

# Methodology & Assumptions

## Surveying Existing Studies and Plans

The planning process began with surveying plans that had already been created for the area or were underway. Looking at these plans, Livable Places became familiar with what planning had already been done while finding information that would be helpful for Making the Connections.

At the outset of the project Livable Places surveyed 17 studies and plans that were known to be in existence. Over the course of the planning process several more studies and plans were discovered and reviewed.

The existing studies and plans cover a range of issues including public space, urban design, pedestrian and cycling circulation, parks and rivers, and public access to these elements. The vast majority of the studies have not been implemented. Plans created by the City of Los Angeles include the Cornfields/Arroyo Seco Specific Plan, Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, and River Improvement Overlay (RIO).

## Identifying Candidate Streets: Surveys and Walk/Bikeabouts

The next step in the planning process was figuring out which streets were possible candidates for the final six key connections. Livable Places created surveys and conducted walk and bikeabouts to determine candidate streets.

### Surveys

Livable Places created surveys to find out how much people were walking, biking, and taking the train as well as which streets they used to get around. Livable Places handed out the surveys at both Gold Line Stations and meetings with community residents prior to and after the walkabouts and bikeabout.

Getting people to fill out the surveys proved difficult and in the end only 34 surveys were filled out. In compiling the survey results, all responses for each question were recorded even if only one response was expected for the question. The result is that some questions received more than 34 responses.

The majority of survey respondents were middle-aged adults with about half of them (52%) living outside of the study areas. Eighteen percent live in Lincoln Heights, 15% live in Chinatown, and 12% live at William Mead Homes. Most people walk (65%) and take the bus daily (30%). Fifty-four percent of respondents take the Gold Line every day or every week and 29% reported rarely taking the Gold Line. Fifty-six percent reported rarely or almost never driving a car, and 28% reported driving a car daily. Seventeen percent reported riding a bike daily and 72% reported almost never riding a bike.

These results reveal that residents and those who travel through the study areas walk and take the bus a lot but rarely bike. When asked if they felt generally safe walking, both during the day and the night, 61% said they felt safe. But when asked the same question in terms of biking, 64% said they did not feel safe biking. When asked why they did or did not feel safe biking, the majority (57%) reported safety issues as their barrier to cycling.

Sixty-nine responses were given for streets taken for walking and bicycling. Broadway received the most responses. College, Main, Spring, Alameda, Pasadena, and 1st Street



received the second tier of responses at four percent each. Alameda and Chinatown received the most responses for specific areas to focus on for improvements. These responses shaped and confirmed the selection of the six key connections. See Appendix C for full results.

### Walkabouts & Bikeabout

The surveyed streets included streets that directly connect to the Gold Line stations such as Avenue 26 and Alameda Street, and streets that indirectly connect to the stations such as Humboldt and Ann Streets. Besides their proximity to the Gold Line stations, these streets were chosen based on the presence of walking and biking activity that was noted in previous studies and observed by the Making the Connections team.

The primary focus for selecting candidate streets was through two walkabouts and one bikeabout. Participants were broken up into small teams to walk or bike specific areas within the study areas and record their observations. Teams were asked to answer specific questions and make general

observations. The surveyed streets that directly and indirectly connect to the Gold Line stations and were chosen based on known walking and cycling patterns as well as survey results.

### Walkabouts

Walkabout participants found the walking experience to be poor. Crossing intersections was problematic because of inadequate crosswalks and the need for longer crossing signals and better curb cuts. The buildings encountered were not pedestrian-friendly and sidewalks, bus stops, and landscaping were in poor condition. The majority of conflicts recorded were between pedestrians and cars. See Appendix C for full results.

### Bikeabout

Participants found that the majority of streets did not have bike facilities and in many places traffic needed to be calmed. The most reported dangerous condition was speeding cars.

Fifty percent of the negative observations made were about street and path design. The majority of observed actual

## Criteria for the Six Key Connections

1. Connects directly with Metro Station
2. Connects with other key destinations (including housing, school, retail, jobs, parks)
3. Is already in use by cyclists and pedestrians
4. Is a street that will accommodate anticipated new development and growth
5. Cost-effective, especially relative to attaining the 20% local funding match as required for Metro's Call for Projects application\*
6. Absence of physical barriers and right-of-way space constraints for building the project
7. Solves problems in a known problem area
8. Increases safety
9. Produces multiple benefits and solves multiple problems for cyclists, pedestrians, drivers and storm water at the same time

\*Metro's Call for Projects program awards discretionary federal, state, and local funding for transportation projects. It is a potential funding source for implementing the proposals for the six key connections.



or potential conflicts (89%) were between cyclists and cars.

Among all the potential bike improvements, implementing road diets was reported as having the greatest potential. There was also high potential for bike lanes.

Over 90% of the groups thought that the route they biked should be strongly considered for our plan. See box on page 12.

## Choosing Six Key Connections

Using the results of the walkabouts and surveys, Livable Places along with the Project Advisory Committee came up with a list of 33 potential projects for the study areas. Livable Places and the Project Advisory Committee then created a list of criteria to use in choosing the final six key connections. It was decided that in general, the group of six key connections should reduce cut-through traffic in the neighborhoods and should include at least one good bike connection between the Lincoln/Cypress neighborhood and the Ann Street neighborhood. It was also decided that each particular connection and its improvements should have the characteristics listed in the box.

Livable Places then took this list of criteria and eliminated the 19 projects that met the fewest criterion; fourteen projects remained. Livable Places then met with its transportation consultant and landscape designer to further reduce the projects list. The method employed included going through each project and listing the general pros and cons of each potential project. Given these pros and cons, the projects were then evaluated by the criteria again and the projects that met the least criteria were eliminated; eight projects remained.

Livable Places' transportation consultant and landscape designer then began initial fieldwork on the eight projects. To determine the final six projects, Livable Places decided to present a draft proposal for the eight projects to the city departments that would be involved in implementing the proposal for the final six key connections; whichever projects were determined to be the most difficult to implement would be eliminated. All eight projects were well received so Livable Places combined two closely related projects and eliminated the least feasible project to reach its goal of six key connections.

## Choosing Street Typologies

The City of Los Angeles has street designations, or street types, that are applied to each street throughout the city. These street types specify the width of right-of-way and how it is to be used for each street. Currently the City's street designations proscribe very wide streets that result in a lot of fast-moving traffic that creates an unsafe environment for pedestrians and cyclists. One goal of Making the Connections is to put forth new ideas for street types that allow people to move efficiently, whether they are walking, biking, or driving.

Livable Places consulted the street types proposed in the Cornfields Arroyo Seco Specific Plan (CASP) to formulate its street typologies because the CASP area includes much of the same area as the Making the Connections study areas and is another important avenue for implementing the Making the Connections proposals. Livable Places came up with three major street types: Avenues, Neighborhoods Streets, and Slow Streets. Livable Places' transportation consultant then went out in the field to assign the street typologies to the streets in each study area.

Recognizing that different streets serve different functions, each street was assigned a street type according to its desired function given its neighborhood context. This roughly translates into categorization by desired street width and pace of traffic. For example, streets such as Avenue 26 and Main Street are categorized as Avenues because their desired function includes providing space for buses, bicycles, and cars to move efficiently. Streets such as Cypress Avenue and Ann Street serve a more local function where slower traffic is desired; they are therefore categorized as Neighborhood Streets. Full descriptions of each street typology can be found in Chapter 5.

## Confirming Six Key Connections: Community Presentations & Workshop

After the walkabouts and bikeabout, and after the final six key connections were chosen, Livable Places met with seven groups to describe the Making the Connections project, get new ideas for the connections, and confirm that the six key connections settled upon made sense for each study area. Livable Places met with residents at Puerta del Sol, Camino al Oro, Tesoro del Valle, Flores del Valle, William Mead Homes, the Lincoln Heights Neighborhood Council, Greater Cypress Park Neighborhood Council, and the Chinatown Community Advisory Committee.

At most of these meetings Livable Places asked residents to share their experience of the streets including what works well, what does not work well, and what routes they take.

Participants reported very few conditions that were working well for their streets including, inadequate bus stops, crossings, lighting, sidewalks, street design and safety. Among improvements in these aforementioned areas, participants would like to see bike lanes, bike paths, parks and public space, and new transit service created as well as solutions for parking and homelessness.

As another avenue for refining ideas for the six key connections, Livable Places held a community workshop where the proposals for the street typologies, vegetation, and six key connections were presented. At the beginning of the workshop, participants were encouraged to vote for the three most important elements for improving streets by placing a dot sticker next to the associated categories on a board. Next, a short presentation was given that gave an overview of the project and brief descriptions for the rationale and proposals for the street typologies, landscaping, and six key connections. Participants then visited nine stations where they were able to leave specific comments on all of the proposals by placing post-its on the board displays. Participants were encouraged to leave positive and negative comments as well as suggestions.

The comments Livable Places received about their proposal was overwhelmingly positive with no requests for major revisions; participants did leave suggestions for specific issues to further examine.

Participants indicated that pedestrian/bicycle/transit priority streets, landscaping, and bicycle improvements were the most important elements for improving the streets. Participants liked the key connection proposals as a whole and were excited that they reflected subtle ways to calm traffic—through the use of chicanes, bulbouts, and landscaping. See Appendix C for full results.

## Pedestrian Assumptions

Both of the MTC project areas are characterized by a large amount of very low density light industrial development. The presence of freeways, major thoroughfares, and the absence of sidewalks, bike facilities, adequate street lighting, and eyes on the street all serve as barriers to revitalizing these neighborhoods and deterrents to creating livable communities.

Despite the strong presence of under utilized industrial development, the area retains many pockets and corridors that support vibrant foot traffic. Significant pedestrian activity persists along portions of North Figueroa Street (at Avenue 26), Five Points (Pasadena Avenue and Daly Street), the Lincoln Heights Central Business District (North Broadway) and in the retail areas of Chinatown (especially along North Broadway).

Additionally, significant concentrations of housing generate pedestrian trips. These include the 450 units at William Mead Homes, and the over 500 units of new housing along Avenue 26 in Lincoln Heights. Various housing and mixed-use development projects are also proposed, approved and under construction, leading the complexion of the area to further change. Under the City of Los Angeles' Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan (underway), additional land is proposed to change from industrial to mixed use.

MTC assumes that current trend from industrial land uses changing to residential land uses will continue. MTC has prioritized building on the successes of existing pedestrian activity areas and connecting existing housing with transit and other local amenities. The project has prioritized those areas that are most subject to change (generally existing industrial) and has not explored areas that are relatively stable (generally the streets in Chinatown proper).



## Bicycle Network Assumptions

While pedestrians are generally assumed to be willing to walk a quarter to half mile, bicyclist ranges are varied and generally longer. For proposed bikeway connections, MTC focused on connecting existing residential areas, the few nearby existing bikeways (the Cypress Park bike lanes and the Arroyo Seco Bike Path), and the Metro Stations.

This report assumes that the following planned bikeways will be built:

### Los Angeles River Bike Path

The Los Angeles River bike path does not currently exist in the MTC plan area. The existing LA River bike path extends from Griffith Park to Fletcher Drive, with funded plans to extend to Barclay Avenue in Elysian Valley (anticipated to be completed around 2009). Various approved plans (including the City of Los Angeles Bicycle Master Plan, Los Angeles County Los Angeles River Master Plan, and the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan) specify a bike path along the entire Los Angeles River, but are not specific about its alignment. The most difficult area for completing the river path is

through downtown Los Angeles. There are various railroad tracks along both sides of the river, making bikeway alignment and access difficult.

For this report, it is assumed that there will be a bike path along the Los Angeles River. This report does not specify an alignment for the river bike path.

### Arroyo Seco Bike Path

The Arroyo Seco bike path does not currently exist in the MTC plan area. The existing Arroyo Seco bike path extends from York Boulevard to Montecito Heights Recreation Center near Avenue 43. The city Bicycle Master Plan “endorses the concept of a bikeway paralleling the Arroyo Seco Channel/Pasadena Freeway and intersecting the Los Angeles River Bike Path” but is not specific about its alignment. The county received funding to extend the existing bike path downstream to Avenue 26, but did not construct the project due to questions about whether the most appropriate alignment would be inside the channel or along the top of the channel.

For this report, it is assumed that there will be a bike path along the Arroyo Seco. This report does not specify an alignment for the path.