South Bay Cities Council of Governments

June 28, 2018

TO: SBCCOG Board of Directors

FROM: SBCCOG Transportation Committee

RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update –June 2018

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

Trump's Infrastructure Plan Hits A Dead End For 2018
President Trump's legislative framework for a sweeping overhaul of the nation's infrastructure appears all but dead in Congress. The administration's proposal to focus on infrastructure in 2018 and pass legislation to address the country's infrastructure needs seems to have stalled in Congress at least until after the November elections.

Senate Democrats appeared to throw in the 2018 session towel on May 14th, posting an "in memoriam" video tribute to infrastructure week. The White House plan, unveiled in February, was meant to provide lawmakers with a framework to craft legislation. But it quickly met opposition from Democrats, who argued the administration's emphasis on leveraging funding from the private sector and state and local governments was the wrong approach to federal infrastructure investment.

Other than bullet points and press releases, no concrete proposal has emerged from the Trump Administration, and Republicans in the Congress have shown no sign of pressing forward with their own plan. The upshot is that, while $20 billion was included for infrastructure in a recent two-year budget agreement, after dividing it among 50 states, the investment is not expected to have a major impact on the overall need for new projects nationwide.

Administration Rolls Out New Round Of BUILD (Nee TIGER) Grant Applications
On Friday April 20th, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) released the FY 2018 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for a ninth round of the ever-popular TIGER grant program, now known as BUILD, with triple the usual amount of funding and new criteria and qualifications that were added to the program by appropriators in the Senate and House.

The Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program, replaces the ever-popular Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program which received 451 applications in its last round alone. TIGER has been one of the most popular federal programs because the discretionary grants are not allocated by formula through state

DOTs and the grants are awarded to any governmental entity, including counties, cities, and rail authorities.

BUILD is different from previous rounds of TIGER in five significant ways. First, the BUILD budget is three times larger than the previous TIGER grant budget - $1.5 billion. Second, up to $15 million of that $1.5 billion may be used for planning, preparation, or design grants for eligible projects at the discretion of USDOT Secretary Elaine Chao. Third, individual awards are capped at $25 million. Fourth, USDOT will now evaluate applicants on how well they secure and commit new, non-federal revenue for projects. New revenue is defined as being authorized after January 1st, 2015, so Measure M and SB 1 count. Also, the required local match can only come from new revenues. And fifth, USDOT is required to announce the recipients of BUILD grants no later than December 17, 2018. In order to meet the accelerated deadline, USDOT has set an application deadline of 8:00 p.m. EDT on July 19, 2018.

National Safety Council Sets A Nationwide Goal To End Traffic Deaths By 2050
Traffic deaths continue to plague U.S. streets, with more than 100 fatalities per day of which more than 16 were pedestrian deaths in 2017. In response, the National Safety Council (NSC) worked closely with the Department of Transportation and over 600 industry groups over the past year to develop the first national strategy to completely eliminate road fatalities nationwide by 2050, with recommendations outlined in a scenario-type Road To Zero report by the RAND Corporation.

The April 4th report speculates that it is 2050 and there are no traffic deaths and then asks what is it that happened over the last 30 to 40 years to get us to this point?" The study cites specific improvements as particularly effective, like narrowing crossing distances using curb extensions or reprogramming walk signals to give pedestrians a head start at intersections (known as a Leading Pedestrian Interval, or LPI).

The report also champions what's called a "safe systems" approach for transportation planning—integrating life-saving improvements consistently and universally into every roadway. As part of the initiative, the Federal Highway Administration is awarding grants to groups like Smart Growth America focused on reducing speeds, redesigning streets, and introducing innovative technologies to vehicles.

A recent World Resources Institute report came to the conclusion that safety improvements have been proven to work, yet U.S. cities lack the political will to implement them. The result is that the U.S. lags far behind its economic peer countries, which have managed to dramatically reduce traffic deaths over the last few decades. By highlighting the cause of each fatal crash—and questioning what can be done to improve the design of the street where crashes occur—cities can combat the idea that eliminating deaths is not a worthwhile or possible goal.

The full RAND report can be found at:
https://www.nsc.org/Portals/0/Documents/DistractedDrivingDocuments/Driver-Tech/Road%20to%20Zero/The-Report.pdf?ver=2018-04-17-111652-263)

STATE

Initiative To Repeal SB 1 Submitted For November Ballot; Opposition Efforts Gear Up
A Republican-backed effort to repeal SB 1, the 2017 state fuel tax increase, took an important step April 30th when organizers turned in more than 940,000 voter signatures, hundreds of thousands more signatures than the 585,407 required to qualify the measure for the November 2018 ballot.

SB 1, approved by the state legislature and signed by Governor Brown in April 2017, is expected to raise $5.4 billion a year for the next 10 years to fund transportation projects across California, funded by a 12-cents per gallon gasoline tax increase and a 20-cents per gallon diesel tax increase that started last November 1st. SB 1 also increases vehicle registration fees in 2020.

The repeal initiative calls for the repeal of the increases and fees and would require any future fuel tax increase to be approved by voters. Backers of the SB 1 funding have countered the fall repeal initiative by placing Proposition 69 on the June ballot, which prohibits the state legislature from diverting any transportation-related funding to pay for non-transportation programs or projects.

Governor Brown and a bevy of elected officials used a May 30th Torrance Transit Center Groundbreaking Ceremony to urge voters to vote No on the repeal initiative. Although the transit center will open next year as a bus transit center and park and ride lot, it will become the Torrance station of the Green Line South Extension by 2028 due to the investment of local sales taxes and more than $230 million in SB 1 funding. Opponents of the repeal initiative cited numerous other projects that have been accelerated by the new state funding and expressed concern with the delays in those projects that would occur if SB 1 were to be eliminated.

California Auto Dealers Seek Control Of Car Subscription Services
Auto dealers became concerned after automakers introduced their own ride-hauling services in response to rise of Uber and Lyft. Now California dealers are seeking legislative protections as potential customers are further untethering themselves from vehicle ownership by subscribing to car services that allow people to pay a flat monthly rate and access the type of vehicle they need for specific tasks. Many costs, including insurance and repairs, are covered by the subscription fee.

AB 2107, which passed out of the Assembly on May 29th focuses primarily on franchising issues between carmakers and dealers, such as the cost of replacement parts and dispute resolution by state authorities. But one of the bill's provisions states, "If the manufacturer, manufacturer branch, distributor or distributor branch is also a franchisor, or an affiliate of a franchisor, it may not compete with any franchisee by directly or indirectly offering vehicles for sale, lease or subscription, unless these vehicles are offered exclusively by franchisees." The only change from current law is the word "subscription".

The California New Car Dealers Association considers subscription services a new way of leasing vehicles, which the group's members control. But the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers distinguishes the emerging subscription programs from leases because, in most cases, the vehicle is being shared. Today the subscription services that allow you to change vehicles at any time cost as much as $3,000 per month and are offered mostly by high-end manufacturers including BMW, Cadillac, Porsche and Volvo. Competitors include start-ups such as Canvas and Flexdrive.

AB 2107 also includes a workaround for manufacturers by explicitly allowing them to partner directly or indirectly with a personal vehicle sharing program.

REGION

Metro's Ponders Its Problem Statement For Next Gen Bus Service Network Redesign
For the first time in more than two decades, Metro is undertaking a comprehensive review of its bus service network to see if ridership loses can be reversed by providing a system that is more attractive to the way people travel today. The Next Gen Bus study is considering the role of Metro's traditional fixed route bus lines and seeking better integration with emerging mobiiity options like micro-transit, shared ride networks, electric-assist and autonomous vehicles.

A recent panel discussion of academics and land use experts explored the Problem Statement for Metro's future transit networks. Even with seven million hours of service spread throughout the county, Metro is challenged by increased expectations of its service frequency, reliability and communications technology as it competes with other emerging "smart mobility" options.

UCLA researchers believe ridership loss primarily can be attributed to increased vehicle ownership. When they modelled transit ridership, the biggest predictor of someone using transit is that they do not have a vehicle available to make the trip. From 2000 to 2015, Southern California auto ownership has risen almost exactly the same pace as population has grown. Between 2000 and 2015, we added 2.3 million residents and 2.1 million cars. The number of zero-vehicle households in the region is plummeting and the drop in zero-vehicle households is even faster for immigrant households.. Metro's surveys of their frequent riders have concluded that about 40 percent are looking to get a car as soon as possible.

Against this statistical backdrop, the Next Gen Bus Study will explore whether Metro's service was the cause of a former rider's decision to not use transit, or if access to a vehicle came first and ending their ridership was merely an effect. The study also will explore how Metro can get core riders to stay and entice occasional riders to ride more often.

Instead of merely re-structuring its service, the NextGen Bus Study is aimed at understanding the market for fixed route bus transit. For example, their surveys show that people want an all-day frequent network but Metro generally focuses on peak hour service, and adds a lot of service and frequency on its busiest routes during the busiest times. Yet riders want more weekend service, improved reliability and frequency throughout the network, and better real-time information about when to expect the bus will arrive at their stop.

In addition, seven million hours do not go far enough to provide everyone everything that they want. So the Next Gen Bus Study will need to balance the tradeoffs between frequency, time-of-day coverage, and geographic coverage. If a trip takes two transfers, riders are less likely to commit to Metro. So the study needs to better understand the origin and destination travel markets today which are different from what they were 25 years ago. Southern California also is undergoing a structural economic change in which a lot of the families are commuting to multiple jobs in the region. Given the minimum wage, the cost of living, and the sprawl of our region, it is not sustainable to be spending hours on transit or waiting at transfer locations. And because people are working non-traditional hours, they need other transportation options. Metro expects its Next Gen Bus Study to provide a navigational tool for improving Metro's countywide mobility services.

Cities Grapples With Dockless Bike and Scooter Regulations

An Los Angeles City Council committee considered a staff proposal for a comprehensive set of dockless bike and scooter regulations on May 25th and asked the Department of Transportation to come back with a new set of guidelines for a potential pilot program.

The Transportation Committee spent more than an hour discussing a report from LADOT about potential laws and guidelines for dockless electric scooters and bike sharing, which are already operating on a limited basis in Venice and on the campus of UCLA.

Dockless bikes and scooters work through a phone app which allows people to find and unlock the devices and drop them off anywhere they are allowed, with no docking station or kiosk required. LADOT staff recommended creating a geo-fence that would limit scooters and dockless bike share companies from operating within a three-mile radius of Los Angeles Metro Bike Share service areas, which would limit their deployment in places like downtown, Venice and San Pedro under the pilot program. The committee asked LADOT staff to reconsider the geofencing concept, to reconsider a cap on operators that would limit them to 2,500 devices in the city, and to report on the possibility of an equity program that would make the devices cheaper in lower income neighborhoods.

In a May 18th report, the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) recommended that local jurisdictions regulate five elements: transit integration, data sharing, public space management, user protections and dedicated staff.

In its report, ITDP highlighted success stories in Dublin, Ireland and Guangzhou, China, where both issued guidelines and a code of conduct to control dockless bike-share. And in the United States, the organization said Washington, DC is a good example of a city that is trying to phase in dockless, but recognizes there is still work to do — data analysis, for example —as it extends its pilot program.

Over the June 1st weekend, LA Councilman Buscaino held a pop-up LIME electric scooter demo in San Pedro and Wilmington.

Torrance Transit Introduces Smartphone Next Bus Texting App

Torrance Transit is installing 800 new signs at its transit stops that provide a unique text number that customers can use on their smartphone to receive information on when the next bus will arrive at that location.

To use the service, Torrance Transit bus riders text the keyword "4TTBUS" followed by the unique stop ID number to 41411. Replying to the original text enables passengers to instantly receive updated arrival information.

Metro Planning Vermont Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Line For 2028 Opening
Metro held four meetings in May to present the latest thinking on the agency's planned Vermont Transit Corridor project. Overall, the plan includes implementing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on Vermont Avenue from the I-105 Freeway to Hollywood by 2028, and planning to not preclude an upgrade to rail by 2067.

The 12.4-mile Vermont Avenue BRT project has $425 million allocated in Metro's Measure M sales tax expenditure plan, which is enough for a BRT line but would only provide a fraction of the estimated cost for a rail line. The study area extends the service along Vermont Avenue from 120th Street just south of the I-105 Freeway to Hollywood Boulevard in Los Feliz.

Vermont Avenue bus lines carry 45,000 boardings daily which is Metro's second busiest bus corridor after Wilshire Boulevard. Depending on the alternative selected, the BRT line is expected to carry 64,000 to 75,000 daily riders making it the highest bus ridership in the Metro system.

Similar to its Wilshire Boulevard BRT line, Metro is pursuing a curb-running BRT configuration which would attract the lowest ridership and remove the fewest parking spaces. Center-running BRT that is found in other high-volume corridors throughout the world was eliminated due to the high cost of stations, the need to remove a vehicle travel lane and curbside parking, and the need to provide special buses with doors on both sides similar to light rail vehicles. In addition, the city of L.A. appears unwilling to take the center lane space away from drivers to prioritize bus riders. This includes reallocating space currently dedicated to driving and parking.

The anticipated timeline for Metro's Vermont Transit Corridor study includes continuing to refine BRT and rail concepts before another round of public meetings in October. The initial study is anticipated to be complete in December. Environmental review of the BRT project could start in mid-2019.

Paid Parking To Begin At Four Green Line Stations In June
Paid parking will be implemented at four Green Line stations in June. Aviation/LAX and Crenshaw Stations will be converted from free to paid parking on June 4th followed by Lakewood and Norwalk stations on June 18th.

The parking rate is $3 per 24 hours. Monthly permits for Norwalk and Lakewood will be available at $39 a month, and for Crenshaw Station at $59 a month. All stations will have the automated pay systems that are in use at other Metro pay parking lots. Riders will need a valid TAP card and either cash or credit card to pay. Parking kiosk locations are different for each facility but are generally located along pedestrian walkways, ground level near the elevator lobby or in the station plaza. You can also pay for parking online at parkatmetro.net or use the Metro parking app. The app is available in the iTunes store and the Google Play store (there is a 15-cent fee to use the app so parking is $3.15 a day).

TRENDS

Uber To Partner With NASA and the U. S. Army On Flying Taxi Project

Uber announced on May 8th it has signed a Space Act Agreement with NASA to develop models that will simulate urban air mobility service for an ambitious Uber flying taxi project. Under the agreement, Uber will provide NASA with details and data on its plans for a flying taxi service, which the agency will use to simulate flights over Dallas-Fort Worth. This data will address scenarios involving air traffic, collision mitigation, and air space management. It is NASA's first such agreement related to urban air mobility (UAM) specifically focused on modeling and simulation. Los Angeles and Dallas have agreed to host early tests of Uber's air taxi service.

Uber also signed an agreement with the US Army to develop and test "flying taxi" aircraft for the company's mobility service. The company will jointly develop and fund research into rotor technology with the US Army's corporate research lab.

Lime is developing low-speed, small electric vehicles

Lime, a company that runs sharing services for scooters, pedal bikes and e-bikes, is developing a new type of vehicle known internally as a "transit pod." The early concept is to build an enclosed, electric vehicle that could hold one or two people, resembling a smart car or a deluxe golf cart. The vehicle wouldn't be a car, exactly; it's not even clear whether it would have three or four wheels. But it would drive in normal street traffic, and could hit a top speed of about 40 miles an hour.

Unlike Lime's scooters, which tend to end up littering the sidewalks and exasperating the non-scooting public, unused pods would be parked in street parking spots two or three to a single spot. Customers would access the pods through a sharing service available in the company's app, seeing them as another transportation option alongside scooters and electric and pedal bicycles. The timeline of the project and the number of pods Lime would try to produce is unclear.

Lime isn't the first company with a utopian plan for tiny, car-like vehicles that run on electricity. In the early 2000s, Ford made a line of similar vehicles it called TH!NK. Arcimoto has been working on two-seat, three-wheeled electric vehicles for a decade, and began delivering its first shipments to customers last fall. Electra Meccanica, a Canadian startup that makes three-wheelers that look like regular cars with the back half cut off, said recently it has begun delivering them to the United States.

Lime would also pursue car sharing deals for the pods to be parked in on-street parking spots, akin to the car-sharing company Car2Go. This would allow someone to pick up a pod, drive it across town, and leave it at their destination. Programs to offer car-sharing companies city contracts for such arrangements are emerging; San Francisco approved its program last year, citing research that each shared car could result in 7 to 15 privately-owned vehicles being removed from the streets. The city's transportation department said it hadn't received any requests for shared parking from companies utilizing such novel vehicles.

For Many, Ride-hailing Driving Is Not Just A 2nd Job In L.A.
When ride-hailing services Uber and Lyft arrived in Los Angeles six years ago, they expected that driving for their companies was little more than a flexible way to make money while being your own boss in your second job.

However, there is debate as to whether ride hailing drivers work fulltime or parttime. According to a survey of 260 drivers released in May from UCLA's Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, more than half of Uber and Lyft drivers in Los Angeles drive full time.

About two-thirds of respondents said driving for Uber or Lyft was their main source of income and around half of the drivers surveyed said it's their only job, with many claiming they work more than 35 hours a week and still struggle to pay for gas, insurance and car maintenance. Around a third either purchased or leased their car specifically to drive for the companies and must now continue driving to pay off those loans. The drivers — who are classified as independent contractors rather than employees — overwhelmingly said they want to negotiate the conditions of their contract with Uber and Lyft. The majority of respondents said they wanted higher wages and payment transparency, a fixed pay rate above their operating costs, the ability to choose their passengers without penalty, and assistance with vehicle care and maintenance.

Uber and Lyft, which were not consulted for the report, noted that UCLA's 260 survey participants represent only a small fraction of the tens of thousands of ride-hailing drivers in Los Angeles County. Citing its own survey completed last year of 37,000 drivers across the nation, Lyft noted that in Los Angeles, 93% drive fewer than 20 hours per week.