but instead create a special design celebrating BTCNJ's 50th Anniversary.

Treasurer's report

Len Ruvolo presented the Treasurer's Report showing a net operating loss of \$9,000 for the year to date which was significantly behind last year's \$2,000 loss for the same period. Part of the difference is due to Rally revenues lagging behind last year by \$3,000. Cash and other liquid assets were at \$106,000 compared to \$111,000 this time last year.

Safety and Advocacy

Anastasia Conlon raised the possibility of offering CPR and first aid training for ride leaders and club members. The Board will look into options and costs, with more information to be shared at a future meeting. The Board discussed the Club's accident guide and ongoing efforts to review and update safety rules and expectations for members and ride leaders. Additional information will be shared as these efforts progress.

The meeting concluded with Olivia Sharp noting that she would email current Board members to ask whether they would like to continue in their current role, transition to another role, or step off the Board due to term limits. Updates regarding Board positions, including any open positions and related information, will be shared with club members in future issues of MasterLinks.

The next board meeting is scheduled for September 7, 2026.
The meeting was adjourned by Olivia Sharp at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Joyce Haddad, Secretary