

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: October 15, 2020

To: Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395, City Hall
Attention: Honorable Mike Bonin, Chair, Transportation Committee

From: Seleta J. Reynolds, General Manager 
Department of Transportation

Subject: **SLOW STREETS L.A. PROGRAM UPDATE**

SUMMARY

This report provides an overview, update, and next steps for the Slow Streets L.A. Program. After installing over 50 miles of Slow Streets in 30 neighborhoods throughout the City, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) is recommending to stop the installation of new Slow Streets to focus on supporting existing streets with more durable materials until additional funding is available.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council APPROVE the continuation of the Slow Streets L.A. Program as detailed in this report and DIRECT LADOT to report back to the City Council in approximately 90 days on the status of the Program.

BACKGROUND

On May 15, 2020, Mayor Garcetti launched the Slow Streets L.A. Program to temporarily calm traffic on residential streets to create space for neighbors to remain physically active while socially distant. The Program was set up in response to the closure of our parks, gyms, trails, and other popular exercise venues.

Slow Streets are intended for local residents only. Eligible organizations nominate a small network of neighborhood streets to reduce and slow traffic. After vetting applications, the Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA) and LADOT implemented temporary signage at intersections advising drivers to slow down for people using the street to exercise. Signage remains in place for the duration of the Program. Slow Streets sponsors play an active role by communicating the project to their neighbors and ensuring barricades and signage are properly placed throughout the project. Slow Streets users must adhere to current health guidelines. Local traffic and parking are still allowed on the streets.

Demand for Slow Streets remains high with over 427 applications received to date. LADOT implemented approximately 50 miles of Slow Streets in 30 neighborhoods.

DISCUSSION

Summary

Slow Streets seeks to repurpose City streets to supplement the limited access to recreational facilities. Slow Streets is a Program by which residents can apply to partially close a network of qualified streets to minimize the volume and speed of vehicular traffic. The goal is to create a safer and more comfortable pedestrian environment within the public right of way allowing for people to remain physically active and socially distant.

Program Overview

Partnerships

Slow Streets is a Program based on partnerships, in which neighbors and community groups nominate a network of neighborhood streets in their community to reduce and slow vehicle traffic. Applicants are active players once the Slow Streets is implemented and are responsible for notifying neighbors of the project, ensuring barricades and signage are properly placed, communicating with the City about the state of the closure infrastructure, usage, and other factors necessary to support the Slow Streets.

Application Criteria

Each Slow Streets network is considered using a set of criteria: network size, street classification, connectivity, and other socio-economic factors.

Applicants should nominate a network of streets approximately 1-3 miles in length. Only local and collector streets as identified by the Mobility Plan 2035 that are primarily residential are eligible. To minimize the impact on businesses, LADOT does not implement slow streets on commercial corridors. Arterial streets are not eligible. The road segments should be contiguous to one another and provide connections to nearby neighborhood destinations.

Applications must be submitted by an eligible organization. An eligible organization includes: block clubs, business associations, business improvement districts, church or faith organizations, council districts, homeowners associations, local nonprofit/community-based organizations, neighborhood councils, and school or parent teacher associations.

Focus on Equity

Slow Streets L.A. set out with the goal to deploy 20 Slow Streets with at least five within communities most impacted by the lack of open space due to the pandemic. In Los Angeles, these are typically communities with high residential density, low access to traditional recreational opportunities, communities of color, and low income communities. LADOT identified 13 geographies that match those criteria to focus Slow Streets efforts:

1. Boyle Heights
2. Central Hollywood
3. Chinatown
4. East Hollywood
5. Koreatown
6. Pacoima
7. Panorama City
8. Pico Union
9. South LA
10. Sun Valley
11. Van Nuys
12. Watts
13. Westlake

LADOT retained the services of Kounkuey Design Initiative, Inc. (KDI) to facilitate implementing Slow Streets in high need neighborhoods. This includes direct and proactive engagement, technical assistance to potential sponsors, sponsor support post Slow Streets deployment and creating program materials, design, and branding. KDI also assisted in matching potential partners with eligible organizations.

Program Implementation

Since the Program launched in May, organizations submitted 427 applications for Slow Streets, with nearly half of those submitted within the first three weeks of announcing the Program. Demand for the Program remains high, as the Department received an average of 12 applications per week since the initial surge. LADOT staff, with the support of KDI, reviewed each application and worked with community partners to identify viable networks of neighborhood streets throughout the City.

LADOT surpassed the initial goal of 20 Slow Streets with five in focus areas. To date, staff implemented Slow Streets in 30 neighborhoods for a total of 50.2 miles (see **EXHIBIT A**). Out of those, 12 Slow Streets covering 35% of the total mileage are located within six focus neighborhoods.

Materials

Slow Streets currently uses a combination of traffic cones and A-Frame barricades affixed with a coroplast sign board, measuring two feet by three feet. StreetsLA has been an invaluable partner to LADOT in implementing the Slow Streets Program by providing 2,522 barricades and delivering them to neighborhood street corners across the City. LADOT staff then affixes the Slow Streets signs to the barricades and places them in every intersection along the perimeter and within the Slow Streets project area, typically located at the entrance to the street on the centerline of the roadway. Staff may place a third barricade mid-block on the centerline of the roadway, depending on street width.

User Perception

Overall, the response to Slow Streets by users has been positive. More users reported feeling safe on a Slow Street than those who did not feel safe. The majority of users observed others socially distancing while using the Slow Streets and also felt Slow Streets made a positive impact on personal health and wellness during COVID-19. An overwhelming majority (81%) of the 320 users who took the survey were willing to be contacted regarding their survey response, which indicates high interest in the Slow Streets Program (see **EXHIBIT B**).

Maintenance

Signage and barricade maintenance is a shared responsibility between the City and Slow Streets Sponsors. Sponsors sign a Letter of Expectation and agree to perform a range of tasks related to upkeep of program materials.

The current materials for Slow Streets are readily available, lightweight, and easily implemented. StreetsLA provided the plastic A-Frame barricades, and program signage has been deployed with minimal turnaround time for procurement. These qualities made them ideal for a temporary, emergency response as Slow Streets was originally conceptualized. However, LADOT observed and received feedback that the existing materials are becoming less effective over time. Keeping the movable A-Frame barricades in place requires constant attention, and it is clear that LADOT and its community partners need a longer-term strategy to support Slow Streets moving forward.

Future Program Strategy

As the pandemic restrictions continue, along with the need for physically-distant recreational space, the Department is proposing to stop the installation of new Slow Streets, until additional funding is available, and focus on supporting the current 50.2 miles of Slow Streets with more durable materials. LADOT will work with program sponsors to choose between the following options for each designated street within their Slow Streets area:

1. Replace the barricades with striping and metal signs to warn drivers to watch for people walking and biking, and to advise drivers to travel 15 mph or slower.
2. Replace the plastic barricades with larger and more durable temporary barricades with signs designating the street as closed to through traffic.
3. Remove some barricades within a given Slow Streets area.

If program sponsors select the second option, LADOT would submit a resolution to the City Council to formalize all temporary street closures, under California Vehicle Code Section 21101(e), which provides the authority for such closures when “the closing is necessary for the safety and protection of persons who are to use that portion of the street during the temporary closing.”

Program Funding

Thus far, LADOT allocated \$185,658 to the Department of General Services for printing the signs for the program. Looking ahead, LADOT identified a total of \$800,000 in Open Streets Program funding, through a combination of Measure M Local Return and Metro grants, to install more durable materials for the Slow Streets Program. LADOT proposes to repurpose these funds from Open Streets events that were cancelled and/or postponed to comply with COVID-19 public safety guidance.

The Department estimates that these funds are adequate to upgrade the following:

- Approximately half of the Slow Streets intersections to striping and metal warning signs, **or**
- All of the Slow Streets intersections to larger, more durable barricades for temporary road closures, where approved.

Should additional funding become available, LADOT would ensure that the above upgrades for all of the existing streets are funded, and then dedicate the remaining funds to expanding Slow Streets into new neighborhoods. Staff would move forward with both upgrades and new streets in parallel.

LADOT plans to report back to the City Council in approximately 90 days on the status of the Program and the upgrades to existing Slow Streets.

FISCAL IMPACT

Proposed Slow Streets L.A. Program installations are funded through \$800,000 that was originally allocated to the City’s Open Streets Program. The sources of these repurposed funds are Metro grant funds, front-funded by Measure M local return funds, and City Measure M local return match funds. No impact to the City’s General Fund is anticipated by this action.

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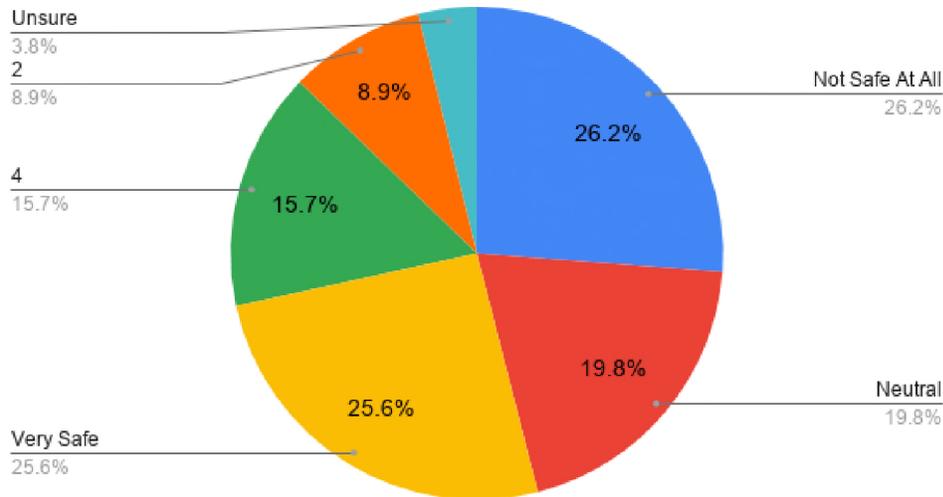
EXHIBIT A - SLOW STREETS - IN ORDER OF INSTALLATION

Neighborhoods	Community Partners	Miles	Total
Sawtelle (West LA)	West LA Sawtelle NC	3	3.0
Del Rey	Del Rey NC	4	7.0
Eagle Rock	The Eagle Rock Association	1.1	8.1
Mid City West	Mid City West Neighborhood Council	2.4	10.5
4th / Berendo (Koreatown)*	Friends of Berendo	0.9	11.4
Mid-Wilshire / Mid City	Destination: PICO	1.4	12.8
4th St / San Marino (Koreatown)*	KIWA	1.7	14.5
Watts*	Bright Watts	1.1	15.6
North Hollywood	North Hollywood NC	3.3	18.9
Historic South Central (South LA)*	TRUST South LA	1.3	20.2
Jefferson Park (South LA)*	United NC	2.6	22.8
Vermont Vista (South LA)*	Community Coalition	1.7	24.5
Los Feliz	Los Feliz NC	1	25.5
Highland Park / Mt. Angelus	CD 1 / Mt Angelus	1.5	27.0
Palms	Palms NC	1.2	28.2
La Cienega Heights	Chabad of Beverlywood	2.4	30.6
Cypress Park	Cypress Park NC	1.2	31.8
Leimert Park (South LA)*	Sutro Avenue Block Club	1.8	33.6
Thai Town (East Hollywood)*	Thai CDC	0.8	34.4
Adams - Normandie (South LA)*	Adams-Normandie Neighborhood Association	0.8	35.1
Valley Village	Valley Village Homeowners Association	2.7	37.8
Boyle Heights*	Boyle Heights Chamber of Commerce	1.1	38.9
Hollywood	Hollywood Studio District Neighborhood Council	2	40.9
East Hollywood*	East Hollywood Neighborhood Council	1.8	42.6
Vermont Square (South LA)*	Voice Neighborhood Council	0.6	43.2
Canoga Park	Organización Voces del Cambio	1	44.2
Mar Vista	St. Andrew's Lutheran Church/ North Westdale Book Club	2	46.2
Studio City	The River Project	1.4	47.6
Wilmington	CD 15	1.3	48.9
MacArthur Park (Westlake)*	MacArthur Park Neighborhood Council	1.3	50.2
		Total	50.2

*indicates target neighborhoods

EXHIBIT B - SLOW STREETS SURVEY RESULTS

On a Scale of 1-5, how safe do you feel on a Slow Street?



On a scale from 1 - 5, how well were people socially distancing with people who do not live in the same households?

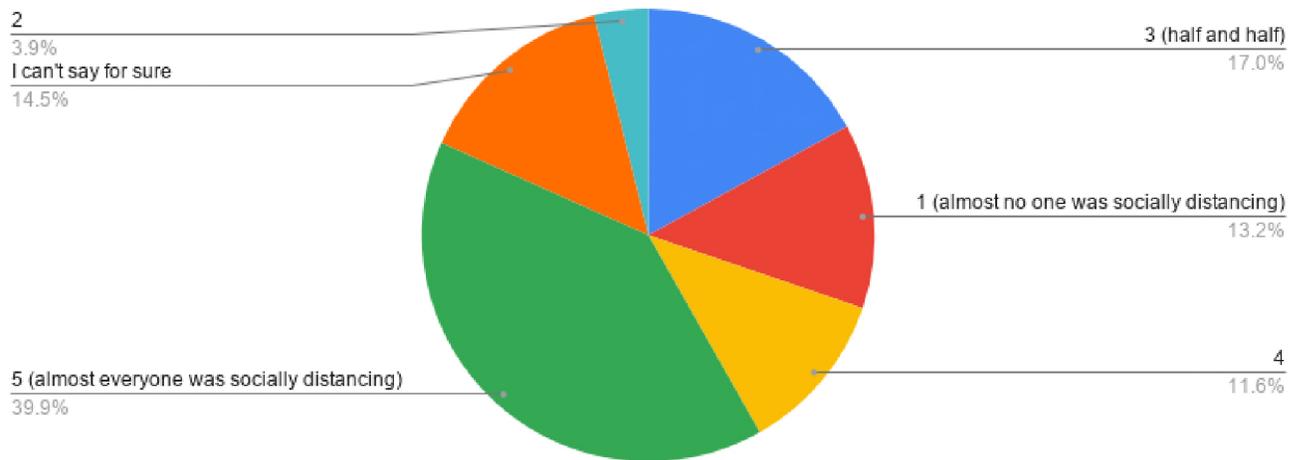
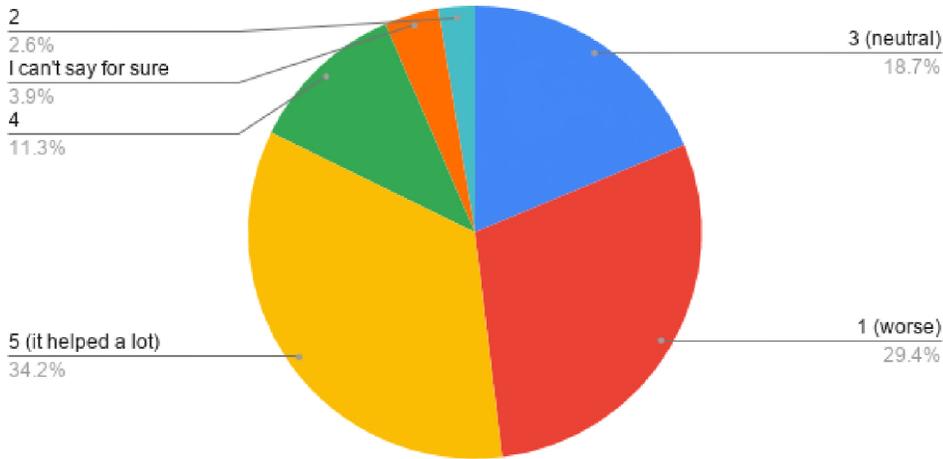


EXHIBIT B (Cont'd)

On a scale from 1 - 5, how did the closure contribute to your health and wellness during COVID?



If the City has any additional questions about the information you've provided, may we contact you?

