




OFFICE OF
THE CHANCELLOR

TO: Dr. David Sink
FROM: Joel E. Anderson 
RE: Pedestrian Safety Report Update
DATE: August 5, 2011

I write to express my appreciation to you and the members of the Pedestrian Safety Committee for the report you sent to me on June 28. The report included eight valuable recommendations. Your report noted that there will be cost considerations. I am asking Vice Chancellor Robert Adams to evaluate them and provide me a cost estimate, feasibility assessment, and timeline for accomplishment of each recommendation.

The report of the committee in 2004 was very helpful, as are your new recommendations. I agree that after the current construction projects on campus have been completed, the committee should conduct another review to consider changed circumstances produced by the new facilities.

c: Dr. Robert Adams, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration (with report)
Chancellor's Leadership Group (with report)

MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Joel E. Anderson, Chancellor
From: Dr. David Sink
Subject: Pedestrian Safety Report Update
Date: June 28, 2011

On behalf of the Pedestrian Safety Committee, I am presenting an update to the earlier Pedestrian Safety Committee Report. I would be glad to discuss the report if you wish.

David

Pedestrian Safety On and Around the UALR Campus

June 2011 Update

Introduction

Since the first pedestrian safety report in May 2004, significant improvements have occurred that make the interface between pedestrians and automobiles on and about the UALR Rebsamen Campus safer. Of particular note are the following:

- Closing of a vehicle-exit gate at Parking Lot 13-West
- Improved lighting on 28th Street, particularly at the Lot 13-East crossing
- Installation of countdown walk lights on 28th Street and University Avenue
- Installation of flashing lights at crosswalks leading to Lot 5
- Closing of Campus Drive between the parking deck and DSC

The Pedestrian Safety Committee appreciates these improvements, all of which were included in the 2004 report. They have made the campus a safer place to walk and drive.

With the growth of the physical campus and student enrollment, attention to safety continues as an important topic. Members of the original committee plus additional staff, faculty, and students met during the Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 semesters to survey what changes had been made and what changes still should be made. The recommendations that appear below, while not an exhaustive list, deserve attention. We urge they be put into effect, although we understand that cost and feasibility factors may delay or prohibit execution.

Context

We would draw to the reader's attention the Introduction to the 2004 Pedestrian Safety report (pp. 1-6) that discusses the context of pedestrian and vehicular movement on and about campus. The intervening seven years have seen an intensified effect of some of those. For example, the UALR campus has become denser with the addition of buildings and the sidewalks that connect them. Additional residence halls have increased the numbers of pedestrians crossing the 32nd Street bridge. Traffic counts are up on University and Asher Avenues. Movement along and across 28th Street has increased. Despite these factors, we observe that pedestrian movement has not been greatly impeded. We appreciate the close and consistent attention paid these impacts by staff over physical plant and public safety operations.

However, one item from the list of factors affecting pedestrian safety that appeared in the earlier report needs restating. We wrote that students with disabilities cross the campus every day and noted that their particular needs should be emphasized in any list of recommendations. We continue to stress this fact and draw the reader's attention to the first recommendation.

Recommendations

1. Fix uneven pavement, bricks, grates, and other surfaces on campus so that pedestrians, especially those who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices, can move about without impediment.

The Disability Resource Center Staff had completed a survey of the campus to identify safety concerns. They are numerous. Of particular concern are uneven pavement and drain grates that are out of compliance. We strongly urge a concerted effort to correct these problems.

2. Install redbrick pavers in the crosswalks at 28th Street and Lot #13 East and West as further indication of pedestrians crossing.

We seek to accomplish two goals here. First, we think that crosswalks made of a different color paver will highlight crossings in which pedestrians have the right-of-way. Good examples of this kind of crosswalk exist on Central Avenue in Hot Springs. They have held up well, are attractive, and call the motorist's attention to pedestrians. Second, the new crosswalks are part of the design pattern we wish to use in the University District. We urge that these two crosswalks be redone as a pilot project. If they work as we think they will, we hope that Little Rock's traffic engineer will be amenable to similar crosswalks on University Avenue.

3. Continue to rework pedestrian and vehicular flow at the intersection of University Avenue and University Drive in order to lessen the chance of accidents.

This crossing may be the most problematic on and around campus. Recently, we experimented with a "no turn on red" directive to vehicles leaving campus. This didn't improve the situation. Our concern is that both pedestrians and motorists have several directions to look simultaneously before proceeding through the intersection. For example, a driver headed east emerging from the Town and Country shopping center has both vehicular and pedestrian traffic oncoming; westbound pedestrians have to watch behind and in front of them.

4. Rework the pedestrian entrance to campus at University Drive and University Avenue.

Currently, pedestrians coming from the University Plaza parking lot walk north along University Avenue before entering the campus, most likely across the mouth of University Drive where they encounter two-way vehicular traffic. Better separation between walking and driving traffic would improve safety at this high-traffic flow location.

5. Increase the speed limit on University Avenue from 25 to 40 miles-per-hour.

When plans for widening University Avenue to three northbound lanes were cancelled, the mayor of Little Rock directed the speed limit be lowered from 40 to 25 mph's as an extra measure of safety for both pedestrians and drivers. We appreciate his action and believe it to be a sincere attempt to slow down traffic. Our observation suggests that 1) 25 is not enforceable, 2) a driver trying to go that speed will be "run over" by other vehicles, and 3) almost all drivers ignore the 25 mph limit. We wish to recommend that the speed be raised, that the LRPD follow on with a statement of renewed enforcement (no tolerance), and that these changes receive adequate publicity so that they are widely noted and understood.

6. Request that the city of Little Rock better maintain the overhead lighting along University Avenue from 19th Street to Asher/Col. Glenn Avenues.

Good lighting is imperative in congested areas where pedestrians and motorists cross paths. This is particularly the case on 28th Street and on University Avenue. We are pleased with the quality and consistency of lighting on 28th, but we think that greater attention should be paid to replacing burned-out light bulbs on the high poles in the median of University Avenue. We regularly count the number of lights out in this stretch and find that it ranges from three to six at any given time. Also, poles that have been removed (usually because a car or truck has knocked them down) leave gaps of darkness (e.g. along the wooded stretch from 19th to Berkshire Drive).

7. Upgrade lighting in the University Plaza parking lot, especially on the east end.

This recommendation falls under the heading of safety from personal attacks or car-jackings in the parking lot on the east end of University Plaza. Fortunately, campus police report a low incidence of these occurrences, but a pound of prevention here may be worth the cost of increased lighting.

8. Extend the handrail on the sidewalk crossing the bridge between the parking deck and Donaghey Student Center.

The absence of a handrail that extends to the end of the bridge and sidewalk just west of the parking deck creates a hazard for all pedestrians, particularly wheelchair users or others with a disability. A misstep here might cause those crossing the bridge to tumble down a steep bank into the creek bed.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we urge that the Pedestrian Safety Committee revisit these recommendations in one year to determine progress on these improvements. Also, given the amount of change occurring because of construction, we think that an update to this recommendation list is prudent. We should continue to educate both pedestrians and motorists about sharing the campus and seek their input on other improvements we can make.