

 U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration Michigan Division		Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)	
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Subject:	Road Diets	Approved: _____ (signature) <u>Russell L. Jorgenson, Division Administrator</u> (name and title)	

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II. REFERENCES

III. PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE

This SOP clarifies FHWA’s role on approval of federal-aid funding for road diet conversions, and further provides FHWA support for this type of project.

IV. DEFINITIONS

Road diet - this term is used to describe a reconfiguring of laneage on a roadway that results in fewer through lanes. The most common road diet is a 4-lane to 3-lane conversion, where two through lanes in each direction are converted to one through-lane in each direction with a center turn lane.

PODI (Projects of Division Interest) - a pool of projects which merit direct and enhanced FHWA oversight, established each year by FHWA Division office.

V. SCOPE

This SOP provides guidance to Division personnel reviewing and approving PODI projects that will include a road diet.

For proposed non-PODI road diets, Division personnel are guided to regard such projects as having achieved mainstream design and environmental consideration within MDOT, and that no review or approval action is necessary by FHWA personnel.

VI. PROCEDURES for FHWA review of PODI projects

Project documentation:

Road diets are eligible for Federal-aid funding when documentation from the submitting jurisdiction shows positive resolution of the following issues:

1. Operational analysis (on projects with design life ADT greater than 15,000) shows that the 3-lane cross section will provide a reasonable level of service for all traffic movements at major intersections throughout the design life (see #3 below). Reasonable level of service is generally considered to be LOS C; however, LOS D could be considered reasonable if part of a calculated trade-off to other community goals, such as traffic safety and traffic calming.
2. Projected ADT for the design life is consistent with the area Long Range Transportation Plan, for projects within an area covered by an MPO.
3. Project design life determination:
 - a. For safety project supported by a time-of-return (TOR) analysis, project design life can be as short as chosen for the TOR analysis
 - b. 3 years - if the project consists mostly of signing, striping, and striping removal.
 - c. 10-20 years if the project consists of significant pavement or curb work.
4. Geometrics:
 - a. MDOT and AASHTO geometric standards remain in effect regarding controlling design criteria for projects on the NHS system. However, at design speeds below 50 mph, only two controlling criteria apply. There is leeway in many of these standards to recognize the community and livability goals that, for instance, are part of the complete street movement.
 - b. Road diets that are installed with the intention of improving bicycle and pedestrian traffic flow succeed partly by the traffic calming effect of the 3-lane section. Although MDOT design guidance for 4R projects states that 12' lanes are desirable at most ADT levels, 11' lanes may be more appropriate for the goals of this type project, and FHWA would support that lane width. Note that lanes on the National Truck Network may be narrowed if the route is otherwise consistent with highway safety, as discussed in 23 CFR 658.9.
5. Public involvement in the project has been documented including at least one public meeting within the community, and public comments have been addressed, in accordance with the NEPA process.

Pilot projects on MDOT-jurisdiction roads: A common concern in local communities is that a reduction in number of through lanes could result in travel delay through the proposed road diet corridor, and could discourage customer patronage of businesses in the area of the road diet. Although MDOT has a right to install the cross-section they determine to be most appropriate on any road under their jurisdiction, MDOT tries not to act unilaterally on this issue. In the past, MDOT has addressed road diet concerns in some communities by offering the 3-lane cross-section for a one year trial period. This trial period approach includes the possibility of a later reversal back to the 4-lane section if the conversion is deemed unsuccessful.

FHWA supports the concept of a trial period when requested by MDOT, to demonstrate the feasibility of the road diet as a safety countermeasure. Federal-aid funds are eligible for this type of project approach, provided that the trial will be conducted for a period of at least one year, and the terms of the trial are documented between MDOT and the local agency. At the end of the trial period, if the 3-lane section is determined to be unsuccessful by the measures previously established between MDOT and the local community, the return of that corridor to 4-lane operation is also eligible for federal aid.

Reversal of cross-section: If Federal-aid funds were used to implement a road diet, such as a 4 to 3-lane conversion, Federal-aid funds may be used to reverse that cross-section back to 4-lane if:

- justified by crash analysis, level of service or unanticipated operational issues, or
- if installed as a pilot project, the project is deemed to be unsuccessful per the agreed-upon evaluation measures.

FHWA Processing (PODI Projects)

Federal-aid funded 4-to-3 lane conversion projects will be processed and approved in the same manner as typical highway projects. The following criteria apply to processing of road diets and, if necessary, road diet reversals:

- STIP –
The project must be included in the TIP/STIP. If the project is located within an MPO, it must also be consistent with the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan prior to being programmed in the TIP/STIP.
- Air Quality Analysis –
 - In EPA-designated air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas, proposed road diets should be reviewed through the interagency consultation process to determine if an air quality conformity analysis is needed.
 - For projects that are not located in an EPA non-attainment or maintenance area, no air quality analysis is needed.

- Environmental Clearance —
Projects will be processed per the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The level of review will be contingent upon other proposed project elements and results of the MDOT environmental classification process:
 - Programmatic CE without FHWA approval, if MDOT determines that there is not substantial controversy regarding the project.
 - Individual CE with FHWA approval per 23 CFR 771.117 (b) and (d), if MDOT determines there is substantial controversy regarding the project.