

KPD informs citizens about bike laws

BY DANIELLE WALDRON
Staff Reporter

New signs were spray-painted on the sidewalks by Kirksville Police Department and the City to remind cyclists to keep bikes off the sidewalks in the downtown area.

The recently spray-painted signs on the sidewalks serve to inform citizens about the city codes, said Nick Panos, KPD officer and Bicycle Community Project Coordinator. No skates, skateboards or bicycles are allowed in the downtown area, according to Kirksville City Ordinance chapter 15, section one.

Panos said he has the safety and best interest of all residents in mind when enforcing the code.

KPD will also increase foot patrols to write tickets throughout the downtown area to enforce the codes, he said. This recent enforcement has been called the "Kirksville Police Department Bicycle Community Project," Panos said.

"Riding on the sidewalk in the downtown area where there is a lot of pedestrian traffic ... is dangerous," Panos said. "They are more likely to get into a collision that way."

Tina Abernathy, The Crossing Thrift Store employee, said she thought it was safer for bicyclists to ride on the sidewalk throughout the downtown area instead of the streets where there currently are no bicycle paths.

She said she had not seen any collisions or bicycle-related incidents occur on the sidewalk.

Abernathy said the tighter enforcement might negatively affect some businesses throughout the downtown area, because The Square is an area that is frequented by residents and students.

"We have quite a few shoppers that are bicyclers," Abernathy said. "I don't know how big of a detriment it will be, but I think it will [for] some ... I'm pro-bicyclist, my son has rode his bike up here before. I certainly wouldn't want him getting ticketed."

Panos said he thinks Kirksville does a good job of keeping the city bicycle-friendly for college students and residents by maintaining bicycle trails and



Danielle Waldron/Index

The Kirksville Police Department painted new signs such as this throughout the downtown area informing cyclists to not ride on the sidewalks. The signs are part of the Bicycle Community Project to promote bike safety and education.

lanes, such as the lane on Jefferson Street.

He said warnings typically are issued to violators for the first offense. Repeat violations can result in citations and possible bicycle impoundment, Panos said.

Although street signs with the "no bicycle" code are posted on poles and storefronts throughout the downtown area, Kirksville Codes and Planning Director Brad Selby said he thinks the new spray-painted signs will be more effective.

Selby said he has seen many bikers ignore the old signs, but the new ones are at all ramps from the street, so he said they should be easier to see.

Freshman Isaac Pearlstone said the new red signs do not reflect positively on the City and the downtown area's image. He said he thinks the new signs probably will not influence students who use bicycles as a primary mode of transportation.

"I think it's kind of tacky," Pearlstone said. "People are going to ride their bike anyway, if they want to. The sidewalk is definitely safer than the street."

Pearlstone said the lack of traffic in Kirksville makes Kirksville bicycle-friendly, which allows students to get around easily. He said he would like to see an increase of bike lanes if the space and resources exist.

The Bicycle Community Project still is underway and trying to raise more awareness about bicycle safety, said Panos. An increase of foot patrols throughout the downtown area when pedestrian traffic is higher will help, as well as working with the community to address any suggestions or potential needs, he said.

"I'm working on a brochure which should be approved soon," Panos said. "That should help get safety knowledge out there."

To avoid bicycle accidents, cyclists should obey all traffic laws and wear bright colors or affix lights to bicycles when riding at night, Panos said.

MoDOT audits certain Highway 63 intersections

BY KAITLYN DANIELS
Staff Reporter

High crash rates at various intersections on Highway 63 in Kirksville might result with changes recommended by the Missouri Department of Transportation to provide extra safety for motorists.

A road safety audit was conducted Nov. 26 by the Missouri Department of Transportation and the Missouri State Highway Patrol to make recommendations for safety changes at certain intersections that will be decided prior to Christmas, Assistant District Engineer Kevin James said.

James said the audit was done to come up with different recommendations for safety changes in each intersection they reviewed. They looked at different strategies to try to reduce the number of right angle crashes, which occurred more frequently in the intersections they inspected, he said.

MoDOT still is reviewing data and gathering additional traffic counts to finalize those recommendations, James said.

"We haven't come out with the final recommendations yet," James said. "Some different things that we talked about when we were out there at the different locations involved some signing changes, some rumble strips and flashers and other things to try to make sure motorists are aware of

the intersection and need to stop when they get to it."

Small sign changes and adding rumble strips or flashes would be relatively inexpensive, he said. Larger changes, such as changing the intersection types, could be more expensive and cost would vary depending on the design used in each location, James said.

James said changing the layout and design of some of the intersections as a longer term solution to prevent the likelihood of right angle crashes was also discussed. Changing the intersections to a different design will require more public input to ensure that MoDOT does not miss anything, James said.

James said residents who live close to the intersection or drive through it regularly can give their observations about the intersections to supply information that they might have missed.

The audit last Monday by MoDOT crews was conducted by traveling on the highway with crash statistics for each intersection and a diagram that showed the circumstances of the accidents, James said.

The crews approached the intersection from all angles and discussed the accident trends, traffic patterns, characteristics of the intersection and the number of vehicles that use that area every day, James said.

James said they were brain-

storming potential safety solutions when they conducted the audit. MoDOT will be meeting again to take some of those ideas and finalize a list of official recommendations, James said. He said they have not set a date to meet, but hope to have the official recommendations done before Christmas.

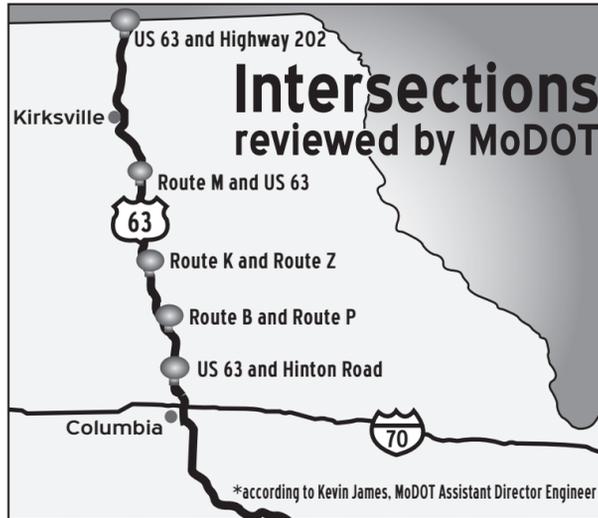
James said MoDOT will pay for any improvements made to the intersections. All of MoDOT's funding primarily comes from fuel tax revenue, James said. The district gets statewide and federal revenue and then they prioritize the funding.

"We have safety projects, resurfacing projects and bridge replacement projects that compete for needs," James said. "That comes down to doing the audit, coming up with recommendations and then looking at how they prioritize with the other needs out there before we actually move ahead with the project."

Lieutenant Eric Olsen said the Missouri State Highway Patrol are partners with MoDOT. MoDOT asked the highway patrolmen if they could sit in on the audit and consult with them, Olsen said.

"One thing in common between MoDOT and the Highway Patrol is that one of our top priorities is traffic safety," Olsen said. "Reducing the number and severity of traffic crashes is a top priority for both agencies."

Olsen said any time you bring



two roadways together, the possibility exists for right angle or 90 degree-type crashes.

"Those types of impacts can cause the most serious types of injuries to people involved because the vehicle being struck at 90 degrees is receiving full impact from the opposing vehicle," Olsen said. "If an intersection can be designed so that people could enter and exit them without presenting 90 degree angles, then the vehicle being struck won't absorb full momentum of the opposing vehicle."

Police Chief Jim Hughes said the vast majority of the high hazard intersections that were identified by the Police Department within the city limits of Kirksville were on Baltimore Street, which is now referred to as Business 63.

Hughes said KPD saw an increase in accidents between 2009 and 2010. The police force did an

analysis of the high risk areas in town, and most of the intersections were identified as existing on the Baltimore corridor.

KPD always is looking to see if accidents are a result of an engineering issue or human-related issue, Hughes said.

"Sometimes a high-hazard intersection doesn't mean that people are violating law," Hughes said. "On some rare occasions, an engineering problem may be found."

Hughes said the police deal with a lot of cases of drivers violating "Right Of Way" laws at the intersections, which isn't always an intentional violation.

"An example of this violation is if someone turns in front of you, doesn't see you and tries to beat the light and you hit them in the middle of the intersection," Hughes said.

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