

Community Ride Organizer Toolkit

Developed by Ride Illinois

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Ride Illinois is a statewide, nonprofit, bike advocacy organization. Our mission is to make Illinois better through biking. Learn more about Ride Illinois at rideillinois.org and on social media.

A casual, family-friendly bike ride is a wonderful way for residents to experience their community. A community bike ride offers many benefits to residents, businesses and the community as a whole, such as:

- Promoting the many benefits of riding a bike
- Increasing interest in riding a bike for recreation, transportation, and everyday trips
- Raising awareness to motorists to look for adults and children on bikes

Suggestions for a Successful Ride

- Time of day:
 - Weekend: anytime
 - Weekday: evening
- Target audience: casual cyclists, families, and children. Cyclists of all ages and abilities are invited to participate
- Distance: 8 miles or less (about one hour of pedaling). Those who haven't ridden a bike in a while will appreciate a shorter ride.
- Start/End: having the ride start and end at the same location makes planning easier.
- Route: chosen with families and children in mind. Include a shorter route or an option to head back to the start at some point along the route.
- Pace: casual (about 8-10mph). Adjust pace to accommodate the slowest riders.
- Total Duration: no more than 2 hours (including stops)
- Rest Stops: include one or more stops to allow participants to catch their breath and get some water. Stopping at interesting locations or local businesses is encouraged.
- Terrain: neighborhood streets, trails, side paths, bike lanes
- Points of Interest: bike infrastructure, local businesses, historical sites, etc
- Options: scavenger hunt, partner with local businesses, contests, incentives
- Ask your local bike shop to check bikes beforehand or assist during the ride
- Offer bike skills, such as starting and stopping, before the ride
- Discuss the [Bicycle Rules of the Road](#) or Rules of the Trail before the ride
- Keep an eye on all participants to make sure no one is left behind or gets lost. Highlight key turns or decision points on the route with sign/road marking or a volunteer
- Offer a certificate to those who complete the ride
- Consider purchasing some helmets for those who show up without one. [Bike Rodeo Helmets](#) offers good quality helmets at a reasonable price
- Incorporate Education: include activities such as helmet fitting, ABC Quick Check, snail race and avoidance weave
 - League of American Bicyclists has produced a [series of short videos](#) that touch on a number of important safety topics

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Share Details with Ride Illinois

We're happy to add your community bike ride to the [Ride and Advocacy calendar](#) on the Ride Illinois website. Send us the details by completing [this brief form](#) or by emailing the details to community@rideillinois.org. The more community bike rides on our calendar, the better! These rides are proof that interest in cycling for recreation and transportation in Illinois is growing.

Spread the Word

Opportunities to promote your community bike ride include email, social media, community newsletters, local businesses (including bike shops), libraries, park districts, etc.

Use these hashtags when posting on social media:

#rideILcommunity, #communitybikeride, #morebutts onbikes, #ridewithus

Invite the Community

Cast a wide net when inviting folks to participate in your ride. Consider inviting:

- Elected officials (local, state, federal)
- Municipal staff (including anyone involved in transportation or public works)
- Park district staff
- Library staff and patrons
- Police officers and firefighters
- Local celebrities or VIPs
- Students, teachers, and school administrators
- Community organizers
- Local bike shop staff
- Business owners

Have Some Fun!

Add some fun, unique elements to your community ride to increase participation. Here are some suggestions to consider:

- Scavenger hunt
- Incorporate local history
- Stop at local businesses
- Visit public art
- Include a used bike drive
- Incorporate cosplay
- Clean up local trail/path
- Include other modes, such as scooter riders, roller bladers, runners, micromobility
- Include a bike decorating contest (during day) or bike light contest (at night)

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Safety Before the Ride

Ride Illinois' BikeSafetyQuiz is a free resource with quizzes for Adult Bicyclists, Child Bicyclists, Motorists, and Truck Drivers. Please share BikeSafetyQuiz with those who plan to participate in your ride and suggest they complete one or more quizzes in the days leading up to your ride.

- English: rideillinois.org/safety/bike-safety-quiz
- Spanish: rideillinois.org/safety/bike-safety-quiz-espanol
- Complete helmet checks and the ABC Quick Checks ([LINK](#))
- Demonstrate hand signals (right turn, left turn, stopping, and hazard)

Safety During the Ride: Pre-ride Chat

Reserve a few minutes to share important information prior to the start of the ride:

- Share details about the route and remind participants to stay together.
- Discuss basic safety: ride to the right, be careful at intersections, communicate, etc.
- Discuss some of the questions from our [BikeSafetyQuiz for Public Events](#) as a group
- Demonstrate hand signals (right turn, left turn, stopping, and hazard).
- Introduce the volunteers who will be assisting during the ride (see below).
- Allow time for questions

Safety During the Ride: Volunteer Roles

Well in advance, recruit volunteers to assist during the community ride. Doing so will increase safety and help newer and less confident cyclists feel welcome and safe. Volunteers can step up just before the ride, but they'll need to know what their role is. Below are some suggested volunteer roles to consider:

- **Ride Leader:** one or more individuals who are familiar with the route and will set a pace that is casual and comfortable for all riders. The ride leader must frequently look behind to ensure that the group is sticking together. The ride leader should adjust their speed, as necessary, and choose a few points along the route to stop and allow everyone to regroup. No one should ride in front of the ride leader!
- **SAG (Support and Gear):** one or more individuals who ride at the back, carry basic tools (on bike or in a vehicle), and can make minor repairs or adjustments along the route. SAG should carry extra water and first aid kits. Check with your local bike shop to ask if they will provide some volunteers to fill this role. No one should ride behind SAG!
- **Sweepers (for rides with 20+ participants):** several individuals (typically more confident cyclists) who ride to the left of the group and keep riders "tight and to the right". Sweepers should be spaced out from front to back and verbally remind riders to stay right. Sweepers serve as the glue keeping the front and back of the ride connected. No participants should ride to the left of the sweepers!
- **Corkers (for rides with 20+ participants):** these volunteers ride in the very front of the ride and block (cork) intersections as needed. Typically, all major intersections get corked. The larger the group, the more important it is and the more intersections will need to be corked. Ride Leaders will decide which intersections get corked in real time during the ride. Corkers line up near the front of the ride and are ready to cork at a moment's notice. After corking an intersection, corks immediately ride up to the front (passing on the left) of the ride to cork the next intersection. This role is the most

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physically taxing due to constantly riding back to the front of the ride after corking an intersection.

- **Law Enforcement:** invite law enforcement to participate in your community ride. Here are a few ways they can offer support:
 - **Lead** and/or **follow** the group on bikes or in vehicles
 - **Assist** with crossing major roads and intersections

Google Form for Registration

Ride Illinois created [this sample registration Google Form](#) for use by ride organizers to gauge interest in their ride, collect email addresses (to share updates or cancelations), and share the Statement of Risk prior to the ride. To request a copy of the Google Form, please contact us at community@rideillinois.org.

Inviting Elected Officials

One way to add impact to your ride is by inviting local and state elected officials. Identify your state representative and senator using [this tool](#). The presence of your state senator, representative, and/or local elected officials at your event will strengthen your relationship with those in charge of crucial legislation and policy decisions. Ride Illinois has created [this sample invitation letter](#) to send to your congressman. If you have any questions or would like to request a copy of the letter, please contact us at community@rideillinois.org.

Photo and Video Guidelines

You can post and share pictures that you have permission to post. So, if your friend took a picture of both of you and sends it to you and says "post this," you have permission. You can also post pictures or images from sites that give you explicit permission to do so.

When taking and sharing photos and videos taken during a community bike ride, be selective and careful. Here are a few helpful tips:

- Before taking a photo or video of someone, ask permission.
- Before sharing a photo or video on social media or with Ride Illinois, ask permission.
- Take photos of an individual or group of cyclists from behind
- Avoid sharing photos or videos that include children's faces unless you have permission from a parent or guardian. If you want to share photos of children at your ride, take the photo from behind.
- Err on the side of caution. Don't share any photos or videos you're not certain you have permission to use.

Statement of Risk

Insurance and waivers are typically not required to organize or participate in a community bike ride. In lieu of waivers, the following statement should be shared with participants and, as necessary, when questions related to waivers and insurance arise.

Please understand there are inherent risks associated with cycling, including bike breakdowns, crashes, unpredictable or dangerous traffic, challenging terrain and weather, and physical over-exertion. The list is not exhaustive and it is each rider's personal responsibility to educate

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themselves, ride responsibly, and exercise sound judgment in order to minimize these risks. By participating in a ride associated with this event, you acknowledge that you are aware of these inherent risks and take full responsibility to ride safely and responsibly in order to enhance your own safety and the safety of others.

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Contact Us

Contact Ride Illinois at community@rideillinois.org or call us at 630-216-9282. We're happy to answer your questions and offer suggestions so those who participate in your community bike ride are safe and have a great experience.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Q: What is the minimum age to participate in a community ride?**
- A: That depends on the distance of the ride and ability of the individual. We suggest that each ride organizer determine the minimum age prior to sharing details of their ride.
- **Q: Do we need to follow the Rules of the Road during the ride?**
- A: Yes. A bicycle is recognized as a vehicle by the state of Illinois. Therefore, traffic laws apply to people riding bikes. Be sure to ride on the right side of the roadway, in the same direction as traffic. At stop signs and intersections where there is not cross-traffic, it is safer to proceed as a group rather than as individuals. At stop signs and intersections with cross-traffic, the principle of "first come, first served" should be followed. In the end, safety must be the #1 concern.