

San Jose Bike Party



Every month, 3rd Friday somewhere in South Bay. Standard good route has 3 legs, two regroup, and many riders. Everyone who hears about it is welcome to show up.

All volunteer everything, participatory democracy at its best, there are many roles to play.



photo: unknown; Bike Party August 2014

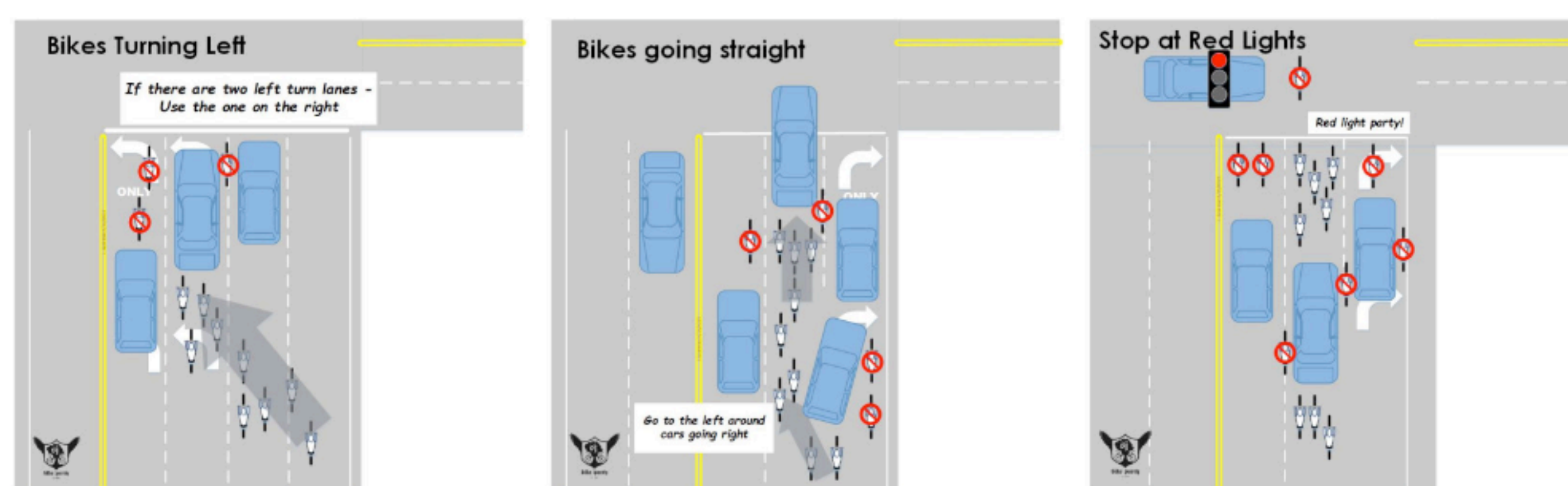
Riders: Someone on a bicycle. Bring your own lock, layers, liquids, and desire to share a good time. Usually first time riders come with a friend for a host of good reasons. We have riders from all walks of life, riding all kinds of bikes. We have riders who ride all the time, as well as people who haven't been on a bike in years. We turn couch potatoes into riders.



BIRDS: Active volunteers that help out when they see a need. So many ways to help! Some stand at intersections where bike party is turning and say "BIKE PARTY, TURN HERE!" while watching the parade go by. Others just enjoy a good party and spread good ideas about how to do that with first time riders. BIRDS have oiled lots of squeaky chains. Many start with this and then move into other roles as their understanding of what can be done and what they want to do develops.

How We Ride

- We encourage safe riding and respect for residents and other road users.



One guys most lasting contribution is making these helpful graphics for us. Thanks Jason! Or did it come from Baltimore Bike Party? Opinions differ on that. Don't worry, folklore benefits from interpretation.

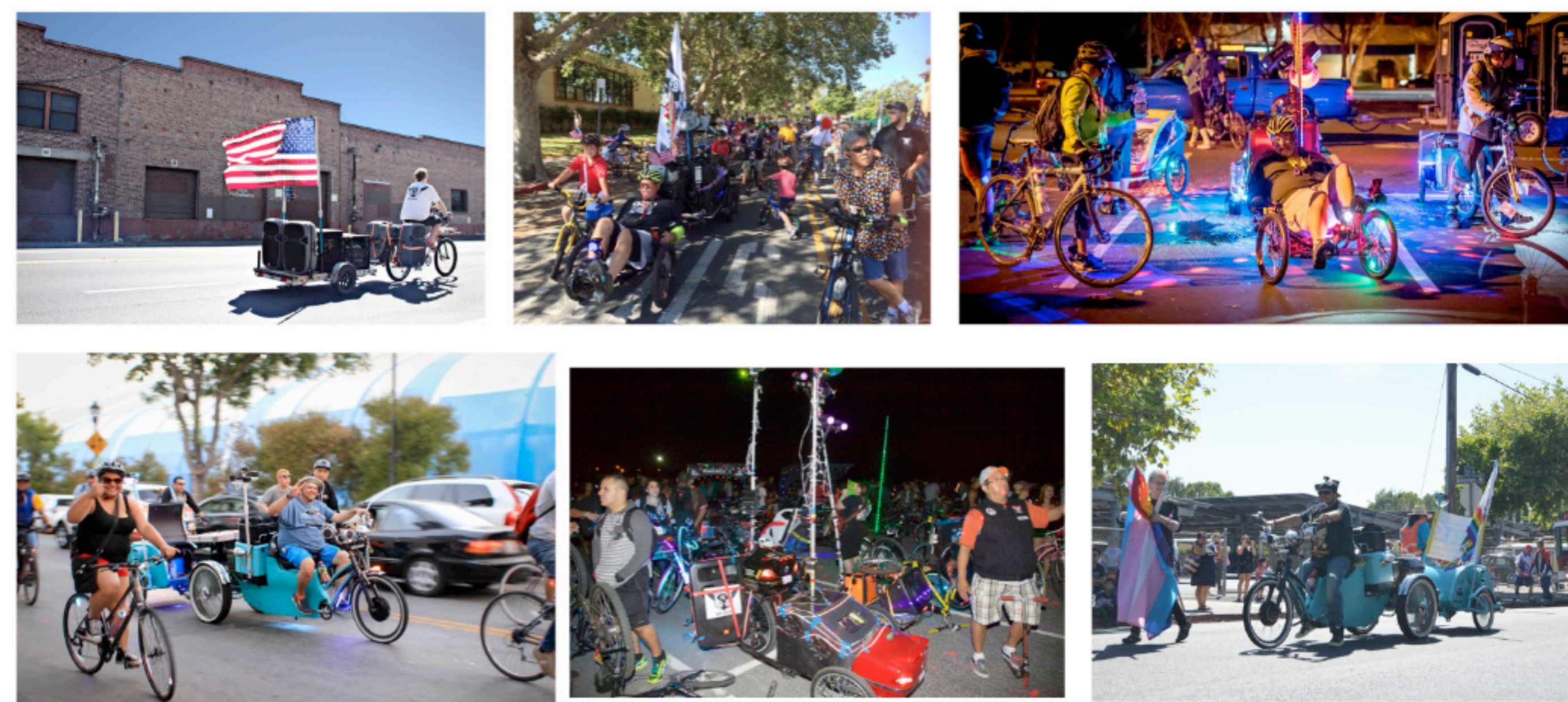
Roadrunners: Figure out routes for upcoming bike party rides. Experience has shown that a route needs to have all stops in large enough areas where the public can assemble freely. All the routes need to use roads wide enough for bike party to have one lane and the cars to have at least one lane. Generally, stopping points should be no more than ten miles apart. We need to avoid places we've been kicked out of in the past year or two. It's hard to come up with a really good route, but at this point we have many old ones that can be reused. Roadrunners need to be involved to get it right!

Ravens: Work on ways to keep our trash footprint from getting out of hand. When volunteers are plentiful that means bringing out the trash hauling bikes with strong riders and other volunteers helping fill the bins at regroup. When volunteers are scarce it's all the BIRDS saying "Leave no trace!"



Songbirds: Make the music happen! These are key to having dancing at regroup.

"Guerillaz In Da Mixx"



Core volunteers are key to keeping bike party moving forward. We all like to say things like "I helped organize a party for 420 people and everybody had a great time." Getting hundreds of people enjoying a bike ride together is not easy. Among the standouts are people like Billy Cool who gave us good bike party routes and graceful leadership for years in a row. Without the work these people did and/or still do, no way could this institution do anything. We are proud that everyday cycling has grown a lot because riding with bike party taught many people they can do it!

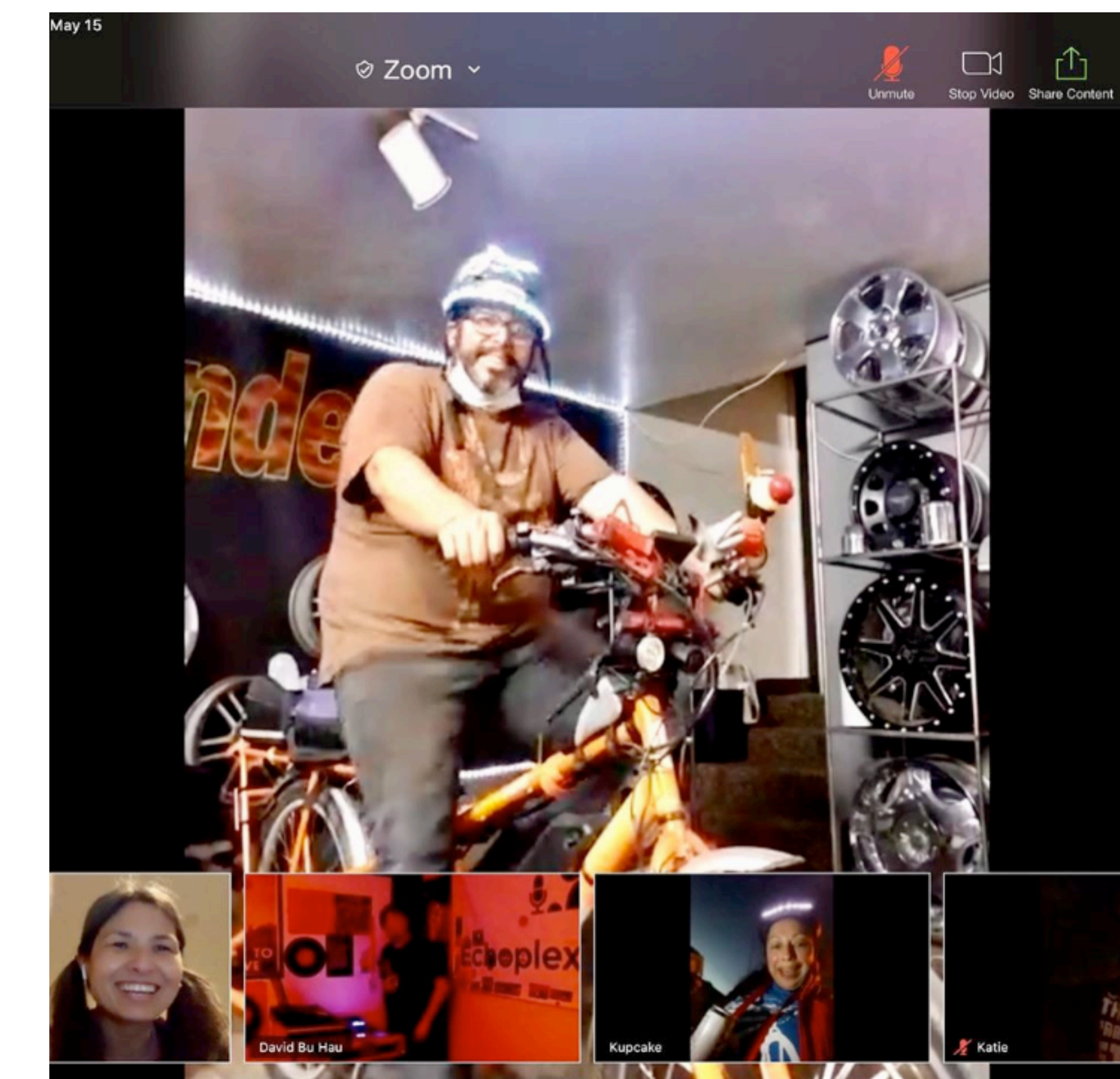
Bike Party draws its heritage from many previous rides. Early rides were influenced by cruising and Critical Mass among other things. The institutional framework around us learned from those things to. One of the things they (Bay Area government) learned from critical mass was they don't like dealing with leaderless mobs. So Bike Party leadership is tolerated and everybody gets along. The winners of this deal are the good citizens who have more shared memories to smile about. After 14 years Bike Party is a San Jose institution under our own name. Bike Party went global because the formula is easy to copy.



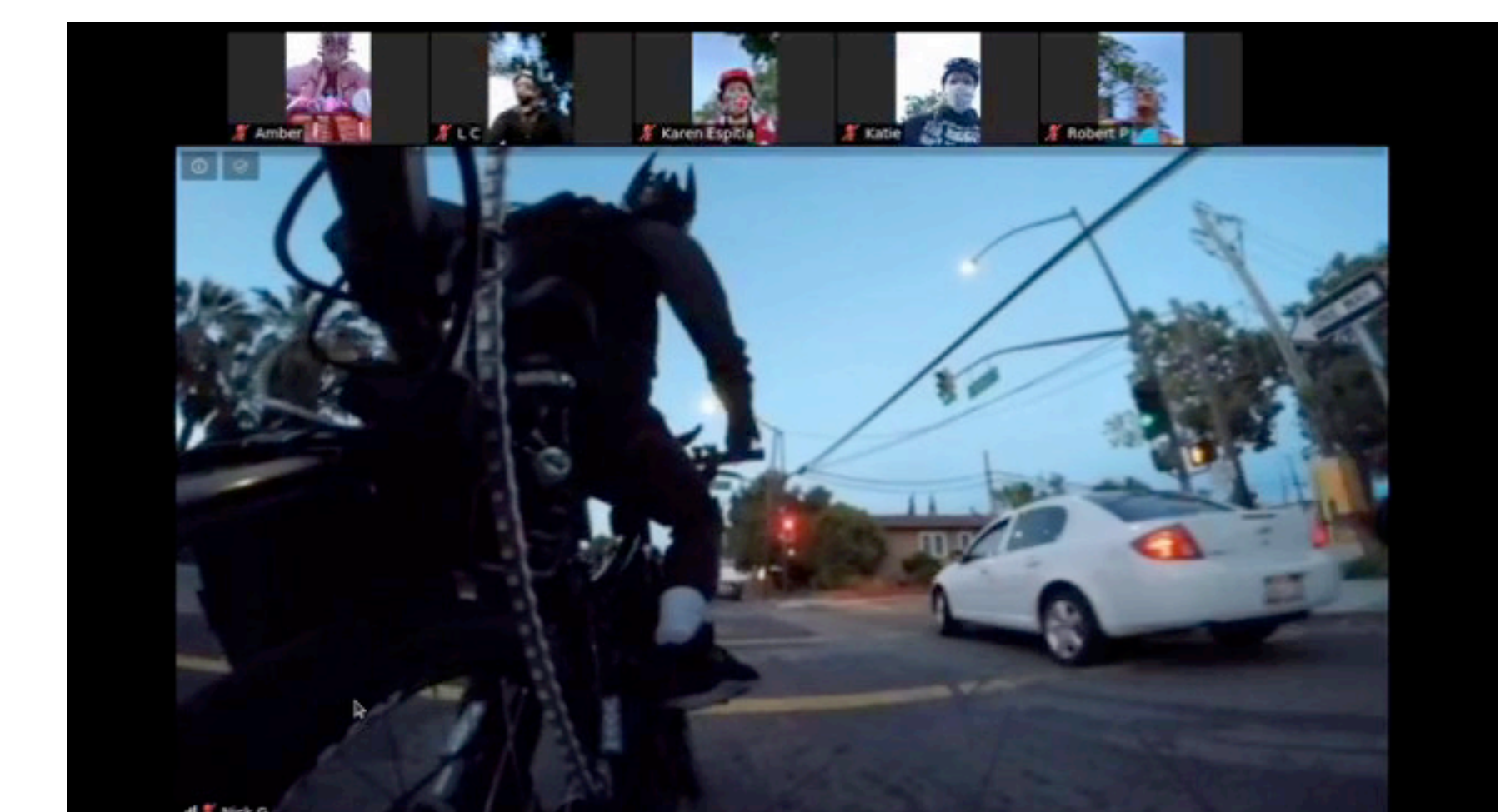
When we were the in new thing (but not too new) a thousand riders would show up at each ride during the summer months. Likely our peak ride was about 4,000 riders. Back then we had lots of rides created from rider volunteer effort. This list of specialty rides represents the work of a whole lot of different people, each with a burning desire to do something else, or at least have fun at the event themselves.

Specialty Rides

- Kids Ride
- Ladies Ride
- Bike The Limits
- Bike To the Bay
- Viva Calle SJ Heros' Ride
- Groovn' Rides
- Day Time rides to new areas (~<8 miles)
- Activate areas by bringing music and friendly faces
- Familiarize riders with a new area



COVID-19 has forced us into a situation where we have to adapt to this new world. At first we all sheltered in place. After a month or two of that people needed to see each others faces again. The first thing we tried was a virtual bike party connected by video conference. Some taped smart phones onto their bikes and shared the experience of riding around solo. Others who were more serious about the shelter in place thing taped theirs to stationary bikes and did the social part while pedaling inside their homes. A DJ who would have done dance sets did some dancing pedaling sets. I tuned in for a while to watch, but my heart just wasn't in it. My life isn't settled enough for that. Lots of them said they enjoyed it later on facebook, and they've done it again several times since then.



Remember when the AIDS crisis started? When they weren't sure about transmission methods a lot of public activity was curtailed. As someone with a demanding day job and no car I just never found many mixing opportunities. One reason I was proud to be involved with bike party was that we were giving todays youth better options than we got. Riding around solo is just not going to do it. We need physically distanced public gatherings where everybody is wearing a mask. How do we make this happen? I want some socially distanced offline bike parties!

After reading the above Jarek had this to say: "If ~420 +/- was the average attendance prior to Covid-19, SJBP could probably use this time to make a roadmap of sorts for rolling out rides for next year. Keep doing the video/zoom interactive stuff. Promote bike stuff because... ..When the time comes we can safely go back to a proper SJBP we will absolutely need to rebuild from the ground up. With bike shops selling out, the people will be there. No need to be reactive. We have got some time to plan much of the rebuilding stage. So I believe numbers will be low, but increase greatly, quickly and the rides themselves can be adjusted to scale with what we believe the numbers will be."

Poster created by Tian Harter and edited by Lloyd Cha, birds that have been with San Jose Bike Party for a long time. Pictures from various sources including Ann Jasper, Mark Hirsch, Nick Laskowski, Roy Leonard and San Jose Bike Party. To find out more please visit <http://www.sjbikeparty.org>.