

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

April 26, 2018

TO: SBCCOG Board of Directors
FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director
RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update – April 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

House / Senate Posturing Begins Regarding Administration Infrastructure Proposal

House Republicans announced in a March 7th House Transportation Subcommittee meeting that they will break President Donald Trump’s infrastructure plan into multiple pieces of legislation as a way to make progress this year. The House will first address airports and runways as part of a must-pass reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration, then work on more traditional highway and bridge issues and the need to raise the federal fuel tax rates to stabilize the Federal Highway Trust Fund which could become insolvent by early 2020.

Democrats in the U. S. Senate unveiled their \$1 trillion infrastructure plan on March 7th. They proposed paying for the investments by reinstating some of the recently approved tax cuts (including reinstating the 39.6% top income tax rate and the alternative minimum tax, re-imposing estate taxes, and raising the corporate tax to 25%.)With mid-term election season opening soon, there are concerns in Congress about whether there will be enough time to get through one major piece of legislation before lawmakers begin their campaigns for re-election.

Transit Ridership Is Falling In Top Seven Markets Across The Nation Including L. A.

Transit ridership fell in 31 of 35 major metropolitan areas in the U.S. last year, including each of the seven cities that serve the majority of riders: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, D.C., San Francisco, Boston and Philadelphia.

The analysis by the New York-based Transit Center advocacy group, using data from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Transit Database, concluded that factors such as lower fuel costs, increased higher car ownership due to the recovering economy, on-line shopping, teleworking and distance learning, and the rise of alternatives such as Uber and Lyft and bikeshare programs are pulling people off trains and buses. The data also showed 2017 was the lowest year of overall transit ridership since 2005 with bus ridership alone falling 5 percent. Exceptions to the trend, Seattle, Phoenix and Houston, either expanded transit coverage and boosted service or underwent ambitious network overhauls.

Los Angeles-area transit agencies have seen dramatic bus ridership declines since the mid-2000s, with overall bus ridership falling about 30 percent over the course of a decade, according to the TransitCenter analysis. For the first time in more than 20 years, L. A. Metro is undertaking a Next Generation Bus Study to restructure and “right size” its transit services.

Coalition Calls For National Oversight Of Driverless Cars; RAND Projects Lives Saved

A coalition of organizations across the country is calling on U. S. Transportation Department Secretary Elaine Chao and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to take part in stricter oversight of driverless cars. In a letter signed by more than 25 organizations in early March, the group’s leaders criticized the DOT and NHTSA as “detached spectators instead of engaged safety regulators” on autonomous vehicles.

The coalition is urging DOT to: 1) issue minimum performance standards instead of “voluntary guidelines”, 2) provide consumers with essential information on the capabilities and limitations of autonomous vehicles, and 3) rigorously enforce current legal mandates for industry to immediately report problems.

The driverless vehicle industry faces a conundrum. Statistical proof that autonomous vehicles significantly reduce the crash and death rate would ease public acceptance of robot-caused injuries and deaths because it’s better than the alternative of human drivers. But the only way to accumulate the hundreds of millions of miles of driving experience needed to prove that is to put the cars on the road.

RAND Corporation explored the question: How safe should highly automated vehicles (HAVs) be before they are allowed on the roads for consumer use? RAND compared deploying automated vehicles when their safety performance is 10% with waiting until performance is 75% better than human operated vehicles. They concluded that, in the short term, more lives are cumulatively saved under a more permissive policy (Improve10) than stricter policies requiring greater safety advancements (Improve75 or Improve90). In the near term more than 100,000 lives could be saved. In the long term more than half a million lives could be saved during the long time it would take for the technology to approach perfection.

So far, industry has successfully pushed for less regulation. A bill, known as the AV START Act, would loosen federal regulations for the development of self-driving vehicles and speed up the process for getting them on the road. The bill, which would allow manufacturers to sell up to 100,000 driverless cars a year without hardware such as steering wheels and side mirrors — has been passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. A similar bill is being considered by the Senate. The bill would also take away states’ ability to regulate autonomous vehicle systems’ performance.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein and several colleagues have tried to put the brakes on the legislation, arguing that it wouldn’t do enough to ensure that self-driving cars are no more likely to crash or cause injuries than human-driven cars are.

STATE

State Bill Would Allow Four Congestion Pricing Pilot Projects

Assembly Bill 3059, referred to the Assembly Committee on Transportation on March 12th, would remove statewide legal barriers that prevent local jurisdictions from implementing congestion cordon pricing pilot programs, called “Go Zones,” in four unnamed California cities. The bill would enable two pilot projects in Southern California and two in Northern California.

Congestion pricing plans require drivers to pay a toll to enter specific areas, usually a downtown city center or dense urban core. Existing law prohibits local entities from “imposing a tax, permit fee or other charge” in ways that would create congestion pricing programs, according to the bill text.

The local ordinances would not be mandated and local authorities would be free to craft their ordinances to address community concerns. The bill would only ensure that the local regulations specify the duration of the congestion pricing demonstration pilot project and the amount of congestion pricing charges to be imposed.

Response to the bill is already dividing along expected lines, with transportation advocates in support and business groups voicing caution.

Arizona And California Are Competing To Attract Self-Driving Car Tests

Driverless, fully autonomous Cars may be coming to California and Arizona streets. Close on the approval by the California Office of Administrative Law on February 26th to allow fully autonomous vehicles beginning in April, on March 1st the Arizona Governor issued an executive order allowing fully autonomous cars to operate on Arizona public roads with no safety driver.

Uber, General Motors and Intel have been testing self-driving cars with safety drivers on public roads in Arizona since 2015. Waymo even does so with no driver behind the wheel of its robot cars in Arizona.

Partly because Arizona does not require a permit to test autonomous vehicles on their roads, there are already 600 self-driving cars operating on public roads in Arizona; no permits have been requested yet in California.

Uber removed its self-driving cars from public streets on March 19th following what is believed to be the first fatality involving a fully autonomous car. An autonomous Uber SUV allegedly struck and killed a 49-year-old as she walked her bicycle across a street in Tempe, Arizona, at night on April 18th. The company has previously removed its autonomous vehicles from on-street testing during the investigation of accidents related to its autonomous vehicles.

REGION

Five Metro Green Line Stations to Reopen Six Days Ahead of Schedule

Metro announced on March 28th that five Green Line stations which have been temporarily closed will reopen to the public on April 1st, six days ahead of schedule. The stations that reopened are: Aviation/LAX, Mariposa, El Segundo, Douglas and Redondo Beach. During the closure, new switches and other infrastructure were installed that will allow trains to move between the new Crenshaw/LAX Line and the Green Line, and repair work was also done on the Green Line.

Metro / TSA Test Passenger Screening System to Detect Suicide Vests, Weapons

Metro riders coming down the escalator into Metro Center station in downtown Los Angeles were scanned on March 6th by a new thermal imaging security system designed to detect suicide vests and weapons concealed close to the body.

On a laptop manned by security personnel, an avatar of the passing passenger shows up like a "green ghost" without anatomical details. If the passenger is carrying a concealed item or weapon, the waves are blocked and the corresponding area of the person's body appears black on the avatar. The U.K.-made system, ThruVis TAC, is mobile and can be taken from station to station, allowing for an "element of surprise."

The portable passenger screening system was being tested as part of a partnership between L.A. Metro and the federal Transportation Security Administration. The same system was tested during the previous week by Amtrak at Penn Station in New York City. Metro previously tested two other systems in August and December of last year as part of a pilot program to evaluate security technology.

Metro Approves Equity Platform Framework To Guide Its Project Investments

On March 1st, the L. A. Metro Board approved a Metro Equity Platform Framework to help address historic racial and economic inequity of investments, or to improve "Access to opportunity".

There are four components of the Metro Equity Platform Framework:

- **Define and Measure** – Metro acknowledges that historically and currently, inequity exists and has been largely defined by race and class – as well as age, gender, disability, and residency. Metro commits to working with historically underserved communities to establish meaningful equity goals.
- **Listen and Learn** – Metro establishes forums to engage historically underserved communities, including with community-based organizations. This will include investing in technical capacity for local governments that serve these communities.
- **Focus and Deliver** – Metro will incorporate an equity focus in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Metro will partner to address issues of gentrification / displacement / affordable housing.
- **Train and Grow** – Metro will cultivate top-to-bottom ownership of its equity agenda throughout the agency. This includes internal training and education, including in communications and evaluation methods.

WeHo Looks To Expedite Installation of Traffic Calming Devices & Work With WAZE

The West Hollywood City Council considered on March 5th a proposal to find ways to collaborate with Waze and also to make it easier for the city to install traffic calming measures in multi-family neighborhoods where it is difficult for residents to get signatures on the petitions now required for such installations.

Various neighborhood traffic studies conducted by the city have recommended traffic calming measures such as street lumps or round-a-bouts. However, the city must have approval of at least 51% of a neighborhood's residents to put such measures in place. Residents or neighborhood

groups also can petition City Hall for traffic calming measures, but again they need to collect signatures from 51% of residents. The proposal before the City Council asked that city staffers identify a list of traffic calming measures that could be installed and tested without requiring a petition.

TRENDS

Citing Low Ridership & Costs, Pasadena May Drop Out Of Metro's Bike Share Program

Pasadena spends about \$120,000 each month operating and maintaining the bike share system, which was launched as a two-year pilot last summer. As of March 15th, Pasadena's participation in Metro's bike share program only has enough funding to continue until October, according to a report assembled by Pasadena's Department that concludes "... it is unlikely that continued support for the bike share system in Pasadena can be recommended as fiscally prudent" after the initial city investment is depleted in October.

The report describes how the Pasadena installation of Metro Bike isn't meeting the revenue and ridership expectations officials were presented when they first signed off on the program in late 2016. Metro has yet to secure a systemwide sponsor, bike station advertising has not yet been implemented, and Pasadena's farebox recovery rate—the costs that can be covered by user fares—is just 8%.

In December 2017, the Pasadena part of Metro's bike share system accrued just 0.21 rides per bike per day, among the lowest rate among the bike share areas that also include Downtown, Venice, and Port of LA. According to a Metro report released last month, Metro Bike nets about 0.7 riders per bicycle per day, roughly the same as Oklahoma City's bike share system. Bikes in Washington D.C. and New York's bike share systems, by contrast, respectively see up to 4.5 and 6 rides per day, depending on the season.

Despite the Pasadena experience, Metro is continuing to expand its bike share system throughout Los Angeles County. At a Mid-March meeting of the agency's planning committee, Metro directors signed off on environmental documents related to Phase 3 and Phase 4 of bike share, which would ultimately blanket much of Central Los Angeles with bikes.

Santa Monica Emergency Ordinance Allows Shared Mobility Devices To Be Impounded

Santa Monica City Council voted on March 6th to create an emergency ordinance that allows law enforcement officials to impound any "shared mobility devices" that pose an immediate hazard or obstruct access to public rights-of-way.

The new law targets shared devices like Bird Electric scooters. The company rents from random locations on sidewalks where they have been left by the former renter.

The new ordinance also prohibits offering or displaying a "shared mobility device" from the public right-of-way or public property without City authorization. The ordinance is worded to limit criminal liability on the part of users. Instead, companies that display or offer the scooters for rent would have to pay impound fees and fines for the misdemeanors.

One big advantage of devices like electric scooters is that they don't need to be locked in a certain place and can be left anywhere. However, they're being left in ways that pose safety hazards for other people. In order to keep their business in the city, electric scooter vendors will now need to partner with local businesses and parking lots where users would park their scooters at the end of a ride.

Under the emergency ordinance, effective immediately, leaving a scooter lying across a sidewalk, blocking a doorway or driveway, or otherwise causing a tripping danger is a potentially impoundable offense that incurs a \$60 fee. In addition, the device owner faces fines that rise from \$500 per occurrence. The temporary ordinance expires on January 1, 2019 — a stopgap intended to cut down on issues with the motorized scooters. The city council is expected to have new options for controlling the scooters on the table well in advance of that date. City staff wants to contract with a third party to help enforce the law by removing scooters from the street.

According to current Santa Monica law, the electric scooters shouldn't be used on sidewalks, and only riders with a driver's license should be operating them. In December, the city of Santa Monica filed a criminal case against Bird Rides, Inc., a popular electric scooter manufacturer, accusing it of operating without proper permits. In February, Bird agreed to pay more than \$306,000 in fines and investigative costs as part of a settlement with the city.

While this ordinance focuses on the company, riders can still get tickets from the police department for not wearing a helmet, riding on the sidewalk or without a license. The California Vehicle Code prohibits riding motorized scooters on sidewalks or the beach bike path.

Pedestrians Would Get Frontsees In Musk's Autonomous Transit Tunnel Vision

Elon Musk's has changed his vision for autonomous vehicle tunnels of the future: pedestrians and cyclists would now get frontsees in the entrepreneur's underground Boring Company mass-transit system.

For months, Musk has teased an evolving vision for the sci-fi-movie-style three-dimensional tunnel network, called Loop. A two-mile test track of "Loop" is now under construction, adjacent to Musk's rocket-manufacturing company SpaceX in Hawthorne, running west under 120th Street toward the 405 Freeway. It would connect to the main part of the tunnel network, according to Musk's plans. The main line would run from Long Beach Airport to Sherman Oaks, parallel to the I-405 Freeway. Also, in the plans are short complementary routes from Los Angeles International Airport to Dodger Stadium, and out to the beaches in Santa Monica and the South Bay beach cities.

Pedestrians and bicyclists would speed through the all-electric system inside rectangular 16 passenger "platforms" attached to autonomous skates that travel from the surface via an elevator to a track more than 30 feet below ground. The autonomous pods would travel between 125 and 150 miles per hour between 1,000s of stations the size of a parking space. The passenger "platforms" would be prioritized over motor vehicles through the subway network.