

Alliance works toward a more user-friendly West Windsor

By: Nick Norlen, Staff Writer, Princeton Packet
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Staff photo by Mark Czajkowski

Ken Carlson, president of the West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance, rides in the marked lane on Southfield Road in West Windsor on Thursday morning.

Events slated to promote bicycling and walking

WEST WINDSOR — It's springtime, and the West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance wants you on two wheels or one pair of walking shoes.

Numerous events, including an April 17 educational walk near Canal Pointe Boulevard and an April 12 meeting at the Municipal Building, are planned for the coming months.

But while bicycling and walking activities increase with better weather, the 125-member group is busy trying to improve conditions for doing so year-round.

Alliance President Ken Carlson said the mission is simple: "To make West Windsor a bike- and pedestrian-friendly community. Right now, it's really not."

The ultimate goal is to allow residents to walk or bike anywhere in town.

"In doing so, you're helping the environment and reducing traffic and promoting good health," he said. "It's not just the simple act of doing it, it's what's not happening as a result."

Such desires to increase self-powered mobility were the reason the alliance, which grew out of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force created by Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh, formed in the first place.

While still a task force, the group was awarded grant funding for a bicycle and pedestrian consultant group to identify trouble spots near township roads, including Canal Pointe Boulevard — a stretch that Mr. Carlson said residents are rightly reluctant to cross.

Some simply get in their cars, while others make the risky cross at that and other dangerous locations in the township, he said.

"They'll go halfway and be standing on the yellow line," he said. "If you can imagine doing that with a baby carriage — which people do — it's insane."

To highlight such dangers, the alliance is hosting this year's first educational walk 5:30 p.m. April 17.

Residents and officials are invited to meet at MarketFair near the movie theater before taking a walking tour to "point out bicycle and pedestrian deficiencies."

Mr. Carlson said that similar walks have been done at other sites, such as the "S" curve on Alexander Road between Route 1 and the Delaware & Raritan Canal.

A few weeks after one walk, two pedestrians were struck by a car at the same location.

"It really, unfortunately, highlighted the danger that pedestrians face," he said. "This is the type of thing we're trying to prevent."

Susan Conlon, second vice president of the alliance, said the walks demonstrate dangers to people who might not experience them otherwise.

"Some of our elected officials, they might not experience a certain type of road," she said. "It definitely kind of accelerates the pace of progress."

First Vice Ppresident Chris Scherer said it's important that the alliance continue to build its relationship with such officials.

"Because they're really the only ones that can build the infrastructure," he said. "Even if we had a million dollars, we couldn't build sidewalks or add room for bike lanes on the road."

Mr. Carlson agreed.

"I think we have an administration that is willing to do this," he said. "I think we just really need to lead the way and show the possibilities of what can be done."

Part of leading the way is lobbying for more funding, Mr. Carlson said.

"This year was a real breakthrough for bicycle and pedestrian funding in West Windsor," he said, referring to the fact that Township Council agreed to double the funds allocated for sidewalk improvements to \$200,000 in the 2007 budget. "The recognition of the need for sidewalks is actually quite clear. We're hoping that once we develop more infrastructure, it will be easier for people to bike to work."

For now, the alliance is working on a survey to identify missing links for walking routes to local schools, as well as compiling a comprehensive map showing bike lanes, sidewalks and trail locations.

The map will be available in both English and Spanish, online and in print. The first copies will be available for sale at BikeFest May 26, Mr. Carlson said.

In the meantime, Ms. Conlon said the alliance will continue to focus on improving mobility.

"Anything that compromises and inhibits people from getting out there and walking and biking — we want to do the opposite," she said.

More information on upcoming events are available at www.princetonol.com/groups/wwbpa.

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