



WeHoBC
8149 Santa Monica Blvd., #434
West Hollywood, CA 90046
Web: WeHoBike.org,
facebook.com/wehobike
Local Chapter of LACBC



April 28, 2017

Dear Council members:

We appreciate the City's work to make West Hollywood safer for people who bike, and to update the Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility Plan.

Several of our core members served on the 2011 Bicycle Task Force, which researched infrastructure issues and produced a report that included five priority projects: a road diet and bike lanes on Fountain Ave, bike lanes on San Vicente Blvd, bike lanes on Vista/Gardner, bike lanes on Fairfax Ave, and additional bike lanes segments on Santa Monica Blvd. It has been more than five years since that report was issued, but progress has been limited: only two of those projects have been implemented — San Vicente (partially) and Fairfax.

We found it notable — though unsurprising — that only 35% of survey respondents considered our city bicycle friendly, and none believed it was super friendly.

The 2017 Ped + Bike Mobility Plan includes many improvements for cyclists, including a greenway on Willoughby and eight bike lanes (including additional segments on San Vicente). However, it does not include a single bicycle lane in its priority projects and it falls well short of the 2011 Bicycle Task Force's recommendations. Most notably, it does not include any definite east/west bike lanes from Kings Rd to La Brea.

As you review the Pedestrian & Bicycle Mobility plan, we urge you to accept the following revisions:

- **Vista/Gardner:** Making these bike lanes a near-term Priority Project
- **Fountain Avenue:** A traffic study in the near term and a road diet in the medium term
- **Santa Monica Blvd:** Adding bike lanes wherever possible
- **Increasing the safety and visibility of existing bike lanes**
- **Ensuring that bulb-outs do not endanger people on bikes**
- **Incentivizing active transportation**
- **Implementation**

Making Vista/Gardner Bike Lanes a Near-Term Priority Project

Vista/Gardner has become more dangerous with its recently increased speed limit. We urge that the Plan be revised to bring the proposal for bike lanes on Vista/Gardner forward into the near term as a Priority Project. These bike lanes were not only included in the 2011 Bicycle Task Force report, they were the third priority project listed (after a road diet on Fountain and bike lanes on San Vicente). Bike lanes on Vista/Gardner here would also connect Fountain Ave. to Romaine St. (and to Willoughby Ave. if L.A. responds in kind), which would add to the connectivity of our bike network.

Fountain Avenue: Near-Term Traffic Study, Medium-Term Road Diet

Fountain Ave is a designated bicycle route, but it currently only has sharrows (shared lane markings) — something many drivers do not even understand. Members of our coalition have been aggressively honked at on Fountain Ave. We urge a road diet allowing for wider sidewalks and the installation of a bike lane in the medium term.

In order to obtain information and community input required to move forward with a comprehensive upgrade to Fountain Avenue, and to demonstrate the City's commitment to doing so, the WeHo Bicycle Coalition also urges the City to carry out a traffic study of a Fountain Avenue road diet in the near term. The traffic study should consider not only a center turn lane as proposed in the draft Mobility Plan update, but also a "reversible" center travel lane, which could mitigate the road diet's reduction in peak auto capacity. This approach to commuter traffic demand is used in many cities around the country, including Los Angeles, and is governed by state guidelines.

Santa Monica Boulevard: Adding Some Bike Lane Segments

Santa Monica has the highest bicycle ridership of any street in the City. Given the many destinations and homes on and just off Santa Monica Blvd., and the locations of the new WeHo Pedals bike share hubs, it is the most logical place to bike for many short trips. Yet there are no bike lanes on Santa Monica east of Kings Road on Santa Monica Blvd. or from Almont to Doheny.

In short, it's an unsafe and uncomfortable place to bike, with a high number of bike/car crashes, and more pedestrian/cyclist conflict due to lack of bike lanes and narrow sidewalks on the east side. Bicycle lanes are desperately needed anywhere on the street they can be added, and the Bicycle Task Force identified several areas where they would be possible.

It is also essential that the City continue to allow bicycling on sidewalks where there are no bike lanes. Penalizing cyclists for riding on sidewalks where roads lack bike lanes endangers them and would make our city even less bike friendly.

Protecting Bikes in Existing Bike Lanes

Currently, bicyclists regularly encounter dangerous situations in the bicycle lanes that exist in our city. Cars regularly stand in the bike lanes, forcing us into traffic. Drivers and passengers also regularly open doors without looking, and they regularly cut through bike lanes to park without looking, endangering cyclists.

We urge the City to protect bike lanes by physically separating them from traffic — such as by having the bike lane abut the sidewalk with parking spaces separating the bike lanes from travel lanes. We also urge lane-markings, such as green paint, to increase visibility. Increased enforcement and education about laws governing bicycle lanes may also help.

Ensuring Bulb-Outs Don't Endanger People on Bikes

All of us at the West Hollywood Bicycle Coalition are sometimes pedestrians and we were glad to see our city is considered friendly or super-friendly to pedestrians by 86% of respondents. While we support continued work to improve pedestrian infrastructure, we urge the City to avoid endangering cyclists when doing so.

Depending on their location, bulb-outs may force bikes out into traffic or they may not be seen, resulting in the rider striking the bulb-out and being thrown from their bike. The image of bulb-outs on p. 97 of the report is concerning — that design would force bikes to merge with cars, even if no pedestrians are present. Please evaluate each bulb-out that is proposed and add only those that would not endanger those of bicyclists traveling alongside two-ton vehicles. Please also ensure that bulb-outs are extremely visible to bicyclists. Finally, please be mindful of any long-term plans for bike lanes and do not add bulb-outs if they would prevent the addition of bike lanes in the future.

Incentivizing Active Transportation

We also urge the City to look toward ways to incentivize the use of active transportation and disincentivize car travel, such as by decoupling rent costs for parking and apartments. This would free up more parking, reduce traffic, and thus reduce pollution and the number of traffic crashes.

Implementation

We are concerned that the City's success in implementing previous bicycle plans has been less than sterling. For example, none of the bicycle lanes proposed in the 2003 Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan were installed, and of the 12 bike lanes proposed by the 2011 Bicycle Task Force, only one street has received lanes via a process initiated by staff. Even in that case, lanes were only installed along part of the street (San Vicente Blvd. south of Santa Monica Blvd.). To encourage implementation of the Plan, we strongly urge the City to produce yearly progress reports for the City Council and the public.

In closing, biking is a healthy and environmentally friendly mode of transit. Unfortunately, it is unnecessarily dangerous due to inadequate infrastructure to separate bikes from cars, and cars' high rates of speed: on average 33 cyclists were hit by cars in our small city each year between 2010 and 2015. A national survey found that 40% of trips are less than two miles, which is easily bikeable. But many people who would like to bike do not because of safety concerns. This worsens traffic, pollution, and public health. Our city needs bold leadership to make biking a safe option for more residents and visitors.

Thank you again for all of your work to keep us safe and for being receptive to our input.

Yours sincerely,

The West Hollywood Bicycle Coalition