



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is bike infrastructure?

Bike infrastructure may include bike lanes, bike paths, bike routes, and bike trails. (Shared lane arrows, aka “sharrows,” are painted on the roadway and are not infrastructure.) Whatever the type, all bike infrastructure or “bikeways” should be designed to ensure people of all ages and abilities feel comfortable and safe riding there. Generally, this means that where traffic volume and speeds are higher, more separation is needed to create the low-stress riding experience most people enjoy.

What about walking?

The focus of Ride Island is encouraging more people to bike, but walking is also important for local trips in each of the communities. The commercial and retail areas of Newport, Middletown, and Portsmouth depend on foot traffic; sidewalks and crosswalks are essential to community and neighborhood enjoyment.

Generally, the more bike-friendly a place is, the more walkable it is, too. This is due to less car traffic and a buffer between the sidewalk and the car lanes. Proposed changes to major corridors like East and West Main Road include shared use paths for people on foot and bike together.

What if I need or want to drive?

You will still be able to get everywhere on the Island by car if you want or need to do so. We are not asking anyone to give up their cars. Right now, driving is the only option for most trips, and that causes congestion and parking issues, especially in the summer. Providing infrastructure for those who want to ride will help make the whole system work better. Riding a couple of times a week instead of driving can make all the difference.

I don't see anyone riding today—where's the demand?

Very few people choose to ride today because it's not safe, comfortable, or convenient enough. Many of those who do ride every day may have no other option. Survey after survey tells us that most people

would welcome the opportunity to ride their bike more if they felt safe doing so. And we know from communities across the world that if you build safe bike infrastructure, people will use it.

Aquidneck Island is a perfect size for biking. Out of all trips that begin and end on the Island, 80% are four miles or less. More than half are two miles or less, which is a very quick and easy bike ride.

Will Ride Island take away parking and travel lanes?

The vast majority of the Island's 137 miles of roads will remain as they are today. Ride Island focuses on the handful of main roads that are the biggest barriers to safe biking and that are home to many important destinations.

In some locations, there is enough space to add a shared use path or protected bike lane to the existing roadway. In other cases, there are opportunities to reduce the number of travel lanes while keeping – or even improving – the current capacity or flow of traffic (for example, on Coddington Highway). There may be a handful of locations, especially intersections, where a small number of on-street parking spaces may be removed; this will be more than made up for with additional bike parking and fewer car trips.

Is Ride Island going to be good for business?

Yes. Encouraging more people to walk and bike will increase foot traffic for shops and restaurants, support more locally owned and operated businesses, and keep money in the local economy.

Examples throughout North America show that individuals and households in communities with well-designed infrastructure for walking and biking can save thousands of dollars annually on transportation costs. They can also benefit from new jobs that are created as a result of these investments.



How do we know Ride Island will work?

The proposed changes are based on proven safety countermeasures, tried and tested bikeway designs, and best practices drawn from decades of experience in communities across the country. You can see examples of what's being proposed in Providence, in nearby Providence-town, and in popular places for biking such as Hilton Head Island.

One of the great things about bike infrastructure is that you can quickly install a pilot or demonstration project using temporary barriers, paint, and flex-posts; collect data and community input; and adjust the final design as necessary.

How will Ride Island be funded?

A wide variety of Federal, state, and local funding sources are available to implement Ride Island. The most recent Federal transportation law, the Inflation Recovery Act, and remaining pandemic recovery funds have made available an extraordinary amount of money for local transportation investments focused on safety, sustainability, access, health, connectivity, and community development.

The Ride Island plan identifies relevant funding sources for each segment. In addition, several funded roadway and infrastructure projects can help deliver segments of the Ride Island network.

Why should I support Ride Island if I'm never going to ride a bike?

The goal of Ride Island is to create a safer, healthier, resilient, and more equitable community where people and businesses thrive. More people riding bikes more often helps achieve that goal, whether you personally ride a bike or not. And if more people ride bikes, that means fewer people driving and less competition for parking spaces.

What happens to the Ride Island network in the winter?

One of the primary benefits of the Ride Island network is to relieve congestion in the crowded summer season. While the number of people riding bikes will drop off in the winter, international experience suggests that good infrastructure will encourage and enable people to ride in all but the most extreme weather conditions. The key is giving people a genuine choice of travel modes so they can pick the most appropriate one for the purpose, time of day, and season.

Will Ride Island take me where I need to go?

The Ride Island network is designed to make every destination accessible by bike, just as it is by car. Many local streets and quieter roads are already comfortable to ride on, but riding on or crossing the main roads is a challenge. Those main roads also have a lot of the shops, restaurants, services, offices, schools, and so on that people want to access. The Ride Island network is focused on making the main roads safe to ride along and safe bike connections from one neighborhood to the next.

I want to ride more but don't feel safe. How will Ride Island change that?

You are exactly the person that Ride Island is designed to help! Very few people are comfortable riding on busy roads like Broadway and East/West Main Road. Those who have no choice but to ride opt for the sidewalk or the gutter, which is far from ideal.

Ride Island will establish a connected network of priority paths for people on bikes (and often on foot) that is separate from traffic. Paths will have a physical barrier between them and motor vehicle lanes, or they will be raised to the same level as the sidewalk to prevent people from driving or parking on them.

What are the benefits of a safe, comfortable bike network?

Building a network that encourages more people to bike (and walk) is one of the best investments a community can make to meet long-term goals around safety, health, community and economic development, climate resilience, equity, and accessibility. It will dramatically improve the experience of residents and visitors, giving them a fun and relaxing way to enjoy the Island's world-class shopping, dining, beaches, festivals, and attractions. It will enable people of all ages and abilities to travel independently to work or school, to run errands, and to visit family and friends.

What can I do to help?

Thank you for asking! The success of Ride Island depends on people like you advocating for the initiative to happen. Check www.rideisland.org frequently for project updates. Support Bike Newport and Grow Smart RI. And tell your local elected officials what it would mean to you to be able to bike safely on Aquidneck Island.