

## Don't let NIMBY kill bike path

Posted Jan 24, 2019 at 9:02 AM

Updated Jan 24, 2019 at 9:02 AM

The state Dept. of Conservation and Recreation wants to extend the Cape Cod Rail Trail by two miles from its current end point at Lecount Hollow Road in Wellfleet to Route 6 south of Cahoon Hollow Road. The long-term plan is to continue the trail via a two-way bike lane on the east side of Route 6 to Provincetown.

Those opposing the plan include residents who live near the proposed extension. At an October meeting they said they feared losing privacy and peace to bikers riding near their yards. Our fear is that NIMBY concerns will kill a project that will save lives.

The same kinds of fears among some residents and business owners along Shank Painter Road in Provincetown threaten a state proposal to add bike lanes there. In both cases, the state would pay.

At a meeting last week on the Wellfleet extension, opponents didn't mention the privacy argument and emphasized safety instead. But the research is clear on the added safety of dedicated bike lanes.

In 2012 the American Journal of Public Health published a peer-reviewed study comparing streets with bike lanes to those without. It found that injury risk to cyclists drops by about 50 percent when they ride in a bike lane versus riding on a street without a bike lane. The risk of injury drops by 90 percent when the bike lanes are "protected," meaning there are actual barriers separating cyclists from traffic.

This is one of the studies that informed Rail Trail extension supporter Sam Blakeslee, who lives near the bike path and is a cyclist and a paramedic with the Eastham Fire Dept. "In medicine we try to use evidence-based practice and keep emotions out of it," he said at last week's meeting. "Why you don't want to make

this safer boggles my mind. ... This represents the most feasible, safest alternative. The state is actually willing to do something that will increase safety and save lives.”

Some opponents want the path to follow the power lines adjacent to the Cape Cod National Seashore instead of the old railroad right of way. But the state already owns the right of way, while the land under the power lines is in private ownership — making that route prohibitively expensive and politically unlikely.

The proposed new terminus of the trail on Route 6 is close to Cumberland Farms, PJ's Restaurant, the Outer Cape Health Services pharmacy and the turnoff at Main Street to Wellfleet center. It is virtually across the street from a ghost bike installed by friends of Miles Tibbetts, 16, who was killed in that area while trying to cross the highway in 2013.

This is truly a dangerous place for cyclists. But the proposed route to Provincetown is on the same side as the new terminus, so that cyclists would not have to cross the highway. They would instead have a way to get to Provincetown that is much safer than what they have now.

The public deserves detailed answers from the state on how best to improve that section of Route 6 and the Main Street intersection for cyclists, pedestrians and motorists. Let's focus improvement efforts there, and say thank you for the rest.