

What's Needed for a Better Bike Plan

By Alex Thompson, Joe Linton, and Rachel Stevenson

1. Detailed Planning for Enforcement, Education, Encouragement, and Evaluation

A table with a short leg rocks and tilts. A five legged table with one very long leg, and four short ones . . . well, it cannot rightly be referred to as a table. Without greater detail in planning for Enforcement, Education, Encouragement, and Evaluation, the detailed plans for Engineering (infrastructure) will fail. Details for these areas should be fleshed out, and done so with public involvement. Programmatic outlines and schedules should be worked out with community leaders and responsible departments at the table.

2. Add a Chapter on the Backbone Bikeway Network

The Backbone Bikeway Network offers a way to connect our city departments, rehabilitate our boulevards, and provide cyclists safe and efficient ways to cross Los Angeles. The Backbone Bikeway Network was developed in a series of six community meetings, open to all members of the public, which offered the public control over the ultimate product. As such, it is a widely supported plan that represents the wishes of many cyclists.

The draft plan should include a chapter on the Backbone network that is written in collaboration with the cycling community. While many of the streets in the Backbone have been added to the Citywide Bikeway Network, the accompanying principles of departmental connectivity, holistic planning and complete streets, and the plans to fulfill those principles, have been left out. One chapter on the Backbone would provide an orienting vision for the draft plan.

The Backbone focuses on improving those major arterials that cyclist need to cross Los Angeles. It approaches this with a win-win Complete Streets approach, where improvements for cyclists would synergize to improve the environment for pedestrians and businesses. The Backbone would seek to rehabilitate key major boulevards – Santa Monica Blvd, Reseda Blvd, Vermont Avenue, and Sepulveda Blvd, for example – so that they become pedestrian friendly, bike friendly, and retail friendly.

3. Focus on Safe Streets

A worthwhile bike plan will commit the city to making L.A.'s streets safer for bicycling. The current (1996) approved plan in effect today designates 190 additional future miles of bike lane. The 2010 draft commits to ~56 miles of additional future bike lanes.

A focus on Los Angeles streets includes the following changes to the 2010 drafts:

3.1 Draft Bike Plan

3.1.1 The bike plan should include **more bike lane mileage than the current plan already in effect**. The total committed (not speculative) bike lane mileage should be greater than 190 miles - preferably at least 250 miles of committed bike lanes. (A good start toward this would be to harmonize upward the discrepancies between the draft Bike Plan, the draft Implementation Plan and the approved Downtown Street Standards. Many streets listed in the Implementation Plan as "sufficient width" are in the Bike Plan as "speculative.")

3.1.2 The bike plan should commit to **robust bike-friendly street treatments**. While it's not feasible to detail every location, the plan should at least target implementation beyond the minimum. As currently specified in the draft, all the bike-friendly street facilities could be considered complete if the city installs a couple hundred signs. The city should specify minimum targets for overall bike-friendly streets, using levels shown in the technical documents. For example: 50% Level 5: Traffic diversion, 20% Level 4: Traffic calming, 15% Level 3: Intersection treatments, 10% Level 2: Pavement markings, and 5% Level 1: signage.

3.1.3 All technical **standards should support bike facility implementation**. Minimum car-lane width should preferably be 9 feet, and certainly not worse than today's 10-foot standard.

3.2 Draft Implementation Plan

3.2.1 **No bike routes** should be prioritized in the Implementation Plan. Routes are ineffective, meaningless and in no way a priority. The plan should prioritize meaningful on-street facilities: lanes and robust bike-friendly streets.

3.2.2 The Draft Implementation Plan should not scale back facilities specified in the Draft Bike Plan. **For Bike Plan streets designated for lanes, the Implementation Plan should implement them as lanes**, not as routes. The current draft Implementation Plan downgrades facilities on Laurel Canyon, Main, Spring, Venice, Western, York and elsewhere.

3.2.3 The Implementation Plan should include **more committed on-street bike facilities in population-dense central neighborhoods in early implementation years**. For Koreatown, Westlake, East Hollywood, Pico-Union, Adams-Normandie, Downtown, and other central areas, the plan includes very little, mainly a few "speculative" facilities to be studied beginning in Year 4 and Year 5 for possible later implementation.