

TIP Regional Meeting

Middletown Town Hall

Tuesday, January 12, 2016

Meeting began: 6:02 p.m.

TAC Members Present

Bari Freeman, Bike Newport

George Monaghan, Rhode Island Consulting Engineers

Everett Stuart, Rhode Island Association of Railroad Passengers

Public Comments

Rebecca Bolan, Newport School Committee

Newport North End Bicycle Pedestrian Connectivity

Ms. Bolan spoke in support of the Newport North End Bicycle Pedestrian Connectivity project, which would connect the North End area of Newport to the city's downtown. Currently, there is no safe efficient way to travel between the two areas of the city. The project would provide benefits to the residents of the North End, the 900 students that attend elementary school in the area, and CCRI-Newport students by improving access to recreation and jobs while also increasing safety. The project would also have health benefits for Newport residents.

Bill Riccio, City of Newport

Mr. Riccio is the Public Works Director for the City of Newport. He spoke in support of the four highest priorities from the city's application.

- **Pell Bridge Ramps:** The reconfiguration of the Newport-Pell Bridge Ramps is Newport's number one priority. The project would be an economic driver for both the city and state, and it would support the city's tourism economy and efforts to develop an innovation hub in the area near the ramps.
- **Bridges:** Newport supports the state's efforts to rebuild and maintain bridges located in Newport.
- **Thames and Spring Street Streetscaping:** This project was in the FY13-16 TIP under study and development, and it is now being moved into the development phase. The corridor is an important north-south corridor in Newport, and improvements would help drive redevelopment in this area of the city.
- **Asset Preservation:** The city supports the state's focus on asset preservation through its TIP application.

Tom Ardito, Aquidneck Island Planning Commission

Mr. Ardito is the Executive Director of AIPC and reviewed the organization's TIP application, which focused on projects related to bicycle and pedestrian safety. He emphasized that all three island

municipalities supported AIPC's application and that the organization is interested in and willing to provide match to its proposed projects.

- **Newport North End Bicycle Pedestrian Connectivity:** The project would improve safety and accessibility for Aquidneck Island residents, diversify the transportation modes used on the island, and provide economic development impacts.
- **Aquidneck Island Bicycle Master Plan:** The project would look at all roadways on the island and set priorities to improve bicycling for recreation and transportation. The organization has identified match for this project.
- **Aquidneck Island Bikeway – Melville Connector:** The project would connect Burma Road with West Main Road and improve north-south travel on the island. It is included in The Town of Portsmouth's TIP.
- **Mount Hope Bay Bicycle Improvements and Shared Use Path:** Two projects that improve connectivity to and between the Mt. Hope and Sakonnet Bridges. One would focus on road improvements; the other proposes study of the unused rail corridor for a shared use path. Both would improve access to open space and the shoreline.
- **Aquidneck Island Ferries Master Plan:** AIPC proposes a study of ferries in Narragansett Bay for commuters and tourists, including a cross-bay ferry and connections to the proposed Bay Island Park System.
- **East and West Main Shared Use Paths:** Both East and West Main Roads on Aquidneck Island are dangerous for non-motorized vehicles and pedestrians. This projects proposes separate shared use paths or sidewalks to improve safety.
- **Aquidneck Island Transit Hub Study:** A project to diversify transportation use on the island and reduce congestion. It could be paired with the reconfiguration of the Pell Bridge Ramps.
- **Burma Road Shared Use Path:** Proposes a shared use path along the west side of Aquidneck Island for safer bicycle and pedestrian travel along the corridor. A narrow bicycle lane already exists on the roadway.
- **Burma Road/Shoreline Drive Improvements:** A low priority for AIPC. The project would make Burma Road a true north-south connector on Aquidneck Island, taking traffic off of East and West Main Roads.

TAC Questions: Do any of the projects have preliminary design and/or planning?

Response: Only the Melville Connector project has planning complete. It is ready for engineering and real estate acquisition.

Olivia Kachingwe, Women's Resource Center

Newport North End Bicycle Pedestrian Connectivity

Ms. Kachingwe works for a group involved in a health equity zone project in Newport, which recently completed a needs assessment in Newport's North End that included numerous surveys and focus groups. It found that Admiral Kalbfus Road was a barrier to job and recreation access for Newport residents. The North End Connector project would encourage active transportation and reduce noise and pollutions. It also aligns with Department of Health priorities for complete streets and active transportation.

Ron Wolanski, Town of Middletown

Mr. Wolanski is Middletown's Director of Planning and Economic Development. He reviewed the town's top six projects.

- **Reconstruction of Aquidneck Avenue – Green End Ave. to East Main Rd.:** The project is in the current TIP under study and development, and RIDOT intends to make it a pavement management project only. The town wants it to remain a reconstruction project to include pedestrian and drainage improvements necessary to serve adjacent business, neighborhoods, and schools. New drainage systems along the roadway would improve water quality in the Bailey Brook Watershed.
- **Atlantic Avenue/Purgatory Road:** The project calls for roadway and pedestrian improvements in this tourist district. The improvements were among the recommendations in the town's Atlantic Beach Master Plan.
- **East Main Road at Aquidneck Avenue:** A project to improve the intersection with left turn lanes. The location experiences traffic back-ups during the tourist season.
- **Purgatory Road Sidewalks:** Purgatory Road connects First Beach and the Atlantic Beach area with Second Beach, and during the summer many pedestrians use the road, which has no sidewalks currently. The proposal is for sidewalks on one side of the road to improve safety.
- **RIPTA Expansion:** A project from the Aquidneck Island Transportation Study to provide fixed-route service down Aquidneck Avenue to the beaches and the Aquidneck Corporate Park, where 2,000 people work.
- **West Main Road at Forest Avenue:** The addition of left turn lanes. The project is in the current TIP, and Middletown hopes it moves forward.
- **East/West Main Road Shared Use Paths and Burma Road Improvements:** Middletown supports these projects included in AIPC's TIP application.

TAC Questions: Does the Aquidneck Avenue project included protected bicycle lanes to serve the high school and middle school?

Response: Protected bicycle lanes are not mentioned specifically, but the town would support them if they could be built.

Tom Grieb, Town of Portsmouth Resident

Mr. Grieb spoke in support of two projects.

- **Sprague Street Sidewalks:** Sidewalks are needed on Sprague Street to serve students at Portsmouth High School. This is the top priority for the town.
- **Aquidneck Island Bikeway – Melville Connector:** This is only bicycle project on the island with a completed design study and support from the Portsmouth Town Council. It presents the best way to connect Burma Road to the Sakonnet River Bridge.

Peter Moniz, Town of Tiverton Resident

Mr. Moniz spoke in support of three efforts.

- **Sprague Street Sidewalks:** These sidewalks are long overdue and should be built to serve Portsmouth High School.
- **Bulgarmarsh Road Sidewalks:** These are much needed in Tiverton.
- **Tiverton Rail Trail Bike Path:** The bicycle path would be one link in a proposed path system from Newport to Fall River. The stretch in Tiverton would be the simplest to construct. Past studies have proved it could be done, and the path would help meet the state's stated need for bicycle and walking paths. In the application process for the FY 13-16 TIP, it scored the second highest among all bicycle projects.

TAC Questions: What sections of the proposed path are included in Tiverton's application?

Response: Only the Tiverton section is included.

Pete Rice, City of Newport Resident

Mr. Rice stated that he is an avid bicycle rider and supports AIPC's proposed projects. He showed a map of Aquidneck Island and noted that two areas were particularly dangerous for cyclists and hindered north-south movement on the island. Neither would be expensive to improve.

- **East Main Road at Quaker Hill:** Bicyclists must slow down to climb this steep hill, forcing them to take more of the road.
- **East Main Road and Union Street:** The stretch of road is dangerous for bicyclists.

Thomas O'Neill, City of Newport Resident

Mr. O'Neill spoke in support of three projects/issues: fixing the East Main Road chokepoints described by Mr. Rice, creating a dedicated multi-use path from Fall River to Newport, and looking for ways to improve the safety of bicyclists crossing the Mt. Hope Bridge.