

Bike path from USCG base to city's school on hold

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — With a \$50,000 budget available for 2021, the city's Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee reconvened last week after a year's shut-down during the pandemic.

A project in the works since 2014 was up for discussion — a county plan to make a safer bike route from the U.S. Coast Guard base to Cape May City Elementary School.

Students who ride their bicycles from housing outside the Coast Guard base to the school must cross three busy roads — Pittsburgh Avenue, Washington Street and Lafayette Street — on their way to and from school.

The route from base housing to the school uses Pennsylvania Avenue, crosses Pittsburgh Avenue, continues on Pennsylvania Avenue to Michigan Avenue to Lafayette Street.

The bike path has been on hold, waiting for approval from the state Department of Transportation (DOT).

Deputy City Manager Lou Belasco said the county is involved in the project since some of the streets are county-owned roads. The DOT recommended an engineer for the project who is working with the county on that section of the project, he said.

Belasco said the city did not have a firm date for completion of the project. The bike path stops at the intersection of Lafayette Street and Madison Avenue, just before the school on the opposite side of Lafayette.

City Manager Mike Voll said Cape May has asked the county to approach the DOT to get the project under way.

Committee member Chris Bezaire said City Council approved completing engineering the city's portion of the bike path on Pennsylvania Avenue where infrastructure work will take place in the fall.

Belasco said a consultant was in the final design phase for the project and has been in touch with the county in reference to work at the intersection of Washington Street and Madison Avenue concerning Americans with Disabilities Act ramp upgrades. Once that is completed, the project will move to the pre-final plans and specifications for submission to the DOT, he said.

Committee Chairwoman Holly Tilford said the intersection of Madison and Lafayette was not included on a map in the plans. Voll said he would confirm with county engineer Bob Church that the intersection was included in the project.

Belasco said the county has submitted a number of projects to the federal government as part of the infrastructure bill.

"All of these projects qualify as shovel-ready projects, so we're probably much further along than a lot of the other projects," he said.

The federal infrastructure bill will end up dictating the county's priorities for projects, Belasco said.

The safe routes to school

project is funded by a \$350,000 grant, Voll said.

In 2019, engineer Tom Pagani, of WSP USA, said three intersections would be improved with upgraded sidewalk curb ramps to be ADA-compliant. He said pedestrian signals would be installed at the intersection of Madison and Washington streets.

"We are providing striping for bike lanes from the Coast Guard station to Lafayette," Pagani said.

There are existing bike lanes going up to Pittsburgh Avenue, he said. Along Pennsylvania Avenue, where it's wide enough, 5-foot-wide bike lanes will be provided.

"When we get to Michigan Avenue, the road is not wide enough, so from there we'll switch over to a bike sharrow, which is basically a share the road symbol, and the same with Madison, it's just not wide enough," Pagani said.

He said the county has a separate project along Lafayette Street including improvements at the Madison Avenue/Lafayette Street intersection.

Committee member Hilary Pritchard asked for an update on Lafayette Street Park which included a bike path.

Belasco said an area of concern was identified in the Lafayette Street Park project requiring further investigation.

"Along with that aspect, JCP&L (Jersey Central Power and Light) has not concluded its clean up yet, it has not handed over the properties to the city, nor would we want to take possession of them at this point," he said. "We don't have full control over all the properties that are underneath the park at this time."

The city is waiting for environmental issues to be cleared up before it can move forward, Belasco said.

Committee member James Moffatt said the city ordered a report in 2015 of bicycle safety in Cape May which included recommendations for Beach Avenue which is scheduled for work by the county. He said the report recommended the creation of bike lanes on Beach Avenue on the north and south ends but not in the center portion.

Bike lanes would be installed from Poverty Beach to Madison Avenue with sharrows on the roadway from Madison Avenue to Grant Street with bicycle lanes from Grant Street to the cove, Moffatt said.

The report also recommended installing continental crosswalks on the major intersections of Beach Avenue, he said. The report's recommendations were presented to City Council in 2019.

Bezaire said bike lanes were supposed to be painted on Columbia Avenue when it was resurfaced but it was determined the road was not wide enough and road sharing sharrows would be painted on the road.

Moffatt said DOT stated Columbia Avenue was wide enough for bike lanes.

Bezaire suggested bringing the report back to council and revisit the issue. He said efforts to create a walking path from the Mount Vernon ramp in the Nature Conservancy were suspended in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic.

A bike path from Madison Avenue through the Emlen Physick Estate has not been created due to a safety concern with a summer camp held in Kiwanis Park, Bezaire said. Tilford said the idea was to take bike riders from Madison Avenue into the Physick Estate without having to use Washington Street which is not considered bike friendly.

Any time the city has plans to resurface a street,

the committee should be informed so it can make recommendations for improvements for bicycle safety, Bezaire said.

The committee discussed printing 30,000 new Cape Island bicycle route maps. The borough of West Cape May will contribute up to \$2,000 of the printing cost.

A goal of the committee is more bike racks in the city. Committee member Terry DiUbaldo said inverted "U" shaped, heavy duty bike racks cost \$159 each. Two rails with an inverted "U" shape are available in lengths of 3, 5, and 10-foot sections.

DiUbaldo said a 10-foot bike rack was priced at \$1,100 which could fit behind the MAC booth on the mall. She suggested the committee order three racks. Moffatt said no room

was available on Beach Avenue for additional bike racks unless parking spaces were removed.

Committee member Evelyn Lovitz said the city's Environmental Commission discussed the danger of having E-bikes on the Promenade due to their speed. Tilford said Ventnor, Ocean City and Rehoboth

Beach, Del. banned E-bikes from their boardwalks.

She said E-bikes come in three classes depending on their weight and speed and police could not tell the difference among the three types of E-bikes. Tilford said Bezaire would speak with Police Chief Dekon Fashaw for his thoughts on E-bikes.

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24	8:13	8:39	2:02	1:57
25	9:08	9:31	2:56	2:51
26	10:02	10:23	3:50	3:45
27	10:56	11:14	4:42	4:40
28	11:51		5:34	5:35
29	12:06	12:46	6:25	6:32
30	12:58	1:43	7:16	7:31

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