

Happy Friday!

Show everyone just how much fun it is to be on a bike!

- Be friendly to everyone you meet. You never know where your next friend might come from; maybe it's that cutie to your left.
- Clean up your trash. This is our city and every neighborhood belongs to someone. Trash containers are everywhere, so use 'em!
- If you choose to drink, keep it under control.
- SMILE! Remember, we are having fun tonight. We're not pasty-faced for lack of sunlight, stuck in a cage waiting for traffic to clear...



ChicagoCriticalMass.org

The Derailléur

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events for meeting listings or to list your own meeting.

I've heard that Critical Mass riders sometimes run red lights. Is this true?

There is a difference between running red lights and allowing the middle and end portions of CM pass through red lights. Running red lights is stupid. The front of the Mass should never run red lights. In order for the middle and end of the Mass to stick to the front of the Mass, those riders will need to pass through red lights on occasion. Think of the Mass as a parade; do you expect a parade to follow all traffic laws? No! The Mass, like a parade, must stick together so cross traffic cannot infiltrate it.

What is a Masshole?

Massholes can be easily identified by their poor behavior which includes treating the Mass as a race and refusing to Mass Up, riding into oncoming traffic, trapping cars in the Mass which creates a bottleneck that is hard to recover from, antagonizing motorists instead of calmly corking intersections, destroying property, littering, drinking so much that they endanger the safety of others, taking the Mass on Lake Shore Drive and/or expressways, spitting on motorists and/or cars, and generally

bringing a negative energy to the ride. Please stay home if you're a Masshole.

What does it mean to Mass Up?

Massing Up is a necessary part of CM rides. Several times during the ride, the front of the Mass must stop at an intersection and wait through 2-3 light cycles (red, green, red, green, red, green) before starting up again. This allows the middle and end portions of the Mass to catch up with the front. It is necessary to Mass Up to close gaps that motorists will fill, which makes the Mass unsafe and unpleasant.

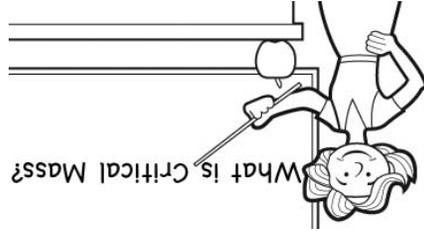
What is the relationship between Active Transportation Alliance and Critical Mass?

Active Transportation Alliance (formerly Chicagoland Bicycle Federation) and most riders in CM share some common goals, such as promoting cycling as alternative transportation (not just as recreation) and helping to make Chicago a better place to bike. Active Trans has been working within the system for many years and has a track record of accomplishments. In contrast, Chicago Critical Mass (CCM) is a fairly new phenomenon. CCM is grass roots—it has no formal organization or political agenda. CCM exists as an entity only during the rides. CCM provides a public, visual demonstration of the strength of the Chicago cycling community.

Why is it called Critical Mass?
The name comes from Ted White's bikenumentary "Return of the Scorchers". This video shows intersections crossing etiquette in Chinad's big cities: cross bike traffic waits until it has enough riders, i.e., a critical mass, to push its way through the intersection.
When did Critical Mass start in Chicago?
The first ride from Daley Plaza was on September 5, 1997, for which 150 cyclists showed up. However, there had been several rides in previous years beginning at different locations.
How long are the rides?
It's better to think of the length of CM rides in terms of time rather than distance. Rides in the warmer months tend to run around three hours long while rides in the winter or on cold/rainy days tend to be brief.
Who runs Critical Mass?
No one! There is no organized structure and there are no leaders. That said, there are occasional meetings where anyone who wants to be involved beyond the rides can participate. They usually take the form of an informal gathering at someone's house or at a bar. Anyone can call one of these meetings and anyone can go. Check thechalinlink.org/

This month's issue is based on content from ChicagoCriticalMass.org. Printing by Lee Diamond of Big Shoulders Realty. Send content for future issues to TheDerailléur@gmail.com. Thank you and Happy Friday! -willow naeco

What is Critical Mass?
Critical Mass (CM) is a worldwide movement to promote the use of bicycles as a viable means of transportation. CM has arisen in response to what many call the "car culture"; an over-dependence on the private automobile. CM is, more than anything else, a reclamation of space, a demonstration to show that the city belongs to people, not machines.
How did Critical Mass get started?
CM started in August 1992 in San Francisco when a group of bicycle commuters decided to ride home together.



Once a month, CCM gives a brief glimpse of what many riders envision as a better future for urban transportation, one in which cars with their pollution, noise, and dangers do not completely dominate the cityscape. When the Daley Plaza rides first began in Chicago, the leadership of Active Trans was skeptical, fearing that a bunch of unruly cyclists would undermine their bicycle advocacy efforts. However, both Active Trans and the City's Bicycle Coordinator now realize that CCM has energized the Chicago cycling community, and both organizations have hired staff members who ride in CCM. Many CCM riders are members of Active Trans. We believe that by participating in this public display of the joys of biking, we will actually make the work of Active Trans and other advocacy organizations more effective.

Are Chicago Critical Mass rides sanctioned by the Chicago Police Department?

We believe that riding our bikes on public streets does not require sanctioning by anyone. Bikes have as much right as cars to city streets. Police officers sometimes assist us by restraining cross traffic at intersections. However, we do not request such assistance and we prefer to cork intersections ourselves.

Why do you give out flyers on your rides? Who makes them and what do they say?

Most CCM riders believe strongly that our city and country are too car-dependent, that cars use up too many resources, occupy too much space, and do too much damage. Bikes, they say, would be a partial solution to the car-glut that grips our cities. So, the flyers are usually designed to help educate motorists along those lines. Some people ride for more personal reasons: since Chicago, like most cities in this country, provides little in the way of bike-safe routes, bike commuters are forced to compete with motorized traffic for road space. Unfortunately, some motorists do not recognize the right of cyclists to the streets. The flyers sometimes carry messages promoting mutual respect between cyclists and motorists. Anyone can make a flyer. Several flyers, including for areas beyond Chicago, can be seen (and downloaded!) on the Flyer Exchange page at ChicagoCriticalMass.org.

Who decides where to ride?

Anyone can make a map and distribute copies at Daley Plaza before a ride. If there is more than one map, each map maker usually stands on the Picasso pedestal, promotes his or her map, and a vote is taken. There are rarely more

than a couple of route proposals, since map creation requires considerable time and effort. Sometimes the maps have themes, such as a South Side neighborhood tour or the annual Polka Ride; others are designed to maximize exposure to traffic.

Is Critical Mass anti-car?

CM itself has no agenda. There are certainly some Massers who hold an anti-car sentiment, as evidenced by the success of the Auto Show Shutdown rides and protests. However, pro-bike does not necessarily imply anti-car. Many Massers, of course, own and drive cars, but advocate using them appropriately, only when no other means is practical. Some riders favor peaceful coexistence with the car, while others, no doubt, would like to see a completely car-free city. But, in general, most Massers just want to celebrate the joy of cycling, and to share that feeling with others.

Why are Critical Mass rides on the last Friday of every month?

CM is a worldwide movement. In order to enhance the feeling of solidarity with other riders around the world, the last Friday has become customary.

Are the rides athletic? Do I need to be in shape?

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Chicago has had in the past few years, drivers can get frustrated waiting for the Mass to pass by. When the Mass is stretched thin, drivers can attempt to push through the Mass. So, to avoid this, Massers can do the following things: **1) Be aware of your surroundings and communicate with your fellow massers.** If you see drivers becoming agitated, warn riders around and behind you. Also, be sure to stay calm no matter what. You may become angry at a driver, but aggression only leads to more aggression. **2) Mass Up!** Massing Up keeps the ride together and prevents motorists from entering and/or passing through the ride. Several times during the Mass, the front of the Mass must stop at an intersection and wait through 2-3 light cycles (red, green, red, green, red, green) before starting up again. It is necessary to Mass Up to close gaps that motorists will fill, which makes the Mass unsafe and unpleasant. **3) Cork an intersection.** Corking is when riders sit in front of cars to prevent them from trying to pass through the Mass. Usually, more experienced riders should cork, as it can be a tense thing. If you see a fellow Masser corking, be sure to thank them as you pass. If you want to cork, make sure to cork both sides of the cross street,

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No. People of all ages and abilities ride. The average speed is ideally 5 mph (parade pace). However, you should aim to be in shape anyway, and if you ride your bike enough, you will be.

Has anyone ever been arrested on a Critical Mass ride in Chicago?

Unfortunately, yes. On two occasions several years ago, officers of Chicago's 18th Police District arrested a number of riders. The riders were charged with Mob Action. Most riders viewed these arrests as police harassment since in all of the cases charges were dismissed or the riders were found not guilty. Since then, however, CCM has had a great relationship with the police. Often Chicago police officers ride with the Mass and can be seen cheering along with everyone else!

Can I come on inline skates?

YES! Several skaters have regularly joined the Mass for years.

Can I come on skateboard or non-motorized scooter?

Yes. Several competent skateboarders (mid to long) have completed prior rides.

Can I jog?

Maybe. The sustained distance and speed are challenging, but if you're a strong runner with a will to try, give it a go.

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but only when the light turns red mid-Mass. Don't block oncoming traffic. It doesn't help us get anywhere and it antagonizes drivers. Also, NEVER block emergency vehicles or train tracks.

What Else?

- In Chicago, the police are generally supportive of the Mass. Sometimes that can change. The most problematic case is if the Mass attempts to ride on Lake Shore Drive or one of the nearby expressways. The police generally will not tolerate this, so be warned should any Mass begin to make its way onto such a roadway, the police may intervene.
- Open liquor containers are illegal in Chicago. If you're going to drink, be sure to not drink from glass, as broken glass and bicycles don't play nicely together.
- Injuries can happen, and if you witness a cyclist get injured, try to help the rider out as best you can.
- The Mass easily spreads for emergency vehicles (much faster than motorists do) and we always accommodate emergency vehicles.
- At the end of the day, keeping the Mass calm and together takes cooperation from everyone. If you think of the Mass as a parade rather than a protest, it can help keep things from getting out of control.
- This guide is by no means exhaustive.

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Can I come on Segway?

Please, no. Myriad philosophical reasons aside, your weight and speed would be a danger to other riders.

What's up with this "Happy Friday!" thing?

"Happy Friday!" is the greeting of choice for Chicago Critical Massers. It's our way of wishing people well along our route. Help spread the love by saying this to everyone you see!

What is a Chicago Holdup?

Occasionally, when CCM riders move through intersections, they spontaneously lift their bikes over their heads. This is called a bike lift or bike salute in other parts of the world. It is a symbolic gesture to emphasize our belief that bikes are superior to cars as a form of urban transportation.

Tips For Newcomers

So, you're new to this Critical Mass thing, and you're trying to figure it all out? Well, we're here to help. While the Mass is open to all and there are no set rules, there are a few things that can help riders enjoy their ride.

Getting Started

As you probably know, the Mass starts at Daley Plaza at 5:30 p.m. on the last Friday of every month. But how do we know where to

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There are as many perspectives on riding the Mass as there are riders. Ask questions of your fellow riders. There is no such thing as too much knowledge.

Get Involved

The Critical Mass spirit makes it easy to get involved. It's a wide open space for civic engagement. Because there are no formal leaders, there's no "they" to make things happen; nothing happens until someone makes it happen.

For instance, all those great CCM T-shirts you see people wearing were printed at T-shirt printing parties—a fun way to make friends and get the word out. They happen irregularly, but if you have an idea for a T-shirt, you can get folks together and make it happen. There are fun things going on year-round; regular happenings initiated by people like you! Don't miss any of the numerous flyers passed out at the beginning of each CCM ride. Watch for event listings like Critical Mass Happy Hours, assembly parties for The Derailleur, and independent rides and events hosted by and for members of the CCM community, flyer and banner production parties, and one-time efforts, such as a brownie-bake for the whole Mass.

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ride? The ride routes are determined at Daley Plaza before each ride. Anyone can bring a route that they would like the ride to take, and usually a vote is taken to see which route will be followed. Sometimes the route can be hijacked by riders at the front. The Mass may not end where you think it will end. Just think of it as real life; you never know how it will turn out. If you don't want to follow the Mass, don't. Head your own way. Start a splinter Mass. The world is your oyster. You can ride the Mass with any type of bike you like. You'll see everything from tall bikes to fixies, trailers to mountain bikes. The ride is generally at an easy pace (ideally 5 mph), and it usually ends up being between 10-15 miles, although no distance is set in stone.

How it Works

The concept of a Critical Mass is that as cyclists, there is safety in numbers. Many of the places the Mass goes would be dangerous for inexperienced cyclists so the Mass attempts to stay together. Sometimes this involves parts of the Mass riding through red lights or stop signs. Laws are generally obeyed, but safety always comes before the law. Should the Mass become stretched or fragmented, things can get dangerous. With the number of riders that

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You can also contribute to ChicagoCriticalMass.org. If you enjoy writing, or you have artistic or technical flair, you can contribute to the site. It's your Mass; make it fun!

So, where do people get together to organize all this stuff?

Join the list-serv at ChicagoCriticalMass.org. This is where lots of folks go to chat and organize projects around Critical Mass. It's a fairly high-traffic list, and there's more discussion there than organizing, but this is where a lot of it happens. Another great forum for cyclists is the Critical Mass message board at thechainlink.org/group/criticalmassdiscussion.

Other goings on

Even though CCM is the most fun you can have on two wheels in Chicago, it's not the only game in town. Lots of Chicago bike organizations have year-round events for your perusal. Here are a few: 1) Chicago Cycling Club: 3-5 weekly rides, all levels 2) Windy City Cycling Club: 1-3 rides weekly for LGBT cyclists and friends, 3) Midnight Marauders: Monthly, 3rd Saturday, 11 p.m., and 4) Chicago Bike Winter: a grass roots effort with a vibrant schedule of rides, workshops, and events all through the winter months.

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