

Richmond area wins grant for park's bike trails

BY LOUIS LLOVIO Richmond Times-Dispatch | Posted: Monday, May 19, 2014 10:30 pm

The Richmond area has come out on top in an online contest and won more than \$33,000 to build bike trails for the Richmond Regional Ride Center at Pocahontas State Park.

According to Bell Helmets, which put on the contest, the grant money will go toward rehabilitating 15 miles of existing mountain bike trail and building an additional 20 miles of trail.

“The project will also focus on improving the existing trails on-site in order to diversify the trails and improve the overall depth of experience within the system,” Bell said on its website. “In addition to the (trails), the project seeks to develop a new gateway trail with two loops suitable for novices, children, handcycles and bicycles pulling child-trailers.”

Bell Helmets is giving away a total of \$100,000 in grants to be divided up for three trail projects through its 2014 Bell Built Program.

Richmond beat out Holiday Valley in Ellicottville, N.Y., for the East Coast grant with 13,896 votes.

Flagstaff, Ariz., was the West Coast winner, and Cottage Grove, Minn., won for the Central region.

When completed, the Richmond Regional Ride Center will be the 12th site worldwide designated as a Ride Center by the International Mountain Biking Association.

“A combination of existing world-class trails in the James River Park System and the trails at Pocahontas State Park will provide over 70 miles of off-road cycling, making the Central Virginia area a destination-worthy resource,” the Ride Center says on its website.

The Ride Center is the first “legacy project” to come out of the upcoming UCI Road World Cycling Championships.

Organizers of next year's world championships have long said that one big benefit of bringing the races here was that it would help create a cycling infrastructure that'll be around long after competitors leave town.

“We've always said Richmond 2015 is more than a bike race. We are interested in transformational change,” said Paul Shanks, director of communications for the race organizer.

“This legacy project has proven to be something the community has been excited about, and we're proud to have played a role, and to serve as a catalyst to get this project started.”

The project was launched last year with a fundraising drive that was kicked off with a \$50,000 donation from Dominion Foundation, which matched a state appropriation for the project.

According the Ride Center's website, the project "will require over \$2 million and is fully reliant on the community, corporations and individuals to ensure this project becomes a reality."

The Virginia Association for Parks, a nonprofit that supports Virginia state and national parks, is coordinating fundraising for the project.

"This moves the ball forward in a substantial way; \$30,000 is an impressive investment," Shanks said.