

From: Scott House
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2023 4:47 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@heberut.gov>
Cc: Matt Brower
Subject: (EXTERNAL) Traffic Safety, Communication & Coordination (For Public Comment)

Greetings Councilors, Friends and Colleagues,

I hope this finds you well and enjoying the fall weather while it lasts! I am writing to you today to provide public comment as a concerned citizen, parent and community advocate. As you well know, traffic, traffic safety, construction and all that swirls around those topics has gotten out of control. The lives of three community youth have been changed permanently due to auto/pedestrian accidents in recent weeks. HWY 40 is in a near constant state of congestion, and our neighborhood streets are serving as a bypass for this congestion, leading to egregiously dangerous speeding and traffic violations throughout our neighborhoods. Residents don't know from one day to the next which streets will be open and when, or which detour route to use, often exacerbating already dangerous conditions.

This is nothing new to you, and rather than being another voice complaining about the obvious I would like to suggest some solutions for your consideration:

- **Communication & Coordination**

- Communication is key in all matters, especially when it comes to safety. Our current communication plan/regime is wholly inadequate for the growth, construction, and impacts are community is facing, and that will only continue to grow. It is imperative that we work immediately to bolster communications to our residents and guests. A monthly newsletter in the mail and social media posts are no longer adequate.
 - I suggest that Heber City develop an opt in email list that can be used to share critical information on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. These communications can include road closures, events, construction projects, designated detours, and safety reminders for our community.
 - In addition to the opt-in newsletter I would also suggest that Heber City pursue an opt-in text messaging services (I use [Simple Texting](#) for work and it is very easy and cost effective). This service could be used in conjunction with an eNewsletter to notify residents of unexpected road closures, changes to construction schedules or detour routes, as well as inviting/reminding the community of events, meetings, etc.
 - Additionally, it is critical that much more coordination takes place between Heber City, UDOT and Wasatch County when it comes to construction projects in and adjacent to Heber City. I know our city staff works tirelessly to ensure this, but more needs to be done. We can't have every north/south road south of Center Street closed between HWY 40 and 750 E and then pinch HWY 40 down to one lane each direction, close 3 lanes on 600 S, and close numerous roads on the west side of Heber all at the same time. This is exactly what leads to the dangerous behavior and traffic situations in our neighborhoods. Certainly I understand our shortened construction window given our location, and the need to get projects done when we can. That said, we need to work to do a better job of taking a holistic/big picture view of our community and the projects within, and adjacent to it, and make sure that we are not creating unnecessary congestion, frustration and hazards whenever possible.

- **Traffic/Pedestrian/Cyclist Safety**

- As mentioned, 3 youth in our community have had their lives permanently changed due to traffic safety issues. All of these youth were crossing in supposed "safe crossings" or "cross walks". And, although outside of city limits, a cyclist was killed on the Pine Canyon Road today by a tour bus that had no right being on that road. As I type this I just witnessed a Geneva Rock Dump truck headed west on 300 S past my home doing between 30-40 MPH. My wife and I no longer feel safe letting our kids out of our yard or across the road to say hi to neighbors as we know we are risking their lives. The speeding, ignoring of stop signs and other traffic signs, inattentive driving, and general disrespectful behavior is out of control.
 - Part of the solution here lies in the previous point around communication. We need to do a better job reminding residents and guests that our neighborhoods are exactly that, neighborhoods, not race courses or bypasses to traffic issues. We need to remind residents and guests, in the kindest way possible, that speeding through neighborhoods at 10, 15, 20 MPH over

the speed limit is not only incredibly dangerous, but does not gain them any significant amount of extra time when getting to their destination. We need to remind residents and guests that it's not just important to follow traffic laws near schools, or in their own neighborhoods but in all neighborhoods and areas of our fine city. And, we need to remind residents and guests of this with consistent messaging and on a regular basis.

- I understand that the men & women of the Heber City Police Department and Wasatch County Sheriff are dedicated to the health and safety of our community. Unfortunately, like many businesses, they struggle to stay staffed at adequate levels, especially considering the explosive growth we are seeing. Furthermore, traffic safety is just one of their many duties when it comes to serving our community. Given this fact, I would like to suggest that Heber City pursue a robust road striping and traffic signage program throughout all of Heber City. Many of our roads have no striping, no speed limit signs, no pedestrian safety signs, etc. Enforcement will always be a challenge, but signage reminding people of acceptable neighborhood speeds, pedestrian crossings, cyclists/pedestrians in the area, would go a long way to combating the problem. Furthermore, no one could claim ignorance when traffic laws were enforced if there was robust signage clearly spelling out speeds, etc. Road striping would help remind people where their lane was, where to stop and when, where to look for pedestrians and cyclist, further contributing to the overall safety of our community. Although both signage and striping comes at an expense it is not nearly the expense or challenge of hiring and retaining a full time employee and would help those in law enforcement better do their job.

- **HWY 40**

- We all know that HWY 40 is a mess, it's no secret. We all have suffered the impact of 200+ oil tankers per day moving through our community, often obstructing both lanes of traffic and consequently visibility for other motorists. We have all been backed up for blocks in town, or getting into town as traffic flows from points outside of our city on their way to Vernal, Duchesne, Provo/Orem or their favorite camping spot in the Uintas, providing little to no economic benefit as they race through town to get to their final destination. Our way of life, our quality of life, our community safety, and our economy are all suffering under the crushing weight of growth that has outstripped projections and is seemingly unrelenting. When UDOT says the projections they used for the original HWY 40 Bypass EIS are no longer accurate due to the explosive growth we are experiencing, that should be a very large red flag to us that we need to adjust our timeline as well.
 - The time is NOW to start pursuing mitigation efforts, including speed limits, additional safe crossings, traffic regulations for commercial traffic (which lane they need to remain in and speed) and any and all options to make HWY 40 closer to a safe Main Street and not the Mad Max esque road scape it is now.
 - The time is NOW; not in 5 years, 10 years, 15 years; NOW, for Heber City to start immediately working with Wasatch County, UDOT, the State Legislature, the Transportation Commission, etc. to address HWY 40 through Heber City. Regardless of your view on a bypass, we cannot afford to idly sit by and wait for UDOT or other outside organization to address HWY 40 on their time. We, Heber City, need to do everything in our power to accelerate taking back OUR Main Street. This can include building a contingency fund to help fund projects making them more enticing for the above mentioned partners, pursuing grant funding to push timelines forward, and working beyond our borders to advocate at a state and federal level for the safety and health of our community and economy as it pertains to Main Street.

As a Co-Chair of your POSTT Committee, a concerned citizen, a fearful parent, someone who is deeply passionate about cyclist and pedestrian safety, and as a resident who wants our community to flourish long into the future; I kindly ask that you not just read these suggestions and file them away. But that you take them to heart and give them serious consideration, in addition to the other suggestions I am sure you have already received, and work to take immediate action.

We cannot stop the growth in, or popularity of our community, we can only do our best to manage that growth and the growing pains that come along with it. I know each of you is doing your very best when it comes to this, and I truly believe that all of you are engaged and committed community servants working to better Heber City for all. Unfortunately, our hand as a community has been forced somewhat and I believe, given recent incidents and what we all experience in our neighborhoods on a daily basis, we need to prioritize addressing the dangerous conditions (that are only growing) that exists on our roads, and for our residents, particularly our youth.

Thank you for your time, consideration and service to our community. I look forward to any and all responses and engaging with you in a productive, and civil conversation to take meaningful action.

Be well and create a great weekend!

Scott



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