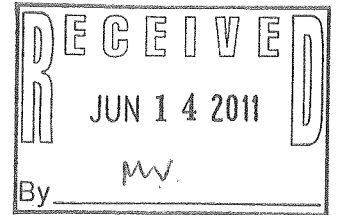


#22

COMSTOCK HILLS

HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

City Council Meeting: Special Agenda for Bus Rapid Transit vote
June 14, 2011



My name is Jan Reichmann and I'm a Westsider.

What I find really offensive is calling us rich Westsiders who don't care about people who need to get to work. It is the worst sort of grandstanding with absolutely no basis in fact.

I have attended most of the hearings on the BRT. What I never hear acknowledged is that the 1 mile Westwood segment that MTA agrees should be removed from Comstock to Selby is the fastest moving stretch in all of Wilshire.

It is the only stretch of Wilshire that is all residential aside from churches with pre-schools and an assisted living project. Buses and cars go at top speed. In fact, it's difficult for pedestrians to even cross Wilshire. Messing with something that works right now for bus riders and drivers is not smart. Removing a lane of traffic during rush hour is not smart. Leaving it alone because it's working just fine is smart.

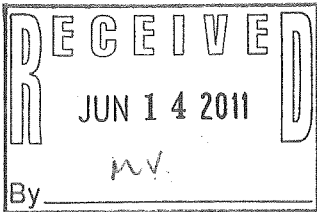
#22

Open Letter to MTA Board & LA City Council: Planners support complete 8.7 mile Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit Project

June 14, 2011

Board of Directors
Los Angeles County MTA
1 Gateway Plaza Los Angeles, CA 90012

Los Angeles City Council
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012



Dear MTA Board of Directors and Los Angeles City Council:

As trained planners, we the undersigned write to highlight the facts about the Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit project. In light of these facts, we urge the Los Angeles City Council and the Metro Board to adopt the option formally known as Alternative A, which will create 8.7 miles of bus-only lanes from Centinela Boulevard in the west to Park View Boulevard in the east. Compared to two shorter options being considered by Metro and the City of Los Angeles (described below), Alternative A will produce the greatest time savings for bus passengers, the largest mode shift to transit in the corridor, and the largest air quality benefits. Alternative A decisively demonstrates the power that bus-only lanes have to transform public transportation in the LA region.

There are three options on the table, all of which will transform the curb lane into a bus-only lane during peak hours and will grant signal priority to buses to expedite them through intersections. None of these options will include the section of Wilshire through Beverly Hills. Wherever the bus-only lane runs, federal dollars will leverage the repaving of Wilshire Boulevard.

- **Alternative A:** 8.7 miles of bus-only lanes running from Centinela Boulevard, west of the 405 Freeway, to Park View Boulevard, just west of downtown.
- **Alternative A-1:** 7.7 miles of bus-only lanes, with the same outer limits as Alternative A, but with a 1 mile section removed from Selby Ave to Comstock Ave, just west of Beverly Hills. In this 1 mile segment, buses will operate in mixed traffic, and the boulevard will not be repaved.
- **Alternative A-2:** 5.4 miles of bus-only lanes, from San Vicente Boulevard to Park View Boulevard. One third of the project, from the western limit at Centinela Boulevard to sections east of Beverly Hills, is removed.

Alternative A Produces the Most Dramatic Time Savings, Moves the Most People, and Generates the Largest Mode Shift

Because of the exclusive lane and signal priority, the bus-only lanes on Wilshire will reduce travel times dramatically for bus passengers. Currently, about 65,000 people per day travel the corridor by bus.(1). These numbers are on par with the numbers of people traveling in the corridor by auto. Once the bus-only lanes are built, the composition of travelers in the corridor will shift even more heavily toward transit riders because the shorter travel times on the bus will draw new riders, some of whom will switch from driving. These many thousands of bus riders will enjoy travel time savings of up to 17 minutes for a trip that currently takes about an hour. When about half the travelers in a corridor are bus passengers, and a bus-only lane can dramatically improve their mobility, bus-only lanes are a fair and reasonable use of the space. The curb lane is predicted to carry up to 1,800 bus riders per hour as a bus-only lane. As a mixed traffic lane, it can carry a maximum of 800 cars per hour, which typically translates to about 1,000 people

per hour. The bus-only lane is simply a more effective use of the curb lane to move people. As such, Alternative A, which maximizes the capacity of the curb lane compared to its shorter alternatives, is clearly the superior option.

As a consequence of the fact that they send buses back into mixed traffic, Alternatives A-1 and A-2 result in smaller time savings for bus passengers. Buses operating in the interrupted bus-only lanes of Alternatives A-1 and A-2 will be less reliable; headways and wait times in these options will be more variable. Because these options do not perform as well, they will attract fewer new riders. Fewer people will switch from driving to transit. The air quality and congestion-related benefits will thus be reduced under these options relative to Alternative A.

Finally, Alternative A will leverage federal money to repave more of Wilshire Boulevard than the other options, something badly needed given potholes and cracks cause crashes, reduce road capacity, and increase maintenance costs for both Metro and vehicle owners.

Impacts on Private Vehicle Traffic

Perhaps the most out-of-balance aspect about traffic congestion in its current form in LA is that it delays a bus carrying 50 people just the same as it delays a car with one person inside. The bus-only lanes will correct this imbalance, allowing public transit in the corridor to be a true alternative to congestion.

Some proponents of the two shorter alternatives have raised concerns that the Wilshire bus-only lanes will impede private vehicle traffic. We reject this claim for several reasons: 1) there is little evidence that private vehicle traffic impacts will be severe in general; 2) there is no evidence that traffic impacts will be more severe in the Comstock to Selby section of the route, which is proposed for exemption; 3) last and most importantly, these concerns are based on the flawed assumption that more people will experience delay simply because private autos experience delay. Many of us have signed a separate letter criticizing the fact that Metro's environmental impact reports study time delay for vehicles, not people as the unit of analysis.(3)

We reject the proposition that the bus-only lanes should be interrupted or truncated so that less vehicle traffic will be caused. There are only four intersections where the complete project is predicted to create over eight seconds of delay during either the AM or the PM peak hour. Two of these are on Wilshire, where the project will also be improving travel times for bus passengers, i.e. more people will be moving through the intersection more quickly on buses.(4) We believe the Wilshire bus-only lanes will increase overall mobility for people in the corridor, and that this is worth any slight increases in delay for private vehicles at certain intersections. Technical analyses of vehicle delay are a distraction from the real questions of mobility and access in the corridor.

Bus-Only Lanes: A Best Practice

As trained planners, we write to highlight the fact that bus-only lanes are considered a best practice in transportation planning.(5) For some time now, transportation planners have emphasized that a transit system's performance is independent of the technologies used to achieve it, whether steel wheels or rubber tires. As planners, we seek, for example, to optimize capacity, speed, and reliability while minimizing cost and emissions. Bus-only lanes and bus rapid transit are an extremely cost-effective transit strategy. They have been implemented with great success in cities all over the world: London, Vancouver, Ottawa, New York City, Sydney, Bogota, and Curitiba.

In conclusion

We want to see the first instance of curb-side bus-only lanes in Los Angeles be a big success. Therefore, given all the reasons we have offered above, we urge the Metro Board and the Los Angeles City Council to choose the 8.7 mile Alternative A, which most boldly demonstrates the potential that bus-only lanes

have to improve public transportation in Los Angeles and to create a true alternative to congestion throughout the region.

NOTE: Affiliations and professional degrees mentioned for identification purposes only. Signatories do not represent views of institutions with which they work.

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Footnotes:

1. As of Q1 of FY2010, 38,000 on the 720 Rapid bus, 17,000 on the Line 20 local bus, and 3,000 on the now-canceled 920. From the Uniform Reporting division of Metro.
2. Recent intersection traffic counts at Wilshire and Highland, for example, counted 38,000 vehicles; at Wilshire and Santa Monica. From the 2001-2008 Traffic Count Summary, Los Angeles Department of Transportation.
3. bit.ly/openletterlos
4. Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit Project FEIR, pages 5-16 and 5-17.
5. Levinson, Zimmerman, Clinger and Gast 2003. "Bus Rapid Transit: Synthesis of Case Studies." Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board. Volume 1841, pages 1-11