

***Kansas City Coalition for Walking and Bicycling***  
***BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN ISSUES IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI***

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**1. Executive Summary**

***The Numbers***

**3.9% of all trips** made in the Greater Kansas City metro area are made by walking or bicycling. These numbers all **less than half the metro average** and **less than half the national average**. We even lag behind other Midwestern, car-centric cities like St. Louis, Denver, or even Los Angeles. Additionally, 13% of city households do not own an automobile. Lack of opportunities to bicycle or walk dictate this group's narrow transportation choices.

***Funding***

Kansas City, MO has **no funding mechanism** for walking and bicycling facilities. Projects must compete with other infrastructure needs in the PIAC process or compete with our suburban neighbors for federal and state grants like CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality) or TE (Transportation Enhancements). Cities that are serious about promoting bicycling and walking have allocated for it within their transportation and public works budgets.

***BikeKC***

In 2002 the City Council adopted BikeKC into the Major Street Plan, creating a network of bicycle routes throughout the city. To date this system still lacks the designation of on-street bike routes and bicycle lanes that were promised. Like other large metropolitan areas, Kansas City's first priority should be to create a network of on-street bikeways in the densist areas from the Plaza to Downtown.

***River, highway, and rail barriers***

The city is shaped by its rivers, roads, and rails. These features also create barriers to the movements of pedestrians and cyclists that must be overcome. Other cities have seen great success by prioritizing the crossing of these barriers.

***Safe Routes to School***

The percentage of children walking or biking to school is at an all-time low, while childhood obesity is at an all-time high. We need a plan to encourage kids to bike or walk to school, and to address the safety issues like sidewalks and trails.

***Sidewalks***

Kansas City has many neighborhoods (both north and south) without sidewalks. Sidewalks should be treated as part of the transportation system, not as an optional recreational amenity. We will never have sidewalks city-wide until we have a city-wide plan to build and maintain them. Imagine if we relied on homeowners to pave the street in front of their houses.

## CITY-WIDE ISSUES

### Funding Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

In most cases the problem with building bicycle and pedestrian facilities comes down to money. **We have no dedicated funding mechanism.** The yearly pleas for PIAC and MoDOT funding result in piecemeal, disconnected infrastructure. Furthermore, we are one of the largest metro areas without regional funding for trails and greenways. KCMO must compete with all the other cities and counties for our region's share federal funding.

Current law leaves the funding of sidewalks to property owners. Unfortunately many of the neighborhoods without sidewalks also have older or lower income residents with fewer resources to pay for sidewalks. These same residents also have a greater need for walkable neighborhoods and non-motorized transportation.

CMAQ, Transportation Enhancement and other similar funds are often used as a primary source for Bike/Ped projects. CMAQ is designed to help alleviate regional pollution, TE is designed to enhance existing transportation systems and has 12 different categories competing for a relatively small (versus KC's total transportation budgets) amount of money. This small fund is also for the entire MARC region.

Walking and bicycling are **not** just a pollution control method or **just** an enhancement to motor vehicle facilities, but rather a valuable component of a modern, well designed, well rounded transportation system. One that meets the needs of all citizens that need to move about Kansas City.

*\* **Kansas City's full potential to as a bike & pedestrian-friendly city will never be realized until the city identifies an adequate and reliable funding source.***

### BikeKC: Kansas City's Bicycle Transportation Initiative

BikeKC is a plan to integrate bicycles into the city's transportation system through a **network on-street arterial bicycle routes**, including bike lanes. BikeKC is based on the **FOCUS** plan, and the City Council adopted it into the **Major Street Plan** in 2001. When a street on the BikeKC network is built, widened, extended, or rebuilt, appropriate bicycle facilities are to be added. Where right of way permits, this means a bike lane. Otherwise, "share the road" and "bike route" signage can be used on existing streets or narrow corridors.

Unfortunately the 2001 ordinance provided **no funding** to pay for BikeKC, leaving it up to private developers and the PIAC process. The ordinance went even further and prohibited the use of **arterial impact fees** to fund bicycle facilities.

Since then the plan has not been re-evaluated, revised or updated. The City's practice of developer built road improvements on City streets at the site of development has resulted, at best, in discontinuous bike/ped facilities apparently leading nowhere, or developers being allowed to **not** build the facilities designated by BikeKC which will leave facilities discontinuous in the future if the rest of the City street is built to BikeKC standards.

**So, five years later we have almost no facilities.** Piecemeal construction makes it difficult to convince developers and PIAC of the importance of BikeKC. Developers don't want to build bike lanes because

they don't see them connecting to anything. We have a chicken or the egg situation. Implementing the BikeKC network is the most visible thing the city can do to demonstrate a commitment to bike issues.

*\*The city must begin by updating, then implementing BikeKC. Oversight, at the Council level must be provided to insure that developers, City departments, and even TIF funded projects fully comply with BikeKC.*

## **River Crossings and other physical barriers to walkers & cyclists**

The Missouri River is a major barrier to bicycle and pedestrian connectivity between the north and south halves of the city. Today we have zero safe, dedicated crossing. If you have ever driven across the Broadway Bridge you have probably seen people risking their lives to walk across it. This demonstrates the extreme need.

The Mid-America Regional Council recently added a new policy to guide decision-making on when to add bike/ped facilities to Missouri and Kansas River bridges. We are currently lobbying MoDOT to include a bike/ped lane on the new **Paseo Bridge**. This will be our only chance to do this right for the next 100 years. MoDOT has proposed adapting the Heart of America Bridge, but we feel that the low cost of this option makes it appropriate for local funding - leaving the bigger project for state funding.

- **The Heart of America Bridge** has a wide northbound shoulder, but no barrier to separate automobiles from bicyclists and pedestrians. The southbound lanes have a very narrow shoulder, poor for cyclists, totally inadequate for pedestrians.
- **The Chouteau Bridge** has wide shoulders on both sides that are designated as bike lanes. There is no barrier to protect pedestrians, and there is no good way to get to this bridge on Front Street, Chouteau Trafficway, or Hwy 210.

*\*The city must continue to work with MoDOT to put a bike/ped crossing on the new Paseo Bridge and identify local funding to match state money.*

Kansas City has a crisscrossing network of Interstates and other limited access highways. Many surface streets do not cross these barriers and those that do have complicated interchanges that are difficult and often hazardous for walkers and cyclists to negotiate. Many are MoDOT facilities built before MoDOT even acknowledged the existence of non-motorized users of their facilities and even new facilities emphasize the rapid movement of cars and trucks, often at the expense of other users.

*\*The City should work with MoDOT and its own Public Works Dept. to insure that these Interstate and highway barriers are made as safe and convenient for non-motorized users as practicable.*

Railroads present another barrier to walkers and cyclists. Autos and truck often have the use of grade separated crossing on Interstates or limited access highways to cross rail roads, walkers and cyclists do not have that option.

*The City should review major rail lines within its borders and strive to provide adequate grade separated crossings for pedestrians and cyclists.*

## Bicycle Parking Regulations

The city is currently rewriting its entire set of planning, zoning, and parking ordinances. This includes a new component on bicycle parking that would set out minimum bike parking requirements for specific types of businesses. This would be a **huge step forward** for bicycling in Kansas City. Visible bike parking at most destinations would greatly encourage more bike use, especially for short trips that might otherwise be made by automobile.

*\*We want the city to adopt the proposed bike parking rules and plan for appropriate implementation.*

## Funding Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

In most cases the problem with building bicycle and pedestrian facilities comes down money. **We have no dedicated funding mechanism.** The yearly pleas for PIAC and MoDOT funding result in piecemeal, disconnected infrastructure. Furthermore, we are one of the largest metro areas without regional funding for trails and greenways. KCMO must compete with all the other cities and counties for our region's share federal funding.

*\*Kansas City's full potential to be a bike-friendly city will never be realized until the city identifies an adequate and reliable funding source.*

## Pedestrian-Specific Issues

**1. Sidewalks:** Many of our neighborhoods were developed on unincorporated land and annexed into the city after the fact. Consequently, they often lack sidewalks and have unimproved roads with ditches instead of curbs and gutters. Two of the most notable examples are is the Waldo area and the older Northland neighborhoods south of Vivion Road.

Current law leaves the funding of sidewalks to property owners. Unfortunately many of the neighborhoods without sidewalks also have older or lower income residents with fewer resources to pay for sidewalks. These same resident also have a greater need for walkable neighborhoods and non-motorized transportation.

*\*The city should develop a plan and a deadline to put sidewalks in all neighborhoods, and identify funding to cover the cost for property owners without the resources to do it on their own.*

*\*Priority should be given to sidewalks along transit corridors or on streets that connect neighborhoods to transit stops.*

**2. Crosswalks:** Current crosswalk design suffers from poor visibility. Two narrow lines are too little for motorists to notice. Traffic signal layout and timing is often confusing and hostile towards pedestrians.

*\*The city should consider creative ways to increase crosswalk visibility, such as raised crosswalks, speed tables, etc. It should also improve the design and timing of traffic lights. Finally, the Police*

*Department should be given the direction and resources to enforce crosswalk laws.*

**3. Traffic Signals:** The city suffers from inconsistent traffic signal design. Usability issues confuse both motorists and pedestrians about proper behavior.

*\* All traffic signals should include a walk cycle automatically. When a pedestrian pushes the walk button the signal should change to walk as soon as possible and allow extra time for crossing.*

## **Safe Routes to School**

In 1969, 42% of K-12 students walked or biked to school. Today that number is down to just 16%. Safe Routes to School is a national movement designed to encourage a higher rate of biking and walking to school through improvements in safety, sidewalks, education, etc. State and federal money is available to implement local Safe Routes to School programs.

*\* The new Bike/Ped coordinator should create a plan to partner with all of the city's fourteen school districts to plan for and implement local a local Safe Routs program. Money must be budgeted to match state and federal grants for programming and infrastructure.*

## **Public Transportation**

**1. Buses:** KC took a big step forward this year when bike racks were added to all full-sized KCATA buses. This greatly extends travel range and flexibility when users are able to combine bike and bus. Now we need secure bike parking along the transit network.

*\* The city should work with the KCATA to fund the installation and management of bike lockers at park-and-ride lots and major employment districts.*

**2. Light Rail:** As the city moves to implement light rail, it must plan for bicycle accommodations from the very beginning.

## **Policy**

**1. Bike/Ped Plan and Advisory Committee:** The city recently identified funding for a full-time bicycle and pedestrian coordinator and opened the hiring process. Once this person is in place s/he should appoint a bike/ped advisory committee made up of representatives from departments like planning, public works, parks, etc. and outside constituencies like bicycle advocates. The Mid-America Regional Council and Missouri Department of Transportation already have successful models that can be replicated.

A priority task for the Bike/Ped Coordinator and advisory committee should be development of a comprehensive bike/ped plan for the city to integrate these modes into the city's transportation infrastructure. The plan topics would include policies, routes, intermodal connections, end-of-trip facilities, education, and design guidelines.

**2. Complete Streets policy:** Bicycles and pedestrians should be integrated into all aspects of city policy,

planning, and public works. The so-called Complete Streets movement is a national initiative to design streets for all users, motorized or not. This should be adopted as by the City Council as city-wide policy for all departments to follow. ([More info on Complete Streets](#))

**3. Funding:** Currently the city relies almost exclusively on special sources like PIAC, CMAQ, Transportation Enhancements to fund its bike/ped infrastructure. The city must also create a place for bike/ped in the regular budget process as part of the overall transportation system.

**4. Law Enforcement:** The mayor should use his/her position of the Board of Police Commissioners to insist that the police department consistently enforce traffic laws related to bicycles and pedestrians. The police department should also work to train all officers on bike/ped laws and issues.

**5. Policy Enforcement:** The city must enforce all bike/ped plans and policies.

**6. Interdisciplinary approach:** Leadership from the top is needed to ensure that all city departments work together to accomplish the cities bike/ped goals - especially city planning, public works, parks and rec, and water.

### **Interconnected system of Bike paths or Multi-use trails**

In addition to a complete on-street network, the city needs to plan and implement an interconnected system of off-street facilities (Bike paths, Multi-use trails, etc.). This type of system has long been missing and some are hopeful that the City can develop a comprehensive plan as a part of the recently begun ‘Citywide Trails Master Plan’ effort.

Our City competes with other communities across the region that have already invested in this type of interconnected transportation and recreation system. Many businesses and their highly educated work force look for these types of systems when choosing a place to reside. It has been proven that these types of systems have a direct link to the economic base of a community.

Combining this transportation and recreational system of bike paths with the storm water management has worked for many of these other communities. We have that same opportunity but lack the political support and the staff planning to make it happen. Protecting our major stream and river corridors from development with multi-purpose easements or stream buffers helps set aside the right-of-way required to extend these transportation and recreation systems through. In addition to just protecting, they allow for more natural means of storm water management which leads to higher water quality throughout the City. Furthermore, the City should make sure that any new bridge or roadway project provides for a grade separated (underpass or overpass) along major corridors allowing for a better interconnected system. The on-street and off-street systems need to be planned, integrated and funded to allow for maximum connectivity to community destination points.

## NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES

### 1st District

**1. Vivion Trail:** A multi-use trail along Vivion Road from the Riverside city limits on the west to the Claycomo city limits on the east. To date the city has received \$700,000 in federal transportation funds for this project. A one mile first phase has been completed in Anita Gorman Park at Vivion and North Oak. A second phase on to Antioch Mall is being designed but awaits funding from CMAQ, TE, PIAC, etc. This project is in conjunction with MoDOT, Department of Conservation, Parks & Rec, and CIMO.  
*Benefits: Job access, recreation, safety.*

**2. North Brighton Bike Lane:** North Brighton Avenue is designated as a bike route in the BikeKC plan and the Major Street Plan. Bike lanes are being constructed in conjunction with the roads current widening project. However, a private developer with a TIF project along this road has been granted an exemption, which will cause a gap in the bike lane. This is example of the consequences of an unfunded and toothless bicycle facilities plan and patchwork funding.  
*Benefits: Job access, neighborhood connectivity*

**3. Missouri River levee trails:** The MetroGreen regional plan for greenways calls for trails on both banks of the Missouri. Gaining access to the levees has been difficult and the levee districts need encouragement to negotiate access. The City of Kansas City could play an important role in moving this regional effort forward by opening all city operated levees to trail users.

*Benefits: recreation, tourism.*

### 2nd District

**1. Hwy 45 widening & NW 64th Street Trail Extension:** MoDOT is preparing to widen HWY 45 from Route 9 to I-435. They will likely extend the NW 64th Street trail as part of this project, but we are also asking them to include an on-street bicycle lane or shared-use lane for experienced cyclists and bicycle commuters. This is an important east/west corridor for bicycle commuters. This project is outside KCMO city limits but will have a big impact cyclists who live or work in KCMO.

*Benefits: Job access, recreation, safety.*

**2. Riverfront Heritage Trail:** This bi-state trail connects Downtown KCMO, Downtown KCK, the West Bottoms, Berkley Riverfront Park, the Westside, and Penn Valley Park. It is being developed piecemeal as funding is secured through PIAC and other sources. A key segment within KCMO yet to be funded is a bridge from the Downtown Loop down to the West Bottoms.

*Benefits: Job access, recreation, tourism.*

**3. Riverside Levee Trail:** Part of the Northland Trails Masterplan, this trail will along the new Riverside-Quindaro Bend Levee will connect Parkville, Riverside, the Downtown Airport, KCMO's Harlem neighborhood, and North Kansas City. MARC and Platte County Parks & Rec continue to struggle through red tape at the levee district and Crops of Engineers.

*Benefits: Job access, recreation, safety.*

### 3rd District

**1. Construct Blue River Trail:** The Water Services Department has planned a multi-use trail along the Blue River all the way to the Missouri River. It's a key piece of the MetroGreen regional trails plan and would provide a vital north/south route for bicyclists on the eastern side of the city. In addition to a fabulous recreation amenity, this trail would also provide access to employment center like Bannister Road, Leeds, Front Street, and the East Bottoms. **This important trail is ready to go, but awaits funding.**

**Benefits:** *Job access, recreation, transportation, tourism*

**2. Safe Routes to School:** The compact, walkable design of the 3rd District's urban neighborhoods provide good opportunities for children walk or bicycle to school. It is important for the city and school district work together to keep kids safe, including things like good sidewalks, modern crosswalks, and crime prevention. Both parties can apply for funding from the Missouri Department of Transportations Safe Routes to School program for funding to improve infrastructure and/or create educational or safety programs.

**Benefits:** *safety*

### 4th District

**1. Bike parking:** Bike parking is needed in areas with a concentration of jobs, housing, retail, and entertainment - for example, Downtown, Westport, the Plaza, Brookside, and Waldo. This can range from bike racks in front of businesses to dedicating 1 or 2 automobile spaces in a parking garage.

**Benefits:** *Job access, tourism, air quality*

**2. Finish the Brush Creek Trail on the East Side:** The Brush Creek Flood Control Project includes a popular multi-use trail and greenway that is planned to go all the way to the Blue River and connect with a planned north/south trail along that river. The trail currently runs through the plaza and east to US 71/Bruce Watkins Drive. Some pieces exist to the east, but the city has yet to finish the trail along its entire length.

**Benefits:** *Job access, recreation, tourism*

**3. Enhance the Trolley Track Trail:** The city's first rails-to-trails conversion is also one of the region's most popular trails and key piece of the MetroGreen regional trails plan. Small improvements like drinking fountains, seating, crosswalks, etc. would enhance an already great amenity. Opportunities should also be investigated to extend the trail north to Downtown or south to Swope Park.

**Benefits:** *recreation, job access*

**4. Downtown/Plaza bike corridor:** There is a need for at least one high-quality bicycle corridor through the urban core to connect Downtown to the Plaza and southward via the existing Trolley Track Trail.

**Benefits:** *job access, transportation, tourism*

### 5th District

**1. Finish the Brush Creek Trail on the East Side:** The Brush Creek Flood Control Project includes a multi-use trail and greenway that is planned to go all the way to the Blue River and connect with a

planned north/south trail along that river. The trail currently runs through the plaza and east to US 71/Bruce Watkins Drive. Some pieces exist to the east, but the city has yet to finish the trail along its entire length.

**Benefits:** *Recreation, tourism*

**2. Trolley Track Trail extension:** The city's first rails-to-trails conversion is also one of the region's most popular trails and key piece of the MetroGreen regional trails plan. There are plans to extend the trail to Swope Park, connecting the Plaza to the Zoo and Southeast Side, but funding is needed.

**Benefits:** *Job access, recreation, tourism*

**3. Hickman Mills Redevelopment:** The city is working on plans to redevelop neighborhoods in the Hickman Mills area. It is important to include sidewalks for pedestrians, trails for children and recreational cyclists, and bike lanes for transportation cyclists and bike commuters.

**Benefits:** *Safety, neighborhood revitalization*

**4. Construct Blue River Trail:** The Water Services Department has planned a multi-use trail along the Blue River all the way to the Missouri River. It's a key piece of the MetroGreen regional trails plan and would provide a vital north/south route for bicyclists on the eastern side of the city. In addition to a fabulous recreation amenity, this trail would also provide access to employment center like Bannister Road, Leeds, Front Street, and the East Bottoms. **This important trail is ready to go, but awaits funding.**

**Benefits:** *Job access, recreation, transportation, tourism*

## 6th District

**1. Hwy 150 widening:** MoDOT is preparing to widen Hwy 150 along the south side of the metro area. This an opportunity to establish a key east/west corridor for bicycle commuters, connecting South KC, Grandview, Lee's Summit, and Johnson County. We are asking MoDOT to include a multi-use trail, sidewalks, and on-street bike lanes or shared-use lanes.

**Benefits:** *Job access, transportation, safety*

**2. Construct Blue River Trail:** The Water Services Department has planned a multi-use trail along the Blue River all the way to the Missouri River. It's a key piece of the MetroGreen regional trails plan and would provide a vital north/south route for bicyclists on the eastern side of the city. In addition to a fabulous recreation amenity, this trail would also provide access to employment center like Bannister Road, Leeds, Front Street, and the East Bottoms. **This important trail is ready to go, but awaits funding.**

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