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## Bicycle Urbanism, Blog 4

Luanda Fiscella

*Virginia Commonwealth University*



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# Bicycle Urbanism

Part of the Great VCU Bike Race Book Course



## Bicycle friendly city, what does it look like?

🕒 October 2, 2015   📁 Student Post   👤 dpitt

The biggest obstacle any city faces trying to become bike-friendly is the modification of its car culture. In many ways bicycle infrastructure already exists, but roads continue to be dominated by automobiles and desensitized drivers. Cyclists are subject to distracted motorists who are not accustomed to sharing the road. Changing this alone can create bicycle-friendliness in any city. Bicycle infrastructure is necessary no matter what but traffic calming poses to be a challenge that will require multiple approaches and long-term commitment. Educating motorists how to share the road and the importance of safe driving is just as critical as teaching cyclists how to ride in the city.

While funding the bricks and mortar of any kind of infrastructure is always challenging, it is the attitude and behavior motorists have towards cyclists that will pose the biggest difficulty. Even the most experienced and competent cyclist using a designated bike lane is subject to the hazards of traffic conditions. Roads everywhere are congested with vehicles operated by people oftentimes texting. Cyclists are at a serious risk when drivers travel at higher speeds while distracted. Having lived in Richmond for only 1 year, I have seen 3 accidents occur between a car and a cyclist. This not only rightfully scares people out of riding bikes but also a complete and unnecessary tragedy when worst-case scenarios happen.

A bike-friendly city would require motorists to drive less, slow down and learn how to share the road. A bike-friendly city would be one that motorists are hyper-aware of pedestrian and cyclists' right to street space. Such a city is cognizant of the true burden singular vehicular use has on the environment and communities. Car use would be discouraged as much as possible while promoting the low-cost sensible alternative of bussing or biking. Schools and places of employment would implement incentives for those who choose to ride instead of drive. This kind of place goes beyond just needed infrastructure; it involves rebuilding a culture where cars are less dominate.

Creating a bicycle friendly city is no small feat and requires long-term commitment and the cooperation of multiple stakeholders. This kind of evolution doesn't happen overnight. From cities down to the individual, a thriving bicycle culture relies on the acquiescence of dominant car culture. The pursuit of bicycle infrastructure like lanes and parking should continue without haste. But in the meantime, we should all consider the sustainable influence bicycles have and start respecting the street space they deserve.

Side note: I choose this image of Curitiba, Brazil because of the powerful presence the bicycles have on street. The cyclists easily outnumber the vehicles. This shot captures the shift that most cyclists hope to see in more cities.

Submitted by Luanda

## *4 thoughts on "Bicycle friendly city, what does it look like?"*



Mariam  
Sankoh

October 5, 2015 at 10:40 pm

With the America sense of independence associated so much with being able to own and drive a car rather than bike and use other forms of transportation. Do you think that encouraging more bicycling by limiting car driving and slowing it down will catch on here the way it has in other cities around the world? I ask because I remain skeptical that we should approach improving bicycling culture by discouraging car driving culture.



James  
Yancey

October 9, 2015 at 3:04 pm

You're correct in saying that cooperation between cyclists and motorists is key. Many people, in my view, neglect the fact that educating motorists in bike safety is just as important as educating cyclists. Also, I'm glad you chose the image of Curitiba to represent such a shining example of a well adapted cycling community. This entry presents excellent insight into what a bike centered culture might look like, not only in Richmond, but in many other cities as well.



October 9, 2015 at 3:30 pm

I am glad that you also brought of pedestrian safety. A lot of bicycle advocacy seems to ignore pedestrians rights, whom, in the end, are the epitome of

Alex Cortes

concerned citizens of earth. This picture is awesome, I could imagine a two-way bike avenue of this sorts on Broad, which is one of the most uncomfortable streets to ride on.



Steven  
Heinitz

October 9, 2015 at 7:23 pm

I think your comment modification of the local car-culture is an important step to a make a city bicycle friendly. Regardless of how many bike lanes and sharrows a cities has will not improve bike safety if car drivers dominate the roads and do not respect the bicyclists around them. A city needs to to have certain streets that are “bike friendly corridors” to welcome bicyclists and encourage automobile to drive slower and give bicyclist a safe distance to ride. As the City of Richmond moves forward with the Floyd Avenue Bike corridor it will be interesting how people living in this area change their driving and bicycle habits.