

New Project Application  
Rhode Island Transportation Improvement Program 2017-2025  
*Completion of the South County Bike Path via Canonchet Farm, Narragansett, R.I.*  
Submitted by the Friends of the William C. O'Neill South County Bike Path

**EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The Friends of the William C. O'Neill South County Bike Path is proposing the completion of the Bike Path using an off-road alternative described in the RIDOT Feasibility Study for the South County Bike Path - Phase 4 - Canonchet Farm Extension Final Report - Contract #89111 - October 2015. The proposed path starts at the current terminus on Mumford Road, traverses through Canonchet Farm, and ends in the parking area across Boston Neck Road (Scenic Route 1A) from the Narragansett Town Beach. This proposed bike path is more expensive and requires more permitting than the on-road alternatives evaluated in the RIDOT Feasibility Study but it provides the safest route to the beach, a superior recreational experience, and the best return on investment for tourism and economic development for the Narragansett Pier area, South County and all of Rhode Island. We are proposing the same plan as the Town of Narragansett.

This proposal meets the following Guiding Principles of the R.I. Statewide Planning Program:

**Mobility:** The present bike path is used by over 100,000 bicyclists and pedestrians annually as measured in 2015 by Eco Counter. This proposal completes the intended purpose of the bike path, which was begun in 1991, to connect the Kingston Train Station to the Narragansett Town Beach. It provides a first/last mile railroad connection for the residents of two towns, an accessible path through Canonchet Farm, an alternative to auto parking at the beach and a connector to the 10-mile long Bike Route on Scenic 1A to Saunderstown and Wickford.

**Cost Effectiveness:** The Town of Narragansett has two proposals on the current and next TIP for beautification and other improvements to Beach Street (\$150,000) and Boston Neck Road (\$250,000), which is the terminus of the proposed path. Alternate funding could be found to complete these projects if the Bike Path is funded for completion. In addition, the Friends of Canonchet Farm, a volunteer group, has spent approximately 4,000 hours over four years restoring habitat along the coastal ponds to prepare for a linear park that will connect the South County Bike Path, Canonchet Farm, Narragansett Beach, the business area of Narragansett Pier, and the bike route on Boston Neck Road (Scenic 1A).

The Town of Narragansett is charged with managing the assets of the 175 acres of Canonchet Farm. The addition of the bike path to the walking paths on the farm creates greater accessibility for passive recreation and enjoyment of the open space.

**Economic Development:** The final segment of the bike path will be a tourist attraction in and of itself as it will provide accessible views of Pettaquamscutt Cove, access to the historic stone walls and varied habitats of Canonchet Farm and a route to South County Museum. In addition, it will attract and connect visitors to Narragansett Pier businesses not only during the beach season but also during the critical shoulder seasons. The current bike path has proven to be an economic generator for the town of South Kingstown. Eco Counter has determined that the total traffic over a four month period beginning July 1, 2015 is 64,353 users with 26,404

pedestrians and 37,949 bicyclists counted at Peace Dale. Completion of the path to Narragansett will provide similar traffic to the Pier Area and will increase bike path use overall.

When a town welcomes walkers and bikers to a well-defined bike path, there is the perception of an overwhelming positive impression of the locale even by people who are not walkers or bikers.

Connecting the bike path from the Kingston Train Station to the Narragansett Town Beach is a step in connecting all of the South County shoreline with multi-modal transportation opportunities.

**Environmental Impact:** The proposed bike path provides a safe and accessible route to views of the Pettaquamscutt Cove and the interior of Canonchet Farm, which promotes appreciation of the environment by exposing nature's complexity and beauty.

Completion of the bike path will increase the usability of Canonchet Farm for environmental education for local schools and research projects from the University of Rhode Island and other groups.

**Supports Local and State Goals:** Completion of the South County Bike Path was a key feature of the Canonchet Farm Master Plan Executive Summary adopted by the Town Council in August 2010. In the Narragansett Comprehensive Plan now under review completion of the bike path is part of several action items to make Narragansett a bike-friendly town. Local merchants and environmental groups such as the Narrow River Preservation Association, the designated Watershed Council for the area, have expressed strong support for the proposed route to complete the bike path.

What does not have local support is any on-road solution. The path will never be completed if it travels down a street in Narragansett as there would be huge community pushback. After holding hearings about the path four years ago, the Town Council promised the community that the path would be off-road.

In the past 30 years, RIDOT has built an impressive network of bike paths, offering more than 60 miles of off-road cycling in all regions of the state. The goal of the South County Bike Path according to the RIDOT website is to connect Kingston Station to the Narragansett shoreline.

**Safety and Security:** The current bike path ends on Mumford Road in Narragansett where users face ambiguous and unsafe connections, including Kingstown Road, to the Narragansett downtown businesses and the beach.

The proposed route would place bicyclists and pedestrians on a 1.1 mile dedicated off-road path for the final segment of the bike path.

**Equity:** With its hardened surface and decking, the proposed bike path makes Canonchet Farm accessible to people with disabilities and multi-generational pedestrians and bicyclists.

The proposed bike path extension through Canonchet Farm represents an opportunity to complete a vital transportation alternative serving Narragansett and South Kingstown and to enable the South County Bike Path to achieve its full potential as a major recreational asset for the State of Rhode Island.