

Public can weigh in on Outer Cape bike plan

By Mary Ann Bragg
mbragg@capecodonline.com

WELLFLEET — Bicyclists and walkers are invited to weigh in Thursday on preliminary ideas for a network of biking and walking routes in the three outermost towns on Cape Cod.

Planners from the Cape Cod Commission and Cape Cod National Seashore have collected ideas from a public workshop held in October and, with other data, put together draft concepts for a primary route between Wellfleet and Provincetown. Draft concepts for secondary routes within the towns that would connect beaches, scenic spots and downtown areas will be presented as well.

About 50 people attended the Oct. 30 workshop in North Truro to tell planners about favorite or typical biking and walking routes in the three towns, and about dangerous spots such as roads with no shoulders, sand accumulation and poor paving. The commission and Seashore staff also received about 25 written

comments and continue to welcome written comments as well as feedback at the Thursday meeting.

"These are all drafts right now," commission planner Martha Hevenor said. "What we want to do is check in with the public again and see if this is on the right track. There's always room for new ideas."

The workshop dovetails with a request from the Truro Bike and Walkways Committee in February to the state Department of Transportation for specific and immediate improvements along Route 6 to make biking safer and alert drivers. The Truro Board of Selectmen endorsed the committee's letter to state highway officials, committee chairman Catherine Hayes said. The committee would like special signs and road striping from the through all of Wellfleet and Truro except for the part of the highway in North Truro that is four lanes.

On Friday, a state highway department spokeswoman did not provide comment on the Truro committee's request.

The creation of the three-town master plan is a joint effort of the town bike and walkway committees, the commission and the Seashore and is funded through a \$346,500 federal grant. The concept of the master plan got its start in 2011 and then faltered over grant funding and the economic downturn's impact on the federal government. It took until last June to finalize the grant, which comes from the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program of the Federal Transit Administration.

The idea is to develop a safe, interconnected bicycle and pedestrian network that links the towns with the Seashore and with the Cape Cod Rail Trail, which runs from South Dennis to South Wellfleet. In 2010, a study by the Seashore and the commission identified the extension of the rail trail northward to Provincetown as one of 16 bike-way improvements needed on Cape Cod. There is a 20-mile gap between the South Wellfleet trail head and Provincetown.

The master plan, to be

completed later this year, would provide guidance for future projects such as bike trails and sidewalks, bicycle accommodations on certain routes, bicycle and pedestrian facility development and safety improvements, according to commission and Seashore materials. The plan will explore how to extend the rail trail from South Wellfleet to Provincetown.

At the October workshop and in a Times story in early November, bicyclists and pedestrians said that narrow roads and heavy summer traffic, such as on Route 6A in North Truro, create dangerous situations. Crossing Route 6, the Outer Cape's main north-south highway, was described as dangerous and a need for more sidewalks and designated walking trails was mentioned as well. There was also a call for more driver and bicycle education and for more road markings for bicyclists.

The federal grant pays for Seashore and commission staff to compile statistics and the information from the public, hold the workshops and write the plan.

Public comment

Public comment is being sought for an Outer Cape bicycle and pedestrian master plan that would identify an interconnected bicycle and pedestrian network for the outermost three towns on the Cape. The network would link the towns of Provincetown, Truro and Wellfleet, along with the Cape Cod National Seashore, the Cape Cod Rail Trail and other destinations like beaches.

A public workshop about the plan will be held from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the Wellfleet Public Library, 55 West Main St. For information and to make comments, visit capecod-commission.org/ocbpmp.

The money will pay for a consultant to write an environmental assessment as part of the regulatory requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, according to Hevenor and Seashore planner Lauren McKean.

— Follow Mary Ann Bragg on Twitter: @maryannbraggCCT.