



May 10, 2018

City of Lawrence Public Works Dept.  
c/o Mark Thiel  
City Hall  
6 E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Lawrence, KS 66044

RE: Statement on Proposed Return of Tour of Lawrence Downtown Bicycle Race on July 1, 2018

Dear Mark and City Event Committee,

On behalf of the Downtown Lawrence, Inc. Board of Directors we are providing this statement of our position regarding the proposed return of the Tour of Lawrence Bicycle Race over the weekend of June 29-July 1. Our organization had a preliminary meeting to discuss the race with Cindy Bracker of the Tour of Lawrence Committee in late February 2018 along with Michael Davidson and Kim Anspach of eXplore Lawrence. At that time, it was communicated to Ms. Bracker and the Tour of Lawrence Committee that DLI and downtown business owners have felt the negative economic impact of the course and street closures for that race for a number of years. As such, it was requested that the committee look into an alternate course and timeframes for the races that day.

Recently, Ms. Bracker attended our Downtown Lawrence, Inc. Board meeting and spoke about the plans for bringing the Tour of Lawrence Race back to Lawrence and about the Downtown Criterium race scheduled for Sunday, July 1, in particular. According to Ms. Bracker, the committee had looked into alternate courses, earlier/late start times and a more condensed race schedule, however, the committee decided not to change to the proposed course or timeframe. The race course, as proposed, would close all of downtown from 7<sup>th</sup> Street to 10<sup>th</sup> Street and from Vermont Street to New Hampshire Street for an entire weekend business day, which would have a significant economic impact on downtown businesses and impact the services for the church community which meets at the Lawrence Arts Center. The closure of pedestrian and vehicle access would mean that customers and merchants will have difficulty traveling downtown and potential customers may avoid downtown businesses altogether. The course also effectively cuts off all alley access, the New Hampshire and Vermont Street parking garages, and the large surface City parking lots along those streets.

The long closure time coupled with lack of a large percentage of downtown parking is not a sustainable model for this race, which the race committee anticipates will attract approximately 150 riders competing in 19 different categories. Downtown businesses will be closed off to vehicular and foot traffic on a crucial weekend day for both retailers and restaurants. When this race last occurred, in July of 2016, DLI members reported via a post-event economic impact survey that they experienced a decrease in sales from 5%-98% compared to prior years, with the average decrease of approximately one third of average sales. It is apparent this event will have a major, negative impact on sales and sales tax collections.

While we agree that the Tour of Lawrence is a unique event with growth potential, the current course layout and timeline places a tremendous strain on downtown businesses. Rather than continuing this pressure on the



businesses that call downtown home, we firmly request that the race committee compromise by integrating the following into their event:

- An alternate course that does not involve a multi-block closure of Mass. Street – possibly stretching into the neighborhoods both east and west of downtown and allowing several major cross streets to remain open.
- An earlier start and finish time, as well as a condensed race schedule, which would allow for a shorter street closure period on Mass. Street as well as side streets.
- A course that does not cut off access to key events (such as church services), parking garages, large surface lots, and would allow at least some alleyways to remain open.
- A liaison from the race committee to answer questions and educate downtown business owners as to the race details and schedule, closure times, and share the plan to allow business owners, employees and customers who need to gain access to blocks affected by the closure.

DLI would like to see this event succeed and develop a regional and national following in future years. According to the race committee, this is their goal as well. DLI is willing to support the event, but the course, timeline, and collaboration must be adjusted to allow downtown businesses to stay open for the weekend.

Thank you,

Downtown Lawrence, Inc. Board of Directors

cc: Tom Markus, City Manager