



# 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 2016 Budget

26 May 2015

Sustainability Action Network has for eight years been Lawrence's grassroots bicycle transportation advocate. The goal of our Bicycle Program is the reduction of motor vehicle trips per day, matched by an increased number of trips by non-motorized vehicles. While we also want better sidewalks, we emphasize the bicycle as a vehicle that closely competes with motor vehicles in covering distances quickly, and because it uses no petroleum.

Transportation accounts for 18% of typical U.S. household expenditures, and accounts for 65% of oil consumption in Lawrence (Lawrence Peak Oil Plan, page 13), resulting in a significant portion of our CO2 emissions. Transportation expenditures account for an average 11% of the City of Lawrence budget expenditures, or \$20,823,766 in the 2015 budget (CIP transportation projects, plus the funds for Public Parking, Public Transit, Street Maintenance, Engineering, Traffic Engineering, and Street Lighting).

To clarify an important issue, I don't recall anyone saying that the City is doing nothing for people who walk or bicycle. Rather, the contention is that budget allocations for sidewalks and bicycle lanes have, for 39 years, been but a fraction of motor vehicle allocations. Transportation 2040 states that only 0.82% goes annually to bikeways and sidewalks. Although in all fairness, the past two budgets have been more favorable than that.

Based on Public Works figures for 2015, \$1.7 million is being spent this year on bikeways and sidewalks, or 8% of total transportation allocations. But unlike the one-time huge infusion of SLT dollars this year, a more typical budget year spends \$430,000 on bikeways and sidewalks, which is only 2% of total transportation allocations. However you compute it, those percentages continue to be quite small.

Considering this disproportionate spending, and the how large a role transportation plays in the Lawrence economy and the City budget as well, Sustainability Action has identified bicycle transportation as having multiple benefits for our community.

- Fewer trips by motor vehicles means less auto lane congestion, lower auto parking requirements, less pavement damage, and shorter intersection queues and wait times.
- Cutting that 65% motor vehicle fraction of Lawrence's oil consumption would help to achieve our targeted reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Douglas County is about to be required to comply with the Kansas City EPA ozone non-attainment standards as part of the MO-KS Combined Statistical Area, with much of the economic costs resulting from motor vehicle exhaust.

- Most notably, enhancing our bicycle transportation system would prove attractive not only for quality new industrial jobs but also for boosting our tourism.

That last point is what plays most prominently in the Lawrence budget deliberations. The Commission would be wise to think “bicycle as transportation” (distinct from fitness or recreation) as a capital investment with a healthy return.

From the report *Protected Bicycle Lanes Mean Business* - “City leaders find that building high-quality bicycle networks is an efficient and appealing way to move more people in the same amount of space. Companies and cities are scrambling to attract the most talented Millennials and Generation X-ers. Most appealing are protected bicycle lanes that physically separate bicycles from auto traffic and sidewalks, and promote economic growth in several ways. By extending the geographic range of travel, protected bicycle lanes help neighborhoods redevelop without waiting years for new transit service to debut. Employees who benefit from the gentle exercise of pedaling to work help boost overall hourly productivity. And entrepreneurial innovators are discovering that protected bicycle lanes can help retailers get more customers in the door.”

## BIKE SHOPPING: SMALLER TRIPS, MORE VISITS

People who arrive to a business on bike spend less per visit but visit more often, resulting in more money spent overall per month. <sup>12</sup>

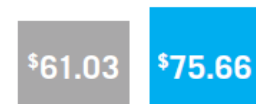
In Portland, OR, people who traveled to a shopping area by bike spent 24% more per month than those who traveled by car.

Studies found similar trends in Toronto and three cities in New Zealand.

AVERAGE SPENDING PER TRIP



AVERAGE SPENDING PER MONTH



## SMALLER PARKING SPACE, MORE VALUE

19 cents: retail revenue per hour per square foot of on-street auto parking.

69 cents: retail revenue per hour per square foot of bike parking. <sup>13</sup>

Melbourne, Australia, 2008



From the report *How Bicycles Bring Business* - “According to the NYC DOT, retail sales on Ninth Avenue are up 49 percent since the street’s protected bike lanes were installed; that’s 16 times the area growth rate. City officials are recognizing that the small cost of bicycle infrastructure provides a big payoff for taxpayers and business owners. A recent study from North Carolina’s Outer Banks showed that the one-time investment of \$6.7 million for a network of bicycle lanes has yielded an annual nine-to-one return, thanks to increased bicycle tourism.”

An Oregon study by Dean Runyan Associates measured the impact of bicycle tourism, and based on a survey of about 5,000 people, it found that vacationing bicyclists spent \$400 million last year. And the report *Build It And They Will Come* concludes - "Beginning in 1990, Portland OR began investing \$5 million per year in bicycle infrastructure, resulting in bicycle transportation use rates now higher than the national average, averaging 10% of vehicle trips." The report concludes "Bicycling provides the best return on investment for transportation dollar spent, in terms of providing personal mobility".

Finally, an Auckland New Zealand study, *Costs & Benefits of Bicycle Commuting* states - "If a city built a network of separated lanes and slowed down traffic speeds, it could increase cycling by 40% by 2040; but adding only a few lanes in a few places might increase bicycle traffic by only 5%. The smaller investment would have little impact".

The economic development experienced by other communities can be a model for Lawrence. As during the 2014 and the 2015 budget hearings, Sustainability Action is recommending that the City create a Bicycle Engineering Division within the General Operating Fund 001, possibly numbered Division 3050. This Division should be staffed full time by a Bicycle Transportation Engineer and a Pedestrian Coordinator.

We also recommend that the CIP line item "Non-motorized Transportation" be capitalized in 2016 with \$2 million, half for protected bicycle lanes and half for sidewalks. If Lawrence is to realize a meaningful economic benefit from non-motorized transportation, we will need to commit to a significant capital investment.

There are many revenue sources to fund capital projects including the following:

- Property tax – the \$3million budgeted for East 9th complete streets is property tax.
- Sales tax, 2008 – 0.30 % for streets, sidewalks, bicycle trails, other infrastructure; appropriate at present because bicycle lanes are on or beside the streets.
- Sales tax, 1994 – 1% "including but not limited to the following": parks and recreation facilities
- Sales tax, TDD – 1% for Transportation Development Districts; designate bicycle transportation districts (such as downtown) and levy tax.
- Transient guest tax – 6% on tourist accommodations; revenues increased by becoming an attractive bicycling community.
- Street safety fee – improve public safety with protected bicycle lanes, sidewalks, intersection improvements, etc; modeled on Portland OR progressive income tax.
- Bike-Ped utility – same objectives as street safety fee, but using a fixed household and business fee. Could be a Bike-Ped Fund to track revenue over expenses.
- Transportation Demand Management, TDM – typical revenue sources are: fuel taxes (Gas Tax Fund), parking fees (Public Parking Fund), carbon tax levied at the pump.
- Downtown night parking meter fee – incentive to walk or bicycle to the bars.

The salaries for a Bicycle Transportation Engineer and a Pedestrian Coordinator would come from the General Operating Fund.

Some Commissioners may be inclined to wait for recommendations from the Pedestrian Bicycle Issues Task Force, which will be prioritizing which sidewalk and bikeway gaps should be constructed first. That's all good and fine, but those recommendations won't be available until early 2016.

Here are some reasons why Sustainability Action urges you hire bicycle-pedestrian staff and allocate project dollars now:

1. If you budget the funds now, you will have a Bicycle Engineer ready in 2016 to implement the Task Force projects, and most importantly, funding for “shovel ready” projects. If you don't budget for staff and project dollars now, a year will be lost until the 2017 construction cycle.
2. In order to have bicycle-pedestrian staff ready to move in 2016, those positions will need to be advertised soon, for hiring in early 2016.
3. It is budget-smart to increase community mobility through bicycling and walking, which move more people per dollar spent, reduce motor vehicle congestion, more efficiently utilize parking space, and reduce pavement maintenance costs.
4. An investment in a walkable-bikeable community is known to provide a high rate of return, something even the Chamber of Commerce would not choose to delay.
5. As politicians, the Commission aspires to please all the people. A study by People For Bikes found that protected bicycle lanes appeal to everyone – people who walk, people who cycle, and people who drive. They noted “There’s a very clear delineation ... this is where the bikes belong, and this is where the cars belong. You just want those choices to be made very, very clear for you. Whether you biked or didn’t bike, you got it.”
6. Commissioners have stressed a number of times that providing for public safety and infrastructure are core functions of City government. Protected bicycle lanes and safe sidewalks and intersections meet both those stipulations.
7. Other communities, both large and small, have not invested heavily in walking and bicycling purely out of altruism. They have found that they gain a competitive edge in attracting the best industry and capturing tourist dollars.

Sustainability Action urges you to allocate City funds in the 2016 budget to hire a Bicycle Transportation Engineer and a Pedestrian Coordinator, and capitalize the “Non-motorized Transportation” CIP line item with \$2 million. Please make this investment for our children, for a robust transportation system, and for our entire community.

Thank you,

Michael Almon