

From: [Catherine Welsh](#)
To: [Eastman, Jeff R. - PDR](#)
Subject: corrected submission
Date: Sunday, July 05, 2015 3:08:07 PM

Jeff,

Please use this one with the corrected spelling: aesthetics. I was too quick on the send! Thank you - Catherine

-----Original Message-----

From: Catherine Welsh
Date: Jul 5, 2015 2:48:46 PM
Subject: Re: UDC meeting 7-9-2015
To: Jeff.Eastman@richmondgov.com

Mr. Eastman,

I have lived in the Murchies Mill Civic Association neighborhood for over 30 years and have witnessed Belmont Rd change from a 2 lane road with a 90 degree turn onto West Belmont to a 4 lane road extending to Walmley Blvd. with a blind intersection at West Belmont. I am the current president of the Murchies Mill Civic Association and while I can not speak for all of my neighbors, I am 100% in support of a roundabout at the intersection of Belmont and West Belmont Rds. I believe the roundabout would accomplish a number of desired outcomes including: slow the traffic coming up the hill off of Route 150, eliminate the blind spot for drivers trying to cross Belmont Rd from West Belmont, provide a safe pedestrian crossing at this intersection and improve the aesthetics of one of our gateway roads into the City of Richmond. Recently 5 of the residential communities in this area joined together as the Upper Reservoir District and we are very proud of our residential communities here at the most southern end of Southside Richmond. A roundabout at this intersection will enhance our communities. I ask the Urban Design Committee to please approve its construction.

Sincerely,

Catherine Welsh
3610 South Belmont Rd.
Richmond, VA 23234
Murchies Mill Civic Association
804-745-1512

On 07/02/15, Eastman, Jeff R. - PDR <Jeff.Eastman@richmondgov.com> wrote:

Catherine,

The Urban Design Committee agenda and related documents for the July 9, 2015 meeting are now available on the City's legislative website. You can access the agenda here: [July 9, 2015 UDC Agenda](#)

The published agenda link on this page will open a PDF that contains links and lists attachments to each agenda item.

The Urban Design Committee meets at 10am in the 5th floor conference room of City Hall, 900 E. Broad Street.

Please let me know if you have any trouble accessing the information.

Feel free to reply to this email with your feedback and/or attend the meeting this Thursday to provide your input directly to the Committee.

Best,

Jeff

Jeff Eastman

Senior Planner, Planning & Preservation Division

Secretary to the Urban Design Committee

Dept. of Planning and Development Review

Richmond, VA

804-646-6348

<http://www.richmondgov.com/planninganddevelopmentreview/index.aspx>

From: [TERRIE McSWEEN](#)
To: [Eastman, Jeff R. - PDR](#)
Cc: [Terrie McSween](#)
Subject: Round About on Belmont Road
Date: Sunday, July 05, 2015 8:47:25 AM

Good Morning Jeff

I hope you enjoyed a wonderful 4th of July! My name is Terrie McSween I live in the Upper Reservoir District and specifically in the Brookbury subdivision. I am excited to know our community will gain a roundabout on Belmont Road. I have traveled the world and I can tell you the roundabout is the safest connection between roads. The roundabout is a solution that will meet our communities needs to improve safety standards but also meet both the environmental and aesthetic requirements. Please know I am supportive of the plan. I am away but will do all I can to be at the meeting to lend my voice of support. I wish you a wonderful working week.

Warm Regards

Terrie

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Amelia Lightner](#)
To: [Eastman, Jeff R. - PDR](#)
Date: Monday, July 06, 2015 10:47:03 PM

Mr. Eastman,

I have lived in the Brookbury Community for sometime and have been the President for over 10 years. We have had many residents complaining about the lack of having a clear view of on coming traffic at the intersection of west Belmont Road and Belmont Road. The view is total obstructed, the experience is a very frightening, due to the design of the road, which you can not see traffic as it approaches, this was a great concern, many accidents has happened in this area,two years ago there was a fatality. The residents came together and have voted unanimously in support of the roundabout. We support the project because, number one, it will force the traffic to slow down or come to complete stop, that will create a much safer situation, and , number two, the roundabout will enhance the area. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Amelia Lightner, President,
Brookbury Civic Association
804 279- 8816

8 July 2015

Dear members of the Urban Design Committee,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on UDC 2015-17, concerning a roundabout at Belmont Road and West Belmont Road.

I'm pleased to see another roundabout added to Richmond's infrastructure. Roundabouts slow down traffic, increase efficiency, reduce collisions and reduce collision severity; these benefits are thoroughly reviewed in the applicant's submission. This roundabout will greatly benefit pedestrians, as Belmont, a fast, four-lane road with no median is difficult to cross safely, and another deadly collision would be just a matter of time. Narrowing the road to one-lane each way allows a one-lane roundabout, which is much, much safer for pedestrians than a multi-lane roundabout; the city is right to look out for the safety of pedestrians. However, in designing this roundabout, the applicant has missed one other key user: cyclists. Not planning for safe cycling now when bicycle infrastructure on the nearby streets has already been proposed will lead to having to rebuild the intersection a second time, at unnecessary expense; we should get it right the first time!

The recently produced Bicycle Master Plan has laid out corridors for future bicycle infrastructure over the next decade and beyond. The current and proposed network can be seen in Figure 3-9 (page 3-9, or page 45 of the pdf, see attachment). The current network features a bike lane on Iron Bridge Road, part of Bicycle Route 1, which stretches from Maine to Florida; this lane intersects with West Belmont Road only 1,500 feet from the proposed roundabout. The proposed bicycle network includes a bicycle facility along West Belmont Road from Iron Bridge Road to this intersection, and along Belmont Road in both directions of this intersection. Given that three legs of this proposed roundabout are roads with proposed bicycle infrastructure, the city should be planning now to accommodate cyclists at this intersection, rather than having to pay for this again later; the cost and trouble of planning for cyclists with this project will be very little today compared to doing it a few years from now.

Telling cyclists to go in the lane with cars is not a safe solution. "Sharrows" and "take your lane" creates the exact problem segregated-cycling infrastructure is designed to solve: it puts cyclists in front of cars, or pinches them right where the roadway narrows. Cars travel 2-3 times the speed of cyclists in these kinds of situations, which will only make those in cars feel frustrated and impatient waiting for cyclists. Cars will try to mount the apron to speed around a cyclist, or honk, or tailgate, or do other things that make the cyclist either unsafe or feel unsafe; it certainly won't create a pleasant experience that will encourage people to keep cycling. Segregated cycling infrastructure is needed here, among many places. Fortunately, the current intersection is very wide and is being narrowed, so there is more than enough space to fit segregated cycling facilities. (Note that the proposed-shared space configuration can be reasonable for narrow, residential roads in dense areas with low speed limits on adjoining streets and little traffic, like some parts of the Fan; it is not safe on suburban/rural roads right next to a highway interchange and with a 35 mph speed limit and over 5,000 Annual Average Daily Traffic.)

However, not all segregated facilities are created equal. Below is an old roundabout with a bicycle lane surrounding it right outside the train station in Zwolle, a city in the east of the Netherlands. It was designed years ago before safety data showed this design unsafe.



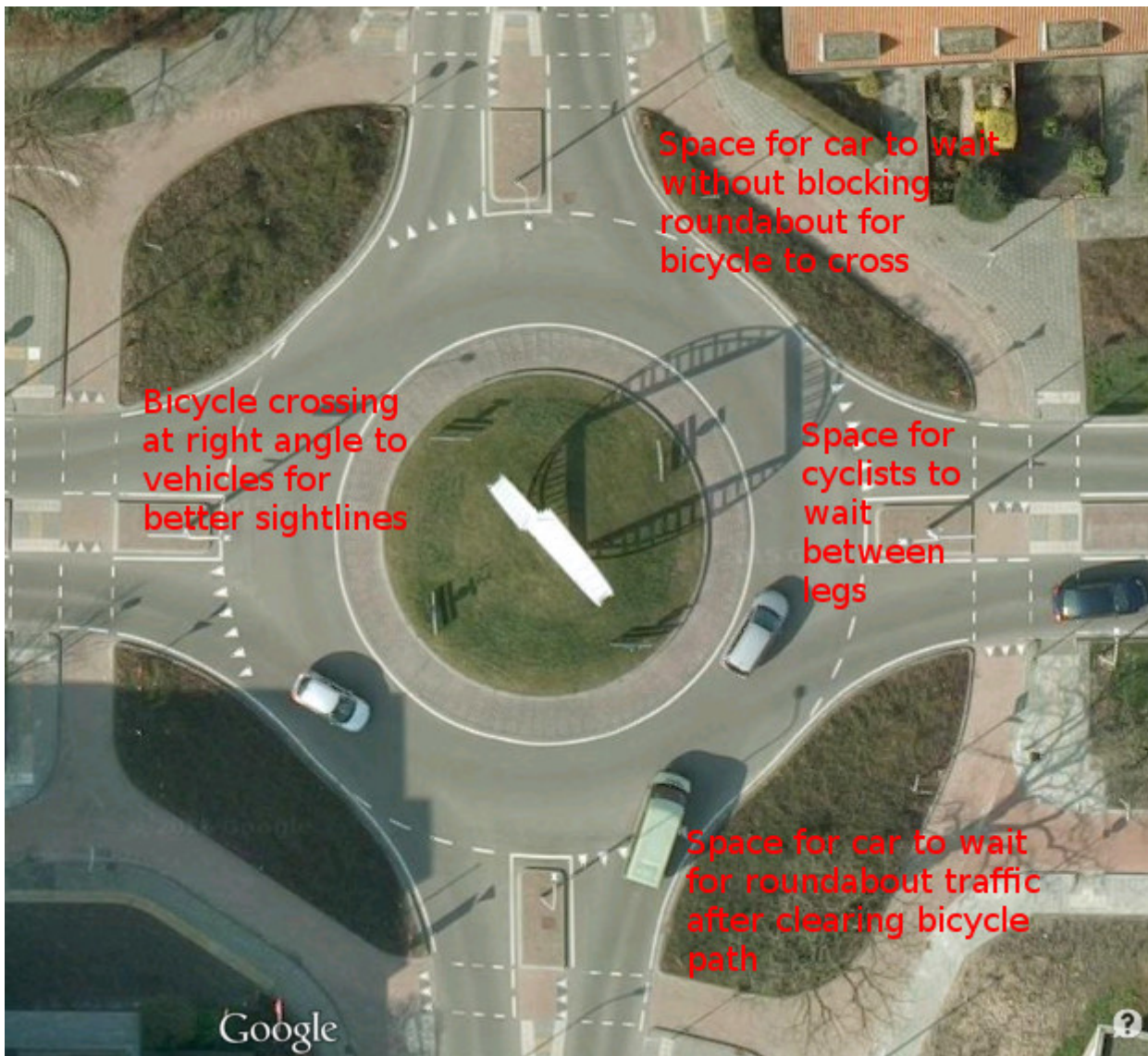
As you can see, there is only paint separating the lane for cars and the lane for bikes. On entering the roundabout there is no space for cars to wait after crossing the crosswalk or bicycle lane, meaning if the roundabout has traffic the car will block pedestrians and cyclists. There is also no space to wait on exiting, which blocks cars behind them in the roundabout. Lastly, the crossing angle when exiting the roundabout is very tight, maybe 30 degrees or less, meaning the driver has to look far back over their right shoulder to make sure not to hit a cyclist. A slight slip of the wheel when driving in the roundabout can cause a car to veer into the bicycle lane, leaving the cyclist at the mercy of the driver. In four years there were 15 collisions at this intersection, including one cyclist who was seriously injured.

This design has been copied repeatedly, and is unsafe wherever it's implemented, which is why the Dutch have stopped building them. Unfortunately for them, they haven't had money to replace them all yet. Fortunately for us, we have the benefit of all their experience with these roundabouts, as well as their safety data, so we can avoid the unsafe design and use the safe design from the start. Just because a design comes from the Netherlands doesn't mean it's good!

For what's worth copying, notice the difference between this design and the one below, in Assen, the next main city to the north:



The only interaction between cyclists and cars are the very short crossings between the legs of the roundabout; cars would have to drive over the grass or concrete curb to hit the cyclists anywhere else. It creates protection effortlessly, preventing even inadvertent collisions.



As you can see, there is space upon entering for a car to wait after crossing the cycle path; this means the driver can deal with one thing at a time: first the cyclists, then the cars in the roundabout. Reducing the number of things to pay attention to at once reduces the chance of missing one. The same thing is true upon exiting. The crossing of cyclists occurs at or very close to right angles, meaning drivers are looking out their front windshield for cyclists, not behind them through seats, other passengers and small windows. Lastly, cyclists can also deal with one thing at a time: first cross traffic exiting the roundabout, then traffic entering, as there is a space to wait safely in between. This increases safety and increases the flow for everyone. This roundabout had 4 collisions in the same four-year period, all between motor vehicles. (Obviously these are just two roundabouts, but the four bicycle traffic safety groups in the Netherlands all agree the former roundabout type is less safe than the latter.)

I should also note here that this roundabout doesn't have to be as the one pictured above. The grass between the roundabout and the bicycle paths can be narrowed considerably as conditions warrant, as in the northeast corner. This roundabout at maximum diameter is about 120 feet (including the bicycle paths), while the proposed one you are reviewing today in Richmond is just over 100 feet. Geometry will obviously be a bit different, but this design can easily fit in the space provided.

One more thing worth pointing out here: all the bicycle paths are red. This is the standard colour for

bicycle paths in the Netherlands. Much of the US has gone with green, but the Dutch chose red partially because then red bricks can be used as a path in historical areas while red asphalt can be used in other areas. And when I say red asphalt, I mean that the asphalt has been dyed red, meaning that it stays red much longer than a thin layer of coloured paint ever could, reducing maintenance costs and making what is what clear.

Lastly, it is sometimes said that because the type of bicycle infrastructure for the adjoining streets has not been selected yet, and that the implementation date may be far in the future, it would not be a good idea to build bicycle infrastructure only on the roundabout, better to wait until the rest is ready. But this type of roundabout is compatible with any kind of design for the adjoining roads because it is the only recommended kind for every kind of adjoining road infrastructure. (The only exception is when vehicle numbers are high enough that either a traffic light or full grade separation with a tunnel or bridge is warranted.) So this design will work whether the lanes are painted, buffered or protected; it will also work if there is one kind of infrastructure on one leg and another kind on another leg. For an example, see the roundabout, a few miles north of the previous one:



This image below may be a little hard to see (it's at maximum zoom), but there is an east-west fully protected bicycle path to the south of the main east-west road; this path stays protected through the roundabout. (This path is two-way because of the adjacent property, but could easily be one-way on both sides of the east-west street.) On the street to the south there is no bicycle infrastructure because this road only leads to a farm, so has very low traffic. On the street to the north there are painted lanes (with no buffer or protection) which, on approaching the roundabout, leave the road for cars and go around the roundabout protected from other traffic. This roundabout mixes protected lanes, a painted lane a lack of bicycle infrastructure (sharrows) all in one, and could have been built before infrastructure for the adjoining streets was decided or built. This design is then adaptable to whatever future infrastructure is built by Richmond in the next decade, and requires very little change compared to having to add this all after the fact.

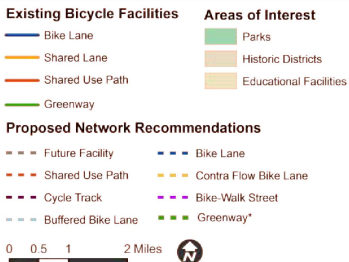
Given that the main road in today's proposed roundabout, Belmont Road, had 5,700 vehicles per day in 2013, and that West Belmont has 740, it seems clear that four lanes on Belmont are unnecessary, and a road diet is in order. When this happens, there will be ample space for a buffered or protected bicycle lane in each direction (or maybe moving all car traffic to one side of the median and all pedestrian and bicycle traffic to the other). Given that bicycle infrastructure is already in the Bicycle Master Plan for this area and that there is sufficient space for it and that much of the space devoted to motor vehicles is unused and won't be necessary unless traffic at least quadruples, it's safe to say that something is coming, and we should prepare for it today rather than pay for it twice.

Therefore, I urge the Urban Design Committee to recommend the applicant add a protected bicycle path around the roundabout, taking in mind the important points I noted for designing safe infrastructure that separates and reduces conflicts and chances for mistakes. Your move today can save the city tens of thousands of dollars down the line for very little cost today while providing safer facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

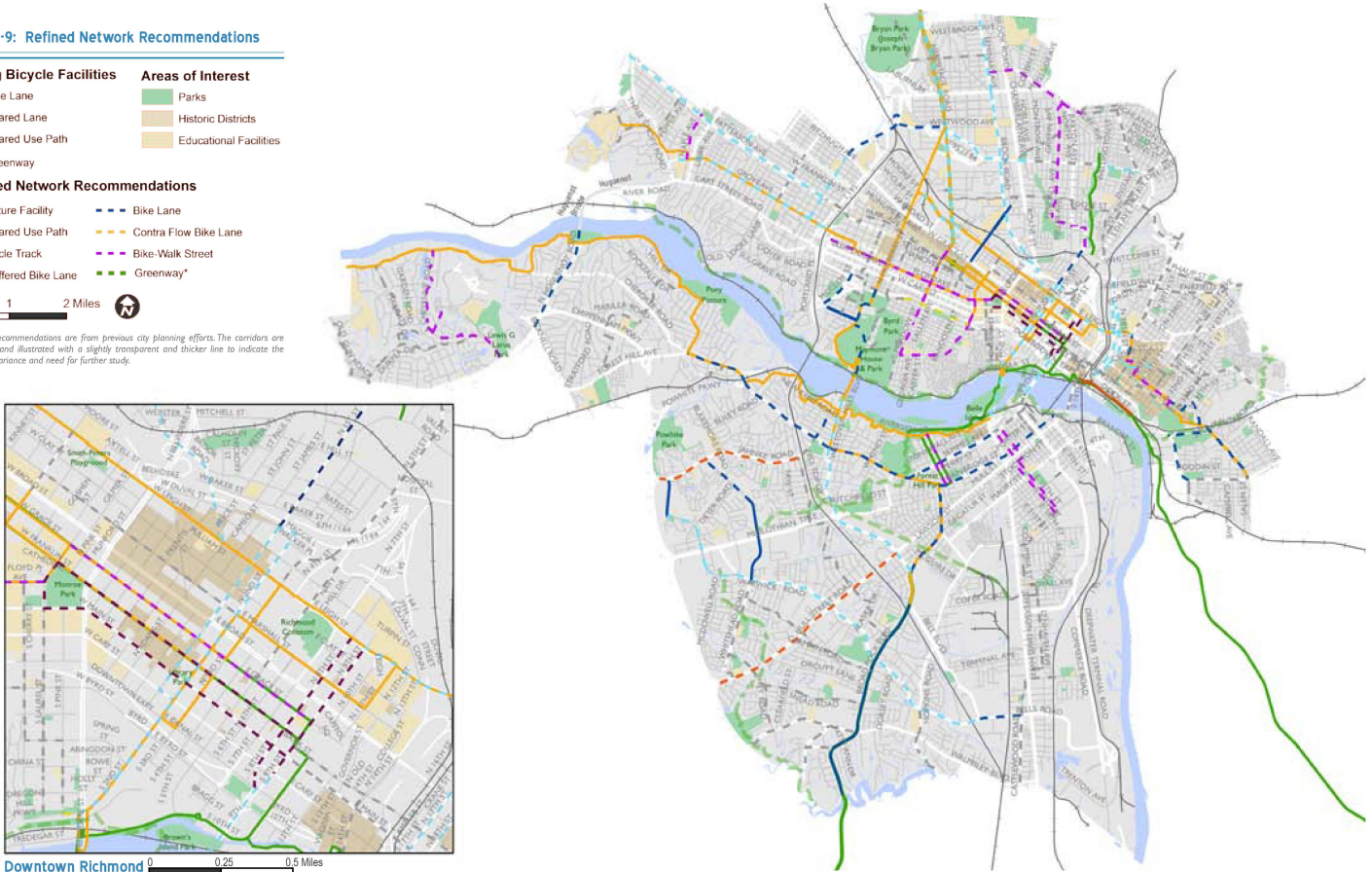
Thank you for your time, and my apologies for not being able to present in person, as I'm currently in the Netherlands looking at bicycle infrastructure. Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments.

Nicholas Smith

Figure 3-9: Refined Network Recommendations



*Greenway recommendations are from previous city planning efforts. The corridors are conceptual and illustrated with a slightly transparent and thicker line to indicate the alignment variance and need for further study.



From: [Dawn Page](#)
To: [Eastman, Jeff R. - PDR](#)
Subject: Roundabout at the intersection of Belmont and West Belmont Rds
Date: Wednesday, July 08, 2015 10:08:31 PM

Mr. Eastman,

In preparation for the Urban Design Committee meeting, I am in support of a roundabout at the intersection of Belmont and West Belmont Rds. I believe the roundabout would accomplish a number of desired outcomes including: slow the traffic coming up the hill off of Route 150, eliminate the blind spot for drivers trying to cross Belmont Rd from West Belmont, provide a safe pedestrian crossing at this intersection, and improve the aesthetics of one of our gateway roads into the City of Richmond. Finally, as a resident of Brookbury/Upper Reservoir District, a roundabout at this intersection will enhance our communities. I ask the Urban Design Committee to please approve its construction.

Sincerely,

Dawn C. Page, Vice President
Brookbury Civic Association
5020 Brookbury Blvd
Richmond, VA 23234