

Study done on potential bike plan for Avon

By Jennifer Senofonte
Staff Writer

AVON - Efforts by the Unplugged Learning Project prompted the town to complete an overview study to determine a bicycle plan and design for Avon.

Christopher McCahill, a recent UConn grad who obtained a Ph.D. in transportation planning, volunteered to carry out a basic study highlighting all the roadways in town and categorizing

them in terms of condition for bicyclists and pedestrians. He noted that bicycles offer low-cost transportation that is non-polluting, energy-efficient and has health benefits.

He developed an inventory and assessment of Avon's existing bicycle network.

Aspects he ranked included posted rate of speed, shoulder width, accident history, destinations for cyclists and others.

Additionally, he classified dif-

ferent levels of cyclists, from young children to avid riders, who use these streets and for what purpose.

"Recreation cyclists are less comfortable riding on certain roadways, like Route 44. They are looking for safer roadways to ride on," Town Planner Steve Kushner said during the Oct. 4 Town Council meeting where he presented the study.

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Factors that have a significant influence on cyclist comfort level include width of the outside travel lane and shoulder, traffic volume, pavement surface conditions and heavy vehicle percentages, according to the study.

He explained that the study looked at, among other things, more than four miles of the Farmington Valley Greenway, which connect to segments in Farmington and Simsbury and how it can be better accessed.

Another fact revealed is that the police department had no reported bicycle collisions between 2006 and 2008, but since 2009 there have been 10 reported accidents. Of those, seven involved motor vehicles.

The study noted that these accidents involved injuries, but none were serious.

The next steps, Kushner said,

are to identify an area of town to paint sharrow on the roadway that would alert motorists that the road is to be shared with cyclists.

One possible area is Burnham Road, he said.

"We're trying to enhance opportunities for children walking to school. We're in the beginning stages of this," he said. "The walking piece brings with it its own challenges. ... We have a very limited network of sidewalks in town."

Unplugged Learning Project Co-Chair Sue Rietano Davey was in the audience and expressed concerns about Country Club Road and the need for attention there because so many school children and families use it.

"We'd just like you to pursue it more aggressively. ... We're just asking for the west side of Country Club Road," she said. "That one stretch of road would benefit



The next steps are to identify an area of town to paint sharrow (like the ones in Simsbury, pictured above) on the roadway that would alert motorists that the road is to be shared with cyclists. *Photo by Jen Senofonte*

every resident in this town."

Town staff has been talking with the Capitol Region Council of Governments and Connecticut Department of Transportation about a project to redo Country Club Road, which would include widening the road to accommodate a pedestrian/bicycle lane.

Until the town knows what will come from that, it does not want to look into installing sidewalks on that road.

Council members said, while they are in support of pursuing improvements based on the study findings, it all comes down to available funds.