

## Ocean City Rail-Trail Q & A

Currently, the only bike lanes in the south end of Ocean City are those adjacent to the 4 travel lanes on West Avenue. While these lanes may be sufficient for the more experienced rider, they are broadly considered hazardous for the leisure biker; families with children, seniors, etc. We are seeking to create a safe alternative.

The Haven Avenue Bike Route (OC1) has been established between 9<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> street and from 49<sup>th</sup> to 56<sup>th</sup> street – leaving an unsafe gap of **13 BLOCKS**. We are proposing a 1 ½ mile Rail-Trail on the abandoned Pennsylvania Railroad Seashore Line rail bed, which would offer a safe and scenic solution.

The following is a guide to understanding the issues as presented by Rail-Trail supporters.

Q. Why are we submitting this to the public now?

A. We offered two options for safe bicycling between 36th to 49th streets at our recent public meeting. We presented the rail trail as an option because so many people have advocated it to us recently. The public response to move forward has been overwhelming both at the meeting and since.

Q. How is this different than the Crook Horn Creek application?

A. These are completely different and separate projects. The Crook Horn Creek Nature Trail proposal used the old service road adjacent to the railroad bed, from 51<sup>st</sup> & Haven to the Intracoastal Waterway. This road has been used for years for illegal purposes such as alcohol consumption and the dumping of trash and waste. The focus of that project was to promote access to a natural area by bikers, walkers and those wanting to fish, crab and bird watch; while prohibiting the environmentally detrimental uses.

This rail-trail project is a north-south transportation route, connecting the south end neighborhoods to our schools, playground, shopping, etc. This option would qualify for state and federal funding.

Q. Is flooding on the rail bed a problem?

A. No, tidal flooding normally occurs during storms. It is suggested, and common sense would dictate, to stay off the trail during storms.

Q. Will the rail trail cause more flooding in the area?

A. No, there is no scientific basis to this rumor. The rail bed itself is a structure built years ago. There would be no substantial changes to the structure needed to accommodate use by bicyclists and pedestrians.

Q. Will the city have added liability for this trail?

A. By creating a corridor with less auto-bike interaction than currently exists on West Avenue, we believe the liability will be lessened. This will be a safer space for bikes.

Q. Is the rail bed considered wetlands?

A. While there are both wetlands and uplands adjacent to the rail bed in this area, the rail bed itself is a man-made structure. It is an abandoned transportation route, used by the Pennsylvania Railroad Seashore Line trains. Just as the Beesley's Point Bridge – another abandoned transportation structure – is still a bridge and not “bay”, this railroad bed still exists as a structure and not “wetlands”. However, this project must be approved by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the New Jersey Army Corp of Engineers (Army Corp).

Q. Will a rail-trail be detrimental to the wildlife; flora and fauna?

A. No. In fact just the opposite has proven to be true. Studies show that rail-trails, or greenways, offer tremendous opportunities for protecting plant and animal species. They also can be useful tools for wetland preservation and improvement of air quality. In addition, they can allow humans to experience nature with minimal environmental impact.

Q. Where do we go from here?

A. If the community supports this project, then the city would have an engineer and environmental consultant create a design plan. (Note: grant money is available for the planning process). Once complete, application can be made to the DEP and Army Corp for approval.

Q. How would it be funded?

A. We propose to have it funded 100% by State and Federal grants. Grant opportunities include Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Recreational Trails Program; Federal Safe Routes To Schools Funding; Transportation Enhancement Program; and many, many others. Since 2002, New Jersey has received over \$60,000,000 in federal trail funding.