

# South Bay Cities Council of Governments

March 31, 2021

TO: SBCCOG Transit Operators Working Group –4/1/21 meeting  
SBCCOG Transportation Committee - 4/12/21 meeting  
SBCCOG Infrastructure Working Group – 4/14/21 meeting  
SBCCOG Board of Directors – 4/22/21 meeting

FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director

RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update Covering March 2021

## **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**

### **President Signs \$1.9 Trillion American Rescue Plan Including \$30 Billion For Transit**

President Biden signed a \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill in mid-March that provides over \$30 billion for transit agencies nationwide and includes a provision for existing New Starts transit projects. The plan also includes unemployment aid, direct payments, tax credit expansions, vaccine distribution funds and state and local government relief, among a range of other provisions.

The law includes the following for the transit industry:

- \$26.09 billion for urbanized area formula grants
- \$317.2 million for rural area formula grants, which includes:
  - \$30 million in formula funds for tribal governments;
  - \$5 million in competitive tribal government grants; and
  - \$6.34 million in formula Rural Transit Assistance (RTAP) formula funds.
- \$50 million for mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities grants;
- \$100 million for non-urbanized intercity bus program recipients;
- \$25 million for competitive planning grants; and
- \$2.21 billion in grants for recipients in need of financial assistance to maintain operations over and above the aid that has been provided.

LA Metro and other transportation agencies in the LA-Long Beach-Anaheim urbanized area will receive \$1.6 billion in relief funding under the allocation plan. The allocation methodology between counties within the urbanized area is still being negotiated. The Plan also includes \$1.68 billion in the Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program, which includes \$250 million for Small Starts projects and \$1.43 billion for New Starts and Core Capacity projects. The 23 New Starts and Core Capacity projects in 13 states that will receive funding through the CIG Program allocation include four L. A. Metro rail projects (the Metro Regional Connector and 3 segments of the Purple Line Wilshire Subway between Alvarado and Westwood).

L. A. Metro used the announcement of new funding to approve an accelerated service restoration plan on March 25<sup>th</sup> that returns Metro services to pre-COVID levels by September 2021 rather than the previously announced December 2021 schedule.

### **Biden Unveils His Vision For A Landmark 8-Year Infrastructure Funding Program**

President Biden on March 31<sup>st</sup> provided details of his American Jobs Plan for revitalizing America's infrastructure. His recommended investments are separate from the American Rescue Plan. Broadly, the 8-year jobs bill would provide \$85 billion for thousands of new buses and rail cars, \$115 billion to modernize bridges, highways, roads and main streets, boost broadband access, and fund workforce development programs – among many other non-transportation policy priorities.

Democrats envision a plan that would not only create jobs but also address climate change through energy-efficient projects and racial equity issues by improving roads and other infrastructure in underserved areas. The President scaled the initiative to be comparable to past federal generational infrastructure initiatives like FDR's federal works projects of the 1930s, the interstate highway program, and the space program. He also framed the proposed projects with special attention to climate and clean investments, Buy America, disadvantaged communities and racial injustice.

The President's plan invests \$621 billion in transportation infrastructure and resilience. It would:

- Reconstruct the most economically significant large bridges in the country and repair the worst 10,000 smaller bridges.
- Provide \$20 billion to improve road safety for all users, including increases to existing safety programs and a new Safe Streets for All program to fund state and local "vision zero" plans and other improvements to reduce crashes and fatalities, especially for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Invest \$85 billion to modernize existing transit and help agencies expand their systems to meet rider demand.
- Invest in reliable passenger and freight rail service, including \$80 billion for Amtrak's repair backlog, modernize the high traffic Northeast Corridor; improve existing corridors and connect new city pairs; and enhance grant and loan programs that support passenger and freight rail safety, efficiency, and electrification.
- Electrify vehicles by investing \$174 billion to spur domestic supply chains from raw materials to parts, retool factories to compete globally, and support American workers to make batteries and EVs. The proposal also gives consumers point-of-sale rebates and tax incentives to buy American-made EVs and will establish grant and incentive programs for state and local governments and the private sector to build a national network of 500,000 EV chargers by 2030.
- Replace 50,000 diesel transit vehicles, electrify at least 20 percent of the yellow school bus fleet, and electrify the federal fleet, including the United States Postal Service.

The infrastructure push has support not just from labor unions, traditionally a more Democratic constituency, but also the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which is urging action by July 4. In response to Republican questions about how to pay for the massive investments, the administration claims the investments will be fully paid by revisions to corporate taxes within the next 15 years and will reduce deficits in the years after. They claim no increases in individual taxes would be needed.

### **Coalition Of Mayors Call For End Of Ban On Local Hires In Federal Infrastructure Projects**

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti (D) and other elected officials are joining local leaders, labor unions and community organizations demanding the Biden administration overturn the 1986 ban on local hire programs in federally funded infrastructure projects. Jobs to Move America, a broad coalition of mayors, cities, labor unions and community organizations from 24 states, issued a letter calling on President Biden to end a decades-old federal regulation that prevents recipients of federal grant money

for infrastructure projects to include provisions requiring or promoting the hiring of local community members.

## **State**

### **State Legislature Considers Budget Items for AB 1147**

The Legislature has begun budget deliberations to implement greenhouse gas reduction goals. Among the appropriations requests are:

- \$250,000 for the Strategic Growth Council (SGC) to convene state, regional, local partners to review barriers and make recommendations for meeting VMT GHG targets;
- Two positions at the ARB for increased workload support the Sustainable Communities Strategy Program; and,
- \$250 million to the SGC to create the SCS Block Grant Program. The SCS Block Grant Program is for completing the necessary planning to identify transformative VMT reducing projects and carry out those projects; and,
- Additional funding for the Active Transportation Program for innovative pilot projects identified in AB 1147 such as bicycle highways and the 15-minute city concept.

### **California Lawmakers Push AB 556 To Make Streets Safer**

A statewide pedestrian safety bill, AB 550, would allow cities to explore automated speed enforcement cameras and would require adherence to state guidelines. The bill also would direct the state's transportation agency to develop guidelines for speed camera pilot programs so local cities could launch their own technologies.

The bill would require the programs to be run by local transportation agencies, not police. The local jurisdictions would need to adopt strict privacy protections. Citations would be civil and not criminal, add no points to a driver's record, be capped at \$125 with alternative diversion programs for low-income drivers, and would be appealable at a hearing. In addition, facial recognition software would be banned from speed cameras and cameras would take photos of "just the license plate". Data from a camera system could not be used for any other purpose or shared with any other entity except in response to a court order or subpoena.

Privacy rights advocates and civil liberties groups defeated similar legislation proposed in 2017.

### **CA Transportation Agency Releases Plan to Support, Promote Sustainable Transportation**

In response to several executive orders from Governor Gavin Newsom calling for California to reduce greenhouse gases in the transportation sector, the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) on March 12<sup>th</sup> released a plan to guide California transportation investments towards sustainable, clean transportation options.

The Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI) is intended to identify near term actions, and investment strategies, to improve clean transportation, sustainable freight, and transit options while maintaining the "fix-it-first" approach that stems from the backlog of maintenance needed to keep current transportation infrastructure in good repair.

The Plan's guiding principles call for supporting "an integrated, statewide rail and transit network," "networks of safe and accessible bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure," and zero-emission vehicle infrastructure. Investments should take climate risk into account, help reduce fatalities, promote projects that do not increase vehicle travel, support infill development, and protect natural and working lands. The plan also calls for considering the state's "commitment to social and racial equity by reducing public health and economic harms and maximizing community benefits."

The draft plan and more information can be found [here](#), and CalSTA is taking feedback on it until May 4 (via email to: CAPTI@calsta.ca.gov).

### **Freedom to Walk Act Seeks To Decriminalize Jaywalking In California**

The Freedom to Walk Act (AB 1236) was introduced at the behest of the California Bicycle Coalition to address arbitrary enforcement and disproportionate impacts on people of color. The proposed bill would make it legal for a person to cross a street outside of a sidewalk or against a traffic light, when safe. It would eliminate fines for jaywalking. Active transportation advocates contend that law enforcement ticketing pedestrians rather than drivers behaving dangerously on streets does not make any sense and creates an opportunity for law enforcement to racially profile.

A report issued by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area, which looked at data collected through the state's Racial Identity and Profiling Act, found that, of non-traffic infractions between July 2018 and December 2019 from 15 major law enforcement agencies, Black adults were 9.7 times more likely to be cited by law enforcement than white adults. Latinos were 5.7 times more likely to be cited than white adults.

### **California's Senators Ask Biden To Ban Sale Of Gas-Powered Cars**

California's two U. S. Senators are pushing the Biden Administration to set a date after which automakers would no longer be allowed to sell gasoline-powered cars anywhere in the United States. Although the federal government hasn't set a date for the ban, several automakers, including Ford, Honda, Volkswagen and BMW, reached a deal with California saying they would comply with tougher regulations than prescribed by the EPA.

The California senators said that "at an absolute minimum" the new federal regulations should follow the agreement between California and those automakers. They are also seeking to once again grant California the right to set tougher emissions rules than set by the EPA.

Today, electric vehicles make up less than 3% of US vehicle sales, far lower than some other countries. Some automakers have announced plans far more ambitious than those proposed by the industry trade group. General Motors said recently that it has an "aspiration" to sell only emission-free cars by 2035. Ford is also seeking to shift its car models in Europe to pure electrics by 2030, although it expects to continue to sell gasoline powered trucks and vans after that date in Europe. It has yet to set any time frame for when it expects to sell only electric vehicles in the US market.

## **Region**

### **Metro releases Draft Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Plan**

The 2021-2024 Draft Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for L.A. County was released by L.A. Metro on March 21<sup>st</sup>. The plan addresses regional transportation needs of target populations including seniors, persons with disabilities, low-income individuals and veterans. This plan fulfills a requirement of the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5310 program. Key areas the plan covers include:

- Current and future mobility needs of target populations.
- Goals and strategies to address gaps in transportation services.
- Prioritized projects and programs to improve mobility for target population groups.

L.A. Metro also conducted an extensive survey to understand how municipalities and transit service providers are currently operating during COVID-19 restrictions. The survey revealed that although most service providers have less ridership than prior to COVID-19, they are seeing an increased demand for day-of services, longer trips and greater safety concerns.

The plan update will be available for review and public comment for 30 days until April 19, 2021. A community meeting is planned for April 7, 2021. Public comments will be accepted through April 19, 2021, and can be submitted by email, voicemail or U.S. post.

### **Mask Dispensers Now Available On Metro Buses And Trains**

Both Metro and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention require riders to wear face masks on public transit (except for those with a medical excuse). To make it easier for riders who may have forgotten or misplaced their masks, Metro will be installing more than 2,000 mask dispensers on board our trains and buses, Metro Micro vehicles, and at Metro Rail stations.

## **Trends**

### **Lime To Spend \$50 Million On A Huge E-Bike Expansion And A Re-designed Bike**

The scooter company is investing \$50 million to grow its shared electric bicycle network, including adding a new model of bike and expanding into a dozen new cities in North America by the start of 2022.

The \$50 million investment will largely go toward designing, manufacturing, and assembling its next-generation bike, which will start rolling out this summer. The new model will come with a more powerful 350-watt motor, a 2-speed gearbox, an electronically-controlled hub lock, and a swappable battery capable of up to 25 miles of range. The battery is also interchangeable with the ones that power Lime's Gen4 electric scooters, allowing for a standardized battery charging operation. The bikes will be able to hit speeds of up to 20mph (depending on local regulations).

### **U.S. Commuting At Highest Since Last March As Covid Cases Slow**

In the last week of February, the average number of visits to U.S. places of work hit the highest level since March 20 of last year, according to Google Community Mobility Reports [data](#). At the same time, the rate at which people are staying home fell to the lowest since Nov. 12.

### **The Pandemic Prompts Cities To Rethink The Parking Spot**

Nearly one year after parking meters were bagged and street furniture filled parking spaces, cities are deciding whether the impromptu COVID-related parking restrictions should be lifted or whether to make the policy permanent. A 15-minute take-out and delivery curb may be designated as a public space with protected lanes for slow speed neighborhood human-powered or electric vehicles replacing private parking spots. Projects in San Francisco, Oakland and Boston are being studied for applicability in communities across the country.

Change your city's parking policies, goes the logic, and you just might change the city. Doing away with spaces might disinvite car travel and build support for more emissions-friendly bicycles and transit.

In January, the Charleston, South Carolina City Council voted to use its emergency powers to do away with parking-minimum policies to help businesses lease vacant storefronts during an economic downturn. Two businesses have taken the city up on the offer, and the council has discussed making the change permanent. But other cities have had to convince the community that a parking spot is not the highest and best use of the curb.

As businesses have transformed to pickup and drop-off, and to a kind of hybrid between online and brick-and-mortar, businesses understand that how cities look at parking code requirements may need to

change, especially since 8 parking spots can be used to seat almost 100 outside dining patrons with space for take-out pick-ups.

### **New Tool Measures The Environmental Implications Of The Return To The Office**

Telecommuting can save energy and reduce emissions — unless it doesn't. A new tool can help companies measure workplace carbon emissions, and figure out if going remote is easier on the planet. The expected shift away from pandemic-era remote work policies that several major employers have announced could have climate implications. There are software programs available that evaluate how transitioning to a fully remote or hybrid workspace could reduce a company's overall carbon emissions — but at the expense of increasing their employees' own footprints.

Companies like Microsoft Corp., Facebook Inc. and Google have pledged to become carbon neutral by 2050. But traditionally, such promises from businesses only cover their own workplaces, not the homes of their employees. Remote work shifts carbon: Emissions from energy and food still exist, but at employees' homes, where they may be better or worse than in the office.

Also, while a company can source clean power for the office, the energy burden for working from home falls on the employee, especially if the workforce can live far from the office. Telecommuting can be a green choice, but it requires buy-in and climate consciousness from both the employer and the worker. Important telework strategies include limiting long-haul flights to company-wide meetings; encouraging less sprawl by offering better subsidies for public transit than parking; buying carbon offsets to account for employees' extra home energy use; or, spending money once spent on office snacks on a clean power upgrade.

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