

Look what's next on Wilshire

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Purple-blooming jacaranda trees, shown in rendering above, will be spared when new Wilshire bus lane is built.

As the Wilshire segment of the massive 405 Project winds down, with the completion of sweeping new [flyover ramps](#) in the months ahead, another big project is about to hit the boulevard.

The [Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit \(BRT\) project](#), which is creating a dedicated bus lane running from MacArthur Park to the border of Santa Monica, is set to begin work in March, 2014, on a segment of Wilshire Boulevard near the V.A. Hospital in West Los Angeles.

Construction on the Wilshire segment of the [405 Project](#) is expected to wrap up by January, 2014. With the exception of some landscaping work, the freeway project is not anticipated to overlap with the bus lane construction.

In the V.A.-area section of the bus project, Wilshire is being widened from Bonsall Avenue to Federal/San Vicente to incorporate a new eastbound lane that buses will be able to use exclusively during peak morning and afternoon rush hour periods. In the off-hours, the new lane will be available to all vehicles.

Initially, there were concerns that more than 30 [jacaranda trees](#) that line the median on Wilshire between Federal and Bonsall would need to be removed as part of the project.

Now, however, plans call for the trees to be boxed up during construction and replanted when the widening project has been completed. Trees deemed not healthy enough to survive transplanting will be replaced.

“We’re going to improve the situation,” said Lance Grindle of the county Department of Public Works, which is designing the project and overseeing work on the .8 mile stretch. New street lighting is being installed, along with a new, more reliable irrigation system.

“There are quite a few nice healthy trees there. There are also quite a few trees that are in distress because they didn’t get enough water,” Grindle said.

In addition to replacing the jacarandas in the median, more than 35 [Brisbane box trees](#) will be planted along the north side of the boulevard with other landscaping.

“It actually creates a nice little walking area,” Grindle said.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors this week [authorized](#) Public Works to move ahead with the V.A. segment of the project.

Martha Butler, director of regional transit planning for Metro, the lead agency for the project as a whole, said the new lane is essential to speeding up bus travel times along Wilshire.

“It’s the most important corridor in the county, our No. 1 in terms of ridership,” Butler said. She said the bus station at Bonsall, serving the V.A., is particularly heavily used, with 700 boardings a day.

“It really provides a critical service to veterans,” she said.

Butler noted that the new bus lane is an addition to the existing lanes on Wilshire and will not usurp any current travel space. Construction will take place in phases, beginning with the north side of Wilshire, and two lanes will remain open in each direction throughout the project. In addition to the new bus lane, there will be longer left-turn pockets on westbound Wilshire at San Vicente and on eastbound Wilshire at Sepulveda.

An [initial segment](#) of the BRT project—which in its entirety will span 12.5 miles, including 7.7 miles for buses only during peak hours—opened in June from MacArthur Park to Western Avenue. Construction on the segment running from Western to San Vicente is expected to begin this month. (The dedicated bus route is not continuous, as this [map](#) shows. Areas excluded from the project include the entire stretch of Wilshire through Beverly Hills and a one-mile stretch in Westwood.)

When the whole project is completed in November, 2014, average travel times along the corridor are expected to improve by 24% and spark a bus ridership increase of 15% to 20%.

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