



Sustainability Action Network

Local Solutions for Transition to a Sustainable Economy

P.O. Box 1064, Lawrence KS 66044
a Kansas 501(C)(3) not-for-profit

City of Lawrence 2015 Budget

13 May 2014

During the 2014 Lawrence budget hearings, Sustainability Action had recommended that the City create a Bicycle Engineering Division which will earmark budget revenues for construction and maintenance of bicycle transportation infrastructure – boulevards, protected lanes, cycle tracks, trails, bridges, and parking. The Commission recognized the importance of our proposal and asked us to submit it formally early in the 2015 budget cycle.

Therefore, for consideration in the 2015 Budget, we are recommending that the Commission direct staff to create a Bicycle Engineering Division. It will be a Division within the General Operating Fund 001, possibly numbered Division 3050. The Bicycle Network Engineering Division will be distinct from auto funding or transit funding, but budgeted on par with such services, in keeping with the new Complete Streets Policy. This division would operate within the Public Works Department, and be headed by a Bicycle Division Manager under the Assistant Director of Infrastructure & Maintenance.

Transportation accounts for 67% of U.S. petroleum consumption, and 60% of that is by light vehicles (GAO-07-283 Peak Oil Production, p. 10). Most travel takes place in private cars, and 79% of those trips are single occupant (USDOT National Household Travel Survey 2009). So our greatest potential to reduce CO2 emissions is by getting out of our cars and using transit, bicycles and walking. This is amply stated in many sections of both the Lawrence Climate Protection Plan and the Lawrence Peak Oil Response Plan.

But people will get out of their cars only if there are safe and convenient alternatives. The Lawrence bicycle network is neither safe nor convenient in it's current fragmented state, as indicated by the bicycle-auto accident statistics for street segments and intersections, and as indicated by the persistent and considerable gaps in the bicycle network. The very existence of the [Bicycle Rideability Map](#) is evidence that the fragmented network is not self-explanatory nor readily navigable by bicyclists).

Currently, millions of dollars are budgeted annually for transportation construction in Lawrence. Each year, Public Works identifies auto roads and intersections that they warrant as under-performing, and then they budget all available funds to these construction and maintenance auto projects. If an auto project is Federally funded, bicycle and pedestrian elements usually must be included, and those revenues are the bulk of Lawrence bicycle funding.

But otherwise, Public Works will add bicycle elements to an auto project only if some bicycle funds come available from grants or KDOT monies. There have been no Public Works policies or protocols to identify, finance, and construct bicycle transportation infrastructure for it's own merit, as independent from auto street projects.

For thirty eight years, there has been an overwhelming focus on auto infrastructure, and incidental bicycle projects have typically been an afterthought. Public Works is ostensibly responsible for implementing Lawrence bicycle transportation plans. But the bicycle infrastructure is fragmented because segments are built randomly where auto projects are the priority, not where bicycle origin-destination needs would locate them. The piecemeal segments occur when auto-related revenues allow it, not when conscious choices allocate revenues to bicycles. As a result, the most extensive bicycle infrastructure occurs in the outlying, low-density areas with low ridership, not in the central, high-density, high ridership areas.

There are more bicycles in Lawrence than automobiles. But only the bravest are undaunted to venture into the unprotected streets to go to school or the swimming pool or the grocery. Entire neighborhoods have petitioned for bicycle lanes or trails – Brook Creek, East Lawrence, Old West Lawrence, Barker, Indian Hills, to name a few. Not-for-profit agencies have voiced their support – Douglas County Foundation, Douglas County Health Department, Central Rotary Club, and the Complete Streets Task Force. And two Mayor-appointed task forces have developed plans calling for greater bicycle infrastructure, plans adopted by the City Commission - the Climate Protection Plan and Peak Oil Plan.

While the Public Works Department is beginning to construct more bicycle infrastructure, they are hamstrung by inadequate funding (the most frequently given excuse). Implementation is always enabled by revenues, and revenue follows political will.

The 2015 Budget proposal by Sustainability Action is in three parts:

- The Commission shall create a Division within the General Operating Fund titled the Bicycle Engineering Division, operating in Public Works, and responsible for construction and maintenance of bicycle facilities – boulevards, lanes, cycle tracks, trails, bridges, and parking.
- The Commission shall dedicate to the construction and maintenance of bicycle infrastructure the equivalent of 10% of all transportation related revenues (excluding personnel services) above and beyond the revenues from Federal Highway for auto projects. The Bicycle Engineering Division shall be budgeted on average \$2 million per year. The bicycle components of any FHWA or KDOT auto projects shall be funded at 6% of total project.
- The Commission shall create a position of Bicycle Division Manager to head the Bicycle Engineering Division, salaried at \$80,000 to \$100,000. The Bicycle Division Manager shall coordinate with the other Public Works Divisions on stand-alone bicycle projects and on auto-bicycle combined projects. Her/his primary responsibility shall be the implementation of any and all bicycle plans, and s/he shall be authorized to add projects to the Capital Improvement Plan and the Transportation Improvement Plan.

Creating new Divisions or personnel positions can be done only by the City Commission, and we request that the Commission direct the City Manager to develop the means to do so. However, it is the role of the City Manager to investigate the revenue sources, to consider the range of expenditures, to weigh and balance the competing needs, and to determine how to allocate funds to meet those needs as best as possible.

Respectfully,

Michael Almon