



Fw: May 1 2025 Hearing: State grant for Orange Street improvement plan

From Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

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From: Zach Wendling <zach.wendling@gmail.com>

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To: Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

Subject: May 1 2025 Hearing: State grant for Orange Street improvement plan

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Thursday, May 1, 2025 6:00 PM

City Services and Environmental Policy

Resolution LM-2025-0152

Dear Members of the City Services and Environmental Policy Committee:

I am writing in **opposition** to the City's proposal to accept \$1.67 million in state funds to implement the current, proposed redesign of Orange Street between Cold Spring and Humphrey. I've lived in East Rock for nine years and am a survivor of traffic violence – struck by a motor vehicle while riding my bike on Orange Street in 2022, resulting in multiple broken bones and months of painful recovery. The City's plan, as proposed, is not only *personally insulting*, it is **wasteful, dangerous, and in violation** of New Haven's own policies and values.

This plan **does not follow** NACTO guidelines for street improvements. It **contradicts** the City's Complete Streets law. It **ignores** years of resident input. And it **prioritizes on-street parking** over the safety and lives of cyclists, pedestrians, and transit users. It's hard to overstate how egregiously this plan fails.

The proposed "bike boulevard" model **does not belong** on a busy arterial like Orange Street. The traffic volume, at 2800–3800 vehicles per day, plus buses from CT Transit and Yale, makes a shared-lane design **functionally flawed**. According to transportation experts, this kind of design only works on calm, local streets where drivers are resigned to slow speeds – not on a major connector through one of the City's most densely populated neighborhoods. Cyclists will be shoved into traffic, honked at, harassed, and endangered. *This is not a safety improvement. It's a disaster in the making.*

And what's worse, **none of this was discussed with the public**. At the two community meetings, we were shown options focused on parking trade-offs to allow for protected bike lanes. Not once was this "bike boulevard" concept raised. Yet the Mayor abandoned all of that public input and unveiled a completely different plan.

Let me remind you what the public *did* say:

- Over 300 residents signed a petition in favor of protected bike lanes.
- Canvassing on this stretch of Orange found that 95% of residents supported parking removal to make space for safer cycling.
- The City's own parking study found that removing one side of parking would **not** create a hardship for motorists.

Despite all of this, you are now being asked to **spend over \$1.6 million** to make the street worse: By narrowing travel lanes and **forcing cyclists to act as traffic-calming devices**. By placing them in direct conflict with cars and buses. By stripping away already inadequate bike lanes and replacing them with a vague promise of "shared space" that **puts all responsibility for safety on the most vulnerable users**.

This is more than bad planning. It's a betrayal. A betrayal of residents who gave thoughtful input in good faith. A betrayal of the principles of sustainability, equity, and safety that you, the Board of Alders, have publicly championed. And a betrayal of the very

laws this City passed fifteen years ago when it adopted the Complete Streets Ordinance, which *clearly* states that street design must prioritize non-motorized users, especially those who are most vulnerable.

So I ask you directly: **Are you comfortable voting to fund a plan that will make Orange Street less safe, that violates City law, that contradicts expert design guidance, and that residents overwhelmingly oppose?** Are you willing to accept the inevitable injuries – and possibly worse – that this flawed design will produce? And, if so, **why?**

I urge you: *do not reward this failure of planning and process.* Demand a redesign that uses best practices, follows the law, and reflects what residents actually asked for. We deserve better.

Respectfully,

Zach Wendling
79 Avon Street