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Bicycle Urbanism, Blog 1

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Bicycle Urbanism

Part of the Great VCU Bike Race Book Course



Bicycle Friendly City Blog

🕒 October 1, 2015 📁 Student Post 👤 dpitt

What makes a city bicycle-friendly? To me, cities that are bicycle friendly are cities that promote, encourage, and entice citizens to choose cycling as a safe and viable option of transportation. Promoting and encouraging cycling are key parts of a city becoming bicycle friendly. Supporting and encouraging citizens to choose cycling is an important step. To be bicycle friendly, cities should advertise the health benefits of cycling, inform their citizens on how an increase of people riding bikes can decrease the amount of automobile related pollution, and educate their citizens on how cycling is a safe transportation option. Cities should have city wide programs like “ride your bike to work day” and promote bicycle related activities such as competitive cycling and mountain biking. Richmond took a step in the right direction to becoming more bicycle friend by hosting the UCI Road World Championships. It was the perfect opportunity for Richmond to showcase itself to the world while at the same time making the citizenry more aware of cycling and showing that as a city, Richmond is ready to take improving its cycling conditions and cycling culture seriously. The third and most important part of what makes a city bicycle friendly is actively enticing citizens to choose cycling as a practical, every day mode of transportation by providing a safe way for cyclists to navigate the city. This is really the implementation stage of becoming bicycle friendly. This includes vastly improving bicycle infrastructure by establishing safe bike lanes. A lot of the “bike lanes” I have seen in Richmond are not really bike lanes, they are just bike icons painted on the street. There is no actual infrastructure in place that establishes them as bike lanes. Nothing properly differentiates between where motorists are allowed to drive and where cyclists are allowed to ride. Streets like Floyd and Grove are good examples of this. They are “bike lanes” on established “bike routes” yet the only thing that identifies them as bike lanes the bike icons painted on the street and the signs that are periodically posted that say bike route. The only thing Richmond did to establish these streets as having bike lanes as compared to other streets is by saying they have bike lanes. There is no physical infrastructure or markings that safely separate cyclists from motorists. With this being said, there are a few examples in Richmond of bike lanes that are safe, clearly marked, and effective. The bike lane that has been established on Leigh Street is a great example. On Leigh Street there is a bike lane that is clearly marked and there are traffic lines that explicitly separate the bike lane from the automobile lanes. Some parts of the bike lane on Leigh Street have even been painted green to further establish the bike lane. This is a good example of a bike lane that Richmond has created that is safe and

enticing to current and potential cyclists. The attached photograph is of a bike lane in Copenhagen. This should be a model for which Richmond should base its future bike lanes off of. The bike lane pictured clearly differentiates the bike lane from the automobile lanes and the bike lane's safety is ensured by its raised elevation and physical infrastructure (curb) that separates the cyclists from the motorists. In summary, for a city to be bicycle friendly it has to not only promote and encourage its citizens to choose cycling, it has to entice its citizens to choose cycling by putting into place the proper cycling infrastructure that will ensure that cycling is a safe transportation option. Cycling is a choice. Cities have to encourage and entice their citizens to want to choose cycling over driving. Once the citizens understand the benefits of choosing cycling and know they have a safe way to get around town on bikes, more and more citizens will choose cycling and that city will be known as being "bicycle friendly".

Submitted by Matt

2 thoughts on "Bicycle Friendly City Blog"



Luanda

October 6, 2015 at 2:00 am

Do you think that distance might be the number 1 barrier to bike riding? A person might consider riding to the store if it was less than a mile away. Low density means everything is spread out thus making cycling less enticing. I think you're right about cities taking on infrastructure improvements but what about allowing mixed uses so people actually have the option of walking or riding to the grocery store? A lot of communities are food deserts and require residents to rely on vehicles in order to get to grocery stores. Building bike infrastructure can be about creating more efficient and self-reliant communities.



Alex Cortes

October 9, 2015 at 3:26 pm

Nice blog. Those markers on the streets are referred to as "sharrows," as in, share the road. I feel as though sharrows could serve some purpose in low-traffic neighborhoods and streets. One interesting thing I have just reflected on is that I didn't notice sharrows in Copenhagen, as I was just living there for a year study abroad. It is interesting to think that when there is safe bicycle infrastructure, sharrows are practically imbedded in the mindset of the people living in these communities.