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September 8, 2020

Dear Community,

Recently we have been given an opportunity to apply for a large Caltrans grant to improve Melrose, which has been branded “Uplift Melrose”. The plan would create a couple of miles of dedicated bicycle lanes, wider sidewalks for pedestrians and outdoor dining, and many other improvements that would make for a better pedestrian and shopping experience. The argument has also been made that this will help people get out of their cars, onto bikes and walking more. The further argument is that Melrose is depressed by both COVID-19 challenges and looting during the unrest, and that renovating Melrose by 2028 will be a big help and create a sense of optimism. The Melrose BID, Mid-City West NC, and Greater Wilshire NC have been strongly in support. A number of residents have been in support, as well.

I had doubts about whether the potential downsides were adequately considered, so I asked for more outreach to the public, so that there was a greater awareness of the project and what was being proposed. I instructed my staff to initiate a process for our own due diligence in researching the possible impacts.

As more outreach was done, and discussions of positives and negatives have taken place, concerns have been expressed by many in the residential community.

Concerns have also been expressed by our public safety departments. I personally have come to have concerns, as well.

While the intent is genuine and forward thinking, the potential negative impacts were significant and far-reaching.



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I have done much soul searching, and even driven down Melrose one more time to try and envision the results. Many factors contributed to my decision to not move forward with this process.

I believe the traffic impacts on Melrose will be severe. I don't believe that a road diet reducing a street with over 30,000 cars a day to one lane in either direction has been done anywhere in the country previously. That is not by accident. I know other road diets have resulted in some but not all traffic moving to other streets. Melrose is used to get to and from work, to and from school, to and from hospitals, and has been used as a main access route for decades. Traffic impacts related to the significant reduction in lanes could be a tragic catastrophe for residents and neighboring communities. Tens of thousands of vehicles may be displaced, thereby establishing detours and overflow onto streets that weren't meant to handle that level of traffic. While I expect thousands of cars to be diverted to Beverly Blvd. and Santa Monica Blvd., slowing traffic on those streets, the many cars that remain on Melrose can be expected to slow Melrose to a crawl, especially during rush hours. We can also expect a massive bottleneck where Melrose goes from two lanes in each direction to one. Cars may also try to use internal residential streets as shortcuts, but this could be more problematic as we consider neighboring East-West streets like Rosewood Avenue for permanent slow streets without auto traffic. Neighbors may also be unhappy about the inability to make left turns off of Melrose to access their homes.

I don't believe that this action will get anyone out of their cars, except for immediate neighbors on short trips who could walk or bicycle. However, it will make it more difficult for potential customers to access Melrose shops by car. The loss of parking could also reduce access by customers, unless the BID is able to cut long-term deals with several locations for large numbers of cars. This is likely to happen, but not a certainty.

I also believe that this will result in a short-term loss of more marginal businesses during construction. Longer term, I think it is likely to raise rents once it is completed, knocking out remaining smaller businesses that give Melrose its charm, for better funded, more chain-like businesses.

The determining factor for me is public safety. The bottleneck that the reduction of lanes would create, as well as the inability to ingress and egress at critical points along the way, are likely to greatly impede the ability of police vehicles, fire engines, and ambulances to respond in appropriate time. I would hate to have a heart attack at a mid-block Melrose restaurant at 6 p.m.

Additionally, the significant lane reduction would impact the ability to keep Melrose open should there be a requirement for an emergency response on Melrose. The presence of police and fire, whether it is an Engine Company or multiple police vehicles, would in all likelihood immediately close Melrose in both directions. Having received letters of great concern from both departments, as well as private conversations with leadership from these departments, I know their concerns are serious.

While other City Departments insist they will be able to work with Police and Fire to mitigate the issues they raise, I believe they will simply make the best of the situation, rather than be able to solve the public safety and traffic problems we will be causing.

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I don't believe the public safety and traffic concerns can be mitigated, and so I will not support moving this forward. It's hard to turn down tens of millions of dollars, but I believe that is the only prudent course of action.

Melrose already has won a \$3.9 million grant to improve safety and beautify the street. I believe a lot can be done to revitalize Melrose with these funds. Let's all work together to make a good plan to use that money, seek other similar grants, and do what we can for Melrose without causing any harm along the way. We can all agree on that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Koretz". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**PAUL KORETZ**  
Councilmember, 5<sup>th</sup> District