

Curious Cape Cod: Is there a Cape-wide trail?

Eric Williams Cape Cod Times

Published 10:05 a.m. ET Mar. 19, 2021 | Updated 12:36 p.m. ET Mar. 19, 2021

[View Comments](#)



My biking guide, Lev Malakhoff atop a giant boulder. *Eric Williams/Cape Cod Times*

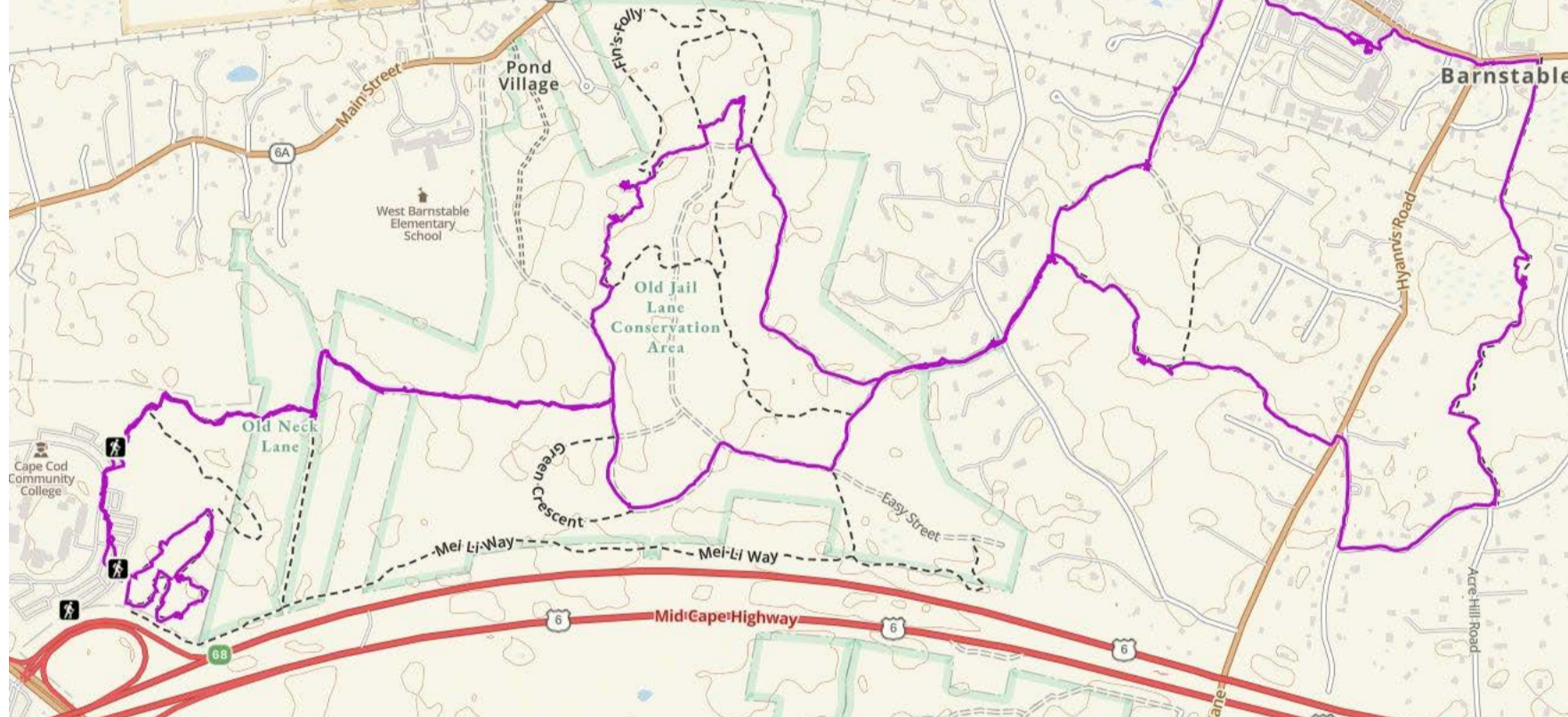
BARNSTABLE – I was practicing the tango for my upcoming appearance on the Scandinavian TV show "Dancing with the Lars," when I pirouetted into a Narragansett tall boy and crashed to earth. Looking over, I could see crisp lager beer flowing onto the floor, a cause for great lament. But in the suds, the following message was revealed:

"Is there a walking or biking path that connects all of Cape Cod?"

This was no time to dance! Outside, the Curious Prius revved to life and cranked up the new novelty Macarena horn. It was the sound of adventure.

Moments later we were zipping toward Barnstable and a rendezvous with the magnificent Lev Malakhoff, transportation planner for the Cape Cod Commission. Lev had amazingly agreed to escort me on a mountain bike tour of some of the paths in the area and chat about the big idea of creating a Cape-wide trail.

More Curious Cape Cod: [Visited the Old Jail in Barnstable? What about the ruins of the first jail?](#)



Lev made this cool map of the route we took! *Map By Lev Malakhoff*

My slipshod research seemed to indicate that this concept had been in play for some time. According to the Barnstable Land Trust's [website](#): "In 1993, the Barnstable County Commissioners hatched a plan to create a regional system of trails from one end of the Cape to the other. Dubbed the 'Cape Cod Pathways,' the concept was to connect the Cape Cod National Seashore with the Cape's wooded interior, historic villages and remaining back country."

More Curious Cape Cod: [In the footsteps of Hank Thoreau](#)

The Trust has handy [maps](#) of the Barnstable portion of the path, but it didn't seem like this was a done deal throughout the Cape. The Pathways idea sounds splendid: imagine hiking or biking all over Cape Cod, enjoying nature, maybe stopping for fried clams. Then, spending the night at a nice inn or Airbnb and moving along in the morning.

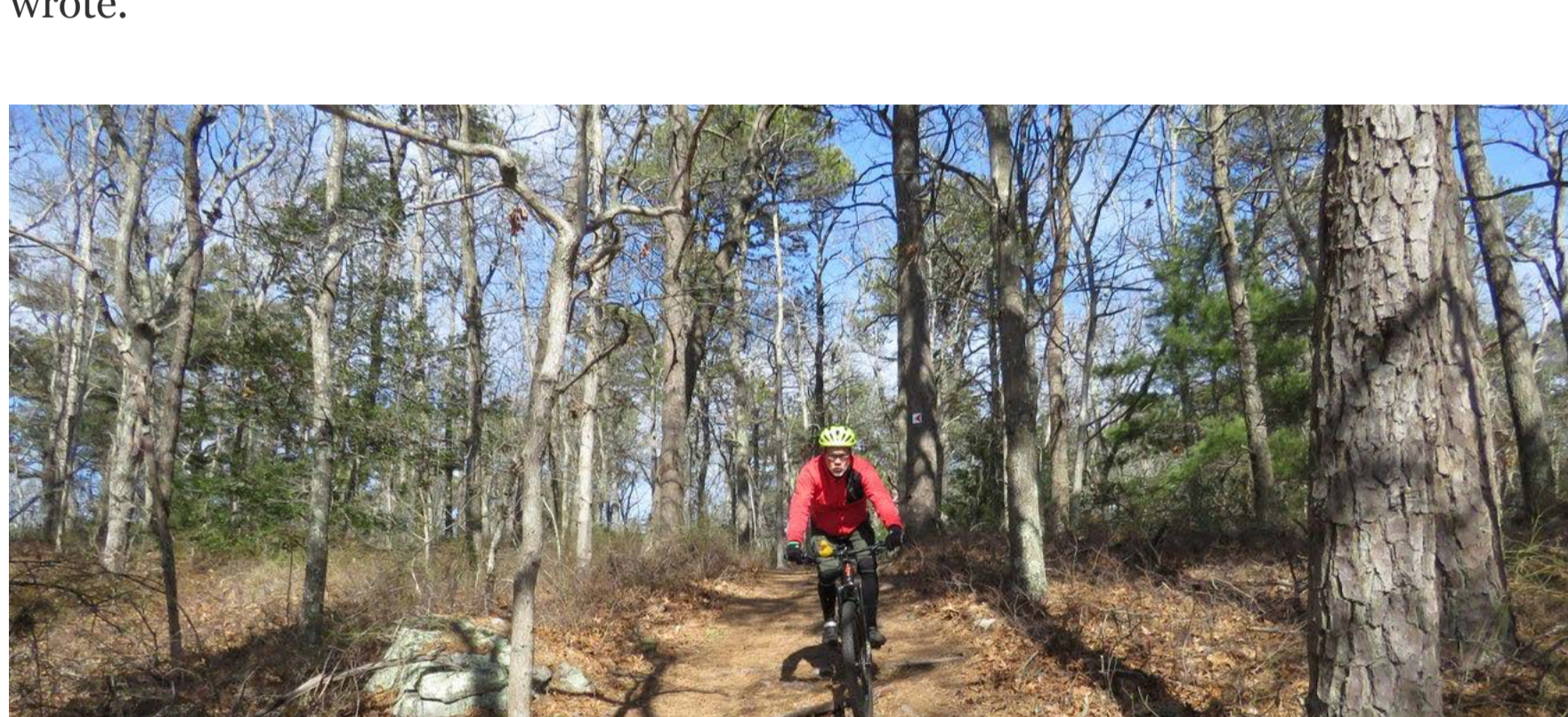


Thankfully we took a break and soaked in some soothing nature — and yes, Lev has a hump mounted on his bike. *Eric Williams/Cape Cod Times*

Lev briefed me on the status of Pathways: "Currently, the program is on hold. Challenges involve working with landowners to secure permission for some of the most direct/enjoyable segments," he wrote in an email.

More Curious Cape Cod: [We asked for names for an anonymous South Truro pond. Here are your answers.](#)

But he hasn't given up hope and sees a lot of benefits from the idea: "A walking path network, including something I call "The Cape Cod Way" (a walking route from Woods Hole to Provincetown) would create opportunities for healthy recreation for Cape Cod visitors and residents alike. Properly designed trail systems that are designed to minimize erosion and other environmental impacts would boost local economies and bring an appreciation for land preservation — including a conduit for fundraising to acquire and preserve additional parcels," he wrote.



Lev rolls into destiny with his "bike face" on! *Eric Williams/Cape Cod Times*

I met Lev in the Barnstable County court complex parking lot and I could tell I would be in for a challenge. Lev had the nicest bike I had ever seen, a mountain monster, and he stood tall in super-stylish bike clothing. I had my black hoodie and my daughter's bike, a rotten little roadster with chain trouble that would soon curse me beyond belief.

More Curious Cape Cod: [Epic ruins in the dunes](#)

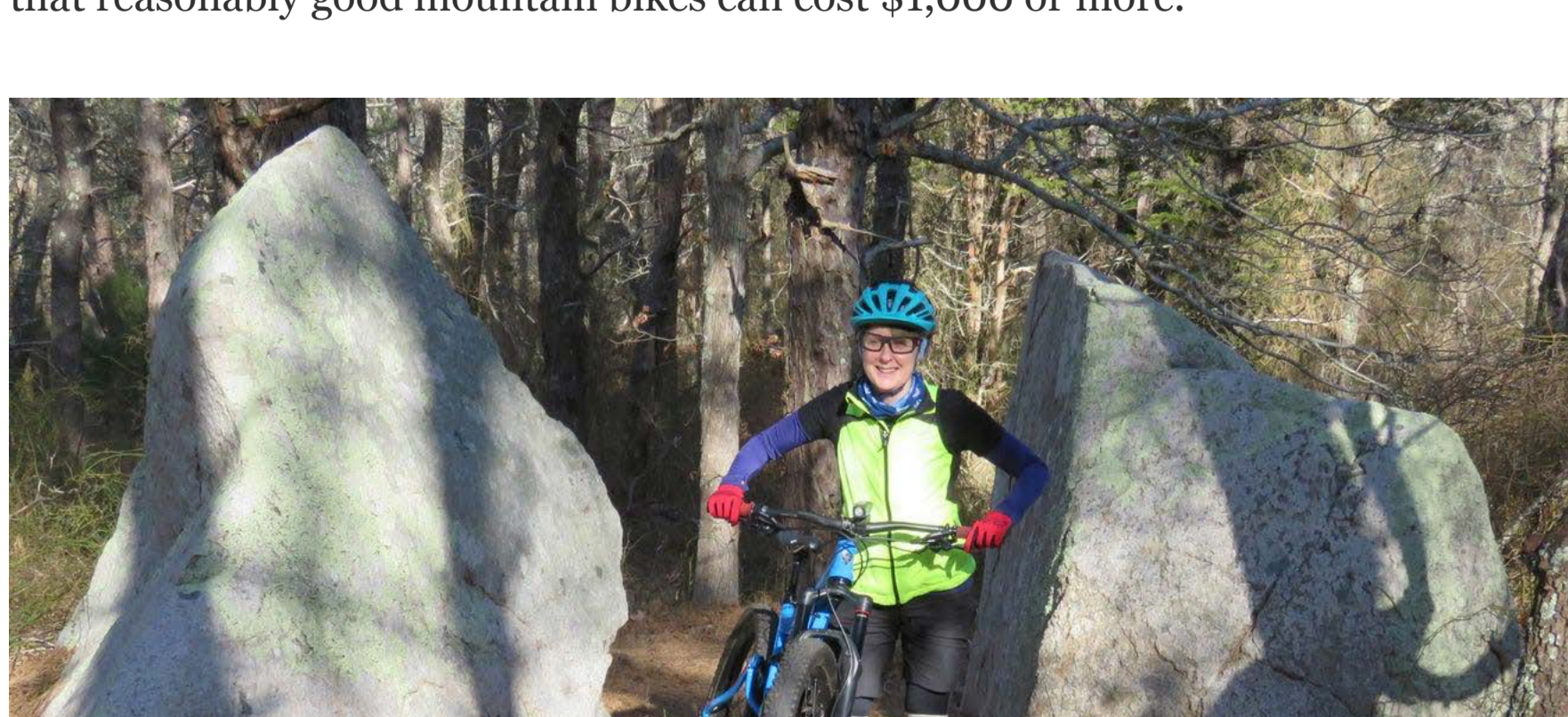
We entered the realm on a path next to the Old Jail and a familiar pattern began. Lev, like a combination waterbug/mountain goat, would skim and climb through the forest and then wait politely for me as I pushed my broken bike up the hills. Sometimes the chain would work and I could keep up for a while, but I felt like Sancho Panza on a donkey, tottering behind a speedy Quixote.



Biking was challenging enough, but then we had to saw a tree that was blocking the path! *Eric Williams/Cape Cod Times*

There were, however, thrilling downhill runs through beautiful country and I could see why folks would take the plunge and buy a pretty fancy bike. Lev is a member of Cape Cod NEMBA ([New England Mountain Biking Association](#)) and is a big-time steward of the trails. At one point, Lev produced a portable saw and we removed a tree that had fallen over the path!

Lev said Cape Cod NEMBA works hard on stuff like trail maintenance and sustainable trail projects. It also seems like they have a lot of fun, with group rides and maybe cold beer. I imagined joining this jolly bunch; the only tough thing is that reasonably good mountain bikes can cost \$1,000 or more.



I met my old pal and former Cape Cod Times staffer, Susan Eastman by chance along the trail! *Eric Williams/Cape Cod Times*

But the big takeaway was that it sure would be nice to get this Pathways idea going again. Sure, there are a lot of economic and environmental reasons for a super trail, but for me the big reason is FUN! I had an awesome time swooping around the woods on my lousy bike, visiting giant rocks and laughing with Lev.

If you have a half-decent bike, give these Barnstable trails a try. And hiking there is fun, too. It's a good way to start imagining the cross-Cape trail that might come to be in the future — when I might have a better bike!