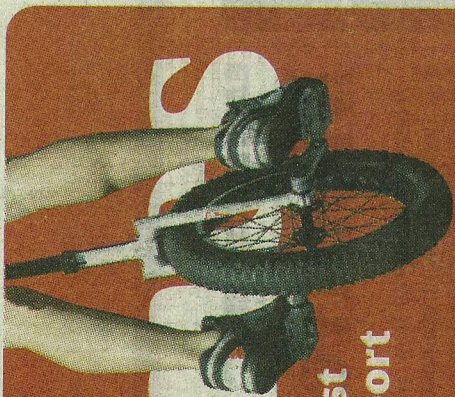


The NEWS-TIMES

Young Danbury unicyclist
shows mastery of the sport
Images



Early Sunday, October 24, 2010 | newstimes.com | Since 1883 | \$1.00

EARTH MATTERS

Montreal to Miami by bicycle

There is talk about how, someday, there will be a high-speed train from Connecticut to Montreal.

How about a low-speed trail — for bicycles and hikers — that would do the same thing?

That's the vision — eventually — of the Housatonic Covered Bridge Trail, a 45-mile bicycle trail that would run on back-country roads from Salisbury to the Gaylordsville section of New Milford.

And if other pieces fall into place, it could go much further.

"From Montreal to Miami," said Sal Lilienthal, director of The Bicycle Tour Company in Kent, and one of the people planning the trail of the East Coast Greenway that may eventually run from Maine to the Florida keys.

The effort to establish the trail got a boost this week, when U.S. Rep. Chris Murphy, D-5th District, announced that the project will get a \$5,000 grant from the national group, Bikes Belong.

That grant, along with \$5,000 from the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, will allow planners to complete a route that will follow the Housatonic River south through some of the state's most beautiful scenery.

As much as possible, Lilienthal said, this trail will follow existing roads. Rather than build a bike path, riders will simply pedal down the back roads throughout the region.

Once the trail is established and mapped out, people will have a

Trail advocates emphasize that having more people riding or walking through their towns also means more people staying at local inns.

route to follow. As much as possible, they'll stay off the major road — Route 7 — that cuts through Litchfield County.

"On weekdays, Route 7 is fine," Lilienthal said "But on weekends, during foliage season, it's pretty busy. Our emphasis is safety, safety, safety."

Trail advocates emphasize that having more people riding or walking through their towns also means more people staying at local inns, more people eating at local restaurants and buying bottled water and energy bars at local convenience stores.

The group planning the Housatonic Trail reckons it could bring \$4 million a year to the region in tourist dollars.

Which is great. But having people outside, whether biking or walking, gives you an appreciation of this world in a way that riding in a car can't.

It's the feel and the smell of the air. It's the sun — or the rain — on your face. It's the pleasure of traveling by your own legs.

"You see the world at a different

BOB MILLER



pace," Lilienthal said.

"It's a prescription," said Linda Cook, the superintendent with the National Park Service, who is working as a partner with the National Heritage Area leaders planning the trail.

And if you want, forget Montreal to Miami. Even Salisbury to Norwalk would be great.

That's because another group is now planning to build the Norwalk River Valley Trail to run along the old Super 7 corridor from Norwalk to Danbury. Hop two towns, and you're on the Housatonic Covered Bridge Trail.

"The two trails don't really come together," Cook said. "The Norwalk trail ends in Danbury and this one ends in New Milford.

"But I'm sure someone, looking at a map, could figure out a way to connect them. And wouldn't that be great."

Contact Robert Miller
at bmiller@newstimes.com
or at 203-731-3345.