



# GUIDE FOR NEW MEMBERS

REVISED 03/05/2022  
NOT TO BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT  
PERMISSION, COPYRIGHT BTCNJ

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**INTRODUCTION**

**WHAT WE DO**

**HOW WE COMMUNICATE**

**CHOOSING AND SIGNING UP FOR A RIDE**

**HOW TO RIDE - RIDING SAFELY**

**WHAT TO RIDE - BIKES, BIKES AND MORE BIKES**

- ROAD, HYBRID, E BIKE, MOUNTAIN, GRAVEL
- VALUE OF A BIKE FITTING

**WHAT MUST GO ON THE BIKE**

- LIGHTS
- HYDRATION CARRIER - HYDRATE, HYDRATE, HYDRATE

**WHAT TO CARRY aka ESSENTIALS OF THE SADDLEBAG**

**WHAT TO WEAR - BICYCLE CLOTHING FOR THE SEASONS**

**WHAT TO EAT - ALL THINGS NUTRITION**

**WHO TO CONTACT**

## INTRODUCTION

This guide is intended for New Members of BTCNJ to ease their entry into our Bike Club. The beginning chapters give an overview of our main events followed by information on how we communicate to the general membership. It then goes on to discuss the practicalities of choosing and signing up for a ride.

The next section of the manual is for all new members but is especially written with the novice bike rider in mind. By “novice” I mean riders who are relatively new to either biking or group riding, a stage we all experienced at some point. Looking back at my early years of riding with the Club I am aware I made almost every mistake possible: from not knowing what a road bike was, to wearing the wrong clothing, to eating insufficiently for my biking needs, to everything in between. The intent of this section is to publish basic information that can be utilized by novice riders to facilitate their transition into group riding and increase their enjoyment. It is not meant to provide extreme detail for cycling aficionados.

The final section provides information on how to address concerns.

I want to thank all Club members who took the time and made the effort to contribute to this endeavor and impart their knowledge and expertise to our new members.

Rich Brookler, Steve Firth, Susan Holmberg, Chuck Solomon each contributed content and valuable proofreading assistance and Amy Avitabile helped to bring it to life. A big thanks to you all!

***Judith Lustig,  
Membership Chairperson***

## WHAT WE DO AT BTCNJ...

We do a lot! First and foremost we have Club rides for all levels. In 2021 we had over 3000 rides. In addition to our daily bike rides there are specialty rides, tours and clinics. Below is a list of some of the events we routinely offer.

*Ramapo Rally* – This is our main event attended by 700+ cycling enthusiasts of all different capabilities. We provide various routes from 12 – 125 miles, along with stocked rest stops and a post Rally buffet. It offers a great opportunity to challenge yourself or to just ride leisurely with your friends, the choice is yours. The Rally has been held for 45 years and is in mid-August each year.

*Anniversary Party* – One night every winter we get dressed up and celebrate the anniversary of our Club at a local Country Club. There is great food and dancing either to a live band or DJ. It's a time to see our friends in another light, decked out in their finest, sans helmet. It's a delightful respite from the cold NJ winter and a time to party.

*New Members' Day* – We aim to keep our new members happy, stimulated and engaged. On this day we have rides specifically geared to new members along with various workshops such as: Bike Maintenance and How to Change a Tire. Post rides there are refreshments keeping to our motto of, "Ride to Eat, Eat to Ride."

*Club Picnic* – One day every summer we fire up the barbie. Rides for all levels leave from Pascack Brook Park in the morning and return at just the right time to partake in a feast of burgers, hot dogs and beverages provided by the Club. Individual dishes for group consumption are also appreciated.

*Happy Hours* – Let's not forget to drink! We have a Happy Hour twice a year at a local restaurant such as Miller's Ale in Paramus. Eat, drink and be merry with your biking friends off the bike.

*Cookie Ride* – Every fall we have an event where we ride for the cookies. This is a multi level, multi ride Club event. We all start from the same place but more importantly end up at the same place, where the cookies are!

*Spin and Tonic Rides* – It has been the tradition of the Club to hold seasonal Wednesday night bike rides followed by a bite to eat and an adult beverage if so inclined, at a local restaurant.

*Club Tours* – Our Club Tours are highly prized and often fill up fast. Each year we offer multiple tours. We go all over from Canada to Amagansett to the Florida Keys to Arizona and many places in between. Tours take place over a weekend or over multiple days. Tour information is on our website and in the MasterLink. Signup for the tour begins once the tour is listed in the MasterLink. Each tour leader will specify these details in the MasterLink.

*RideSmart* – This is an extremely valuable program designed to educate both new and seasoned riders on how to ride safely alone and in a group. It consists of a couple of classroom sessions followed by practical on the road teaching sessions.

*Maintenance Clinic* – This is offered from time to time to demonstrate how to maintain and service one's bike and keep it in tiptop shape.

*Club Merchandise* - Our Club store is periodically open to purchase the Club Jersey and/or other Club merchandise such as tee shirts gloves, sweatshirts, etc.

*Ride Leader Jersey Contest* – Ride Leaders with a certain number of points are eligible to receive a free high quality Ride Leader Jersey along with other incentives. Each year we hold a Ride Leader Jersey Contest whereby members can submit an original design. The entries are voted on by ride leaders with a certain minimum number of points and a winner is selected.

Our Club moves forward with great members, dedicated volunteers and exceptional leaders. Every year leaders look to create new and interesting rides. In 2021 we had a "Shopping Ride", a "July 4 History

Ride”, a “Special Sites of Montclair Ride”, to name a few. Bring your enthusiasm and imagination and the possibilities are limitless.

## HOW WE COMMUNICATE AT BTCNJ

Our goal is to keep everyone informed and aware of what is going on in the Club. Below is a list of the various platforms that offer valuable information all the way from what rides are offered to important one of a kind announcements.

*Website* - [BTCNJ.com](http://BTCNJ.com) brings you to our website. It is here that one signs up for a ride and joins the Club. The website is a wealth of information. It offers information on ride descriptions, our policies, the Ramapo Rally, the Club store and Tours. It is where one can find the Membership Directory and the MasterLink issues. Explore the website. You will be surprised by how much content exists there.

*General Membership Meetings* - These are held the second Thursday of every month. Prior to Covid they were held in the auditorium of the Ridgewood Library. Since the pandemic they have been held on Zoom. After signing into the BTCNJ website click on Zoom in the left sided column and you will gain entrance into the meeting. In the beginning of each meeting, Club business is discussed followed usually by a presentation. During non pandemic times we have an Ice Cream Social in the summer and a Potluck Dinner during the winter holiday season.

*MasterLink* - We are very proud of our online magazine. The ML comes out the first of every month and it is the main forum for our announcements. When tours open they are posted in the ML. Sign up can then begin as per the instructions of the Tour Leader. The Ride Leader Jersey Contest entries are also posted in the ML. The ML is full of important articles relevant to cycling and often spotlights various members and their contributions to the Club.

*eLetter* - The Club eLetter is published the 15th of each month with timely articles for our members and late breaking news.

*Emails* - Emails periodically are sent out by members of the BTCNJ Executive Board with important time sensitive announcements.

#### *Social Media*

*Facebook* - BTCNJ has a Facebook group page as well as a page for our Ramapo Rally. Club members as well as guests are eligible to join and post.

*Meetup* - We periodically post on Meetup as a way to let non-members know what our Club has to offer.

*Instagram* - Followers of our Instagram feed share photos and videos of our BTCNJ activities.

## CHOOSING AND SIGNING UP FOR A RIDE

If you are a new or relatively new rider it is recommended to start at the entry level, "D". If you are new to the Club but are an experienced rider it is advisable to choose your first ride at a level lower than your capabilities. This will allow you to focus on riding in a group and begin to get accustomed to how our members ride.

BTCNJ has seven categories for road biking. The categories are arranged based on the average speed. As ride levels go up generally the rides become longer with fewer rest stops. There are also rides for gravel and mountain bikes, which have their own categories.

#### Road Biking Categories

- A\* 19+ mph
- A 17-18.9 mph
- B\* 15-16.9 mph
- B 13-14.9 mph
- C\* 11-12.9 mph

- C 9-10.9 mph
- D Less than 9 mph

When choosing a ride it is important to take into account not just speed but elevation gain and distance. All of these variables shape the ride. In addition, how well you do on a particular ride may be influenced by the outdoor temperature (most people find it more taxing to ride in the heat), your overall level of fitness, whether or not you have recently been active, how well nourished and hydrated you are and if you are well rested or not.

#### *Regarding Speed-*

The ride categories above are general guidelines and reflect a range of potential speeds appropriate for the category. For instance a particular C ride might come in with an average of 9 mph or 11 mph. At times if the ride surface is very flat the speed could be slightly higher. **If you have any questions about the anticipated speed of the ride or any questions about the ride at all don't hesitate to call the Leader or Co-Leader.** Clicking on their name in the ride description will bring you to their contact information.

#### *Regarding Elevation Gain-*

Elevation gain is categorized by the following terms: Flat, Rolling, Moderately Hilly, Hilly. These designations are noted in the ride description. Clicking on the terrain, ie. hilly, brings up a chart explaining what constitutes hilly in feet/mile. Note however, how the elevation is laid out impacts the ride greatly. For instance, a ride with 2,000 feet of climbing over three large hills will feel vastly different from one with 2,000 feet spread over multiple small hills. In addition 2,000 feet of climbing will feel different spread over 30 miles vs. spread over 60 miles.

#### *Regarding Distance-*

Many times we set our sights on doing a long ride, (long is a relative term), but in actuality we are just not up to it that day. The dilemma is whether to push and challenge oneself or to just go on a shorter ride that day and take it easy. The choice is yours. The info about the length of the ride is clearly printed next to the category letter.



### *Regarding Ride Description-*

The top line of the ride description gives the time the group convenes, (the ride departs 15 minutes later), the category designation, the length of the ride and the Leader and Co-Leader's names. On the line below there is a series of rectangles. Clicking on each rectangle accesses valuable information. The first rectangle is where one signs up for the ride. The next one notes the elevation gain. The following two show where the ride starts and provide directions. The next rectangle with the sun/cloud icon brings up the local weather. Sometimes there is a rectangle with a male/female icon which offers bathroom information. The final rectangle holds the GPS file for the ride which can be downloaded and followed. Rides that don't have a GPS file often have a cue sheet.

### *How To Sign Up For The Ride -*

Click on "Info and sign up", then "Yes, I will ride", then "Update sign up." If you want to make sure you signed up correctly you can then go out of this and then click on "Back to Sign Up" to see if your name appears. If you want to contact another rider on the ride simply click on their name, that will bring up their contact information. Please note that the time indicated on the ride description is when the group meets. The ride departs 15 minutes after that time in order to give people time to get their bikes ready. If you sign up for a ride and your plans change you need to cancel your participation by taking your name off the signup roster.

### *General Info-*

Each BTCNJ ride has a Leader and most have a Co-Leader. The Leader is in charge of the ride. They navigate the route, set the proper speed, decide when to stop as needed and make sure everyone follows safe riding practices. The Co-Leader or "Sweep" is at the rear of the ride and makes sure no one is left behind.

If a rider goes ahead of the Leader or chooses to go behind the Sweep they are considered "off the ride".

***FINAL THOUGHTS- If in doubt, ask!*** If you're not sure whether to go on a particular ride, feel free to call the Leader or Co-Leader to get more information to help you make your decision.

(Further information about Rides is found on our website by clicking "Rides", then "Ride Info".)

## HOW TO RIDE- RIDING SAFELY

BTCNJ takes safety very seriously. We expect our riders to be knowledgeable about how to ride safely. A complete safety document is online [here](#).

We also recommend that new members consider BTCNJ's annual RideSmart program.

Below are a few of the most important safety practices from BTCNJ's Group Safety Guide.

- Helmets are required on all BTCNJ rides.
- Ride single file whenever there is traffic on the road.
- Stay as far to the right as is safe and reasonable.
- Hold your line, ride directly behind the rider in front of you.
- Signal well in advance before turns. Also, audibly communicate your intentions.
- Look carefully over your shoulder before signaling and pulling out into the lane.
- Before you pass another rider, make sure the lane to your left is clear and announce that you are passing with "On your left".
- We don't pass on the right because we cut off someone's safe lane, and they don't expect it. If it becomes absolutely necessary, it is imperative to say "On your right".
- Don't let your front wheel overlap (laterally) with the wheel in front of you because if they move to the side, you'll go down.
- Do not pass on a downhill because riders who are descending may move laterally without warning to avoid a hazard, and they won't be

able to signal in advance. If it becomes necessary to pass, it is imperative that you say " Passing on your left".

- Do not say "Clear!" at an intersection because conditions change rapidly. Each rider needs to make their own decision about when it is safe to go.
- Wear bright colored clothing. Do not wear all black. You need to make yourself highly visible.
- Use a rearview mirror. This will allow you to see behind you without having to turn your head and take your eyes off the road.
- Daytime lights will make you more visible.
- Headphones or earbuds are not permissible.

## WHAT TO RIDE - BIKES, BIKES AND MORE BIKES

### ROAD BIKE

A road bike is designed to be used on a paved road. It's body type, tires and gearing options make it possible to go fast and negotiate changes in terrain more easily than other bicycles.

A road bike is made up of multiple components.



Freepik Co.

*FRAMESET* - this encompasses the frame and the fork. The frameset can be made of carbon (lightest) or carbon and aluminum or aluminum only or steel only. A lighter frameset will be more aerodynamic and assist in the bicycle going faster.

*TIRES* - in general road bike tires are skinny but there is a range of tire widths available. Varying tire widths affect the stability of the bicycle on uneven or unpaved surfaces and also can affect speed.

*CRANKSET (chainset)* - this is the unit that comprises the pedal arms and chain rings. Most road bikes have two chainrings. Less common is to have three chainrings. In the past three rings would allow for more gearing options but newer chainsets are more compact and are able to offer more options for gearing making the three ring sets less useful and almost obsolete.

*CASSETTE* - this is the assembly of sprockets mounted to the rear wheel. When the chain is placed into different sprockets at different times one is changing the gears. Changing gears allows one to keep the pedaling speed constant over different terrain or to alter the revolutions/minute of the pedals. (Cadence)

*DERAILLEUR* - this is the apparatus which is involved with the mechanism that changes the gear. There is a rear and front derailleur. Their job is to push the chain across the cassette sprockets and from one chain ring to the other. The vast majority of derailleurs involve physical cables but electronic derailleurs are also available. The derailleurs are controlled by the shifters.

*SHIFTERS* - These are commonly levers (though not always) that when moved causes the bike to go into a different gear. This is accomplished by controlling the derailleur that moves the chain up and down the cassette and chain ring. The right hand controls the rear gears/derailleur, the left controls the front gears/derailleur. Moving the left shifter with the left hand engages the front derailleur which moves the chain up and down the chain rings causing big jumps in gears for sudden changes in terrain. Moving the right shifter with the right hand engages the back derailleur which moves the chain up and down the

cassette resulting in small adjustments for use during slight changes in terrain.

**Low gear = Easy = Good for Climbing.** The lowest gear on the bike is the smallest chainring in the front and the largest cog on the cassette in the back. In this position the pedaling will be the easiest and one will be able to pedal uphill with the smallest amount of resistance. To get to this position it is called “downshifting”.

**High gear = Hard = Good for Descending.** The highest gear on the bike is the largest chain ring in the front and the smallest cog on the cassette in the back. In this position the pedaling will be the hardest and one will be able to accelerate while traveling downhill. To get to this position it is called “upshifting”.

*HANDLEBARS* - Drop handlebars are the most common configuration on road bikes. Hands can be placed on the horizontal part of the handlebars, on the hoods (the area that covers the brake levers) or the drops. The handlebars come in various widths and shapes to accommodate different body types. It is possible to purchase road bikes with horizontally configured handlebars or to change the ones that come with the bike. (See Bike Fitting section).

*SADDLE AND SEATPOST* - The saddle is what you sit on. It is designed to provide support for long rides. Saddles come in various widths and shapes to accommodate different body types and often a rider needs to try a few different ones in order to find the one that is most comfortable and supportive. Some are even split down the middle. The seat post connects the saddle to the frame.

*BRAKES* - The most common brakes at this time are rim brakes. These are brakes that clamp the wheel rims when a rider wants to stop the bicycle. They are mounted on the frame near the upper part of the wheels. Another option is disc brakes. These brakes sit at the center of each wheel and stop the bike by squeezing a brake pad against a rotor mounted around the hub. They are advertised as being better performers in wet conditions and are good for fast descents on off road trails. Each type of brake has their pros and cons and should be

discussed and evaluated with the bicycle sales professional when buying a bike.

## *PEDALS*

### *Platform pedals*

These are flat pedals and are likely what the beginner biker has been using up till now. They provide a wide, stable surface to support the foot. They can be worn with any shoe but they do not secure the foot to the pedal. This results in a reduction of pedaling efficiency.

### *Toe Clips/Cages*

These pedals have a cage-like apparatus that the foot slides into. They are generally less expensive than clipless pedals, they do not require cycling specific shoes and they provide more efficient pedaling than flat pedals. However, they are "old school" and often require tightening of straps to stay secure.

### *Clipless Pedals*

These pedals are called "clipless" to distinguish themselves from the older toe clip pedals. Ironically they work with a specifically designed bike shoe that "clips" into them. (See section on clothing.) Clipless pedals provide a high level of control while riding fast or executing moves like going over debris. Feet won't bounce off the pedals as you apply power or while riding over bumps. These are the most common types of shoes that are worn by cyclists while road biking in our club.

### *Hybrid Pedals*

These pedals have a flat platform on one side and a clipless pedal on the other. Some beginner riders choose this until they are totally comfortable with fully clipless pedals. These pedals allow the rider to clip in or not. It can be a little cumbersome at first to try to find the specific side you want when riding.

## **HYBRID BIKE**

A hybrid bike is a cross between a road bike and a mountain bike. It is suitable for general purpose riding over different types of terrain, thus it is often used for commuting. Hybrid bikes usually have a flat handlebar rather than a drop handlebar. This allows for a more upright riding position which may add comfort but sacrifices speed because

this configuration is not as aerodynamic as drop handlebars. Compared to road bikes, hybrids tend to use larger volume tires which offer more comfort and stability but may make the bike heavier and more difficult to take up hills.

### ***E-BIKE***

An E-bike is a bicycle that has been fitted with several electrical components: a motor, a battery and a controller. The purpose of an E-bike is to assist so that obstacles like hills and headwinds become more manageable. The E-bike allows the rider to travel further without getting as tired. Riders who would like to ride hillier terrain than they are capable of or who have conditions that might affect their riding, ie. asthma, could benefit from an E-bike.

There are different classes of E-bikes.

CLASS 1 – This E-bike provides assistance only when the rider pedals and stops assisting when 20 mph is reached.

CLASS 2 – This E-bike is equipped with a throttle that can activate the motor without pedaling and stops assisting at 20 mph.

CLASS 3 – Speed differentiates a class 3 E-bike from a Class 1 E-bike in that it offers assistance when the rider pedals and stops assisting when 28 mph is reached. Some Class 3 E-bikes have throttles.

**BTCNJ ALLOWS ONLY PEDAL ASSISTED CLASS 1 E-BIKES, AND CLASS 3 E-BIKES THAT ARE PURELY PEDAL ASSISTED. CLASS 2 E-BIKES AND CLASS 3 E-BIKES WITH A THROTTLE ARE NOT PERMITTED**

### ***MOUNTAIN BIKE***

Mountain bikes are designed for off road conditions. They offer some similarities with other bicycles but incorporate features designed to enhance durability and performance over rough terrain. They are heavier, more complex and less efficient on smooth surfaces. Their tires are large and very durable, their brakes more powerful and their handlebars are extra wide to improve balance and comfort over uneven terrain. Their gearing is optimized for steep climbs and rapid descents. They are specialized for use on mountain trails with rocks, roots, loose dirt and steep grades. There are various subsets of mountain bikes.

## **GRAVEL BIKE**

Gravel bikes essentially are road bikes designed to travel over a variety of surfaces, carry additional gear and are suitable for all day riding on remote roads. They are more durable than a standard road bike and have an increased gear range and space for much wider tires. They are slightly heavier than road bikes and can travel almost as fast as road bikes but do not do as well in racing conditions. The geometry of the gravel bike compared to the road bike is more relaxed which improves comfort and stability and allows for longer riding days.

## **THE VALUE OF A BIKE FITTING**

When purchasing a bicycle for the first time, the bike store representative should “fit” the bike correctly to you. A properly fitted bike will go a long way in helping you feel comfortable on your bike. It will also enable you to excel in the sport.

The first component of fit is addressed by selecting a bicycle with the proper frame size and height. However, that is just the tip of the iceberg. In order to get maximum performance from your bicycle and to be the most comfortable the bicycle should be fitted to many other variables. Bear in mind that for any additional components to function well the frame must be correct.

When you are fitted for the bike it is advisable to wear your bike shoes and bike shorts. The bike will be fitted to optimize your upper and lower body positions. In today’s market there is an array of components that can be swapped in and out to customize the bike.

### **The following should be optimized:**

*The height of the seat* - if it is too low pedaling will be inefficient.

*The tilt of the saddle* - tilted down too much will put forward pressure on your arms, tilted up too much, your bottom will feel it.



*How your legs are positioned over the pedal* - It is important to get the proper angle of flexion at the knee for optimum comfort and performance.

*The height of the stem* – drop handlebars have the rider leaning forward which in some can cause muscle tension in the neck and shoulders. The stem may be able to be lengthened on some bikes to reduce this, albeit that might reduce aerodynamic gain.

*The position of the cleats on your shoes* – If you are going to wear cycling shoes be aware that poorly positioned cleats can cause knee pain, ankle discomfort or numbness; too far back and power is sacrificed.

Even a bicycle that is several years old might need to be reevaluated and adjusted. Things shift, we age, and the bike and rider can come out of alignment. Investing in a bike fitting with a good bike technician is always worthwhile.

### **Personal Story**

Five years into riding my Cannondale Synapse I noted that my lower neck and the area between my shoulder blades would ache after an hour of riding. I also found myself leaning forward putting pressure on my arms and they would start to burn. In addition, I didn't feel I was moving forward efficiently.

I sprung for a custom bike fitting. These changes were made: new seat with a split down the middle, adjusted seat tilt, handlebars changed for a narrower set, stem raised so I wasn't leaning over so much, cleats adjusted to give me more power when pedaling. I had bought this bike on sale five years prior and it was perhaps not the perfect fit at that time but for the amount of riding I was doing it was fine. As the years went on though I was riding more frequently and longer and things began to hurt. Having had all the above done was worth it. My discomfort went away, I was able to pedal more efficiently and due to no more aches and pains I was able to enjoy the bike rides much more.

## WHAT MUST GO ON THE BIKE

### BIKE LIGHTS

Bicycle lights are mandatory by law in lowlight conditions but are also extremely useful during the daytime. They advertise our presence and are an important defense against being hit.

Lights fall into two categories – “lights to see” and “lights to be seen”. “Lights to be seen” are just bright enough for nearby motorists or pedestrians to see us and “lights to see” are much brighter, illuminating the road ahead. Most lights have more than one setting ranging from solid to flashing to pulsing and can be set at various speeds.

#### **EACH BIKE SHOULD HAVE A FRONT AND A REAR LIGHT**

The *front light* should be positioned on the handlebars. The front light illuminates the road ahead and allows the rider to see any potential obstacles. A constant white light is the best option for this purpose. It makes the rider visible to others without being distracting. A second front light could be added to the helmet. A sole front light on the helmet, however, is not advisable. With the head turned the rider loses visibility of the road and also would not be seen by opposing traffic.

The *rear light* needs to “distract”. It needs to capture attention and make the rider visible to cars and cyclists in the back. A flashing red light serves this purpose the best. The rear light should not be obstructed by the saddlebag. A second rear light can be added to the helmet if desired.

#### **DURING THE DAY**

Though not legally required, research has shown that the accident rate for cyclists with constant permanent running lights is lower than for cyclists without daytime lights, so it is recommended to run the lights during daytime rides. When it is sunny a bright flashing front light will do better to get a driver’s attention than a non flashing one.

## **NIGHTTIME**

Nighttime riding or lowlight riding requires two lights on at all times. A bright white, front facing light set to the solid beam option to illuminate the road ahead and the other, a bright rear red light, pulsing or flashing to increase the chance of being seen.

Multiple bike lights with different properties are available. Do research before choosing.

## **HYDRATION CARRIER HYDRATE, HYDRATE, HYDRATE**

When riding we expend energy and lose fluid as we perspire. It is extremely important to stay hydrated. Proper hydration increases endurance, lessens fatigue and improves cycling performance. Dehydration can lead to a host of medical issues, some minor, some very serious. It is important to start a ride well hydrated and equally important to stay hydrated during the ride by replenishing lost fluids.

**During long distance cycling, thirst is not the best indicator of hydration levels and therefore it is recommended that one drinks small amounts every 10-15 minutes or every 2-3 miles whether thirsty or not.** This is even more urgent during the hot weather for obvious reasons. We should always carry at least two bottles of water on the bike and replenish electrolytes as needed. Discussion about electrolyte containing options occurs in the Nutrition section of this manual.

### *COMMON WAYS TO CARRY FLUIDS ON THE BIKE*

1. Cages – Every bike should have two cages on the downtube in which to place the bottles for our fluids. It does take a little practice to be able to remove the bottle during riding, drink it and replace it back into the cage. With experience this will become second nature. Drop to the back of the line, slow down with warning to others or stop the bike if necessary and drink. But drink we must.

2. Behind the Seat Water Bottle Cage- this allows the biker to carry an additional two bottles for a total of four.
3. Lightweight Cycling Hydration Pack – This is a small pack worn on the back of the rider. The fluid is accessed through a straw that is always near the rider’s face, thus eliminating the need to take a bottle out of a cage.

## WHAT TO CARRY aka ESSENTIALS OF THE SADDLEBAG

The first question is “Why a saddlebag?” Having a saddlebag on the bike is intuitive to most riders but there have been some new riders without one. The purpose of a saddlebag is to carry essential and discretionary items.

**Every rider is expected and required to carry equipment to fix a flat.** When riding on the road a flat can occur with some degree of frequency. If one does not have the proper tools the only option is a lift and to leave the ride. However, if well equipped, the flat can be fixed on site and the fun can continue. Do not worry if you do not know how to fix the flat, likely someone on the ride does and will fix it for you. Of course it is encouraged that everyone, at some point, learns how to master this skill. In addition to items to fix a flat it is a good idea to carry a general tool kit to be able to make minor mechanical adjustments to your bike. The minimum goal is for you to be able to fix a problem and get home or back to your car.

### *Fixing a Flat-*

In order to fix a flat the following is needed:

- A spare tube that fits your specific bike (it is better to carry two than one)
- Two tire irons that are required to remove the tire from the wheel
- Either a CO2 cartridge or portable air pump to inflate the tire

- Suggested but not essential is a patch kit. A patch kit contains the materials needed to patch a hole in the tube. The kit contains patches, glue, and a means (usually sandpaper) to scuff up the tube before applying the glue and patch. Patch kits are not as reliable as replacing a tube, but can be used if no tube is available or a second tire goes flat. It is mainly a last resort item.

#### *To Make Minor Repairs-*

A bicycle multi-tool is needed, available at bike shops. Any reputable bike shop will carry a number of these tools. Let the shop know the type and model of the bike and they will recommend the best multi-tool to carry. Most multi-tools contain Allen wrenches in the appropriate sizes, flat and Phillips head screwdrivers, and two tire irons. One other feature in more complete tool kits is a chain breaker.

The following additional items are strongly recommended to be carried on your bike.

#### *Identification*

It is important to carry identification somewhere on the bike or rider. Identification should contain: Full name and address, emergency contact information, any medical conditions, allergies, any medications the rider is taking, and medical insurance information. Another option is to wear a Road ID bracelet.

#### *Money and/or a credit card*

How are you going to eat the delicious donuts if you don't have money? Seriously, some money should always be taken with you in case a trip to the bike shop is needed for emergency repairs or parts, for unforeseen transportation needs and of course for the donuts/snacks.

#### *Rubber gloves*

If you've ever fixed a dropped chain you would understand the need for these. Bike parts (especially chains) can be dirty and greasy.

#### *Handy Wipes*

To clean up after handling bike repairs.

### *First Aid kit*

- Neosporin ointment – for scrapes and cuts
- Benadryl ointment – for insect bites
- Band Aids
- Sterile gauze pads
- Adhesive tape

## WHAT TO WEAR BICYCLE CLOTHING FOR THE SEASONS

Our cycling experience is more enjoyable if we are appropriately dressed for the task and for the weather. There is a wide range of biking apparel available but covered here are the essentials.

*Helmets* – An article about what to wear would not be complete without a few words about helmets. In the MasterLink of August 2020 there is a detailed article about helmets which can be accessed on our website. It includes recommending a helmet with the Multi Directional Impact Protection System (MIPS) which helps to reduce the possibility of a concussion and it provides information on the proper way to wear a helmet. When wearing a helmet both the front and back of the head need to be covered correctly (frontal and occipital lobes of the brain) and the straps need to fit properly. Please refer to the diagram in that article for further elucidation.

### *Bike Jersey*

A bike jersey offers more comfort and versatility than a regular polo shirt or tee shirt. A bike jersey is usually made of a moisture wicking material to keep you dry when you sweat. The fabric is stretchable so it does not constrict when assuming different bike positions. Bike jerseys also come with outside back pockets which can hold snacks, money, cell phone, etc.

### *Bike Shorts*

These are essential. Because they are made with Lycra or spandex they stretch. They also have a padded crotch liner called a chamois. The chamois gives protection to our sensitive perineum and makes riding more comfortable. The cushioning effect of the chamois also helps to avoid traumatic pressure on pudendal nerves in our seat region. It is advisable to wear bike shorts without underwear. Underwear has seams and if worn can cause chafing. The chamois covers any seams of the bike short. If there is any lingering discomfort however, chamois butter can be bought at a bike store and applied to the body in that region to further reduce friction and irritation.

### *Bike Socks*

These usually contain polyester or nylon to help with moisture wicking.

### *Bike Gloves*

These are very important. They help us grip the handlebars especially during conditions when our hands sweat a lot. They are padded on the palmar side at strategic points to reduce pressure on the median and ulnar nerves in our hands. When these nerves get irritated we can get pins and needles and numbness in our hands and fingers while riding.

### *Bike Shoes*

New members who have not ridden much or are novice riders often start with shoes they have used outside of the club, ie. sneakers. However, to improve cycling technique over time it is recommended to make the transition to cycling shoes. Cycling shoes are designed with stiffer soles than regular shoes for more efficient energy transfer as you pedal. It is very important to get the fit of your bike shoes correct. There should be enough room to wiggle your toes slightly and for a heavier sock in the colder weather. The arch of the foot should be snug and supported and the heel should not slide up and down. The salesperson selling the shoes can help with the fit. Bike shoes can close with Velcro, notched straps with buckles, dials, or laces.

Cycling shoes are designed to be compatible with a “clipless” pedal. This is a confusing term since cycling shoes actually “clip” into the pedals. The term “clipless pedal” originated years ago to differentiate it from the older pedal style that had cages that were called “toe clips”.

Most road cyclists use either road or mountain bike shoes.

“Road bike shoes” have the stiffest soles and the maximum pedal efficiency. They use three hole protruding cleats that connect shoes to clipless pedals. They have little tread. That along with the protruding cleats make them uncomfortable for extended walking. Therefore many road bikers purchase mountain bike shoes.

“Mountain bike shoes” have soles that grip well for added traction on trails. One type clips into clipless pedals and has two hole cleats that are recessed into the sole thus making them easy to walk with. (Another type works with flat pedals without cleats.)

“Casual bike shoes” resemble sneakers and are used for urban cycling, recreational cycling and indoor cycling classes. They are a hybrid between cycling footwear and casual footwear. They can be compatible with clipless pedal systems but have rubber outsoles and recessed cleats to allow for easy walking. They are not as stiff as road or mountain biking shoes therefore pedal power is sacrificed. These are not preferred for the majority of biking we do in the club but could be adequate for shorter, flat trips.

### *Arm Sleeves and Leg Warmers*

Arm sleeves and leg warmers go over the exposed parts of our arms and legs. Some arm sleeves are made of a lightweight material and offer valuable protection against the sun. Others, as well as their lower extremity counterparts, are made of thermal for use in cold weather.

## **COLD WEATHER RIDING**

As the weather gets colder it's imperative to change our clothing to meet our needs to stay warm. Proper clothing during this time allows us to ride comfortably and longer into the year.

When weather is very changeable, ie. cold for the first hour then warmer, arm sleeves and leg warmers can be added to short sleeved jerseys and shorts and can be removed when it gets hot and stored in the pocket of our bike jersey or potentially in a bike bag. As weather gets more predictably cool the short sleeved jersey can be changed for a long sleeved one and/or one can wear a windbreaker, or bike jacket



rated for various temperature conditions. The concept is **layering**. A long sleeved base layer can also be added under the jersey. This item pulls moisture away from the skin and helps to keep us warm.

Long bike pants with the chamois are worn in cold weather. It is also possible to use yoga or athletic style pants, (some can be found lined with fleece) worn with bike shorts on top. Tights are another option.

Biking gloves with the distal fingers cut off can be replaced with full finger biking gloves. When very cold outside, lobster mittens work well.

Proper footwear is also very important. Woolen socks are very helpful to keep the feet warm and dry. Shoe toe covers are available for when the weather gets a little colder but booties are the best option for really cold weather. They wrap around the bike shoes and attach via Velcro. They are made of a neoprene or a rubberized laminate to provide insulation and water resistance. The soles are cut away to accommodate cleats.

Warming discs can be inserted in the gloves or shoes to add warmth to the extremities.

It is imperative to keep your face and head warm when riding in the cold. Felt headbands provide warmth to the ears. Further warmth is provided with a skullcap. A balaclava can be worn to cover the head and the face if needed.

**PLEASE BE AWARE THAT HEAD COVERINGS SHOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH THE FIT OF THE HELMET. AVOID A THICK HEAD COVERING THAT COULD PREVENT THE HELMET FROM GRIPPING THE HEAD ADEQUATELY WHICH COULD RESULT IN INSUFFICIENT HEAD AND BRAIN PROTECTION IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT**

## WHAT TO EAT – ALL THINGS NUTRITION

Many folks don't like to eat first thing in the morning, but if you are riding for any length of time or on a particularly challenging course and don't take in any fuel in advance, chances are you may feel significantly depleted during your ride manifesting in lightheadedness, fatigue or even cramps.

Exercising, even for novices, creates a need for more of the protective chemicals found in fruits and vegetables, so your overall food plan will ideally include these all the time.

### **Pre-Ride Fueling - Sustaining Energy**

To keep your energy up during your ride, make sure your pre-ride meal or snack includes any combination of: protein (i.e. eggs, cheese, meats, yogurt, cottage cheese, etc.), fat (nut butters, nuts, butter, cheese, avocado, etc.) and fiber-containing carbohydrate (any vegetable or fruit, whole grain breads and cereals, brown rice, quinoa, legumes, etc.). Here's why: carbohydrate is the primary fuel, protein takes a long time to digest and thus helps keep blood sugar stable, fiber and fat both keep food in your stomach longer.

Some examples of meals that contain all three of these components are: a veggie omelet, yogurt with fruit and nuts, peanut butter on whole grain bread or banana, chili or bean soup in the winter, a protein drink with fruit and fat (like peanut or almond butter) or dinner leftovers. You are sure to find some menu ideas online that can work for you, especially if you think outside the box. It doesn't have to be traditional American "breakfast foods".

If you have ever crashed, soon into your ride or felt starved 1/2 hour after breakfast, chances are your breakfast was either nothing at all or simple carbs alone (refined flour items like bagels and cereals as well as skim milk). These raise sugar quickly, but it quickly falls again leaving you potentially lightheaded, dragging and hungry.

With experience, you will be able to tailor your pre-ride meal to your own biochemistry and the level of challenge of your upcoming ride.

## Energy During Your Ride

Drinking continuously along the way is critical for energized riding whether you actually feel thirsty or not. Always bring at least 2 bottles of water. In especially hot weather it is easy to sweat out most of your electrolytes and you may need to replace them along the way to avoid cramps and dehydration. To this end there are plenty of sugar containing electrolyte drinks (like Gatorade), tablets and gels as well as artificially sweetened electrolyte drinks (like G2 Zero) that help with muscle contraction but without the added sugar.

How much additional fuel you need during your ride to keep your energy up depends in part on your pre-ride fueling. On shorter or less challenging rides you may not feel like you need to eat or snack during the ride. That's fine, but be prepared anyway. Snacks with protein, fat and fiber like the examples below will provide energy that lasts and potentially preempt your need for a fast acting sugar fix later.

Dried fruits (i.e. raisins, figs, dates) provide lots of natural sugars and when combined with nuts (providing protein, fat, fiber), will last even longer. Other individually packaged grab and go real food options could be apple and cheese or banana and peanut or almond butter.

There are endless energy bars on the market and you can tell if they are healthy options by the list of ingredients found on the back, not by what the marketing geniuses have put on the front label! If they are made from mainly whole ingredients like nuts, whey protein, oats and dried fruits, contain a healthy 5-10 gram dose of protein, 5-10 grams of fiber and are **low** in sugars and saturated fat, they can be a decent snack choice. But when the very first ingredient(s) are some type of sugar (like high fructose corn syrup, agave syrup or brown rice syrup) or they contain chocolate coatings, they are really just protein-fortified candy bars. And when they are 400-500 calories for the whole bar, they are more a meal than a snack.

If you do run out of fuel mid-ride and need a quick, fast acting sugar hit, there are real food choices like bananas, grapes or fruit juice. They provide fast acting sugar with the bonus of some nutritional value.

Chocolate milk is yet another easy-to-purchase-along-the-way quick sugar fix with some fat and protein to help it last. Not the healthiest choice, but it will do the trick.

Wolfing a bagel (or croissant at our favorite Nyack bakery) along the way will work as a sugar fix also, but bear in mind you will be using that for fuel (as you would be with any sugar option) and will not be accessing stored body fat you might have been hoping to work off on your ride!

### **Post Ride Replenishing**

Listen to your body. If you are hungry, eat. A good post exercise recovery meal or snack will contain both protein and carbohydrate to replenish muscle glycogen stores. Vegetables and fruits are carbohydrates, so don't feel you must consume a grain like bread or pasta. The same guidelines about the content of your post exercise meal apply here and a lite snack of yogurt and fruit could be a good choice to take you to your next meal.

There are a number of protein drinks specifically created to contain the amino acids ideal for muscle recovery and repair if you have done a particularly intense ride. These combined with some organic frozen berries can be an excellent option. Some added fat will provide satiety and help curb that sometimes frustrating excessive post exercise appetite.

## **WHO TO CONTACT**

Any questions about a scheduled ride can be addressed by the Leader or Co-Leader of that ride. The contact information for the Leader is available simply by clicking on their name above the ride description. This will provide you with their phone number and email address. Alternatively you can look up their contact information on the website by clicking on the "Lead" section of the orange column on the left, then clicking on "Leaders" and putting in the first letter of their last name.

Both methods also give you access to their “stats”. You can see how many rides they have led and the average speed of those rides.

If a rider has an issue with a ride **after** it is completed they can address their concerns with the Leader of the ride or the Ride Lieutenant of that category. If they are unable to reach that person or do not feel that their concerns were addressed sufficiently they can contact the Rides Captain. Finally, if there is a need to go further the President and/or Vice President of the Club can be contacted.

To find the contact information for the Ride Lieutenants and the President and Vice President go to the website and click on “Membership” and then click on “Officers”.

Of note, all accidents should be reported to the Leader of the ride. An accident report will be filed when necessary.

