

RAIL TRAIL

With the wheels turning on bike path improvements and an extension to the Outer Cape, there's one thing of concern to many:

'It should be safe'



Nancy Howard can be found riding her bicycle around town and on the trails like this one near Herring Cove Beach.
CAPE COD TIMES/MERRILY CASSIDY

By **Mary Ann Bragg** | mbragg@capecodonline.com

Bicyclists and walkers in the Cape's outermost towns agree on one thing: drivers may see you on the road, but they don't always react.

As planning for a new set of biking and walking routes in Wellfleet, Truro and Provincetown gets underway, the idea of safety is utmost in nearly everyone's mind.

On Castle Road in Truro, the narrow two-lane way offers no room or protection for someone walking a dog or for exercise, according to part-time resident Mary Ellen Kimball, 54, who walks about 3 miles a day. The intersection of Castle Road and Route 6 also confounds bicyclists who are headed north but find themselves on a busy state highway with no crosswalk, blinking light, traffic

Give your input

Outer Cape Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan: Public comments are sought through Nov. 24 to help develop a draft set of bicycling and walking routes in Wellfleet, Truro, Provincetown and the Cape Cod National Seashore. A public workshop is planned in February or March to discuss the proposed new routes. For information, visit capecodcommission.org/ocbpmp or email ocbpmp@capecodcommission.org.

"I'M SEEING MORE AND MORE BICYCLES ON ROUTE 6 AND I THINK IT'S SCARY."

Provincetown bicyclist Barry Barnes



Barry Barnes secures his helmet before getting on his bicycle for a ride in Provincetown. CAPE COD TIMES/MERRILLY CASSIDY PHOTOS

SAFE

From Page A1

light or signs, according to Truro resident and bicyclist Mike Carabetta.

"It's hard to see the cars," Carabetta, 65, said. He has logged 3,500 miles of biking on Cape Cod this year, and rode across the U.S. last year. "There's a little hill. That's a dangerous intersection there. All the people who are touring, from all over the world, they get there and they're just baffled."

The idea of an improved biking and pedestrian network of trails in Provincetown, Truro and Wellfleet is not new.

As far back as 1978, the state legislature established the Claire Saltonstall Bikeway from Boston to Cape Cod, and the route remains the state's only signed long-distance route, according to state Department of Transportation records. Claire Saltonstall, 16, was the daughter of former state Sen. William Saltonstall and the granddaughter of Leverett Saltonstall, a Massachusetts governor and U.S. Senator, who in 1959 co-sponsored the bill with then-Senator John F. Kennedy to establish the Cape Cod National Seashore. Claire Saltonstall died on Martha's Vineyard in 1974 when a car veered off the road and struck her as she rode her bike.

From the end of the Cape Cod Rail Trail in South Wellfleet, the Saltonstall route leads to the tip of the Cape, via Ocean View Drive and Main Street in Wellfleet, then Old County Road and Castle Road in Truro and then Route 6 and Route 6A to Provincetown, according to the Charles River Wheelmen website. The Saltonstall route is marked by a white sign with a green oval that contains an image of a bike and the number "1."

Bike traffic increasing

In 2010, a study by the Cape Cod National Seashore and the Cape Cod Commission identified the extension of the Cape Cod Rail Trail northward to Provincetown as one of 16 bikeway improvements needed on Cape Cod. The paved rail trail, built in 1977 and upgraded in the mid-2000s, extends 22 miles on an old railroad bed from South Dennis to South Wellfleet. At the South Wellfleet end, though, bicyclists and pedestrians face the question of how to head north: along Route 6 or narrow backroads. There's about a 20-mile gap between the South Wellfleet trail head and Provincetown. In the summer of 2012, two



Kathy Goodbody walks along Hillbourne Terrace in North Truro on Wednesday afternoon.

regional shuttle buses that hold 12 bicycles each were added to the regular summertime shuttle bus service to reduce unsafe travel on Route 6 between South Wellfleet and Provincetown.

"Part of it for me, these days, is not so much that I want bike to Truro and Wellfleet, it's more that I think a lot of people do want to and I think it should be safe," Provincetown bicyclist Barry Barnes, 70, said. Barnes said he prefers shorter rides and will often throw his bike in his car if he's taking a trip to, say, Hyannis. Once there, then he may take a bike ride out along the ocean in Hyannisport.

"I'm seeing more and more bicycles on Route 6 and I think it's scary. In a lot of places it's not wide enough." And more traffic is on the roads, he said. The biggest improvement is to have a safe route similar to what the rail trail offers "that's flat and maintained and beautiful."

About 400,000 people use the state-maintained rail trail every year, according to Seashore and commission study. More specifically, on a summer day in 2012, 100 bicyclists and seven pedestrians were estimated to have passed through the intersection of Lecomt Hollow Road and Route 6, at the trail's end in South Wellfleet, according to a commission investigation report.

The current master planning effort began in 2011 and 2012 in cooperation with the three town bike and walkways committees, the Cape Cod Commission and the Seashore. In June, a \$346,500

grant from the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program of the Federal Transit Administration was finalized, to pay for commission and Seashore staff to research and write the plan, and to pay a consultant to develop the environmental assessment in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

The master plan should describe a system of connected bike and pedestrian facilities that provide a safe and enjoyable experience for residents and visitors, according to the commission. The master plan should also improve connections to the Cape's outermost towns, the Seashore and public transportation while minimizing negative environmental or cultural effects and adding benefit to areas adjacent to the planned bikeways and walkways.

Short-term fix?

The planning effort is, in part, heightened because of two deaths along Route 6 in the last three years. Blake Van Hoof Packard, 16, died July 14, 2011, when he was hit by a car as he walked a bicycle along Route 6 toward the center of Provincetown. Miles Tibbetts, 16, was hit by a car on Aug. 17, 2013, as he biked across Route 6 south of Cahoon Hollow Road, and later died of his injuries. Tibbetts was not wearing a helmet, as required by state law for bicyclists age 16 and under, according to the police investigation.

"Route 6 has to be made safer by bicyclists," Truro Bike and Walkways Committee chairman

Catherine Haynes said. In addition to the master planning effort, the Truro committee will ask the Truro Board of Selectmen to support asking the state for additional bicycle striping on the Route 6 pavement. The road has paved shoulders now, Haynes said. The committee wants a wider stripe on the outer edge of the road, a rumble strip and then standardized road paint for a bike lane, with a little picture of a biker, she said. Route 6 is often the quickest way to get from Wellfleet to Truro, and used by summer workers and avid bicyclists, she said.

"That's a short-term fix," said Haynes, 56, a part-time Truro resident. She bikes about 10 to 20 miles a week. Haynes said she sees a lot more families and people walking for exercise along the two-lane Old County Road in Truro. "That's where I find it very dangerous," she said.

Other bicyclists and pedestrians have their pet peeves as well. For Provincetown bicyclist Nancy Howard, 64, a wider breakdown lane on Route 6 between Herring Cove Beach in Provincetown and where routes 6 and 6A converge in North Truro is important. Howard tends to bike only in the spring and autumn because of the traffic. A typical route might be to start at Herring Cove Beach, then ride on roads to Race Point Beach in Provincetown, and then hit Route 6 and bike south to Truro, then bike along the Pamet River in Truro, ride Old County Road in Truro to Wellfleet, and finally make her way to the rail trail

and go up to Dennis and back. Roughly, that would be about 90 miles round trip.

"Crossing over Route 6 I find very difficult," Howard said. "There's no safe way to ride up to the rail trail."

Need for better markings, education

For Kathy Goodbody, 71, in North Truro, who walks every day, the lack of sidewalks on South Highland Road and the lack of safe, clearly marked nature trails in the Seashore are issues.

"Often the cars don't even move away a little bit or try to respond to where I am," Goodbody said. "My sense is that if I'm the only person around and there are no other cars around, that a car could go over the yellow line a bit (to avoid me)." She also would like to see a more definitive trail made for walkers and bikers on an unused trail in North Truro, between Coast Guard Beach and Head of the Meadow Beach. There are many trails in the Seashore woods but it's easy to get disoriented, trip on roots and feel afraid about being alone. "My sense is having a bike trail or pedestrian walkway would be safer, easier and more enjoyable," she said.

The existing 2-mile bike trail between Head of the Meadow Beach and High Head Road in North Truro, one of three Cape Cod National Seashore bike paths, is the biggest headache for North Truro bicyclist Tim

2012-2035 Cape Cod Commission Regional Transportation Plan

Three alternative design concepts to extend the Cape Cod Rail Trail from South Wellfleet to Provincetown, approximately 20 miles:

■ Eastern alignment: largely through the Cape Cod National Seashore; consisting of both roads and shared-use paths; primarily undeveloped and natural environments; design cost estimate \$3.385 million

■ Interior, or Cape Cod Bay alignment: mostly on secondary roadways; via the towns and neighborhoods of Wellfleet, Truro, and Provincetown; primarily developed and largely residential environments; design cost estimate \$1.1 million

■ Abandoned railroad alignment: located along the western side of the outermost section of the Cape; shared-use paths with occasional road segments; a mix of natural landscapes in the Seashore and developed areas of North Truro and Provincetown; design cost estimate \$2.911 million.

O'Brien. O'Brien logs about 2,000 miles a year. A favorite route of his is to take the Head of the Meadow trail, and then High Head Road, and then Route 6A north to Provincetown. From there he pedals out to MacMillan Wharf in Provincetown, then to the west end of town, out to Herring Cove Beach and Beech Forest and then back into downtown Provincetown, with a possible stop at a Portuguese bakery or a hot dog joint as a reward.

"Of the route I just described, the Head of the Meadow trail borders on downright dangerous," O'Brien said. "It's the tree roots across the trail. It really needs to be repaved. There's one spot you couldn't get more than one bike down the trail." O'Brien said he's seen box turtles, snakes and foxes along the trail. "It's very pretty," he said.

More importantly, O'Brien said, is the need to educate bicyclists and drivers, and to have more markings on the road.

"It kind of alerts the drivers that it's heavily traveled by bikes," he said. "Conversely, cyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as well. Riding double or not paying attention to traffic signals, that can give us a bad name."

Follow Mary Ann Bragg on Twitter: @MaryAnnBraggCCT.