

Thank you Mayor and members of the City Council for hearing me today. I want to thank the City of Roanoke for listening to the many people who advocated for the reopening of the Greenway system. I hope that the phased reopening of the Lick Run Greenway, Garden City Greenway, and Tinker Creek Greenway was successful and without crowding over the weekend, and that people continue to be responsible as the Roanoke River Greenway reopens this week.

Roanoke's Greenway system is incredibly important because it is a place that is consistently safe and available for biking, walking, and other physical activity. Last Friday, unfortunately, we were reminded of how dangerous Roanoke's roads and sidewalks can be, particularly for people outside of cars. The same day that people protested the sentence of the driver who hit and killed Linda Pierson, there was a person hit on Orange Avenue and two people hit on Brandon Avenue. These events highlight the dangers that the people of Roanoke face due to streets that prioritize cars and speed.

While there are many places where Roanoke can improve road safety, I'd like to talk about Brandon Avenue today. Brandon Avenue was identified as a priority corridor in Roanoke's 2012 Bicycle Plan and for several pedestrian improvements in the 2015 Pedestrian Plan. As a corridor, the area from Main Street to Franklin Street sees multiple crashes per year, including a fatality last year and numerous serious injuries according to data from the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Brandon Avenue is currently scheduled to be repaved this summer, but repaving plans have not been made public. It is not uncommon for roads to go 10 or 20 years between repaving. If the City is not considering a larger redesign of Brandon Avenue, and does not foresee one during its next Comprehensive Plan, then this summer's repaving is the best, and perhaps only, chance to improve safety on the corridor.

If the City wants to hold itself to its goals for the future – ensuring health and safety, providing high livability and quality of life, and promoting sustainable growth – then the City should use the opportunity of repaving to show how these goals can improve Brandon Ave. By adding buffered bike lanes and a center turn lane, Brandon Ave can serve more people and be safer for everyone who uses it. A more multimodal Brandon Avenue can make Towers a stronger destination, sustainably woven into the surrounding neighborhoods and inviting people who enjoy Roanoke's outdoors to explore more of the City.

With the repaving of Brandon Avenue this summer the City can take a step toward a safer, more multimodal future, as its Comprehensive Plan envisions, or perpetuate a dangerous design. I hope that the City carefully considers the opportunity presented by repaving and takes every step possible to ensure that what happens this summer is a step toward Roanoke's future. At the very least, the City should study multimodal improvements for Brandon Avenue and allow public comments on its repaving plan.

Remarks from Ken McLeod to City Council on May 18, 2020

Twitter: @kenmcl

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ken.mcleod.777>