

Completing Los Angeles Streets - April 2018

In 2017 the City of Los Angeles announced plans to upgrade six [Complete Streets corridors](#), identified by the shared need for traffic safety improvements as well as resurfacing and road repair. All six corridors were located on the City's Vision Zero High Injury Network (HIN) and the list of grade "D/F" streets, ranking the pavement conditions of the City's 7,500 miles of streets. This was a promising attempt on the City's part to analyze street improvements from a comprehensive, complete perspective and leverage resources to implement Complete Streets projects.

At first, these projects only focused on the roadway (curb-to-curb). Thanks in large part to transportation and access advocates pushing the City to define Complete Streets even more comprehensively, sidewalk repair was added as a project element. This was a huge win for mobility advocates who recognize sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian path of travel as a key backbone in the City of Los Angeles transportation network. The City also included "green streets" elements into the six projects, such as dry wells and other stormwater management systems.

The City had the critical elements in place. Locations with high and overlapping need were finalized. Funding for design and construction was anticipated from Measure M and SB 1. And the City was even hiring local community-based organizations to conduct meaningful outreach along the corridors.

Complete Streets were looking good.

Cooks in the kitchen

Last month, during a joint meeting between Los Angeles City Council Budget & Finance and Transportation Committees, members discussed the funding, scoping, and implementation of the six Complete Streets corridors.

- Budget & Finance chair Krekorian [moved](#) to set budget ceilings on each of the six corridors:

Corridor	Council District(s) / Neighborhood(s)	Maximum budget
Avalon Blvd	8, 9, 15 / Historic South Central and Watts	\$17.5 million
Main St	8, 9 / Historic South Central	\$13.9 million
Reseda Blvd	3, 12 / Reseda	\$17.3 million
Roscoe Blvd	6 / Panorama City	\$8.6 million

Temple St	1, 12 / Historic Filipinotown	\$9.2 million
Venice Blvd	1, 9, 10 / West Adams	\$13.6 million

These budget ceilings were based on by BOE estimates based on early project scopes.

- Preliminary project scopes and elements for each corridor are outlined in a February 2018 [Chief Administrative Officer \(CAO\) report](#).
- The motion also instructed BOE to work with the Council offices of the districts that include each of those projects, to “maximize the amount of work performed” while keeping costs within the above budgets for each project.

The [motion](#) was approved during the joint committee meeting (7-1) and then a week later was approved at full Council with [amendments](#):

- Curb extensions (Avalon, Reseda) and protected bike lane on Avalon to be included in design budget, working with respective Council offices to stay within designated project budgets.
- Require departments to return to Council for project approval only if final project budget is "significantly higher" than protected budgets.

Analysis

This [motion](#) set budget limits, but beyond that did not identify shared parameters for project development. And this means that the first Complete Streets projects to come out of the City of Los Angeles are lacking any defined citywide goals, standards or performance measures. Complete Streets projects are supposed to comprehensively address mobility and infrastructure concerns such as safety, access, maintenance, liability, and sustainability. Without shared standards, how do we know if these projects will address these issues? How do we know if the City’s investment will yield the return it is expecting?

Los Angeles is a huge city with a beautifully diverse tapestry of communities and there is no “one size fits all” style or way of life among its 4.2 million residents. It is a huge step forward for the City to recognize this by contracting with locally-based community organizations that work and have history in the six corridor project areas to do outreach and engagement for these six projects. But our different communities are still part of the same City. And the City is in a position to lead its various neighborhoods to a shared vision of safe and complete streets, while allowing for local flexibility in how that happens and with what partners.

The rationale for Councilmember Krekorian’s motion was to ensure that the six Complete Streets project budgets did not increase beyond a dedicated ceiling. This is good finance practice and we support it. Because advocacy efforts expanded the 2017 project scopes to include sidewalks, a considerable amount (\$20 million total) of budget needs were added to the six projects.

What we are looking for is shared guidance and goals for these six Complete Streets projects. The locations were originally selected because of high need for improvement in traffic safety (Vision Zero) and road repair (D/F grade streets) that needed considerable resources. If we don't know what our safety and maintenance goals are, how do we know if these considerable resources have been invested in the most efficient and effective way possible?

Further, if the City is spending resources to contract external organizations to conduct meaningful community engagement, how do those groups develop outreach strategies if Council Offices retain control of project scopes? What is the role of community engagement? How can we ensure that this investment is also supported to be efficient and effective?

Measuring what and how much

We respectfully submit our recommendations for shared performance measures that can help determine both a) which project elements are likely to yield the most impactful return on investment, and b) which elements can be measured to evaluate project success.

Project prioritization:

- Select corridors based on HIN and Plan for Healthy LA

Traffic safety:

- Decrease serious injuries and fatalities from traffic collisions on project corridor and intersecting streets
- Reduce high vehicle speeds on project corridor and intersecting streets

Road reconstruction:

- Linear miles of roadway improved from "D" or "F" grade to "A" or "B" on project corridors
- Reduced injury and/or property damage from segments of project corridors in disrepair

Sidewalk repair and accessibility:

- Linear miles of sidewalks and crosswalks, and number of curb ramps brought up to ADA standard on project corridors
- Number of access sidewalk repair requests completed on project corridors
- Amount of urban tree canopy preserved and/or replaced
- Improvements to bus stops

Green street treatments:

- Investments in storm water capture (permeable pavement, bioswales)