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EDITORIAL

Bus lanes vs. parking

November 7, 2005

THE ILLOGIC OF CITY COUNCILMAN Bill Rosendahl's motion before the council's Transportation Committee is breathtaking. While saying bus-only lanes on Wilshire Boulevard are highly desirable and have "the potential to make transit a viable option ... by reducing the time spent commuting," it goes on to propose that the existing bus-only lanes on the route be removed.

Businesses along a one-mile stretch of Wilshire between Federal and Centinela avenues, where one lane in each direction is now open only to buses during peak hours, complain that the resulting loss of street parking is hurting them badly. Rosendahl's motion says it is unfair for them to suffer while other jurisdictions have refused to extend the bus lanes. It proposes that the existing stretch be eliminated until a deal is reached for bus lanes stretching from downtown to Santa Monica.

Memo to businesses on Wilshire: This ain't Peoria. You are operating along one of the densest, most congested corridors in the United States. Street parking at rush hour there is a luxury the city cannot afford.

Memo to Rosendahl: You can't persuade other officials to make a political sacrifice by failing to make it yourself.

Rosendahl says he is just trying to use the threat of his action to force the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and city officials along Wilshire to sit down and agree to a plan for extending the bus lanes. "Talk is cheap," he said. "I want timetables and deadlines." If that's his goal, he is taking a bizarre approach. His motion would be a giant step backward for the bus lanes, killing them indefinitely and possibly forever.

The point of the bus lanes is to make the bus a desirable alternative to driving, thus helping to reduce congestion and pollution. An MTA study found that at rush hour, it takes a car 19 minutes to pass through the stretch but only 7 minutes for a bus. That is a strong incentive to get on board.

At its next session Wednesday, the Transportation Committee should flatten Rosendahl's motion like a Prius in the bus lane.

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