



MONTHLY SBCCOG TRANSPORTATION REPORT

COVERING July 2022

Edited by Steve Lantz

SBCCOG Transportation Director

FEDERAL

U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee Releases its FY23 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Spending Bill

The U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations released its draft Transportation, Housing and Urban Development bill for Fiscal Year 2023 on July 27th. The bill provides \$106.6 billion for the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), which represents a \$2.1 billion increase over the previous fiscal year spending levels. This is in addition to \$36.8 billion provided to DOT through advance appropriations in the recently passed Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill.

The bill includes significant funding for L. A. County transit capital projects, including:

- the (Westside Purple Line Extension, Sections 1, 2 and 3);
- the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor Project;
- the West Santa Ana Branch Transit Corridor Project;
- the North Hollywood to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit Project; and
- the Vermont Transit Corridor Project.

The Appropriations Committee and the full Senate will consider the bill in the coming months before the October 1 start of the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Congress Passes Competition Legislation Including Metro Priorities

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the CHIPS and Science Act on July 27th to provide incentives for domestic semiconductor manufacturing. Included in this legislation is a provision that would support Metro's Center for Transportation Excellence initiative, which in partnership with the County of Los Angeles aims to establish a rail rolling stock manufacturing center in Los Angeles County. Specifically, the bill provides \$10 billion over five years to create 20 regional technology and innovation hubs around the United States.

FHWA To Issue Federal Rules For Reducing GHG Emissions

The Federal Highway Administration plans to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking that requires states and municipalities to track and reduce greenhouse gas or GHG emissions. The new rule would establish a flexible national framework for tracking state-by-state progress by adding a new GHG performance management measure to the existing national performance measures to help states track performance and make more informed investment decisions.

Under the proposed "flexible system", state departments of transportation and Metropolitan Planning Organizations would set their own declining targets for on-road greenhouse gas emissions from roadway travel on the National Highway System.

It also requires state DOTs and MPOs to report biennially on their progress in meeting the declining targets they establish, with FHWA tasked to assess significant progress toward achieving those targets. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) plans to analyze the proposed rulemaking more deeply including the potential impact of USDOT's proposed "percent change in tailpipe emissions." AASHTO also plans to use the 90-day regulatory comment period to have

conversations between its members and FHWA about FHWA’s legal authority to establish a new performance measure as well as how states and FHWA can best work together to reduce GHG emissions.

FHWA Expands Alternative Fuel Corridor EV Charging Program

FHWA added 249 new designations to its Alternative Fuel Corridor program, with those corridors now covering 85 percent of the National Highway System: roughly 190,000 miles out of the total NHS network of 222,000 miles. Under the new National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure formula program, those Alternative Fuel Corridors will serve as the “backbone” for the national EV charging network.

STATE

Caltrans Releases Action Plan For Making Complete Streets A Priority

Last December, Caltrans released a new Director’s Policy establishing an organization-wide priority to encourage and increase walking, bike, transit, and passenger rail modes in California, in keeping with state and departmental sustainability, climate, and resilient community goals.

To implement the policy, in mid-July the department released its Complete Streets Action Plan list of specific tasks to be done within 2022 and 2023 to be taken by Caltrans to encourage the shift towards equitable and safer transportation. In addition to establishing district administrative structures to manage complete streets actions, the 2022 list includes:

- Developing minimum expectations for complete streets facilities, patterned after the most recent American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Green Book, and including design guidance on reduced lane widths on complete streets projects.
- Updating statewide policy and guidance for bicycle access through work zones on the state highway system and developing new specifications and plans for temporary bicycle access routes.
- Developing a process for tracking the inclusion of complete streets elements in major highway pavement and bridge projects.
- Developing an active transportation benefit/cost tool that can be used for project evaluations statewide.
- Creating a database of active transportation projects on the state highway system that are ready for funding.

Governor’s Free California Public Transit Plan Axed From State Budget

Last March, California Governor Gavin Newsom pitched the idea of a gas rebate for vehicle owners as well as three months of free public transportation in the state. But on June 28th, Governor Newsom signed the finalized annual state budget — one that opts for direct cash payments of up to \$350 rather than a gas rebate or three months of free public transit fares. The final agreement providing direct cash relief is based on a state tax return means test rather than being based on vehicle registration.

Due to the means test, four of five of the roughly 17.4 million tax return filers that will be receiving a rebate will fall in the lower bracket of the rebate payments — a bracket that will likely include more

Californians who regularly use public transportation than a personal vehicle than those in the higher brackets. The budget doesn't dole out any new/additional state investments for transit operators.

REGION

Metro CEO Goal: Restore Ridership to Pre-COVID Levels by July 2023

At a July 7th Metro State of the Agency event, Metro CEO Stephanie Wiggins pledged to increase Metro transit ridership back to pre-pandemic levels in the coming year. Full ridership recovery would require an increase in Metro ridership from the 789,000 to 1.2 million average weekday riders.

Due to interrelated factors – pandemic surges, bus operator shortages, and reduced/inconsistent service, current ridership has only recovered to about two-thirds of pre-COVID levels. Metro bus ridership has declined less – and rebounded more quickly – compared to Metro rail. As of May, buses are carrying 71 percent of pre-COVID levels, while rail is seeing 55 percent. Metro restored some additional service in June, though overall service hours remain about ten percent below pre-pandemic service to reduce the number of cancelled runs in response to ongoing bus operator shortages.

Wiggins outlined several factors that will help grow ridership, including more than ten miles of new rail service, restored bus service, and a significant investment in making a fast, clean, reliable, and safe system.

In contrast to the transit recovery challenges, LAX Passenger Traffic has returned to pre-pandemic levels. For the first time since January 2020, more than 6 million passengers passed through Los Angeles International Airport last month.

Over 100,000 Signatures Submitted for Healthy Streets L.A. Initiative

In 2015, the City of Los Angeles passed a progressive mobility plan that promised to increase safety and access for bicyclists and pedestrians, reduce emissions, increase access to transit and eliminate car-dependency. Since the passage, Los Angeles has only implemented 95 miles of improvements out of 3,137 miles planned...less than 3%.

In response to the slow implementation, on June 30th, advocates with Streets for All submitted over 102,000 signatures to place a Healthy Streets L. A. measure on a future ballot that would require that when Los Angeles completes a road resurfacing or slurry project, that it re-stripes the street to conform to the mobility plan. The City Council also unanimously passed a motion directing the City Attorney to draft an ordinance to accomplish the same thing. The City Council hopes to vote on the city ordinance sometime in August and it needs only eight votes to pass...four less than it received on first reading.

In addition to requiring the city to implement the mobility plan after fixes, the future Council ordinance will also: create a coordination office at Public Works to marshal city departments to implement the ordinance, task the City Administrator to develop a plan and budget to make sure the plan is implemented in areas that need it most, and set aside funding to build a public dashboard so that the public can see what projects will be implemented.

If the Council doesn't approve the ordinance, the initiative would then head to the ballot. If Healthy Streets is passed either by voters or the Council, it would take an act of the voters in a future election to undo it.

FEDERAL, STATE & LOCAL TRENDS / INNOVATION

Urban Flooding Presents Challenges For EV Charging Stations

Under newly proposed federal regulations published in the Federal Register on June 22, the Federal Highway Administration would require that charging networks funded under the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Formula Program consider the risks of locating chargers in areas subject to 100-year floods. Additionally, consideration should be given to access for EV chargers "during times of emergency such as evacuation from natural disasters," as stated in the proposed rule.

The public may comment until Aug. 22 on the proposed regulations, which also cover the installation, operation, maintenance, interoperability and network connectivity of EV charging infrastructure. Protections can include waterproof connectors that protect the grid from moisture. Some stations can use batteries, but they need to be elevated since the battery box has to have the ability to breathe.

Bloomberg Says U. S. Has Hit Electric Car Tipping Point

Bloomberg is telling its subscribers that electric cars have passed a critical tipping point in the US and that a quarter of all new cars sold in America will be electric by 2025, several years earlier than expected.

In theory, once a new, new thing hits 5% market penetration, the rate of acceptance goes up exponentially before tailing off at the end. *CBS News* reports that the United States is the most recent addition to a growing list of nations where fully electric cars make up 5% of new vehicle sales, a threshold that opens the gate to mass adoption. When it comes to electric cars, 5% seems to be the magic number at which the early adopters are joined by most of the rest of a country's population. Aside from reducing AV cost as sales volumes increase and continuing governmental EV subsidies, EV market share optimists face a very real challenge: battery supplies may not come close to matching the demand over the next few years.