



Marketing bicycle safety training

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Austin Cycling Association

Promoting access, education, safety and enjoyment of cycling in Central Texas





Who we are

- A 501 c 3 non-profit organization
- Over 1400 members
- The umbrella club: most members of other clubs are also members of ACA
- Over 400 rides per year, weekends and weekdays, most free and open to public
- One fee ride per year, nets about \$18,000
- Annual budget over \$100,000
- Good working relationships with City public works dept, local metropolitan planning org (CAMPO), and Austin district office of TXDOT



First efforts: if you build it, they will come

- Very active program for children through schools, PTA's, churches.
 - Offer free training and helmets for kids
 - High demand; we have to leverage ourselves by demanding assistance from organizations we help
 - Our most successful program; client groups approach us
 - We partner with local Safe Routes to School Coalition, reaching children and their parents



If you build it, they will come

Adult education not so successful

- Tried to get as many LCI's, TS101 graduates, trained APD officers as possible
 - Offered scholarships to ride leaders, APD officers, other groups
 - More than 120 have completed TS101 in last 15 months
 - More than 30 LCI's in Austin area
 - Set up "teaching co-op" to centralize registration, class materials, computers, resource material to ease administrative load on LCI's
 - Advertised courses on website, in club newspaper (distribution 4500/month) and via posters at bike shops



But only a few came

- Youth programs were quite successful
- Still locked into “one size fits all” (TS101) for adult education, other than a few brown bag one-hour seminars for commuters, students, and as teasers for “real” TS101
- Over 120 graduates, but minimal impact on Austin cyclist behavior
- Spring 2009 – Whole Foods downtown delivery program. Custom course carved from TS101 to fit customers’ needs. No bicycling basics, just rules of the road, parking lot drills, road test. A light went on:
- Why not custom design training for others? And
- What do we want from our training efforts?



Strategic planning bicycle safety education

- What do we want to accomplish with our efforts?
- Whom do we have to reach?
- What do we have to teach these groups?
- How do we effectively market to these groups?



1. What do we want to accomplish with our efforts?

We want to make Austin a better, safer place to ride a bike.

We want better infrastructure, more cycling-savvy public officials, better-behaved cyclists, more courteous motorists, fewer incidences of road rage directed at cyclists.

We want to see more people riding bikes safely.

We want to see more kids riding to school and after school.

In terms of recognition of all of this, we want to be a gold or platinum level bike-friendly community (we are silver now).



2. Whom do we have to reach?

- city and county staff, particularly those having to do with infrastructure (public works).
- city council and county commissioners, as well as TxDOT engineers in our district.
- Make police officers more knowledgeable of bicycle rules of the road so they will be more confident in dealing with both errant cyclists and aggressive motorists.
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- experienced adult cyclists: commuters, recreational riders, racers, triathletes, so that they no longer raise the ire of motorists while putting themselves in harm's way.
- beginner cyclists
- kids



3. What do we have to teach these people?

For people in any sense beginners, we need to teach TS101.

But Whole Foods experience demonstrated that for some groups, we can use TS101 as a content resource, and carve out appropriate material.

For other groups, we can add to TS101 material i.e., for commuters, show route selection and clean-up (hygiene) options.

Cost and time demands for class can be sharply reduced.

Cannot offer TS101 certificate if not all “need to know”, but not an issue for most.



4. How do we market to these groups?

We've only just begun. We hope to come away from here with more answers.

One given: we want to maintain a fee for LCI's so they feel their work is appreciated, so pricing for customers must include this consideration

We recognize that the marketing approach for each group must be planned for that group; scattershot approaches have generally been of limited impact.



One key strategy: partnerships with other organizations

City of Austin's employee phys ed program. As part of a 12-week Cycling course, city employees participate in spin classes, TS101, and outdoor rides. Over 100 students through this program.

We taught TS101 to city officials (public works directors, the police chief, police officers, and city Council members).

UT Orange Bike Project: small grant from CAMPO, did a series of brown bag safety classes open to students, staff and faculty. Bureaucratic issues, attendance was small. We got our foot (wheel?) in the door for future efforts on UT campus.

Helped Austin Police Department design a bicycle law and rules of the road continuing education program for all 1600 officers taught via the APD academy website. Focused on bicycle vehicle law and safe riding strategies in TS101, and the reasons for those strategies.



TS101 and LCI training (at ACA expense) for volunteers from the Yellow Bike Project (YBP) . We feel this will be our best method to reach cyclists who would find the regular cost of TS101 or other classes to be prohibitive.

One large remaining “outlaw” group is the community of racers and racer wannabe’s who routinely ride in large packs in town and on small country roads, and blow through stoplights and stop signs. This highly visible contingent sets a bad example for more casual riders, and provokes quite a bit of motorist anger; we are presently trying to figure how to reach enough of them to change the culture of scofflaw behavior. Maybe present brief program to larger racing clubs in town?

Marketing tells us to advertise benefits, NOT features.

How do we best do that?