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# MONTHLY TRANSPORTATION REPORT

COVERING April 2022

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## ***A Summary of recent federal, state, regional and local developments and trends in transportation.***

### **FEDERAL**

#### **Senators Urge US DOT To Develop Autonomous Vehicle Rules**

A group of 12 U.S. Senate Democrats has urged Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg to develop a comprehensive federal framework for autonomous vehicles. In February, General Motors Co and its self-driving technology unit Cruise petitioned the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for permission to build and deploy a self-driving vehicle without human controls like steering wheels or brake pedals. The petition is pending.

The Senators' letter said the "significant technical and economic challenges at hand" in respect to autonomous vehicles should spur the federal government to address the issue now by determining how the department will "evaluate applications from manufacturers" and whether it is providing "clarity about the timeline and procedures for the review process."

#### **USDOT Initiative to Generate Emergency Power from Electric Buses During Natural Disasters**

In an effort to build resilience during natural disasters, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is making available funding for organizations and partnerships interested in developing systems to generate power from electric buses. The Bus Exportable Power Systems (BEPS) Program would be the first step in building community resilience through transit.

The \$1 million BEPS funding opportunity will go to an organization that can develop interoperable national standards for power generation, allowing a variety of manufacturers' systems to use the same technology to provide electricity to community buildings, emergency shelters, and hospitals during power disruptions.

#### **FHWA Issues Walkable Streets Demographic Consideration Guidance**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has issued new guidance to help state and local governments carry out projects that create safer, more walkable streets, including Safe Routes to School programs, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and local community projects.

The guidance encourages states and metropolitan planning organizations to incorporate demographic information into their Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA Set-Aside) program applications. The TA Set-Aside program, part of the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, funds smaller-scale transportation projects. States are permitted to develop a process to sub-allocate up to 100 percent of funds to counties, metropolitan planning organizations, and regional transportation planning organizations.

### **STATE**

## Bill to Improve Pedestrian & Cyclist Safety Passes Senate Transportation Committee

SB 932, a state measure to prioritize pedestrian and cyclist safety, has passed the California Senate Transportation Committee. The bill would require a county or city to include a map of the high injury network in its General Plan and would further require a county or city to identify and prioritize safety improvements that would address serious and injurious traffic collisions.

SB 932 also creates an annual grant program to award funding to cities and counties that implement timely and effective short-term efforts to mitigate bicycle, pedestrian, and other human-powered transportation injuries and fatalities.

## CARB, LADOT Create Pilot Sustainable Transportation Equity Program

The LA City Department of Transportation (LADOT) has launched a pilot program mostly funded by the California Air Resources Board that aims to make mass transit more affordable and accessible, increase the use of electric vehicles and cars, and promote EV-related jobs. The Air Resources Board will provide \$13.8 million for the project with LADOT providing an additional \$4 million to the board's contribution, giving the project a budget of nearly \$18 million. The pilot project area extends roughly from the 10 Freeway to Florence Avenue, and from South Alameda Street to Crenshaw Boulevard.

The pilot includes a "universal basic mobility" program which includes a "mobility wallet" from LADOT and Metro that will be available to 2,000 residents in a South Los Angeles project area, who will receive \$150 in monthly aid for one year for public bus and train fares, on-demand shuttles, and scooter, bike and electric vehicle rentals. Loaded onto a Metro Transit Access Pass (TAP) card, the funds will pay for rides on any transit line that's part of the TAP system, as well as for rentals from the BlueLA electric-car-sharing program and Metro Bike Share.

The monthly grants are expected to begin in the first three months of 2023. The wallet will be offered to South L. A. community members who face mobility challenges, "including students, senior citizens, low-income residents and people with differing abilities," the project's website says. But the precise eligibility requirements for the wallet are still being worked out by LADOT, in consultation with a local advisory committee and the agency's research partners at UC Davis.

The pilot includes the following additional elements:

- **More clean transportation options.** The LA CleanTech Incubator is putting together an electric-bike library that will make e-bikes available for free or at low cost for extended periods of time. LADOT will try out an on-demand electric shuttle service to fill the gaps between its DASH bus routes. And the BlueLA program will make at least 50 more EVs available for rent by members in the project area.
- **A network of public EV charging stations.** Green Lots will install 21 chargers at five public libraries and 30 EV chargers on light poles maintained by the Bureau of Street Lighting. Other chargers will be added by EVGo and BlueLA.
- **More pedestrian- and bike-friendly streets.** The project envisions a variety of efforts to make streets more inviting to people on foot and on bicycle. Among them are enhancements along the coming light rail line connecting Exposition Boulevard and LAX.
- **Training for EV-related jobs.** The LA CleanTech Incubator and Los Angeles Trade Technical College will offer workforce training to community members seeking work as EV technicians.

According to the LADOT, “participants will receive training in technical areas and interpersonal skills, and industry-recognized certifications to succeed in the green economy.”

## **Talks Of Suspending California's Gas Tax Increase Fizzle Out**

California Governor Newsom first introduced a proposal for gasoline price relief in his January budget and again called for financial assistance during his March State of the State speech. Other proposed legislation included direct payments to drivers, subsidizing public transportation and canceling the sales tax on diesel fuel for a year.

Legislative leaders repudiated the governor’s calls for pausing the gas tax hike, arguing it would take critical funds away from road repair and improvement without guaranteed relief for consumers. Now, California lawmakers have missed the April 30<sup>th</sup> deadline to introduce, let alone enact, legislation that would stop the gas tax’s inflation adjustment from automatically taking effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **REGION**

### **L.A. County Keeps Mask Mandate at Airports, on Public Transit**

Despite recent changes at the federal and state level, Los Angeles County is continuing to require travelers to mask up when aboard public transit or in indoor transportation hubs such as airports.

L.A. County’s mask order covers commuter trains, subways, buses, taxis, Ubers and Lyfts; as well as indoor transportation hubs, including bus terminals, subway stations, seaports and other indoor port terminals. The order applies to everyone ages 2 and older, regardless of their COVID-19 vaccination status. However, the order applies to airline passengers once they disembark their plane and does not extend to people once they have boarded.

Local transit agencies had begun lifting mask mandates in mid-April, but have begun announcing the return of mask orders on public transportation. It is expected that the county order will be reassessed when community transmission falls back to the moderate level, when the CDC determines transit masking is no longer necessary, or in 30 days, whichever happens first.

### **L. A. City to Electrify Its Entire 10,000-Vehicle Fleet By 2035**

Los Angeles City plans to electrify its fleet of more than 10,000 vehicles as part of an effort to become one of the first U.S. cities to rely on carbon-free energy by 2035. The Electric Vehicle Master Plan was unanimously approved by the Los Angeles city council on April 6<sup>th</sup>. The switch to electric vehicles will start at the city’s largest departments of sanitation, recreation and transportation. Expansion of the EV charging network also will be considered as part of the rollout. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power currently projects about 97,000 charging stations will be needed by 2030.

### **Dodger Stadium / Harbor Gateway Express Buses Return**

The Dodger Stadium Express will be running for every Dodger regular season and playoff game — as well as the All-Star Game on July 19. The Dodger Stadium Express runs to the ballpark from the Harbor

Gateway Transit Center with stops at four bus stations along the 110 freeway (Rosecrans, Harbor Freeway, Manchester and Slauson).

The Harbor Gateway Transit Center is served by several Metro bus lines, the Metro J Line (Silver) and Torrance Transit. Harbor Gateway has free parking. Although the Dodger Stadium Express bus is free to those with a game ticket, regular fares apply on all other connecting bus and rail service.

Buses to the Stadium run every 30 minutes starting 2 hours before game time, with the last bus leaving Harbor Gateway Transit Center at game time. Buses will drop off at the right field entrance to the stadium. Service back to the South Bay will pick up at the same stop after the game. Return service begins after the end of the 7th inning, with the last bus departing 45 minutes after the final out or 20 minutes after a post-game event.

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## Federal, State and Local Trends

### **Google Offers Hybrid Workweeks, Electric Scooters to Get Employees Back in the Office**

Following years of remote-only work policies, Google has begun to bring its employees back to the office. To attract reluctant workers, the company has adopted innovative hybrid work rules and is offering incentives including electric scooter reimbursements.

The new work location policy requires all Google employees to be in the office three days a week, with the other two days working remotely. Twitter and a handful of other tech companies, including Slack, have said they will allow remote work indefinitely.

The tech giant is also teaming up with e-scooter maker Unagi to launch a new program called “Ride Scoot,” in which most of Google’s US-based workers can get reimbursed for the full cost of a monthly subscription to Unagi’s Model One scooter. a lightweight dual-motor scooter with a top speed of 20mph and a range of 15.5 miles.

Unagi is offering Google employees in several cities with Google offices across the nation (including Playa Vista) a discounted monthly scooter subscription. Google will reimburse the employee as long as they use the scooter for at least 9 commutes per month.

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