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A. Pre-ride questions

1. How is the Dirt to D.C. ride different from other Bike Adventure rides?

As the newest member of the Bike Adventure family, the Dirt to D.C. ride represents an exciting expansion of our mission and offers a unique, off-road experience, while also staying true to the foundational principles shared by all Bike Adventure rides.

The title of the ride hints at the most noticeably different feature of Dirt to D.C.: namely, that about 90% of the ride is routed on unpaved bike trail (crushed limestone and dirt)! Cars are rare sights as we follow the historic paths of the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) and the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal (C&O) through the great wilderness of Appalachia.

The “off-the-grid” nature of the ride’s unpaved trails presents both unique benefits and new challenges for Bike Adventurers. On the positive side: we are out of vehicle traffic for the vast majority of the ride, we have very few tricky turns during ride days, and elevation grades rarely exceed 1-2%. On the other hand, riders may find that navigating the trail surface requires wider tires and more alertness, that cell phone reception is spottier, and that the Fuller Center support van will not have unlimited access to riders at every point along the route.

In many ways, however, the Dirt to D.C. ride is a spitting image of our other Bike Adventure rides. We still stay in host churches each night, we still fully-support the ride with frequent rest stops and daily

sweeps, and each rider still raises money to support the Fuller Center's mission of eradicating poverty housing!

2. The Fuller Center is a Christian organization, but I don't consider myself Christian. Am I welcome to participate in the ride?

Absolutely. While The Fuller Center is unashamedly Christian, we welcome all people regardless of faith to support and participate in our work, and we place no religious requirements on our beneficiaries. We build with and for Hindus in Nepal, Buddhists in Sri Lanka and Muslims in Africa.

One should note, however, that for the sake of community, all riders are expected at least to be present for a number of faith-based aspects of the trip, such as morning devotions, Sunday worship services with our church hosts, prayer before meals, etc. As such, riders should at least be comfortable with these types of activities and surroundings.

3. How much training do I need to do?

This is a personal decision that depends upon personal athleticism, fitness, biking experience and endurance. We have learned that those who are older (especially if inexperienced in cycling) typically require a greater amount of training to obtain the needed level of speed and endurance. We generally leave it to each rider to determine for themselves whether they will be in adequate physical condition for the event. We do, however, recommend that riders log at least a few rides on unpaved bike trail during their training, since the rougher and slipperier terrain in some spots of the route may take some getting used to.

All training does not need to be on a bike (other forms of leg exercises and cardio workouts will help, as well), but it is recommended that riders gain at least some experience on their bike before arriving. You do not need to be Superman or a college athlete to complete this kind of ride, but you do need to get yourself into good physical condition.

Be sure to check out the training guide on the [Tools for Riders](#) page.

4. What kind of bike do I need? Does the Bike Adventure provide any help with getting one?

Based on FCBA's past experiences on the trails, and on trip reports from other GAP / C&O cyclists, we have developed a few general bike recommendations for Dirt to D.C.:

- *Tires.* 700x32 or 26x1.25 tires will work, but wider would be better. The optimal tire is somewhere in between a skinny road tire and a massive, knobby mountain bike tire. Cross-country mountain bike tires (with smooth center tread but knobs on the side) would be a nice compromise between low rolling resistance and adequate handling. Tires without tread are definitely not advised for this ride!

- *Suspension.* It is certainly possible to complete the route without full (or even front) suspension. Having at least front suspension will smooth out your ride a great deal – and will make the C&O in particular a more enjoyable experience – but may sap your energy quickly unless you have “lockouts.”

- *Bike Type.* We strongly recommend hybrid or cyclocross bikes for the GAP and C&O trails. Mountain bikes are a decent option, as long as you are comfortable riding long distances with your setup. If you can fit sufficiently wide tires onto your road or touring bike, then those bikes may be workable options, as well.

Given the diverse and ever-changing nature of trail conditions, especially on the C&O, there may not be one bike that is perfect for every surface you will encounter on the ride. Understand that each tire and bike type has unique pros and cons, but the “best” choice is a reliable bike which you are comfortable and familiar with.

You can read more about bike selections for the GAP and C&O on these helpful web pages:

[Bike Washington's C&O Canal Bicycling Guide](#)

[BiketheGap.com](#)

Recumbent riders have completed the length of the Dirt to D.C. route, although we do ask that you contact us directly at bike@fullercenter.org if you plan to ride a recumbent bike or a trike. These bikes may place a few extra demands on our support team, so giving us a heads-up will ensure that we can accommodate you!

5. Do I need to be a super-avid cyclist and/or highly skilled builder?

No. Many of our riders have had very little experience cycling, and we want this event to be accessible for cyclists of a wide range of abilities. Also, while skilled volunteers on the work-site are incredibly valuable, even unskilled people can learn and contribute.

6. When and where do I need to arrive?

We ask that riders plan on arriving to our host location in Pittsburgh between 6-9 p.m. on Friday, September 15. More specific details on arrival timing and location will be emailed to registered participants well in-advance of the arrival date.

7. How do I get to my starting point/home from my end point?

Each rider is responsible for arranging his or her own transportation for where they join/exit the trip. The trip support vehicle can typically be used to get riders to/from local nearby transportation centers (bus, train, plane, etc.), but arrangements should be secured ahead of time with the trip leader (bike@fullercenter.org). You should also consider carpooling with another rider(s).

Early Sunday morning, our final day, the support vehicles and rental vehicles (if needed) will be used to drive riders and bikes back to Pittsburgh but you must let us know you need this assistance ahead of time. Riders can also opt to get their own transportation out of Washington, D.C. We will do what we can to help bring riders to public transportation facilities (airport, bus stop, etc.), but we can only be one place at once. One way or another, it always seems to work out.

8. How do I get my bike to my starting point?

Most airlines, trains, and buses allow you to bring your bicycle with you for a fee. Airlines usually allow you to check your bike as luggage for a fee and as per their packing specifications. Check your airline's baggage policy and/or call them ahead of time, and then bring your evidence (printed policy) with you to avoid any extra hassle from the attendant.

As your arrival date nears, we can also send you a shipping address to which you can ship your bike using any standard carrier (UPS, FedEx, Postal Service, etc). Take a look at our [Shipping Your Bike](#) page to learn about all the options you have when it comes to transporting your bike.

9. How much stuff can I bring with me?

Room in our support trailer will be very tight, so unless you want to strap it to your back or to your bike (not recommended), each rider can bring 1 bag of about 4,000 cubic inches but no more than 4,500 cubic inches / 40lbs. Not sure the size of your bag? Measure the length, width, and height in inches, and then do the math:

Length x width x height = bag volume in cubic inches

Keep in mind you will be receiving two t shirts and at least one jersey, which you wear for most of your trip. We will make every effort to do laundry every 3rd day. The rider with the heaviest bag may or may not be required to carry a water bottle full of pennies with them on their bike, so pack carefully.

One exception: People bringing laptops may bring them in a separate laptop case/bag.

10. Do you have a need for any non-cyclists on the trip to support the riders?

Yes! In general, our team is self-supported – we do daily chores like cooking, laundry, etc. as a team. However we do need volunteers to do a couple of jobs that the cyclists can't, and in the right situation we're open to other ideas as well. Below are a couple of opportunities. If you're interested, [contact us!](#)

Communications / Multimedia Intern:

Each year, we look for individuals to accompany us on our trip who will document the journey and tell our stories through videos, blog posts, photos, social media, etc. They'll also help build local connections by contacting key media outlets along the way. This is a wonderful opportunity for someone looking to gain some hands on experience in the multimedia and communications field ... and to have the adventure of a lifetime! Spreading awareness is one of the main purposes of the ride, which means this person will play a very important role in the overall success of this trip, and is a valued member of the team.

Drive our van:

We need someone to drive our van and trailer to/from rest stops and host locations every day. You'll be a member of the team and get to see all the same sights and have the same awesome journey of faith ... just with a lot less strokes of the pedal!

Drive your own vehicle along with us:

In the right situation, we'd love to have you drive along with us for the Dirt to D.C. ride. It's a tremendous help to have extra support out there on the road; whether it's an extra snack, a ride in a rainstorm, or just an extra word of encouragement for a tired rider, it makes a huge difference on a journey like this. You'll be a big part of our mission, and an important member of the team ... plus you'll get to see this beautiful country and meet all the amazing folks we come across along the way! This support person would be responsible for their own expenses, such as the cost of gas for their car. We'd love to talk with you about how it works, and invite you to join us for the adventure! Know that you would be loved and appreciated!

Interested? Visit our page to learn more and/or contact bike@fullercenter.org.

B. Ride Logistics

11. Is the ride fully-supported?

Yes...by you! While we do seek support volunteers (whom we love and adore!), the ride is truly carried by each member of the team. We have chore groups to spread the load of cooking, laundry, packing, cleaning, etc. Sometimes we have to rotate riders spending a day helping with the support vehicles. In other words, the ride is fully supported because we support each other. Perhaps a better term would be "community-supported."

Do note, however, that a support vehicle pulling a small trailer will carry all our individual and group gear to our destination every day. See "How much stuff can I bring with me?" for baggage size limitation information.

12. Who drives the support vehicle?

Glad you asked. We hope to find a volunteer to drive the vehicle along with us for the whole trip (see “Do you have a need for any non-cyclists on the trip to support the riders?”). However if we do not find a driver, the riders will need to rotate through driving the vehicle according to an assigned schedule.

13. How do we do laundry?

Laundry will be one of the tasks of the chore groups. We’ll typically do our laundry in Laundromats every three days.

14. Where do we stay at night?

We will typically stay in churches or other community centers. We live simply in this way to ensure that as many dollars as possible go toward the mission, and sleeping within the community also is consistent with our ideal of being a grassroots ministry.

The trip will provide Thermarest air/foam mats on which to sleep.

15. How far do we go per day and how fast do we ride?

Our average will be 57 miles, with some days shorter and some days longer. Our longest ride day will be about 64 miles. We would like riders to be able to average **at least 10 mph and be able to go 20-25 miles without long rests.**

Also, a note for riders gifted with speed: We plan to have only one support vehicle that will stop every 18-25 miles to provide rest stops for the team. This means that if you're going significantly faster than 15 mph you may find that you need to wait at rest stops for our less quick teammates to catch up, or ride at a slower pace. However, since this is not a race, but a team on a mission to change the world, we hope this is less a challenge as it is an opportunity for our team of cyclists from all backgrounds and a range of abilities to bond together for a common purpose!

16. How many of the meals are provided? What do we eat?

Meals are prepared by rotating chore teams, or by generous hosts. Breakfast and lunch typically consist of cereals, bagels, bananas and other simple foods. Peanut butter is a real staple of the diet. The cost is covered by the trip.

Our trip commits to ensuring that dinner is provided by churches or chore groups 5-6 nights a week. Riders should anticipate the need to purchase their own dinner once or twice a week.

BONUS: If I'm vegetarian / vegan / gluten free / allergic to peanuts, will I starve?

We do our best to accommodate riders with varying dietary needs or restrictions. However, since many of our meals are provided by our generous church hosts, and since dietary needs vary widely even within a single trip, there may not always be the exact foods you'd choose for yourself to eat available at every meal. For those who abstain by choice, we would encourage you to eat what is served as much as possible.

If your dietary restrictions are extremely stringent, please let us know so we can discuss the best way to accommodate them, and know that you may have to plan to supplement your meals on your own.

Peanut butter and bread are regular staples of our rest stop food (lunch). We can typically supplement with other foods, but if your allergies are highly sensitive such that any contact or traces of them can cause you to have a severe reaction, please know that we cannot totally control all cross contamination on the road. In such cases, please discuss with us carefully ahead of time so that you can determine if or how you may be able to safely participate.

17. Are there chores or other responsibilities?

Yes. In preparing mentally for an event like this, the team aspect can be easily overlooked. To reach our goal, however, we need to work together; divide and conquer the task before us.

Some riders may be asked to serve as full-time “experts” on a certain area (such as route planning, bike maintenance, etc.), while others will be put into groups that will rotate from chore to chore.

18. What do we do about showers?

When possible, we try to find hosts that have showers onsite. Other times we will arrange for the team to use showers at a local school or community center, and occasionally participants may have to pay for showers at YMCAs or other public facilities. The types of showers can range from the bathroom in a local church member’s home to the typical gym shower, and when all else fails, we look for a garden hose to let people “hose off.” (That’s why we call this an “Adventure”!)

19. What happens if I am unable to complete one of the day's rides?

No problem. If you are unable to complete one of the day's rides for non-emergency reasons, the support vehicle will be able to pick up you and your bike at an appropriate location. We are not going to abandon you! We do, however, expect riders to arrive at a rest stop, or at least a road access point, before requesting pickup from the support crew (since the support van/trailer cannot drive on the trails). Of course, for logistical reasons, we need our riders to participate expecting to be able to complete the mileage.

If you cannot continue riding due to a medical emergency, and are not within reach of our support crew, we will be in touch with local emergency services.

If you cannot continue riding due to a mechanical emergency (e.g., broken derailleur), and our sweeps / other riders are unable to get you up and running, you may need to walk to the next access point on the trail for pickup by our support crew. While walking your bike in for pickup is not ideal, most sections of the route are within a few miles of an access point, and you will be made aware of all access points daily. Depending on where we are, it is possible that Park Rangers may be able to pick you up if you are facing a long walk after a mechanical issue.

20. What bike supplies should I expect to carry with me during a ride?

While some mechanical issues will require you to get picked up by our support team and seek assistance at a local bike shop, there are many common mechanical problems which can be overcome without having to leave the trail at all...with the right tools! The following supplies are must-haves for every rider, and they will make you more prepared for life's little surprises on the ride:

- 1-2 spare tubes. Flat tires happen to the best of us!
- Multi-tool kit.
- Patch kit.
- 2 tire levers.

- Tire boots. Although dollar bills work great, too.
- Handpump. CO2 canisters may not be as helpful for larger tires. You just can't beat a good handpump.
- Headlight and taillight. Tunnels can be our friend (think of all that elevation gain we miss!) but also can be very dark. Stay bright to avoid a tunnel tumble.
- Bottle cages. Proper hydration means having 1-2 bottles of water with you at all times.

Remember that you are not alone out there on the trail – we are a team! If you are not comfortable changing a tire or making other roadside adjustments / fixes to your bike, you'll be happy to find that our group will be sure to include many mechanically savvy folks who will be happy to help you in a pinch. We also have "sweeps" every day, who ride behind all riders, are knowledgeable about roadside repairs, and typically carry extra supplies.

21. How much free time will we have?

Define "free time." Every day, you will get to spend hours just riding a bike. As for how much time will you have for relaxing, exploring, etc., it will depend on a number of factors. For instance, the length of the day's ride, the speed at which we completed it, the number and length of rest stops along the way, the amount of tire or mechanical issues that may have slowed down the group, how many pictures we stopped for, etc.

There will be group activities in the evening, like dinner, a presentation, chores, weekly group meeting, etc., but we do make it a priority to allow folks to just "do their thing."

22. What does a typical ride day look like?

We will first start off by saying that there really isn't a typical day on the Bike Adventure as each day presents new and exciting challenges. Also, with factors like weather, terrain, riding distance, shower

logistics, church hosts, etc., it's always hard to give exact times or details regarding the day so riders need to remain flexible. With all that said, here is an example of a ride day which should give you a general idea of what to expect.

6 a.m.: Breakfast is served. Complete your morning chore tasks (clean church, pack coolers, etc.) and get your bike ready to go.

7 a.m.: Gather outside for route meeting, brief devotion and general overview of the day.

7:15 a.m.: Depart for the day's adventure! Rest stops will be set up every 18-25 miles for riders to get snacks, refill water bottles and take a quick breather.

3 p.m.: Arrive at host location. Help unpack trailer, unload coolers and get ready to head to showers.

3:30 p.m.: Head to showers! Generally within walking/biking distance or a short van ride away.

6 p.m.: Supper is served either by church hosts or chore group. If the church is providing supper, they will generally allow us to give a little presentation on our ride and the Fuller Center.

10:30 p.m.: Lights out!

23. Will I get to go to a church of my choice on Sunday?

We understand that this is an important and sensitive subject to folks, and we try to be as accommodating as possible within our logistical constraints and desire to be with our hosts.

At the beginning of the week, all of our riders will be strongly encouraged to attend church with whoever happens to be hosting us. At the end of the week, those taking the ride back to Pittsburgh on Sunday will not be able to attend church that morning. We expect to arrive in Pittsburgh by 2:00pm, so you may be able to find an evening service.

24. What do we wear during the ride? Can I wear my own jersey?

As part of the registration fee, riders will receive one Fuller Center jersey. (You are on your own for shorts/spandex.) Also if you reach the \$1,000 fundraising level before April 1st you will get an additional jersey for free! You also have the option to purchase another one for \$40 during registration.

Riders joining our team for more than a day must wear the Fuller Center jersey. It makes us easily identifiable, helps us spread the word and makes us look like a team.

You may also purchase a Bicycle Adventure jersey from a past ride at a reduced rate, but sizes are usually limited.

25. Do I have to stay the nights with the group or can I just find local hotels?

Riders should stay with the group to allow for seamless communication amongst the team and to foster community spirit.

26. How can people stay in touch with me during the ride?

Some of the towns where we stay are very rural and cell service is limited. Tell your family not to worry — no news is good news. Even still, there are a number of ways your friends and family can follow the journey and stay in touch!

- Various riders will rotate in posting to a trip blog, which can be found at fullercenterbikeadventure.org/blog
 - They can find us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#)
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C. Fundraising / costs

27. What's the cost, and how much do I have to raise?

We try to keep the ride as affordable for the cyclist as possible, so the registration fee for those joining for a segment or the whole way starts at an “early bird” rate of \$200. The registration fee increases to \$250 on January 1st. Signing up early will save your spot and some cash!

In addition to the food and support along the ride, paying the fee also means that you'll receive one Fuller Center jersey and a t-shirt. (You are on your own for shorts/spandex.) Keeping in mind that we will do laundry every three days, riders can opt to pay an additional \$40 for another jersey.

To ensure that our ride impacts those in need, all participants must meet a minimum fundraising requirement to participate. The requirement for the Dirt to D.C. Ride is **\$750**.

Remember that each rider sets their own fundraising goal, so you may want to consider choosing an amount even higher our minimum! High goals help you and your supporters think big.

Our team goal is to raise \$400,000 in 2017, which would bring the total raised by FCBA since 2008 to \$2 million — so we need everyone to come through if we hope to reach it!

To show our appreciation for your fundraising efforts we will give you an additional 2017 Fuller Center Jersey for free if you hit the \$1,000 fundraising level before April 1.

If fundraising is the only thing holding you back, don't let it! We can help – contact us at bike@fullercenter.org, or check out our [Fundraising Guide](#).

28. How much should I expect to spend along the trip?

Individual costs along the trip should be relatively low, since the trip will be finding the sleeping quarters and providing nearly all the food.

Plan on the trip providing all but 1-2 dinners. All other purchased food — like stops for ice cream, coffee, etc. are on your own. The trip will try to make it as affordable for you as possible to complete the journey, but it is not an absolute all-expenses-paid trip.

Your biggest personal costs will come from getting yourself to/from the trip and your personal biking-related purchases, such as spare tires and tubes, gloves, handlebar tape, helmet, pedals and shoes, etc. We have some suggestions for [Ways to ship your bike](#).

29. How do we send in and get credit for our donations?

Checks should be made payable to “The Fuller Center” with “bike – [rider’s name]” in the memo section of the check and mailed to:

The Fuller Center for Housing
Attn: Bike Adventure
701 S. Martin Luther King Blvd.
Americus, GA 31719

Donations can also be made online by going to [your fundraising page](#), or by clicking the orange donate button and entering a rider’s (your) name.

30. Are donations tax-deductible?

Yes! The Fuller Center is a 501(c)(3) organization and meets all 20 Better Business Bureau Charity Standards. All contributions that we receive are deductible against federal income taxes. Please note that we can only send the recognition receipt to the writer of the check we receive.

The Fuller Center will send a receipt and donation recognition for any amount \$10 or over. Even still, you will want to thank your supporters more personally.

31. How will I know who has donated for me and how much I have raised?

If you have created a personal fundraising page, start by looking there for real-time updates. In addition, we will send donor reports to each rider once your donations start coming in (usually on a weekly basis).

32. Why aren't all of my donations showing up on my fundraising page?

Only donations that come in directly through your fundraising page will appear there automatically. Donations that come in by check, for example, will be on the fundraising report that we email to you but will not appear on your page automatically. You can manually add these donations to your page—there are instructions on the [Tools for Riders page](#)!

33. Where does the money we raise go?

All the funds go to support the work of the Fuller Center for Housing. Thanks to our simple living on the road, the support of churches and countless volunteers, historically only about 3% of the fundraising is needed to cover the cost of the ride. The rest is covered through the registration fees.

Since we work with the numerous Fuller Center partners most closely, the default and our preference is for funds to go to the sites where most needed. If you have a particular Fuller Center location you are passionate about, though, we do allow you to designate your funds raised for that project. To do so, you must email us at bike@fullercenter.org within 1 week of registering.

34. How will I ever be able to raise all that money?

You can do it! And we can help. Download the fundraising guide from our [Tools for Riders page](#), or email bike@fullercenter.org to ask for more help.