

The Newport Daily News

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AQUIDNECK ISLAND BIKEWAY

All in favor of project

Members of the state's congressional delegation and local officials voice support for the 18-mile cross-island project.

By Matt Sheley
Staff writer

MIDDLETOWN — The proposed Aquidneck Island Bikeway has the firm support of Rhode Island's congressional delegation.

During a launch event Monday for the 18-mile bikeway linking Newport to Portsmouth along the west side of the island, Sens. Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse, both D-R.I., and Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., pledged to back the project.

"We're looking seriously at how we can develop this whole stretch of Burma Road and other areas," Reed said during the event at the Midway Pier on Burma Road. "One of the most positive things we can do is to create a bike path. It's not only smart in terms of transportation, it's great environmental policy to get out on the bike."

"Also, it will add to the attraction of Newport and Middletown and all the Newport County communities," he said. "There's nothing like getting on a bike to make people want to come back."

The top elected municipal officials of the three island communities joined the delegation, touting the benefits of the project, which they said was good news for local bikers and those visiting the area.

The bikeway could be open in as little as two years, with the timeline mainly contingent on funding, said Tina Dolen, executive director of the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission, which has been spearheading the bikeway proposal.

According to the plan officially unveiled Monday, the bikeway would start on Memorial Boulevard in Newport near Easton's Beach and head north via Washington Street, Third Street and Connell Highway into Middletown, where it would travel along Coddington Highway, Lexington Street and Burma Road into Portsmouth. From there, the bikeway would connect to Cory's Lane, West Main Road, Bristol Ferry Road, Anthony Road and the



Jacqueline Marque | Staff photographer

Mark Chesterton of Middletown, Bike Newport director of youth programs, carries his daughter Lucy O'Rourke Chesterton, 3, on his cargo bike Monday during a group ride on Burma Road after the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission unveiled the route of the 18-mile-long Aquidneck Island Bikeway during a press conference.

Sakonnet River Bridge.

Whitehouse said the delegation agreed it is important to support the bikeway and will work hard to ensure the funding is available as soon as possible through the federal

FAVOR A8

'It will add to the attraction of Newport and Middletown and all the Newport County communities. There's nothing like getting on a bike to make people want to come back.'

SEN. JACK REED, D-R.I.

Local bicyclists say safety still an issue on island's roads

By Matt Sheley
Staff writer

Biking on Aquidneck Island is getting a little better, but work still is needed, according to local bicyclists.

During an event Monday to officially launch the proposed Aquidneck Island Bikeway, those who regularly ride bicycles on the island said that most motorists seem to be aware they need to share the road, but not

enough that it's safe to ride in the more heavily traveled areas.

As he held his 3-year-old daughter Lucy, Mark Chesterton of Middletown said he wishes more drivers would leave their cars behind once in a while in order to understand what it is like to bike to work, to the beach or anywhere else on the island.

"It's getting better, but it's still a problem," Chesterton said. "From what I've seen, and this is just my personal opinion, a lot of the drivers out there don't use a bike, so they don't have the empathy for someone who's just trying to get to work on his or her bike."

Chesterton, who rides his green cargo bike to work at Bike Newport in downtown Newport whenever possible, said he's grown accustomed to taking back routes and lesser-used roads to make the 2-mile trip.

He and others said a proposal such as the 18-mile bikeway along the west side of the

SAFETY A8

LEARN MORE

Bike Newport offers free bicycle safety information cards, including the rules of the road under Rhode Island law, at its office in the Seamen's Church Institute building, 18 Market Square, Newport.

The nonprofit organization also will assist employers whose workers ride bicycles at night to provide them with lights and reflective safety vests, according to Executive Director Bari George.

For more information, call 619-4900 or visit bikenewportri.org.

JAMESTOWN

Tick threat is increasing on the island

By Joe Baker
Staff writer

Jamestown has a mounting health problem that, left unaddressed, could endanger many of its residents.

There are 500 deer living on Conanicut Island, which is 10 square miles. Each deer can host up to 450,000 deer

ticks in a single year, Thomas N. Mather, director of the University of Rhode Island's Center for Vector-Borne Disease and its TickEncounter Resource Center,

told Town Council members Monday night.

Deer ticks carry a number of parasites that cause several debilitating diseases, the most well known being Lyme disease.

Spurred by a letter from resident Julie Janson, who underwent a decade-long battle with Lyme disease, council members asked Mather to speak to them about the best ways to address the problem.

TICK A8

Twice is nice



Jacqueline Marque | Staff photographer

Nicolas Mahut, rear, hugs his doubles partner Edouard Roger-Vasselin on Monday after the Frenchmen won the doubles title at the Hall of Fame Tennis Championships. Mahut also captured the singles title on Sunday. Story, Page B1.

MIDDLETOWN

Town will explore regional high school

By Matt Sheley
Staff writer

The Middletown Town Council decided Monday night to take the lead in exploring the prospect of establishing a regional high school on Aquidneck Island.

The council voted 6-1 to approve a resolution proposed by Richard Adams and Barbara A. VonVillas instructing Town Administrator Shawn J. Brown to develop a model proposal for a new islandwide high school.

Councilman Bruce J. Long voted against the resolution, saying the matter might be better handled by school officials.

Adams and VonVillas argued that given the struggling state of the economy, reduced state and federal aid, declining student enrollments, lagging curriculum and other factors, the atmosphere was right to push the discussion forward.

"There are a lot of moving pieces and we've all talked about regionalization for a long time," Adams said. "I've been struck by something lately. It used to be, not so long ago, that you said the word 'regionalization,' you'd better get under the desk because there was a great outcry against it. The whole context has changed."

ALSO

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No timeline was given for Brown to complete the work, but he is expected to report back to the council in several months.

In a two-page letter to the council, Adams and VonVillas suggest Brown develop specific data on personnel, curriculum, athletics, enrichment programs and facilities based on a 2,000-student school "that would enable all students to achieve future success and independence through post-secondary education or entry-level skilled positions."

Among more than 30 questions needing answers are the number of teachers, administrators, related personnel, number of academic courses, athletic and extracurricular opportunities and square footage of the school building, offices and amenities.

"There are two major reasons: one is money and the other is education," VonVillas said. "There are people who will support regionalization because it will save money and the efficiency and the other factions will support it because of the need for it educationally."

"Newport County communities can

SCHOOL A8

COMING
attractions

Some things you won't want to miss

WEDNESDAY

»»» **BLACK SHIPS FESTIVAL** to mark its 30th anniversary.

REFURBISHED TOWN PARK to be centerpiece of weekend celebration.



WEATHER

69 Tonight, partly cloudy. Low around 69.

84 Wednesday, mostly sunny. High near 84.

Details, A8

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