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Federal Approval Moves Wilshire Bus-Only Lane Closer to Reality

By JIMMY STROUP

(Dec. 19, 2007) The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has approved the Bus-Only Lane on Wilshire Boulevard in the City of Los Angeles to advance into the development phase under the Very Small Starts program.

While the approval doesn't mean the project is fully funded, it does allow Metro to work with the City of Los Angeles to create a project management plan and begin drafting engineering and technical strategies for fully implementing the lane.

The FTA approval also makes it possible for the Wilshire Boulevard project to be included in the President's fiscal year 2009 budget, which is submitted to Congress in February. If it's approved by Congress, construction on Wilshire would need to begin sometime between October 2008 and September 2009.

An initial one-mile segment of a peak period Bus-Only lane went into effect in March 2004 as a pilot program in West Los Angeles between Federal Avenue and Centinela. That pilot project was ultimately made permanent by the City of Los Angeles. It was later cut back by two blocks and, earlier this year, removed completely until the larger program can be implemented.

By restricting parking in the curb lane during peak periods, that lane can be used for Metro and other buses. Automobiles were also allowed if they were turning right at the next intersection or coming in or out of a mid-block driveway. Project managers say that the Wilshire bus lane in West Los Angeles improved travel times during peak hours by 6 percent in the morning and 14 percent in the afternoon and evening. Transit patrons also experienced improved travel reliability.

The new Bus-Only Lane, when implemented, will run on Wilshire in the City of Los Angeles from just west of downtown Los Angeles to the Santa Monica City line – nearly nine miles. Staff is working separately with the County of Los Angeles and the Cities of Beverly Hills and Santa Monica on improvements to portions of Wilshire Boulevard within their jurisdictions.



A busy afternoon along Wilshire Boulevard. The Federal approval to advance the Bus-Only Lane project into the development phase should help to expedite Metro service and ease congestion along the nine miles from downtown to Santa Monica.