

# Heritage bike trails roll through Kent

## Area effort gets toehold in Connecticut

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REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

KENT — A new project in the works will make Kent the first Connecticut town in the upper Housatonic River region to map out official bike trails highlighting the natural and historic draws of the area.

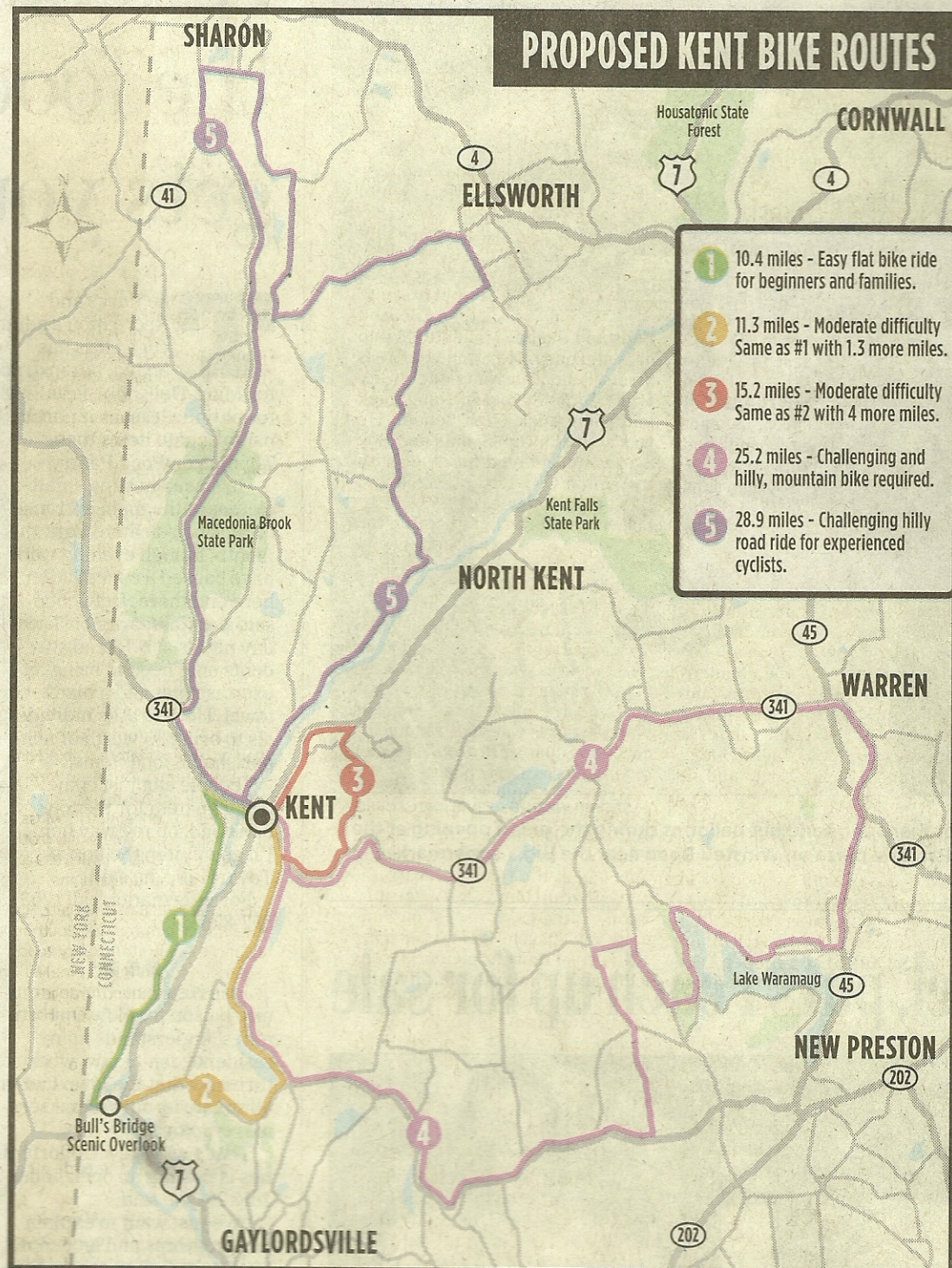
The Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, encompassing the Housatonic River watershed area towns of Canaan, Cornwall, Kent, Norfolk, North Canaan, Salisbury, Sharon and Warren, plus 18 towns in Massachusetts, was created in 2001 to preserve and celebrate the heritage of an area that was once booming with iron production.

The heritage area, a nonprofit working with direction from the National Park Service, has gotten an OK from town officials to begin planning safe and scenic bike routes from other areas come in to use the trails," said Dan Bolognani, executive director of the nonprofit. "It's a quality-of-life issue and it would be nice to think at some point in the future, bike trails could help alleviate traffic congestion, especially in downtown areas."

"Some of the desired outcomes of this program include the promotion of healthy lifestyles, recreation for families and children and an economic development component when people from other areas come in to use the trails," said Dan Bolognani, executive director of the nonprofit. "It's a quality-of-life issue and it would be nice to think at some point in the future, bike trails could help alleviate traffic congestion, especially in downtown areas."

Bolognani said the goal of the program is not to create new off-road bike paths, which would cost about \$1 million per mile for land acquisition, environmental impact issues, design, construction and insurance, but to put up road signs and tell people where to find the safest, most scenic routes while avoiding busy Route 7.

He said the planning is being underwritten by the heritage



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area and the National Park Service.

Sal Lilienthal, who operates The Bicycle Tour Co. in Kent and is a member of the heritage area bike committee, designed five proposed bike routes. They range in difficulty from easy and flat for families, to a long and hilly dirt road for experienced cyclists.

Highlights include an 18th

century covered bridge, a scenic overlook at Bull's Bridge Gorge, the Housatonic River, the Sloane-Stanley Museum, Macedonia Brook State Park and downtown Kent.

In the past two years, the heritage area has created a network of trails from Pownal, Vt., to Sheffield, Mass., and Bolognani said the 11 communities the trail runs through were

"happy to be a part of this." He hopes to re-create the success in Northwestern Connecticut.

"Our hope is that the trail in Kent will eventually thread together with six other towns in Northwestern Connecticut and that it will connect at the Sheffield/Canaan line so there will be a continuous trail from Kent to Vermont," Bolognani said.