

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: November 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: **NEXTGEN BUS STUDY / OPERATIONAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS /
RELIABLE SERVICE**

SUMMARY

In response to direction in Council File (CF) 19-0885, this report provides an update on the NextGen Bus Speed Engineering Working Group, a joint effort between the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro). The joint working group has implemented dedicated bus lanes on priority corridors and is beginning community engagement on additional corridors.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council RECEIVE and FILE this report.

BACKGROUND

On September 17, 2019, Council directed LADOT to convene a monthly NextGen Bus Working Group (Working Group) with Metro and provide quarterly updates to the Transportation Committee, starting in October 2019. The working group is responsible for developing a list of priority bus-supportive infrastructure projects to support Metro's NextGen bus service plan, with an emphasis on near-term improvements implemented concurrently with each phase of NextGen.

Starting in October, 2019, the working group has been meeting regularly to identify and prioritize corridors for infrastructure improvements, develop project scopes, and determine outreach strategies. LADOT will continue to provide quarterly updates on the coordination to the Council.

In May, 2020, LADOT provided a report to Council outlining community outreach for proposed projects on 5th, 6th, and Aliso streets in Downtown and identified Olive and Grand as recommended corridors for consideration of dedicated bus lane projects.

In December, 2020, LADOT provided a report to Council outlining completed bus lane implementation along Flower Street, 5th Street, 6th Street, and Aliso Street, as well as planned public outreach for bus lanes on Grand Avenue, Olive Street, and Alvarado Street.

In September, 2021 LADOT provided a report to Council with an update on all projects to date, and announced plans for community engagement for peak-hour dedicated bus lanes on La Brea Ave.

In June, 2022, LADOT provided a report to Council with an update on all projects to date, and announced plans for community engagement for peak-hour dedicated bus lanes on Florence Ave.

This report provides an update on all ongoing projects and identifies corridors the working group is currently conducting community engagement for.

DISCUSSION

The Working Group identified several ways to improve bus speed and reliability throughout the City. The NextGen Bus Plan identifies eligible corridors, while the Working Group recommends tools based on the specific needs of each corridor. The Working Group initially focused on corridors in Downtown Los Angeles where many bus lines begin and end, and has since identified additional corridors outside Downtown to conduct outreach on proposed projects. Bus speed and reliability is increasingly critical as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and the need for mobility options rise.

Since the June, 2022 report, the following projects are advancing in varying stages between preliminary scoping and implementation. Additional information on each project is also available in the attached Metro Board report.

Phase 1: Downtown Los Angeles

The Working Group identified priority corridors to focus initial infrastructure improvements in Downtown Los Angeles. Status updates for ongoing project corridors are provided below.

5th Street Queue Jumper

LADOT will implement the queue jumper at Flower Street and 5th Street in coordination with on-going construction associated with the Regional Connector. This improvement will allow a smooth transition for buses at the intersection from the dedicated bus lane.

Phase 2: Citywide bus speed and reliability improvements

While the Working Group focused initial efforts on bus only lanes in Downtown Los Angeles to improve speed and reliability on the vast number of routes that begin, end, or pass through these streets, improved service citywide requires treatments across the City's most transit dependent corridors. The working group is advancing the following priority projects.

Alvarado Street Peak-hour Bus Only Lanes

LADOT and Metro completed the first phase of Alvarado between 7th Street and US-101 Freeway in June 2021. The Alvarado project converted existing peak-hour travel lanes to dedicated bus lanes that operate weekdays from 7-10 am Southbound and 3-7 pm Northbound. These dedicated bus lanes increase bus frequency along the corridor from approximately 10 minutes to seven minutes, and reduce travel time by three minutes in each direction.

LADOT is coordinating with Caltrans to permit the second phase of implementation on Alvarado. The second phase of Alvarado Street extends the existing project from the US-101 north to Sunset Boulevard. Additional requirements in the permitting process have delayed construction on this segment, which is now anticipated for December, 2022.

La Brea Peak-hour Bus Only Lanes

In June, 2022, LADOT reported that the technical working group determined feasibility for peak-hour dedicated bus lanes on La Brea Avenue between Sunset Boulevard and Coliseum Street. These bus lanes will improve bus service while maintaining all parking during parking hours, with minimal traffic delay. La Brea is the working group's longest proposed project to date, spanning nearly six miles that cross three Council Districts and the City of West Hollywood. Due to its length and complexity, implementation is planned in two phases. LADOT will begin implementing peak-hour bus lanes from Sunset Boulevard to Olympic Boulevard in December 2022.

Converting the existing peak-hour lanes on La Brea will double the frequency of bus arrivals and provide significant time savings on every trip. It will better connect residents to the Metro E (Expo) Line, the eventual Metro D (Purple) Line, and services along La Brea. In addition to improving bus service for riders, dedicated bus lanes reduce conflicts between vehicles and improve pedestrian safety. Based on sociodemographic ridership information collected by Metro along the corridor, nine in 10 riders on La Brea are people of color, three in four do not own a car and rely on bus service, and four in 10 live below the poverty line. The project maintains loading zones, existing parking, and ADA parking throughout the rest of the day and on weekends.

The External Affairs working group will continue project engagement on the phase two segment of La Brea from Olympic to Coliseum, where existing conditions make the bus lane critical for service, but may also require additional treatments. LADOT and Metro are committed to evaluating any potential for adverse impacts of this project, including neighborhood cut-through traffic, and identifying appropriate treatments to mitigate those impacts.

Florence Avenue Peak-hour Bus Only Lanes

The External Affairs working group began community engagement on the Florence Avenue project in June, 2022. The Florence Avenue project spans 5.8 miles between West Boulevard and the Florence A (Blue) Line Station in unincorporated Los Angeles County. The proposed project converts peak-hour travel lanes to peak-hour bus only lanes and extends the parking restriction by one hour in the morning and afternoon.

There are 16,678 total daily bus boardings on Florence Avenue. According to rider surveys, 88% of transit users along Florence Avenue do not own or have access to cars; 93% are black, indigenous, or people of color; and 60% live below the poverty line. The proposed project would include 15% travel time savings for transit riders, resulting in an end-to-end trip lasting 25 minutes during morning peak hours, and 29 minutes in the afternoon peak hours.

Florence Avenue is also a Vision Zero Priority Corridor between Crenshaw Boulevard and Central Avenue. Between 2010 and 2019, 115 crashes on this corridor resulted in death or serious injury. Nearly 50% of those crashes involved pedestrians or bicyclists. Converting the existing peak-hour travel lanes to dedicated bus lanes will improve safety for all road users along the corridor.

Metro is conducting outreach with local stakeholders through public meetings, direct outreach with local businesses, and bus rider surveys along the corridor. Metro also has a constituent portal for community engagement via email, phone, and live website.

LADOT, Metro, and StreetsLA are working together to incorporate street resurfacing into project delivery on Florence Avenue. Community engagement continues during this coordination.

Venice Boulevard Bus Only Lanes and Parking-Protected Bike Lanes

LADOT, in collaboration with Metro, StreetsLA (SLA), Council Districts 5 and 11, and local stakeholders, is also taking advantage of a repaving opportunity to advance a new street design for Venice Boulevard. This regional corridor, which provides critical connections from other neighborhoods to the beach, is also on the City's High Injury Network, and a key route of travel for the upcoming 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, expected to host events at Venice Beach. The bus improvements, coupled with other LADOT street safety treatments, will help increase speed and reliability for bus riders, make roads safer for cyclists and pedestrians and increase efficiency for vehicles.

SLA resurfaced Venice from Motor to Culver in 2020, and from National to Fairfax in 2022. Additional resurfacing from Tuller to Motor scheduled for December 2022 brings Venice Boulevard into good pavement condition from Lincoln to National, providing an opportunity to redesign the corridor when it is restriped to upgrade the existing bike facility to a parking protected bike lane and add a bus only lane.

Metro's Line 33, which operates along Venice Boulevard, also serves a critical, transit dependent community, carrying more than 19,000 daily riders that are predominantly transit-dependent, low-income, people of color: 93% are BIPOC, 84% earn less than \$50,000 per year, and 82% do not own a vehicle. Metro anticipates a 15% decrease in end-to-end travel times with dedicated bus lanes.

LADOT and Metro evaluated the technical feasibility of dedicated bus lanes and parking-protected bike lanes on Venice Boulevard, and created a comprehensive design from Lincoln to Culver. Community engagement on the proposed design began in June 2022. Outreach included a public survey with nearly 1,800 respondents, over 14,000 mailers to residents and business, business canvassing, event tabling at over a dozen events, neighborhood council and community presentations, and a virtual open house with more than 350 participants. Of the nearly 1,800 survey responses, approximately 74% were from zip codes directly along the project corridor. Survey responses were consistently positive:

- 57% of all responders support upgrading the existing bike lanes to parking-protected bike lanes.
- 85% of current bike riders are more likely to bike if all of Venice Blvd had a protected bike lane. (851 responses)
- 44% of all people would be more likely to ride the bus along the corridor with the addition of a bus-only lane. (1,633 responses)
- 77% of current bus riders are more likely to ride the bus more frequently if Venice Boulevard had a dedicated bus lane. (204 responses)

To minimize travel delay as much as possible, LADOT will also implement new double left turn lanes at the intersections of Venice and Sepulveda, and at Venice and Sawtelle, and maintain three vehicle travel lanes approaching the I-405 freeway. Final traffic analysis suggests the project segment could experience end-to-end peak-hour delay ranging from 21 to 218 seconds (3.6 minutes). LADOT will

continue to monitor and evaluate cut-through traffic on surrounding neighborhood streets, and has dedicated funding to implement traffic diversion treatments as needed.

In December, LADOT plans to begin implementation on Venice Boulevard from Inglewood Avenue to Culver Boulevard. Implementation will be coordinated with StreetsLA's scheduled resurfacing along the corridor. LADOT will continue design and engagement on the proposed project from Beethoven to Lincoln. This second phase would be coordinated with future resurfacing work that could allow the project to extend to Venice Beach. LADOT and Metro will work with stakeholders, including the Mar Vista and Venice Neighborhood Councils.

Sepulveda Boulevard Bus Only Lanes

The Sepulveda Boulevard (Line 234) Bus Priority Lanes Project is located along a 5.5-mile segment of Sepulveda Boulevard from Ventura Boulevard and Rayen Street, as well as a 0.9-mile segment along westbound Ventura Boulevard from Vesper Avenue to Sepulveda Boulevard. The project proposes dedicated bus lanes for Metro Line 234 on weekdays during peak hours:

- Both directions on Sepulveda between Magnolia and Rayen from 7am-7pm weekdays
- Northbound-only on Sepulveda between Ventura and Magnolia from 7am-7pm weekdays
- Westbound-only on Ventura between Vesper and Sepulveda from 7-9am weekdays

Metro Line 234 serves 12,000 riders daily, providing important connections to the Sepulveda G Line (Orange) Station, Sherman Oaks Galleria, Valley Presbyterian Hospital and other local destinations. Over 80% of bus riders using Line 234 are people of color, nine in 10 live in households earning less than \$50,000 annually, and nearly six in 10 are below the poverty line.

LADOT is facilitating planning efforts with the City of Los Angeles Mayor's Office, Metro staff, and City Council Districts 4 and 6 to identify the specific stakeholders and businesses along this corridor that Metro can engage. Local stakeholders were invited to a community event that took place on November 10, 2022, and additional outreach is ongoing.

Next Steps

LADOT and Metro will continue meeting regularly to identify and prioritize the next phase of corridors and appropriate treatments. Prioritization will be based on bus service frequency, demand, existing traffic volumes, and safety concerns, and will be presented to Council in a future update report.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

CL:DM:mr