

# South Bay Cities Council of Governments

June 13, 2016

TO: SBCCOG Steering Committee

FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director

RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update – June 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**

### **Federal Highway Administration Makes It Easier To Fit Bike Lanes On Streets**

The Federal Highway Administration announced an update of its key geometric design standards on May 5<sup>th</sup> that will make it easier to incorporate bike lanes and complete streets elements into streets that are on the National Highway System (NHS) — a 230,000-mile network of roads that includes many urban streets. There is no indication yet on whether Caltrans will revise its design standards to conform to the new simplified and more flexible federal standards.

In 1985, the FHWA adopted 13 “Controlling Criteria” to create a simple, hard-to-break list of basic guidelines for street design: shoulder widths, grades, cross slopes and how close to the roadway an “obstruction” (such as a tree or post) would be allowed. But smart street and livable communities’ advocates have criticized the 12-foot lane standards for giving a false sense of safety and security at slow urban speeds. And local agencies that want design exceptions have been forced to provide extensive documentation to obtain project permits. The permitting process can delay a project for more than a year. If federal and California standards were conformed, local agencies could avoid the significant cost and delays associated with the current design exception and permitting processes for improvements on state and federal highways.

FHWA reduced the list of Controlling Criteria on lower-speed streets from 13 to two. For Federal Highway System non-freeway streets with traffic speeds below 50 mph, only “design loading structural capacity” (how much weight a bridge can bear) and “design speed” (how fast traffic is expected to be able to move safely) are now tightly federally regulated. The FHWA guidance also clarifies when design exceptions are needed and the documentation that is expected to support such requests.

The FHWA's guidance memorandum is available at:  
<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/05/05/2016-10299/revision-of-thirteen-controlling-criteria-for-design-and-documentation-of-design-exceptions>

## **STATE**

### **Bill to expand Metro board is shelved in Sacramento**

After two months of behind the scenes wrangling, a bill that would have expanded and changed the balance of power on the Metro Board of Directors was ordered to the inactive file on June 2<sup>nd</sup> by

State Senator Tony Mendoza, the author of the bill, after debate on the California Senate floor. Senate Bill 1472, which had initially proposed adding two members to the current 14 member board (selected by the state assembly and senate) would have expanded the Metro Board to 22 by the time it was shelved.

The bill was initially proposed by state legislators from Southeast Los Angeles that were upset about proposed delay of a rail line. The line from Los Angeles Union Station to Artesia had been tentatively scheduled in the 2008 Measure R sales tax expenditure plan for completion in 2027. However, in the Metro staff recommendation for the 2016 ballot measure, the \$4 billion project was broken into two phases with completion delayed to 2047 while new Metro priorities like the \$5-9 billion Sepulveda tunnel leapfrogged to the first decade of the plan.

### **CTC Axes Transportation Projects Due to Reduced Gas Taxes From Low Gas Prices**

The California Transportation Commission (CTC) adopted a five-year state transportation funding plan on May 23<sup>rd</sup> that cuts \$754 million and delays another \$755 million in highway, rail, transit, bicycle and pedestrian project spending for project commitments previously made for fiscal years 2016-17 through 2018-19.

The cuts are due in large part to the steady loss of gas tax revenue over the past two years because of the drop in gasoline prices and more fuel efficient vehicles. It is the largest funding reduction since the current state transportation funding structure was adopted 20 years ago.

The CTC is required by law to estimate the amount of funds projected to be available over the five-year State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) period. The excise tax in 2010 was set at 17.3 cents per gallon and is adjusted annually by the State Board of Equalization based on fuel prices. On July 1, 2016, the tax will be reduced to 9.8 cents from the current 12 cents. Based on that reduction, the CTC anticipates a \$1.5 billion funding shortfall through FY 2018-19.

### **California Carbon Emission Auction Proceeds Fall 98% Short Of Expectations**

The seventh quarterly auction of GHG allowances in the State's Cap and Trade Program on May 18<sup>th</sup> generated only \$10 million, less than 2% of the \$500-plus million expected from the sale of state-owned allowances.

Brown has submitted a plan to the legislature that would spend \$3.1 billion in auction proceeds in 2016-17, both leftover funds from past auctions and an estimated \$2 billion from those during the fiscal year. The governor also has built a \$500 million cap-and-trade reserve into his budget. The plan would cover a wide variety of projects and programs, including a major allocation to support the state's high-speed rail project.

### **Governor Issues May State Budget Revision; Conference Committee Convened**

Governor Jerry Brown issued his proposed revisions to the state budget on May 14<sup>th</sup>. California budget negotiations now shift to a bicameral Senate and Assembly budget conference committee. The conference committee negotiations will focus on areas where the three budget proposals—Senate, Assembly, and Governor—differ. The committee's job is to find agreement among the three competing state budget proposals before June 15, when it must submit a final version to both houses to be voted on. The final budget agreement "must" be signed by the Governor by the end of the month.

In his initial budget proposal issued in January, Brown had proposed several new transportation funding sources including a new vehicle registration fee, a "road improvement charge", raising gas taxes, cost-saving reforms by Caltrans, and quicker repayment of loans from general funds back to transportation. His revised budget also continues to include a "Low Carbon Road Program" in which

Brown proposes allocating \$100 million from cap and trade “for Caltrans to implement . . . local projects that encourage active transportation such as bicycling and walking, and other carbon-reducing road investments, with at least fifty percent of the funds directed to benefit disadvantaged communities.”

Also to be resolved in next year’s budget are questions about allocations from the state cap-and-trade program. Forty percent of the revenues from last year’s program, about \$1.4 billion, were left unallocated in last year’s budget, and the three budgets differ. The issue is especially important since the most recent quarterly cap-and-trade auction only generated \$10 million, a dramatic decline from the \$500 million generated in each quarterly auction for the last few years.

None of the Governor’s new funding proposals were included in the Senate budget proposal since the Senate and Assembly prefer to deal with new tax proposals in the slumbering Transportation Special Session rather than through the budget process. So far the Legislature has not held any hearings on Brown’s plan or other legislative proposals to address the funding backlog, leaving local governments frustrated.

### **Earmarks Proposed For State Active Transportation Program**

A.B. 2796 would require a minimum of five percent of funds in the Active Transportation Program (ATP) to be allocated for planning and community engagement in disadvantaged communities, and a minimum of ten percent of ATP funds to be programmed for non-infrastructure purposes, such as education and encouragement activities like Safe Routes to Schools programs. The bill passed unanimously on May 31<sup>st</sup> on the Assembly floor, and now it goes to the Senate.

The California Transportation Commission (CTC), which is in charge of allocating funds to the ATP, has resisted awarding funds for plans and programs, setting aside only two percent for planning in the most recent round of funding. The commissioners prefer to fund building paths and other infrastructure.

### **South Bay Transit Operators Receive Caltrans Greenhouse Gas Reduction Grants**

Gardena, Torrance and Redondo Beach are receiving funding for five South Bay projects totaling nearly \$165,000. Caltrans announced on June 1<sup>st</sup> that 131 local projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving public transportation were awarded \$74.6 million in funding from the state’s Low Carbon Transit Operations Program.

The program is funded through auction proceeds from the California Air Resources Board’s Cap-and-Trade Program. It provides operating and capital assistance for transit agencies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve mobility, with a priority on serving disadvantaged communities. Approved projects support new or expanded bus or rail services, or expanded intermodal transit facilities, equipment acquisition, fueling, and maintenance and other costs to operate these services or facilities, with each project reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

## **REGION**

### **A Simple Change Transformed One of Los Angeles’ Most Dangerous Intersections**

The intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue is one of the most famous in the world. It is also one of the most dangerous due to the high volumes of distracted pedestrians and drivers. Six months ago, L. A. Department of Transportation (LADOT) redesigned the intersection with a new “scramble” crosswalk (also known as a Barnes Dance) that provides a separate signal phase for pedestrians to cross the intersection in all four directions and diagonally. Vehicles are stopped in all directions while pedestrians get the intersection to themselves, *then* the cars get to take their turn while all pedestrians wait on the sidewalks. The separate pedestrian phase routes cars more

efficiently because pedestrians aren't crossing when vehicles are negotiating turns (which is when most crashes occur).

Does the scramble work? Yes, for a price. From 2009 to 2013, the average number of crashes per year at Hollywood and Highland was 13. And during the first 11 months of 2015 there were 19 crashes, resulting in 13 injuries. But since the crosswalk was redesigned in November 2015, there have been no crashes involving pedestrians and only one car-vs-car crash. LADOT estimates the cost for the conversion is about \$100,000 per crosswalk.

### **Metro Adopts Active Transportation Strategic Plan; Targets 100 Stops and Stations**

Metro estimates that 76 percent of Metro rail customers and 88 percent of Metro bus customers arrive at their station or stop by walking, biking, or rolling. To support these customers, the Metro Board adopted the agency's first Active Transportation Strategic Plan on May 26<sup>th</sup>. The plan contains many First-Last Mile elements including, ADA-compliant curb ramps, crosswalk upgrades, traffic signals, bus stops, carshare, bikeshare, bike parking, context-sensitive bike infrastructure, and signage/wayfinding.

The Board directed staff to designate streets within the Active Transportation Strategic Plan's 661 transit station areas as the Countywide First-Last Mile Priority Network and to support regional and local transit ridership and facilitate build-out of the Countywide First-Last Mile Priority Network. The motion provided 6 program areas in which Metro staff could implement, or assist local jurisdictions to implement, strategies ranging from grant writing to design standards funding and implementation. The Board also asked for a progress report during the November 2016 MTA Committee and Board meeting cycle.

### **Uber And A Bay Area Landlord Will Pay New Tenants \$100 A Month To Go Car-Free**

Uber and the owner of 8,900 apartments in San Francisco are offering new tenants a monthly \$100 transportation stipend if they agree to go car-free. The money can be used for public transit, taxis, and car-sharing, as long as at least \$30 is put toward Uber. Uber is also capping the cost a ride from the developer's locations to certain BART and MUNI stations at \$5 per ride.

### **Lyft Plans To Allow Booking 24 Hours Before Trip**

Lyft announced on May 23rd that it will soon roll out an advanced reservation feature that will let customers use the Lyft app to schedule a ride up to 24 hours before they need it. The feature will be tested by Lyft employees in San Francisco before it launches in other markets. Lyft competitor Uber declined to comment on whether it was developing a similar feature.

### **West Hollywood Opens The West Coast's First Municipal Robot Parking Garage**

West Hollywood's new three-story, 200-space automated parking garage adjacent to City Hall opened on May 24<sup>th</sup>. The garage requires a much smaller physical footprint than would a conventional parking structure with a similar capacity due to the elimination of ramps between levels. The space savings nets more than 7,000 square feet for a Community Plaza and an entry service area for community events.

Drivers simply park their car in one of four ground-level entry bays, grab their ticket, and the garage itself finds an open spot for the car. When it's time to go, the parking ticket tells the garage where to find the car and it's brought down while you wait.

### **L. A. City Pilot Project Will Allow Bikes To Park At Modified Parking Meters**

Locking a bicycle to a parking meter post is currently illegal in L. A. But, in late 2015, the LA City Council approved Ordinance No. 183951 for a pilot program to provide an exemption for the use of parking meter posts for bicycle parking purposes. By mid-summer 2016, hoop-shaped bike racks will be installed on parking meter posts in Westwood Village, the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and Great Streets corridors. Additional bike rack-modified meter post parking districts will be identified once L. A. DOT evaluates the pilot program's overall success and reports back to Council.

### **Would You Trust Autonomous Vehicles; Or Use One?**

According to a recent Kelley Blue Book study, 75 percent of the 2,076 people surveyed said they don't think they'll ever own a self-driving car. In the another study by EY (formerly Ernst and Young), just 40 percent could imagine engaging the autopilot, a feature already available on Tesla's sport utility vehicle and sedan and coming soon on models from Audi, Volvo, Mercedes and Cadillac.

In a survey released in mid-May, J.D. Power found that just 23 percent of Baby Boomers would trust self-driving technology. Acceptance improves with younger cohorts, but it's not overwhelming. Less than half of Gen Xers (41 percent) would trust robot cars, while 56 percent of Gen Y and 55 percent of Gen Z are comfortable with the concept.

Consumers are getting their first exposure through semi-autonomous features such as automatic brakes, systems that steer a drifting car back into its lane and adaptive cruise control that operates the brake and accelerator to stay a set distance from vehicles ahead. Luxury makers such as Mercedes and Audi soon will introduce traffic-jam assist that takes over in stop-and-go situations. Relinquishing complete control is a much greater leap. In the EY survey, a drivers' willingness to allow an autopilot to steer their car improves from 40% to 66 % if they have the option of taking over the wheel in an emergency. But safety regulators blame human error for more than 90 percent of crashes, so it's actually not best to override the robot in a stressful situation.