

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

August 11, 2014

TO: Jacki Bacharach, SBCCOG Executive Director

FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Consultant

RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update –August 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

Congress Patches Together A Short-term Highway Funding Extension Bill

Congress gave final approval on July 31st to HR5021, a \$10.8 billion bill to keep federal highway funds flowing to states highway and transit programs at current levels through May 2015. By temporarily preventing a bankruptcy of the Highway Trust Fund, lawmakers acted to take advantage of the summer construction season and get past the fall elections when a newly elected Congress takes office. The bill also defers a threatened average 28% cut in state subventions from the federal Highway Trust Fund that the USDOT said would start if the fund ran out of reserves in August.

Passage of HR5021 follows more than a month of political posturing in both houses of Congress regarding the ultimate funding sources and amounts for the Highway Trust fund, the duration of a long-term reauthorization, and even the length of the interim measure.

The bill reflects the horse trading and creative accounting that was needed to obtain passage in the House and Senate in an election year. The trust fund gets its money from the 18.4 cents per gallon gas tax, which has not been increased since 1993 and has struggled to keep up with rising costs of transportation infrastructure projects as cars grow more fuel-efficient and fewer gallons of gas are sold. At its current rate, the gas tax only generates \$34 billion of the \$50 billion in federal funds being spent on transportation infrastructure per year.

The cost of the Highway Trust Fund extension was partially covered from a \$1 billion transfer of revenues from a separate trust fund established to clean up leaking underground storage tanks at gas stations which generates more annual revenue than the cleanup work requires.

President Creates Private Sector Transportation Investment Clearinghouse

Frustrated by Congressional gridlock on long-term funding for transportation infrastructure projects, President Obama on July 17th issued an executive order to create the Build America Transportation Investment Center, a “one-stop shop” within the U. S. Department of Transportation, to forge partnerships between state and local governments, private developers and investors. The executive actions the president announced provided no new funding, but promised accelerated approval of private public partnerships that can provide financing to accelerate investments using existing federal credit programs.

The White House will also create a Build America Interagency Working Group that officials said would “expand and increase” private investment and collaboration by addressing “barriers” to private investment in the transportation area. The Treasury Department will host an Infrastructure Investment Summit in September.

Metro Approves 2014 ExpressLanes Net Toll Revenue Reinvestment Expenditures

At its July 24th meeting, the Metro Board approved nearly \$26 million in surplus I-10 and I-110 Express Lane revenues. Related to the I-110 revenues, the board funded nearly \$16 million in new community projects, provided \$3.4 million for continued transit service, and deposited nearly \$600,000 into reserve accounts. In addition, the Board removed \$1.75 million originally recommended for a Metrolink smartphone ticketing project and recommended that staff return in September with recommendations for funding the Metrolink Enhanced Ticketing project from other Metro sources. The Board also instructed staff to return in September with recommendations for using the \$1.75 million savings to approve other project applications that were recommended “pending available funding” or to increase reserves within each of the I-10 and I-110 corridors. The Metro staff report, including a two-page table breaking down the funded and un-funded applications, can be found [here](#). Approximately 40% of the funded applications are for active transportation.

Metro Delays Fare Increase By Two Weeks To September 15th

Metro has slightly postponed its fare increase that had been approved in May for September 1. The new fares will take effect on Monday, September 15th. Staff moved to the Sept. 15th date to allow a consistent price for, and not impact sales of, the countywide EZ Monthly Pass that is sold to customers from the 25th of the preceding month through the 10th of the month for which the pass is valid.

The base bus/train fare will increase 17 percent, going from \$1.50 to \$1.75. Senior fares and all daily/monthly/weekly passes also increase 25-40 percent. With the new fares, Metro is instituting a new 2-hour-free transfer window, though it only applies to customers paying via TAP card. The Metro board also deferred raising student cash fares from the current \$1.00 per boarding and clarified that the new 2-hour free transfer will not apply to students paying the reduced fare and only applies for continuation in the direction of travel (not for a round trip).

Board Approved Fares Effective September 2014

	Current Pricing	Approved FY 15
Regular		
Base Fare ¹	\$1.50	\$1.75
Day Pass	\$5.00	\$7.00
Weekly (7 Day)	\$20.00	\$25.00
Monthly (30 Day)	\$75.00	\$100.00
EZ Pass	\$84.00	\$110.00
Muni Transfers	\$0.35	\$0.50
Monthly Zone Upcharge (EZ/Silver/Express)	\$22.00	\$22.00
Student/College		
Student Cash ²	\$1.00	\$1.00
Student 30 Day ²	\$24.00	\$24.00
College 30 Day	\$36.00	\$43.00
Silver		
Regular Silver ¹	\$2.45	\$2.50
Silver Upcharge ³	\$0.25 - \$0.95	\$0.75
Express		
Express Fare ¹	\$2.20 - \$2.90	\$2.50
Express Zone Upcharge ³	\$0.70 - \$1.40	\$0.75

¹ Under the approved fare structure, base fare payments on a TAP card include 2 hours of transfers.

² Student fares are frozen at current levels per an approved Board motion and thus student cash fare does not include free transfers.

³ The two Express zones have been consolidated into a single surcharge.



Metro Is Struggling To Reduce Fare Evasion

The L.A. Times reported on July 28th that even though Metro had an estimated 115 million riders last year (up 5 percent from the previous year), the MTA could only produce a documented 70 million rides — a difference of 40 percent.

What accounts for this discrepancy? How many people are riding L.A.'s subways and trains without paying? How much money does the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority lose each year to fare evasion? Nobody really knows, and that's a problem, the LA Times noted in a July 29th editorial, particularly as Metro hikes its fares in September and makes the case for future fare increases and, potentially, for a sales tax increase in 2016 to help expand the region's rail system.

Metro's ridership estimates, which are based on a six month rolling average, may be too high. Or, riders that purchase day, weekly or monthly TAP passes may not tap each time they board a bus or enter a rail station. One promising statistic is that, in cases where stations have been upgraded with turnstiles, the gap between ridership and revenue numbers closed from 46% in January 2013 to 13% by April 2014, although it is unclear how 13% of riders continued to board at gated stations without paying their fare. Only about half of the station entrances have turnstiles and many of the remaining station designs preclude the retrofit of fare gates.

The ratio between revenues and ridership is important since Metro could lose federal funding if it cannot keep its fare box recovery ratio above 25%. The agency's Long Range Transportation

Plan assumes a 33% ratio, but Metro's fare revenues currently generate approximately 26% of the cost to operate their bus and rail services. Metro's bus system carries the lowest passenger loads of any major transit operator in the nation and opening of new rail lines such as Expo 2, the Gold Line extension to Azusa, and the Crenshaw LAX line will add pressure to increase fares or reduce service frequencies.

TRANSPORTATION INNOVATION: STARTS AND STOPS ...

TRANSIT / RIDESHARING / CARSHARING

Metro Board Seeks Next-Steps Study Of Acceleration Of Airport Metro Connector Project

At its July 24th meeting, the Metro Board approved a motion that instructed Metro staff to report back to the Board in September at the Planning and Programming and Construction Committees and at the September 25, 2014 full Board Meeting, with written details on the strategic next steps and plan to "accelerate" completion of the Green Line to LAX/Airport Metro Connector Project.

The Board motion asked for a detailed timeline and the specific MTA Board actions that are needed to accelerate delivery of the project that may be necessary to complement, align and expedite project delivery to match the completion date of the Crenshaw/LAX Light Rail Project in 2019 and the South Bay Green Line Extension Project, which are connected to and share the Green Line Corridor.

The Board motion also requested a detailed action plan that includes an array of funding alternatives, formal arrangements for working with LAWA, as well as local, state, and federal partners, to fund and implement the Green Line to accelerate the LAX/Airport Metro Connector Project. In addition, the Board requested staff to provide a specific approach to advocacy efforts with relevant federal agencies including the FTA and FAA to better coordinate and align with the federal review process, including resolving any road blocks to project funding, implementation and acceleration.

HIGHWAY

"Century Crunch" Bridge Demolition Project Finishes 41/2 Hours Early

Demolition of the old freight railroad bridge across Century Boulevard near Aviation was supposed to take 57 hours over the weekend beginning July 25th. But the bridge was removed, lanes were re-stripped, new signals installed, and K-rail was installed in time for Century Boulevard to reopen at 1:30 am on July 28th, 41/2 hours ahead of schedule. Century Boulevard will be limited to one lane in each direction for the next 16 months while a new elevated light rail station is constructed for the Crenshaw / LAX light rail line.

Caltrans Calls For Toll Lanes On I-405 In Northwest Orange County

Caltrans officials on July 25th reiterated their interest to add 14 miles of toll lanes on Interstate 405 between Seal Beach and Costa Mesa in Orange County. The stretch of freeway is already slated for a \$1.3 billion Orange County sales tax-funded expansion project but Orange County Transportation Authority has previously declined not to designate the new capacity for toll lanes.

Caltrans has proposed converting existing carpool lanes to toll lanes and adding another toll lane in each direction, but it doesn't have the extra \$400 million to make the idea a reality. Caltrans' version

of the plan -- including the future toll lanes -- projects that by 2020 drivers in regular lanes of I-405 could travel between State Route 73 and I-605 in 29 minutes. With only one new general-purpose lane in each direction and no toll lanes, Caltrans says the same trip would take 57 minutes. However, cities along the freeway in northwest Orange County told a meeting of the Orange County Transportation Authority that voters never were told before they approved a half-percent county sales tax in 2006 that funds from the road construction ballot measure might be used to help build freeway toll lanes.

The Orange County Transportation Authority expects to start construction on its widening project by 2016 and finish by 2021, with or without the toll lanes. Although Caltrans claims the toll roads provide drivers choices and expedite travel, opponents contend that one of the Caltrans' motivations for implementing toll lanes on its state-owned freeways is that any surplus revenues from the toll lanes could help close California's \$6 billion annual funding gap for state highway maintenance.

The issue is made more important by the impending decisions facing L. A. Metro and Caltrans as they determine whether or not to complete planning on its southern Los Angeles County toll roads using the I-405 or the I-105 to link Orange County to LAX. In addition, the state legislature must approve the permanent designation of the I-10 and I-110 ExpressLanes and deliberations may include which agency controls use of the surplus revenues being generated by the newest toll lanes.

SOUTH BAY

Metro Board Approves South Bay ExpressLane Expansion Studies On I-105 and I-405

At its July 24th meeting, the Metro Board directed the CEO to begin preparation of a Project Approval / Environmental Document study for conversion of the I-105 High Occupancy Vehicle lanes to ExpressLanes between the I-605 and I-405 and to undertake a similar study to extend the I-110 ExpressLanes south to the I-405 / I-110 interchange.

TRANSFORMATIVE SOUTH BAY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ...

California Energy Commission Awards Hydrogen and Electric Recharging Grants

The California Energy Commission on July 24th approved \$46.6 million in grants for hydrogen refueling and electric charging construction projects throughout the state. California's zero-emission vehicle goal is to get 1.5 million hydrogen, battery electric and plug-in electric vehicles on the roadway by 2025. The majority of the CARB grant funding was approved for new projects that will accelerate the state-wide hydrogen refueling station network that will support the commercial launch of hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles in 2015.

The approved list included a \$200,000 grant to the US Hybrid Corporation in Torrance to install electric vehicle chargers for its employees. In all, \$2.8 million in grants were awarded for 175 electric vehicle chargers stations in local communities, at key locations on I-5, SR 99, in 12 California State Parks and at two baseball parks. The CARB Clean Vehicle Rebate Program received \$5 million and \$3.1 million was awarded for two medium-duty electric repower demonstration grants for a school bus project and a delivery vehicle project.

There are currently 10 operational hydrogen refueling stations in California—the most recent opened in May 2014 on the CSU Los Angeles campus. With the announcement of Energy Commission funding for additional stations, California is slated to have 51 public hydrogen refueling facilities on line by 2017.

In another initiative California is working with other states to harmonize regulations and building codes to ease the location and construction of refueling stations for hydrogen and electric vehicles. An eight-state ZEV Action Plan released last month lays the foundation to coordinate efforts among California, New York, Maryland, Connecticut, Oregon, Massachusetts, Vermont and Rhode Island. The goal of this collaborative effort is to put 3.3 million ZEVs on the highways in those states by 2025.

Could Automated Electric Vehicles Use South Bay Rail Rights of Way?

The [Tracked Electrical Vehicle \(TEV\) Project](#) is futuristic concept that might transform rail rights of way to create a network of compact, electrically powered roadways on which conventional electric vehicles (EVs) can drive indefinitely under computer control. The electric roadways would supplement traditional roadways and operating rail lines.

The TEV roadways would be controlled by a computer system in a similar way to Automatic Train Operation on metro rail systems. The electric highways could be designed to be used by rubber-tired EVs as well as other transport modes like mini-buses, taxis and light freight vehicles. A road user would enter their destination then use the system as a guideway and power source. Vehicles could be automatically “entrained” while on the guideway and would be powered directly with electricity embedded in the guideway s as they travel, meaning they would never need to stop to recharge.

The system would also create energy savings over traditional private vehicles through eliminating the need for headlights, using steady vehicle speeds, reducing aerodynamic drag, and many other features. The TEV project could represent one means of shifting to a cleaner form of transport while improving the quality of travel.

Although innovative technology has a role to play in the future of safe, sustainable transport, the project would have many hurdles to overcome before it could be operational. For example, how could a breakdown of one car not prevent the rest of the cars behind it from moving forward? Or, how could the automated system be protected from computer hacks that might endanger the safety of road users?