

# Outdoors/opinion: Mountain bike trails for beginners in the making

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One good thing leads to another in terms of outdoor recreation in this city.

Having secured the 2015 World Cycling Championships a couple years ago, plans immediately began to extend the bicycling opportunities throughout the area for all levels of bikers. As a result of work by the mayor's office and the mountain biking community in Richmond, the International Mountain Bicycling Association announced last year it intends to reward Richmond with regional ride-center status.

That means we have a “community that really gets and supports mountain biking,” said Frank Maguire, IMBA regional director for the Mid-Atlantic.

The IMBA is the leading voice for the mountain bike community across the globe, so getting the nod from them as a good place to come ride a mountain bike means a lot. Not only will the IMBA's support and advertising bring more people to Richmond to ride, but it will shine a brighter light on our great trails.

Greg Rollins of Richmond MORE, an organization dedicated to Richmond's mountain bike trails, expects the ride-center status will “bring more people to love trails that are already well loved,” and that it should provide an “opportunity to expand trails into surrounding areas.”

Maguire acknowledged it was the hard work and community involvement in the James River Park, Forest Hill Park and Pocahontas State Park as well as other surrounding parks that really set the stage to make Richmond a ride center. Groups like RVAMORE, Friends of Pocahontas, Friends of the James River Park, JROC, Friends of Forest Hill Park and others were essential to making this happen.

Nathan Burrell, former trails manager and current superintendent of the JRPS, is excited about the prospect of the ride center.

“The unique aspect of this ride center is having the urban trails as part of it,” Burrell said. “There aren't any other ride centers where someone can hop off the trails and grab a cup of coffee or get their bike fixed at a local shop and then hop right back on the trails.”

What changes will the average mountain biker and park user see because of the status?

Riders will reap rewards from the new trails going in at Pocahontas State Park. IMBA recognized the wonderful riding opportunities, including the mountain bike skills park on Belle Isle as a true asset. The

one thing the JRPS is light on, mainly because of the geography of the river, is trails for beginner riders.

A wide variety of trails for all levels is essential to being named a regional ride center.

Consequently, work has begun on a stacked loop trail system in Pocahontas State Park, where riders will be able to start on beginner trails and work their way up to more advanced terrain. When all is said and done, there will be 30 miles of new trails in Pocahontas State Park. The park already averages 800 cyclists a day according to Phil Walker, president of Friends of Pocahontas State Park.

Pocahontas also will boast a trail system and riding opportunities for paralyzed riders, something Walker says has been on the radar for some time. This will add another unique element of the ride center.

A new feature of note, especially for city residents, will be a new trailhead at Pocahontas near the intersection of Route 288 and Courthouse Road. This will be 15-20 minutes closer to the city.

The trails have been flagged at Pocahontas and work will begin in the coming months. Lots of volunteers will be needed.

Walker said this is an excellent opportunity for high school students to get community service hours and for anyone looking to get his or her hands dirty building trails. For more information on volunteering, visit [fopsp.org](http://fopsp.org)

Completion of the trails in Pocahontas is expected in the spring of 2015.

Richmond MORE is hosting its second Trailicious celebration on Saturday from 6:30-10 p.m. at the Carillon with proceeds going to benefit the ride center. There will be videos, music, food trucks and lots of information available about the ride center. Registration information is available at [bikereg.com/trailicious](http://bikereg.com/trailicious)