

A Metro Rapid bus makes its way along a stretch of Wilshire Boulevard that will be included in the bus-only lane project beginning March 1.



### **Bus-Only Lane Demonstration Starts March 1 on Wilshire**

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Jan. 14, 2004) Testing for the next phase of the Metro Rapid bus program – peak-period, bus-only lanes – is scheduled to begin March 1 on a one-mile stretch of Wilshire Boulevard just west of the Veterans Administration Hospital.

Managers hope the six-month project, which reserves curbside lanes for buses during morning and afternoon peak hours, will demonstrate improvements in bus operation and general traffic flow in an area that experiences frequent gridlock.

Each weekday from 7 until 9 a.m. and from 4 until 7 p.m., parking will be banned on both sides of Wilshire between Federal Avenue and the Santa Monica city line at Centinela.

City and county officials, whose approval is key to implementation of a regional Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, will be closely watching and evaluating the project. Eventually, MTA hopes to designate bus-only lanes on portions of a number of traffic-choked streets to help keep buses rolling.

#### **Solid white line**

The bus-only lanes will be set off by a solid white line for most of each block and by white dashed lines at approaches to the intersections. Various signs, including a large overhead sign near Federal, will mark the area and indicate restrictions for motorists.

Not only Metro Rapid buses, but also local service Metro Buses and buses operated by municipal transit agencies will be permitted to use the exclusive lanes.

Cars will not be allowed to enter the bus-only zones except to make right turns at intersections or to turn into off-street parking lots. LADOT traffic officers, along with LAPD and Sheriff's deputies, will enforce restrictions on parking and curb lane use by non-transit

vehicles.

In selecting a demonstration site, Tom Carmichael, Wilshire BRT project manager, says MTA chose the location to avoid taking traffic lanes. The Los Angeles City Council approved the project in a November 2003 vote.

### **Curbside parking**

The 13-block section was suitable for the project because it currently has curbside parking. Parking meters will be left in place so that drivers can park on the street during off-peak periods.

"We won't be negatively affecting street traffic because the traffic never had that lane, anyway," says Carmichael. "Our feeling is that traffic actually will move smoother when buses operate in their own lane. Our studies show that the displaced parking can be accommodated in the adjacent blocks."

Later this month, staff members from Community Affairs and Planning will visit area merchants to brief them on the project and determine whether mitigation will be needed. The evaluation period will continue through Aug. 31.

"This test is intended to prove to the City of LA that this lane is really worth it and that we can move the buses faster," says Rex Gephart, Metro Rapid project manager. "These lanes will be most beneficial when the traffic in the other lanes isn't moving at all."

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