

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of CSEP,

Thank you for considering my testimony, expressing my concerns about the grant request for Orange Street. I am sorry I have a conflict on Thursday night, and so cannot testify in person.

I appreciate the city's focus on improving traffic safety, an issue I care deeply about and have spent a lot of time advocating for over the years. However, I am concerned the proposed plan risks making Orange Street less safe for people riding bikes, and is spending a lot of money—\$1,671,600—and city time (a precious commodity!) changing a street which currently, for the most part, feels very safe as a pedestrian, especially when there are other parts of the city where such changes would be more beneficial. I write this as someone who primarily walks for transportation, and walks in many parts of the city, including frequently on Orange Street. I also am worried the plan will have a negative impact on people driving and riding in buses/shuttles on Orange Street.

The focus on Orange Street began when it was being repaved, several years ago now. Traffic safety advocates suggested to the city that since it would be restriping the street after repaving, it would be a logical, economically efficient time, to change the bike lane (the first in New Haven I believe!), from four feet, to five feet – the minimum standard. This request turned into a long conversation (including two public meetings) between the city and community, which included a traffic/parking study to consider the feasibility of the bike lane. After the two public meetings, this plan (or one similar to it) was released by the city, even though it had not been discussed to my recollection during the meetings. The plan felt like a way the city could avoid having to create a bike lane, which would have taken away some parking, while suggesting the city cares about safety.

When this plan was released, numerous people with significant knowledge about street design said there is too much traffic volume on Orange Street to make the shared street design safe for cyclists. The slow street idea is terrific and appropriate for local streets (like Foster or Nicoll, for example), but inappropriate for arterial roads like Orange Street, which has a high volume of cars, shuttles, and trucks.

This plan will require vehicles to travel around 12 mph, risking making drivers really frustrated, and making it uncomfortable for people riding bikes having the cars, trucks, and shuttles right behind them on the road. I am guessing less experienced bike riders will instead ride on the sidewalk, making things worse for pedestrians.

When I rode my bike down Orange Street last weekend on route to/from Rock to Rock, I felt like there was little space to ride as is – making the road even narrower, by adding the median, would feel dangerous to me, increasing the risk of being hit by a car or doored by a parked car.

Again, I appreciate the city's intent, but do not think this is a good use of State funding/City resources, especially when other LOTCIP projects like Whitney Avenue and S. Frontage Road have not started actual construction yet, though the money has been secured for years.

In my view, the city should not seek this large grant to make changes to a street that already is essentially safe for pedestrians and that will risk making it less safe for people riding bicycles and really frustrating for drivers. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Abigail Roth

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