

Westwood South of Santa Monica Blvd
Homeowner's Association
Incorporated November 8, 1971
P. O. Box 64213
Los Angeles, CA 90064-0213

August 4, 2015

LA City Council
Transportation and Land Use Committees
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Via email: Adam.Lid@lacity.org, Sharon.Dickinson@lacity.org,
Councilmember.bonin@lacity.org, councilmember.huizar@lacity.org,
david.ryu@lacity.org, councilmember.cedillo@lacity.org,
councilmember.martinez@lacity.org, councilmember.harris-dawson@lacity.org,
councilmember.fuentes@lacity.org, councilmember.englander@lacity.org,
councilmember.koretz@lacity.org, councilmember.harris-dawson@lacity.org

RE: COUNCIL FILE 15-0719 / Mobility Element

Dear Chairpersons Huizar and Bonin and Committee Members:

We are respectful of the work that has gone into the Mobility Plan to date. However we do not believe that this aspiration plan provides a reality-based transition from the LA we know today to the one that is the “vision” for Los Angeles’ future.

No one can deny the need for Los Angeles to be weaned from its reliance on the automobile. No one can deny the need for improved safety on our streets—for pedestrians, bicyclists and those in vehicles. What we question is the ability of those involved to engineer the transition from “what is” to “what can be.” This transition is critical to the success of our City’s future. No amount of enthusiasm, no collection of petition signatures can overshadow the serious issues that this plan ignores (or creates).

On the matter of safety, it is assumed that a Westwood bike lane will improve safety for bike riders. Yet, those most familiar with the street and the immediate area know that increased (planned) congestion will result in additional vehicles leaving the busy boulevard which will lead them to cut through the nearby residential neighborhoods. This situation will decrease safety on our streets. Our children will no longer have safe routes to school. Placing bicyclists under HUNDREDS of buses (over 900 buses each day) is a recipe for disaster. We have few north/south through streets in the area and removal of Westwood Blvd. is a major arterial. We must be able to move buses to and from EXPO and points south. The negative impacts of the proposed placement of the bike facility has not been adequately assessed. We understand that CEQA analysis is no longer required for bike facilities; that does not mean that we should not identify and

recognize any related negative impacts so that decision-making is done with the best possible information available.

Further, the City seeks to increase density and incentivize the locating of multi-story mixed use buildings on Westwood thus leading to an increase of driveway entrances which will be a further danger to bicyclists on the street.

It is wishful thinking to believe that placing a designated bike facility on Westwood Blvd. will improve safety. Many of us have seen buses stuck behind bikes on other streets. Many of us desire to ride our bicycles to and from Westwood Blvd. However, our community members have clearly stated that they will not ride (nor will they allow their children to ride) bicycles on Westwood Blvd. in this area and into the Village. **We support the establishment of a bike facility for UCLA-bound riders on a street other than Westwood Blvd. We will happily participate in any process to establish such a route.**

The fact that there was not an effort to bring together bicycle and community advocates to identify a route that will serve the needs of UCLA bicyclists, community bicyclists, transit providers and all concerned is a sign that there is a serious shortcoming in this planning process. We should not be pitting bike riders against community members. We should be seeking ways to bring together stakeholders with the goal of finding consensus.

We thank Councilmember Koretz's efforts to remove the Westwood Blvd. bike facility from the Mobility Plan. Further work is needed to engage all stakeholders and it is our sincere hope that a truly safe route for UCLA bound riders can be identified –one that all can embrace. Further, we wish to re-state the comments that we submitted to the City Planning Commission regarding the time frame of the proposed plan:

In our most recent correspondence with the Planning Department, we noted that the focus of this plan should be reduced to not more than ten years due to the considerable changes to now underway in Los Angeles – in the accelerated build-out of public transit, bike facilities and the implementation of the new “complete streets” philosophy. Indeed, recent programming presented by Christopher Hawthorne, Occidental College and SoCal Public Radio as part of the “Third Los Angeles” project highlighted the challenges facing the City in its evolution as the City builds out its public transit system and begins to pay “serious attention to its long-neglected civic realm.” The project’s website notes that “This is a city trying, and often struggling, to define a post-suburban identity.” That struggle should not be artificially channeled in a way that thwarts the natural evolution of change. The Mobility Plan as currently drafted should be a guide that builds upon the City’s hopes and intentions while also acknowledging reality and the need for an evolutionary change process that takes into account the physical changes in our environment coupled with policy framework and culture shifts. While the intent of planners has recently been coined to be “aspirational” in nature, we believe that plans such as the Mobility Plan, which will have an overriding impact on both transportation and land use planning for decades to come, should be more cautious and circumspect and should better reflect the concerns and opportunities noted by community members during the drafting process. The project documents themselves admit that the proposed project “would have a significant impact to the circulation system (Impact 4.102), as it would exceed the applicable threshold established by the City, and two Mitigation Measures T1 and T2 would reduce the level of impacts. However, the effect of Mitigation Measures T1 and T2 cannot be reasonably determined at this time and


therefore the level of impact after mitigation remains significant and unavoidable impact with respect to delay and LOS of roadways within the City based on current thresholds of significance.

Outreach through social media does not reach our constituents whose points of views do not agree with those younger constituents who are internet savvy. There is an older population who cannot and do not ride bicycles, who are dependent upon public transit and vehicle conveyance and who will be negatively impacted by increased congestion. We are fearful of bicycle traffic significantly slowing bus travel and bus rider access between UCLA and EXPO and all other nearby bus destinations. We ask what kinds of monitoring is included in this plan, what kinds of relevant data will be collected and what ability the City will have to CHANGE any of this plan should data demonstrate and prove out the fears of those who have voiced opposition to various aspects of the plan.

We cannot plan via wishful thinking. We should not create plans that may result in reduced quality of life in our communities. We should not “blame the victims”—those that cannot use transit, ride a bike or walk to their job, school or other necessary destinations. Not everyone can live and work in walking, biking or transit distance. We cannot ignore the needs of those individuals. Finally, what is most concerning is the notion that LA should be or can be just like New York, San Francisco, Portland or any other metropolitan area. We are different. We have many physical challenges (a mountain range in the middle of the City), we are building transit networks ON TOP of an already existing streetscape – as opposed as the situation in cities where transit infrastructure was built out and their cities built up around those transit lines.

We are often told to “be careful what you wish for.” In the case of mobility planning, we should be very careful not only of what we wish for, but of how these aspirations are implemented over time. Social engineering is best accomplished via an evolutionary process – not a revolutionary one. We would call upon our City leaders to bring together the many voices of Angelenos on this matter. This should not be a dividing discussion of bicyclists vs. drivers, or Millennials vs. Boomers. A good city plan and a good Mobility Plan needs to recognize the many passages of life of our people: young and old, rich and poor, with and without children, able-bodied and disabled.

Sincerely,



Barbara Broide
President