

Bike trail receives \$5,000 heritage grant

By Shaw Israel Izikson

KENT — It may be a while before the proposed Housatonic Covered Bridge Bike Trail is ready for bike riders, but the project seems to be picking up speed, thanks to some new and substantial financial support.

The trail, as proposed, would begin at Bulls Bridge, go along the Housatonic River and continue up to the Massachusetts border.

Congressman Chris Murphy (D-5) and other state and town officials announced Oct. 21 that the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area has received a \$5,000 grant from Bikes Belong for the trail project. The heritage area is one of many federally funded areas under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service.

Bikes Belong is a Colorado-based bicycle advocacy organization that supports bicycling projects and companies in the U.S.

Sal Lilienthal, owner of The Bicycle Tour Company at 41 Kent Blvd., has been leading the push to create the bike trail.

He said specific plans for using the grant from Bikes Belong

are still being developed. The completion date for the project hasn't been set yet, but Lilienthal feels that it should be finished as soon as possible. One local town planner, Pat Hare of Cornwall, estimates that the trail could bring as much as \$4 million in tourist revenues to the region.

"In addition to promoting tourism in the area," Lilienthal said, "the trail will promote cycling, which is a healthy outdoor activity."

The new cycling path will include and overlap with some of the existing trails already in use in the region. Lilienthal said it will be 45 miles long and will connect to a trail in western Massachusetts.

It will also be part of the East Coast Greenway, which is a planned 3,000-mile pathway for nonmotorized travel that will begin in upper Maine and end in Florida.

Lilienthal said that he, Murphy and the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (based in Salisbury) are still seeking more funding.

So far, \$41,000 has been raised from town governments, conservation groups and recreational organizations.