

Public Testimony for Joint Legislative Transportation Vision Task Force

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The following testimony is being provided on Wednesday, **September 12, 2018** at Memorial Hall, 600 N. 7th Street, Kansas City, KS 66101.

Good afternoon, Members of the Task Force:

My name is Michael Kelley and I'm the policy coordinator for BikeWalkKC. **We are the area advocacy organization for cyclists and pedestrians, and a fair amount of our work takes us to Johnson and Wyandotte Counties.** In particular, our work in Wyandotte County falls primarily into two areas: First, we work to educate children and adults about how to safely walk and ride a bike on the streets of Kansas City, Kansas through programs such as Safe Routes to School. Second, we work with a number of local organizations to advocate for changes to the built environment that make it easier for people to engage in these forms of active transportation.

I am here today to speak briefly about why **it is important to invest in plans, programs and projects that make it easier for people to walk and bike** throughout the Sunflower State.

Initially, cycling is important for the State of Kansas for a number of reasons. Kansas has become a major draw for cyclists in recent years, as demonstrated by the explosive popularity of the Dirty Kanza. The Dirty Kanza has become one of the nation's most famous gravel-terrain bike races, growing from 34 participants in 2006 to some 2,200 in 2017¹. Kansas can also boast a number of bicycle friendly communities (4), bicycle friendly businesses (10) and bicycle friendly universities (3) according to the League of American Cyclists².

Despite all of this growth, there is only so much that these entities can do without leadership and funding from the state. While the State has published a new bicycle map for 2018-2019, the State's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan has not been updated since 1995. Kansans deserve bicycle infrastructure for the 21st Century, but it has to start with 21st Century funding that is informed by a 21st Century plan.

¹ Dirty Kanza. "About", Dirty Kanza, last accessed September 7, 2018.

² League of American Bicyclists. "Bicycle Friendly State Report Card: Kansas", League of American Bicyclists, last accessed September 7, 2018.

Additionally, sufficient consideration for pedestrians in the State of Kansas can yield a host of important benefits. Greater investments in the right type of infrastructure can make pedestrians safer. That means investments in measures such as more sidewalks, raised medians, better bus stop placements, traffic-calming measures, and treatments for disabled pedestrians.³ Enabling communities to develop more “Complete Streets” (streets that place an emphasis on multiple modes of transportation, including biking and walking) through enhanced funding can also yield important financial returns in the form of increased retail sales and property values.⁴

It is important that we also place an emphasis on funding mechanisms that will appropriate funds to communities that have struggled without. That means we need to invest in the low-income communities and communities of color of Kansas. To do otherwise could have serious consequences. As the National Complete Streets Coalition explained in a 2017 report⁵, pedestrian fatalities are overrepresented by the elderly and people of color. Like the rest of the nation, Kansas is not only seeing its elderly population rise, but it is also growing more diverse.

In conclusion, **I urge you all to continue to look for ways to fund plans, projects and programs related to cycling and walking in this new transportation funding approach for the State of Kansas.** Kansas has made good strides for those who use active transportation to get around the state, but there is still more work that needs to be done. Ensuring that this new funding mechanism prioritizes cycling and walking will help Kansas continue to become safer, healthier, more equitable, and more business friendly.

³ Campbell, B., et al. (2004). “A Review of Pedestrian Safety Research in the United States and Abroad.” *Federal Highway Administration Publication # FHWA-RD-03-042*

⁴ National Complete Streets Coalition. “The Benefits of Complete Streets 7: Complete Streets Spark Economic Revitalization”, Smart Growth America.
<https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/cs/factsheets/cs-revitalize.pdf>

⁵ Atherton, E., et. al. (2017). “Dangerous by Design 2016.” National Complete Streets Coalition.