

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

April 11, 2016

TO: SBCCOG Steering Committee

FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director

RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update –April 2016

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

Pedestrian Death Rate Rises Across Nation

The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) on March 8th released a study projecting that that the number of pedestrian fatalities in 2015 jumped by 10 percent over 2014, a year-to-year increase that comes after a 19 percent increase from 2009 to 2014. Although full-year statistics are still be compiled, during the first 6 months of 2015, there were 2,369 pedestrian fatalities across the nation. Pedestrian deaths totaled 15% of all traffic fatalities, up from 11% a decade ago, and overall traffic deaths declined by about 4 percent during the same period. The report partly attributes the change partly to improvements in vehicle safety equipment. However, cheaper gas in a stable economy means more people are driving and, with the emergence of “walkable communities”, nearly a million more people are walking or biking to work.

Other significant factors have been reported. Distracted driving and walking puts pedestrians particularly at risk. A study completed by Public Health Reports in 2010 said that pedestrian fatalities caused by distracted drivers had increased by 50 percent over five years. Walking after dark accounted for 72 percent of fatalities in 2014 with the deaths happening between 6 p.m. and midnight. In addition, more than three-quarters of deaths happened somewhere other than an intersection. The four largest states — California, Florida, Texas and New York — accounted for 42 percent of the overall pedestrian deaths. California led the way, with 347 people killed.

U.S. Drivers Are Distracted More Than Half the Time They're Behind the Wheel

Until sometime in the early 2000s, the U.S. had fewer traffic fatalities per mile traveled than most developed countries. That’s changed. If we’re measuring by road traffic deaths per 100,000 people, the U.S. is currently ranked 17th out of 29 high-income nations for which data is available.

The Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) published a report in February with a finding that people behind the wheels of passenger vehicles are distracted more than 50 percent of the time. That doubles their risk of a crash. Nearly 70 percent of the crashes the researchers analyzed

involved “some type of observable distraction. To complete their study, the Virginia Tech researchers, placed cameras, sensors and radar in the vehicles of more than 3,500 study participants for a three-year period. Researchers observed exactly what happens before a crash, capturing more than 35 million miles of data in all. The VTTI researchers estimate that potentially 36 percent of incidents— 4 million of the almost 11 million crashes that happen in this country annually — could be avoided if no distractions were present.

The main culprit, of course, is the cell phone. Dialing a cell phone raised the odds of an accident by a factor of 12 compared to what the researchers call “model driving,” or driving while “alert, attentive, and sober.” Texting increased the crash risk by a factor of six. Chatting on the phone more than doubled the risk of an incident. Just reaching for a handheld cell phone increased the odds of an accident nearly five times.

By comparison chatting with a teen or adult passenger in the vehicle only raised the risk by a factor of 1.4 while driving while sad, crying, in an emotionally agitated state increased the risk of an incident by nearly 1000 percent compared to model driving. Drug and alcohol use was observed just 0.1 percent of the time, but it increased the risk of crash by a factor of 40.

Miami-Dade County Merges Public Works, Transportation Into One Agency

Miami-Dade’s transportation and public works agencies were merged in April 2016 in hopes that having Traffic Operations, Construction and Maintenance, Highway Planning, Passenger Transportation Regulation and the County Engineer all under one roof can facilitate more of a complete streets approach that will consider many mobility needs in a single project — crosswalks, traffic-calming initiatives, bicycle infrastructure and the like.

The processes to build out a network of fully automated light signals, or add express bus service to highways, or create reversible lanes could all be streamlined when they’re happening under the umbrella of a single department. Some are hoping the merger will also make technology adoption easier, hastening Miami’s rise to smart city status.

Orlando Suburb Is First City In Nation To Subsidize Uber Rides

Altamonte Springs, an Orlando suburb, on March 21 became the nation’s first city to pay a portion of the fare for all trips with Uber within its limits. The city has budgeted \$500,000, partly from local businesses, for a year-long study during which it will pick up 20% of all Uber rides in city limits, and 25% for those to or from its SunRail transit station.

The goal is to integrate the on-demand ride service into the transportation network, get cars off the road and induce people to use mass transit in an effort to spend less on street repairs. Some economics and public policy experts who study Uber are skeptical due to a lack of data on increased demand caused by the subsidies. If the city decides to continue the program past its initial year trial, the city will open the contract to other bidders.

Millennials Are Finally Buying Cars

Headlines in 2010 proclaimed the end of the car culture for millennials who would prefer car share and use transit rather than purchasing an auto. But new auto sales data suggests millennials are now buying cars in big numbers. They just had a late start. Now the largest generation in the U.S.,

millennials bought 4 million cars and trucks in the U.S. last year, second only to the baby boomers, according to J.D. Power's Power Information Network, which defines millennials as those between 21 and 38 in 2015.

In the country's biggest car market, California, millennials outpaced boomers for the first time. Millennials' share of the new car market jumped to 28 percent. It's a very different story from 2010, when millennials — who make up around 30 percent of the population — bought just 17 percent of new cars.

Apparently the delay was in caused by the advent of graduated licensing laws, which make teens practice driving in stages before granting a full license, and the economy. The teen unemployment rate rose from 15 percent to 26 percent between 2006 and 2012. It's now at 8% and interest rates and gasoline prices are down.

STATE

Caltrans and FHWA Create Council for Transportation Innovation

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) signed a charter on March 24th to create The California State Transportation Innovation Council (STIC). The new organization is the 52nd partnership negotiated across the country to advocate for and oversee the rapid development of innovations in the transportation sector with a goal of delivering a safer, more efficient and sustainable transportation system.

The STICs are composed of a multi-stakeholder leadership team who works together to evaluate well-researched and proven technologies that are ready to be implemented in the field. Technologies, tactics and techniques that are selected will be employed and promoted to become standard practice within the transportation community at the local, regional or statewide level. Each State operates its innovation deployment council, task force, committee or group based on its unique business needs and approaches to meeting those needs.

California's Electric Highway Is Growing

In February, the California Energy Commission (CEC) proposed awards of \$8.87 million to four companies to install a network of DC fast-charging stations along major highways in California. ChargePoint, Recargo, EVConnect and NRG EV Services were awarded grants to install DC charging stations along different routes and sections including Interstate 5, State Route 99 and Highway 101. The CEC is expected to put each of the four projects to a final vote on April 13.

The common perception of electric cars is that they can serve well for local driving, but regional or national trips are prohibitive due to limited range and long recharge times. The combined development of affordable longer range EVs and abundant highway-based quick-charging could change that scenario.

Washington and Oregon began installing fast-charge stations in 2012 at 20-mile to 60-mile intervals along I-5, I-90, I-84, and a handful of important stretches of state routes. However, the vast majority of California's fast-charge stations are clustered in and around urban areas, leaving long stretches of I-5 and other key roads totally uncovered. The CEC initial network narrowed a field of 35 proposed installations down to nine specific proposed awards. The grant requires completion by 2020.

Navigant Research projects that in California, the growth in electric car sales will be from about 3 percent of overall sales today to between 15 and 22 percent by 2024.

Commuter Bicycling Report Shows Slight Growth in California, Los Angeles

The Alliance for Biking and Walking published its 2016 Benchmarking Report in March, which ranks states and cities across the nation on key statistics including the percentage of people commuting by bike. According to the report, California's bike commute mode share now ranks fourth among the fifty states, up from sixth in 2014. At 1.1 percent of all California commute trips, the number of bike commuters is slightly up from the 1 percent in the 2014 report. L. A. city's bike share was also 1.1%.

California's 1.1% bike commute mode share has considerable challenges to meet the statewide 4-5% commuter biking goal.

REGION

Long Beach Opens Bike Share Program

The City of Long Beach opened its Bike Share Program to the public on March 10th. Long Beach Bike Share, powered by CycleHop and Social Bicycles, is funded by a \$2.3 million Call for Projects grant from L. A. Metro matched with \$565,000 in city funds. When fully implemented, the program will include 50 stations equipped with a total of 500 bikes. The area will first launch with 100 bicycles at 10 stations. Stations will be added to the system as the city identifies more areas that can benefit from the program. The city expects the initial investment to cover purchase 500 bicycles and expects the program to operate without cost to the city.

Acting FTA Administrator McMillan Named Los Angeles Metro's Planning Chief

L. A. Metro announced March 3rd that Therese McMillan, the current acting administrator of the Federal Transit Administration, is LA Metro's new chief planning officer. McMillan joined the FTA staff in 2009 as deputy administrator. She began heading the agency in 2014 after former Administrator Peter Rogoff moved into the Department of Transportation's number-three role of undersecretary for policy.

Prior to joining the FTA, McMillan worked in San Francisco as deputy executive director of policy at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in the nine-county area. During that period, she was also an instructor in transportation funding and finance at the Mineta Transportation Institute at San Jose State University.

L. A. City Council Approves Fix and Release Sidewalk Repair Plan

Los Angeles City Council approved a plan on March 29th to fix broken and buckled sidewalks across the city, then gradually hand off responsibility for future repairs to property owners -- an idea known as "fix and release."

City attorneys are now supposed to draft a new ordinance that would put the plan in motion, including rescinding a decades-old rule that put the city on the hook for sidewalks ruptured by street trees. State law says that the adjacent property owner is responsible for sidewalk repairs, but L.A. took on responsibility for repairing sidewalks damaged by street trees more than 40 years ago then failed to keep up with the needed repairs. Those failing sidewalks also spurred a major lawsuit by advocates for the disabled, who argued that impassable walkways violated their rights to access in the city under federal law. To settle that case, Los Angeles has pledged to spend more than \$1.3 billion over the next three decades to smooth its sidewalks.

The new program will begin in July. Under the new policy, L.A. will first pay to repair sidewalks next to commercial, industrial and residential properties, whether or not the damage was caused by a street tree. After the initial repairs are made, the city will offer a warranty period during which it will guarantee one more repair, meant to prevent homeowners and businesses from facing immediate problems. The warranty will not apply to damage caused by the negligence of anyone other than the city. The warranty period will last two decades for residential properties and five years for commercial and industrial property. City officials also plan to establish a cap on the amount that L.A. would spend on sidewalk repairs at each site to prevent the city money from being consumed by a few especially expensive or vast projects.

After the warranty ends, the property owner will be on the hook for future fixes. And to encourage people to fix their sidewalks quicker and stretch city funds, L.A. also plans to offer property owners a rebate if they choose to repair their buckled sidewalks before the city does, reimbursing them for roughly half of the average cost per square foot of repairs if they make fixes during the first three years of the new program. L.A. will also waive permit fees for such work.

The repair plan passed unanimously, 14 to 0, with Councilman Jose Huizar absent. The final wording of the new ordinance will return to city lawmakers for another vote before it becomes law.

MIT Study Proposes Eliminating Stoplights

A team from MIT published a study on March 18th in the journal *PLoS One* examining a radical proposal: Get rid of the stoplights completely. The paper proposes replacing traffic signals with a "slot-based" intersection, or SI, where cars and infrastructure communicate through an algorithm that choreographs a graceful dance of vehicles through an intersection – rather like an automated version of the boarding process used by Southwest Airlines.

"Slot-based" scheduling is already in use everywhere from air traffic control to business management. The basic idea is that actors in a system are grouped into batches or platoons, and the speed of their movement is carefully controlled to move them more efficiently through a space. The authors demonstrate in the study how it could double the efficiency of intersections and cut delays "to almost zero."

A sensor-equipped car would need to communicate its trajectory—right, left, or straight—to a central algorithm controlling the intersection, which would group it into a "batch" of other cars going in the same direction. The central software system would control the speed of each platoon, using cruise control-style software that already exists in most cars, to determine the correct speed of your car as it moved through the intersection. The system could even be applied to bikes or walkers who are trying to cross busy intersections.

GM and Lyft Unveil A New Strategy To Lure Shared Ride Drivers: Free Cars

On March 15th, GM and Lyft announced the two companies are teaming up in a new Express Drive program under which Lyft drivers will be able to rent vehicles from GM from one to eight weeks at a time—potentially for free. Under the pilot program in Chicago, if a Lyft driver completes more than 65 rides in a week, they pay no rental fee, insurance or maintenance costs (although drivers do pay for their own gas). If drivers complete fewer rides, they will pay \$99 a week to rent the car.