

Letter: Bikeways not safe or clean

Danvers Herald, Thursday, June 16, 2005

To the editor:

The recent letters to the editor in reply to my letter regarding the problems created by allowing a bike path on the abandoned rail bed are interesting, if not very factual. Both writers admit that there are problems with crime and garbage on the rail bed, but they fail to mention that the problems occur where the rail bed is cleared, which allows people to use it for crime and, as one writer said, to set fires. One said it would help the town "by creating a safe place for children and adults." Another said, "when the good folks come, the bad behavior goes somewhere else." All I can say is that it is obvious that neither writer has spent much time on bike paths or read the police logs in towns where they exist. Since they both mention the Lexington Minuteman Bikeway, let's start with some reports from the Lexington Minuteman newspaper police logs:

1. Male exposing himself on the Minuteman Bikeway the previous evening,
2. Resident reported his son and friend were approached by three males on the Minuteman Bikeway who demanded money and then attacked the boys.
3. Gives name and address of man arrested for lewd lascivious behavior after a bicyclist reported etc.

It goes on.

Obviously that bike way is not a safe place for children, and when the good folks come the bad behavior comes too. When the bike highway was first proposed six or seven years ago I saw a story in the Boston Globe of not one but two rapes on the bike paths in Boston and Watertown, so you see the bad behavior just travels up the bike path. Also of interest is the Danvers Police Report stating that the Lexington Police had three bike policemen for the bike way. What does that say about crime on the bikeways?

Another point both writers raised is that a bike path creates a restful, scenic recreation area for the young and old where the sun shines seven days a week. Again I raise the question as to whether they have ever been on a bike path. The path as proposed for Danvers is an interstate highway connected to other bike paths which increase traffic along with crime and costs. The Bi-Ped people want to connect Maine with Florida by bike highways. I have been on bike trails and bike trips in Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire, and I have seen people dump their trash, but never have I seen them pick any up or clean the path, as one writer suggested.

The last point is the statement "that bike paths significantly increase the market value of properties within half of the trail" as much as 6 percent. I have seen such a report, but it also said that the rest of the properties in town increased by 12 percent. Putting a bike highway in a residential area (that's what the Bi-Ped proposal does) creates all sorts of problems calling for police, emergency services and lack of rest rooms.

Any real estate developer will tell you when you ask about land that it's all about location, location, location. Several years ago when the Rail Trail first reared its ugly head, Mark Zuberek suggested using the 500 acre State Hospital as a location to get it away from the residential areas. The town manager discussed it with the original developer of the State Hospital, but nothing happened. Maybe it's time to revisit Mark's suggestion?

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