

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Casey Maddren  
**Date Submitted:** 10/13/2020 12:38 AM  
**Council File No:** 19-1533  
**Comments for Public Posting:** Attached are comments submitted in opposition to the 639 La Brea Project.

October 12, 2020

The Los Angeles City Council  
LA City Hall  
200 N. Spring St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: 639 La Brea Project, OPPOSED  
623-671 South La Brea Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90036  
ZA-2019-1744-CU-MCUP-SPR-TOC, ENV-2019-1736-SCPE  
Council File: 19-1533

Members of the Los Angeles City Council,

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the 639 La Brea Project. In rushing through the approvals for this project, the Department of City Planning (DCP) has once again abused the law to clear the way for significant entitlements that promise to make the developer much richer while doing significant damage to the surrounding community. Here is a brief summary of my objections. Detailed comments and exhibits are below.

The Project Does Not Qualify for a Sustainable Communities CEQA Exemption

CA PRC Sec. 21155.1 (a) (1) requires that the Project can be adequately served by existing utilities. The site is currently not adequately served with regard to electrical power and waste collection, and the Project will only exacerbate these deficiencies.

The Project Is Not Consistent with the RTP/SCS

The Project is only consistent with the RTP/SCS in that it increases density near transit. It does not promote reduction in GHGs from vehicles. The City has consistently failed to achieve the GHG reductions that the RTP/SCS was designed to reduce. Instead GHG emissions from vehicles have increased significantly in the LA area while transit ridership on Metro and DASH has fallen substantially.

The TOC Guidelines Can't Be Used to Approve the Project Because They Aren't Part of the LAMC

The developer seeks a density bonus under the TOC Guidelines, but the TOC Guidelines were never approved by the City Council, and therefore cannot grant legal authority to approve additional density.

The Project Description Fails to Acknowledge the Request for a Master CUP to Sell Alcohol

DCP appears to be aiding the developer in concealing the fact that one of the requested entitlements is a Master Conditional Use Permit for the sale of alcohol. This information does not appear in the project description or in the case summary on the DCP web site. The MCUP is mentioned only once on page 25 of the Sustainable Communities Project CEQA Exemption document, which does not disclose how many establishments will serve alcohol, or whether they will be restaurants, bars or clubs.

See the following pages for detailed comments and exhibits.

Casey Maddren  
2141 Cahuenga Blvd., Apt. 17  
Los Angeles, CA 90068

**COMMENTS**

The Project Does Not Qualify for a Sustainable Communities CEQA Exemption

CA PRC Sec. 21155.1 (a) (1) requires that the Project can be adequately served by existing utilities. The site is currently not adequately served with regard to electrical power and waste collection, and the Project will only exacerbate this problem.

The area frequently experiences power outages, and the proposed Project will only exacerbate the inability of existing infrastructure to serve the community. See Exhibits A1, A2 and A3.

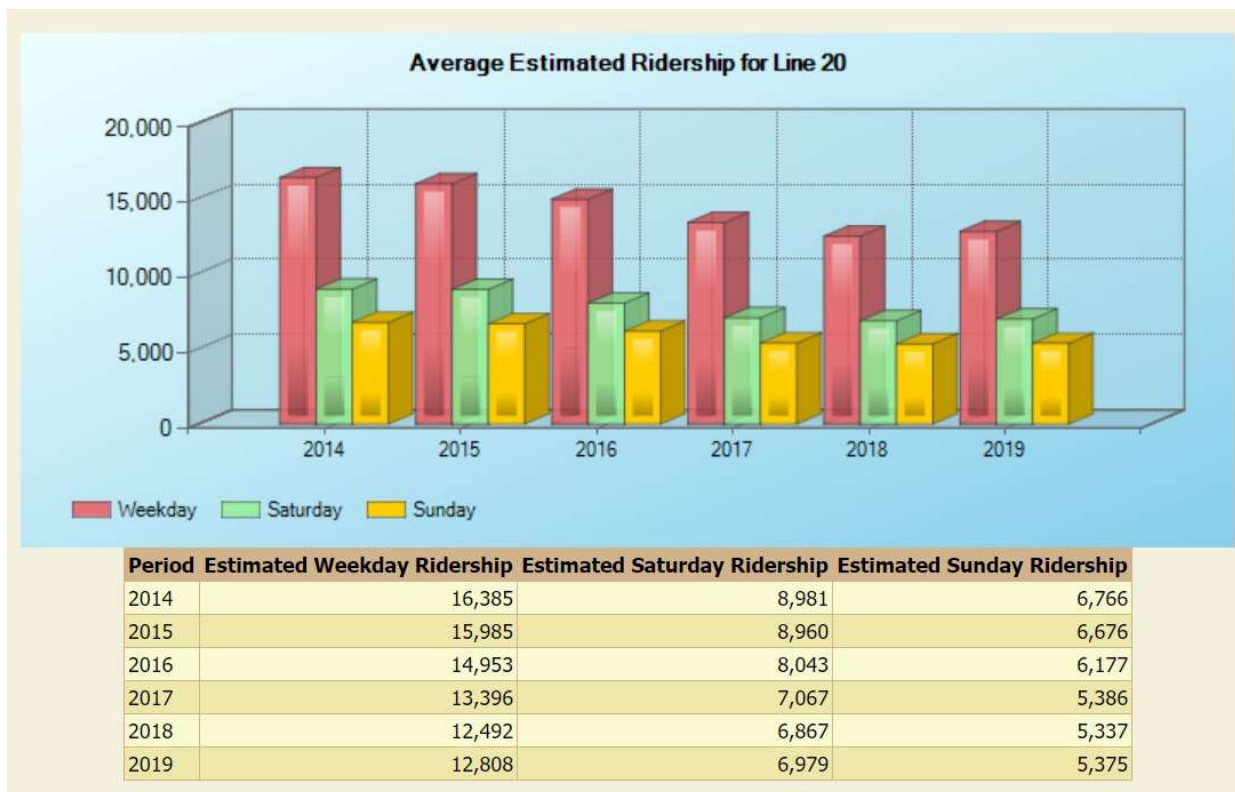
The Project will be served by RecycLA, which currently does not come anywhere near the State-mandated threshold of 50% diversion to recycling (CA PRC 41780 (a) (2)). The City has lowered required diversion rates for RecycLA waste haulers to 35% by 2023. The City’s claim that it will achieve 90% diversion to recycling by 2025 is absurd, and is not backed by data or any adopted plan. See Exhibit B.

The Project Is Not Consistent with the RTP/SCS

The Project is only consistent with the RTP/SCS in that it increases density near transit. It does not promote reduction in GHGs from vehicles. The City has consistently failed to achieve the GHG reductions that the RTP/SCS was designed to reduce. Instead GHG emissions from vehicles have increased significantly in the LA area while transit ridership on Metro and DASH has fallen substantially.

Hundreds of new residential units have been built along both Wilshire and La Brea over the past decade, but the Metro lines that serve these corridors have seen significant declines.

*Line 20, Wilshire Blvd.*

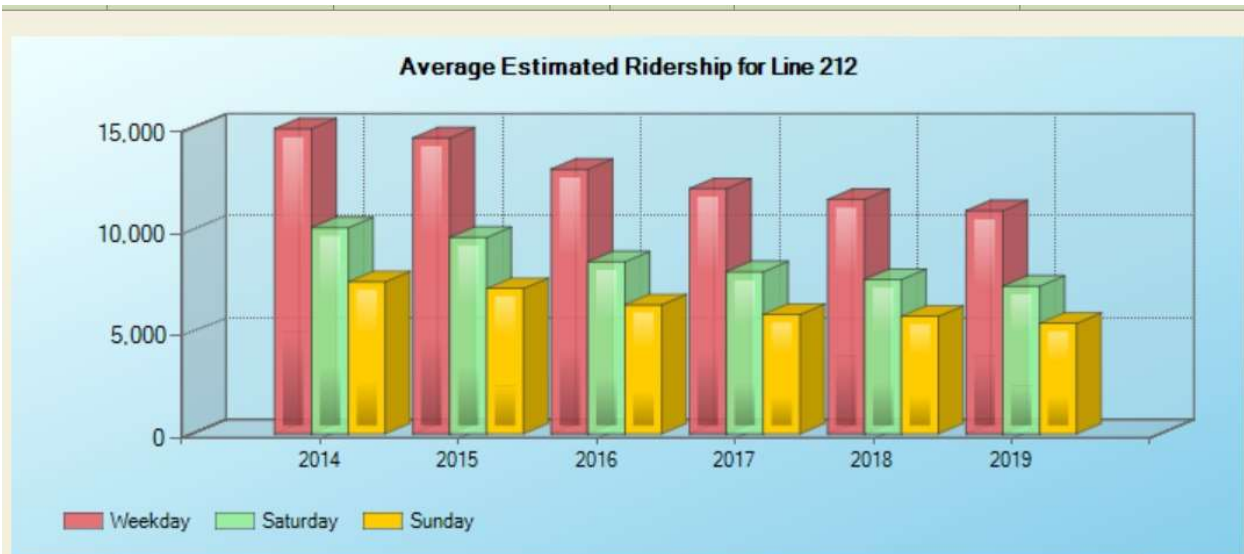


Line 720, Wilshire Blvd.



Period	Estimated Weekday Ridership	Estimated Saturday Ridership	Estimated Sunday Ridership
2014	39,908	27,811	22,082
2015	38,564	26,137	20,796
2016	33,826	21,805	17,483
2017	28,805	19,114	15,162
2018	26,994	17,704	13,969
2019	28,371	18,846	14,811

Line 212, La Brea



Period	Estimated Weekday Ridership	Estimated Saturday Ridership	Estimated Sunday Ridership
2014	14,978	10,123	7,459
2015	14,522	9,643	7,133
2016	12,989	8,445	6,340
2017	12,031	7,954	5,859
2018	11,503	7,576	5,771
2019	10,948	7,253	5,429

In general terms, the project complies with the RTP/SCS policy of encouraging dense residential uses near transit, but does it actually further the goals listed in the RTP/SCS? Under "What We Will Accomplish", the RTP/SCS lists the following goals:

- The combined percentage of work trips made by carpooling, active transportation and public transit would increase by about four percent, with a commensurate reduction in the share of commuters traveling by single occupant vehicle.
  - The number of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per capita would be reduced by more than seven percent and Vehicle Hours Traveled (VHT) per capita by 17 percent (for automobiles and light/medium duty trucks) as a result of more location efficient land use patterns and improved transit service.
  - Daily travel by transit would increase by nearly one-third, as a result of improved transit service and more transit-oriented development patterns.
1. *The City offers no evidence to show it has achieved any increases in trips made by transit, and the graphs above show that the opposite is true. The City offers no evidence to show an increase in carpooling or active transit.*
  2. *The City offers no data to show that any actual VMT reductions have been achieved, and only offers the claim that LADOT's VMT Calculator show a relative reduction in trips generated by the Project.*
  3. *Far from increasing transit ridership by one-third, Metro stats show that ridership has declined in this area, in spite of significant new residential development along both Wilshire and La Brea.*

A 2018 report from the UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies makes clear how completely the City has failed to achieve the RTP/SCS

Falling Transit Ridership: California and Southern California, UCLA ITS, 2018

[https://www.scag.ca.gov/Documents/ITS\\_SCAG\\_Transit\\_Ridership.pdf](https://www.scag.ca.gov/Documents/ITS_SCAG_Transit_Ridership.pdf)

From Page 4:

*Long associated with the automobile, in the last 25 years Southern California has invested heavily in public transportation. Since 1990, the SCAG region has added over 100 miles of light and heavy rail in Los Angeles County, and over 530 miles of commuter rail region-wide. These investments, however, have not been matched by increases in transit ridership. Transit ridership in the SCAG region reached its postwar peak in 1985. Through the 1990s and 2000s ridership rose and fell modestly, but never again reached its 1985 level. Figure ES-1 shows that per capita trips have been mostly declining in the SCAG region since 2007, and have fallen consistently since 2013.*

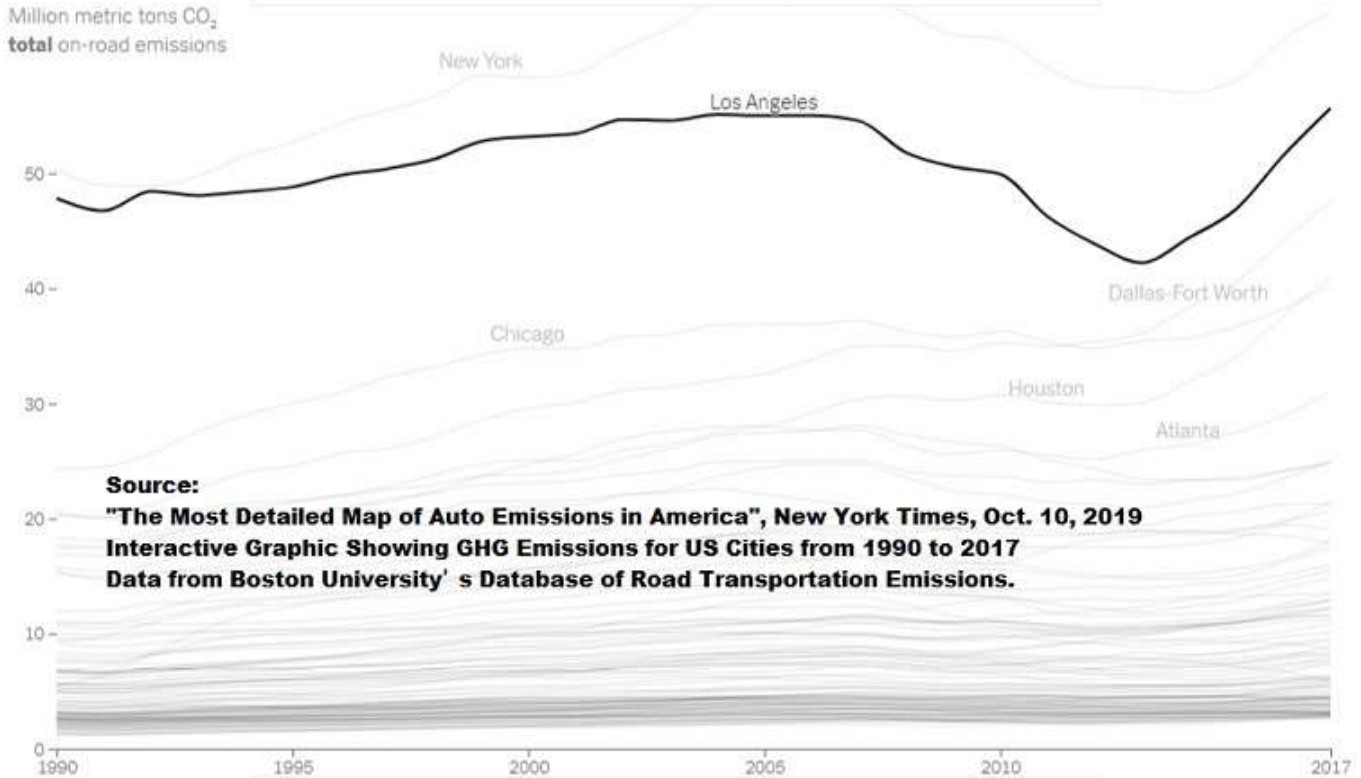
From Page 9

*The growth in vehicle access has been especially dramatic among subsets of the population that are among the heaviest users of transit. Between 2000 and 2015, the share of households in the region with no vehicles fell by 30 percent, and the share of households with fewer vehicles than adults fell 14 percent.*

Boston University's Database of Road Transportation Emissions shows a steady increase in CO2 emissions in Los Angeles from 2013 through 2017.

*[See following page.]*

In nearly every metro area, total emissions have increased since 1990. Here's the trend line for the area you selected in the top map.



The TOC Guidelines Cannot Be Used to Approve the Project Because They Are Not Part of the LAMC

The developer seeks a density bonus under the TOC Guidelines, but the TOC Guidelines were never approved by the City Council, and therefore cannot grant authority to approve additional density. Even if the TOC Guidelines were part of the LAMC, using them to approve this Project would constitute an egregious abuse. The Guidelines were supposedly based on voter-approved Measure JJJ, which was intended to boost construction of residential housing and to promote affordable housing. Voters did not approve Measure JJJ to offer loopholes for hotel projects.

The Project Description Fails to Acknowledge the Request for a Master CUP to Sell Alcohol

DCP appears to be aiding the developer in concealing the fact that one of the requested entitlements is a Master Conditional Use Permit for the sale of alcohol. This information does not appear in the project description or in the case summary on the DCP web site. The MCUP is mentioned only once in the Sustainable Communities Project CEQA Exemption document, on page 25 under Discretionary Requests. Even here the SCPE document does not disclose how many establishments will serve alcohol, or whether they will be restaurants, bars or clubs. The public has had no opportunity to learn what uses are proposed or to offer comments.

## EXHIBIT A1

Current estimated time for response remains 24-48 hours, but this could change. Dispatchers continue to assign repair crews to locations where customers have been out the longest and are reviewing and updating data on assignments and outages. As they continue to assess our progress and the potential for mutual aid, we will update our estimated response times, which could be extended longer.

We understand how difficult long outages are on our customers and their families and want to assure everyone currently affected that our crews remain focused on getting every repair job done quickly and safely. They have been working around the clock on 16-hour shifts since Saturday and will continue until every last customer is restored. We appreciate everyone's patience as we respond to one of the worst heat storms ever to hit our City.

### **Communities most affected include:**

#### **Metro Area** (South of Mulholland Drive)

Leimert Park – 1815                      Mount Washington – 389                      Hyde Park – 1056

Mid-Wilshire – 1339                      West Adams – 1537

Park LaBrea – 1332                      Hollywood Hills – 1049

East Hollywood – 2593                      Highland Park – 1095

#### **San Fernando Valley**

Pacoima – 455                                      Arleta – 587

Sylmar – 3895                                      North Hollywood – 372

Sun Valley – 559                                      Panorama City – 640

Lake View Terrace – 879                      Studio City – 448

### **Cooling Centers**

We encourage customers to check on elderly neighbors and also to consider using



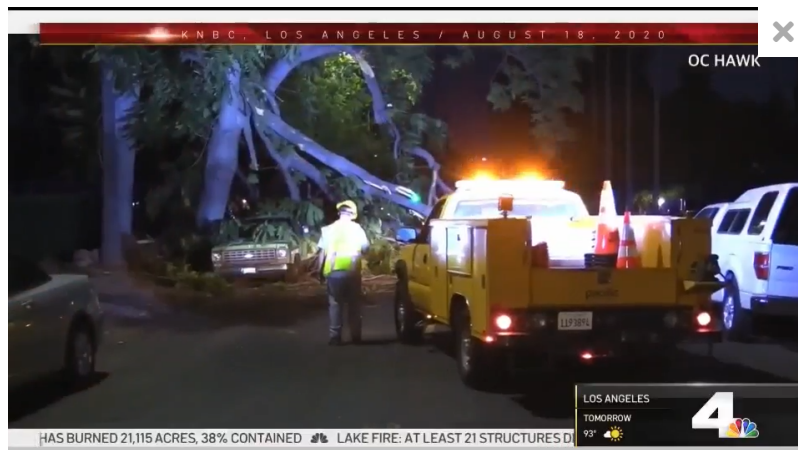
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# EXHIBIT A2

## POWER OUTAGES

# Thousands Lose Power Due To 'Extreme Heat' and Demand

By City News Service • Published August 18, 2020 • Updated on August 18, 2020 at 11:39 pm








might amid high temperatures throughout the city.

"Extreme heat and electricity demand has caused outages in parts of Los Angeles, currently affecting some LADWP customers," Mayor Eric Garcetti said on Twitter Tuesday night. "Crews are working hard to restore power as quickly as possible."


LADWP said it could take between four and 12 hours for power to be restored.


As of 10 p.m., 12,000 customers were without power, mostly in the areas of Mid-Wilshire, Westlake, Echo Park, Studio City, Panorama City and West Hills, according to DWP's Joe Ramalo. At 5 p.m., the number of customers offline was 9,000.

The outage in Studio City includes customers impacted by a tree that fell and took out power lines, Ramalo said.

 **MayorOfLA**   
@MayorOfLA 

Extreme heat and electricity demand has caused outages in parts of Los Angeles, currently affecting some LADWP customers. Crews are working hard to restore power as quickly as possible. Follow [@LADWP](#) for updates.

8:44 PM · Aug 18, 2020 

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The outages were not related to the power distribution system being strained by the heat.

's distribution

Repair crews took advantage of the cooler temperatures in restoring power to affected customers. Ramalo said.

ss in restoring  
ners back online,



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BY CAMERON KISZLA / JUNE 13, 2019

# Power outage affects M Mile

Two separate electrical outages left more than 300 Miracle Mile customers without power for up to 18 hours on June 12-13.

Sylvia Beltran, public affairs representative for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, said an underground cable failed between 3:30 and 4 p.m. on June 12, a few hours before scheduled maintenance was to begin. Some customers had their power restored in the overnight hours, Beltran said, but others had to wait because a steel plate belonging to the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority was blocking the LADWP's access to some circuits.

Early on June 13, Metro removed the plate near Wilshire Boulevard and Orange Grove Avenue, and electricity was restored by 9:30 a.m., Beltran said.

"As soon as they lifted that steel plate, we were able to access that circuit and get that power transferred to another circuit," Beltran said.

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## BRIEF

# New RecyclA settlement: Relaxed hauler targets, \$9M in customer relief

By Cole Rosengren

Published Feb. 14, 2019

## Dive Brief:

- After months of negotiation, the Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation (LASAN) has reached a settlement agreement with the seven RecyclA service providers. Among multiple changes, it is designed to give them more leeway on meeting contract targets, while reducing near-term costs for customers and reinforcing diversion goals.
- If approved by the Los Angeles Board of Public Works (BPW) on Feb. 15, customers will no longer pay access/distance fees for blue bin recycling. The city will split the expense of any fees, including retroactive charges, at an initial cost of \$9.12 million. Contamination levels up to 20% will also be allowable through 2020 in an extended "optimization period."
- Companies now have until Jan. 31, 2023 to meet initial disposal reduction targets and will pay lower liquidated damages if they fail to do so. 2020 rate increases for blue bin and green bin organics service have been raised to 3.5% beyond CPI (plus an automatic 0.25% increase to reflect low commodity values), and an automatic 3% increase for overall cost of service will take effect in 2022.

## Dive Insight:

The RecyclA franchise saga has been a long, ambitious and contentious one. Waste Management, Republic Services, Athens

Services, Universal Waste Systems, CalMet Services, NASA Services and Ware Disposal have lucrative 10-year contracts (with the option to extend) but have been working overtime to meet elevated standards amid ongoing public scrutiny.

While LASAN notes that initial missed collection issues are old news, the mounting expense of additional fees has become a serious issue. On top of higher baseline costs, the fees have spurred vitriol and pushback from multiple real estate and business interests. Whether or not any of these changes will quiet the program's critics, or have any effect on ongoing legal proceedings, remains unclear.

An estimated 19,600 of the program's 66,000 customers are currently getting extra charges based on access or distance, according to LASAN. The city's initial \$9.12 million contribution is slated to cover any charges incurred Feb. 2018-June 2019, and budget reserves can cover future expenses through at least FY20. LASAN has committed to spending upward of \$94.2 million on this program through 2027 if necessary.

Described as the "Removing Barriers to Recycling" program, these new terms will also require service providers to offer robust and ongoing education, including up to four warnings for customers that surpass the 20% contamination threshold.


Multiple companies told Waste Dive this had been a challenge last fall, but said they were largely holding off on contamination charges out of good faith. Temporarily raising the acceptable threshold from 10% to 20% and agreeing to waive extra charges until 2020 runs counter to the current industry narrative at a national level — but it's a sign of how delicate the customer relationship is right now in this program.

As service providers deal with tough national commodity market trends, elevated organics diversion requirements and future infrastructure expenses, it's clear some may have underestimated their initial bids. Even though the timing has

been delayed, the newly agreed-upon rate increase schedule can be expected to help fill that gap. At the same time, they still need engaged customer participation to start making headway on mandated disposal reduction targets, so perceptions of excessive rate increases could create future tensions.


Los Angeles still has a stated goal of 90% landfill diversion by 2025, but the city has revised its RecycLA contract target from 45% to 35% diversion by 2023. A lack of recent data (another RecycLA priority) makes it hard to assess where that diversion rate currently stands. Regardless of this new financial compromise, it's clear significant progress will need to be made by all parties in order to hit the mark.

### **Recommended Reading:**

 Waste Dive

Next up for the RecycLA experiment — optimization [↗](#)

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 Waste Dive

Los Angeles BPW approves RecycLA facility plan, plus \$6M for consultant [↗](#)