

To: City of Ann Arbor Transportation Commission  
From: Kirk Westphal  
Subject: Love the S. Main reconfiguration, please do more asap  
Date: Tuesday, September 14, 2021

Friends,

It was worth the wait! I have been enjoying driving both a car and a bike on the new South Main St. It is a huge transformation; it reminds me of the first time driving on the reconfigured Jackson, Platt, and Packard Roads several years ago.

The fact that this project is part of "Healthy Streets"—and has resulted in some painted bicycle lanes—has created the belief that it solely caters to cyclists. This is incorrect: the high probability that fewer car drivers and pedestrians are getting injured also qualifies as "healthy!"

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*What are the safety benefits of road diets? The resulting benefits include a **crash reduction of 19 to 47 percent**, reduced vehicle speed differential, improved mobility and access by all road users, and integration of the roadway into surrounding uses that results in an enhanced quality of life.* Jul 29, 2016

[Road Diets \(Roadway Reconfiguration\) - FHWA Safety](#)

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Barring any inexplicable increase in severe crashes, it is urgent to make the S Main reconfiguration permanent and to diet most of the existing 5-lane roads in the city because:

- 1) you have committed to Vision Zero,
- 2) we still have dangerous roads next to schools where injuries have happened,
- 3) we have national studies—and multiple studies from within the city—saying road diets prevent injuries, most of the time with no downside to car throughput, and
- 4) even if there is some sacrifice to auto throughput, residents are clearly willing to endure delay in exchange for safety benefits—and you have committed to a 50% reduction to VMT city-wide as well—so "congestion" should be a non-issue relative to safety.

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*From the 2018 Ann Arbor National Citizens Survey*

*"The City of Ann Arbor is considering introducing new road designs that have been shown in other cities to reduce pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes, injuries and deaths. For example, roundabouts have reduced injuries for all users while decreasing motorist drive times (by creating more steady traffic flow). Other road redesign options reduce injuries but have different effects on motorist drive times. Which of the following statements is closest to the advice you would like to give the City as they make these decisions?"*

26% Substantially increase drive times (a drive that was 10 minutes would be 16) to very significantly reduce pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes, injuries, and deaths

40% Moderately increase drive times (a drive that was 10 minutes would be 13) to significantly reduce pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes, injuries, and deaths

18% Slightly increase drive times (a drive that was 10 minutes would be 11) to somewhat reduce pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes, injuries, and deaths

5% Do nothing and expect the same drive times and levels of pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes, injuries, and deaths

3% Reduce drive time, even if it increases pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes, injuries, and deaths

8% Don't know

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This means that, statistically, 66% of Ann Arborites are willing to endure car delays of between 30-60% on a given segment of road if it means a much safer environment. The city has never even implemented a road diet that would result in ANY motorist delay, let alone up to 60%, and there are many other roads like S Main that even conservative models say should be considered for road diets.

From what I understand, lane reconfigurations are the cheapest and most reliable safety improvement we can make to reduce car-on-car and car-on-pedestrian crashes. The bonus is that these reconfigurations also make it much more possible to install roundabouts, which also further reduce speeding, almost eliminate serious injury, AND dramatically increase car throughput efficiency. (I'd bet that S. Main would operate even more efficiently and safely for everyone with the current diet AND roundabouts at Madison, Hill, Pauline, etc. Can you model this?)

I'm anxious to see the data collection comparing pre-COVID to now, and then again when delineators are added. (I hope any current crash statistics are normalized for the documented increase in COVID-associated crashes nationwide.) If buses experience a marked increase in delay, this does not mean we should revert to the old configuration; rather, this calls for installing roundabouts to improve throughput (and should probably be done anyway if feasible).

Bottom line: thank you for your support. Please do more as soon as possible.

Sincerely,  
Kirk Westphal

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Kirk Westphal,

Thank you for your message. As you may know, the Main Street reconfiguration is a pilot and is scheduled for removal in November. There are some data collection efforts scheduled for early October which will help staff determine if this removal will be reconsidered for a permanent installation. We appreciate the safety benefits of the project which you cite below and this will factor heavily into our determination.

If you have additional comments, questions, or concerns on Healthy Streets, feel free to reach out to me or Eli Cooper.

Cheers,  
Raymond