



# VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University  
**VCU Scholars Compass**

---

Great VCU Bike Race Book Student Blog Posts

Great VCU Bike Race Book

---

2015

## Bicycle Urbanism, Blog 3

Alexander Cortes

*Virginia Commonwealth University*



Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/bike\\_student](https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/bike_student)

 Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0) License.

---

Downloaded from

[https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/bike\\_student/24](https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/bike_student/24)

This Blog Post is brought to you for free and open access by the Great VCU Bike Race Book at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great VCU Bike Race Book Student Blog Posts by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact [libcompass@vcu.edu](mailto:libcompass@vcu.edu).

# Bicycle Urbanism

*Part of the Great VCU Bike Race Book Course*

## Blog

🕒 September 30, 2015   📁 Student Post   👤 dpitt

Last year I studied abroad for a year in Copenhagen, which is a city very well known for being bicycle-friendly. I did not truly understand what that meant until I had lived and interacted with the urban landscape for over a month or so. Before I knew it, I was picking up the rhythms of commuting by bicycle in Copenhagen, and I was loving it. I began to reflect on bicycling conditions back home in Richmond, Virginia. Richmond, as we know, has quite the bicycle culture; with its many bicycle shops, bike crews and group rides, bicycle coops, and even bicycle-related events and festivities. Even though this culture is very present in the city, it is not a bicycle-friendly city.

For starters, the presence of bicycle lanes within the city is laughable, considering there are practically none. The few protected bicycle paths are outside of the city, which are great, but do not efficiently connect those neighborhoods with the urban center of Richmond. I am aware of the Richmond Bicycle Master Plan, but the infrastructural improvements proposed for that plan are not even set in stone. The safety and drive to improve bicycling conditions in Richmond is not of high priority for city officials, and that is one thing that makes Richmond bicycle-unfriendly.

Whenever I hop on my bicycle and go for a ride, it is like preparing for battle. The number of times that I have been harassed by automobilists while rightfully and safely bicycling in the street is uncountable, as is the number of times a car has passed me uncomfortably close. This brings to the point that the mindset of city residents and a society as whole is one aspect that makes a city bicycle-friendly. Contrasting horrible hit-and-run experiences friends have had in Richmond, I had nothing but great experiences with drivers in Copenhagen. When one goes for their driver's license in Denmark, bicycle-awareness is a big element in the test. They are taught that bicyclists have the right-of-way, unless marked otherwise, but one of the best characteristics of bicycling in Copenhagen is that one almost never felt in competition with cars.

Bicycle access is another big element that creates a bicycle-friendly city. A city can have a large portion of bicyclist-commuters, but if accessibility is absent then the efficiency and effectiveness of bicycles is thrown out the window. Bicycle access deals with bicycle parking, bike share programs, as well as facilities such as showers or repair stations. Bicycle parking is an important element to get people to start bicycling. Just think about it, when plans were getting started for the Floyd Avenue Bicycle Boulevard, the biggest concern of residents was losing parking spaces. It is engraved in the American mindset that they must have space to park their vehicle: a car, truck, motorcycle, or in this case, a bicycle. Safe and effective bicycle parking is one where there are more than enough parking spaces to fit bicycles on a busy day. It is also parking where there is lighting that makes people feel safe, about the well-being of themselves and their bicycles. Another important factor of bicycle parking is protection from weather, such as precipitation and wind.

These are all factors that contribute to the execution and existence of a bicycle-friendly city. Richmond has a lot of work to be done, with infrastructural improvements, as well as a change in the mindset of its residents. This all starts by hopping on your bicycle and making sure your community knows that bicycling can be an effective and efficient mode of transportation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAr5sB6aivk>

Alexander Cortes

Submitted by Alexander

## 3 thoughts on “Blog”



Brittany  
Prorise

October 2, 2015 at 11:21 pm

I like what you said about the American mindset and parking spaces. I never really thought about how much we envy convenient parking. Living in the fan, I use my bike a lot to get to class, Carytown, grocery store, etc., and one thing that drives me crazy is that there is no decent bike parking around my apartment. I have to lock my bike to handrails and street signs and then I feel bad when it's locked next to someone's car door, I also imagine dogs might be inclined to pee on my bike when they walk by it attached to a street sign. It's nice that restaurants and stores have decent bike parking but it would be even nicer if some of the neighborhoods in Richmond had a few racks scattered about.



Carlisle  
Wilkinson

October 8, 2015 at 5:37 pm

I love the idea of requiring a section on bike safety on the driver's license test. I think in order to encourage bicycle friendliness, a cooperation among legislative efforts and infrastructure are a great means. A friend of mine from Germany was telling me that in Copenhagen, they began by just building the necessary infrastructure and investing in bike share programs before the demand, and the public just started using more bike transit because it was readily available, and the city was built for it!



Justin  
Grenzebach

October 10, 2015 at 11:10 pm

awesome post and great video, I really like how the video captures the essence of non-physical/societal aspects of biking that are common among our class blog. Additionally I liked how the video recapped some foundation-level ideas to bear in mind when thinking about bikes as transit, that bikes are the fastest way from point A to B, and that there needs to be a focus on implementing ideas that work

within cycling opposed to trying to squeeze bike infrastructure in wherever it is most convenient for a specific city.