

ROAD DIET



Safety | Livability | Low Cost

Common Questions and Answers

What is a Road Diet?

A Road Diet repositions pavement lines in order to improve safety for all users and add space for other travel modes. Narrowing lanes (Figure 1) or removing a lane (Figure 2) opens up space for other uses, including:

- Center two-way left-turn lanes (TWLTL)
- Alternate modes of transportation (e.g., bicycle lanes, transit lanes, and bus turnouts)
- On-street parking
- Physical safety barriers (e.g., raised medians, pedestrian refuge islands, and curb extensions)
- Wider shoulders

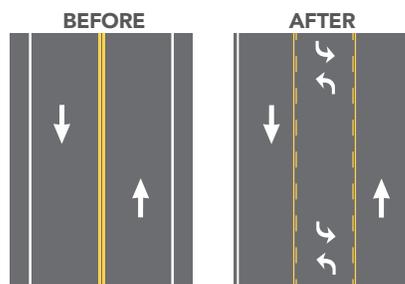


Figure 1: Existing lanes are narrowed to reallocate space for a left-turn lane.

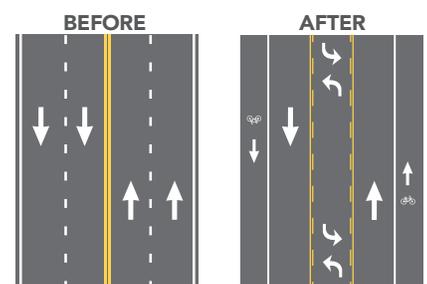


Figure 2: Two travel lanes are removed to reallocate space for a center TWLTL and bicycle lanes.

How does a Road Diet make driving easier?

Separates Left-Turning Vehicles.

A center two-way left-turn lane (TWLTL) provides dedicated space for left-turning vehicles, allowing traffic to flow uninterrupted. When turning, drivers can focus their attention on one lane of oncoming traffic rather than two (Figure 3).

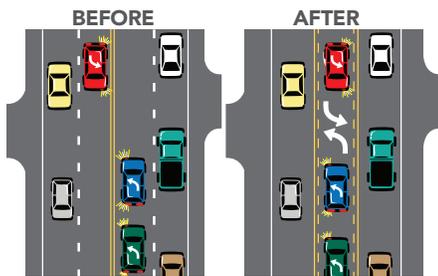


Figure 3: A TWLTL makes turning easier and reduces the likelihood of a crash.

Improves Side-Street Traffic's Ability to Cross.

By reducing lanes, side-street traffic can more easily enter and cross the mainline roadway with fewer conflicting traffic streams (Figure 4). This can reduce both delays that occur on side-streets and the potential for an oncoming vehicle crash.

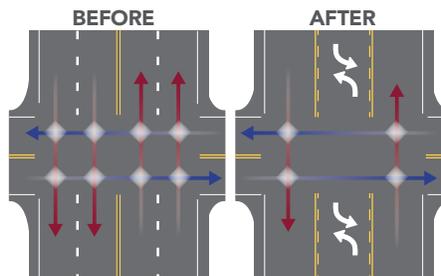


Figure 4: Reducing lanes makes it easier for side-street traffic to cross.

Improves Sight-Distance. When making a left-turn across multiple lanes of traffic, vehicles in the inner lanes can block the visibility of vehicles in the outer lanes, increasing the likelihood of a crash. Road Diets can help to reduce or eliminate blind spots by reducing the number of travel lanes (Figure 5).

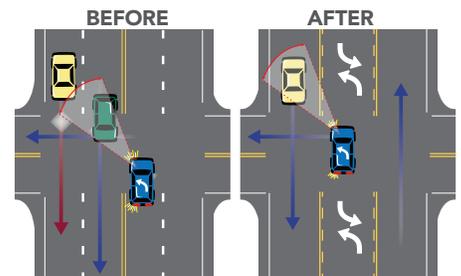


Figure 5: Reducing lanes reduces blind spots.

Q A How does a Road Diet improve user experience for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders?

By reducing lanes, pedestrians are exposed to less traffic while crossing, and the reallocated space can be used to add pedestrian refuge islands (Figure 6). For bicyclists, Road Diets can include dedicated, and sometimes protected, bicycle lanes. These bicycle lanes could lead to increased transit ridership; for example, in Seattle, WA, buses routing through a Road Diet on Dexter Ave experienced a 35 percent increase in ridership after the city introduced dedicated bicycle lanes. Residents are more likely to take the bus if they can safely walk or bike to the bus stop.

Adding transit facilities like bus pullouts or dedicated transit lanes can also increase transit ridership. A Road Diet on 55th Street in Chicago, IL provided protected bus pullouts (Figure 7). The new design allowed transit buses to pull out of the way of traffic, enabling riders to board the bus safely.



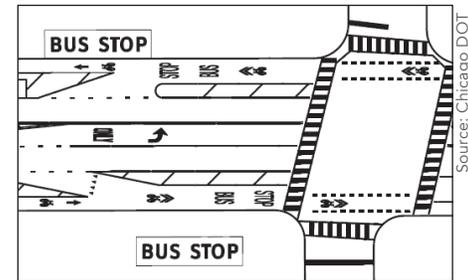
Source: NYCDOT

Figure 6: Pedestrian refuge island.

Q A How much safer is a Road Diet?

Studies have shown that Road Diets reduce the total number of crashes by about a third. They are extremely effective at improving safety, which can be attributed to the following improvements:

- **Road Diets reduce potential crash points.** Removing a travel lane reduces the number of conflict (or potential crash) points, and adding a dedicated left-turn lane minimizes the chance of turn-related or rear-end crashes (Figure 8). Road Diets also reduce intersection conflict points (Figure 4 on reverse side).
- **Road Diets calm traffic.** A Road Diet project may include lane reduction or lane narrowing, both of which contribute to calming traffic. (See callout box “How do Road Diets calm traffic?”) At lower speeds, crashes tend to be less severe and are less likely to occur in the first place.
- **Road Diets increase awareness.** Incorporating pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities, like dedicated lanes or protected waiting areas, can increase motorists’ recognition of these users. These visible cues enhance driver awareness and encourage motorists to slow down and pay attention.



Source: Chicago DOT

Figure 7: A Road Diet that added bus pullouts in Chicago, IL.

Q A How much will a Road Diet cost?

Most Road Diets are completed within the existing roadway space and only require restriping. Additional bicycle, pedestrian, or transit facilities may increase this cost, but overall this safety treatment is relatively inexpensive.

How do Road Diets Calm Traffic?

- ▶ **Reducing lanes from two travel lanes to one in each direction forces aggressive drivers to maintain the lead vehicle’s speed. This results in nearly eliminating top-end speeders.**
- ▶ **Narrowing lanes causes motorists to focus their attention on staying within the lane, which may foster speed reductions.**

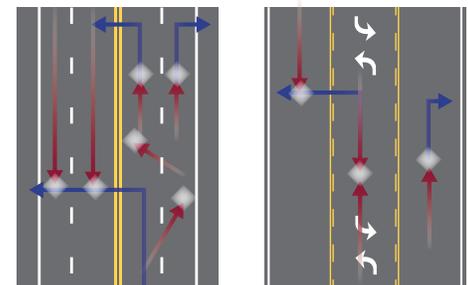


Figure 8: Road Diets reduce potential points of conflict.

