

LETTER OF REQUEST

EQUITABLE AND SAFE TRANSPORTATION DURING COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Dear >>>>>,>

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has greatly and negatively impacted life for everyone in Los Angeles. The severity of impact varies greatly depending on how and where we live, work, go to school, and shop; how much money we do or do not have; our race and socio-economic status; and crucially whether or not we are housed, employed or not. It is important to acknowledge these differences because a response that supports human dignity, rooted in equity, does not avoid such distinctions, it accounts for them.

We acknowledge the actions that have already been taken. However, as evidenced by the recent spike in traffic fatalities despite significantly fewer cars on the roads, there are still dangers and inequalities that need to be rapidly addressed in order to safely reopen our city.

Therefore, the following are key areas of concern that we request be addressed with utmost priority to protect Angelenos.

Priority 1. Protecting Vulnerable Populations

There has been a definite increase in essential workers cycling and walking to work and people cycling, running and walking for exercise or recreation. It has been observed in other cities that as businesses reopen, physical distancing on limited public transportation will remain a challenge for the foreseeable future. Additionally, many are still out of work resulting in a greater number of people turning to less expensive forms of transportation — walking, cycling and e-scooters. Few streets in Los Angeles are balanced for the safety of all users. Therefore, we urge the following be implemented as soon as possible:

1. Use real-time data on road usage, dangerous roads and mass transit usage to identify routes that can easily be made into temporary “Safe Street Corridors”. The purpose of these corridors are to facilitate vulnerable road users needing to travel by bicycle, foot, wheelchair or e-scooter for work or other essential activities.
2. Through rapid and open community engagement, find which routes would be community-supported and start systematically implementing them.
3. Continue to measure the program and engage the community to adjust these priority corridors as needed to ensure safety and the ability to meet physical distancing guidelines for those using them.

4. Increase education and outreach about the impact speeding has on essential workers and the continued importance of reducing risk and staying safe during this ongoing health crisis.

Priority 2. Protecting Those Using Mass Transit

Many in this region are scared of using mass transit but do not have other options. It is imperative that those who depend on mass transit are protected and know what actions must be taken to protect against further viral spread. Therefore, we urge the following be implemented as soon as possible:

1. Expand the regular cleaning and sanitizing of frequently touched surfaces on busses, trains, at stations and heavily used bus stops so this is being done several times a day.
2. Distribute free face coverings to those who can not afford them but must use mass transit.
3. Continue to expand the installation of hand sanitizer dispensers until they are readily available at all train stations and heavily used bus stops.
4. Expand busy bus stop areas to allow people to stay physically distant while waiting. This could mean adding temporary bus benches for the elderly or the disabled to sit or temporarily widening sidewalks by using adjacent parking spots.
5. Ensure information on all actions taken to protect riders is made readily known through all available channels.

Priority 3. Protecting Pedestrians on Overcrowded Sidewalks

With COVID-19 precautions, pedestrians are forced to walk out of their way to avoid other people, often meaning they are stepping into busy streets placing themselves and others in harm's way. Businesses offering curbside pickup or queuing lines to access services are creating further hazards which overcrowd our narrow sidewalks. Therefore, we urge the following actions be implemented as soon as possible:

1. Provide a streamlined and free menu of creative options that restaurants, retail businesses and communities can implement to facilitate commerce and safe pedestrian passage. This would include things like parklets and temporary sidewalk expansions.
2. Further reduce traffic on busy sidewalks along "Safe Street Corridors" by deploying appropriate signage to encourage correct safer usage of the new street design by bicycles and e-scooters where protected bikeways exist.
3. Identify crowded pathways near our senior centers, hospitals, medical centers, parks and schools. Implement temporary sidewalk expansion projects to facilitate safe pedestrian travel.

None of these requests are new or radical. They have been successfully implemented in other cities around the world prior to and as a result of this crisis. While we understand that these requests are not without challenges, it is an ethical and moral obligation to operationalize what is possible to save lives.

Respectfully submitted by a coalition of community groups, businesses and civic leaders, as represented below.

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