

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

February 27, 2020

TO: SBCCOG Board of Directors

FROM: SBCCOG Transportation Committee

RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update Covering January 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.

FEDERAL

Democrats Propose Federal Infrastructure Plan Sans Funding Plan

The \$760-billion infrastructure package released by House of Representatives Democrats on January 29th would shift America towards more sustainable transportation (meaning active transportation, more trains and buses) and away from highway construction.

The plan would mandate that states adopt policies and make investments that will reduce transportation-sector pollution. To help, the House specifically mandates increasing investment in cycling, walking, and public transportation and use of “complete streets” standards to improve safety and reduce vehicle miles travelled. The plan also would fund a national pilot program to replace gas taxes with vehicle miles travelled taxes.

The plan requires recipients of federal funds to prioritize buses, trains, and transportation access and to consider during the planning process all system users, job access, connections to housing, and creation of transportation options in underserved communities.

The Democrat’s plan also would prioritize maintenance over new construction and tighten federal standards around tolling and congestion pricing. Democratic leaders did not propose how to pay for the \$760 billion package.

House Bill Would Provide Funds To Connect America's Active Transportation System

The 'Connecting America's Active Transportation System Act' (H.R. 5696) introduced on January 28th would provide \$500 million annually in funding for a federal competitive grant program to help communities and regions build connected active-transportation routes—trails, sidewalks, bikeways and other infrastructure—to ensure people can get where they want to go safely by foot, bike or wheelchair.

Currently, funding for walking and bicycling facilities comprises less than 2% of the federal surface transportation budget, with limited policy direction to strategically prioritize those funds to fill critical infrastructure gaps and make the active transportation system more effective and efficient.

White House Proposes Guidelines for Regulating AI Use, Including in Transportation

The Trump administration is proposing new rules to guide future federal regulation of artificial intelligence used by the private sector in medicine, transportation and other industries. A document from the White House said that in deciding regulatory action, U.S. agencies “must consider fairness, non-discrimination, openness, transparency, safety and security.”

The White House said the proposals unveiled January 7th are meant to promote private sector applications of AI that are safe and fair, while also pushing back against stricter regulations favored by some lawmakers and activists. There’s a monthlong public comment period before the rules take effect.

Bill Would Boost Electric-Vehicle Adoption

The USA Electrify Forward Act (HR 5558) introduced on January 6th would direct the U.S. Transportation Secretary to accelerate domestic manufacturing efforts directed toward the improvement of batteries, power electronics and other technologies for use in plug-in electric vehicles.

The bill would appropriate \$2 billion annually for the U.S. Department of Energy's Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing Incentive Program from 2021 to 2035 and would direct the US DOT to update residential and commercial building codes to encourage the installation of electric-vehicle charging stations and would order states to consider measures to encourage charging stations.

FHWA Approves Red Street Paint Option For Bus Lanes

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on December 9th approved the optional use of red paint on city streets to signify bus priority lanes. Giving buses their own lane is intended to remove the vehicles from the rest of traffic, speeding up service and boosting reliability. The red lanes have been sought by local agencies to assist in enforcing no stopping or standing restrictions during rush hour.

Any jurisdiction that requests and receives approval from FHWA will be able to use the red pavement paint for bus travel lanes in designated locations and at transit stops. States may also request permission for all their jurisdictions. The guidelines also clarify that, because this colored pavement has been used to regulate, warn, or guide traffic, it is serving as more than an aesthetic treatment and is, by definition, a traffic control device.

Because instances have been reported during FHWA pilot projects of drivers being confused and not sure if they could park in red bus lanes, FHWA recommends that agencies installing red paint consider educational campaigns and signage to reduce confusion among road users, and to increase compliance.

STATE

Judge Temporarily Exempts Truckers From California’s New Gig-Work Law

After California’s new gig-work law, AB5, took effect on January 1st, a federal judge issued an injunction on January 16th blocking the state from enforcing it for motor carriers until the court reaches a final verdict in the case brought by the California Trucker’s Association. The Judge agreed with the California Trucking Association’s contention that AB5 was preempted by a 1994 federal statute that prohibits states from making laws that affect the price, route or service of freight-hauling motor carriers.

Assembly Bill 5 (AB 5) ushers in a new test for what constitutes an independent contractor. The new standard (called the ABC test) is intended to keep businesses from avoiding providing overtime pay and benefits to contract workers who work near full-time hours or make an equivalent contribution as a full-time employee. Unions, ride-sharing drivers and the AFL-CIO have hailed the legislation as a win for worker's rights.

But the implementation presents a major shift for supply chains in California that experts expect to affect trucking capacity and eventually rates. As of 2016, owner-operators, hired as contractors by carriers and shippers, made up 28% of the registered trucks in California, according to government numbers cited in a report conducted for the California Trucking Association (CTA) on the impacts of AB5.

Many in the trucking industry are at a loss for how to comply with AB5, saying the state has not provided any guidance and suggesting the correct approach will ultimately be decided in court. Transportation economy experts have suggested paths for compliance including converting to an all-employee fleet, establishing new companies that separate the driver from the truck, moving the fleet out of California, and doing nothing different while AB 5 is in court.

Starting in 2020, California Carpool-lane Access Is More Equitable

A new California law effective January 1st allows low income drivers of used electric cars to use carpool lanes with one occupant in the vehicle. The stickers granting access were previously only available for those who bought new electric vehicles. The change is designed to address concerns that only wealthier people buying high-priced EVs can drive solo in a high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lane.

The new law allows people who earn less than \$65,777 a year, which is 80% of California's median income, to receive a new sticker when they first register a used electric vehicle.

As the number of zero-emission vehicles on California roads grows from about 600,000 today – to a goal of 5 million by 2030 — carpool-lane access would diminish to keep travel speeds higher than the adjacent travel lanes. The red decals issued in 2018 will no longer work in 2022, but low-income buyers of vehicles could receive new stickers attached to those and other used EVs. White decals expired on January 1, 2019.

In another move to improve equity, starting December 3, 2019, California EV buyers purchasing vehicles with a price exceeding \$60,000 do not qualify for the state's \$2,500 clean-vehicle rebate. The change eliminates rebates for the Audi e-tron and Jaguar I-PACE — as well as many models from BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Tesla. Also, single taxpayers who earn \$150,000 or more are no longer eligible for state rebates, but they still qualify for carpool-lane stickers.

REGION

L.A. Metro Is Hosting Next Gen Transit Plan Workshops To Fix Plummeting Ridership

L. A. Metro on January 13th unveiled an ambitious plan to increase ridership by up to 15% without increasing service hours by shifting service hours and service frequency from low demand routes to higher demand corridors, a change the agency said could help reverse a 25% decline in bus trips over the past decade.

If approved, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's plan would be the first overhaul of the region's bus network in more than 25 years. Riders would see changes on the street by the end of the year. The plan calls for buses that arrive every 10 minutes or less — and in some cases, as frequently as every five minutes — on 29 major routes. About 83% of Metro riders could walk to a bus stop with that level of service, compared with 48% now, officials said.

To achieve ridership growth projections in the plan, Metro will need to implement a \$1-billion, five-year capital program to improve bus reliability, speed and comfort. The average speed of a Metro bus has dropped 12.5% over the last 25 years as buses have gotten stuck in the same worsening traffic with cars.

Bus speeds have dropped, hurting Metro's image and operational costs. When traffic slows, Metro puts more buses on the street to stay on schedule. Each year, Metro spends \$10 million more than in the previous year to provide the same level of service. If the five-year capital investment plan to speed up buses were completed, Metro could run more than 5 million additional hours of bus service per year for the same cost as today's network.

The plan relies on a network of bus-only lanes that would be essential if Metro is going to promise transit riders frequent, reliable and fast bus service. The proposal includes \$750 million for the bus-only lanes, synchronized traffic signals to provide priority for buses, and other improvements, and about \$150 million for improved shelters and other rider amenities at busy stops. In addition to finding the funding, Metro will need to partner with local jurisdictions to create bus priority on local streets. Neither specific capital projects nor funding has been identified.

To create the more frequent service without additional operating costs, the plan would eliminate or reduce service on some Metro bus lines. A key part of the proposal involves consolidation of most of Metro's rapid bus lines, which would merge with "local" buses that serve similar routes but make more stops. Instead of two versions of the same route, operating on two different schedules, Metro plans to run more consistent all-day service on these routes, with fewer stops than a local line but more stops than a rapid line.

Most of the network of red Rapid buses would be eliminated, with the exception of Wilshire Boulevard, Vermont Avenue and Van Nuys Boulevard. Metro would also reduce the number of stops along the lines where buses would run every 10 minutes or less. Bus stops placed every quarter-mile would mean slightly longer walks, but shorter door-to-door travel times due to increased service frequency. Metro would also expand all-door boarding to shorten the time it takes to load passengers onto buses. About 0.3% of Metro's riders would lose their ability to walk to a line with a bus every 10 minutes or less.

Metro Seeks State Funds To Extend Green Line Platforms

In anticipation of increased demand due to the opening of the Crenshaw/LAX Line and the LAX automated people mover system, Metro is seeking state funds to expand passenger capacity on Green Line platforms and power upgrades to accommodate three-car trains. Proposed improvements include platform extensions at the Redondo Beach, Douglas, Mariposa, and Aviation/LAX Stations to accommodate three-car trains and two new traction power substations for the Crenshaw/LAX Line.

L. A. Metro To Study Free Bus Rides For LA County Students Beginning with LAUSD

L.A.'s Metro has a ridership problem. The Los Angeles Unified School District has a poverty problem. More than 80% of its students live below the poverty line. Their families often

struggle to cover the basic expenses, including transportation. What if these two public agencies could work together to help solve each other's problem? That's the idea behind a proposal, floated by LAUSD Supt. Austin Beutner and transit advocates, to provide free transit passes to the District's more than 600,000 K-12 students.

To begin exploring the question, the L. A. Metro Board on January 23rd approved an initial study of ways to make bus services free for students throughout the county beginning with the Los Angeles Unified School District and eventually potentially expanding the policy to include primary, secondary and city college students in all Metro service areas throughout the county. The study would also explore incorporation of an equity-based eligibility criteria.

The board directed Metro staff to work with LAUSD and other school districts, cities, the state and other stakeholders to return to the board in April with a report that includes:

- A review of the performance of existing free transit programs for K-12 students, including the Los Angeles DASH to Class program, Metro's Just Transit pilot with LAUSD and other school districts, and the city of Sacramento's RydeFreeRT program;
- Cost estimates of providing free Metro transit services for LAUSD and other school districts' students and potential subsidies to phase the program based on Metro's Equity Platform;
- Forecasts of effects to Metro fare revenues as a result of the free service;
- A survey of various schools to determine transit dependency and interest of students switching to transit as a result of potential free fares;
- Mapping of various school district boundaries throughout the county in relation to existing and planned transit services utilizing Metro's Equity Platform to identify high-need communities;
- Analysis of effects on ridership, inclusive of effects to operations on transit lines that may experience overcrowding during peak hours and potential impacts to school bus ridership;
- Outreach to municipal operators that have transit service supported by Metro formula funds connecting to K-12 schools; and
- Recommended actions to minimize or eliminate barriers for Los Angeles County households to take advantage of potential free transit for students, including partnering with LAUSD and other school districts for administrative support.

The Metro Board also instructed staff to return in June with a separate report on a partnership with community college districts within Metro's service area to provide no-cost transit programs for campuses that have imposed student fees to cover the cost of transportation.

TRENDS

Oregon Lets Low Emission Vehicles Choose Higher Registration Fee Or Mileage Fee

Oregon drivers will not only pay a higher gas tax starting in January but those driving fuel-efficient vehicles will have a higher registration fee to account for the lower amount of gas taxes they pay. The 2-cent-per-gallon gas tax increase and change in registration fees are part of legislation enacted in 2017 to better fund the state's roads and bridges. There will also be an increase in fees for commercial trucks and buses.

Fuel-efficient vehicle drivers, however, will have the option to pay a lower registration fee, if they sign up for the state's fee-per-mile program known as OReGO. The program charges participants monthly based on the number of miles they drive. They then receive credits on their monthly bills for any state gas taxes they paid. The volunteer OReGO program is available for cars that get at least 20 mpg, but only those with at least 40 mpg can get a break on the registration fee by joining OReGO.

How To Cope with Curbside Congestion Driven by E-Commerce Deliveries

In one to three years, cities will be "severely challenged" by e-commerce-driven delivery traffic, but existing technology and policy fixes can help quell the resulting carbon emissions and congestion if implemented quickly, according to a January 10th report from the World Economic Forum (WEF) with input from DHL, Llamasoft, McKinsey, Uber Freight, Unilever, UPS and Walmart among others.

The study analyzed 24 last-mile technologies including drones, robots and unmanned deliveries, drop boxes, locker systems and other ways of consolidating orders, along with non-tech changes including increased double-parking enforcement, delivery time shifts, traffic light interventions and road lane changes.

The best scenario, according to WEF, is one that takes into account the carriers' interest in fewer disruptions and faster deliveries alongside cities' desire for lower emissions and less congestion. This combined scenario would include electric vehicles, night deliveries, multi-brand parcel lockers, dynamic re-routing and load pooling. These interventions could reduce emissions by 35%, unit costs by 15% and congestion by 25%, according to the report.

Report Finds L. A., Miami Travelers Have Biggest Commute Challenges

According to a new report from Moovit, using Big Data from millions of trip requests performed in 99 cities across the Americas, Asia, and Europe in 2019:

- Los Angeles and Miami travelers tie in first place for the longest commutes in North America with an average of 56 minutes for a single trip
- Miami and Los Angeles tie for the longest average wait times, with an average of 16 minutes per trip
- About 1 in 4 L. A. travelers make three or more transfers and 27% of L. A. commuters wait more than 20 minutes
- An average commute time in L. A. is 56 minutes, compared to other large metro area, London, United Kingdom, with an average commute taking 45 minutes
- Ten percent of Los Angeles commuters average two hours, compared to 1% of commuters in Madrid, Spain
- Los Angeles and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil both have 32% of local commuters walking more than 0.6 miles per commute