



Florida Department of Transportation

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CHAMPIONS RIDE FOR BICYCLE SAFETY

DAYTONA BEACH – Top NASCAR and INDY Car Drivers, Olympic and World Champion Tri-Athletes, National Champion and Tour de France stage winning Cyclists, and Professional Sports Commentators, are just a few of the titles this group holds. All riding over 60 miles to Daytona International Speedway this morning to show their support for bicyclist safety.

Scott Lagasse, Jr., spokesperson for the Florida Department of Transportation's bicycle and pedestrian focused initiative, organized this *Champions Ride for Bicycle Safety* for the second year in a row. And this year, he's bringing even more champions, and more focus to the issue.

"These guys are pretty important people. People we follow. People we look up to" said Scott Lagasse, Jr. just before the ride. "They came here to help us spread the message that we're not just an object on the road, we are real people! Our bike just happens to be our vehicle of choice at the moment."

In Florida, cyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as other drivers on the road, and Lagasse, who logs more than 100 miles each week on his bike, takes that seriously. What frustrates him most? Being cut off by a driver that isn't paying attention. "We all have a right to be there (on the road). And we all have a responsibility to keep each other safe. Unfortunately, that's not always what we do" he said in an interview earlier today. "Pay attention! Share the road! Give everyone the space they need to get to their destination safely."

Lagasse is the spokesperson for *Alert Today Florida*, a campaign launched in 2012 by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to increase public awareness of pedestrian and bicyclist safety and to drive down fatalities on Florida's roadways.

"Increasing awareness is key to reducing bicycle crashes" said Noranne Downs, FDOT District Five Secretary. "Scotty, as we call him, gets it. He's out there, dealing with cycling challenges every day. The fact that he brought champions like Jimmie Johnson, Tony Kanaan, Alicia Kaye, Dirk Bockel, and Christian Vande Velde (to name a few) together for this ride shows just how much he gets it."

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Team members from Alert Today Florida will be at the Speedway to welcome them, as this group of champions roll in at noon today. And they'll remain onsite through the weekend providing motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists safety tips and encouraging everyone to take a pledge to walk, bike, and drive safely every trip, every time.

"Every life counts" said Trena McPherson, FDOT State Bicycle Pedestrian Safety Program Manager. "No matter what mode of transportation you choose, human or gas powered, we all have a right to get to our destination safely."

Becky Afonso, Executive Director of Florida Bicycle Association and Alert Today Florida team member hopes this ride puts a "positive spin" on cycling. "Bicycling is an everyday means of transportation for some and this is often overlooked by the more visible recreational cyclists on the roads" she said. "Scotty, fellow NASCAR racers, and everyone riding today are those visible cyclists demonstrating the legal right for bicyclists to be on the road, and to obey the laws."

Alert Today Florida encourages everyone to enjoy the Florida sunshine by bike. Whether you ride for health, transportation, or recreation, here are some tips to help you stay safe on the road:

- Always ride in the direction of traffic when riding on the roadway.
- Use bike lights, front and rear, and wear bright colored or reflective clothing when riding at night.
- Remember, your bike is your vehicle. Always signal your intentions when turning or changing lanes so drivers know what to expect

And drivers:

- Watch for cyclists. Especially at night.
- Check the bike lane on your right before making that turn, just in case a cyclist is there.
- Always move over and give cyclists space to ride safely. 3 feet minimum please!
- Get rid of the distractions. It only takes a second to take a life. And EVERY LIFE COUNTS!

Everyone: Share the Road and Stay Alert! Every Trip, Every Time!

For more information on the ***Alert Today Florida*** campaign, or for a full list of cyclists riding in today's event, please visit our website at www.alerttodayflorida.com

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