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REVISED

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 14, 2005

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 15, 2005

SUBJECT: PEAK-PERIOD BUS-ONLY LANE ON WILSHIRE BOULEVARD

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE PROJECT UPDATE AND REPORT ON COST, IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME AND NEXT STEPS FOR PEAK-PERIOD BUS ONLY LANE ON WILSHIRE BOULEVARD

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file this report on the cost, implementation timeframe and next steps for a priority transit lane on Wilshire Boulevard.

ISSUE

At the July 21, 2005 Board meeting the Metro Chair requested a report on the cost, implementation timeframe and next steps for implementing a peak period bus-only lane on Wilshire Boulevard. This report discusses the implementation efforts made to date and the further actions/timeframe that would likely be required to implement a peak period bus only lane beyond the current one mile segment.

DISCUSSION

In August 2002, the Metro Board certified the ***Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR).*** **As shown in Attachment A,** the Wilshire BRT project was composed of four major components including:

- Wilshire Corridor Improvements - segments of peak-period bus only lanes in the Cities of Los Angeles, Beverly Hills and in Los Angeles County, four miles of bus lane reconstruction, enhanced station areas and two new station parking facilities.

- Peak period bus only lane Demonstration Projects
- Bus Operation and Maintenance Facility expansion, and
- Articulated Bus Acquisition.

Since the Board certified the FEIR, the bus facility expansion and the articulated bus acquisition have been split off from the Wilshire BRT project and are being implemented separately. Staff also completed Preliminary Engineering for the BRT project.

A major condition of the FEIR was that dedicated bus-only lanes could only be implemented where approved by the local jurisdiction. In order to address the concerns of local jurisdictions in hope of obtaining approval for the dedicated bus-only lanes, the Board authorized a program of demonstration projects. Demonstration Project #1 was developed and implemented in 2004.

Recent Efforts at Implementation – Peak Period Bus-only Lanes

- Metro and the City of Los Angeles opened a one-mile demonstration bus-only lane segment in March 2004. In September 2004, the Los Angeles City Council made the one-mile bus-only lane permanent but requested further traffic studies. The lane has now been operating for over 18 months. Studies are continuing.

- The bus signal priority system has been implemented in the City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles segments on Wilshire and is currently being installed in the City of Beverly Hills (expected to be operational by April 2006).

- In September 2004, the Board directed staff to study extending the one-mile bus-only lane segment to the east and west. Staff reported these efforts to the Board in a June 2005 Board Report. Staff has been coordinating with the City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County and Caltrans to develop concepts for extending the lane for a short distance to the east past the Veterans Administration property.

Future Implementation Time Frame – Peak Period Bus-only Lanes

- As new segments of bus-only lanes are developed, the time frame for implementation would depend on the length of time required for obtaining approval of the local jurisdictions. The 2002 FEIR for the Wilshire BRT Project anticipated that Metro would have to perform additional traffic studies to determine specific mitigation measures (e.g., signal timing modifications) on streets parallel to Wilshire Boulevard. These studies could take from six to twelve months. Final design of the bus-only lane could be done simultaneously during this period.

- Once approval of the local jurisdiction is obtained, the implementation of bus-only lane segments that would require only signing, striping and marking modifications would likely take five to nine months. The segment between Western Avenue and the Beverly Hills City Line at San Vicente would require curb lane reconstruction.

This could take approximately two years depending on the procurement method and who performs the work. For the segment immediately east of the current one-mile bus only lane segment, Metro's current discussions with the County of Los Angeles are to add a lane in the eastbound direction only. This would require some street widening and curb reconstruction, as well as some mixed-flow improvements. Completing the engineering and construction of this segment could take approximately 12 to 18 months, although certain components could be implemented sooner.

Implementation Costs – Peak Period Bus-only

- Project costs were developed as part of the Preliminary Engineering for the Wilshire BRT Project. Implementation of the peak period bus only lane, including curb lane reconstruction, utility relocation, and traffic mitigations on parallel streets, is estimated at $71 million. Costs for enhanced stations and station parking facilities would cost approximately $16 million. Metro staff expects that some of these costs, such as the underground utility relocations, might be accomplished for significantly less if undertaken by local jurisdictions.

Wilshire Bus Transit Speeds and Reductions in Travel Time

Before the implementation of Metro Rapid in June 2000, Metro Bus Lines 20 and 320 served the project area. The peak period average speed of this service was approximately 12 miles per hour. At that time, the average travel time to complete the journey from Wilshire/Western to the Santa Monica Pier was approximately 65 to 69 minutes.

Today, the Metro Rapid has an average peak period speed of approximately 16 miles per hour, an increase of approximately 25 percent. This improvement has come about primarily through the reduction in the total number of stops and the implementation of traffic signal priority in the City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles segments of the corridor. Peak period average travel times from Wilshire/Western to Santa Monica Pier are approximately 50 to 55 minutes, a reduction of between 10 and 19 minutes per trip.

The Wilshire BRT enhancements were proposed to build upon the Metro Rapid successes with the implementation of several additional features. These are described in the Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit Project FEIR. In that report, it is estimated that the additional BRT improvements would achieve an additional 10 to 12 minute decrease in travel time from the existing Metro Rapid service. This is due to a combination of the project components including:

- ***BRT Vehicle & Station Enhancements*** **– Three-door buses, multiple-door boarding and exiting, and improved "smart card" fare collection systems would reduce the time that the bus is stopped at the stations. Metro is currently acquiring the three-door, buses separate from the Wilshire BRT project, however, fare collection systems have not yet been developed for use on the Wilshire Corridor. If multiple-door boarding and alighting could be implemented using these buses, this would greatly reduce the**

waiting time that riders presently experience as each rider must currently board and pay at the fare box located only at the front of the bus. If the combination of new buses and enhanced fare collection could be implemented, an average trip from Wilshire/Western to the Santa Monica Pier might be reduced by between 6 and 11 minutes.

- *Expanded Bus Signal Priority* - The current bus signal priority system has only been implemented in the City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles segments to date. Expansion of signal priority into the cities of Beverly Hills and Santa Monica has not yet been implemented within the project area. Previous studies undertaken by Metro and the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) have determined that traffic signal priority accounts for between 7 to 15 percent of increases in bus speeds. If such decreases in travel time were applied to the segments of Beverly Hills and Santa Monica where no such priority presently exists, the average daily run times would decrease approximately three to four percent over existing Metro Rapid service. This component would reduce peak run times by about one to three minutes for a typical peak-hour trip between Wilshire/Western and the Santa Monica Pier. Bus signal priority is presently being installed in the City of Beverly Hills and is expected to be operational by April 2006.

- *Peak Period Dedicated Bus Lanes* - The third component, Peak-Period Dedicated Bus Lanes, if implemented in segments between Western Avenue and Santa Monica City limits with the approval of the local jurisdictions would reduce peak run times by an additional two to four minutes for a typical trip between Wilshire/Western and the Santa Monica Pier.

  In addition to average travel time savings, the primary benefits of bus lanes occur during the heavily congested "peak of the peak" travel periods, when congestion levels cause traffic backups and bus signal priority is not effective in keeping transit buses moving. During these periods, the bus-only lane can maintain bus speeds at 12-16 mph, while general-purpose traffic delays of up to 30 minutes can occur in heavily used segments of the Wilshire Corridor.

Cost Savings from Reductions in Travel Time

It is estimated that travel time savings of up to 24% could be achieved from all of the above improvements, with approximately 9% of that resulting from the bus-only lane. Such travel time savings could translate into operating cost savings if service is reduced and capacity maintained at the higher travel speeds.

NEXT STEPS

Metro staff will continue with current efforts to extend the existing one-mile bus-only lane eastward toward the I-405 (San Diego Freeway), past the federal Veterans Administration property. Staff will continue discussion with jurisdictions to obtain approval for longer extensions of the bus only lane.

Attachment A- Wilshire BRT Project: Project Components by Segment

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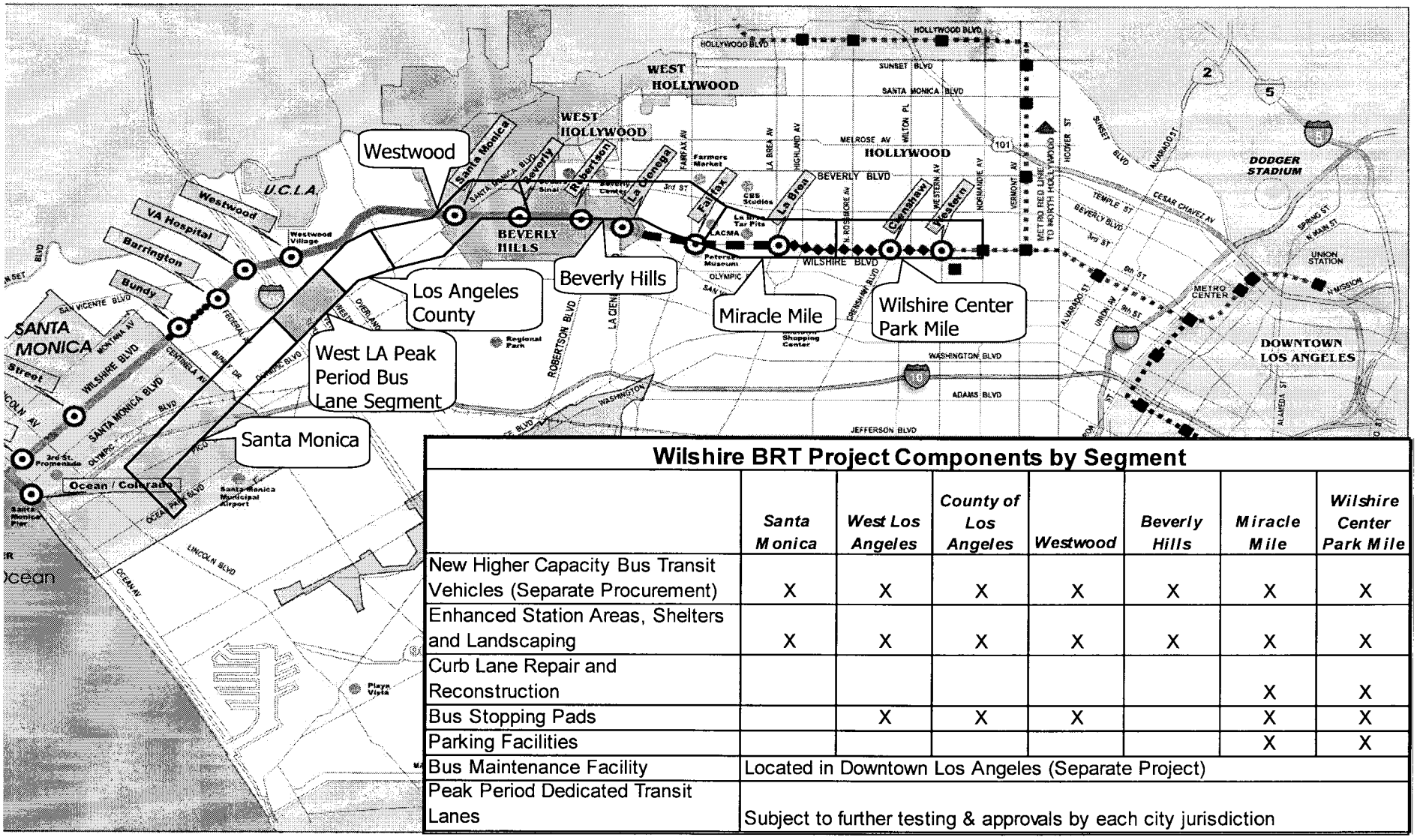

Wilshire BRT Project Components by Segment

	Santa Monica	*West Los Angeles*	*County of Los Angeles*	*Westwood*	*Beverly Hills*	*Miracle Mile*	*Wilshire Center Park Mile*
New Higher Capacity Bus Transit Vehicles (Separate Procurement)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Enhanced Station Areas, Shelters and Landscaping	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Curb Lane Repair and Reconstruction						X	X
Bus Stopping Pads		X	X	X		X	X
Parking Facilities						X	X
Bus Maintenance Facility	Located in Downtown Los Angeles (Separate Project)						
Peak Period Dedicated Transit Lanes	Subject to further testing & approvals by each city jurisdiction						

Attachment A
WILSHIRE BRT PROJECT
Project Components by Segment