

# South Bay Cities Council of Governments

September 23, 2021

TO: SBCCOG Board of Directors  
FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director  
RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update Covering August 2021

## **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**

### **Senate Approves \$1.2 Trillion Infrastructure Bill, \$3.5 Trillion Budget Reconciliation Plan**

The U. S. Senate approved a sweeping \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill on August 10<sup>th</sup> that includes a substantial increase in funding for roads, broadband, water and energy projects. Immediately after approving the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill, the Senate approved a \$3.5 trillion budget reconciliation blueprint.

Nineteen Republicans joined Democrats to pass the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, HR 3684, which would infuse \$550 billion in new one-time funding and set the rules for core federal transportation programs for the next five years. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released an analysis saying the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package would add \$256 billion to the federal deficit over the next decade.

The bill would provide new funding for a wide range of national programs, including:

- \$110 billion for road and bridge repair and other major surface transportation projects
- \$73 billion to expand clean energy sources and modernize the nation's aging electric grid
- \$66 billion for AMTRAK maintenance and modernization of key corridors
- \$65 billion to connect rural and low-income neighborhoods with broadband
- \$55 billion to modernize water systems and expand water recycling / storage projects
- \$55 billion for safety programs for highways
- \$39 billion for buses and rail transit repair and transit expansion to underserved areas
- \$15 billion to replace about 1/3 of lead pipes across the country
- \$11 billion for pedestrian safety, including a \$5 billion Safe Streets For All program
- \$7.5 billion for 250,000 electric vehicle charging stations across the country

- \$7.5 billion to convert school buses and ferries to use electric power
- \$3.2 billion to upgrade dams, canals and water infrastructure
- \$2 billion to expand roads, bridges and rural transportation projects
- \$1.2 billion for wildfire risk reduction and restoration of damaged public assets
- \$1 billion to re-connect neighborhoods severed by freeways

Immediately after approving the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill, the Senate approved a budget reconciliation blueprint that includes a \$3.5 trillion top line and broad instructions for drafting the spending plan Democrats want to pass this fall without GOP votes. The spending plan includes many of progressives' top policy priorities, such as paid family leave, a universal prekindergarten program, expanded Medicare, combating climate change, and legislating a pathway to citizenship for some immigrants. The Senate voted 50-49 on August 10<sup>th</sup> to take up a budget resolution that includes instructions on how to draft the spending package. No Republicans voted to start the budget debate.

To pay for the new infrastructure spending, President Biden has previously called on Congress to raise the corporate tax rate from 21 percent to 28 percent. The Democrats' budget resolution would raise taxes on the American corporations and on families earning more than \$400,000 annually while providing tax relief for families and low-income individuals, including extending the child tax credit.

However, the specifics of the sources of new taxes needed to fund the \$3.5 trillion programs will be worked out by Congressional committees responsible for the various program budgets.

Buried in the Senate infrastructure bill is another funding source, a new pilot project in which the federal government will study the feasibility of a vehicle mile tax or VMT. The purpose of the VMT is to charge a tax for every mile driven to fund the Federal Highway Trust Fund which is in danger of being insolvent.

The pilot program will solicit volunteers from diverse areas in all 50 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico. These volunteers will install a mileage tracking program in their cars. The bill states that mileage can be tracked a number of ways including smartphone apps, third-party on-board diagnostic (OBD) devices, and data collected by automakers and insurance companies. The amount of the VMT will be based on the type and weight of the vehicle based on their estimated impacts on infrastructure, safety, congestion, and the environment.

The House interrupted its previously scheduled seven-week summer recess and returned to session on August 23<sup>rd</sup> to consider the budget resolution and a voting rights bill. Democratic leaders in the House are expected to link passage of the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill to the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill.

## State

### **Prop. 22 Is Ruled Unconstitutional, A Blow To Independent Contracting In California**

A California Superior Court judge in Alameda County ruled on August 20<sup>th</sup> that parts of Proposition 22, which allowed app-based ride-hailing and delivery companies to classify their

workers as independent contractors, are unconstitutional, rendering the ballot measure unenforceable.

The judge also noted that, by including language aimed at preventing drivers from unionizing, Proposition 22 also violated a constitutional provision that requires laws and initiatives to be limited to a single subject.

The judge's opinion held that the law infringes on the power of the Legislature explicitly granted by the state Constitution to regulate compensation for workers' injuries. So, changing the law would require a constitutional amendment rather than an initiative statute. And, since a ballot initiative cannot be amended after it is passed by voters, any unconstitutional provision renders it unenforceable.

Ride-hailing company Uber vowed to appeal. Uber and other gig economy companies spent more than \$220 million last year in the nation's costliest-ever ballot initiative campaign to exempt their drivers from a 2019 law, AB 5, that requires gig workers across many industries to be classified as employees with benefits such as minimum wage, overtime and workers' compensation in case of injury.

After consideration by the state court of appeals, the judge's ruling will likely be decided by the California Supreme Court.

### **Caltrans Approves \$82 Million For 134 Projects To Reduce GhG Emissions And Improve Transportation Options For Low-Income Communities**

Caltrans announced on August 5<sup>th</sup> \$82 million in Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) grants to 134 local public transportation projects throughout the state. The LCTOP funds are targeted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve transportation sustainability by providing new and expanded bus and rail service for disadvantaged and low-income communities.

LCTOP is funded by the Cap-and-Trade Program from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. The Cap-and-Trade Program is one of many programs developed under AB 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, implemented to fight climate change.

The only project approved in L. A. County during this cycle is \$21 million to L. A. Metro for a fare-less system pilot project for low-income riders and K-12 students on the Crenshaw/LAX light rail line. Around the state, Caltrans funded the following types of projects from the LCTOP program:

- 31 projects offering free or reduced fares to encourage lifelong transit users, including young riders, seniors, veterans and persons with disabilities
- 31 projects providing new and expanded transit service for better access to jobs and educational sites, as well as expanding transit options that serve priority populations
- 22 projects purchasing zero-emission vehicles and related equipment/infrastructure
- 16 projects purchasing, constructing or installing infrastructure, equipment, or facilities to support zero-emission vehicle(s)

## **Autonomous Ride-Hailing Gets The Go-Ahead In California From CPUC**

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) in June 2021 gave the authority to Cruise, a subsidiary of General Motors, to operate an autonomous-vehicle car service on a pilot basis in the nation's first ride-hailing operation using driverless vehicles.

Vehicles will be limited to a maximum capacity of 15 passengers, and the service will be free for riders to use. As part of the permit, Cruise will submit data on vehicle operations to the CPUC each quarter and will submit plans to minimize risk to passengers while in the vehicles, how it will allow passengers to safely board and exit, and how it will educate the public about the vehicles and their use.

The announcement follows the CPUC's issuance last fall of a permit to Nuro, an operator of driverless delivery vehicles, to operate a fee-based delivery service in the state.

## **Region**

### **Free Gameday Bus Shuttle To Run Between SoFi Stadium And Hawthorne/Lennox Green Line Station**

Visitors to SoFi Stadium during pre-season and regular Rams and Chargers NFL games will be able to take a free Metro bus shuttle from and to the Hawthorne/Lennox C (Green) Line Station or a \$4 GTrans Stadium Express bus from the Harbor Gateway Transit Center. Metro bus lines 115, 117 and 212 also serve the Inglewood Entertainment District.

The Metro bus shuttles will arrive every 5-8 minutes starting about three hours before kick-off and ending about 1 1/2 hours after each game. The service will also be run "as needed" during games. The shuttle will be available for a total of three pre-season games and 18 regular season games.

The Metro shuttles will load and unload on northbound Hawthorne Boulevard, just south of the Hawthorne/Lennox Station. The Metro C Line typically runs every 15 minutes between Norwalk and Redondo Beach, and many stations along the line have free parking on weekends.

Beginning Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>, GTrans will offer its Line 7X Stadium Express bus service to Inglewood Sports and Entertainment District and SoFi Stadium from the Harbor Gateway Transit Center every Sunday. Service begins at 9 am and runs through 10 pm. For more info visit [ridegtrans.com](http://ridegtrans.com).

### **LADOT Releases Study On Improving Transportation For Women In LA; Pilots Variable Stops**

Hoping to identify improvements that could better tailor transit systems to meet the needs of women, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation released a study on July 30<sup>th</sup>, on mobility challenges women face. The study focused on women in Sun Valley, Watts and Sawtelle, who were chosen to represent different demographics in Los Angeles.

According to "Changing Lanes: A Gender Equity Transportation Study," women are less likely to have a driver's license and access to a vehicle than men. More than half the women on the L. A. Metro system have children. At the same time, they're more likely to take trips that require multiple stops because they are often responsible for a larger share of household and childcare-

related duties. They're also more likely to be carrying strollers and shopping bags, as well as to be accompanied by children. According to the study, even transit infrastructure is designed using men's bodies instead of women, which makes grab bars, handles, ramps, curbs and seats less effective for women.

The "Changing Lanes" study listed recommended LADOT goals for implementing programs to improve women's safety when traveling. In addition, the department announced an "on demand" pilot program to make DASH service more convenient and to address safety concerns. The pilot program, which began in August for Panorama City, Watts, Pico-Union and El Sereno DASH routes, enables riders to get off their bus anywhere along the route, instead of only at designated bus stops.

## **Trends**

### **Toronto Signals Give Pedestrians A Head Start To Improve Safety**

Over the past three years, Toronto has installed a new road safety measure at hundreds of intersections. More than 150 walk signals give pedestrians a 5-second head start at busy intersections before vehicles are permitted to enter the intersection in a bid to decrease traffic deaths and injuries.

There's no data available yet on the impact of advanced pedestrian walk signals in Toronto's streets but research from the National Association of City Transportation Officials suggests they can reduce collisions involving pedestrians by up to 60 per cent simply by making pedestrians more visible to drivers.

### **As Workers Are In The Office Fewer Days, The Rush Hour Commute Could Change For Good**

An upheaval in commuting patterns may be afoot as employees change how often they return to their office desks — if at all. With more offices expected to slowly re-open after Labor Day, transportation experts have predicted that up to 18% will work remotely at least some days each week. And the pace of re-opening offices may be further tamped down by the appearance of the Delta variant and the new CDC indoor mask rules.

The questions being pondered by traffic and transit planners is how fast folks come back, how frequently they come back, and whether there's flexibility on when they must be in the office. In addition, the rise of the delta variant highlights planners' commuting concern: Calling people back to the office before they are ready to ride increasingly crowded buses and trains could lead many to drive solo, potentially canceling out any traffic relief that increased teleworking would bring.

In addition to tracking transit ridership and roadway congestion, planners are monitoring parking transactions in several large cities with major mass-transit systems. Their data points to the possibility that more commuters are driving (filling spaces to between 70 and 90% of pre-COVID levels), but they are not purchasing as many monthly parking passes. Instead, they are asking for a more flexible price break that matches their new hybrid schedules.

If employer-provided parking becomes more available because some workers stay home, previous Metro riders would have a new incentive to drive, officials say. Others might be more willing to pay hefty private parking fees if they only have to do so a couple times a week. And there is a hopeful theory that workers will be more willing to bike or walk to work if they only have to do so a few days per week.

Experts say they expect a gradual increase in commuters over the coming months, rather than a sudden rush back to the office, assuming the spread of the delta variant doesn't push back re-openings. However, traffic volumes are expected to be spread more throughout the day, revealing more flexible commute times and teleworkers escaping home computers midday to work out or run errands. Even a slight reduction in traffic has an outsized impact on heavily congested roads, experts say, because traffic flows freely once it drops below about 80 percent of a road's capacity. Increasing teleworking has long been viewed as a relatively simple way to ease backups because it removes vehicles from the morning and evening rush, when road capacity is most overtaxed.

Afternoon traffic is expected to bounce back faster than in the mornings, experts say, because commuters typically tack on more personal trips, such as a grocery store run, on their way home. Transit ridership has produced another surprise. Although weekday ridership is slowly rising, weekend ridership has grown significantly faster.

### **Employees That Work Remotely From The Office May Face A Pay Cut**

Employers and employees alike are needing to consider previously work/life balance issues that were not significant before work-from-home became a reality. Employee compensation is just one of the challenges needing to be addressed if employers allow or encourage flexible work locations.

For example, Google employees may have to take a pay cut to change their permanent work location. To attract the most qualified employees in the Silicon Valley's hyper-competitive human resource market place, Google has a policy that its pay rates factor in the actual cost differences of working at differing Google worksites. Google pays the top rate specific to the city and state where the employee permanently works.

A Google employee who decides to ditch their two-hour commute to permanently work in a remote Google office or from home could see their commute costs drop dramatically, but they face a pay cut by about 5-25% because their remote site is a less expensive work location than the previous office location. Facebook and Twitter also cut pay for remote employees who move to less expensive areas, while smaller companies including Reddit and Zillow have shifted to location-agnostic pay models, citing advantages when it comes to hiring, retention and diversity.

Google launched a Work Location Tool in June to assist employees in calculating the potential salary effect of changing their work location. The pay calculator analyzes the financial impacts of a potential Google employee's move from working at the office to working from a remote location using U.S. Census Bureau metropolitan statistical areas, or CBSAs. The company will not change an employee's salary based on them going from office work to being fully remote in the same statistical area where their current office is located.

It will be interesting to monitor how compensation and other obsolete human resources policies at Google and other forward-thinking employers are modified to account for changing work pattern of their employees who permanently are allowed to work remotely either full time or part time. Although the employee will certainly save commute costs and the environment will benefit from reduced work-related VMT, employers like Google will need to adapt their human resources policies to reflect the new work / life balance options to attract and retain top drawer talent.