

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

November 8, 2015

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

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RE: COUNCIL FILE 15-0719-S11 / Mobility Element

Dear Chairpersons Huizar and Bonin and Committee Members:

It was our understanding that the Mobility Element has been adopted by the full City Council and, as such, any proposed changes must first be reviewed by the City Planning Commission before any changes can be contemplated to it., as noted in Charter Section 555. We do admit having been a bit confused at the time of the Mobility Element's original consideration in that the concerns of some of the Councilmembers (and requests for changes) were handled in a rather unorthodox manner. The amendments that resulted in additional language that would consider "community input" before any Mobility Plan projects are implemented was and is an important factor for our community. It is of critical importance to our stakeholders to know that emergency first responders will be able to reach their destinations in good time. After all, the protection of public safety is one of the key roles that local government is meant to fulfill. We simply cannot implement mobility strategies that are designed to slow traffic on major arterials upon which first responders and our communities depend. We can and should increase multi-modal options for mobility in Los Angeles. However, in doing so we should not be pitting drivers against bicyclists or intentionally clogging traffic on streets that are critical to regional access.

Pressure has been placed on the LAFD to improve response times. However, there is little they can do to reach a person in need of accident/medical aid IF the roadways have been calmed to such a degree that passage in good time has been rendered impossible. While the intent of much of the Mobility Element is laudable, as we all know, the devil is in the details and, sadly, the direction of this plan has been launched without adequate

attention to necessary detail. The Rowena road diet/traffic calming experience is an excellent example of the unintended consequences that can occur IF plans are implemented without adequate preparation and understanding. Why weren't traffic counts taken on nearby streets BEFORE traffic calming was implemented? Why wasn't community input sought BEFORE project implementation to discuss alternate streets likely to be used by travelers should new congestions result in the road diet? And why wasn't a plan for data capture designed for evaluation and feedback all along the way so that the city could learn both the positive and negative impacts of this roadway experiment? The experience on Rowena shakes our very confidence in the commitment of this City to a reasoned and reasonable approach to bike facility implementation. Just because bike facilities have been exempted from CEQA analysis does not mean that the City should abandon the philosophy underlying CEQA which is to identify best possible alternatives and to identify mitigations to lessen community impacts. In weighing options we look to policy makers to balance the needs of all constituents. While the City wishes to encourage more bike and pedestrian activity, it still must acknowledge that the overwhelming numbers of Angelenos rely on a vehicle for their travel. One cannot blame the driver (blame the victim) for as we all know too well, our region is vast and our transit offerings are yet to provide a comprehensive web of coverage over the region to enable many to rely upon transit for their daily commute.

It is too easy to say that road diets and the slowing of traffic are being done in the name of safety or to reach "Zero Fatality" figures in the future. Average citizens know that when traffic is significantly slowed, those waiting do not simply sit quietly behind the wheel (eating, drinking, shaving, texting or reading billboard signs). When congestion reaches certain levels drivers make and take alternative routes. In our community those alternative routes are residential streets on which our residents and their children walk, ride bikes and walk their dogs. We do not see adequate attention having been paid to the unintended consequences of various elements of the Mobility Plan.

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, for example, 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 leading them to cut through the nearby residential neighborhoods. This situation will decrease overall 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 the addition of significant numbers of bikes on our major Westwood Blvd. is counterproductive to the coming of EXPO. We must be able to move buses to and from EXPO Westwood station. 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, we are getting conflicting messages from the City. On the one hand, the City seeks to increase density and incentivize the locating of multi-story mixed use buildings on Westwood Blvd. thus leading to an increase of driveway entrances which will be a further danger to bicyclists on the street. On the other hand, Westwood is being eyed for major bike facility designation.

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 earlier 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. With the pace of transit construction, growth of telecommuting, etc., we cannot help but feel (as expressed in earlier correspondence) that the focus of the Mobility Plan should be reduced to not more than ten years. We do not have an official City crystal ball and the pace of change suggests that our battleship may need to change course mid-journey.

We continue to believe that while "aspirational" planning can be inspiring, REAL planning must be more evidence-based. LA's change from a car dominated society to a multi-modal one should be the product of an evolutionary process. The citizens of Los Angeles do not expect to be looked at as subject guinea pigs in a social experiment known as the Mobility Element. We look to our leaders to bring us together – not to approve a plan that divides us.

Sincerely,

Barbara Broide, President