

Bike path proposal would narrow highway

By Staff reports

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"Since the fatality on Route 6 you've spoken loud and clear [on bike safety]," Candace Nagle, chair of the advisory committee, said to selectmen. Nagle was joined by committee members Bill Meadows and Jeff Epstein, as well as Karst Hoogeboom from the Cape Cod National Seashore and Clay Schofield, traffic engineer for the Cape Cod Commission.

Hoogeboom and Schofield are spearheading the Cape-wide effort for a bicycle and pedestrian master plan, which they said has identified 200 projects, 45 of which have gone to the next step of seeking funding.

Schofield gave a PowerPoint presentation to the board proposing to extend the Cape Cod Rail Trail from South Wellfleet to Provincetown, where it would link up with the bike trail on Race Point Road. The proposal calls for narrowing Route 6 to two lanes instead of four, starting presumably at the Shore Road intersection in Truro. Their goal that night was to simply gain support for the idea, which he called "a road diet."

“It’s a wonderful idea and I do support this,” said Police Chief Jeff Jaran of the preliminary proposal, adding that all the pieces of the puzzle would need to fit together, including how it would affect the town’s intersections with the highway.

Selectman Austin Knight suggested using traffic cones to study the narrowing, noting that people can pass vehicles turning left now.

“The flow of traffic is key,” said Hoozeboom, adding that the entire concept and alternatives would need to undergo a full evaluation.

As the proposal is very preliminary, there was little detail provided, though Schofield created a computer-generated graphic of what the stretch of highway along East Harbor (Pilgrim Lake) might look like, narrowed to two lanes, with a strip of grass separating the highway from a bike path.

There was also very little discussion of the potential ramifications of such a dramatic alteration to the main — in some places only — thoroughfare on the Outer Cape.

Selectmen gave their unanimous support to advance the project to the next stage, and Schofield said they would like to create a multi-town executive committee to review and advance the proposal.

Selectman John Santos suggested opening the railroad bed between the Provincetown town line and Snail Road for the path, calling it “a hidden treasure.”

“People are scared and everybody wants something done,” said Nagle after the meeting, calling the concept a big vision for Route 6, with an estimated price tag of \$17 million.

“Let’s move with a big vision and go for big grants. Imagine how many more bike clubs and events would come to Provincetown. We can really make this a bike destination.”

Nagle said they will be meeting with the bike committees and selectmen in Truro and Wellfleet with the proposal. “For years we’ve only been in the telling stage. Now it’s actually in black-and-white.”

According to Schofield, if the preliminary public response to this proposal is positive, the National Seashore will apply for funding the process.

In an interview after the meeting, Elaine Anderson, chair of the board of selectmen, said the proposal would require careful vetting.

“As soon as we get into Route 6 it gets complicated,” Anderson said. “It’s not going to happen without public meetings and a lot of public input,” including input on the impact to traffic flow. “We have an enormous number of vehicles and we can’t be foolish about this. It would require a full review and analysis and a lot of homework even to apply for any federal grant money.”

Selectmen also approved the creation of a Bike Path Gift Fund to allow people to make donations toward the various efforts to make the town safer, and approved a request to remove the no bikes on the sidewalk signs on Shank Painter Road, replacing those by painting the sidewalk with Share the Road.