

Chapter 3 Environmental Setting

3.1 Regional Setting

Wilshire Boulevard, the proposed project corridor, traverses five community plan areas within the City of Los Angeles. The community plan areas that encompass the proposed project include Westlake, Wilshire, Westwood, West Los Angeles, and Brentwood-Pacific Palisades. The project corridor includes portions of Wilshire Boulevard between Valencia Street, near the western edge of downtown Los Angeles, and the eastern boundary of the City of Beverly Hills as well as portions of Wilshire Boulevard between the western boundary of the City of Beverly Hills and Centinela Avenue at the eastern boundary of the City of Santa Monica. The proposed project spans approximately 9.9 miles, excluding the City of Beverly Hills.

Wilshire Boulevard is a major transportation corridor traversing roughly east to west through the City of Los Angeles. Accordingly, regional access to the project corridor is provided by the adjoining major north-south streets and highways, including (from east to west) Alvarado Street, Hoover Street, Vermont Avenue, Western Avenue, Crenshaw Boulevard, Highland Avenue, La Brea Avenue, Fairfax Avenue, San Vicente Boulevard, La Cienega Boulevard, Robertson Boulevard, Santa Monica Boulevard, Beverly Glen Boulevard, Westwood Boulevard, Overland Avenue, Sepulveda Boulevard, the San Diego Freeway (Interstate 405), and Centinela Avenue.

3.2 Local Setting

As described above, the project corridor includes the portion of Wilshire Boulevard between Valencia Street and Centinela Avenue, excluding the City of Beverly Hills. Wilshire Boulevard varies in width from two lanes in each direction in the Westlake area, east of Park View Street, to four lanes in each direction in the Westwood area between Glendon Avenue and I-405.

Wilshire Boulevard is classified as Major Highway (Class II). A Major Highway (Class II) generally operates with two full-time lanes in each direction, with continuous left-turn channelization and one additional lane in each direction during selected peak periods with curb-side parking during off-peak periods. Most of Wilshire Boulevard already has both a.m. and p.m. peak period parking restrictions along the project corridor.

The project corridor varies in elevation along the entire length -- approximately 340 feet above mean sea level (amsl) at the eastern end, approximately 140 feet amsl at La Cienega Boulevard, approximately 380 feet amsl at Beverly Glen Boulevard, and approximately 200 feet at Centinela Avenue.

No bodies of water are present on or adjacent to the project corridor. The Pacific Ocean is located approximately 2.5 miles to the west of the western end of the project corridor at Centinela Avenue.

A variety of land uses are located adjacent to the approximately 9.9-mile long Wilshire corridor. The corridor is densely developed with an abundance of various commercial uses. The majority of land uses located adjacent to the Wilshire corridor consist of parcels zoned for office, retail, commercial, residential, or institutional uses (e.g., museums). Commercial development and some multi-family residential uses front both sides of the corridor and the intersecting north/south streets.

The Wilshire corridor forms a central area for commercial activity for a number of neighborhoods, including the Westlake/MacArthur Park, Lafayette Park, Koreatown, Wilshire Center, Mid-Wilshire, Miracle Mile, Carthay Circle, Carthay Square, South Beverly Roxbury, Westwood, Boulevard Heights, West Los Angeles, and Brentwood Village.

The eastern portion of the Wilshire corridor, which is located in the Westlake community of the City of Los Angeles includes mainly commercial office and retail (small businesses and strip malls) uses, interspersed with some residential uses, parking lots and community facilities. This portion of the segment also includes MacArthur Park and Lafayette Park. This segment also consists of a mix of mid-rise (8 to 10 stories) and low-rise buildings.

A long, narrow corridor of commercial activity exists along Wilshire Boulevard in the Wilshire Community Plan Area. The commercial activities along this corridor are comprised of professional offices and retail (strip mall and small businesses), interspersed with a few multi-family residential areas. Additionally, the corridor includes public attractions, such as Museum Row, Hancock Park, and the La Brea Tar Pits. The structures fronting Wilshire Boulevard contain numerous high-rise (20 stories) and mid-rise office buildings.

The segment of the Wilshire corridor located within the community of Westwood consists of multi-family housing, both high-medium and medium density residential uses. High-rise condominium towers are located along Wilshire Boulevard between the Los Angeles Country Club and Malcolm Avenue. Near Westwood Boulevard, the high-rise office corridor along Wilshire Boulevard serves as a regional business center with financial institutions and corporate headquarters.

The segment of the Wilshire corridor within the West Los Angeles community consists of commercial land uses, primarily strip mall development. The majority of commercial facilities are either small-scale and free standing or mini-mall type buildings designed to primarily serve local neighborhoods. The Los Angeles Veterans Administration and Hospital Complex and the Los Angeles National Cemetery are located to the south and north of this segment of the corridor, respectively.

Figure 2-3 in Chapter 2 of this document presents the community plan area boundaries along the proposed project.