

Public Involvement Approach

The public involvement component of the study initially focused upon the education aspects of access management by providing information on access management, dealing with typical questions that arise and even the showing of a FHWA Access Management video that attempts to address economic impacts.

Public Opinion Survey

At the beginning of the study process, a telephone survey was conducted of residents within the City of Lawrence to ascertain the degree of problems the community perceived along the 23rd Street corridor as well as their acceptability of various potential solutions. A summary of the findings is provided here along with a few pertinent charts. The complete survey document and instrument is provided in the Appendix.

The purpose of the survey was to gather statistically representative input about a variety of issues including:

- the primary reasons residents travel on 23rd Street
- the frequency of travel on 23rd Street
- concerns about traffic congestion
- safety concerns
- concerns about access to businesses along 23rd Street
- intersections that residents think need the most improvement

The survey was administered by phone to a randomly selected sample of households in the city. Of the 618 households that were contacted, 400 (or 65%) agreed to complete the survey. The sample of 400 households has a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 5%. The following presents some of the major findings of the survey.

Frequency that Residents Travel on 23rd Street

More than half (62%) of those surveyed said they travel on 23rd Street at least once a day. More than three-fourths (84%) of those surveyed travel on the street at least a few times a week. Only 1% of those surveyed indicated that they never travel on 23rd Street.

Purpose of Travel on 23rd Street

On average, residents indicated that 49% of their trips on 23rd Street involved travel to/from their home and destinations along 23rd Street; 31% of their trips involved travel to/from their home and other destinations in Lawrence, and 20% of their trips on 23rd Street involved travel to/from their home and destinations outside Lawrence.

Residents Think 23rd Street is Much More Congested Than Other Roadways in Lawrence

Most residents, 67%, said that 23rd Street was much more congested than other major roadways in Lawrence. Twenty-one percent of those surveyed said it was slightly more congested and 12% said that 23rd Street had about the same level of congestion as other major streets in Lawrence.

Residents Think Congestion on 23rd Street Has Increased Significantly

More than half (51%) of those surveyed said they think it takes significantly longer to drive from one side of Lawrence to the other than it did five years ago; 26% thought it takes slightly longer, and 8% thought it takes about the same amount of time. Only one percent (1%) thought the travel time across the City had decreased. Fourteen percent (14%) did not have an opinion.

Intersections Along 23rd Street that Residents Think Cause the Most Difficulty

The two intersections that residents were most concerned about along 23rd Street were the intersections at Iowa (40%) and Louisiana (34%). None of the other intersections along 23rd Street were mentioned by more than 7% of the respondents.

Residents Think Travel on 23rd Street Has Become More Dangerous During the Past 5 Years

Almost half (44%) of those surveyed thought that travel along 23rd Street has become "more dangerous" (32%) or "much more dangerous" (12%) during the past five years. Thirty-six percent (36%) thought the level of safety has stayed the same; only 4% thought travel had become safer. Sixteen percent (16%) did not have an opinion.

Most Important Issues to Consider When Determining Improvements to 23rd Street

Based on the top two choices given by respondents, the two most important issues to consider when determining the types of improvements to make to 23rd Street are: driver safety (71%) and improving traffic flow (67%). Other factors to consider include: access to business and retail areas along 23rd Street (33%), bicycle and pedestrian mobility (20%), and scenic/beautification enhancements (2%).

Residents Are Generally Concerned About Safety on 23rd Street

More than three-fourths (81%) of those surveyed said they were either very or somewhat concerned about safety along 23rd Street; 19% indicated that they were not concerned.

Residents Are Generally Willing to Drive Farther to Get to Destinations Along 23rd Street in Exchange for Safety and Traffic Flow Improvements

Ninety-two percent (92%) of those surveyed said they were either very willing (71%) or somewhat willing (21%) to drive a little farther to get to destinations along 23rd Street if the reason for driving farther was related to safety and traffic flow improvements. Only 7% of those surveyed were not willing to drive a longer distance; 1% did not have an opinion.

Residents Think Safety Improvements Are Enough to Justify Enhancements to 23rd Street

Nearly three-fourths (70%) thought safety improvements alone would be enough to justify improvements along 23rd Street; 23% did not think safety improvements alone would be enough to justify improvements along 23rd Street and 7% did not have an opinion.

Concerns About Traveling on 23rd Street

More than three fourths of those surveyed were either very or somewhat concerned about each of the following items when they travel on 23rd Street: delays at traffic signals (85%), how well traffic signals are coordinated (84%), the number of vehicles in queues at traffic signals (84%), and the number of vehicles turning to/from retail and commercial driveways along 23rd Street (81%). Residents were less concerned about lighting and the visual appearance of the street.

Top Priorities

From a list of three priorities for transportation, residents were asked to identify the one they thought should be the top priority for the City. Forty-four percent (44%) selected “developing alternative routes to relieve congestion on 23rd Street,” 31% selected “making traffic flow and access improvements to 23rd Street,” 22% selected “developing alternative forms of transportation, such as public transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities,” and 3% did not have an opinion.

Presentations

Several presentations were made throughout the course of the study. A summary list of the presentations, including their dates and major topics are shown below.

May 17, 2000	City Commission & Planning Commission Joint Study Session: Top 3 Questions of Access Management by Chris Huffman 23 rd Street Corridor’s Guiding Principles by TranSystems
July 18, 2000	Leadership Briefing: Development of Access Management Options
April 18, 2001	City Commission & Planning Commission Joint Study Session: Preliminary Recommendations
March 13, 2002	Planning Commission: Draft Report & Recommendations

In general, the study sessions were opportunities to present and discuss material related to the study process, initial findings and preliminary recommendations. In addition to these study sessions, briefings and presentations were given to various groups and committees to inform officials of the study's progress.

Public Input Meetings

Two public meetings were conducted during the study. The first meeting was held on October 4, 2000 and the second meeting on April 30, 2001. The purpose of the first meeting was to inform the public of the study, its assessment of the existing conditions as well as to present some of the initial possibilities of access management tools and techniques being potentially applied along the 23rd Street corridor. Thirty people attended the first meeting and approximately 75 people attended the second meeting and associated briefing sessions. Many of the attendees for the second series of meetings attended more than once. The handouts described a brief summary of material presented. Critical information presented included the phasing summary of the preliminary recommendations.

The following are selected comments raised during the Public Meetings.

Selected Public Comments

- *Improve appearance of Lawrence's gateways. Most impressive thing was the concept of giving Lawrence an identity with lamps and landscaping.*
- *Questions on raised medians. Is it a money pit? Constant upkeep and repair. How affect businesses? Raised medians need to be maintained if used. They are usually not in Lawrence.*
- *This addresses the problems, which will not be solved by a SLT, if that project ever gets done.*
- *Remove pole signs and billboards and replace with monument signs.*
- *Remove median at 23rd and Louisiana.*
- *Please make incremental changes, add sidewalks and lighting and trees. Take care of access as redevelopment occurs.*
- *Require setbacks for buildings to leave room for frontage roads.*
- *Get rid of power lines!*
- *Against raised medians. Strongly suggest that completing the SLT will be a big help in reducing congestion and accidents.*
- *Cyclists have only dangerous options east of Iowa. Consider interface of bike lanes on Naismith and Louisiana.*
- *Any project to "fix" 23rd Street is going to cost a lot of money and still not address the basic problem of too many cars in a limited space. I tend to use 21st and 27th Streets where I can.*
- *Review each situation as being unique.*
- *Capacity of 23rd St. is limited, handling projected traffic volumes will have to be done on other roads. 23rd St. will still be a major commercial and business magnet. Alternative routes are a must.*

- *Iowa crossing is impossible for pedestrians. Raised medians unless wide and grassy and can be seen aren't good. U-turns are not safe.*

At the Public Meeting, attendees were asked to complete a questionnaire. The responses to the questionnaire are summarized below. Approximately 20 persons completed all or a portion of the questionnaire. The responses are shown both numerically and by percentage for the five possible options of strongly agree, agree, don't know, disagree or strongly disagree.

An average of the responses is also provided for review. If one assumes that a corresponding 1 through 5 is associated with strongly agree to strongly disagree, it can be said that an average of 2.5 or less would mean basic agreement while an average of 3.5 or more would mean basic disagreement. There were no responses that indicated basic disagreement, although there were several responses that people indicated they did not know enough about the issue to provide an opinion. The responses are summarized in the two categories of basic agreement and don't know.

Summary Feedback from 1st Public Meeting

Basic Agreement

- 85% agree with filling in sidewalk gaps and 75% agree with constructing a multi-use path on one side.
- 80% agree with corridor-wide traffic signal coordination.
- 75% favor increasing capacity at the intersection of Iowa Street with the addition of dual left turn lanes.
- 75% favor improving intersection operations at Haskell and Harper.
- 75% agree with modifying driveways to improve spacing and clearances.

Don't Know

- 45% don't know about the alignment of Silicon and Ponderosa
- 45% don't know about installing an interchange at Noria and closing the median opening at East Hills Business Park.
- 45% don't know about installing an interchange at Noria and a bridge at East Hills Business Park.

The following are selected comments raised during the course of the Public Meetings. The comments are summarized as well as their responses. Many of these responses were provided at the time of the meeting.

U-turns are unsafe.

Studies have shown that u-turns may actually reduce accident potential. The u-turns proposed at signalized intersections occur with the left-turn phase and are protected from opposing vehicles. One local example of this configuration is at Metcalf Avenue and 105th Street in Overland Park in the northbound direction.

The construction impacts will put the businesses "out of business".

While that is certainly not the intent of the recommendation, various economic studies do indicate that the construction phase represents the most significant period of economic impacts for businesses. Various mitigation measures could be pursued to minimize impacts.

Some businesses need their two driveways for delivery accessibility and internal circulation. Since large trucks can't make the u-turns, how do I get deliveries?

The suggestions for possible driveway removal, relocation or consolidation are for illustrative purposes to indicate potential access management improvements. Because of the varying sizes of property frontage, the lack of a parallel road system and limited side-street access for mid-block properties, not all of the typical access management guidelines for driveway placement can be met. Consequently, the internal circulation of every property has not been reviewed in detail. Certain properties may need two driveways to maintain their delivery accessibility.

Various studies indicate that raised medians can cause delivery inconvenience or changes to delivery access for some businesses along a corridor. Similar impacts could be expected along 23rd Street, yet there does exist safe means of providing access for large vehicles.

Accidents primarily occur at intersections.

Accident data for the most recent three years identified 60% of the accidents occurring at intersections and the remaining 40% occurring at mid-block. Typically, on corridors with fewer access points, the percentage of mid-block accidents to the total number of accidents might be less than 20%. The section between Barker and Harper does exhibit a slightly less mid-block accident rate, yet this is in part due to the former railroad bridge that eliminates access to 23rd Street. Another common factor is the reporting of accidents at the nearest intersection rather than at a driveway. The fact remains that the corridor exhibits an increase in the accident rate as the rate of access points increases, which is also well documented by other national studies.

Build the SLT and the problems will disappear.

This study focuses upon the physical aspects of the corridor, for example the relationship of access points to the number accidents. Those physical aspects are independent of the traffic volumes along the corridor. Prior origin-destination studies indicate the commercial attractions along 23rd Street generate a significant amount of the traffic on the corridor. While the SLT or other parallel may have transportation benefits on their own, the physical aspects of the corridor will not change without physical changes.

The problems aren't that bad, just the fix the signals.

The access issues have been documented along the four and one-half mile long corridor. Those issues vary by segment, and in relative terms this segment between Barker and Harper has fewer issues and constraints than other

segments. Through the prior establishment of a wide right-of-way, this segment also has greater opportunities to implement some access management techniques than possible in other segments. The options evaluated and recommended are intended to address existing and potential future problems, more in a pro-active manner than a reactive manner. Traffic signal coordination is one of the many tools of access management and while often effective it is very much dependent signal spacing, cross street traffic volumes, and the ability to maintain consistent speeds on the mainline. Turning movements to both left-turn lanes and driveways create friction and reduce through travel speeds. Without improved access management the benefits of traffic signal coordination will not be realized.

How will emergency access be provided?

Discussions with the City Fire Department has brought to light concerns about emergency access to properties on the south side of 23rd Street. An emergency response station is located immediately north of 23rd Street off Harper. The next emergency response station serving this area is from Iowa Street. Depending upon the property requiring service, emergency response times may be increased because of the access restrictions of the raised median. This is not always the case with a raised median, yet with the lack of parallel roadways, limited side street access and internal cross circulation among the small properties it is acknowledged that in certain locations emergency response will also be restricted. To date there are no current plans to establish an emergency response station south of 23rd Street which could address the response issue. While additional median breaks could be considered to improve accessibility, the issues of defined above would still remain. If enough median opening could be provided to allow accessibility the purpose of the raised is defeated.

The 10-foot multi-use path would be better suited north of town rather than east of town as there are more destinations north of town.

The primary reason for the east path is to provide future community connections to Eudora, DeSoto, and Lenexa. This is long-term goal of the SmartGrowth K-10 Corridor. As stated earlier, the Bicycle Advisory Committee will determine approval of the path's alignment.

Overall the enhancement recommendations (special landscape screening, placing utilities underground, and filling in sidewalk gaps) were well received at the community briefings. Residents were favorable to the restoration of the Breezedale monuments, the ornamental lighting with banners and other site amenities proposed. Residents also agreed the Massachusetts intersection is not particularly safe for pedestrians and enhanced crosswalks would be helpful.

Although some residents agreed with providing continuous sidewalk on both sides, some were concerned with the loss of property due to additional right-of-way acquisition and who would be responsible for the cost of the new sidewalk. The greatest concern is that they lose property and also pay for the sidewalk improvement. These questions will

need to be addressed by the City of Lawrence in order to gain support for this particular improvement.

With many business owners opposed to the median, the enhancements in the median were also opposed. One business owner commented that they did not want any trees in front of their business, as trees would block the view of their business. It should be noted that placement of trees in the center median rather than placement on the perimeter of the corridor would have less impact on businesses. If the raised median is not developed within this segment, enhancement applications could still be applied at key intersections, reducing the perceived impact on businesses.

The data from the responses has been tabulated and is shown in the attached table. In summary approximately 28 to 30 persons completed all or a portion of the questionnaire. The responses are shown both numerically and by percentage for the five possible options of strongly agree, agree, don't know, disagree or strongly disagree.

Summary Feedback from Public Meeting No. 2

Basic Agreement

- 77% agree with corridor-wide traffic signal coordination.
- 70% agree with filling in sidewalk gaps or constructing a multi-use path on one side.
- 63% favor increasing capacity at the intersection of Iowa Street with the addition of dual left turn lanes.
- 50% agree with under grounding of utilities.
- 50% agree with reducing the number of median openings on the divided roadway between Harper and Noria Road.

Basic Disagreement

- 67% disagree with raised medians (continuous) to control turning movements.
- 63% disagree with widening the roadway to increase capacity and accommodate u-turns.
- 60% disagree with the overall segment recommendations between Barker and Harper.
- 60% disagree with the overall suggested phasing of projects.
- 53% disagree with improving the intersections at Haskell and Harper.
- 53% disagree with constructing an interchange at Noria and closing the median at East Hills Business Park.
- 50% disagree with the projects identified in the Mid-Term period (2005-2010).
- 50% disagree with providing enhancements such as landscaping, gateways, etc in the segment between Louisiana and Barker.
- 50% disagree with providing enhancements such as landscaping, gateways, etc in the segment between Barker and Harper.

In review of the data, it is evident that several responses were “bullet” votes. Ten such responses would fall in this category, one response all for “strongly agree”, one

response all for “strongly disagree”, and eight responses with the majority (95%) of the responses being “strongly disagree”. Such bullet voting would have a tendency to skew the data. Only five questions received a “Don’t Know” of 15% or higher.

Website

A website (www.k10corridor.com) was established in October 2000 and was updated several times to include the results of the public opinion survey as well as material presented at the public meetings. The majority of those providing comments say they use the road daily and live in Lawrence. As a trip purpose, work accounts for more than half of the respondents with the remainder either shopping or having a residence along the corridor. The majority are mainly concerned solely with congestion, some solely with speed or safety and other a combination of all three. Their priorities were targeted to alternative transportation, although some identified flow and access their main priority.