

# South Bay Cities Council of Governments

September 9, 2019

TO: SBCCOG Steering Committee

FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director

RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update Covering August 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.

## **National League Of Cities Urges Consideration of Congestion Pricing**

The National League of Cities (NLC) released a guide, Making Space: Congestion Pricing in Cities, in August encouraging cities to consider congestion pricing to ease traffic, improve citizens' quality of life, and gain revenue for infrastructure maintenance and upgrades.

The guide advises small and medium-size cities to ensure the congestion pricing concept is implemented in an equitable way and that residents have access to reliable alternative transportation. In concert with new tolls, the NLC recommends cities set up pricing structures — such as including toll exemptions or rebates — to fairly charge fees to reduce congestion without disproportionately burdening low-income residents.

The guide also examines congestion pricing under a future that includes significant growth in the role of autonomous vehicles in the transportation network. It explains that requesting a car service instead of owning a car will become cheaper and more competitive once ride-hailing companies roll out autonomous vehicles (AVs). However, a significant growth in AVs could lead to a further burden on cities' streets and infrastructure if left unchecked. On a more positive note, the report estimates about 33% of ride-hailing vehicle miles traveled in the cities studied currently comes from drivers waiting for a ride request. But implementing congestion pricing could prompt AVs to make different driving decisions and unclog roads.

## **U.S. Regulators Move To Ease Drive-Time Rules For Truckers**

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on August 14<sup>th</sup> covering potential changes in the existing Hours of Service (HOS) rules for commercial drivers. ' FMCSA proposed changes in the length of required breaks, off-duty hours between shifts, and implementing separate maximum on-duty periods for short-haul trips versus trips over 150 air miles.

The current regulations limit long-haul truckers to 11 hours of driving time within a 14-hour on-duty window. Drivers must have had 10 consecutive hours off duty before the on-duty clock starts anew. A driver who will be driving more than eight hours must take a 30-minute off-duty break before hitting the eight-hour mark.

The administration also is proposing to allow drivers to “pause” the 14-hour driving window for an off-duty break of up to three hours, typically taken while the truck is being loaded or unloaded, provided the trucker still takes the 10 consecutive hours off duty at the end of the work shift.

Although the FMCSA estimates that proposed rule changes are estimated to save \$274 million in trucking costs, opponents to the rule changes note that there were 4,657 large trucks involved in fatal crashes in 2017, a 10% increase from the year before and the number of short haul incidents were more than 300 times higher than long distance trip incidents.

The new rules are in a 45-day public comment period. There is no estimate when final rules will be issued.

### **Consumer Reports Attacks Trump’s Proposal To Freeze Fuel Economy Standards**

Consumer Reports has issued a report that undermines President Trump’s proposal to cap fuel economy standards at 2020 levels instead of letting them become stricter each year. The President’s plan would also strip California of its authority to regulate tailpipe emissions. The organization claims capping vehicle efficiency standards would result in higher costs for motorists without doing anything to boost highway safety.

The Transportation Department and the Environmental Protection Agency argued that their proposal would lower the cost of new automobiles and save as many as 1,000 lives annually by incentivizing drivers to trade in older vehicles for newer, safer ones. Consumer Reports countered that the effects on safety from changes in fuel-economy standards are quite small and likely not statistically different from zero. The Consumer Reports analysis also paints a starkly different picture of potential costs for drivers, by highlighting the importance of fuel savings rather than vehicle purchase prices. The administration has acknowledged its proposed freeze could cause the United States to forego savings of 500,000 barrels of oil daily.

Because most buyers of new vehicles finance their purchases, they can start feeling the benefits of lower fuel costs right away by driving higher consumer spending and more purchases of newer, safer vehicles.

Four major automakers said last month that they had reached a compromise with California to voluntarily boost fuel efficiency, a move seen aimed at pressuring the administration to shift course.

## **STATE**

### **Complete Streets Bill Threatened By Dept of Finance Concern Over Cost Estimates**

The Complete Streets for All Bill (S. B. 127) would require Caltrans to incorporate complete street designs—safety considerations for people on foot and on bikes—into all of its road repair projects. It also requires Caltrans to track complete streets better, and assign employees specifically to do so.

SBCCOG is opposed to the bill. Caltrans is already required to incorporate complete streets elements into projects when it is appropriate. Caltrans is claiming that S.B. 127 could cost California an extra \$1 billion a year, or \$4.5 million per centerline mile, a figure that the author of the bill, Senator Scott Weiner, calls incredible. The State Department of Finance also opposes the bill because it significantly increases state costs and makes it more difficult

for the state to meet the goals outlined in Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 (SB 1, Beall, 2017).

Supporters of the measure contend that the Caltrans cost estimate assumes the state highways would have to be widened to accommodate the active transportation elements. However, the bill provides an out for Caltrans by requiring a single public hearing to discuss why Caltrans believes it can't deliver complete streets elements for a project.

The Appropriations Committee placed the bill in suspense to allow financial impact analysis. The committee had until Friday, August 30 to decide the fate of those bills that it has been holding in suspense.

## **REGION**

### **Metro Ridership Falls; New Strategies Being Developed To Speed Buses**

L. A. Metro buses provided about 276 million total bus rides last year. That is down 24% since 2013, significantly higher than drops in public-transit usage in other major cities like New York, Chicago, Denver and Phoenix. Metro's rail ridership declined 5% in the same period, despite the opening of new rail lines.

Metro buses currently average 11 miles per hour. So Metro is evaluating a range of options to attract riders with increased speeds including bus rapid transit in dedicated lanes, traffic signal priority for buses, off board fare collection, and all door boarding.

Metro is also completing its Next Gen Bus study of how to revamp its bus network to increase service effectiveness and efficiency. The recommended route and service changes should be released in December with a goal of beginning an 18-month implementation program in June 2020.

## **TRENDS**

### **D.C. Tests System That Allows Delivery Drivers To Reserve Space At The Curb**

Delivery drivers jockeying for parking on D.C. streets can now reserve curb space in advance — part of the city's attempts to discourage double-parked vehicles that block traffic, bike lanes and crosswalks.

A 12-week pilot project launched on August 2<sup>nd</sup> allows delivery drivers, including those in private vehicles, to reserve curb space in nine areas of the city via the website [curbFlow](#). Motorists may reserve space up to 30 minutes in advance and remain as long as they are actively loading or unloading.

City officials say they plan to use the data to determine how to better manage — and possibly expand — commercial loading zones. CurbFlow staff will record the types of vehicles that use the delivery zones, as well as their arrival and departure times. Three to five parking spaces will be removed from each of the nine curbFlow locations during the pilot project, a District Department of Transportation spokeswoman said. Street parking will be removed to make way for the loading zones.

Cities that use a reservation system long-term could charge user fees to pay for it and to recoup any revenue lost from eliminating parking meters. Taxis and ride-hailing companies

aren't permitted to use curbFlow during the test phase. But during the testing, curbFlow representatives also won't have any authority to prevent drivers from idling or parking without a reservation.

A study by transportation consultant Fehr & Peers that Uber funded found that cities could make their curbs more "productive" by consolidating commercial loading zones to accommodate larger trucks and replacing street parking with more loading and pickup areas. Cities also could allot curb space differently, such as for deliveries in the mornings and afternoons, for passenger pickups and drop-offs during busy commuting periods and for resident parking overnight, the study found.

### **Walkability Is Key To Whether People Will Use Parks, Neighborhood Green Spaces**

Walkability is more important than proximity in determining whether people use a park or neighborhood green space. People are unlikely to visit their neighborhood park often unless they perceive the park to be easy and safe to get to on foot, according to a study published in the October 2019 journal *Landscape and Urban Planning*.

For the small, localized study, the researchers surveyed 103 users of the Rillito River Park in Tucson, Arizona, as well as an additional 309 residents of two adjacent neighborhoods, including a high-density one. The park was selected "because it has many amenities and infrastructure including bicycle paths, dirt trails, parking, restroom facilities, and drinking fountains," the researchers explain. It is also a linear park that connects with other green spaces in the region.

The surveys revealed that people who said their primary way of getting to the park was on foot were 3,500 times more likely to use the green space daily than those who said they drove to the park. The major factor in whether people perceived that the park was easy to walk to had to do with traffic safety. But busy roads weren't the only barriers. The way some neighborhoods are designed — with many cul-de-sacs or dead-end roads, for example — can also keep residents living near a park from easily accessing it on foot.

The study also identified two additional factors that influence people's use of neighborhood green spaces: their sense of *community* ("how many opportunities for social interaction exist within a neighborhood") and their perception of *surveillance* ("how well residents inside buildings can see outside into the neighborhood"). Residents were also more likely to visit the nearby park, the study found, if homes in their immediate neighborhood had front porches and were set close to the street and if larger residential buildings had front doors and windows that face the street.

### **Paying Transit Fares With Plastic - Plastic Bottles, That Is!**

Plastic bottles are now valid fare to ride the subway in Rome, Italy, Fast Company and several travel sites recently reported. You'll need 30 bottles to get enough credit for one trip, which can be deposited into special fare machines at certain stations. This initiative is part of an effort to incentivize greater collection and recycling of plastic in Rome that follows a similar move by Istanbul, Turkey and Surabaya.

For Rome, Istanbul and Surabaya, though, it's not just about reducing plastic waste. These cities are also trying to get more users to take public transit, which can reduce the number of cars on the road. Considering that plastic is manufactured from fossil fuels, most often petroleum, making transit free—or de-facto free—through plastic collection

schemes can reduce emissions and waste while putting cities on the path toward meeting their sustainability goals.

### **Bird Shuttlers Bike Lane Repair Safety Program**

Micro-mobility firm Bird quietly phased out a program earlier this year to help cities pay for protected bike lanes and improve infrastructure earlier this year over concerns about how the money was being spent.

The program had been established to set aside \$1 per scooter per day to pay for bike lane maintenance in an attempt to improve safety by smoothing the rough curb lane surfaces that are typically designated for bikes and scooters. Damaged roads can be even more unsafe to scooter riders than bicyclists because the tires are smaller and riders may have less control.

The company's Save Our Sidewalks (SOS) pledge sought to create best practices, and the bike lane funding program was a much-hyped strategy to work with governments to improve safety. A Bird spokesperson said that most cities were taking the dollars they were getting out of the program and plugging budget holes as opposed to plugging potholes. Although some cities used the funding to repair bike lanes, others had simply put it into the public works budget without earmarking it for scooter-related infrastructure. Some of the cities in question noted the fees were charged to all operators and were not tied to the Bird SOS program.