

Lewiston pitched as future hub for biking

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sort of tell you where you are? So, it's intuitive.

"And we've heard from the business community on Center Street that they want to slow down Center Street; they want more of a village feeling with slower traffic, with something that looks less like a thruway with tiny green signs on aluminum overhead. And something that really speaks for the Village of Lewiston and makes people slow down."

He explained, "When you come into the village ... you get off of the high-speed road. You see this giant thruway sign and you see five wide-open lanes, and you think, 'I can go pretty fast, because there's nothing

slowing me down.'

"All of the research that we're doing around the country on pedestrian-friendly and cycle-friendly communities tell us that we can't just change the speed limit and expect people to slow down. You have to change the physical infrastructure. You have to make them feel like, 'OK, this has gotten more narrow, and I'm in a city center (or) the heart of the village now, and I need to be going 30 or 20 or 23 or whatever that lower speed limit is.' You do that by physically reengineering the street and compressing the lanes. And so, the challenge is how do you do that and at the same time maintain parking and serve your commercial businesses.

"So, these are the factors that the experts (including Bergmann and Alta Planning + Design) are juggling. And what they've come back with is this idea of a cycle track down the south side of Center Street, which separates the pedestrians and the bicycles and the cars, from the bicycles and pedestrians.

"It's a very modern concept. It's what's going on in Portland and Denver and sophisticated upscale places with a lot of visitors."

Lewiston a Key Spoke

The village's portion of the bike trail starts at Seneca Street. In the conceptual plan, it would continue to Academy Park (a welcome area would be built next to the Niagara River Region Chamber office), cross Center Street, go down Fourth Street and around the Red Brick Municipal Building, with connections to Mohawk Street and down Lower River Road.

Stevens said a public presentation of the complete trail proposal - from Buffalo to Youngstown - will take place Oct. 8.

"Just so you know, our board is in agreement with Greg," Welch said. "This is a great opportunity for the village to have this bike lane, to bring business to the businesses. People can stop or, you know, stay overnight in a hotel; or shop; or go to lunch, dinner; go to the waterfront; and it really makes the most of the destination for these outside visitors - and residents alike. ...

"(Deputy Mayor) Vic (Eydt) and I took a walk last week and talked to the businesses about the bike lane. And while we were walking, we had probably 25 people on bikes - kids - you know,

whizzing up and down the sidewalk. It's not safe. It's not safe for them to be on Center Street, but it's not safe for them on the sidewalk, either."

"This would take care of all of that," Welch said. "It's much safer. It's designated so they can all ride in that bike lane and feel secure. I know I wouldn't want my grandkids riding on Center Street. But I also don't like to see them on the sidewalks, either, because it presents quite a problem for the business people. And the restaurants, they have the tables out. ...

"So, if you look at the plan, the conceptual plan, I think it really fits the village. I think it's great for us to have something like this."

Sizing of the bike lane, the parking spaces and the roadway is still a work in progress, as far as actual measurements. Eydt reiterated the proposal is conceptual.

Stevens has convened a series of meetings this year, including a walking tour that began on the Chamber of Commerce steps. Local elected leaders and people participating in those meetings have offered more favorable comments toward the conceptual bike trails.

Village Bake Shoppe owner Mi-

chael Fiore oversees the Chamber of Commerce's Lewiston Business Group subcommittee. He said, "We are actually meeting next Tuesday. We meet every month to discuss all of these problems. We also have a chamber board meeting tomorrow to get the process rolling. So, all the businesses will have their input. I did speak to a few today, just walking here and there. A lot of businesses right now are kind of unsure. The plans just came out. We have a lot of questions."

He added, "If you are a small business owner in Lewiston, please feel free to come to the Lewiston Business Group. ... We will be having a Zoom call. If you're a chamber member, or you're not, you are still welcome."

Fiore also said business owners can drop comments off at his Center Street bakery.

Tuesday's meeting at the Red Brick was just the second public forum for the Village Board since the coronavirus pandemic put "New York State on PAUSE" in March. This was the first time residents were in attendance in about six months. Recent meetings have taken place virtually on Zoom.

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