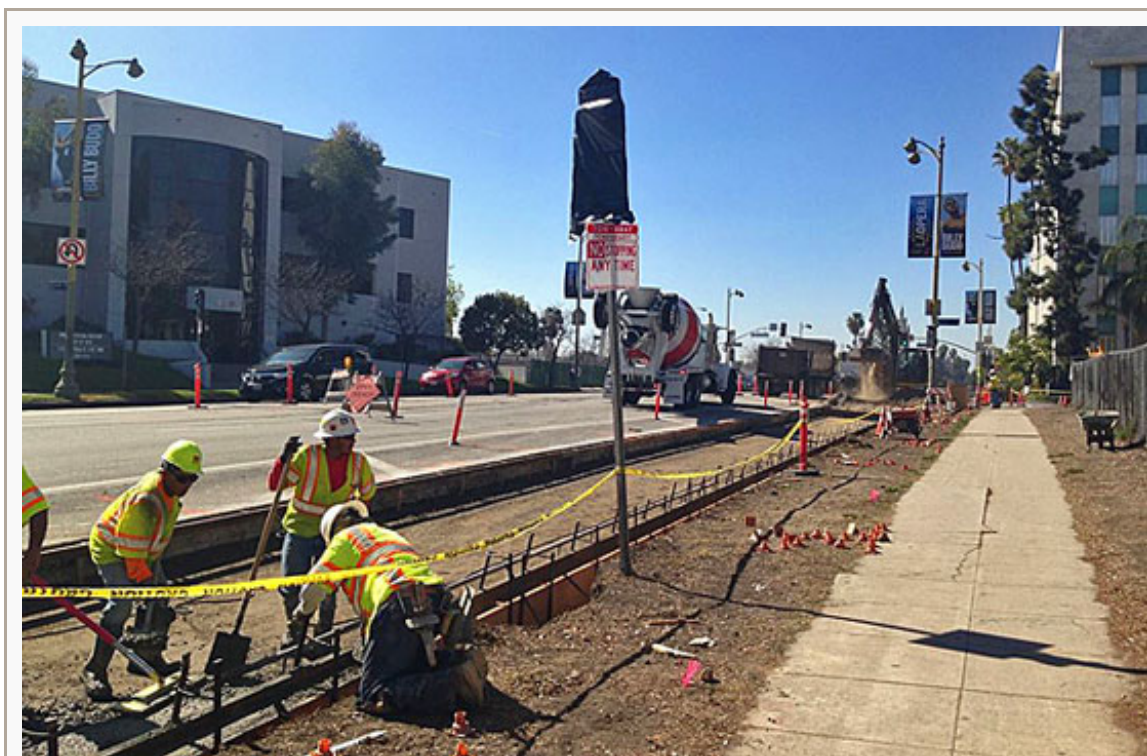


The whammy on Wilshire

 zevyaroslavsky.org/news/the-whammy-on-wilshire

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A rapid transit bus lane is part of a series of ambitious projects on Wilshire. Photo/Wilshire BRT

As the 405 Project starts to move out of the limelight as L.A.'s most groused-about long-running transportation project, attention is shifting to a new construction hot zone: Wilshire Boulevard.

With a litany of high-visibility public and private projects in the works or on the horizon, the legendary boulevard is gearing up for a years-long building boom, particularly in the Miracle Mile.

“Seriously, if it’s not one thing, it’s another,” said Ginny Brideau, a consultant with The Robert Group who is handling community outreach for one of the projects, a new lane dedicated to buses at rush hour and available to all drivers at other times.

As part of that project, crews already are building [special lanes](#) and resurfacing Wilshire from Western Avenue to San Vicente Boulevard—work that entails closing lanes, detouring sidewalk traffic and putting up temporary no-parking signs.

Later this month, things start heating up miles to the west, as work begins on another [bus rapid transit](#) segment near the V.A. in West Los Angeles—close to where the [405 Project](#) has been a high-profile challenge for nearly five years. Construction of the short (less than ½ mile long) bus lane on Wilshire between Federal Avenue and Bonsall Avenue will bring lane closures for the next seven months. That includes a period in which traffic will be detoured away from ramps connecting Wilshire to the Bonsall underpass. (Details are [here](#).)

The Wilshire bus project is intended to create a faster-moving [12.5-mile corridor](#) for rush hour riders between MacArthur Park and the Santa Monica border, and to improve traffic for everyone by tempting more people to ditch their cars and hop aboard public transit.

But it's just the first leg of what promises to be an epic journey on Wilshire. Here's a brief taste of what's happening now, or coming down the road soon:

- The project to extend the Purple Line subway from Western to La Cienega Boulevard is currently busy with utility relocation, including after-hours jackhammering and saw-cutting. The action is expected to intensify in the months ahead when demolition begins on the first of 17 buildings set to come down to create staging areas for the project. Actual subway construction, including pile-drilling and station excavation, will start next year, according to a [timetable](#) presented at a recent community meeting. A more immediate impact: next week's [closure](#) and relocation of Metro's Wilshire/LaBrea customer service center.
- At the same time, private developers have started work on the [Desmond on Wilshire](#), a new 7-story apartment structure in the Miracle Mile that's expected to be finished by next summer.
- Then there's the new [Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences museum](#), designed by Renzo Piano, to be built on the old May Co. site at Wilshire and Fairfax Avenue and heading for a 2017 debut.
- Right next door, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art is developing plans of its own for a new building by [Pritzker Prize-winning architect Peter Zumthor](#) to open in 2023, replacing several aging buildings on the museum campus.

In the scheme of things, the Wilshire bus rapid transit project is expected to wrap up relatively quickly, by next year.

"I'm thrilled that it's going in," said James O'Sullivan, president of the Miracle Mile Residential Association. "It's made a mess out of Wilshire, and 8th Street has become a jungle at times. But it's short term."

There's a much longer road ahead for the subway extension.

"Our issue all along has simply been: we don't understand how we can do nine years of this, 24/7," O'Sullivan said. "We know it's coming. We know it's going to go in. We have lots of questions."

Complicating matters is the sometimes confusing welter of agencies with a piece of the action: the county is building the bus lane from Federal to Bonsall, the city is constructing the rest of the bus rapid transit project, Metro is in charge of building the subway and is funding much of the bus lane work, utility companies are out in force moving lines in support of a variety of projects, and the Los Angeles Police Commission is responsible for canvassing residents and businesses when a project needs an exemption from work hours requirements under the city's noise ordinance.

In the midst of all that, consultant Brideau said she understands how people feel when they experience problems: "You don't care who it is, you just want it to stop."

She recently came to the rescue of a toy store owner who arrived one day to find that a contractor had unceremoniously installed a portable restroom right in front of her business. Brideau also has been known to remove no-parking signs left up too long after bus lane work has concluded.

Calls to the bus rapid transit project's hotline—(213) 922-2500—are promptly returned, Brideau said, and so are messages left on its [Facebook page](#).

As for the subway, project director Dennis Mori acknowledges there's a lot going on, but said the results—new transportation and cultural facilities that will provide a broad public benefit—will be worth it in the end.

"We look forward to the opportunity of integrating our plans and construction activity with the other projects," Mori said. While there's lots of coordination ahead, he said, the agency has been there before on other successful endeavors.

"We've had those experiences in the past," he said, pointing to collaborative work between Metro's Red Line subway

team and the group building the [Hollywood & Highland](#) center. “We had very busy schedules and both parties worked very closely together.”



Much of the work is taking place in Wilshire's Miracle Mile over the course of the next nine years.

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