

# Myth-Busting!

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## ■ “Road diets divert traffic.”

Drivers tend to use primary roads that provide the most direct and efficient route to a destination.

Well-designed road diets do not divert drivers onto other roads. While traffic often drops during construction, it typically returns to normal or increases within six months of completion. Many roads actually experience an increase in vehicle traffic after a successful diet.<sup>5</sup>

## ■ “Road diets increase congestion.”

On roads used by fewer than 20,000 vehicles per day, road diets have a minimal or positive impact on vehicle capacity. Left-turning vehicles, delivery trucks, police enforcement and stranded vehicles can move into a center lane or bike lane, which eliminates double-parking and reduces crash risks.<sup>6</sup>

## ■ “Road diets increase crashes.”

Road diets actually reduce rear-end collisions and sideswipe crashes by slowing vehicle speeds by 3 to 5 mph. Road diets decrease by 70 percent the frequency of people driving more than 5 mph over the speed limit.

Data collected on road diets in two very different settings (several small towns in Iowa and a group of larger cities and suburbs in California and Washington state) confirmed that road diets improve safety. The research showed a 47 percent reduction in crashes in the Iowa towns and a 19 percent drop in crashes in the more heavily traveled corridors of California and Washington.<sup>7</sup>

## ■ “Road diets aren’t good for public transit.”

Transit conflicts can be avoided with planning, such as by incorporating a center lane so motorists can move around stopped buses and adding side pull-out bays for buses.<sup>8,9</sup>

## ■ “Road diets are bad for business.”

Road diets increase and enhance business activity by reducing traffic speeds (which helps motorists notice the shops, eateries and businesses they’re driving alongside) and by accommodating pedestrians and bicyclists (who, by the way, tend to spend more money at local businesses than drivers do).<sup>10</sup>

Road diets often create more street parking spaces, which is helpful to businesses. In addition, the slower speeds, better sight lines and narrower lanes are safer for both drivers and non-drivers (aka customers), and center-turn lanes provide motorists with an easier and safer way to make right and left turns, including for entering and exiting driveways.<sup>11</sup>

## ■ “Road diets are being reversed.”

With thousands of road diets completed nationwide, there are few reports of any being reversed. On the contrary, road diets are proving to be effective, safe and popular. Interest among transportation engineers and planners is booming as handbooks, guidelines and other resources become available.<sup>12</sup>

## ■ “Road diets slow down emergency responders.”

By not using short speed humps and stop signs, a road diet can accommodate emergency vehicles without increasing response times.<sup>12</sup> Drivers can pull into bicycle lanes to move out of the way, and a center-turn lane can be used by responders needing to pass other vehicles.<sup>13</sup>

## ■ “People don’t like road diets.”

The Electric Avenue road diet in Lewistown, Pa., was opposed by 95 percent of residents when it was first proposed; after completion, nearly 95 percent of residents are supportive of the changes.<sup>14</sup>

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