



Town Meeting: Lincoln Road Diet

Thursday, February 12, 2015, Willow Glen Elementary School Cafeteria

Hosted by the Willow Glen Neighborhood Association (WGNA), in partnership with the Willow Glen Business Association (WGBA) and the Road Diet Working Group (RDWG)

CALLED TO ORDER – 7pm

ATTENDANCE (Unofficial) – 175

SPEAKERS

The following individuals spoke during the meeting on different aspects of the road diet trial:

- Chris Roth, WGNA President, RDWG Member
- Pierluigi Oliverio, San José City Council, District 6
- Tom Trudell, RDWG Chair, WGBA “Our Avenue” Committee
- Hans Larsen, Director, City of San José Department of Transportation (DOT)

Points of emphasis from speakers:

1. While they are all supportive of the trial, no group or individual involved in the RDWG has a predetermined position on whether or not the road diet should be made permanent. The plan is to run the trial, analyze data and community feedback, and make a final determination.
2. Residents, business owners, and other community members can share their questions, comments, and concerns by submitting an email to lincolnroaddiet@gmail.com or via the webform at www.bit.ly/lincolnroaddiet

VIDEO

The meeting began with a short video to answer the question: What’s a road diet?

A road diet, also called a lane reduction or road rechannelization, is a technique in transportation planning whereby the number of travel lanes and/or effective width of the road is reduced in order to achieve systemic improvements. The goal is not to reduce the number of cars that flow down the road, but to slow it down a bit while carrying the same amount of traffic more efficiently, adding bike lanes to make the road safer for cyclists, and making the street safer for pedestrians to cross. Watch this to see what that means, and see the results of some real-world road diets.

SCOPE

DOT Director Hans Larsen opened by describing the general nature and location of the test:

- The Lincoln Road Diet trial will run from **March 1st through the end of May**.
- Findings will be presented and feedback accepted in a post-trial public meeting currently scheduled for **June 11th**.
- The road will be reconfigured from 4 lanes of flowing traffic (two in each direction) to two lanes (one in each direction) with a third lane down the middle for left turns and use by emergency vehicles.

- The space opened up by removing one lane completely is effectively split in half to create bike lanes along the outside edges of the road.
- Lanes will be reconfigured between Minnesota and Coe, with “transition areas” that extend to Paula and Nevada.
- Traffic signals at Curtner and Pine will be adjusted to give 20% less green time to northbound traffic in an attempt to prevent congestion where the road diet begins.
- An electronic sign warning northbound drivers of the reconfigured road has already been installed.
- As has always been the case, delivery trucks will need to park in designated loading zones while making deliveries. **Parking in the center turn lane is illegal.**
- **No parking spaces will be removed or reconfigured as part of the test.**
- There will be two left turn lanes from northbound Lincoln onto Minnesota to accommodate more drivers taking Minnesota to Meridian.

STUDY

Mr. Larsen then described how the test’s effectiveness and impacts will be measured, both downtown and on surrounding residential streets:

- DOT has deployed a network of **45 stations** to measure traffic volumes, speed, and travel time through the corridor, plus **8 stations** that measure congestion at signalized intersections.
- “Before” data was collected Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday during the week of Feb. 2nd.
- Additional data collections will occur once the test is underway.
- DOT will deploy **field personnel** to actively monitor the first week of the trial.
- Personnel will be re-deployed during the trial to monitor “hot spots” deemed to be in need of additional attention based on data and community feedback.
- Special attention will be paid to potential congestion and safety issues around Willow Glen Elementary, especially during dropoff and pickup.
- It was emphasized that this represents the largest traffic data collection effort on any road project in San José history.

BENCHMARKS

Following the three-month trial, another community meeting will be held on June 11th, during which DOT will present all of the data captured via monitoring stations and observed by field personnel, and community members will have a chance to share their own observations.

Definition of “success”:

- If the general and obvious consensus is that the trial was not successful, or if success came at too great a cost to the surrounding neighborhood, the temporary markings will be removed and Lincoln Avenue will return to its current configuration.
- If *either* WGNA or WGBA officially oppose a permanent application of the road diet, the markings will be removed and Lincoln will return to its current configuration.

- If community feedback is generally positive, and both associations officially express their support, the reconfiguration will be left in place until August, when a permanent reconfiguration will be presented to the City Council for final approval.
- If the council approves, the road will be permanently reconfigured as part of a repaving project already scheduled and budgeted to occur in the fall.

PUBLIC FORUM

There was an open mic for community members to share opinions, ask questions and voice concerns. At least three dozen people took advantage of the opportunity to speak.

With a few exceptions, the tone was generally positive — best described as “cautious optimism”. Many people asked clarifying questions about the plan’s execution or expressed a specific concern about the impact on their street or some gap in measurement.

Most speakers agreed in principle that:

- There is a need to calm traffic and improve safety on Lincoln Avenue;
- The concept of a road diet is interesting if not a sure thing; and
- They look forward to seeing the results of the trial.

Traffic concerns:

- Several residents of Nevada and Iris Court, which wrap around the elementary school, noted that the need for a traffic measurement station on Nevada as they expect many drivers to use Nevada as a cut-through to Newport or Iris. DOT staff pointed out that drivers diverting onto Nevada will be counted when they turn down subsequent streets to get to Minnesota.
- A number of people expressed concerns about traffic impacts on narrow residential streets that parallel Lincoln (e.g. Settle, Blewett, Iris Court), specifically that congestion on Lincoln through downtown will encourage commuters to use these streets as detours.
- A few people expressed concern about the traffic impacts on Minnesota as people turn left to cut over to Meridian, specifically that there would be an increase in volume on an already dangerous road.
- Almost every speaker — even those who generally support the trial — expressed concern about the traffic impact on residential streets, with many of those making it clear that they don’t feel the plan includes sufficient safeguards to identify, minimize or prevent cut-through traffic on residential streets.
- DOT staff maintained that the extensive monitoring will help them identify “trouble spots” early on and take mid-trial steps to alleviate them.

Other public comments:

- Outreach: There were mixed responses on whether or not the road diet trial process has been promoted well enough. A few people said that “most people” haven’t heard of it. Others said they and their neighbors felt fairly well-informed.
- Several people indicated that they look forward to how much nicer it will be to ride bikes to and through downtown as part of their commute or with their families.

- A number of people mentioned concerns about pedestrian safety downtown and said they hoped the road diet would help. DOT staff noted that studies indicate road diets like this are one of the best ways to make streets safer for pedestrians and bicyclists, as the distance to cross the street is shortened. This also eliminates the problem of cars in one lane stopping for a pedestrian and cars in the second lane not stopping because cars in the other lane obscure their view of the pedestrian.
- A couple people suggested signage aimed at letting drivers know how they can give feedback on the road diet. Tom Trudell said the working group would look into that.

ADJOURNED – 8:45pm

Special thanks are due to WGBA Board Member Greg Barr for providing the notes that served as the basis for these minutes, and to everyone who participated in this meeting.

- WGNA Board of Directors