

Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council
Special Joint Meeting of the Transportation Committee and the General Board
April 21, 2021

DRAFT MINUTES

I. WELCOMING REMARKS

A. Call to Order

A duly noticed special joint meeting of the Transportation Committee and the General Board of the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council (“GWNC”) was held on Wednesday, April 21, 2021, via Zoom (online and by telephone). Committee chairperson Conrad Starr called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Mr. Carpenter called the roll. Six of the seven Committee Members (Committee members Jennifer DeVore and Chris Palencia having recently resigned from the Committee) were present at Roll Call: Jonah Bliss, Tucker Carney, Jeffrey Carpenter, Philip Farha, Conrad Starr (chair) and Jon Vein. [The GWNC Transportation Committee quorum (the minimum number of Committee Members needing to be present to take binding votes on Agendized Items) was 51% of 7 Committee Seats, or four, so the Committee was able to take such votes.] Cindy Chvatal was absent.

C. Welcome

Mr. Starr welcomed the assembled group and introduced three presenters from the Los Angeles City Department of Transportation’s Transportation Planning Section that had requested the opportunity to update the GWNC on one of its current planning programs.

II. PRESENTATIONS

A. LADOT Staff Presentation on “Stress-Free Connections” Planning Program Rubina Ghazarian, Supervising Transportation Planner II, David Somers, Supervising Transportation Planner I, and Severin Martinez, Stress-Free Connections Project Manager, presented a slide show describing the program, beginning with its origins in the City’s 2035 Mobility Plan.

Among the primary goals of the Mobility Plan that the Stress-Free Connections Plan is designed to respond to are safety, world-class infrastructure, access for all citizens, collaboration with communities, and the promotion of a clean and healthy environment. In addition, the Plan also aligns with the Mayor’s Zero Emission Transportation Initiative.

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LADOT staff stressed that the Planning Program is not at the stage of making recommendations or identifying specific solutions and that no implementation funding is presently identified for the Program. The present planning effort is supported by a State planning grant to support increased biking and walking, identifying areas with a latent propensity for car-free travel and to build connections where it is likely to have the most impact.

Mr. Severin explained the planning programs methodology that draws upon research and survey techniques developed at the Mineta Transportation Institute at SJSU that demonstrated that stress is a major obstacle to car-free mobility and that the lack of safety assurance at a trip’s weakest link is the primary determinant of stress.

Residential streets with limited car traffic are typically the most appealing for walking and biking so LADOT has begun surveying neighborhoods to gather user assessments of where primary stress points are in neighborhood connections. Data has shown intersections to be common barriers to walking and biking, so the LADOT selected 10 intersections for particular attention, doing on-site “pop-up” at each location, 3 of which were in the GWNC. Results from the surveys collected to date suggest a variety of possible solutions.

i. Public Comment / Q&A

Mr. Starr inquired about the survey schedule and cut-off date. He also asked if LADOT was proposing any bike lanes in the GWNC area.

LADOT staff responded that they would like to close out the survey in the next month or by early summer. They alluded to some disruptions with keeping survey notices in place, especially at 4th Street. LADOT also confirmed that no bike lanes are presently being proposed within the GWNC area.

Gary Gilbert asked if the survey was also including questions about the consequences of possible measures. Rory Cunningham said that this was his first hearing of the possible changes at St. Andrews and Beverly and wondered if there was going to be adequate time for input on that location and possible consequences of any changes. He asked if a stoplight was being considered.

Liz Moore also responded that she was only finding out about this study, asked how others can find out more about getting involved and how possible conflicts in recommendations might get resolved. Ms. Ghazarian and Mr. Somers responded that the survey is just a starting point for gathering community input. They were looking into arranging workshops for possibly getting into identified concerns and issues and to provide input into engineering analyses. No proposals have been made for St. Andrews and Beverly, but looking to identify whatever issues there might be.

Mr. Vein stated that he felt that there was a bias built into the survey, that

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invited input from anonymous outsiders with little or no connections to the neighborhood and that many of the questions it asked were “leading” to particular conclusions. He asked if traffic studies were done the streets surveyed “as the law requires”. A broader question, he said, was what purpose was being served in this effort? Were these trips to work, for shopping or for leisure? He suggested that for most residents, bike travel had limitations.

Mr. Somers responded that the survey does ask for emails and zip codes (although not names). He cited Vision Zero—hence pedestrian safety—as one goal and to provide improvements that “make neighborhood streets function to their potential”.

Mr. Bliss asked if LADOT was taking the opportunity to examining the broader implications for the area’s traffic infrastructure. Mary Sheehan Rajswing recounted that Wilton Place had traffic restraint measures painted on the street but that, in the absence of enforcement, traffic ignored the restraints and needs to be addressed. In addition, she said that the intersection of Beverly and Wilton needs to be looked at.

Mr. Farha asked if the effect of the pandemic had been studied. He mentioned potential infrastructure examples as the intersection signaling that only permits bicycle through-traffic although some measures that cannot be enforced might need to be avoided.

Mr. Somers and Ms. Ghazarian responded that the present focus was on the identified streets, but that there might be a need for the LADOT District Engineer to give attention to some of the other issues being raised. An LADOT study (to be forwarded and subsequently placed in Committee documents) indicated that trips did continue to happen, albeit volumes were down. Mr. Vein indicated an interest in seeing a “before” and “after” analyses of the Rosewood intersection.

Mr. Carney asked if there has been a study of the operation and impacts of the intersection treatment (crossing permissive only for bikes) at La Brea and Rosewood. He also asked if St. Andrews’ intersection(s) were part of the present study. Mr. Martinez responded that there had only been initial, cursory analyses of the Rosewood intersection, which seemed to indicate no increase in cut-through traffic.

Mr. Gilbert, noting Ms. Rajswing’s report on measures being ignored on Wilton Place, asked if there were any studies being done on when bicycle measures “backfire”. Further, who actually decides what measures ultimately get installed?

Regarding consequences of bicycle improvements, Mr. Somers indicated studies show various results, indicating the need for addition analyses. In general, with the general increase in the number of bicyclists, drivers have tended to pay more attention to them—a “virtuous cycle” if it takes hold.

In terms of projects, the LADOT General Manager has primary approval authority as conferred by the Municipal Code, and is responsible to the Mayor and with discretion accorded to City Council Offices.

III.

ADJOURNMENT

Having extended over its allotted time, Public Comment was closed and the meeting was adjourned at 6:49 pm. The GWNC Transportation Committee Minutes page is <http://greaterwilshire.org/transportation-committee-agendas-minutes>.