



BREWSTER VISION ADVISORY GROUP

SUMMARY PAPER

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

OCTOBER 2017

I. Background

Overview

The term community infrastructure is meant to encompass the variety of physical infrastructure and facilities that the town and other community organizations provide for public purposes. The June vision workshops showed the considerable value the participants placed in community infrastructure for recreation, public gatherings, and alternative transport. Frequently mentioned specific places included the bike trail, the Ladies Library, Drummer Boy Park, Nickerson State Park, and the Stony Brook Grist Mill. However, the most frequently mentioned infrastructure issue, by far, was a community center, combined with a new location for the Council on Aging. Participants expressed interest in having a place for community gatherings and events and where people of all ages could interact. Bike trails and sidewalks for recreation and as a means of alternative transport around town were the second most frequently mentioned infrastructure.

The Vision Committee conducted a supplemental survey with 3rd, 4th and 5th graders at the Eddy School to determine their priorities. While many of the issues they identified were similar to the general workshop findings, the need for active recreation sites such as skateboard parks, sports fields, and swimming pools stood out.

Community infrastructure is, in many ways, a building block that supports many of the other building blocks, particularly community character, economy, and coastal management (beach access). This paper will focus on the issues of the community center and bike and pedestrian ways as the two highest priorities.

Current status

a. Community space

A variety of facilities are currently used for public meetings and gatherings. The main locations include the Ladies Library (meetings and events), the Brewster Baptist Church (elections and workshops), the Council on Aging (senior activities), the Eddy School (recreation), the Stony

Brook School (Town meeting). Town Hall is used primarily for official board and committee meetings. There is no multi-purpose facility which allows a variety of uses and interactions.

Town facilities for active recreation are spread out throughout the town. They include the Freeman's Way ball and soccer fields, the Town Hall ball fields, Gage Field (behind the Fire Station), and the community tennis courts off Underpass Road.

b. Bike and pedestrian ways

The Cape Cod Rail Trail (CCRT) stretches 7 miles from south central Brewster to the northeast line with Orleans, linking to the entire 22 miles of paved bike/pedestrian trail. The CCRT is one of the most actively used recreational features in Brewster and serves as a center piece of Brewster's "green economy." In the summer, it also serves as a way for visitors and summer workers to get around the town.

Recent re-paving projects in Brewster have expanded both biking and pedestrian access around town. The Rt. 6A repaving in 2016 expanded the sidewalks in the center of town for bicyclists and pedestrians. There are now 7 miles of sidewalks along Rt. 6A from Nickerson State Park to Stony Brook Rd.

Also in 2016, the Town completed the re-paving of Underpass and Snow Roads, extending the sidewalks and creating narrow bike lanes. The Underpass design may serve as a model for future re-paving of town roads. At a cost of \$3 million, this project was completed using part of the \$10 million bond that was approved by Town meeting in 2015. The next priority for road bond funds is Millstone Road to include re-surfacing and pedestrian and bike improvements, yet to be specifically defined.

The Town also receives approximately \$400,000 annually of Chapter 90 funds for road improvements. Over \$1 million of these funds have been accumulated over several years. The next target for Chapter 90 funded improvements is Highway 137, including re-surfacing and accommodating bike and pedestrian traffic.

While there have been recent improvements in bike and pedestrian access around town and more are planned, access remains problematic, particularly if road design is the primary avenue for expanding access. The main challenge to expanding bike and pedestrian ways is the narrow width of Brewster's roads—both the pavement and the rights-of-way—which do not allow for easy addition of sidewalks and/or bike lanes. The extent of wetlands along town roads also constitutes a constraint on expanding road ways to accommodate bike and pedestrian facilities. On the larger roads, speed limits also dictate design standards: the higher the speed limit, the greater need for separation (distance or curbing) of vehicles and pedestrians or bicyclists.

Table 1: Summary of Roadway Ownership in Brewster

Ownership	Length gravel (mi)	Length paved (mi)	Total length (mi)	% of total
Town-owned streets	10	54	64	31%
MassDOT-owned streets	NA	16	16	8%
Private/unaccepted streets	42	83	125	61%
Total	52	153	205	100%

Source: Brewster Pavement Management Plan, 2015

A considerable portion of Brewster’s road network is made up of private roads, which creates a degree of management confusion. The Town generally plows private roads, sweeps private paved roads, and provides some help with signage. However, creating public access (for a walking trail or identified bike route) requires getting easements from each landowner, which is a long and complex procedure.

The fundamental challenge to expanding bike and pedestrian access in town is how to create connectivity: to link places around town without relying solely on the public road layout.

Recent actions in town

a. Community space

In 2009, the Town proposed to sell Town Hall to the Lighthouse Charter School and move town administration to the Eddy School and create a community center there. However, planning for this action was stopped when the State Board of Education refused to allow the conversion of a school for which state capital loan funds were still being reimbursed. The Town has since completed reimbursement of state loans and the Eddy School is mentioned as a potential site for a community center. The Recreation department is currently housed there. More discussion is needed with the School Committee about consolidating Eddy and Stony Brook Schools before a solution is found.

The Town’s five year Capital Plan 2018-2023 identifies a feasibility study for a combined Council on Aging (COA) and community center in 2019 and possible construction in 2021. The recently completed COA needs assessment, *The Future of Aging*, indicates that many of the respondents to the survey and participants in focus groups, which were the basis for the study, preferred a community center in which COA would be housed.

b. Bike and pedestrian ways

In 2015, the Town completed a Pavement Management Plan which assessed the conditions of Brewster’s roads and the long term financial liabilities of the road network and recommended improvements. Based on that assessment, the Town approved a \$10 million road bond in 2015. The bond proceeds funded the repaving and improvements of Underpass Road at a cost of \$3

million in 2016-17. The next priority for repaving and bike and pedestrian improvements is Millstone Road and the remaining funds will be used for general roadway improvements around town.

The Rt. 6A re-paving and improvements were completed in 2017 and funded entirely the State.

In 2016, the Board of Selectmen approved *Biking Brewster: a strategy to enhance biking in Brewster*, prepared by the Bikeways Committee. The strategy identifies alternative biking routes for transport and recreation, proposes safety improvements, and recommends public education measures.

The Town also completed a Beach Access strategy, which includes expanding bike and pedestrian access to town landings as a way to reduce the need for more beachfront parking.

In 2017, Town Meeting approved \$100,000 for the installation of warning lights at the four CCRT crossings in town: Rt. 124, Rt. 137, Underpass Road, and Millstone Road, a recommendation of the Biking Brewster strategy. The lights will be installed in Spring 2018 and are intended to enhance safety at the crossings.

The Town's Natural Resources Department has made a proposal to the State Department of Conservation and Recreation to create a Rail Trail spur from the current location near the entrance to Nickerson State Park to the beach between Crosby and Linnell landings to expand bike and pedestrian access to the beach.

II. Key issues moving forward

How should the Town proceed to examine options for a multi-use community center?

How aggressively should the town promote connectivity off of roadways (for example on Town land from Underpass Rd to the Stony Brook School to the Eddy School to Rt. 6A near Town Hall, or along Eversource's rights-of-way)?

III. Draft Vision Goal

Draft Goal: Maintain and expand town infrastructure in ways that expand opportunities for community interaction, support the development of a "green" economy, expand recreation opportunities, and promote public safety.

Purposes:

1. Create a community center to house activities and interaction for people of all ages.
2. Expand the bike and pedestrian trails and paths for recreation and transport throughout the town.
3. Provide active recreation opportunities and facilities, including for youth.