

County Executive Brian M. Hughes
Mercer County Administration Building
640 South Broad Street
P.O. Box 8068
Trenton, NJ 08650-0068

January 12, 2012

RE: Main Street Princeton Junction/Route 571 Design

Dear County Executive Hughes:

On behalf of Tri-State Transportation Campaign, I am writing to request that the following changes are made to the current proposed design for Princeton-Hightstown, Road/CR 571 in downtown Princeton Junction, Mercer County:

- * **Lower the speed limit to 25-30mph,**
- * **Include bicycle lanes throughout the project area,**
- * **Increase safety at intersections by providing pedestrian refuge islands and pedestrian-activated signals at all crossings,**
- * **Provide visual cues that inform drivers that they are approaching a “main street” area.**

While the DVRPC TIP specifically states that the rationale for this project is to improve safety by making “‘Main Street’ pedestrian, bicycle, and site access improvements...,” the project plans, as they stand, will not accomplish these life-saving aims.

The current proposed design for Route 571 calls for a 40 mph posted speed limit, construction of a two-way left turn lane, and would not include pedestrian crossing refuse islands. Not only is this design wholly inappropriate for a “main street” project, it does not adequately address the safety needs of pedestrians (from 2004-2005, 2 pedestrian fatalities occurred in the project area, while there were no motorist fatalities). Additionally, a previous version of the CR 571 plan included bike lanes in the project area, but these have been replaced in the design with wide shoulders. While wide shoulders are appropriate for bicyclists in certain contexts, dedicated bicycle lanes are much preferred in a “main street” context and are inexpensive to implement.

In your recent press release, you concede that the pedestrian and bicyclist components of the Route 571 plan aren't ideal, but that in the future "...[Mercer County] can go back and think about putting in some other amenities..." In truth, improving the plans now, before construction, will be of far greater benefit to the residents of Mercer County. In a November op-ed, NJDOT Commissioner James Simpson rightly stated, "It is easier and cheaper to build it right the first time than to retrofit the project later."

Route 571 is a glaring example of a project that must be altered now, before construction begins, to avoid the costly, inefficient and inevitable future changes that will have to be made to improve roadway safety and create a viable main street should project construction go forward as planned. Mercer County should follow the lead of the state DOT by following "complete streets" design principles that ensure that the road functions for all users.

We ask for your support in improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety throughout Mercer County, and hope that you will work with us to secure changes to the proposed Route 571 project design that will truly enhance the quality of the local built environment. We look forward to following-up with you on this and other matters, and appreciate the time you've taken to review our request.

Sincerely,

Janna Chernetz, Esq.
NJ Advocate
Tri-State Transportation Campaign