

Fatal tragedy in Provincetown spurs call for swift progress on bike trail

By Kevin Mullaney

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Selectmen are calling for an increase in the priority of plans for bike trails on the Outer Cape in the wake of the tragic death of Blake Van Hoof Packard, a 16-year-old who was struck and killed by an SUV while walking his bike on the shoulder of Route 6 on Thursday.

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“We have to provide an alternative bike trail that gets people off the highway,” said Selectman John “Grassy” Santos. Santos said the town needs to look at the abandoned railroad bed to get cyclists out of harm’s way on the stretch between Truro and Provincetown.

“Absolutely this calls for making bike trails more of a priority,” said Selectman David Bedard. “We’ve lost a [16]-year-old young adult. It’s tragic.”

Bedard said he has been told a number of times of people being sideswiped by vehicles while riding their bikes on the highway.

“It’s not just our priority,” he said, referring to the National Park Service and the Cape Cod Commission’s collaboration to create bike trail master plans for all the towns on the Cape.

Selectman Austin Knight said the whole “bicycle transformation” planning needs to be pushed further. “Not only on the highway, but on Bradford and Commercial streets. Every year it’s getting more and more dangerous [all around town]. We need clear discussions on what we can do to make it safer for everyone.”

In terms of what is actually in the works right now, there are three proposals made by the National Park Service, in collaboration with the Cape Cod Commission. The most pertinent is a bike shuttle — a passenger van pulling a 12-bike trailer that is expected to operate between Provincetown and Marconi Beach in Wellfleet. According to Clay Schofield, the commission’s traffic engineer, the shuttle is expected to launch in August.

Another project is the extension of the bike trail from Race Point Road to MacMillan Pier in Provincetown. This would not be a separate trail. It would be a “share the road” situation, with the bike lane painted on the asphalt. Funding for this project is not expected until next spring.

The third proposal is to connect Moors Road, at the end of Bradford Street Extension, to the nearby bike path on Province Lands Road.

In early June selectmen agreed with a request by resident Candace Nagle to create a new bicycle advisory committee, which requires a vote of Town Meeting. In the meantime, they created a bicycle advisory working group to establish a mission statement and purpose for the new committee. Currently, bicycle issues are the purview of the recreation commission.

Five residents were appointed to the working group by Town Manager Sharon Lynn — Nagle, Michael Peregou, Paul Cezanne, Bill Meadows and Jeff Epstein. They had their first meeting last week, a meeting that included a discussion with Schofield.

“I have high hopes for the bike advisory committee,” said Elaine Anderson, chair of the board of selectmen. “It’s a good group that can get things done.”