

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: September 30, 2022

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

From: Connie Llanos, Interim General Manager 
Department of Transportation

Subject: Gender Equitable Transportation Report (Council File 22-0229)

SUMMARY

This report outlines LADOT programs in existence and under development that address the goals of improving gender-equitable transportation options, services, and outcomes. As directed by Council, this report also describes the ways in which LADOT can develop these goals into programs and the resources needed to do so.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council, subject to the approval of the Mayor:

1. Direct LADOT to report back in one year on the status of programs and initiatives outlined in this report.
2. Authorize LADOT to accept third-party grant funded services from Kounkuey Design Initiative, Inc. and enter into an agreement to create a Gender Equity Action Plan for LADOT.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) commissioned a study, Changing Lanes: A Gender and Transportation Study (Changing Lanes), to better understand gender-based transportation needs and barriers in Los Angeles. The study informs how the Department collects and analyzes data to make service and infrastructure decisions that better support the mobility needs of women, girls, and gender minorities. Data collection efforts are often skewed to capture information from male travelers, despite women taking more trips and often being responsible for a higher share of household and care-related travel. Limited mobility impacts access to opportunity and increases the time and cost burdens of travel for women and their families.

LADOT published Changing Lanes in 2021. The findings of the report demonstrate that there are significant gender-based and neighborhood-based disparities in mobility across Los Angeles.

In May 2021, the Los Angeles City Council directed LADOT to report on programs that provide new mobility options for women and prioritize the experiences, perspectives, and needs of low-income and

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. This direction also asked LADOT to report on the necessary resources to implement the recommendations in the Changing Lanes study.

DISCUSSION

Travel patterns vary by gender. Gender-based differences in travel patterns include trip-chaining, reliance on specific modes, traveling with dependents or others, tendency to make either many more trips or many fewer trips. Changing Lanes confirmed significant gender-based and neighborhood-based mobility disparities in Los Angeles that compound inequities for women in low-income neighborhoods. The study also found limited access to information, such as access to internet and smart phones, as well as lower rates of driver's licenses, contribute to restricted mobility for women. Safety and perceptions of safety are yet another concern: women, girls, and gender and sexual minorities are more likely to face violence or harassment while traveling, and commonly report it as a barrier to using public transit and traveling on the street.

Changing Lanes outlines multiple recommendations under each of the following categories:

- Build gender-inclusive infrastructure
- Design transit and mobility services that serve needs beyond traditional commute patterns
- Establish programs that support multi-modal travel, improve safety, and expand access through information and community-based engagement

Existing Programs

Universal Basic Mobility Pilot

LADOT's Universal Basic Mobility (UBM) pilot expands transportation options and supports the way women travel. LADOT worked in partnership with Slate-Z to develop the pilot and include transportation and mobility infrastructure and programs that will address transportation inequity in low-income communities of color and advance racial and gender equity goals identified in Changing Lanes and the LADOT Strategic Plan. Components of the pilot respond directly to gender-based travel needs and are designed to support trip-chaining and multi-modal travel by expanding options and eliminating the cost burden and inconvenience of multimodal transportation. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) awarded \$14 million to deliver the project through CARB's Sustainable Transportation Equity Program (STEP). Council has also approved an additional \$4 million in funding to enhance the pilot program for a total of \$17.8 million.

The pilot program components include:

- Expansion of BlueLA electric vehicle carshare
- an on-demand community shuttle to fill in gaps in transit service and reduce transfers
- a Mobility Wallet pilot program that provides 2,000 local, low-income residents with monthly subsidies of \$150, for transit and shared mobility, and integrates the subsidy with TAP
- Street safety infrastructure to support walking, biking and rolling
- Community engagement in collaboration with community-based partner organizations
- Open streets programming in partnership with CicLAvia

Following the initial pilot in South LA, the City will need to identify funding to expand these options citywide.

Electric Vehicle Carshare

As part of the UBM pilot, LADOT will add 100 new BlueLA electric vehicles in the South LA project area by the end of 2025.

As of July 2022, the BlueLA program has 100 vehicles in service at 40 stations (200 chargers total throughout CDs 1, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 14). Siting and feasibility assessments are underway for a Phase II pilot expansion, which will add 60 more stations by April 2024 and bring the vehicle total up to 300. LADOT also received Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to expand BlueLA into the North East San Fernando Valley.

Safety Programs & Infrastructure

LADOT's Vision Zero and Safe Routes to School programs are designed to eliminate fatalities and improve transportation for the most vulnerable road users. These programs prioritize traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures in underserved communities burdened by traffic violence.

A new program, Safe Routes for Seniors, will conduct a community-based design process to develop safety plans for five pilot areas: Boyle Heights, Baldwin Hills, Chinatown, Skid Row and Westmont. By employing LADOT's Community-First Engagement approach, this program will put elder, low-income women at the center of the planning process. Funded by an Active Transportation Program (ATP) Cycle 4 Planning Grant, this program will require future capital grant funding for final plan implementation.

High quality, comprehensive street infrastructure— such as sidewalks, curb ramps, pedestrian crossings and street lighting— is critical to improve travel experience for women and gender minorities. Project design processes should install or upgrade bicycle infrastructure to high safety standards and with an enhanced degree of protection from moving vehicles to feel more accessible and attractive for women. Vision Zero, Active Transportation, Safe Routes to School, and other LADOT capital project programs work closely with StreetsLA, Bureau of Engineering, and other Public Works partner agencies to pursue funding and implement projects that prioritize street lighting, accessible infrastructure such as sidewalks and curb ramps, and transit amenities that support women's travel needs and patterns. These multi-agency partnerships are essential to delivering comprehensive and inclusive public infrastructure, and LADOT recommends continued coordination through the Mobility Investment Program and consistent with the Interdepartmental Memorandum Of Understanding governing project planning and delivery in the public right-of-way, to sustain and advance these efforts.

Transit Services

LADOT DASH Transit provides short local trips and connections to regional transit that support trip-chaining. Based on rider surveys, women make up a majority of travelers - accounting for two thirds of all Community DASH riders. LADOT is expanding DASH service by adding new routes and improving headways on existing routes. The City can increase mobility for women by investing in and expanding the DASH system.

LADOT made DASH free to students in 2019, reducing transportation costs for families. In March 2020, LADOT stopped collecting fares from all riders on DASH, which supports more than 19,000 women who ride DASH daily.

Following recommendations in *Changing Lanes*, LADOT began a DASH On-Demand Stop Program pilot program that allows riders to request a courtesy drop-off between designated DASH stops on four DASH Community Transit routes: El Sereno/ City Terrace, Panorama City/Van Nuys, Pico Union/Echo Park, and Watts. This pilot is low-cost but requires marketing and engagement to expand rider awareness and encourage use. With additional resources, LADOT can expand this pilot to other parts of the City and increase awareness and participation in the program.

In August 2022, LADOT updated the DASH rider code of conduct to explicitly include sexual and gender-based harassment. LADOT is also establishing a gender-based violence hotline, where passengers who have experienced or witnessed gender-based violence can report the incident to LADOT personnel.

Changing Lanes found that women in low-income study neighborhoods were less likely to have driver's licenses, but were not adequately served by transit. Many trips require point-to-point service that transit cannot provide. CityRide and LANow serve this need for flexible point-to-point transportation and can support travel for women and their families who do not have access to a vehicle. With additional resources, LADOT could expand these services to ensure greater usage.

Programs in Development

Community Engagement

LADOT is committed to prioritizing the experiences, perspectives, and needs of low-income and BIPOC communities, particularly women, to develop mobility solutions. LADOT employs a Community-First Engagement model that centers stakeholders, historically excluded from project processes, through equitable and robust planning and outreach. LADOT limited this program during the pandemic due to resource and public gathering constraints. However, since December 2021, LADOT has led Community-First Engagement campaigns on four projects and is currently conducting engagement on three additional projects, with six additional projects scoped for completion through the current professional services task order solicitation. To date, LADOT has funded the work through the Department's annual budget allocation, but robust engagement relies on sustained and consistent resources to be successful.

Through a forthcoming Equity and Capacity Building community engagement initiative, LADOT will expand engagement and education to more thoroughly embed equity within the Department. Building on LADOT's framework for robust project campaigns for Vision Zero, Active Transportation, and other programs, this initiative will include a central, Department-wide Community Advisory Board, a staff training curriculum for a community-first engagement model, multilingual and gender-inclusive resources for all staff, and program support for more coordinated engagement.

This initiative will implement key recommendations of *Changing Lanes* to standardize and expand data collection to consistently include gender, demographic, and socioeconomic metrics. It will also establish a community-representative body empowered to contribute to departmental processes.

Play Streets

LADOT's Play Streets program is designed to serve the needs of kids, their families, and caregivers—who are often women—by providing safe spaces for play in communities with limited access to parks and open space. Play Streets are community-driven events where LADOT partners with local

organizations to temporarily close streets to cars and transform them into public spaces using the Play Streets Box of Play, a mobile set of adaptable play objects designed for all ages. Play Streets is a pilot program with events most recently in Boyle Heights, MacArthur Park, and Panorama City in 2021-22. LADOT is currently working to expand the program Citywide and develop a sustained, equitable application-based process that prioritizes park-poor communities.

Next Steps

Changing Lanes outlined recommendations for action but was primarily a data collection effort. Developing a comprehensive action plan is a key next step. The department initiated a partnership with Kounkuey Design Initiative, Inc. (KDI) to create a Gender Equity Action Plan. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded a grant directly to KDI to fund the project. This project will include an internal equity audit, partner agency and community member input, pilot project implementation, and a final Action Plan roadmap to operationalize gender-equitable mobility.

Pending the Action Plan, LADOT recommends expanding the following programs to advance the gender equity goals of the department:

- On-Demand Stop Program: Resources for additional marketing, promotion, and route planning will allow LADOT to scale the On-Demand Stop pilot program to all Community DASH routes and grow participation and awareness.
- Play Streets: LADOT will deliver Play Street programs in at least four new communities by the end of calendar year 2023. Additional resources for consultant services, planning, and materials would allow LADOT to expand the program to more underserved communities across Los Angeles.

In addition to the near-term expansion of these existing programs, LADOT is in the planning process for a “Promotora” program and anticipates launching a pilot this fiscal year. Promotoras are on-board and in-community mobility ambassadors who can share information and resources to help people access mobility services. If successful, LADOT will expand the program in following fiscal years.

Resource & Staffing Needs

Staffing remains one of the most significant barriers to expanding equity initiatives. Dedicated staff time and resources are a necessary and missing component to create sustained processes that weave gender and racial equity into the fabric of the Department. In addition to building capacity, LADOT is making efforts to increase gender and racial representation among staff through targeted outreach and recruitment.

In the FY 22-23 Budget process, LADOT requested authorization for three new positions (one Supervising Transportation Planner and two Transportation Planning Associates) that would support the development and integration of gender and racial equity-driven programs throughout the Department. Those positions remain unfunded and LADOT will resubmit them in the upcoming FY 23-24 budget cycle.

Foundational steps such as expanded data collection, baseline metrics, and data-informed prioritization methods depend on having fully-staffed teams with sufficient IT and data analyst support.

To expand the Play Streets program, LADOT will also need additional resources. Play Streets has \$500,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in FY 22-23, and can leverage Open Street funding if available, but the program needs a sustained local funding source to serve communities on a citywide scale.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no impact to the General Fund at this time. The estimated cost for three new positions outlined in this report may have an impact to the General Fund. Through the budget process, LADOT will define staff positions and salaries that would impact the General Fund.

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