

West Windsor Bicycle & Pedestrian Alliance

August 14, 2007

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On May 10 during the evening rush hour, thirty-three West Windsor residents, including several members of Township Council and the Planning Board, took part in an educational walk of Cranbury and Clarksville Road in the vicinity of Grovers Mill Pond. The walk was organized by the West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance (WWBPA) and was part of a series of public outreach walks, "West Windsor Walks", to examine conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists on township roads.

We were also joined on by Mercer County Engineer, George Fallat, since both Clarksville and Cranbury Roads are county roads. The walk began at Van Nest Park and proceeded down Cranbury Road to the intersection with Clarksville Road, and then up Clarksville Road to Villa Drive. The West Windsor Police helped us cross Cranbury Road as we approached Clarksville Road, presaging the dangerous conditions that are encountered by pedestrians in this part of the township.

The group examined and discussed the serious flaws regarding access, mobility and safety for pedestrians and cyclists on these two roads and considered possible immediate short-term steps as well as potential larger-scale projects.

General Existing Conditions:

The intersection of Clarksville Road and Cranbury Road has features that are unique and important to West Windsor's cultural history, with Grovers Mill and the Grovers Mill Pond, which is considered the site of the "Martian landing" from the 1938 radio broadcast of the H. G. Wells fictional story "War of the Worlds." The Township is in fact celebrating the 80th anniversary of the radio broadcast in 2008 and is anticipating the event as a community and tourist draw.

It is also an important transportation crossroad in town, equidistant between the two high schools in our district, one mile from the train station, and close to the main retail center in town. This crossroad itself will become more of a destination with the addition of a coffee shop at the Grovers Mill Company barn sometime in 2008. Unfortunately, this intersection, as well as Cranbury and Clarksville Roads are completely bicycle and pedestrian unfriendly.

The existing conditions for both pedestrians and cyclists on Cranbury and Clarksville Roads are extremely dangerous. There is a striking lack of sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks, and bikelanes on these busy roadways. The almost complete lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities represents a real lost opportunity, since although these roads serve as major conduits for local

residents to travel to the train station, both high schools, and local retail. Residents find walking and cycling on these roads too dangerous and have no option but to use their cars for local trips. Despite the dangerous conditions, some residents do attempt to walk and bicycle on these roads. For instance, the cross country running teams from both High School North and South run daily along these roads, even during rush hour, and Cranbury Road is a major route for bicycle commuters seeking an alternative to the even more dangerous roadway, Princeton-Hightstown Road.

Recorded observations and recommendations:

Cranbury Road:

- The existing but almost completely faded crosswalk at Van Nest Park (crossing Cranbury Road) needs re-striping. This crosswalk is ADA non-compliant due to lack of curb cuts, and as such is also difficult to navigate with baby strollers. This park is a popular destination of children. George Fallat said that this crosswalk improvement is likely a project that can get immediate attention from Mercer County, and perhaps include a pedestrian activated crosswalk. **Recommendation: the County should re-stripe crosswalk as soon as possible, add curb cut at north side of road, and install a pedestrian-activated crosswalk.** *[Note- the County has since re-striped this cross-walk. However, there is still a need for a curb-cut]*
- The crosswalks at Steele Drive, Yeger Road, and Bolfmar Drive are all faded. **Recommendation: re-stripe these three crosswalks.** *[Note- the County has since re-striped these cross-walks]*
- The sidewalk on the north side of Cranbury Road ends soon after Yeger Road. Pedestrians are forced to walk across to the pond side of Cranbury Road. If the sidewalk was extended to the Grovers Mill barn, residents would be able to walk to the future coffee shop as well as to the future reconstructed Millstone Road. We have spoken to the owners of the two properties that lack sidewalks leading up to the Grovers Mill barn, and both are willing to consider the construction of sidewalks on their frontage. **Recommendation: The Township should open up a dialog with the two property owners just east of the Grovers Mill Barn about the potential construction of sidewalks along Cranbury Road.**
- The curve on Cranbury Road just before the intersection with Clarksville Road compromises safety. Despite the sharp curve, motorists drive at excessive speeds on Cranbury Road, and because of an existing fence and shrubbery at the curve, their ability to see bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as oncoming automobiles is greatly impaired. We spoke extensively with the homeowner who lives right next to the Grovers Mill Barn and he is willing to discuss potential changes to his frontage to improve sight lines. **Recommendation: The County should open up a dialog with the homeowner who lives next to the Grovers Mill barn to discuss improving visibility around this corner.**
- Several residents suggested that a boardwalk be constructed at the edge of the pond along Cranbury Road. The boardwalk would be put into place using pilings and would go a long way to improve pedestrian safety along Cranbury Road. It would also serve as a safe location to enjoy the beauty of the pond. George Fallat told us that a similar boardwalk is being constructed at Etra Lake in East Windsor Township. **Recommendation: The County should consider the feasibility of constructing a boardwalk alongside Grovers Mill Pond.**
- Concern was expressed about pedestrian access from the Van Nest Park to Rabbit Hill Road (opposite direction of our walk route that evening). Prior to the walk, we spoke with residents who live between Van Nest Park and Perry Drive, and all who we spoke with were in favor of having sidewalks constructed along their frontage. Residents were told that they

West Windsor Bicycle & Pedestrian Alliance

have easy access to the Trolley Line trail via an easement between two houses on Perry Drive. **Recommendation: The Township should open up a dialog with residents along Cranbury Road who live between Van Nest Park and Perry Drive about construction of a sidewalk.**

Clarksville Road:

- There was considerable speculation as to why bicycle and pedestrian access was not factored into the re-design of Clarksville Road at the bridge. The shoulder on Clarksville Road along the pond is not marked for bicycle and pedestrian use. In point of fact, there was a car parked on the shoulder of Clarksville at the pond on this evening which belonged to someone who was fishing on the bridge section. George Fallat suggested that the shoulders be textured to make them more obvious as pedestrian and bicycle paths and perhaps a textured surface (simulated pavers). **Recommendation: The shoulder on Clarksville Road should be signed and striped for bicycle and pedestrian use, and there should “No Parking” signs installed signs on bridge.**
- Automobile travel speeds are excessive along Clarksville and Cranbury Roads. Residents expressed desire for lowering the speed limit on Clarksville Road (now 35 MPH). Residents expressed desire for traffic calming and a desire for increased police enforcement of current speed limits. **Recommendations: The speed limit along Clarksville Road should be lowered to 25mph, and traffic calming measures should be considered and implemented.**
- Sidewalks are clearly needed on Clarksville Rd. It was discussed that the best location would be on the pond side of the road with a crosswalk connection to Landing Lane. **Recommendation: The Township should open up a dialog with residents who live on the Grover Mill Pond side of Clarksville Road about constructing sidewalks that would lead to Landing Lane and an eventual safe crosswalk across Clarksville Road to Landing Lane.**
- There is a missing link in the sidewalk network on the west side of Clarksville Road just south of Landing Lane (between Landing Lane and Villa Drive). The missing link is just one property. **Recommendation: The Township should open up and explore possibility of connect missing sidewalk link between Landing Lane and Villa Drive that does not have a sidewalk out front; there is one house it affects, and their thoughts on this and right of way issue warrant further evaluation and outreach.**
- With respect to sidewalks, George Fallat recommended that West Windsor Township incorporate a fund for new sidewalks with the construction any new house or upon the sale of a house, with money be put aside for the eventual construction of a sidewalk. He also suggested that if one resident objects to a sidewalk, that sidewalks be constructed up to that house on either side to build eventual momentum for connecting the missing link.
- It was pointed out that the intersection of North Mill Rd. and Clarksville Rd. is confusing and dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. A resident of North Mill Road who participated expressed interest in sidewalks along North Mill Road, and is willing to follow up by doing an informal survey of her street to scope for interest. **Recommendation: The Township should follow up with North Mill Road residents about the construction of a sidewalk along the length of the road.**
- Residents were asked what they thought were the most desired biking and walking destinations in the area. They responded with the following destinations: the Acme shopping center, WW-P High School North and South, the train station, Community Park (which can

be accessed from North Mill Road) and the Rogers Preserve. They also expressed that at present they felt their safety was compromised by lack of bike/pedestrian access and if it were improved they would be more inclined to ride and walk.

- A resident reported that the pedestrian signal at Route 571 and Clarksville Road does not activate when you push the button. **Recommendation: The County or Township should investigate if the pedestrian signal at this intersection is working.**
- There was a question about the patch of green grass next to the pond off of Clarksville Road just before the dam. It's inaccessible due to a guardrail, yet it could have benches and be a nice space to enjoy the pond.

Intersection of Clarksville and Cranbury Roads:

- The intersection is dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists, and cars. **Recommendation: The county and township should conduct a scoping project of this intersection with the goal of improving safety and mobility.**

There is a pressing need to dramatically improve bicycle and pedestrian safety along Clarksville and Cranbury Roads. This is a beautiful and historic area in our town, yet the lack of bicycle and pedestrian safety puts this area at high risk for a serious pedestrian or bicycling accident. If we act promptly, we can make important safety improvements in time for the War of the Worlds Anniversary celebration, and in time for the coffee shop that will soon be established at the corner, both of which are likely to further increase pedestrian activity along these dangerous roads. There are several next steps following collection of these comments and it will require scoping the possible projects and problem-solving to develop and then implement improvements and solutions, interacting with both West Windsor Township and Mercer County.