

The Times

Striding for sidewalk upgrade

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BY CATHARINA EVANS
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WEST WINDSOR -- Amid local worries about the potential traffic volume increase associated with redevelopment plans for Princeton Junction, many citizens are expressing concerns about already apparent traffic problems.

Members of the West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance were out walking early yesterday morning on a portion of Route 571 to promote safer ways to bike and walk to the Princeton Junction train station, which would become the hub of a proposed transit village.

"Our concern right now is that the redevelopment is being used as a way to put off a lot of needed improvements on the sidewalks and roads," said Susan Conlon, a member of WWBPA's board of trustees. "There needs to be a continuous sidewalk from Sherbrooke Drive to Route 571, so that pedestrians can safely walk to the train station. The lighting is also nonexistent or inconsistent. We want to get something done, before someone gets killed."

The West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance is a nonprofit organization whose members want to improve bicycle and foot travel throughout the community, and they have lobbied for safety improvements elsewhere in town.

Yesterday's walk on Route 571, during which participants handed out pamphlets describing their mission, was spurred by the increasing danger the road's uneven and sporadic sidewalks pose to commuting pedestrians.

"From a point of view of a local citizen, I sense great worry about the (proposed) transit village," said Gordana Siorta, a WWBPA member. "There is no escaping the development. People are already worried about the traffic it will bring."

West Windsor's redevelopment proposal for 350 acres that encompass the Princeton Junction train station will potentially include new roads, retail and residential buildings, bypasses and a self-contained transit village whose residents would not need to rely on cars.

In recent weeks, architects and planners have presented ideas for construction to the township council and planning board. Council members have said they hope a workable plan will be agreed upon in the next year.

"As an interim improvement, even before the redevelopment happens, we're looking for some kind of action plan for the sidewalks and roads," said Conlon. "We know there is a problem right now. All of us who lived here for a long time have talked about this."

Although most members of the WWBPA welcome many aspects of the redevelopment proposal, the group wants to be certain that adjacent neighborhoods are connected and have well-lit, well-maintained walking paths, said member Alison Miller.

"This group will be there to make sure it happens," she said.

Conlon hopes that West Windsor's elected officials get out of their cars and try walking the roads and sidewalks for themselves.

"They cannot do this by remote control," said Conlon. "It's a whole different thing to experience it."

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