MEMFIX PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS IN SOUTH MEMPHIS

November 1, 2013
by ibikememphis
Earlier this month, the Mayor’s Innovation Delivery Team worked with neighborhood leaders from the Soulsville, USA Neighborhood Association and LeMoyne-Owen College CDC to launch South MemFix, a collaborative and community-driven effort to re-design and temporarily activate two or more city blocks over a weekend to demonstrate the “art of the possible.” The objective is to serve as a tool for engaging community residents and to showcase how great streets, active retail, and quality public spaces can be drivers of neighborhood economic vitality.

You can read more about the South MemFix event here, here, here, here, and here.

One exciting component of all the previous MemFix events has been the temporary street infrastructure put in place to create safer and more attractive conditions for person to ride a bicycle or walk the neighborhood. The temporary bike lanes along Broad Avenue have spurred a public-private partnership dedicated to making the changes a permanent reality and the protected bike lanes on Cleveland Street supported the development of the city’s first protected bike lane along Overton Park Avenue.
South MemFix was the first attempt to improve pedestrian infrastructure under these conditions. Inspired by the work occurring in New York City to create pedestrian plazas, City of Memphis engineers worked to create curb extensions (aka bump-outs) at the intersection of Mississippi Blvd. and Walker Ave. A curb extension is a traffic calming device, used to extend the sidewalk, that reduces the crossing distance for pedestrians and allows better visibility between persons driving automobiles and pedestrians.

We don’t have many curb extensions here in Memphis, but it is a method in our toolbox where we can help keep pedestrians out of the roadway for long periods of time while crossing the street.

Utilizing paint, some plastic delineators, and planters, engineers reclaimed some of the roadway for use by pedestrians. The results – a
better aligned intersection that prevents erratic driver behavior, shorter crossing distances for pedestrians by about 30%, and reclaimed pedestrian space that could have potential future for planting and/or cafe seating. The white striping indicates to persons driving cars that they should not operate their vehicles in this space. The vertical plastic delineators help to reinforce this point, especially when turning or stopping at the intersection. Furthermore, the tan-colored paint inside the space is used to illustrate that this section of roadway is being treated differently than the other pieces of asphalt. The color is
similar to the color of the sidewalks. It was clear from the day of the event, that without instruction or signs, both pedestrians and persons driving cars understood the changes.

Unlike some of the other temporary roadway changes with previous MemFix events, the curb extensions at Mississippi and Walker were designed to remain in place after the event which will help City of Memphis engineers to make the curb extension a permanent feature in the future. This low-cost, short-term methodology used at South MemFix allows them to

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Businesses and organizations throughout the country are standing up to help make biking better every day. We love the support we receive from all of our partners near and far. So when our friends down the road at Polar Bottle approached us about a happy hour to spread the word about better bicycling in the U.S., we said [...] 

**Don’t scare our kids away from biking, Thomas Barraga**

After four of his classmates and his mother were all hit by cars while out biking or walking, 17-year-old Matthew Cutrone wrote a letter to his county legislators asking for safer roads. Suffolk County (NY) Legislator Thomas Barraga responded with a letter shared by Matthew’s mother and
observe changes, make notes of improvements to the design, and analyze traffic patterns before spending thousands of dollars on hard infrastructure.

What do you think about the curb extensions? Do they make crossing the street easier? Do you feel safer when you cross the street? Check out our Facebook page and leave a comment under this article.

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