

# South Bay Cities Council of Governments

April 23, 2020

TO: SBCCOG Board of Directors  
FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director  
RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update Covering March 2020

## **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.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and its potential fiscal impacts, nearly all non-pandemic transportation initiatives have been put on hold. As a result, this update includes a new COVID-19 section that has expanded the Transportation Update to include work-in-home (WIH) news in the hope that this trend will thrive after the social distancing controls are lifted. Other news follows in the traditional format.

## **COVID-19**

### **Federal Stimulus Bill Awards \$25 Billion To Transit Agencies For Operations Support**

The \$1 trillion “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act”(CARES Act, HR 748) includes a \$25 billion appropriation from the general fund of the Treasury for grants to mass transit agencies.

Grants are to be “available for the operating expenses of transit agencies related to the response to a coronavirus public health emergency...beginning on January 20, 2020, reimbursement for operating costs to maintain service and lost revenue due to the coronavirus public health emergency, including the purchase of personal protective equipment, and paying the administrative leave of operations personnel due to reductions in service...”

The grants, which require no local match, must be made by April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7 days after the bill was signed into law. While the grants could, in theory, be used for capital programs or operating costs, it is expected that almost all of the \$25 billion will go towards operating costs to make up for lost farebox and dedicated tax revenues. Metro expects to receive approximately \$710 to \$810 million of the \$3.8 billion apportioned to California with specific requirements that the funds be spent on matters directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **FTA Allows Transit Agencies To Use Capital Funds for Operations During COVID-19**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is working closely with local transit authorities to free up resources to help them deal with COVID-19. Large operators are not normally allowed to cover operating expenses with any of their Federal formula funding. However, if a governor declares an emergency and the FTA concurs, the FTA Emergency Relief Program (49 USC

5324) lets local transit agencies in those states use their federal transit formula funding to pay up to 80% of their operating costs, including the cost of activities aimed at containing Covid-19.

### **L. A. Metro Reduces Service**

As of March 23<sup>rd</sup>, L. A. Metro has experienced a 68% decline in bus ridership and an 81% decline in rail boardings. However, Metro has reduced service on its bus lines by 15% to 20%, depending on the route. Metro considers its service a lifeline to thousands who depend on its services, including first responders, hospital workers and essential city and county employees.

Metro is also requiring all riders to board and exit through rear doors only, with the front door reserved only for wheelchair users who need to use the front door ramp. Metro bus operators have been instructed not to enforce fare payment to allow social distancing. The agency also has installed sanitation stations and hand-sanitizer dispensers at major transit stops, and also increased cleaning efforts on vehicles, at Union Station and other transit hubs.

Metro instituted a screening process to only serve riders who are making essential trips. Metro joined the city of Los Angeles Department of Transportation in providing bus transportation to those who may need alternative aid, such as social service assessment, shelter or mental health services. The goal is to protect vulnerable and unhoused individuals and riders who are using Metro for essential travel only during the state's and county's safer-at-home orders. Assessment is being conducted at major transit hubs and stations in an effort to keep buses and trains clean and help Metro protect its frontline operations staff. Metro is encouraging riders to only bring aboard one personal item. That can include a purse, backpack or similar sized work utility.

In the work week of March 23-27, Metro provided at least 310,000 lifeline trips each day on its buses and trains, and numerous riders have reached out on social media to thank Metro and its frontline staff for continuing to operate during the pandemic.

### **Beach Cities Transit Suspends Most Services**

Line 102 school trippers were suspended through Friday, April 10, 2020. The WAVE Dial-A-Ride is operating on a Holiday Schedule on weekdays and weekends from 8 AM to 5 PM, with the last trip taken at 4 PM. Rear door boarding was implemented. Fares are not being collected.

### **Carson Suspends Transit Service**

The city of Carson suspended all of its municipal bus service on March 22<sup>nd</sup> due to the coronavirus, and the mayor called on other transit agencies to do the same. Carson's decision will not affect Dial-A-Ride or ACCESS Paratransit services in the city.

### **El Segundo Suspends Transportation Services**

The El Segundo Dial-A-Ride, Lunch Shuttle, and Beach Shuttle service were suspended. Only Doctor Dial-A-Ride service on Thursdays are still operating.

### **Gardena Reduces GTrans Service**

Effective March 29<sup>th</sup>, GTrans buses are operating between 5:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m.

Line 1X: will operate daily on its Weekend Schedule as normal - No service to Downtown L. A.

Line 2: will operate every day on its Weekend Schedule, with trips canceled in the early AM

Line 3: will operate daily on its Weekend schedule, with trips every hour  
Line 4: will operate daily on its Weekday Schedule  
Line 5: will operate daily on its Weekday Schedule, with trips every hour

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### **Palos Verdes Peninsula Transit Authority (PVPTA) Reduces Service**

Effective Monday, March 16, 2020 until further notice, PVPTA will only operate Routes 225-226 and the dial-a-ride service.

### **Some LADOT Services Temporarily Reduced**

Some Los Angeles City Department of Transportation services were temporarily reduced starting March 30<sup>th</sup> Monday. LAnow, the city's new on-demand shared ride service, was suspended. Commuter Express service were reduced by 50% affecting South Bay Lines 438, 448, and 574. Modified Routes and schedules are available at [bit.ly/2JjppSn](https://bit.ly/2JjppSn). L. A. City also reduced frequencies on its LAX FlyAway service which had ridership down 72% and LAX passenger counts that were down 87.5% as of March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Torrance Transit Operates Saturday Schedule on Weekdays**

Until further notice, Torrance Transit is operating a Saturday time schedule Monday through Friday. Line 4X and Line 6 are running under a modified schedule Monday through Friday.

### **LADOT Relaxes Parking Enforcement**

Beginning March 17<sup>th</sup>, LADOT has implemented a freeze on parking fines for 60 days, relaxed enforcement around closed schools and street sweeping restrictions in residential areas; a moratorium on ticketing and towing of abandoned or oversize vehicles; an extended grace period for dropping off or picking up of groceries and an immediate extension on all deadlines for payments due up to June 1.

Normal restrictions will apply at metered parking spaces to encourage short-stays for businesses and restaurants relying on takeout or deliveries. Operations that affect health, safety and emergency access – including parking restrictions in colored curb zones, street sweeping around encampments, peak-hour restrictions as well as repaving and slurry work – also will continue to be enforced.

### **Port Of L. A. Estimates COVID-19 Impacts On Goods Movement**

The Port of L. A. estimates its volume will be down 18-20 percent from last year due to international and domestic trade flows affected by COVID-19. The reduction is largely attributable to the fact that China, which makes up 50% of imports through the port, is manufacturing at 50% of its normal capacity. In addition, the Port of L. A. has witnessed 14 consecutive months of export declines due to Federal trade policies. And, the port's cruise business is at a standstill.

### **Shared Scooter Companies Reduce Services; Long-term Viability Questioned**

Scooter companies are looking at how to keep operating as people are ordered to stay at home and rider demand by tourists has plummeted. Bird cut its workforce 30% on March 27<sup>th</sup> to “preserve investors cash”. Lime announced on March 21<sup>st</sup> that the startup was “winding down or

pausing” service in all markets but South Korea with significant layoffs imminent. Uber-owned Jump has paused electric bike and scooter rentals in most of its European markets and trimmed the size of its fleets across the U.S. Lyft Inc. has continued to operate its network of mostly docked bikeshare systems in eight U.S. markets, while laying off 20 employees. Spin., owned by the Ford Motor Co., reduced service on March 24<sup>th</sup> to only Austin, Baltimore, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Portland, San Francisco, Tampa, and Washington, D.C.

Some experts believe the pandemic could be a death knell for scooter businesses with large and growing operational costs including increased regular cleaning and disinfection of shared vehicles and helmets. However, some scooter start-ups with recent capital infusions or improved technology are continuing and new partnerships may be needed to recover once the isolation restrictions are lifted.

None of the companies shared specific information about how often vehicles are disinfected or taken in for inspection. By and large, cities did not include requirements related to disinfection or the spread of disease in their permit agreements with companies, and the quickly-evolving crisis has forced both regulators and companies to be nimble. Operators also recommend that riders disinfect points of contact on the vehicles themselves.

Several scooter operators, including Jump, Lime, Spin and Wheels, are considering opportunities to partner with local governments or essential service providers as a way to continue operations. Subsidizing operations may be the only way to secure their existence long-term. Some traditional docked bikeshare systems, including those in Boston, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., are owned by local governments but operated by Lyft. In contrast, Miami-Dade County on March 25<sup>th</sup> issued an emergency order barring operation of any common-use micromobility vehicle, noting that such shared fleets are not routinely cleaned between users and may therefore be vectors for the spread of the COVID-19.

But elsewhere, scooter and bike fleets remain on the streets, available for users even as governments warn to limit social contact and work from home. In a letter to operators, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) said that mobility services are categorized as "essential" and that companies could continue their operations to provide healthy options for all essential trips.

Micromobility is also filling a transportation gap as transit ridership falls in major cities due to recommendations that people not gather in groups of more than 10. For example, the New York Post reported that ridership on the Lyft-owned CitiBike network over the first 11 days of March was up nearly 70% over the same period the previous year. In Detroit, where public bus service was temporarily shut down because of drivers' coronavirus concerns, Spin was asked to deploy scooters to help fill the gaps. Even as limited bus routes have resumed, the company is continuing to work with the city to supplement service.

Wheels, a startup that operates dockless electric minibikes in 17 cities in Europe and the U.S announced on March 27<sup>th</sup> that it will roll out vehicles with self-cleaning handlebars and brake levers that can be used for delivery services and other essential uses, while its shared bikes are suspended until the end of March. The company has partnered with NanoSeptic, which has

developed the self-cleaning surface. The technology uses mineral nano-crystals that continuously oxidize organic contaminants.

### **Lyft, Uber Suspend Pooled Ride Option; Access Services, Inc. Follows Suit**

Uber and Lyft have suspended their pooled ride option in the US and Canada in a move to "flatten the curve" of the coronavirus outbreak. No date has been announced from either company on when services will resume. Access Services Inc. also is not offering a shared ride option and is carrying only one rider per vehicle.

## **FEDERAL**

### **Trump Administration Rolls Back Mileage-standard**

The Environmental Protection Agency and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration on March 30<sup>th</sup> published final fuel efficiency rules for new passenger cars and light trucks for model years 2021 through 2026, known as the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFÉ) standards.

The rule change, softened from its initial language, had repeatedly been delayed and amended, in part due to a lukewarm response from an auto industry that had retooled for the tougher Obama-era regulations, adjusted to a mixed bag of state-by-state rules and was responding to a changing demographic of car and truck buyers who want a smaller carbon footprint.

The Trump administration had long advocated for a reversal of the stance established during the Obama administration that had called for an unadjusted fleet average of 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025. Alternative-energy advocates believed the higher requirement would have helped promote a shift to electrified vehicles.

The final rule sets a 1.5% increase in efficiency for passenger cars and light trucks covering model years 2021 through 2026, pared from the current trajectory of 5%. The rule change revokes California's five-year old "waiver" allowing the state to implement its own more-stringent greenhouse gas standards and offer promotions for low-emissions and zero-emissions vehicles. It also restricts programs in more than a dozen other states that have followed California's lead. Both sides are bracing for expected court battles to challenge the rule change.

## **STATE**

### **CARB Developing Ride Hailing Emissions Regulations**

The California Air Resources Board is developing the world's first regulations to reduce the climate impacts of ride hailing. The rules seek to reign in pollution from the mobility segment that has quickly risen to overtake taxis, in large part by avoiding regulation to begin with.

The move to regulate ride hailing is a result of Senate Bill 1014, the 2018 law that requires California regulators to impose rules to reduce the industry's greenhouse gas emissions. The bill was initially drafted with a statewide goal of transitioning the ride-hail fleet to 100% zero-emission vehicles by 2029, but that language was stricken. That leaves it to regulators to enforce the change.

## **TRENDS**

### **Work From Home Could Slow Internet Speeds**

The U.S. internet won't get overloaded by spikes in traffic from the millions of Americans now working from home but connections could stumble if too many family members try to videoconference at the same time. Traffic has spiked 10% to 20% during peak hours since the first week of February in greater Seattle, the U.S. metropolitan region hardest-hit by COVID-19, according to Cloudflare.

The core of the U.S. network is more than capable of handling the virus-related surge in demand because it has evolved to be able to easily handle bandwidth-greedy Netflix, YouTube and other streaming services. The sudden, unanticipated surge in millions of remote workers creating some temporary bottlenecks. But because so much of computing has moved to cloud services, the shift doesn't pose much of an on-site burden for companies with bottlenecks typically cleared in minutes or hours. But some conference calling and chat services have been overburdened.

Italy's internet saw a 30% spike in peak-hour traffic after the government sent everyone home into isolation, but this is less than the spikes during World Cup soccer matches. Peak internet usage times in nations where work has shifted from the office to home due to COVID-19 have also shifted — from about dinner time to about 11 a.m.

If parents are videoconferencing for work at the same time college and high school students are trying to beam into school, they could experience congestion because the so-called last mile is for most Americans provisioned for cable — download capacity is robust but upload limited. Some may have to settle for audio, which is much less demanding of bandwidth.

Local jurisdictions may want to note that last-mile fiber optic connections don't have the same issues and will do fine. The South Bay Fiberoptic Network will enable local jurisdictions to connect their residents and businesses to create all-fiber connectivity to their local digital records and remote services.

### **GM Lays Out Strategy To Sell 1 Million EVs Per Year Within 5 Years**

General Motors laid out an aggressive electric vehicle plan on March 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday to invest \$20 billion on its electric and automated vehicle programs over the next five years, at which point it intends to be selling a million EVs a year in the U.S. and China. Key to the strategy is a joint venture with South Korea's LG Chem that aims to boost driving range to 400 miles or more while reducing costs.

GM will make its own battery packs, as does Tesla. GM is building a giant factory in Lordstown, Ohio — the size of 30 football fields, the company says — to turn out 30 gigawatt-hours of battery power per year. That's about the size of Tesla's so-called Gigafactory outside Reno. In the U.S., EV sales fell more than 6% in 2019, and they still represent only about 2% of the 17 million passenger vehicles sold. GM is not the only automaker going out on an EV limb. Pushed by regulators worldwide, Volkswagen, Ford, Hyundai and others are diving deep into EV development.

Starting in 2023, the state would begin imposing increasingly stringent pollution standards, along with the requirement that the number of miles driven in electric vehicles grow over time. The approach will also include measures to encourage better integration with public transit and increased use of pooled rides — two strategies that experts say can push carbon emissions from ride-hail trips lower than private cars.

Starting in July, L.A.'s Department of Transportation will prohibit solely gas-powered taxis from joining the L. A. City fleet, allowing only clean-air models like hybrids or electric cars. In California, ride-hail services are under the jurisdiction of the state Public Utilities Commission, and local governments are barred from regulating them.