

# **RATIONALE FOR A SHARED USE PATH ON CHAPPY AND THE CPA PROPOSAL**

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## **1. SAFETY**

On Chappaquiddick ever increasing numbers of cars, trucks, bicycles, walkers and joggers share a narrow two lane paved road and sand roads. Cars and trucks have to move into the oncoming lane to pass the pedestrians and bicyclists. When two cars/trucks approach from opposite directions, one has to slow or stop, or the bicyclist or walker has to go off the road. For many, young and old, bicycling or walking in the road is unfortunately not an option because of the safety hazard. Even in difficult times, it is hard to imagine a higher priority than safety of our children, one of the goals of our proposal.

The vast majority of fatal bicycle accidents involve a collision with a vehicle (92% in one study of 225 fatalities), a risk that will be greatly reduced by a separate bicycle path. Bike paths do not prevent other accidents between bikes or between bikes and pedestrians. This can be minimized by the design of the path, including an ample width, separation of the lanes, signage and good visibility.

Serious injuries to bicyclists on Chappy have occurred, including one to a member of our committee who was run off the road by a vehicle and had to go to the MVH. According to the computerized records of the Edgartown police, from 1988-2005, there were 8 serious bicycle accidents on Chappy that were reported to police. None of these involved a collision with a vehicle, although a role of vehicles in the accidents, such forcing off the road, is not excluded. During this time there were 35 motor vehicle accidents on Chappy, 6 involving injuries. Any role of bicycles or pedestrians in these accidents is similarly unknown.

Currently there is a whole population of people who are not out biking/walking on the roads because they feel it is too unsafe. Families with small kids, pre-teens and teens whose parents won't let them ride by themselves and anybody else who just feels too frightened to take on the winding roads with the cars.

This path will benefit Chappy and Edgartown residents both in the summer and especially year round who bicycle or walk or who would be able to do so with a path. We expect to see an increase in Chappy residents using bicycles especially among those who have indicated that for safety reasons, they are reluctant to bicycle on the road and discourage their children and grandchildren from doing so. A rough estimate of the use is over one million trips/20 years (250 people/day in the summer and 30/day off season).

## **2. CAR INDEPENDENCE**

Many would ride bikes if they perceived it as safer. It will be especially appealing for parents with children who otherwise probably would not be able to ride their bikes on Chappy. A separated path provides an efficient, enjoyable and safe means of transportation- a way to the beach and to town without depending on cars. The path will further our efforts to make Chappy greener by reducing gas consumption and will decrease the demands on the parking lot and ferry. What could be more quintessentially rural than an opportunity to get away from the tyranny of motor vehicles?

### **3. REDUCE CAR TRAFFIC AND PARKING**

Cars overload the parking lots at the ferry and at the beaches, in part because biking or walking is not considered safe by many Chappy residents. While it is likely that more bicyclists will come to Chappy (they already do come in great numbers), some will substitute a bike for a car, reducing car traffic and ferry lines. To the extent bikes replace cars coming over to Chappy the net effect will be beneficial.

### **4. ENJOYMENT/HEALTH**

Chappy is blessed with many open spaces, public beaches, and trails. Access to these open and public areas is currently through walking, biking or driving on the paved and sand roads. The Chappy path would be a way to connect to these resources for walkers and bikers. The route will increase walking/biking access to Land Bank and Sheriff Meadow trails, the Trustees of Reservations properties at East Beach and Mytoi, and the Chappaquiddick Community Center.

The route will be separated from the road and will provide views of water, fields and forests, without distraction by oncoming or passing traffic. It is expected that this path will be used young and old for many generations in the future and become a widely used and permanent enhancement to our community recreational facilities. Bicycling, walking and jogging afford multiple health benefits in addition to the opportunity to enjoy our beautiful island.

### **5. RATIONALE FOR AN ENGINEERING SURVEY**

The 1995 engineering survey of the potential route was reviewed by the Chappy Path Committee by checking the markers and objects along the route against the survey. The whole route from the Ferry to the Dyke bridge was walked and photographed. We concluded that this survey, which was done gratis, is not sufficiently accurate, complete or up to date to decide whether a path really could be constructed and how it might be designed. Stuart Fuller, Head of the Edgartown Highway department, and Bill Veno of the Martha's Vineyard Commission agree on the need for a new survey. A recent email survey of Chappy homeowners showed that 60% of 191 respondents favored the proposed engineering survey.

An accurate and complete survey will help promote consensus among the Chappy community. The survey will enable a realistic discussion of the merits of a path among Chappy homeowners, based on facts rather than opinion. This will permit appropriate attention to the issues of wetlands and property lines as well as the esthetic consequences, major concerns of Chappy residents, whether for or against a path. If these issues can be satisfactorily addressed, it will be much easier to get support for a path among Chappy residents and find a common ground.

### **6. RATIONALE FOR A DEMONSTRATION PATH**

A demonstration path constructed in the Gardner property from the Chappy ferry to the Manaca Hill Road will be an excellent first step towards a path system. This section of the road is heavily used by children, parents, and baby strollers in the summer to and from the beach club and as the entrance to the Chappy Ferry, the most congested area on Chappy. The path will relieve this congestion, chaos and confusion and be useful whether or not further paths are constructed. The path will provide an opportunity to test the durability of the stone dust material which has proved successful in other settings, but needs to be tested under Chappy conditions. A non-asphalt surface is quite appealing to Chappy residents, if it can withstand our weather and use. Such an esthetically appealing path will go a long way towards convincing skeptics of the merits of further path development.