



## Private sponsorship aids public project Bike sales to fund upkeep of Clipper City Rail Trail

By Charles Frost  
Staff writer

NEWBURYPORT — Buy a bike, help maintain a trail.

To Riverside Cycle owner Aaron Millet, a cyclist himself, that's his way of giving back to the city for adding the Clipper City Rail Trail.

Work is set to begin this summer on the new Clipper City Rail Trail, a 1.141-mile-long, 10-foot-wide, paved trail that will run from the MBTA commuter rail station to the Merrimack River, essentially linking the station to the downtown for walkers, joggers and bicyclists.

The city was able to secure funding for construction of the \$2.8 million project, but once complete, money for upkeep often runs out. To bridge that gap, Millet decided to sponsor the maintenance of the trail with a donation tied to the sale of each bike and tune-up.

Geordie Vining, the city's senior project manager, said he suggested the idea of being a sponsor of the rail trail to Millet because he has been a strong supporter of bicycle-related improvements in the city.

"I think it's hugely important (to receive private sponsorships like this)," said Vining, who noted Riverside Cycle as the only current sponsor of the trail. "The main point is that one can find grants for capital improvement much more readily than grants for taking care of public facilities. In this case, the idea is that there is going to be this regular, dedicated, reliable revenue stream coming from our sponsoring partner."

Vining said the rail trail project is scheduled to break ground sometime around July and be completed within a year. The paved, multiuse trail will not only accommodate bicyclists, but it will also benefit Rollerbladers, pedestrians and others. The trail runs south from the MBTA commuter rail station to the Merrimack River along the old eastern line rail corridor.

"It's going to provide a place for people to walk or stroll," Vining said. "It will connect all sorts of destinations whether Haley's Ice Cream, MetroRock North Indoor Rock Climbing Center, the MBTA, or the Graf Skating Rink. The long-term idea has been to establish an interconnected trail network to increase the walkability of Newburyport."

Millet said that Riverside Cycle has sponsored a number of projects in the community over the years, including bike rides and bike safety rodeos, but not of the same magnitude as the rail trail sponsorship. The company will donate \$10 for every bicycle sold and \$5 for every bicycle tune-up or maintenance performed, beginning April 1.

The money will be used to pay for everything from maintenance of the trail to services, stipends, equipment and materials, Vining said.

Millet said he's looking forward to the trail and felt his sponsorship was a way to give back to the city.

"We would like to support it, and one of the issues that seemed to be a problem was upkeep because the

state didn't have funding for it," said Millet, who opened his Newburyport store in 1996. "It seemed like a good idea for us to contribute to that and help keep it up. I think it's going to be a great part of the community."

Millet said the sponsorship could raise as much as \$5,000 each year to benefit the rail trail project, and he is hoping that the sponsorship will continue indefinitely.

"I wanted to get behind the rail trail, and this was the opportunity that seemed the easiest for us to make — a direct contribution," Millet said. "It's been a lot of time for everyone that has been involved for the past 10 to 12 years and now nearing a more finalized stage, it's actually great that we can put some money towards it."

Millet is hoping his sponsorship will keep the trail well-kept and draw more people who would normally drive, keeping the environment cleaner in the process.

"I think once it's in, if it does really well and people like it, they will be interested in doing other forms of alternative transportation," Millet said. "We are trying to set a good example."

A single speed tune-up at Riverside Cycle is \$30 while a regular tune-up is \$60 and includes lubrication of the chain and cables as well as adjustment of the brakes, among other things.

Riverside Cycle sells Cannondale, Specialized, Orbea, MirraCo and Trek bicycles and is located at 50 Water St. in the Tannery in Newburyport. Riverside Cycle also offers a lowest price guarantee for all bike shops located within 50 miles.

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Photos



Aaron Millet, owner of Riverside Cycle, is sponsoring the city's Clipper City Rail Trail project by donating money from each tune-up and bike sale. He expects to raise around \$5,000 this year and wants to continue the project for a long time. The money will be used for maintenance of the trail. Staff photo