

# Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues for 2011 City Council Candidates

## Sly James, Mayor

**1. Bicycle Friendly Community.** In 2008 the Mayor and City Council adopted the goal of achieving the nationally-coveted Platinum Level Bicycle Friendly Community designation from the League of American Bicyclists by the year 2020. **Would you continue this goal, and if so, how would you achieve it?**

*I will continue this goal, reaching out to private and non-profit organizations to assist in the process. Through better public-private partnership, City Hall will have an opportunity to engage citizens in a “challenge” to put to use the bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure our city so desperately needs. Demonstrating widely the benefits of using this infrastructure will help spur its demand. Finally, more public-private collaboration will help to identify more incentives our local businesses and City Hall may offer to our respective employees to better engage our citizens in the process.*

**2. Sidewalks.** The City has estimated it would take over \$1 billion to bring all sidewalks into a state of good repair and install sidewalks in neighborhoods that currently lack them. Current city ordinances place the burden of paying for sidewalks on the property owner, yet many neighborhoods with the greatest sidewalk needs are the least able to pay. **How would you work towards ensuring all residents have access to good sidewalks?**

*First, I will not place the burden of much needed infrastructure repair and maintenance directly on the backs of residents without a long-term, comprehensive plan to address the overall \$1 billion shortfall. This is a flawed process. Take, for example, neighborhoods in our 3<sup>rd</sup> District, where property owners are in short supply. The cycle of infrastructure deterioration perpetuates itself when a dramatic lack of property owners leads to a deteriorated neighborhood. In these difficult economic times, we all have to do our part to protect and strengthen our city. I will restore programs like Clean Sweep, in which neighborhoods had a say over the types of services they received based on needs they identified. However, asking individual property owners to shoulder the burden of City Hall’s lack of a long-term plan to address such needs is simply too much our citizens, lacks vision, hurts our neighborhoods, and will be changed under my administration.*

**3. Funding.** Current bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure relies on PIAC funds and Federal grants like CMAQ and Transportation Enhancements. City staff estimate it will take decades to build out the Bike KC and Trails KC systems at the current rate of funding and construction. **Would you support a dedicated funding source, and/or suggest other ways to accelerate the pace of infrastructure investments?**

*Although I do not support a tax increase at this time, I do support fully funding our infrastructure needs. This will not happen overnight, but we must develop a plan to meet our deferred maintenance back log and our infrastructure needs.*

[Please see my attached efficiency paper.](#)

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## **Sly James, Mayor**

*Our last U.S. Census revealed that there are only 50 people living in Kansas City who commute to work each day by bicycle. That number is far too low.*

*Part of the problem is our city's lack of support for commuting by bicycle and an infrastructure that is inadequate and thus discourages many from becoming regular bicycle commuters. The addition of bike racks to KCATA busses has been an improvement and the addition of more bike lanes recently has been encouraging, however we need to undertake more of these initiatives.*

*Cycling has many clear benefits to our community as a whole. It makes our citizenry more physically active and thus more healthful, which results in lower health care costs. There are no harmful emissions or pollutants associated with bicycle commuting. It is affordable, sustainable, and clean.*

*I support setting a timeline for improving our infrastructure to allow for more and enhanced bicycle commuting. In addition to increasing dedicated bike lanes, we need to look at connecting bike lanes to create a "road map" for cyclists, similar to our bus routes. I would also sponsor an ordinance establishing a goal to support increasing the number of regular bicycle commuters, setting benchmarks in each five year period for the next 25 years. These will be incorporated into our comprehensive development plan.*

**4. ADA.** The City is currently many years planning and achieving compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, including the lack of a full-time ADA Coordinator and significant deficits in sidewalks, crosswalks, and accessible traffic signals. **How would you improve both the city's infrastructure and policies to make the city fully accessible for all its citizens?**

*City Hall's inability to meet our ADA regulations is unacceptable and inhumane. As we make a plan for moving our city forward, involving multi-year budgeting and the implementation of CitiStats, all part of my efficiency policy ([attached](#)), meeting ADA regulations will be a top priority. Unfortunately, City Hall has been bouncing from crisis to crisis, drama to drama, leaving this problem to build up. We will not be able to fix this overnight, but will create a multi-year plan by which our city will meet ADA compliance.*

**5. Bike KC.** The city's long-delayed Bike KC plan envisions a network of on-street bike lanes and other bike routes across the city. While recent years have brought good progress in including bike lanes on new streets in outlying neighborhoods, the city lacks a plan to retrofit existing streets with bike routes in urban core and other developed areas. **How would you improve the pace to bring bike routes to the heart of the city?**

*One of our main hurdles to better, quicker implementation is data. We need to improve the ways in which we collect data to have a clearer map of how long it will take to meet our ultimate goal. We're not there yet, and it is holding back implementation. CitiStats will help (please see [attached](#) efficiency paper).*

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*City Hall has effectively shelved plans like Bike KC and FOCUS on which our citizens and city employees have spent countless hours and countless dollars. Moving forward, infrastructure planning and repair will look different from the recent past because of our more than \$2.5 billion combined-sewer overhaul -- our most expensive and largest infrastructure project in our history. The shape of our planning will conform around this project, which I see as an opportunity. As citizen satisfaction remains low regarding issues of infrastructure, it is crucial that we improve this low rating through the process of our combined sewer overhaul. We need to offer our neighborhoods a carrot as we are gutting them for sewer repairs. Improving sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure would be a great way to do so.*

**6. Your priorities.** How does walking and bicycling fit into your overall agenda and your plan for the future of Kansas City?

*Please see my answer to question number 3. Walking and bicycling will be part of my agenda for infrastructure planning and development. Laying the infrastructure for a more bike-friendly Kansas City makes sense. Our city has to move away from our fossil fuel addiction and bicycling and walking are two of the most cost effective way to do so.*

*Our needs are many and our challenges great. What is clear to me is the need to start getting serious about our fossil fuel crisis. Bicycling and walking are obvious solutions by which we only stand to benefit in a cost effective way. Our city's health, too, is a serious consideration. We are not getting any healthier and that has serious long-term costs as well. Implementing a serious bicycling and walking infrastructure is a winning proposition. I will be a champion of a smarter, healthier, more bicycling and walking friendly infrastructure*

**7. Yourself.** Feel free to tell us about your own history on bike/ped issues or your personal experiences bicycling/walking/running for transportation, recreation, or fitness.

*The bottom line is that I strongly support smarter transportation, which will include bike and walking infrastructure improvement and planning. As a form of exercise, I take regular walks with my wife Licia. In addition, as an individual who was in a wheelchair for a significant period of my life, I can attest personally to our city's dramatic need for improvement with ADA compliance. I feel strongly about this issue, and hope I earn the opportunity to work with you to make these necessary improvements to move our city forward.*