

Date: October 16, 2013

To: The Lawrence City Commission

From: The Lawrence Pedestrian Coalition

Cc: David Corliss; Chuck Soules; Scott McCullough, City of Lawrence

The Lawrence Pedestrian Coalition (formerly the Community Sidewalk Task Force) exists to realize completion of the pedestrian network in Lawrence, Kansas and to ensure pedestrian access and safety throughout our community.

The Lawrence Pedestrian Coalition is dedicated to promoting a walk-able community in Lawrence, Kansas, and through pedestrian safety and access, making Lawrence a vibrant, healthier, more livable city. We want the City to ensure that walking is a safe method of transportation. Through both infrastructure improvements and planning, we ask that the City provide a safe and pleasant environment for those who walk.

While our first objective is completion of the sidewalk network in Lawrence, we recognize that this is a very long-term proposition. In the short term, we have a number of suggestions that we believe can help the City realize the goals of the Lawrence Complete Streets Policy, Transportation 2040, and some of the recommendations of the Retiree Attraction Task Force Final Report:

- We encourage the City to begin robust execution of the Complete Streets policy, to include development of a pedestrian plan; clarification on responsibilities for implementation; creation of design guidelines; and the development of performance indicators.
- We support the City's ongoing additions to, and improvement of, the sidewalk network. We encourage the City to continue improving maintenance of what is in place, and adding to the sidewalk inventory whenever possible (i.e. when roads are repaired or new curb and gutters are installed, etc.).
- We suggest that the City Commission direct coordinated efforts between the Traffic Safety Commission and the Planning Staff. We believe the City needs to assign a planning representative to the Traffic Safety Commission, and improve integration between pedestrian safety and

planning. We support the development of a pedestrian plan, and the designation of a half time pedestrian planner.

- We believe that the City needs to better enforce traffic laws affecting pedestrians. Some intersections in Lawrence are inherently hazardous for pedestrians, especially when drivers turn right on red or block crosswalks. We routinely observe the following violations of traffic laws: drivers who anticipate a right-turn-on-red and fail to yield to pedestrians; drivers who turn left and do not yield to pedestrians who have the right of way; vehicles who do not stay behind the white line at crosswalks and intersections. We ask the City Commission to direct the police to better enforce laws for the protection of pedestrians.
- We ask the City to consider allowing more crossing time at signaled intersections. Many pedestrians dare not cross major streets, in part because the time allotted for crossing (often only 15-20 seconds) is insufficient. This is particularly problematic if the pedestrian in question is elderly, has a disability, or is walking with children or pushing a stroller.
- We believe that a clear path for pedestrians should be maintained in front of stores and businesses. Pedestrian passage should not be blocked by advertising, merchandise or dining.
- We would like the City to establish rules for bicycles sharing sidewalks with pedestrians, as we believe that sharing a sidewalk with a cyclist can be a very anxious situation. Should cyclists on sidewalks stop before crossing a street? What should happen on a narrow sidewalk on a major street? Who has the “right of way”?
- We recommend that boardwalks be required around construction sites, instead of “Sidewalk Ends” signs. Pedestrians should not be forced into vehicular traffic.
- We’d like to see the City develop pedestrian design standards and requirements for new construction beyond the minimum that is currently required. We think it is time for the City to put pedestrians, as a priority, back into planning. As an example, we would like new parking lots to be designed to accommodate pedestrians, with pedestrian access created through parking lots--from streets to stores--rather than expecting pedestrians to fend for themselves. Under the current scheme, children and pedestrians with disabilities are especially vulnerable.
- We believe that sidewalks should avoid cross-slopes used for drainage or other ancillary purposes. Sidewalks should not slope at every curb cut/driveway. Level sidewalks should be a priority.

- We recommend that pedestrians be visible and protected at intersections. We support the City's ongoing efforts to eliminate obstructions like signs, transformers or utility poles that block sidewalks.
- We ask that the City work to avoid granting regular variances to codes requiring sidewalks on both sides of the street. Every time such a variance is granted, the City takes a step backward in realizing a complete pedestrian network. We would also like the City to place requests for variances on the regular agenda, not the consent agenda, so that the public receives adequate notification and can comment on variance requests.
- We recommend that the City develop and implement a pedestrian education program for all segments of the population, including students and new residents. This program should provide guidelines to both pedestrians and drivers, and inform new planners and police officers. We are concerned that increasingly, walking has become a lost concept for many. We want our community to realize true and safe walkability. Education and re-education is badly needed.

In conclusion, The Lawrence Pedestrian Coalition recommends that the City of Lawrence seriously examine planning, design and policy decisions and eliminate those practices that are counterproductive to pedestrian safety and accessibility.

Further, whether through the formation of a sidewalk utility or dedication of a percentage of infrastructure sales tax revenue specifically set aside for sidewalks, or other funding or enforcement mechanisms, we all need to be thinking about implementation and funding, now.

We believe that this community and its leaders are serious about creating a pedestrian-friendly environment. We hope that our suggestions can be implemented within the City's current programs, and considered in future planning efforts. Together, we can realize progress needed to take safe and sustainable steps forward.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Laura Routh, Facilitator
 On behalf of the Lawrence Pedestrian Coalition
lauridi@hotmail.com
 785-979-3918
<https://www.facebook.com/LawrencePedestrians>
<http://www.lawrencewalks.org>