

WCC SAFE RIDING PRACTICES - recommended reading if you cycle in the Sea to Sky corridor

Whistler Cycling Club members often ride along highways in the Sea to Sky corridor where vehicle speeds can range from 80 kph to 110 kph. Most publications regarding safe cycling apply mainly to urban areas and cities, whereas our riding is often along rural roads and highways. Higher vehicle speeds mean a marked difference in speed between vehicle and bicycle, and often only a short time for driver and cyclist to realize the others' presence and make adjustments as necessary to ensure everyone's safety. Consider a winding highway with moderate to high vehicle speeds. There may be only a second or two between when a driver sees the cyclist or the cyclist hears/sees a vehicle and when the vehicle will pass by the cyclist. With this in mind the following practices are recommended to help stay safe while riding along our local highways, whether riding alone or as a group.

HELP DRIVERS KEEP YOU SAFE

RIDE SINGLE FILE

A group of riders in single file generally makes it easier for a driver to accommodate and navigate past. It is also the law in BC. Riding side by side or 'two up' becomes a lawful option only where the shoulder is wide enough for both riders to fit on the shoulder. Where shoulders are too narrow to fit both riders, or is often the case, are absent, 'two up' riding should be restricted to carefully selected stretches of roadway and times of day. Very quiet traffic situations, side streets where vehicle speeds are low, or no-traffic roads may be suitable.

KEEP RIGHT OF THE WHITE

Aim to keep your handlebars and body to the right of the fog line. The fog line is the white line that marks the edge of the vehicle lane and possibly the edge of the pavement. It is a guide for drivers when the light isn't ideal and that, rightly or wrongly, doubles for many drivers as an indicator of where cyclists should position themselves relative to the vehicle lane. Where there's no white line or the line is only inches from the gravel, ride as if there's an imaginary white line one meter or so from the edge of the pavement so you have a little room to maneuver around anomalies without riding in gravel. If there's an obvious hazard ahead, check for vehicles approaching from behind and judge whether it will be safe to use part of the vehicle lane or whether you'll need to slow down so you can maneuver past the hazard without riding left of the line; be sure to signal your intention to venture further into the vehicle lane, fully cognizant of vehicles that may be approaching from behind.

CLUSTER DURING NARROW AND CURVY STRETCHES

A winding or rolling road with minimal or no paved shoulders adds to the challenge for drivers to pass by cyclists safely before an oncoming vehicle suddenly appears around a corner or over a crest. In these situations riders should cluster into groups of 3-5 riders with plenty of distance, perhaps 200-300 meters or more, between clusters. Avoiding long lines of riders lowers the difficulty (and stress level) for drivers and increases everyone's safety.

STAND COMPLETELY OFF THE ROAD WHEN STOPPED

When stopped, riders should stand where vehicles can pass easily. Standing in the gravel is the best

option, especially in places where other cyclists will ride past while you are stopped. Choose a stopping place with a long line of sight so approaching vehicles can see you well in advance. Avoid stopping a group at the top of a hill or around a blind corner unless you have room to stand completely off the pavement.

CONSIDER TAKING THE LANE WHEN...

Descending at near vehicle speeds means that you are slowing drivers very little (if at all) and for them to overtake you will increase safety risk for either or both of you. Another situation when taking the lane may be advisable is where anomalies on the shoulder would risk a crash or flat tire; in this case be sure the line of sight for drivers is sufficient that they have plenty of time to accommodate your choice. IN ALL CASES...only occupy the vehicle lane after weighing the advantage of doing so vs the potential risk posed by nearby vehicles, and clearly signal in advance your intentions to drivers.

STAY ALERT, PLAN AHEAD, ADJUST SMOOTHLY

Continually assess ahead for potential hazards, including upcoming narrowing or disappearance of the paved shoulder. This allows time to signal co-riders, check behind for approaching vehicles, and adjust your line smoothly and gradually. Avoid weaving your line left or right rapidly as this gives drivers and other riders reason to doubt your riding skill and intentions. Holding a calm steady line on the shoulder or road helps others, riders and drivers alike, to accommodate your actions with minimal stress.

CONSIDER THE DRIVER'S VIEW

Picture yourself being a cyclist that you would see when driving your vehicle, and act accordingly in order to minimize the stress that you would cause yourself as the driver. Ride smoothly and predictably, ensure you are visible, signal clearly your intentions, and share the road in a friendly and responsible manner.

HELP KEEP YOUR CO-RIDERS SAFE

STAY AWARE – USE ALL YOUR SENSES

Use your ears – NO EARBUDS! Riding solo with the music blasting, as long as you adhere to the shoulder, poses little extra risk to yourself, but when riding with others you are increasing the danger for yourself and others you are riding with. Use your eyes – buy eyewear that allows you to see well in all light conditions, especially in situations where light is alternating between bright sunlight and shade. Perfect your ability to look behind while maintaining a straight line, or consider a rearview mirror. Assess your co-riders. Are they riding smoothly and holding a line? Increase your distance from them if otherwise.

SIGNAL HAZARDS TO RIDERS BEHIND YOU

When leading a train of riders, signal hazards so riders behind you know what to expect. When in the middle of a pace line pass the signal along to riders behind you. Learn the proper signals and use your voice only in demanding or exceptional situations.

NO WHEEL OVERLAPS

The nose of your front wheel should never be ahead of the rubber on the back wheel of the preceding bicycle. Not even a quarter inch. Recommended: keep your front wheel a little to the left or right by 3-6

inches of the rear wheel of the preceding bicycle; this allows a little extra safety should the rider in front suddenly hit their brakes (they shouldn't do that but it can happen).

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH BRAKE LEVERS

When riding in a group, always have hands in touch with brake levers ready to adjust or contain your speed. Feather the brakes gently when appropriate, and try to avoid sudden slowing.

AVOID SUDDEN CHANGES IN SPEED AND LINE

Ride with a 'steady' back wheel. Doing so provides a calm guide to the rider behind you and allows them to relay that same calmness to the riders behind them. When slowing, slow gradually. Watch far enough ahead for hazards so you can ease left or right gradually. In mid-line watch the second rider in front of you in addition to watching where your front wheel is relative to the rear wheel of the bike just ahead of you. Maintain your distance relative to the bike in front by feathering the brakes and pedaling smoothly with a little more or a little less power. You should be able to spin your pedals at a cadence suited to the current speed and power requirements, then be able to smoothly change the power to the pedals, even while shifting up or down by a gear or two. Learning to smoothly adjust braking and power to the pedals are acquired skills worth practicing when riding solo.

HELP KEEP YOURSELF SAFE

PREPARE YOUR BIKE

Ensure your bike is safe to ride, by confirming the brakes, gears, steering and tires are all in good working order – *before* you hop on it to ride. If unsure, have your bike checked and tuned by a capable mechanic. Best bet is to educate yourself regarding these fundamentals.

WEAR A HELMET

Give yourself the best chance of mitigating the effects of a crash. If your helmet has ever impacted the road or is several years old, buy a new one. Be sure your helmet fits and is oriented properly, i.e., not tilted back, with the strap tight enough that only two fingers will fit between the strap the underside of your jaw.

LIGHT IT UP

Equip your bike with a headlight and taillight so that vehicle drivers are aware of you well in advance. Especially important when it may be harder for drivers to see you, i.e., at darker times of the day, when riding solo or in a small group, or when riding with less-than-bright clothing. Buy quality lights that are visible from afar – and keep them charged so they will last for your whole ride.

DESCEND IN THE DROPS

Ride with hands on the drops whenever descending, or for that matter, whenever you might not see a rough spot on the upcoming road (hammering a pothole can knock your hands off the hoods and induce a fall). Ensure you can comfortably operate your brake levers with at least two fingers when your hands are on the drops. If you descend with hands on the hoods, which are the typical place to hold your

handlebars on flats or climbing, you'll be at more risk due to less braking power and the potential to lose your grip on the handlebars.

PRACTICE WHEN RIDING SOLO

Pick one or two safety pointers each ride and remind yourself from time to time during the ride. Be mindful of them, develop your self-awareness with respect to them, and practice them until they become automatic.

REFLECT AFTER A RIDE

Ask yourself if there was anything you could have or should have done differently in order to be safer at any time during your ride, and consider what you would do next time in the similar situation.