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January 2, 2014

Dr. Barry Pressman, Chair  
Santa Monica Boulevard Blue Ribbon Committee  
c/o City of Beverly Hills, Transportation Planning  
455 North Rexford Drive  
Beverly Hills, California 90210

via electronic mail: [SMBLVD@beverlyhills.org](mailto:SMBLVD@beverlyhills.org)

### **Inclusion of Bike Lanes in Santa Monica Boulevard Reconstruction**

Dear Dr. Pressman and Committee Members:

The Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition (LACBC) is the region's principal nonprofit advocacy organization working to make communities throughout Los Angeles County healthy, safe and fun places to ride a bike. LACBC has worked with cities all over the county to advise on a combination of engineering, education, enforcement and encouragement strategies, including a presentation to city leaders, staff and the public in Beverly Hills on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012. LACBC is also working closely with the Westside Cities Council of Governments to develop a regional bikeshare system and implement the WSCCOG's proposed Priority Bicycle Facilities Corridors.<sup>1</sup> Santa Monica Boulevard is one of five high priority corridors identified by WSCCOG to create a regional bike network on the Westside. Santa Monica Boulevard is also the alignment for U.S. Bicycle Route 66, a project of the U.S. Department of Transportation and Adventure Cycling Association, coordinated locally by the Southern California Association of Governments.<sup>2</sup> West Hollywood, Los Angeles and Santa Monica have all invested in bike lanes along the Santa Monica Boulevard corridor, leaving the longest gap through Beverly Hills. The Santa Monica Boulevard Reconstruction Project will close this gap, if bike lanes are included.

### **Demand for Bike Lanes is Increasing Nationally and Locally**

Cities across the United States are working to meet growing demand for safe bicycle facilities as more people take to bicycling for trips to work, school and around town. Nationally, bicycle commuting is up 47% over the past decade. However, in communities that invested in bicycling and were recognized as Bicycle Friendly Communities<sup>3</sup>, bicycle commuting increased by 80% over the same time. In most of these communities, bike lanes were a primary strategy for encouraging bicycling.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.westsidocities.org/COGnews/ApprovedCorridors\\_031512.pdf](http://www.westsidocities.org/COGnews/ApprovedCorridors_031512.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://adventurecycling.org/routes-and-maps/us-bicycle-route-system/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bikeleague.org/bfa>



National data reflects broad trends, but local data tells an even more compelling story. LACBC conducts biannual counts of bicyclists and pedestrians in the City of Los Angeles. In 2011 and 2013, LACBC included count locations on Santa Monica Boulevard in Beverly Hills. In just two years, the number of bicyclists counted on Santa Monica Boulevard increased 47%.<sup>4</sup> The vast majority of this increase occurred during the afternoon peak period (4:00 PM to 6:00 PM) when the boulevard is most congested with automobile traffic. Bike lanes will provide an additional lane to accommodate this increase in bicycle volume while reducing friction for motor vehicles by reducing the need to change lanes to pass safely, helping traffic flow as smoothly as possible.

### **Bike Lanes Improve Safety for All Travelers**

Bike lanes have significant benefits for everyone who travels along a street.<sup>5</sup> Bike lanes:

- Provide clear and predictable paths of travel for all road users;
- Reduce conflicts between drivers and bicyclists traveling at different speeds;<sup>6</sup>
- Allow right-turning vehicles to pull out of the flow of traffic while slowing down to turn;
- Provide space for emergency vehicles to maneuver around stopped traffic;
- Increase the buffer between moving traffic and pedestrians or transit users on the side of the road; and
- Reduce both the frequency and severity of collisions for all travelers.

The benefits of bike lanes are so overwhelming that they are among the most cost-effective safety countermeasures endorsed by the Federal Highway Administration. On arterials with 30 to 40 mile-per-hour traffic, a 5-foot bike lane minimum is recommended, or 6-foot if there is on-street parking. Enhancements such as buffered or colored bike lanes are becoming commonplace in cities looking to further increase comfort and safety for bicyclists and drivers.

In Los Angeles County, 47% of all trips are less than three miles—a distance easily walked or biked if people felt safe and comfortable.<sup>7</sup> Trips that length are no faster to drive than bike in urban areas. Yet bicyclists are overrepresented in traffic fatalities because most streets continue to lack safe accommodations. While 1.4% of trips in Los Angeles County are taken by bicycle, 4.2% of traffic fatalities are people riding.<sup>8</sup> In regions with more advanced bicycle infrastructure, collision rates are much lower, such as in Portland, which just celebrated another year with zero bicyclist fatalities, despite the highest bicycle mode share for a major U.S. city.<sup>9</sup>

Bike lanes are also associated with higher rates of compliance with traffic laws. Bicyclists are expected to ride in the same direction of traffic and follow all the rules of the road applicable to drivers.<sup>10</sup> However, in the absence of safe and comfortable bike infrastructure, bicyclists will often

<sup>4</sup> <http://bikecounts.luskin.ucla.edu/>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/bikesafe/countermeasure.cfm?CM\\_NUM=11](http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/bikesafe/countermeasure.cfm?CM_NUM=11)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.utexas.edu/news/2006/09/18/engineering/>

<sup>7</sup> [http://saferoutescalifornia.org/2012/09/24/19percent\\_lac/](http://saferoutescalifornia.org/2012/09/24/19percent_lac/)

<sup>8</sup> 2010 Statewide Integrated Traffic Reporting System

<sup>9</sup> <http://bikeportland.org/2013/12/31/the-4-biggest-portland-bike-stories-nobody-wrote-in-2013>

<sup>10</sup> <http://la-bike.org/resources/california-bicycle-laws>



bend or break those rules in order to feel safer, even if behaviors like riding against traffic and riding on sidewalks are actually more dangerous. Compounding this problem, in the absence of bike infrastructure, many motorists do not know the laws that bicyclists are expected to follow and will harass or intimidate bicyclists for riding safely and legally in the right lane. These conflicts are significantly reduced when bicyclists and drivers are each provided clear instruction on how to interact safely and courteously. Bike lanes reinforce these safe behaviors by indicating where bicyclists and drivers are each expected to be. Bike lanes are a proven strategy to promote bicycling and improve safety for everyone.

### **Bike Lanes Boost Communities' Health and Local Economy**

Not only do bike lanes increase safety and comfort, they have also been shown to increase local retail sales and improve rates of physical activity. On San Francisco's Valencia Street, 65% of merchants reported that bike lanes had a positive impact on their business more than four years after their installation.<sup>11</sup> A study of Bloor Street in Toronto showed that bicyclists spend more per month than those arriving by car.<sup>12</sup> In the former case, bike lanes were installed at the expense of a car lane ("road diet") while in the latter case, bike lanes would be installed by removing half of the on-street parking in a commercial district. Similar results have been found in cities ranging from Portland to New York City to Memphis to Long Beach here in Los Angeles County. On Santa Monica Boulevard, there is no such tradeoff: bike lanes can be installed without inconveniencing other travelers, allowing Beverly Hills to accrue all the benefits without the costs normally associated with these projects.

LACBC urges the City of Beverly Hills to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to rebuild its section of Santa Monica Boulevard to safely accommodate all who travel on it. The reconstruction project will allow the City to build a beautiful, complete street that is a pleasure to drive, bike or walk along—a boulevard that future generations will be proud of. All signs point to the future growth of bicycling for transportation, for fun, for health, for the environment and any number of reasons. We hope that Beverly Hills will embrace the future with this signature project.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We are happy to provide additional consultation to your committee or city staff. I can be reached at (213) 629-2142 or [eric@la-bike.org](mailto:eric@la-bike.org).

Sincerely,

Eric Bruins  
Planning and Policy Director

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.bikewalk.org/2004conference/sessions/28\\_Business\\_calm/TrafficCalming\\_summary.pdf](http://www.bikewalk.org/2004conference/sessions/28_Business_calm/TrafficCalming_summary.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.cleanairpartnership.org/pdf/bike-lanes-parking.pdf>



cc: The Honorable Henry Waxman, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District  
The Honorable Richard Bloom, 50<sup>th</sup> Assembly District  
The Honorable Ted Lieu, 28<sup>th</sup> Senate District