

Slimming streets: Collierville could trim thoroughfare

By Abigail Warren, Daily Memphian

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Close to Planters Ridge Park, Collierville Arlington Road is 64 feet wide. (Courtesy Town of Collierville)

Collierville Arlington Road is wider than needed, so Collierville leaders are considering a measure to trim that down by undertaking a “road diet.”

A road diet helps reduce the size of a thoroughfare. The Collierville Board of Mayor and Aldermen heard a presentation from Neetu Singh, the suburb’s traffic engineer, during their day-long retreat on Wednesday, Jan. 21.

Originally, Tenn. 385 was supposed to end at U.S. 72, so drivers were forced to use Collierville Arlington as a north and south thoroughfare. But now drivers have another option as the highway meets Interstate 269. It runs parallel to Collierville Arlington Road, taking drivers to Eads or Interstate 40.

Interstate 269 opened in October 2018, and traffic volumes have decreased on Collierville Arlington Road since 2019. Singh expects that trend to continue.

The road has not been well-maintained. Long before Singh took her job as the suburb's traffic engineer, the Tennessee Department of Transportation signed a contract with Shelby County giving up ownership of the road. About 12 years ago, TDOT restriped and repaved the road and gave up ownership.

"That is news to Shelby County," Singh told elected officials. "We didn't know they were supposed to maintain it, so no one is maintaining it."

TDOT is working to replace the bridge over Wolf River, but Singh said it's possible, the town may be responsible for the portion south of the bridge and the county will upkeep the road north of the bridge.



The width of Collierville Arlington Road north of Fletcher is two lanes in each direction and 48 feet wide.
(Courtesy Town of Collierville)

Collierville Arlington Road is a bit confusing, as it's all different lengths between Poplar Avenue and the bridge.

The width north of Fletcher Road is two lanes in each direction and 48 feet wide. Close to Planters Ridge Park, it's 64 feet wide. Near Collierville Christian Academy, the width is 88 feet.

So Singh proposed a couple of ideas. Some were to restripe the roads, use planters, rubber curbs and other tools bolted into the pavement plus add bike lanes to help keep a consistent width.

As the town continues gathering feedback of part of its comprehensive plan process, one frequent request has been bike lanes, Michael Clark, Collierville economic and community development director.

“People are wanting the ability to ride from one of these nearby neighborhoods to the Town Square for events and activities and everything else,” he said.

If that option is pursued, the excess pavement could have several different uses, and that would be determined at a later date.

The other option was full construction, similar to what the town is undertaking on Shelby Drive.

Both options take the road from four or five lanes down to three lanes — one lane in each direction with a turn lane.



Collierville Arlington Road near East Powell Road. Collierville Arlington Road hasn't been as bust since the opening of Interstate 269. (Courtesy Town of Collierville)

However, there is a large difference in the price. Full construction estimates are about \$27 million, while the calculations for the delineating measures were nearly \$3 million.

“It is a big number, and we have a lot of other needs,” Molly Mehner, town administrator, said.

Mehner said the board must prioritize projects as it plans the 2026-27 budget.

“Do we have friends of the road diet?” Mayor Maureen Fraser joked as the nonprofit Friends of the Lucius E. and Elsie C. Burch, Jr. Library is helping fundraise for the library renovation.

Singh noted the costs may be less due to contingencies factored in. She said by phone Thursday those were high-level planning estimates. The numbers can fluctuate as the details are fine-tuned with material selection and design.

Mehner said a full buildout could transform that area and be a perk for families in the area. Collierville Arlington Road is frequented by families headed to Tara Oaks Elementary on East Harpers Ferry Road.

Singh said there have been only 30 crashes in the last five years and none have been fatal. By engineering standards, that’s a low rate, so grant opportunities are limited. There may be options through the Metropolitan Planning Organization, which would allow Collierville to get most of the funding through a grant.

The board asked that town staff continue researching and bring back several proposals, including a hybrid option, before deciding if the project is part of the 2026-27 budget.



Abigail Warren

Abigail Warren is an award-winning reporter and covers Collierville and Germantown for The Daily Memphian. She was raised in the Memphis suburbs, attended Westminster Academy and studied journalism at the University of Memphis. She has been with The Daily Memphian since 2018.