

CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
MARCH 24, 2026 – 7:30 PM

For the full detail of this evening's Council Meeting, please visit www.watchreadingohio.com

CALL TO ORDER

President of Council, Mr. Mattscheck called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President of Council, Mr. Mattscheck led those in attendance in a prayer and then the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Council Members Present: Mr. Powell, Mr. Bronner, Mr. Bishop, Mr. Boehner, Mrs. Kroeger, Mr. Thamann, & Mrs. Eadicicco.

OTHER CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Mayor Bo Bemmes & Auditor Sabrina Smith

GUEST SPEAKERS: ODOT Representatives Anthony Pankala, Jeremy Thompson and Scott Knebel

ODOT stated that although the Public Input period is over, they are still accepting comments and suggestions from the public. A lot of concerns that have been raised are about congestion and are similar to the ones made at the public information session. ODOT reiterated that this is something that has been done before across the state and country and is a well-proven safety improvement plan for pedestrians and vehicles. ODOT has not made any major changes to the plan and is still proposing a road diet. By June, ODOT hopes to have a firmer set of plans but will continue to coordinate with the City of Reading to incorporate small changes they want to recommend. The overall focus of the road diet has an emphasis on reducing speeds and improving pedestrian safety.

COUNCIL INPUT:

President Mattscheck opened the discussion to council members one at a time.

MR. POWELL:

Mr. Powell noted the lack of promptness in receiving the information for review and disappointment in not seeing any changes incorporated into the plans since the last meeting. ODOT responded that they are beholden to whether the city wants to proceed and needs feedback from

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the city before they can move forward with any design changes. The road diet is a major feature of the plan and cannot change, but smaller features can be adjusted.

He asked ODOT if they responded to the owner of the Reading Feed Mill on her question, and ODOT responded that she had not reached out. Mr. Powell stated that ODOT needs to make contact with her.

Mr. Powell asked if there were thoughts on a crosswalk at the intersection of North Street and ODOT said the project designers would need to review it. No changes have been made prior to the June update.

Mr. Powell mentioned the significant queuing at southbound Clark Road to make a left hand turn into the lot of an exterminating company, and that much queuing is not needed. In contrast, the east side of Reading Road turning into Skyline has very little queueing for a left hand turn. He asked if ODOT has looked at this to determine how it will impact these businesses. ODOT confirmed that there are minor changes that can be adjusted in the next phase of the plan.

MR. BRONNER:

Mr. Bronner reiterated what came up during discussion with Mr. Powell, that the road diet is a required feature of the ODOT plan. ODOT confirmed. Residents have had positive feedback on other elements such as raised sidewalks.

Mr. Bronner noted the concerns about congestion near Galbraith and that the road diet will negatively impact the issue, and asked whether the road diet could be limited to Jefferson to Pleasant. ODOT stated that the heart of the issue is the speed data collected from Galbraith to Columbia and that is the bare minimum they would want included in the road diet.

MR. BISHOP:

Mr. Bishop stated that he wishes he knew that the city had input on making changes to the plan and that he had received the information earlier so he could review. His biggest concerns are the two turn lanes onto Columbia heading south and how a right-hand turn lane will get backed up and block the right hand through lane. He is also concerned about the distance from Columbia to North Street and the normal congestion in that area. He mentioned concern with trucks turning in and out of businesses on Reading Road near Columbia and their ability to stay in one lane doing so. ODOT said they will provide turning templates to illustrate and ensure it is a maneuverable turn.

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Mr. Bishop discussed the second turn lane in this area is going to get backed up. ODOT reiterated providing turning templates, so the plan is clear. ODOT would implement the plan and continue monitoring it to make tweaks where needed.

Mr. Bishop brought up the issue at the Feed Mill with customers parking on both sides of the road and how the road diet and hardened centerline will impact their business. ODOT confirmed that these are the type of details they are working through during this phase. Mr. Bishop stated that he is glad the city has input on those types of details.

MR. BOEHNER:

Mr. Boehner agreed with Mr. Powell that he also did not get the information until 3:30pm today.

Mr. Boehner asked for confirmation that the traffic light at Vorhees is being removed and ODOT confirmed that a raised intersection and rectangular rapid flashing beacon would be added in lieu of a signal. Mr. Boehner raised a concern that without a traffic light, turning left will be difficult and could lead to traffic re-routing through side streets. ODOT confirmed that removing the signal will help with traffic along Reading Road.

Mr. Boehner asked for confirmation on where the road diet begins coming from Evendale and ODOT confirmed it would start at Incinerator Lane. Mr. Boehner raised concern about having traffic backed up in this area, especially during rush hour when I-75 south is shut down and southbound traffic increases. Confirmation that lights from Columbia through Clark are on a system that measures cars so heavier traffic makes them run longer than on the side streets, but city electrician isn't certain he can adjust further.

Mr. Boehner expressed concern about the poles at Reading and Columbia and the right of way limitations. He also mentioned the concern about the traffic exiting Circle K and how that could be impacted by the two left turn lanes. ODOT confirmed the only firm road preventing a left is at Vorhees and others in the proposal can be adjusted via the hardened center lines.

Mr. Boehner also mentioned concern with the potential restricted access issue at Southern and the library regarding pedestrians.

MR. THAMANN:

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Mr. Thamann asked for information on how the road diet achieves ODOT's two main goals of reduced speed and pedestrian safety and whether the speed tables and raised crosswalks could achieve those goals without the road diet. ODOT informed that the slowest moving car sets the pace so one lane vs. two would reduce the ability for people to drive faster, and fixed objects like curb bump outs make drivers instinctively drive slower. The road diet is the starting point for these elements and raised sidewalks would need to be multiplied in a short distance to achieve these efforts, which frustrates drivers and complicates things for oversized vehicles, etc.

MRS. KROEGER:

Mrs. Kroeger stated that many of her questions have previously been answered. She asked whether the plan could be reversed after implementation if it's deemed not to work properly. ODOT cannot promise that they would be a part of a reversal in that instance but reiterated that they believe this will be a successful project.

Mrs. Kroeger asked about hardened center lines near McDonalds and ODOT reiterated that they would work with city officials to determine those details. ODOT will be firmer on certain hardened center lines like near the library, but others will be up to the city to determine placement.

MRS. EADICICCO:

Mrs. Eadicicco said she has read all the public comments and went through all of her notes from the public forum and has listened to what the citizens have to say about this project.

She likes the idea of raised crosswalks as long as they go the whole width of the road. She also likes the idea of some of the bump outs but is not a huge fan of the raised medians. She likes the left turn reductions around businesses like McDonald's, UDF, and Circle K.

However, she's not entirely sold on the plan and still has a lot of questions and concerns.

Mrs. Eadicicco asked if a traffic light at the library had been considered? If it hasn't, why not? She feels that a traffic light at that crosswalk would greatly improve safety and slow traffic. A light that stays green until the button is pushed could be installed. She believes it's too wide of a road and too busy for the blinking crosswalk signals to work. She's been stopped there and watched cars blow right through that and thinks a traffic light is a better option. ODOT confirmed that Mrs. Eadicicco is talking about a HAWK signal that flashes when it's pressed to stop traffic, and that its not as successful on roads with multiple lanes and that a median with a RRFB as part of the road diet in that area will help achieve the desired results.

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Mrs. Eadicicco stated that she would like more data on the number of cars that travel on our section of Reading Rd., not just an average. She would have liked numbers for different times of day, including morning rush hour and evening rush hour, and the number when there's an accident on 75.

She thinks she and Shelly have the best perspective of what happens to Reading Road when there is any sort of backup or shut down on 75, or even what Reading Road is like during morning and evening rush hours. She lives between Reading Road and Jefferson and Jefferson will back-up with people trying to get around Reading Road and sees this issue increasing when they begin construction on the 75 overpass and the Lockland split. That construction is quickly creeping up this way, and she already anticipates an increase in traffic through Reading while this project is taking place.

She also worries that if a driver is stuck behind a truck, bus, slow driver, or bicyclist they'll use the center turn lane to pass or use the center turn lane to go around backed up traffic. She's been told by a few people who travel on Glenway that this happens often in that area.

She has concerns about backups where the bus stops are.

She's concerned about the designs around the Feed and Garden store. She understands this is a congested area, especially in the spring, but doesn't think these plans solve the issues and in fact, could create more congestion, even with a center turn lane. She thinks that turn lane will back up.

She doesn't like the idea of the 2 left turn lanes onto Columbia and feels like the whole area from Reading Road to Hunt would have to be reworked. She doesn't feel that the question of whether residents on the section north of Columbia will be able to turn left out of their driveways has been answered.

She realized it was suggested by some residents to increase the speed limit to 35, however she is uncertain whether that would help with the goal to slow traffic and reduce accidents. There's a lot of residential buildings on Reading Road and a lot of pedestrians, kids, and bike riders. If it were to increase, people would just go faster.

Mrs. Eadicicco understands the goals that ODOT is trying to accomplish but is not convinced one lane in each direction is the answer. She has continued concerns with how this would work north of Columbia Avenue since there are no streets to turn off Reading Road to get around any sort of back up. She witnessed this backup firsthand when the MSD project was taking place and she was

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coming home from work and couldn't turn left off Cooper on to Reading Road because traffic was backed up that far when the road was down to one lane.

Her concern in this section is the lack of side streets and also understands the concerns of residents on the side streets in the section between Columbia and Benson or further south. A lot of these streets are narrow and were made before cars even existed and are not made to handle a huge increase in traffic.

Mrs. Eadicicco realizes we shouldn't plan for the 10% feels like traffic backups on Reading Road happen daily with rush hour and traffic from 75 happens more than 10%. That is the route that people seem to take, whether they're following GPS, or other drivers, or know the area.

ODOT responded that they did a comprehensive traffic study based on the highest peak traffic when developing this plan. It does not account for the 75 shut down scenario since it's just a couple of times per year. They don't expect queuing or travel time to change much. They confirmed the plan does not include a dedicated bike lane but rather a 'sharrow' where drivers and bike riders can use the same lane. The abuse of the center lane is addressed with the raised center lines and medians in strategic areas.

PRESIDENT MATTSHECK:

President Mattscheck stated that he likes the raised crosswalks, reprogramming of the signals and better signage. He asked how far back ODOT did their traffic study and expressed concern with the impact on side streets and whether data that is being considered is from prior times when traffic enforcement was in place. ODOT confirmed that the initial data for project consideration was from 2023 to narrow down to the final projects and another round of data is from 2024. ODOT reiterated that this is 100% funded and would widen lanes back to the recommended width for trucks.

OPEN COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

Mayor Bemmes stated that both Police and Fire chiefs stated that there will not be an increase in emergency response times. He reiterated that this will reduce speeding which happens all over the city.

Mrs. Kroeger asked when the data was collected. ODOT confirmed it was collected per industry standard with a 48-hour window to capture the 30th percentile during the week. Speed data was collected in July 2024, but the turning movement data is from three-year intervals.

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ODOT confirmed that the public website is still live for comments and they can email the city or ODOT as well.

Mr. Boehner mentioned that the flashing speed light on Reading Road south of Cooper is an effective tool in slowing traffic because of ticket enforcement that has happened in that area.

President Mattscheck reiterated that he believes traffic may have increased since the data was taken and that it would be nice to have data pulled from a longer time period in order to also factor when I-75 is shut down and the traffic impacts on the city.

Mr. Powell asked whether ODOT would take corrective action if this plan has issues after implementation. ODOT said they could make minor changes like signal changes but not raised crosswalks or the road diet but reiterated that they are investing a lot of money because they believe in this plan.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Boehner moved to adjourn. Mr. Thamann seconded. Motion carried by voice vote.
The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 pm.

X_____

Respectfully Submitted, Kevin Mattscheck
Clerk of Council, Pro-Tem

X_____

Kevin Mattscheck
President of Council