

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REPORT relative to reviewing policies and practices related to signal phasing and timing so as to minimize conflicts between people walking and motor vehicle traffic, and minimize wait times for people walking.

Recommendation for Council action, pursuant to Motion (Raman – Hernandez – Blumenfield – Soto-Martinez):

INSTRUCT the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) to:

- a. Report within 120 days with a draft policy and implementation plan to modify signal timing citywide to run traffic signals free or with reduced cycle lengths as appropriate to reflect a priority for people crossing the street by means other than motor vehicles- balancing this need with speed and reliability objectives of public transit buses and trains.
- b. Report within 120 days with a plan to inventory signalized intersections, identifying the timing plans and other pertinent information for each intersection for each specified period of the day as part of any future LADOT asset management system creation or integration.
- c. Report within 120 days, with an inventory of signalized intersections with pedestrian recall instituted during the COVID-19 Pandemic and a draft policy and implementation plan to make permanent as appropriate, intersections converted to operate with pedestrian recall during that period, and to consider future locations for such conversions as well as any prioritization method.
- d. Report within 120 days with draft updated guidelines for the use of Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI), scramble crosswalks, and NO RIGHT TURN ON RED restrictions, taking into account the appropriateness of longer LPI duration, a more liberal set of criteria for scramble crosswalks, and increased usage of restricting right turns on red to reduce vehicle-pedestrian conflicts.

Fiscal Impact Statement: Neither the City Administrative Officer nor the Chief Legislative Analyst has completed a financial analysis of this report.

Community Impact Statement: None submitted.

Summary:

On December 6, 2023, your Committee considered a Motion (Raman – Hernandez – Blumenfield – Soto-Martinez) relative to reviewing policies and practices related to signal phasing and timing so as to minimize conflicts between people walking and motor vehicle traffic, and minimize wait times for people walking. According to the Motion, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the LADOT converted all traffic signals in the City to run a “nighttime” signal plan at all times. In nighttime plans, all approaches are served

relatively quickly and the rapid flow of traffic along arterials is not prioritized over other road users. This generally results in reduced wait times for side street traffic and for pedestrian crossings.

The LADOT has since returned signals to run as they did prior to the Pandemic, where different plans run at different times of the day. During peak periods (and sometimes mid-day periods), signals run long cycle lengths, often resulting in long waits to cross major streets for people who are walking. Also during the Pandemic, the LADOT converted about 900 traffic signals to run in “pedestrian recall” mode, in which pedestrians receive a WALK indication automatically without having to push a call button. The LADOT does not have a formal policy to implement, retain, or remove pedestrian recall beyond the implementation during the Pandemic, but should.

Through mid-October 2023, 134 people walking have been killed by people driving in the City of Los Angeles and 427 people have been severely injured. This represents a 13% rise in our year-to-date number of total pedestrians killed compared to last year, and an 18% increase in severe injuries. This is part of a harrowing national trend. Rising from a low point of 4,302 people killed while walking in 2010, a projected 7,508 pedestrians were killed by traffic violence in 2022, the highest number since 1981.

The LADOT also deploys NO RIGHT TURN ON RED restrictions, typically where there are visibility or operational conflicts. A more liberal application of NO RIGHT TURN ON RED, particularly at locations with high volumes of people walking, sensitive uses, and/or challenging intersections for pedestrians to navigate, either due to geometry and size or signal operation, would further reduce conflicts between turning vehicular traffic and people walking.

Several cities in the United States are exploring restrictions on right-on-red turns, including Denver, Seattle, San Francisco, and Washington, DC. LADOT deploys and has guidelines for Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI) and scramble crosswalks (exclusive pedestrian phases, often inclusive of diagonal crosswalks). LPIs give people walking a head-start before concurrent parallel vehicle traffic, affording greater visibility of people walking to turning drivers. However, the duration of the LADOT’s LPIs is typically four seconds, while other cities such as Hoboken, NJ use five to seven second intervals. Driver behavior and the size and geometry of intersections in Los Angeles suggests that longer LPI intervals may be necessary to achieve the intended benefits.. The City’s guidelines for scramble crosswalks recommend that both a pattern of pedestrian crashes and substantial pedestrian volume be present. The department’s thresholds result in many locations -that would otherwise be good candidates for scramble crosswalks - being omitted from consideration. Scramble crosswalks have the benefit of removing all pedestrian-vehicular conflicts at intersections and their use in more cases should be explored.

According to the City’s Vision Zero Safety Study for Los Angeles, 70% of our crashes where someone is killed or severely injured (KSI crashes) occur at intersections, many of which are controlled by traffic signals. At these signalized intersections, people walking

often have to contend with left and right turning motorists that do not yield properly (if at all). Additionally, excessive wait times can cause pedestrians to cross while the solid upraised hand is displayed, or cross away from the signal at uncontrolled, unmarked locations which are subject to even poorer driver yielding compliance. In furtherance of the goal of eliminating deaths and serious injuries for people walking as part of Vision Zero, LADOT should revisit its policies and practices related to signal phasing and timing so as to minimize conflicts between people walking and motor vehicle traffic, and minimize wait times for people walking. After consideration and having provided an opportunity for public comment, the Committee moved to recommend approval of the Motion. This matter is now submitted to Council for its consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,
Transportation Committee

COUNCILMEMBER VOTE

HUTT:	YES
PARK:	ABSENT
HERNANDEZ:	YES
RAMAN:	YES
YAROSLAVSKY:	YES

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12/6/23

-NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL COUNCIL ACTS-