



Kansas LTAP Fact Sheet

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City of Andover Takes Proactive Approach to Reducing Crashes

By Lisa Harris

Andover's Traffic Safety Committee gets the right people in the room to develop solutions.



Andover, Kansas had a situation common to all local governments in Kansas—they had traffic safety problems and complaints that involved multiple city departments and community stakeholders. Communication was not what it needed to be. The solution? Get the right people in the room, on a regular basis, to talk about traffic safety, with the right data and tools, and develop solutions together.

Andover, in Butler County, near Wichita, has multi-disciplinary traffic safety meetings, which include lunch, three times per year. In this article we'll describe those meetings and how they are helping with traffic safety.

The Andover Police Department started the city's Traffic Safety Committee meetings in January 2012. Andover's Police Traffic Safety

Coordinator of the department at the time, Sergeant Brandon "Hoss" Stewart, started them with the help of Police Chief Michael Keller. Lieutenant Lance Parker became the Traffic Safety Coordinator (and took over the meetings) in the middle of 2013.

Who is on the committee?

The committee has 10 members with representatives from traffic engineering, public works, the street department, the area school district, business owners, community members, and the police.

"Each of those are stakeholders in our community and play a role in making our city safe," Parker said. "The schools educate our youth, engineering/public works develops our roads and streets, and the police enforce the traffic laws of our state and city."

What does the committee do?

The committee meets three times per year in January, May, and September to:

- 1) Go over traffic crash information to identify problem areas. They look at injury and non-injury crashes per four-month period and by year, and compare data with the previous year. They also break down the incidents into categories

like speeding, age, gender, reckless driving, and weather conditions.

"It's real good information for everyone," said committee member Bill Braitsch, street superintendent. He said the police department has a relatively new crash mapping tool that helps with visualization. Traffic problems are usually at major intersections, he said.

- 2) Review traffic complaints and develop suggestions for improvement. Complaints are broken down into two groups: driver and road hazard.

- 3) Learn about police enforcement efforts such as number of citations, locations of the speed trailer and speeds recorded, location of signs, drone vehicle, etc.; and

- 4) Review and discuss traffic engineering studies planned and under way, road construction, and current and future improvement plans—and discuss any adjustments to consider.

The overall objective is to lower both the number of crashes and the number of traffic complaints.

What have been some notable benefits and outcomes of the traffic safety meetings?

Better communication. Parker cited this first. "I believe that communication between public works, schools, local business owners, the police, and the community has been improved. The committee members all have different



City of Andover Police Department

Andover's Traffic Safety Committee was initiated by the police department. The department organizes and hosts each meeting at their offices.



perspectives on traffic safety and we all learn from each other," he said.

Greater awareness of safety issues.

Parker said that, since he has taken over the Traffic Safety Coordinator position for the police department, he has learned a lot.

"I have learned to look at computerized crash data and provide targeted enforcement sites for our agency," he said. In addition, Parker said he has been able to provide better use of the city's police radar trailer, radar sign, and additional traffic safety programs offered by the police department.

Parker also attends and participates in bimonthly *Operation Impact* meetings in the Sedgwick County/Wichita area. These meetings focus on the law enforcement side of traffic safety. Sedgwick County's sheriff's department, Wichita's police department, and surrounding law enforcement agencies get together to discuss traffic law enforcement trends and issues throughout the Wichita metro area.

Braitsch said that looking at crash data and talking about the crashes gets the traffic safety committee to think about why a crash happened at a particular

location and whether traffic control devices at the site are working as they should. "We might see if a traffic signal is malfunctioning. Maybe a camera needs to be adjusted because it's not pointed just right. Maybe it wasn't entirely the driver's fault. We're more aware," he said.

Targeted engineering. Braitsch said improvement plans might be adjusted as a result of a discussion. An example is at 13th Street and Andover Road. A new junior college facility opened its doors ½ mile east of that intersection, and traffic skyrocketed. Crashes increased as well, and the traffic safety committee discussed them.

Braitsch said the public works department changed the signal timing before they had the money to reconstruct the intersection. That helped some. Later they added dedicated turn lanes. The result? In 2012 there were 19 crashes, going up to 26 in 2013, probably due to construction and confusion, said Parker. (Improvements were completed in Summer 2013.) Crashes in 2014, as of 12-18-14, number just 6. "It's approaching 80 percent better," Braitsch said. The crash severity has decreased as well. "We used to have T-bones at that

intersection. Now we see just fender benders. I won't say the problem has gone away—it's college kids and they are not always going to wait—but it's a lot better," Braitsch said.

Areas around district schools are particularly problematic for traffic safety, with lots of buses in the area. Braitsch said the district is always very involved in safety discussions. The committee has recently discussed the possibility of installing a pedestrian-activated beacon at crosswalk on a school route in the near future.

Targeted enforcement at trouble spots. The committee reviews trouble spots—places where they are seeing more crashes and/or complaints—and the police department will increase enforcement at those locations.

Community approval. Braitsch said Andover residents appreciate the city's focus on traffic safety. He gave an example of the street department's practice of installing "Keep Kids Alive—Drive 25" signs at entrances to residential areas off of arterials with a higher speed limit. The speed limit on residential streets city-wide is 25 mph, and these signs reinforce the change in speed limit.

"Police like the signs and so do residents," Braitsch said. "We're looking out for their kids. They are colorful. We're replacing our regular 25 mph signs with these." Braitsch noted that the signs are more expensive because they are bigger than a speed limit sign and they have more than one color, but they are considered worth the investment in Andover.

Statewide recognition. Parker noted that the City of Andover has been awarded Kansas AAA Traffic Safety Awards since 2011, in part because of the work of their traffic safety committee. The City received the Silver award in 2011, Gold award in both 2012 and 2013, and is in line to receive the Platinum award this year. To be eligible for the annual award, a community must conduct traffic safety promotions and educate the public on safety topics. David Hanni, AAA Kansas Region Executive Vice President, said



“Drive 25” signs on residential streets in Andover are liked by the police department as well as the public.



the awards “recognize the great efforts of these law enforcement agencies, and encourage other law enforcement agencies to actively engage in similar type efforts.”

We echo the sentiments of AAA and hope this article will encourage your street or road and bridge department to develop a traffic safety committee together with your law enforcement agency and other traffic safety stakeholders. It’s certainly working well for Andover, and their whole community benefits.

For more information

For a PDF of a sample agenda from an Andover Traffic Safety Committee meeting, contact Lisa Harris at lharris@ku.edu.

Bill Braitsch, Andover Street Superintendent, can be reached at (316) 733-8290 or bbraitsch@andoverks.com

Lieutenant Lance Parker can be reached at (316) 733-5177, ext. 215 or lparker@andoverks.com ■

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Sources:

- Phone interview with Bill Braitsch, 10-24-14.
- Email correspondence with Lt. Lance Parker, 11-3-14.
- Andover Police Department Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AndoverPoliceDepartment>