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January 22, 2009

To: Sam Surtees, West Windsor Township Land Use Manager
Marvin Gardner, Chair of West Windsor Township Planning Board

Cc: Pat Ward, West Windsor Township Community Development Coordinator
Shing-Fu Hsueh, Mayor of West Windsor Township
Members of West Windsor Township Council

The West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance (WWBPA) has been following the progress of the Princeton Junction Redevelopment effort with a mixture of hope and concern - hope to achieve at long last significant improvement in the ability of residents to walk and bike safely around town; concern that this promise, as central as it is to public acceptance of redevelopment, is not realized in the details of the built infrastructure. In reviewing the January 9th plan sent from Council to Planning Board, our collective concern is growing - to realize the goals of redevelopment, WWBPA recommends the following changes:

Bike Lanes

Bike lanes should be mandated for all roads in the redevelopment area, not just Route 571 as shown on page 52, due to the population and traffic density of the redevelopment area. In the current draft plan no bike lanes are included in Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, & 6. Per the DVRPC Smart Transportation Guidebook, six feet wide bike lanes are recommended for arterial or collector roads that will have bus or truck traffic, while five feet wide bike lanes are recommended for the other roads. NJDOT's Bicycle Compatible Roadways and Bikeways guidelines recognize three groups of bicyclists - advanced, basic and children. WWBPA recommends designs that will encourage adult basic riders to be comfortable bringing their children to the main street area via bicycle.

Bicycle Parking

Bike lockers and racks should be added to the plan - per NJDOT Bicycle Compatible Roadways and Bikeways design guidelines, lockers should be located near each boarding location, and bike racks should be located under a shelter. All facilities which provide parking to the public should provide parking for bicycles at the rate of one bicycle parking space per 10 automobile parking spaces for the first 100 parking stalls and one bicycle space for every 20 beyond that. In addition, WWBPA recommends bike racks on each block within the main street area and for each separate office or retail building within the redevelopment area.

Multi-Use Paths

Bicycle and pedestrian multi-use paths are recommended where pedestrian-only access is shown on page 52, including the tunnels under the train tracks. In addition, multi-use paths are recommended adjacent to all BRT-dedicated roadway, rather than the bicycle-compatible shoulders shown.

Pedestrian Promenade

A pedestrian-only promenade is recommended for the central main street area that runs parallel to the train tracks, which can be traversed by the roads running parallel to Route 571.

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.

Having vehicles circulating in the central area, as currently shown, will render the narrow public space pedestrian un-friendly, whereas pedestrian-only blocks will allow a much broader range of commercial and community activities for that space.

Sidewalks

Where multi-use paths do not accommodate pedestrians, especially along arterials such as Route 571, sidewalks meeting the standards applicable to all districts (10 - 15 feet wide, p. 53) are recommended. Sidewalk minimums should be revised (p. 58) from 4 feet to 5 feet, per the Smart Transportation Guidebook and the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines. Furthermore, it is of utmost importance to construct sidewalks on existing roads within the Redevelopment Area as soon as possible. The WWBPA has placed as its highest sidewalk priority for 2009 a continuous sidewalk between Alexander Road and Cranbury/Wallace Road.

Open Space Access

The open space is isolated from the residents by the Vaughn drive arterial plus the BRT roadway - access should be improved by an above-mentioned multi-use path connecting the currently shown pedestrian path, extending along the Dinky tracks, then continuing parallel to Vaughn Drive to connect to the currently proposed multi-use path shown (p. 52). Bicycle and pedestrian crossings from the town center area to this path must be designed to enable safe access to the Redevelopment Area.

Connectivity to existing neighborhoods

The WWBPA is particularly concerned about bicycle and pedestrian connectivity between existing neighborhoods and the Redevelopment Area. We recommend that every effort be made to provide safe bicycle and pedestrian access between existing residential neighborhoods and the Redevelopment Area. To this end, we recommend that any developer of properties within the Redevelopment Area contribute to funding bicycle and pedestrian improvements (i.e., bike lanes, sidewalks and multi-use paths) that will help connect adjacent neighborhoods and properties to the Redevelopment Area. We are particularly concerned about bicycle and pedestrian access to the Redevelopment Area along Alexander Road, Bear Brook Road, Cranbury Road, Scott Ave, Wallace Road, Princeton-Hightstown Road, Washington Road, North Post Road, Roszel Road, Clarksville Road, and along the proposed BRT route. These roads should all have safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Specific recommendation for amending the plan

We recommend that the plan be amended to emphasize inclusion of sidewalks, bike lanes and multi-use paths to encourage pedestrian and bicycle access, mobility and safety, and we recommend the following change (p. 36, #4):

"All roads within the Redevelopment Area must have sidewalks and bike lanes and all paths must be multi-use paths. Six feet wide bike lanes are recommended for arterial or collector roads that will have bus or truck traffic, while five feet wide bike lanes are recommended for the other roads." Continuous sidewalk and bicycle connections should be provided throughout the Redevelopment Area and adjacent neighborhoods.

We feel strongly about these recommendations and it is our hope that they are followed. Providing extensive and safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the Redevelopment Area will relieve traffic pressures, will encourage residents to walk and bicycle to the train station and to work, and will make the Redevelopment Area a more liveable and enjoyable part of our community. If you have any questions about our recommendations, please don't hesitate to ask us.

Sincerely,

Susan Conlon, 2nd Vice President, on behalf of the Board of Trustees