MONTHLY SBCCOG TRANSPORTATION REPORT

A summary of recent federal, state, regional and local developments and trends in transportation

COVERING JUNE 2025

Edited by Anne Tsai

Federal

U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy Streamlines Exemption Process for Noncompliant Automated Vehicles

U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy announced that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will further accelerate the safe development of automated vehicles by streamlining the Part 555 exemption process.

The exemption will continue to allow manufacturers to sell up to 2,500 motor vehicles per year that do not fully comply with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. This includes vehicles that do not have traditional steering wheels, driver-operated brakes, or rearview mirrors. Manufacturers must demonstrate that their vehicles provide an equivalent safety level as compliant vehicles and that the exemption is in the public interest. This latest development builds on Secretary Duffy's innovation agenda and NHTSA's AV Framework.

The streamlined Part 555 exemption also involves improvements to NHTSA's internal processes to expedite processing time, improve transparency, and increase engagement with applicants. NHTSA will issue improved instructions to give applicants a better idea of what to expect and ensure they provide necessary information up front.

President Trump's Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy Announces Availability of $5.4 Billion in Bridge Funding to Get America Building Again

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced nearly $4.9 billion in available funding for major bridge projects through the Bridge Investment Program, and up to $500 million for repairing or replacing bridges in rural areas through the Competitive Highway Bridge Program.

This announcement will help address the tens of thousands of bridges across the country – including approximately 42,000 bridges in poor condition – that are in dire need of repair.

<u>Example of Removed Climate Change and Environmental Justice Requirements:</u>

“Applicants must address how the project will consider climate change and environmental justice in the planning stage and in project delivery. In particular, applicants must address how the project reduces greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector, incorporates evidence-based climate resilience measures and features, and reduces the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions from the project materials. Applicants also must address the extent to which the project avoids adverse environmental impacts to air or water quality, wetlands, and endangered species, as well as address disproportionate negative impacts of climate change and pollution on disadvantaged or other affected communities, including natural disasters, with a focus on prevention, response, and recovery.”

State

HDR to deliver engineering and design services for California high-speed rail

HDR has been chosen by the High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Agency to deliver engineering and design services for a 54-mile rail segment of California’s high-speed rail project between Palmdale and Victorville.

Under the terms of a five-year contract, HDR’s responsibilities will span a broad spectrum of engineering disciplines, including rail and bridge design, systems and station integration, and the planning of operations and maintenance facilities.

Additionally, HDR will provide support for right-of-way coordination, environmental services, stakeholder engagement, risk management, procurement, and contract administration.

The new rail service between Palmdale and Victorville is expected to operate at speeds of up to 180 miles per hour.

It will offer a fast link from the Antelope Valley’s multimodal transportation hub in Los Angeles County to the planned Brightline West station in San Bernardino County.

The broader vision for the network includes connections to Northern California, Las Vegas, and additional destinations, reshaping access to housing, employment, and cultural sites.

The project is currently finalizing environmental documentation and preliminary engineering with plans to move to the construction phase in the early 2030s.

In the 2024 Economic Impact Analysis Report announced in January, it was revealed that the California high-speed rail project has produced $21.8 billion in economic activity following an investment of $13 billion by the California High-Speed Rail Authority from July 2006 to June 2024.

Region

A trip to LAX without a car? Metro opens long-awaited LAX station

Decades after rail first broke ground in Los Angeles County, Angelenos are one step closer to an airport connection with the opening of the LAX/Metro Transit Center.

The station at Aviation Boulevard and 96th Street connects to the K Line and C Line and, starting next year, to Los Angeles International Airport's long-awaited automated people mover train. For now, free shuttle buses running every 10 minutes will transport travelers along the 2.5-mile route between the center and LAX.

The transit center was budgeted at $900 million and includes a 16-bay bus plaza with electric bus infrastructure and a bicycle hub. When the people mover is running, Metro riders will take two escalators up past a mural, now showcasing the 2026 FIFA World Cup, to board.

Most major cities already have a direct airport rail connection. The absence at LAX has long left travelers baffled, particularly first-time visitors and international passengers expecting a world destination like Los Angeles to have streamlined transit to its main airport.

A variety of factors led to the delay, including reported concerns among airport officials over potential lost parking profits, Federal Aviation Administration pushback, and competing interests over taxpayer dollars.

The debate was renewed more than a decade ago, and plans for the airport's people mover connection and Metro's station were ultimately approved. The station is one of Metro's "28 by 28" transit projects ahead of the Olympics.

The train is the most anticipated project under the airport's $30-billion overhaul ahead of the FIFA World Cup in 2026 and the Olympics and Paralympics in 2028. Airport leaders and transit experts believe the automated train will significantly ease traffic at 1 World Way.

Trends

Your Packages Could Soon Be Delivered By Honda's Electric Quadricycle

Honda has always been more than just a car company. The Japanese manufacturer got its start assembling motorcycles and has dabbled in everything from lawnmowers and motorized tillers to jet-powered airplanes and outboard boat engines. Now, Honda is venturing into another vehicular realm with Fastport, a new business that will produce an all-electric quadricycle that can fit in a bike lane and is aimed at last-mile delivery.

Fastport's first product is the eQuad, a narrow four-wheeled contraption that is operated like a bicycle and features a large storage box behind the rider. Honda says the eQuad is designed to "help address urban congestion and rising consumer demand for faster, more frequent deliveries." The eQuad is designed to travel in bike lanes, appearing to just squeeze into the painted lines in the photos we have of the quadricycle traveling in New York City. Honda does note, however, that the eQuad's ability to drive in bike lanes will be dependent on local regulations.

The eQuad will be offered in two sizes and with two cargo box sizes, in order to meet the needs of different businesses across both Europe and North America. The smaller eQuad is 133.9 inches long, 82.7 inches tall, and 39.4 inches wide, while the larger eQuad measures 144 inches long, 84 inches tall, and 48 inches wide.

Honda says the eQuad's modular design allows it to be easily customized for the specific use case of the business. The small cargo container's length/width/height is 75 by 57.5 by 38.4 inches, while the bigger box's dimensions are 89 by 47.9 by 60 inches. In its larger configuration, the eQuad has a payload of 650 pounds; the smaller eQuad can carry up to 320 pounds.

The powertrain is described as "pedal-by-wire pedal-assist," and the eQuad also features regenerative braking. The eQuad can travel up to 12 mph, regardless of the configuration, and Honda quotes a range of up to 23 miles for the larger version. A range estimate for the small model is not yet available.

While the eQuad is essentially a bike with four wheels, Honda also added a couple of amenities for rider comfort. The eQuad's canopy has a UV coating and a ceramic tint option to shield the rider from the sun, while a ventilation fan helps the rider stay cool. The prototype also appears to feature a headlight and a camera-based rearview mirror. Fastport will also provide a "Fleet-as-a-Service" (FaaS) platform that not only includes the swappable batteries and cargo containers but also service and maintenance plans and real-time data for driver and fleet management. The eQuad will be capable of over-the-air software updates.

The Fastport eQuad prototype will make its in-person debut at Eurobike in Frankfurt, Germany, next week. Honda aims to deliver the first units in late 2025 before mass production gets underway in the summer of 2026. The eQuad will be built at Honda's Performance Manufacturing Center in Ohio, where it previously built the Acura NSX and currently assembles the CR-V e:FCEV hydrogen SUV. Honda says that Fastport is already in discussions with major logistics and delivery companies in North America and Europe for use in pilot test programs.