

# South Bay Cities Council of Governments

September 24, 2015

**TO: SBCCOG Board of Directors**

**FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director**

**RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update – September 2015**

## **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...**

### **FEDERAL**

#### **Streamlined Process Proposed To Develop A Long-term Federal Transportation Bill**

After months of serial wrangling in both houses, Congress passed a three-month extension of the Highway Trust Fund on July 29<sup>th</sup> before leaving for the summer recess. The 34<sup>th</sup> short-term extension in the past decade once again avoided resolution of the long-term transportation system funding shortfalls.

The Senate last month passed a six-year highway bill that included a variety of ways to pay for only the first three years of their legislation. House Republicans want to negotiate with the White House on tax reform to pay for a long-term highway bill. Democrats want to use any savings to reduce the amount of increase in the debt ceiling that will be exceeded in the next few months.

Senator Tom Carper, of Delaware, has proposed increasing the federal gas tax 4 cents each year for the next four years which would raise the federal gas tax from 18.4-cents-a-gallon to 34 cents. Carper noted that, had legislators included an indexing provision in the last law that increased the federal gas tax (in 1993), the tax would have already risen to approximately 30 cents. The U. S. gas tax rate is one of the lowest in the world; rates in other nations range from \$1.25 to \$3.35 per gallon.

Drivers would also continue to pay state gas taxes. Adding California's 42.35-cent gas tax to the 18.4 cent federal tax brings the total to nearly 61-cent-per-gallon, the fourth highest in the nation, behind only Pennsylvania, New York and Hawaii. This does not include the recent addition of extra cap-and-trade taxes resulting from reducing use of fossil fuels under California's AB 32 law or the state gas tax increase currently being debated by the California legislature (see below).

The Brookings Institute published an interesting idea for expediting the deliberations on a long-term bill before the next due date on October 30<sup>th</sup>. Institute analysts proposed creating the Special Joint Committee on Infrastructure. Members could be the chairs and ranking members of the relevant authorizing and appropriations committees. The committee would also

include the Congressional tax committees, or their designees, and representatives from the Budget Committee chairs and ranking members from each house. The ad hoc committee would be charged with developing a comprehensive bill *and* the means to pay for any increased spending over current law. The resulting bill would be introduced to both houses and considered under rules that would limit amendments and time for debate and lead to an up-or-down vote. The enacted bill would be subject to presidential veto.

### **FHWA Broadens Design Flexibility For Federal Highway System Bike & Ped. Projects**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released “clarifying” guidance on August 20<sup>th</sup> regarding the funding, design, and environmental review processes for projects on the Federal Highway System (including South Bay state highways and many arterials). The newly permissive guidance is in a report called "Bicycle and Pedestrian Funding, Design, and Environmental Review: Addressing Common Misconceptions." Major points include:

1. The American Association of State Highway And Transportation Officials’ (AASHTO’s) Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets (the Green Book) is not the only design standard that can be used on federal aid highway projects. States can adopt their own standards or use other sources such as the National Association of City Transportation Officials’ (NACTO’s) Urban Bikeway Design Guide and the Institute of Transportation Engineers’ (ITE’s) Designing Urban Walkable Thoroughfares.
2. Bicycle and pedestrian projects do not need to be within the existing Right of Way (ROW) to be eligible for a Categorical Exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The environmental review process for NEPA considers environmental impacts of a proposed project, and doesn’t mandate the siting of a project either within or outside of existing rights-of-way.
3. Federal funds CAN be used to build protected bike lanes and other bicycle or pedestrian projects and for road diets. FHWA printed its own design guide for protected bike lanes.
4. Vehicle lanes DON’T have to be a certain width to receive federal funds. Lanes don’t have to be at least 11 feet wide on the National Highway System or at least nine feet wide on local roads. Also, curb extensions, roundabouts, and trees CAN be used on federally-funded streets.
5. Speed limits DO NOT need to be set using average vehicle speed based on the “85th percentile” rule — the speed that the fastest 15 percent of drivers exceed on a road. FHWA calls the 85th Percentile rule “just one part” of an approach that should consider other factors like pedestrian traffic. FHWA has its own tool for calculating appropriate speed limits.

## **STATE**

### **California Legislature Ponders How to Fund Transportation**

The legislature returned from its summer break on August 24<sup>th</sup> hoping to reach consensus on a wide range of legislative proposals generated during the special legislative session. One major goal is to secure \$6 billion a year to pay for deferred highway and bridge maintenance. Administration officials estimate that \$59 billion is needed for state roads. Local officials estimate an additional \$78 billion is required for cities and counties.

Several state lawmakers have proposed transportation funding bills to help, including:

SBX1-1 would raise the gas and diesel fuel taxes, increase vehicle registration fees and add a \$100 fee for zero-emission vehicles plus a “road access charge” of \$35 to every vehicle. It would also require Caltrans to increase its efficiency by thirty percent.

A constitutional amendment, SCAX1-1, would restrict money collected from motor vehicle taxes to be used only for streets and highways and would prohibit the state from balancing the budget by borrowing funds from transportation, as it has in the past. It could also impose restrictions on using those funds for transit or to mitigate the costs imposed by cars—like reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The bill would require two-thirds support to pass.

Other legislative proposals (SBX 1-7, SBX 1-8, ABX 1-7 and ABX 1-8) would increase funding for highway projects that benefit goods movement or transit programs.

California local government officials, along with allies in labor and business, outlined a proposal on August 11<sup>th</sup> by which the state, cities and counties could share any new revenue. The plan outlined by local leaders includes many ideas already suggested by Democratic lawmakers, such as raising the gas tax and boosting vehicle registration and license fees.

A State Senate committee endorsed legislation on August 19<sup>th</sup> that would generate \$4 billion annually for repairs by increasing the state gas tax 12 cents a gallon and boosting annual vehicle registration fees \$35 for most cars. Fees for all-electric vehicles would go up \$100.

The California Chamber of Commerce and the Silicon Valley Leadership Group support raising at least \$6 billion annually by increasing gas and diesel taxes and vehicle registration and license fees. The Bay Area Council proposed indefinitely extending the quarter-cent sales tax portion of Proposition 30, the 2012 measure that Brown championed to pay for the state's once-cash-strapped schools, and dedicating all the revenue to transportation needs.

### **SB 350 Would Require CARB To Set New Standards To Reduce Transportation Emissions**

SB 350, the “Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act of 2015”, would increase the statewide Renewable Portfolio Standard goal for generating electricity from renewable energy sources (rather than petroleum) from the current 33% to 50% by 2030. The bill would require the state to cut petroleum use in cars and trucks by 50 percent by 2030, electric utilities to use 50 percent renewable energy by 2030, and for buildings to become twice as energy efficient.

Currently, trends are moving in the wrong direction. Gasoline and diesel sales are ticking up, the sign of a surging economy. The number of miles traveled by vehicles on California highways — a crucial metric for determining whether Californians are getting out of their cars and onto bikes, sidewalks or public transportation—is also rising.

To achieve the new standard, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) would be required, by January 1, 2017, to prepare a strategy and implementation plan.

## **REGIONAL**

### **Los Angeles / Metro Bike Share Program to Launch by Mid-2016**

L. A. City’s **65-station** pilot program of more than 1,000 bikes seems like it will launch in mid-2016 now that Metro and the City have agreed to a partnership. Metro and LA will share the demonstration project net costs with Metro footing the bill for 35 percent and LA picking up the

remaining 65 percent. They'll also be splitting sponsorships—Metro will keep naming rights (think New York's Citi Bike), while LA will have the advertising rights for the future bike hubs. Vendors BTS and BCycle were chosen earlier this summer. One of Metro's demonstration goals is to let bike-sharers use their TAP card to rent a bike since Metro and LA consider the bike share program "a form of public transportation."

### **L.A. City Council Approves Full Uber And Lyft Services At LAX**

Los Angeles City Council on August 26<sup>th</sup> approved ride-hailing companies to fully operate alongside taxis at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). Uber Technologies Inc. and Lyft Inc. will be able to both pick up and drop off passengers. Unlike taxis, Uber and Lyft drivers would drop off and pick up passengers only on the upper departure level. The vehicle drivers would be required to wait in a holding area until receiving a request for a ride. No more than 40 drivers would be allowed in the holding area at one time. The LAX permits would require Uber and Lyft to pay the airport a minimum of \$25,000 per month from \$4 fees for each drop-off and pickup.

Before the pick-up services begin, LAX officials will need to negotiate final contracts with the companies that nail down operating and information reporting requirements. Ride-hailing services, like limousine and shuttle drivers, are regulated by the state, which does not require fingerprint background checks. The City Council agreed to ask the California Public Utilities Commission to require fingerprint-based background checks for all for-hire drivers, including those behind the wheel of limousines, shuttles and ride-hail cars. In addition, the Council also instructed the City Attorney to report within a month on what legal authority Los Angeles may have to require fingerprint background checks if state regulators fail to act.

Until the contracts are signed any transportation service can continue to take riders to the airport, but only limousines, shuttles and taxis can pick them up.

### **Metro Wayfinding Signage Grant Pilot Program Applications Due November 13<sup>th</sup>**

Metro has created a two-year \$500,000 competitive pilot Wayfinding Signage Grant Program to assist agencies in designing and implementing static wayfinding signage on non-Metro properties within one mile of transit stations that will be open as of June 30, 2017.

Metro has also developed Station Wayfinding Signage Guidelines that can be found at: [http://www.metro.net/projects/call\\_projects](http://www.metro.net/projects/call_projects) under the Guidelines and Manuals section. The application is now available on the Metro website at [http://www.metro.net/projects/call\\_projects](http://www.metro.net/projects/call_projects). Applications are due November 13<sup>th</sup>.

### **Long Beach Transit To Extend South Bay Bus Service**

Long Beach Transit announced on August 18th that it will extend bus service along its Route 1 to destinations in Carson — South Bay Pavilion, Cal State Dominguez Hills and StubHub Center.

As part of several new service changes that were effective on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, the last daily outbound Route 1 bus leaving Long Beach Transit Gallery in downtown Long Beach is now scheduled to depart at 9:05 p.m. The last daily inbound Route 1 bus is now scheduled to arrive at the Transit Gallery at 11:10 p.m.

The changes to Route 1's schedule also include service to the Del Amo Blue Line Station and cancellation of stops at Wardlow Station Bay 2 as well as another stop at the southeast corner of where Wardlow Road crosses Magnolia Avenue.

Long Beach Transit also is making service changes on several of its other lines. Additional details can be obtained by calling 562-591-2301, reviewing the service changes on Long Beach Transit's website <http://www.lbtransit.com/services/service-changes.aspx>, or picking up a copy of printed schedules.

### **L.A. City Council Adopts Historic New Approach In Mobility 2035 Plan**

The Los Angeles City Council on August 11th approved the City's Mobility 2035 plan, an historic piece of legislation with a goal of adding about 300 miles of protected bike lanes and nearly 240 additional miles of bus-only lanes that would operate either during rush hour or 24 hours per day. The 200-page plan is a guide for "achieving a transportation system that balances the needs of all road users" in the next 20 years.

The Mobility 2035 Plan's key policy initiatives all steer the city in a new direction, one in which the car is no longer the central driver of the city's transportation policy. The initiatives include:

- Establishing new standards for streets design that "will provide safe and efficient transportation for pedestrians (especially for vulnerable users such as children, seniors and the disabled), bicyclists, transit riders, and car and truck drivers."
- Using data to make transportation decisions, with safety, public health, and equity as top criteria.
- Linking land use and transportation policy.
- Making equity a prime consideration in transportation planning.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions "through a more sustainable transportation system."
- Expanding "the role of the street as a public place."

The new plan is meant to meet the requirements of 2008 state legislation calling on local officials to create "complete streets," serving "motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, children, persons with disabilities, seniors, movers of commercial goods, and users of public transportation, in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban or urban context."

One of the 2035 Plan's primary goals is to cut the fatality rate from traffic collisions to zero within 20 years, by improving safety for cyclists and pedestrians while also luring more people out of their cars. In addition to slowing vehicle speed limits, the plan proposes to reshape streets by adding medians, widening sidewalks and putting in dedicated bus and bike lanes, at the expense of car lanes.

As part of the August 11<sup>th</sup> decision, council members signed off on the Environmental Impact Report Statement of Overriding Considerations, saying that the benefits of the mobility plan will outweigh its more serious environmental impacts. The city's EIR concluded that the plan's projects, if completed by 2035, would result in "unavoidable significant adverse impacts," including additional noise, cut-through traffic and diminished access for emergency vehicles. The report also found that there would be a considerable increase in the percentage of major streets that are highly congested during evening rush hour.

A consortium of opposing community organizations are preparing a legal challenge, saying the city's own analysis shows that the plan, and the accompanying loss of car lanes, will lead to increased traffic congestion and delays by emergency vehicles.

The plan is conceptual and includes no funding for implementation.

## **What's Being Said About the Proposed L. A. County Transportation Sales Tax**

The SBCCOG adopted its recommendations to Metro on August 27<sup>th</sup> for the design of a potential L. A. County Sales Tax Measure. Other organizations are starting to issue their perspectives on the design “framework” of the measure. The diversity of perspectives, recommendations, and priorities will be featured in this edition and future Transportation Updates.

The Westside Cities Council of Governments (WSSCOG) adopted its priorities on August 20, 2015. It noted that “The WSSCOG supports an iterative process in the development of the potential ballot measure and LRTP update, which may require the WSSCOG to amend the project priorities as more information becomes available from Metro throughout this process.” Current WSSCOG priorities include:

- The Sepulveda Pass Corridor project (a tunnel or two for vehicles and transit), with an equitable share of costs for joint projects with regional significance.
- Dedicated regional funding for active transportation and 1<sup>st</sup>/Last Mile Connections on the Westside such as a Bicycle Program, a Citywide Bicycle Master Plan, a Livable Boulevards and Streetscapes Program, Mobility Hubs, an Education/Encouragement Program, 1st/Last Mile Program, a Pedestrian Program, and Safe Routes to School.
- The Crenshaw-LAX Line Extension from Exposition Boulevard to West Hollywood/Hollywood or an extension of the Purple line subway to West Hollywood as an alternative.
- Reconfiguration/rationalization of the I-10 Robertson/National area on/off ramps and arterials in the Exposition Light Rail Culver City Station area.
- Lincoln Blvd. improvements for wider bridge, bike lanes, transit lanes, etc
- Sepulveda BRT/Rail Program Transit including the following sub-projects: 1.) Multimodal linkage from Westside to San Fernando Valley and LAX. 2.) Sepulveda BRT Project on Sepulveda Blvd from Wilshire to LAX with a potential upgrade to rail in the long term.
- Westside Subway Purple Line Extension from UCLA to Santa Monica

Investing in Place, is a two-year-old, non-profit organization working to achieves social equity, public health, and environmental policy goals using active transportation to improve neighborhoods and communities. The organization has issued the following key sales tax measure recommendations:

- Develop a data-driven framework that prioritizes funding for projects that advance social equity, enhance public health, and achieve environmental goals;
- Create prioritization investment areas based on income levels and race/ethnicity;
- Better serve transit-dependent populations by maintaining low fares, increasing frequency of service on high-ridership lines, ensuring funding for transit operations, enacting policies that enable development without displacement, and supporting integrated housing and transportation initiatives;
- Increasing funding for Active Transportation and other travel options for low-income and carless households; and
- Supporting Meaningful and Authentic Participation during this process.