

RBA Organizer Recap of Attacks at Critical Mass Austin #21 - 3/31/23

[Critical Mass Austin](#), organized by [Ride Bikes Austin](#) (RBA), has enjoyed jubilant monthly celebrations in support of Austin's focus on infrastructure improvements **mostly** without incident since July 30, 2021.

To avoid confusion, we will refer to another group of individuals who also have a Critical Mass ride as "[5:30 CMATx](#)." The 5:30 CMATx group meets on the Pfluger Pedestrian Bridge

The 5:30 CMATx group joined "[Critical Mass Austin #21 - 3/31/23](#)" at the start of our ride on Pedernales Street. The group created threats to public safety, harassed our riders, and engaged in oppressive tactics to achieve their goal to force us to "ride as one."

Threats to Public Safety

- Creating threats to public safety by expressing **unprovoked** aggression toward motorists
 - Yelling at drivers, hitting the sides of cars
 - Startling unsuspecting motorists by suddenly weaving through streams of oncoming traffic
 - Playing "chicken" with oncoming traffic by abruptly swerving into the opposite lane
- Increasing the risk of crashes and pile-ups at the front of the group by shouting incorrect turns in opposition to the directional calls issued by our designated ride leader
 - Ride Leader calls "Stopping", 5:30 CMATx rider immediately shouts "Going!"
 - Ride Leader calls "Right Turn", 5:30 CMATx rider immediately shouts "Left Turn!"
- Riding erratically and dangerously close to the ride leader which compelled several of our riders to create a buffer to protect her from falling or being crashed into.
 - Male Social Cycling Austin Rider Leader/10-Year Member, 5:30 CMATx Rider/10-Year Member

Harassment

- Blocking all roads in intersections to prevent our group and all motorists from proceeding (e.g., Haskell & Chicon; Holly & Waller)
 - Male Social Cycling Austin Rider Leader/10-Year Member, 5:30 CMATx Rider/10-Year Member
 - Male Social Cycling Austin/3-Year Member, 5:30 CMATx Rider/1-Year Member
- A male rider placed himself and his bike less than a foot in front of our female ride leader, physically blocking her from proceeding for almost 2 minutes until several of our riders intervened with requests that he allow her to proceed.
 - Male Social Cycling Austin/3-Year Member, 5:30 CMATx Rider/1-Year Member
- Verbally harassing our group of riders and engaging in physical intimidation through reckless behavior
 - Yelling obscenities at our riders including "F*CK RBA" and "You're not my f*cking mom!"
 - Weaving in and out of our group while going the opposite direction through the crowd causing unnecessary confusion
 - Aggressively swerving between our riders and doing "tricks" in the middle of the densely packed mass causing at least one crash plus several near misses

- A 5:30 CMATx rider was moving recklessly and erratically near the DJ equipment and ignored multiple requests to give space. A physical barrier was placed between the individual and the equipment but the individual removed the barrier at least seven times
- A male 5:30 CMATx rider forced two females to endure repeated unwelcome touches despite repeated requests for no physical contact. They were also subjected to physical restraint in the form of “bear hugs” which required forceful removal
 - Male Social Cycling Austin/3-Year Member, 5:30 CMATx Rider/1-Year Member

Oppression

Individuals from 5:30 CMATx have stated their intentions to force us to “ride as one” with them and to endure their vastly different cultural norms which include “No Rules, No Route, No Leader.”

This is disturbing because our community norms include mutual respect for all road users, riding on the right side of the road, staying behind our designated ride leader who sets the pace, and following a pre-tested route.

- Behavior from 5:30 CMATx individuals caused many of our regular riders to leave the ride to avoid crashes, verbal confrontations, and physical fights
- A 5:30 CMATx male invaded a female’s personal space by unexpectedly placing himself on the ground under her propped up leg leaving her feeling “creeped out” and in need of an escort to her vehicle; Several other females were also escorted to their vehicles due to safety concerns
- Organizers were compelled to escort some of our male riders to their vehicles to help **prevent** the potential for incitement of violence from 5:30 CMATx riders that were hanging out in the parking lot
- Organizers picked up four bags of discarded trash at the end spot when there is usually less than half a bag

Ride Leader Public Safety Mitigation Strategies

- Discarded our [8.40-mile pre-planned route](#) through downtown which included sections of 6th Street, Lamar, Riverside Drive, and Congress Avenue
- Refrained from crossing major roads to reduce the risk of life-threatening injuries related to faster moving traffic and bypassed intersections with traffic lights to reduce the potential for bicycle-vehicular crashes
- Avoided roads with median strips to reduce opportunities for 5:30 CMATx riders to play “chicken” with unsuspecting motorists in oncoming traffic lanes
- [Remained within a two-mile radius](#) from our start/end spot to empower our riders to depart early due to safety concerns