

## Walking the walk

In East Hollywood, a move is afoot to make neighborhood streets more pedestrian-friendly.

BY ARIN MIKALIAN  
STAFF WRITER

In an effort to make local streets safer for pedestrians, the East Hollywood Neighborhood Council plans to move forward with a walkability project designed by one of its own constituents.

At last week's neighborhood council meeting, local resident Stephen Box pitched "Sole Mates," a cleverly titled five-step program intended to accomplish goals that range from adding more speed bumps to East Hollywood streets to launching a public awareness campaign targeted at students.

The EHNC, which in its two-year existence has promoted other measures aimed at pedestrian safety like a Cyclist's Bill of Rights, approved Box's idea and agreed to put "Sole Mates" to work.

"This is one thing we can do to

bring more attention to the need of pedestrian safety and the fact that the streets belong to the people that walk them as well," said lifetime local resident and EHNC vice president Elson Trinidad.

One of the first steps of the project involves reaching out to local businesses, schools and churches to gather input on what measures should be pursued to make local streets safer, Box said. "This is a particular project to engage the community in reshaping the way we function as a city," he said. "Our streets right now are

WALK page 4



GARY MCCARTHY

Pedestrians cross the street near a subway station at the busy intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Western Avenue.



GARY MCCARTHY

On a walk along an East Hollywood street, a couple dodges a man sleeping on the sidewalk.

## Fancying footwork in EaHo

WALK FROM PAGE 1

oriented to move vehicles at the expense of people. This is an opportunity to rethink how we can move people to be first."

He added that the input will guide the later stages of "Sole Mates," when the EHNC and others will begin to request funding from various government agencies.

Much of the early focus appears to be on raising pedestrian safety awareness among youth, in hopes of preventing tragedies like the 2005 death of 8-year-old Seily Rodriguez, who was struck by a car while trying to cross a street in a local neighborhood.

Reaching out to students will be a two-pronged process, with the first stage involving gathering input from local students. EHNC President David Bell said he wants to take a more creative approach, such as an art contest

depicting different types of safety measures.

"We'll be like 'Hey, we're having an art contest' and ask them how they would like to change East Hollywood," Bell said.

The second prong would involve an educational program, in which experts would visit local schools to make presentations on pedestrian safety. Part of that effort includes pairing students up with one another — hence the term "Sole Mates" — so they can look after one another.

"We've got to look out for kids that are walking or riding their bikes to school," Box said, later adding: "The next level is with the kids themselves. We're going to engage them in 'Sole Mates,' train them on safety and have them start watching out for one another."

Once enough input is gathered from the community, Box said

the process for finding sources for funding will begin. Box said he already has the support of some local politicians and hopes to reach out to members of the State Assembly.

"I mean, no one is obviously going to say, 'I'm against it,'" said Bell. "Everyone is for safer streets for kids, but we want people to put their money where their mouth is."

In addition, Trinidad said the EHNC will most likely dip into some of the annual \$50,000 it is granted by the city of Los Angeles in order to fund some of the measures. Box said he expects some of those measures to begin about a year from now.

"This is going to be urban design that puts people first," he said. "We want these streets to be walkable, rideable and livable."