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## **Far better STP experience this time around**

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Preparation and education paid off. Last weekend's Seattle to Portland Bicycle Classic [received generally high marks](#) from both riders and Cowlitz County motorists, according to Daily News reporter [Leslie Slape](#). Some even turned out to cheer on many of the bicyclists participating in the Northwest's largest multi-day cycling event as they rolled through the community and across the Lewis and Clark Bridge.

The comity had its exceptions, of course. With a record 9,500 bicyclists in this year's STP classic, there were bound to be some riders who would act as if they owned the road. And there will always be some local motorists who have the same attitude and resent even a little inconvenience. But what we've read and heard about this 29th annual STP is mostly positive.

Last year, the story line wasn't so encouraging. [Three bicyclists were injured](#) on the final day of the event, when a hit-and-run driver collided with one rider on Highway 30 and two others riders collided with the downed bicyclists. News of the accident occasioned an outpouring of hostile comments on The Daily News Web site. [Area readers slammed STP riders](#) for littering, failing to obey the rules of the road and causing drivers to slow to a crawl by riding three or more abreast. A few bicyclists responded with derogatory comments about county residents, but most of the hostility was directed toward bicyclists.

Organizers of event with the Seattle-based Cascade Bicycle Club were rattled by the online story comments. M.J. Kelly, the club's communication specialist, told The Daily News that staff members were surprised and saddened by the "magnitude of the hostility" toward the STP.

The club responded in positive fashion, working in advance of this year's event [to improve rider safety and reduce traffic delays](#) and other inconveniences for motorists as much as possible. The club counseled bicyclists to ride in single file. "Single File is Safer" appeared on shirts for this year's event. The club provided "rider refs" to watch for unsafe riding and traffic violations. The club's Gold Wing motorcycle patrols were instructed to watch for unsafe riding and issue "mock tickets" payable as a \$25 donation to the club's education foundation. The club paid to have police officers manage bicycle and vehicle traffic at intersections where there had been problems in years past.

By all accounts, the club's careful preparations paid off. There is a world of difference between this year's online comment and the previous year's. That's good news. We believe the community is fortunate to be on the route of the STP Bicycle Classic. The enjoyment and commercial benefits of having thousands of bicyclists ride through Kelso and Longview for two days each year far outweigh any inconvenience.