

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

September 25, 2014

TO: SBCCOG Board of Directors

FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Consultant

RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update – September 2014

Adherence to Strategic Plan:

Goal A: Environment, Transportation and Economic Development. Facilitate, implement and/or educate members and others about environmental, transportation and economic development programs that benefit the South Bay.

FOLLOW THE MONEY...

TRANSIT / HIGHWAY

Congress Re-sets Nine-month Federal Gas Tax Debate; In Sync With Voters?

The last-minute patch to the Highway Trust Fund that Congress enacted on the way out the door at the end of July postponed insolvency of the Highway Trust Fund until next May, after the mid-term elections and just as the 2015 summer construction season begins. It's the fifth time in the last six years that Congress has patched a hole in the federal Highway Trust Fund that pays for highway and transit aid.

According to an AP/GfK poll fielded at the end of July, Congress is reflecting the duality expressed by the public, which also can't make up its mind on how to pay for federal transportation priorities. Although six in 10 Americans think the economic benefits of good highways, railroads and airports outweigh the cost to taxpayers, 58 percent oppose raising federal gasoline taxes to fund transportation projects. Moving to a usage tax based on how many miles a vehicle drives also draws more opposition than support — 40 percent oppose it, while 20 percent support it. Only 30% of those polled support shifting the tax burden from the federal government to the state governments.

Metro Fares To Rise on September 15th

Metro has slightly postponed its fare increase that had been approved in May for September 1. New Metro fares will take effect on Monday, September 15th. The base bus/train fare will increase 17 percent, going from \$1.50 to \$1.75. Senior fares and all daily/monthly/weekly passes also increase 25-40 percent. With the new fares, Metro is instituting a new 2-hour-free transfer window, though it only applies to customers paying via TAP card. The Metro board also deferred raising student cash fares from the current \$1.00 per boarding and clarified that the new 2-hour free transfer will not apply to students paying the reduced fare and only applies for continuation in the direction of travel (not for a round trip).

Oregon Is Testing VMT Tax To Replace State Fuel Taxes

Oregon is testing a new transportation revenue generation approach that could replace the state's per-gallon gas tax with a tax on vehicle miles driven, rather than on each gallon of fuel purchased. In every other state, and at the federal level, gasoline taxes are levied on a per-gallon basis. California is considering a plan similar to Oregon's particularly in light of compounding challenges caused by a \$300 billion shortage in road maintenance and repair and the fact that California accounts for one-third of all of the hybrid cars purchased in the nation.

Oregon is signing up volunteers for the program with the goal of getting 5,000 testers in place by next spring who are willing to test different tracking methods. One way to monitor mileage would be an odometer-like device that simply keeps track of miles driven. (The motorist would receive a refund for miles driven out of state.) A smarter system could involve GPS monitoring, and still others could rely on smart phone apps or a combination of tracking systems. Key provisions in the Oregon test program do not allow the information to be used by law enforcement without a probable cause warrant and requires the information to be destroyed after a set period of time.

The proposed tax rate for the Oregon demonstration project is 1.5 cents per mile, which is the current Oregon state gas tax rate of 30 cents per gallon divided by the average car's miles per gallon, which is 20. California's state excise tax rate is currently 36-cents per gallon although the cost of gasoline is expected to rise later this year up to 15-70 cents per gallon (depending on which estimate you read) due to the inclusion of oil refining in the State's Cap and Trade emissions reduction program.

TRANSPORTATION INNOVATION: STARTS AND STOPS ...

TRANSIT / RIDESHARING / CARSHARING

Uber, Lyft and Sidecar launch on-demand carpooling services in San Francisco Bay Area

Rival car-sharing services Lyft, UberX and Sidecar, launched on-demand carpool options in San Francisco during August that will let passengers share rides - and costs - with other people going the same way. Riders can select a shared-ride option in their Smartphone application, enter their destination and be shown a fixed discount price. The companies will use technology to ensure that the extra pickups and drop-offs don't add much time to the trip. The carpool options, like the services themselves, are limited to people with smartphones and credit cards.

Minimum State Insurance Requirements Proposed For Carsharing Drivers

AB 2293, which is on the Governor's desk, would require drivers that provide services for ride-sharing companies such as Lyft and Uber to have at least \$500,000 in liability insurance that covers \$50,000 for killing or injuring a single person, \$100,000 for damage from a single accident and \$30,000 for property damage. In addition, required excess insurance coverage would drop from \$500,000 to \$200,000 when drivers do not have passengers in their vehicles.

HIGHWAY

USDOT Proposes Safety Rule for Vehicle-to-Vehicle Safety Communications

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) on August 18th released an early version of a proposed 2016 rulemaking that will make vehicle manufacturers incorporate vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) communications technology into future automobiles and light duty trucks. USDOT claims the new technologies could prevent up to 592,000 crashes and save 1,083 lives saved per year.

The technology suite being developed at the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute would warn drivers not to turn left in front of another vehicle traveling in the opposite direction and would warn them if it is not safe to enter an intersection due to a high probability of colliding with one or more vehicles. Additional applications could also help drivers avoid imminent danger through forward collision, blind spot, do not pass, and stop light/stop sign warnings.

The information sent between vehicles 10 times a second includes speed, direction, location and other data. The system does not identify those vehicles, but merely contains basic safety data. By the end of the decade, if all goes as planned, the typical American vehicle will be part of a network, constantly sharing information as it travels. The federal agency estimates that vehicle-to-vehicle transmitters will add only about \$350 to the total cost of a vehicle by 2020.

Drivers today can buy cars that monitor blind spots, warn them when they veer out of a lane and even park themselves. Such features are overseen by sensors inside the car: cameras, radar and lasers that scan the road like electronic eyes. However, the on-board sensors can warn about only what they can see. The developing wireless technology goes beyond cars talking to other cars. It also allows the roads themselves to communicate to the vehicles about real time about traffic jams, roadwork or malfunctioning traffic lights. By integrating the on-board V2V systems with roadway signal control networks (like those being developed in the South Bay), the system could inform drivers what speed to travel to hit all the green lights ahead and suggest detours. The three-year program may soon incorporate about 9,000 local participants, including, for the first time, pedestrians carrying tiny transmitters.

Protected Bike Lane Bill Would Create A New Class IV Bikeway Category

AB 1193, a bill that would make it easier for California cities to build protected bike lanes, was passed by both houses of the state legislature and awaits Governor Brown's signature. The bill requires Caltrans to establish engineering standards for protected bike lanes or "cycletracks," a new category of bike lanes for cities to use. At the same time, it removes a provision in the law that requires that any bike lane built in California adhere to Caltrans specifications, even if it is built on a local street that is not under Caltrans' jurisdiction. This frees up local jurisdictions to choose other guidelines, such as the National Association of City Transportation Officials' (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide, if the Caltrans standards do not adequately address local conditions.

The bill addressed concerns about liability by adding several conditions that have to be met before non-Caltrans criteria can be used. A “qualified engineer” must review and sign off on a protected bike lane project, the public must be duly notified, and alternative criteria must “adhere to guidelines established by a national association of public agency transportation officials,” which means the NACTO guidelines could be used whether Caltrans has officially adopted them or not. The new protected bike lanes category would be officially named “Class IV Bikeways,” adding to Class I Bikeways (bike paths or shared use paths), Class II bikeways (bike lanes), and Class III bikeways (bike routes).

Local Fees Could Fund Bike Facilities In California If SB 1183 Is Signed

The State Legislature sent a bill to the Governor (SB 1183) on August 21st that would allow cities, counties and regional parks districts to put a measure on their local ballots asking voters to approve an annual fee of up to \$5 that would be added to their vehicle registration fees and go toward building or rehabilitating bicycle infrastructure. Two-thirds of local voters would have to approve the fee.

TRANSFORMATIVE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ...

STATE

State Proposes to Replace “LOS” With “VMT” in CEQA Analysis

The California Governor’s Office of Planning & Research (OPR) proposed on August 6th that highway “level-of-service” be replaced with “vehicle miles traveled” when considering a significant environmental impact under the California Environmental Quality Act. In addition, OPR proposed that expanded roadways in congested areas that are currently considered mitigation under CEQA should be examined as a possible growth-inducing impact under CEQA.

The changes were included in a draft document that OPR hopes will more closely align CEQA analysis with greenhouse emission reduction goals in the state’s climate change laws AB 32 and SB 743 that require the agency to examine alternatives to LOS within the CEQA context.

The change of emphasis from “automobile delay” to “vehicle miles traveled (VMT)” is expected to shift environmental studies away from building bigger roads and intersections as ‘mitigation’ for traffic impacts to a new focus on the amount and distance a project may cause people to drive. Projects that generate greater than the regional average VMT could be considered significant. Projects close to transit stops might be considered below the significance threshold. The proposed CEQA Guideline amendments also clarify that local traffic safety impacts and noise and air quality impacts are appropriate for CEQA analysis but mitigation for these impacts should address the specific noise and air quality problems, not the underlying traffic congestion problems.

The new CEQA analysis standard would be phased in and would apply statewide as of January 1, 2016.

SOUTH BAY

SCAQMD To Demonstrate eHighway Port Access Concept In L.A. City, Carson

The South Coast Air Quality Management District has selected the Siemens Company to install an eHighway system in the proximity of the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. A two-way, one-mile catenary system will be installed by Siemens and the system will be demonstrated with different battery-electric and hybrid trucks.

The catenary infrastructure will be installed on the North and South-bound sections of Alameda Street where it intersects with Sepulveda Boulevard in Carson. SCAQMD expects the catenary system will be installed beginning immediately with the first truck starting a one-year demonstration in July 2015. Up to four trucks will be running in the demonstration, making multiple drives per day.

The catenary supplies trucks with electric power, similar to how modern day trolleys or streetcars are powered on many city streets. Siemens will also supply electric current collector devices mounted on the top of the demonstration trucks, which allows trucks to connect and disconnect at any speed. To ensure the same flexibility as conventional trucks, the eHighway vehicles use an electric drive system, which can be powered either by diesel, compressed natural gas (CNG), battery or other on-board energy source, when driving outside the catenary lines.