

# Pedaling Together: Building a Safe Cycling Community



(Photos courtesy Randy Bailey)

**F**or many, cycling is more than just transportation; it's a shared passion and source of community. The sport welcomes riders of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities and professions.

The local **Peachtree Corners Cycling Club (PC3)**, founded by **Randy Bailey**, boasts 1,300 local members. That means 1,300 of our friends, neighbors, coworkers and community leaders are cycling on roads regularly.

"It is a great cardiovascular endurance fitness activity, particularly if you're over 40 and your knees and hips don't work as well. Cycling is an activity to help you stay fit and to stay healthy," Bailey shared.

The sport, which welcomes people of all ages, demographics and abilities, is also a wonderful way to connect with others.

By **Kristen Corley**

"A typical ride could last two hours or three hours. It's great from a social standpoint, a bit like golf in that sense. The social interaction and connectedness that it brings is really cool and beneficial," Bailey said.

## Safety challenges and infrastructure needs

Bailey champions cycling as a lifestyle and works to ensure it is a safe option for everyone in Peachtree Corners.

"My goal for a long time has been to try building bridges with the people sharing the roads with us to make sure that we arrive alive," he asserts.

Bailey has a lifetime of experience as an endurance athlete and over four decades of residency in Peachtree Corners. He has witnessed firsthand the evolution of local roads and the increasing need for comprehensive safety measures.

"Cycling has been a significant part of my life. Through my experiences, both joyful and jarring, I've come to realize the critical need for better safety measures and mutual respect on our roads," Bailey stated.

Cyclists face numerous safety challenges. They're actively dodging road debris, potholes and infrastructure issues that drivers may not even notice.

**Andrew Hixson**, Norcross City Councilman, avid cyclist, and member of PC3, has had a few narrow escapes of his own.

"Riding is full of close calls that you, unfortunately, get used to. I have fallen a few times, mostly due to poor road design and maintenance. The most com-

mon issue is drivers passing extremely close and accelerating purposefully near you," Hixson shared.

## Common misconceptions on the road

Acknowledging the tension between drivers and cyclists on the road, Bailey addressed a key misconception that commonly leads to road aggression.

"If a group of cyclists moves into the road and someone gets stuck behind us, they might feel like we don't care about them. The perception may be that we are being arrogant, obnoxious and unaware of others around us. That is the furthest thing from the truth," he said.

"There's a reason we're not on the side of the road. Our top two goals in riding a bike are: don't get killed and stay out of the way of the rest of the traffic. No one is going to pull out into active traffic unless there's a reason," he explained.

"The reason could be that on the shoulder, where we're usually riding, there's broken glass, potholes, or other obstacles that cars don't see. If we hit those, we might get a flat tire at best, or worse, we could have an accident and land on our head. We do everything we can to be respectful and flexible. We stay out of the way of faster-moving traffic as much as possible," Bailey further commented.

Bailey's commitment to road safety is deeply personal, fueled by friends' accidents and his own harrowing experiences.

"I was rear-ended on my bicycle by a pickup truck at Lake Lanier a few years ago. I fractured my pelvis and I broke some ribs, but I came up swinging. That's good when you have one of these incidents because that's not always the case," he recounted.

According to a 2022 report from the CDC, nearly 1,000 bicyclists die, and over 130,000 are injured in crashes that occur on roads in the United States every year. Dedicated to the sport they love, cyclists are pleading for a better understanding of laws and humanity on the road.

## Common misconceptions on the road

**Bruce Hagen**, founder of **Hagen Roskopf** personal injury law firm, specializes in cycling accidents. He shared insights into common misconceptions about cyclists' rights and responsibilities on the road.



Hagen emphasized the severity of this issue.

“The number one danger facing cyclists is distracted driving caused by improper use of cell phones. Driving while texting or holding a cell phone is not just illegal; it endangers everyone on the road, particularly vulnerable road users such as bicyclists and pedestrians,” he added.

### Practical advice for cyclists

Hagen also offered practical advice for cyclists to protect themselves, starting with their insurance coverage. He highlighted the importance of having comprehensive coverage that extends beyond just automobile accidents.

“Everyone, but especially cyclists, should have as much Add-On Uninsured Motorist (UM) coverage as possible on the automobile insurance policy. The UM coverage follows the individual wherever they go, even when they’re riding a bike,” he advised.

This ensures that cyclists are financially protected in case of incidents involving uninsured or underinsured drivers.

Hagen outlined several critical steps that cyclists should take immediately following a crash.

“After a crash, it’s very important to call the police to conduct a thorough investigation. Take photographs at the scene, if possible, and of any visible injuries. If there are witnesses, get their names and contact information since it often does not show up on police reports,” he urged.

Collecting this evidence can be crucial for any legal proceedings or insurance claims that may follow.

### Legal and medical follow-up

Hagen also stressed the importance of seeking medical attention and being cautious with insurance companies.

“Follow up immediately with the appropriate medical provider to get whatever care

that’s needed. Do not give a tape-recorded interview to the driver’s insurance company because they’re not trying to help. They’re trying to minimize their exposure to paying a claim,” he said.

“When you can, contact a lawyer who has specific expertise in handling bicycle crash cases because there are many unique aspects that make them different from a typical Car vs. Car personal injury case,” he continued.

### Promoting safety in urban areas

Looking at broader solutions, Hagen shared his views on how to improve cycling safety in urban

areas like Peachtree Corners. He believes that a comprehensive approach is essential for making meaningful changes.

“Improving safety for cyclists requires a multi-pronged approach involving improved infrastructure on the roads to make them safer for all users, public education about drivers’ responsibility and enforcement of existing laws,” Hagen said.

This approach aims to create a safer environment for cyclists through better road design, increased public awareness and stricter law enforcement.

### The role of technology in enhancing cyclist safety

Innovative solutions are continually being developed to improve the coexistence of vehicles and bicycles on our roads.

A key example is the partnership between **Spoke Technology** and **Audi**, which aims to enhance cycling safety. This collaboration combines Spoke’s advanced sensor and software technology with Audi’s automotive expertise to create a safer environment for cyclists.

On April 28, 2024, the **Curiosity Lab Criterium** returned to Peachtree Corners. The competitive cycling race hosts USA CRITS Division 1 teams across three states. This year, the race spotlighted advanced safety technologies, including a live demonstration of Spoke’s Cellular Vehicle-to-Everything (C-V2X) technology in collaboration with Audi.

Spoke’s technology represents a significant leap in safeguarding cyclists, pedestrians and motorcyclists, often referred to as vulnerable road users, or VRUs. The C-V2X technology facilitates improved communication between VRUs and nearby vehicles through a small device.

This device, which can be attached to bicycles, motorcycles or carried by pedestrians and motorcyclists with vehicle-based C-V2X systems, such as those found in Audi cars. It alerts both drivers and VRUs to each other’s presence, direction, and speed, helping to prevent accidents before they occur.

When accidents do occur, the team analyzes incident data to identify patterns and areas of concern. This allows for continuous improvement of safety features. This data-driven approach ensures that the solutions are not only effective but also evolve with changing road conditions and cycling behaviors.

### Public-private partnerships and community engagement

Curiosity Lab’s achievements have brought national recognition to Peachtree Corners as a leader in intelligent mobility and smart city solutions. The event highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships. Technology companies, car manufacturers and local governments like Peachtree Corners collaborated to develop life-saving technologies.

“The city is doing a lot of research on vulnerable road users and is collaborating with Audi, T-Mobile and other partners at Curiosity Lab. They’re developing technology to keep cyclists, pedestrians, scooter users and e-bike riders safe when sharing the road with cars and trucks,” said Bailey.

As Peachtree Corners and its partners continue to work for safer streets, they will establish a model that other communities can emulate.

The initiatives in Peachtree Corners highlight the importance of cooperation between cyclists, drivers and municipal officials. By promoting community involvement, utilizing advanced safety technologies and educating the public on traffic regulations and hand signals, the city encourages a shared road environment for everyone. ■

According to Hagen, these misconceptions often stem from drivers’ misunderstandings about cyclists’ rights.

“Cyclists have most of the same rights to ride on the road that drivers have. For example, bicyclists over the age of 12 may only ride their bikes in the street, not on the sidewalk, as many drivers believe. Cyclists may ride two abreast; they do not have to ride single file,” he explained.

Better education and awareness among motorists are needed to ensure safer interactions on the road. However, understanding the laws does not eliminate the threat posed by distracted driving.