

Bike Newport launches bike path advocacy

By Janine Weisman | Mercury | Posted: Tuesday, March 17, 2015 5:00 pm

In the past two decades, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation has built a network of bike paths in different regions of the state. Except in Newport County.

Bike Newport wants to make a Newport bike path a top priority in its advocacy work this year with a new initiative, “The First Mile,” to bring attention to a stretch of railway corridor between Newport’s North End and the Gateway Center. That will become its focus for proceeds raised at its fourth annual Bike Newport Night on Thursday, March 19, from 6-9 p.m. at the Midtown Oyster Bar, 345 Thames St., Newport.

An off-road bike path from Newport’s North End to the downtown waterfront would provide a safe place for bike commuters to get to and from work, and encourage more people to get out of their cars and onto their bikes, Bike Newport Executive Director Bari Freeman said. About half of Newport Public School students live in the city’s North End and would also benefit from a safe place to ride their bikes, she added.

“We have no place where you can ride without traffic,” Freeman said. “Riding with traffic requires a certain amount of confidence to be able to do it well and what keeps people from riding in large part is fear and anxiety.”

Dozens of area businesses are providing raffle and silent auction items for Bike Newport Night.

Everyone in attendance is eligible for the grand prize giveaway: a new hybrid electric bike worth \$2,500 donated by IE-Cycle, a rentals and sales shop on Fair Street.

Entertainment will be by the Slackwater String Band and Los Duderinos. And there is the opportunity to hop on a VeloSprint Racing simulator for a fired-up 30-second sprint.

Last year’s Bike Newport Night raised \$4,000 to defray the \$17,000 cost of purchasing high capacity bike racks that should be ready for use by May for the Volvo Ocean Race. The racks will encourage bicycling to festivals, concerts and other types of large public events.



grand prize bike

A Metro hybrid electric bike valued at \$2,500 from IE Cycle is the Bike Newport Night grand prize giveaway.