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New Jersey Department of Transportation Commissioner James Simpson
David J. Goldberg Transportation Complex
1035 Parkway Avenue
Trenton, NJ 08625

Re: New Jersey Transit Support for Biking and Walking

Dear Commissioner Simpson,

The West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance is an all-volunteer, not-for-profit organization of about 400 members, dedicated to creating a bicycle and pedestrian friendly community.

Regarding a recent NJ Transit policy change restricting bikes to high platform train stations, we are writing to ask you to consider improving the policies regarding biking and walking access on NJ Transit trains, light rail and buses (used collectively as “transit”).

New Jersey’s population density creates challenges to enabling the automobility necessary for sustained economic growth. The last half-century of sprawling suburban development, while benefiting our state immensely, cannot continue, since we’re almost out of space. Increasing transit use enables continued economic growth, since it uses space more efficiently to get people where they need to go.

Sprawl and transit don’t complement each other; it’s a “last mile” problem of how to get to and from a transit node. More compact land use is a long term solution, but will take decades to achieve.

Bus stops in particular are often just a sign on the shoulder of a road, without safe facilities to wait for transit, cross the road or access surrounding developments. Adding crosswalks, sidewalks, paths and shelters enables pedestrian and wheelchair access to transit.

Bicycling can increase transit use in spite of sprawl. While most people won’t walk more than half a mile, many are willing to bike up to 2 miles.

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Biking puts people within reach of a transit node relatively inexpensively, since it doesn't require additional car parking. As biking and walking to transit becomes more attractive, people will switch from cars to transit, providing a host of related benefits for everyone, from improved health to less pollution – making New Jersey more competitive.

Please consider encouraging bicycle, wheelchair and pedestrian access to transit by implementing the recommendations below.

Short-term recommendations:

1. Allow bicycles to use low-platform train stations, perhaps by designating the last car of a train as the preferred bicycle car, thereby limiting conflicts.
2. Install ADA-compliant ramps and platforms for all low-platform train stations, enabling high-platform access to one door, which also enables bicycle access.
3. Enable conductor/operator discretion to allow bikes whenever conditions allow, such as during peak hours between Hamilton and Trenton when the train is empty, since it mostly fills/empties at Princeton Junction.
4. Improve conductor and operator training regarding all bicycle-related policies, such as that folding bicycles are always allowed on trains.

Intermediate-term recommendations:

1. Improve bicycle, pedestrian and wheelchair access to transit nodes by implementing ADA-compliant facilities, including shelters and sidewalks and/or paths to surrounding development.
2. Improve bicycle parking and loading facilities at transit nodes, such as by improving bus stops to include sheltered bike racks, installing secure limited-access indoor parking at popular transit nodes, and converting low-platform train stations to high platforms.
3. Increase transit's capacity to carry more bicycles, such as by converting a train car to primarily carry bicycles, and installing hanging racks on all cars, like on the River Line.
4. Consider bike share programs for favorable locations.
5. Develop "Bike to Transit" and "Walk to Transit" publicity campaigns.

We're confident that by enabling biking and walking to transit, New Jersey will develop a competitive advantage over other states, attracting workers and businesses to our more livable communities. Everyone will benefit, through better health, less pollution and less congestion.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Foster
President
West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance

cc: New Jersey Transit Executive Director James Weinstein, New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition, Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, Tri-State Transportation Campaign, Mercer County Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force, League of American Bicyclists, Princeton Free Wheelers