

To: 2018 Blackberry bRamble Committee

From: Steve Hecker, GEARS President

Re: Considerations for the 2018 bRamble

I was requested at the last board meeting to provide to the 2018 bRamble committee an outline of major issues to consider as planning gets underway for next year's event. This memo is my attempt to do that. Please note that this is largely my creation but based on the debriefing from the 2017 event, Dave Walla's report, and conversations that we've been having for some time about what works, what we might like to do differently, costs and benefits of the bRamble to GEARS and its volunteers, and the fact that this is the 20th anniversary bRamble upcoming. I'll also remark that last year our intent was to somewhat downsize the bRamble in terms of effort but not in terms of number of riders. We succeeded in a few ways but most of us who have worked on a number of previous bRambles didn't perceive much of an effort reduction. We also added some really good things like the auction. This year the idea has been raised of significantly increasing the scale of the bRamble. I don't make a judgment on that other than strongly advising that we match the resources to the goals if we choose to go that way.

On to some specifics:

- **Volunteers:** The bRamble runs on volunteers. We had an excellent volunteer coordinator in 2017 and it made a huge difference. We need that again so that subcoordinators can focus on planning and executing their tasks rather than finding volunteers to help them.
- **Changed routes:** Some have argued that we won't attract appreciably more cyclists, particularly younger cyclists, unless we do new routes or add options like gravel. There's been talk of changing the century route which has followed Wolf Creek for a number of years now, e.g. doing the Willamette Flyway instead. Major changes will involve dealing with more public jurisdictions, different rest and water stops, coordinating with the 40 and 62 routes, etc. It may well be time for significant changes, and that's a major early activity for the committee.
- **Organizing structure:** How well did the subcoordinator structure work in 2017? Are there changes to make going forward? Who will coordinate and will we need to pay the coordinator again?
- **Marketing strategy and materials:** It's time for a review of logos, graphics, and formats, particularly if this will be a 20th anniversary celebration. We did an excellent late push in 2017, but a more sustained and layered approach over time would be less nerve wracking and could generate significant increased numbers, if we want them
- **Community ride:** The relationship with Safe Routes around the Community Ride is a valuable one, and the CR has been increasing in popularity. If it continues to grow it will require a larger volunteer effort. This is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship with SRTS, have them more

involved in the bRamble, and perhaps have GEARS members more involved with SRTS.

- **Celebration:** We aimed to downsize it this year and we did avoid the complexity of a stage and multiple entertainers, but we didn't shrink much. The committee needs to decide on scale, vendors, entertainment, food and drink, etc. We missed an emcee this year which lost the chance to communicate broadly with participants. The auction added interest and revenue. Specific feedback from 2017 includes
 - Claim 52 was much better to deal with than previous breweries
 - Wine should be offered on the same basis as beer
 - Address the timing issue of community riders, and even some longer riders, returning before the celebration is set up and running.
- **Special bRamble jersey:** This is an option especially in an anniversary year. Design, marketing, etc. will be a big job.
- **Financial/Registration fees:** We showed last year that when we focus on reducing expenses and increasing revenues we can accomplish both, even while paying a coordinator. John's 2017 bRamble financial statement is a good starting point, but the committee should dig deeper into some of the categories. We seemed not to have suffered at all from raising fees from 2016, and the rush of late registrants paying an extra \$10 was good for revenue.
- **bRamble committee and R&R committee:** There's a lot of overlap here so the committees should figure out (with board concurrence) the approach to sponsors/business members so that it's clearer how club support is related to bRamble support.
- **Membership:** Make better use of the bRamble as a membership drive opportunity.

There are undoubtedly a number of areas I didn't even touch, but other committee and board members can add their ideas. I'm sure you'll agree that what I've provided is more than enough to start with, and you may even have to narrow from there.

Best of luck to the committee. I think the bRamble is in good hands but as always it's an enormous amount of work.