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July 5, 2011

Barry Seymour
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
American College of Physicians Building, 8th Floor
190 N. Independence Mall West
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Mr. Seymour,

I am writing in response to public comment on the DVRPC Draft 2012 Transportation Improvement Program in regard to NJDOT DB# D0701, "Princeton-Hightstown Road Improvements, CR 571" for the segment between Clarksville and Wallace Roads.

Comments generally praise the project for adding bicycle and pedestrian amenities in what West Windsor Township desires to be a 'main street', mixed-use district near the Princeton Junction train station. Most commentators urge the project to go further. The pedestrian crossing at Sherbrooke Drive attracted particular concern. Aware of this concern, Mercer County recently conditioned approval of a site plan for Windsor Plaza redevelopment on the installation of rectangular rapid flashing beacons and other pedestrian improvements at this location. These will persist as an existing condition through the federal project. With concurrence from West Windsor, the County will also consider lowering the speed limit to 25 MPH. Other comments, however, urge significant design changes that reduce travel speeds and create refuges for crossing pedestrians.

A project for this section has been on the TIP twice before. After graduating to the TIP in 1993, the West Windsor Township Council reversed its endorsement of a project to add pedestrian amenities and widen the road to 5 lanes. The Council re-iterated its opposition to widening when NJDOT listed a similar project in the 2002 Local Scoping program. Thereafter, West Windsor took the lead and in 2005 both its Planning Board and its Council endorsed a design for a three-lane section, including extensive bicycle and pedestrian amenities, following a thorough alternatives analysis and public outreach process. After very minor changes during Preliminary Design, the current TIP moves the

project forward into final design. Significant changes to the design at this point will force the project to be dropped from the TIP and revert back to the alternatives analysis phase. This will delay implementation for years, if not preclude it from ever receiving federal funding.

In the public outreach process leading to the preferred alternative, some citizens voiced concerns similar to those raised today. As a result, the final preferred alternative amalgamated the design with the smallest cartway width (to reduce pedestrian crossing distances) and the design with continuous bikeable shoulders. To go further, as advocated by the West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance, and eliminate auxiliary lanes, reduce turning radii, and introduce other traffic calming elements, conflicts with the imperative that this segment of CR 571 safely move vehicular traffic.

CR 571 is a Principal Arterial (AADT ~20,000) and serves as the only direct link between the NJ Turnpike, Princeton Junction train station, US Route 1, and the Township and Borough of Princeton. Turn volumes are high at signalized intersections, where auxiliary lanes will improve operations and safety. Without auxiliary lanes to enhance the free flow of through traffic—including Bus Rapid Transit vehicles travelling in traffic on this segment—opportunities for regional economic development may be jeopardized. In every project such as this, the final preferred alternative must be a compromise. In this case, regional mobility needs must be accommodated while enhancing safety for all travel modes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Lawson', with a long, sweeping underline.

Matthew Lawson, AICP/Ph.D.
Principal Planner