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Bicycle Urbanism

Part of the Great VCU Bike Race Book Course



Bike-Friendliness

🕒 October 2, 2015 📁 Student Post 👤 dpitt

Before taking this course I assumed that a “bike friendly” community just meant that there were a lot of people within the community that rode bikes. Now that I’ve completed the surveys and mapping project I understand that there is a lot more to it. Also, riding a bike a few times a week has given me a new perspective on Richmond’s bike friendliness.

What makes a city bike friendly is how it caters to its bikers/cyclists. In Arlington, VA, where I’m from, there are bike paths on every street, the Capital Bikeshare is throughout the county and there are bike racks everywhere, even in parking garages. Arlington has made it extremely easy for people on bikes to get around. It’s easy to get on a bike and ride somewhere but what is the trip like and what is the destination like? If a city makes you feel encouraged, as opposed to discouraged, to ride a bicycle to work, school, dinner etc., then it is bike friendly.

In Richmond, I feel encouraged to ride a bike to avoid traffic, hunting for a parking space and avoiding having to pay for parking. It’s very easy to get to Carytown, Shockoe Bottom and Belle Isle on a bicycle. From Monroe Park, you can get to any one of those places within ten minutes. However, going by car will take double the amount if you include the time it takes to find parking. Richmond is a big city; however at the same time, it doesn’t take you long to get from place to place.

After completing the surveys, I realized that Richmond still needs a lot of work.

Many people mentioned that the construction and bad driving can make riding a bike very dangerous. It’s no longer a nice relaxing cruise, you have to be very aware of your surroundings, it doesn’t matter if you’ve been riding a bike for 15 years or 5 days, the people around you are what you need to look out for. One suggestion would be to start cracking down on bad drivers who don’t yield to cyclists. Another suggestion would be to start fixing the sidewalks; everybody knows how terrible Richmond sidewalks are. Even though people on bikes should ride in the street to avoid running over pedestrians, when there’s a lot of cars or fast moving traffic, it would be nice to safely get out of the way and onto the sidewalk without riding over a loose brick or giant hole.

I also think that adding more bike paths would be a good idea. If you’ve ever been to Belle Isle, the journey down to the river is treacherous. There’s steep hills, rocky paths, narrow paths, it’s not easy to bike or even walk. It would be more convenient if a nice smooth pathway was put in place, I’d be more inclined to ride my bike as opposed to drive, park and then walk. It would also be easier for people with road bikes and cruisers that can’t handle the terrain that mountain bikes can.

All in all, if I had to rate how bike friendly Richmond is on a scale of 1-10 (10 being very bike friendly), I would give it a score of 7.

Submitted by Brittany

One thought on “Bike-Friendliness”



Mariam
Sankoh

October 5, 2015 at 10:45 pm

I agree with you that although cyclist should not be riding on the sidewalks, that fixing the sidewalks around the area should still be on the city's radar because it could lead to improvements such as expanding sidewalks and incorporating new bike lanes. I know that when I was in Northside I saw a bike land and sidewalk hybrid that was newer and well lite and could work well around campus.