

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

October 12, 2015

TO: SBCCOG Steering Committee

FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director

RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update –October 2015

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...

FEDERAL

Federal Highway funding will last until June 2016

The Department of Transportation updated its Highway Trust Fund ticker on September 8th to estimate that federal funds for infrastructure projects for transportation will be sufficient until June 2016, six months later than forecast three months ago when the extension had been expected to provide infrastructure funding only until December 2015. Transportation officials said they would be able to make the dollars stretch further than expected because the pace of U.S. construction typically slows down greatly in the winter.

Congress will still have to pass an extension of the federal Highway Trust Fund transportation spending authorization by Oct. 29th. With no lurking cash flow threat, Congress is expected to approve a 35th Trust Fund extension at least through December instead of passing the multi-year transportation bill that has eluded Congress for several years.

U.S. DOT Creates The “Build America Transportation Investment Center”

The U. S. Department of Transportation’s Build America Transportation Investment Center (BATIC) was unveiled on September 30th. But don’t think it will open the floodgates to new federal transportation funds. BATIC will serve as the single point of contact and coordination for states, municipalities and project sponsors looking to utilize federal transportation expertise, apply for federal transportation credit programs and explore ways to access private capital in public private partnerships. The staff will assist project sponsors to navigate the procedural, permitting, and financial barriers to increased infrastructure investment and development.

BATIC also will work with the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) through a cooperative agreement to establish The BATIC Institute: An AASHTO Center for Excellence (the Institute). The BATIC Institute will aim to improve State DOTs and other public sector organizations’ ability to effectively employ project finance tools through a program of training, sharing best practices, and technical assistance. As part of this effort, AASHTO and USDOT will work with project sponsors across the country to identify institutional capacity building needs and develop resources.

U. S. Dot Investing \$42 Million To Test Connected Vehicles In Three Cities

After testing connected-vehicle technology in Ann Arbor (MI), the U.S. Department of Transportation announced on September 17th it will invest up to \$42 million to try out the technology in three new locations — New York City, Florida, and Wyoming.

New York City will be home to the largest connected vehicle demonstration project in the world. The New York City Department of Transportation will test vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) and vehicle-to-infrastructure (V2I) technologies by installing V2V technology in 10,000 vehicles — including taxis, buses, UPS delivery trucks, and its own vehicle fleet — along with V2I technology in the city's traffic signals. The NYC pilot is also expected to include a mobile application for pedestrians and bicyclists that would alert drivers when they cross the street.

The demonstration program in Florida will focus on addressing peak-period congestion and protecting pedestrians in Tampa. The Wyoming project will focus on freight movement through the I-80 corridor. California applied, but was not selected, as a US DOT site for the demonstration programs.

STATE

Governor Brown Proposes New Revenue Sources For Infrastructure Repair

Governor Jerry Brown's administration proposed a framework to address the crumbling transportation infrastructure in the state on September 3rd. According to analysis by the California League of Cities, Brown's \$3.6 billion a year framework includes several key provisions:

- \$1.8 billion would go to cities and counties for street maintenance, complete street projects, public transit and state-local partnership funding projects.
- \$1.05 billion of the \$1.8 billion local package would be allocated by formula for local streets and road maintenance, \$525 million of which will go to cities each year based on population
- \$400 million a year would be available for local grants for transit
- An additional \$100 million would be set aside for a complete streets competitive grant program.

Some of the money to fund Brown's proposal would come from a \$65 annual fee on vehicle registrations and increases in diesel and gas taxes tied to inflation. The proposal says the \$65 annual charge would generate \$2 billion a year, while \$500 million would come from fees charged to polluters and \$100 million from so-called "efficiencies" at Caltrans (aka staff reductions). The proposal would set the state gas tax at a fixed rate based on a 5-year average then add index increases to the consumer price index. It also calls for an 11-cent-per-gallon increase on diesel fuel.

Governor Signs AB 902 To Improve Bicycle Safety Education, Reduce Ticket Fines

A new law enacted on September 21st allows local jurisdictions to create bicycle diversion programs similar to the driver education classes that would allow ticketed adult bicyclists to go to a bike "bicycle traffic education school" class to reduce or eliminate the cost of their ticket. Local jurisdictions would work with bicycle advocates, educators and law enforcement to create the curriculum and establish a policy for which bicycle moving violations would be eligible for the diversion program. The law goes into effect January 1, 2016.

Governor Vetoes Bill To Open Some Carpool Lanes To Everyone During Off-Peak Hours

Governor Jerry Brown vetoed AB 210 on September 21st. The bill would have opened carpool lanes for all users during non-peak hours on the 134 Freeway from North Hollywood to

Pasadena, and on the 210 Freeway from Pasadena to Glendora. AB 210 also would have allowed Caltrans to test the change on other freeways.

Brown said in his veto message that he had the same concerns about the measure that led him to veto a similar bill two years ago. He cited the need to retain the current 24/7 carpool lanes “to reduce pollution and maximize the use of freeways.”

California Legislature Strips Gas Reduction Goals From The SB 350 Climate Change Bill

State legislators amended S. B. 350 on September 11th to remove the goal of reducing petroleum use from the so-called “50-50-50” climate change bill. The removal was approved as legislators expressed concerns about how much authority the California Air Resources Board (ARB) should have and in response to concerted lobbying by the petroleum industry. SB 350’s other two provisions—increasing efficiency in buildings by fifty percent and increasing the proportion of renewable energy used in the state to fifty percent — remain in the bill.

California Transportation Commission Awards Active Transportation Grant Funding

This week, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) staff on September 21 recommended winners for \$180 million in statewide Active Transportation Program (ATP) funding, including over \$60 million for projects in Los Angeles County. The biggest recipient of the 2015 ATP awards for Los Angeles County applicants is Metro, with over \$12 million awarded for the Union Station Master Plan. In the South Bay Hawthorne/Lennox were awarded \$2.046 million to implement Green Line community linkages. And a West Carson Commuter Bikeway was approved for \$425,000. The CTC will consider the staff recommendations during its October 21-22 meeting.

REGION

Metro Bike-Share Update: 2016 Opening On Track, Without A Title Sponsor

A few Metro bike-share details emerged at the September 16th Metro Planning and Programming Committee meeting as staff noted that the Downtown LA bikeshare program is on schedule to open in mid-2016 with 1000+bikes at 60+kiosks.

Staff also disclosed a few troubling unresolved start-up issues. No firm responded to the agency’s July request for sponsorship proposals, which was initially touted as a source of ongoing operating subsidies. The fee structure has yet to be set by the Metro Board. Interoperability with the Santa Monica and Long Beach Breeze bike share programs will likely be limited to accepting Metro TAP card for bike share rentals. Beyond accepting the Metro TAP fare payment card, no other integration or reciprocal memberships in the programs have been agreed to by the sponsoring agencies or their vendors.

More Than Just Street Furniture Or a Bus Bench

A Boston startup, Soofa, has installed solar-powered benches that can charge phones, sense heat and count pedestrian foot traffic. Boston and a handful of other large cities, including Jersey City, N.J., Boulder and Austin, have installed these "smart benches," which use solar panels to power mobile devices, such as phones and tablets. In the future, they'll be outfitted with a variety of sensors that will collect and share data with city agencies.

The Soofa benches are part of a larger effort within urban government to add new functions to street furniture. New York City is replacing public phone booths with NYC Link stations that provide free wireless Internet access, USB chargers and Android tablets. In Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and many other cities, conventional trash cans have given way to solar-powered bins that collect and share data with waste departments.

By collecting pedestrian counts, the benches may have economic development applications. The city trying to attract a grocery store or pharmacy to a neighborhood might be able to pique a company's interest by including in their recruitment pitch results of the pedestrian foot traffic counts collected through the benches.

The Soofa benches do have some drawbacks and it's not clear whether the Soofa-type model or an alternative offered by competitors will prove more useful in cities. Other companies sell solar-powered charging stations that include USB cables for various mobile devices. The Soofa bench, by comparison, has outlets but no cables, leaving people out of luck if they don't have a USB cable. Anticipating competition in smart benches, Boston planners have begun to explore other types of data beyond pedestrian counts and street temperature that could be collected by the benches.

Torrance Breaks Ground On New Transit Center

A decade after the Torrance transit center closed at Del Amo Fashion Center, Torrance broke ground September 8th on the Torrance Transit Regional Park and Ride Terminal on a 7-acre former industrial site near Crenshaw Boulevard and 208th Street. The city expects to open the new facility in 18 months.

The regional transit hub includes a 250-vehicle parking lot, eight bus bays in a dedicated bus lane loop, a landscaped, covered public plaza with large video screen, and 15,000-square-foot transit building with restrooms and retail space.

The \$21.5 million project is funded with \$18.1 million in Measure R South Bay Highway Program revenues, \$2.4 million came from a state bond, and the city kicked in \$1

Torrance Transit and other regional bus lines including the LAX Flyaway Bus are expected to use the hub initially. Long term, the site will include a Green Line South rail transit station.

Portland Opens New Car-Free Bridge

Portland opened a new bridge on September 12th known as Tilikum Crossing that allows pedestrians, cyclists, and urban rail and street car riders—but not drivers. When the U.S. Department of Transportation issued its proposed budget earlier this year, the cover image wasn't an open highway or an interstate cloverleaf—it was Tilikum.

Developers have wanted to connect the Southwest Waterfront knowledge district (home to Portland State and Oregon Health & Science University) with the emerging “crafter-maker-doer” economy on the Central East Side. New housing units, jobs, and businesses are expected to emerge on both sides of the bridge, with growth on one side supporting the other.

To get a sense of the new bridge, view this link of Tilikum's public preview in August, shot via drone: <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?shva=1#inbox/1502ef728d8b032c?projector=1>

Lawsuit Alleges New L.A. Mobility Plan 2035 Creates More Air Pollution, Not Less

Fix the City, a Westside-based nonprofit group, has sued the City of Los Angeles to overturn Los Angeles' sweeping new 20-year transportation plan that calls for addition of hundreds of miles of new bus and bike-only lanes. The group alleges that the city failed to properly examine the plan's effects on public safety, air pollution and other aspects of city life as bike and bus lanes replace vehicle lanes and increase traffic congestion.

The mobility plan is the first major overhaul of the city's transportation policies since 1999. It calls for an additional 300 miles of protected bike lanes, the kind separated from traffic by curbs or other physical barriers, and 117 miles of bus-only lanes. An additional 120 miles of bus lanes would be created for rush-hour-only use.

The city's environmental impact report said the plan's projects would double the percentage of major streets that are heavily congested during the evening rush hour. Nearly 36% of major street segments would be heavily congested in 2035, up from 18% currently, the report said. The same analysis found that if the mobility plan were not approved, the number would reach only 22% in 2035.

Backers of the mobility plan say L.A. lacks the space and money to continue widening streets or adding freeways. The plan's projects are expected to increase walking by 38%, transit use by 56% and bicycling by 170%, if completed by 2035. L. A. City Councilman Mike Bonin, a supporter of the plan, said the lawsuit simply acknowledges that Angelenos are “desperate to get out of mind-numbing traffic.”