



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

Mayor Bob Schumm & Commission
Lawrence City Hall
6 East 6th St.
Lawrence KS 66044

19 October 2012

re: Project PW1212 - - 9th St. bicycle lanes from Tennessee to Kentucky

Mayor Schumm:

Sustainability Action supports the inclusion of bicycle lanes in this key area of 9th Street, moving that much closer to linking the existing bicycle corridor directly to downtown.

We also want to commend Public Works staff for their pro-active stance on bicycle transportation. When City staff actively looks for opportunities to complete the bicycle network, they are applying the Complete Streets Policy as intended, and relieving the public of the need to always be monitoring transportation plans.

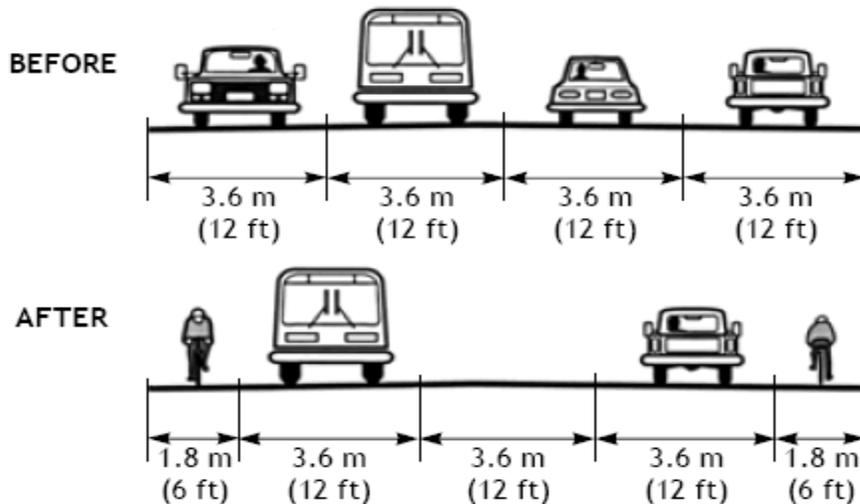
When comparing how this design project was managed to that of the 9th Street bicycle lanes adopted in June of 2009, it is apparent that Lawrence has made great strides toward more equitable transportation opportunities.

- In 2009, there was no acknowledgement of 9th Street having been designated a key bicycle connector from K.U. to downtown. There also was no recognition that this corridor had the highest bicycle-auto accident rate in the City, and the project was designed without bicycle lanes. Today, City staff understands the value of leveraging our investment in traffic safety by extending the 2009 bicycle lanes farther east.
- In 2009, City staff did not attempt a parking study to consider removal of underutilized parking. It fell on myself personally to conduct the research and contact all the property owners along 9th Street. Of 24 merchants, only 3 were opposed. Today, the parking study by City staff represents an appropriate use of staff time, and allows them and yourselves to make informed choices.
- In 2009, City staff maintained that auto lanes narrower than 12 feet would compromise traffic flow. Today, they understand that 10 foot lanes can perform just as well, simultaneously providing a traffic calming effect.
- In 2009, without a Lawrence Peak Oil Plan, there was little concern for reducing fossil fueled transportation. Today, that Plan not only calls for more bicycles, transit, electric vehicles and jitneys, but also recommends to “Reduce the number of automobile parking spaces required per development” (Appendix B, Sec. E, Parking).

Though this one block project does not entail a huge physical profile, it's policy implications are significant. It demonstrates that Lawrence is reassessing our local priorities in light of global energy depletion, and measuring our progress by more than just the economic growth yardstick.

And a final thought in anticipating the next phase of 9th Street bicycle lanes to the west of Mississippi St. It has been demonstrated that replacing four auto lanes with two traffic lanes and a center turn lane enhances traffic flow in congested areas. By doing this on 9th Street from Mississippi St. to Emory Rd. (where you already are adding auto turn lanes), it would provide enough pavement width for bicycle lanes on both sides of 9th Street (this section has no on-street parking).

9th Street, Mississippi to Emory



This is a discussion that I have already had with David Cronin, City Engineer. I believe he may consider this option for the near future, and I trust you would give your support to such a proposal. After the Commission added the bicycle lanes to the 2009 9th St. project, the most common question raised was “why didn't they add bicycle lanes west of Mississippi?” I say it's nigh time they be added. It would be wise to schedule this section of 9th Street for microsurfacing, at which time the lane striping could be changed to include bicycle lanes.

Sustainability Action is pleased to work with Mr. Cronin as City Engineer, and we thank the Commission for appointing him.

Sincerely,

Michael Almon

cc: David Cronin, Charlie Bryan, Marilyn Hull