

V. PROCEDURES

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 shows that the 3-lane cross section will provide 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.
 - Exception: Proposed projects with design year ADT projected to be 15,000 or less will not require operational analysis.
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 curb radius, lane width, etc. However, there is leeway in many of the standards, and this leeway may be used to recognize the community and livability goals that, for instance, are part of 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 foot lanes are desirable at most ADT levels, 11 foot lanes may be more appropriate for the goals of this type project, and FHWA would support that lane width.
 - Exception: 12 foot lanes required on National Truck Network.
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 Trunk Line Roads: As owner of the road, MDOT has a right to install the cross-section they believe to be most beneficial on any trunk line road, even though that road might be going through a community. In the past, MDOT has addressed concern in some communities by offering to “pilot” the 3-lane cross-section for a period of time. This approach, by definition, includes the possibility of a later reversal back to the 4-lane section if the trial period is deemed unsuccessful.

FHWA supports the concept of pilot projects, when requested by MDOT, to convince the public of the feasibility of this concept which we consider to be 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, the return of that corridor to 4-lane operation is also eligible for federal aid.

Reversal of Cross-Section: If Federal aid was used to convert a 4-lane section to 3-lane, FHWA 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 according to the agreed-upon evaluation measures.

FHWA Processing

Requests for 4-to-3 lane conversion projects that are to be accomplished with Federal-aid highway funds will be processed and approved in the same manner as typical highway projects.

1. STIP – The project will need to be included in the STIP. If the project is located within an MPO, it will need to be consistent with the MPO’s Long Range Transportation Plan prior to being programmed in the STIP.
2. Air Quality Analysis –
 - In EPA-designated air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas, proposed 4-to-3 lane conversions 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.
3. 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 there is substantial controversy regarding the project.
4. Project Approval – Project approval will be according to the FHWA/MDOT Stewardship Agreement:
- PODI projects – FHWA Area Engineer
 - Non-PODI projects-MDOT