

OUR VIEW

Pedding the bike trail

It's a plan that's been in the works for decades and, if officials can find the necessary funding, it could take more than a decade to complete. But, if the stars align, just beyond the not-too-distant horizon, a 22-mile bike path could traverse the scenic Taunton River, connecting Fall River, Taunton and the towns and villages in between the two cities.

Under recently resurrected plans, the bike path would begin in Taunton's Weir District and end at the Veterans Memorial Bridge, connecting Somerset and Fall River. It would largely travel along old rail beds, which have provided the routes for many "rail trails" throughout New England. While many areas of Massachusetts and Rhode Island already have bike paths, this is another area where Bristol County has been left behind.

A highlight of the bike path would be a section through Sweet Knolls State Park in Dighton, where the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and

RECENT OUR VIEWS

MARCH 27

'You are not forgotten'

Despite the march of time, efforts to remember and recover POW/MIA's must be funded and continued.

MARCH 25

Sinking the ship

If there is a way to wrest control of the Marine Museum from the unctuous Paul Simister, it ought to be done and the sooner the better.

READ THEM ONLINE:

heraldnews.com/opinions

ABOUT OUR VIEW:

Our View is The Herald News' stance on current issues and events. Respond to Our View with letters to the editor via mail, email or video.

certainly be a tourist draw for the entire region and a way to help "sell" the SouthCoast. It could also help spur new attractions and businesses at both ends of the bike path and all along the way. The Taunton River bike path is expected to eventually connect with the South Coast Bikeway, which is currently being built to link Rhode Island, Fall River and Cape Cod. One day, the Taunton bike path could go as far north as Brockton.

While some agreements have been reached to obtain right-of-way ownership, some privately owned properties may be more difficult to acquire. The largest roadblock to the construction of the bike path is money: No funds have been identified and no funds are expected to be available for the next few years.

The cost is also prohibitive: Each mile of off-road bike path costs about \$700,000. Planners say that means that, optimistically, it could be constructed at a rate of one mile per year. The biggest hope for finding immediate funding to begin piecemeal construction comes from the potential delay or demise of other similar projects in other parts of the state for which funding has been allocated.

Still, there seems to be a great deal of community support for this bike path. Local, state and federal officials ought to collaborate with private recreational, watershed and historic preservation groups to identify funding streams to put the pedal to the metal and begin progress on this worthwhile venture.

Local officials could potentially consider tapping into Community Preservation Act funds to contribute local and state dollars for the construction. There appears to be a great deal of community support for this project. It will be important for residents to see forward momentum on the plan, even if it is done in pieces.

JOIN THE DISCUSSION

Make your voice heard on this subject or any other in The Herald News. Write a **Letter to the Editor** to The Herald News, 207 Pocasset St., Fall River, 02722, send an email to letters@heraldnews.com, or find out how to post a video online at heraldnews.com.