

Public Forum on Pedestrian Safety

October 28, 2008

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CITY OF
REXBURG
America's Family Community

October 28, 2008

Mayor Shawn Larsen

Council Members:

Christopher Mann – Council President

Rex Erickson Randy Schwendiman

Bart Steven Richard Woodland

Adam Stout

City Staff:

Stephen Zollinger – City Attorney

Richard Horner – Finance Officer

John Millar – Public Works Director

Val Christensen – Building Official

Blair Kay – City Clerk

6:30 P.M. Public Forum on Pedestrian Safety:

1. Mayor Larsen opened the meeting requesting public input on this community issue.

Representatives attending the meeting included: elected officials, city staff, traffic and safety committee, Police Department, Emergency Services Department, Public Works Department, Planning and Zoning Department, concerned citizens, BYU-I students and officials, and a licensed traffic engineer, Bill Baranowski.

Mayor Larsen stated that the purpose of the meeting is to listen to everyone's comments, because the crisis at hand affects everyone. He said that he wants to take a comprehensive approach to pedestrian safety throughout the community. During the meeting, he would like to have the main points jotted down, and then he will ask various individuals to address each concern. Human mobility is a top priority. Mayor Larsen also expressed his appreciation for all those who attended and he wanted to engage in the process. Safety is everyone's problem. He stated that eight individuals have signed up to speak in the meeting. He is requesting comments be kept to three to four minutes at the most, because others may want to make a comment eventually. They will keep a tally of individual's comments on the screen.

Discussion points included:

- a. Rexburg is a growing University town.
- b. Pedestrian safety is a community issue.

Community Discussion:

Amy Hanks discussed that she has been friends with various people involved in recent fatalities dealing with road safety. She wanted to know what the criteria is for making changes in certain intersections. She is aware of all of the recent work done around the crosswalk on 3rd South and 2nd West (location of latest fatality); however, she wanted to know if it was necessary to have a tragedy first before changes are planned. She thinks we should be a little more proactive in these decisions.

Tammie Bagley stated she thought it was a good idea to slow traffic down near Taco Time; however, she thinks pedestrians should be held accountable for their own actions as well. She wanted to know what happened to stop, look, and listen. Ms. Bagley expressed currently traffic jams are occurring at the round-about because of pedestrians walking without waiting their turn. Also, skateboarders have become a problem because they are actually riding on the street instead of on the side. She asked how people are able to follow actual traffic laws when pedestrians don't follow any sort of rules. She expressed her concern for bicyclist's riding area. She asked where they are supposed to ride their bikes when going past Madison Park Apartments. Mayor Larsen stated a lot of people have been parking diagonal by Madison Park Apartments. The plan is to extend the bike lanes all the way to 3rd West. The parking along Madison Park Apartments will be changed to parallel parking. The City will look at the bike lane situation by Bank of Commerce before making a decision at that location. Ms. Bagley voiced her concerns about loud stereo systems and engines that limit people's attention at stop lights.

Douglas Stutz explained he thinks when speed limits are lowered the roads become safer for pedestrians and drivers. He believes the speed limit should be 25 mph throughout the entire city, but mostly on roads such as Main Street, 2nd East, 4th South, and near the high school. He stated it would be better for the safety of bicyclists, and pedestrians, if there were bicycle lanes everywhere. Bicyclist and pedestrians do not mix well. Mr. Stutz mentioned it would be beneficial to the community if there were better lighting on the streets. He mentioned the Canadian “Advanced stop,” practice to yield from 35 to 50 feet away from the crosswalk.

Brian Jackson at 235 W. 4th S. Apt. 206 stated that it seems to be drivers verses pedestrians on 1st W and 1st South because there are two crosswalks in the immediate vicinity. He believed the crosswalk should be pulled at 1st West and 1st South. He also discussed his beliefs that there should be a four way stop, instead of a two way, on 1st East and 2nd South. Mr. Jackson suggested the city take out parking next to the crosswalks, because it is a safety hazard for pedestrians. Lastly, he stated on his street they have reflectors on the crosswalks that help a lot in making drivers aware pedestrians are around. He believed it would be beneficial to put reflectors on all of the crosswalk signs in the city of Rexburg.

Mike Whitesides thanked the city for bike lanes on 5th West and other locations. He encouraged the city to take action before another tragedy occurred. He mentioned a safe community needs to have the infrastructure along with citizens with a desire to foster a safe culture. He suggested the culture in Rexburg could be improved by respecting others on the roads and crosswalks. He was appreciative of Mayor Larsen’s plan to have a bicycle day in the spring.

Rob Coleman indicated he is a student and he is most concerned with the area near the temple. Fellow cyclists have a hard time interacting with drivers because drivers do not know what cyclists will do. He asked for increased awareness from drivers and more police ticketing.

Mike Ricks indicated drivers & pedestrians need to know a 50,000 Gross Vehicle Weight truck takes time to stop. The pedestrian areas need more lighting. The intersection at 2nd East and 7th South should have a 25 MPH speed limit. The intersection of 7th South and 5th West should have a four-way stop. The speed on University Boulevard may be too high for icy roads due to the slope of the road. Mr. Ricks was concerned with drivers using a rolling stop instead of coming to a full stop. He also mentioned road rage as a problem.

Terry Nelson commented the danger associated with joggers who wear dark clothing and listen to their MP3 players and their iPods. These joggers stay out in the roadways to jog. He was concerned with visual obstructions that may obscure pedestrians like parked cars, bushes and other obstacles. He mentioned other ways to slow traffic like speed bumps, turtles or other raised in-pavement materials.

Bill Stanton referenced his mother’s death at 2nd West and 3rd South. He was concerned with jay walking, and traffic speeds coming into the city. He requested the speed be lowered to 25 MPH west of the intersection by the church on 4th South. He would like to see the jaywalking ordinance enforced.

Mayor Larsen commented on the Comprehensive Plan’s reference to safety. There will be a new high school on 12th West plus the new Burton Elementary School near the high school. Main Street is a state hwy. Diagonal parking at Porter Park needs awareness from drivers. There are some cars that do not stop.

Parents of the two boys struck by a vehicle on 1st South and 2nd East would like more lighting between 2nd West and 4th West.

Jessica Holmes said late night classes are unsafe due to the lack of street lighting. She referenced her personal safety concerns while walking on streets around Colonial Apartments and Nauvoo Apartments. They are unsafe walking areas for people walking towards the campus.

A person in the audience requested more bike lanes on major roads like 2nd East.

Mayor Larsen said the goal of the meeting is to take public input, create awareness which will lead to an action plan resulting in implementation of the plan.

Public Works Director Millar and City Engineer Keith Davidson introduced Bill Baranowski, P.E. 801-502-1144 (Salt Lake City, UT) You can contact Bill by email: bbbara@msn.com.

Mr. Baranowski is licensed traffic engineer and consultant designing roundabouts. Public Works Director Millar wanted to explore the traffic issues to come up with the best solution for intersections. The solution would have to be approved by City Council. Mr. Baranowski has spent 14 years in the Provo, Utah area working with similar growing pain problems as Rexburg is experiencing. He was a member of a traffic safety committee in Provo. Their major issues included parking and traffic control. Pedestrians have a great deal of exposure when crossing uncontrolled crosswalks on four or five lanes of traffic. They reviewed a slide show presentation and discussed issues and possible actions to take to create a safer crossing zone.

1. Paint the crosswalk
2. Shorten the distance for pedestrians to cross
3. Sight distance for driver awareness of a crosswalk
4. Pedestrian may not exercise care
5. Higher number of rear end accidents at crosswalks
6. Increased fatalities with wider streets
7. Countdown timers (pedestrian buzzers)
8. Graphed accidents rate by age (the youth need education)
9. No parking within 20 feet of the crosswalks
10. Red vs. Yellow warning lights
11. Hawk signal
12. Raised Median
13. Street Lighting
14. Overhead flashers
15. Prioritize improvements
16. New sign "Stop here"
17. Neck down/bulb outs which reduces the street width
18. Raised pedestrian table (Cadillac option)
19. Example of a road diet (narrow the driving area near a crosswalk)
20. 2nd West has 69 feet of asphalt

Mayor Larsen called for public education and an engineered design plan for pedestrian crosswalks. He said enforcement is also a part of the safety program.

Police Officer Chuck Kunsaitis explained some of the state codes for pedestrian safety used in enforcement. Officer Kunsaitis has had eight years of experience working with pedestrian/traffic issues in Rexburg. He referred to Idaho Code 49-702; 49-703; 49-740; 49-720, etc. These state codes deal with regulating pedestrian and bicycle safety in traffic.

49-702. PEDESTRIANS' RIGHT-OF-WAY IN CROSSWALKS.

(1) When traffic-control signals are not in place or not in operation the driver of a vehicle shall yield the right-of-way, slowing down or stopping, if need be, to yield to a pedestrian crossing the highway within a crosswalk.

(2) No pedestrian shall suddenly leave a curb or other place of safety and walk or run into the path of a vehicle which is so close as to constitute an immediate hazard.

(3) Subsection (1) of this section shall not apply under the conditions stated in section 49-704(2), Idaho Code.

(4) Whenever any vehicle is stopped at a marked crosswalk or at an unmarked crosswalk at an intersection to permit a pedestrian to cross the highway, the driver of any other vehicle approaching from the rear shall not overtake and pass the stopped vehicle.

(5) Except where otherwise indicated by a crosswalk or other traffic-control devices a pedestrian shall cross the highway at right angles to the curb or by the shortest route to the opposite curb.

49-703. PEDESTRIANS TO USE RIGHT HALF OF CROSSWALKS. Pedestrians shall move, whenever practicable, upon the right half of crosswalks.

49-704. CROSSING AT OTHER THAN CROSSWALKS. (1) Every pedestrian crossing a highway at any point other than within a marked crosswalk or within an unmarked crosswalk at an intersection shall yield the right-of-way to all vehicles upon the highway.

(2) Any pedestrian crossing a highway at a point where a pedestrian tunnel or overhead pedestrian crossing has been provided shall yield the right-of-way to all vehicles upon the highway.

(3) Between adjacent intersections at which traffic-control signals are in operation, pedestrians shall not cross at any place except in a marked crosswalk.

(4) No pedestrian shall cross a highway intersection diagonally unless authorized by traffic-control devices. When authorized to cross diagonally, pedestrians shall cross only in accordance with the traffic-control devices pertaining to crossing movements.

A question from the audience concerning bicycles in crosswalks.

Officer Kunsaitis explained a bicyclist obeys traffic law on the street until they enter a crosswalk when they obey pedestrian law. He explained the police officer has discretion whether to issue a ticket or issue a warning for education. If a crosswalk is not available within 500 feet, a pedestrian can cross the roadway with caution giving right-of-way to vehicle traffic.

49-720. STOPPING -- TURN AND STOP SIGNALS. (1) A person operating a bicycle or human-powered vehicle approaching a stop sign shall slow down and, if required for safety, stop before entering the intersection. After slowing to a reasonable speed or stopping, the person shall yield the right-of-way to any vehicle in the intersection or approaching on another highway so closely as to constitute an immediate hazard during the time the person is moving across or within the intersection or junction of highways, except that a person after slowing to a reasonable speed and yielding the right-of-way if required, may cautiously make a turn or proceed through the intersection without stopping.

(2) A person operating a bicycle or human-powered vehicle approaching a steady red traffic control light shall stop before entering the intersection and shall yield to all other traffic. Once the person has yielded, he may proceed through the steady red light with caution. Provided however, that a person after slowing to a reasonable speed and yielding the right-of-way if required, may cautiously make a right-hand turn. A left-hand turn onto a one-way highway may be made on a red light after stopping and yielding to other traffic.

(3) A person riding a bicycle shall comply with the provisions of section 49-643, Idaho Code.

(4) A signal of intention to turn right or left shall be given during not less than the last one hundred (100) feet traveled by the bicycle before turning, provided that a signal by hand and arm need not be given if the hand is needed in the control or operation of the bicycle.

The following statistical charts were reviewed in the meeting.

Accident Breakdown 2005-2008

TYPE	NUMBER	PERCENT
Pedestrian	44	52%
Bicycle	40	48%

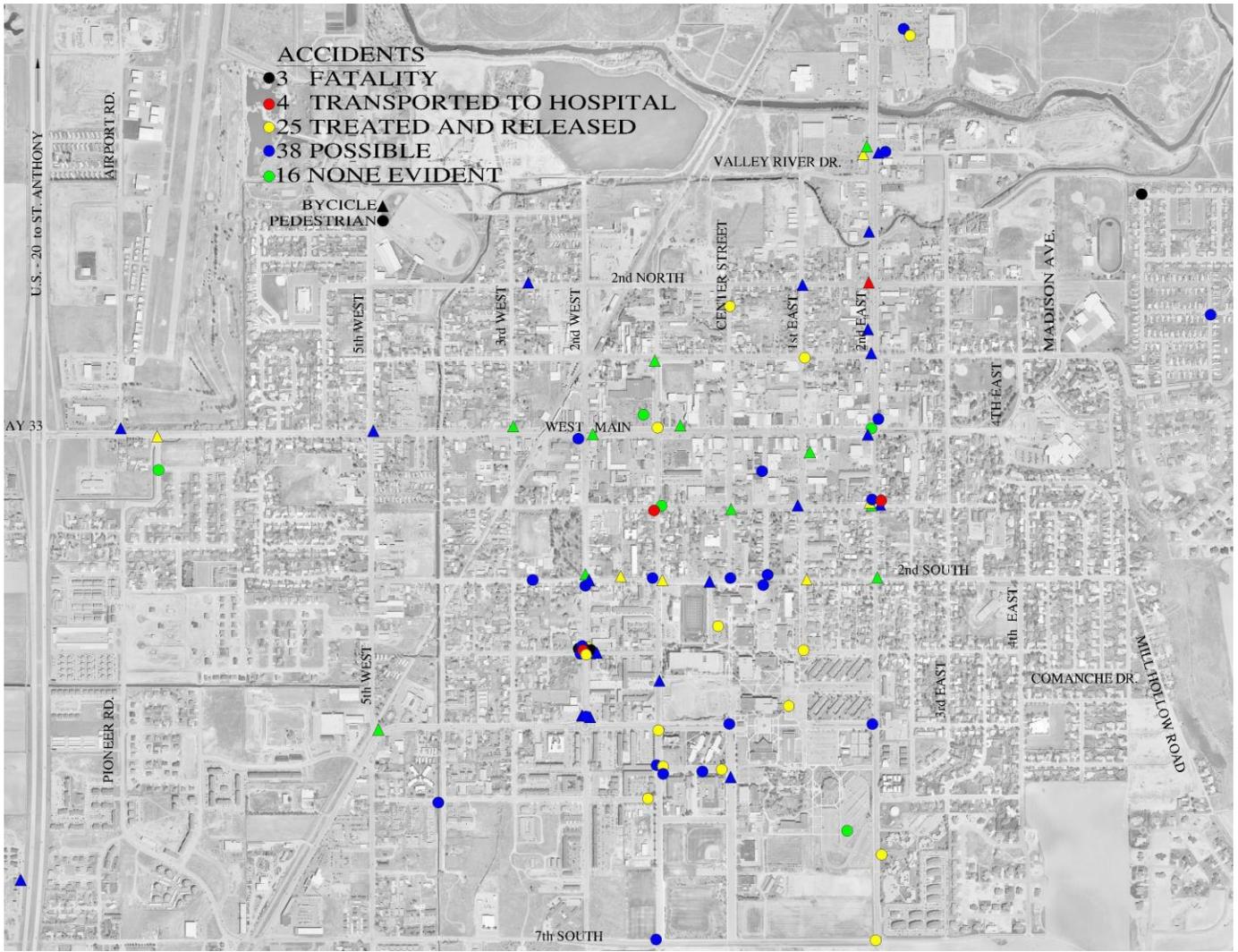
YEAR	TOTAL	VEHICLE	PEDESTRIAN	BYCICLE
2008	540	515	12	13
2007	715	699	8	8
2006	693	674	11	8
2005	732	708	13	11

TIME	NUMBER	PERCENT
Day time = 7:00am- 5:00pm	46	54%
Evening = 5:00pm- 8:00pm	21	25%
Nighttime= 8:00pm-7:00am	18	21%

Intersection Accident Breakdown 2005-2008 cont.

LOCATION	NUMBER	PERCENT
Controlled (Signal)	10	12%
Controlled (4-Way Stop)	6	7%
Uncontrolled	46	53%
Private Property	24	28%

INTERSECTION	PERCENT
4 WAY	3%
SIGNALIZED	6%
UNCONTROLLED	91%



Pedestrian/ Bicycle Accident Severity

Number	Severity
3	Fatality
4	Transported to Hospital
25	Treated and Released
38	Possible
16	None Evident

Jay walking (Ordinance 867) was reviewed by Officer Kunsaitis. He referred to distractions pedestrians have including cell phones, iPods, talking, etc.

Ordinance 867

SECTION I. Purpose: The purposes of this Ordinance are;

- (A) To regulate and prohibit random or uncontrolled access to public roadways by pedestrians;
- (B) To protect public roadways from being impeded by pedestrians;
- (C) To reduce accidents associated with pedestrian and vehicle conflicts; and
- (D) To protect and promote the peace, health, safety, welfare and tranquility of the community and citizens of the City of Rexburg.

SECTION II. Definitions: Certain words and phrases used in this chapter are defined as follows:

PEDESTRIAN: Any person afoot, any person operating a wheelchair or a motorized wheelchair, or any person upon a bicycle engaged in the use of a designated bike or pedestrian path.

PEDESTRIAN PATH: Any path, sidewalk or way set-aside for the use of pedestrians.

PUBLIC ROADWAY: All portions of any highway which are controlled by any governmental authority, including highways within the jurisdictional limits of the City of Rexburg.

SECTION III. Unlawful Crossing of Public Roadways: Any pedestrian who crosses, or attempts to cross a public roadway at any point other than a designated crossing, within the City of Rexburg, shall be guilty of an Infraction.

SECTION IV. Designating Crossings: There shall be established, crosswalks within the City of Rexburg, as determined appropriate by the City Engineer, Public Works Coordinator, Safety and Traffic Committee, or any other designated representative of the City of Rexburg. Such designated crossings shall be identified and marked in such a way as to make them clearly identifiable to the reasonable public, and where practicable in accordance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

SECTION V. Defenses: It shall be a defense to the offense of Unlawful Crossing of a Public Roadway, if there are no Designated Crossings within Five Hundred feet (500') of the point at which the crossing occurred.

SECTION VI. Enforcement: The peace officer shall not issue a citation under this chapter unless the officer reasonably believes that a violation has occurred and that, based on any response and all other circumstances, no defense is present.

SECTION VII. Penalties: Any person who violates a provision of this chapter shall be guilty of an infraction and upon conviction shall be punished by a fine of Twenty-five Dollars (\$25.00).

SECTION VIII. Effective Date: This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage, approval and due publication.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL AND APPROVED BY THE MAYOR this 3rd day of April, 2002.

Mayor Larsen asked the attendees at the meeting to stay actively engaged in this process. A signup sheet was provided for input and a contact list. It takes all of us working together to solve these issues. He appreciated the attendees at the meeting for the purpose of soliciting their concerns. The city will take those concerns and work with the community and the community organizations to develop an action plan. Those improvements will be put into place. The city will provide information on Rexburg.org concerning this process. The short term action plan will be in place by November 15, 2008. Some of the items can be put in place before winter. The speed limit has been reduced to 25 MPH. Major construction will have to be implemented at a future date. The first item of business will be to prioritize the intersections needing the first attention; secondly, money will have to be appropriated by the City Council to complete the work. The funds will have to come from a limited street budget. The education component "Share the Road" is a positive campaign slogan to take a proactive approach. Everyone needs to be educated to share the road along with making a plan to improve the intersections. The goal is to develop a campaign with a coalition of individuals willing to go talk to civic groups, scouts, schools, etc. to educate the public about "Sharing the road". He thanked everyone for being involved and attending the meeting.