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June 28, 2010

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Greg Sandusky, Mercer County Engineer
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Department of Transportation & Infrastructure
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Dear Mr. Sandusky:

The West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance is delighted that Washington Road/County Road 571 is being repaved between U.S. Highway 1 in West Windsor and Faculty Road in Princeton and that the shoulders will meet width guidelines for bicycle lanes. On behalf of our 400-plus members and countless more supporters, the WWBPA trustees respectfully request that Mercer County take the final step and designate the shoulder as a bike lane with appropriate signage. The WWBPA is prepared to partner with Mercer County by paying for bicycle-related signage.

Washington Road is a key connector between Princeton and West Windsor, used by many bicyclists commuting to the Princeton Junction train station or to their jobs in Princeton, as well as by recreational cyclists. It has been designated as one of the highest priorities for a bike lane by the Mercer County Bike/Ped Task Force, and bike lanes would provide safe and accessible accommodations for existing and future bicycle traffic, as per New Jersey's Complete Streets policy.

We understand your concern that a bike lane along this stretch of roadway wouldn't connect to an existing bike lane. But every bike lane needs to begin somewhere, and only then can it be extended. In fact, it already would connect to the D&R Canal/East Coast Greenway.

The bike lane also could be extended across Route 1 on Washington Road, with signage to alert motorists at the intersection with Route 1 to the presence of cyclists (who are already there). The shoulder along Washington Road is sufficiently wide until it ends on the eastbound side at the bridge over Little Bear Brook (and before the railroad bridge), and a "bike lane ends" sign paired with a "Share the Road" sign could be added there. The bike lanes can later be further extended along County Road 571/Princeton-Hightstown Road to Clarksville Road when the Route 571 "concept plan" is approved and funded.

The WWBPA is a private non-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to promote bicycling and walking in West Windsor Township and neighboring communities, emphasizing access, education, mobility, and safety.

Waiting for the "concept plan" to become reality could take years, particularly given government finances, and a way would still need to be found to add bicycle lanes/multi-use paths on both sides of the railroad bridge, or otherwise let cyclists safely access a path on only one side. It would be a shame to wait until all these matters are resolved before taking the simple step of designating the wide shoulders of Washington Road between Route 1 and Faculty Road as bike lanes.

Sincerely,

Silvia Ascarelli,
2nd vice president

cc: Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh
West Windsor Township Council members
Robert Hary, West Windsor Township Business Administrator
Princeton Township Mayor Bernard P. Miller
Princeton Borough Mayor Mildred T. Trotman
Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association