

Greenwords:

The past year was one of GARI's best

The past year was a rewarding one for GARI as we strengthened partnerships with other organizations to host many events and raise awareness of the rich diversity of hiking, biking and paddling resources in Rhode Island.

We repeated our successful spring edition of *Trail Mix* in cooperation with the Rhode Island Blueways Alliance that highlighted many paddling opportunities offered on the rivers, bays and ocean in our state during Rhode Island Rivers Month.

For the third year the fall edition of *Trail Mix* featured recreational opportunities on trails and greenways. Rainy weekends interfered with some events but others attracted many new hikers and cyclists to our green and blueways.

Schedules of events for the Blueways and Greenways month editions are on the GARI web site. If you did not participate this year, go to the GARI website (www.rigreenways.org) and contact the leaders listed there to learn more about other activities they hold during the year.

GARI was invited to coordinate the GARI/NBW grant program, in partnership with the Narragansett Bay Wheelmen, for the second year. The purpose of the program is "to aid in the encouragement of the building, maintenance, and use of

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Blue Trail for kayaks and canoes designated in Narragansett Bay

By Tina Dolen



U.S. Congressman Kennedy takes to the water.

When the idea for a water trail along the west side of Aquidneck Island first emerged during collaborative discussions sponsored by the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission (AIPC), there was immediate interest and support. A water trail evoked images of windswept islands

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Cyclist groups achieve equality

By Mark Dieterich

The Providence Bicycle Coalition (PBC), spearheaded by Bike-to-Brown (BTB), started actively advocating for better consideration for cyclists during RIDOT projects in November 2007, when we first heard of the impending closing of the Henderson Bridge linking East Providence to the East Side.

In October 2007, RIDOT closed the Washington Bridge pedestrian walkway to implement I-195 construction. A month later, RIDOT posted a reduced weight limit on the I-95 Pawtucket

River Bridge, forcing trucks over the posted weight limit to detour over the Division Street Bridge. As a result cyclists using this route were forced to deal with increased motorized traffic and bigger trucks. Fast forward to June 2008 and RIDOT has a construction project underway on the Henderson Bridge. Three commonly used cycling routes, all three affected by construction or closed to bicycle and pedestrian traffic at the same time!

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Greenwords

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bicycling ways in Rhode Island.” This year we increased outreach activities to reach a broader range of local grass roots organizations and projects.

As expected, we received more requests for funds. The program was pleased to support the following projects:

- Apeiron Institute for Sustainable Living: \$200 for t-shirts for bike train participants.
- Blackstone River Bikeway Patrol: \$500 to print information booklets.
- East Coast Greenway Alliance: \$808 to produce signs along the East Coast Greenway in Providence.
- Providence Bicycle Coalition: \$433 for web site hosting costs and Bike Downtown.
- Recycle-a-Bike: \$800 for bike repair materials and tools.
- Jamestown Rolling Agenda: \$200 to support the Jamestown Walk/Bike/Bus to School Month.
- Friends of the South County Bike Path: \$500 to reprint map .
- US Cycling Open Foundation: \$359 to reprint the *RI Bicycling Guide*.
- The Friends of the West Warwick Greenway: \$200 to support spring clean up of the West Warwick Greenway.
- Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council: \$1000 for materials describing the greenway.

As a result of our cooperative funding project, and our newsletters highlighting Rhode Island’s rivers and trails, we are learning about more grassroots groups and projects in the state with missions like ours: to encourage communities to build and maintain greenways and other safe resources for non-motorized transportation. We encourage you to explore the outdoors in Rhode Island on the trail or on the water.

Sue Barker, **GARI Chair**

An opinion on transportation and greenway funding

By Barry Schiller

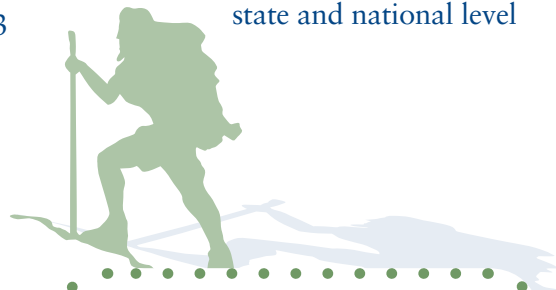
These days it is commonplace to hear that there is "no money" for greenway projects, but it is not the case that the country is really poorer than it used to be. Any lack of funds is due to political decisions about raising revenue and investing in infrastructure. For transportation, revenue streams at both the state and national level mainly depend on a gas tax that is a fixed amount per gallon, it does not rise with inflation (as sales and income taxes do) and at both the state and national level

the gas tax has not been raised in years. Thus our agencies, RIDOT and RIPTA, lose purchasing power each year from the gas tax, while higher gas prices, a recession, and more efficient cars are cutting the number of gallons sold, further reducing revenue.

Bike projects being deferred to the "future" after 2012 include repairing the East Bay Bike Path bridges, the north and south ends of the Blackstone Bikeway (where it reaches Pawtucket and Woonsocket!), the bike route system in Warwick and East Greenwich, the Tiverton, Jamestown, and Charlestown bikeways, bike access to the new Jamestown bridge, the Pontiac and South Elmwood routes in Cranston, the Northwest Trail in North Smithfield and beyond, and the Hope Spur to the Washington Secondary. Once the earmarks expire, in 2010 or so, there will be no bikeway construction scheduled at all. RIPTA (and its bike racks that help us!) is facing about a \$10 million deficit, has had a fare increase this summer already implemented. We can expect substantial service cuts, just as we need more transit to relieve already overcrowded buses, help on economic redevelopment, combat high oil prices, help stem the outflow of our dollars when we buy gasoline, and help mitigate global climate change.

If we are to have any hope of extending, connecting, and maintaining our vision of a RI bikeway system we have to face the need to increase the revenue stream for transportation. RIDOT really needs more funding just to properly repair and maintain

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

Editor Sue Barker

Contributors Sue Barker, Mark Dieterich, Tina Dolen, Charles St. Martin, Richard F. Santopietro, Ph.D., Barry Schiller, Eric Weis

Graphic design and layout
Nelson-Lee Communications
e-mail: nl@nelsonlee.com
(401) 423-2967

Please send your comments to
GARI, 31 Stanchion Street,
Jamestown, RI 02835
e-mail: sueb4@cox.net
www.rigreenways.org

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Help Make Greenways in Rhode Island Happen: Join the

Dear Dr. Sprocket,

Dr. Sprocket will answer questions in each issue of Trail Mix.

Q Dear Dr. Sprocket,

With the recent meltdown of the banking and financial markets, and the ominous signs of a severe recession on the near horizon, I've been trying to cut down on our family's expenses. When gasoline was selling for close to \$4 per gallon, everyone was talking about getting rid of their gas guzzling SUVs and finding cheaper ways to get around. My family tries to ride our bikes as often as we can, but I can't see how I can lower transportation costs during the winter when riding a bicycle is impossible. What can we do to reduce our expenses and get some good exercise at the same time?

Economizing in Escoheag

A Dear Economizing,

I agree that the recent reductions in gasoline prices may lull us into forgetting about finding ways to spend less money on transportation. While riding during the winter months is very challenging and done by only a few hearty souls, there are lots of ways we can reduce our overall transportation costs and still use pedal power to get valuable physical activity at the same time.

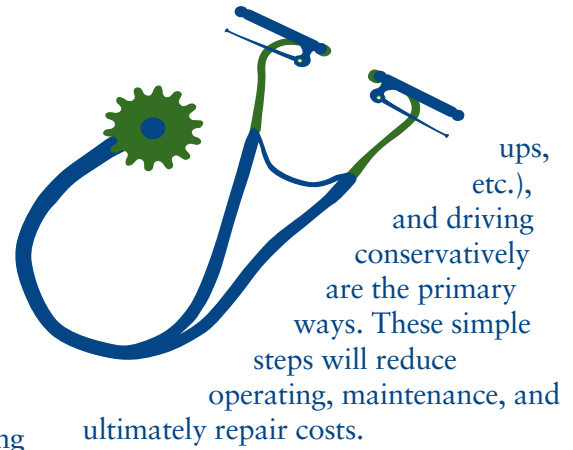
The most vital economic function our cars serve is getting us to and from work. If we're lucky

enough to live within 10 miles of work, we can probably ride our bikes at least half the time. For most of us, commuting entirely by bike isn't an option. RIPTA, however, has installed bike racks on all their buses, making it possible to ride at least part of the way. Of course, changing from biking clothes, showering, and storing our bikes during the day pose additional problems that we have to solve. Simpler solutions include carpooling, telecommuting, and creating alternative work schedules when possible (e.g. four ten-hour workdays per week).

Over the years when gasoline was inexpensive, our lives evolved around our cars more and more until we now practically live in them. We take drive-through tellers, pharmacies, restaurants, and coffee shops for granted, and spend hours idling our engines, waiting to be served.

Changing these lifestyle choices will be challenging.

We can start by planning and consolidating each excursion by car so that we get the most done with the least driving. Grouping tasks that allow one trip to accomplish many tasks, maintaining our cars properly (checking and maintaining tire pressure, eliminate idling warm



We can also radically reduce car costs associated with recreational activities. Rather than using the car for long rides to theme parks, we can take the family to a nearby bike path or hiking trail. Even during the winter months there are many warmer days when biking is possible, and winter walks can be especially beautiful and invigorating. This way we limit the mileage on our car, get reconnected to the natural world, and enjoy more physical activity.

Send your Dr. Sprocket questions to righreenways@righreenways.org.



The West Greenwich Land Trust has created a series of walking trails on an 80 acre property owned by the Land Trust and located behind the West Greenwich Town Hall on Route 102.



Blue Trail

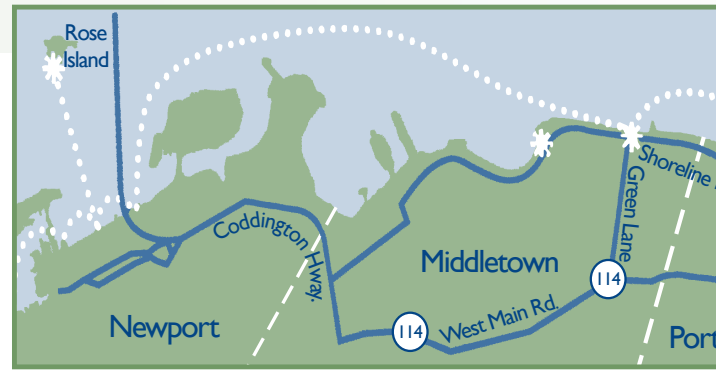
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in Narragansett Bay, steady breezes, diving gulls and brilliant sunsets behind the graceful silhouette of the Newport Pell Bridge.

In fact, the trail has met all of those expectations and many more. It is an entrée to the watery heart of the bay for the average citizen who has only to rent or possibly buy a reasonably priced kayak or canoe. Once on the water, land-side cares literally drift away as the paddler rhythmically strokes across the waves near the communities of Portsmouth, Middletown and Newport. By staying within close reach of the mainland, and being sure to use a personal flotation device, paddling remains a safe and economical mode for exploring the coast.

The Aquidneck Island Planning Commission developed “The Blue Trail” for Narragansett Bay as part of its widely acclaimed West Side Master Plan for some 5,000 acres on the west side of the island. Themes of the plan include sustainable economic development, public access to the sea, environmental preservation and recreational opportunities. With respect to recreation, the AIPC’s plan

also outlines a dedicated (off-road) multi-use recreational bicycle path running from Newport to the Mt. Hope and Sakonnet Bridges. Plans also call for a new waterfront park in Middletown at Greene Lane and possibly development of a new fishing pier there.



This map shows the Narragansett Bay Blue Trail route.



U.S. Senator Jack Reed joins the paddle.

The Blue Trail will provide recreation and fishing opportunities from launch points along the coast from an eventual nine locations. Thanks to a grant from the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, the AIPC was able to install its first two launch points last summer, marking them with informative travelers’ kiosks. These are at Cory’s Lane and Weaver Cove in Portsmouth. A formal dedication ceremony was held in late August at Weaver Cove, when U.S. Senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse and Congressman Patrick Kennedy joined General Assembly members including Senate Majority Leader Senator M. Teresa Paiva Weed followed their congratulatory remarks by hopping into kayaks to explore the bay! They were joined by RI Department of Environmental Management Director Dr. W. Michael Sullivan and

Chairman of the RI Coastal Resources Management Council Michael M. Tikoian. There were over 100 people in attendance for the launch party and more than 50 kayakers celebrating the trail that calm summer day.

Portsmouth will eventually add launch sites (also known as put-ins) at Dyer Island and Willow Lane. Middletown will have a launch at the newly proposed Greene Lane Park near the planned fishing pier, and Newport put-ins include Rose Island, Elm Street Pier, the former Navy Hospital site and Long Wharf Landing at Perrotti Park.

To Go

Weaver Cove Boat Ramp in Portsmouth: Public access ¼ mile south of the intersection of Stringham Road and Defense Highway (Burma Road). Launch on the sandy beach at the far end of the parking lot. Ample parking available.

Cory’s Lane: Public access; turn west at the intersection of Cory’s Lane and West Main Road (Route 114) in Portsmouth and travel past Portsmouth Abbey and St. Philomena School to the very end of the road, near the railroad tracks. Parking for one car and launch off rocky shoreline.

GARI accomplishments

Our members and supporters:

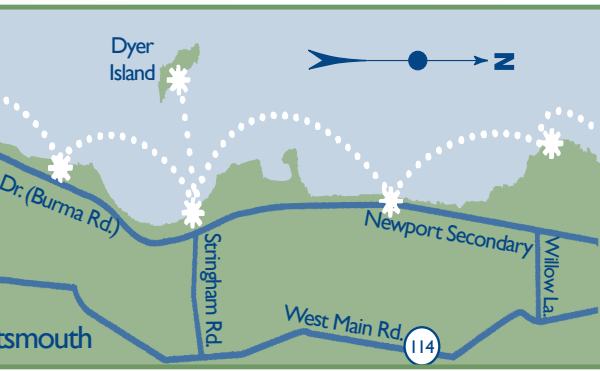
- Cooperate with other bicycle and trails groups to support trail and greenway development and to promote bicycle safety.
- Communicate with state department directors to encourage improved bicycle and pedestrian resources.
- Coordinate and promote September as Rhode Island Trails and Greenways month.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

www.rigreenways.org

Winter 2009

GARI is able to continue our advocacy for safe and accessible trails through the Bay Wheelmen and funding of our quarterly newsletter, Trail Mix, for their ongoing contributions to our efforts. In addition, we’d like to thank:

- RI Blueways Alliance
- Woonasquatucket River Water



along the west side of Aquidneck Island

The Blue Trail is just one of many water routes that will eventually become a linked network in the bay known as Rhode Island Blueways, celebrating exploration of our state's most important, and impressive, natural resource. The Aquidneck Island Planning Commission, as sponsors of the Blue Trail, are proud to be a part of the wider paddling network that will provide so much recreation for so many across the state's bay-connected communities.

The writer is the Executive Director of the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission.

To encourage the state to adopt a suitable commitment to alternative transportation, a small band of representatives of PBC and BTB attended a State Transportation Committee (STC) meeting to counter a request from RIDOT to require bicycles to use of the sidewalk area on the Henderson Bridge for the duration of the construction. STC members provided the BTB and PBC advocates ample time to make our case, focusing on three fundamental issues: 1) The sidewalks are in terrible condition and simply end on the west side of the bridge, 2) exiting the sidewalks on the east side of the bridge is truly dangerous, cyclists may need to cross four full lanes of traffic without a light or crosswalk, and 3) the bridge railings are too low for RIDOT to legally recommend cyclists ride on the sidewalks. The entire group discussed various options for increasing the safety of cyclists. As a result of the

discussion the STC tabled the vote on the restrictions until the next meeting, allowing RIDOT to plan how they could better accommodate cyclists during construction.

BTB and PBC advocates attended the next STC meeting. RIDOT project engineers presented a number of detailed street-level photographs, documenting many of the sidewalk issues that were brought to light. The STC voted to limit bicycles to sidewalk use whenever the roadway was reduced to 15 feet or less with the understanding that RIDOT would:

- Limit bicycles to the sidewalk only on the side of the bridge which has a reduced travel lane. Furthermore, only reduce the inbound or outbound traffic to a single travel lane at any one time.
- Post extensive bicycle and pedestrian detour signs, so cyclists don't suddenly find themselves sharing a single travel lane with cars.
- Install "Share the Road" signs at all areas where cyclists must exit the sidewalks.
- Install crosswalk at the East side of the bridge, where cyclists must cross four lanes of traffic.
- Uncover primordial sidewalks on the West end of the bridge currently covered by 3+ inches of sand, dirt, and grass and introduce curb-cuts at both end of the sidewalks.
- Maintain entire length of sidewalk from Massasoit on the East to Patterson Ave. on the West to include repairing certain sections of sidewalk where significant bumps/drops or broken pavement exist.
- Mitigate drainage issues as part of bridge maintenance.

We are pleased with our progress on these issues. RIDOT has adhered to number 1, 2, 4, and 5. We hope to see "Share the Road" signs and improvements to the existing sidewalks.

The writer is a member of the Providence Bicycle Coalition.

Join GARI today!

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 _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State, Zip _____
 E-mail _____
 Telephone _____
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 Organization _____

Annual Membership enclosed

- Individual \$15
- Family \$25
- Nonprofit \$50
- Corporate \$100
- Other: _____

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

anks, in part, to support of a joint grant program with the Narragansett
 x, by the RI Dept. of Environmental Management. We are grateful
 to recognize and thank the following 2008 Organizational Friends:
 Marsh Council ➤ West Warwick Friends of the Greenway



Connecting the DOTs

RIDOT opens pedestrian bridge in Providence

By Charles St. Martin

A vital link for cyclists and pedestrians was restored in mid October when the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) opened the new India Point Park Pedestrian Bridge. The park-like bridge is a major addition to the Fox Point neighborhood and affords easy access to the Providence waterfront for cyclists throughout the East Side of Providence.

The new bridge is almost 50 feet wide, six times larger than the narrow chain-link enclosed structure

it replaces. The bridge also includes ample space for planting of flowers, shrubs and small trees. Much of this landscaping will be installed next spring. Even now the substantially wider bridge is a much quieter place than the old bridge. RIDOT expects that once the plantings are mature, it will be easy for one to forget that he or she is walking over a bridge over the highway.

“The new bridge is not just a means to get from the East Side to the waterfront,” RIDOT Director Michael P. Lewis said. “The bridge is an integral part of both the neighborhood and the park.”

Other amenities on the bridge included built in benches that run the length of the bridge. There is decorative lighting throughout, making it a safer resource for those who use it. The southern end of the bridge features a staircase and a serpentine ramp system to allow handicapped persons to get down to the Park.

The bridge and numerous improvements to India Point Park (including new roads, additional parking, more trees, and landscaping) are being built by RIDOT as part of the Iway project. The bridge is an integral part of the \$610 million highway relocation project, and spans local roads and ramps in the park as well as I-195.

In the future the pedestrian bridge will have an even greater role as RIDOT works to restore the connection of the East Bay Bike Path over the remnants of the old eastbound

span of the Washington Bridge. The East Bay Bike Path technically begins in India Point Park and historically used a narrow protected lane on the Washington Bridge to reach East Providence. This pathway has been closed due to construction on the Washington Bridge.

RIDOT hopes to reopen the old bike lane on a temporary basis this winter and spring as it prepares plans to make more substantial improvements that would turn the old southern portion of the Washington Bridge into a linear park and bikeway.

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



An opinion

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our highways and bridges, and this includes having the maintenance dollars to adequately sweep the highway shoulders as we would want. In my opinion we must ally with RIDOT (and RIPTA) to increase funding for transportation and insist for all the right reasons that bicycle programs get a fair share. There is no easy way to do this. The public has the impression that everything should be done without them having to pay for it, and thus politicians avoid taking action, or simply call for studies. We have to help overcome this and support political leaders who put the needs of the country ahead of the short-term payoff from a "no to taxes" sound-bite. Or we will have crumbling infrastructure and no more bikeways. At least Rhode Island provides a lot of opportunity for public comment. Stay tuned.

The writer is a member of GARI, and the State Planning Council's Transportation Advisory Committee



A father and his son walk over the bridge during opening ceremonies.

Webmaster's Corner

New site launched with detailed trails information

The Internet is full of wonderful web sites to help you plan your next outdoor adventure. By studying terrain, topographical and aerial views, you can get a real feel for where you are going and what type of terrain to expect. The best sites try to merge all this data and then some. A new site called www.gravitycollege.com is one of them.

This mapping service has in its database every National Park, National Forest, State Park, State Forest, Bureau of Land Management Area, Wildlife Refuge and Grassland in the continental United States. The web site has spent numerous hours digitizing hundreds of thousands of miles of trails and pledges to continue doing so until every trail is mapped.

A review of good hiking spots in Rhode Island showed that the website has some catching up to do. For the areas they have included, however, the information available is impressive. Each trail is marked with its mileage. Click on a trail and a trail elevation

profile appears, showing you the contour of the trail over its length. This is a great asset for those of us who aren't that adept at reading topo maps other than to know that the closer together the contour lines, the steeper the terrain.

Another neat feature is a built-in plug in using Google Earth to provide a 3-D flyover of the trails. This is pretty cool, but only works on PCs and not Macs. (All the Google-based services are poised to take a major leap forward due to published reports about an agreement with an enhanced satellite imagery company.)

The web page has great information on the George Washington Management Area, the Arcadia Management Area, Lincoln Woods, and Goddard Memorial State Park. Obviously there are many more areas that should be included, including the many great trails that are part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, trails across Audubon Society of Rhode Island properties and lesser-known parks and wild spaces managed and owned by local, state or national organizations – both public and private.

Rhode Island has a rich mix of trails. GARI has been working to get its arms around these, and in the past year has expanded



its website to be as inclusive as possible of all publicly owned trails. This too is a work in progress. Log onto www.rigreenways.org/paths/g-way-og.htm and see what GARI has so far. Anyone interested in contributing information is welcome and invited to do so.

In the meantime, give gravitycollege.com a look. It is especially beneficial for finding new spots to hike or walk when vacation or traveling to unknown places.



Blackstone Boulevard's bicycle lanes

By Eric Weis

As I write this, the issue of bike lanes on Providence's Blackstone Boulevard is finally less controversial than it was when the topic was brought to the neighborhood several years ago. Who could have foreseen that the arrangement of white paint on a 1.5-mile stretch of asphalt could raise so much ire, and so much enthusiasm?

In 1987, the state unveiled a plan for constructing the Blackstone River Bikeway, a 48-mile route from Providence to Worcester, Mass. The plan looked at the potential of developing a riverside path from Providence Harbor to Pawtucket, but ultimately, it was determined that routing the Bikeway on Blackstone Boulevard was preferable. For this short stretch, the Bikeway would be

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Two walkers enjoy the sun and conversation on the East Bay Bike Path.

Join the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island Today!

Blackstone lanes

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on bicycle lanes, rather than a traffic-separated path.

Many years later, in the early 2000s, the city brought the idea of bike lanes to the residents of Blackstone Boulevard. But many residents of “the Boulevard” spurned the notion. Some didn’t want to see the paint, for aesthetic reasons. Others feared an increase in the number of cyclists, and accidents. Still others thought that an influx of cyclists would make it difficult for motorists to exit their driveways.

Whatever the individual reasons, the residents were vocal; without political support, the bike lane project lay dormant for years. More recently, however, other changes were brought to the Boulevard. For the first time,

lane lines were painted, to create a parking lane and two vehicle lanes for each side, separated

by the grassy, tree-lined median (a city park with a walking path over the entire length). Traffic volume, speed, noise, and trash increased, as motorists increasingly saw the Boulevard as a convenient cut-through between East Providence and Pawtucket.

City Councilman Cliff Wood called a neighborhood meeting to assess local sentiment on changes for the Boulevard, held in March 2008. With little opposition, attendees gave a resounding affirmation for converting one travel lane in each direction into a bike lane. Councilman Wood backed the plan, and the Providence Planning Department incorporated them into the city’s bike plan. Critical mass, it seemed, had been achieved. The bike lanes were painted this past summer. But that wasn’t the end of the story. Some locals felt that their voices had not been heard. Councilman Wood was bombarded with phone calls and

emails from angry neighborhood residents.

On October 15, another neighborhood meeting was held, this one with more notification. Once again, the basement of School One was filled with people from the neighborhood and around the city who came to give their opinions. While there were a number of people quite vocal about their opposition to the bike lanes, the majority of attendees recognized the benefits of the new Boulevard lane scheme. Nearly everyone agreed that car traffic was slower, and that conditions have become better for walkers and cyclists. It now looks like the bike lanes are here to stay.

The writer is East Coast Greenway Alliance Deputy Trail Program Coordinator / New England Regional Trail Coordinator.



www.rigtreenways.org

31 Stanchion Street,
Jamestown, RI 02835

GARI