



MIKE BONIN

City of Los Angeles
Councilmember, Eleventh District

September 5, 2017

Cyndi Hench, President
Neighborhood Council of Westchester Playa
7166 W Manchester Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Dear Cyndi,

I am writing in response to your August 15 letter, to address ongoing concerns about the Playa del Rey road safety projects, and questions about the Playa del Rey Safer Streets Task Force and the role of the Neighborhood Council of Westchester-Playa in evaluating and recommending changes to road configurations in Playa del Rey.

Thank you for your letter, your steadfast advocacy for the Neighborhood Council and for its important role as guardians of the interests of Westchester, Playa Vista, and Playa del Rey. I am happy to try to clarify matters on recent road configurations in the community.

As you and your board members know, and as I explained at your board meeting at LMU on June 4, in late Spring following community workshops with some Playa del Rey residents, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation made changes to Culver as a result of significant safety and liability concerns. Those changes were controversial, and LADOT and I were fairly and appropriately taken to task for a lack of public outreach on the changes. As you also know, in June we restored a lane on Culver Boulevard, and in August we restored the lanes on Vista del Mar, and made changes to the signal and timing at Vista del Mar and Culver to make traffic flow more smoothly.

In late July, I announced the formation of the Playa del Rey Safer Streets Task Force, created to bring diverse stakeholders with differing opinions to a common table to evaluate the neighborhood's the road safety projects and make recommendations to me and to the City on whether to keep, remove, or modify the projects. That panel, which began meeting last month, is composed of a balanced range of stakeholders, staffed by a professional and impartial facilitator. My goal is for the panel to make recommendations, with safety as the primary focus, to me, to your Neighborhood Council, and to LADOT. My intention is for these recommendations to be the subject of a well-publicized open house in the Playa del Rey area, so any and all stakeholders can offer their feedback.

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In the past two weeks, some members of your board have asked what role I envision the NCWP will have in considering further changes to the road projects. I urge and welcome the NCWP's Safe Streets Ad Hoc Committee to make suggestions and recommendations to the Task Force. I invite the NCWP to co-sponsor the open house on the Task Force's recommendations. And I anticipate and welcome the NCWP's consideration and evaluation of what the Task Force recommends.

In the meantime, your August 15 letter posed several questions, which I am pleased to answer below:

- 1) *"We, the Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa, ask that with the exception of the changes to Pershing Drive, you immediately reverse the lane reductions in Playa del Rey and implement other strategies to improve the safety, efficiency, and accessibility of our roads for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles."*

Rather than acting immediately and unilaterally on what remains a very divisive issue, I intend to honor the Task Force and the community process I outlined above. If further changes are made to the road projects, it is essential they be made in conjunction with alternative safety measures. We need to give the Safe Streets Task Force time to do its job.

- 2) *"The NCWP asks that you ensure the LADOT community meeting is rescheduled within the next 30 days, and that there is a mechanism for public testimony with a timeline for responsiveness to their comments."*

The July LADOT open house was postponed because the decision to restore Vista del Mar back to four lanes fundamentally changed the project. The LADOT open house will be held to evaluate the Task Force recommendations, and I invite the NCWP to be a co-sponsor of the event. In the interim, LADOT can be available to answer questions and take comments at the NCWP board, and at the NCWP Ad Hoc Committee.

- 3) *"...there needs more outreach to inform community members of this [CD11 sponsored] survey including mailings as not everyone is internet connected and a timeline for when the final results of this survey including not only a summary but complete raw data will be released."*

The June survey was digitally sent to thousands of people who have contacted my office regarding the changes. However, this is only one of many ways we've taken comments on the projects. We've gathered comments through emails, phone calls, in person conversations, etc. Those who have no internet access have had and will continue to have opportunities to weigh in, including calling my office. We also welcome the help of the Neighborhood Council in spreading the word about project updates to people we might not be reaching.

I would also like to do more to spread the word on the pending task force recommendations through US Postal mail. City ethics regulations strictly limit how much mail I am allowed to send, but we will send as widely as we are legally allowed, and ask LADOT to supplement.

- 4) *"We ask that the Neighborhood Council is given representation on the Task Force..."*

I appointed Michele Cooley-Strickland from the Neighborhood Council as a member of the task force.

The NCWP also asked several questions in a June motion. While my staff and LADOT have since answered those questions, I will include them here for the record:

- 5) *"Request the implementation of mitigation measures designed to lessen the impact of the lane reductions on Culver Blvd. and Vista del Mar on the areas of upper Playa del Rey and Westchester"*

LADOT implemented the following measures:

- Restored Eastbound lane to Culver between Nicholson and Jefferson
- Restored all lanes on Vista del Mar
- Changeable messages signs on Vista del Mar and on Culver Blvd. notifying drivers of the changes and suggesting alternative routes
- Traffic advisories announcing the changes and suggesting alternative routes
- Installation of a "trapped" right turn lane on northbound Pershing Dr. to eastbound Westchester Pkwy to encourage moving traffic off of Pershing Dr.
- Addition of second left turn lane pockets on Manchester Ave at Lincoln Blvd
- I personally asked LAPD to increase enforcement of right turn restrictions and other violations at the start of project implementation to discourage cut-through traffic

- 6) *"Request that the Los Angeles Department of Transportation and/or the CD11 Council Office immediately provide a copy of any traffic study done in advance of the commencement of the lane closures included in the Safe Streets Initiative; and, a) Provide any available data regarding traffic on the community streets impacted by the Safe Streets Initiative for the area bounded by Sepulveda to the East, Imperial to the South, Culver to the North and Vista del Mar to the West"*

LADOT has provided available data to the recently formed Safe Streets Ad Hoc Committee of the Neighborhood Council, including but not limited to traffic counts, delay studies, and collision information.

- 7) *"Provide a detailed plan for traffic enforcement for the next 90 days"*

My staff has provided the Safe Streets Ad Hoc Committee of the Neighborhood Council with the dates that LAPD conducted targeted traffic enforcement in Playa del Rey in the months of April, May, June, and July. For your convenience, I have included again here:

April: 4/4/, 4/6, 4/7, 4/8, 4/10, 4/16, 4/23, 4/19, 4/30, 4/25, 4/20, 4/21, 4/27

May: 5/1, 5/2, 5/14, 5/16, 5/17, 5/18, 5/25, 5/28

June and July: The combined effort between West Traffic and Pacific has resulted in traffic enforcement having been conducted in the Playa Del Rey area (majors and residential streets) every day of the week. That's all 30 days of June and all 31 days in July.

August: LAPD has continued presence in the area, as well as confirmed a saturation detail.

LAPD has had a presence multiple times per week and often daily. Following my initial letter of traffic enforcement request to LAPD (shared at NCWP's June meeting), I have asked that LAPD continue to have as much of a presence in the area as possible. Both LAPD's Pacific Division and West Traffic Bureau have committed to continue to keep PDR and Mar Vista as the primary focal points in Pacific Division.

- 8) *"Provide written explanation of the feasibility of reducing Vista del Mar to one lane each way commencing South of Imperial Highway"*

Vista del Mar has since been returned to two lanes in either direction. The Task Force will make safety recommendations for Vista del Mar.

- 9) *"Respond in writing to all community suggestions and questions given at this meeting"*

As the Safe Streets Ad Hoc Committee of the Neighborhood Council discussed with my staff, my office is prepared to respond to all community suggestions and questions in writing upon receipt.

- 10) *"..and set metrics for the success of the Vista del Mar pilot restriping project"*

Measures of success at the outset of this project included reducing severe and fatal collisions, slower and safer speeds through downtown Playa del Rey, and reduced cut-through traffic. The Safe Streets Community Task Force is also working toward identifying what the updated community goals are for the project.

- 11) *"We ask that you implement all parts of the Vision Zero "toolkit" to improve safety without first resorting to removing traffic lanes."*

Thank you for acknowledging the importance of Vision Zero, and understanding that Vision Zero also means traffic signals, crosswalks, bulb-outs at intersections, enhanced enforcement, and much more. Not all Vision Zero tools are appropriate for all situations and locations, and I will forward your suggestions to the Task Force and to LADOT for consideration.

- 12) *"We want to know exactly how LADOT is monitoring the number of accidents on Culver/Jefferson/Pershing/VDM - both before and after implementation of the changes."*

I've asked LADOT to report to the Ad Hoc Committee with a response.

- 13) *"LADOT must investigate options for angled compact vehicle parking to provide parking spaces in close proximity to businesses on Culver."*

This is a very worthwhile idea, and one I recently discussed with the local business community. Given that it has been suggested by several people, I suspect the Task Force will consider this. LADOT will investigate this option, and we will canvass the business community for its specific feedback, and ask for broad public feedback -- as well as make DOT's findings part of the public process.

- 14) *"A centerpiece of our efforts should be to make the Ballona path safely accessible to Playa Vista residents."*

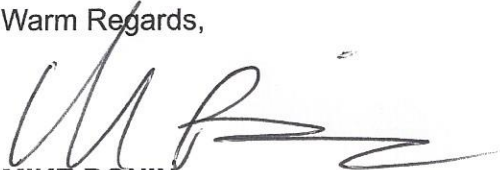
Regardless of the ultimate configuration of Culver Boulevard, increased access to the Ballona Bike Path is a priority.

Finally, I understand some members of the public and of the NCWP board have challenged the composition of the membership, questioned the integrity of the facilitator, and even objected to the validity of the task force and its process. Some have suggested the task force is an attempt to stall any further decisions until public controversy has abated. Those characterizations are unfair and simply inaccurate. The goal of the task force is for people with different viewpoints and perspectives to find common ground and make recommendations based on that. I am not seeking nor do I expect a polarized discussion with a split vote. I am hopeful that it will function more like a group of neighbors working together than like a divided and partisan Congress. I am optimistic for smart, consensus suggestions that the community can consider and support.

The road safety projects have raised tensions in our community. The Task Force is an attempt to bring people together around the important issues of street safety, and move past the bad blood created between neighbors. Attempts to delegitimize or undermine the Task Force derail those efforts, and delay ultimate resolution of the question of configuration of the Playa del Rey streets.

Thank you very much for your time, effort, and attention to addressing these concerns and improving the quality of life for our constituents in Playa del Rey, Playa Vista, and Westchester. I look forward to our continued work together.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Bonin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

MIKE BONIN

Councilmember, 11th District