

# High-Volume Road Diet Success in Los Angeles

Los Angeles, California

## KEY ELEMENTS:



High-Volume Road Diet



Increased Active Transportation Safety & Mobility

The Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) installed a road diet on Rowena Avenue in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Silver Lake in 2013. The four-to-three lane conversion along the high-volume corridor resulted in fewer overall crashes and increased bicycle usage. Since the Rowena Avenue project, LADOT has implemented dozens of road reconfiguration aimed at enhancing safety along high-volume corridors and has 148 miles of road diets citywide.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Residents and the local Neighborhood Council had discussed the half-mile road diet on Rowena Avenue since 2006. Representatives from the elementary school, independent businesses, and residents wanted a safer and welcoming environment for pedestrians along the neighborhood's primary corridor that saw an Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) of 25,000. The death of a pedestrian crossing Rowena Avenue in 2012 increased pressure to act. The City was in a unique position to implement the road diet during scheduled utility work. The City converted the four-lane road in 2013 to two travel lanes with a two-

way left-turn lane, bicycle lanes, and on-street parking in both directions.

## PROJECT PROCESS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Independent public discussion and engagement on the road diet were underway prior to LADOT's involvement. The neighborhood was active in promoting area safety improvements through channels like widely-read online community publications and the active Neighborhood Council.

A mixed public reaction surfaced after the road diet installation, with some residents concerned that the project had increased cut-through traffic on parallel roads. The Neighborhood Council hosted community conversations with residents and LADOT. Two separate studies--one independent and one from LADOT-- confirmed the road diet had increased safety while maintaining AADT, though some concerns about cut-through traffic remained.

"Unconventional and high-volume road diets have seen repeated success in Los Angeles for reducing crashes while maintaining higher levels of AADT, upward of 25,000 vehicles per day. The Rowena Avenue road diet has demonstrated positive safety outcomes in independent studies and our team's own internal analysis. Best of all, it came at little cost since it was implemented in coordination with planned street resurfacing."

– Bhuvan Bajaj, LADOT Hollywood District Engineer

## Case Study: High-Volume Road Diet Success in Los Angeles

STEP: [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/step/](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/step/)

### DATA & EVALUATION

LADOT performed a five-year pre-and post-project analysis of the Rowena Avenue road diet. LADOT reviewed collision, speed, traffic volume, and bicycle count data changes along Rowena Avenue. Road diet outcomes included:

- Crashes decreased in 2017 to the lowest reported level on record.
- Average annual crashes dropped from approximately 12 to 8.
- Average annual pedestrian and bicycle crashes dropped from 9 to 6.
- AADT remained consistent with approximately 25,000 vehicles per day.
- Peak hour bicycle counts increased from a pre-road diet high of 14 to an average of 71.
- Unsafe speed crashes were reduced by 65 percent.
- No crash increases on parallel side streets.

### LESSONS LEARNED

LADOT recommends anticipating the unique factors and data needs that are important for candidate road diet corridors. These include conducting pre-and-post pedestrian counts to understand overall pedestrian volumes and crossing patterns in commercial corridor settings. Additionally, knowing the local context and neighborhood needs can help address concerns after project implementation. For example, each Los Angeles neighborhood is unique in the best way to reach its residents; Silver Lake has a particularly engaged Neighborhood Council, and residents partly led the push for the road diet installation. Understanding the neighborhood's past discussions about Rowena Avenue was essential in communicating project outcomes.

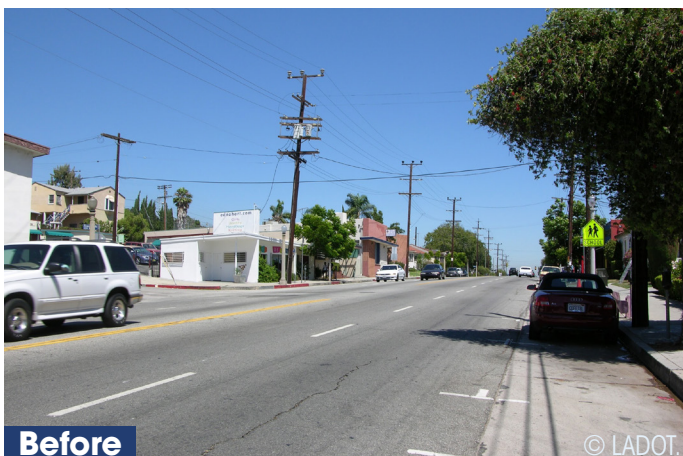


Figure 1. Photo. The four-lane Rowena Avenue before the road diet.



Figure 2. Photo. Rowena Avenue after the road diet with two-way left-turn lane, bicycle lanes and on-street parking.