

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

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RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update – February 2014

Federal Update

FY 2014 Federal Spending Bill Includes Funding for Two Metro Rail Extensions and Provisions Requiring FAA To Limit Helicopter Noise

Congress passed and President Obama signed a \$1.1 trillion FY 2014 Omnibus Spending Bill on January 17th designed to avoid another government shutdown that includes \$600 million for new discretionary TIGER investments, \$2.13 billion for capital investment grants and provisions to limit helicopter noise through voluntary means or regulation.

The capital grants are expected to allow federal grants of \$65 million to be awarded each for the Wilshire Purple Line subway extension from Wilshire Boulevard and Western Avenue to Wilshire and La Cienega Boulevard, and the Downtown Connector tunnel to link the Gold Line from Pasadena and East L.A. to the Blue Line from Long Beach and to the Exposition Line from Santa Monica.

The bill was based on a budget compromise negotiated at the end of 2013 by Senate Budget Committee Chairwoman Patty Murray (D-WA) and House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI), which set an overall fiscal year 2014 funding level for discretionary spending.

The budget agreement limited nondefense discretionary spending to about \$492 billion in FY 2014, about \$22 billion more than the spending limit previously imposed by sequestration.

The 1,582-page omnibus spending measure would also require the Federal Aviation Administration to step up efforts to reduce helicopter noise over the Los Angeles area. The measure directs the FAA, within a year of passage, to begin writing rules to reduce helicopter noise in the Los Angeles area unless it can show that voluntary efforts are working. An FAA study last year recommended a voluntary approach rather than government regulation to reduce helicopter noise, citing the complexity of the region's airspace and its high number of aircraft. However, the bill authors have gotten impatient and the language directs the Secretary of Transportation to adjust helicopter routes if that would reduce noise over neighborhoods; promote "best practices for helicopter hovering and electronic news gathering, conduct outreach to helicopter pilots" to inform them of voluntary policies and increase their awareness of noise-sensitive areas and events; and work with local groups to develop a more comprehensive noise-complaint system.

President Obama includes transportation funding in State of the Union Speech

Obama called in his State of the Union speech on January 28th for using revenue from closing tax loopholes to pay for new infrastructure projects. He called on Congress to approve a new surface transportation funding bill by "this summer." Some transportation advocates were disappointed

that Obama did not promote a new dedicated source of transportation to supplement or replace the 18.4 cents-per-gallon federal gas tax. Although the gas tax brings in approximately \$35 billion per year that is used to pay for road and transit projects, the current surface transportation measure, MAP-21, which is scheduled to expire in September, includes about \$54 billion in annual spending.

Sacramento Update

Backers Delay Proposed California Car-tax Hike Initiative

Proponents of an initiative ballot measure to more than double the vehicle-license fee to pay for road improvements decided on January 28th to drop efforts to put it on the November ballot. The "California Road Repairs Act of 2014" would have phased in a 1 percent hike in the license fee - the equivalent of property tax rate on a home -- to raise from \$3 billion to \$4 billion annually. The fee has been .65 percent of a vehicle's market value since the late 1990s, with a temporary increase to 1.15 percent from May 2009 through June 2011.

Governor Brown Proposes Cap-and-trade Money For High-speed Rail, Sustainability

Governor Jerry Brown submitted an annual state budget on January 10th that proposed spending \$600 million in fees paid by carbon producers to help fund sustainability of the state's transportation system. The Governor's proposed budget includes \$100 million in Sustainable Communities, \$200 million in clean transportation including rebates and subsidies for the purchase of low and zero emissions cars, heavy-duty vehicles, and buses, \$250 million for high-speed rail, and \$50 million for intercity rail modernization.

Though the state has acquired \$3.4 billion in federal funding to start construction of the high speed rail project in the Central Valley, legal challenges have left state bond funding in question. Brown has made high-speed rail a priority of his administration, and he suggested two years ago that cap-and-trade revenue, which is designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, would be a future source of funding for the project. But the use of cap-and-trade money for high-speed rail could be problematic since the benefits would not be seen until after 2020, the year by which California is seeking to meet its greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Independent Review Critical Of Caltrans

An independent review of the California Department of Transportation, released January 30th, called for sweeping reforms of the department to improve mobility in the face of environmental challenges and a decline in the number of miles driven by Californians.

The review found long-standing problems in Caltrans operations, including "a mission, vision and set of goals that are not well aligned" with current needs, such as legislation that mandates improved mobility while reducing traffic demand and greenhouse-gas emissions. Caltrans' management practices were described as "out of date," with no serious metrics to tie managers' performance to accomplishing the department's missions. The review also cited "a culture of fear" within Caltrans when it comes to deviating from standard policies.

Brian Kelly, Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency, which includes Caltrans, concurred that culture change would be key to getting better results from Caltrans, including a new emphasis on keeping highways in good repair. "It's not OK to have highways ranked 48th

nationally in terms of pavement condition” yet still prioritize new construction, he said and continued, “ ‘Fix it first’ makes sense,” given current resources.

Governor Jerry Brown ordered the review last May. The \$270,000 study was conducted by the State Smart Transportation Initiative at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Southern California Update

Metro breaks ground on new \$2 billion Crenshaw/LAX Light Rail Line

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on January 21st for the estimated \$2 billion, 8.5-mile Crenshaw/LAX light rail line. In addition to Metro Board members, guests also included U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer and South Bay Congresswoman Maxine Waters.

The new line, slated for completion in 2019, will begin at the corner of Exposition and Crenshaw boulevards in the West Adams neighborhood of Los Angeles and proceed south along Crenshaw into Inglewood. From there, the trains will go southwest along Florence Avenue across the 405 Freeway. At that point the line turns south, where it connects to the Green Line at the Century/Aviation station. As part of the project, a northern branch of the Green Line will be constructed between the current Green Line at Imperial Boulevard and the Century / Aviation station. Metro and Los Angeles World Airports are also studying how to connect both the Crenshaw Line and the Green Line to LAX (See next story).

Although most of the project funding comes from Measure R, the federal government is funding about \$130 million of the project and offering a TIFIA loan for another \$550 million of construction costs.

Metro Bifurcates Study of LAX Rail Connector Alternatives; Airlines Express Concerns

The Metro Board decided at its January 23rd meeting to initially undertake an environmental clearance process of four alternatives for connecting the LAX terminals and the Crenshaw-LAX light rail line. One approach would bring an LAX automated people mover (APM) out from the terminals nearly two miles to the east, to meet the Crenshaw-LAX line at the planned Aviation/Century station. Another calls for a ground-level or aerial station at Aviation Boulevard and 96th Street, paid for by the airport. The third option, proposed by L. A. City Mayor Eric Garcetti and Councilman Mike Bonin, would shift the Crenshaw line to the west, where it would link up near east of Sepulveda Boulevard near Parking Lot C with the APM at a new Intermodal Transportation Facility that would also incorporate a proposed shuttle bus and rental car hub. Under the final option, a light-rail station would be built near the eastern entrance to LAX at a proposed Consolidated Rental Car facility east of Aviation and north of Century to connect with the APM.

Metro staff had initially proposed to eliminate two alternatives that would construct a light rail subway directly through the terminal area due to concerns about construction risks of tunneling under runways and an estimated \$3-billion price tag. Other board members supported continued consideration of the tunnel alternatives until the combined cost and ridership estimates for the APM and light rail alternatives have been documented adequately to allow a decision to be made. After a heated and lengthy debate, the Metro board agreed to initiate the environmental documentation needed for the four options and to complete a more detailed review of cost and ridership estimates of building stations under the airport outside the formal environmental process for now.

A conversation at the January 13th LA City Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) Commission was more blunt and reminiscent of the debate in the 1980's that prevented the Green Line from being built into the airport and extended up Lincoln Boulevard to Playa Vista. LAWA Executive Director Gina Marie Lindsey said the airlines (her tenants) have little interest in APM and ITC proposed by Garcetti and Bonin because they have higher priorities for improvements in the terminal areas, they do not expect increased customers due to ground improvements, and they'll have to pay for the improvements, either directly or indirectly.

But L.A. Councilman Mike Bonin, whose district includes the airport, said in a January 15th *Daily Breeze* article that, whether airlines want it or not, the city will build what it needs. "It's hardly a revelation that the airlines have little interest in growing transportation," Bonin said. "All they care about is that you are at the airport. They don't care if it took you three or four hours to get there. Our commitment as owners and operators of the airport requires us to be competitive for the customer experience. Traditionally, it's an area where LAX has fallen down. Ground transportation improvements at the airport are absolutely essential for the passengers, the airport and the airport neighbors," Bonin said. "We certainly understand it is not a top priority for the airlines but it is a top priority for everyone else and it absolutely needs to happen."

"Rail to River" Greenbelt Concept Proposed for South L.A.

L. A. Metro has launched a feasibility study for an 8.3-mile greenbelt that would transform the Harbor Sub-division rail right of way owned by Metro east of the Crenshaw LAX route into a path of greenery and trails to include walking and cycling paths, and the lighting and security features necessary to make it a safe place to be.

The new project is called the Rail to River project because it starts on its western end at Florence Avenue and West Boulevard near the future Crenshaw/LAX Metro rail line, moves north to Slauson and goes east to Santa Fe, where it turns north and heads toward the river. The corridor route would allow a bicyclist to connect easily to the bicycle path along the L.A. River.

Officials have yet to determine the design, how much the project would cost to construct and maintain, or how to fund the project. In addition, BNSF Railway would have to relinquish the operating easement it retained when it sold the rail right of way to Metro.

Metro might also have to reimburse the Proposition A rail account which was used for the purchase of the right of way if it was determined that the route would no longer be used for rail purposes. A similar project built by the City of Culver City in the early '90s on Culver Boulevard was designated an interim use with a 30-day cancellable lease between the city and Metro to avoid having to repay the Proposition A rail account.

"Jamzilla" Closure Coming To The I-405 Northbound Lanes on Presidents Day Weekend

Los Angeles Metro, Caltrans, Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), and a host of law enforcement and emergency response agencies throughout L.A. County on January 15th initiated a public awareness campaign to alert I-405 motorists of an unprecedented 80-hour northbound I-405 freeway lane closure operation in the Sepulveda Pass on Presidents' Day weekend, February 14 to 18, 2014. The campaign hopes to distinguish the upcoming closure from the previous 2011 and 2012 "Carmageddon" closures during which a bridge above the I-405 was removed in less time and with less traffic impact than anticipated.

The I-405 contractor will be paving a major segment of the future northbound I-405 High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane in the Sepulveda Pass. The work is considered key to meeting

the project's scheduled completion date of 2014 since it will eliminate the need for several consecutive 55-hour freeway closures from the project schedule. Although the closure is being timed to take advantage of the three-day weekend, congestion will be compounded by the fact that the Northern Trust Open will be held the same weekend at the Riviera Country Club on Sunset Boulevard west of the I-405.

Traffic conditions on local streets and freeways within the region of Los Angeles County and beyond could become severe, with significant, hours-long delays if motorists do not cooperate with authorities and limit northbound freeway trips. Motorists who must travel during this weekend are advised to prepare their itineraries in advance, monitor real-time traffic conditions prior to beginning their trips and follow alternate routes that are provided. Motorists will be continually informed of the closure in advance by Caltrans-operated freeway message signs.

The closure plan consists of a partial day-time lane reduction and a full night-time freeway closure on the northbound I-405 between Getty Center Drive and Ventura Boulevard. The closure area is approximately 5.6 miles long, or nearly two-thirds of the entire I-405 project area.

During daytime hours, two northbound lanes will remain open while the remaining three lanes will be closed. During night-time hours, all five northbound freeway lanes in this area will be closed. The southbound I-405 will remain fully open during the day, but some southbound lanes may be closed during night-time only paving operations.

Work is scheduled to begin Friday night, February 14 starting at 11 p.m. and will last until Tuesday, February 18 at 6 a.m. Ramps within the project area will begin to close as early as 7 p.m. Full northbound night-time freeway closure times are as follows:

- Friday night, February 14 – 1 a.m. to 6 a.m.
- Saturday night, February 15 - 2 a.m. to 7 a.m.
- Sunday night, February 16 – 12 a.m. to 5 a.m.
- Monday night, February 17 – 12 a.m. to 5 a.m.

The designated alternative route for night-time full closures will be for motorists to take the Wilshire northbound to westbound off-ramp to northbound Sepulveda Boulevard, returning to northbound I-405 at the Greenleaf northbound on-ramp. Sepulveda Boulevard also will be fully open with two lanes in each direction during the paving operation.

The I-10 connector ramps to the northbound I-405 also will be closed. Motorists detouring from the closed I-10 connectors should use freeway detour routes rather than local streets. The connector detour routes will be as follows:

- For eastbound I-10 to northbound I-405 – use northbound I-110, northbound US 101, to northbound I-405.
- For westbound I-10 to northbound I-405 – use northbound I-5, westbound SR 134, northbound US 101, to northbound I-405.

The paving is more complex, requires new construction and is more time-consuming than the bridge demolitions of 2011 and 2012. The contractor must pour 4 layers and allow time for each layer to dry. In order to complete as much paving work as possible, the contractor will use new

polyester pavement that cures and reaches specified strength within hours instead of days, and provides an extremely durable roadway surface. The contractor also must shift the freeway centerline 20 feet to the west for approximately 1,000 feet as the northbound I-405 winds its way down into the San Fernando Valley. There was no room for the freeway to be widened to the east due to the existence of a multi-residential building adjacent to the northbound I-405 in Sherman Oaks. Approximately 1,700 feet of freeway and shoulder lanes must be completely excavated and rebuilt in order to realign the freeway and new approaches to the connector ramps at the I-405 and I-101 will need to be constructed.

The paving progress will also depend on the weather. The polyester paving requires favorable temperatures in order to cure properly and gain strength. In the event of inclement weather during the 80-hour closure, the project will revert to the previously planned continuous 55-hour weekend closures of the northbound freeway starting the following weekend, February 21 for up to four weekends to complete work.

Metro Proposes New Fare Structure

The Metro Board approved release of a fare restructuring proposal on January 23rd that would raise fares in three phases over the next eight years while also allowing riders to board an unlimited number of buses and trains for 90 minutes in any direction for a single fare. The proposal is a notable departure from the current fare system that requires passengers to pay a full fare for each individual ride on a Metro bus or train — which effectively punishes those who must transfer to reach their destinations (Metro customer surveys indicate more than half of its riders transfer to reach their destination).

A public hearing on the fare proposals is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on March 29th, at Metro headquarters in downtown Los Angeles. No fare changes can take effect until the Metro Board votes to approve them, which is scheduled for consideration on May 22nd. If approved, the new fares could take effect on September 1st.

The proposal includes two options for restructuring fares. The first option would raise the base fare from the current \$1.50 to \$1.75 for the next four years and eventually to \$2.25. The second option would keep the base fare at \$1.50 during off-peak hours and raise it to \$2.25 during peak hours for the next four years and eventually to \$2 in off-peak hours and \$3.25 in peak hours. Under the proposal, the cost of daily, weekly and monthly prices would rise because pass holders tend to be the heaviest users of the system. Another significant change would be the eventual elimination of the current monthly pass in favor of the EZ pass that would allow for unlimited travel on Metro and other bus systems in Los Angeles County. The ability to transfer for free within 90 minutes would only be available to those with TAP cards since TAP cards track how long people are riding the system.

Metro last raised the price of the regular base fare and daily, weekly and monthly passes in July 2010. Fares for seniors, disabled and students were not raised at the time because they had been frozen by Measure R for five years.