

# Appendix C

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*Fort Collins Department / Staff Interviews*

# Fort Collins Department/Staff Interviews: Pedestrian Planning & Engineering

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Balloffet & Associates conducted telephone and personal interviews of City of Fort Collins staff regarding pedestrian planning and engineering. The objectives were to determine 1) what role they have in pedestrian planning and engineering within the city, 2) how they perform their work, and 3) the problems or obstacles they face in performing this work.

## **Traffic Engineering**

The City Traffic Engineer is responsible for the placement of pedestrian crosswalks and signs, installation of traffic and pedestrian signals, installation and maintenance of school signs, and pedestrian signal timing. The traffic engineer receives calls regarding safety and traffic concerns. These calls can generally be categorized as follows:

- Development-Related
  - Developer feels mitigation costs are too high.
  - Neighborhoods say there is too much traffic.
- Speeding in neighborhoods,
- Timing of signals, and
- People wanting signals, signs, or pedestrian crossings.

The traffic engineer meets with the person making the call at the location of concern. Typically, concerns are valid and improvements are implemented, such as signs, pedestrian crosswalks, or signals installed and traffic control (such as a fence to limit pedestrian access).

Pedestrian signals cost about \$20,000 each for installation. In almost all cases, pedestrian signals have been tied to schools or parks. General criteria used when considering pedestrian signals include pedestrian volume warrants, traffic flows, the physical characteristics of the study area, and pedestrian counts if associated with a school. (Contact: Eric Bracke)

## **Engineering**

Engineering has two programs related to sidewalk repair and replacement: the Sidewalk Program and the Street Overlay and Sealcoat Pavement Management Program. In addition, Engineering prepares standards for public and private improvements.

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The 1996 engineering sidewalk program budget is approximately \$400,000. The following generalizes current sidewalk expenditures by the Engineering Department:

50/50 Sidewalk Replacements	\$ 20,000
Concrete & Asphalt Sidewalk and Ramp Improvements and Replacements	\$330,000
Miscellaneous (Emergency Replacement and Govt. Building Improvements)	\$ 50,000

City ordinance requires the adjacent property owner to repair or replace hazardous sidewalks. The 50/50 sidewalk program is provided to assist the property owner in repairing or replacing these hazardous sidewalks. If the City is contacted by a citizen regarding a hazardous sidewalk, an engineer is sent to confirm the problem and estimate the cost of improvement. If an improvement is required, the adjacent property owner is notified of the problem, their requirement for improvement, and the cost for repair per the 50/50 program. The City then has the adjacent property owner pay in advance fifty percent of the cost.

The City has a high priority sidewalk improvement program. This program started in 1995 with advertisement in the newspaper asking citizens to identify locations where sidewalks and/or ramps should be provided or repaired. This advertising resulted in approximately 100 locations being identified as candidate projects. The list was intended to provide locations for several years. The prioritization was not only to trim the list size, but to determine which sidewalks are most used and/or needed. Engineering developed a priority ranking to select the top locations. The following presents this criteria and ranking:

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Service Criteria	Points
1 Bus Route, Government, School or Health Care Facility	Yes = 10, No = 0
2 Is the Facility on a Pedestrian Corridor?	Yes = 10, No = 0
3 Will the improvement serve handicapped residents?	Yes = 15, No = 0
4 Shopping and/or Employment Center	Yes = 8, No = 0
5 Is the current condition hazardous?	Yes = 8, No = 0
6 Handicapped Bonus ( 1, 3, 5)	Yes = 20, No = 0
7 Pedestrian Corridor Bonus (Along a shopping or pedestrian corridor or bus route) (1, 2, 4)	Yes = 25, No = 0
8 Street Classification	Residential = 0 Collector = 4 Arterial = 8
9 Type of Repair	Ramp = 10, Walk = 5
<b>Total</b>	<b>Sum of 1-9</b>

Engineering reserves a miscellaneous budget for emergency projects. Engineering has the Street Overlay and Sealcoat Pavement Management Program. When streets are overlaid, the project includes adjacent ramp improvements to comply with current standards. The City currently overlays three and one-half to four miles of streets per year. Ideally each street should be overlaid every 15 years; however, because of budget limitations, overlays are exceeding the 15-year period.

Engineering also develops and updates standards. The standards currently used in Fort Collins were prepared in 1986. Revised standards for intersection pedestrian ramps were updated in 1996. Engineering is in the process of updating other street standards, scheduled for approval this year. (Contact: Tom Chapel)

### **Engineering (Development Review)**

The Engineering Department provides an engineer to the Planning Department for development review of all new projects submitted to the City for approval. Part of Engineering's responsibility is to review public improvements proposed by developers. This would include adjacent streets, parkways, sidewalks, etc. Part of this review is to look at sidewalk arrangement to see if handicapped accessibility is incorporated into the design. The engineer reviews basic sidewalk linkages from the public

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street system to on-site development for PUDs and subdivisions. Engineering does not review the linkages of "Use By Right" projects.

Problems facing Engineering include lack of detailed standards and policies for general review, and more specifically, standards for private streets and drives. Engineering also commented on conflicts that arise between older and new developments, where the older development does not want any connections or extensions of stub streets. In the past, they have vacated the stub streets with a pedestrian/bicycle easement to connect the old and new communities. (Contact: Mike Herzig)

### **Police Department**

The vehicle traffic code is based on the 1977 Model Traffic Code, revised for the City of Fort Collins. The State and City do not have pedestrian-friendly traffic laws as compared to other jurisdictions such as California, Washington, Arizona, and the City of Longmont. State and city laws do not give the pedestrian exclusive right-of-way at intersections or crosswalks. Instead, it is the responsibility of pedestrians to wait for an acceptable gap and only then do they have the right-of-way for the lane they are in. Vehicles have the right-of-way in both the lane the pedestrian is approaching and the lane the pedestrian has left. Given that many of our streets have high traffic volumes with few gaps in traffic, it can be extremely difficult to cross the arterials.

Because there are only three traffic officers for the entire City of Fort Collins and because pedestrian/vehicular right-of-way is difficult to identify, there is very little pedestrian-related enforcement. In 1994, the City of Longmont passed an ordinance, similar to the State of Washington, that requires the driver of a vehicle to yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian lawfully crossing the roadway within a marked or unmarked crosswalk for all lanes in the direction of travel the pedestrian is crossing. Although this law does not give the right-of-way to the pedestrian to enter the opposite direction of traffic flow until an acceptable gap, the full right-of-way does improve the opportunity for law enforcement. The California law is further favorable to the pedestrian in that it requires the vehicle in the opposite direction of travel to yield to the pedestrian approaching the center of the street. All laws, however, state that no pedestrian shall suddenly leave a curb or other place of safety and move into the path of a vehicle which is so close as to constitute an immediate hazard.

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Education of pedestrians as well as vehicular traffic laws could be improved. The best effort has been through working with schools and parents in preparing route-to-school maps. The population group that tends to have the most difficulty is the senior citizen. Whereas they pride themselves in maintaining their mobility, their confidence in crossing wide streets with high traffic volumes is challenged. (Contact: Rita Davis)

### **Streets**

The Streets Department is responsible for all maintenance of streets including overlays, pothole patching, grading of alleys, storm water, mowing of shoulders, and snow removal. Streets has little involvement with the actual maintenance of the sidewalk system other than emergency patching. Typically, calls to Streets for sidewalk repair are forwarded to Engineering. Health and Sanitation staff works with homeowners and refuse collection services to make sure garbage cans are not placed on sidewalks, which would interfere with the pedestrian. Inoperable motor vehicles are also removed by Streets.

Streets policy for snow removal from sidewalks is "If we bury it, we uncover it." Therefore, if sidewalks are covered with snow through plowing snow off the streets, Streets will return to remove the snow off of the sidewalks. Removal of snow from the sidewalks is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner. If Streets receives a complaint that snow is not removed from a sidewalk, Streets takes a proactive role and contacts the property owner or leaves a door hanger describing their responsibility and need for compliance. Follow-up is conducted to determine compliance. If snow has not been removed, Streets retains a contractor for snow removal and forwards the bill to the property owner.

The Parks Department is responsible for snow removal on sidewalks adjacent to parks, pathways within the parks, and some of the downtown blocks. Streets removes snow on school pedestrian-ways that are off-street connections. Streets strongly prefers sidewalks to be removed four to five feet from the curb, as it is this area where snow is plowed. Streets also gets involved in development review, where there has been major headway in providing sidewalks offset from the curb edge on arterials and collectors. (Contact: Larry Schneider)

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### **Risk Management**

Risk Management receives claims for injuries resulting from falls or trips on the City's sidewalks. The average number of claims per year is six, primarily received from the elderly. Once a claim is received, Risk Management assigns a claims adjuster to investigate the site and interview the injured person. Claims adjustments are generally settled out of court for medical cost. The major problem areas are uplifted sidewalks due to tree roots. Occasionally, Risk Management will receive a complaint about a hazardous sidewalk, which is forwarded to Engineering. (Contact: Stewart Ellenberg)

### **Transportation Planning (Neighborhood Safety Program)**

As the City of Fort Collins continues to focus on the promotion of a balanced transportation system, enhancing the pedestrian and bicycling environment for all age groups and ability levels is a critical element. Neighborhood safety plays a key role in fostering a convenient, comfortable, usable, local (neighborhood level) transportation network throughout the community.

The Neighborhood Safety Program allows the City's Transportation Planning Department to work in partnership with the Poudre School District (including administration, schools [K-12], parent/teacher organizations), Colorado State University, Front Range Community College, neighborhoods, developers, Larimer County, and other city departments to provide safe roadways, bikeways, and pedestrian ways within the school areas/neighborhoods of Fort Collins.

As part of Neighborhood Safety, the Safe Route to School/Crossing Guard programs will continue to be expanded as needed and monitored on a periodic basis working cooperatively with the Poudre School District administration, schools, parent/teacher organizations, and neighborhoods.

The Neighborhood Safety staff will continue to participate in the development review process as related to bikeway and pedestrian system safety, connectivity, and continuity.

In addition, staff will work cooperatively with other city departments on neighborhood traffic calming and safety education.

Work will also include the implementation of the 1996 Pedestrian Plan, including the identified demonstration project areas as well as the update of standards, policies, and practices.