



# Sustainability Action Network

Local Solutions for Transition to a Sustainable Economy

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a Kansas 501(C)(3) not-for-profit

## City of Lawrence 2014 Budget

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When City Transportation Planners recently conducted public open houses regarding the Transportation 2040 Plan (T2040), Sustainability Action submitted recommended revisions to the Plan. Among them, Sustainability Action had recommended that the City create a Bicycle Network Engineering Division which will earmark budget revenues for construction and maintenance of bicycle facilities – boulevards, lanes, side paths, trails, bridges, and parking. But City staff did not intend the T2040 open houses to gather any feedback for incorporation into the T2040 Plan. They told us that the proper place to address our proposal is in the City Budget.

Therefore, for consideration in the 2014 Budget, we are recommending that the Commission direct staff to create a Bicycle Network 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 Public Works, and be headed by a Bicycle Division Manager under the Assistant Director of Infrastructure & Maintenance.

As most people are aware, in order to reduce our human carbon footprint we need to keep most of the fossil fuels in the ground. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, 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 its 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 (please do not mistake the “little green bike” signs as meaningful infrastructure; 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 (see: [2013 Project Schedule - Gantt Chart.pdf](#)). If the 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. For example, if re-striping is possible on road reconstruction or overlay, they piggyback bicycle lanes onto the auto project. Notwithstanding some Parks & Recreation funding of recreation trails, there have been no Public Works policies or protocols to identify, finance, and construct bicycle transportation infrastructure for its own merit, as independent from auto street projects.

It is indicative of the auto-centric priorities in the Public Works Department that the word “bicycle” does not appear anywhere in their Division descriptions in the 2014 Budget. None of the Public Works Divisions – Street Maintenance, Engineering, or Traffic Engineering – mention bicycles under “Profile”, “Accomplishments”, “Significant Issues” or “Major Goals & Objectives”. This overwhelming focus on auto infrastructure is why for three decades or more, incidental bicycle projects have been a step-child of the predominant auto projects, typically as an afterthought. Public Works ostensibly is responsible for implementing all Lawrence bicycle plans, but they must be provided adequate direction and means if they are truly to be expected to accomplish it.

The Public Works “side-door” approach to financing bicycle transportation is the key reason that the bicycle infrastructure is so fragmented. Infrastructure segments occur 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 (see: Sidewalk, Share Use Path, & Bike Lane Projects for 2014, Recommended 2014 Budget).

After decades of public bicycle advocacy, official delay can no longer be justified by the time-worn question “Where’s the constituency?” 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.

Now finally with the Complete Streets Policy, the Public Works Department is beginning to construct more bicycle infrastructure, but they are hamstrung by inadequate funding (the most frequently given excuse). Implementation is always enabled by revenues, and revenue follows political will. If the City of Lawrence is to make good on the political promise of Complete Streets, the Commission must dedicate funding toward that end.

The 2014 Budget proposal by Sustainability Action is in three parts:

- The Commission shall create a Division within the General Operating Fund titled the Bicycle Network Engineering Division, operating in Public Works, and responsible for construction and maintenance of bicycle facilities – boulevards, lanes, side paths, trails, bridges, and parking.
- The Commission shall dedicate to the construction and maintenance of bicycle infrastructure the equivalent of 25% of all transportation related revenues (excluding personnel services) above and beyond the revenues regularly allocated for bicycles as part of selected auto projects.

Excluding personnel services, the 2014 expenditures for Street Maintenance, Engineering, Traffic Engineering, and Street Lights totals \$3,987,027. The Bicycle Network Engineering Division therefore would be budgeted \$996,757.

- The Commission shall create a position of Bicycle Division Manager to head the Bicycle Network Engineering Division. 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 coordinate with the Transportation Planners in prioritizing projects for construction.

As in years past, the City Manager has prepared a highly professional recommended budget to be commended for its intricacies and thoroughness. But it is not his role to be creating new Divisions or personnel positions. That 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.

To paraphrase J. Pierpont Morgan (referring to his attorney), we don't need a budget analyst to tell us what we can't do; we want a budget analyst to tell us how to do what it is we want to do. Bicycles have been on the back burner for 30 years. Bicycles have remained in the budgetary "Unfunded or Partially Funded Projects" for too long. It is nigh time that the Commission find the political will to fund bicycle infrastructure fully, and direct the City Manager to determine how to do it.