

## City receives \$1M grant for bike path

### Path

#### NEWPORT

#### By Derek Gomes

Staff writer

The city has received a \$1 million state grant to embark on the construction of a bike path that would eventually reach from Newport to the Mount Hope and Sakonnet River bridges.

The grant from the Department of Environmental Management, a portion of the \$35 million Green Economy Bond approved by voters last November, represents only a start to the ambitious plan.

The City Council accepted on Wednesday the correspondence from DEM notifying the city it had received the money for the design and construction of the First Mile Shared-Use Bike Pathway.

The 1.6-mile stretch will connect the Newport Gateway Visitors Center to the Community College of Rhode Island Newport County Campus, from downtown to the north end.

The full plan hinges on running the path along the northsouth rail line that spans the island's three communities, similar to the East Bay Bike Path, the 14-plus-mile multipurpose path that connects India Point Park in Providence to Independence Park in Bristol.

Bari Freeman, executive director of the nonprofit organization Bike Newport, said the island “desperately needs” a path of its own to unclog the streets of cars, as well as to reserve a space for bicyclists to gain more confidence riding.

“The No. 1 issue of people who bicycle or want to right now ... on Aquidneck Island is you have to ride (along) with cars,” she told The Daily News on Wednesday.

The concept of a bike path has been discussed for decades, Freeman said, but it wasn't until recent years it gained momentum.

In 2011, the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission presented the bike path in its transportation study, and the state included it in its transportation improvement plan last year.

The commission has also turned its attention to the northern end of Aquidneck Island, where it envisions a

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trail from the Sakonnet River Bridge to the planned Mount Hope Park along the shore of Mount Hope Bay in Portsmouth.

The recipients for the bond money were announced last month, and they will create 10 new miles of bike paths.

“We are fortunate to have a wealth of beautiful outdoor spaces to enjoy in Rhode Island,” said Gov. Gina Raimondo at that time. “And as Rhode Islanders, we know their value to our state - a point reinforced by the overwhelming voter support this bond received.”

Projects benefited are spread across the state, including one totaling \$800,000 intended to give bicyclists access to the Jamestown-Verrazzano Bridge.

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