

powered by feet first



# feet first policy

taking a stance to advance walkability

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Feet First policies

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## Road Rechannelization (Road Diets)

### Policy

#### where we stand

Advocacy is a major component of the work Feet First does. These policy papers, prepared by our Policy Committee, convey Feet First's position on key issues of interest to increase safe and easy ways for people to choose to go by foot.



### background

There has been much debate in Seattle about proposals to convert existing four-lane arterial roadways to three lanes, a process called rechannelization, or "road diets." Recent implementations include rechannelizations along Stone Way, Nickerson Street, and NE 125th Street. A four-lane arterial roadway has two lanes with traffic in either direction, whereas a three lane roadway has one lane of traffic in either direction with a center turn lane.

These treatments are usually quite controversial due to concern about reduced roadway capacity from residents, business owners, and drivers. All too often, the public debate over these treatments is mistakenly framed by the news media and others as a zero sum contest between drivers and bicyclists. This is false. When done properly, at appropriate locations, all users benefit.

### Mission

#### who we are - what we do

Feet First promotes walkable communities and envisions people walking every day for their health, transportation, environment, community, and pleasure.



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promoting walkable communities



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## why it matters to walking

Busy, four-lane arterial roadways are unsafe to cross at non-signalized crossings. A car stopping for a person crossing the street obscures visibility for the driver in the adjacent lane, who might not see the person walking. This dangerous situation is significantly improved by converting to a three-lane arterial roadway because the person walking can cross each half of the road separately, using the center turn lane as refuge, instead of waiting for a gap in traffic in both directions.

Safety is also improved because speeding is less common on three-lane arterial roadways. The removal of the extra “passing lane” prevents speeding drivers from passing other drivers who are following the posted speed limit. When Stone Way was converted to three lanes, speeding ten miles or more over the posted speed limit declined by over 80 percent. Rechannalization also provides safety benefits to motorized vehicles by reducing conflict points, improving visibility for crossing and turning vehicles, and reducing speed.

Another benefit from converting arterial roadways to three lanes is that it frees up extra space on the roadway for other uses. A common practice is providing new bicycle lanes in each direction. In some locations, an appropriate use might be adding additional on-street parking.

As for accommodating traffic; when done at appropriate locations, three-lane roadways can handle the same amount of vehicles per hour as they did before the conversion from four lanes. According to the Federal Highway Administration, rechannalization on roadways carrying up to 20,000 trips per day have minimal effects on roadway capacity.

## feet first position

Feet First generally supports conversions of four-lane arterial roadways to three lanes. However, Feet First understands that there are many four-lane arterial roadways that simply carry too much traffic to be converted to three lanes without causing unacceptable levels of traffic congestion. Therefore, rechannalization proposals should be evaluated for safety and vehicle capacity on a case-by-case basis.

## resources

U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration description of “Road Diet” (Roadway Reconfiguration).

[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa\\_sa\\_12\\_013.htm](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa_sa_12_013.htm).

Stone Way rechannalization before and after study:

<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/docs/StoneWaybeforeafterFINAL.pdf>.



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Nickerson Street rechannalization before and after report:

[http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/docs/Nickerson%20before%20and%20after%20study\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/docs/Nickerson%20before%20and%20after%20study_FINAL.pdf).

Project for Public Spaces Rightsizing Streets Guide:

<http://www.pps.org/blog/welcome-to-the-rightsizing-streets-guide/>.

FHWA webpages on road diets:

[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa\\_sa\\_12\\_013.htm](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa_sa_12_013.htm).

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/11septoct/05.cfm>.

Road Diets: Fixing the Big Roads by Dan Burden and Peter Lagerwey:

<http://www.walkable.org/assets/downloads/roaddiets.pdf>.

Photo courtesy of Seattle Likes Bikes!



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