

Notes from The Role of Road Diets in Complete Streets and Vision Zero Webinar

October 6th, 2024

Webinar Summary

The objective of the research effort was to better understand how Road Diets are used in Complete Streets and Vision Zero road planning approaches by exploring the importance of Road Diets in these two approaches.

Presenters:

- Alex Hanes, Toronto Metropolitan University Master of Planning graduate

Key Findings:

- This webinar explored the necessity of Road Diets in Complete Streets and Vision Zero road planning approaches and identified that the audience has varying opinions on whether road diets are needed to achieve Vision Zero and Complete Streets.
- Alex Hanes, the author of '[Road Diets in Complete Streets and Vision Zero: A Comparative Analysis Report](#)', discussed his research and findings from municipalities across Ontario.
- Through the research, Alex found that Road Diets are viewed as important for advancing Complete Streets and Vision Zero initiatives by municipal Complete Streets and Vision Zero planners, but that there is a gap between the findings of the road diets regarding opportunities and actual implementation of those opportunities.
- The research also found that there is a need for greater political leadership to champion implementation of Road Diet project opportunities, and a need for more comprehensive engagement across council members.
- Community opposition, lack of political support, and financial constraints were identified as a major barrier to implementation.
- Audience members were supportive of a potential Community of Practice, facilitated by TCAT, for active transportation practitioners.

Presentation Summary:

Alex Hanes, Toronto Metropolitan University Master of Planning graduate

- Alex defined Complete Streets and Vision Zero movements, where Complete Streets is about designing streets to accommodate all users and incorporates access or accommodation components, while Vision Zero is a road safety

movement focused on eliminating traffic related injuries and fatalities and incorporates systems thinking to road safety.

- In a broad sense, road diets are defined as the opportunity to reallocate space to moving people rather than simply moving vehicles. Road diets identify opportunities to provide more equitable space across community roads for infrastructure that improves the movement of people via a variety of different modes.
 - Re-prioritizes Street space
 - Slows traffic and improves safety
 - Increased livability
 - Local economic benefits
 - Can benefit traffic flow.

Barriers to implementing Complete Streets

- Cultural opposition: there is often opposition to removal of car space.
- Contradicting opinions
 - Complete Streets planner claim roads are too narrow to fit desired additions
 - Vision Zero planners claim roads are too wide and encourage speeding.

Research Questions

- How important are Road Diets to Complete Streets and Vision Zero?
- How do Complete Streets and Vision Zero compare in the importance they place on Road Diets?

Research Literature Review Focused on:

- Exploring the significance of Road Diets in implementing Complete Streets and Vision Zero initiatives.
- Was challenging to find literature specifically on this subject matter. The literature primarily assessed safety effects of Road Diets.
- The literature review also found that Vision Zero has a wider range of road design interventions (i.e., enforcement techniques, education) than Complete Streets, that may be less expensive than building structures.

Research Findings

- Alex Interviewed (3) and distributed surveys to municipal planners within Southern Ontario. (24) Participants identified as being aligned with either Complete Streets or Vision Zero.

- Overall findings from the interviews and surveys show alignment between Complete Streets and Vision Zero planners in the belief that Road Diets are an important tool for both initiatives.
- There is a gap between Road Diet opportunities and implementation of those opportunities.
- There is often mixed support from politicians, but overall support from municipal staff.
- Public support is limited, but municipal planners admitted to having a limited understanding of public opinion. Therefore, there is a need for more engagement to better understand public support.
- There is consensus amongst planners that both initiatives could be better achieved if Road Dieting received greater consideration in project planning and development.
- Very few municipal planners felt that the two initiatives were applicable in rural settings. There is a need for tailored strategies that take rural challenges, such as an absence of paved shoulders, into accounts.
- Road Diets is a term that can carry negative connotations to some, and it may be beneficial to adopt new terminology.
- Where Road Diets are considered in project planning and development varies. There is not a lot of direction on how or when to consider Road Diets.

Contact information:

Please reach out to us at any time with additional information, questions, or input.

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