

Greenwords:

New greenway opportunities in Rhode Island

Hats off to the Rhode Island Department of Transportation for completing three new sections of Rhode Island Greenways. The recent opening of the new Martin Street Bridge and two additional miles north from Manville on the Blackstone River Bikeway means we can walk, run, and cycle along the Blackstone River for 9 miles from the southern parking lot at Front Street in Lincoln into Woonsocket.

An off-road 2.9-mile section of Fred Lippitt Woonasquatucket River Bikeway was recently opened to the public. This new off-road section connects to the on-road section along Promenade Street and ends at the Providence Place Mall.

Many events during Trails and Greenways Month in September gave Rhode Islanders opportunities to experience lesser known trails around the state and region. Among these are the Wolf Hill Forest Preserve in Smithfield, the Canonchet Farm in Narragansett, the West Warwick JAYCEE Arboretum, and along the Kickemuit River and through the Touisset Marsh in the RI Audubon Society Refuge.

47 People joined the Appalachian Mountain Club's work weekend to construct a boardwalk in Burlingame State

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Bicycle recycling takes root in Providence

By Tom Gomes

Recycle-a-Bike is a volunteer not-for-profit community bicycle workshop in Providence, R.I. In this issue, Tom Gomes of Recycle-a-Bike explains the organization's history. It's a perfect primer for grassroots organizers. In the next issue of Trail Mix, the author will highlight the organization's current programs.

We began over a bike ride in the summer of 2001. A small group of community-minded, bicycle commuting activists in Providence joined a 500-plus-member Critical Mass ride on Mayday 2001. We then began meeting for monthly group rides that led to talk about starting a small self-run bicycle-repair cooperative. Our original goal was to set up a small bike workshop to share tools and workspace, and to help each other fix our own bicycles instead of taking them to an expensive bike shop for every little repair. We also wanted to help friends to own good working bikes, and to advocate green transportation and living practices. Ron's Bicycle Shop in East Greenwich and several individuals donated used bikes and parts. We expanded our goals to include repairing and

maintaining a fleet of public free-to-borrow bikes (based on bike-sharing programs in other cities and countries).

The "pink bike" program soon fizzled because even inexpensive public bikes painted pink to deter theft and left out for anyone to borrow, will still get stolen and abused. In a matter of days, the 10 or so bikes were gone or destroyed.

Later that summer, we learned about an after-school youth bicycle recycling program that had operated a few years earlier. Later the program moved to the basement of Trinity Church on Broad Street in Providence, where a pastor and a church administrator ran it as a neighborhood youth earn-a-bike program. There they acquired more tools and hundreds of used donated bikes. After two years the administrator left for



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Greenwords

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Park. Over 150 parents and children enjoyed the trails, colonial games and other events at the Gilbert Stuart Museum's Funday. Tree lovers were treated to a walking tour of Roger Williams Park and a description of the heritage collection of specimen trees in the Park. The Friends of the William O'Neill Bike Path held a bike path tour for the physically inspired and impaired that included free ice cream cones at a shop in Wakefield.

A variety of weekly events were held in Coventry on the Washington Secondary Bike Path and in the parks and woodlands in that town. Weekly hikes on the Midstate Trail in Rhode Island and Massachusetts began in September and extended into November. The weekly Wednesday night rides held on the East Bay Bike Path gave cyclists a chance to participate in a leisurely bike ride followed by pizza at a local restaurant. The Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association held two evening paddles down the Wood River.

Most of the Trails and Greenways Month events were held on public lands. Others were held by friends groups who conduct periodic visits to their property. Take the opportunity to visit those places you missed before really cold weather arrives in Rhode Island. Late fall and early winter is a great time to get on the trail!

Sue Barker
GARI
Chair



Tom Fortier leads hike through Canonchet Farm

Recycle-a-Bike

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missionary work overseas and the program closed its doors. With this news, we went to the church and asked the residing Rev. Anne Grant about the fate of the after school program, bikes and tools. We were told that everything was still there, waiting for someone to take it on and re-open the doors.

In fall 2001, Recycle-A-Bike began in the Basement of Trinity Church by merging the small collective of cycling activists and the abandoned bike workshop of the after-school bicycle repair program. In September Recycle-a-Bike held a fundraiser at Julian's Restaurant in Providence. This raised seed money for more tools, new parts and supplies and most importantly, interest in and awareness of the program. Recycle-a-Bike needed ideas and volunteer mechanics willing to teach.

One of the new goals of Recycle-a-Bike became the resurrection of the church's youth bicycle programs to provide bicycles and bicycle education to the neighborhood kids. More and more people began coming to help, learn and volunteer. Recycle-a-Bike began seeking grants from neighborhood associations, Rhode

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A sign of the times: along the Woonasquatucket River Greenway.

Trail Mix is the quarterly newsletter of the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island (GARI).

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Recycle-a-Bike

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Island Justice Commission, and other sources to help fund these programs.

In early 2003, a water pipe burst in the church building, flooding part of the basement, and damaging some of the internal structure of the building. Recycle-a-Bike suffered no damage, but the building did lose its occupancy permit. Recycle-a-Bike began looking for a new space. By spring we found an abandoned garage space filled with unused junk behind the City Arts building on Broad Street. City Arts agreed to let RAB use it, free of charge, but it had to be cleaned out first. After two months of cleaning and three dumpster loads of waterlogged junk, RAB had an empty workspace with a courtyard, two small back rooms, and a loft. We also had storage space. In the late spring, RAB moved all of the bikes, parts, and tools to the new City Arts location with a rented Uhaul, and as many friends, and pick-up trucks and vans as we could round up.

RAB re-opened in City Arts in the summer of 2003, keeping most of the same programs, with an emphasis on youth workshops. Here, we were much more visible and accessible to the many kids in the neighborhood. We also started our Mechanics-a-go-go program, converting an adult tricycle into a mobile bike workstation. We would take it to parks and special events and offer free bike repair. We held another bike rodeo in conjunction with the West Broadway Neighborhood Association's annual Family Day Festival in Armory Park, another successful bike auction and fundraiser at Julian's in the Fall of 2004. In the winter of 2004, we learned that the City Arts building renovations would continue the next spring, and that they had planned to use the garage area for workspace and storage. RAB

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Active Transportation in Portland OR

By Barry Schiller

Active Transportation was the theme at the Rails-to-Trails national conference held in Portland, Oregon in August 2007. One part of the theme is a campaign to increase funding for encouraging biking and walking and its infrastructure when Federal transportation law is renewed in 2010. It was noted that nearly half of all trips, not just work trips, are under 3 miles, so active transportation has much potential to cut emissions and congestion and to improve public health. This is especially important in light of the skyrocketing cost of importing oil and the need to cut the carbon emissions that lead to climate change. Indeed, about 37% of Rhode Island's carbon emission is from transportation. Yet, transportation activists expect a tough fight in Congress as the Minneapolis bridge collapse will be used to defund the transit, bike and enhancement programs and shift the money to highways, as has already been suggested by the current Secretary of Transportation. The best defense is thought to be aggressive promotion of making biking and walking a mainstream transportation choice.

Active Transportation also included an opportunity to bike on Portland's extensive bikeway system that helps make it the county's most bike-friendly city. There are bike paths on both sides of the Willamette

River that cuts the city in two. On the downtown side, a former industrial highway was plowed up and replaced by a waterfront park that hosts lots of community events. The east bank is mostly given to I-5, the main North-South Interstate route, and where there was no room for the bike path, Oregon built a kind of long floating dock right on the river for the path, which can rise or fall with the river. To see this should inspire us to seek bike paths on both sides of the Seekonk River! One amazing bridge across the Willamette has a road and light rail line on an upper deck, and a freight rail and a bike lane on a lower deck that can be raised as needed for river traffic without disturbing the upper deck. I was there for the annual Sunday morning event where the bridges are closed to cars so that thousands of bicyclist can cross the bridges in an organized ride. Also, bikes can just roll on and off Portland's extensive and expanding light rail lines, and there are many bike lanes on the streets, even downtown, and quite a few bicyclists, at least in the summer. I noted the big Patagonia store had a bulletin board on how employees commute — more than half come by bike! There is youthful energy in Portland and nearby, a big contrast from the dingy and desolate city I recall from my an Oregon State student days in 1974-75, my last time there.

But taking light-rail out to the suburbs, it was the usual big box shopping, lots of traffic, and recent development fueled by rapid population growth in the region. So we may be winning some battles but losing the war. Contact me (bschiller@localnet.com) if you would like to discuss this any further.

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Newly restored trails showcased at Neutaconkanut Hill

By Elli Panichas

On Sunday, October 18, the Neutaconkanut Hill Association (NHA) guided curious and eager outdoor enthusiasts on a walk through the newly restored trails on Neutaconkanut Hill in Providence. Those participating in the guided walk were equally pleased with good walking conditions following a torrential rainstorm the day before and the surprising views and solitude offered by a place known more for its heavy urban development than a beautiful place to go for a walk. All seemed to enjoy, and importantly appreciate, what has happened on the Hill over the past two years.

What was particularly satisfying with the walk was the variety of walkers. Although NHA had sponsored several other public walks in the past two years, this one attracted what the organization considers "an important audience." They included neighbors who bordered the Hill Park but never walked there; members of the Tree Steward course sponsored by the R.I. Tree Council; Greenways

Alliance of Rhode Island members; the environmentally savvy; and representatives from DEM, DOT, the Providence Water Dept., Brown University, RIC, and the Johnston Historical Society.

So what does this mean to NHA? We feel strongly that to attract an audience of this quality, we are doing something right. We are being noticed by those who will lend their voice to protect Neutaconkanut Hill Park, and all of the other precious woodlands in Rhode Island. Doing so is vital, particularly in Providence, in this small, densely populated city/state of ours.

For information of Neutaconkanut Hill Association contact: Elli Panichas at ellip5@cox.net or Susan Fitzpatrick at RCFitz2@cox.net. Maps of the Hill can be obtained by emailing www.citywidegreen.org/documents/NeutaconkanutTrails.pdf <<http://www.citywidegreen.org/documents/NeutaconkanutTrails.pdf>>

The author is President of the Neutaconkanut Hill Association Inc.



Walkers explore the hidden gem that is Neutaconkanut Hill in Providence.

Connecting the DOTs

Fall brings flurry of bike path openings

By Charles St. Martin

This fall the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) was quite busy in the area of bike paths as it organized ribbon cutting events for three key bikeway segments on two bike paths.

The openings made more than 5.5 miles of new bikeway available to riders, as well as reopening a segment of the Blackstone River Bikeway that had been closed due to a bridge replacement project. When added to the other bike paths around the state, Rhode Island has nearly 50 miles of bike paths now.

The first event took place in late August with the reopening of the Blackstone River Bikeway at Martin Street. RIDOT replaced two vehicular bridges in this area, one over the river and another over the old Blackstone Canal. The closure had separated two long lengths of the bikeway. The reopening allowed for 7 miles of contiguous bike path.

The new Martin Street Bridge incorporates a grade-separated crossing for the bikeway, meaning that the bike path now passes under Martin Street as opposed to meeting it at street level. This far safer design also includes a ramp from Martin Street to the bike path, as well as sidewalks on both sides of the Martin Street Bridge. The bridge includes a timber truss and sidewalks that honor the history of the original bridge that crossed the river back in 1900.

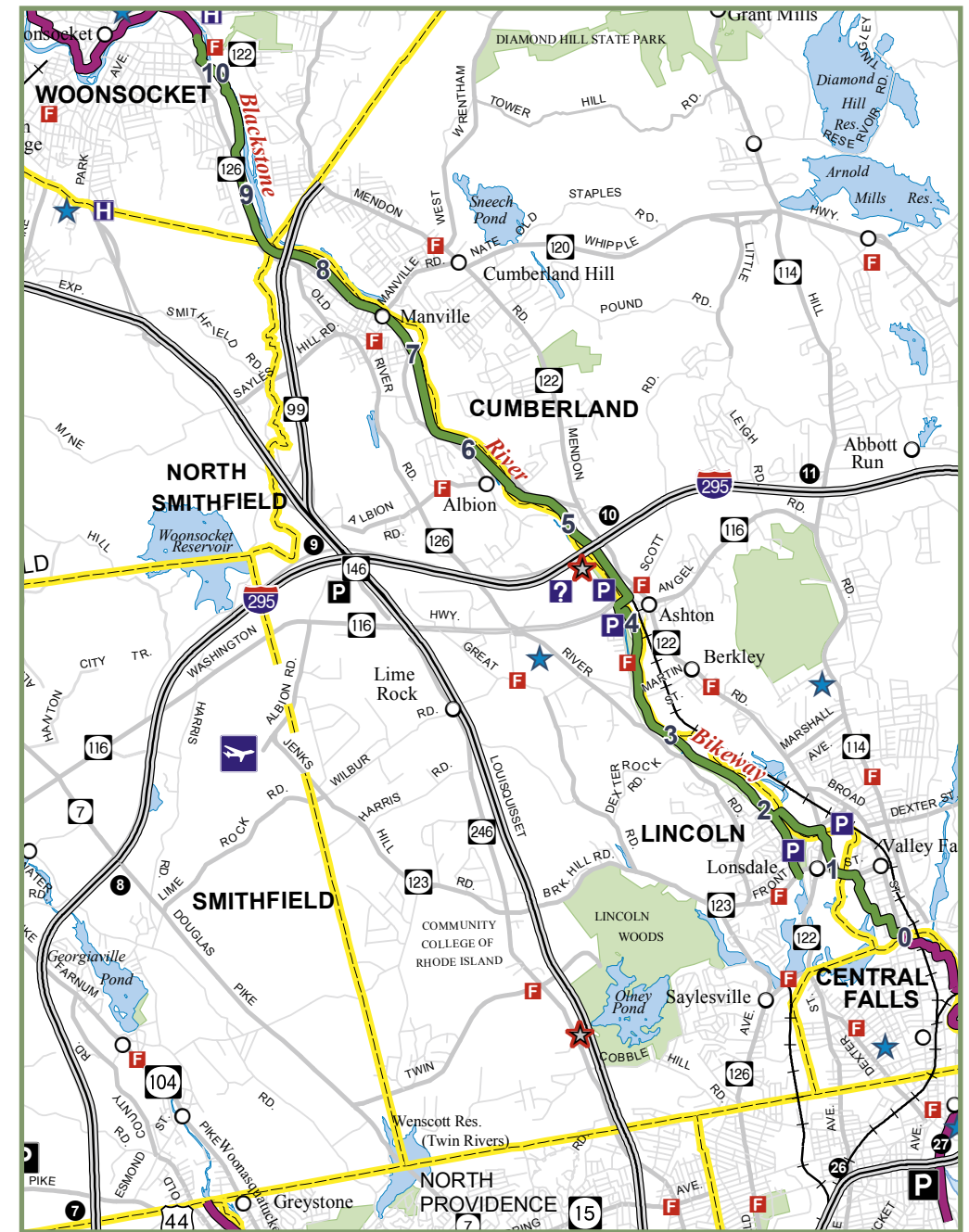
A month later, in late September, RIDOT dedicated a 3.6-mile bikeway segment on the Fred Lippitt Woonasquatucket River Greenway. Also known as the Northwest Bike Trail, this segment includes on-road

and off-road portions stretching from Valley Street in Providence to Lyman Avenue in Johnston. A bulk of the new segment (2.9 miles) is off-road, beginning at Riverside Mills Park in Olneyville and running into Johnston.

The new greenway is the first off-road bike path in Providence, and Rhode Island's first urban bikeway. The path features many scenic places, including many views of the Woonasquatucket River. At many places, it is easy to forget one is riding through the middle of a city.

The third major dedication took place in early November with a dedication of a two-mile section of the Blackstone River Bikeway. This segment begins at the current northern end of the path in the Manville section of Lincoln and ends at the Woonsocket Water Treatment Plant on Manville Hill Road in Woonsocket. The path features fantastic views of the Blackstone River, the Canal and wetland areas. Much of the path is tightly nestled between the river and the Providence and Worcester Railroad Company rail line. This allows up-close views of the river and the wildlife it supports, and children of all ages will appreciate the view of passing trains on the other side.

Like much of the rest of the Blackstone River Bikeway, this segment offers a fine view of one of the river's majestic dams. The Manville Dam spans the entire 160-foot width of the river, dropping the elevation of the river about 19 feet. RIDOT widened the path in this area and added granite benches set in stamped concrete to offer paths users a place to pause and admire the scenery.



The dark green line on the above map shows the Blackstone River Bikeway, including sections on the north and south of the existing path that are scheduled to open in 2008.

The new segment now extends the length of the Blackstone River Bikeway to 9 miles in each direction, not counting its two spur routes that lead to parking areas on Route 116 in Lincoln and the Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center and rest area on I-295 North. Next year RIDOT expects the Blackstone River Bikeway to grow a bit more as work wraps up on a 1-mile extension on the southern end

and two segments totaling 1.4 miles from the new northern end of the path. That work will make the Blackstone the second-longest bike path in Rhode Island, with the East Bay Bike Path ranking first and the Washington Secondary Bike Path third.

The writer is an Information and Public Relations Specialist for the Rhode Island Department of Transportation

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began searching for a new space while continuing to work at City Arts.

The Steel Yard, a fairly young non-profit industrial arts education organization sited in the former Providence Steel Company, offered us temporary space. They also ran a used bike repair program for a small fleet of loaner bikes for artists at the Steel Yard. Recycle-a-Bike agreed to share its parts and tools to help with the fleet.

RAB moved in May 2005. We built a small tool shed inside the larger building. We rented a Uhaul, and helped by many friends with trucks, wagons, and vans, moved again. Because bikes were spread out across the buildings at City Arts, we had no idea how many bikes we collected during the years. It wasn't until we started moving that we saw just how many bikes we had accumulated. We filled our allotted space, and began lining bikes up in rows outside in the nearby yard. To say the least, the Steel Yard was overwhelmed with bikes!

We learned in winter 2005/2006 that the Steel Yard had to clear land for a huge soil remediation project. RAB started a big clean up: everything off the ground outside and organize and condense the bikes in the building or onto hanging racks in a covered area outside of the building. RAB went through all of the bikes keeping only the best stuff, and sending the lowest quality, bent, broken and rusted stuff for the Steel Yard scrap heap. Now we had the opportunity to actually recycle the junk bikes as scrap rather than just throwing them away.

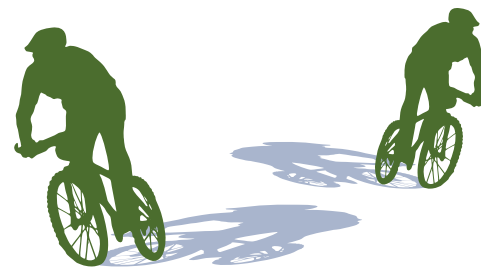
RAB opened in the spring 2006 with few volunteers, and no new sources for funding. RAB came close to shutting down this summer. Due to liability issues with the building, we cancelled our youth programs altogether. At the end of

the summer, we offered formal bicycle maintenance classes through the Steel Yard's course curriculum, and they were very well received. We hoped that would also train new mechanics who could volunteer to help run the program. Things started to look up a bit with a few new volunteers helping by summer's end. We established an evening mechanics workshop set up to assemble bikes since many of the bikes left were incomplete. The women's Sunday afternoon workshop became the most productive program, building and giving away a bunch of bikes to local youth, and teaching several women bicycle maintenance in the process. Recycle-a-Bike closed for the winter again around the holidays.

When RAB opened this spring, original volunteers returned, and new volunteers developed interest in the program. We started the season by removing all bikes from outside the building and organizing the inside shop space. RAB received a grant from the REI sporting goods store in Cranston to invest in tools for our mechanics a-go-go program and maintenance classes, and to replenish all of the broken and lost tools. We held regular meetings and a weekly mechanics-a-go-go outpost at the Cranston St. Armory Park in Providence. We realized that by



Recycle-a-Bike volunteers set up shop along the Fred Lippitt Woonasquatucket River Greenway in Providence.



setting up benches and work stands on the sidewalk, we could continue our youth open workshop programs (at least in nice weather). More Bicycle maintenance class offerings through the Steel Yard produced even more interest and volunteers to help Recycle-a-Bike start growing again. With more organized open workshops, and Tuesday evening mechanic workshops RAB resurrected and rolled out more bikes this year than any other year.

The Steel Yard continues to be our gracious host. They have donated much needed storage and workspace for our workshop and instruction programs, provided invaluable new contacts to our community and opportunities to collaborate with them on new programs. The Steel Yard also offers us fiscal sponsorship to Recycle-a-Bike as an umbrella organization. They provide a vehicle for Recycle-a-Bike to apply for and receive grants which fund the material aspects of our programs. These funds are used to purchase tools, consumable parts and supplies, building materials and cleaning supplies.

In the near future, as the long-delayed plans for renovating the building that houses Recycle-a-Bike finally get underway, we will again re-organize and build a new space. Our favorite option would be to stay here and maintain our relationship with the Steel Yard, so we can continue our work to help others become self-sufficient in bicycle rebuilding, repair and maintenance and, in the process, give them the transportation and independence that a recycled bicycle offers them.

We are always refining and altering our programs to suit our patrons' needs and our volunteers ambitions.

Transportation Improvement Program includes many bike path projects

So what is the state doing about bicycle infrastructure? Well, quite a bit. In fall 2007 the State Planning Council formally adopted the following elements as part of its 2008 Transportation Improvement Program, usually referred to as the "TIP."

Bike programs funded for construction:

- > Davisville Bike Path (\$1.3 million) which is apparently a priority of the Economic Development Corporation.
- > Warren extension of the East Bay Bike Path (\$2 million).
- > East Bay Bike Path - Colt Park Connector, Bristol, \$500,000 in both 2008 and 2009, funded with a Congressional earmark. Also \$500,000 for East Bay Path repairs.
- > Washington Secondary/Trestle Trail, Coventry, \$4 million in 2008, part of ongoing \$18.75 million project funded with a Congressional earmark.
- > Ten Mile River Greenway, Pawtucket, East providence, part of an

ongoing \$3.76 million project funded with a Congressional earmark.

- > Woonasquatucket River Greenway, Providence, Johnston, part of an ongoing \$14.75 million project also funded with an earmark.
 - > Blackstone River Bikeway, \$2.5 million in FY 2008 and another \$2.5 million in 2009 are funded with a Congressional earmark.
 - > South County Bike Path South Kingstown, Narragansett, \$630,000 in 2008, \$500,000 in 2009 funded with another earmark.
 - > East Greenwich/Warwick Bike network program is programmed for \$2.5 million starting in 2009.
- Many bicycle projects are in the TIP "study and development" phase. Although this does not commit the state to their completion, at least the projects are being studied.
- > Poppasquash Road bike/pedestrian path, Bristol.

> Northwest Regional Bike Path, Burrillville, Glocester and North Smithfield.

> Shoreline Bikeway, Charlestown.

> South Elmwood Bike Path, Cranston; Pontiac Secondary Bike Path, Cranston.

> Jamestown Bike Trail, Jamestown.

> Tiverton Bike Path including connections on Aquidneck Island.

> Hope Spur to the Washington Secondary Greenway, West Warwick, Coventry.

Other projects related to bicycling are the RIDOT road resurfacing program under pavement management: safe routes-to-school projects; the study of reusing part of the I-195 bridge in Providence for bikes and pedestrians; the Redman Linear Park being developed as part of the Washington Bridge project; a new Sakonnet River Bridge with a bike path; and a "Pawtuxet Riverwalk" under study in Warwick.

Bicyclists can appreciate our Congressional delegation used the earmark process to help our bikeway program.

GARI accomplishments

Our members and supporters:

- > Cooperate with other bicycle and trails groups to support trail and greenway development and to promote bicycle safety.
- > Communicate with state department directors to encourage improved bicycle and pedestrian resources.
- > Coordinate and promote September as Rhode Island Trails and Greenways month.
- > Participate in other state and national trails and environmental support programs.

www.rigreenways.org

Fall 2007

Get on the trail:

GARI is dedicated to improving conditions for cyclists, hikers, and pedestrians and increasing the number of greenways statewide. Your membership makes this newsletter possible and enables us to continue working with state and local leaders to ensure Rhode Island has an integrated, well maintained network of alternative transportation recreation resources.

Name _____

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Annual Membership enclosed

Individual \$15

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Please return membership form with check payable to the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island to: GARI, 31 Stanchion Street, Jamestown, RI 02835.

Please tell me about GARI meetings by
 E-mail Regular Mail Neither

Help Make Greenways in Rhode Island Happen:

Join the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island Today!

State House Update



Supporting safety standards

By Barry Schiller

With regard to bicycling, the 2007 General Assembly did help us a bit. They passed companion bills S262 and H5664 to upgrade safety standards for bicycle helmets and for carrying small children on bicycles. We supported this as a measure to help promote bicycle safety, and we thank the sponsors, Senator Dennis Algieri of Westerly and Representative

Joseph McNamara of Warwick for their help, as well as the RIDOT staff. The Assembly also passed S134A to repeal the all-keep-right requirement that would have forced a change of the rules for pedestrians on the bike paths. Thus Rhode Island rules for pedestrians remains under the control of the RIDOT and RIDEM that manage the paths. Again we thank the sponsor, Senator Mark Cote of Woonsocket, and RIDOT lobbyist Bernie Frezza for their help.

The Governor did allow all three bills to become effective without his signature. I regret that he didn't use this opportunity to show an interest in and support for our greenways and

bikeways, but there was a turnover in the Governor's Office on who acts as transportation aide and by the time I was able to contact that office it was too late to ask for his signature.

We should also note that the Governor nominated the GARI Chair to the Scenic Highway Board and the Senate confirmed her nomination. Congratulations Sue!

GARI encourages anyone with ideas for legislation for the 2008 session to improve bicycling in Rhode Island to contact us.



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