

CREATING A SAFE ROUTE TO BIKE & WALK BETWEEN WEST WINDSOR & PLAINSBORO: ALTERNATIVES TO THE EXTENSION OF THE TROLLEY LINE TRAIL

Analysis by the West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance

The goal is to create a safe off-road trail and/or near-road path connecting the Trolley Line Trail in West Windsor to the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District campus in Plainsboro. The campus serves students in grades 4-12, so the route and crossings should be appropriately designed for use by student bicyclists and walkers of those ages.

The major challenges to creating a safe route in West Windsor are:

- 1) PSE&G objection to additional trails on their rights-of-way
- 2) Wetlands permitting and associated additional expense of bridges, etc.
- 3) Neighboring property owners' objections
- 4) Roadway right-of-way limitations

The most obvious route, extending the Trolley Line Trail in the PSE&G right-of-way, is being advocated by West Windsor resident and High School North student Alex Inkiow, and faces some of the challenges above. Three West Windsor alternatives to the proposed extension are offered for consideration.

All three routes require a multi-use path from the present end of the Trolley Line Trail on Rabbit Hill Road to Cranbury Road. From the intersection, the 3 alternatives are to go straight across, turn right or left on Cranbury Road.

1. NEW DIRECT TRAIL

Create a new multi-use trail starting straight across Cranbury Road from the end of Rabbit Hill Road, running along the property line between block 14, lot 5.02 and block 14, lot 6 to Plainsboro, including a new bridge over the Millstone River in the vicinity of High School North. This route is the shortest path to the campus, maintains the off-road trail experience, requires only one road crossing (Cranbury at Rabbit Hill), and does not involve PSE&G. This alternative has the fewest number of adjacent property owners, however, it would mean acquiring property or securing an easement from either or both owners to create the trail.

2. MULTI-USE PATH ALONG CRANBURY ROAD TO PLAINSBORO

A multi-use path would run along Cranbury Road, from Rabbit Hill Road east to Plainsboro. The path could be built on either side of Cranbury Road, and in either case two crossings would be required, though in one case the second crossing may be in Plainsboro. This alternative includes minimal use of PSE&G property and uses the Cranbury Road bridge to cross the Millstone River, which may have to be reconfigured to accommodate the new path. Alternately, the old Cranbury Road bridge alignment may

prove more desirable than using the existing bridge. Property owners may be involved if the path along Cranbury Road requires additional right-of-way.

3. MULTI-USE PATH TO STEELE DRIVE TO TRAILS IN MILLSTONE PRESERVE

A multi-use path would run along Cranbury Road, from Rabbit Hill Road west to Steele Drive, where there are sidewalks for pedestrians and a safe neighborhood road network for bicyclists to continue to the existing upper trail in the Millstone Preserve. Improvements would have to be made to the trail, significantly changing its character, and a multi-use path would have to be added along Millstone Road from the gravel parking lot to Plainsboro. This alternative avoids PSE&G property and uses the Millstone Road bridge to cross the Millstone River, which may have to be reconfigured to accommodate the new path. Property owners may be involved if the path along Cranbury Road requires additional right-of-way.

General note: all these West Windsor alternatives preserve the level of safety and lack of vehicular conflicts bicyclists and pedestrians experience on the Trolley Line Trail. Also, since only off-road trails and near-road paths are involved, presumably the project would not require road widening or other redesign except for the crossings and bridge reconfiguration. All three alternatives extend only to the Plainsboro border, and require cooperation from the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District, Plainsboro Township and Mercer and Middlesex Counties to complete the connections to the campus.