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SPORTS



B's RUSTLED: Despite rallying from a 3-0 deficit in the third, Boston couldn't catch the Toronto Maple Leafs. C1

INSIDE



TALK OF THE TOWN: Our Community Clips page fills you in on local happenings. A7

MONDAY

It's not just about the flag



MARC DION: The newspaper gets plenty of calls about flags being disrespected. Not that it shouldn't.

But when was the last time people railed with such passion against the ills plaguing the veterans who fought to stand up for and raise our flag?

WEEKEND



Make the most of your garden

Matt Blashaw, host of "Yard Crashers," tells you how to manage your greenery.

INSIDE

Business.....C6
Classified.....C5
Dear Abby.....D7

"We've got to get this country moving again."

— Pauline Hamel, Mass. in Motion New Bedford coordinator and South Coast Bikeway Committee member

ON THE RIGHT PATH

South Coast Bikeway committee progress making project a reality

Jo C. Goode
Herald News Staff Reporter

FALL RIVER — Supporters of the plan to create the South Coast Bikeway from the Rhode Island border to Cape Cod to serve cyclists and walkers continue their momentum to make the project a reality.

"We've got to get this country moving again. Whether we're talking about commuting to work or recreation, we are really talking about quality of life," said Pauline Hamel, the coordinator for Mass in Motion New Bedford and a member of the South Coast

INSIDE

South Coast Bikeway Summit to be held at UMass Dartmouth. PAGE A5

OUR VIEW: Bikeway proponents need a big push from the public to realize dream. PAGE B2

GUEST OPINION: Strong transportation will bring many benefits. PAGE B3

Bikeway Committee spearheading the effort.

One of the many advantages of creating a 40-mile biking trail is the

health benefit to local residents as the region and nation face a public health crisis that includes obesity, diabetes and cancer, Hamel said.

Since 2011, the South Coast Bikeway Committee has been working on plans to build the bikeway that will feature both on- and off-road trails and link the cities and towns of Swansea, Somerset, Fall River, Westport, Dartmouth, New Bedford, Fairhaven, Mattapoisett, Marion

TURN TO **BIKEWAY**, PAGE A5

Taunton River Trail to connect to city

Marc Larocque
Taunton Daily Gazette

TAUNTON — Bicycling enthusiasts in southeastern Massachusetts continue to work toward the long-term goal of creating a 22-mile bike trail connecting Taunton to Fall River.

The Taunton River Trail, as it has been referred to, would allow bicyclists to get off the public roads and peaceably traverse between the cities while enjoying the scenery and nature along the water.

"The Taunton River Trail will be a great recreational resource for the residents of Taunton, Dighton and

Somerset," said Al Lima, who leads the Taunton River Trail Committee, a group dedicated to bringing the 22-mile path to fruition. "It really is quite scenic along the Taunton River. The hope is to not only create a bike path but to preserve open space

TURN TO **RIVER**, PAGE A5



Photo: Mike Piro | Jax Foto
Fall River Bicycle Committee Chairman Brian Pearson pedals down Meridian Street during an organized ride last summer.



Photo: Mike Piro | Jax Foto
A cyclist makes his way up the Veterans Memorial Bridge heading from Somerset to Fall River on the Michael E. Boushot Bicycle Path.

Photo: Mike Piro | Jax Foto
RIGHT: The bicycle lanes on either side of Swansea Mall Drive are part of the South Coast Bikeway.



Adam Recchia, above, a transportation planner for SRPEDD, listens while Julianne Kelly of Mass in Motion, below, narrates a slideshow about local cycling at a South Coast Bikeway editorial board meeting.

HERALD NEWS PHOTOS | JACK FOLEY

Bikeway: Patrick's plan would provide \$430M for state bike/walking paths

FROM PAGE A1

and Wareham, and could include routes to the campuses of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and Bristol Community College.

Completed portions of the bikeway already exist within six miles in Mattapoisett, Fairhaven and Fall River. Two more miles in Fall River and Mattapoisett are in the design stage, and a plan for a 12-mile section will link Wareham and Bourne.

The bikeway committee met with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's Secretary Richard Davey in support of the his new policy to see a 30 percent mode share shift, said Mass in Motion Fall River's coordinator, Julie Kelly.

"That's moving more toward using bicycles, pedestrians walking and using bus transportation, basically shifting away from the idea everyone has to have an automobile to transport themselves around," Kelly said.

Susan Jennings, director of UMass Dartmouth's Sustainability Office, said her organization has been one of the partners in the South Coast Bikeway. She said there is a lot of interest from staff and students to develop a bike path on campus that will connect the university with surrounding communities.

"And a way for a community to connect with us," Jennings said.

The project to connect bikeways from Swansea to Bourne has the support of the nonprofit East Coast Greenway, whose members met with South Coast Bikeway Committee and voted to support the region's bike trail plan, said Kelly.

That organization is developing a bicycle trail system that will span 3,000 miles, winding between Canada and Key West, Fla., and linking all major cities along the eastern seaboard, Kelly said.

"The East Coast Greenway organizers approved a measure that would make the South Coast Bikeway a spur as part of their overall plan," Kelly said.

As of December 2012, cost estimates predict the main bikeway project will cost \$25.3 million in construction costs and \$4 million in design costs, according to Adam Recchia, principal transportation planner and Bicycle Coordinator for the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District.

Bikeway summit set for Thursday

DARTMOUTH — The South Coast Bikeway Summit will be held March 28 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the University of Dartmouth Law School.

The summit will explore the positive economic impact of bicycle trails on communities they serve.

Speakers include trails to trails expert Craig Della Penna, John Walkey of TAMA and state Rep. Bill Straus, D-New Bedford, chairman of the Joint Committee on Transportation.

People interested in attending can register online at southcoast-bikeway.com and click on "events calendar" or call SRPEDD at 508-824-1367.

The following organizations are sponsoring the event: South Coast Bikeway, SRPEDD, Mass in Motion Fall River, Mass in Motion New Bedford, UMass Dartmouth Office of Sustainability, VOICES for a Healthy SouthCoast.

improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities managed by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

The governor's plan is now in the hands of the Legislature, which has vowed to scale down his plan.

In Rhode Island, which boasts nearly 60 miles of off-road trails and 120 miles of on-road bikeways, bike path construction began in the 1980s, first with the East Bay Bike Way, said Rhode Island Department of Transportation spokesperson Charles St. Martin.

Since then, RIDOT has completed the 11-mile



Blackstone River Bikeway constructed along the Providence and Worcester Railroad line.

St. Martin said funding for the projects was paid for with a combination of federal and state money, with a split of about 80 percent to 20 percent respectively.

On March 28, the group will sponsor its third annual South Coast Bikeway Summit at the University of Massachusetts Law School that will focus on the economic development advantages.

The bikeway planners say that, aside from the health and social benefits of bicycling and walking, bike paths in communities drive economic development — a fact that the SouthCoast is missing out on, unlike other regions in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Years ago, when the Rhode Island Department of Transportation proposed the East Bay Bike Way, the residents protested the project, said Brian Pearson, chairman of the Fall River Bicycle Committee.

"Now they use it as a selling point particularly in home sales," Pearson said.

St. Martin agrees the Rhode Island bike paths have created an economic advantage for communities.

"They are positive assets for towns that help provide a quality of life," St. Martin said.

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River: Path between city, Taunton offers scenic route

FROM PAGE A1

and to provide opportunity for historical interpretation of the Taunton River area."

There are several obstacles in the way of creating such a trail, including funding. But Lima and his associates are working incrementally to first outline the trail with street paths marked by signs, informational kiosks and pavement markings.

"The overall goal of a 22-mile bike path is a bit down the road," said Lima, who has been involved with the effort since his group formed about two years ago. "These things sometimes take a decade from time of conception to actual opening of the bike path. We hope to at least have a bike route sooner than that. Then we will work to get the bicycles off the road and onto paths as soon as possible."

The effort, which is supported by the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District, is contingent upon securing federal funding funneled through the state's Department of Transportation and Department of Conservation and Recreation. But DCR has many other priorities right now, including bridge and intersection projects. Lima estimated that such an off-road path could cost as much as \$700,000 per mile, a daunting figure that is elevated in part because its proximity to the Taunton River presents wetlands concerns.

The initial step for the proposed trail, Lima said, would be getting bicycles off the road on a dangerous stretch of Route 138 in Dighton by cutting a path through Sweets Knoll State Park, Lima said. What's needed is \$200,000 for the 25 percent design stage and permitting.

"We'd like to get people off of 138 as quick as pos-



COURTESY PHOTO

This map from the Taunton River Trail Committee shows the path the bike trail would take along the Taunton River, connecting Taunton to Fall River.

sible, particularly in Dighton," said Lima, of Fall River, who retired as a city planner before becoming an avid bicyclist. "It's a rather narrow and heavily trafficked road on Route 138 in Dighton. But, like I said, it could take a while."

A transportation planner at SRPEDD said his organization is currently in talks with DCR about potential funding for a two-mile bicycle path section going through the Sweets Knoll land, which was donated to the state and designated as a state park in 2010.

But to start off with, SRPEDD and the Taunton

River Trail Committee are working with Dighton's Public Works Department on the possibility of putting up signs at no cost to the town.

Lima also said that his group plans to attend a Dighton Board of Selectmen meeting next to hopefully get the blessing of the town to place four information kiosks along the Taunton River Trail in June that would be paid for by the National Park Service. The effort would also advance the goal of the federal Wild and Scenic River designation.

Transportation Planner Adam Recchia of SRPEDD said his agency supports the Taunton River Trail for environmental, recreational and transportation reasons.

"It's in our regional transportation plan," Recchia said. "It's sort of the crux of the north-south piece in our main bicycle plan. ... The air quality benefits of having more people commuting by a mode that has virtually no emissions is definitely a plus, and also giving people who can't afford a car another way to get somewhere and access jobs. We don't have any bus lines that go from Taunton down to Somerset."

"Obviously, there is a big recreation part as well, especially with this path. It has scenic views of the Taunton River and cool, old industrial areas that it will go by in Taunton," Recchia said.

Lima said that in the grand scheme of two-wheeled, pedal-powered transportation in Massachusetts, the hope of cycling idealists in Massachusetts is to connect the Taunton River Trail to a large path that leads all the way to Boston.

"That's a much, much longer range plan," he said. "It's really a regional system we have in mind. It will be implemented in pieces, and one of the big pieces is the Taunton River Trail."



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Add in alternative segments at UMass Dartmouth and Chase Road in Dartmouth to the New Bedford Hurricane barrier, and tack on an additional \$6.2 million.

How the completed project will be funded is still a relative unknown.

"Unfortunately, the way the funding works for a project like this, construction is mile by mile and town by town," Recchia said.

In January, Gov. Deval Patrick proposed an ambitious 10-year transportation funding plan. His proposal

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