Pointers for MATES and ETR Host Teams

This document originated as Karen Hass's recommendations for hosts for MATES. It has since been generalized for the ETR Rally as well. Significant input courtesy of Caren Bianco following ETR 2013 Warren, NJ and 2016 Geneva, NY, and by Malcolm Boyd.

After putting on MATES 2006, we decided that it might be useful to identify the critical steps we deemed necessary to assure that ETR and MATES rallies run smoothly. Below we list in chronological order what we feel is necessary for a successful rally. Generally, the MATES rally is held in June and is targeted at approximately 50 teams; ETR has been held from June to early October and targets 100-125 teams, although it can be (and has been significantly larger). We also aim to schedule the two rallies at least 6 weeks apart. Keep in mind that Father's Day is in June and you will probably get a lower turnout if you decide to hold MATES on that weekend. Also check with others to make sure that we don't go with the same weekend as another tandem cycling event.

Try to recruit at least a couple of people to commit to helping during the MATES or ETR weekend early on. No single person needs to do a lot, but every little bit will help. We had two friends help with registration on Friday until dinner time, another friend help from dinner until 9 pm, and another friend hang out in the snack room (replenishing snacks as necessary) from lunch time until dinner on Saturday. The larger the rally, the more help you will want. Ask all the folks who help out at the rally to be as welcoming as possible, it really adds to the rally-goers experience. This is particularly important for new rally participants to feel welcome from the start!

1. **Choose the Host Motel and set the weekend date.** First order of business - finalize the location and block a set of rooms no later than a year prior to the rally. The larger the rally, the sooner this needs to be done, since you are looking for a large block of rooms. ETR and MATES has generally tried to avoid conflicts on major holidays with other tandem events – the BBC has the Kent County Spring Fling over Memorial Day weekend, and the MTR is always Labor Day weekend – but we have used July 4th weekend successfully. The combination of the hotel and the date define your event. We suggest discussing proposed dates with the ETR Board. You might also consider trying to check in with other entities that sponsor regional tandem events, such as Tandems East (eg Tandem Weekend), GTG (tours), BBC, and PPTC, and regional clubs like NEWTS, DOGS, CRABS, WABITS, etc. Our objective is to do no willful harm to other organizers or events if we can avoid it. Keep in mind that hotels will reserve a block of rooms, but you should try to avoid making any room **guarantees**. If you do need to make a room guarantee, it will need to be approved by the ETR Board.

   Motels are very competitive. If you can get quotes for group rates from several in the area you are in a much better position to bargain! Even if your options are limited, don't be afraid to ask for a discounted rate – remember you are filling up their facility for an entire weekend! This substantially increases their profit, and at the same time minimizes their sales effort. They can afford a discount, but many will not give you one unless you ask for it.

   Make sure that when you first talk with the hotel, you are clear about what extra

space you will need. For example, bike storage rooms, place to hold registration, or, if you are planning an ETR, you will want to have a place for the open Board meeting typically held on Saturday late afternoon. The best time to bargain is before you have set the hotel.

Some hotels will give you a free suite or room if you have 10 or so rooms taken. This can keep costs down as you can use this for the free ride room for the prior year sponsors, or just roll the savings as a credit to the rally expenses.

You will also want to make sure you discuss the price of rooms for the 'shoulder' days before or after a rally. One hotel gave us a great weekend rate, but would not budge on the price of the rooms for people arriving on Wednesday or staying a night or two after the rally.

You need to decide how many days the rally will run. Increasingly, rallies are routinely running three days, and some are opting for four days. Wherever you choose should also provide space (e.g., meeting room) for registration, snacks, and the ice cream social at no additional charge.

For the first day of the rally, it is a good idea to have a later start time. This way teams that are not too far away can go directly to the ride and save a night's hotel.

You will also need to decide whether to have breakfast and/or dinner at the hotel, either in their restaurant or via a caterer. Be sure that any meals that will be provided by the hotel are included in the rate you negotiate! (More on meals below.)

A hotel with a pool is a nice plus. Kids (and adults!) love swimming pools!

Other options you might consider for hosting ETR and MATES are colleges and conference centers. ETR particularly has a long history of using college dorms, see the ETR web site for the history.

Last but not least, think through the safe routes away from the hotel for the start of the rides! You may have the best hotel/motel, but if the roads around it are not good, then you will be stuck with remote starts each day which can be a strain on participants.

You can either include the hotel cost in the registration fee for the weekend or keep it separate. We have attended rallies that did it both ways – hotel included with the registration or paid for separately. We found keeping the hotel separate from the registration fee to be best for several reasons. If a team cancelled they were responsible for cancelling the hotel reservation – one less thing for us to have to worry about. Also, it nicely solved situations where a team wanted to

only stay one night, camp nearby, or sleep at their own home nearby.

2. **Choose the Lunch Stop.** Second order of business is as critical as the host site. A Saturday lunch stop needs to be chosen, ideally between 5 and 20 miles riding distance from the host hotel in order to accommodate families and riding teams that aren't that strong. Having a lunch stop near the hotel is a good option. Many people do not like to ride after eating, so being closer is helpful. Some may even prefer to go to the hotel, shower and then drive over to the lunch. Also, if the weather is not nice, it is preferable to have the lunch near the hotel. You can always provide a longer route back for those that want to ride more after lunch. An alternative is to have a remote start from the lunch stop location for the shortest route.

   Look for parks with picnic shelters, churches, fire houses, schools, sports fields, etc., but since these kinds of facilities are often in demand in June, it is important to reserve a spot early – no later than December or January. Be sure wherever you choose for the lunch stop allows everyone to get under cover from rain or sun. Either choose a place that has drinking fountains or faucets or be sure whoever provides lunch brings plenty of water &/or other cold drinks. Look for facilities that have a full bathroom. Port-a-johns are not great for a lunch spot. We suggest checking out the bathrooms before deciding on a place.

3. **Decide Who Will Provide Meals.** Good food in **quantity** is important! Regardless of who provides meals, it is **critical** that the meal providers understand that cyclists eat **LOTS**!!! The analogy that is often used is that it is like feeding a football team. You should also be concerned about how long it takes to feed the group. A sit down lunch may not be appropriate since people will want to get moving to ride more. Grab and go sandwiches move a line of people through very quickly and people can take as much or as little food as they need.

   Arrival Night Dinner. Since people will be arriving at the rally at various times, it may be easiest to let everyone find dinner on their own on the night of the arrival. If any meals are provided on an arrival day, a good idea is to provide an opt-out option on the registration form. That way, later arrivals are not expected to pay for meals they didn't eat. Provide a list of local restaurants either in the team packets or make it available on the website. A local map also helps pinpoint restaurants and other points of interest – check with the Chamber of Commerce or local visitor's center for such a map. Or the host hotel may have one.

   Breakfasts. It is easiest to provide breakfast at the host hotel, either the complimentary continental "plus" that has become popular, or breakfast at a restaurant on the hotel premises, or a catered breakfast at the hotel or nearby. If the hotel provides guests with a complimentary breakfast, find out exactly what it includes and decide if it will provide sufficient fuel for cyclists about to leave for a 50+ mile ride! Don't be shy about telling the hotel what you need to have. Make sure that the breakfast offers cereal, oatmeal, bananas and yogurt. Many hotels offer bacon and egg breakfasts, but not as much fresh fruit and grains.

Having breakfast someplace close to the hotel is an option although not quite as convenient. In our opinion, the quality and quantity of food was most important, with convenience secondary.

Lunch. Generally, ETR or MATES arranges for some form of a picnic lunch on the road. You will need a caterer for the Saturday lunch stops to set up at a park, firehouse, church, fraternal organization, etc. as a picnic stop. See the comments in section 2 about lunch stop. On the departure day, some rallies have offered lunch, typically at the hotel after the ride; other rallies have ended without offering lunch. A bag lunch gives the attendees the choice to eat it there or take-with on a long drive homeward. Be aware that a lot of people will order lunch on Sunday, but not pick it up. You may want to order a bit less (at least 10% fewer lunches than people) or line up a food bank to donate the food to. Keep in mind that many food banks will not take the leftover food since they cannot vouch for its freshness.

Saturday Banquet. Generally, ETR or MATES arranges for some form of a group dinner Saturday evening. Dinners have ranged from hotel banquets to a local restaurant or country club, or even a clam bake (the clam bake actually was one of our few fiascos, and started and hour and a half late because no one had gotten a fire permit! The devil is in the details!) If the ETR or MATES host hotel has a good restaurant that may be an easy option for the Saturday banquet – many hotels with restaurants on premise have separate banquet rooms and set menu/buffet options for large groups. This may be more of a challenge for ETRs since they can be upwards of 250 people. Other options are restaurants within a reasonable driving distance of the host hotel (many have banquet rooms), other nearby hotels with restaurants, churches, fraternal organizations, museums, etc. If you have spoken to any caterers they may have ideas. Other sources of information are the hotels and caterers you have spoken with, the local bike shop, the chamber of commerce, or anyone you know who is familiar with the area. If you are doing a buffet, you should be consider whether to have two rows of food so that the group can get through faster. Sometimes a plated meal is better and can often be less costly than a buffet. With a plated meal, you know that you won't run out of food.

Caterers. Most caterers have web sites with sample menus and prices. We suggest you get quotes from several different caterers, unless you know of a really stellar one. You will need to give them an estimate of total adults and children so they can give you a quote – the cost for children under age 12 should be half to a third the cost for adults. If you find a caterer that interests you, ask for references. If you can find a caterer that has experience feeding cyclists or athletes that is a plus because they will have first-hand experience with the amount of food athletes eat! Try to find alternatives early so you can assure that your final choice is not booked for the dates you want! Also, in some cases we were able to negotiate a

lower price overall by selecting a caterer to provide all meals from Saturday breakfast through Sunday breakfast.

Some Additional Thoughts on Food.

Vegetarians – make sure that you get a lot of veggie burgers or the like. We ran out of veggie burgers at Saturday's BBQ. I think that there were 50. For the sandwiches on Sunday, I ordered 20% vegetarian sandwiches and those were all gone. There were a lot of turkey and tuna left over.

Gluten Free and other Allergies – consider asking the caterer to offer this option, or mark dishes that do not contain wheat gluten. Maybe even order specific meals for the gluten free folks with their names on it. More and more, there are people who are gluten-free and dairy-free. Note that for the 2016 ETR, about 3% of the attendees were GF.

Counts -- When you give counts for the ice cream social (assuming you have to) or the Sunday lunch, estimate low (perhaps 80%). A lot of people either don't eat ice cream or they go out to dinner and miss the ice cream social. A lot of people also leave early Sunday and don't pick up their box lunch. You could save money by going low on the count. We had 223 attendees. I bought 220 lunches, but we had to have had at least 20 left over.

Environmentally Friendly – We have found that tandem couples are very concerned about our carbon footprint. You might want to consider using eco-friendly plasticware and avoid Styrofoam plates. Or you could encourage people to bring their own plates to reuse and give a prize to those who do so.

Entertainment. ETR's optionally have some form of entertainment after the Saturday dinner. This can be anything from a comedian, improv group, musicians for dancing, folk musician(s), or pretty much anything you choose. An increasingly popular option is simply to open the hospitality room with some drinks available afterwards, too. Many people enjoy just talking with friends as much as, or more than sitting through the entertainment gig. Be sure to budget for this and have a plan for what type of entertainment you would like before really committing to dates. See if your Saturday evening dinner venue can handle having a show.

4. **Draft a Budget.** Once you have the three items above firmed up, you are ready to draft a preliminary budget and calculate the team registration fee. Remember to include as an expense the registration fee and hotel fee extended to the previous year's organizer for MATES and ETR. They get a free ride (both registration and room), as one team amongst your group will at the following year after your rally. You may also seek a couple to act as support and SAG. In 2013, we gave the SAG support team a free trip. In past years we have used Knapp and Ella Hudson

as our photographers. They do not charge for being the photographers, but we have covered their rally hotel and fees. In addition, they have charged $200 or web hosting fees.

We used the ETR Board of Directors for questions about the budget and registration fees and they will want to review your initial draft budget at least 10 months in advance for a "sanity check". We also asked the prior year's team for advice. They had just been through everything and it was fresh in their minds. Pick a target number of teams that you would break even with costs. In other words, spread your fixed costs over a minimum number of attendees. For the 2013 ETR, we used 80 teams. When we ended up with 109 teams, we had a bit of extra money to play with. Whatever you arrive at for a team registration fee, we suggest you add an extra 5% or 10% - there will invariably be expenses you forgot about! To the extent that you are spreading fixed costs over a small number of people, you do not need to have as large of a cushion for unexpected costs. Following your rally you can make a contribution of any extra money left over to ETR or (in amounts less than $500 without Board approval) to a cycling-friendly or advocacy organization, or to a deserving local organization, like a parks commission if you used their facilities. If you have large amounts of collected fees left over, consider a cash refund to attendees or a roll-forward to the next rally, in addition to returning a small profit to the ETR organization.

Tracking ETR or MATES Finances. As soon as you start to spend money for ETR or MATES or collect registration fees, you need to appoint a treasurer and co-treasurer and set up some sort of balance sheet (we used Excel) to track all incoming money and all expenses. The ETR organization will provide a checking account that you can use in the ETR or MATES rally names. The checking accounts are two signature accounts, meaning that two people must sign each check. A single husband and wife team does not suffice for the two signatures. This is just one of the simple financial checks and balances the organization has in its Bylaws. The ETR organization also provides front monies for making deposits on hotels or banquet spots. Be sure to keep receipts for any money spent for the rally and record the expenditure on the balance sheet. If you choose to, you may keep track of any mileage for scouting, etc, and use the government's mileage reimbursement percentage to calculate reimbursement for mileage. (Most teams do not do this if they live locally.) For income received from Rally participants, the minimum information that needs to be recorded is the registering teams first and last names, address, and total amount received from that team.

For the 2016 rally, we used electronic registration for the first time. The rally filled up in less than a week. Note that you will need to budget about 3% in PayPal fees. In 2016, we only accepted checks for registration if the person had trouble using the PayPal system. This ended up being two teams out of over 190 teams who registered.

You will need to submit your balance sheet and receipts to the ETR Treasurer following ETR or MATES.

5. **Refund Policy.** It is up to the organizing team to set up a refund policy for registration fees. This should be communicated on the website and/or registration materials. For example, full refunds less 5% for cancellations up to one month prior to the event; 50% refunds for cancellations less than one month, but up to one week prior. No refunds within a week of the event. Then if there is money left over after the rally is over, the organizing team may elect to refund something to those who cancelled last minute. Generally those last minute cancellations are due to individual or family health issues. It buys goodwill by refunding something.

6. **Website and Social Media.** You will need to update a few pages on the easterntandemrally.org website for either MATES or ETR. This is not difficult and the ETR webmaster can help you. There is also Facebook page for the ETR. See the Georgia Tandem Rally Facebook page if you are looking for ideas. If you are not into social media, find another attendee who is. It is likely that they can help you too. There is also an ETR Gmail account. Contact the prior organizers for the password.

   We also set up a website for attendees to upload and share photos.

7. **Photographer.** For the ETR event, you optionally may want to consider hiring a professional photographer. For 2013 ETR, we had a tandem team who are professional photographers and who were not riding do the photography. That situation is always best, since they know how to photograph cyclists. Be sure to make sure that there are free downloads, even if the photographer charges for prints. ETR and ETOR Rallies usually post a time for a group picture in the agenda. MATES typically does not; however, you certainly could do that for MATES as well.

8. **Create Registration Form.** The registration form should provide the following information:
   - ✔ Location and date of rally
   - ✔ Amount of registration fee for team and for children
   - ✔ Optional events fees and optional gear, such as jersey sales
   - ✔ Where to send the registration form and check
   - ✔ Date registration closes
   - ✔ How cancellations will be handled
   - ✔ Contact information for any questions (i.e., whoever is putting the rally on)

- ✔ What the registration fee covers (specify whether it includes the hotel cost or whether teams need to reserve and pay for a hotel room themselves)
- ✔ Hotel information – number to call for reservations, special rate
- ✔ Where to send the registration form and check (if you are not doing electronic registration)
- ✔ Liability release form (which needs to be signed by all participants with parent/guardian signing for minor children)

The registration form should also have spaces for the team to provide the following information:

- ☐ Team member names, address, phone #s, email addresses. Be sure to ask what name the member would like on their badge
- ☐ Names of children attending
- ☐ Size t-shirt or jersey if that is included
- ☐ Special dietary needs (e.g., vegetarian, gluten-free)
- ☐ Allergies, other chronic medical conditions, medications being taken
- ☐ Who to contact in an emergency with contact information

If you are asking people to make meal choices, put it on the registration page so that they will be forced to make the election.

You also need to post the registration form to the ETR website and any other organizations that will promote the rally for you. Additionally, you will want to design the web pages (more on this later).

9. **Open Registration!** The sooner the better – certainly three months before the start of your rally. As soon as you've done everything above, send the vital information and a registration form to the current webmaster of the ETR web site, Tandem@Hobbes, Tandem Club of America, PPTC, BBC CRABS, DOGS, NEWTS, CTC, and any other tandem organizations and newsletters you know about as soon as you have the registration cost calculated. The webmaster can also provide a list of past participants. For ETR in 2013, we sent out mass mailings to over 400 teams with only a small percentage of emails bounce back. We cannot say how many got into spam folders, but tend to think it was not a big issue. Certainly when we had all of the participants, we sent mass mailings to the registered participants and we do not think that those emails landed in spam. (A 2013 review of the commercial systems suggests that greater than 100 addresses in a single email may be treated as spam.) In 2012, the ETR website also started using a 'Contact Us' form to collect email addresses of newbies who are not currently on our mailing/attendee list.

10. **Tracking Registrations.** As teams register, keep a list (a spreadsheet works nicely) with all information collected on the registration form. We also kept the

forms in a 3-ring binder that we took with us to the rally. Once a team registered, we sent them an email (or postcard if they didn't have email) confirming that we'd received their registration and check. By 2013, everyone had email. In addition, for the 2013 MATES and ETR rallies we did not have any mailings.

11. **Notifying Police.** For ETR 2013, we sent out letters to the police departments three times. First, in March, alerting them to the event, giving an overview of the towns that we would be going through and asking whether we needed any special permits. Second, in July, providing actual cue sheets and asking whether there were any road closures. Third, after the event, telling them how the event went and thanking the police for helping us. It is also a good idea for any ETR sized mass starts to alert the police to the mass start and to see if they can send an officer over to stop traffic at the start. If you have a college option, you may be able to use the campus police. Police notification is a strong suggestion, not a requirement.

12. **Getting Sponsors.** Particularly for ETRs, you can ask for donations/sponsorships. ETR 2013 was the first year we tried to get sponsors for ETR. If you are interested in doing it, I suggest that you send out emails in October. A number of rejections that we got said that they set their budgets in October of each year. You can hire a high school or college student to research all of the bar, gel, goo, etc. providers and send them emails asking them to sponsor our event. What you get back will likely far outweigh the few hours of payment. Soliciting sponsors is not a requirement.

13. **Finalizing Rides.** Although at the outset you will know that the area you've chosen has a good variety of cycling routes, it's not necessary to finalize them until right before the registration for the rally. You need to have a pretty good idea of where people will ride so that you can choose the host hotel and lunch stop, but the final details can wait until closer to the date of the rally. The only exception to this is if you are in a hilly area. Then you want to make sure that you have communicated the hill profile before you ask for money from participants.

    Working out the ride routes requires a great deal of knowledge about the local roads and traffic patterns. If you are not intimately familiar with the area, find a local cyclist/club/shop willing to help with route design.

    When formulating routes, use Strava Heat Maps to see where the local cyclists ride.

    General Routing Suggestions. We used some local cycling books, ADC maps, county maps and GPS computer software to work out our routes for MATES 2006. We started by more or less identifying all the roads that were ride-able in

the general area. Short distances with gravel/dirt are okay if they are fairly hard packed, limited miles and if participants are warned in advance so that they can use proper tires. Sometimes these have to be used to get from one good place to another. Once you have some routes roughed out, recruit local cyclists to ride them (or traverse by auto) and identify any potential problems. It is important to traverse the routes at approximately the same weekday and time that rally participants will be cycling them. Contact the local authorities and check to be sure the routes will not be closed or under construction/re-paving the day of the ride. Many states now have this kind of information available on the internet.

We used Ride with GPS software to make our maps and provide most of the input for our cue sheets. GPS auto-routing has become very accurate, so one doesn't have to go out and record mileage and turns by hand anymore. In fact, GPS mileage will be much more accurate than use of an automobile odometer. We also made elevation profiles of all our routes. This isn't necessary, but adds a nice touch.

In 2016, ETR paid $250 to join Ride with GPS Club membership. This was very helpful in developing cue sheets. If this would be helpful, perhaps the ETR main account can pay for this in the future.

The rally rides take place on Friday afternoon, Saturday (all day) and Sunday morning (church traffic). ETR's typically also offer Thursday rides.

Friday. Usually, there are one or possibly two options for Friday – about 25 miles is a nice distance with a slightly longer option. (An added benefit to leaving Friday dinner as an "on your own" option is that it allows a greater amount of flexibility for the Friday rides.)

Saturday. Saturday routes are more complicated. All routes have to arrive at the lunch location within approximately a 1-2 hour window. Since there is such a wide variety of riding paces it is important to have 3 or 4 routes ranging from 15-50 miles to lunch. Furthermore, it is nice to have a couple of options for the return ranging from a very short route (2-5 miles), fairly short one (10-15 miles) to a longer route in the 20-30 mile range. Having distance options for both before and after lunch covers a lot of possible contingencies including bad weather first thing in the morning or later in the day. Folks like to have options if it gets too hot or if rain is in the forecast, or if the weather is particularly nice they may want to ride a lot!

Sunday. The Sunday rides are less of a problem since lunch may or may not be included, and most people need to get on the road for home by early afternoon. A loop ride of about 30-40 miles is a nice distance that allows folks to get back to the hotel in time to clean up before checkout. Negotiate a late checkout with the host hotel if possible, or arrange to have a couple of rooms available with

quantities of towels and shampoo (one for men and one for women works quickest) for any rally participants who want to shower and change clothes before heading home.

Cue Sheets. Having accurate cues, and the right amount of detail on a cue sheet is the most important thing. If you don't have a good template, ask the prior year organizers for their cue sheet template. It's important to travel the roads that you will be riding, and not just take street names off a map, since it's not unknown for street signs to have different names than the same street on a map. Having the cue sheets in color was really nice too. Also, they were printed on a laser printer. While we did not think about this in advance, it turned out that the ink did not run when wet. This was particularly useful on a rainy day's ride. You might want to test out whatever you print with in order to make sure the ink won't run. We were able to pay a local, small business to use their color printer at cost. Printing in color from a Staples store is not worth it. Color printing costs are expensive because they budget for a lot of color ink. Our cue sheets use very little ink, so if you know someone with a color printer that can handle 1000 pages, maybe you can strike a deal. It is very helpful to provide a link to the GPS files two weeks before the rally.

In 2016, we used 8.5 by 14 paper and also listed the important times of events on the cue sheet for each day. Also color coding the cue sheets made it easier for people to distinguish the different route choices for each day.

Be sure to put food, water and rest room stops on your maps and cue sheets. The normal format for a cue sheet is a column with the total elapsed miles, miles to the next turn, and the actual cue for the next turn. Also, note railroad crossings, higher traffic roads, dirt/gravel and anything else that might be construed as unusual or a danger. In the title of the cue sheet, note the distance and how far it is to lunch (if applicable). At the end of the cue sheet add emergency phone numbers, sag support information, and the number of the host hotel. We strongly suggest the cue sheets be re-ridden a weekend or so before the ride, which provides the opportunity to find the recently closed bridges and detours, missing street signs, new mammoth potholes, turned street signs, etc. Please keep in mind that a single wrong turn can send hundreds of people off course. Very little needs to be perfect about a rally, but route slips should be.

Some rallies have marked the roads, but we have found cue sheets to be the most reliable method of routing. Garmin routable output, downloadable to Garmin devices has in recent years become a requirement.

Additional Advice – Particularly for Larger Rallies.

14. **Road Signage.** Several ETRs and MATES rallies have made 'ETR Rally' road signs to help with close-in driving directions, particularly useful on college campuses. At ETR 2013 we made them but were cheap and they were too small. Ours were 8 by 10, but if I were to do it again, I would make 11 x 14 or even 16 x 20. We printed the signs at Walmart photo and then glued them to poster board and a stick. That is a lot less expensive than having them professionally made.

15. **T-shirts /Jerseys.** T-shirts are relatively cheap (~ $20 per shirt) and the artwork doesn't have to be stellar. Something as simple as the name "MATES", year of the rally and location is sufficient – but don't be shy – think of something original. Be sure to get the order in so you will have at least a week or two before the rally in case there are any problems and to leave enough time to include them when you stuff the registration packets. Cycling jerseys can be pretty expensive, costing upwards of $60 per jersey. If something this expensive is offered, we recommend that it be offered as an option, not as a mandatory purchase. In addition, jersey orders should be pre-order only. It is not possible from a profit/loss standpoint to buy extra jerseys; the only rally we lost money on was the result of the organizing team ordering extra, unsold jerseys, against the advice of the ETR Board. Finally, shirts are not absolutely necessary. Any lasting memento will suffice – for example, socks, bike tool packs or water bottles imprinted with "MATES", the date and location. 4-Imprint is great for any custom stuff. Check out their website – 4imprint.com. They will mail you samples. I ordered tons of stuff before deciding on the ETR 2013 give-away.

    For ETR 2013, we designed our own jersey. Graphic designers at Voler were great at helping us finalize the design. If you do not have anyone interested in designing a jersey, you might want to contact Kerry Loftus. She has designed jerseys for several of the prior ETR rallies. Jerseys, polo shirts or tee shirts are not mandatory, but a jersey or polo has been offered at ETR every year since 1987. MATES has often offered tee shirts only.

16. **Hospitality Room/Congregating Area**. While not essential, a hospitality area is very nice to have. Optimally the host hotel will have space where snacks and drinks can be left out for teams returning from riding, and some seating and tables in the same room or nearby, sufficient for several dozen people to relax and socialize. In our case, we had exclusive use of a meeting room (at no additional charge) for the weekend and used it for registration and the hospitality room. (We also used it for the ice cream social and for breakfasts both days.) Some hotels will not allow you to serve food and alcohol from a meeting room within the hotel. In that case, hospitality can be held in a hotel room or suite – although it might be tight. You should ask the hotel what their policies are.

    We purchased a lot of bottled water, assorted soda, cookies, snack food, energy bars, bananas, trail mix, etc. to have on hand at all times. You will need ice too - usually the hotel will have this, but ideally we have several coolers on hand to

hold ice and drinks. [ETR and MATES have been sharing a pair of Gatorade drink cooler thermos for the past several years; these also go out on the rides at rest stops or after the picnic to top off water bottles. Inquire.] We also set up a foam board (the kind kids use for their science fair exhibits!) in the hospitality room for posting important information and large colored route maps. You can also have videos, computers with slide shows, whatever you think would be of interest to participants!

17. **Sag/mechanical Support**. There has often been an experienced tandem mechanic at ETR and MATES. This started as some of the attendees were bike dealers, but has more recently been evolving toward a dedicated mechanic for the entire weekend. A dedicated mechanic is expensive and not a requirement; attendees are responsible for their own machines. The registration cost or a hotel room for a mechanic can, at your discretion, be paid for out of the registration monies collected. This person(s) has to be able to fix mechanical problems for teams at the host facility and, if necessary, on the cycling routes. Teams are expected to do their own minor maintenance and fix flat tires. We have also arranged for the hotel to have a bike washing area with a stack of old towels in the parking lot if the forecast was for lots of rain. We also had a maintenance stand and floor pump available outside the hospitality room for anyone who needed it. We try to arrange for a sag van (large enough for a tandem & team) to be available in case of a breakdown that could not be repaired out on the route. For both mechanical assistance and sag, it's entirely acceptable to rely on attendee volunteers, who are happy to lend a hand if need be. Any ETR Board member or officer can also be drafted.

18. **Tandem Storage.** Ideally the host hotel will allow participants to store their tandems in their rooms. However, if they won't or if the hotel is multiple stories with small elevators, there will need to be a secure place for participants to leave tandems overnight. The hotel may have an extra ground-level meeting room they will let you have for the purpose at no cost, or some other readily accessible storage facility. Generally speaking, it's a mistake for this storage area to double as the hospitality area. It gets too crowded.

19. **Registration Packets.** Bags or large mailing envelopes can be purchased, but we were able to get a local bike shop to provide the ones we used for MATES 2006. These bags need to be large enough to hold all rally information, cue sheets, maps, two T-shirts and any give-aways/mementos/premiums you can scrounge up from local bike shops, cycling accessory manufacturers, tandem dealers, etc. Depending on the number of bags, bag stuffing can usually wait until the night before the rally, but be sure to have the contents a few days ahead of time if possible. You don't want to wind up having to mail T-shirts to participants.

    Items that absolutely must be included in the registration packets:
    - Schedule of events for the weekend including
        - ice cream social and meal times and locations

- ride start times
- any other activities you include in the weekend.
- Cue sheets
- Name tags

Suggested optional items:

- T-shirts or other memento
- List of rally participants (names, email addresses, location, make & year of tandem)
- Maps of each ride
- County map(s)
- Samples of energy bars, lubricants, sunscreen or any other items cyclists use
- Brochures for tourist attractions in the vicinity
- List of restaurants for Friday night dinner

20. **Name Tags.** The ETR organization has been very successful using magnetically backed nametags for the past several years. These nametags are particularly good to use, because there are no pins to tear holes in woven jersey material. Also, we have never seen a team lose one of these nametags by having it fly off an individual while riding. The best nametags are laminated in plastic, but a very serviceable name tag can be used with a plastic sleeve with a magnetic bar taped to it. If plastic sleeves are used, we recommend that the top or sides be stapled or taped together to prevent the paper name tag from blowing out. You might encourage teams to return the magnetic bars at the end of the rally, if they do not intend to use the nametags again.

21. **Last Minute Pre-Rally Notice.** Communication is one of the things that differentiate a really well run rally from the average. Attendees really need to know the who-what-why-when-and where! So if you can get the message out to them, they will enjoy the rally all the more. It's important to send out a pre-rally notice a couple of weeks before the big weekend confirming dates and times, providing a preliminary schedule of events for the weekend, or advising of changes from earlier information provided. This assures folks that you are ready and serves to pass along any last minute instructions, directions to the rally and a brief schedule of events. It's also nice to get a list of who is attending out before the rally. People come to rallies to see people, so if you make the list of attendees available ahead of time, they will review it enroute or beforehand to see which of their buddies and riding partners are showing up. This helps people enjoy the event, and it helps attendance if they can see their buddies are signed up well ahead of time. This is something the Georgia Tandem Rally does well – it actually posts people's names, a picture, and their interests some months in advance on the GTR website, which builds the anticipation of the event and also lets people identify others they know only minimally. (We should not post full names or other identifying info unless we get the participants' approval – ie) on

the registration form. However, posting first names and last initial of the attendees should be acceptable.)

In 2016, the website was amended to automatically post attendees first names and state, with permission.

22. **What Not to Do. Kindly recall that you and your team are volunteers.** Don't start assuming that the rally funds are yours to treat discretionarily. Don't treat volunteers or rally committee members to restaurant meals or other expenses paid for by rally funds. If you want to get together to have a celebratory meal, great, but pay for it yourselves. Don't hire yourselves, family members or others to provide paid services or do leg work for the rally or at the rally that normally a volunteer would do for free. Exception: At time of writing in 2013, the ETR and MATES rallies do extend a 'next year' invitation to no-cost registration lodging and meal fees to one (primary) organizing team from the previous year's rally. This is only redeemable once, the following year.

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