

# City to boost commitment to bicyclists

## 160 additional road 'sharrows,' school safety program planned

Daily News staff

NEWPORT — The city is planning to paint 160 road sharing symbols, or "sharrows," on the Ocean Drive, which bicyclists call the "Ocean Loop," to remind cyclists and motorists alike that bikes are present and welcome, the city's Department of Public Services has announced.

Additionally, Bike Newport, the nonprofit bicycle advocacy group, will be working with the public schools' health and physical education program to introduce a bicycle safety component into the curriculum, according to the city's School Department.

The announcements were made on Bike-to-Work Day, which took place on Friday, when 115 bike commuters gathered on Washington Square to kick off the event that is celebrated around the country and Canada during May. Bike-to-Work Day was originated by the League of American Bicyclists in 1956 and is a part of Bike-to-Work Week, which is in turn part of National Bike Month.

Assistant City Engineer Frank Marinaccio said during afternoon announcements that the sharrows would be painted

on Ocean Avenue, Harrison Avenue and Ridge Road, which make up the popular Ocean Loop bicycle route.

"This beautiful seaside road is popular with everyone, residents and visitors alike," he said in a prepared statement. "Placing sharrows on



A total of 160 sharrows, similar to this, will be painted along the Ocean Drive in Newport.

the road is a road calming and safety tool. They guide bicyclists' position and keeps motorists aware that bicycles are ever present."

Marinaccio said the city's geographic information system has a bike rack app, to which the location and a description of bike racks

throughout the city now are being added.

"Ultimately, cyclists will use the app to identify where the nearest rack is located, and the city and advocates will use the app to plan additional racks," he said.

Assistant School Superintendent Jennifer Booth made the announcement that bicycle education would be included in the curriculum for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

"Bike Newport currently provides extracurricular

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bicycle activity in all of our schools— Pell, Thompson, and Rogers,” Booth said in a prepared statement. “The next step is to ensure that we reach every student in our schools with bicycle safety education and encouragement. We want all of our kids to know and have access to the freedom, confidence, and health benefits that comes with biking, and we want them to know from the earliest age the skills and rules that come with the fun. We hope that Newport will set the standard for many other (school) districts.”

Bike Newport’s Executive Director Bari Freeman said her organization has received grants from the state Department of Transportation’s Highway Safety Program and the federal Safe Routes to School program to train the school district’s physical education

faculty in bike safety instruction as a first step toward introducing bicycle education curriculum. The professional development class will take place in September, she said.

Community Oriented Police Officer Jimmy Winters described the Police Department’s work on safe routing of bicycles to summer events in the city. The department also has a new police training program for enforcement of road sharing rules, he said.

“The department is committed to all road users and to continuing to partner with Bike Newport and the (city’s) Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission to ensure safe road sharing,” Winters said.

Among the announcements, the Newport County YMCA was named the Bicycle Friendly Business of the Year for 2015.

“The Y has stepped up to every opportunity to promote and support biking, without exception,” Freeman said in

announcing the award. “The Y promotes biking activities to their membership, added a bike program to their summer camp, ordered a new high capacity bike rack for their property, and they established a dedicated ‘Park & Bike’ section in their parking lot. The Newport County Y is the definition of bike friendly business.”

Bike Newport encourages people to bike to work, or at least the last stretch if they live far away or have to cross a bridge with no bicycle access. Free “Park & Bike” lots are available at Bike Newport headquarters, 437 Broadway, in Newport, and at the YMCA, 792 Valley Road, in Middletown. The lots were promoted for use by people who wanted to ride their bikes to Fort Adams State Park during the recent Volvo Ocean Race stopover.

The gathering on Washington Square on Friday marked the fifth year that Bike Newport has held an assembly to celebrate Bike to Work Day.