

Amanda Sahin

From: Ward Lyles <wlyles9@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 04, 2018 10:39 AM
To: jjzieg@sunflower.com; David Cronin; michele.dillon@gmail.com; Steve Evans; earthpaden@hotmail.com; rkmay@usd497.org; cbryan@ldchealth.org; dhultine@ku.edu; cottagecat@aol.com
Cc: Charles Higginson; knemethutt@tuttle@gmail.com; Amanda Sahin; danielppoull@gmail.com; Zachary Baker
Subject: Pedestrian Safety Decision Before Transportation Commission on March 5th

Dear Transportation Commission Members,

I respectfully request that you ask city staff to restudy the request for pedestrian safety improvements along Tennessee Street between 6th and 9th streets. In my professional opinion - and my personal experience in the area, I find the city staff report memo and analysis summarized therein substantially inadequate to make a reasonable decision.

In regards to my background, I am an Old West Lawrence resident (812 Indiana Street) and parent of three school-age children who walk to schools in the area. I also am a professor of Urban Planning at the University of Kansas (PhD), a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), and spent five years as a transportation planner prior to being a professor.

My request for you to ask city staff to restudy the pedestrian safety issues is based on multiple concerns laid out below. More specifically, I ask that you require city staff to generate data on pedestrian and traffic counts in these locations for at least five different dates, including a mixture of weekdays and weekends, variations in season, and variations of major event days and non-event days. Doing so will provide a much more thorough and accurate assessment of the issues at hand.

Unfortunately, for work reasons, I cannot be present at your March 5th meeting to outline these issues and my request to you in person. I only found out about this pending decision and the date of your meeting yesterday. As a side note, I because of this timing, I have not had a prior opportunity to express my concerns to city staff, for which I apologize to them. Out of professional courtesy I would preferred to raise my concerns to them directly rather than through an email to so many people.

My concerns with the three-page city staff report memo from Zach Baker to David Cronin center around the data used to make the recommendation.

Namely, if the city sought to cook the books, so to speak, to minimize the perceived need for pedestrian improvements, you could hardly do better than November 1st, 2017. For background, 11-1-17 was a Wednesday and the temperature that day was 10 degrees below normal with windy conditions in the morning and foggy conditions in the evening. So, please consider the following about the stretch of Tennessee St. between 6th and 9th streets:

- There are two blocks of city parks, including a playground for small children, which receive maximum use when the weather is warm and on the weekends. A cool Wednesday when children are in school is clearly unrepresentative for this major land use.
- The main outdoor city pool is in the block between Tennessee and Kentucky, 7th and 8th. It is open Memorial Day to Labor Day and generates thousands of pedestrian trips per year, many of which come from people parking in OWL across Tennessee Street. November observations capture none of this pedestrian (and car) traffic.

- The city library, downtown, farmer's market, and other adjacent land uses - all of which generate major levels of pedestrian traffic - receive considerably more foot traffic on warmer days, and weekends.

Again, this observation on a unusually cool weekday in November, captures none of this data.

- There are no less than 20 major events a year that generate major levels of pedestrian traffic in this area. Events include downtown parades, KU football games, festivals downtown, etc. Parking levels in OWL increase dramatically during these periods. Here, too, the relevant data is missing.

- The city data for November 1st shows that the 85th percentile speeds actually exceed the recommended levels for a street posted at 30 mph (at both intersections the speed exceed 40mph). The regulations and guidelines noted in the city staff report memo indicate that more safety improvements, not less, are needed!! The staff report does not highlight in any way the especially concerning point that the average speeds are higher at 8th street than 7th street, indicating that cars are increasing their rates of speed through along this short corridor.

I do not question the actual data in the city staff memo or the interpretation of guidelines and rules based on the data. But, clearly, the data does not remotely capture the relevant context and without more thorough analysis a unnecessarily hazardous situation in our community will continue to exist. Please do ask for more data and more thorough analysis.

Thank you for your consideration of these points.

Best regards,

Ward Lyles, PhD, AICP

812 Indiana Street