

# South Bay Cities Council of Governments

November 21, 2019

TO: SBCCOG Board of Directors  
FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director  
RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update Covering October 2019

## **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**

### **EPA Signals A Shift On Fuel Economy**

According to an October 31<sup>st</sup> Wall Street Journal article, the Environmental Protection Agency and U. S. Transportation Department are planning to require automakers to bolster fuel economy and pare tailpipe emissions by 1.5% annually after 2020, a reversal from its earlier proposal to freeze requirements through 2026.

The modest annual increase changes requirements proposed in August 2018 that would have capped mileage at a 37-mile-per-gallon fleetwide average after 2020, rather than increasing to roughly 50 mpg by 2025, as under current regulations set during the Obama administration.

At the urging of vehicle manufacturers, the Trump administration is focusing on finalizing the SAFE rule, which will deliver one national standard to the American auto market. A spokesman for the California Air Resources Board, said a federal rule that would reduce emissions 1.5% per year isn't enough for the state to meet its air quality and climate change goals.

### **Congress Eyes Increased Funds For Vision Zero Planning**

The Vision Zero Act that was introduced the House of Representatives in mid-October proposes to provide cities billions of dollars in federal transportation funding for street safety as the number of pedestrians and cyclists killed by drivers reached its highest level since 1990.

Some 36,560 people died in traffic crashes last year, according to national highway safety data, with those in cities bearing the brunt of the carnage: Pedestrian fatalities have climbed 69 percent in urban areas since 2009, while cycling fatalities have jumped 48 percent.

The bill would revise the \$287 billion Surface Transportation Bill, which expires next September, in order to make localities with Vision Zero plans eligible for almost \$15 billion in funding from Surface Transportation Block Grants, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program and the Highway Safety Improvement program.

The bill would add pedestrian and bicycle safety planning projects to current eligible uses, which include bridge and tunnel restoration, recreational trails, greenways, and pedestrian and bike infrastructure such as protected bike lanes. To be eligible, cities would need to show how their Vision Zero Plans would eliminate pedestrian fatalities and injuries, educate the public about enforcement, invest equitably in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, collaborate with local government bureaus, and develop ways to evaluate safety data to ensure success.

### **National Freight Report Highlights Growing Capacity and Road Condition Challenges**

An October 3<sup>rd</sup> report by the national transportation research firm TRIP provides a rather bleak picture of the nation's ability to cope with the explosion of e-commerce. The report notes that the nation's freight system moves 17.7 billion tons of freight on an annual basis. Freight moved annually in the United States by commercial trucks could increase 91 percent in inflation-adjusted dollar value fueled by e-commerce which is expected to grow to \$706 billion annually by 2022.

The report raises concerns that roughly 68 percent of intermodal connectors – roads that provide the “last-mile” connection between freight facilities – are congested today and 56 percent of intermodal connectors have pavements in poor condition. In addition, the report cites a U.S. Department of Transportation forecast that by 2045 the miles of major U.S. highways that are congested during peak periods will quadruple from 19,200 miles to 78,500 miles.

TRIP's report recommends: increased investment in improvements to the nation's freight system capacity and safety; greater multijurisdictional cooperation to facilitate multi-modal freight transportation projects; development of vehicle autonomy and the further automation of warehousing; and providing a permanent, adequate, and reliable revenue fix for the federal Highway Trust Fund include dedicated funding of a 21st Century freight transportation system.

## **STATE**

### **Governor Sends Mixed Messages on S. B. 1 and Climate Change Initiatives**

S. B. 1, enacted in April 2017, allocated 65% for road and bridge repairs, 20% for rail and transit, and additional funding for better truck access around ports and the state active transportation program. A June 2018 Proposition 69 was approved with the assurance that revenue raised through S. B. 1 would be solely used for transportation purposes.

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, a few days before Gov. Gavin Newsom spoke at a Climate Week summit in New York, he issued an executive order that, among other things, directed the State Transportation Agency to reprogram more than \$5 billion in annual S. B. 1 discretionary spending earmarked for construction, operations and maintenance to “help reverse the trend of increased fuel consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.” Instead of widening roads, the governor ordered the agency to reduce congestion through “innovative strategies designed to encourage people to shift from cars to other modes of transportation.” Newsom directed Caltrans to “fund transportation options that ... reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as transit, walking, biking and other active modes.”

Two weeks later, the California Department of Transportation issued a biennial report updating its Interregional Transportation Improvement Program. In it, three S. B. 1 state road widening projects on SR 46 and SR 99 in San Luis Obispo, Madera and Tulare Counties were listed for funding deletion with the note that the projects weren't ready for implementation and could presumably be programmed when ready in subsequent annual S. B. 1 allotments.

The report noted \$32.5 million in deletions plus other road project savings totaling \$61.3 million were to be held in reserve for priority rail projects and other priorities aligned with Governor Newsom's executive order. No accounting was provided to indicate whether the transfer of funding from street widening to climate action constituted a change in the percentages allocated in S. B. 1 or an annual cashflow use of the funding.

On October 12<sup>th</sup>, Governor Newsom vetoed S. B. 127 which would have required Caltrans, when undertaking a specified capital improvement project on a state highway or on a local street crossing a state highway that is funded through the State Highway Operation and Protection Program, to include new pedestrian and bicycle facilities, or improve existing facilities, as part of the project.

In his veto message, the Governor claimed he "fully" supports "improving facilities to increase walking, biking, and public transit" ... "where appropriate and feasible," but he balked at the bill's "prescriptive and costly approach despite the fact that the bill included a provision that includes an exemption process if a project is not cost effective or disproportionate to future need.

In response, the California State Transportation Agency (CTSA) issued a statement that investing in transportation infrastructure and meeting climate goals are not mutually exclusive. "That means directing available resources to projects that make the most progress toward our climate goals but not at the expense of safety, repairs and mobility relief." CTSA ended its statement by committing to develop an implementation plan for the Governor's executive order with the input and collaboration from transportation sector stakeholders, partners and the public."

### **Uber, Lyft, And DoorDash Kick Off \$90 Million Fight Against Gig Worker Law**

On October 30<sup>th</sup>, a group of drivers and couriers for Uber, Lyft, and DoorDash launched a new group called Protect App-Based Drivers and Services, aimed at passing a ballot initiative in California to counteract the effects of the state's gig worker bill (AB 5) that was enacted on September 18<sup>th</sup>. The effort is being supported by the companies, which have vowed to spend \$90 million to get the measure passed in 2020.

A.B. 5 enshrines the so-called "ABC test" for determining whether someone is a contractor or employee. Unions championed the bill throughout the legislative process, and have been at the center of the fight over gig work in California. Legal experts agree the law will make it more difficult for gig economy companies like Uber, Lyft, and DoorDash to classify their drivers and couriers as independent contractors. The companies have argued that the law represents an existential threat to their business models and that drivers are not part of the companies' core function.

The California ballot measure would ask voters to approve wages and benefits comparable to those of unionized employees while retaining the workers as independent contractors. Experts

have said there is nothing in federal or state law that precludes Uber from offering its drivers the same flexibility as employees as they have now as contractors

## **REGION**

### **LA City Looks To Improve Parking Of Dockless Scooters And Bikes**

Six months into a pilot program to allow dockless scooters and bicycles to operate in Los Angeles City, the City Council plans to work with operators to address tipped-over scooters and bikes and to study the possibility of installing corrals.

The city is looking at using corrals, which are already being tested in the Venice area, as well as geo-fencing technology and signage or symbols that designate parking locations.

Transportation officials say they are also surveying operators about the latest technology being used to detect vehicles that are tipped over and need to be picked up or repositioned. Some operators such as Bird, Lime, Lyft and SherpaLA have sensor technology to detect tipping.

LA DOT is also monitoring safety issues including underage riders, people riding e-scooters illegally on sidewalks, and injuries from collisions. Out of the 1,053 citations issued to e-scooter riders since the start of the year, 85%, or 890, are for riding on sidewalks.

### **LA's Taxis Could Soon Work A Lot Like Uber**

Taxis in Los Angeles could operate a lot more like Uber and Lyft, under new rules proposed by LADOT to the City Council's Transportation Committee on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. The proposal would place all of the city's taxis under a single, centralized dispatch system which would allow taxis to be requested by phone or with an app. And passengers would know the cost of their rides before getting into the car.

The overly-structured franchise rules for L.A. taxis compared to ride-hailing rules have been blamed for the 75 percent decline in taxi business in L. A. City since 2012. The proposed rules would also lift the cap on the number of taxis in the city and remove the requirement that they be certain colors. If ultimately approved by the city council, the new system would take effect before the end of 2020.

### **LAWA Struggles To Change Rules for Airport Pick-Ups**

On Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>, L. A. World Airports (LAWA) introduced a new system for people exiting the airport called LAX-it, pronounced "LA Exit." In order to reduce congestion in the LAX terminal horseshoe while an automated people mover is being constructed, LAWA stopped curbside pickup by taxi and ride-hailing services in the central terminal area (CTA) and moved to the former Park One lot.

LAX-it shuttles fill up at staggered one or two terminals then take travelers to a new LAX-it lot where ride-share drivers and taxi drivers can take travelers out of the airport. Shuttles run every 3-5 minutes. Travelers can also walk to the LAX-it lot which is located just east of Terminal 1, at the corner of World Way and Sky Way. The LAX-it lot includes bathrooms, food trucks, and phone charging stations

The new system immediately required operational changes to reduce long delays being experienced by travelers. Passengers said the shuttles came in a timely manner, but there were long lines to board the shuttles and some were stuck in the shuttle for up to 40 minutes due to congestion on airport roadways and at the LAX-it lot.

By the end of a chaotic first week of operations, LAWA officials added shuttle vehicles, doubled the size and number of pick-up lanes in the LAX-it lot, installed directional signage, changed roadway markings, provided additional training for taxi and other ride-hailing operators, and changed messaging on the electronic trip routing maps.

Although Uber and Lyft are working with LAWA, they expressed concern with the LAX-it lot waiting lines due to the size of the new LAX-it lot. Uber initially complained that there are only 37 Uber pick up spaces and the service typically picks up 500 riders per hour at LAX terminals with up to 1,000 riders during peak hours. The confusion resulted in cancelled trips and reluctance of ride-hail operators and taxis to serve the new lot.

Despite the initial confusion and delays, LAWA continues to declare the move a success. Switching to a central pickup point removed about 15 percent of all vehicle traffic from the CTA. LAWA reported traffic speeds through the CTA improved by 35% after the new changes were implemented. LAWA also reported the average shuttle wait time at terminals was two minutes, and the average time to the "LAX-it" lot on the shuttle was 11 minutes but acknowledged that peak trips were taking an unspecified longer time.

Additionally, another change at LAX has not been reported. Parking and Hotel Shuttles are now only available for drop off and pick up on the Departure level and there seem to be fewer stops for those vehicles. This change causes passengers leaving the airport from Baggage Claim to go up a level to get these shuttles.

### **Los Angeles City To Test "Plastic Asphalt"**

Now that China has stopped accepting waste from California and lawmakers rejected a bill to phase out single-use plastic containers last September, L. A. City is getting more creative with its recycling solutions. In partnership with [Technisoil](#), owner of the patented product, the city will soon be testing a new paving material made largely out of recycled plastic. The city's Department of Street Services predicts the new material will reduce costs by 25 percent, may be seven times stronger than regular asphalt, and will require significantly less maintenance.

Plastic asphalt is made by converting shredded recycled plastic into an oil that replaces petroleum-based bitumen to become the binder in an otherwise traditional method of street pavement. Plastic roads may be more durable—up to seven times stronger than regular asphalt—and will require significantly less maintenance.

The first test site—at West First Street and North Grand Avenue, near the Frank Gehry-designed Walt Disney Hall—will receive the treatment before the end of the year. The first test will include analysis to ensure that there is no adverse environmental impact from the plastic leaching into the stormwater system.

Los Angeles is the first city in the U.S. to consider implementing this material on a wide scale, but the patented plastic road material has already been implemented in the U.K. and Australia.

### **Metro/Via Mobility On Demand Pilot Attracts Few Riders Despite High Subsidy**

Six months into Metro and Via's year-long "Mobility on Demand" pilot shows that ride-hail continues to be an expensive way to provide mobility for very few riders. The program's \$3.4 million one-year budget is funded through a \$1.35 million Federal Transit Administration (FTA) demonstration grant and \$1.75 million in Metro subsidy. Via has contributed \$287,000 toward the contract cost.

Metro's transit-on-demand pilot launched in January 2019. The pilot is testing whether an on-demand, shared ride that can be requested by smartphone or through a call center, that offers language translation services, and can accommodate customers in wheelchairs, can improve mobility for vulnerable populations.

Metro contracts with Via to provide ride-hail (more or less like Lyft and Uber, but at a fixed-price) for first/last mile connections to/from several Metro rail/BRT stations. The pilot program currently operates from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays in three service areas:

- Blue Line Artesia, Compton, and Willowbrook Stations, Green Line Avalon, Willowbrook, and Long Beach Boulevard Stations
- Red/Orange Line North Hollywood Station
- Silver Line El Monte Station

Ridership has been steadily rising throughout the first six months to a high of nearly 1,700 per week partly due to the fact that Metro is now giving away free rides. The pilot's second quarter report also showed rides per driver hour climbed from 1.12 to 1.8, failing to meet the pilot's goal of 2.5 rides per driver hour.

Under this pilot Metro's cost-per-ride during the first six months has been more than \$20 with the subsidy in the most recent month lowered to under \$15 per ride. The fixed pricing was initially announced at \$1.75 for TAP card holders, \$3.75 for non-TAP riders, and free for enrolled low-income riders. Metro's report states that rides have been free for the second quarter of service and will continue to be free until further notice.

For comparison, Metro's low-performing Bus Line 201, which runs hourly from Koreatown to Glendale, attracted 983 daily bus riders at a \$1.75 fare, approximately three times the number of trips as on the free Mobility on Demand service which has a 7 to 9-minute frequency.

Despite having a dedicated wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) positioned at each of the three rail stations, in the first quarter of service, Via received zero requests for wheelchair accessible vehicle rides. Metro and Via took steps to ensure that this feature was widely promoted including creating marketing materials and targeted community outreach. After this targeted outreach, utilization of the WAV vehicles increased from zero to approximately 10 rides per week.

## TRENDS

### **Robotaxis May Be Coming To A Street Near You Within A Year**

Pledges to launch robotaxi networks have been an intriguing part of the battle to be first to roll out AVs on public streets, as companies of various sizes and statures look to make their mark on the new mobility landscape.

Tesla and Zoox have announced plans to introduce a fleet of robotaxis on public streets in 2020. Google-backed Waymo, which is operating autonomous vehicles in Phoenix, is promising they will be "fully driverless" without a safety driver. While Via's partnership with Hyundai and Pony.ai in Irvine is also breaking new autonomy ground among auto makers. Companies including Ford and BMW-owned MINI are moving beyond making single-occupancy cars and instead looking at ways to support new mobility.