

## Complete Streets Committee presentation to WT Select Board on Brandy Brow Path Safety improvements. April 17th 2024

The Complete Streets Committee's goal is to create safety for both roads and pedestrian walkways. We look at all the areas where people and cars meet as major areas that need to be improved and made safer. While we have many projects that we are working on, many of which are covered under the Complete Streets funding of Massachusetts and some that are being supported financially by Mass trails and CPC, we are still looking at dead end places where connections are lacking for safe pedestrian travel. We have worked on implementing crosswalks where there are none available for safe crossing and we have worked with both the town highway department and the State Highway department. While the latter is more difficult it is still necessary and we have found adding crosswalks the easiest way to provide safety and ease traffic.

That being said, while we have been working on safe bike trails and SUP's in our town to help locals and visitors access town safely without clogging State Road and risking their lives in the narrow N. Tisbury Bridge area we have met with a crossroads literally. Phase 2 of our upcoming SUP project on Old County Road will terminate at Elias Lane that lies adjacent to Scotchmans Lane, therefore we are faced with the decision of which way we would direct bikes especially, but pedestrians too, to navigate safely into town center. The committee is in favor of a trail that shares the road from -Scotchmans lane, ->Pan Handle lane -> Music street, especially for bikes. These are non state owned roads that the committee has the liberty of managing and are less traveled roadways with slower speed limits and minimal intersections. Our first thought was to reach out to the WT highway department and ask how they felt about placing a crossing from Elias Lane (Granary Gallery) to Scotchman's Lane and subsequently erecting signs and painting bike symbols along the town roads.

Mr. Olsen indicated that he would prefer that the traffic from the SUP head down the narrow historic end of Old County Road to the preexisting pedestrian trail that is along State Highway WT/ED road.

The CSC decided that a site visit would be necessary to determine if this was a safe option. After our site visit we determined that it was not a safe option unless major upgrades were done along the Mill Pond path<sup>1</sup> and a crosswalk was placed from the culmination of the preexisting path to the Brandy Brow Trail head on the opposite side of State Highway WT/ED rd<sup>2</sup>. What we did learn on our site visit was that the Town and the Land Bank have signs indicating a public trail that is the preferred access to town<sup>3</sup> instead of the very busy 3 way triangle intersection with no crosswalks and no pedestrian safety signs<sup>4</sup>. We also found that the path itself is very unsafe as it is root bound and sloping<sup>5</sup>. While we understand that this is a lovely easement that the Woods family gave to the town, we also determine that the signage (erected with the permission of the town, and the Land Bank) is directing the public to use this path as an access to town, specifically the library.

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<sup>1</sup> Image of Mill Pond Path

<sup>2</sup> Image of crossing at Mill pond end to Brandy Brow Start

<sup>3</sup> Images of Signs

<sup>4</sup> Image of intersection

<sup>5</sup> Image of sloping root bound path

We have met with the CON COMM a few times on the matter and it was clear that they would not like the path to be altered and would refer this to the SB. We would also like to have the Land Bank address the matter as they have signage indicating access over this path<sup>6</sup>.

The CSC position on this matter is that it is not safe for folks who are unstable, walking with canes, baby carriages, little ones on bikes and the like. This path leads from a place that has many children being picked up and dropped off by the school bus, going to the library and our senior center as well, and it leads to a very popular children's destination for fishing and the like as well as the direct access to the existing pedestrian path that leads to the Youth Hostel<sup>7</sup>. While it is true that 30-40 years ago this was not a big issue, times have changed, people are driving more recklessly, and speeding around the corners off and on to the State Highway WT/ED road and there are just simply more people and cars on our roads. Our committee feels that if the town is planning on having signage to encourage pedestrians to use the trail (which we would prefer rather than along the road) then the path needs to be improved. And a crosswalk should be placed over the State Highway.

We have had a number of site visits and it has been made clear to us by our past chair Oliver Ossnos, formally of Polly Hill Arboretum, that many of the trees that are interfering with the path are invasive species. On another visit we discussed that many of the roots impeding the path are from invasive vines and removing them would not compromise the trees. We we have met with the WT tree warden Mr. Brown to review these two issues for clarity and he has made a recommendation and will have that in writing.

The primary reason for our request to meet with the SB is because our committee is very fortunate to have a professional trail builder as a committee member and he would like to present a demonstration on how the path can be improved (at no cost to the town) with very little disruption to the natural aesthetic of the existing path.

Andrew Lester will present to you the concept for the demo and full path renovation. Included are photos from are most recent site visit with the CON COM

In conclusion I might add as Chair of this committee that while doing nothing feels like honoring this gift to the town, it does not serve the best interests of our community to turn a blind eye to what looks like a significant safety concern. We are the voices and stewards of our community and must think of the current environment we are living in There will always be change from something that was different from before, at one point there had to be a discussion about paving roads to allow for new modes of transportation back in the day, well here we are in the 21st Century trying to create a greener way of life that is less fossil fuel dependent. By creating connectability to the town center for pedestrians and bikes we are allowing our community the flexibility they need to get from A-B safely. It would also be important to note that each year that passes new ADA and other regulations become state mandated and at this time perhaps just a textured pad at the cross walk will be the only State requirement, but who's to say if we wait a year or two they might mandate flashing lighted signs (as they have in Maine) so getting this done now may be the least obstructive option then it may be down the road.

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<sup>6</sup> Land Bank signs at library end of path

<sup>7</sup> Image of pre existing walking path

