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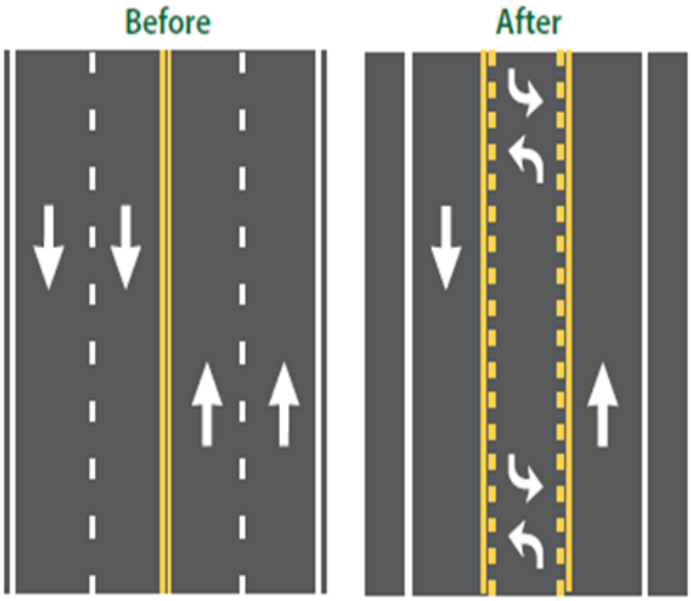
What is a Road Diet?

Road Diets are a safety-focused alternative to a four-lane, undivided roadway. The most common type of Road Diet involves converting an existing four-lane road to three lanes, where the center lane becomes a two-way left-turn lane (TWLTL). The reclaimed space (from losing that fourth lane) can be allocated for other uses, such as bike lanes and pedestrian refuge islands.

On a typical four-lane, undivided road, vehicle speeds can vary between travel lanes resulting in drivers changing lanes. Divers also change lanes to deal with a turning vehicle in front of them. On a three-lane road with a TWLTL, however, left-turning vehicles are separated from the through traffic, resulting in a more consistent vehicle flow. Data show that such an arrangement reduces the sort of vehicle-to-vehicle conflicts that contribute to accidents. According to studies, when a road diet is installed on a previously four-lane, undivided highway, there's a 29 percent reduction in overall crashes.



Why Consider a Road Diet for Main Street?

A road diet would address many of the stated concerns about Main Street.

Speeding: Having one travel lane will result in more consistent traffic speeds controlling the speed of those few vehicles that travel at rates significantly over the speed limit.

Access to the highway from side streets: Many residents comment that it is difficult to make a left-hand turn onto Main Street due to the number of lanes that must be crossed. However, adding a turn lane in the middle means there's space to pause (after clearing the near lane of traffic) while waiting for an opening in the far lane.

Safer for pedestrians: Crossing four lanes as a pedestrian is very difficult and sometimes dangerous. A well-meaning driver might stop for a pedestrian and wave them to cross, while another driver in another lane may have no such intention. Having a single lane of traffic in each direction helps to prevent this situation, while the center space for the turn lane can provide a halfway-point refuge for pedestrians.

Bike lanes: Reconfiguring Main Street to three lanes will allow for the installation of bike lanes.

Emergency Vehicle Access: During those events when interstate traffic is diverted to North Main Street, all lanes of the four-lane road can be full of stopped traffic. If fire or rescue services are called for when Main Street is impassable, it is very difficult for emergency vehicles to access many parts of their service territory. Time lost trying to move through stopped traffic can be devastating for the person(s) in need of emergency services. The available center turn lane would provide a better opportunity to move emergency vehicles through the City during a high traffic event.

Snow removal: The Main Street corridor is narrow for a four lane road, leaving very little space for snow storage along its curb line. This situation makes sidewalk shoveling difficult for those adjacent property owners with narrow terraces. Having a bike lane along the curb will provide more snow storage space thus reducing snow removal costs for the City.

Cost of this safety improvement: Converting Main Street from its current configuration to a three lane road is cost effective because it does not require any street construction — it simply requires restriping the street in the new configuration. The City is considering making this modification at this time because the current street markings have worn off and need to be repainted anyway. The modification will however reduce the City's highway aids by approximately 4.6% or $14,000.

More resources about Road Diets: Additional information, including a helpful video about Road Diets, has been posted on the City's website.

Comments? The Public Works Committee is seeking public input about a Road Diet for Main Street. Please submit any comments or questions to edgertongovernment@cityofedgerton.com.