

County officials encounter opposition to bike route plan in West Windsor

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By

Mercer County has completed roadwork in Pennington to create its first designated bikeway and is planning a more complicated bike and pedestrian access project in West Windsor that has encountered opposition from bicycle advocates, County Executive Brian Hughes said.

Construction of road shoulders and striping on Route 632 in Pennington is complete. The county performed the work in-house, at a cost that was just a fraction of the \$1.8 million estimate a state Department of Transportation contractor had offered for a standard road-widening job.



“We were able to do the widening as part of a normal resurfacing project and our guys did it for only \$82,300,” Hughes said in a news release. “They also fixed some flooding and icing issues.”

But related improvements planned for Route 571 in the Princeton Junction area are “a lot more complicated,” so the county went with outside contractors, Hughes said. To reduce costs for taxpayers, federal funding will be used for that project, he said.

“We are almost ready for final design and construction, and funding has been committed,” Hughes said. “The design is not exactly what bicycle and pedestrian advocates would like to see, but it came out of extensive public outreach to local residents and the township.”

The initial design concept calls for 12-foot-wide lanes on a portion of Route 571, also known as Princeton-Hightstown Road, county engineer Gregory Sandusky said.

It would have 6-foot-wide bike lanes on each side, a 14-foot-wide center turn lane, and a 10-foot-wide greenway along the sidewalk.

That proposal has drawn fire from Jerry Foster, president of the West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance. In a September letter to local officials and state legislators, he called the design “inappropriate for a bicycle and pedestrian improvement project” and said it “should either be reclassified or remedied.”

The plan proposed by West Windsor and the county would make a portion of Route 571 into a Main Street with pedestrian, bicycle and access improvements, including sidewalks and protected turn lanes, according to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, which will fund an environmental impact study of the proposal.

Foster’s group is calling for a reduction in speed limits in the plan from 45 to 30 mph.

He was also critical of the additional center turn lane and roadway widening, saying they will make it harder for people to cross the street.

“This affects our children, who walk across 571 to the high school, as well as our senior residents, who cross 571 to the pharmacy,” he wrote.

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