

Rideau Lakes Cycle Tour:

Communication Volunteer Event Overview

Event Background

Every year, the **Ottawa Bicycle Club (OBC)** organizes and runs the **Rideau Lakes Cycle Tour (RLCT)**. This is a one-weekend event in early June that has bicycle riders cycle from Algonquin College since 2014 (previously from Carleton University) in Ottawa to Queen's University in Kingston, and back, a round-trip distance of over 340 km. The outbound trip starts early on the Saturday morning departing from Carleton, and finishing at Queen's University later in the day. Riders stay overnight at Queen's, and return along the same route on the Sunday. There are four specified routes, of which two are supported by repair vehicles, communication and designated rest and refreshment stops. There can be as many as 2000 riders taking part in the RLCT, coming from across Canada and many other countries, with over 1000 on the supported routes. This event takes place rain or shine.

More information can be found about the RLCT at their website <http://www.ottawabicycleclub.ca/rlct>

Communication Purpose

Given the large number of riders, the range in departure time and variation in speed, the tour can be spread out over a great distance. Providing communication spanning the full distance of the tour enables the support team to co-ordinate, and to render assistance to riders in need. With such a large number of riders and bicycles involved, it is inevitable that breakdowns and accidents will occur, and both do every year. Communication along the route enables accident location for emergency support, and the most effective deployment of the two repair vehicles to get bicycles repaired, and back on the road as soon as possible. In addition, identification and tracking of the last rider enables the organizers to ensure that no rider is left behind. There may be other requests for communication related to riders dropping out, lost items, etc., as well. Persons participating in communication support are not there to provide any form of traffic control, or to enforce rules and regulation of the Ottawa Bicycle Club.

Communication Overview

The communication services for this event are limited to the supported route, and are provided by radio amateur volunteers from Ottawa to Kingston. Overall communication co-ordination responsibility lies with VE3IHI (Rick Furniss), who works with the OBC executive. The Ottawa team's coverage zone goes from Carleton University to about 10 km west of Blacks Corners, which is south of Carleton Place on Highway 15.

Time Commitment

Although each day the tour is an all day event for the riders, communication volunteers participate from three regional groups to cover the whole route (Ottawa EMRG/ARES, Lanark ARES and Frontenac ARES), so the time commitment required for each group is constrained. For volunteers at the Ottawa end of the tour, participation is typically about 3 to 6 hours maximum during Saturday morning, and/or Sunday afternoon. As the event starts out from Ottawa on the Saturday, most volunteers are needed at their assigned stations by 7:00 a.m. For the Sunday return trip, most volunteers are expected to be at their stations by 11:00 a.m., but times may vary slightly from year to year. Once the last cyclist passes by their station, a communications official (usually via net control) will release that volunteer for the day.

Equipment Requirements

It is not necessary that every communications volunteer have his or her own equipment, just an amateur radio license. Volunteers who do not have equipment will be paired with those who do. Those with equipment will need to be able to operate on 2 metre FM mobile or fixed portable. While the ability to monitor two 2m frequencies simultaneously (dual watch) is desirable, it is not essential. A 50W transmit capability is ideal, but those with lower power can certainly be used as well. Operators who staff Ottawa Bicycle Club mobiles, will need dualband (2m/70cm) capability as there are 70 cm repeaters in use through the Lanark area.

Route Synopsis (Ottawa to Perth)

The Classic Tour leaves Algonquin College via Woodroffe Avenue and proceeds south toward West Hunt Club, where it turns right, and follows that to Old Richmond Rd. At Old Richmond Rd. it turns left continues on to Hope Side Rd, where it turns right, and then follows that to Eagleson Rd. At Eagleson, it turns left and follows Eagleson south for a short distance to Flewellyn. It then turns right onto Flewellyn

Rd, which it follows all the way into Ashton. The tour leaves Ashton on the 9th Line, which it follows through Blacks Corners to Loon Lane. At Loon Lane the road changes into Tennyson Rd., which is followed to Macphails Rd. where it goes left, and this takes the tour a short while later into Perth.

From Perth, there are two routes to Kingston, the Classic which travels via Westport and down CR 10 to Kingston, and the Century Route, which is a 100 km route starting at Conlon Farm (south part of Perth) and taking a different route to Kingston via Crosby, Elgin, Battersea and rejoins the Classic Route north of Kingston. Both parts of the tour end at Queens University on the Saturday and follow the reverse path to Algonquin College in Ottawa on the Sunday.

Note: The Ottawa Bicycle Club has provide detailed route instructions and maps through their website.

Role of the volunteer

Communication along the route enables general co-ordination, including the effective deployment of the repair vehicle, pickup (SAG) vehicles, and accident location for support. The roles of the volunteers are as follows:

- **Establish a station** at your assigned location. Find a suitable place to park/set up, and to ask for any permission that may be required (usually none needed).
- **Display your sign** in a location that will be visible to riders. A printable sign will be provided.
- **Be familiar with the route:** to track tour progress, and in case of redeployment (route maps available).
- **Support Communication Requests:** e.g. calls for repair vehicles, accident reporting, rider pickup requests, rider info. for cases of location-unknown riders, lost item reports, etc. Typically, you will be approached by riders with such requests.
 - **Identify the rider's bib number**, when making requests. [No bib – no service!]
- **Identify the bib-numbers of the last riders past your station** -- to ensure that no rider is left behind.
- **Identify to Net Control when the various mobiles visit/pass your location** (if you are able to identify them).
- **Watch for accidents/riders needing assistance** and report.
- **Supplementary:** In addition to providing communications, volunteers may be asked for: directions, the use of tools, band aids (for minor issues like blisters), to stay with people awaiting pickup, etc. – being able to accommodate such requests is a bonus.
- You are **NOT** there to provide any form of traffic control.
- You are **NOT** there to enforce rules and regulation of the Ottawa Bicycle Club.

Operations Summary

- **Cell Phone Use:** We are in the age of the cell phone, and amateur radio is not the only method used for trouble reporting along the route. The riders may be provided a cell phone number that will give them a direct line to OBC management to report accidents/incidents. In many cases, this will provide the quickest response to an emergency situation. However, many riders do not carry their cell phones with them, and coverage is inconsistent along the route. So, this form of reporting is often not dependable, and most reports do end up relying on the amateur radio support.
- **Ottawa Control:** All amateur radio communications for the event will take place via a controlled net on repeaters designated in this document. Net start times: Sat. 7:00 a.m.; Sun. 11:00 a.m. or thereabouts
- **Lanark ARES:** Lanark control is typically done from Westport using VE3KJG (Tactical Call: Westport Hill)
- **Last rider location & radio station shutdown:** Ottawa Control will coordinate operations and provide permission for shut down and departure.
- **OBC Mobiles:** There are multiple Ottawa Bicycle Club support mobiles that travel the route. They are designated with tactical calls as follows: SAG 1 and SAG 2 (see Pickup and assistance for riders – below); Repair 1, Repair 2 and Repair 3 (see Repair – below); and Admin plus Ops. The latter two carry the route manager and the overall OBC tour coordinator respectively. Admin is our primary interface into the OBC. There may be more SAG and Repair vehicles in a given year. In 2016, there are 4 SAGs and 6 Repair vehicles to ensure support over the two routes south of Perth. In addition, starting in 2014 a motorcycle based Sweep has been used.
- **OPP:** The OBC usually contracts OPP motorcycle police officers to patrol the route to provide Traffic Act enforcement (for both cyclist and motorists), and assist with emergencies.
- **Pickup and assistance for riders:** “SAG” (Support And Gear) refers to vehicles that are used to transport riders/bikes as required. “SAG” can be used as a verb or noun, e.g. “a person has asked to be sagged”, or “we have a sag request”. There are two SAG vans (radio equipped): SAG1 & SAG2.

- **Repair:** Several repair vehicles (usually vans) will be present on the route.
 - “Repair 1” through “Repair 6” or whatever is the number used are usually mobile with no ham radio support and rely on cell phones and stopping at our stations for messages.
- **Rider Bibs -- No bib, no service policy:** Each registered rider will have a numbered bib. Due to the number of non-registered riders who tag along, the OBC have decreed that **except in extreme emergency “no bib, no service”.**
- **Signs (Radio Stations):** You will be provided, in a separate printable file, a sign reading “Cycle Tour Radio Communications”. Display one or more of these in visible locations for ease of identification.
- **Signs (Tour Route):** There will be directional signs placed along the route. The people who put these up or take them down are referred to as “Uppers” or “Downers” respectively (really!).
- **Tactical Calls:** Tactical call signs may be used during the tour to identify your location or function. Examples of such calls are “Repair 1”, “Admin 1”, “SAG 1”, “Westport Mountain”, Blacks Corners, etc.. **Remember to identify using your amateur radio call sign periodically, per the regulations.**
- Starting in 2015, we had distinctive “red caps” red baseball caps with Amateur Radio Communication written on them. You will be provided with one of these. Please wear it when not in your vehicle to ensure you can be easily identified as a communication person, and keep it for subsequent year use.

Rider Knowledge of the Radio Operators

Some riders seem unaware of who the radio operators are or what they are about. This is simply a case of them not reading the information provided. The route map that every registered rider receives as part of their package contains the following statement:

"The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) is once again providing communications services for the Rideau Lakes Cycle Tour. If you need a mechanic for bicycle repairs, or if you need sag wagon service because of injury or a health problem contact one of the radio vehicles or one of our tour volunteers. You will see us at Carleton University, at refreshment stops, along the route, in Perth and at Queen's University."

Rider Numbers

Typically, there are about 2000 riders engaged in the tour. For reference, the 2008 rider figures were as follows (similar numbers in subsequent years):

Total registration, 2141: Challenge route 82; Classic 1250; Century 472; Cruise 249; Cancellations 88
2053 departed from Carleton plus Perth (the Century route initiates from Perth) on Saturday.

Rider Road Behaviour

Although the vast majority of riders exhibit good behaviour, there are always some who are less than ideal. The Ottawa Bicycle Club does issue notes to the riders highlighting this, and asking for their co-operation in making the tour go smoothly.

(NOTE: The following is typical of what is included in the riders' confirmation package, on the website (to be read before being able to access the application form), in the newsletter and in other miscellaneous correspondence.)

“ATTENTION ALL RIDERS: In recent years, an increasing number of complaints have been received concerning the poor conduct of individuals and/or groups on the Tour. These complaints originate from town officials along the route, the Police, the public and even fellow riders.

They list instances where cyclists flout traffic laws, are inconsiderate or even hostile towards drivers, residents and other riders. Other cases involve acts of trespassing on private property, littering, foul language and inexcusable use of public and private areas as toilets.

This situation has reached the point where it puts the very existence of the Tour in jeopardy. While a few identifiable individuals or groups may be barred from future Tours, realistically, the organizers cannot control the behaviour of the majority of riders en route.

It is then up to you, fellow riders, to act and speak out when you witness objectionable conduct, on or off the bike. Only by applying this peer pressure will you ensure the continued existence and success of your Tour. “

The OBC (Ottawa Bicycle Club) have also stated that they will encourage the OPP escort officers and other police forces along the route to be more aggressive in enforcing the rules of the road.