

TO: CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS, STAFF
FROM: DR. SUKHSIMRANJIT SINGH
RE: COMPLETE STREETS PLAN FACILITATION
DATE: March 30, 2021

Facilitation Report: Complete Streets Plan for the City of Beverly Hills

In November of 2019, the City of Beverly Hills released a current draft of the Complete Streets Plan for public review. The Complete Streets Plan (CSP) is a “mobility policy plan that includes a comprehensive analysis of pedestrian, bicycle, street networks, and emerging transportation modes and technologies.”¹ After the initial release of CSP and following a recommendation from the City Council/Traffic and Parking Commission Liaison Committee, a community Town Hall was held in December 2019 to discuss issues raised on select CSP sections. Following the initial meeting and postponements due to COVID-19, the City of Beverly Hills invited a professional facilitator, Dr. Sukhsimranjit Singh, to continue the dialogue and build community consensus surrounding the plan. The goal of this second conversation, held a year later on December 6, 2020, was to gather specific suggestions for improving the draft CPD before presenting a final proposal to the City Council. This report summarizes the key issues and concerns surrounding the second CSP community session from the perspective of attendees. The report also provides assessment of each issue from Dr. Singh’s perspective.

¹<http://www.beverlyhills.org/citymanager/newsroom/cityofbeverlyhillstohostcommunitymeetingfordraftcompletestreetsplan/web.jsp>

Issue #1: Safety

A significant concern raised by community participants in response to CSP is cyclist safety. In advocating for the plan, several pro-bike lane participants emphasized that safety must be a larger consideration in implementing CSP. It became clear that many view the current bike lane structure as inadequate, as vehicles continuously ignore bike paths directly adjacent to roads. This brought types of bike lanes into the discussion: some cyclists in the group disapproved of both Class II and Class III bike lanes, which are located on the same streets as motor vehicle lanes. (Presently, Beverly Hills only has Class II and III routes: see Figure 1.)

Instead, those concerned with safety prefer that Class IV bikeways be integrated into the plan, as they are physically separated from cars that may choose to disregard them, significantly decreasing the likelihood of a collision. Between the existing Class II and Class III, there is a slight preference for Class II for some, though the consensus emphasized the need for a structural barrier between cyclists and cars.

Here are some takeaway points on this issue:

1. Participants expressed frustration with motor vehicle speeding, and some claimed an increase in dangerous speeding during the pandemic. For those individuals, speeding is a strong deterrent from riding bikes along the existing lanes. Under this reasoning, unless bike lanes can be separated from roads, simply constructing more Class II and III routes does not make the city more bike friendly.
2. Additionally, parents in the community emphasized that bike lanes must be safe for children who may use them recreationally and as transportation to

and from school. With Class IV bike lanes, some parents would feel more comfortable allowing their kids to ride bikes without supervision.

3. Aside from cycling safety, pedestrian safety was a common theme. For those who live a short distance from shops and restaurants in Beverly Hills, there needs to be more done to promote walkability and crosswalk safety.

Some participants were satisfied with CSP's layout of pedestrian improvements and suggested that all proposed changes be adopted by the City Council.

Recommendation: *The council should assess how the current plan affects pedestrian safety. In areas where bicyclist safety becomes a concern due to heavy or fast traffic, the city can consider revising the speed limits to better control traffic.*

Issue #2: Traffic Flow

With an increase in ridesharing platforms like Uber and Lyft, a participant advocated for a revised version of the plan that considers the traffic impact these platforms pose. Notably, community members have experienced impeded traffic in locations (Wilshire Blvd., for example) where vehicles routinely stop traffic to drop off and pick-up riders. For those who live in the area and count on arriving to their destination in a timely fashion, frequently stopping so as to avoid hitting pedestrians who walk into the road is frustrating and dangerous. Instead, it was recommended that CSP include designated cutouts from traffic lanes that allow rideshare loading/unloading to occur without blocking traffic.

Here are some take away points on this issue:

1. To facilitate traffic flow, some participants recommended an increase in traffic circles/roundabouts. Traffic circles both help to slow vehicles down and connect multiple streets. They also tend to be faster than a stoplight intersection, reducing congestion in populated areas.
2. A major concern of those against CSP as it stands is the chance that vehicle lanes may be removed from Beverly Hills streets to make room for more bike lanes. In an already traffic-heavy area, these folks argued that taking away a car lane would be highly problematic for those traveling by car.
3. Likewise, some brought up concerns that emphasizing a “share the road” approach would slow down vehicle traffic to accommodate for larger cycling groups.

Recommendation: *The current traffic flow can be compared with similarly placed cities where traffic circles have been introduced in the past. As per one study quoted by Washington State Department of Transportation,*

“Roundabouts promote a continuous flow of traffic. Unlike intersections with traffic signals, drivers don’t have to wait for a green light at a roundabout to get through the intersection. Traffic is not required to stop – only yield – so the intersection can handle more traffic in the same amount of time.”

Full report is available here: [Roundabout benefits | WSDOT \(wa.gov\)](#)

Issue #3: Bicycle Connectivity and Bike Lane Locations

Though Beverly Hills has cycling infrastructure in place, there is concern from the community as to how accessible it actually is.

1. One participant suggested that bike lanes under the new CSP be created to connect schools, parks, city hall, and the library. This would be particularly helpful to students and those who either do not own a car or prefer a more active mode of transportation.
2. Another participant suggested specific amendments to the plan, which concern the Wilshire/Santa Monica intersection, Palm Drive, and other locations that lack bike lane connection.

Assessment: My assessment is that in order to efficiently use the lanes in place, they must be continuous in particular locations where they presently come to a dead-end. The CSP already addresses the issues pertaining to such disruption as it prioritizes holistic bikeway network that bicyclists can use to traverse the city.² As per the U.S.

Department of Transportation:

Expanding and improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure means ensuring that a network of infrastructure is in place to make bicycling or walking viable modes of travel. It also means ensuring that the infrastructure

² The existing east-west bike lanes on North Santa Monica Boulevard and Burton Way, and north-south bike lanes/sharrows on Crescent Drive, create great backbones for the future bikeway network. However, overall there is a lack of both east-west and north-south bikeways throughout Beverly Hills. Building off these existing corridors and prioritizing the accelerated installation of several additional east-west and north-south bicycle facilities could help to develop a holistic bikeway network that bicyclists can use to traverse the city. ([Chapter-4-Bicycline-in-Beverly-Hills-web-view.pdf \(altaprojects.net\)](#) p. 2.)

is safe and comfortable to use. This approach can promote health by providing added opportunity for physical activity from transportation. This strategy is related to and supportive of the Safe Routes to School, Complete Streets, and Encouraging Bicycling and Walking programs.³

Issue #4: Environmental Considerations

Some Beverly Hills residents are concerned with the environmental impact posed by a city with a predominantly auto-based transit network. Bearing in mind vehicle emissions, proponents for the new CSP highlight the need for alternatives. Alternatives to personal use vehicles include pathways for pedestrians, bike lanes, a well-functioning metro system, and efficient rideshare programs.

Key take away points:

1. One participant referenced a survey that found that hundreds of respondents would use non-driving modes if Beverly Hills had safer and more accessible cycling infrastructure.⁴
2. Knowing this information and the positive environmental impact a larger cycling population would have, there is reason to believe CSP could improve the overall Beverly Hills carbon footprint.

Recommendation: *In my assessment, the Complete Streets Plan is moving in the right direction in terms of proposals that will move the City more environmentally friendly; as bicycle riding is considered to be most eco-friendly and sustainable form of*

³ Available at [Expand and Improve Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure | US Department of Transportation](#).

⁴ <http://temp3.altaprojects.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Beverly-Hills-Complete-Streets-Workshop-3-PowerPoint.pdf>

transportation.⁵ The CSP provides the emphasis it is placing on environment and on its goal to protect natural environments under the plan's vision.⁶

Issue #5: Equity

Cyclists in the group were quick to emphasize that bikes are not just for the “lower class.” Rather, cycling is an activity that transcends class barriers, and cycling infrastructure is needed for increased equity. For those who ride recreationally, it is a valuable form of exercise and staying active, which is particularly important now that the pandemic has hit, and other activities are limited. It is also a beneficial form of transportation for those dedicated to sustainability. In other instances, not everyone can afford to purchase and maintain an automobile. In this case, not accommodating for those who cycle out of transportation necessity is unfair to lower income individuals.

Additional discussion points raised:

1. Participants expressed views that there is a perceived gender and age divide between those who feel comfortable using the existing bike pathways. Men are disproportionately more willing to ride alongside a busy road, while women tend to prefer riding at a distance from moving vehicles.
2. In a city like Beverly Hills that does not have separated lanes, some riders argued that women are deterred from cycling out of safety concerns. In addition, children are often not comfortable and/or permitted by parents to use Class II or III bike lanes.

⁵ Ralph Buehler and John Pucher, *Cycling for Sustainable Cities* ([Cycling for Sustainable Cities | The MIT Press](#))

⁶ See Beverly Hills Complete Streets Plan Draft (March 30, 2021).

Recommendation: *The revised CSP provides for a holistic bikeway network that includes different class bike lanes and detailed considerations for the use of such bike lanes. The draft plan further provides for design details for further exploration/confirmation during implementation.*⁷

Sub-Issue #5.1: Modernizing Beverly Hills Transportation

While bringing comparative perspectives, two participants raised the issue that Beverly Hills is falling behind in the construction of modern, efficient transportation. Looking to other cities that have structures in place to accommodate both motorists and non-motorists, this group conveyed that it is important for their city to catch up.

Comments: *CSP is already providing concrete steps to promote walkability and cycling infrastructure in ways that do not slow down or impede traffic. Passing the current draft by the Council will be an important step towards modernizing Beverly Hills Transportation.*

Issue #6: Return on Taxpayer Investment

At-least one participant was concerned with the financial implications of the plan. Specifically, they asked: *Are there truly enough cyclists in Beverly Hills to justify the price tag?* The cyclists in the room argued that there are, but that many are currently deterred from existing bike lanes out of safety concerns.

⁷ See Beverly Hills Complete Streets Plan Draft. Pages 27 to 37 (March 30, 2021).

The above stated claim was rebutted by arguing that just because additional bike lanes are built does not mean that they will realistically attract more cyclists. Further, creating bike lanes requires construction, which may slow down already busy streets.

A reference to the “high end” nature of Beverly Hills was brought into the discussion of whether or not the current CSP is a prudent policy. Specifically, one participant emphasized that people are not arriving to shop on Rodeo Drive by bike or subway, because such forms of transportation do not generally cater to an affluent audience. Rather, this individual encouraged the City to remember the types of high-end businesses located there and reassess if CSP aligns with the posh appeal that the City of Beverly Hills is famed for.

Issue #7: Impact on Beverly Hills Businesses

Some feared that an emphasis on bike lane construction could prove detrimental to storefronts and local businesses. They shared that if car lanes are downsized, traffic becomes worse, and it becomes more difficult to arrive at Beverly Hills shops by car, some visitors may be deterred, hurting business revenue. Conversely, pro-cyclists argued that a focus on bike access would not hurt local businesses, but rather would bring more business from those who otherwise would not have been able to ride to their destination.

Recommendation: A balance between the diverse needs of participants needs to be reached and I truly think that the CSP in its current form tries to reach that balance by

implementing a detailed strategic thinking process. If needed, further discussions can be held to understand specifically what and where the draft CSP is lacking.

Issue #8: Timely Approval of the Plan

There were participants frustrated over continual conversation about the plan instead of an initiative to approve of the draft and start working on the most important issues. They encouraged the City to forgo continuous community dialogues, because certain individuals will always disagree, and this disagreement stalls progress. Instead, they hoped that the City would go through with the plan given the suggestions already made. They also advised that the City place a greater emphasis on conducting research on the plan (public transportation methods, cost/benefit of specific types of bike lanes, etc.) that could better inform implementation of the Complete Streets Plan.

Conclusion: To summarize, here are my list of recommendations based on the discussions of December 6, 2020:

Issue #1: Safety

The council should assess how the current plan affects pedestrian safety. In areas where bicyclist safety becomes a concern due to heavy or fast traffic, the city can consider revising the speed limits to better control traffic.

Issue #2: Traffic Flow

The current traffic flow can be compared with similarly placed cities where traffic circles have been introduced in the past.

Issue #3: Bicycle Connectivity and Bike Lane Locations

My assessment is that in order to efficiently use the lanes in place, they must be continuous in particular locations where they presently come to a dead-end. The CSP already addresses the issues pertaining to such disruption as it prioritizes holistic bikeway network that bicyclists can use to traverse the city.⁸

Issue #4: Environmental Considerations

In my assessment, the Complete Streets Plan is moving in the right direction in terms of proposals that will move the City more environmentally friendly; as bicycle riding is considered to be most eco-friendly and sustainable form of transportation.⁹ The CSP provides the emphasis it is placing on environment and on its goal to protect natural environments under the plan's vision.¹⁰

Issue #5: Equity

Recommendation: The revised CSP provides for a holistic bikeway network that includes different class bike lanes and detailed considerations for the use of such bike lanes. The draft plan further provides for design details for further exploration/confirmation during implementation.¹¹

⁸ The existing east-west bike lanes on North Santa Monica Boulevard and Burton Way, and north-south bike lanes/sharrows on Crescent Drive, create great backbones for the future bikeway network. However, overall there is a lack of both east-west and north-south bikeways throughout Beverly Hills. Building off these existing corridors and prioritizing the accelerated installation of several additional east-west and north-south bicycle facilities could help to develop a holistic bikeway network that bicyclists can use to traverse the city. ([Chapter-4-Bicycline-in-Beverly-Hills-web-view.pdf \(altaprojects.net\)](#) p. 2.)

⁹ Ralph Buehler and John Pucher, *Cycling for Sustainable Cities* ([Cycling for Sustainable Cities | The MIT Press](#))

¹⁰ See Beverly Hills Complete Streets Plan Draft (March 30, 2021).

¹¹ See Beverly Hills Complete Streets Plan Draft. Pages 27 to 37 (March 30, 2021).

Sub-Issue #5.1: Modernizing Beverly Hills Transportation

Comments: CSP is already providing concrete steps to promote walkability and cycling infrastructure in ways that do not slow down or impede traffic. Passing the current draft by the Council will be an important step towards modernizing Beverly Hills Transportation.

Issue #7: Impact on Beverly Hills Businesses

Recommendation: A balance between the diverse needs of participants needs to be reached and I truly think that the CSP in its current form tries to reach that balance by implementing a detailed strategic thinking process. If needed, further discussions can be held to understand specifically what and where the draft CSP is lacking.

Annex

Figure 1. Source: <http://temp3.altaprojects.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Chapter-4-Bicycline-in-Beverly-Hills-web-view.pdf>

Table 4-1: Existing Bikeways

CLASS	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO	EXISTING FACILITIES
Class I Bike Paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Off-street, completely separate from the roadway Provide exclusive right-of-way for bicyclists (and pedestrians) Cross flow by motor traffic is minimized May provide separate pedestrian lanes 		None
Class II Bike Lanes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-street, striped lane for one-way bicycle travel Typically adjacent to vehicle traffic traveling in the same direction Can include buffers for separation from moving traffic and parked vehicles Can be placed in one direction in constricted rights-of-way 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burton Way from Rexford Drive to eastern City limits Crescent Drive from Sunset Blvd to Park Way North Santa Monica Boulevard from western City limits to Doheny Drive
Class III Bike Routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated preferred route for bicyclists on streets shared with motor vehicles Established by signage and optional pavement markings Can include traffic calming to create a bike boulevard 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crescent Drive from Park Way to Wilshire Boulevard South Santa Monica Boulevard from Crescent Drive to Rexford Drive
Class IV Separated Bikeways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-street bike lane physically separated from motor vehicle traffic through bollards, planters, or other vertical delineation Often accompanied by bicycle signals through intersections 		None