

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
BUREAU OF ENGINEERING  
1149 S. BROADWAY, 7<sup>th</sup> FLOOR  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015  
CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT  
NOTICE OF EXEMPTION  
(Articles II and III – City CEQA Guidelines)**

Submission of this form is optional. The form shall be filed with the County Clerk, 12400 E. Imperial Highway, Norwalk, California, 90650, and with the State Clearinghouse in the Office of Planning and Research, if filed with the County Clerk, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21152(b). Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21167(d), the filing of this notice starts a 35-day statute of limitations on court challenges to the approval of the project.

<b>LEAD CITY AGENCY AND ADDRESS:</b> City of Los Angeles c/o Bureau of Street Services 1149 S. Broadway, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor Los Angeles, CA 90015	<b>COUNCIL DISTRICT</b>  03
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<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b> Connecting Canoga Park Through Safety and Urban Cooling Improvements	<b>LOG REFERENCE</b>
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**PROJECT LOCATION:** West San Fernando Valley Area of Los Angeles, California, in the Canoga Park – Winnetka – Woodland Hills – West Hills Community Plan Area of the City of Los Angeles. T.G. Page 530


**DESCRIPTION OF NATURE, PURPOSE, AND BENEFICIARIES OF PROJECT:**  
The City of Los Angeles, Department of Public Works Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA) proposes to improve the pedestrian and bicyclist experience within the Canoga Park community. Specifically, the improvements are intended to provide more accessible and safer pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure for community members, many of whom rely on walking, biking, and public transit as their main means of transportation. Please see the project description continuation in the narrative for more details.  
On July 1, 2024, based on the 30% design plans, the Bureau of Street Services (BSS) is moving the Project forward to the Final Design, bid and award phase for a construction start anticipated for late 2025.

<b>CONTACT PERSON</b> Brian Ahn	<b>CONTACT INFORMATION</b> brian.ahn@lacity.org
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<b>EXEMPT STATUS: (Check One)</b>	CITY CEQA <u>GUIDELINES</u> Art. III, Sec. 1 Class 1 (3)	STATE CEQA <u>GUIDELINES</u> Sec. 15301 (c)
CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION*		
* See Public Resources Code Sec. 21080 and set forth state and city guidelines provisions.		

**JUSTIFICATION FOR PROJECT EXEMPTION:** This Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15301 (c). Additionally, the Project is exempt pursuant to *Los Angeles CEQA Guidelines* Article III, Section 1, Class 1 (3), [Existing Facilities] *None of the limitations set forth in State CEQA Guidelines 15300.2 apply (see attached narrative).*

**IF FILED BY APPLICANT, ATTACH CERTIFIED DOCUMENT OF EXEMPTION FINDING**

<b>SIGNATURE:</b>  Maria Martin		<b>TITLE:</b> Environmental Affairs Officer Bureau of Engineering, EMG	<b>DATE:</b> July 22, 2024
<b>FEE:</b> \$75.00	<b>RECEIPT NO.</b>	<b>REC'D BY</b>	<b>DATE</b>

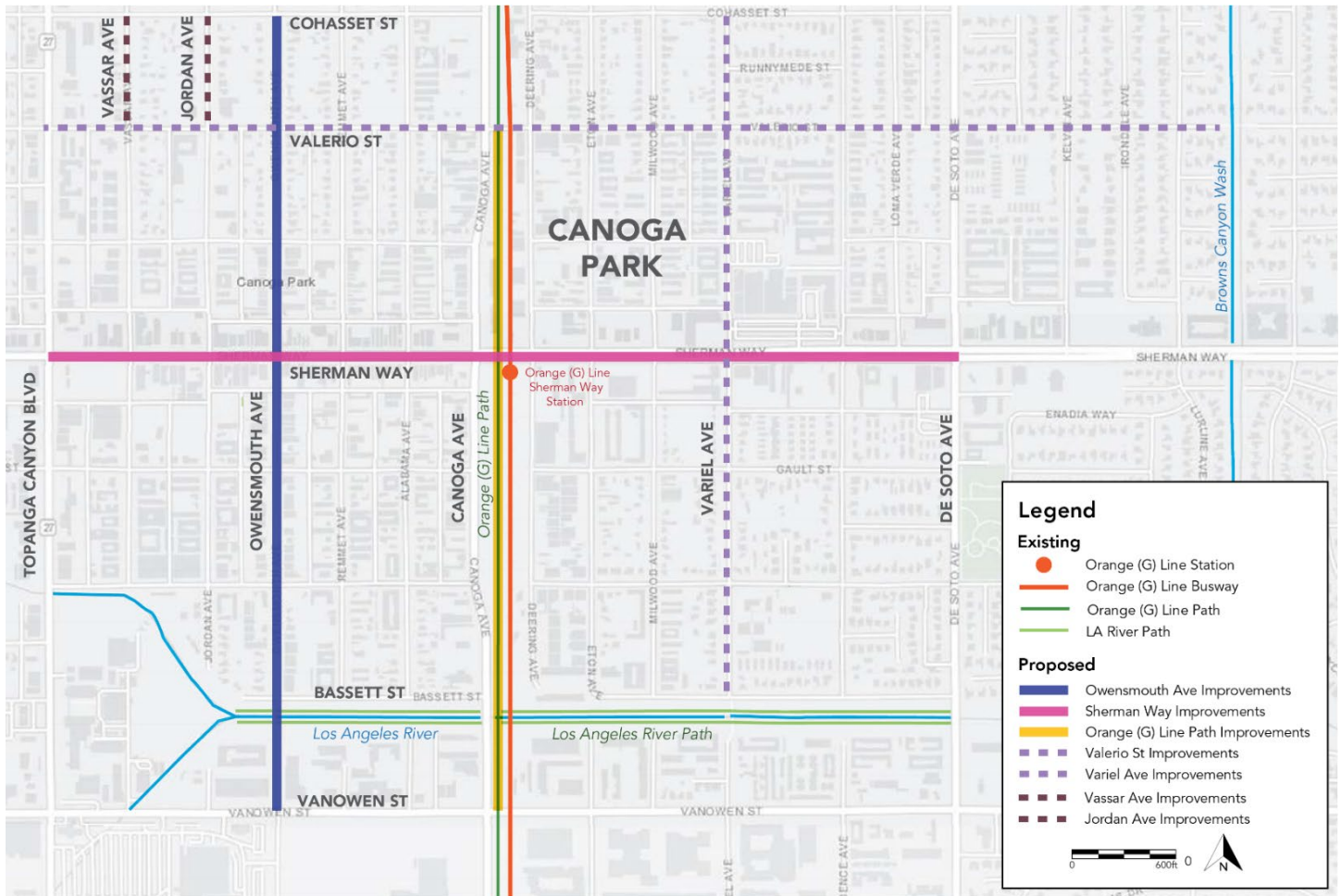
## CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION NARRATIVE

### I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION continued

The City of Los Angeles, Department of Public Works Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA) proposes to improve the pedestrian and bicyclist experience within the Canoga Park community. Specifically, the improvements are intended to provide more accessible and safer pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure for community members, many of whom rely on walking, biking, and public transit as their main means of transportation. The Connecting Canoga Park Project (Project) would improve seven miles of streets in the west San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles, California. The proposed Project would implement pedestrian and bicycle improvements along the following corridors, as well as along adjacent streets abutting these corridors (see Figure 1):

- Owensmouth Avenue, from Cohasset Street to Vanowen Street
- Sherman Way from Topanga Canyon Boulevard to De Soto Avenue
- Orange Line Trail from Valerio Street to Vanowen Street
- Valerio Street from Topanga Canyon Boulevard to Lurline Avenue
- Variel Avenue from Cohasset Street to Bassett Street

**Figure 1. Proposed Improvement Plan**



## Connecting Canoga Park Through Safety and Urban Cooling Improvements

A summary of the proposed improvements is provided in Table 1 and includes pedestrian, bicycle, roadway, and urban cooling features. The proposed pedestrian and bicycle improvements would include sidewalk gap closures, accessible curb ramps, protected bicycle lanes (Class IV cycle track), and bicycle routes (Class III bike facilities). Roadway improvements include, lane changes and traffic calming features, such as speed humps and mini roundabouts. Urban cooling features would include hydration stations, shade trees, shade structures, and expanded planting areas.

**Table 1. Summary of Proposed Improvements**

Street	Proposed Improvements
Owensmouth Ave	Class IV Cycle Track, Bicycle Traffic Signals, Benches and Bike Racks, Construct Missing Sidewalk, Upgrade/Add Missing Sidewalk Ramps, High Visibility Crosswalks and Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI), Pedestrian Lighting and Wayfinding Signage, Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB) at Bassett St, Roadway Reconfiguration, Landscape Improvements
Valerio Street	Class III Bike Route (Sharrow), TOUCAN Signal and High Visibility Crosswalk at Valerio St/De Soto Ave, Construct Missing Sidewalk, Upgrade/Add Missing Curb Ramps, High Visibility Crosswalks, Mini Roundabouts at Owensmouth Ave and Variel Ave, Speed Humps
Variel Ave	Class III Bike Route (Sharrow), Construct Missing Sidewalk, Upgrade/Add Missing Curb Ramps, High Visibility Crosswalks, Mini Roundabout at Hart St, Speed Humps
Orange (G) Line Trail (Metro ROW)	Benches and Bike Racks, Pedestrian Lighting, Orange (G) Line Path Connection for Canoga Ave/Basset St and Canoga Ave/Gault St, Hydration Stations, Shade Structures, Cool Pavement, Landscape Improvements including Shade Trees, Murals and Sculptures, Trail Map/Signs
Canoga Ave	Two-way Class IV Cycle Track on LA River Bridge, PHB and High Visibility Crosswalk at Bassett St and Gault St, Upgrade Curb Ramps
Serman Wy	Class II Bike Lane Gap Closure, Class IV Cycle Track, Bicycle Traffic Signals, PHB at Eton, High Visibility Cross Walks and LPI, Upgrade Curb Ramps, Roadway Reconfiguration, Add Bus Stop Lights/New Bus Pads between Topanga Canyon Blvd and Lurline Ave
Vanowen St	High Visibility Crosswalks, Upgrade Curb Ramps, Bust Stop Lights/New Bus Pads between Topanga Canyon Blvd and Variel Ave
De Soto Ave	High Visibility Crosswalks, Upgrade Curb Ramps, Add Bus Stop Lights/New Bus Pads between Valerio St and Vanowen St
Vassar Ave and Jordan Ave	Construct Missing Sidewalk

Project construction would occur primarily within the public right-of-way; however, temporary construction easements (TCEs) may be needed to accommodate construction activities. All temporary easements would be returned to pre-construction conditions upon Project completion. The Project is expected to maintain through traffic. If temporary traffic control measures are needed during construction, coordination with the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) will be conducted as appropriate. All temporary traffic control will be done in accordance with the latest version of the Work Area Traffic Control Handbook (WATCH). Ground excavation would be required for the work related to pavement, sidewalk, curb ramp, traffic signal, shade structures, and trees. Some limited tree removal is anticipated. Trees removed would be replaced where feasible and appropriate. A landscape strategy was developed for the Project, including a tree removal plan and tree palette. The landscape strategy included an evaluation of the overall character and condition of trees along the affected street corridors, an inventory of existing trees, and an assessment of planting constraints. The landscape strategy will be used to guide decisions regarding removal of existing trees and placement of new trees. Unless otherwise stated, the proposed Project will be designed, constructed, and operated following all applicable laws, regulations ordinances and formally adopted City standards including but not limited to:

- City of Los Angeles Municipal code

## Connecting Canoga Park Through Safety and Urban Cooling Improvements

- Bureau of Engineering Standard Plans
- Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction (Greenbook), including Additions and Amendments
- Work Area Traffic Control Handbook

The objectives of the proposed Project are to enhance safety, accessibility, and comfort for bicyclists and pedestrians within the Project area. Specifically, the objectives of the Project are to:

- Improve pedestrian and bicycle access for community members.
- Provide bicyclists and pedestrians with safer access to local destinations, nearby communities, and regional transportation connections.
- Enhance bicycling and walking conditions in the area by implementing urban cooling features.

The Project area consists of high-speed, vehicle-oriented corridors that lack bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Due to the lack of these facilities, numerous pedestrian and bicycle collisions have occurred along the streets and intersections under study. In addition, pedestrians and bicyclists experience extreme heat conditions as temperatures in Canoga Park are often in the high 80s and 90s. The need for the proposed Project is primarily due to the following:

- Gaps in existing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure within the Project area limit access to surrounding destinations.
- A lack of designated bike lanes and sidewalks within portions of the Project area creates conflicts between drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians resulting in over 164 bicycle/pedestrian collisions between 2013 and 2018. Of those collisions, there was one fatality, 16 severe injuries, and 78 visible injuries.
- A lack of shade within the Project area results in uncomfortable conditions for pedestrians and cyclists as temperatures in Canoga Park often reach 90 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit, which is considered a threshold for “extreme heat”.

The Project includes project design features (PDFs) that have been incorporated into the Project as best management practices (BMPs) to meet regulatory requirements or applicable standard specifications for Public Works Construction. PDFs included in the Project design include the following:

### **PDF-BIO-1: Preservation of Protected Trees**

The removal of any protected tree or shrub will be conducted in compliance with the City of Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 46, Preservation of Protected Trees. An application for a removal permit will be required for all Southern California indigenous tree species, which measure four (4) inches or more in cumulative diameter, four and one-half (4.5) feet above ground level at the base of the tree, or Southern California indigenous shrub species, which measure four (4) inches or more in cumulative diameter, four and one-half (4.5) feet above ground level at the base of the shrub.

### **PDF-BIO-2: Tree Removal Permit**

A tree survey by a Bureau of Street Services Urban Forestry Division (UFD) arborist will be required for all trees proposed for removal that require a removal permit. Tree or shrub removal would be subject to a discretionary approval (permit) by the UFD or the Board of Public Works based on the type and number of trees or shrubs to be removed. Any street tree or shrub removal will be done per City street replacement policies and will be replaced at a minimum two to one, or higher ratio, based on UFD's findings and recommendations. Additionally, removal of any protected trees or shrubs is subject to the City's Protected Tree and Shrub Relocation and Replacement Ordinance (No. 186873). Protected trees and shrubs under this ordinance consist

of the following: (a) Oak tree including Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*) and California Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), or any other tree of the oak genus indigenous to Southern California but excluding the Scrub Oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*), (b) Southern California Black Walnut (*Juglans californica*), (c) Western Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), (d) California Bay (*Umeellularia californica*), or protected shrubs: (a) Mexican Elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*) (b) Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*); except for any tree or shrub grown or held for sale by a licensed nursery, or trees planted or grown as part of a tree planting program.

**PDF-BIO-3: Pre-Construction Nesting Bird Surveys**

In compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and California Fish and Game Code Sections 3503 and 3503.5, clearing or grubbing of vegetation shall occur outside of the raptor and bird\_nesting season, generally defined as January 15 to September 15, to avoid potential impacts on nesting birds. If clearing or grubbing activities are required during the nesting season, a preconstruction nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist. The survey will be conducted no more than three (3) days prior to the start of work. The survey will be conducted within the proposed impact area and adjacent suitable habitat up to 200 feet outside the Biological Study Area. Should nesting raptors or MBTA protected birds be present, no work will be conducted in that area until the young have fledged and will no longer be affected by the project, as determined by the qualified biologist. Adherence to seasonal restrictions on nest disturbance may be required.

**PDF-BIO-4: Pre-Construction Bat Surveys**

Prior to the start of construction, a qualified bat biologist will conduct daytime surveys of the biological study area (BSA) to assess the potential for maternity roosts. The surveys may include a combination of structure and tree inspection, sampling, exit counts, and acoustic surveys. If bat sign is observed, then nighttime bat surveys will be conducted to confirm whether the structures or trees are used for day roosting and/or night roosting. If individual roosting bats are located, the Engineer must be contacted and avoidance and minimization measures, including the establishment of buffers around the identified roosts, and/or agency coordination may be required. Adherence to seasonal restrictions on nest disturbance may be required.

**PDF-BIO-5: Bat Maternity Sites**

If maternity sites are identified during the preconstruction bat habitat assessment, then no construction activities at that location will be allowed during the maternity season (April 1–August 31) unless a qualified bat biologist has determined the young have been weaned. If maternity sites are present, and it is anticipated that construction activities cannot be completed outside of the maternity season, then bat exclusion at maternity roost sites will be completed by the qualified bat biologist, in consultation with CDFW, either as soon as possible after the young have been weaned, outside of the maternity season, or as otherwise approved by the qualified bat biologist, in coordination with CDFW.

**PDF-GHG-1: Fugitive Dust Control**

During clearing, grading, earthmoving, or excavation operations, excessive fugitive dust emissions will be controlled by regular watering, or other dust preventive measures using the following procedures as specified in the South Coast Air Quality Management District Rules and Regulations:

- Onsite vehicle speed will be limited to 25 miles per hour;
- During clearing, grading, earthmoving, or excavation operations, areas being excavated or graded will be sufficiently watered to prevent excessive amounts of dust. Watering should occur at least twice daily with complete coverage preferable in the late morning and after work is done for the day;

- All soil material transported onsite or offsite will be either sufficiently watered or securely covered to prevent excessive amounts of dust;
- Areas disturbed by clearing, grading, earth moving, or excavation activities will be minimized to prevent excessive dust; and
- Visible dust beyond the construction limits emanating from the Project will be prevented to the maximum extent feasible.

### **PDF-CR-1: Discovery of Archaeological Resources**

In the event any unanticipated evidence of historical artifacts is encountered during ground disturbing activities (i.e. digging, drilling, etc.), all work within the vicinity of the find shall stop until a qualified archaeologist can assess the find(s) and make recommendations. All earth-moving activity within 60 feet around the immediate discovery area will be diverted until a qualified archaeologist can assess the nature and significance of the find. No excavation of any finds should be attempted by project personnel unless directed by a qualified archaeologist. Construction activities may continue in other areas. If the discovery proves significant under CEQA (Section 15064.5f; Public Resources Code or PRC 21082), additional work, such as testing or data recovery, may be warranted.

### **PDF-CR-2: Discovery of Human Remains**

In the event human remains are discovered during earth moving activities, all work within the vicinity of the find shall stop and no further disturbance shall occur until the Los Angeles County Coroner has determined the origin and disposition pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98 (State of California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5). The Los Angeles County Coroner must be notified of the find immediately. If the human remains are determined to be prehistoric, the Coroner will notify the Native American Heritage Commission, which will determine and notify a Most Likely Descendent (MLD). The MLD shall complete the inspection of the site within 48 hours of notification and may recommend scientific removal and nondestructive analysis of human remains and items associated with Native American burials.

### **PDF-PAL-1: Discovery of Paleontological Resources**

In accordance with the Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction “Greenbook” (2021), in the event that paleontological resources are discovered during construction, the City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works will be notified immediately, and all work within the area of the find will cease until a qualified paleontologist evaluates the discovery. The paleontologist shall determine the location, timeframe, and the extent to which any monitoring of earthmoving activities shall be required. The found deposits would be treated in accordance with Federal, State, and local guidelines, including those set forth in California Public Resources Code Section 21083.2.

### **PDF-HAZ-1: Soil Sampling Program**

To better evaluate potential impacts from the RECs (i.e. High and Medium risk sites), and the relevant potential general environmental concern (i.e., ADL) a soil sample investigation program will be conducted during the final design or pre-construction phase of the Project.

### **PDF-HAZ-2: Contaminated Materials Removal**

Contaminated soils or materials removed from the project site will be properly managed, handled, and disposed of in accordance with all local, state, and federal regulations.

### **PDF-HAZ-3: Paint Management and Disposal**

The construction contractor will follow local, state, and federal regulations to properly manage and dispose of yellow thermoplastic and yellow-painted traffic stripes and pavement markings



should these materials require removal or disturbance as part of the proposed project improvements.

### **PDF-HAZ-4: PCB Handling and Management**

The construction contractor will follow local, state, and federal regulations should any potential PCB-containing materials require moving or disturbance as part of the proposed project improvements.

### **PDF-TR-1: Temporary Traffic Control Measures**

All traffic control measures needed during construction shall be coordinated with the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT). The Project shall be constructed in accordance with the latest edition of the temporary traffic control provisions of the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control (CA MUTCD), the Work Area Traffic Control Handbook (WATCH), and any traffic control requirements required by LADOT. Construction crews are required to coordinate with schools and LADOT accordingly to provide flagmen when any mode of transportation (e.g. pedestrian, bicycle, automobile) is altered. When the activity site encroaches upon a sidewalk, walkway or crosswalk area, pedestrians shall be provided advance warning if they are detoured away from the activity construction site. As to the closure of any traffic lanes, the Project shall comply with any previously referenced regulations and the Bureau of Engineering (Engineering) Master Specifications.

### **PDF-WQ-1: Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP)**

A construction Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and soil erosion and sedimentation plan will be developed to minimize erosion and identify specific pollution prevention measures to eliminate or control potential point and nonpoint pollution sources on site during and following the project's construction phase. The SWPPP will identify specific Best Management Practices to be implemented during project construction to avoid exceeding any water quality standard. Specifically, the SWPPP will identify the requirement for silt fencing to be placed around the vegetated swale on Canoga Ave. In addition, the SWPPP will contain provisions for changes to the plan such as alternative mechanisms, if necessary, during project design and/or construction to achieve the stated goals and performance standards. The SWPPP will be reviewed and approved by City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA) Engineer, prior to start of construction. A copy of the SWPPP will be supplied to the StreetsLA Engineer.

## **II. HISTORY**

The improvements included in the Connecting Canoga Park Project are based on concepts developed in the Sherman Way Station Urban Cooling and First/Last Mile Strategies Plan ('Urban Cooling Plan') completed in early 2020. The Urban Cooling Plan's engagement process involved over 450 community members with multiple workshops, outreach events, and community surveys to determine community members' perceptions of the existing conditions and challenges to walking, bicycling, and accessing transit in the area.

The Urban Cooling Plan's engagement process provided the framework for the Connecting Canoga Park Project by culminating community-informed design prototypes that reflected their desire for crossing treatments, separated bikeways, street lighting, and urban cooling.

In 2020, StreetsLA began the application process to pursue funding from the Caltrans Active Transportation Program (ATP) for the Connecting Canoga Park Project to make the community's vision a reality. As part of the ATP application process for the Connecting Canoga Park Project, StreetsLA and the Office of Councilmember Blumenfield co-hosted a Virtual Town Hall to facilitate discussions on

how to expand the urban cooling and safety strategies into a network of pedestrian, bicyclist, and transit rider improvements that would transform the Project area.

### III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

#### A. Basis for Categorical Exemption

This Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15301, Class 1(c) Existing Facilities and City CEQA Guidelines Class 1, Category 3, Existing Facilities.

State CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15301, Class 1(c) Existing Facilities consists of the operation, repair, and maintenance to existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities (this includes road grading for the purpose of public safety, and other alterations such as the addition of bicycle facilities, including but not limited to bicycle parking, bicycle-share facilities and bicycle lanes, transit improvements such as bus lanes, pedestrian crossings, street trees, and other similar alterations that do not create additional automobile lanes).

The Project would implement a variety of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements within the existing roadway right of way to enhance safety, accessibility, and comfort for bicyclists and pedestrians within the Project area. As previously described, the proposed pedestrian and bicycle improvements may include sidewalk gap closures, accessible curb ramps, protected bicycle lanes (Class IV cycle track), bicycle routes (Class III bike facilities), roadway lane changes, traffic calming improvements, and urban cooling features. Because all improvements are considered other alterations to existing streets, the proposed Project would be exempt under Class 1(c).

City CEQA Guidelines Class 1, Category 3, Existing Facilities include the operation, repair, maintenance or minor alteration of existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle, and pedestrian trails. The proposed Project is exempt under Class 1, Category 3 for the same reasons as identified under State CEQA Guidelines as described above.

#### B. Consideration of Potential Exceptions to use of a Categorical Exemption

The State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Sec 15300.2) limit the use of categorical exemptions in the following circumstances:

**1. Location.** Exemption Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the Project is to be located – a Project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may be significant in a particularly sensitive environment. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply all instances, except where the Project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.

The proposed Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Article 19 Section 15301, Class 1 (c) *Existing Facilities*. Because the Project is not exempt under Classes 3, 4, 5, 6 or 11, this exception does not apply to the Project.

**2. Cumulative Impact.** This exception applies when, a project may not have a significant impact, but the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.

Review of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation Livable Streets website was conducted to identify other active transportation and transit projects within 2-miles of the Project area. The following five projects are either in construction or are being planned.

- Saticoy St. Safety Improvements Project – Planned



## Connecting Canoga Park Through Safety and Urban Cooling Improvements

- Reseda Blvd Safety Improvements Project – In Construction
- Topanga Canyon Blvd & Parthenia St Safety Improvements Project – Planned
- Orange Line Bike Path Project – Completed in 2005; additional improvements to be constructed in 2024
- Roscoe Boulevard (Oso to Tampa) Safety Improvements – Planned

Implementation of the proposed Project would not result in any significant impacts and any minor impacts to resources would be minimized by project design features (PDFs). Additionally, all projects identified above are also required to comply with all applicable federal and state environmental compliance requirements. Therefore, the proposed Project, in combination with present and future projects, would not result in a significant cumulative impact. This exception does not apply to this Project.

**3. Significant Effect.** This exception applies when, although the project may otherwise be exempt, there is a reasonable possibility that the project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Air Quality:

The proposed Project is in the South Coast Air Basin which is under the authority of the South Coast Air Quality Management District. The proposed Project is exempt from regional conformity per 40 CFR 93.126, “Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities”. As such, transportation conformity does not apply to the Project, and no additional interagency consultation is required. In addition, the Project is included in the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (Project Number LATP21F105), which was found to be conforming by the Federal Highway Administration. Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Biological Resources:

A desktop review and a site reconnaissance survey were conducted in 2023 for the proposed Project. A Biological Reconnaissance Survey Report was prepared that summarizes the existing habitat conditions within the biological evaluation study area (BESA) and potential sensitive biological and natural resources, listed under References and is available on file with Bureau of Street Services. The BESA encompasses the Project footprint plus a 0.25 mile buffer.

Several species of trees, including multiple stands of eucalyptus were identified within the Project area. Protected trees observed onsite during the visit included seven California Black Walnut, an endemic species, and two species of oaks. Additionally, multiple bird nests were identified in trees along Valerio Street, Owensmouth Avenue, and Variel Avenue. A tree cavity was identified on Valerio Street which provides potential habitat for bats.

An inventory of existing trees within the Project corridors was conducted to support the development of a landscape strategy for the overall Project, which is available on file with Bureau of Street Services and listed under References. The inventory included an assessment of tree health, growth pattern, and location conflicts. As part of the landscape strategy certain trees were identified for removal. Recommended tree removals are based on health concerns, undesirable growth patterns, crowding, conflicts with proposed design, inappropriate placement (e.g. tree canopy conflicting with overhead utility cables), and lack of desired shade effects (e.g. palms which provide limited shade). The landscape strategy and 30% Design Landscape Set, listed under References and available on file with Bureau of Street Services, will be used to

guide decisions regarding removal of existing trees, replacement of removed trees, where feasible and appropriate, and placement of new trees.

Based on the presence of mature and protected trees, recommended tree removals, several well-established nests, and a tree cavity within the BESA, project design features (PDFs) **PDF-BIO-1** through **PDF-BIO-5** would be implemented. Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Climate Change:

Climate change refers to long-term changes in temperature, precipitation, wind patterns, and other elements of the earth's climate system. While human activities generate several types of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, the most abundant is carbon dioxide; the largest source of GHG emissions in the U.S and California is from transportation. GHG emissions from transportation are generated from operation of vehicles and construction.

The proposed Project would have temporary impacts on GHG emissions due to use of construction equipment and machinery. However, typical best management practices would be implemented during construction to reduce these effects, such as regular vehicle maintenance, minimizing vehicle idling, phasing construction, etc. In addition, project design feature **PDF-GHG-1** would be implemented to control fugitive dust emissions.

Once constructed, the Project would include urban cooling features and multi-modal enhancements that would help to reduce the effects of extreme heat within the corridors and could potentially lead to a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions through shifts in travel mode choices. Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Community Impacts:

The seven miles of proposed active transportation improvements are intended to provide better access to local resources and regional destinations, safer facilities for multi-modal users, and a more comfortable urban environment for all users. The benefits of these improvements would be experienced by all community members. During construction, temporary noise, air quality, and traffic impacts would also be experienced by all community members and would not disproportionately affect a specific population group.

The Project would not result in any full or partial takes; however, temporary construction easements (TCEs) and impacts to access may occur to accommodate construction activities. Any TCEs or impacts to property access would be temporary in nature. Once construction activities are completed, access to properties and roadways would be restored. Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Cultural Resources:

A Cultural Resources Memorandum, listed under References and available on file with Bureau of Street Services, was prepared to analyze the proposed Project's potential to affect historic properties. The assessment included a review of recorded cultural resources and reports within a 0.5-mile radius of the Project. Four (4) cultural resources were recorded within a 0.5-mile from the Project. One (1) historic-era cultural resource has been recorded adjacent to the Project area. This resource consists of the administration building and auditorium of Canoga Park Elementary School, which has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of

Historic Places (NRHP) and is listed in the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR). The other three (3) resources are historic era commercial buildings recorded along Topanga Canyon Boulevard approximately 0.5-mile from the Project. These resources have not been evaluated for eligibility for the NRHP and/or CRHR. No cultural resources have been recorded within the Project area; therefore, the Project would have a low potential to impact cultural resources.

The Project includes primarily shallow excavation; however, some limited excavation at depth (depth of approximately 15 feet below ground surface [bgs]) would be required for the installation of signal poles and shade structures. Project construction would occur within areas previously disturbed by grading and installation of sewer lines, maintenance holes, drop connections, and other utilities; however, should unanticipated historical artifacts be encountered, the Contractor would be required to immediately cease excavation in the discovery area per City Engineer Standard Specifications, Section 6-6.2 (Greenbook, 2021) and not continue until ordered by the Engineer (see measure **PDF-CR-1**).

The discovery of human remains is always a possibility during ground disturbing activities. In the event human remains are discovered during excavation activities, the State of California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that no further disturbance shall occur until the Los Angeles County Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98 (see measure **PDF-CR-2**). Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Paleontological Resources:

Paleontological Resources Assessment is listed under References and is available on file with Bureau of Street Services. The Project footprint was assessed for paleontological sensitivity. The geologic units underlying the Project footprint have been identified as primarily undivided young alluvial fan deposits (Qyf) dating to the Holocene to late Pleistocene. Holocene-age deposits are typically assigned a low paleontological sensitivity, as their young age prevents the accumulation and preservation of significant paleontological material. However, Holocene deposits often transition with depth into older, high sensitivity Pleistocene-age deposits with the potential to preserve extinct taxa. Hundreds of Pleistocene sites have been recorded within units underlying Holocene alluvium throughout southern California.

Research and review of paleontological literature did not identify paleontological resources on the surface of the Project boundaries. Based on published data, the Project footprint was determined to have an unknown sensitivity for paleontological resources at depths exceeding five (5) feet. The Project includes some limited excavation at depth for installation of signal poles (approximately 15 feet); shade canopies (approximately 5 feet), and tree removal, replacement, and installation (dependent on tree size); however, overall, the Project would result in minimal ground disturbance. Therefore, ground disturbance associated with the Project is unlikely to result in significant impacts to paleontological resources. In the event that paleontological resources are discovered during excavation work, project design feature **PDF-PAL-1** would be implemented to ensure the treatment of found deposits is done in accordance with Federal, State, and local guidelines. Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Hazardous Waste and Materials:

An Initial Site Assessment (ISA), listed under References and is available on file with Bureau of Street Services, was performed using guidance from Caltrans Standard Environmental

Reference, Volume 1: Guidance for Compliance, Chapter 10 - Hazardous Materials, Hazardous Waste, and Contamination, and in partial accordance with the scope and limitations of American Society for Testing Materials Method E 1527-21 (Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments). Aerial photographs, local government records, and regulatory agency records were used to evaluate historic uses within the Project footprint. An Environmental Data Resources (EDR) report was also obtained to identify sites that potentially pose a risk of environmental contamination. The search distance ranged from 0.125 miles to one mile from the Project footprint depending on the database. A total of 1,902 facilities were identified from the database searches. After consolidating duplicative listings, the number of sites requiring evaluation was reduced to 393.

A site reconnaissance was conducted to verify the location of the 393 sites and to identify any other issues that could pose a risk to the Project (e.g. soil staining, distressed vegetation, abandoned drums, etc.). Once the site reconnaissance was completed, each of the 393 facilities were further evaluated and given a Generalized Risk rating based on the possible contaminants that could be present, the toxicity and mobility of these contaminants, and geological factors that could influence the migration of possible contaminants. After the Generalized Risk Rating was established for the facilities, the types of proposed Project improvements and degree of ground disturbance related to those improvements was taken into consideration to establish a Project-Specific Risk Rating. Professional judgement was used to assign these ratings; however, the following general guidelines were followed:

- **High Risk:** High risk sites are facilities with known contamination that has likely impacted the Project area; therefore, will likely affect construction activities that entail ground disturbance.
- **Medium Risk:** Medium risk sites are facilities where information obtained suggests that there is a reasonable chance that contamination exists that could affect the Project area and possibly affect construction activities.
- **Low Risk:** Low risk sites include facilities with known leaking underground storage tank and other adjacent underground sites that have been remediated and are officially closed with no use restrictions; small vehicle repair shops, and similar facilities that may have had small spills in the past; and businesses that handle hazardous waste with no violations, no indications of improper management or disposal, or no obvious releases. These facilities likely represent a de minimis condition, which generally does not present a threat to human health or the environment and that generally would not be the subject of an enforcement action if brought to the attention of appropriate government agencies.

In summary, the Project-specific assessment resulted in two (2) facilities being rated High Risk and sixteen (16) facilities rated Medium Risk. The first High Risk facility is a gas station with contaminated soil and groundwater on the property, that reportedly flow southeast, towards the Project area. The proposed Project element in proximity to the facility includes a signal pole at the southeast corner of the property. The second High Risk facility is Aerojet Rocketdyne, which was identified as the source of a chlorinated volatile organic compound groundwater plume that extends off the property to the northeast towards the Project area. Remediation activities and a deed restriction was placed on the property, which includes a Soil Management Plan. Based on the residual contaminant concentrations present at this facility and the proposed Project elements, which include full depth roadway replacement, signal pole installation, and potential shade structure footings, this facility is classified as High Risk.

In addition to the sites identified above, there are several general potential environmental concerns, including naturally occurring asbestos, aerially deposited lead (ADL), yellow thermoplastic pavement marking, polychlorinated biphenyls, and pesticides from agricultural activities.

To better evaluate potential impacts from the recognized environmental concerns (RECs) (i.e. High and Medium risk sites), and the relevant potential general environmental concern (i.e., ADL) a soil sample investigation program is recommended to be conducted during the final design or pre-construction phase of the Project (see **PDF-HAZ-1**). If contaminated soils or materials will be removed from the premises to accommodate construction, they would be properly managed, handled, and disposed of in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations (see **PDF-HAZ-2** through **PDF-HAZ-4**). Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Noise:

During construction, the Project has the potential to generate noise that may exceed ambient levels due to the use of heavy construction equipment. However, construction related-noise impacts would be short-term, intermittent, and generally overshadowed by local traffic noise. Additionally, the Project would also be required to comply with the Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 41.40, which prohibits construction activities between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. when most people would be home. Once constructed, the Project would include features that could help to reduce general urban noise, such as landscaped medians and parkways that help to absorb or soften urban noise. Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Parks and Recreation:

There are two park and recreation resources within the Project area, John Quimby Park (Quimby Park) and the Orange Line Bike Path and Trail (Orange Line Trail). Quimby Park is located approximately 0.2-miles from the nearest proposed Project improvement. No permanent Project features would be constructed within or directly adjacent to Quimby Park; therefore, the proposed Project would have no impacts on Quimby Park.

The proposed Project improvements include the addition of shade trees, shade structures, water stations, cool pavement, and enhanced landscaping. Some of these features would be installed within the Orange Line Trail corridor providing trail users with a more comfortable and enhanced experience. The proposed improvements are expected to have a beneficial impact on the Orange Line Trail. Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Traffic and Circulation:

A Traffic Study Report, listed under References and available on file with Bureau of Street Services, was prepared for the Project to evaluate the potential impacts the proposed Project may have on traffic operations. The study consisted of a Level of Service (LOS) analysis for 41 intersections within the Project Area. LOS ranges from LOS A, which indicates free flow or excellent conditions with short delays, to LOS F, which indicates congested or overloaded conditions with prolonged delays. The LOS thresholds are based on the average delay incurred by vehicles traveling through the intersection.

Based on the analysis, under the No Build Scenario for the Existing (2023) and Opening Year (2028), seven (7) intersections would fail at a LOS E or F during the AM and/or PM peak hours. Under the Opening Year Build conditions, a total of six (6) intersections would fail during the AM and/or PM peak hours. Table 2 provides a summary of the intersection traffic operations that either improve, remain the same, or worsen with implementation of the Project. Of the seven intersections that failed in the No Build Opening and Existing Year conditions, the proposed Project would improve two of them, slightly worsen one during the AM peak hours, and the remaining four would remain the same. In addition, one intersection at Sherman Way/Canoga Avenue would fail with implementation of the proposed Project.

Under the Opening Year Build conditions, the proposed lane reduction along Sherman Way between the Orange Line Busway and Canoga Avenue, would result in the degradation of the Sherman Way/Canoga Avenue intersection operations to LOS E in the AM and PM peak hour. The lane reduction converts the westbound right turn lane into a bike lane and reduces the number of through lanes from two to one. Optimization of signal timing would be used to maximize vehicle throughput and the intersection would still operate at LOS E.

**Table 2. Summary of Intersection Traffic Operations**

		Build – Opening Year (2028)		No Build – Opening Year (2028)		No Build – Existing Year (2023)	
ID	Intersection	AM LOS	PM LOS	AM LOS	PM LOS	AM LOS	PM LOS
1	Owensmouth Ave/Bassett St	E	E	C	E	B	E
2	Owensmouth/ Valerio	A	A	E	C	D	B
3	Owensmouth Ave/ Cohasset St	E	C	E	C	D	C
4	Sherman Way/ Canoga Ave	E	E	C	D	C	C
5	Sherman Way/ Eton Ave	F	F	F	F	F	F
6	Sherman Way/ Milwood Ave	F	F	F	F	F	F
7	Valerio St/ De Soto Ave	A	A	F	F	F	F
8	Canoga Ave/ Gault St	E	F	E	F	E	E
Total Failing Intersections		6		7		5	

CEQA no longer considers LOS as a criterion for measuring project impacts. Instead, CEQA considers impacts on a system-wide basis and focuses on increased vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as vehicle delay does not reflect the value and function of a street or intersection that is intended to accommodate all roadway users. Per CEQA Guidelines, transportation projects that conflict with local plans, ordinances, and policies addressing the circulation system, increase VMT, or substantially increase roadway hazards are considered to have a significant impact. The Project is consistent with the City’s policy of developing a safe, accessible, well-maintained, and well-connected multi modal transportation network by promoting road safety and creating a pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment. The Project would not add vehicle capacity to the existing transportation network, nor would it induce population growth. Therefore, the Project would not generate an increase in vehicle trips or VMT. The Project would not increase hazards and instead is intended to reduce mode conflicts and increase pedestrian and bicycle visibility and safety.

During construction the Project is expected to maintain through traffic; however, if temporary traffic control measures are needed during construction, coordination with the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) will be conducted as appropriate. All temporary traffic control will be done in accordance with the latest version of the Work Area Traffic Control Handbook (WATCH) and **PDF-TR-1**. Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Utilities:

The proposed improvements would require minor adjustments to or relocations of existing utilities (e.g. slightly shifting a water connection, relocating a fire hydrant). These minor adjustments and relocations are considered typical utility adjustments for street improvement projects. Coordination with utility providers would help to reduce conflicts and limit service disruptions during construction. Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Visual/Aesthetic Resources:

Construction activities would disrupt the visual environment and would slightly reduce the visual quality of the area due to brightly colored traffic control and safety features, and construction equipment. Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be implemented during construction to reduce the visibility of the active construction areas and minimize visual impacts. These impacts would be short term, intermittent, and expected for a project of this nature.

Installation of urban cooling features would improve the natural visual environment of the Project area while also decreasing sources of glare and extreme heat. The Project would install new traffic signals, pedestrian crossing signals, and pedestrian scale lighting.. The additional lighting would improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety, comfort, and visibility. These new light sources would be at a pedestrian scale, focused on bike and pedestrian uses (e.g. bike lanes, bus shelters), installed in limited locations, and potentially co-located with existing luminaires. No additional large-scale street lighting would be added as part of the proposed Project. The proposed lighting would not create a substantial new source of light, as the Project area has many existing traffic lights and signals. Therefore, the proposed improvements would not only be consistent with the existing roadway but would also have a beneficial impact on the existing visual environment by providing appropriate pedestrian level lighting where needed. Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### Water Quality and Stormwater Runoff:

The Project is located within the Canoga Park community of Los Angeles which is characterized as the Los Angeles Plain. Three of the proposed Project corridors would intersect with the Los Angeles River Reach 6 (LA River Reach 6) at Owensmouth Avenue, the Orange Line Trail, and Variel Avenue. Where these proposed improvements would cross the LA River Reach 6, the river is confined in concrete boxes with concrete banks and no vegetation. Bell Creek and Browns Canyon Wash, which are tributaries to the LA River Reach 6, are immediately adjacent to the Project area. Where they are in proximity to the proposed Project, both waterways are also concrete lined and have no vegetation. In addition, the Biological Technical Report identified a vegetated swale along the Orange Line Bike Path and Trail.

Construction related impacts to water quality would be avoided by developing and implementing a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) in accordance with the requirements of the



California National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit. The Best Management Practices (BMPs) outlined in the Project SWPPP would also be implemented to prevent soil erosion, waste discharge and protect existing drain inlets. Additionally, placement of silt fencing around the vegetated swale would be implemented to avoid potential impacts to water quality (see **PDF-WQ-1**).

During Project operation, long-term water quality impacts are not anticipated with the implementation of the guidelines and regulations established by the Caltrans MS4 Permit and Regional Phase I MS4 Permit. Additionally, the proposed Project would be required to follow the City of Los Angeles' Green Streets Standard Plans. Therefore, no adverse long-term effects to hydrology or water quality are anticipated with implementation of the proposed Project. Given the Project design and construction methodology, there is no reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

### **Conclusion**

For the reasons stated above, implementation of the proposed Project would not result in a significant effect due to unusual circumstances. Therefore, this exception does not apply to this Project.

**4. Scenic Highway.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway.

The proposed Project is not within a state designated scenic highway or within sight of any state designated scenic highway. There are also no identified visual or scenic resources within the Project area. The proposed improvements would be consistent with the existing visual environment and has the potential to improve the existing character and quality of the area. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the Project.

**5. Hazardous Waste Site.** This exception applies when a Project is located on a site listed as a hazardous waste site under Government Code Section 65962.5.

As of March 2024, the proposed Project was not identified on the Cortese List pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5(a). Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed Project.

**6. Historical Resources.** This exception applies when a project may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

As previously described in Section 3, *Significant Effect*, there are no recorded cultural resources within the Project area. As indicated above, the proposed Project is not anticipated to result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed Project.

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