



Continuing Assaults on Drivers and Their Cars



In the Spring 2018 issue of EDM Today, my *Rant* “**The Future of Transportation, Nirvana or Nightmare**” provided a troubling forecast for personal transportation. I pointed out that the advent of the automobile in the early twentieth century heralded an unprecedented era of freedom of movement for the average American. From that point up until today, Americans have been able to go anywhere, at any time, by any means and by any route they choose. No permission or scheduling required. That *Rant* primarily addressed the issue of autonomous/self-driving cars. While that threat has been somewhat mitigated by reality, another threat has quietly emerged, which will be the topic of this month’s *Rant*.

Government Officials are Bent on Making it Difficult to Drive

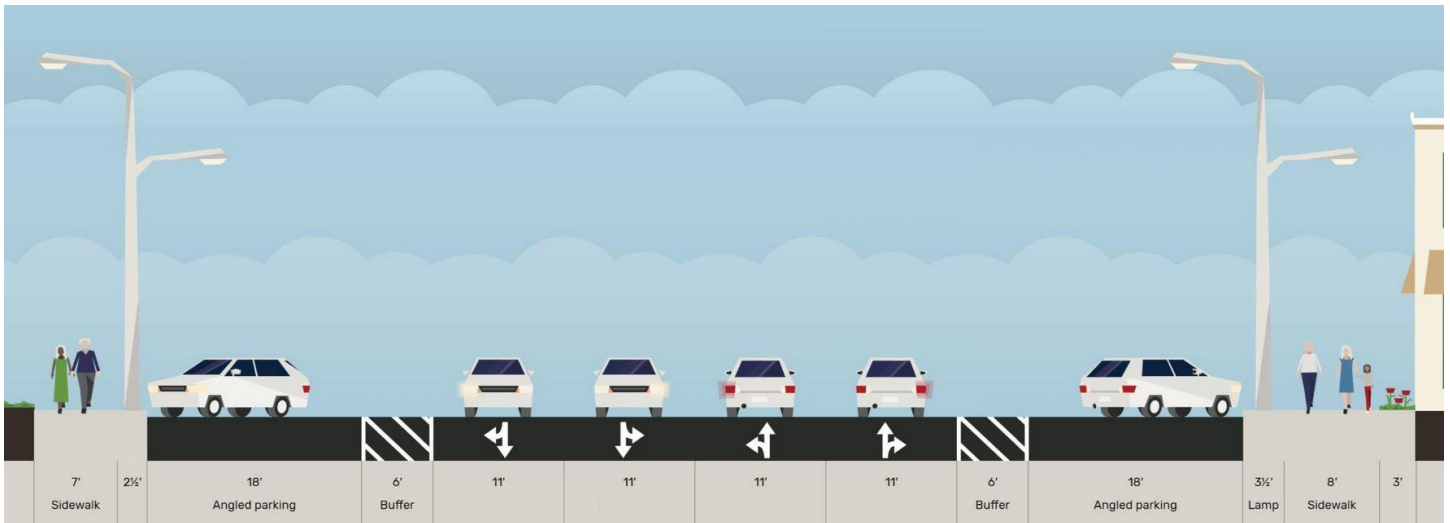
By means of a combination of legislation and road redesign/reconstruction, federal, state and local governments have embarked on a campaign to restrict and hinder automobile traffic in order to “encourage” motorists to walk, bike or use mass transportation.

In the following treatise, I'll point out and examine some of the key components of that campaign.

Complete Streets

"**Complete Streets**" are corridors designed and operated to support safety and use mobility for users of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are travelling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders. The foundation of this project is a "**road diet**," which creates the necessary space for most of the "improvements." The net effect is to reduce the number of traffic lanes and reduce vehicle speeds.

A perfect example is a project planned for Main Street in Manchester, Connecticut. The current street layout is shown below.



This spacious street layout is considered by many to be one of the most convenient and efficient of all the Main Streets in the State.

The proposed street layout is shown below.



This multimillion dollar (tens of millions, actually) makeover, which has been endorsed by municipal and State leaders, has drawn staunch and vociferous opposition from residents and merchants.

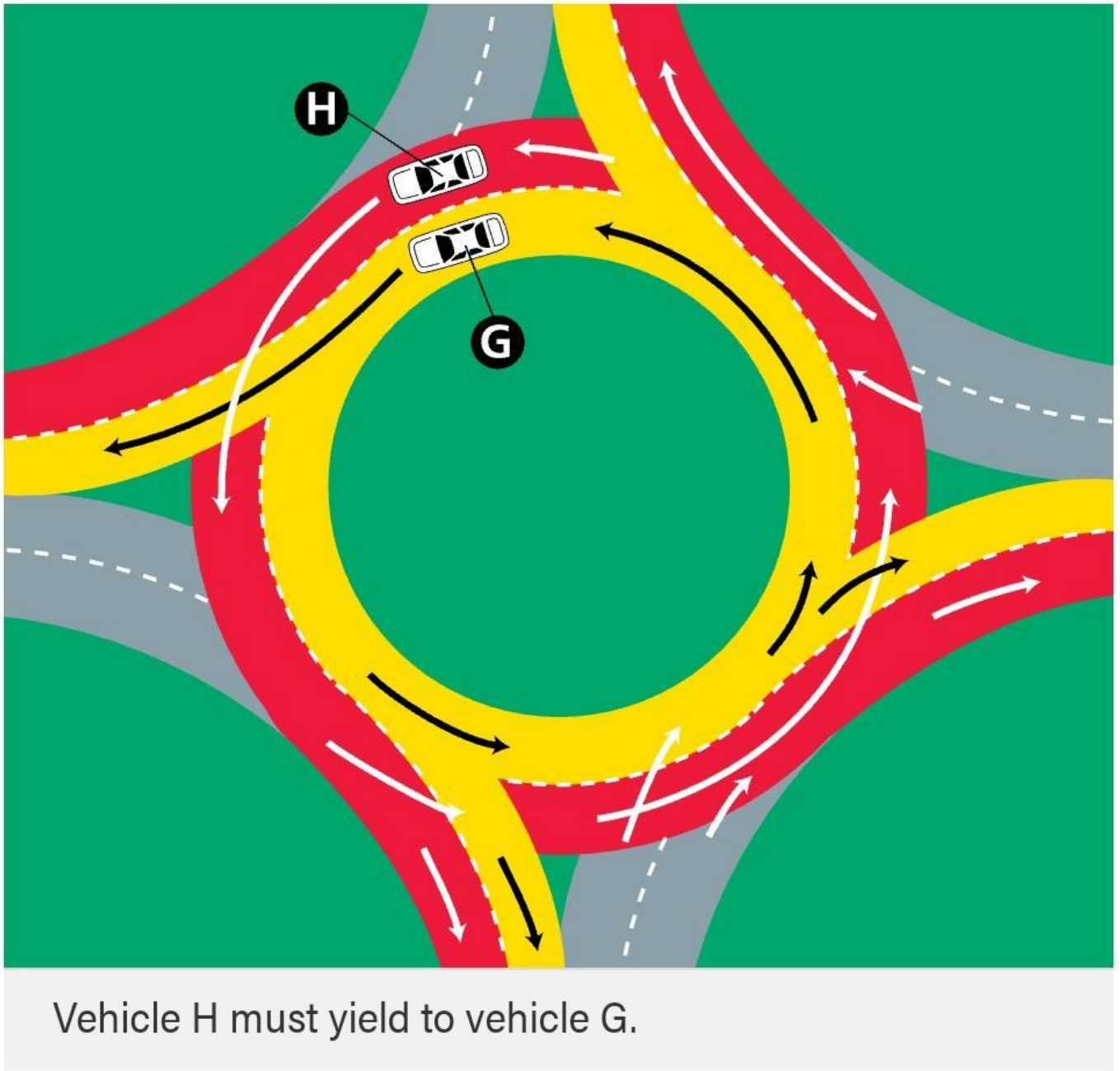
Traffic Circles

Alternately referred to as roundabouts, these contraptions originated in Europe and are purported to improve traffic flow and increase safety at intersections. Likely the original and most infamous is the traffic circle in Paris surrounding the Arc de Triomphe as shown below.



Okay, maybe this is an extreme example, but if you've ever encountered a traffic circle, you've likely not found the experience totally satisfying.

The idealized concept behind a traffic circle is shown below.



One of the traffic circles proposed for the Manchester, Connecticut Complete Streets project is shown below.



Note the extraordinary amount of real estate that will be consumed by this monstrosity, necessitating the taking and demolition of numerous properties.

What is supposed to happen is that vehicles enter the traffic circle onto the outer lane, proceed to the inner lane and then exit the circle. However, in reality, most traffic circles in the U.S. are constructed as shown below.



This is an actual traffic circle in New Britain, Connecticut that I must daily traverse on the way to my lab. Notice that there is only one lane and not two, as the inner lane has been raised and curbed to prevent vehicles from using it. The result, besides the fact that trucks and buses can't navigate the narrow lane without running over the curb onto the inner lane, is that due to traffic circle rules (you have to yield to a vehicle already in the circle), cars have to come to a complete stop before entering the circle just as if there were a four way stop at the intersection!

Bike Lanes

Even though, in New England, commuting by bicycle is impractical due to common inclement weather conditions and suburban commutes, governments are hell-bent to converting roads to accommodate the few adventuresome cycling enthusiasts on the road. Below is an example of how two full traffic lanes were converted to bicycle-only use.



However, besides halving the traffic capacity of the road, this can get complicated. The photo below shows a city bus blocking a bike lane. You know, tough bananas to cyclists because bus riders get priority!



Furthermore, bike lanes often disappear when it is inconvenient as is the case with narrow traffic circles or road width restrictions as shown below.



So, in this common instance, bikes and cars must share the same lane with cars required to yield to bicycles.

Traffic Calming

In essence, traffic calming means putting obstructions in the road to slow cars down. One of these obnoxious tactics is placing speed humps (some genius decided to replace “speed bumps” with “speed humps” despite its dubious connotation) in the travel lanes, either randomly or at each intersection with a crosswalk.



We've all experienced these obnoxious intrusions in supermarket parking lots which are annoyingly inconvenient. However, on a travel lane, they effectively make you slow down to five miles per hour every block or so. In addition to slowing you down unnaturally and increasing the possibility of rear end collisions, they will increase brake and shock absorber wear, while destroying your gas mileage. On a personal note, what do you think a speed hump does to my GT 350 with three inch ground clearance?

Another new trend in city traffic planning is establishing bump outs at intersections as shown below.



Bump outs restrict your ability to make a gradual turn onto a cross street. This raises havoc with larger vehicles such as trucks and buses and morphs an efficient turn into a slow crawl around a sharp corner. They also put pedestrians waiting at the corner crosswalk in greater jeopardy. The bump out shown in the above-right photo also knocks out the bike lane shown in earlier photos of the same street. Oh well, I guess bicycle safety isn't that important after all.

Besides wasting millions of taxpayer dollars (don't worry, we can borrow more from China), these obnoxious impediments to normal driving are on almost every city and town planner's agenda.

Congestion Pricing



Congestion pricing, originally enacted for London, is a plan that purportedly reduces traffic congestion and pollution. In actuality, it is a tax designed to produce billions in revenue to subsidize mass transit, while shunting the pollution and congestion to other areas of the city as vehicles attempt to avoid the toll. In New York City, the original plan imposed a \$15.00 toll (collected by the EZ-Pass gantries shown above, erected at a cost of tens of millions of dollars) for all vehicles entering lower Manhattan. After substantial opposition, the toll was reduced to \$9.00. Note, this is in addition to the substantial tolls paid when crossing the bridges leading to Manhattan.

So, fellow motorists, be aware that the liberal, woke agenda against automobiles has a bullseye on your liberty and your wallet.

Roger