

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

February 1, 2022

TO: SBCCOG Transit Operators Working Group
SBCCOG Infrastructure Working Group
SBCCOG Transportation Committee
SBCCOG Board of Directors

FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director

RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update Covering January 2022

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.

Federal

USDOT Awards Metro \$1.24 Billion In ARP Grants, Establishes Federal Road Safety Initiative

US Department of Transportation awarded L. A. Metro \$1.24 billion in American Rescue Plan Act funds in mid-January. The grant is part of a \$26.6 billion formula allocation to help transit agencies around the country maintain service and keep workers on the payroll as communities continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, FTA has awarded over \$56 billion in COVID-relief funding to transit agencies nationwide.

The Biden Administration also announced on January 14th a first-ever strategy to put \$6 billion into state and local governments to improve safety on the roads by improved street lighting and safer crosswalks.

Transportation Secretary Pushes Federal Support For Vehicle Innovation

Speaking to the annual Consumer Electronics Show on January 6th, U. S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg discussed the agency's commitment to fostering technological growth for U.S. travelers.

Last December, US DOT collaborated with the U.S. Department of Energy to create the first Electric Vehicle Office to oversee the research and development of the electric vehicle market in America, in pursuit of the goal of establishing a network of about 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations. In the CES speech, he also outlined several principles US DOT is adopting to help make American transportation systems compatible with new technology, including supporting innovation on a policy level, accelerating smart pavement initiatives, helping communities adapt to new technology, supporting workers, creating an environment that fosters experimentation, and encouraging collaborations between the public and private sectors in support of greener and modernized transportation solutions.

State

State Bill Would Guarantee Free Transportation For All California Students, Reimburse Districts
Senate Bill 878, introduced on January 25th, would ensure all K-12 students in California are offered free transportation to and from school starting in the 2023-24 school year, and that school districts are reimbursed for it. SB 878 would create a new state fund to reimburse districts for school transportation, but only if districts confirm that it is available to all students. No cost estimate is available yet.

Although local school districts have access to state funding for student transportation, there's no state guarantee that students receive free school transportation; it's up to individual school districts to either operate their own bus program or contract with local transit providers to bus students to and from school.

Districts are eligible to pay for transportation out of their apportionment of state funding allocated through the California Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). The allocation formula was enacted in 2013–14 to consolidate the previous kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) state funding programs which had been in existence for four decades.

Governor Proposed Budget Includes Gas Tax Increase Pause, De-carbonization Spending

California's automatic gas tax hike may not kick in this summer under Gov. Gavin Newsom's new budget proposal, which seeks to halt the \$523 million increase. He proposed backfilling the program funding from the anticipated FY 22-23 \$46 billion state surplus, subject to any changes in the May Budget Revision.

The State's excise tax has been rising automatically tied to the annual statewide cost of living increase since Senate Bill 1 was enacted in 2017. At a current cost of approximately 51 cents per gallon, the state's excise tax is already the highest in the nation. On top of that, California continues to have the most expensive gas on average in the country. The current statewide average cost at the pump is about \$4.65 for a gallon of regular unleaded, over \$1.30 above the national average.

The 2021 California Budget Act committed \$3.9 billion towards zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) acceleration through 2023-24. This included investments ranging from cleaning up drayage trucks, transit, and school buses to accelerating equitable electrification of passenger vehicles, e-bikes and rail—coupled with infrastructure and incentives for in-state manufacturing.

In his 2022-23 budget proposal, California Governor Gavin Newsom is adding an additional \$6.1 billion over five years, with a focus on communities that are most impacted, bringing the total investment to \$10 billion over six years to decarbonize the transportation sector. Significant investments include:

- **Low-Income Zero-Emission Vehicles and Infrastructure:** \$256 million for low-income consumer purchases, and \$900 million to expand affordable and convenient ZEV infrastructure access in low-income neighborhoods. These investments will focus on planning and deploying a range of charging options to support communities, including grid-friendly high-power fast chargers and at-home charging.
- **Heavy-Duty Zero-Emission Vehicles and Supporting Infrastructure:** \$935 million to add 1,000 zero-emission short-haul (drayage) trucks and 1,700 zero-emission transit buses; \$1.5 billion Proposition 98 to support school transportation programs, including advancing electric school buses in a coordinated effort between educational, air pollution, and energy agencies; \$1.1

billion for zero-emission trucks, buses, and off-road equipment and fueling infrastructure; and \$400 million to enable port electrification.

- **Zero-Emission Mobility:** \$419 million to support sustainable community-based transportation equity projects that increase access to zero-emission mobility in low-income communities. This includes supporting clean mobility options, sustainable transportation and equity projects, and plans that have already been developed by communities that address mobility. These locally driven projects continue to be a direct response to critical mobility needs identified by community-based organizations and residents working on the front lines to lift up priority populations.
- **Emerging Opportunities:** \$200 million to invest in demonstration and pilot projects in high carbon-emitting sectors, such as maritime, aviation, rail, and other off-road applications, as well as support for vehicle grid integration at scale.
- **Active Transportation:** \$750 million General Fund for projects to transform the state's active transportation networks, improve equity, and support carbon-free transportation options, including funding for: Active Transportation Program projects, the Reconnecting Communities: Highways to Boulevards Pilot Program, and bicycle and pedestrian safety projects.
- **High-Speed Rail and Transit:** \$4.2 billion Proposition 1A bond funds for High-Speed Rail, \$3.25 billion General Fund for statewide, regional and local transit and rail projects, and \$500 million General Fund for high-priority rail safety improvements.
- **Climate Adaption:** \$400 million General Fund for climate adaptation projects that support climate resiliency and reduce infrastructure risk.
- **Long Duration Storage:** \$380 million over two years
- **Green Hydrogen:** \$100 million in 2022-23 to advance the use and production of green hydrogen.

Region

L. A. Metro's Fareless Transit Pilot Ended January 10th

L. A. Metro resumed fare payment enforcement and front door boarding on January 10th. The agency had not enforced fare payment, had prohibited front door boarding, and reduced service since March 2020 as a social distancing measure to address COVID concerns.

Because most of the people who take the buses or trains in L. A. depend on transit as their primary transportation mode, and despite numerous periods of quarantine and precautionary isolation, Metro's transport capacity never fell below 50 percent, while providing more than 280 million free transits. Eliminating fares had minimal revenue impact since fare revenue only amounts 6% of the system's total revenue, and a third of this is lost in fare enforcement. The lost revenues were offset with emergency federal Covid operating grants.

But now, 22 months after opening fare free, Metro is using the information gathered over the past two years to implement future service improvements such as the Next Generation (NextGen)

service plan, free or deeply-discounted promotional fares to attract back riders, and a revised reduced-fare structure for low-income riders and K-14 students.

Amid Driver Shortage, Metro Board Reduces Service, Addresses Driver Recruitment & Retention

L. A. Metro has been forced to cancel as much as 17% of scheduled bus and rail service since September as the agency struggles to find enough bus drivers. Since July 2021, 378 drivers have left the agency. Some retired; others got new jobs or were dismissed for misconduct or poor performance.

In addition to reporting that recruitment and training have not kept pace with driver departures from the agency, Metro staff reported at the January 27th Metro Board meeting that more than 10% of its bus and rail operators are absent and service cancellations have risen to 17% due to the COVID Omicron surge. High rates of COVID-19 infections among remaining employees, a competitive labor market and a hiring freeze during the pandemic have left the agency without enough drivers and many riders without reliable transportation and rail operators are working 6 days a week to provide more reliable service.

In a bid to stabilize the system, the Metro Board on January 27th authorized staff to temporarily reduce bus service by 800,000 service hours (nearly 10%) and reduce rail service frequency beginning February 20th in what officials described as an “emergency” measure intended to spread the pain equitably across a system. Metro anticipates that the cuts will reduce canceled bus runs from 17% to 5%.

Although no lines will be eliminated, the Board expressed concern with the high concentration of absences serving high-frequency lines in equity-focused communities, with one line alone experiencing a 46% driver absentee rate. The board expressed equity concerns with the staff plan to cut service based on absentee rates at each Metro operating division and instructed staff to work with its unions to develop a more equitable temporary re-allocation of drivers. The Board also authorized a six-month program in which new drivers will be hired to work fulltime, rather than the current practice of starting driver on a part-time work schedule. Initial hourly pay will be raised from \$17.75 per hour to \$19.12 per hour.

Because the Board expects the crisis to subside after the Omicron variant peaks, the Board set a goal of restoring service to pre-COVID levels by June 2022. Staff expressed cautious optimism for reaching the goal, but outlined several metrics that must be met before reliable service can be expected including COVID absentee reductions, reduction in required overtime and “ordered” driver callbacks, vaccinating the 17% of drivers that remain unvaccinated but continue to drive the buses and trains, streamlining recruitment and training of new operators, and filling more than 586 bus operator vacancies to reliably provide the restored service in the newly re-configured Next Gen service plan.

Since early 2021, Metro has been pushing hiring more drivers, but operator attrition continues to outpace hiring. Metro said at least 3,800 people have applied for operating jobs but only about 1,000 of those applicants remain in the pipeline. It may take more than a month to get them started because they must undergo federal screening.

Former San Pedro Waterfront Red Car Right-Of-Way In San Pedro To Become Park

The San Pedro Waterfront Red Car ceased operation in 2015. Los Angeles City is now pursuing \$1.65 million in federal funding to convert a segment of former streetcar's right-of-way into a new public park. The proposed site stretches the east side of Harbor Boulevard between 1st and 3rd Streets, and varies between 21 and 35 feet in width.

The Harbor Department, in partnership with the Housing Department, intends to rip out the rail tracks to make way for new recreation amenities, including a plaza space for food vendors, a lawn area, shade structures, swings, a children's play area, exercise equipment, picnic tables, and seating.

Trends

Shared E -Scooters and E-Bikes May Emit More CO2 Than The Alternatives They Replace

A new study in [Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment](#), examined what impact shared mobility options have on the climate. The researchers not only considered CO2 emissions throughout the lifecycle from production, operation, and maintenance, but also the substitution patterns during usage.

The findings show that shared e-scooters and e-bikes in the city of Zurich primarily replace more sustainable modes of transport—walking, public transport, and cycling. This means that they emit more carbon than the means of transport they replace. A different picture emerges in the case of private e-scooters and e-bikes, which replace trips by car much more frequently and thus produce less CO2 emissions than the means of transport they replace. Private micromobility therefore reduces CO2 emissions and ultimately benefits the climate. Whether this potential for shared mobility can be realized depends on how we integrate and use micro-mobility in the future.

Point-Of-Sale ADA Compliance Programs Could Provide A Faster Path to Safer Sidewalks

In 2003, the Supreme Court ruled that the Americans with Disabilities Act requires cities to keep their sidewalks accessible to persons with disabilities. In 2016, Los Angeles lost a class-action lawsuit initiated by disability rights advocates who alleged that the city's inaccessible sidewalks violate the Americans with Disabilities Act. The settlement requires L.A. to spend \$1.4 billion over 30 years to fix its sidewalks. Since then, Atlanta, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Sacramento, San Francisco, Seattle and hundreds of other cities have been sued for violating ADA requirements for sidewalk design and condition.

UCLA Professor Donald Shoup has proposed a simple way to ensure that sidewalks will be accessible: Cities can require that the sidewalk abutting any property must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act when the property is sold. California's [Streets and Highways Code](#) requires property owners to repair damaged sidewalks fronting their property. Point-of-sale programs can help cities enforce the state law.

To manage a point-of-sale program, the city can require property owners to submit a certificate of compliance with the sidewalk ordinance before the title is transferred. To obtain the certificate, property owners would request the city to inspect the sidewalk abutting their property. If the sidewalk is in good repair, the inspector issues a compliance certificate. If it's damaged, the inspector estimates what the city would charge to repair it. The property owner can then have the city make the repairs or hire a private contractor to do the work.

How fast will a point-of-sale program fix broken sidewalks? On average, half of all properties are sold in [12 years](#), so a program adopted in 2022 should repair half a city's broken sidewalks by 2034.

New Report Predicts 5G Will Fundamentally Transform Urban Transportation

Connectivity and smart technology via rapid 5G will fundamentally transform our experience of the world – including urban transportation – within the next decade, according to *The Connected Consumer 2030 Report (CC2030)*, a new report by Vodafone.

Research by McKinsey predicts that by 2025 cities that deploy smart mobility applications could cut commuting times by 15-20% on average. But the benefits go well beyond convenience. The report concludes that Cities that embrace smart, autonomous mobility systems will be greener, quieter, more sustainable and more livable.

By the end of the decade, new mobility systems will see vehicles become hubs of experience, enabling the creation of new consumer touchpoints, including self-driving retail concepts. Using immersive holograms, the report suggests, e-commerce brands will be able to showcase their latest collections to passengers of autonomous vehicles as they travel, allowing them to swipe through products and even be dropped off at a retail destination to make a purchase. On entering a vehicle, passengers will be able to control their journey through their personal devices, pre-selecting from a series of settings ranging from sightseeing to work and leisure to create a completely tailored passenger experience.

To enable smart mobility systems to thrive, mobility players, tech businesses and governments must work together to define how data is shared with cities. As the urban transport system continues to incorporate more digitally enabled ways of moving around – from drones and shared scooters to autonomous vehicles – cities need new ways to ensure everyone’s transport needs are met in a safe, efficient and environmentally sustainable way.