

Forrestal Bicycle and Pedestrian Advocates
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9 February 2011

Mayor Peter Cantu
Township of Plainsboro
641 Plainsboro Road
Plainsboro, NJ 08536
609-799-0909

Dear Mayor Cantu,

We are a group of 36 cyclists, pedestrians, runners, and motorists, who work on or near the Forrestal Campus. Many of us bike or walk to work daily (winter included), so we have a strong interest in safe bicycle and pedestrian routes through Plainsboro. This includes making sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike paths passable in winter -- particularly along **Scudders Mill Road**.

We are requesting prompt and sustained enforcement of Plainsboro's snow-clearing ordinances for sidewalks and bike paths. Attached are Sections 79-10 through 79-16 of the Township Code, adopted 12 August 1998 by the Township Committee. These ordinances require land owners to clear snow and ice from sidewalks abutting their property within 24 hours, or face fines of up to \$500 for each 24-hour period thereafter. When a path remains uncleared, Section 79-13 of the Code further empowers Plainsboro's Director of Public Works to remove the snow and ice without notice, at cost to the owner.

Several parcel owners along Scudders Mill Road, particularly between US Route 1 and Dey Road, have repeatedly violated the Township Code. As of this writing, **parts of this crucial walkway/bikeway remain buried in snow, 14 days after the snowstorm of January 26**. The Township Code, in a strict interpretation, would impose a fine of \$5,650 (and counting) on any owner of a still-unplowed path.

Attached is a map of the snow-blocked sections of Scudders Mill Road. These include: (1) crosswalks at the intersections with Schalks Crossing Road, College Road East, and Campus Road; (2) most of the path adjacent to the eastbound lanes of the bridge over the railroad tracks; (3) part of the path adjacent to the westbound lanes between Campus Road and Bristol-Meyers Squibb; and (4) the path adjacent to the westbound lanes between Campus Road and Mapleton Road.

As a result, **bike commuters, pedestrians, and runners are being forced into the roadways**, endangering themselves and posing hazards for motorists. The situation is serious. Several of us have recently witnessed near-collisions between cars, cyclists, and pedestrians along Scudders Mill Road, directly resulting from snow-blocked paths, crosswalks, and shoulders. And **two pedestrians in our area have been struck by cars in recent weeks** (<http://wwbpa.org/tag/pedestrian-accident>).

Scudders Mill Road is a high-speed, high-traffic road with narrow shoulders and no alternative routes nearby. Therefore it is essential to maintain the sidewalk that parallels this road. For this critical route, **we ask that the Township use its authority under Section 79-13 to plow any Scudders Mill paths that remain uncleared after 24 hours**. The full cost of removal is levied against the owner -- so resources, equipment, contractors etc. ought not be an issue.

We are aware that the narrow Scudders Mill bridge over the railroad tracks may be owned by Middlesex County. Township officials we contacted were unsure whether we could rely on the County to promptly remove snow from its sections of the bridge sidewalk. But this bridge is an essential gateway for Plainsboro. **If the County fails to respond after 24 hours, we ask that the Township proceed to plow the sidewalk on the Scudders Mill railroad bridge.**

Bristol-Meyers Squibb (BMS), Princeton University, and the businesses in Plainsboro Village already clear their paths reliably and promptly. We hope that stepped-up public education and enforcement of our local snow-clearing laws will encourage all owners to do their fair share.

Well-maintained sidewalks and bikeways offer many benefits. They improve the safety of our children, residents, and employees, many of whom rely on these paths to get to school or work each day. They keep bicyclists and pedestrians off the roads, reducing hazards for motorists. They facilitate commerce -- freeing up parking at local shops, restaurants, and offices, and providing routes to local businesses for short-term visitors, young residents, and others who may not have access to a car. Finally, they promote health, livability, and involvement within the community, by encouraging residents to step outdoors for exercise during the lunch hour or as part of the daily commute. All of these serve the Township Committee's 2011 goal of making Plainsboro "the best township in the state."

Thank you for your attention to this important issue -- and please let us know if we can be of any assistance or provide more information.

Signed,

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West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance
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Code of the Township of Plainsboro, NJ

Chapter 79, Article II: Sidewalk Maintenance and Repair

Adopted 12 August 1998 by Ord. No. 0-98-20 of the Plainsboro Township Committee

<http://www.ecode360.com/?custId=PL1612>

(Excerpts pursuant to snow and ice removal from pedestrian/bike paths.)

Sec. 79-10: Snow and ice removal.

An owner-occupant or tenant shall cause the sidewalk in its entire width to be cleared of snow within 24 hours after the first daybreak after the same shall fall or be formed and, in the event of ice which may be so frozen as to make removal impractical, shall apply sand, sawdust, ashes, salt or other harmless substance to the portion not removed and shall, as soon as possible thereafter, remove the remainder, together with any substance which has been applied to it.

Sec. 79-11: Deposit of snow and ice.

No owner, tenant or occupant of any premises abutting on any street or sidewalk shall throw, place or deposit any snow or ice which has accumulated upon private property into or upon any public sidewalk, bicycle route or the paved portion of any public street in the Township or into or upon any area within the right-of-way lines of any street in such a way as to hinder the passage of persons, bicycles or vehicles or obstruct vision.

Sec. 79-13: Removal by Township on owner's default; prior notice to owner; cost; lien.

Whenever any owner-occupant or tenant shall fail to comply with the provisions of § 79-10 or 79-12 in the manner therein prescribed, the Director of Public Works is authorized and empowered to remove or cause to be removed such snow, ice, ... No notice is required for the removal of snow or ice as required by § 79-10. Upon the completion of any such removal ... the cost as shown thereon to be charged against the land abutting or bordering such sidewalk... and shall be collected and enforced by the same officers and in the same manner as taxes.

Sec. 79-15: Enforcement.

The provisions of this article shall be enforced by the Plainsboro Township Police Department.

Sec. 79-16: Violations and penalties.

Any person or corporation violating any provision of this article shall be punished by a fine of \$50 for the first offense, \$100 for the second offense and up to \$500 for each subsequent offense thereafter. Each and every twenty-four-hour period in which the violation exists shall be a separate and distinct violation subject to the penalties stated herein.

Status of Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes to Forrestal Campus

February 9, 2011

