

From: Sarah McIntee [<mailto:sarah.katherine.mcintee@gmail.com>]

Sent: Saturday, October 18, 2014 12:29 AM

To: Info - CAPA; Celisa J. Lehew; Kumar Neppalli; Catherine Lazorko; Len Cone; David Bonk; Brian Litchfield; Bill Webster; Eric Hyman

Subject: Re: Town of Chapel Hill: Chapel Hill Addresses Cyclist and Pedestrian Safety Improvements

Please pass this on to the task force and the council. Eric, please also pass this onto the Connectivity Board.

I will be sending along my list of detailed recommendations to town council, staff, and Connectivity Board, but I say to you all, immediately, that lowering the speed in town, and aggressively ticketing speed violations, will do quite a bit to change transportation habits for drivers in town. We want to change the culture. Reducing speed is the fastest, least expensive, and most effective way to reduce traffic fatalities. Lowering the speed forces drivers to pay attention to what they are doing when they drive inside town. It takes extra effort, extra attention, to drive under 30 mph, as should be required on all surface roads in town where cyclists and pedestrians are to be protected and encouraged to be there. To driver this slowly, the driver *has* to use their brakes.

You have heard this suggestion from me before, but it is the best advice I have found from other communities. As a car driver, I hate having to go slow. But I would rather go slowly that to have any more fatalities. Many European cities, to encourage bicycle use, have put their surface road speeds to under 25 mph. In many cases, it is about 20 mph. Inside a neighborhood, it should be under 18 mph. A strong enforcement of a no nonsense speed policy will change the pedestrian-cyclist-automobile relationship and culture to a more attentive, respectful, one.

We can't afford to install bridges and tunnels everywhere a pedestrian wants to cross a road. The different transportation modes have to interact safely. The pedestrian is the lowest common denominator. The pedestrian is the limited reagent. To be around a pedestrian, drivers (and cyclists) have to slow to within 10 mph of the pedestrian.

We can spend millions on separate infrastructure (...and we should, as there is no room on most roads, forcing cyclists to use the lane) but there will be crossings in town where the different modes of transportation interact, and that is where the danger always is. It will be at intersections, at driveways, and/or at crosswalks that someone gets hurt or killed. Someone did get killed, again.

How many deaths does it take?

Lowering the speed is the single-most effective way to change a town from a Nascar

speedway culture, to a pedestrian dominant kind of culture. Hilly towns have special challenges when it comes to enforcing speed. In some cases for some roads, like on downhills, We may have to install textures and tables in the road. We may have to narrow the road, narrow the road lanes, or put in chicanes to negotiate to force drivers to take more care. We will need to put more at the road sides to force drivers to slow down. Wide roads like MLK are a broad invitation to drivers to speed, and as I have pointed out recently, I have witnessed drivers going 50 mph on MLK. Since we can't always have a police car and radar guns watching vigilantly, infrastructure to slow traffic is necessary.

A safer situation where several modes use the roads, is where all of the vehicles, human powered, or motored, are within 10 mph of each other. A safer situation is where the fastest are encouraged to go more slowly. This leaves more opportunity, and longer time window, for paying attention.

Drivers HAVE to pay attention in order to drive this slowly. A car will coast up to 45-50 mph going down the hill on Estes, Franklin, or MLK if the driver doesn't use their brakes. This point is obvious. The brakes are not being used enough in all over town, which facilitates a speeding culture in any hilly community. It doesn't matter if this specific accident was, or was not, at a slow speed. We are trying to change the culture here. We want drivers to drive slow enough so they expect to see what they need to see. At higher speed, at rapid acceleration, change the radio station and you could not see someone. If we want drivers to pay attention more, we have to make them do things that force them into needing their full attention. Forcing them to drive slower is one way to do that.

Give pedestrians and cyclists a brake, let's not have cyclists side swiped by 45 mph cars. When I am walking on a sidewalk, I do not want to feel the breeze, and listen to the din, of 40 mph cars. And when I get to a crosswalk and are forced to be hyperaware of the danger, I don't want to be bearing extra risk just because I am near flying hunks of 2500 pounds of metal. A pedestrian crossing needs to be, at least, every 1/4 mile. Preferably, a ped crossing should be every 1/8th mile. Every vehicle, including pedestrians, wants to be able to change their direction every few minutes. To have to walk more than 10 minutes to get to a place to cross is unacceptable. Therefore, because of the necessary intersection frequency in town, the speed must be lower that it is now. We can start by getting vehicles to obey the speed limits we have now. There is no where in town where they actually do this.

We will not get the town that we want without lowering the speed.

I have been asking the town, and the state to change the landscape to make it safer for

all vehicles and peds since I moved here in 1985 from Massachusetts. Every time I hear about another ped or cyclist death, every time I have a near miss of my own, I keep crying, and I keep trying. All she wanted to do was ride her bike. It should be a safe, benign way to get around town. Why did she have to die? What is it about our town that make drivers not pay attention enough? A a driver now is going to have nightmares for the rest of their lives because they killed someone. It was all because we did not create a culture for safety. Safety requires paying attention. Safety requires not having distractions, Safety requires that the risk of a dangerous encounter be lowered for the vehicles going faster than anyone else using the public right of way. Safe access means safe for all.

The burden of risk has been placed, too much, on those who are least capable of surviving a cross-mode encounter. This is not just a safety issue. It is also an access issue. It is also a justice issue.

Sarah McIntee

On 10/17/2014 3:32 PM, info@townofchapelhill.org wrote:

Chapel Hill Addresses Cyclist and Pedestrian Safety Improvements

Posted Date: 10/17/2014

Chapel Hill residents will begin to see immediate action steps this month targeted to improve bicyclist and pedestrian safety including new flashing lights at mid-block crosswalks, safety signage, and a step-up in traffic education and enforcement activities.



Town Manager Roger Stancil has established a new interdepartmental staff group that combines law enforcement, planning, traffic engineering, Chapel Hill Transit, parks and recreation, and public outreach representatives. The team is championed by Police Chief Chris Blue with project leaders Police Sgt. Celisa Lehew and Len Cone, Go Chapel Hill community outreach coordinator. The group has identified a number of immediate actions to identify problem traffic spots and improve safety. The staff team will also join efforts with such groups as the Town's [Transportation and Connectivity Board](#), and the [Bicycle Alliance of Chapel Hill \(BACH\)](#).

"We are determined to improve cyclist and pedestrian safety in Chapel Hill," said Town Manager Roger Stancil. "Our Town employees share responsibility for community safety, regardless of their job roles. When they work together to design solutions, we can expect excellent outcomes. We also intend to work closely with our residents toward these shared goals."

Immediate actions by the Town will include the following:

- Install push-button activated flashing lights at four un-signalized mid-block pedestrian crosswalks on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and East Franklin Street. The existing mid-block crosswalks (total of seven) were installed in 2010, and the Town maintains them through an encroachment agreement with NC Department of Transportation. *This will occur during the first week of November.*

- Launch a WikiMap, an interactive crowdsourcing application that allows users to view an online map and post comments to identify unsafe areas and concerns. The data will become available for Town staff to review, collect, prioritize and provide response. *This will be launched in October.*
- Place "High Crash Area" digital signs near areas where a high number of traffic accidents have occurred. Chapel Hill Police have found that the placement of signs in past outreach efforts have reduced accidents by as much as 50 percent. *This will occur in October.*
- Increase both education and enforcement activities to improve safety and raise awareness. People may receive helpful information, warnings and in some cases, tickets for traffic violations. Officers may cite motorists for failure to yield to pedestrians within the crosswalk and cite pedestrians and cyclists for crossing against the signals or crossing outside the crosswalk. Fines and court costs for these violations begin at \$213. *This begins immediately.*
- Trim hedges and clean other debris at intersections where high growth impedes view for travelers and clean foliage away from sidewalks and signs. *This begins immediately.*

In addition to the above, the Town is also looking into a number of new measures -- such as painting green bicycle lanes, painting bicycle boxes at intersections and lights, adding signage across town, and improving its public outreach. Many of these efforts are included in the [Chapel Hill Bike Plan](#), which was adopted by Council in June 2014. A major goal of [Chapel Hill 2020](#), the community's comprehensive plan, is to provide safe connections among neighborhoods, schools, commercial areas, parks, rural bikeways and farms, and business and art/dining/entertainment hubs that promote healthy exercise and environmentally friendly modes of transportation.

Addressing travel safety is a collaborative team effort in Chapel Hill. The following Town departments work to create safe spaces for travelers -- including pedestrian, cyclists and motorists -- and to educate people about safe road behavior, and enforce traffic laws:

Chapel Hill Police Department

Contact: Sgt. Celisa Lehew, 919-968-2760, clehew@townofchapelhill.org

The Chapel Hill Police Department partners with the UNC Department of Public Safety, the Chapel Hill Carrboro City Schools and the NC Department of Transportation to provide public safety education and outreach. Officers regularly conduct outreach and enforcement as a reminder to obey traffic laws, share the road and keep safe.

Chapel Hill Public Works, Traffic Engineering Division

Contact: Kumar Neppalli, 919-969-5093, kneppalli@townofchapelhill.org

Traffic Engineering focuses on infrastructure including signal lights, pedestrian countdown signals, stop signs, speed limit signs, pedestrian crosswalks, medians, and bike lanes. Traffic controls regulate the speed, volume and flow of traffic. The neighborhood traffic-calming program provides residents an opportunity to present a concern for traffic safety.

Communications and Public Affairs

Contact: Catherine Lazorko, 919-969-5055, clazorko@townofchapelhill.org

Community engagement specialists assist with outreach efforts of all departments of the Town, as well as those of the NC Department of Transportation campaign "Watch for Me NC."

Messages are dispersed throughout the year via the website, news releases, social media, occasional advertisements, and at festivals and special events.

Go Chapel Hill!

Contact: Len Cone, 919-969-5065, lccone@townofchapelhill.org

Go Chapel Hill helps determine ways to leave our cars at home and lead a more active and healthy lifestyle. The program encourages basic strategies to reduce our carbon footprint, save money, reduce traffic congestion and begin days in a healthier way. <http://www.gochapelhill.org/>

Chapel Hill Planning Department

Contact: David Bonk, 919-969-5064, dbonk@townofchapelhill.org

The Planning Department's long-range transportation effort works to integrate considerations of bicyclist and pedestrian needs into all facets of transportation planning and programming. Work is underway to create a more connected, bikeable community through the recently adopted Bike Plan. Through the Sidewalk Construction Program the Planning Department prioritizes sidewalks that need improvements to strategically improve sidewalks when funds become available.

Chapel Hill Transit

Contact: Brian Litchfield, 919-969-4908, blitchfield@townofchapelhill.org

Chapel Hill Transit is the public transportation provider that serves Chapel Hill, Carrboro and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and supports efforts to create safe environments for all modes of transportation, especially for pedestrians and cyclists. Chapel Hill Transit buses are equipped with sturdy exterior racks that can hold two bicycles. Transit communicates messages to improve safety when people approach and exit Town buses www.chtransit.org

Parks and Recreation

Contact: Bill Webster, 919-968-2819, bwebster@townofchapelhill.org

Parks and Recreation is dedicated to providing recreational opportunities in a safe, maintained and inviting environment. The total land area of Chapel Hill is 21.3 square miles, and about 11 percent of this is dedicated to parks and open space. Since the Town Council adopted an open space plan in 1965, there are now about 1,200 acres of park, open space, and greenway easements totaling 12 miles of trails.

PARTNERS

NC Department of Transportation-Watch for Me NC

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board

UNC Department of Public Safety

UNC Department of Public Policy

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools

Town of Carrboro

Visitors Bureau

Bicycle Shops, Clubs, Alliances

Chapel Hill is working to make the community a safer place to walk, cycle and drive. For more information, visit: <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/index.aspx?page=1128>

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