

Small Pieces of Ocean City Bicycle Route Moving Closer to Reality

The city is applying for grants for a safe Ninth Street crossing and for a bikeway behind the Ocean City Primary School.

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An existing path behind the Ocean City Primary School shows where an improved bikeway could be constructed. The city is applying for a state grant to do the work.

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Photos



Ocean City is applying for grants that could provide two key links in a long-sought safe bicycle route that would run the length of the island.

City Council on Thursday (Sept. 22) unanimously approved applying for \$61,644 to construct a bikeway behind the Ocean City Primary School.

City Council on Sept. 8 unanimously authorized applying for a \$95,403.36 grant to create a safe bicycle crossing of Ninth Street.

The grants could help solve two pieces of a puzzle in moving bicycles safely from the Ocean City-Longport Bridge at the north end of Ocean City to the Corson's Inlet Bridge at the south end.

The grounds of the Primary School and adjacent city ball fields interrupt Simpson Avenue (part of the proposed bicycle route) and the new bikeway would provide a connection.

Ninth Street, the main gateway into Ocean City, provides perhaps the biggest obstacle. Installation of a "HAWK Signal," a user-activated traffic signal, would help bicyclists cross Ninth Street near the intersections of Haven Avenue and Aldrich Avenue. The city applied for money from the state Department of Transportation's Safe Street to Transit Program for the signal.

The application for the Primary School bikeway money will be made to the state Department of Transportation Bike Grant Program. The resolution council passed cited the need for "safe and alternative transit to the school."

The two projects are suggested in an \$87,000 state study of creating a safe bicycle corridor in Ocean City. A draft of the report has been distributed and shared with the public at meetings, and the city appears to be taking action on some recommendations even before the study's final release, a sign that the bicycle route could become reality.

Much of the state study makes recommendations for using existing roads to establish a safe and low-cost bicycle route by creating obstacles to through traffic: lower speed limits, physical barriers, signage and paint on streets.

One proposed route would start at the Ocean City-Longport Bridge, proceed along the feeder roads along the Gardens Parkway, wind back to Simpson Avenue, cross behind the Ocean City Primary School, cross Ninth Street at Aldrich Avenue (near the TD Bank parking lot) and hook up with the existing bike route that runs along Haven Avenue from Ninth the 36th streets.

From there, the route could potentially travel along a redesigned West Avenue with car traffic reduced from four lanes to two. It could eventually hook up with an existing bicycle trail through Corson's Inlet State Park.