

Road Diet Short 27 July 2016

[music playing]

Male Speaker:

My daily bike commute starts out about five in the morning, and I leave my house and I go about five miles down paths and streets until I connect with a bus center. I've had a couple of close calls where I really had to hit the brakes hard.

Female Speaker:

While I'm crossing a four-lane in the city, sometimes I get a little nervous because I'm not really sure if the cars can see me. Sometimes I don't always have enough time to cross the street, and I'm always a little worried that I'm going to get hit.

Female Speaker:

In this area, the roads are always busy; there's always a lot of traffic out there, and drivers here – they make poor choices. They're weaving in and out of traffic, slamming on brakes to quickly stop because they missed their turn, or they're distracted because they're doing other things in the car.

Male Speaker:

There's a lot of reasons why a community might want to build a road diet, but it's actually considerably safer to build a street with a road diet configuration rather than a conventional four-lane, undivided section. It's a great opportunity to combine the need for bike infrastructure with the goal to help improve traffic safety.

Male Speaker:

The reason that roads diets are considered, at least from our agency standpoint – a big – a big benefit is the safety benefit. So having four lanes instead of three or two lanes allows people to weave through traffic, and so you end up with sideswipes. And by having a road diet you eliminate conflicts. By going to a three-lane cross-section you now provide a turn lane so that people can move over to make left turns, and you don't have those rear-end crashes. The other benefit that you get typically is speed reduction. On the Robinson Street Road Diet and on the Gaines Street Road Diet here in Tallahassee, when you go down to having only two travel lanes, the prudent driver who will drive the speed limit now controls the platoon speed, basically meaning that the platoons of cars can't travel any faster than the prudent driver.

Male Speaker:

If we determine that the street will work well from an engineering perspective, then we want to get together with the community and talk about the various configurations that might be available. We'll work with the elected officials that represent that community to talk about whether it might make more sense to change the configuration. I think one of the things that's important is, the street belongs to the community, and we want to involve the community in every decision we make.

Male Speaker:

You can really see a dramatic increase in the diversity of people using the sidewalks from strollers, joggers, people walking their dogs in a way that, even 10 years ago, you wouldn't have seen in this community.

Male Speaker:

I think road diets are going to have a positive impact on the transportation system as a whole.

Male Speaker:

Bicycling on the redeveloped roadways around Phoenix that has been on a road diet is a huge improvement. Number one, it gives me a barrier; it gives me my own lane that is reserved strictly for cyclists.

Female Speaker:

Crossing the street with a road diet is a lot easier now. If I don't make it across the intersection in time, there's a place in the middle for me to stand. That way, I feel like the cars can see me better and I don't have to worry about getting hit by a car. I feel much safer.

Female Speaker:

I think road diets have really made an improvement. The traffic flows better. Having that dedicated turn lane has really helped reduce some of the stress and has made it easier for people to get where they're going. And I didn't think it would work, but having less lanes has really helped; people can't weave in and out of traffic, and I really feel safer on the road.

[end of transcript]