

Cyclists win victory with promised Route 35 bike lanes

Posted on April 1, 2014 by Larry Higgs

The state Department of Transportation's project to rebuild 12.5 miles of Route 35, which was battered by superstorm Sandy, has been a battleground for cyclists seeking real bike lanes along the seaside highway and on the bigger issue of whether the DOT would comply with its own "Complete Streets" policy.



Advocates said more businesses will benefit from Rt 35 bike lanes than just this shop in Ortley Beach.

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Plans call for no bike lanes on Route 35 in Bay Head, because the highway is too narrow there and has on street parking, but "share the road" signs will be installed to remind drivers that cyclists will be present.

Tuesday was a win for cycling advocates when the NJDOT did the right thing by complying with its own Complete Streets policy. The policy says a road should be designed with facilities for all users, bikes, pedestrians and cars, when it is rebuilt.

Last summer, state cycling advocates were up in arms because the DOT had planned to put bikes on the shoulder without designated, painted bike lanes. I covered the story at that time, interviewing cyclists ranging from tweens to a man in his 80's out on a cruiser bike, who said they wanted bike lanes.

Advocates said they believed that Route 35 was a litmus test for the Complete Streets policy – if the DOT didn't adhere to it when rebuilding its own highway, then it would likely be ignored by towns and counties that the DOT encouraged to sign on to the policy.

What's the advantage of bike lanes? What's the advantage of bike lanes? As someone who drives a car and rides a bike, bike lanes provide clarity and safety. Bike lanes make it clear that this is where the bikes belong. Of course cyclists have to use them, but these lanes will be on new pavement, so there will be no reason to ride in the street.

Drivers will know where to expect bikes, eliminating confusion when they encounter a bike on the road. **A statement from the NJ Bike and Walk Coalition and the Tri-State Transportation**

Campaign, the two groups which worked and fought with the DOT, said the bike lanes are a “vast improvement” from the previous plan.

However they cautioned it is “just a first step in transforming Route 35 into a truly Complete Street.” The groups said that “some sections” of the Route 35 rebuilding project lack “dedicated bicycle accommodations and continuous sidewalks” which needs to be revisited in the future. But progress has been made. It means you can take an NJ Transit Coast Line train to Bay Head with your bike and ride to Island Beach State Park or anywhere in between.

Locals who I interviewed last summer said they wanted to be able to safely bike to restaurants and said they would be more likely to if there were bike lanes to ride in.

This isn't the first rethink in rebuilding plans which cyclists have won in the past month. In March, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's board approved a plan to replaced the metal suspender ropes which support the George Washington Bridge, which includes better bike lanes and elimination of stairways and a sharp curve.

I'm looking forward to riding them all.

<http://blogs.app.com/traffic/blog/2014/04/01/cyclists-win-victory-with-promised-route-35-bike-lanes/>