

# South Bay Cities Council of Governments

November 3, 2021

Attachment C

TO: SBCCOG Transit Operators Working Group  
SBCCOG Infrastructure Working Group  
SBCCOG Transportation Committee  
SBCCOG Board of Directors

FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director

RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update Covering October 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**

### **Biden Budget Proposes Up To \$1,500 Tax Credit For E-Bike Purchases and Bike Commute**

E-bikes have the potential to replace car trips in the fight against climate change. A recent study found that if 15 percent of car trips were made by e-bike, carbon emissions would drop by 12 percent.

As of November 1<sup>st</sup>, the Biden Administration's proposed 30% federal tax credit for new electric bike purchases has survived the most recent round of Congressional budget trimming. If the deal passes in its current form, e-bikes would become significantly cheaper for most Americans. In turn, that could mean a significant change in the transportation options for millions of people around the country.

The legislation would offer Americans a refundable tax credit worth 30 percent of a new e-bike's purchase price, capped at \$1,500. All three e-bike classes would be eligible for the tax credit, but bikes with motors more powerful than 750W would not. The credit would be fully refundable, which would allow lower-income individuals to claim it.

Bikes that cost more than \$8,000 would not be eligible and the 30 percent credit starts to phase out for bikes that cost more than \$5,000. The program is also means-tested based on tax status, meaning the credit would begin phasing out \$200 for every \$1,000 spent on the purchase for individuals who earn \$75,000, heads of household earning \$112,500, and married couples who file jointly earning \$150,000.

There are other benefits for cyclists tucked away in the massive 1,600-page bill. People who ride bikes to work or use bike-share would be eligible for pre-tax commuter benefits similar to those who drive and park or take public transportation to work. Under the proposal, employees would be allowed to receive a tax-free bicycle benefit from their employer of up to \$81 a month which is 30 percent of the current parking benefit.

## **US DOT Promises National Safe Systems Approach After Historic 6-Month Surge In Deaths**

A shocking 18.4-percent more people died on U.S. roads in the first six months of 2021 compared to the same period last year. Preliminary data from the Federal Highway Administration show that vehicle miles traveled in the first half of 2021 only increased by about 13%.

In response, the U. S. Department of Transportation is talking about radically changing federal roadway safety policy after new stats showed the largest six-month increase in roadway fatalities ever recorded by the agency.

The department did not reveal how many vulnerable road users were killed in that surge, but if trends mirror the historic 22-percent spike in pedestrian fatalities between 2019 and 2020, advocates fear it may have been one of the deadliest years ever for people outside motor vehicles too.

New research that accompanied the estimates suggests that the surge was largely attributable to increased rates of speeding, which spiked on quarantine-emptied roads but remained endemic even as Americans returned to their driving commutes. US DOT is expected to release its first-ever National Roadway Safety Strategy in January 2022. The strategy will include “a comprehensive set of actions to significantly reduce serious injuries and deaths on our nation’s roadways,” to be revealed in January 2022. The new federal guidelines will hold state and local leaders accountable for implementing Safe System Approach principles and will identify significant actions the Department will take to help ensure: “Safer People, Safer Roads, Safer Vehicles, Safer Speeds, and Post-Crash Care.” The philosophy made the National Transportation Safety Board’s “Most Wanted List” for the first time last April.

Of course, a Vision Zero commitment doesn’t always mean real Vision Zero results. That’s why safety leaders are already putting the pressure on U. S. DOT to revise the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices to prioritize the safety of all road users over the convenience of drivers.

For more information on all of the Proven Safety Countermeasures FHWA supports at: <https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/>. Information on FHWA’s Focused Approach to Safety Program can be found at <https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/fas/>.

## **\$5 Billion Loan Agreement, Executive Order Signed To Clear Shipping Logjam Around California Ports**

A \$5 billion loan agreement was announced on October 28<sup>th</sup> between the U.S. Department of Transportation and California to fund infrastructure improvements to help clear the shipping bottlenecks at California ports.

The partnership will allow California to expedite work on port-specific upgrades, expand capacity for freight rail, develop inland port facilities to expand warehouse storage, and upgrade highways to improve truck travel times, including around the San Pedro Bay and in the Inland Empire. The loan will also help kick-start construction on electrifying railyards and trucks, establish land ports of entry to expand trade capacity and cross border commerce, and make rail crossings safer and more efficient.

The pandemic led to a number of factors that ground the global shipping chain to a halt. Outbreaks have closed factories overseas, and shortages of shipping containers and drivers have led to a historic backup at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, which are already the busiest ports in the nation. The White House first sought to demonstrate that administration officials are tackling the supply chain disruptions head on by announcing on October 13<sup>th</sup> that west coast ports, as well as FedEx, UPS and Walmart, will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Gov. Gavin Newsom also signed an executive order on October 20<sup>th</sup> directing state agencies to find properties, state-owned and otherwise, to place containers once goods are unloaded from ships. The order also allows truck drivers to be considered for a temporary exemption on weight limits to allow them to carry more goods. The order also emphasizes the need to implement longer-term solutions to address supply chain challenges, and includes direction to the Department of Finance to identify potential investments in transportation infrastructure during the next budget cycle. Finally, the order directs various state agencies, including CalSTA, to continue to coordinate with the Biden-Harris Administration Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force.

### **Governor Signs A. B. 43 Re. Local Speed Limits; Vetoes S. B. 556 Re. Public Poles for Broadband, A. B. 122 Re. Rolling Bike Stops, And A. B. 1238 Re. Legalizing Jaywalking**

A. B. 43, signed by the Governor on October 8<sup>th</sup>, allows cities to set their own speed limits again but has raised concerns about the return of cash-collecting police speed traps. A. B. 43 dilutes the so-called "85th percentile rule," which establishes speed limits based on how fast most drivers in a given area are already driving. California lawmakers hoped the 85 percent rule would discourage cities from setting arbitrarily low limits, which in theory could be exploited by local police departments through excess ticketing at city boundaries where the speed limit abruptly drops once vehicles enter town, giving traffic officers cause to pull over non-observant drivers and issue citations. Bill supporters say it would allow cities to take into account the safety of vulnerable road users when setting limits.

Vetoed S. B. 556 would have forced local governments to make space available on street light poles, traffic signal poles, utility poles, and other public infrastructure to telecommunications providers seeking public locations on which to mount their broadband infrastructure.

Vetoed A.B. 122 would have allowed rolling bicycle stops at stop signs while A.B. 1238, the Pedestrian Access Bill, would have made jaywalking legal.

### **It Just Got Easier To Set Up 'Slow Streets' And Sidewalk Dining Programs In L. A. County.**

A. B. 773, which becomes effective January 1, 2022, allows local jurisdictions in L. A. County to adopt "slow streets" programs that prevent or limit vehicle traffic on some roads that permanently or temporarily close streets and highways. To do that, a local jurisdiction must meet certain conditions:

- There must be a determination that halting or restricting vehicle traffic is necessary for the safety of people who use the street.
- The jurisdiction must conduct an outreach and engagement process.
- The street closures and traffic restrictions must clearly be designated with signage
- The jurisdiction must maintain a website with information about the slow streets program and a list of streets that are part of the program or being considered for it.

## **CA to Vastly Increase Investments in Zero Emission Vehicles and Infrastructure**

S. B. 170 was one of the 24 bills that were signed by the Governor when he approved the state budget on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. The bill includes \$3.9 billion to be invested by the state over the next three years for zero emission vehicle (ZEV) infrastructure and incentives programs.

The investments are made possible by this year's unexpectedly huge budget surplus, new revenue from recent cap-and-trade auctions, and other funds such as legal settlement money from vehicle manufacturers that were caught cheating on emissions tests.

The state will invest \$3.9 billion over the next three years to encourage and increase the use of ZEVs, including building charging infrastructure and encouraging manufacturing of vehicles and charging equipment. The investment plan includes:

- \$2 billion over three years for heavy-duty ZEV vehicles and charging stations, including transit buses, school buses, and short-haul trucks.
- \$1.2 billion over three years for passenger ZEV adoption and transportation equity, in the form of "clean mobility for disadvantaged and low-income communities." This includes \$400 million over three years to expand the Clean Cars 4 All and for "a suite of clean transportation equity projects." There is also \$525 million allotted to the Clean Vehicles Rebate Project, and \$10 million for electric bike incentives.
- \$407 million for zero-emission rail and transit, for equipment purchases and infrastructure.
- \$250 million to the Clean Transportation Program, which gives grants to strengthen and expand California's ZEV manufacturing.
- \$25 million for "zero- and near zero-carbon fuel production and supply and \$5 million for workforce training and development

## **Region**

### **Fare Collection Resumes January 10<sup>th</sup> On The Metro Bus And Rail System With New Pricing**

To keep Metro riders and employees safe, Metro suspended front door boarding and fare enforcement on Metro buses and trains in March 2020 at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. To attract riders back to the system, the Board on October 28<sup>th</sup> approved the following fare discounts for six months when fare enforcement resumes on January 10<sup>th</sup>:

\$26 for a 30-day pass

\$6.50 for a 7-day pass

\$3.50 for a day pass

The Metro Board of Directors also approved a fare policy change, allowing all five-year-olds to ride Metro buses and trains for free. Previously, pre-kindergarten five-year-olds paid full fare while students had discounted fares and children age one to four rode free.

In addition, Metro is expanding its low-income fare program by offering six months of discounted LIFE fares for current LIFE low-income customers and 90 days of free rides for new LIFE enrollees starting January 10, 2022

The fares will be available on Metro TAP vending machines, taptogo.net and at Metro Customer Centers from Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> until July 20<sup>th</sup>.

Metro's GoPass fareless program for students will continue through June 30, 2023. The program allows K-12 and community college students at more than 40 participating schools and/or school districts in

L.A. County to obtain free passes to ride the Metro System (and participating transit operators). To check if your district or school is on the list, press control and click [here](#).

### **County Supervisors Will Explore Providing Mental Health Services on Metro Trains and Buses**

The L. A. County Board of Supervisors have unanimously approved a proposal that allows the LA County Department of Mental Health (DMH) to enter negotiations with Metro about the possibility of using county mental health professionals to respond to mental health crises aboard Metro's trains and buses.

The motion allows DMH to begin official conversations with Metro about providing mental health crisis response services and gives the department the authority to enter into a contract if an agreement is reached.

DMH operates two types of mental health crisis teams. One is known as a Mental Evaluation Team (MET) which consists of one highly trained law enforcement officer paired with one DMH-licensed mental health clinician to provide a specialized response to the highest-risk crises with the goal of diverting these individuals to treatment, minimizing uses of force and harmful outcomes, and mitigating incarceration and justice system involvement.

The other type of team is an unarmed, non-law enforcement Psychiatric Mobile Response Teams (PMRT) with teams consisting of at least one licensed mental health clinician and at least one other mental health professional.

### **Trends**

#### **Drone Delivery Promises Comfort And Speed, But Needs Local Regulatory Structure**

Drone delivery company [Wing](#) owned by Alphabet, the parent company of Google, is setting itself up to be the backbone of a new aerial infrastructure. Wing's delivery drones can operate out of the operator's line of sight. Flight is fully autonomous, with one pilot monitoring several flights at once and able to take over or land if necessary.

Wing operates much like many app delivery platforms. After signing up, customers use the smartphone app to place their orders. Orders are then packed at local base stations and flown to their destinations by Wing's drones. On arrival, the packages are lowered to customers by winch, automatically detaching from the drone before it returns to the base station.

One of Wing's major promises is unbelievably fast delivery on demand. This is a remarkable acceleration in the pace and expectation of delivery. Wing boasts an average delivery time of roughly 10 minutes. Their quickest time recorded – from order placement to product in hand – is 2 minutes and 47 seconds

While Wing's drones are autonomous, pilots monitor flight paths, packers parcel up the products, and maintenance staff take care of the hardware and software. All of these workers must perform to satisfy the stress-inducing 10-minute delivery time.

Drone delivery may also have hidden environmental costs. Keeping cars and trucks off the road might cut energy consumption, but mining lithium for batteries and supplying energy for data centers may reduce or eliminate those gains. And there is that pesky question from your neighbor: "Do we want to live under a cloud of drones?"

Alongside new regulations to protect neighborhoods, new digital infrastructures are being developed to manage increasingly congested and “automated” skyways. Wing is heavily involved, providing a flight planning and safety app for drone operators, a system for remote drone identification, and an “unmanned traffic management” service.” The COVID-19 pandemic is also helping companies like Wing to accelerate their agenda, as they can promise less congestion, less consumer mobility, and less social contact.

Local leaders will need to develop the tools and expertise to enforce ground-based design and land use standards and equal and fair access to skyway infrastructure. It may already be too late for local jurisdictions to “Just Say No!”

### **How Will Transportation Tech Evolve Over The Next Decade?**

Here are some of the key insights from the October 19<sup>th</sup> Smart Cities Connect Conference:

- Remote work should be the default to improve efficiencies and aid in recruitment.
- Million-mile electric car batteries.
- Congestion pricing that can provide a regular funding stream for public transit.
- More flexible use of public rights of way for buses, bikes, and community commerce, and neighborhood vitality.
- Innovation around electric grid management.
- Renewable sources of energy
- Parked electric vehicles returning electricity during peak periods through vehicle-to-grid charging.