

The Jonesboro Walkability Survey

Conducted October 8, 2009

Background

A coalition of six local organizations organized a walkability survey on Thursday, October 8. Fifty volunteers met at the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce for training prior to dividing into teams and answering a list of questions regarding intersections and sidewalks to which they were assigned. A list of the intersections is included in Appendix A at the end of this report.

Volunteers were asked to observe physical aspects of the intersections and sidewalks and to provide feedback on vehicular traffic and their sense of personal safety as a pedestrian. As such, portions of the survey are subjective in nature. Survey questions were divided into five areas of concern: crosswalks, sidewalks, driver behavior, safety, and comfort and appeal. All questions were formulated around issues for which national standards have been set.

Recommendations

- Since pedestrians are walking in areas where no sidewalks currently exist, the City of Jonesboro can facilitate safer crossing of city streets by increasing the number of crosswalks at intersections and key crossing points. This will include implementing a city policy of painting crosswalks at intersections each time a stop sign or traffic light is installed. Painted crosswalks assist drivers by providing a visual reminder that pedestrians may be present.
- Many crosswalks were reported to have been poorly marked, which may mean they have been partially paved over or have faded over time. We recommend establishment of a priority list of crosswalks to be painted/ repainted.
- Many crosswalks, including newer ones, are at least partially blocked by obstructions such as mail boxes, utility poles, signage, and utility boxes. These obstructions pose hazards for the elderly, children, the disabled, and the average citizen. We recommend design standards which designate appropriate locations for such items in the right of way and which prohibit their presence in the sidewalk.
- The initiative by the City to develop a sidewalk inventory should be expanded as a means to develop a comprehensive plan to address sidewalk connectivity in the city.
- Explore options for raising driver awareness, including asking local driving instructors to emphasize crosswalk safety and yielding to pedestrians in driver education classes. Enforcement and education days could also be organized in partnership with community groups to raise public awareness.
- Increased use of signage, beginning in school zones, should be considered to instruct and remind motorists they are required to stop for pedestrians crossing the street.
- Medians and curb extensions assist pedestrians in crossing streets safely by providing better visibility and acting as safe zones for crossing multiple lanes of traffic. They also force traffic to slow down. Buffers provide for pedestrian safety and comfort and, where street trees and vegetation are included, enhance the environment of the streetscape. All three are nationally recommended best practices for walkable communities. We recommend the city adopt these design elements as requirements for city streets.
- We recommend the inclusion of diverse stakeholders in drafting language for city ordinances addressing sidewalk, buffer, and crosswalk features.

The Survey Tool and Methodology

The survey was developed by the AARP Public Policy Institute using its Liveable Communities Evaluation Guide. It is intended to provide a representative sampling of a community's walkability. Based on its findings, communities can more effectively prioritize and address problem issues; including sidewalk and crosswalk conditions and their availability in the city.

The 45 intersections chosen for this survey include those along the Stadium and Caraway corridors from Phillips Drive north to their intersections with Matthews Avenue. Matthews and Washington Avenues were surveyed west to their intersection with South Main Street. Phillips Drive was surveyed separately and those findings are not included in this report. Intersections were selected with the assistance of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) based on high traffic counts, proximity to commercial areas, and their location on routes where pedestrians and those using public transportation may work, shop, or seek access to services. For comparison, two crossing points at each intersection were observed: one point was across each major arterial (Stadium or Caraway) or minor arterial (Matthews or Washington); the second crossing point was across each local street or collector. The survey was conducted between 11:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

The MPO divided the intersections into three categories: red, yellow, and green. Red intersections were those where there has been minimal or no investment in crosswalks and sidewalks; yellow intersections were areas where the City has made some investment in crosswalks and sidewalks. Green intersections were areas where the City has made considerable investment in crosswalks and sidewalks. See Appendix A for a list of these intersections by category.

Summary of Findings

Intersections With Minimal or No Investment in Crosswalks and Sidewalks (Red)

Crosswalks

- Data on adequate crossing times was collected but is not included since most volunteers chose not to cross due to safety concerns.
- 65 to 70 percent of all intersections require pedestrians to walk further to access marked crosswalks.
- 74 percent of streets are considered too wide to cross safely without a median (“safe zone”) for pedestrians crossing multiple lanes of traffic.
- Drainage issues (including ditches, potholes, and pools of water) were frequently cited as an impediment to crossing.
- Approximately one quarter of all the pedestrians observed were in this area.

Sidewalks

- 74 percent of intersections in this area have no sidewalks. All intersections without any sidewalks are located in these areas.
- This area has a total of six sidewalks among 23 intersections. Of these six, two have broken or cracked sidewalks and have misplaced ADA ramps.
- None of the six sidewalks provide connectivity from the intersections to adjacent businesses.
- Five of the six are considered too narrow for two persons to walk abreast.
- Three of the six sidewalks have obstructions in them.
- None of the sidewalks have buffers between the sidewalks and the street.

Driver Behavior

- 20 percent of intersections had drivers not yielding to pedestrians.
- 13 of 23 intersections rank “Poor” for driver behavior; 5 rank “Fair”; 4 rank “Good”. One was not ranked.

Pedestrian Safety

- 70 percent of intersections were reported as having cars going too fast. This may be a reflection of how safe pedestrians feel in these areas.
- 83 percent were reported as having high volumes of traffic.
- 17 of 23 intersections rank “Poor” for pedestrian safety.
- 30 percent of signage was reported as being unclear.
- Potholes, broken telephone boxes, jay walking, and a lack of signage were specifically cited as safety concerns but were not exclusive to these areas.

Comfort and Appeal

- 74 percent of intersections were reported as needing shade trees and landscaping.
- 65 percent were reported as needing places to rest.
- 48 percent had trash on the roadside.
- 15 of 23 are ranked “Poor”.

Intersections With Some Investment in Crosswalks and Sidewalks (Yellow)

Crosswalks

- 100 percent of crosswalks crossing arterial intersections and 60 percent of those crossing local/collector streets are nonexistent or poorly marked.
- Most intersections have crosswalks missing from key locations where pedestrians can be expected to cross.
- Approximately half of the intersections have inadequate lighting at crossings.
- Visibility issues, turning traffic, uneven surfaces, poor drainage, jay walking, narrow curb cuts, and overgrown vegetation are specific concerns cited.

Sidewalks

- All five intersections located here have some sidewalks.
- None of the sidewalks surveyed provide connectivity to local streets or adjacent businesses.
- Four of five have broken or cracked sidewalks and were blocked by obstructions.
- None of the sidewalks had buffers between the sidewalk and the street.

Driver Behavior

- All five intersections received a “Good” ranking.

Pedestrian Safety

- 40 percent of intersections reported cars going too fast.
- Four of the five intersections were reported as having signage that is unclear. A more detail look at those intersections would be required to draw specific conclusions.
- One intersection is ranked “Good”; the remaining four are equally divided between “Fair” and “Poor”.

Comfort and Appeal

- All five intersections were reported as needing shade trees, landscaping, and places to rest.
- Three of the five need landscaping maintenance. Of the three areas, this area ranked highest in need of landscaping maintenance.
- Three of the five were reported as having trash on the roadside.

Areas With Considerable Investment in Crosswalks and Sidewalks (Green)

Crosswalks

- Between 47 and 67 percent of crosswalks are nonexistent or poorly marked.
- 59 percent of arterial intersections and 47 percent of collectors/local streets were reported as having inadequate lighting at crossings. These percentages are as high or higher than other areas.
- 47 of arterial intersections were reported as not having crosswalks at key locations.
- Over three quarters of the pedestrians observed were in this area.

Sidewalks

- All intersections in this area have some sidewalks.
- Five of the 17 sidewalks surveyed were recorded as providing connectivity to adjacent businesses.
- Open ditches, vegetation, vehicles, and other obstructions in the sidewalk were cited as concerns.
- 65 percent of sidewalks were considered too narrow for two persons to walk abreast.
- 59 percent sidewalks have obstructions in the sidewalk.
- All sidewalks were without buffers between the sidewalk and the street.

Driver Behavior

- 53 percent of intersections reported cars stopping in the crosswalk.
- Poor visibility and distracted drivers talking on cell phones were two specific concerns cited.
- Two intersections rank "Excellent", 9 rank "Good" for driver behavior. The remainder are evenly divided between "Fair" and "Poor".

Pedestrian Safety

- 77 percent of these intersections reported cars as traveling too fast.
- 53 percent reported high volumes of traffic.
- Five rank "Excellent" for pedestrian safety, 5 rank "Good", the remainder are "Fair" or "Poor".

Comfort and Appeal

- While all areas were reported to be in need of shade trees and landscaping, this area ranked as having the least need, perhaps reflecting that investments in landscaping have already been made.
- 29 percent of these areas were reported as needing landscape maintenance.
- Five intersections rank "Excellent" for comfort and appeal, 6 rank "Good", and 6 rank "Fair".
- Only 6 percent of intersections were reported as having trash on the roadside.

Crosswalks

	Not marked or poorly marked	No crosswalks in key locations	No push to walk button	Cars observed in crosswalk	Required pedestrians to walk more than 300 feet to find a marked crosswalk	Considered too wide to cross safely without a median	Inadequate lighting at crossings	Pedestrians counted	Ranking
Arterial Intersections (45)	84%	73%	73%	40%	44%	44%	49%	44	25-Poor 13-Fair 5-Good 1-Excellent 1-Not ranked
Red (23)	96%	87%	74%	48%	65%	74%	39%	10	19-Poor 4-Fair
Yellow (5)	100%	100%	80%	60%	20%	0%	60%	3	1-Poor 4-Fair
Green (17)	65%	47%	71%	24%	24%	18%	59%	31	6-Poor 5-Fair 5-Good 1-Excellent
Local Streets or Collectors (45)	71%	53%	69%	33%	42%	40%	44%	48	19-Poor 10-Fair 8-Good 1-Excellent 7-Not ranked
Red (23)	96%	78%	74%	35%	70%	74%	43%	7	16-Poor 3-Fair 4-Not ranked
Yellow(5)	60%	60%	60%	40%	0%	0%	40%	1	1-Poor 1-Fair 3-Not ranked
Green (17)	47%	18%	65%	29%	18%	6%	47%	40	2-Poor 6-Fair 8-Good 1-Excellent

Sidewalks

	Intersections with no sidewalks	Sidewalks are not continuous	Sidewalks not wide enough for 2 persons abreast	Sidewalks interrupted by driveways	Obstructions in the sidewalk	No buffers	Sidewalk Ranking
Sidewalk Conditions (28 sidewalks at 45 intersections)	38%	82%	75%	61%	61%	100%	3-Poor 12-Fair 8-Good 1-Excellent
Red (6 sidewalks at 23 intersections)	74%	100%	83%	83%	50%	100%	3-Poor 2-Fair 1-Not ranked
Yellow (5 sidewalks at 5 intersections)	0%	100%	100%	80%	80%	100%	1-Poor 4-Fair
Green(17 sidewalks at 17 intersections)	0%	71%	65%	47%	59%	100%	6-Fair 9-Good 1-Excellent 1-Not ranked

Driver Behavior

	Drivers appear to be speeding	Drivers don't yield to pedestrians	Drivers stopped in crosswalk	Ranking
Driver Behavior (45)	60%	22%	22%	16-Poor 8-Fair 18-Good 2-Excellent 1-Not ranked
Red (23)	70%	20%	4%	13-Poor 5-Fair 4-Good 1-Not ranked
Yellow (5)	20%	0%	0%	5-Good
Green(17)	59%	24%	53%	3-Poor 3-Fair 9-Good 2-Excellent

Pedestrian Safety

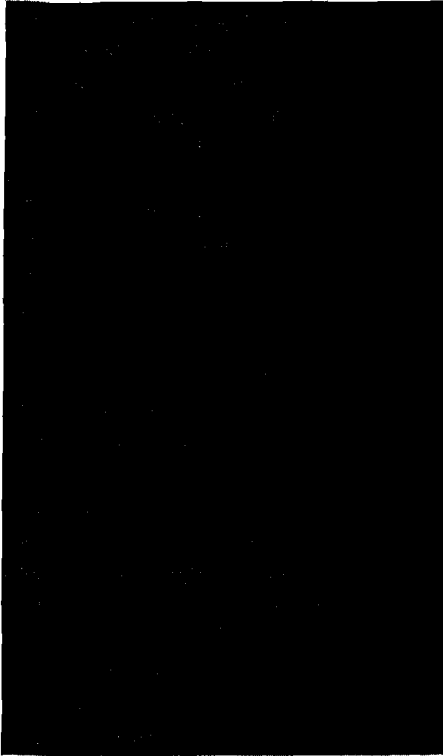
	Cars are going too fast	High traffic volume	Driver behavior is a concern	Signs are unclear	Ranking
Safety (45)	69%	67%	36%	29%	22-Poor 9-Fair 7-Good 5-Excellent 2-Not ranked
Red (23)	70%	83%	44%	30%	17-Poor 3-Fair 1-Good 2-Not ranked
Yellow (5)	40%	40%	20%	80%	2-Poor 2-Fair 1-Good
Green(17)	77%	53%	29%	12%	3-Poor 4-Fair 5-Good 5 Excellent

Comfort & Appeal

	Needs shade trees	Needs landscaping	Needs landscaping maintenance	Needs places to rest	Trash on roadside	Ranking
Comfort & Appeal (45)	78%	69%	29%	73%	33%	19-Poor 10-Fair 9-Good 5-Excellent 2-Not ranked
Red (23)	74%	74%	22%	65%	48%	15-Poor 4-Fair 2-Good 2-Not ranked
Yellow (5)	100%	100%	60%	100%	60%	4-Poor 1-Good
Green(17)	71%	47%	29%	71%	6%	6-Fair 6-Good 5-Excellent

Appendix A

Intersections Included in the Walkability Study and How They Were Categorized



- 24 E. Washington/McAdams St.
- 25 E. Washington/McDaniel St.
- 26 E. Washington/S. Patrick
- 27 E. Washington/Kitchen St.
- 28 E. Washington/S. Bridge St.

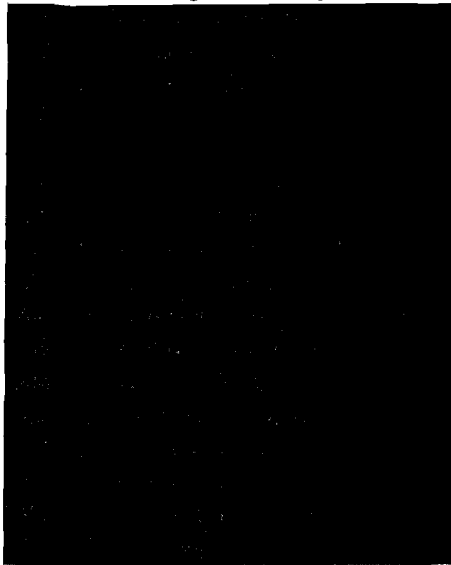


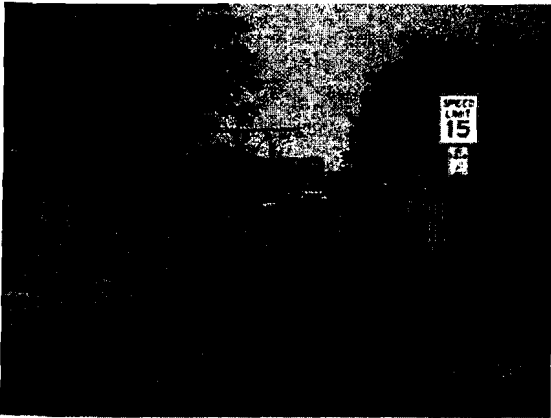
Photo Gallery from October 8



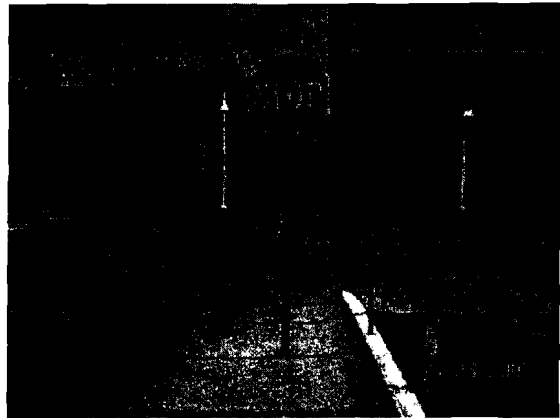
Vehicle Stopped in the Crosswalk



Vehicle Parked Illegally on Sidewalk



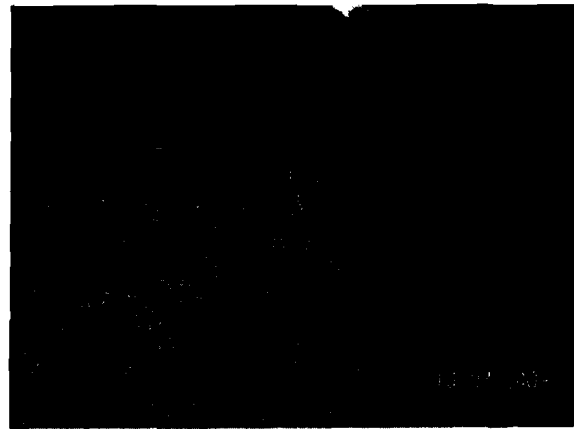
Delivery Truck Parked Illegally on Sidewalk



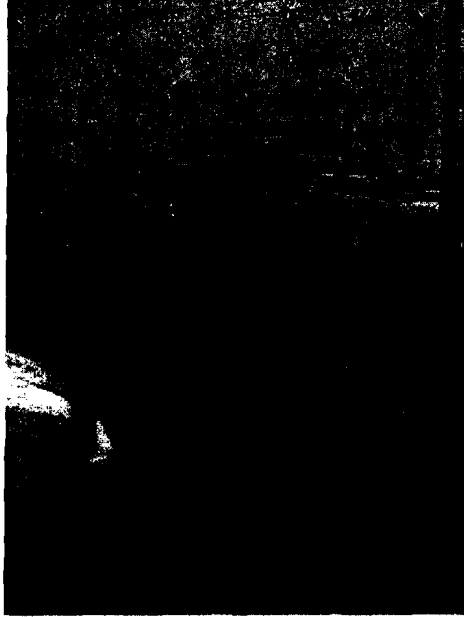
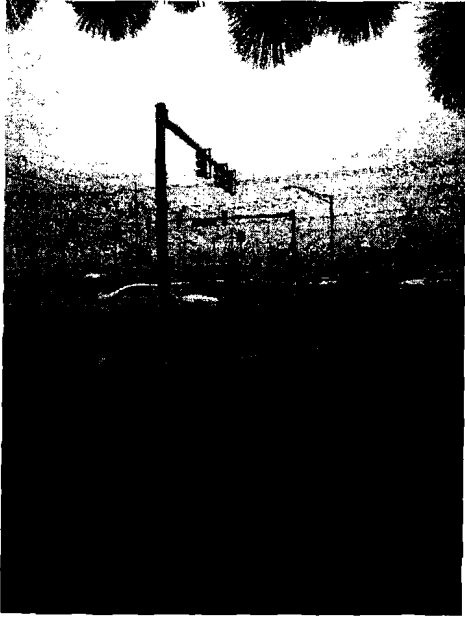
Example of Obstacle in the Sidewalk



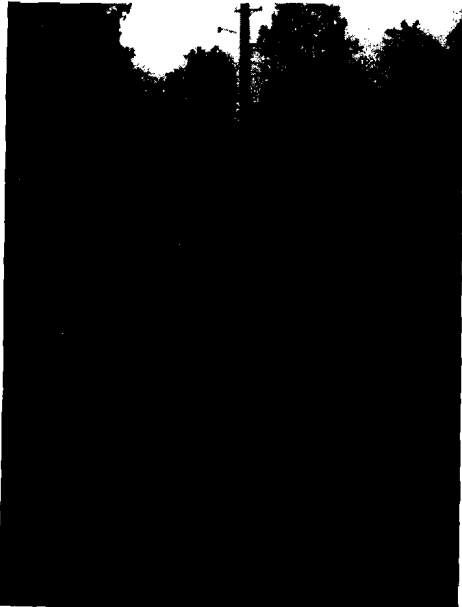
Examples of Obstacles in the Sidewalks



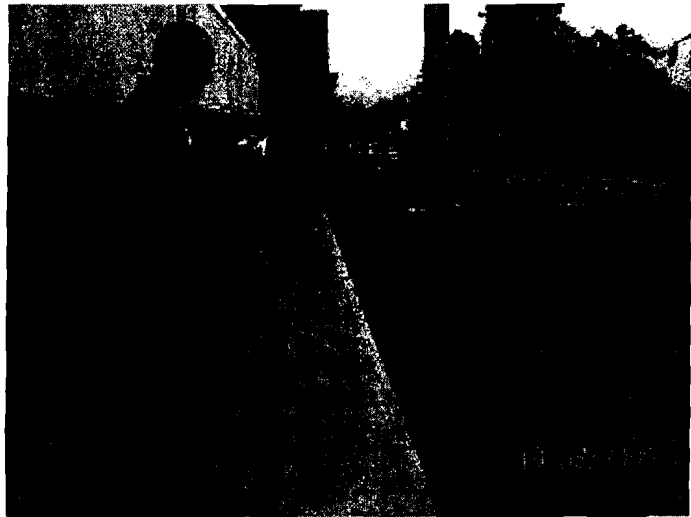
Vegetation Obstructing the Sidewalk



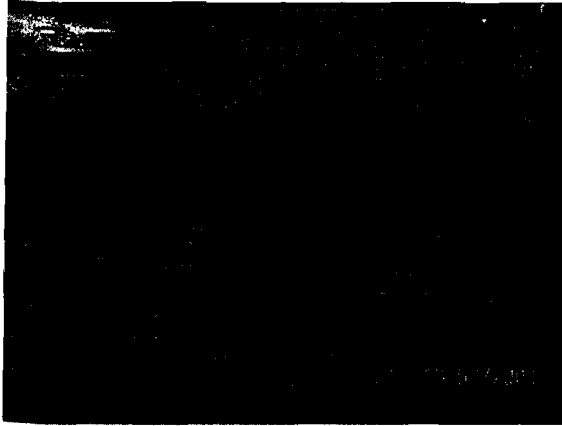
Examples of Crosswalks Missing in Key Locations



Example of a Hazardous Sidewalk



Wall and Lack of Buffer Creates Hazardous Walking Conditions



Lack on Connectivity and a Potential Obstruction