



# MONTHLY SBCCOG TRANSPORTATION REPORT

COVERING May 2022

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## **Bill Introduced To Suspend Federal Gas Tax**

At a press conference on May 31<sup>st</sup>, Congressman Adam Schiff announced legislation to lower gas prices and bring immediate relief to Americans struggling to pay the out-of-control prices at the pump by instituting a suspension of the federal gas tax.

The Federal Gas Tax Suspension and Windfall Profits Tax Act would suspend the federal gas tax – which currently stands at 18.3 cents per gallon – through December 31, 2023. To ensure the Federal Highway Trust Fund is still robustly funded, the suspension would be paid for through a new 50% tax on Big Oil's windfall profits.

Schiff noted that despite the Ukraine war and supply chain issues, the five biggest oil companies — Shell, Chevron, ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, and BP — have increased their profits by over 300% percent in the first quarter of the year compared to 2021, amassing \$35 billion in just three months.

## **FTA Funding Available For Transit-Oriented Development Planning**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced on May 25<sup>th</sup> that approximately \$13 million is available in a competitive pilot program for transit-oriented development (TOD) planning. Priority will be given to projects, such as mixed-use development near transit stations, that help reduce transportation costs, combat pollution and climate change, and promote housing affordability.

The current opportunity is funded within a multi-year FTA Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development Planning and supports comprehensive or site-specific planning projects that improve economic development and ridership, foster multimodal connectivity and accessibility, improve transit access for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, engage the private sector, identify infrastructure needs, and enable mixed-use development near transit stations. Special consideration in this grant cycle will be given to applications that improve air quality, advance environmental justice, and promote housing affordability.

To apply for program funding, an applicant must be an existing FTA recipient – either a project sponsor of an eligible transit project or an entity with land use planning authority in the project corridor. To ensure that work meets the needs of the local community, transit project sponsors and land use planning authorities must partner to conduct the planning work.

The full announcement is posted on Grants.gov as opportunity [FTA-2022-004-TPE-TODP](#). The grant application deadline is July 25<sup>th</sup>. Information on previously funded projects can be found [here](#).

## **US DOT Creates \$5 Billion Safety Grant Program As Road Deaths Soar**

U.S. traffic fatalities rose to 31,720 through the third quarter of 2021, the highest nine-month period since 2006 and trending much higher than the 38,000 traffic deaths in all of 2020. Roadway deaths represent about 95% of all U.S. transportation deaths.

In response, the US Department of Transportation has created a new Safe Streets & Roads For All program that will allocate \$5 billion in federal aid to cities and localities over the next 5 years to address the growing crisis by slowing down cars, carving out bike paths and wider sidewalks. and nudging commuters to public transit. The department's effort is part of a new national strategy, launched in January, to stem record

increases in road fatalities with a “safe system” approach that promotes better road design, lower speed limits and tougher car safety regulations.

The application deadline is September 15, 2022. More information on the Safe Streets & Roads Program is available at: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=340385>

## **US DOT Helping States & Locals To Build A National EV Charging Network**

The new federal Joint Office of Energy and Transportation is providing technical assistance to state and local governments as part of the White House’s \$7.5 billion deployment to build a national electric vehicle charging network. Its goal is to accelerate adopting EVs, including for those who cannot reliably charge at home, to enable up to 50% of new vehicle sales to be electric by 2030.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law established a National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Formula Program (“NEVI Formula”) to provide funding to States to strategically deploy electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and to establish an interconnected network to facilitate data collection, access, and reliability. Under the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program, DOT requirements include designating national EV charging corridors that identify near- and long-term needs and locations for charging infrastructure that support freight and goods movement at strategic locations. Charging corridors can be placed at major national highways and the National Highway Freight Network as well as at ports, intermodal centers and warehouses.

In May, FHWA published proposed regulations for minimum standards and requirements for the NEVI Formula Program. In addition, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and National Association of State Energy Officials that calls for AASHTO and NASEO to enhance coordination between state energy offices and DOT. The MOU also creates a framework for collaborations among national, regional, state, local and tribal governments as well as the private sector on building EV charging stations.

State DOTs have until August 1<sup>st</sup> to submit their Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment Plans to the Joint Office. By Sept. 10, FHWA must approve the plans or notify DOTs if state changes are needed.

The Joint Office is also seeking technical assistance from one or more organizations on sustainable on-road transportation, on transit, and school bus fleet electrification.

## **STATE**

### **State Surplus Use Still Unresolved; Gas Tax Increase Likely July 1**

The state has a nearly \$100 billion budget surplus. Half of it must be used for education, but what to do with the remaining \$49 million budget surplus is under protracted negotiation between Governor Newsom and the state legislature.

The Governor earlier this year proposed suspension of the planned 3-cent hike in the state gas tax effective July 1. In his May revised budget unveiled earlier this month, he revised the plan and proposed sending \$400 checks to most of the state’s vehicle owners.

But the state legislative leaders don't support either proposal. Instead, they want to send rebate checks to state residents whether they own vehicles or not and to exempt upper-income Californians. And some legislators have favored approval of both issuing rebates and suspending the gas tax increase.

California's current gas tax is 51 cents per gallon. It now seems likely the tax will increase to 53.9 cents on July 1<sup>st</sup> because of the impasse. An agreement on the size of the rebate, the rebate mechanism, and eligibility to receive a rebate is likely to be delayed until lawmakers and the governor reach a budget deal in June. Under that revised timeline, the first payments in Newsom's plan would not be sent until September at the earliest.

## REGION

### **Metro Formally Ends I-710 South Freeway Expansion Projects**

The L. A. Metro Board on May 26<sup>th</sup> unanimously voted to end a half-century battle over a \$6-billion expansion plans for the southern end of the I-710 Freeway by adopting the "No Project" alternative for the project's environmental impact report rather than adding new travel lanes.

Last year federal environmental regulators struck a serious blow to any hopes of widening when they found the plan could violate the Clean Air Act, noting the region already had the worst air quality in the United States. Those findings prompted the state's top transportation official to drop his support of the plan.

While expansion plans have been put to rest, Metro and Caltrans will undertake a new planning process to re-purpose the \$750 million available in the corridor to reduce air quality, noise and other community impacts while continuing to serve mobility needs in the main artery for the nation's largest port complex, through which nearly a third of the nation's imported goods move.

### **L. A. City Motion Could Restructure Staff To Speed Project Delivery**

A Los Angeles City Council motion was introduced on May 25<sup>th</sup> to streamline implementation of the city's Mobility Plan, which was approved in 2015 to make Los Angeles more pedestrian-friendly by 2035. The Mobility Plan provides a framework to create a network of bus lanes, pedestrian-priority areas and protected bike lanes. Yet, only 45 miles of the plan's 1,500 miles of pedestrian safety improvements due by 2035 have been implemented.

The motion would create a Unified Project Coordination Office within the Board of Public Works to implement the proposed Mobility Plan Implementation Ordinance and coordinate all capital projects, work programs and grants to maximize mobility and environmental benefits. Several current city departments, including the Department of Transportation and the Bureau of Engineering, would be instructed to report on recommendations of how that new office can best implement the ordinance.

The motion also would have the city construct Mobility Plan improvements while performing unrelated street resurfacing and slurry seal projects. The motion would prioritize projects that improve mobility for low-income, transit-dependent residents.

If the motion is approved and the Unified Project Coordination Office is created, the office would report to the City Council within 60 days on an implementation plan for the ordinance, including:

- The creation of a multi-year work plan that includes adequate time for engineering, coordination, and engagement
- Prioritization of corridors in the High Injury network in a way that addresses racial and economic marginalization
- A public engagement strategy that allows feedback on the proposed implementation plan

The motion is yet to be scheduled for a vote.

## **I-405 Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan Comments Due 6/10**

I-405 is a critical node in the South Bay regional transportation system connecting major gateways and trade hubs, but is one of the top 10 congested highways in the United States. Metro has compiled the Draft I-405 Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan (CMCP) which plans to make it easier to get around, with multiple efforts to improve travel and address congestion. The Plan file includes the Draft report, several appendices, and a comprehensive list of candidate projects that will be considered when Metro is preparing state and federal funding applications. The SBCCOG submitted a comment letter which is available here: [https://southbaycities.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/HANDOUT\\_-I-405-CMCP-comment-letter.pdf](https://southbaycities.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/HANDOUT_-I-405-CMCP-comment-letter.pdf)

The Draft Plan link is: [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/bf4hjivy5k52uvq/AAACCxoo9WUVJ5Y-0hC27Klla/Draft I-405 CMCP Documents?dl=0&subfolder\\_nav\\_tracking=1](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/bf4hjivy5k52uvq/AAACCxoo9WUVJ5Y-0hC27Klla/Draft I-405 CMCP Documents?dl=0&subfolder_nav_tracking=1)

A Story Map summary of the CMCP is available at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7a5d3f2e53434e51bc52655019b33d26>

Submit your comment by Friday, June 10, 2022 to: <https://metro.commentinput.com/?id=Fshdi>

## **LA County Formally Extends Mask Requirement On Public Transit**

With COVID-19 case numbers steadily rising — enough to push Los Angeles County into the “medium” virus risk level — officials officially extended the mask-wearing requirement on public transit and at transportation hubs on Friday, May 20 for either another 30 days or until the county sees a sharp drop in virus transmission, whichever comes first.

Masks were previously required nationally on public transit and in transportation facilities, but a federal judge struck down the requirement last month. The county initially followed the ruling and the mandate was dropped locally, but when the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention opted to appeal the ruling, the county issued a new health order reinstating the requirement locally.

The requirement affects people on trains, subways, buses, taxis, ride-hailing vehicles, and at bus terminals, subway stations and indoor port terminals. It also affects airports, but does not extend to airplanes, which are under federal jurisdiction.

## **Federal, State and Local Trends**

## **Tesla, Others Lobby For Electric -Truck- Charging Infrastructure Funds**

Last year, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) included \$7.5 billion in funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Several EV companies, including Tesla, and environmental groups, want 10% of \$7.5 billion to be earmarked for charging infrastructure specifically for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles (MHDV).

The group argues that while heavy-duty vehicles account for only 10% of the US vehicle fleet, they account for “45% of the transportation sector’s nitrogen oxide pollution, 57% of fine particulate: matter pollution, and 28% of its global warming emissions.” If the request is successful, it would help finance the deployment of a newly developed >1 MW charging standard for electric trucks.

## **Google Offers Worker Incentives 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.