

July 29, 2015

Hon. Mike Bonin, Chair, Transportation Committee
Hon. Jose Huizar, Chair, Planning and Land Use Management Committee
Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

To the Members of the Transportation and Planning and Land Use Management Committees:

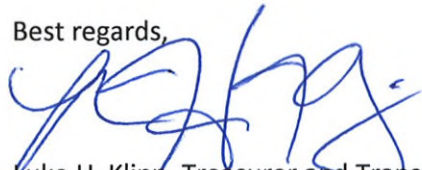
Thank you for your consideration of the City's Mobility Plan 2035. I am grateful for this new governing document, and I hope that it soon becomes law.

One item to which I wanted to draw your attention is the matter of lane widths, which are discussed in the plan's accompanying "Complete Streets Design Guide." While the guide sets a minimum and maximum lane width for bike lanes, it sets only a minimum lane width for car lanes, with no maximum. Recent research¹ points to car travel lane widths as having significant impacts on travel speeds, collision rates, collision severity, and overall walkability and bikeability of a thoroughfare. Remarkably, 12-plus-foot wide car travel lanes - which are common throughout Los Angeles - experience 33% more collisions than 10-foot wide lanes. According to this cited study, "narrower lanes in urban areas result in less aggressive driving and more ability to slow or stop a vehicle over a short distance to avoid collision." Furthermore, car travel lane capacity is optimized with lanes of around 10 feet in width, when compared with wider lanes, since increased width encourages speeding, which results in more space between cars and reduces overall capacity.

The "Complete Streets Design Guide" does encourage 10-foot wide car travel lanes when developing complete streets that include bike travel lanes and that are intended to encourage more people to walk; however, the city should adopt a citywide design standard that no car travel lane shall be more than 11 feet in width, except where required for very specific purposes, such as a shipping or industrial access road with curves that necessitate additional width. Simply adopting this car travel lane maximum - and applying it whenever a street is repaved - would align Los Angeles' street design speeds with its posted 35 MPH speed limits. A 12-foot car travel lane width is associated with freeways, where design encourages speeds in excess of 60 MPH, and a 10-foot car travel lane width is identified as having a design speed of 30-35 MPH. Car travel lanes of 12 feet or more should not be permitted on our urban street grid, where every year another 250 people are killed in traffic collisions.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. It's a simple idea – all car travel lanes have a standard 10-foot width with an 11-foot maximum – but it is mission critical in ensuring complete streets and street safety.

Best regards,



Luke H. Klipp, Treasurer and Transportation Committee Chair
Los Feliz Neighborhood Council

¹ Karim, Dewan Masud; "Narrower Lanes, Safer Streets;" 2015. Available online at:
https://www.academia.edu/12488747/Narrower_Lanes_Safer_Streets_Accepted_Paper_for_CITE_Conference_Regina_2015