

SUBJECT: **FOUNTAIN AVENUE PROTECTED BIKE LANES FEASIBILITY STUDY**

PREPARED BY: **PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT**
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STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT:

The City Council will receive a presentation on the findings of the Fountain Avenue Protected Bike Lanes Feasibility Study and select an alternative. The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) Select a preferred alternative,
- 2) Direct staff to prepare 35% construction plans and cost estimates and return to the City Council with cost estimates and implementation timeline for approval.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:

This staff report intends to provide an update on the findings of the Fountain Avenue Protected Bike Lane Feasibility Study, including the results of the technical analysis, community outreach efforts undertaken to date, and community feedback received by the project team while seeking City Council direction on a preferred alternative to develop further. If Council approves an alternative, staff will prepare detailed design and construction documents, an accurate cost estimate, and an implementation schedule for Council consideration in 2023.

On March 1, 2021, the City Council directed staff to initiate a feasibility study for Fountain Avenue Protected Bike Lanes. Attachment A provides a copy of the City Council staff report where this direction was provided. On February 7, 2022, Council approved the transportation engineering and planning consultant contract with Fehr + Peers to assist City staff with the technical analysis and outreach on this project.

On October 4, 2021, the City Council directed staff to create a Bicycle Working Group made up of representatives from the West Hollywood Bicycle Coalition, Streets For All (a regional safe streets advocacy community-based organization), local bicycle-related business owners, a member of the West Hollywood Transportation Commission, and the West Hollywood Gateway. The Working Group met twice to discuss alternatives and voted to recommend protected bike lanes (Alternative 1) to the Transportation Commission and City Council for further consideration.

On August 17, 2022, the Transportation Commission received a presentation from the project team and discussed the alternatives at their regular meeting. They ultimately voted 5-2 to recommend the protected bike lane alternative (Alternative 1) to the City Council.

Additional outreach efforts are listed in the Community Engagement section of this report.

The City of West Hollywood has historically advocated for alternative modes of transportation, including transit, walking, and biking, to reduce automobile dependency. The City's adopted General Plan identifies specific goals and policies related to promoting alternative modes of travel, including:

- M-3: Maintain and enhance a pedestrian-oriented City
- M-4: Create a comprehensive bicycle network throughout the City
- M-5: Create an environmentally and financially sustainable transportation network that provides for the mobility and livability needs of West Hollywood residents, businesses and visitors
- M-6: Utilize Transportation Demand Management strategies to reduce auto travel

In May 2017, the City Council adopted the Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility Plan (PBMP), which provides a roadmap for improving the City's pedestrian and bicycle environment.

The vision for the PBMP is to create the foundation for a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly West Hollywood that provides comfortable, safe, healthy, and convenient places to walk and bicycle in the context of a balanced, multi-modal transportation network serving pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists of all ages and abilities. The PBMP identifies several categories of projects, including improvements at unsignalized crosswalks, signalized intersections, and bicycle improvements throughout the city.

The PBMP also identified pedestrian improvements along Fountain Avenue as priority projects. The PBMP identified 28 short-term and 25 mid-term improvements to address pedestrian safety along the 1.9-mile corridor. The proposed protected bicycle lane alternatives are consistent with the goals of the PBMP in enhancing safety for all modes of travel. The section from the PBMP regarding Fountain Avenue is provided in Attachment B for reference.

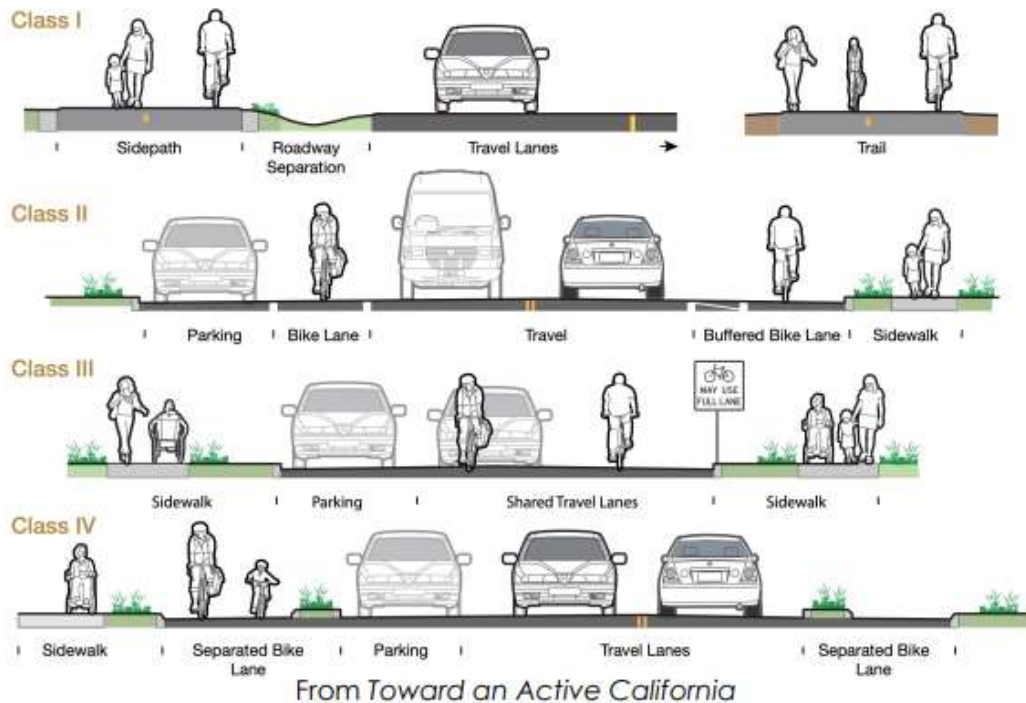
ANALYSIS:

Per City Council direction, staff entered into an agreement with Fehr and Peers to prepare a feasibility study for the addition of protected bike lanes on Fountain Avenue. The City currently has two types of on-street bike facilities:

1. “Class 2” includes standard striped bike lanes (i.e., the western segment of Santa Monica Boulevard, Fairfax Avenue, and San Vicente Boulevard); and
2. “Class 3” shared street bike route (i.e., Fountain Avenue).

However, gaps in this network, especially east/west connectors, need to be addressed to provide an effective bicycle network and increase public safety for those biking and driving. Fountain Avenue is currently a designated Class 3 bicycle route. Still, it only includes painted sharrow roadway markings rather than the more protective traffic calming features that improve safety and comfort in some Class 3 corridors. The figure below illustrates the different types of bikeway classifications in California.

Bikeway Classification in California



Feasibility Study

This section summarizes the consultant's and staff's analysis and findings of the ongoing feasibility study, including an analysis of existing conditions, the right-of-way reconfiguration required to provide separated bike lanes, and an exploration of alternatives for Council's consideration. Attachment C provides a summary of the technical analysis conducted by Fehr and Peers (consultant).

Existing Conditions

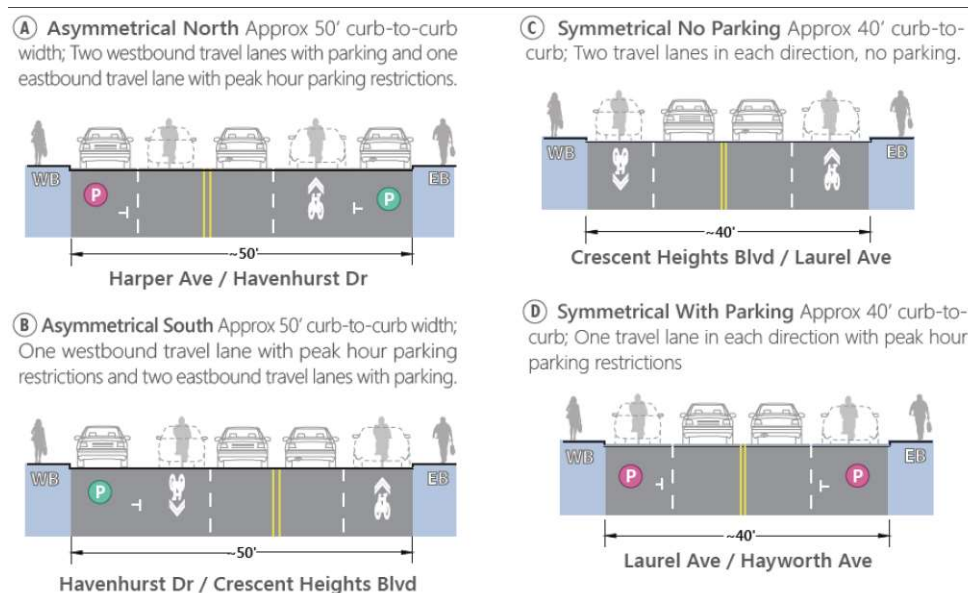
Fountain Avenue is an east-west roadway classified as a collector within the City. Fountain Avenue is approximately 1.9 miles long within West Hollywood from La Brea Avenue on the eastern City boundary with the City of Los Angeles to where it terminates at La Cienega Boulevard. The corridor provides 2 to 4 travel lanes for auto traffic with intermittent street parking and peak-hour parking restrictions. Currently, Fountain Avenue provides a Class 3 bike route with no marked/dedicated bike lanes marked but with sharrows for shared lane use. East of La Brea Avenue, Fountain continues east within the City of Los Angeles as a primarily 2-lane residential roadway and terminates near the

neighborhood of Silver Lake. East of La Brea within Los Angeles, there are currently no dedicated bike lanes. As such, the proposed bike lanes on Fountain Avenue would not connect to other dedicated bike facilities east of the City's boundary though Metro plans to install peak hour bus/bike lanes on La Brea Avenue later this year which would provide a connection to other facilities north and south of Fountain during rush hour

Within West Hollywood, Fountain Avenue carries 32,000 – 37,000 vehicles per day (vpd). Based on 2017 bicycle counts, Fountain Avenue currently ranges from 34 to 146 bicycles per day. However, the lack of a dedicated bicycle facility and high vehicle speeds on the corridor likely discourage less confident bicyclists from using the corridor in its current configuration. The width of Fountain Avenue varies from 40 feet to 60 feet. As such, the number of travel lanes, availability of street parking, and sidewalk widths also vary based on available right-of-way (ROW). Obstructions from above-ground utilities and narrow sidewalks without street trees, pedestrian lighting, street furniture, or landscaping also present barriers to pedestrian circulation.

Along the Fountain Avenue corridor, approximately 80% of the sidewalks are substandard, according to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines.

The figures below illustrate the various current cross-sections:



Right-of-Way Reconfiguration for Protected Bike Lanes on Fountain Avenue

Right-of-way improvements and reconfigurations of existing street space will be required along the entire stretch of Fountain Avenue to incorporate dedicated bike lanes, including reducing auto travel lanes from four to two, removing some on-street parking, and narrowing vehicle travel lanes. Additionally, any permanent improvements to Fountain Avenue would trigger a legal requirement to widen most of the existing sub-standard sidewalks to comply with federal ADA standards, which require at least 36 inches of a clear path of travel for pedestrians and people with disabilities. Also, as part of baseline assumptions, peak-hour parking restrictions would be eliminated.

Based on Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines, improvements of this scale may see a crash reduction of up to 30% for all modes of travel.

The right-of-way enhancements would shift approximately 40% of the traffic currently utilizing Fountain Avenue or approximately 900 vehicles per hour (vph) during the most congested afternoon peak hour of traffic. It is estimated that Sunset Boulevard would see an increase of 12% to 15% (300 to 500 vph) of the displaced traffic from Fountain Avenue. Similarly, it is estimated that Santa Monica Boulevard would see an increase of approximately 5% to 10% (100 to 250 vph) of the displaced traffic from Fountain Avenue. Other traffic may shift to other modes of travel made more appealing by the introduction of safe and comfortable walking and biking facilities along the corridor, shift to other times of the day outside of the peak hour, take other routes outside of West Hollywood, or not happen at all if they are discretionary.

Currently, Santa Monica Boulevard and Sunset Boulevard carry a substantial amount of vehicles during the afternoon/evening peak hour of traffic. Both facilities carry approximately 3,000 vehicles during the PM peak hour of traffic. With the additional traffic displaced by the lane reductions on Fountain Avenue, congestion levels on Sunset Boulevard and Santa Monica Boulevard would likely see a modest increase and will adversely impact auto circulation. However, as these roadways are already operating with significant congestion levels during peak hours, the impact would likely be most

noticeable by extending periods of congestion earlier and later in the day rather than introducing a significant additional delay.

The traffic levels shifted from the reduction in travel lanes on Fountain Avenue discussed above are rough estimates and do not address potential traffic impacts on local/residential streets. Similarly, traffic modeling is imprecise and cannot fully account for potential behavioral changes as roadway users seek alternate routes outside the City or consider alternate modes or times of day for travel with the potential introduction of a much more comfortable bike facility than any the City has installed to date. As such, it is a long-standing practice in the City to pilot/test these types of projects with temporary quick-build materials to better understand all potential impacts so they can be appropriately addressed before more expensive permanent improvements are installed. Once installed, a pilot project could be modified over time with additional traffic calming interventions to address any unanticipated consequences, such as any potential diversion to side streets. This approach is addressed in more detail in the Evaluation section of this report.

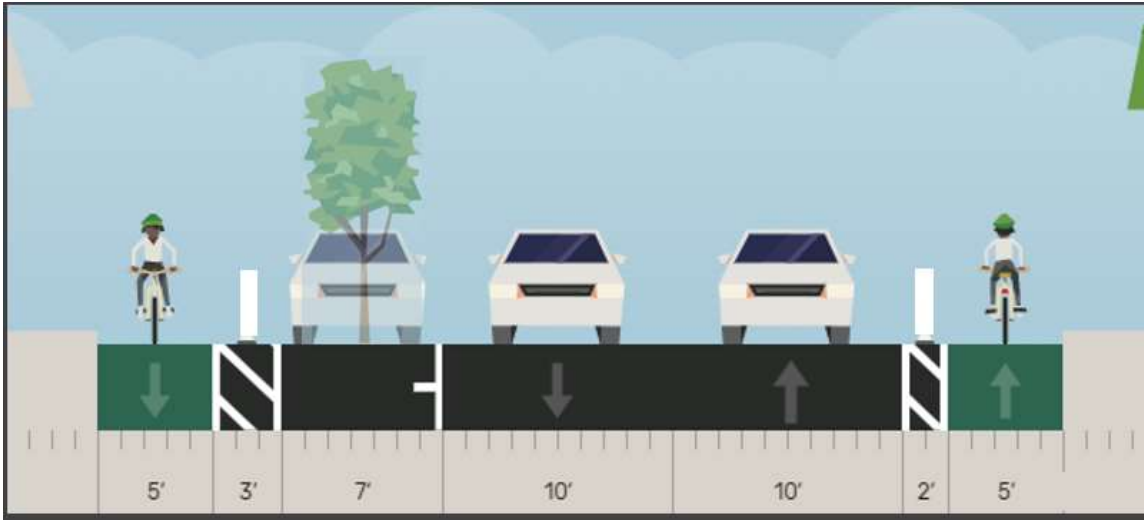
Alternatives

Per the City Council's direction, staff and consultants analyzed the feasibility of protected bike lanes (Class 4) along Fountain Avenue as described below as Alternative 1. Other types of bike lanes were also considered as options:

- **Dedicated bike path (Class 1):** considered, but due to right-of-way constraints, this option was not pursued as it would require additional right-of-way from private properties along the corridor.
- **Striped bike lanes (Class 2):** viable within the existing right-of-way and is analyzed as Alternative 2 discussed below.
- **Shared bike lanes (Class 3):** this is what currently exists along the corridor. This option would be a do-nothing option discussed below as Alternative 3.

Three long-term alternatives have been developed to meet the goals of the project:

- **Alternative 1: Protected Bike Lanes (Class 4):**



This alternative would provide fully protected bike lanes (Class 4) along most of the corridor, except for several pinch points where a standard bike lane (Class 2) would be added. A Class 4 bike lane would require 7-8 feet of width (including a buffer zone). While no Class 4 facilities currently exist in West Hollywood, nearby Cities like Los Angeles, Beverly Hills, Culver City, and Santa Monica have implemented these facilities to great success as they provide a much higher level of protection and comfort with physical separation and protection from vehicle travel. This added level of protection and comfort makes them more attractive to a broader range of potential users who may not be comfortable biking on less protected facilities, which makes them better at encouraging mode shifts away from less sustainable forms of transportation like driving alone.

This alternative would provide the best protection for bicyclists, provide the best safety for all travel modes, upgrade sidewalks to meet ADA compliance, and introduce street trees in certain areas. This alternative would require the removal of on-street parking on one side of Fountain Avenue to provide space for the bike

lanes and buffer zones where physical protection is provided from vehicles. To repurpose enough space for a Class 4 bike facility and sidewalk widening, the on-street parking supply would be reduced by approximately 150 spaces on the north side (westbound) or approximately 190 parking spaces on the south side (eastbound). As such, if Council selects this alternative for further development, staff recommends focusing on repurposing the parking lane on the north side of the corridor as it would result in less parking reduction.

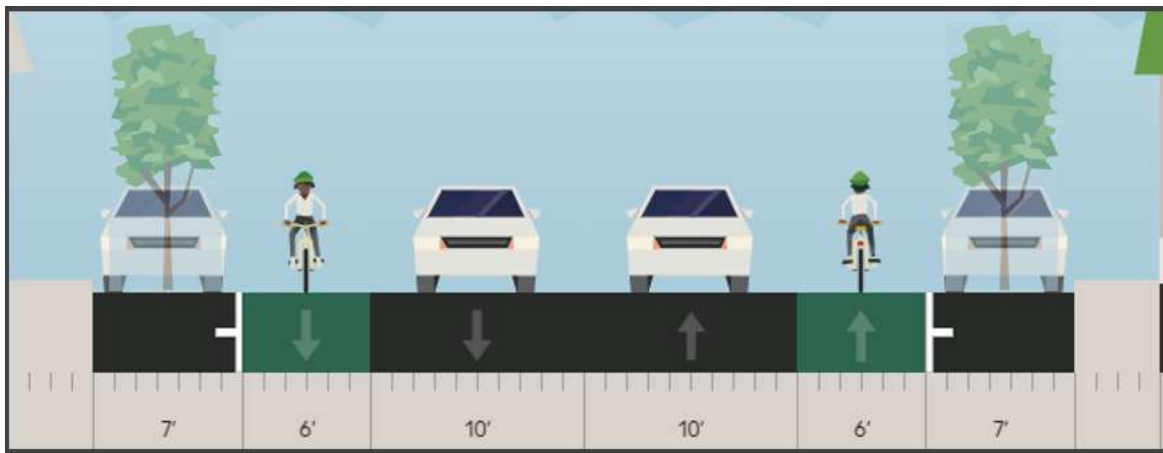
This alternative would also include the upgrade of sidewalks that are currently sub-standard. It is estimated that of the 80% of sidewalks within the corridor are substandard (meaning they are narrower than permitted under federal ADA standards). This alternative would include addressing approximately 90% to 100% of those deficiencies. The exact figure will be determined in the next phase of the study, where the development of construction plans will provide more details.

Considerations:

- Crash rate: A crash reduction of up to 45% can be expected from protected bike lanes.
- Bicycles: This alternative would provide bike riders a 5-foot lane with a 3-foot buffer with physical barriers providing separation from vehicles improving comfort and safety.
- Pedestrians: This alternative would upgrade approximately 90%-100% of current sidewalk deficiencies, thus improving safety for pedestrians. The additional right-of-way also offers opportunities for additional greening and shade from the introduction of street trees.
- Auto vehicles: The reduction in roadway capacity from 4 lanes to 2 will decrease traffic on Fountain Avenue, and adjacent arterials such as Sunset Boulevard and Santa Monica Boulevard would see an increase in

congestion due to displaced traffic.

- Residents: The residents along Fountain Avenue would experience less traffic and fewer traffic accidents. However, the loss of approximately 150 parking spaces may make it more difficult to find on-street parking.
- **Alternative 2: Striped bike lanes (class 2):**



This alternative would provide standard bike lanes (Class 2) along the corridor with a few pinch points. These pinch points are where current right-of-way are very constraint and may limit available space. A Class 2 bike lane would require 5-6 feet of width but would not include repurposing additional roadway space to provide a buffer zone between bicycles and vehicles. As such, this alternative would not require the removal of street parking on an entire side of the street, although 35-40 spaces would still need to be removed under this alternative in some areas where the roadway width is constricted (for example, to maintain left turn lanes at intersections). This alternative would also see the upgrade of sidewalks that are currently sub-standard. It is estimated that of the 80% of substandard sidewalks within the corridor, approximately 67% to 100% of those deficiencies would be addressed. The exact figure will be determined in the next

phase of the study, where the development of construction plans will provide more details.

Considerations:

- Crash rate: A crash reduction of up to 35% can be expected with a standard striped bike lane.
- Bicycles: This alternative would provide bike riders with a 6-foot bike lane but no buffer zone or physical barrier, providing separation from vehicles. This alternative would improve bicyclist comfort and safety compared to existing conditions, but not to the same degree as Alternative 1.
- Pedestrians: This alternative would upgrade approximately 67%-100% of current sidewalk deficiencies, thus improving safety for pedestrians. The additional right-of-way also offers opportunities for additional greening and shade from street trees but not as much as compared to Alternative 1.
- Auto vehicles: Similar to Alternative 1, the reduction in roadway capacity from 4 lanes to 2 will decrease traffic on Fountain Avenue, but adjacent arterials such as Sunset Boulevard and Santa Monica Boulevard would see an increase in congestion due to displaced traffic
- Residents: The residents along Fountain Avenue would experience less traffic and fewer traffic accidents. However, the loss of approximately 35 to 40 parking spaces may make it more difficult to find parking for some residents, but this reduction would be significantly less impactful than Alternative 1.

The table below compares the two alternatives:

			Alternative	
			1 - Protected Bike Lanes	2 - Standard Bike Lanes
Right-of-way Improvements				
-	Crash Reduction - all modes		30%	30%
-	Auto volume Change - PM peak hour of traffic			
-	Fountain Av		-40% (-900 vph)	-40% (-900 vph)
-	Sunset Bl		+12-15% (+300 to 400 vph)	+12-15% (+300 to 400 vph)
-	Santa Monica Bl		+5-10% (+100 to 250 vph)	+5-10% (+100 to 250 vph)
Greening/bioswales			less opportunities	more opportunities
-	curb ext			
-	tree wells between parking			
Alternatives				
-	Crash Reduction - bikes		45%	35%
-	Parking Restrictions		no parking restrictions (except for street cleaning)	no parking restrictions (except for street cleaning)
-	Sidewalk Deficiencies Addressed		90-100% addressed	67-100% addressed
	(Approx. 20% of sidewalks are substandard)			
-	Loss of parking			
-	Northside (westbound) [a]		150	
-	Southside (eastbound) [a]		190	35-45
Notes:				
[a] Under Alt 1, only one side of the street will be required.				

Alternative 3: Maintain existing PBMP Recommendations for Fountain Avenue by focusing on pedestrian enhancements.

This alternative would keep the current roadway geometry and configuration until the PBMP improvements for pedestrian safety measures are implemented. As such, no dedicated bicycle facility would be provided, and no reduction in travel lanes or on-street parking would occur. This is essentially a do-nothing alternative always available for City Council's consideration.

Community Benefits of Roadway Reconfiguration “Road Diets”

As described above, a roadway reconfiguration or “road diet” on Fountain Avenue would be required to accommodate a protected bike lane. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, road diets can improve safety, calm traffic, provide better mobility and access for all road users, and enhance the overall quality of life along the corridor in question.¹

In addition, as described by the Project for Public Spaces, the community benefits of the proposed project may include the following²:

- **Enhanced Safety:** Road diets lead to greater safety by slowing traffic to safer, more consistent speeds. The most significant danger to pedestrians and bicyclists is speeding cars. The threat of a fatal pedestrian crash increases exponentially as speed increases above 20 mph. The most successful walkability improvement is one that slows cars down. These safety outcomes directly impact people on foot, on bicycles, and those behind the wheel. Redesigning Fountain Avenue can help the City prioritize a street design that enables safe mobility for vulnerable users, such as children and elderly pedestrians. Road diets like the one proposed on Fountain are proven strategies to slow traffic and improve safety for all road users, including drivers.
- **Equity.** Driving is a luxury that not everyone can afford. The City may want to invest in alternative transportation modes to provide job access to those who can’t afford to drive.
- **Health:** Our transportation network can provide better access to active living, and road diets can accomplish this. Thanks to the traffic-calming effect that a road diet can bring, the speed of the city slows to be more compatible with human-scale activity. Additionally, biking and walking can be part of a larger strategy to get our community healthy and fit. Many people are interested in biking for leisure or

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA-SA-21-046)

² <https://www.pps.org/article/the-benefits-of-road-diets>

transportation but feel unsafe. These average folks need infrastructure like buffered bike lanes to increase comfort.

- **Multimodality.** Not all transportation modes are created equal. Each has its advantages in terms of safety, cost, efficiency, speed, and inclusivity. Safety accommodations for people on bicycles and pedestrians require significantly less space than single occupancy vehicles. By freeing up space and balancing the needs of different users, road diets create the opportunity for genuinely multi-modal streets.
- **Resilient Infrastructure.** The grayer and harder the pavement, the more prone an area is to flooding and the urban heat island effect. Creating space for more softscape and green infrastructure can be extremely challenging in existing built environments, making small and incremental change a more realistic solution. Road diets can free up space for resilient softscape to combat the increasing threat of weather events in pre-existing developments. Where space permits, street trees will be introduced along Fountain Avenue to introduce green infrastructure and shading for the comfort of pedestrians.
- **Improved User Experience.** Unfortunately, too few streets are safe, comfortable, or attractive to the human-scale user (people choosing to walk or bike). Road diets provide the opportunity to turn high-speed streets into vibrant corridors. Reconfiguring Fountain Avenue to have fewer lanes for pedestrians to cross will create a more community-focused, Complete Streets environment that better accommodates the needs of all road users.

Next Steps

If Council approves moving forward with Alternative 1 or 2, staff and the consultant team will proceed with the preparation of detailed design and construction documents as well as an accurate cost estimate and implementation schedule for Council consideration in 2023. If Council approves moving forward to implementation after reviewing those materials, staff would then proceed with implementing a temporary quick-build pilot

project with temporary materials to further evaluate the various benefits and impacts of the project before recommending a more costly permanent installation. The pilot project results would be communicated back to the Council in a before and after evaluation before seeking funding for and constructing the long-term buildout of the project.

CONFORMANCE WITH VISION 2020 AND THE GOALS OF THE WEST HOLLYWOOD GENERAL PLAN:

This item is consistent with the Primary Strategic Goal(s) (PSG) and/or Ongoing Strategic Program(s) (OSP) of:

- OSP-4: Transportation System Improvement.
- PSG-1: Maintain the City's Unique Urban Balance with Emphasis on Residential Neighborhood Livability.

In addition, this item is compliant with the following goal(s) of the West Hollywood General Plan:

- M-5: Create an environmentally and financially sustainable transportation network that provides for the mobility and livability needs of West Hollywood residents, businesses and visitors.
- M-3: Maintain and enhance a pedestrian-oriented City.

EVALUATION PROCESSES:

The traffic levels shifted (to Sunset and Santa Monica Boulevard) from the reduction in travel lanes on Fountain Avenue discussed previously are rough estimates and do not address potential traffic impacts on local/residential streets. As such, it is a long-standing practice in the City to pilot/test these types of projects to properly ascertain all potential impacts so they can be appropriately addressed. If Council selects Alternative 1 or 2 for further development and directs staff to proceed after reviewing design documents, cost estimates, and implementation schedule options at a future meeting, staff would then further evaluate the various impacts of the project post-installation by implementing a

temporary quick build pilot project with temporary materials. Metrics to be evaluated in such a pilot before the installation of a more expensive, permanent project would include the following:

- Reduction in accidents for all modes, including pedestrians, bicycles, and autos;
- Increase in traffic and congestion on parallel streets, including Sunset Boulevard and Santa Monica Boulevard;
- Potential increase in traffic within the residential areas; and
- Potential impacts on parking supply
- Increase in pedestrian and bicycle volumes along the corridor

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HEALTH:

The project has been environmentally reviewed pursuant to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code Sections 21000, et seq., and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Sections 15000, et seq.). The project's scope of work consists of installing pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The project meets the criteria under a Categorical Exemption 15301 (c), as it consists of improvements on existing highways and streets where there is negligible or no expansion of use and the addition of bicycle facilities, including bicycle lanes, enhanced sidewalks and crosswalks, street trees and other similar alterations that do not create additional automobile lanes. Further, the project qualifies for a statutory exemption under PRC Section 21080.25, as it includes the installation of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, which include bike lanes, either as separated bike lanes or shared bike lanes. The project also meets the additional criteria required to assert the exemption under PRC Section 21080.25, as it is located in an urbanized area, is located within existing public right-of-way, does not add physical infrastructure that increases automobile capacity, does not require demolition of affordable housing units, and will be carried out by a skilled and trained workforce. There are other requirements for projects greater than \$100,000,000, which do not apply in this case because the project cost does not exceed that threshold.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

A series of community outreach efforts were undertaken, including:

- Presentation to the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee (August 9th, 2022)
- Presentation to the West Hollywood Transportation Commission (August 17th, 2022), where the Commission voted to support the Protected Bike Lane (Class 4) alternative,
- Distribution of over 13,000 mailed project notices to all residents living within 500 feet of the impact area (in both West Hollywood and Los Angeles)
- Virtual Community Workshop (October 20, 2022) attended by approximately 65 community members..

In addition, an online community survey was conducted to measure the level of interest by the community in the different alternatives, to understand how residents currently use Fountain Avenue, and to identify potential community impacts and priorities for improvements. The results of the online survey are as follows:

- A total of 1,439 respondents took part in the survey
- 61% of respondents live within 500' of the Fountain Avenue corridor
- 57% of respondents walk/roll along Fountain Avenue.
- 80% of respondents drive along Fountain Avenue.
- 42% of respondents bike/scooter along Fountain Avenue
- 20% of respondents park along Fountain Avenue.
- 62% of respondents support fully protected bike lanes (Alternative 1)
- 10% of respondents support standard bike lanes (Alternative 2)
- 28% of respondents support no changes to Fountain Avenue.

A complete survey report is provided in Attachment D. Attachment E provides copies of all email correspondences regarding the project and Attachment F provides questions asked during the community workshop with topical responses provided as well.

OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT / LONG RANGE PLANNING
DIVISION

FISCAL IMPACT:

None at this time. If Council approves, staff will work with the consultant team to prepare detailed initial construction drawings needed to calculate cost estimates for further Council consideration before implementation based on the preferred alternative selected.

ATTACHMENTS:

A – March 1, 2021 City Council Directed Staff Report

B – Pedestrian Bicycle Mobility Plan – Fountain Avenue Priority Project Section

C – Consultant Summary of Analysis Letter

D – Online community survey results

E – Email correspondence

F – Community Workshop Q&A