

Frequently Asked Questions The Road Diet on North Main Street

What is the “Road Diet?”

The Road Diet concept was introduced in 2010 to improve public safety on North Main Street. The “diet” reclaims road space and reallocates it for a center refuge turn lane and bicycle lanes, reducing four lanes of traffic to two travel lanes. In August 2011 the Ashland City Council approved a one-year trial period for the North Main Road Diet, starting *after* the realignment of Hersey and Wimer Streets. It’s important to note that this is a one-year pilot project. It will be discontinued at the end of the trial period if the project is not producing the desired results.

Why is this being done?

The accident rate in the North Main Street corridor between the railroad trestle and Helman Street is very high. Most of the accidents are either rear-end collisions resulting from motorists waiting to turn left, or the result of lane changes and weaving as motorists switch lanes to avoid left turning vehicles. Changing the configuration to one lane in each direction with a center turn lane should reduce the rear-end collisions as well as the accidents caused by lane changes and weaving. Speed violations on North Main are problematic. Reducing the number of lanes narrows the road and creates a tunnel effect that naturally slows motorists’ speeds. Finally, dedicating road space to bicycles creates a buffer between the sidewalk and vehicles.

When will this happen?

The Hersey/Wimer realignment project is expected to be completed on or about October 15, 2012, and work on re-striping for the Road Diet will begin the following week.

Where will the changes be made?

The restriping of North Main will stretch from Helman Street to about 500 feet past the railroad trestle. An ODOT contractor will remove (grind off) the existing lane stripes on North Main and restripe the road. The restriping will designate:

- A bicycle lane in each direction
- A vehicle lane in each direction
- A center refuge/left turn lane with some left turns prohibited. Prohibited left turns include: from North Main to Van Ness, from North Main to Central Avenue and from North Main to Coolidge Street.

How will the City determine whether the Road Diet is successful?

The following criteria will be used:

1. A reduction in the annual average number and severity of crashes on North Main.

2. Vehicles travel at a speed closer to the posted 25 mph speed limit. Currently, the “85th percentile speed” on North Main is 32 mph. That means 85% of vehicles on North Main are traveling at least 32 miles per hour.
3. Vehicles maintain an average travel time of 4 minutes and 20 seconds or less from Helman Street to the railroad trestle during the peak traffic hours of 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. (That is about 30 seconds longer than the current average time; keeping in mind there will be times when travel will be faster or slower.)
4. Impact on adjacent streets and neighborhoods, in particular Van Ness, Central, Laurel, Manzanita and Hersey (vehicle increase/decrease will be tracked on identified streets including Van Ness, Central, Laurel, Manzanita, High and Hersey).
5. An increase in bicycle and pedestrian use.
6. An increase in or majority support for keeping the Road Diet after the trial period will indicate a successful project (public input, public meetings, questionnaires, etc).

Again, this is a one-year pilot project. If it does not work, the re-striping can be removed and North Main reverted to its present configuration.