

Lower-Middle Seek County Funds to Join Bike Paths

VILLAS – Lower and Middle Townships are working together to connect their separate bike trails to create a bike path that will extend from the Cape May-Lewes Ferry terminal in North Cape May to the county Park and Zoo.

In addition, riders bringing a bicycle aboard the ferry would connect to bike paths running from Lewes Del. to Rehoboth Beach.

As a cooperative effort, the two municipalities are making application to county freeholders seeking \$462,000 to connect bike paths running through Lower and Middle Townships.

At a joint meeting of officials from both townships and the Cape May-Lewes Ferry Nov. 26, a conceptual plan for the path prepared by Lower Township Engineer George Curvan was approved.

Curvan said using in-house engineering and public works employees for path construction would reduce the cost of linking the two bike paths.

Lower Township's portion of the bike path currently ends at Sally Marshall Crossing/Cresse Lane in Erma. Middle Township's portion of the path ends at Indian Trail Road.

Phase five of Middle Township's bike path expansion from Main Street to Satt Boulevard in Rio Grande has a pending application.

Middle Township has been successful in receiving grants for all other phases of the bike path, according to Middle Township Business Administrator Connie Mahon. She said the final Middle Township trail expansion phase and the connection of the bike trails from the two townships would likely be completed at the same time.

Joining the two bike trails is the first step in offering additional riding opportunities throughout the county, said Mahon. She said the bike path would act as a spine offering side trails that would take riders to museums and businesses at the county airport, recreation areas, wineries and connect to campgrounds.

Mahon estimated the entire bike path would be completed in 2015. She said Middle Township Bike Path phase four from Indian Trail to Main Street in Whitesboro and the Martin Luther King Community Center is set to begin construction in the spring.

Middle Township Deputy Mayor Tim Donahue said the joint application represented the two townships taking a broader economic outlook.

Heath Gehrke, director of ferry operations, said the Delaware River and Bay Authority provided bike lanes as part of its reconstruction of Sandman Boulevard to connect the ferry terminal to the southern end of the Cold Spring Bike Path.

He suggested the governors of New Jersey and Delaware attend the ribbon cutting for the completed bike trail.

Mike Porch, Cape May-Lewes Ferry marketing manager, said the number of bike racks on the ferries would be doubled. He said the ferry has partnered with the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce in support of their effort to produce a county bike map."

"The Cape May-Lewes Ferry encourages bicyclists to use the ferry to cross the Delaware Bay for fun and recreational purposes," said Porch. "We are supportive of efforts to increase the more than 4,000 bicyclists each year who take the ferry."

Lower Township Manager Mike Voll said the bike path extension is being handled on a regional approach.

“I’m very excited about their council and our council working together in the best interest of the taxpayers in both Middle and Lower townships along with DRBA to complete this bike trail,” he said.

Voll suggested businesses sponsor mile marker signs along the bike path. Gehrke suggested posting QR codes on signs that can be scanned by Smartphones to provide web page information to bicyclists.