

March 18, 2014

Beverly Hills City Council
455 North Rexford Drive
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

Email: MayorandCityCouncil@beverlyhills.org; SMLVD@beverlyhills.org

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers:

I am writing to encourage you to incorporate safe bicycle routes on Santa Monica Boulevard during the upcoming reconstruction project.

I write as a private citizen, but my professional role is Professor and Chair of Environmental Health Sciences at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. I am the former California State Health Officer, and also the former director of the National Center for Environmental Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I am a pediatrician who has dedicated his career to studying the impact of the environment, in particular the built environment, on human health especially the health of children and young people. I am convinced that the obesity and inactivity epidemics and their health consequences are due not only to bad nutrition but also to severe car dependency.

In the last half century, we have effectively engineered physical activity out of our daily lives. The incidental exercise that was a routine part of earlier generations' lives as they walked to shops, churches, and workplaces and climbed stairs in buildings, has diminished with the rise of nearly complete car dependency. From 1960 to 2000, Americans' per capita vehicle miles traveled doubled, from 4,000 to close to 9,000 miles per year, although this number has remained stable since 2000--perhaps because every urban area is already over-full of cars.¹ Americans spend more than one hundred hours per year commuting to work, which is more than the ten days of vacation time offered in many jobs.² Annual hours of highway traffic delay per person in urban areas increased from an average of twenty-one hours in 1982 to about fifty-one hours in 2007.³ During that same time, rush hour increased from 4.5 hours of the day to 7 hours.⁴ The US population will double by the end of this century. Nearly 600 million people will be vying for limited resources in

¹ Litman, T. 2010. *Are Vehicle Travel Reduction Targets Justified? Evaluating Mobility Management Policy Objectives Such as Targets to Reduce VMT and Increase Use of Alternatives Modes*. Victoria Transport Policy Institute. http://www.vtpi.org/vmt_red.pdf.

² US Census Bureau. 2005. "Americans Spend More Than 100 Hours Commuting to Work Each Year, Census Bureau Reports." http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/american_community_survey_acs/cb05-ac02.html.

³ Texas Transportation Institute. 2009. *Congestion Trends--Wasted Hours (Annual Delay per Traveler, 1982-2007)*. College Station: Texas A&M University System, Texas Transportation Institute. http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/congestion_data/tables/national/table_4.pdf.

⁴ US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. 2008. *Congestion Pricing*. <http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop08039/fhwahop08039.pdf>.

our not-so-distant future, so we must undertake measures to develop a sustainable infrastructure now.

The manner in which we design and build our communities--where we spend virtually our entire lives--has profound impacts on our physical, mental, social, environmental, and economic well-being. Today these ideas are recognized as common sense and are regularly cited by the US president, major policy organizations, and in legislation as ways to address outcomes associated with the built environment. Communities that support transit use, walking, and bicycling are associated with improved air quality,⁵ reduced greenhouse gas emissions,⁶ lower rates of traffic injuries,⁷ more physical activity,⁸ and lower body weights,⁹ thus reducing the likelihood of chronic disease.

Bicycling has seen a resurgence for reasons of health, vitality, economics, and sustainability, although the infrastructure for safe bicycling has not kept pace. Recent high-level commitments by the US Department of Transportation to provide more support for non-motorized transportation options offer hope for an increase in safe routes to school, trails, bicycle routes, transit options, and other important ways to improve health and reduce pollution and traffic risks.

I urge you to consider the long-term impact the Santa Monica Boulevard Reconstruction project will have on public health. It is our shared duty to work together to build communities that are safe, affordable, lively, and healthy.

Respectfully submitted,



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⁵ Frank L, B. Stone, and W. Bachman. 2000. "Linking Land Use with Household Vehicle Emissions in the Central Puget Sound: Methodological Framework and Findings." *Transportation Research Part D--Transport and Environment* 5 (3): 173-96. <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/trd>. and LaChapelle, U., and L. D. Frank. 2009. "Transit and Health: Mode of Transport, Employer-Sponsored Public Transit Pass Programs, and Physical Activity." *Journal of Public Health Policy* 30, suppl. 1: 573-94. <http://www.palgravejournals.com/jphp/journal/v30/nS1/pdf/jphp200852a.pdf>.

⁶ Ewing, R. K. Bartholomew, S. Winkelman, J. Walters, and D. Chen. 2008. *Growing Cooler: Evidence on Urban Development and Climate Change*. Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute.

⁷ Ewing, R., R. Schieber, and C. V. Zegeer. 2003. "Urban Sprawl as a Risk Factor in Motor Vehicle Occupant and Pedestrian Fatalities." *American Journal of Public Health* 93 (9): 1541-45. <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/cgi/reprint/93/9/1541.pdf>. and Dumbaugh, E. 2005. "Safe Streets, Livable Streets." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71 (3): 283-300.

⁸ LaChapelle, U., and L. D. Frank. 2009.

⁹ Ibid.