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TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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THROUGH: JAMES L. DE LA LOZA, EXECUTIVE OFFICER
COUNTYWIDE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT 

SUBJECT: WILSHIRE BUS RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT
PEAK-PERIOD DEDICATED TRANSIT LANE

ISSUE

On March 8, 2004 a peak-period dedicated bus lane was opened in West Los Angeles as a part of the Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project. The bus lane is being implemented by MTA in coordination with the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and Santa Monica Big Blue Bus to test the effectiveness of bus lanes on major arterial streets like Wilshire Boulevard. This report provides information on the status of this project.

DISCUSSION

In August 2002, the MTA Board certified the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Wilshire BRT Project. One of the conditions of EIR approval was that MTA would work with affected local jurisdictions prior to the implementation of any type of dedicated transit lanes. Based on this direction, MTA staff worked with the LADOT to get approval for a dedicated transit lane on a short segment of Wilshire Boulevard where traffic congestion is high and buses are often locked in traffic congestion.

On November 18, 2003 the Los Angeles City Council approved a motion (CF#03-2337) authorizing the implementation of an initial demonstration project located along a one-mile segment of Wilshire Boulevard between Centinela and Federal Avenues in West Los Angeles.

The project team prepared designs for the peak-period bus-only lane and obtained the necessary approvals from the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles (Veteran's Administration segment). The total cost of the fabrication and installation of signage and

striping for the demonstration segment, excluding design costs, was about \$55,000. The City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation performed the work. In addition, the MTA funded several weeks of supplemental traffic and parking enforcement to insure that the bus transit lanes are free of parked vehicles and are not being used by general-purpose traffic.

This segment along Wilshire Boulevard was chosen because:

- Implementation of a peak-period exclusive bus-only lane operation required almost no elimination of through travel lanes since peak-period parking was allowed prior to the Demonstration project in most stretches of the test area.
- Parking utilization studies show that sufficient side street parking capacity exists to handle loss of peak-period Wilshire Boulevard on-street parking.
- Many businesses also have off-street parking for their customers
- Significant peak-period congestion exists in this segment, especially during the PM peak-period, which reduces bus speeds for MTA (Rapid and Local) and Santa Monica Big Blue Bus.

The Demonstration Project includes the following elements:

- Prohibition of peak-period parking along Wilshire Blvd in the test area.
- Installation of exclusive peak-period bus-only lane striping and signing.
- Exclusive curbside bus-only lane operation during the AM Peak (7:00 to 9:00 AM) and the PM Peak (4:00 to 7:00 PM).
- Parking & traffic enforcement during the hours of bus-only lane operation by LADOT, LAPD and the LA County Sheriff.
- A community outreach program targeted to the affected businesses, residents, and transit patrons along the pilot project route.

Travel Time Improvements

Initial measurements of Metro Rapid travel times indicate that the lanes are working very effectively to improve bus travel times through this segment of the Wilshire corridor. Data provided by the LADOT “ATSAC” System monitoring equipment shows bus travel time improvements in the AM peak up to 6% Eastbound and up to 12% Westbound; in the PM peak up to 12% Eastbound and 18% Westbound¹. The greatest travel time benefits are derived when the lanes are fully operating. Reduced benefits occur during periods when illegally parked vehicles may still be present in the lanes or during the beginning or end of the rush hour period when traffic is lighter and bus speeds are similar to automobile speeds. The PM period appears to be experiencing slightly more improvement than the AM period. This may be due to higher levels of congestion during the PM period, demonstrating that the lane is more effective when heavy levels of congestion slow automobile speeds but buses are able to proceed unimpeded.

¹ Avg. of bus travel times obtained during the third week of operation (March 22nd through March 26th) were compared to a one-week period in mid-February prior to startup

Initial bus operator feedback on driving in these lanes has been positive. Based on responses to internal surveys, the majority of operators noticed an improvement in speed or reduced interference with automobile traffic when in the designated bus lanes. Photos of the peak period bus lane in operation are included as Attachments A and B.

Business Owner Impacts

Some businesses located along Wilshire Boulevard have expressed concerns that the bus lanes are harmful to them due to loss of parking in front of their stores. Prior to the implementation of the bus lanes, MTA Community Relations and Project staff visited all affected businesses along the route to inform them about the project. Businesses were also provided with signs to post and flyers to inform customers about the coming parking changes. Staff conducted parking studies to determine if sufficient parking existed on side streets. In all cases, available parking for use by customers was identified within 1-2 blocks of all businesses. In addition, many businesses have off-street parking for their customers. Staff will continue to work with affected business owners to identify measures that would reduce impacts. In several cases, LADOT has added loading zones on side streets to provide alternative locations for delivery vehicles to park.

NEXT STEPS

The operation of the transit lane will be monitored for a period of six months. Starting in late April, a number of additional data collection efforts are taking place to compare with similar data collected prior to the opening of the bus-only lane. This data will be analyzed and reviewed with ongoing bus travel time data and will be included in a “Before and After” study that will be used to evaluate the operating benefits and prepare recommendations for the remaining period of the demonstration project. This information will be presented to the Board as well as the Los Angeles City Council for further direction.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. View of Wilshire Peak Period bus Lane at Barrington MR Station (eastbound)
- B. View of Wilshire Peak Period bus Lane at Federal (eastbound)



View of Wilshire Peak Period Bus Lane at Barrington Metro Rapid Station (eastbound).



View of Wilshire Peak Period Bus Lane at Federal (eastbound).