

=For Immediate Release=

5 Minutes to Midnight for Monthly Bicycle Happening

A Victim of its own success, Chicago's beleaguered Critical Mass ride fails to find needed sponsorship

Chicago: What started in 1997 with a handful of cyclists barely taking up a lane has grown into a wildly successful monthly party parade, with numbers in the thousands in the summer months and barely dipping below the 400-mark in the coldest months. But now the free-form bike event that motorists and 'establishment' cyclists love to hate may be nearing the end of the road. A controversial decision to end the ride on a high note to celebrate the September 28, 2007 10th anniversary from within the ranks of the ridership, and the resulting bitterly divisive infighting, have now been overshadowed by a real threat: the expiration of the ride's lease on its Daley plaza starting point, and relative support from the Chicago Police Department.

In June of this year, ride supporters working within city government learned that the ride would no longer be able to gather at the Daley Plaza location, and this news led to the launch of a campaign to forge a partnership with the Mayor's Office of Special Events in the hope of attaining city sponsorship of the event. The effort went as far as to receive confirmation that the Mayor would officiate over the launch of the September 28 2007 ride, but it was not until posters had been sent to every bike shop in Chicago announcing the Mayor's blessing and attendance that word came down from city hall that the commitment had been a "miscommunication" and the mayor would not be attending.

A reportedly "furious" mayor then ordered the Chicago Police shut down the August ride, resulting in mass arrests.

Not to be discouraged by these developments, organizers sought private sponsorship, and at one point had serious interest from Old Style Beer, who had turned out for the group's July Ride to the Berwyn Car Spindle with t-shirts and bumper stickers; however, a spokesman for G. Heileman Brewing Co, speaking on terms of anonymity, reports that Old Style is declining sponsorship at this time due to the high percentage of teens and families with small children typically in attendance on the ride.

With only a few days remaining until the "final tour", Friends of Chicago Critical Mass are now planning to approach Governor Blagojevich for a bailout, in final hope of avoiding their "doomsday scenario". A route to meet the governor near his house in the Ravenswood Manor neighborhood is under development; riders are cordially requesting that governor Blagojevich meet them at 9 P.M. at Huettenbar, 4721 North Lincoln Avenue, or 10 P.M. at the Chicago Brauhaus, 4732 N. Lincoln Ave., or at 11:00 P.M. at Carola's Hansa Clipper, 4721 N. Lincoln Ave. or at midnight in front of Leland Liquor, 4663 N. Rockwell St., or to just look out his window around 1:00 A.M.

The "final" Chicago Critical Mass ride will meet at Daley Plaza, Washington and Dearborn, at 5:30 PM and depart shortly after 6 P.M. as it has done every month for 10 years.

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