



GROUP RIDE ROAD CAPTAINS & SWEEPS GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The OBVMC has never had a formal Road Captain (RC) & SWEEP training course. However, it is prudent to have refresher sessions for all members, but especially for those who routinely volunteer to organize and lead rides. This information is designed to be available to all members and will be used for conducting pre-ride briefings and refresher sessions.

RESPONSIBILITY AND ATTITUDE

You have **been trusted with the safety and security** of the group you are leading. As such, you are responsible for making sure the ride goes smoothly and that you adapt not only to the prevailing road conditions: other road users, and the weather, but also to all the riders within the group (type of motorcycle, skill levels, etc.). Riding in a group requires a different mindset than when riding solo or with a few friends, whose riding style is known.

RC and SWEEP must exhibit a high degree of **self-discipline**. The main goal of the RC is to keep the ride safe and keep the group together.

Even though the RC and SWEEP have overall responsibility for ensuring a safe ride it is **every rider's responsibility to pay attention**, maintain proper distances and pass on hand signals. They cannot be passive; you are not just 'along for the ride.'

PLANNING

If a member of the club is planning to lead a group ride, they should advertise the meetup location and time, (build in time for the ride brief), the departure or 'Kick Stands Up' (KSU) time, the approximate duration, and a general description of the route and any intended stops. This way riders know what to expect and may even be able to provide more up to date info regarding the route.

PREPARATION

Ideally the RC should have done a **reconnaissance** of the route within a reasonable time of the planned ride so there are no surprises such as construction, road closures etc.

Know your group: As you gather, note not only who is in your group and how many, but ensure you know their level of experience with group riding. Inexperienced riders should identify themselves and be positioned up front with the Road Captain, in the 'co-pilot' position (first bike Right Lane) or behind the RC if more than one inexperienced rider.

RIDE BRIEF

Before departing provide a brief to the group including:

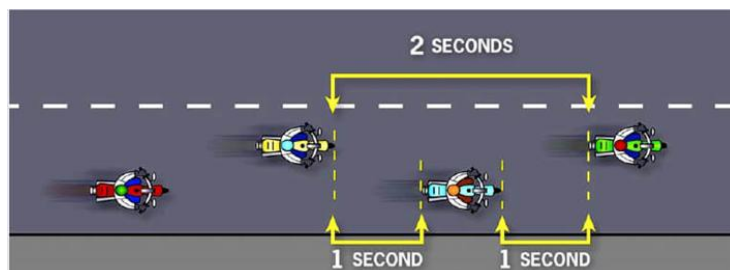
- **Route:** Provide a general overview of the route: type of roads expected (highway, through towns, back roads, etc.) road particularities, i.e. turns in the road that might be problematic or gravel at a certain intersection, etc.; duration of the ride in time and distance, and any stops.
- Review **Hand signals:** (Chart at the end of the document),
- Remind people you should always start a ride with a **full tank** and an **empty bladder**,
- Ask for **gas requirements** as not every bike has the same range, and older bikes may need high octane gas,
- **Emergency procedure**, (see emergency procedure below),
- What to do if **separated**. Always have a plan to pull off in a safe location to allow the group to reform and let riders know they will not be left behind so they do not try and keep up and drive dangerously,
- Check with the group at stops and use the opportunity to adjust and correct.

FORMATION RIDING – STAGGER

Riding in a Staggered formation (two lane offset) is the only legal formation for group riding in most Provinces except for single lane riding under some circumstances. We will rarely be riding side by side.

Standard group guideline has a **2 second** gap behind the bike directly in front (same lane) and a **1 second** gap behind the bike adjacent. This creates your safety cushion to enable and provide space and time to react to issues during the ride, especially at highway speeds. Most “Short reaction time” for manoeuvres is at least one-half second so the one second interval should allow adequate time to manoeuvre and avoid any contact with adjacent bikes. This reaction time is however much greater when breaking so advance warning is suggested prior to breaking (if possible) by tapping the break or indicating a slow-down signal with your left hand prior to actual breaking.

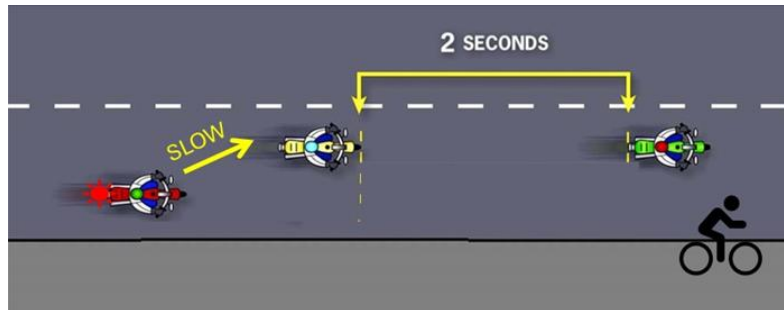
Trikes and sidecars are best positioned at the **back of the group**, just in front of the SWEEP. Because these vehicles are wider than two-wheeled motorcycles, they will use the entire lane, and have **different handling characteristics**, especially in corners. Placing them at the rear ensures they do not disrupt the staggered formation of the main group.



FORMATION RIDING – SINGLE FILE

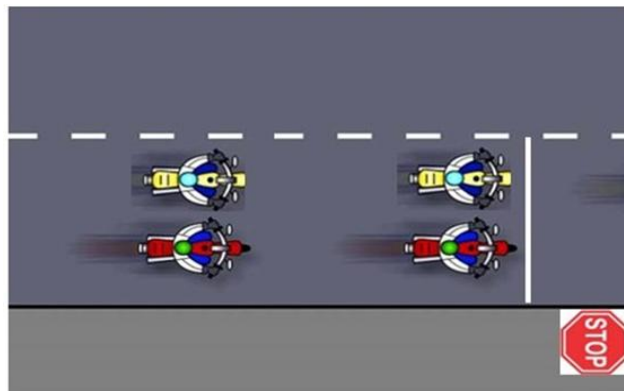
Also understand the stagger can become a brief single file orientation when cornering as riders can and are able to select the comfortable lane position for themselves thru a corner. The 'single file' signal is not necessary at every turn unless deemed necessary by the RC.

The RC may also indicate single file if there is a **shoulder hazard** such as a cyclist, parked vehicle, emergency vehicle, or the shoulder is in rough condition.



FORMATION RIDING – PARADE

Parade formations (side by side) are designed to maximize safety, visibility, and control during slow-speed, high-density public events and at stops. When the group comes to a stop at an intersection pull into this formation to allow better communications by closing the group.



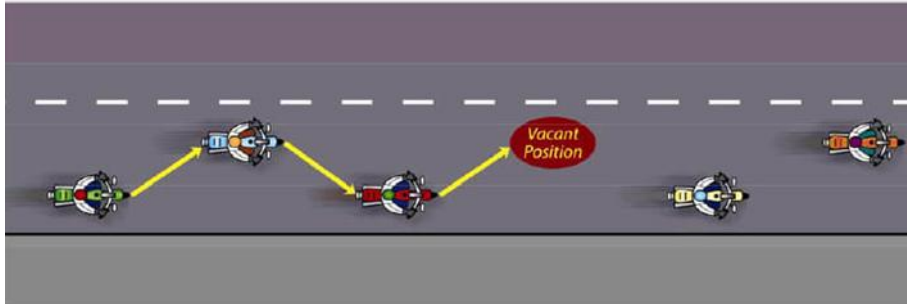
LEAVING FORMATION

Riders will often have to **unexpectedly leave formation** and should indicate their intention using the proper hand signal. When this has been noticed by riders in front or behind, they should pass up the signal for pulling off so the RC knows that a rider has unexpectedly pulled off and can find a safe area to pull the group over. The sweep should pull off with the rider leaving formation to ascertain what has happened.

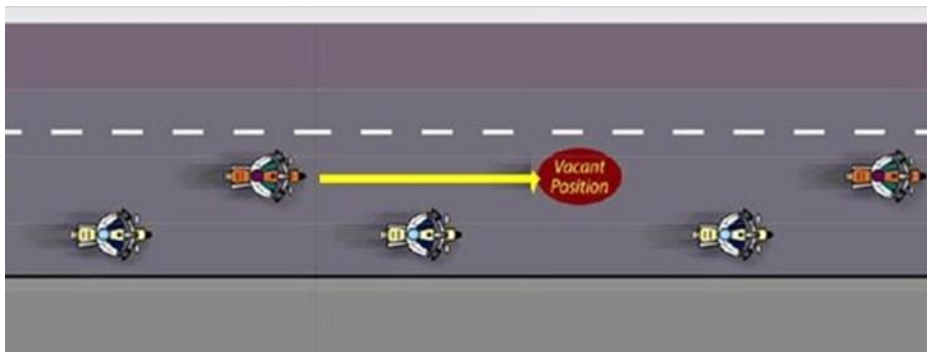
Often riders will **plan to leave formation** on the return route to take a different route home. This should be discussed and everyone advised so it is not a surprise. Riders planning to leave the group should be repositioned at the rear in front of the sweep to avoid causing too much disruption in filling the gap.

FILLING THE GAP

There are two ways to fill a gap in the staggered formation when a rider leaves, unexpectedly or otherwise. The first is the **cross-over method** (switch lane) to re-align the stagger formation when a rider drops out either unexpectedly or planned.



The second method is to simply **move up into position** to fill the gap from the drop-out rider. This results in a rider passing an adjacent rider in the process. Some riders will wave you up to pass, as they may not be comfortable changing positions and others may not be aware, thus the importance of making the effort to advise the group ahead of time, what is expected of them when the 'drop-out' occurs and/or knowing what a rider is likely to do when a 'drop-out' occurs.



RIDE SPEED

Motorcycle groups often travel 10–15 km/h above the speed limit, primarily as a calculated, defensive riding strategy aimed at creating a safety bubble. By staying slightly ahead of the flow of traffic, motorcyclists reduce the risk of being rear-ended, blind-spotted, or crowded by larger vehicles.

We have found that if the RC rides at the posted speed limit, the remainder of the group have little difficulty keeping up. However, this can cause cars to pile up behind the group, and could create impatience, leading to poor or dangerous decisions. If the RC notices this, they should pull the group off in a safe location and allow the traffic congestion to clear.

It is the responsibility of the RC / SWEEP to keep an eye on riders that cannot keep up or are crowding others, taking away the safety cushion of space between riders. At stops the RC should check with the group to see how they find the speed. You are only as fast as your slowest rider.

AVOID BREAKS IN THE GROUP

Try to avoid unnecessary breaks in the group by being aware of what might cause a break. The main reasons why a group will split are:

- Traffic Light changes: when some members of the group have already passed the intersection,
- Hurried lane changes or quick corner turns to beat oncoming traffic,
- Riders going at a different pace, which extend the length of the group (Slinky effect),
- Lead riders going faster than the rest of the group,
- Accelerating too fast when leaving from multiple stops (lights, Stop, Merger, etc.) and
- Not informing the group of the Route, so they cannot prepare on what to expect.

Always have a plan to pull off in a safe location to allow the group to reform.

THE "SECOND RIDER DROP-OFF" SYSTEM

If there is an unavoidable break in the group and the RC is concerned that they will miss an upcoming turn but cannot safely pull the group off to reform, he can designate the second rider to drop off wait and signal the turn to the remainder of the group.

When the group comes to a turn or junction, the rider immediately behind the RC (the second man) acts as a marker. The second rider pulls over to a safe, visible position at the corner, pointing in the direction of the turn to show the rest of the group where to go. The marker waits for all other riders to pass and rejoins the group.

CHANGING LANE OR MERGES

SWEEP blocking for lane changes initiated by the RC or closing the door on merging lanes are also a requirement to keep the group together. Remember this is **more the exception than the rule**. You can always find a safe location to pull over to allow trailing riders to catch up if the group is separated for any length of time. Remember, **at no time** will a SWEEP voluntarily block an intersection, stop traffic, or take any other actions to disrupt traffic. **BLOCKING TRAFFIC IS ILLEGAL!**

PASSING

Remember, **passing is a group effort** where all riders are following you. It is important to remember the length of the group and number of bikes behind you when getting back into a lane once a pass has been made. Using his discretion, the RC **can take the entire group beyond the vehicle being passed before the lane change** back occurs or **move over one bike at a time**. However, this can create an issue of "safety" when getting back into the prior lane using the "one at a time" method because group riders who fear being separated may try to follow the bike ahead as quickly as possible. In doing so, the follow up riders all too often cut it too close to the front of the vehicle being passed as they get back into position behind the riders ahead. Also, there is a

tendency for riders to slow down once they have completed their pass, closing the gap behind them for other riders trying to get back behind them. Passing speed should be kept until the SWEEP has passed and joined the formation. Be aware of this issue and make best efforts to give the group and individual rider's adequate space to get back into the main riding lane.

PACE AND SPACE

Oftentimes, a group ride is made more challenging when pace and space, are not respected by all. **Accelerate at a slower speed from stop** (maintain slower speed 10-15 seconds depending on group size) then reach your desired riding speed. This gradual acceleration will help avoid "the Slinky" throughout and especially at the back of the group. A gradual increase in speed allows the group to stay closer together longer and creates a "group" sensation for all riders. Group safety is our main concern and **consistency of "pace" and "space"** will encourage a 'safer' riding environment. Note that riders in the group cannot leave excessive spaces between themselves and other riders nor should they be crowding the rider ahead. It is the responsibility of the RC and SWEEP to keep an eye on the group and address any issues at the next stop. (See 'Communication' topic below).

EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

Under an emergency, the SWEEP will stop to assess the situation. **Mechanical emergencies** will be dealt with accordingly. **Accidents** involving a member of the group would require any riders behind the accident to stop and render aid. If a rider has bike troubles or happens to have the attention of a police car and needs to pull over, or goes down during a ride, the SWEEP is expected to stop with that rider and help.

Whatever the situation, the group is expected to be led away from the scene by the RC and down the road to stop at a safe location for a cool down period and or "debriefing" of the situation. Hanging around an accident scene creates additional distractions and can be extremely dangerous for everyone in the group so keep riding and lead the group where a stop can be managed safely. The remainder of the group ahead will follow the direction from the RC. At no time will any rider in the group become free runner without the direction of RC or SWEEP.

GROUP RIDING HABITS

Stop at Stop signs and look both ways, twice before proceeding. Listen, if necessary, for oncoming traffic if a clear view down the road is not possible due to a curve or incline or some form of obstruction in the road or along the roadside.

Extending the 'Stop' time (within reason) at a 'Stop' sign, briefly allows the group to catch-up and compress into parade formation. Stopping allows time for a glance back to contact with the SWEEP and encourages acknowledgement from the SWEEP ("All okay" or "issue" identification). Once you roll-on, the group can 'roll' thru, but each rider must look left & right for their own safety. Remember, **all riders are responsible for their own decisions and must not simply follow along blindly**. Stopping where required also results in a ride that will not feel 'rushed.' Take your time and enjoy the ride.

During ride intervals or breaks, **talk with the SWEEP** and discuss any abnormalities or riding concerns and address the group (in general terms) prior to continuing the ride.

COMMUNICATIONS DURING THE RIDE

All riders must learn and pass on all hand signals. Hold them a few seconds longer than you feel is necessary to ensure riders behind catch the signal and allow the group more time to react. Point out direct hazards, as you see them first. At stops take time to speak with the riders, especially new riders, to get a sense of how they are doing, and how you are leading.

MAINTAINING AWARENESS

Mirrors: Check your mirrors often. Keeping your eyes on the riders behind and especially for the SWEEP for any concerning signals. Left and Right mirror **checks through all intersections is necessary**. You must be aware of who is in your group, and if anyone has been left behind. Encourage all riders in the group to keep an eye on their mirrors as well, so they will realize they have suddenly become the next 'drop-back' rider when the group has made a turn. While the "**eye contact rule**" (if you can see their eyes in their mirror, they can see you) is an accepted rule of thumb for road safety, **it is not a guarantee of safety**.

Eyes and Ears OPEN. While leading rides or SWEEPING, you are responsible for the group and not permitted to be wearing earbuds or headphones of any kind. Remember communication is important and you must be able to hear fellow riders and the surroundings for hazards. Earplugs, used for noise reduction are OK.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY ISSUES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROCEDURES

Understand Riding Skills. At one point in our riding career, we were the new kid on the block. Even with years of experience, group riding is an art. OBVMC encourages new, or inexperienced to group riding riders to join us, yet we do not want to jeopardize the safety of others in the group.

We encourage **new or slower riders to be positioned up front with the Road Captain**, in the 'co-pilot' position (first bike right lane) or behind the RC if there is more than one new rider. This places the rider of concern in the safest position(s) in the group and tends to eliminate the Slinky felt at the back of the group. The rider(s) of concern will also see the signals that can sometimes not reach the back of the group properly. Depending on quantity of new or slower riders, an orientation ride may be considered prior to actual group riding. The new or slower rider can also take instruction from the RC more easily as the ride progresses.

Anticipate and Avoid Dangerous Situations. As a responsible RC/SWEEP or rider in general, anticipation and avoidance are important to help minimize dangerous situations and infiltration into the ranks of a group ride. To reduce the danger of group infiltration, maintain a tight formation in the group when instances of higher risk occur, such as when approaching and passing exit and entry lanes on highways, passing through critical intersections, when in heavy traffic or when emergency vehicles are nearby. The group should be doing this automatically.

RC and SWEEP, it is Your Ride. In general terms, Road Captains and SWEEP are responsible for the ride and the group, getting them from one point to another. While **every single rider is responsible for their own ride and safety**, the RC / SWEEP carries the "extra" responsibility of trying to make the ride as safe as possible for everyone. If you see a rider (or passenger), who is not dressed properly, i.e. not riding with eye protection for example, or has an issue with their lighting, i.e. a light is broken off or the bulb burned out, or a mirror is missing, etc. you have the responsibility and obligation to either remove that individual from the group or ask that they ride at the back with the SWEEP where again, they should not pose an issue to other riders.

HANDSIGNALS

Hand signals are key to communications as relying on voice is not only difficult, but dangerous it is a distraction while riding. Signals made by the RC need to be repeated and relayed by every rider in the group not only to ensure its passage back but as an acknowledgement by all riders.

The most common signals used will be turn indication, stop indication, road hazard, and moving into single file and back in stagger formation.

MOTORCYCLE HAND SIGNALS



LEFT TURN

Arm and hand
extending left,
palm facing down



RIGHT TURN

Arm out bent at 90°
angle up with fist
clinchd



STOP

Arm out bent at 90°
angle down with
palm facing back



SLOW DOWN

Arm extended
straight out with
palm facing down
while swinging arm
down



SPEED UP

Arm extended
straight out with
palm facing up
while swinging
arm upward



HAZARD IN ROAD

On left point
with left hand

On right point
with right foot



FOLLOW ME

Arm extended
straight up with
palm facing
forward



COME AROUND/ TAKE THE LEAD

Arm extended index
finger pointing out
while swinging arc
from back to front



PULL OFF

Arm extended
index finger
pointing out while
swinging arc from
left to over head



SINGLE FILE

Arm straight up
with index finger
pointed up



DOUBLE FILE

Arm straight up
with index finger
and middle
finger up



RIDE STAGGERED

Arm straight up
with index finger
and pinky up



FUEL STOP

Point to fuel
tank



COMFORT STOP

Arm extended
with clinched fist
with short up and
down motion



REFRESHMENT STOP

Fingers closed with
thumb to mouth



TURN SIGNAL ON

Extend arm while
opening and
closing hand



POLICE AHEAD

Tap top of head
or helmet with
palm of hand

