

Mayor's Pedestrian/Bicycle Advisory Committee
2740 "A" Street
Lincoln, NE 68502

August 9, 2016

Mayor Chris Beutler
City/County Building
555 So. 10th Suite 301
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Mayor Beutler:

The Mayor's Pedestrian/Bicycle Advisory Committee (PBAC) has been working closely with the Lincoln Children's Zoo design team to develop an alternative that protects zoo patrons and trail users while meeting the overall needs of our community. We appreciate the zoo design team's willingness to communicate, attend meetings, and take our concerns into consideration. After several meetings with the zoo design team and acquiring feedback from trail users, PBAC has prepared the following recommendations.

Maintain Rock Island Trail as it currently exists. The existing alignment currently best meets the needs of the over 800 pedestrians and cyclists who use the trail daily for commuting and recreation. This alignment also provides good access to the zoo for patrons arriving by bike or foot, an aspect the zoo design team wants to encourage. We appreciate the zoo's support in maintaining this current alignment. However, if a future alternative is identified that provides a better alignment for trail users while meeting the overall needs of our community, PBAC would be interested in considering that alternative. We believe that costs associated with an alternative alignment should be borne primarily by the zoo.

Reevaluate the vehicular crossing of the Rock Island Trail. While the design team has worked hard to minimize potential conflicts between trail users and vehicles driving across the trail between parking lots, we believe this feature still poses public safety risks and is worthy of reconsideration. Other alternatives may eliminate the need for the parking lot on the decommissioned water reservoirs as well as the need for the pedestrian bridge crossing A Street.

Consider expanding zoo development in the triangle to make access safer and more pedestrian friendly. The current plan with the parking lots across A Street creates several pedestrian issues for zoo patrons which have been reaffirmed by the Urban Design Committee's recent review of the current expansion plans. One issue is the distance of the proposed parking lots from the zoo's entrance. While we want to encourage people to walk more, evidence suggests that the public is not likely to walk more than 300 to 600 feet from a parking lot to reach their destination and this distance is likely to be less with small children.¹ Locating visitor parking across A Street will likely exceed distances that some zoo patrons are willing to undertake.

We believe a solution to these issues is to expand zoo development on the triangle and consider relocating the Parks and Recreation Administration Building to allow for better utilization of the triangle. This sentiment was echoed at Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meetings early on in the process. Expanding zoo development on the triangle and placing the zoo visitor parking lot on the triangle would reduce pedestrian and public safety issues noted by our committee and the Urban Design Committee. It would also eliminate the need for the expensive pedestrian bridge (~\$1-2 million) and this savings could be applied to more sustainable parking solutions such as decked parking that can be phased in over time as zoo visitation increases. We believe this offers a great educational opportunity for the zoo to demonstrate smart growth planning principles which is one of the best ways to support wildlife conservation. Pursuing certification from the Green Parking Council could be used to demonstrate leadership in pursuing a more environmentally-friendly parking solution.²

We are hopeful that an innovative solution will be developed that will be safe and sustainable, and also encourage pedestrian and bicycle traffic to reduce the number of motor vehicles coming to the zoo. We look forward to working with the City and the zoo design team to develop a safe alternative that protects and meets the overall needs of our community, now and in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Bentrup". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "G".

Gary Bentrup
Chairperson of the Mayor's Pedestrian/Bicycle Advisory Committee

CC: City Council Members, Zoo Expansion Committee

¹ Smith, M.S. Butcher, T.A. 2008. How Far Should Parkers Have to Walk? *Parking* May: 28-31.

² Green Parking Council <http://www.greenparkingcouncil.org/>