

spoke'n word

official newsletter of the Rapid Wheelmen Bicycle Club



01.2026

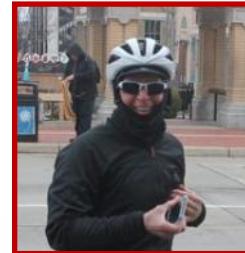
the board



Evan Wilson
President
president@rapidwheelmen.com



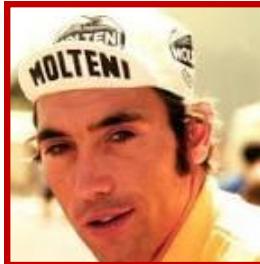
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The GOAT
Special Projects (Vacant)



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rakc@rapidhwheelmen.com



Dave Durkee
Time Trials Co-Cordinator
timetrials@rapidwheelmen.com



Matt Cederquist
100 Grand
100grand@rapidwheelmen.com

club meeting

Club Meeting Membership Meeting

Meeting: Post Holiday Party

Where: Bier Distillery, 5295 W River Dr NE, Comstock Park, MI 49321

When: Wednesday, January 14, 6:00 to 9:00 pm

What: General frivolity, storytelling, and the Fergie Awards!

Club will cover appetizers. Food and drink on your own.

RSVP here: <https://forms.gle/bp2kcZ5jRLHNftgbA>

Subscribe to the IO group chat here: <https://groups.io/g/RapidWheelmen>

Who is Joel Bierling, the founder of Bier Distillery?

I met Joel Bierling in early 2008 during the rebirth of the Rapid Wheelmen Race Team. The race team had been largely dormant for about 10 years, but RW members Jeff Festian and Joel Bierling just decided the club needed to get back into racing. At that time we had about 12 riders who were serious about racing, and with several training rides led by Joel and Jeff, we were off!

Joel was not only a passionate and accomplished rider, but I believe one of the most well rounded bike handlers on the road or mountain bike. With superior technical expertise and great perception, he could surf the pack at a road criterium as easily as any twisty MTN bike singletrack. With a lean upper body and strong legs he had the perfect cycling physique. He was an intellectual with an ever pleasant demeanor. Just a great rider, ride leader, and friend.



The team had several Barry-Roubaix recons in those days. I'll never forget visiting the local brewery in Hastings post ride and Joel orders a flight of brews. But he doesn't just taste and admire. He very carefully inspects the samples for aroma, color, and taste. He makes notes. You can see the gears whirling in his head. His analytical mind is already thinking about how to make something good even better. And so with Bier Distillery.



Joel and his wife Sara have always been a close team on everything they accomplished. So when they started [Bier Distillery](#), it was a family adventure. When you come, you'll be able to see the personal touches and attention to detail in his craft spirits, beers, and wines. You can't find anything like it anywhere else.



Editor

Dave Durkee



As I write this blurb the snow is howling across our front driveway. Whiteout conditions are not conducive to riding outdoors. Although some have tried, like Michael Burden and Jochen Ditterich did one Winter on a trip to Keisers for lunch. One for the ages!!

The more sane will resort to usually uneventful adventures in their warm abodes.

I don't know about your history, but in the '80's we were roller racing indoors at the local malls all over the state. So my training consisted of riding rollers at that time. They required a lot of attention. Any dalliance at an uneven cadence or body position sent one crashing to the ground in an instant.



Cover image: Joel Bierling on an early break in the 2008 Priority Health Criterium in downtown Grand Rapids.

Photo: Dave Durkee

After quite a hiatus, I see rollers are becoming "cool" again. I see riders using them for warm ups at races and some are buying them for indoor riding.

I highly encourage newer riders think about getting a set of rollers. On the threat of instant disaster when not done correctly, it teaches you to remain smooth with unwanted upper body motions. It also improves your pedaling stroke with some high speed smooth reps.

You'll become a more efficient and safer rider on the road when you can produce maximum power without going off your line. Racing, and even group rides, will be so much more enjoyable.

In this issue we again discuss paceline/pack riding. We'll also have a discussion about pedaling technique based on some recent science.

Ride on!

Dave

Riding the Paceline**Part 7**

by Dave Durkee

So we have discussed proper placement in the paceline for safety, how you use your eyes, and then account for various wind directions. Cycling has always been about using energy judiciously. Any energy saved is energy available for that big climb, sprint, or just feeling better at your final destination. So finding an efficient place in the paceline helps tremendously.

About 6 weeks ago on our final "Not Dawn Patrol" Saturday ride we had a fair NW wind, and it was great to see all the riders in 2 separate groups going West into the wind with the lead rider far to the right near the road shoulder with 1 or 2 riders staggered behind to the left in the downwind position. The lead rider eventually made a signal they were done at the front with an elbow wave or pat on their own rear and just drifted straight back, then over at the back of the line. Perfect!

When is the appropriate time to give up the lead position to rotate the line? Well, it varies.

I have done a lot of road racing and also many non-competitive group rides. Racers will try to keep the speed up but also conserve energy at the proper times. So their pulls at the front are usually short (like 1 to 2 minutes). But many tourists seem like they have something to prove by pulling for 5 miles to show everyone how strong they are. There are very few times that the really strong riders are that strong to pull the group like that, but it does happen and I think it's appropriate then (Nick Siegel comes to mind).

But with nearly evenly matched riders, even casual group rides would be more efficient if everyone took shorter pulls, like for a half mile. Everyone recovers in time to pull again at the front, and guess what? The average speed increases and everyone arrives more evenly tired. Less dropped riders and waiting around to catch up is a good thing!

ride calendar

January 2026

Day	Date	Ride Name	Ride Start	Ride Details	Contacts
MON	Planning for 2026	Ada Time Trials	On site Registration 5:30 to 6:15 First rider off at 6:30:30	Start at Ada Park, Buttrick and Grand River. Registration in East parking lot off of Grand River. 15 mile time trial. Registration available off site at Webscorer.com . "Day of" registrations still available on-site from 5:30 to 6:15 pm	Dave Durkee Matt Cederquist TimeTrials@rapidwheelmen.com
MON	Spring 2026	GRavel Grinderz	6:30 pm	Friendship Christian Reformed Church, 190 100th St SE (corner of 100th & Division)	Tom Westrick tjwestrick@gmail.com Nick Siegel Nicholassiegel@mac.com
WED	Spring 2026	Challenger	6:20 pm "C" 6:20 pm "B" 6:30 pm "A"	Challenger Elementary School 2475 52nd St. Slow, Good + Fast paces, 30-50 miles	Tom Westrick tjwestrick@gmail.com
WED	2026	Wednesday AM Coffee	Check IO group or email Ride Leader	Usually 20 to 40 miles at a slow to moderate pace. Great for beginners or seasoned riders! Coffee meetings during Winter	Patrick Florian Check RW IO group email
Various	Mon, Wed, Saturday	Virtual Zwift Rides	Varies	Group workouts or just rides for fun and fitness. Look for "Rapid Wheelmen"	Join Rapid Wheelmen group discussions on Facebook's Instant Messenger, RW Zwift Club, RW Stava Club
SAT	2026	Saturday AM Coffee	Varies	Usually 20 to 40 miles at a slow to moderate pace. Great for beginners! See RW IO group email posts or email ride leader	Bob Ayars rsayars@sbcglobal.net
SAT	Spring 2026	Dawn Patrol	Time varies	45-65 miles at good to fast pace. Check IO group or Facebook IM "Rapid Wheelmen" for details	Mike Burden 616-915-2048 mwb@mwburden.com

French Alps Adventure Part 4

by Dave Durkee

After spending a day touring Geneva, Switzerland, my son-in-law Tim and I were ready to be picked up by our tour hosts [Thomson Bike Tours](#) to start our 7 day adventure in the Alps. We awoke in plenty of time to pack, eat breakfast, and arrive in the hotel lobby for the pick up. Excitement and trepidation at the same time!

At the time, I had no idea that Thomson Bike Tours was well known as “The dedicated cyclist’s tour”. In other words, designed to be challenging for experienced riders. I envisioned probably 1/3 of the 20 riders would be older and heavier than myself. “I’d do fine”, I thought.

The idea was quickly shattered when Tim and I arrived in the lobby, and soon about 10 other riders were there talking about what adventures they anticipated that they would be having. I instantly knew I was way out of my league when I saw this group of 10 riders, all from Colorado, young, lean and strong. Although they were in their 30’s and 40’s, I could tell that they could easily scale 8,000 feet a day at altitude and actually make a race of it between themselves. Then since no older nor out of shape riders showed up, I realized I was likely at the bottom of the totem pole. Tim, however, was in his glory.



Drop off at our 1st hotel. We'll ride that first day for a shakedown on our rental bikes, a Specialized Atheos. It was a good bike!



We always stayed in some nice hotels, mostly just 1 night each. We ate in the hotels' restaurants. The food was great!



The Thomson crew was tasked with setup, tear down, mechanics, transportation, and counselors!



We had 3 of these vans plus one cargo van. The crew would swap days riding with us with days of driving the vans. The crew were excellent riders, almost all from Spain.

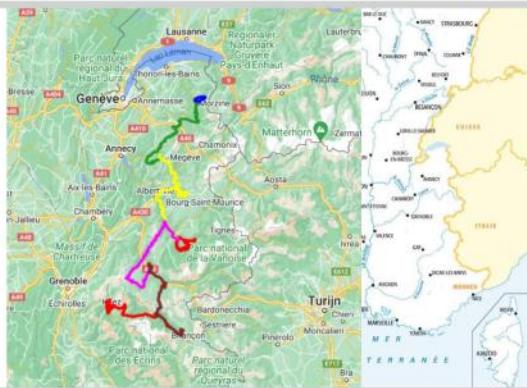
French Alps Adventure Part 4

by Dave Durkee

Introductions

Staff Roles

Role	Staff Member	Mobile Phone
Trip Manager & Ride Leader	Lilbert	+34 685 016 359
Mechanic & Ride Leader	Arnau	+34 696 127 198
Mechanic & Ride Leader	Borja	+34 657 440 633
Van Driver	Andre	+34 652 507 809
Ride Leader	Dani	+32 486 440 253
Ride Leader	Hector	+34 667 986 064



Today's Schedule

11:30pm	Orientation Meeting
12:00pm	Bike Build
1:00pm	Lunch
3:00pm	Ride Leaves
7:15pm	Evening Brief
7:30pm	Dinner

Usually the night before we'd get a briefing of the next day's activities. The document above shows our ride leaders names, an overall map for the week, and a schedule for the next day. The first day was the only time we had a briefing the same day. That tiny blue dot at the top of the map was our 1st day ride.



By the time we got on the bikes in the afternoon, it was raining. Luckily we came prepared for anything like rain or snow. Still it was about 2,000 ft of climbing.



Typically our breakfast was fresh fruit, pastries, and various grains. Being Danish, Tim is at home eating this way. I kept looking for my bowl of frosty flakes or oatmeal, but I never found it. Everything I did eat was excellent.

French Alps Adventure Part 4

by Dave Durkee



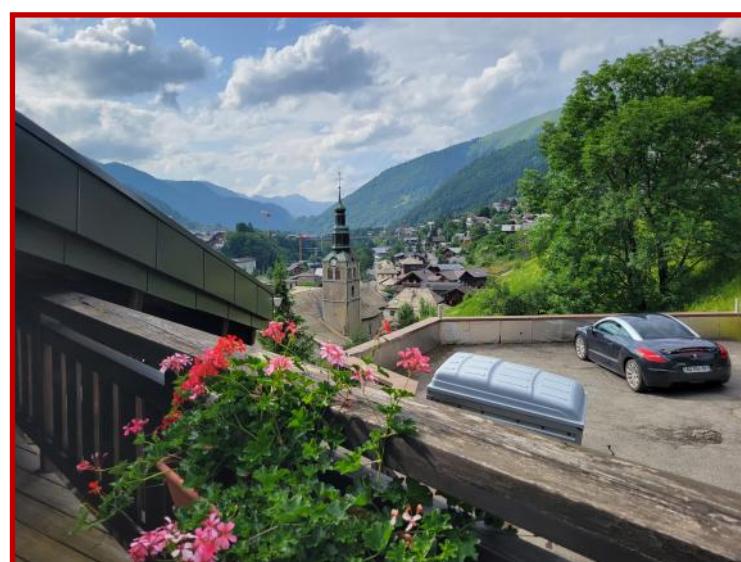
I'm in front of this group with Tim behind in the yellow coat and one of our ride leaders. We were never far from our ride leaders as they rode up and down the group with little effort. At this stop Tim told me I had a nose bleed. Darned blood thinners and altitude! However, I never had another one for the rest of the trip.



The Colorado boys took the first day like a walk in the park. They were actually nice to each other without vicious attacks. That fun would all start the next day.



Two of the guys more my age, both good riders. Looking back on it, being patient and persistent was going to be good advice for older riders. Riding at 5 mph up 8% grades for 2 hours at altitude is a special skill, something I could not train for until I arrived.



The rain and bloody nose was all worth it when you have this view of an Alpine Valley with a good Belgian ale. We asked our guides if there was any good beer in France, to which the quick reply was a resounding "NO". But they praised the wine and food, and I can attest that both were the best one could have.

2025 Rider Mileage

Here's the mileage, climbing, and other facts as submitted by our club members

	Mileage	Climbing (ft)	Misc
Tom Westrick	5,226		
Vincent Nienhuis	3,893	116,334	
Dave Kuilema	4,212		New Trek Domain 2026
Darren Burke	5,948	234,391	
Jason Lee	3,221	142,000	
Matt Cederquist	2,163		
Dave Durkee	4,400	205,656	
Scot Morrell	4,075	161,500	
Mason Morrell	1,614	64,180	
Chad Kettner	2,112	43,261	
Evan Wilson	2,650		
Jack Wright	3,624	115,754	
Mike Burden	4,396	156,764	Also ran and swam alot
Kevin Devries	3,850		

Membership—Important Update!!

New for 2026, we've transitioned to RunSignUp's Club Management platform. What does this mean for you? You can now manage your membership online (pay, update your personal info, set your emergency contact, etc.). If you are renewing your membership, please first try claiming your existing by following the directions [here](#).

Once claimed, you can view club memberships by going to your RunSignUp Profile here - <https://runsignup.com/Profile> and clicking on "My Club Memberships" at the bottom.

Join and manage your membership online at <https://membership.rapidwheelmen.com>. If you have a family membership, you'll need to enter each member individually under your primary membership.

Of course, if you still prefer paper and offline payment, we can still do that. You can find the PDF membership form at <https://rapidwheelmen.com/join/> under "Paper Form".

If you have any questions or issues, please reach out at membership@rapidwheelmen.com.

Pedaling Efficiency

by Dave Durkee

There appears to a paradigm shift in how you should be pedaling. More specifically, HOW you should be pedaling for regular road riding. If you have been working on your technique for greater power and efficiency* for the last several decades, you may have been working on producing more power throughout your entire pedaling stroke, ie—pulling up and around after reaching the bottom with each stroke. In fact, there are pedaling workout drills where you work on pulling back at the bottom “like scraping mud off your shoes” and “1 legged” drills.

But what I heard Spring of 2025 while watching a European Spring Classic race really got me to thinking. I watch all the European professional racing on FloSports. Joining the announcer was [Nicolas Roche](#), son of the very famous Irish pro road racer Stephen Roche, and also a very competent road and gravel racer himself. During some idle talk between the announcer and Nicolas, there was some discussion about how pedaling technique had changed in the pro peloton over the last several years. Recent physiological studies have indicated a more efficient method of using your energy. To paraphrase the discussion, it went something like this:

Announcer: “So the riders ride lower in their saddles, feet parallel to the ground at the bottom of their stroke. Why is that?”

Nicolas: “Well, 2 reasons. With the higher speeds in the pro peloton, a slightly lower saddle position is more aerodynamic. So no more pointing your toes down a lot at the bottom from a higher saddle height. Also, studies have shown that calf muscles consume a lot of energy without contributing a lot to the pedal stroke. So basically, your pedaling technique should be like 2 pistons just going up and down, something more natural. Early in my career I worked hard at developing nice calf muscles, then later worked hard at trying to get rid of them. Ultimately though, you produce power more efficiently, thus saving your energy to compete at a high level for 200km as long as you can consume a lot of carbohydrates too.”

WOW—I thought. All those years of spinning “circles” may not have been the best thing to do. Yes, I have good calf muscles, but lately I’ve been bothered by strained calf tendons and I had always been plagued by hamstring cramps. But since changing my pedaling technique to a “push forward and down, but not back and up”, my legs feel good after a ride and I feel I have more power all the way to the end. It’s working for me, and it’s more natural.

So where’s the science behind this? Over the Summer and Fall, I found several YouTube videos that explain the newest thinking. Take a look at:

[One Bad Pedaling Habit You MUST Avoid](#)

[Does Your Pedaling Technique Affect Your Cycling Performance? The Science](#)

* Effectiveness is defined as the most power attainable, using all the muscles in your legs like for sprinting and hill climbing. Efficiency is using energy judiciously, reducing energy needs.

club financial report for 2025

Rapid Wheelman, Inc.
Profit & Loss Detail

January 4, 2026

Cash Basis

January through December 2025

Type	Date	Account	Class	Original Amount	Balance
Income					
Event Donations					
Deposit	09/05/2025	Event Donations		100	100
Deposit	09/05/2025	Event Donations		60	160
Deposit	11/04/2025	Event Donations	Colorb...	60	220
Deposit	11/04/2025	Event Donations	Colorb...	82	302
Total Event Donations					302
Club Event Income					
Deposit	11/04/2025	Club Event Inco...	Colorb...	60	60
Total Club Event Income					60
Club Membership Dues					
Deposit	01/06/2025	Club Membershi...		70	70
Deposit	01/07/2025	Club Membershi...	General		70
Deposit	02/28/2025	Club Membershi...	General	704	774
Deposit	03/11/2025	Club Membershi...	General	125	899
Deposit	03/31/2025	Club Membershi...	General	465	1,364
Deposit	04/30/2025	Club Membershi...	General	315	1,679
Deposit	05/30/2025	Club Membershi...		35	1,714
Deposit	06/30/2025	Club Membershi...		105	1,819
Deposit	06/30/2025	Club Membershi...	General	550	2,369
Deposit	07/01/2025	Club Membershi...	General	35	2,404
Deposit	08/04/2025	Club Membershi...	General	250	2,654
Deposit	08/18/2025	Club Membershi...	General	60	2,714
Deposit	08/31/2025	Club Membershi...	General	175	2,889
Deposit	11/04/2025	Club Membershi...	General	160	3,049
Deposit	11/04/2025	Club Membershi...	General	80	3,129
Deposit	11/04/2025	Club Membershi...	General	105	3,234
Deposit	11/04/2025	Club Membershi...	General	35	3,269
Deposit	12/09/2025	Club Membershi...	General	710	3,979
Deposit	12/10/2025	Club Membershi...	General	35	4,014
Deposit	12/30/2025	Club Membershi...	General	250	4,264
Total Club Membership Dues					4,264
Event Clothing Sales					
Deposit	09/05/2025	Event Clothing ...		185	185
Total Event Clothing Sales					185
Total Income					4,811
Gross Profit					
Expense					
Club Christmas Party					
Check	01/25/2026	Club Christmas ...	General		
Total Club Christmas Party					
Club Donations					
Deposit	11/04/2025	Club Donations	General	(5)	(5)
Total Club Donations					(5)
Club Flyers					
Check	07/07/2025	Club Flyers		47	47
Total Club Flyers					47
Club Food					
Check	04/02/2025	Club Food	Time T...	184	184
Check	11/04/2025	Club Food		40	224
Check	11/04/2025	Club Food		50	274
Total Club Food					274

club financial report for 2025

Rapid Wheelman, Inc.
Profit & Loss Detail
January through December 2025

January 4, 2026

Cash Basis

Type	Date	Account	Class	Original Amount	Balance
Club Insurance					
Check	03/05/2025	Club Insurance	General	1,263	1,263
Check	05/10/2025	Club Insurance	General	650	1,913
Total Club Insurance					1,913
Club Miscellaneous					
General Journal	10/14/2025	Club Miscellane...	General		
General Journal	10/14/2025	Club Miscellane...	General		
Total Club Miscellaneous					
Club Postage & Shipping					
Check	03/05/2025	Club Postage & ...		210	210
Check	06/04/2025	Club Postage & ...			210
Check	08/19/2025	Club Postage & ...		19	229
Check	12/29/2025	Club Postage & ...		125	354
Total Club Postage & Shipping					354
Event Expenses					
Check	04/23/2025	Event Expenses	100 Gr...	33	33
Check	05/12/2025	Event Expenses	Time T...	120	153
Check	09/09/2025	Event Expenses	Time T...	539	692
Check	11/24/2025	Event Expenses	Colorb...	150	842
Total Event Expenses					842
Total Expense					3,424
Net Income					1,387

club financial report for 2025

January 4, 2026
Cash Basis

Rapid Wheelman, Inc.
Balance Sheet
As of December 31, 2025

	<u>Dec 31, 25</u>
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
5/3 Main Chkg - 7744	10,402
5/3 PayPal Savings - 5052	600
Cash	(151)
	<hr/>
Total Checking/Savings	10,851
Other Current Assets	
Club Merchandise	5,100
	<hr/>
Total Other Current Assets	5,100
	<hr/>
Total Current Assets	15,951
	<hr/>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>15,951</u>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Equity	
Opening Bal Equity	11,281
Retained Earnings	3,284
Net Income	1,387
	<hr/>
Total Equity	15,951
	<hr/>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>15,951</u>

For Sale

From a parts reservoir of Randy Higgins:



Bontrager shoes are **\$75.00**

Selle Anatomica saddle **\$60.00**

Avenir saddle with carbon rails **\$25.00**

Carbon Profile Design arm rests **\$75.00**



Fenders are \$10.00 apiece

Exp 3/30/2026

For Sale



Bar mitts are
\$25.00 for both.

Contact Randy Higgins at:

randyshiggins@gmail.com

From Tom Westrick

New Lauf Smoothie Carbon Handlebars

Price **\$200.**

Reach: 80mm

Drop: 125mm

Width: 42cm

Diameter: 31.8mm

See <https://www.laufcycles.com/product/lauf-smoothie> for additional details.

Contact Tom Westrick at tjwestrick@gmail.com if interested.



Exp 3/30/2026

For Sale

More from Randy Higgins:



For Sale



Winter riding boots, Bontrager size US 14, with an inner removable liner. **Asking \$75.00.**

Contact Randy Higgins at:

randyshiggins@gmail.com

Exp 3/30/2026

bike shops

1. Alger Bikes

120 - 28th St. S.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49548
(616) 243-9753
www.algerbikes.com

2. biked.

2312 28th St SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508
(616) 234-0134
<https://www.biked.app/>

3. Freewheeler Bike Shop

915 Leonard Street NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
(616) 451-8011
www.freewheelerbikeshop.com

4. GRBC (Ada Bike Shop)

597 Ada Drive
Ada, MI 49301
(616) 682-2453
www.grandrapidsbicycles.com

5. GRBC

1311 Fulton St E
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
(616) 458-2200
www.grandrapidsbicycles.com

6. West Michigan Bike and Fitness

2830 East Paris Ave, SE
Kentwood, MI 49512
(616) 942-1880
www.westmichiganbike.com

7. Rockford Bike Shop

169 Marcell Dr NE
Rockford, MI 49341
(616) 951-7181



8. Village Cycle & Fitness

450-A Baldwin Jenison, MI 49428
(616) 457-1670
www.villagebikeshop.com

9. Village Cycle & Fitness

5991 Kalamazoo Ave SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508
(616) 455-4870
www.villagebikeshop.com

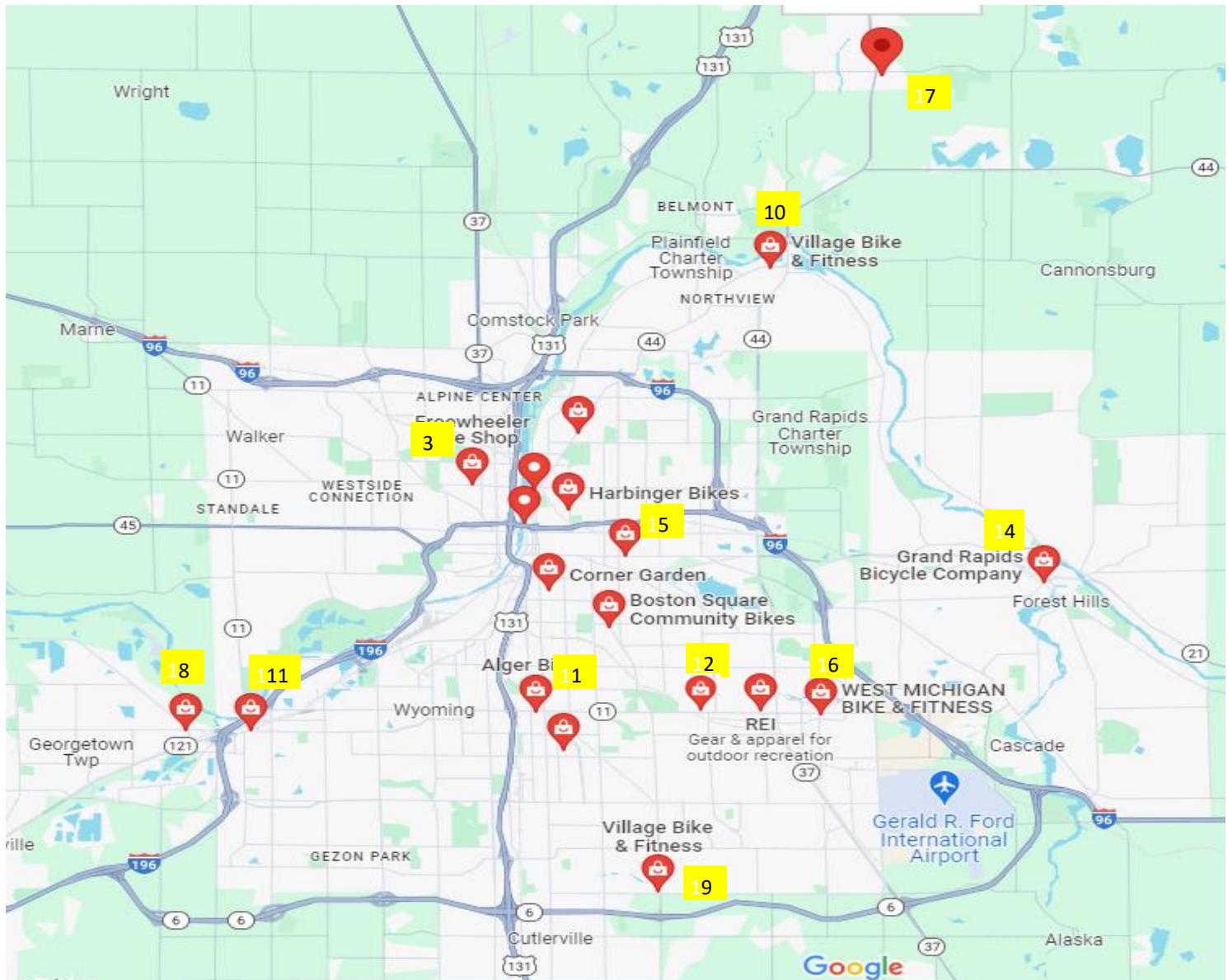
10. Village Cycle & Fitness

5278 Plainfield Ave NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
(616) 361-3661
www.villagebikeshop.com

11. West Michigan Bike and Fitness

4300 Chicago Dr. SW
Grandville, MI 49418
(616) 531-9911
www.westmichiganbike.com

Click [HERE](#) for GGRBC's List



Rapid Wheelmen

PO Box 1008

Grand Rapids, MI 49501



Support your club, ride in club colors! Items will be available for purchase at club meetings and events.



t-shirts - \$12

shorts - \$65

bib shorts - \$70

jersey - \$60

water bottle - \$10

To arrange a purchase, contact:

Randy Higgins: treasurer@rapidwheelmen.com

IO Groups

Join the Rapid Wheelmen IO Group!

<https://groups.io/g/RapidWheelmen>



Like us on Facebook!

[@RapidWheelmen](https://www.facebook.com/RapidWheelmen)

[@RapidWheelmenTimeTrials](https://www.facebook.com/RapidWheelmenTimeTrials)

