

MEMORANDUM

July 2, 2020

To: Amber Miller, DDA Capital Projects Manager/Raymond Hess, City Transportation Manager From:
Organization: Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority/City of Ann Arbor From: Addie Weber, AICP

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Project: Rebalancing Streets - Pilot Projects

Re: Rebalancing Streets in Ann Arbor

All around the country, cities and towns are rebalancing their streets to better accommodate people traveling on foot and by bicycle while maintaining the recommended six feet of physical distancing as suggested by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and to slow the spread of COVID-19. Accommodations have also been made to allow businesses the opportunity to operate outdoors with expanded areas for dining, staging areas, and dedicated pick-up/drop-off areas.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a diverse range of national experts, public agencies, cities, and firms (like National Association of City Transportation Officials, Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration) are working to promote safe initiatives to accommodate the changes in behavior within the public realm. While the implementation of these quick-build facilities (i.e. pilot projects) has accelerated due to COVID-19, Toole Design has been working with communities on the rapid implementation of similar infrastructure for years. Toole Design is nationally recognized as experts in identifying, planning, and implementing rebalanced streets.

At the start of any project, community engagement and goals are taken into consideration, while acknowledging the need to maintain or accommodate vehicle and/or emergency access. All designs undergo appropriate traffic analysis and a design review process, catered to the nature of the project. As quick-build materials are used, designs may be monitored and refined on an on-going basis if the needs of the community change.

Project Design / Engineering Expertise

The engineering team working with the City of Ann Arbor and the DDA includes Toole Design Group, Wade Trim, and SmithGroup. These engineering firms have experience and expertise designing and deploying pilot projects similar those under consideration in Ann Arbor, as part of Ann Arbor's Healthy Streets initiative.

The engineering team follows national best practice and guidance in the design and operation of pilot projects and have used such projects locally and across the country in order to test roadway configuration options and/or in response to special circumstances – such as COVID-19. Descriptions of prior pilot project engineering work are referenced as at the end of this memo.

Ann Arbor Healthy Street Pilot Projects

The Healthy Street Pilot Projects are aimed at providing safer access into and through the downtown with special consideration given to equity and ensuring that the needs of disadvantaged populations (low income, elderly, carless-households, people with disabilities) are prioritized.

Recommended pilot project corridors were identified based on a thorough analysis of the following factors:

- Safety and crash data, especially locations with higher incidences of pedestrian and bicycle crashes.
- Demographic and socio-economic factors (race/ethnicity, income, car ownership, disability status, age) to identify corridors that could serve these populations.
- Analysis of the existing bicycle infrastructure to determine where gaps in the network exist and where they may be opportunities to fill network gaps.
- Analysis of physical corridor conditions, available roadway space, historic traffic volumes, and observed/reported current traffic volumes to identify candidate streets.

The recommended pilot projects rely on vehicle lane adjustments and/or reconfigurations in order to provide the following benefits:

- Provide more safe passing distance for pedestrians and bicyclists by providing temporary dedicated travel lanes that are wider and better accommodate physical distancing during COVID-19.
- Address critical gaps in the non-motorized system where dedicated bicycle facilities abruptly end and/or do not adequately connect to destinations or other dedicate bicycle infrastructure. This will better allow people reliant on bicycling to access essential services and destinations during COVID-19.
- Support local business health during COVID-19 by establishing additional curb-side lanes that can be used for customer pick-up/drop-off parking, outdoor dining/retailing, or additional pedestrian queuing space.
- Mitigate excessive vehicle speeds caused by reductions in traffic volume through use of temporary treatments to provide greater safety for all roadway users.

Pilot Project Implementation and Monitoring

The pilot projects identified include a monitoring plan to track their performance. Historical vehicular data was reviewed for each pilot project in conjunction with observational data, to ensure that the proposed pilot project was appropriate for the context and safe for all modes. Monitoring of each project will be varied due to its context but will likely include a review of vehicle speeds and volumes, bicycle and pedestrian volume, intersection queuing, incident reports, user feedback, and curbside activity pre-and post-implementation.

This widely accepted approach to assessing and testing pilot projects will inform us of the effectiveness and impacts of these new bicycle facilities and expanded pedestrian networks and support future decision-making.

The proposed pilot projects are intended to be installed for a 90-day period. Successful pilot projects rely on on-going monitoring and thorough analysis of their performance to ensure that the anticipated goals are being achieved by the project.

In advance of installation, traffic volume, speed data, and video footage will be collected at multiple locations within each pilot project to provide a baseline of information. After installation, a second round of data collection will be conducted, approximately 60-days into the pilot project after new travel patterns have established. This post-installation data will be reviewed alongside on-going field observation and on-going public feedback methods to determine how the pilot projects are performing and if any field modifications need to be made prior to the 90-day end date.

Throughout the 90-day pilot project phase, the engineering team and project staff will be observing and monitoring the performance of the pilot projects and making any critical adjustments deemed necessary to best project safety of all roadway users. It is anticipated that the pilot projects will be removed at the 90-day end date.

Addendum:

Additional Resources:

- [http://tooledesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Rebalancing Streets for People Webinar Slides 2020_04_02.pdf](http://tooledesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Rebalancing_Streets_for_People_Webinar_Slides_2020_04_02.pdf)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0onoN-Po2M&feature=youtu.be>
- <https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/pdfs/2009r1r2/part6.pdf>
- <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/>
- <https://nacto.org/streets-for-pandemic-response-recovery/?fbclid=IwAR0ClqchJ6rnQhW0NivIObGJHone--reocriTH8P-gVp0pt1fPpYNDtjSfE>

Representative Projects

The list below represents a sample of the projects and communities Toole Design has collaborated with to provide quick-build bicycle facilities and expanded pedestrian networks. Like the proposed pilot projects for Ann Arbor, these efforts took into account the community's vision, need, and context to provide a response that was safe, rapidly implementable, and quantifiable.

- **Main Street, Northampton, MA** – Toole Design collaborated with town officials to provide technical assistance in designing a plan to replace parking spaces on Main Street with outdoor dining space for local restaurants and increased sidewalk space.
- **City of San Francisco, CA** – Toole Design was recently awarded a contract to provide technical assistance in the evaluation of three sources of feedback data (online survey, Twitter, 311), and participation in and advising on methods for manual counts and intercept surveys as part of Metropolitan Transportation Commission on-call contract.
- **Broad Street, Providence, RI** – Together with Street Plans, Toole Design implemented a two-way bike facility using temporary materials on a section of Broad Street by removing a travel lane. This demonstration project also created multiple temporary curb extensions, which were used as community space with seating. Link to project website and video.
- **East Boston Greenway, Boston, MA** – Toole Design, working with the Friends of the East Boston Greenway and the Boston Society of Landscape Architects, provided short-term tactical solutions and long-term visions that would support use by people of all abilities and backgrounds, provide flexible event space, improve circulation and safety, and manage stormwater in a beautiful way. The short-term pop up event included converting an underused parking lot to community space with temporary seating. Link to project website.
- **Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA** – Toole Design designed a quick-build two-way bicycle facility on Brattle Street in Cambridge, starting from concept design to 100% design plans, which included parking inventory studies and community outreach both before and after implementation.
- **City of Austin, TX** – Toole Design is imbedded with the City of Austin's Transportation Department's (ATD) Active Transportation Department and Street Design team, to rapidly implement projects that improve mobility options and transportation safety.