DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING
RECOMMENDATION REPORT

Department of Transportation  Reference  10-2385-S1,
Council File  10-2385-S2
Nos.:  
CEQA No.:  ENV-2013-878-SE
Council No.:  1-Reyes, 13-Garcetti
Plan Area:  Central City North
            Central City
            Silverlake/Echo
            Park/Elysian Valley

Date:  April 1, 2013
Public Hearing:  Public Hearing held
                February 14, 2013

PROJECT LOCATION

The project area is located in portions of the Central City North, Central City, and
Silverlake/Echo Park/Elysian Valley Community Plans. The project is located in the
public right-of-way along Sunset Boulevard bounded by N. Figueroa Street to the east
and Douglas Street to the west. The project area is directly east of existing bicycle lanes
along Sunset Boulevard and west of the proposed peak-hour bicycle-transit-only lanes
that are included as part of the First Year of the First Five Year Implementation Strategy
of the 2010 Bicycle Plan.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The Proposed Project is part of 40.4 miles of new bicycle lanes proposed as part of the
First-Year of the First Five Year Implementation Strategy of the 2010 Bicycle Plan. The
Proposed Project implements several programs of the 2010 Bicycle Plan, which include
completion of a backbone bicycle network and the facilitation of both bicycle and bus
service on transit/bikeway priority streets. The Proposed Project consist of 0.9 miles of
new bicycle lanes (including 0.76 miles of peak-period bicycle-transit-only lanes from
Elysian Park Avenue to N. Figueroa Street and 0.14 of standard bicycle lanes from
Elysian Park Avenue to Douglas Street) that would be striped along Sunset Boulevard
within the existing right-of-way (Table 1). Figure 1 shows the location of the proposed
new bicycle lanes in relation to the existing bicycle lanes.

The Proposed Project would include restriping only. No excavation or construction is
contemplated in connection with the proposed bicycle lanes. Implementation of the
proposed bicycle lanes would not change access to existing facilities and properties. A
maximum of 10 existing on-street parking spaces could be eliminated.

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1 A Draft EIR was prepared and made available on January 17th, 2013 that evaluated the traffic and safety impacts of
39.5 miles proposed bicycle lanes not including the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project was introduced later
after the release of the Draft EIR and was evaluated in a separate Traffic and Safety Assessment pursuant to the
procedures of Section 21080.20.5 of the Public Resource Code (PRC).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street / Facility Type</th>
<th>Limits</th>
<th>Length (miles)</th>
<th>Area/Connection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W. Sunset Blvd. / peak-period bicycle-transit-only lanes</td>
<td>N. Figueroa St. to Elysian Park Ave.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>Echo Park/City Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Sunset Blvd. / standard bicycle lanes</td>
<td>Elysian Park Ave. to Douglas St.</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>Echo Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>Echo Park/City Center</td>
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**SOURCE**: City of Los Angeles, LADOT, 2012.

The Proposed Project would involve the elimination of peak-period motor vehicle lanes in each direction along West Sunset Boulevard between North Figueroa Street and Elysian Park Avenue and eliminate no more than 10 parking spaces between Elysian Park Avenue and Douglas Street. Due to the high frequency and volume of buses on Sunset Boulevard the Proposed Project would incorporate peak-period bicycle-transit-only lanes in lieu of standard bike lanes from Elysian Park Avenue to North Figueroa Street. These peak-period lanes would permit the use of the Dodger Stadium shuttle buses before and after game time. Signage and pavement markings would help indicate, to bicyclists and bus operators as well as drivers, appropriate use and restrictions of the peak-period bicycle-transit-only lanes.

The implementation of Proposed Project would result in greater bicycle network benefits by connecting to the existing standard bicycle lanes (along Sunset Boulevard further to the west), thereby facilitating inviting and safe bicycle travel from the neighborhoods of Silver Lake, Echo Park, Elysian Valley, Angelino Heights, all the way into the Central City area. This connection would be further facilitated by a continuation of the peak-period bicycle-transit-only lanes proposed as part of the First-Year of the First Five Year Implementation Strategy along West Cesar E. Chavez Avenue east of North Figueroa Street where the existing bicycle lane currently terminates.

**REQUESTED ACTIONS**

1. That the Department of Transportation (LADOT) install 0.9 miles of new bicycle lanes (including 0.76 miles of peak-period bicycle-transit-only lanes from Elysian Park Avenue to N. Figueroa Street and 0.14 of standard bicycle lanes from Elysian Park Avenue to Douglas Street) along Sunset Boulevard between N. Figueroa Street and Douglas Street in accordance with the 2010 Bicycle Plan.

2. That the Department of Transportation (LADOT) determine that the 0.9 miles of new bicycle lanes and peak-period bicycle-transit-only lanes along Sunset Boulevard between N. Figueroa Street and Douglas Street is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Public Resource Code (PRC) Section 21080.20.5.
Figure 1 - Project Location

- **Blue** proposed bike lanes (Sunset)
- **Green** proposed bike lanes (1st year)
- **Red** existing bike lanes
- **Yellow** existing bike paths

Source: SWITRS, LADOT Bike Program
BACKGROUND

2010 Bicycle Plan Implementation

The City of Los Angeles adopted the 2010 Bicycle Plan (Bicycle Plan) on March 1, 2011. The Bicycle Plan identifies a 1,684-mile bikeway system and includes a comprehensive collection of programs and policies.

The Bicycle Plan establishes the Five-Year Implementation Strategy as a logical process to design, analyze and build 1,227 miles on the Backbone and Neighborhood Networks in five-year increments within the next 35 years. Program 1.1.2 C of the 2010 Bicycle Plan calls for funding and construction of at least 200 miles of on-street bicycle facilities on the Backbone and Neighborhood Networks every five years until the networks are complete.

At the time of adoption, the bicycle lanes included in the 2010 Bicycle Plan were in various stages of planning. Some were well defined but others required additional study to determine exact routes and/or roadway design. To the extent that impacts of the Bicycle Plan could be analyzed they were addressed in a Mitigated Negative Declaration. However, as some bicycle lanes are further defined it has become apparent that some require additional analysis because the implementation could potentially impact travel delay. In general, bicycle lanes typically have the potential to significantly impact traffic (as well as related environmental issues such as air quality) if the result is a loss of a travel lane in a high-traffic area, or the loss of a parking lane adjacent to land uses without off-street parking available. The implementation of the Proposed Project would require the removal/reallocation of mixed-flow travel lanes and a limited amount of on-street parking and as such would potentially result in travel delay requiring further traffic and safety analysis.

Statutory Exemption Requirements

On September 2012, Governor Brown signed Assembly Bill (AB) 2245 (adding Section 21080.20.5 to the Public Resources Code (PRC)), which allows (through January 1, 2018) a Statutory Exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the striping of new bicycle lanes on existing urban streets that are lanes included in an adopted bicycle transportation plan.

Projects eligible for the statutory exemption must still assess project-related traffic and safety impacts and identify traffic and safety mitigation measures where available, hold noticed public hearings in areas affected by the project, and respond to public comments.

DISCUSSION

It was determined that the Proposed Project qualified for the Statutory Exemption and therefore the City initiated a traffic and safety assessment, identified mitigation measures, and held a public hearing.
Traffic and Safety Assessment

The Traffic and Safety Assessment concluded that the implementation of the proposed bicycle lanes would result in a significant and unavoidable impact due to travel delay, potentially causing an increase to Level of Service (LOS) F in the AM and PM peak hours from LOS E for the two intersections studied along Sunset Boulevard. Traffic impacts on parallel facilities resulting from trip redistribution is not expected since parallel arterial streets along this portion of Sunset Boulevard are not available to serve the same trip purpose to attract cut-through traffic.

Traffic impacts from the proposed bicycle lanes are expected to be aggravated during Dodger baseball season. However, in order to facilitate bus access to Dodger’s Stadium during peak travel times, the proposed bicycle lanes would incorporate peak-period bicycle-transit-only lanes in lieu of standard bike lanes from Elysian Park Avenue to N. Figueroa Street to continue to effectively facilitate this bus service to Dodger Stadium.

The Traffic and Safety Assessment found there to be either less than significant impacts or no impacts to parking, transit, General Plan consistency and emergency access.

The Proposed Project could cause a net decrease in no more than 10 parking spaces on Sunset Boulevard between Elysian Park Avenue and Douglas Street. The Traffic and Safety Assessment found there to be a mix of off-street parking supply and nearby on-street parking sufficient to compensate for the spaces lost due to the bicycle lane striping.

Due to the high frequency and volume of buses on Sunset Boulevard and the effective reduction of mixed-flow lanes, the project would add a peak-period bicycle-transit-only lane from Elysian Park Avenue to N. Figueroa Street. This bicycle-transit-only lane would reduce the transit travel time, within this segment, during the peak hours of travel demand.

With the implementation of the proposed bicycle lanes, it is anticipated that bicyclists would benefit from improved safety due to the designation of a clear right-of-way for their use.

The Traffic and Safety Assessment found that the Proposed bicycle lanes would improve bicycle accessibility, connectivity, and safety, and would encourage bicycle use (potentially resulting in improved health of the population), and would not decrease the safety of bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit riders. Rather, the proposed bicycle lanes would significantly improve bicycle safety, as well as safety for all road users by extending bicycle lanes along Sunset Boulevard.

Mitigation Measures

The Traffic and Safety Assessment recommended the following mitigation measures to reduce impacts to traffic circulation:

**MM T1:** LADOT will adjust traffic signal timing after the implementation of the proposed bicycle lanes (both along project routes and parallel roadways if traffic diversions have occurred as a result of the proposed bicycle lanes). Signal timing adjustment could reduce traffic impacts at impacted intersections. (LADOT routinely makes traffic signal timing changes and
signal optimization on an as-needed basis to accommodate the changes in traffic volumes to reduce congestion and delay in the City.)

**MM T2:** The City shall implement appropriate Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures in the City of Los Angeles including potential trip-reducing measures such as bike share strategies, bike parking, expansion of car share programs near high density areas, bus stop improvements (e.g. shelters and “next bus” technologies), crosswalk improvements, pedestrian wayfinding signage, etc. (Such improvements shall also be required of private projects in the project area as part of the review and approval process.)

The Traffic and Safety Assessment recommended the following mitigation measure to reduce impacts from the construction phase:

**MM T3:** Construction activities will be managed through the implementation of a traffic control plan to mitigate the impact of traffic disruption and to ensure the safety of all users of the affected roadway. The plan will extend for the duration of construction and could include such measures as a temporary traffic signal or the use of flagmen as appropriate.

The Traffic and Safety Assessment recommended the following mitigation measure to reduce impacts related to the safety of the transportation system:

**MM T4:** Prior to the implementation of bicycle-transit-only lanes, safety training and information sessions shall be conducted for bus drivers and the members of Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition. The training information sessions would involve, but not be limited to, educating drivers and bicyclists about giving equal weight and equal responsibility for each other’s safety within shared right-of-ways.

**Public Hearing**

The Department of City Planning (DCP) held a total of four public hearings for the proposed bicycle lanes included in the First Year of the First Five-Year Implementation Strategy. The hearings were located in areas affected by the proposed bicycle lanes as required by PRC Section 21080.20.5 (b)(2). For the purposes of the public hearing, the Proposed Project was included with the other proposed bicycle lanes in the First Year of the First Five-Year Implementation Strategy that were proposed in the central area of the City. The DCP held this public hearing on February 14, 2013 at the District 7 Caltrans Building on 100 S. Main Street. 78 members of the public attended the public hearing. At the hearing, LADOT and DCP staff were available to present the Proposed Project, and summarized the results of the Traffic and Safety Assessment as described above. Additionally, one webinar public hearing was held on February 20th where interested public could provide feedback on all of the proposed bicycle lanes in the First Year of the First Five-Year Implementation Strategy.

A Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Traffic and Safety Assessment and Public Hearing was included in the January 17th, 2013 edition of the Los Angeles Times in compliance with Section 21080.20.5 (b)(2) of the PRC. Additionally, notices were sent to multiple
public agencies and organizations including Metro, the City Council offices and neighborhood councils with jurisdiction in the area. Notices were also distributed electronically to over 1,400 individuals who were either participants involved in the adoption of the 2010 Bicycle Plan or have been involved in the implementation process. Hard copies of the Traffic and Safety Assessment were made available at the Edendale Branch Library, 2011 W. Sunset Blvd., as well as the City Clerk Vault, and the Department of City Planning offices in City Hall. An electronic copy of the Traffic and Safety Assessment was made available on the Department of City Planning website, and information about the electronic copy was included on the notices described above.

**Summary of Public Hearing Testimony and Communications**

Of the 78 people attending the public hearing, 47 people gave verbal testimony during the hearing and five submitted written comments at the hearing. Of the 47 people who gave verbal testimony, 44 people spoke in support of implementing the bicycle lanes in the First Year of the First Five-Year Implementation Strategy in the Central Area, which included the Proposed Project. In addition to those present at the public hearing, six comments were submitted after the public hearing that addressed the Proposed Project. Of the letters received, all six were in favor of the Proposed Project.

The comments favorable about the Proposed Project stated that the proposed bicycle lanes would create safer riding conditions by allocating space for the bicyclist whereas, currently bicyclists must contend with mixed-flow traffic or are forced to ride on the sidewalk. The comments also indicate that the Proposed Project would provide a much needed connection between Downtown Los Angeles and the existing bicycle lanes in Echo Park, improve access to destinations, and result in traffic calming attributed to the revised roadway allocation. The comments stated that these benefits would outweigh the cost of increases in travel delay that would result from the Proposed Project.

The Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition (LACBC) stated that this addition to the Sunset Boulevard bicycle lanes is a high priority as it fills in a network gap that creates a complete corridor between Los Feliz and Downtown, and further emphasizes that existing conditions are unsafe for bicyclists, especially during the PM peak traffic period.

The LACBC letter also expressed that the bicycle-transit-only lanes are less preferable than conventional bicycle lanes; however, it is a reasonable compromise along this busy corridor to accommodate Metro buses and the Dodger’s game shuttle.

Another comment took issue with the safety analysis presented in the Traffic and Safety Assessment, in that that the safety improvement data appeared to greatly underestimate the monetary values of injury types from collisions. Footnote 6 on page 15 of the Traffic and Safety Assessment gave the following estimates of monetary values of respective injury types: Fatality ($140,301), Severe Injury ($7,560), Other Visible Injury ($2,765), and Complaint of Pain ($1,572).\(^2\) Follow up correspondence with UC Berkeley staff that were involved in compiling cost data confirmed that the monetary values of respective injury types were higher than reported in the Traffic and

\(^2\) The Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS) cost estimates of collisions were developed for Caltrans Division of Local Assistance grant applications.
Safety Assessment.\(^3\) In response, the revised estimates of monetary values of respective injury types are corrected as follows: Fatality ($4,000,900), Severe Injury ($216,000), Other Visible Injury ($79,000), and Complaint of Pain ($44,900). These revised figures demonstrate substantial safety benefit expressed in monetary terms of installing bicycle lanes.

The same commenter also found fault that the bicycle collision heat map in Figure 2 of the Traffic and Safety Assessment was not informative enough to give readers information about the amount of collisions that occur within the project limits. The heat map was developed to show citywide trends regarding bicycle collisions. According to the Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS) developed by UC Berkeley, this portion of Sunset Boulevard had 50 collisions and 1 fatality of bicyclists and pedestrians between 2001 and 2010,\(^4\) which is ranked the fourth highest in collisions/fatalities per mile per year of all the street segments evaluated in the First Year of the First-Five Year Implementation Strategy.

The commenter also stated that the level of service benefits of the Proposed Project is not addressed by the traditional level of service methodology that gives greater weight to vehicle movement through an intersection rather than people. The comment explains that the peak-period bicycle-transit-only lanes will likely lead to improved operational transit performance above the existing conditions, where buses have to contend with other vehicles in the mixed-flow lanes during peak-periods. The Traffic and Safety Assessment verifies that the bicycle-transit-only lane would reduce the transit travel time, within this segment, during the peak hours of travel demand. Alternative level of service methodologies advanced by the commenter are not currently available, however the City is currently evaluating the application of alternative levels of service metrics similar to those addressed by the comment.

Concerns were raised by the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) related to installing bicycle-transit-only lanes along Cesar Chavez Avenue (east of the Proposed Project). The comment was not addressed in reference to the Traffic and Safety Assessment prepared for the Proposed Project; however, a response is included here since the Proposed Project would be similar in nature to what is proposed for Cesar Chavez Avenue. The comment expresses concern that the bus volume on Cesar Chavez Avenue may exceed the bus volumes found in other cities where bicycle-transit-only lanes (also known as shared bus bike lanes (SSBLs)) have been implemented. The comment references guidelines developed from A Summary of Design, Policies and Operational Characteristics for Shared Bicycle/Bus Lanes (SSBL Summary) developed by the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT).\(^5\) The guidelines documented many applications of SSBLs both in the United States and other countries. The comment references a guideline in Ottawa that suggests buses and bicycles should be separated in locations with more than 20 buses per hour. While the City of Ottawa

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\(^3\) Correspondence with TIMS staff on January 22, 2013.

\(^4\) Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS) developed by the University of California, Berkeley. [http://www.tims.berkeley.edu/](http://www.tims.berkeley.edu/).

appears to have established a recommended upper bus volume limit when establishing SSBLs, the SSBL Summary also states that high bus volumes need not preclude SSBLs. It should also be noted that the Proposed Project along Sunset Boulevard has much lower bus volumes than the area of concern addressed by the comment, which is the portion of Cesar Chavez adjacent to Union Station.

However, the Florida DOT SBBL Summary demonstrates that SSBLs are applied in a wide variety of context including dense urban areas, similar to conditions along Sunset Boulevard, as well as busy arterials or state highways in more rural areas. For instance, the SBBL Summary documents the established use of SBBLs in cities with higher bus volumes than the Ottawa guidelines such as Philadelphia, Minneapolis and Seattle as well as dense areas of the UK where space constraints prohibit exclusive bicycle lanes in addition to bus-only lanes. Bus volumes in the UK would likely be very high as bus ridership constitutes nearly 50 percent of the modal share of road traffic. A 2004 study reported that bicyclists prefer riding in bus-only lanes in the UK as opposed to mixed flow lanes as they are perceived to be safer than riding in between a bus-only lane and a mixed-flow lane. Results of another UK survey found that most bicyclists perceive safety benefits in riding in a bus-only lane and would rather ride in a narrow bus-only lane than a standard mixed flow lane. The SBBL documents examples of typical conflicts between bicycles and busses in SBBLs; however, there has been no documentation of increased risk to bicyclists from riding in bus-only lanes in comparison to standard bicycle lanes, and bus collisions would be less than in mixed-flow lanes where most collisions are with cars.

Furthermore, it is neither consistent with the California Vehicle Code (CVC) nor within City policy to exclude bicycles from curb-adjacent bus-only lanes. Under Section 21200 of the CVC, bicycles are permitted within all lanes. Additionally, Section 21202 of the CVC requires bicycles to ride as far to the right-hand curb as practical, and Section 21654 of the CVC requires slower moving vehicles to travel in the right-hand lane or as close as practical to the right-hand curb. An agency cannot require a bicyclist to ride between two moving lanes of faster moving vehicles when the bicycle is the slower moving vehicle. The 2010 Bicycle Plan formalizes this in a policy to develop bicycle-transit-only bicycle lane standards to accommodate bicyclists and install appropriate signage and on-street markings. As such, the installation of the peak-period bicycle-transit-only lanes along Sunset Boulevard implements a program of the 2010 Bicycle Plan.

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6 ibid. Page 67  
10 ibid. Page 19  
11 ibid. page 18  
12 ibid. page 10
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the completion of the publication of the Traffic and Safety Assessment, the inclusion of mitigation measures and the holding of a public hearing, the DCP recommends that LADOT find that the City is in compliance with Section 21080.20.5 of the PRC, and therefore determine that the Proposed Project is not subject to Division 13 of the PRC, also known as CEQA. Based on the conclusions of the Traffic and Safety Assessment, the safety improvement benefits of building out the bicycle network, and the role the Proposed project plays in implementing the goals and policies of the 2010 Bicycle Plan, the DCP recommends that LADOT act to move forward with the implementation of the 0.9 mile bicycle lanes and peak-period bicycle-transit only lanes along Sunset Boulevard between N. Figueroa Street and Douglas Street.

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