

Safety Tips, by Ben Hochberg, ABATE of Colorado

More on Turning Apexes

Last time I discussed paths of travel for turns, particularly at which point we should be closest to the inside of the curve (the apex). Because there are many types of turns (increasing radius, constant radius, decreasing radius, uphill, downhill, left, right, turns followed by straightaways and turns followed by other turns, and on and on) and many different types of roadway conditions (surfaces, traffic, crowns and cambers, etc.) there is no one “magic bullet” for every turn. Does this mean we must be constantly aware of ALL OF THAT at ALL TIMES when we are riding??? You know the answer to that... Snooze, ya’ lose.

We mentioned the “outside-inside-outside” technique that should be used in many turns; that is, entering the curve near the outside of the lane, apexing near the middle of the curve, and then exiting towards the outside of the lane. This method “straightens out the curve and allows less of a lean angle and less demand on the bike’s suspension.

But there are other approaches to taking curves. I attended a seminar recently in which a different technique was promoted. The presenter (Bob Reichenberg, of Streetmasters) suggested that experienced riders are often better served by apexing very late in the curve; in other words, staying towards the outside of the curve as long as possible, and then finishing the curve near the inside of the lane. One of the suggested benefits of this technique is that there is less chance of running wide in the turn, especially since turns are generally handled best under (a small amount of) throttle roll-on. Applying more throttle (slightly) in a turn stabilizes the bike’s suspension for more control, while it maximizes the amount of ground clearance the bike can provide in the lean. The presenter’s term used to describe how much more throttle to add in to the turn is to “sneak on the throttle.” Good stuff! Another suggested benefit of the late apex is better visibility through more of the turn, prior to the apex selection.

So, which to choose: early, late, or mid-curve apex? Think about it, but don’t decide right now, because it all depends on the situation of the moment while you are riding. There are times when either of the three might be most appropriate than the others. There are even times when no apex is appropriate, just track around either the outside of the lane or the inside of the lane, following the radius of the road’s curve. There is a technical term for practicing this stuff on our bikes: “fun,” although the pros call this, “professional development.” Whatever. Get out there and ride and improve your skills. You’ll be glad you did.