

# South Bay Cities Council of Governments

November 20, 2014

**TO: SBCCOG Board of Directors**

**FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director**

**RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update – November 2014**

**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.

**FOLLOW THE MONEY...**

**TRANSIT / HIGHWAY**

**FEDERAL**

**Foxx Calls Again For Long-term Transportation Funding Solution**

Anticipating the November elections, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx renewed his call for transportation funding reform and noted the coming lame duck session of Congress presents an opportunity to pass a multi-year road and transit funding bill to avoid short-term patches that keep the federal Highway Trust Fund from going broke. Although there may be consensus on the importance of establishing a national transportation funding program, but there is little agreement on how to pay for it.

House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) wants to craft a new highway and transit authorization bill that would run five or six years. To get a long-term bill, he said lawmakers need to agree on the revenue options they would use to shore up the trust fund, and those funding choices would determine whether the next highway/transit bill covers five or six years of spending.

The administration preferred solution, the Grow America Act, is a four-year, \$302 billion proposal that would be partly funded through corporate tax reform. Members of both the House and Senate have floated a variety of proposals, but none has had enough support to pass, including any plan that called for an increase in gas taxes. The Obama administration has opposed raising the federal fuel tax (\$.18/gallon), last increased in 1993.

The current “patch” Congress passed in July funds surface transportation programs to the end of May 2015. If Republicans take control of the Senate, a long-term resolution might have to wait until after the January 2017 inauguration following the November 2016 elections.

## **STATE**

### **Nearly \$7.3 Billion Needed Annually In California To Make Streets and Roads Fully Safe**

The biennial California Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment released on October 30<sup>th</sup> confirms that the pavement condition of the system that makes up more than 80 percent of California's roadways is failing. Conditions have deteriorated since the first survey six years ago when the statewide average was 68. Today it's dropped to 66, which falls into the at risk category. Of California's 58 counties, an alarming 54 have streets and roads that are either at risk or ranked in poor condition.

The 2014 report, a collaboration between the California State Association of Counties, the League of California Cities and the state's regional transportation planning agencies, surveyed California's 58 counties and 482 cities and captured data from more than 99 percent of the state's local streets and roads. The Needs Assessment uses a pavement condition index (PCI) that ranges from 0 to 100.

In the next 10 years the report estimates that the local system will have a \$78.3 billion funding shortfall. Existing funding for California's local streets and roads is just \$1.7 billion annually but \$3.3 billion is needed just to maintain the current statewide average rating of 66. However it would take \$7.3 billion annually to bring the state's local streets and roads into a safe and reliable condition. These figures do not take into account the \$31 billion needed in the next decade for curb ramps, sidewalks, storm drains, street lights and signals. Further, there is a funding shortfall of \$1.3 billion to maintain the safety and integrity of California's 11,863 local bridges.

An interactive map showing the street and road condition for every California county and city is posted at [www.SaveCaliforniastreet.org](http://www.SaveCaliforniastreet.org).

## **TRANSPORTATION INNOVATION: STARTS AND STOPS ...**

### **TRANSIT / RIDESHARING / CARSHARING**

#### **Bus Bench Beacons Beckon Bored Boarders**

If you are sitting on a bus bench in the City of Los Angeles and are bored waiting to board, Martin Outdoor Advertising, the company that handles the bus bench seat advertising in LA, has an app for you. An estimated 250 benches of the 5,000 bus benches in the city have been outfitted with Gimbal Bluetooth beacons, but have yet to be turned on as of October 24<sup>th</sup>, according to the L. A. City Bureau of Street Services.

The beacons will provide users that "opt in" to the service, beacon-triggered location messages on their smartphone. Oh, and every time a user passes a beacon, the phone sends information about the encounter — including the phone's 'unique identifier', its location, and the time of day to Gimbal.

Beyond the obvious desire to sell proximate goods and services in real time, the beacon manufacturer notes the system could alert people to necessary services in case of a disaster.

### **Americans Favor Transit Expansion Over New Roads**

According to results from a September 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> ABC News / Washington Post telephone poll, Americans would rather spend transportation resources expanding transit than widening roads. More than 1,000 randomly-selected adults were asked the question, “In general, do you think government efforts to reduce traffic congestion around the country should be focused more on expanding and building roads, or on providing more public transportation options, such as trains or buses?” Approximately 54% said they would rather see government providing more public transportation options; 41% preferred expanding and building roads. Five percent offered no opinion on the matter. The survey had a margin of error of 3.5 percent.

Attitudes varied by political leaning, place of residence, and other demographic factors. Urbanites were most likely to prefer transit spending (61%), followed by suburbanites (52 %), then rural residents (49%).

### **Garcetti Seeks Equal Competition Between Car-Sharing Services And Taxis**

In a letter sent to the L. A. City Taxi Board in mid-October, Mayor Garcetti urged L. A. City Taxi Commission officials to report present recommendations by the end of the year that would change the city’s taxi regulations to ensure taxi competitiveness with car sharing services such as Lyft, Uber and Sidecar, which are regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission and are not subject to Los Angeles taxi rules.

Los Angeles city’s regulated cabs are required to charge fixed rates: \$2.85 when a ride begins, and \$2.70 for each subsequent mile. The City Council has capped the number of cabs in the city at 2,300, split among nine licensed companies. Major policy changes, including ones involving fares, would have to be approved by the City Council.

Garcetti recommended allowing more taxis to operate in the city and to allow flexible pricing models similar to the car sharing pricing structures that increase during peak periods, such as nights and weekends.

## **TRANSFORMATIVE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ...**

### **Metro funds study of Rail-to-Trail Conversion in South Los Angeles**

L. A. Metro approved up to \$2.8 million on October 23<sup>rd</sup> to plan a \$35 million, 8.5-mile pedestrian / bike path through South Central Los Angeles. The former BNSF railroad right-of-way would be converted to a pedestrian / bike path between the Crenshaw/LAX Metro line at the West Boulevard Station in Inglewood and the L. A. River on the eastern edge of downtown Los Angeles.

Over the past decade, Metro has studied a variety of future transit uses for portions of the former BNSF railroad; however, no immediate investment in the corridor east of the Crenshaw-LAX light rail line is planned. As it currently stands, the right-of-way has become a major source of blight within the communities it traverses. If approved, the project would be built as an interim use but would not preclude the corridor’s long-term availability for use as rail transit line.

## **Vehicle / Bicycle Lane Sharing Debate Fosters New Street Designs**

A new California law that went into effect in mid-September requiring drivers to give bikers three feet of space when passing, or pay a fine is raising concerns. Although these "three-foot" laws are now on the books in 24 states, some bicycle advocates are arguing that making slight concessions for cyclists as part of a system designed entirely for cars is no way to make city biking safe and accessible to the casual rider.

The policy dispute is part of a broader disagreement amongst cyclists: whether bikers should simply share the road with cars, obeying all of the same rules (a philosophy commonly called "vehicular cycling"), or whether cities should be investing in specialized infrastructure so that bikes and cars don't have to mingle (a position often called "segregated cycling").

Many proponents of vehicular cycling are actually against measures like protected bike lanes and separated trails. One reason, they argue, is that these lanes are more dangerous at intersections than just riding in the road — because cars turning in front of these lanes don't expect bikes to ride through. Others fear that the creation of separate lanes is a precursor to keeping cyclists off regular roads altogether.

With a growing number of bicyclists on streets, those on the other side of the debate contend that the focus should be on constructing bike-specific facilities, like protected lanes and paths, rather than retrofitting a car-centric road system. Their goals are to ensure that cars and bikes don't have to share the road more often than necessary and to create a linked, cohesive bike network, so people can bike between home to work.

A simple design innovation, common in Europe, subtly separates cyclists from road traffic. Rather than simply painting lanes on pavement, installing a separating row of bollards or putting parking spaces between vehicle lanes and bike lanes, several cities are experimenting with demarking bike lanes from regular vehicular lanes with bike lane raising the bike lane pavement just a few inches above the street level and below the sidewalk. Several smaller cities in Oregon have installed the lanes; San Francisco and Chicago are expected to initiate experimental raised lanes in the next year.

Both arguments ignore the broader interests being pursued in the South Bay to provide a safe haven for other potential slow-speed vehicles such as neighborhood electric vehicles and Segways.

## **L.A. City Wants To Ban Apps That Auction Parking Spots**

New smartphone apps like MonkeyParking and Haystack allow a person that is leaving a public parking space to remain long enough to auction off the space to the highest bidder. The people who use the apps auction off the spots as they're leaving and share the earnings they make with the company. For MonkeyParking, on average a parking spot costs about \$5 to \$7, and the company gets a 20 percent fee. MonkeyParking says the app technically just sells knowledge about a space, not the space itself.

The L.A. City Council on September 24<sup>th</sup> asked the City Attorney to draft a law that would prohibit the buying and selling of public parking spaces in the City of Los Angeles. Other cities like San Francisco, Boston, Beverly Hills and Santa Monica already have similar bans in place. What might really alleviate parking stress in the city would be a wider rollout of the L. A. City Parker app that simply alerts drivers to open spaces on the street and in public garages and lots. A smartphone app called Parker, developed by a private San Francisco firm in partnership with the city's Department of Transportation, has been operating for several years in Hollywood and Studio City and for a couple of years in Venice. Based on information obtained by wireless sensors in the parking spaces, it alerts drivers to available metered spots on certain streets and cuts down on the random circling. The app was announced with great fanfare four years ago as a major innovation that would help frustrated drivers in Hollywood. Assuming it's effective, perhaps it's time for the application to be made available to more of the city.

### **Intersection Designs That Protect Crossing Pedestrian Safety**

What if intersection designers equated walkers with those behind the wheel? An October 17th Next City article by Rachel Dovey provides the following six progressive intersection designs that go beyond the turn signal-and-crosswalk formula to really prioritize pedestrian safety:

**Protected Left Turns** - According to the New York City Department of Transportation, left turns are a leading cause of pedestrian death, outnumbering right-turn crashes 3-1. Protected left turns, usually marked by a green arrow, add time to the signal cycle, but eliminate pedestrian conflicts.

**Pedestrian Head Starts** - Allowing an interval of pedestrian walk time before motorists' signal change is another relatively easy adjustment. It gives walkers a head start while also reducing conflicts between pedestrians and turning vehicles and makes crossing pedestrians more visible, according to America Walks. Safe Routes to School suggests "No Turn on Red" signs to accompany the modified signal timing, creating a brief walkers-only zone in the crosswalk.



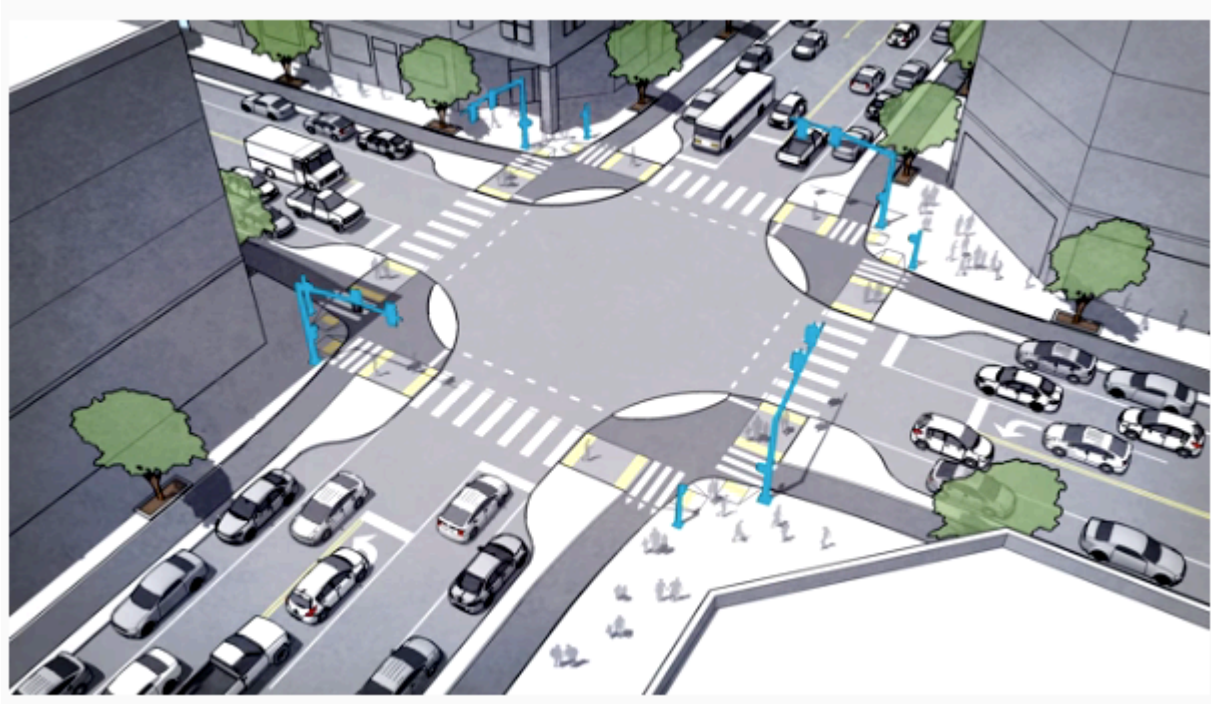
### **Raised Crossings and Intersections**

**Raised Crossings and Intersections** - Crosswalk ramps extending into the intersection and raised intersection crosswalks with bollards work like speed bumps to slow vehicles. The infrastructure

works two ways: It literally boosts pedestrians in the motorist's perspective by making them taller and it also slows cars down.



Neckdowns / Bulb-outs – Neckdowns and bulb-outs extend the sidewalk curb out into the intersection (thus their less poetic term, curb extensions) to reduce the width of the street pedestrians have to cross. According to the Project for Public Spaces, they increase safety for slower pedestrians, like small children and the elderly. Because curbs are usually built in a large bulb shape, they also slow turning drivers down.



### Protected Intersections

Protected Intersections - Designed to extend protected bike lanes into the intersection, these crossings benefit pedestrians too. One key design element is the “corner refuge island,” which is

like a neckdown but with a bike lane running parallel to the street through the island's center. This island forces drivers to turn a full 90 degrees before hitting a crosswalk when making a right turn and makes the intersection smaller overall, shrinking the distance pedestrians, as well as bikers, have to traverse.



**Pedestrian Scrambles** - A pedestrian scramble restricts all vehicular traffic on red (including right turns), and turns the whole intersection into a walkers-only zone for the length of a long pedestrian-only signal phase. Scramble crosswalks are often in the shape of an X through the middle of the intersection in addition to traditional four corner crossings, to designate that walkers can cross diagonally.

### **New Smart Street Corners Could Balance Pedestrian / Vehicle Demand**

You're standing on a street corner surrounded by a mob of people waiting for the walk signal. A single car gets the green light. Imagine if your city could monitor the flow of pedestrians and optimize its traffic signals for walkers and drivers.

Later this fall, Chicago will install a pilot study network of 40 sensor nodes on light poles at intersections that have high volumes of pedestrians. The pilot project is testing whether Bluetooth arrays could count the number of immobile smart phones in traffic lanes and on sidewalks at intersections to enable the signal control technology to actively adapt the signal timing.

Although not everyone has a Bluetooth-enabled device, and those that do don't necessarily activate it on a daily basis, the technology beats a rubber tube in the street or a transportation department staffer noting counts on a clipboard.

### **What if Self-driving cars re-ignited urban sprawl?**

An October 15th post on Wired.com questioned the potential adverse effects on urban sprawl caused by the new connected vehicle technology. As driving becomes less onerous and computer-controlled systems reduce traffic, some experts worry that will eliminate a powerful incentive—commuting sucks—for living near cities, where urban density makes for more efficient sharing of resources. In other words, autonomous vehicles could lead to urban sprawl.

Although autonomous vehicles could ease highway congestion, and commuters will be able to catch up on work or sleep en route to the office, in a 2014 report for advocacy group Smart Growth America, autonomous driving was likened to the construction of “superhighways” during the post-war boom years, which spurred suburbanization.

So how can urban planners ensure that trend toward urbanization doesn't reverse again? Use traditional tools like zoning, pricing, and urban design, says Ratna Amin, director of transportation policy at the Bay Area planning nonprofit SPUR. “Transit sprawl and autonomous vehicle sprawl, these things happen in the absence of growth management,” says Amin. “We can put boundaries on sprawl.” SPUR advocates for subsidized share car parking, competitive pricing for suburban parking, and the implementation of high-speed bus systems to make driving less appealing.