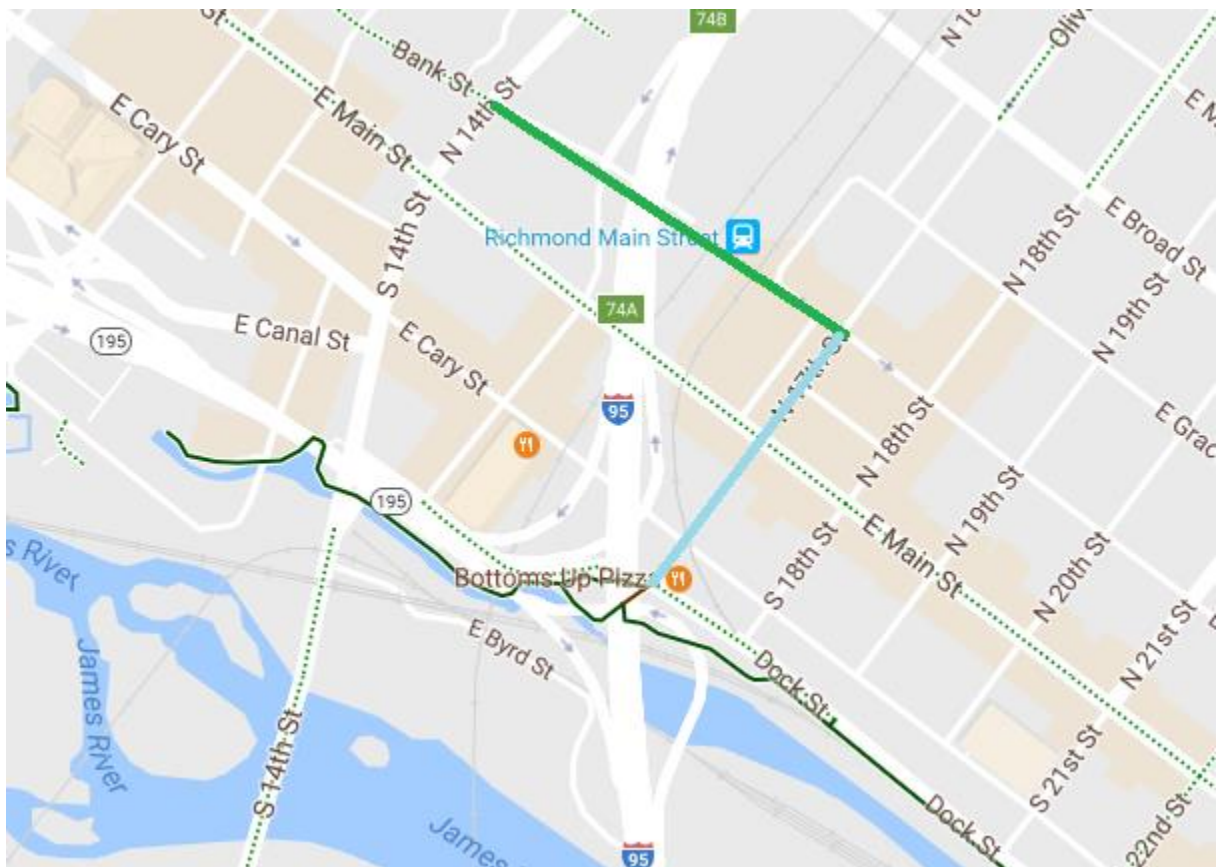


Recommendation to make 17th St. two-way for bicycles next to the Marketplace

Nicholas Smith

To the members of the Urban Design Committee,

I would like to thank the City and Ms. Welliver for the changes made for bicycle accommodations to the 17th St. Marketplace plans, UDC 2017-06. Connectivity between Franklin St., where a new bike route will soon open under the train shed, and the Capital trail is essential to providing a safe, comfortable environment for people getting from the East End to downtown. The smooth brick pavers will create a pleasant transition, while still slowing down bicycles by design to a speed that is compatible with the pedestrian nature of the Marketplace. This is to be commended.



The under-construction, under-the-train shed bike lane is in light green, the Capital Trail in dark green, and the missing link in blue.

I have one small recommendation, which has no additional cost to the design but will help ensure seamless connectivity: making 17th St. two-way for bicycles here. As the brick pavers are only on the east side of the Marketplace, cyclists will choose to use that side for both northbound and southbound trips, rather than the highly uncomfortable granite spalls on the west side. This is just a fact of how the design is, and should be accommodated, not enforced against.

Fortunately, Richmond has already implemented a solution just up the hill. Leigh St. east of 21st is one-way west for one block due to its narrowness, but allows bicycles to use it in both directions.



Image courtesy of Rachel Jordan

This design is obviously not appropriate on busy streets, but is very safe on quiet streets with low vehicle traffic at low speeds. It is also important that bicycles going against vehicular traffic can get out of the way if there is a wide vehicle such as a truck, by, say, hopping onto the curb. As such, it is the perfect design for this part of the 17th St. Marketplace. This design is standard in the Netherlands, the country with the lowest injury and fatality rate for people biking, and due to the already low speeds that allow drivers more time to see people walking and biking, this slows down vehicles even further. With speeds designed to be under 10 mph, which the design is trying to encourage, collisions seem just as rare as with pedestrians crossing between the Marketplace and the curb on the east side of the street.

The total cost would just be adding two “Except Bikes” signs underneath the “Do Not Enter” signs, which would probably cost in the low tens of dollars. It would make legal what will be both the reality and the safest option for connecting from downtown to the Capital trail. And it is a solution already successfully used in the very same neighborhood.

I hope, then, that you include this recommendation in your review and ask the city, specifically the Transportation Engineering Division, to make this change to the city street network to make this already wonderful project even better.

Thank you,

Nicholas Smith