

Lewiston's Sign and Wire Pollution

Inside this report you'll find:

- **How Lewiston is being strangled by wires and drowning in signs.**
- **How our charm and historic character is being destroyed by “sign-creep” -- the slow and insidious addition of more and more signs that create clutter, eyesores, distractions and confusion.**
- **Examples of signs that Lewiston doesn't need and doesn't want.**
- **How the signs on Lewiston Hill misdirect visitors and how obtrusive signs go up, but never come down.**
- **How “pedestrian entitlement” is creating a dangerous showdown between right-of-way vs. right-of-weight.**
- **How Lewiston can embrace a new mindset — more flowers, less signs — and how we can become competitive again with other communities that are successfully cleaning up the clutter, reducing the pollution and reimagining their future.**
- **A recommended list of priorities that the Village and Town can implement immediately to bring a new era for Lewiston.**

**Submitted by Lee Simonson
June 4, 2019**

AN IMPORTANT CALL TO ACTION

June 4, 2019

Dear Lewiston Neighbor:

If you believe in Lewiston, then it's time to make your voice heard to stop our insidious and growing sign and wire pollution!

It's time to clean up our town.

There are two big issues that need to be addressed that go to the core of what Lewiston stands for — its history, its character, and its future.

FIRST, we need to get rid of the utility poles on Center Street and Water Street. These poles, electrical wires and cables, are suffocating our very way-of-life and stifling our potential.

We need to adopt an aggressive multi-year program to either bury the lines or relocate them. Niagara-on-the-Lake adopted a program 50 years ago to do the same thing and has been wildly successful. Other towns have been doing this for years. You'll see samples in this report.

Moreover, we need to coordinate the pole and wire undergrounding with any water and sewer lines improvements. And we need to get our plans developed and get them on future federal infrastructure project lists NOW!

SECOND, we need to get serious about the explosion and proliferation of public signs. Street signs are popping up all over the place as state and local officials think that another sign is going to solve another problem.

“Just put up a sign,” they say, “and that should take care of it.” It's called sign-creep. Before you know it, you have so many signs with so many arrows, that people no longer process the information, and most don't even see the signs in the first place. There is a name for that too — it's called “cluster blindness.”

Ironically, our local governments make private businesses jump through hoops in getting signs approved. And yet, public signs, which have a much greater impact on our community and way of life, just suddenly appear, seemingly without any input or process.

Lewiston, both the town and village, needs to join hands with the State DOT and undertake a program to reduce our street signs by at least 15% over the next 24 months. And then, adopt a strict policy that if a new sign goes up, then an old sign

must come down. That will compel us to make priorities and think twice about using more signs as a solution to whatever ails us. It will also encourage us to take signs down that are obsolete, or no longer necessary or helpful.

Let me emphasize, this process should involve every single public sign — yes, including parking signs, directional signs, warning signs and crossing signs.

Case in point: Niagara-on-the-Lake — the “prettiest town in Canada” — **has 10 times the pedestrian traffic we do, and yet, they have no crosswalk signs.** They don’t even have a stop sign or stop light in their historic district. **And there have been no pedestrian accidents or injuries in anyone’s memory.** (They have one blinking red light for stop-and-go traffic at Queen & King Streets. That’s it.)

We need to adopt a new approach and mindset — Less Signs, More Flowers — and we need to completely shift our attitudes and ask ourselves, first and foremost, “What signs can we take down?” rather than “What signs can we put up?” Every proposal or idea to put a new public sign up should be met with a default “No!” — until it is thoroughly discussed, critiqued, and analyzed.

Before 1960 — when we had a larger population — Lewiston got along quite well with a fraction of the signs we have today. Yes, there are more cars today, but we also have GPS which is making the idea of more signs obsolete. Sign pollution is not compatible with 21st Century technology, especially when we will be sitting in driverless cars in the next 10 years.

This report will give you some examples of Lewiston’s sign and wire pollution problem. But make no mistake, there are dozens of additional examples I have not covered.

I hope you find this report eye-opening and a wake-up call to rethink where we are going as a community. You are going to see things in this report that you actually see every day, but you have become blind to — it’s called familiarity blindness. We need to take off our blindfolds and look at this community as if we are seeing it for the first time — like a tourist or visitor.

Now is the time to begin writing a new chapter for Lewiston’s future.



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Utility Poles and Wires

Lewiston’s #1 Eyesore

“The Spider Web” is smack in the middle of our downtown

One of the Village’s most historic properties is the Long House at 5th & Center Streets — what is located in the “heart of the village.” And yet, the most glaring and obtrusive eyesore happens to be at this important intersection.

Standing underneath this tangle of wires, or even looking at it, makes you feel like you’re caught in a spider web — suffocating under a crazy maze of cables, wires, lines and threads. It’s a dizzying mess.

But more importantly, it’s hiding one of the Village’s most treasured properties and assets. This happens to be the most flagrant, but it is not unique. There several similar examples throughout the village where utility poles and wires are drowning and obscuring our precious history.

Lewiston has been ranked one of the best small towns in America — can you imagine the status we could achieve if we cleaned up the mess of wires and signs and let our history shine through? The results would be astounding — not only for improving our local economy with more visitors, but for our local residents as well who would be free of the visual chaos and eyesores.



Does this look like we respect our heritage, or visitors?

Does this look attractive, impressive or inviting? No, the exact opposite. And yet, this unsightly hodgepodge of wires is only a few feet from the Niagara Discovery bus stop — the first thing visitors see when they step off the bus!

Rather than making the village look like an industrial site, we should joining hands to eliminate this clutter and capitalize on our strengths — our history, charm, and quaintness.

Other historic communities would never allow this. We shouldn’t either.



Another view of the Tangled Web...

This is antithetical to what we stand for — it's not quaint and it's not charming. Wires on top of wires on top of wires. It's a mess, and unfortunately, in the center of the most historic section of the village. Humans created this blemish on our history, and humans can fix it. We need to work on removing this blight, along with other eyesores, particularly on our riverfront.

More Glaring Lewiston Eyesores



Lewiston's Most Photographed Landmark — the Statue or the Pole?

Tens of thousands of people visit the Freedom Crossing Monument on bank of the Niagara River on North Water Street every year, including bus loads of students who take field trips to this landmark to learn more about the Underground Railroad. Judging from Internet presence, it is also the most photographed landmark in Lewiston. But look at what people see when they get home to sort their pictures and create photobooks. The fugitive slaves won their freedom in Canada with the help of Lewiston volunteers, and yet, we have become slaves to the sights that blemish this world class sculpture and hallowed landscape.



Lewiston's Version of the Leaning Tower of Pisa

This photo isn't slanted — the pole is! It's located on Center Street next to the Niagara Crossing Hotel. As you drive down the hill toward the river, this pole looks like it's about to collapse on the street. It's scary. Lewiston needs to remedy these obtrusions and undertake a multi-year project to address the condition and locations of these utility poles — starting with Center and Water Streets which have the most public and visitor impact. Other communities have found solutions, including re-routing wires above ground with new poles located behind buildings, or undergrounding.



WaterStreet Landing Pole or Parking Space?

Most locals and WaterStreet patrons are well aware of this utility pole which stands dangerously close to the restaurant. John Kinney, the owner of the building and the Whirlpool Jet Boat, has stated on numerous occasions that he would be happy to participate in any kind of Water Street program that would underground or relocate the poles and wires. This pole, including transformers, is not only unsightly, but is placed in a terribly inconvenient location for customers. The whole neighborhood, including the poles in front of the Niagara Crossing Hotel, needs to be evaluated for some dramatic improvements.



An Otherwise Beautiful Riverfront, Scarred by Poles and Wires

Why would we spoil Lewiston's MOST valuable asset? Our greatest gift is our geography and we have allowed utility poles, wires and cables to spoil the view. This is what greets visitors from all over the world — crooked, over-wired poles that are in the middle of a parking space. Not impressive for an historic village with an otherwise spectacular vista of the river and Canada.

Communities that took pride and honored their natural and geographic resources would never allow this to happen.



Seeing is Believing!

If Niagara-on-the-Lake can do it, so can we!



Queen Street, Niagara on the Lake, Ontario

How many utility poles and wires do you see crossing the street? None.
How many crosswalk signs do you see? None.
(And no pedestrian accidents!)

Niagara on the Lake wasn't named "The Prettiest Town in Canada" by accident. The leaders and citizens there have worked for decades to make sure their historical town was preserved and protected from the ravages of signs and wires. The only poles you see on the main street in Niagara on the Lake are street lights.

Moreover, NOTL has at least 10 times the pedestrian traffic Lewiston has, and yet, outside of crosswalks at one intersection (Queen and King Streets) it has no designated crosswalks, crosswalk signs, and no utility poles or wires crowding the street. Local officials say there are NO plans to include any pedestrian warning signs in the future, and there are no plans to create designated crosswalks.

In addition, in the entire length of the historic district, there are no stop lights or stop signs. Pedestrians are expected to be careful and look both ways before they cross the street.

There have been no pedestrian accidents, injuries or fatalities on Queen Street despite the lack of safety programs.

The Niagara on the Lake Effect

"The Niagara-on-the-Lake Effect is a feeling that many people describe as unique to Niagara-on-the-Lake. It's a feeling that's difficult to put your finger on, but it all starts with our agricultural roots, stunning vistas and our Heritage District — the centre of the Town's shopping area, home to Landmark Shops."

— Niagara on the Lake Chamber of Commerce

50-Year Headstart on Undergrounding

Back in the late 60s and early 70s the citizens and officials in Niagara-on-the-Lake (NOTL) decided to beautify their town, particularly the Historic District.

Working with Ontario Hydro utility at the time, the town began undergrounding the electric, phone and cable lines and coordinated the project with the installation of new water and sewer lines. This was done at local expense — the taxpayers and officials felt it was worth the investment to build a foundation for the town’s future reputation and economy,

The undergrounding program has continued since then and has expanded to other sections of the town. Councillor John Weins said, “This is an important element in fostering our local economy and our intent is to continue to put all our infrastructure underground. This has been a decades long project and we believe it’s been well worth it.”

Number of Wires Crossing Center Street

Between

Water & 4th Streets	40
4th & 5th Streets	23
5th & 6th Streets	20
6th & 7th Streets	6
7th & 8th Streets	40
8th & 9th Streets	12
9th & Parkway	<u>6</u>
TOTAL	147

**Wires Crossing Queen
Street in NOTL
Zero**

Rather than signs and wires, it has flowers — thousands of flowers — that delight and amaze visitors from all over the world. Today, the town takes care of all the flowers on the street side of the sidewalks, and the businesses are responsible for the flowers on the business side of the sidewalk. The town pays for the flowers largely from parking meter revenue.



Dazzling flower display in median strip in NOTL

There is an award called “Cutest Small Towns in America”

Here are 4 of them with no
utility poles or wires!



**Carmel by
the Sea, CA**



**Taos, New
Mexico**



**Beaufort,
South
Carolina**



**Galena,
Illinois**

What Other U.S. Towns are Doing

More than three million miles of electrical cables are strung across the country and at least 180 million telephone and cable television lines coexist with above ground power lines. As a result, the aesthetics of our communities and landscapes are often overwhelmed by unsightly utility wires and accessories.

Because of the benefits of undergrounding utilities, 9 out of 10 new subdivisions bury utility lines. In addition, dozens of cities have adopted comprehensive plans to bury or otherwise relocate utility lines, including San Antonio, TX; Colorado Springs, CO; New Castle, DE; Saratoga Springs, NY; Williamsburg, VA; Tacoma, WA; and Frederick, MD. Together, communities and utility companies can reduce the visual impact of utility lines and poles; saving scenic beauty, improving safety, reducing utility disruptions, and increasing property values.

— Scenic America

“Sounds Great! But Who’s Going to Pay for All This?”

Lewiston needs to take an aggressive several-pronged and multi-year approach to its pole and wire pollution problem.

1) Combine future water and sewer replacements with undergrounding.

In general, Lewiston’s water and sewer system is deteriorating, particularly in the Village. Old leaking metal pipes need to be replaced by new, more flexible and durable plastic. It is a huge project and will cost millions.

Now is the time to follow Niagara-on-the-Lake’s lead and incorporate the utility undergrounding with new water infrastructure projects. That’s exactly what they did. They fixed their water problems and put the wires and cables underground at the same time.

2) Lewiston needs to get on the federal “Infrastructure List” — yesterday!

Everyone in Washington DC agrees that the \$Trillion+ infrastructure program will start sooner or later. Lewiston needs to come up with a general plan and proposal and get it in front of Western New York’s congressional representatives — both the House and the Senate. There are already dozens of local projects on the lists and Lewiston can’t be left behind.

Congressman Chris Collins is a personal friend of the President, and Congressman Brian Higgins has proven to be one of the most effective and successful representatives in the nation for securing federal funds for local projects. We have every opportunity to take advantage of that leadership and we need to get everyone — local, state and federal — officials at the table.

The train will be leaving the station and we can’t be late. We never got a penny from the first, or second, “Buffalo Billion.” Now is the time to stand up and show how Lewiston is one of the most important and integral parts of our regional economy and how, with everyone’s help, we can lead the way toward Western New York’s future prosperity.

HOWEVER, before we can get on the list, we need some semblance of plan. That’s why it’s important that we get started now!

But make no mistake, Billions of dollars in federal public works projects are routinely spent every year. We should be working be working to get on those lists as well.

3) Label this an important Economic Development project

New York State has resources too and we should be working hand-in-glove with our state representatives and Empire State Development. We can get a hand from Mike Casale, a Lewiston village resident, and the Director of the Niagara County Economic Development Department, who has inroads to all of the regional agencies, including the WNY Regional Economic Development Council.

Have Lewiston's new grant writer begin working on a Consolidated Funding Application and any other resources that can be tapped.

4) Use Greenway funds

Lewiston is one of the few communities in Western New York that has the benefit of hard fought Greenway funds. Yes, those monies can and should be used to start the process so there is no delay. It has been estimated that it would cost \$400,000 to bury the 5 utility poles on Water Street. It may cost less if they are relocated above ground. A project like this should and can be undertaken immediately.

Lewiston will be receiving \$7.5 million of additional Greenway money over the next 15 years. We can spend that money directly on urgent pollution issues, or leverage it with whatever federal or state money we can secure. We can also issue local long-term bonds and pay them off gradually, mostly with Greenway money. Don't worry, we won't run out of Greenway money — there's another \$12.5 million we'll receive after that.

5) Coordinate with State

The State is also planning to pave and improve Center Street by 2022. This is a perfect time to work with state and utility officials in coordinating those improvements with undergrounding at several strategic locations, with a combination of local, state and Greenway money — and hopefully, some federal infrastructure funds thrown in.

We are not re-inventing the wheel here. Other communities across the country do this all the time. In this particular instance, we will NOT be a model community — we're just catching up.

Public Signs

Does this look like you are entering one of the most historic and cultural small towns in the nation?



Lewiston's entrance looks like you are about to enter an industrial city, not a small village renowned for its culture, arts and history. No other village in Western New York has a 6-lane gantry — some call a monstrosity — as a welcome point. How many things are wrong with this picture? For starters, the first thing you see is an arrow telling you how to get out of town. It's not welcoming, it's oppressive!

An example of what it could look like:



It's time to eliminate the giant gantry and soften the entrance. We can also dispose of the crosswalk and signs as well — amazingly, no one has ever been seen crossing there. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could get rid of the utility poles and wires on the right?

Signs in Lewiston that need to be taken down



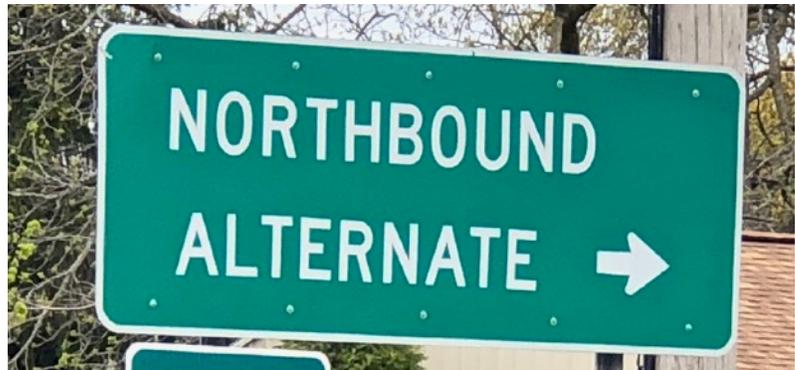
The smallest sign that misdirects the most people

This sign on Lewiston hill is intended to designate the Village boundary. But the arrow at the bottom gives visitors the impression that they need to take the Creek Road exit to get to the Village. Not only is the sign ridiculously unsightly, but it's misdirecting. The whole thing should be taken down immediately.

And someone needs to find out how the Seneca Golf Course gets the State to put up signs on its behalf. Is it a deal with the Casino? What about other attractions like the JetBoat?

No one knows the purpose of these signs — and they're totally obsolete anyway

There are several Northbound Alternate signs that are part of our local pollution problem. To make matters worse, no one really knows what they mean or what purpose they serve.



These signs served a long ago purpose and are no longer needed,

Back in the 1990s when the Canadians were shopping at the Factory Outlet Mall, there were backups at the Lewiston Queenston Bridge. Sometimes the backups went all the way back to Witmer Road (Rt. 31). To accommodate people who wanted to avoid the backups and get to Lewiston, Youngstown and Route 104, the State put up a big orange sign on the Thruway which flashed during backups and told "northbound" travelers to take the Witmer Road exit to avoid getting stuck in traffic. It was the "alternative" way to get to Lewiston.

However, since 9-11 and the inversion of the exchange rate, those traffic lines haven't been seen in years and probably never will be again. The bridge has also increased its capacity. So the Northbound Alternate signs are now useless and obsolete. All of them should be taken down immediately. Yes, it was a good idea at the time, but the times have changed.



“The Never Used Crosswalk”

These obtrusive signs should be taken down now

This crosswalk crosses Center Street and is located at the intersection of Center Street and the Parkway entrance.

In the past 58 years since I’ve been a resident of Lewiston, I have passed this spot at least 12,000 times (10,000 times going back and forth from Lockport.) I have never seen anyone cross here. I have asked dozens of long time friends and neighbors if they have ever seen anyone cross here, and the answer is always “No.”

The intent may have been to allow pedestrians on the north side of 104 to cross there and continue up the hill. However, there really isn’t any pedestrian path up and down the hill.

Moreover, locals will attest that if there is any pedestrian traffic in that area, the pedestrians are on the south side of 104, where is no need to cross Center Street.

The State should remove the crosswalk and signs and instead put smaller signs on the sidewalks telling pedestrians to use the stop light at Center & Ninth Streets to cross Center Street.



Two Duplicate Signs for the Price of One

Talk about sign pollution — we don’t need two “Right Lane MUST Turn Right” signs before turning right to go up the hill. One is enough.

This is just another example of our sign cluster problem where signs keep multiplying for no reason.

Confusion Reigns on Lewiston Hill

Getting to Lewiston should be easy, but it isn't. Take a good look at this sign on Lewiston Hill. The intention behind it is great, but where is it pointing? Is it trying to tell drivers to take the next Creek Road exit (that's where the arrow is pointing) or is it telling them to bear left? Recommendation: It should just say, "Lewiston, Straight Ahead".



Example of a sign that could be put on Lewiston Hill that consolidates the directions and eliminates the clutter

Here is an example of the kind of sign that could be used to clear up the clutter on Lewiston Hill and attempt to make directions clearer and more understandable.

Lewiston Hill needs to be reviewed from top to bottom and a comprehensive plan needs to be developed

in cooperation with State DOT. This sample sign may not be in compliance with the law, but that's OK. We can work with officials to change the law or standards or at least get an exemption.



What's this? It's a dilapidated Fatima Shrine sign that has been languishing for decades.



“The Random Hodge-Podge Corner” Lewiston and Military Roads

This corner is a mess. Niagara University actually has two signs here — one for the main campus and other for the Castellani Art Gallery. All of these signs should be consolidated and/or removed. And we need to determine if there is a policy for posting private entities (i.e., Seneca Golf Course) on public signs. No one wants to hurt business, but what about the businesses that are not on the signs? Are they being hurt by not being included?



A prime example of general sign pollution entering the Village. We need to reconfigure and clean things up. Other historic communities would never allow this.



The Thruway Exit (25A)

80% of the people entering Lewiston do so at this exit. It is a very important location and the signage needs to be reimagined and reconfigured. With no plan or active management, it becomes more unsightly and confusing every year. New signs are slapped on old posts just adding to the clutter. Once again, the Seneca Golf Course is apparently the only attraction in Lewiston. Most people don't realize it, but the Historical Association and Garden Club paid over \$5000 for the beautiful new gold-leaf Welcome Sign there. The area is well landscaped, because Beau Landscaping does it in return for a promotional sign next to the Welcome sign (the promotional sign should be placed several feet away from the Welcome sign rather than right next to it, for photo taking purposes.)

Happy Trails to You...

Every year more “trail” signs are going up, causing more dizziness, distractions and confusion



Every year there is a new trail for something new and it's becoming overwhelming and making the clutter even worse. All trail signs in Lewiston need to be evaluated in an effort to reduce and consolidate the signage.

First, totally remove any America's Byways and Scenic Byway signs since they only duplicate the Seaway Trail.

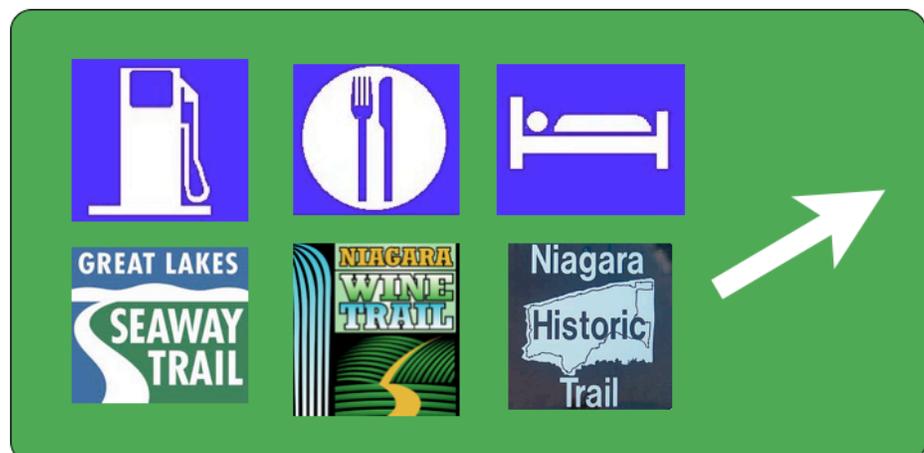
Second, try to remove any stand-alone signs and consolidate where you can, including the gas, food and lodging signs.

Third, make sure the consolidated signs are as compact as possible.



Another mess we see every day. Two of those trail signs shouldn't even be there since they are simply a duplication of the Seaway Trail.

Here is an example of a consolidated trail sign that should be as compact as possible. While the trail concept may have merit, how many people have you met that have said they were getting in the car and following a trail?



Why Pedestrian Fatalities Are Up 50% in the Last 10 Years

Right of Way vs. Right of Weight

Have pedestrians forgotten how to cross the street. With “pedestrian entitlement” ruling the day, does anyone actually look both ways before crossing?

Despite tens of millions of dollars spent across the nation to create signs, crosswalks, “pedestrian friendly” communities, and new automatic emergency braking systems on cars, pedestrian fatalities have risen dramatically since 2009. Ten years ago, there were 4000 pedestrian fatalities. That figure rose to over 6000 in 2018.

What happened 10 years ago that changed everything? The answer is simple:

Smartphones!

Pedestrian accidents and deaths started rising when the iPhone 4 was launched in June 2010.

Not just because of distracted driving, but because of distracted walking as well. Experts are now saying that pedestrians are not paying attention to their surroundings and are concentrating on their smartphone when they should be looking both ways before they cross.

Pedestrian deaths have risen an astounding 50% since the introduction of smart phones. Between 2010 and 2016, the number of smartphones in the US increased from 78 million to 262 million. In the same time period, annual wireless data use rose nearly 400 percent.



**Are these bright signs more effective?
No.**

The Transportation Research Board discovered many years ago that “the fluorescent yellow-green signs, although more conspicuous, produced no improvement in yielding behavior or motor vehicle-pedestrian conflicts” on streets posted at 30mph speed limit.

In other words, the old, and less obtrusive, black and white crossing signs worked just as well.

These ugly signs are not compatible with Lewiston’s character or history. Niagara on-the-Lake has 10 times Lewiston’s pedestrian population and NO crosswalks or crosswalk signs — and NO pedestrian accidents in anyone’s memory.

There is also an element of “pedestrian entitlement.” The thinking goes that “cars HAVE to stop!” Well, they should stop, but that doesn’t mean they do. There is a big difference between the law and common sense. Just because the law says pedestrians have the right of way, does not mean they have the “right of weight.” Proving the law is on your side, is not worth dying over. As some say, pedestrians shouldn’t be going to their graves being “dead right.”

Honolulu now tickets pedestrians who stare at their phones while crossing the street. The small California town of Montclair does too. New York State is now considering a similar measure.

Beyond that, early statistics are indicating that the legalization of cannabis is having a direct effect on pedestrian fatalities:

Research shows that the eight states that have legalized recreational cannabis saw a 16.4% increase in pedestrian traffic deaths between 2016 and 2017.

People have forgotten to look both ways. They are too busy looking at their phones.

— Jonathan Atkins
Governor’s Highway
Safety Association, March
30, 2017

We’re seeing a complete reversal of the progress that had been made in the 1980s and up until 2009.

— Richard Retting, Sam
Schwartz Consulting, as
told to the Wall Street
Journal



Do these middle-of-the-street crosswalk signs create more problems than they solve?

- Do they create a false sense of safety for pedestrians who think the signs will save them from getting hit by a car so they don’t have to look both ways.
- Do the signs embolden pedestrians with a sense of entitlement, thinking that they own the street and that the “cars have to stop” for them?
- Do the signs create the potential for rear-end collisions when cars unexpectedly and suddenly stop for pedestrians, upsetting the flow of traffic?

Drivers and Pedestrians Need Share the Burden of Safety Equally

Rather than more street signs for auto traffic, we should think about smaller sidewalk signs for pedestrians.

These 18 x 18 inch aluminum sidewalk signs only cost \$23 each. For safety's sake, they may be just as effective as the huge, gaudy, and florescent green crossing signs — an option that is inexpensive, pedestrian scaled, and historically friendly.



Watch out! New York may ban texting while walking across the street

Joseph Spector, Albany Bureau Published 5:28 p.m. ET May 19, 2019

ALBANY, N.Y. — You probably shouldn't walk across a street and look at your phone at the same time. Now [New York might make it illegal](#).

A bill sponsored by Democrats who control the state Legislature would [allow police to issue a ticket](#) between \$25 to \$50 for a first offense of getting caught texting while walking — unless you can prove it was an emergency.

The law would be simple enough, the bill states: "No pedestrian shall cross a roadway at any point while using any portable electronic device."

Pedestrians Killed "Walking Drunk"

37% percent of fatally injured pedestrians have blood alcohol concentrations of at least 0.08 percent. Intoxicated drivers, by comparison, are involved in 13 percent of pedestrian collisions.

— IIHS-Highway Loss Data Institute

Pedestrian Accidents Would Be Dramatically Reduced (Without Signs!) If...

- 1) Pedestrians walked defensively and looked both ways before crossing.
- 2) Assumed that cars did not see them.
- 3) Did not use electronic devices while crossing the street.
- 4) Did not "walk drunk."
- 5) Wore reflective clothing at night.

Why More and Bigger Signs Don't Work

You can pass an intersection a million times but not notice the clutter. There are two kinds of sign blindness — familiarity blindness and cluster blindness. Here is an example of each.



CLUSTER BLINDNESS

This is a good example of what causes “cluster blindness.” This is on the traffic circle at the bottom of the hill coming in to Lewiston. Over a dozen signs are crammed into a small space going around a curve. Few people have the capacity to register what they are seeing as the signs go whizzing by. Arrows are pointing in every direction, bewildering and confusing drivers. This should be “unclustered.”

Notice that the florescent green crosswalk sign apparently wasn't enough. The legs had to be painted too. Few, if any pedestrians, ever cross there. Even if there was a pedestrian who wanted to cross, it could pose an extremely dangerous back up of cars and back-end collisions. This is an example of a location that pedestrians are safer and better off waiting for a good time to cross than having automobile traffic suddenly stop. The location is bad enough with cars constantly stopping at a yield sign.

FAMILIARITY BLINDNESS

Have you ever noticed this sign near 8th and Center in front of the new Paladino development? Probably not. You pass it so many times coming into Lewiston, you just ignore it. That's called familiarity blindness.

The sign serves no useful purpose and it is one sign that should come down to remove clutter from the street. No one will miss it, and bicyclists should be riding in the street anyway. Paladino certainly doesn't need it in front of his property.



Insightful Articles

Crossing the street becomes a lost survival skill

Melissa Preddy, Special to The Detroit News
Sept. 19, 2018

In a big-box store parking lot the other morning, a woman who had been strolling along stopped, stretched her arms overhead, then removed her hair clip. She leisurely twisted her locks into a fresh up-do and replaced the hair accessory before heading off to the store.

She performed this activity smack in the middle of the lot's driving lane, parallel to the storefront and about six feet in front of my car's grille — as if my freshly washed, shiny white hatchback was invisible.

I sat there with my jaw agape at the sheer obliviousness. Though, on reflection, I should not have been surprised. There's an entitlement lately among pedestrians that is foolhardy, dangerous and frankly quite baffling.

Like the alphabet song and the multiplication tables, some things get burned into memory at an early age and never are unlearned.



“Stop, and look both ways, before you cross the street,” was, I thought, one of them, as immutable and universal as the law of gravity and the sun rising in the east. Most of us drilled in that routine can't even cross a parking lot, someone's driveway — or for that matter a supermarket aisle without pausing and checking in all directions for approaching traffic.

Apparently it's fast becoming a lost survival skill. Maybe it's the bustle of modern life, perhaps it's screens or the proliferation of pedestrian-favoring laws and crosswalks — with their bright yellow signs and flashing strobe lights — that are giving travelers afoot a false sense of invincibility. Whatever the reason, it is creating peril for everyone.

A report released earlier this year by the Governors Highway Safety Association found that the number of pedestrian fatalities in the United States has grown substantially faster than all other traffic deaths, up 27 percent from 2007 to 2016, while at the same time, all other traffic deaths decreased by 14 percent.

Pedestrian deaths account for the highest share of traffic-accident fatalities in 33 years, the report continued, and the authors estimated that nearly 6,000 people in the United States died this way in 2017.

Motorists I speak to who gripe about imprudent walkers don't want anyone's injury or death on their conscience but feel helpless and frustrated when pedestrians don't hold up their end of the bargain by remaining alert, observant and responsive to traffic conditions.

I routinely see pedestrians continue without the slightest hesitation from sidewalk into intersections, looking down at their phones, not even checking whether traffic is approaching from the side street or about to turn through their path.

I've seen squirrels with savvier traffic instincts.

Most of the pedestrians I see now are staring down at the phone in hand, often with earbuds in. Not only is that dangerous, it impedes the natural flow of traffic. Another study released in June found that people using their mobile phones afoot tend to slow down. When I am aware that vehicles are idling, waiting for me to pass by, I speed up if at all possible, and at least give a little wave to acknowledge that I'm the hold-up.

Having the right-of-way in a legal or logistical sense does not mean one has the right to be inconsiderate, rude or oblivious to one's surroundings. A little more consideration from people on foot would make driving a lot safer and more pleasant for those of us behind the wheel.

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Pedestrian Arrogance in Vancouver

by Stacey Robin Smith, July 4, 2011

I was listening to Bill Good on CKNW this morning. He was taking calls from people on the topic of pedestrians and their inability to appreciate the fact that any car or truck on the road has the “right-of-weight” when it comes to pedestrian-vehicle interactions.

And for the first time in a long time, I actually found myself agreeing with Bill Good and his callers. Far too many times I have seen pedestrians step off the sidewalk and begin crossing the street without even a quick glance to the side to see if the truck bearing down on them is going to stop.

The other day I was waiting for another car to finish backing out of a parking spot when I noticed two teenage girls walking down the middle of the parking lot, even though there are plenty of sidewalks in that particular mall. The car came close (at a crawl) to the girls and they stopped walking and their texting long enough to scream obscenities at the driver of the car and flip the driver the bird.

How is it that in Vancouver the pedestrian is the king or queen of the road? Nobody wants to hit a pedestrian and yet it seems like the pedestrians are asking to be hit on a daily basis. What gives?

Nobody wants to hit a pedestrian and yet it seems like the pedestrians are asking to be hit on a daily basis.



Benefits of Relocating Utilities

From: <https://www.scenicpittsburgh.org>

Utility wire undergrounding and relocation projects are expensive. Communities need to convince their local officials and utility companies of the benefits of wire relocation or burial.

Aesthetics

The appearance of an area can be greatly improved by reducing the visual clutter of utility wires. Undergrounding utility wires allows communities to highlight their unique beauty without a maze of poles and wires in the way. Without overhead utilities, communities can more readily undertake improvement projects such as sidewalk widening and tree planting without having to snake around poles or trim vegetation to make way for power lines.

Reduced Maintenance

Falling tree limbs, high winds, and heavy snows are just a few of the things that frequently cause utility disruptions by destroying overhead lines. Burying lines eliminates weather-related power outages and provides more reliable service to subscribers.

Safety and Community Health

Burying lines eliminates fire hazards, accidents, and safety risks from power outages due to downed lines. Relocation also reduces possible health risks from electromagnetic radiation and improves road safety by removing or reducing the chance of motorists striking poles.

Economic Development

Many revitalization experts agree that investing in improving the appearance of traditional commercial areas is one of the best ways to attract new business and stimulate economic development. Beauty benefits business, and minimizing the visual impact of utilities can be a major strategy to beautify and revitalize an area.

Options and Strategies for Relocating Utilities

Communities seeking to reduce the visual impact of utility wires have three options: undergrounding, relocation, and reduction.

Undergrounding Wires

Undergrounding is the most comprehensive and effective method of reducing the visual impact of utility wires. Undergrounding is the act of removing utility poles and burying wires and equipment in conduits or pipes. Undergrounding utility wires is common in countries famous for their scenic beauty such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, and Great Britain.

The biggest challenge to undergrounding wires is the cost. Estimates for utility burial can range from \$500,000 to \$3 million per mile, in comparison to \$120,000 per mile for the erection of overhead lines.

The cost is so high because of the expense of burying the utility wires in conduits, which is the best method of burying wires to ensure reliability and facilitate repairs. Coordinating the burial of several utility wires, such as telephone and cable television wires that also use poles, is another expense. While it is possible to bury cables directly in the ground, this technique makes it more difficult and time consuming to locate problems and make repairs.

However, communities can manage the cost of undergrounding by:

- Timing the project with other utility work, such as gas or sewer line replacement;
- Consolidating high voltage lines and burying only low voltage wires; or
- Undergrounding only feeder lines (the lines that actually run to buildings) and hiding main lines along one side of the road.

Relocation of Wires

In areas where undergrounding is not feasible or cost-effective, communities can work with utility companies to move wires and poles to less visually intrusive areas. This can include running lines along the rear of buildings or through alleyways. In more rural areas, utility companies can run lines over ridgelines and out of viewsheds, or set back poles from the right-of-way and screen them behind treelines.

Reduction of Utility Wires

Screening reduces the appearance of utility poles and hides equipment such as substations, meters, and transformers. One of the easiest ways to reduce wires is to consolidate lines along one side of the roadway on a single pole and wrap them to create the appearance of only one cable.

Other strategies communities can pursue include:

- Persuading utility companies to erect poles that complement their surroundings;

- Using heavier cables and stronger poles to reduce the number of poles required;
- Planting trees, shrubs, and other vegetation around substations and transformers to make them less intrusive; and
- Raising wires above sight lines along buildings and signs to make them less noticeable.



This is an Easy Fix

This kind of electrical configuration should be avoided in a public park, especially on Lewiston's riverfront. Do you see the wire crossing the park from the street utility pole to the street light on the left side, which illuminates the stairs to the docks below? Not only should the street utility pole be eliminated and put underground, but the wire feeding power to the street light should be underground as well.

Better yet, the street light should be taken down and replaced with an historic lantern with spot lights in exactly the same configuration as exists with the stairs just short distance south near the Freedom Crossing Monument.

Park patrons and visitors should have a clear view of the river — it's our most valuable resource.

Action Item Check List

Action Item Check List

Step-by-step, we can get this done!

Lewiston is very capable of tackling the problems of sign and wire pollution. We can get the support we need from all levels of government. We have the talent, human resources, the equipment and financial resources we need (or we can get it) and, most of all, we have the will and desire to clean up our town:

We can do this in bite-size stages. We can establish priorities. Here is a suggested list of priorities, in order:

Priority One: Water Street and North 1st Street Utility Poles/Wires

Without question, these need to come down or be redirected. The waterfront is Lewiston's most valuable natural and commercial resource and we need to eliminate the man-made pollution which is scarring our otherwise beautiful vista. Discussions with National Grid need to be commenced and the Town can help finance with Greenway funds. Hopefully, we can get National Grid to provide a discount in the interest of economic development.

Priority Two: Removal of the Giant Gantry on Center Street

The state is planning to make Center Street improvements within the next 4 years. The removal of the Gantry, along with a several other issues, is our once-in-50-year chance to make Lewiston more welcoming and to enhance our historical character and reputation. Ideally, the State will foster local input with local citizens and government to discuss sign proposals and configurations before they go up.

Priority Three: Remove Unused Crosswalks and Obsolete Signs

The never used crosswalk at the Parkway entrance should be removed, along with the Northbound Alternate signs. These are easy fixes. Consultation with the state is necessary.

Priority Four: 15% Reduction in Signs in 24 months

Appoint a commission, possibly the existing Historical Commissions, to work on eliminating 15% of the signs in Lewiston in the next 24 months. Evaluate the signs, street by street, including state roads, and provide recommendations to the respective boards who in turn can make recommendations and suggestions to the State. (While this could include consolidation of signs, beware of unintended consequences. For example, making consolidated signs bigger than the ones they are replacing, depending on the location, etc.)

Priority Five: Officially Adopt the Sign Policy: “One Up, One Down”

Adopt a policy for local signs that says if a new sign goes up, then an existing sign comes down. That will force officials to prioritize signage and determine which signs are wanted and needed. It will also put an end to “sign-creep” — the practice of putting up more and more signs. Ideally, this policy should include State signs, particularly on Center Street and major routes entering the town — from the Lewiston Thruway exit to the Village. Working with the State on this concept and policy is possible, even if special legislation needs to be passed in Albany. Current thinking needs to be disrupted — putting up new signs should be difficult, not easy. Taking signs down should be easy, not difficult. If you think “one up and one down” would be hard to implement, can you imagine a policy to get the same number of signs we had 30 years ago, when the village population was a little more than today? That would really be challenging.

Priority Six: Officially Adopt Policy that the “Burden of Safety Rests Equally with Drivers and Pedestrians”

Pass resolutions stating that safety is everyone’s shared responsibility. Just because pedestrians have the right-of-way doesn’t mean it’s safe for them to cross, especially if they are not situationally aware, are distracted, or drunk. Pedestrians shouldn’t tempt fate. Everyone needs to drive and walk defensively. Just because it’s “the law” doesn’t mean it’s worth someone’s life.

Priority Seven: Bury or Relocate Center Street Utility Poles/Wires

This will be a large transformational project. Plans need to be formulated NOW so when federal infrastructure money becomes available, we are “shovel ready.” This can be combined with any Village goal of replacing water and sewer lines. We need to get on the federal project lists and we also need to look into State Consolidated Funding applications. If the money drops out of the sky, and we aren’t prepared, Lewiston will lose out on a golden opportunity and other communities will benefit.

Priority Eight: Look for Ways to Achieve “More Flowers, Less Signs”

The Village and Town Lewiston should cooperate in finding ways to support a full time gardeners position, to supplement volunteer efforts to make Lewiston a bastion of beautiful flowers. Possibly assigning a current employee to the position would help in maintaining what we have and taking us to the next level. A contingent of Lewiston officials should make a visit to Niagara-on-the-Lake to see how they do it across the river.

**JOINT RESOLUTION FROM THE VILLAGE AND TOWN OF
LEWISTON TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THE COMMUNITY'S
HISTORICAL CHARACTER AND SIGNIFICANCE BY REDUCING
AND CONSOLIDATING SIGNAGE AND BURYING OR
RELOCATING UTILITY WIRES AND POLES**

WHEREAS: Lewiston citizens, businesses and local governments, have worked diligently over the past decades to establish a vibrant community that is renowned for its history and cultural assets, and

WHEREAS: Lewiston has received national recognition as one of the top small towns in America, and while Lewiston's future is bright, it is critically important that we continually work on ways and means that will enhance our quality of life, and

WHEREAS: It is in the interest of economic development and local prosperity, that Lewiston preserves, protects and promotes its historical heritage and cultural assets, by ensuring that our community is free of extraneous signage and obtrusive visual pollution from utility poles, wires and cables, that can be distracting, unsightly, and confusing, and

WHEREAS: In order to accomplish our goals, as similar communities have done across North America, we are looking to create a cooperative alliance with agencies and governments, including New York State and regional utilities, to help us reduce sign and wire pollution in an effort to reduce clutter, adapt our infrastructure to be more historically compatible, soften aesthetics, and make our community more attractive, prosperous and safer.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: The Village and Town of Lewiston respectfully requests the opportunity to work with all involved and interested parties to improve our cultural reputation, historical presence and local economy, by undergrounding or relocating utility poles and wires, and by working to reduce the number of signs on all roads, state and local, by 15% over the next two years, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That a joint commission be appointed within the next two months to determine priorities and an action plan, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That copies of this resolution are sent to all appropriate parties.



Some Good News! The Frontier House's Future is Uncluttered

Lewiston's situation is not all dire. This is a recent photo of our precious Frontier House — newly purchased and ready for its resurrection as the centerpiece of our historic district.

Take a good look — there are NO wires or signs that detract from its significance. THIS is what Lewiston should be like all along Center Street's magical mile.

Let's use the Frontier House as our model to transform the rest of the street and waterfront!