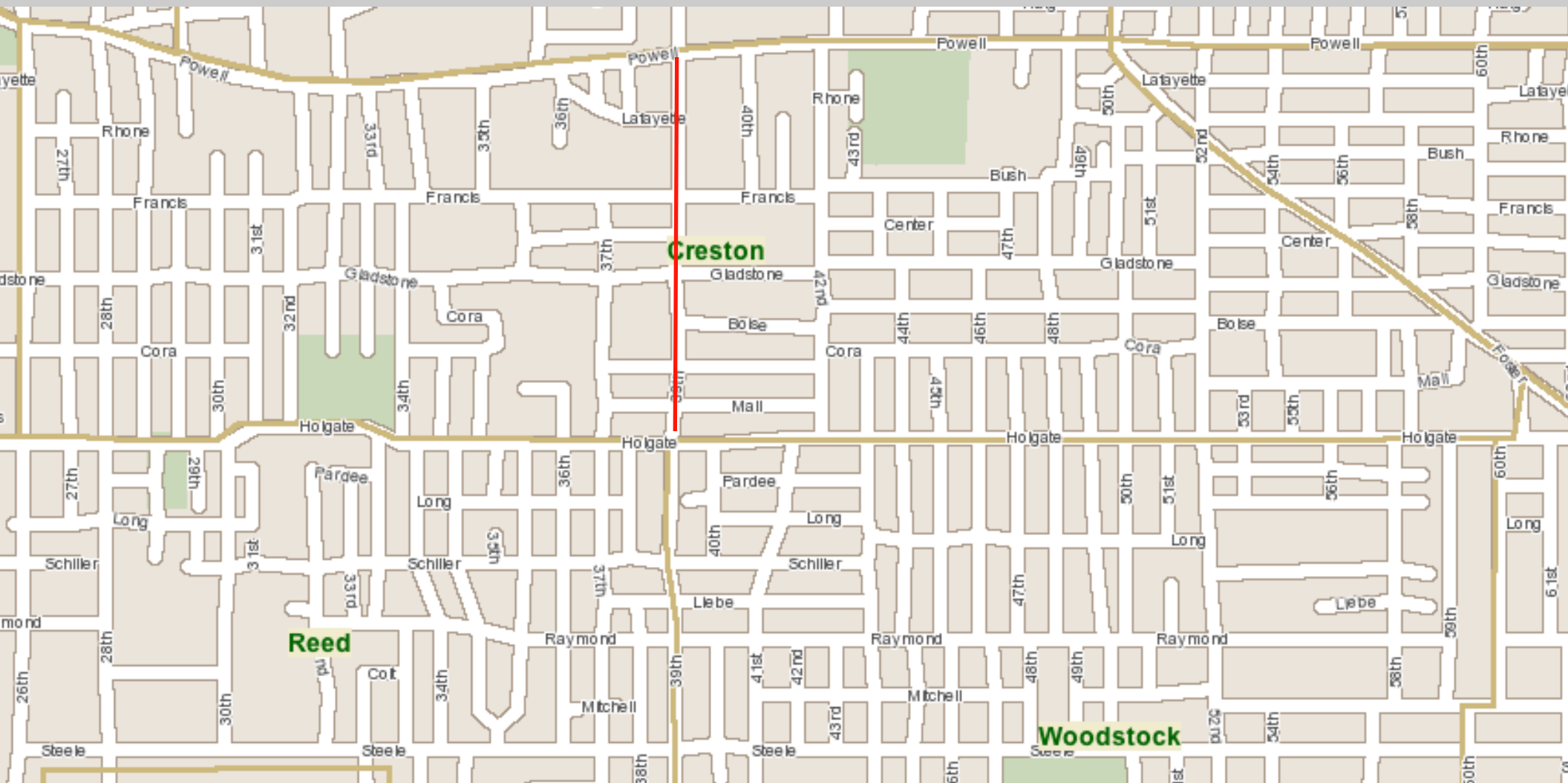


# Improving the pedestrian environment on 39th avenue in the Creston-Kenilworth neighborhood

Presentation prepared for Portland Traffic and Transportation class, Fall 2006  
by Nellie Korn



## Creston-Kenilworth

39th avenue bisects the Creston-Kenilworth neighborhood.

# So what's wrong with 39th?

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39th between Powell and Holgate has no buffer between the substandard width sidewalk and traffic lanes. This makes the street unpleasant to use as a pedestrian and discourages interactions between neighbors, or indeed any use of the street beyond motorized transport.

In all conditions, it is unpleasant to walk or talk next to noisy, fast moving traffic.

In rainy weather, pedestrians get soaked by cars driving through runoff in the curb lane.

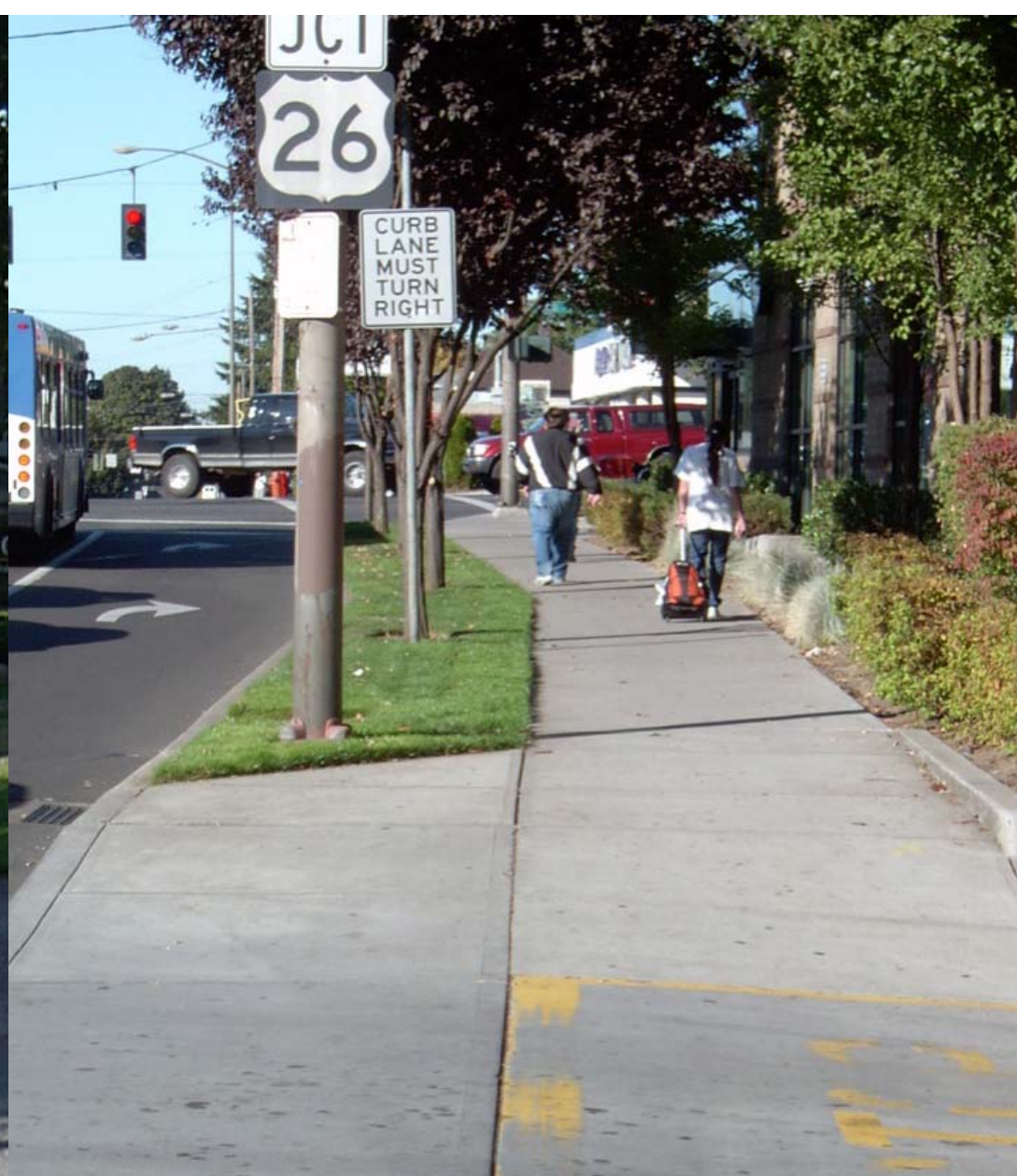
In snowy weather, the sidewalk becomes nearly impassable due to slush and gravel piled up on the sidewalk.

The 4 travel lanes make crossing the street anywhere but the three signal controlled intersections difficult, especially for children and elders.



## We Share the Sidewalk

Pedestrians share a (mostly) 6 foot sidewalk with cyclists, transit riders, fire hydrants and delivery vehicles.



## Wider sidewalks and street trees

Provide a buffer between pedestrians and traffic.

But there is no budget for capital improvements in this corridor, only paint changes.



**Space is limited.**

According to PDOT, there are two feet additional right-of-way through most of the corridor.

Existing construction suggests there may be less.

# What can we do with the limited space and money we've got?

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Ignore the problem (the current plan)

- It's cheap and easy

- Does nothing to improve the pedestrian environment

# What can we do with the limited space and money we've got?

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Ignore the problem (the current plan)  
Reallocate space from cars to people

How? There is no budget for anything besides paint.

# How can we reallocate space from cars to people using only paint?

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PDOT's proposal: Remove one northbound lane and replace with on-street parking

- Parked cars provide a physical barrier between pedestrians and traffic.
  - Traffic cannot drive where cars are parked, so spray from stormwater runoff is reduced.
  - Delivery vehicles don't have to park on the sidewalk.
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- Space has been reallocated from cars to... cars.
  - Only improves one side of the street, and that only minimally.
  - Northbound traffic would frequently be obstructed by drivers parking their vehicles.

# How can we reallocate space from cars to people using only paint?

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PDOT's proposal: Remove one northbound lane and replace with on-street parking

Creston-Kenilworth neighborhood proposal: Remove one travel lane in each direction, add a shared center left turn lane, widen the sidewalks and add street trees.

Addresses all concerns, BUT

There is no money for new curbs and sidewalks and trees.  
PDOT believes there is too much traffic for this to work.

# My proposal

Retain current configuration at Powell.



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In the long block between Powell and Lafayette, reduce southbound lanes from two to one. Northbound lanes will expand to their current configuration between Lafayette and Powell.



# My proposal

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Retain current configuration at Powell.

In the long block between Powell and Lafayette, reduce southbound lanes from one to two. Northbound lanes will expand to their current configuration between Lafayette and Powell.

South of Lafayette and on south to Holgate: one northbound lane, one southbound lane, center left turn lane, north and south bike lanes.

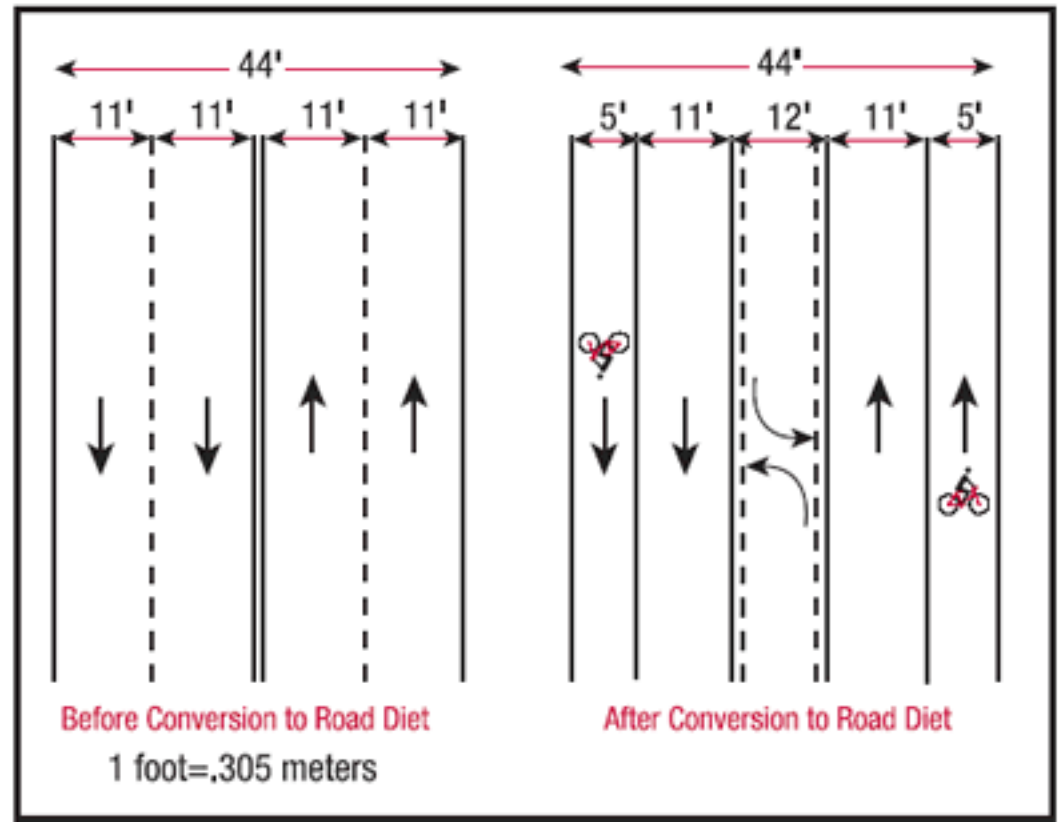
I would suggest continuing the above configuration south to Schiller St, where 39th is currently reduced to two lanes, and extending striped bike lanes south to connect to bike lanes on Steele and Woodstock



# So what about traffic volume?

The configuration I propose is one variation of a “road diet.”

**“Under most average daily traffic (ADT) conditions tested, road diets have minimal effects on vehicle capacity, because left-turning vehicles are moved into a common two-way left-turn lane. However, for road diets with ADTs above approximately 20,000 vehicles, there is a greater likelihood that traffic congestion will increase to the point of diverting traffic to alternate routes.”**

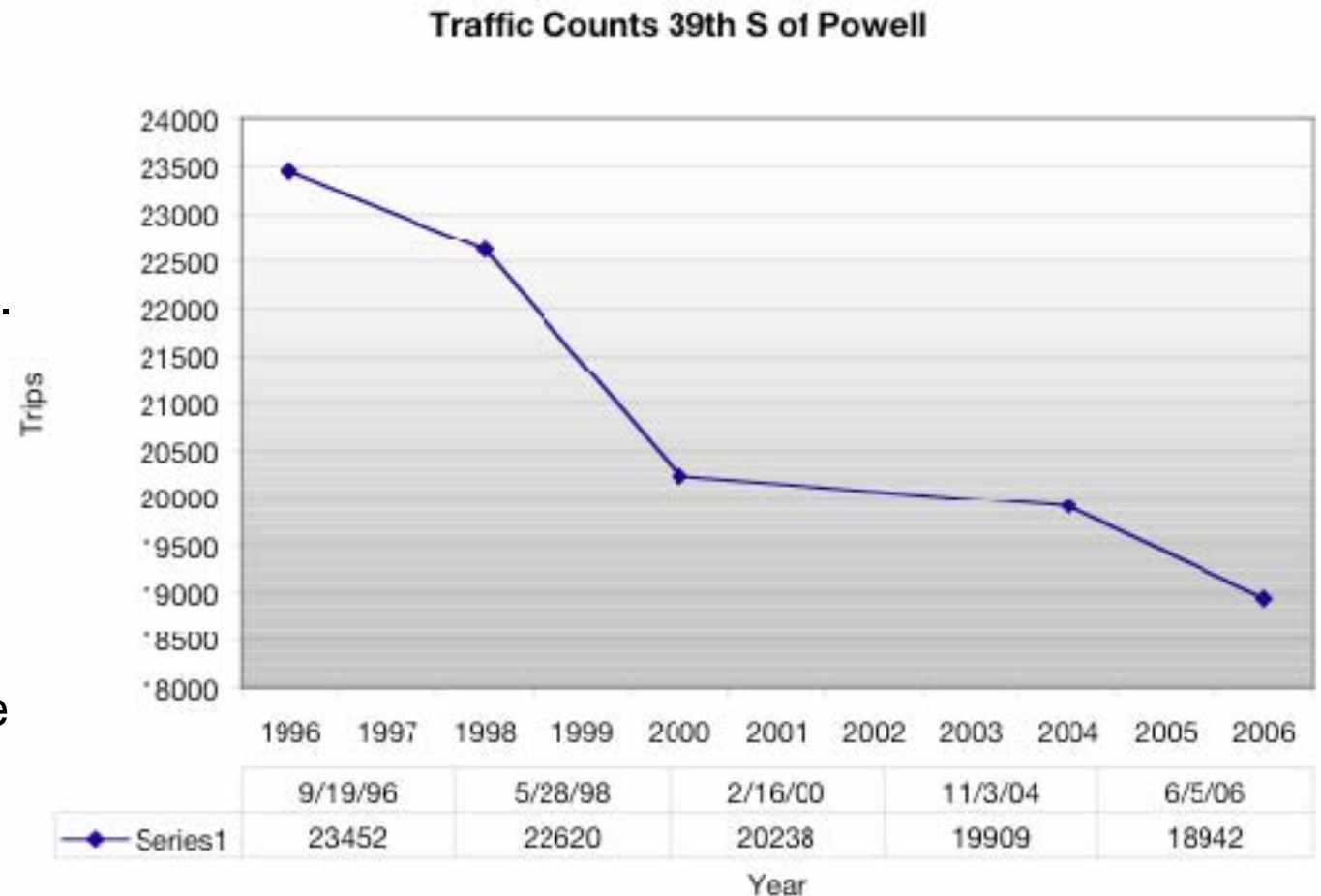


# So what about traffic volume?

Traffic volume on 39th south of Powell has decreased by nearly 24% over the past decade.

The last count put daily volume under 19,000 trips.

PDOT has not provided any explanation as to why they believe volume is too high for a road diet, given that recent counts put volume in the range where road diets have been shown to work, and the trend in volume on 39th is downward.



# Are there other considerations?

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PDOT engineer Mike Coleman expressed a concern that this configuration would reduce headways between vehicles, making pedestrian crossing at uncontrolled intersections more difficult.

”Pedestrians may benefit because they have fewer lanes of traffic to cross, and because motor vehicles are likely to be moving more slowly. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) report *Safety Effects of Marked vs. Unmarked Crosswalks at Uncontrolled Locations* found that pedestrian crash risk was reduced when pedestrians crossed two- and three-lane roads, compared to roads with four or more lanes.”

My own observation as a driver has been that drivers are more likely to yield to pedestrians when there is only one lane in each direction.

As a pedestrian, I find it easier to accurately gauge breaks in traffic when there is only one lane in each direction. In addition, where there is a center left turn lane, it functions as an informal pedestrian median. If one can cross to the center lane, drivers in the far lane are much more likely to yield to a pedestrian standing in the middle of the road.

# Are there other considerations?

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39th is not part of the bicycle master plan. There is a bicycle boulevard at 33rd and striped bike lanes on 42nd. Cyclists should just use those and stay off 39th.

The routes on 33rd and 42nd both place additional hills in cyclists' paths. If cyclists are using their bicycles for transportation, some will choose the route involving the least additional work.

While most cyclists do choose the alternate routes, some choose 39th as the most appropriate route to their destinations. The number who choose this route is small enough that they could safely share a wider sidewalk. They could use the road, if drivers would obey the law and recognize cyclists' right to use roads without harassment. That cultural change has yet to happen.

# Are there other considerations?

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At the PDOT open house on June 8th, 2006, most people favored no change to existing conditions.

Not all options were presented at this meeting. The options presented were:

- No change
- One northbound lane, two southbound lanes, with on street parking (the “three-leg” option)
- Taking property to make room for 12 foot sidewalks and street trees

A road diet configuration was not presented as an option.

The meeting was poorly publicized. No one I have spoken to outside of active members of the neighborhood association knew this meeting had occurred. Of the thousands of people in Creston-Kenilworth and surrounding neighborhoods, only 40 people attended this meeting, of those, only 28 completed a survey. 14 chose “no change” as the best option among the options presented, 11 chose “three-leg” option, and three did not select an option. Of those, two indicated a marginal preference for the three-leg option in their comments.

Given the poor publicity, poor attendance, omitted options, and the lack of any consensus, I don't believe this meeting should be considered an accurate indicator of neighborhood opinion.

# What are the benefits?

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## For Pedestrians:

- Cars are 5 feet away instead of at your elbow.
- Bikes are off the sidewalk.
- Delivery vehicles can stop in the center lane instead of on the sidewalk.
- Only two lanes of through traffic to cross, instead of four.
- Traffic speeds are likely to be slower (the driver at the head of the line sets the pace, so if they slow down, the cars behind must do so as well).
- Bikes only in the curb lane mean far less spray on rainy days.

# What are the benefits?

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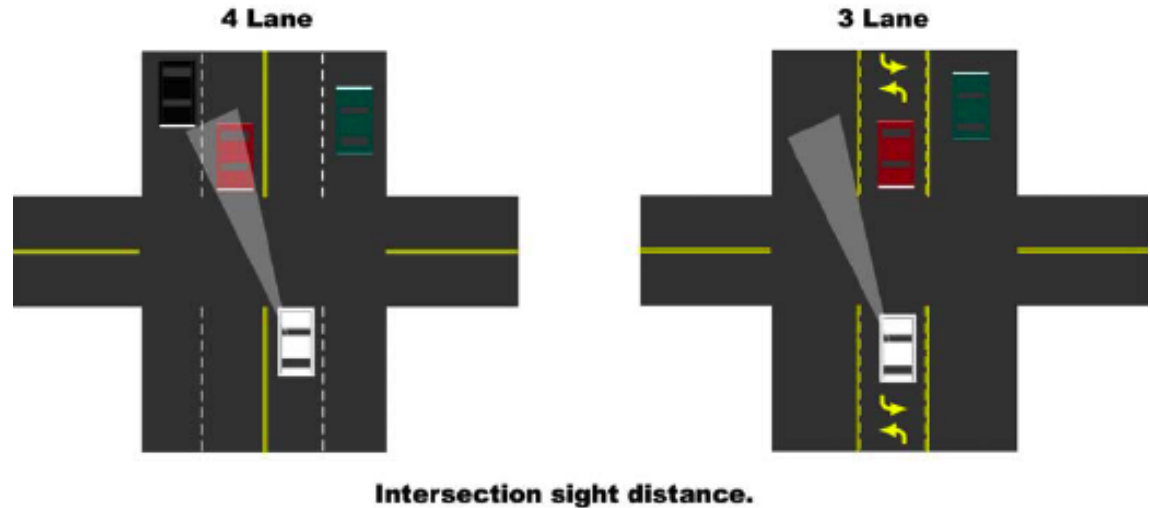
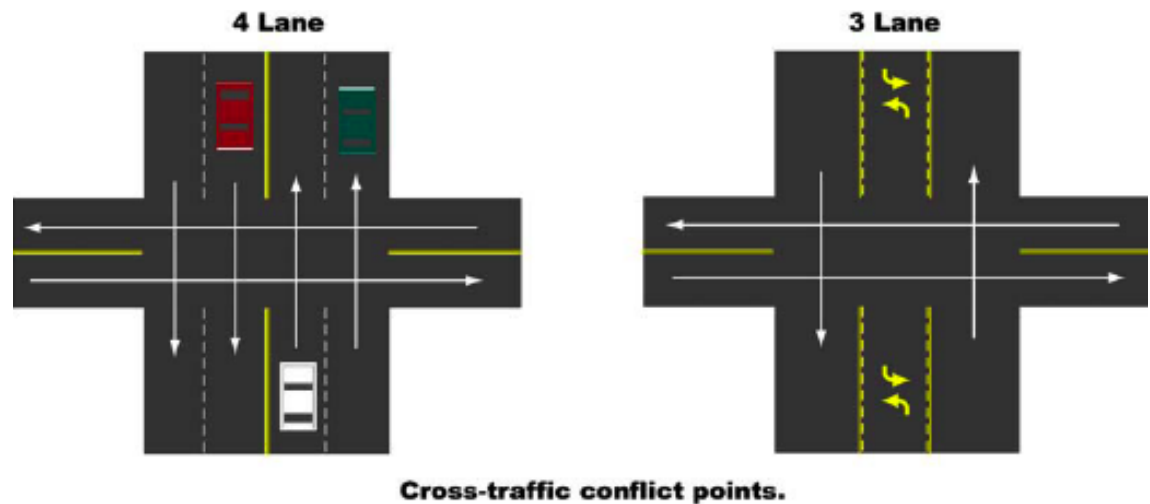
## For Cyclists:

- Don't have to choose between running over granny and her grocery cart or getting hit by a bus
- Drivers have clear illustration the bicycles have the right to use the road.
- Traffic speeds are likely to be slower (the driver at the head of the line sets the pace, so if they slow down, the cars behind must do so as well).

# What are the benefits?

## For Drivers:

- Cross traffic conflict points are halved, reducing the possibilities for collisions.
- Sight distance for left turners is improved, and potential blind spots reduced.
- Left turners are removed from the traffic lanes, creating smoother flow.
- All of the above reduce the opportunities for vehicle to vehicle collisions.



# What are the benefits?

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For the neighborhood:

Road diets elsewhere have provided:

- Reduced traffic speeds and crashes
- Renovation and redevelopment of adjoining properties
- Improved perception of safety