

## Safe Streets for All Los Angeles Initiative Briefing

### Overview

On August 11, 2015 the Los Angeles City Council adopted Mobility Plan 2035 in a [12-2 vote](#) as the first update to the City's General Plan Transportation Element since 1999. The Plan calls for a comprehensive and connected network of pedestrian, bike, transit, and vehicle facilities. However, only *95 of the 3,137 (3%) lane miles* are complete over six years later since implementation is not compulsory during street resurfacings. Implementation must be made compulsory if Los Angeles is to achieve the Council's ambitious vision for creating a diverse, sustainable, safe, and efficient road network for all Angelenos.

### Cost of Implementation

Installing improvements during scheduled street resurfacings and repairs are an efficient and cost-effective way to build a network. Over the last decade, [Austin, TX has increased cycle commute rates by 19%](#), and achieved overall bike commute rates more than twice the national average by incorporating bike elements during scheduled resurfacings. On average Los Angeles [rehabilitates 200 miles of roads annually](#). However, the streets are often repaired to their preexisting design, *even when they are identified in the Plan for reconfiguration*. Under the status quo, streets are repaved *then* redesigned adding cost and delay. If adopted, the Initiative would create new public in assets in the form of a comprehensive bike network and faster bus system, *at almost no cost over a few short years*. It would better the lives of every Angeleno by providing safe, affordable, and fast alternatives to driving, while reducing congestion and pollution.

### Safety

The economic costs of fatalities and severe injuries in Los Angeles was \$3.2 billion dollars in 2021, representing 6,340 Years of Potential Life Lost (CDC average cost per California [road fatality - \\$9.8 million](#), injuries requiring hospitalization - [\\$266,000](#)). While, the financial figures may seem high, the City settled a wrongful death case for a pedestrian [killed on Vista del Mar in 2015 at \\$9.5 million](#) in addition to numerous other [multi-million dollar settlements](#). It bears noting creating a road network for all users improves safety not just for [pedestrian and cyclists, but drivers, too](#). Despite the adoption of Vision Zero in 2015, 2021 was a historically bad year with fatalities up 21% to 289 (128 pedestrians) and severe injuries up 30% to 1,465 (486 pedestrians). Implementing the Plan would start saving lives immediately, and with it the billions of dollars in associated costs.

### Traffic congestion

Reconfiguring streets to accommodate a diverse range of modes will have a positive impact on congestion. Vehicle trip length and per capita daily miles traveled are uncharacteristically low for a city with Los Angeles's levels of car usage. Los Angeles has a [per capita daily vehicle miles traveled of 9.3 versus an average of 17.2 miles](#) for the Southern California Association of Governments region. Citywide [49% of trips are less than 3 miles with 21% being less than 1 mile](#), compared to [46% and 21% nationally](#). Short distance trips are those most easily shifted to vehicle alternatives, freeing road space for longer distance trips. School trips are an illustrative example, in 1969 42% of children walked or rode bikes to school nationally, whereas in [2017 only 10% did](#). The current network makes cars the only viable option for many short trips they are ill-suited for. The imbalance in Los Angeles' road network is revealing, of 6,000 centerline miles of road (26,000 lane miles), there was only [19.4 miles of protected bikeways in December of 2020](#) and **less than 20 miles of bus lanes**. With 349 days of no precipitation and little elevation change, Los Angeles is

ideal for biking [yet only 0.8% of commuters do so](#). Safety and the lack of a cohesive network are [the biggest impediments to cycling nationally](#). Los Angeles' own experiences confirms the demand exists for safe driving alternatives. [Biking increased by 73%](#) on Figueroa after the installation of protected bike lanes.

Adding capacity through the Plan is critical to accommodating future population growth. On November 4, 2021, the Council adopted the [2021-2029 Housing Element, which calls for increasing zoning capacity by over 500,000 units](#). Furthermore, zoned capacity is likely to increase further with further State action (SB 9 and 10 being recent examples). Whereas [a vehicle lane can move 600-1,600 person per hour a bus lane can move 4,000-8,000 and two way protected bike facility 7,500](#). How much worse will congestion get if all these new residents take cars instead of public transport, walking, or biking? These must become competitive alternatives to preempt worsening gridlock.

However, declining transit ridership pre-pandemic reveals the current network struggling to compete with driving. Declining transit use pre-pandemic was driven [by an increase in car ownership](#). As household finances improved, lower income households bought vehicles to escape the irregular and slow bus network, while increasing car ownership coincided with rising congestion levels pre-pandemic.

### **Social Equity**

Providing safe, reliable, and efficient alternatives to owning and operating a personal vehicle is critical to reducing the financial precarity of low-income individuals. Transportation is the second highest household cost in America behind housing average 13% across all households. For those in the lowest quintile, transportation accounts for [28.8% of household income](#). For sake of comparison, in [European Union the lowest quintile spends 7.5% of income on transportation](#). The disparity is driven by car dependency. In 2020, assuming 15,000 miles driven annually, [a vehicle cost \\$9,561 to own and operate](#). Creating real alternatives to driving will put thousands of dollars back into Angeleno's wallets and create economic opportunity citywide by improving accessibility to jobs, education, and housing.

### **Pollution**

Los Angeles was worst in the country [for PM2.5 and ozone pollution in 2021](#). Resulting in 2,163 excess deaths (1,632 and 531 respectively). Transportation is the primary source of both pollutants. PM2.5 are small particles created from vehicle emissions and brake pads, while ozone is produced from vehicle emissions interacting with other pollutants and sunshine. Despite major historical improvements, pollution decreases are reversing. In 2020 Los Angeles had its worst year for smog pollution with [the highest levels of ozone pollution since 1997](#). The inequities of air pollution are revealed in Los Angeles' high childhood asthma where [25% of Black children](#) have asthma compared to 7% of white children, the disparity largely attributable to Black children being more likely to live in neighborhoods with [high traffic exposure](#).

### **Additional Resources:**

[Benchmarking Bike Networks](#)

[Road diets do not impact travel times](#)

[Housing Transportation and Affordability Index](#)

[Traffic Delay, Accessibility, and Economic Activity in Los Angeles](#)

[LADOT 2019 Bike and Pedestrian Count](#)