

July 2007

ITE District 6 Annual Meeting, July 15-18th in Portland, Oregon – Mirai Senior Planner, John Davies presented a paper on Road Diets & Traffic Calming.

Abstract: The Dark Side of Road Diets

The road diet concept provides many benefits to a community. Reducing a roadway's width can provide traffic calming, improved pedestrian access and an appropriate scale to surrounding land uses. This presentation focuses on Market Street in Kirkland, WA, the only principal arterial that parallels the heavily-traveled Interstate 405. The design for the 1.3-mile Market Street was conceived as four-lanes, but never developed in favor of a two-lane, smaller-scale facility. Kirkland's Market Neighborhood, trapped between Market Street and the shores of Lake Washington, is dependent solely on Market Street for access. An offset street grid and topography further exacerbates the neighborhood's access problems by creating restricted sight lines.

With traffic levels nearing 1500 vehicles/hour in the peak direction, what options can improve minor street mobility in the face of the overwhelming demand for through travel?

This project summarizes a six-month study completed for the Market Neighborhood organization focused on how best to: (1) improve mobility for residents "trapped" by Market Street traffic, (2) reduce off-peak travel speeds and (3) enhance the quality of this high volume corridor. While unique to the characteristics of Market Street, many of the concepts and issues may be applicable to communities considering a road diet of an arterial roadway or dealing with minor street movements onto a high volume corridor.

Recommendations from this study included: signal timing changes, traffic calming improvements, targeted parking removal, turn restrictions, pedestrian and transit improvements, and public information campaigns.

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