

Memorandum

Sustainability Action Network

Bicycle-pedestrian advocacy

To: Mayor Amyx and City Commission
From: Michael Almon, Sustainability Action Network
Date: February 18, 2015
Re: Active Transportation Task Force

The City Commission has received proposal over the past two years for increased attention and funding for bicycle and pedestrian safety issues. Proposals included a sidewalk performance audit, a bicycle transportation engineer, a bicycle-pedestrian coordinator, dedicated line-item funding, and an active transportation advisory board.

An active transportation advisory board would most likely assume all the duties of the Bicycle Advisory Committee within the City of Lawrence, with additional corresponding duties for pedestrian transportation. During the consideration of the 2015 budget last summer, the City Commission established a CIP line item dedicated to “non-motorized transportation”, and directed the formation of a task force to address these issues.

Such a task force could be charged to make recommendations on a permanent active transportation advisory board, revenue sources, funding priorities, bicycle engineering staff, pedestrian coordinator, sidewalk standards and maintenance, and related issues. This memo provides some additional background on the issues and provides recommendations for a next step.

Evolution of a bicycle-pedestrian task force, and proposal for a permanent active transportation advisory board

26 November 2012: a multi-modal advisory board was first discussed at the Lawrence Complete Streets Committee.

20 May 2014: the formation of a joint bicycle-pedestrian advisory board called for by the Lawrence Pedestrian Coalition

23 June 2014: a round-table stakeholder meeting was convened by the Lawrence-Douglas County Bicycle Advisory Committee to explore the interrelated governance of a joint bicycle-pedestrian advisory board. Recommendation: the City Commission should form a Non-motorized Transportation Task Force that would determine the scope and the membership of a permanent Non-motorized Transportation Advisory Board.

1 July 2014: the City Commission directed the City Manager to draft a resolution "to establish a task force to look at the pedestrian and bicycle planning issues, and report back to the City Commission. Motion carried unanimously".

5 August 2014: the City Commission established a dedicated line item for Non-Motorized Transportation. You delayed capitalizing it until a non-motorized transportation advisory board made recommendations for priority projects.

21 January 2015: a round-table stakeholder meeting was convened by Sustainability Action Network to develop recommendations for the purpose, scope, governance, and membership of a permanent active transportation advisory board. Recommendations: participants from eleven organizations, boards or agencies submitted their agreed upon recommendations to the City Commission on 25 January 2015 - [Non-motorized Transportation Stakeholders_task force recommendations_21Jan2015.doc](#)

Current City Boards and Commission with some impact on bicycle-pedestrian related issues

There are several existing City boards and commissions which provide advice, review issues, or recommend funding related to bicycle and pedestrian transportation. The governance of an active transportation advisory board will need to interface with some of these, or possibly assume their duties pertinent to bicycle-pedestrian transportation. Lawrence is unique in having a Bicycle Advisory Committee but no equivalent pedestrian advisory board. Most peer communities with such boards have a joint bicycle-pedestrian advisory board. Among the City boards and commissions, the following address these transportation issues to varying degrees (in descending order):

1. The Lawrence-Douglas County Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) provides policy and project advice to the City Commission, including review of proposed street capital and maintenance projects in relation to bike lane/route issues
2. Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the State designated entity for transportation planning and coordination, including review of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure needs.
3. The Traffic Safety Commission (TSC) reviews requests for traffic control devices (parking, speed limits, etc.) and also reviews requests for traffic calming devices, including bicycle lanes, pedestrian crossings, school crossings, etc.
4. Sustainability Advisory Board (SAB) advises staff and the City Commission on policies and programs that promote ecological sustainability, which has included bicycle and pedestrian advocacy
5. Parks and Recreation Advisory Board advises the Department and the Commission on parks/recreation related issues, including construction of recreational trails
6. Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Commission has State law responsibility to recommend certain land use items to the City Commission (zoning, plat, comprehensive plan), including subdivision regulations (location, specifications for bicycle lanes and sidewalks in new plats, etc.)
7. Public Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC) advises on transit routes, policies and related items, including some pedestrian related issues as transit users walk to bus routes, bicycles as inter-modal transit, etc.
8. Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) advises the City Commission on community development policies, and makes recommendations on CDBG and HOME funding, including funding for gap sidewalk projects in certain parts of the community

It is apparent that the City has a number of boards and commissions which can/should speak toward bicycle and pedestrian related issues. Some have only an elective involvement with these issues, while others such as the TSC or the BAC have obligatory involvement, though this could be changed.

Current Sidewalk Inventory and Challenges for Maintenance and Funding Additional Sidewalks

The 2014 sidewalk performance audit provided an overview of the condition of City sidewalks and curb ramps. One key finding was that maintenance of most sidewalks is the responsibility of the property owner, not the City. Complaints about sidewalk defects come to the City, and the City notifies to responsible adjacent property owners to conduct repairs. This complaint driven method means that many sidewalk defects do not receive timely attention because the City lacks staff time.

A second key finding of the sidewalk performance audit was that other municipalities have utilized various financing methods, from property tax mil levies to sidewalk utility fees to splitting maintenance cost between the property owner and the municipality.

It is estimated that for all defective or missing sidewalk segments to be brought up to standard would cost in the tens of \$millions. Additionally, the City does not have a comprehensive method of prioritization for sidewalk improvements. Furthermore, safe and convenient intersection design will require state of the art design guidelines rather than the minimum acceptable AASHTO standards.

Bicycle system fragmentation, unsafe design standards, and funding challenges

It has been said that both motorists and cyclists can be bad at the wheel, but the difference is about 4000lbs and 40mph. Bicyclists differ from their walking counterparts in that they are part of traffic. The City of Lawrence bicycle system is overwhelmingly a “share the road” approach. The little green “bicycle route” signs and pavement sharrows may be easy on the budget, but routine mixing of bicycles and cars is a major deterrent for statistically 87% of potential cyclists. Until Lawrence's bicycle system is built to conveniently connect desired destinations, and safely place cyclists on low-speed, low-volume streets or protected lanes, the rate of ridership will not increase.

The increase in bicycle lanes alongside motor vehicle lanes reflects a helpful shift in roadway lanes over to bicycles, but unprotected lanes are inappropriate on major thoroughfares posted at 45mph (on which the typical speed is 50mph). The fragmented system of “now there's a lane, now there's not” means most potential cyclists won't use the existing lanes that dump them unexpectedly into traffic. And even safe bicycle lanes will be underutilized if they terminate into a congested and unsafe intersection. No education of motorists or cyclists will overcome the fear of being hit.

For twenty years the City has had a Bicycle Advisory Committee (expanded in 2010 to include Douglas County). It makes recommendations to the governing bodies about location and design of bicycle facilities, bicycle ordinances, bicycle safety education, bicycle events, update of the bicycle system map, and coordination with bicycle clubs and schools on bicycle activities. The effectiveness of the BAC has been hamstrung by being a passive body that reviews only what comes to it (all too often after the fact), but does not have the latitude to initiate plans or projects.

Lawrence has seen 39 years of developing at least 12 plans for bicycle transportation, yet still lacks the major components of an effective bicycle transportation system – a qualified bicycle staff engineer, infrastructure design guidelines, performance criteria and data collection, a capital plan, consistent and significant fund sources, an entity to advance these independently of motor vehicle programs, and of course, a fully connected and physically safe bicycle infrastructure on the ground.

The City Commission recognized the importance of capitalizing a bicycle system build-out when it established the Non-Motorized Transportation CIP line item last year. However, the Commission deferred capitalizing that line item until there was some means to prioritize how to allocate it. Estimates for a system build-out with a safety level comfortable for 80% of cyclists would cost in the tens of \$millions.

Possible Next Steps

A one-time task force is one of several ways to fund and properly design bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, though not the most effective. Following are four policy options that would achieve these objectives (in descending order of effectiveness):

Full time professional options:

- 1) Establish a Bicycle-Pedestrian Engineering Division in Public Works, staffed by a qualified Bicycle Design Engineer, with a Pedestrian Coordinator as an assistant. This Division will regularly analyze sidewalk and bicycle facility performance data, and initiate capital projects for the annual budget. Capitalize the Non-Motorized Transportation CIP line item with \$4million annually.
- 2) Create the position of Bicycle-Pedestrian Coordinator in Public Works, qualified possibly as a transportation engineer or a transportation planner. This person will analyze data and initiate capital projects for the annual budget in coordination with MPO Planning staff and the City Engineer. Capitalize the Non-Motorized Transportation CIP line item with \$3million annually.

Part time lay-persons options:

- 3) Establish a permanent Active Transportation Advisory Board that will analyze data and initiate capital project recommendations for the annual budget. Among its membership will sit a representative from the Traffic Safety Commission and the Public Transit Advisory Committee. Staff liaisons will be an MPO Transportation Planner and a Public Works Design Engineer. Capitalize the Non-Motorized Transportation CIP line item with \$2million annually.
- 4) Establish a one-time Active Transportation Task Force that will, first of all, make recommendations to the City Commission on the three above options. City staff hiring considerations will include: professional qualifications, job descriptions, and interrelations with City staff and the Commission. Secondly, regarding the Active Transportation Advisory Board, the task force will make recommendations about the purpose, scope, governance, and membership. Thirdly, the task force will also make recommendations about the 2015 budget line item, possible source of revenues, project priorities for fund allocations, and state of the art design guidelines for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Name options for task force and/or advisory board

Essentially, all these policy considerations are focused on non-motorized means of mobility, in keeping with the Non-Motorized Transportation line item in the CIP. These policies can be characterized as: “non-motorized transportation”, “active transportation”, “bicycle-pedestrian transportation”, “bike-walk transportation”, to name a few. But the defining characteristic is being non-motorized.

Conventional transportation has high emphasis on motor vehicles of all sorts, with high power and speed, medium to large size, significant driver distraction potential, and the lion's share of pavement space and capital investment. People who walk or bicycle are disproportionately vulnerable under such circumstances, and their public safety needs require a policy that focuses specifically on shifting this asymmetrical imbalance in capital funding.

ACTION: Direct staff to prepare an RFQ for the staff positions of Bicycle Design Engineer and Pedestrian Coordinator Assistant, to be within the Public Works Department, if appropriate.

ACTION: Adopt a resolution establishing an Active Transportation Advisory Board, it's scope of work and it's membership, if appropriate.

Non-motorized Transportation Stakeholders Recommendations

Lawrence City Commission
6 East 6th Street
Lawrence KS 66044

21 January 2015

re: Active Transportation Task Force

Mayor Amyx and Commission:

On 21 January 2015, members of stakeholder groups and individuals met to further the community discussion for planning and funding active transportation infrastructure in Lawrence. Participants attended from the following organizations: LiveWell Lawrence (Healthy Built Environment Work Group), Lawrence Pedestrian Coalition, Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods, Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, Traffic Safety Commission, Joint Economic Development Council, Metropolitan Planning Organization staff, Bicycle Advisory Committee, KU Bicycle Advisory Committee, Sustainability Advisory Board, Sustainability Action Network.

Persons in attendance were: Tim Herndon, Scott White, Leslie Soden, Bonnie Uffman, Stuart Boley, Dan Dannenberg, Carol Bowen, Marilyn Hull, Erin Paden, Todd Girdler, Robert Lewis, Chris Tilden, Charlie Bryan, Jeff Severin, Michael Almon.

All attendees agreed (Todd Girdler abstained) to submit the following to the City Commission as our recommendations that:

- 1) The City Commission charter a permanent Active Transportation Advisory Board that would assume all the duties of the Bicycle Advisory Committee, with additional corresponding duties for pedestrian transportation.
- 2) The City Commission appoint an Active Transportation Task Force as soon as possible to develop the purpose, scope, governance, and membership of a permanent Active Transportation Advisory Board, and make its recommendations to the City Commission.
- 3) The charge of the Active Transportation Task Force shall be:
 - to recommend the purpose, scope, governance, and membership of an Active Transportation Advisory Board
 - to make funding recommendations for the 2015 Lawrence budget to advance the development of the city's active transportation infrastructure
 - To complete its tasks within a time frame to be determined

- 4) The scope of the Active Transportation Task Force shall:
- encompass complete streets from a pedestrian and cyclist perspective
 - consider walking and bicycling primarily as transportation
 - approach the issue of design guidelines at a macro and micro level
 - understand that design guidelines for pedestrian, bicycle, motor vehicle, and transit infrastructure are distinct from one another, and require an integrated multi-modal approach
 - consider how the governance of an Active Transportation Advisory Board would relate to the Traffic Safety Commission and the Public Transit Advisory Board
 - consider how an Active Transportation Advisory Board would recommend budget source revenues and set priorities for funding allocations
- 5) The membership of the Active Transportation Task Force shall:
- be no more than twenty members
 - emphasize advocates for pedestrians, cyclists, senior citizens, children, transit, and those with mobility disabilities
 - include representatives from
 1. Bicycle Advisory Committee
 2. Traffic Safety Commission
 3. Lawrence Pedestrian Coalition
 4. Sustainability Action Network
 5. LiveWell Lawrence
 6. K.U. Bicycle Advisory Committee
 7. Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods
 8. Lawrence Douglas-County Health Department
 9. Lawrence Police Department
 10. Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization staff
 11. Lawrence-Douglas County Office of Sustainability
 12. Lawrence Parks and Recreation Department
 13. Lawrence Public Works Department
 14. Lawrence Public Schools

We look forward to this process moving forward, and we thank you for your interest in appointing a task force as the first step.

Sincerely,

Michael Almon
(representing all the above stakeholders)

cc: David Corliss



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

Lawrence Mayor and City Commission
6 East 6th Street
Lawrence KS 66044

27 October 2014

re: Non-Motorized Transportation Advisory Board

Dear Mayor Amyx and Commissioners:

For seven years, Sustainability Action has been Lawrence's grass roots advocacy group for bicycle transportation. We have provided information on bicycle policy, design, and funding to many organizations, to City staff members, to City advisory boards, and the Commission itself. We also have been selected to serve on various City task forces as offering a bicyclist perspective, task forces such as the Cultural District Task Force, the Transit Hub 21st Street Design Charretts, and the East 8th Street Design Team Hiring Committee.

As you will recall, we made a presentation to the Commission on 13 May this year in which we requested two bicycle transportation components be funded in the Lawrence 2015 budget – a dedicated line item of approximately \$2 million per year to fund the build out of a fully functional cycling network, and a Bicycle Transportation Engineer to administer the design and construction of that build out.

Several members of the public spoke in favor of such a budget plan to have dedicated funding for non-motorized transportation. Commissioner Schumm said that “without a permanent funding source, [bicycle transportation] will continue to go nowhere”.

Partly in response to Sustainability Action's bicycle transportation initiative, the recently formed Pedestrian Coalition came to the 20 May budget hearing, and requested similar for pedestrian transportation. They felt that for that to happen, pedestrians needed a public advocacy body like the Bicycle Advisory Committee. Commissioner Schumm said he didn't know whether there should be a task force to study bicycle-pedestrian plans and funding, or whether it should be a permanent bicycle-pedestrian combined advisory board.

Then at the 17 June budget study session, the Public Works Department presented a draft proposal for a “Complete Streets Program Manager”, an attempt to cover all the bases. But the emphasis was heavily on sidewalk conditions and complaints, the Sidewalk Gap Program, and sidewalk programs in comparable cities. The proposed position was also to manage bicycle facilities and the transit system. In trying to please everyone though, this idea pleased no one, and the discussion returned to how best to balance bicycle-pedestrian concerns.

So in order to sort it all out, on 23 June this year, the Bicycle Advisory Committee held a round table discussion to determine how bicycle advocates, pedestrian advocates, and City staff and boards might collaborate on a process that would encompass both cyclists and pedestrians.

Participants agreed that bicycle and pedestrian concerns are similar and overlap, but are modes with different design and implementation needs. All agreed that both require more funding and more advocacy. The decision of the participants was to ask for a bicycle-pedestrian task force to devise recommendations of how a permanent Non-Motorized Transportation Advisory Board would operate to set priorities for funding levels and phasing, for design parameters, for administrative staff, and for infrastructure build out of both bicycle and pedestrian systems.

As a participant in that round table decision, Sustainability Action is asking that the City Commission appoint a temporary bicycle-pedestrian task force that would develop recommendations of how a permanent Non-Motorized Transportation Advisory Board would carry out the above listed duties, and others as deemed necessary.

sincerely,

Michael Almon
Bicycle Program Chair
Sustainability Action Network