

# Lower, Middle bike paths to be connected in spring

BY JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

**VILLAS** — Like the driving of the golden spike that joined the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads to become the Transcontinental Railroad across our nation in 1869, bike trails from two townships will be joined next spring.

An extension will join bike trails in Lower and Middle townships to allow bike riders to go from the county park and zoo in Cape May Court House to the Cape May-Lewes Ferry in North Cape May.

The connector trail will run from Sally Marshal Crossing in Erma to Satt Boulevard behind Wal-Mart in Rio Grande.

At an October 2014 meeting, Lower Township Council

approved a shared-services agreement among Lower and Middle townships and the county Open Space program.

Middle Township Administrator Connie Mahon said the township's engineer was drawing up plans and cost estimates for the bike trail extension.

"Our plan, once we have this plan in place, is to present it to Atlantic City Electric because it is planned to be constructed within their right of way within their property," she said.

The bike trail follows a dirt access path for electric company trucks along utility poles.

Mahon said the township would speak with the real estate department of Atlantic City Electric to seek preliminary

approvals. She said both townships have engineering plans. Middle Township will present its plans to the public to allow comment, particularly those who would be impacted by the bike trail.

Some homeowners in Middle Township extended their driveways onto Atlantic City Electric property, Mahon said, adding that the township would explain to residents how the bike path would look and affect the right of way Atlantic City Electric owns in front of their properties.

Mahon said the bike trail extension has a few obstacles along its path, such as a small drainage area between Route 47 and Satt Boulevard.

"We have guy wires coming off poles that are cost prohibitive to move," she said. "We

don't want to have to move poles that would be a great expense, so we are designing it to be the most convenient for the public and the least impactful to the residents that live along the area of the bike path."

While residents along the path don't own the Atlantic City Electric right of way, they may be inconvenienced by the bike path in some form, Mahon said.

"We're going to try to mitigate that to the best of our ability," she said.

Mahon said there are a number of residential properties along the length of the connector stretch of the bike path between Lower and Middle townships that pose additional challenges.

"I think with a little bit of

compromise it's going to be a very nice project and something that the homeowners along that area will be able to embrace and enjoy," Mahon said. "There's plenty of people who live along there that I'm sure love riding their bikes."

The connected bike path may be expanded further north in the not-to-distant future, she said.

Mahon said Lower Township is seeking a permit from the state Department of Environmental Protection for a portion of the bike path.

The paving and construction of the bike path connector will be handled by Lower Township Department of Public Works and paid for by the county.

At the last county Open

Space Board roundtable meeting, there was discussion of towns building spurs off the main bike path such as into Woodbine and extending the Lower Township bike path below the canal into Cape May.

Lower Township Manager Jim Ridgway said the extended bike path would have a small diversion near Sally Marshal Crossing. He said he was in favor of extending the bike path below the canal.

Ridgway said he had concerns about bike riders navigating through the Seashore Road-Route 109 intersection to enter the Lower Township bike path. He said an alternative may be to take the bike path behind the Carl T. Mitnick School to avoid the intersection.

## Oldest population

Continued from Page A1

returned to the department, 16 percent indicated they lived under the poverty level of \$11,000 per year, said Groome.

The department offers information and assistance with Medicare supplements during open enrollment periods and operates senior centers in Villas, North Wildwood, Upper Township and Ocean City. Groome said the department operates congregate nutrition in its senior centers and home delivered meals to about 250 clients.

There is no waiting list for dining at senior centers or for home delivered meals, she said. The department contracts with South Jersey Legal Services which include preparing simple wills and help with collection notices.

Groome said the department contracted with the county Health Department to facilitate a medication management program which includes a home visit to make sure the individual is taking their medication correctly.

"We hope to reduce readmissions into hospitals or trips to the emergency room," she said.

A dental program has a waiting list due to high demand since most persons on Medicare do not have dental coverage, said Groome. She said Medicare only pays for dental care when it is considered a medical issue.

Case management is available through Social Services and respite service for caregivers that need a break.

"We have housekeeping services that will assist people with everyday household cleaning," said Groome, noting the inability to clean their home can become an issue for seniors.

The county Board of Social Services has paid for, certified home health aides for those who need assistance with their

activities of daily living such as dressing, bathing and grooming, she said.

Groome said a needs assessment survey indicated a need for home repairs.

"It's not for cosmetic repairs, it's more for safety repairs," she said.

A ramp could be constructed for a wheelchair bound person if they do not have the funds for the construction, said Groome. A cap of \$1,500 is placed on home repairs.

Medical, adult daycare is available, she said.

"It's kind of like our senior center but there are nurses there, it's for people that need more of a structured environment and have medical needs," said Groome. "We also have some funding for caregivers."

The department offers caregiver mental health counseling.

"We recognize that caregiving is a really difficult job and we want to try to give the caregivers as much support as possible," said Groome.

She said professional in-home education and support is available where a nurse would do an assessment to see if there are any services the caregiver and care recipient "are not tapped into."

"We also recognized that Cape May County had a high percentage of grandparents raising grandchildren and these are minor grandchildren," said Groome.

A contract with Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service provides a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group, she said.

The county Department of Aging and Disability Services works with the Jersey Assistance for the Community Caregiver program (JACC) which offers assistance in the home for individuals that are deemed clinically and financially eligible. While most of the department's programs don't have financial eligibility criteria, JACC does but

Groome describes it as "pretty lenient."

She said the department has a large role in managed long term services and support in terms of screening individuals to see if they are eligible for in-home services as part of a Medicaid program and giving

the person options counseling for their long term care.

The department is located at the county Social Services Building, 4005 Route 9, Rio Grande. Appointments can be made for Tuesday with walk ins accepted other days from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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