



December 23, 2025

Director Dina El-Tawansy
California Department of Transportation
1120 N Street
Sacramento, California 95814

Subject: Santa Monica Boulevard Pavement Project & the Inclusion of Protected Bicycle Facilities (EA 33360 & EA 38750)

Dear Director El-Tawansy,

I am writing to express serious concerns over the proposed separate construction and implementation of two Caltrans projects in my district: EA 33360 and EA 38750.

EA 33360 is a major pavement rehabilitation project for Santa Monica Boulevard that will add peak-hour bus lanes. EA 38750 is a project to add bike lanes to the small portion of Santa Monica Boulevard that connects two major bike infrastructure projects – also known as the “Ohio to Ohio” connection. EA 33360 is the far larger project, and EA 38750 will take place on a small portion of the road that EA 33360 is rehabilitating.

This corridor is a critical east–west connection on the Westside of Los Angeles and plays an essential role in regional mobility, safety, and network connectivity. I very much appreciate Caltrans’ ongoing investment in this area, and I have full confidence in the technical expertise of the skilled engineers, architects, planners, and other staff of Caltrans. **However, it has come to my attention that District 7 is currently moving forward with EA 33360 while planning to wait until a future SHOPP cycle (likely 2032 at the earliest) to begin work on EA 38750. My understanding is that this means the State will repave this roadway now, only to return later to address safety and mobility improvements that could be incorporated today with significantly lower costs.**

I am concerned that regardless of the chosen alternative chosen for EA 33360, proceeding with these projects separately raises significant policy, safety, and fiscal governance concerns:

- 1. Policy:** the Legislature, Governor, and Caltrans’ leadership have all recognized that pavement rehabilitation is not a neutral intervention. Under California’s Complete Streets framework and Caltrans’ Director’s Policies, maintenance and rehabilitation projects are a primary opportunity—and obligation—to deliver multimodal safety improvements when feasible. With that in mind, I am seriously concerned that EA 33360, as currently scoped, will move forward without incorporating a compliant bicycle facility, despite the existence of a companion bicycle project that is *already* planned for the same corridor and despite the significant barrier in multimodal connectivity posed by the absence of an appropriate bicycle facility in this area.
- 2. Safety:** Advancing a repaving project without a compliant bicycle accommodation represents a serious safety risk to the public. Sharrows are no longer permissible on roadways of this speed (SB 1216), and if Caltrans continues with its planned timeline as described to my staff, the “Ohio to Ohio” bicycle project could realistically be delayed until 2040, if not later. In the interim, Santa Monica Boulevard will remain a critical missing link between two cities that are actively building protected bicycle networks. As Santa Monica builds a protected bike lane up Broadway and Los Angeles builds a protected 1.3 mile bike lane along Ohio to Westwood, more residents will end up making the choice to complete the “Ohio to Ohio”

connection along a major, high-speed artery, regardless of whether or not there is a protected bike lane. This poses serious safety risks, and it may expose the Department to avoidable legal risk.

3. **Fiscal stewardship:** Separating these improvements into two projects appears to be extremely financially inefficient. A majority of the cost of EA 38750 will likely be replicated in EA 33360. For example, Caltrans has identified utility related expenses as a major cost driver of the standalone bicycle project—yet those same utility impacts will *already* be addressed as part of the pavement rehabilitation work. Advancing two projects separately for the same three-block corridor will require duplicative design, traffic control, and construction mobilization, resulting in unnecessary expenditure of state funds.

A municipality in my district recently delivered protected, physically separated bicycle lanes at a cost of approximately \$45–\$55 per linear foot. I understand that – because many fixed costs will be replicated by separating these projects – EA 38750 will cost taxpayers considerably more than it would if it were done at the same time as EA 33360. That is, of course, concerning at a time when the Legislature is required to make very difficult budget decisions.

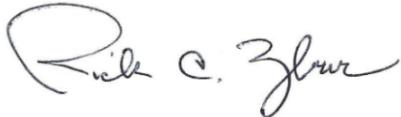
Completing EA 38750 at the same time as EA 33360 could allow Caltrans to maximize its impact at the lowest cost. Two cities in my district—Santa Monica and Los Angeles—are investing significantly in bicycle infrastructure so that the residents of the 51st District can travel from West LA and Santa Monica to as far as UCLA safely. EA 38750 represents an opportunity for the State to support and supercharge these efforts; in fact, this route is often referred to as the “Ohio to Ohio” connector because it *connects* two bicycle networks and has the potential to dramatically increase usage across the entire network. Of course, the inverse is also true; moving forward *without* a connector dramatically reduces the efficacy of the entire system.

I understand that Caltrans staff have expressed concern about modifying project scope once construction is underway. However, my understanding is that initial staging has not yet begun on the western segment of the project. There remains a lawful and practical window to integrate these projects within the existing right-of-way, without reopening CEQA, or materially delaying delivery. (I should also note that as a result of Senate Bill 71, CEQA will no longer apply to projects of this nature beginning January 1, 2026.)

Lastly, if Caltrans is legally precluded in some way from reassessing this project or if you believe that there are key details that my staff and I may not be aware of, I would very much welcome the conversation. If that is not the case, I would respectfully urge Caltrans to reassess the current approach and consider how these two projects may be integrated before construction advances further.

My office stands ready to work with Caltrans District 7 and Headquarters. The District 7 staff have been excellent partners, and I appreciate the hard work and energy Caltrans’ personnel bring to my Assembly District every day. I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



RICK CHAVEZ ZBUR
Assemblymember, 51st District
Democratic Caucus Chair of the California Assembly

CC Secretary of Transportation, Toks Omishakin
Assistant Deputy Director for Legislative Affairs, Danny Yost
District 7 Director, Gloria Roberts
Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of the Governor, Myles White