

# South Bay Cities Council of Governments

January 27, 2022

TO: SBCCOG Board of Directors  
FROM: Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director  
RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update Covering December 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**

### **A Complicated Fiscal Web: Continuing Resolution Restricts Access To Federal Highway Funding**

The Federal Highway Administration announced on December 15th that it plans to provide \$52.5 billion in apportioned funding for fiscal year 2022 to all 50 states and the District of Columbia via the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) signed into law in November.

However, states will be unable to receive a significant portion of that funding due to a continuing resolution (CR) passed by Congress on December 3 that maintains fiscal year 2021 federal government funding levels through February 18, 2022.

The CR, with its flat “obligation limitation,” means state departments of transportation cannot access the higher amounts of formula funding provided by the Highway Trust Fund via the IIJA which are about 20 percent higher for FY 2022 compared to the final year of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation or FAST Act.

The obligation limitation restricts the ability of a state or other entity to enter into a project using federal funds, with the federal government making a binding promise to pay or reimburse the state or other entity for the federal share of the project’s eligible costs.

Additionally, because of the larger share of allocated programs for FY 2022 compared to FY2021, it’s estimated that the initial state DOT share of the obligation limitation provided under the current CR would be about 2.3 percent less than in FY 2021. That is due to a “lop-off” provision which reserves obligation limitation for allocated “national purpose” programs like the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America or INFRA grant program or Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act or TIFIA loans until near the end of the fiscal year.

Finally, FHWA also noted that the CR prohibits “new starts,” meaning that the obligated funds provided in the current CR cannot be used on new IIJA formula programs. That includes the FY 2022 portion of the Carbon Reduction Program that supports emission-reducing transportation projects and the Promoting

Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation or PROTECT formula funding to states to boost surface transportation infrastructure resiliency.

### **Senate Bill Reintroduced To Improve U.S. Infrastructure**

U.S. Sens. Roy Blunt (R-MO) and Mark Warner (D-VA) reintroduced the Reinventing Economic Partnerships and Infrastructure Redevelopment (REPAIR) Act on December 16<sup>th</sup> to help close the infrastructure gap. The REPAIR Act is cosponsored by U.S. Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), John Cornyn (R-TX), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), and Chris Coons (D-DE). Companion legislation was introduced in the House by U.S. Representatives Scott Peters (D-CA) and Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH).

The bill would establish an Infrastructure Financing Authority (IFA) to provide loans and loan guarantees, complement existing funding mechanisms and expand overall infrastructure investment.

The IFA established through the REPAIR Act would become self-sustaining over time and would be run by an appointed Chief Executive and Board of Directors, independent of any federal agency. The IFA would only fund economically viable projects of at least \$50 million, or \$10 million in projects in rural areas. All funded projects would need to show clear public benefit, meet economic, technical, and environmental standards, and be backed by a dedicated revenue stream to be considered for IFA loan and loan guarantee funding.

### **Biden Wants To Make Federal Government Carbon Neutral By 2050**

The Biden administration issued an executive order in mid-November outlining how the federal government will buy its way to a cleaner, cooler planet, spending billions to create a federal fleet of electric vehicles, upgrade federal buildings and change how the government buys electricity.

The executive order leverages Washington's buying power to cut the government's carbon emissions 65 percent by the end of the decade and sets goals that would put the federal government on a path to net-zero emissions by 2050 and would add at least 10 gigawatts worth of clean electricity to the grid.

Federal operations would run entirely on carbon-free electricity by 2030. By 2035, the government would stop buying gas-powered vehicles, switching to zero-emission heavy-duty trucks and cars. A decade after that, most of the buildings owned or leased by the government would no longer contribute to the carbon pollution that's warming the planet. The order also instructs the government to launch a "buy clean" initiative, prioritizing products produced and transported with low greenhouse gas emissions.

Administration officials said the size of the federal fleet alone — which includes some 645,000 vehicles — could lower the cost of electric vehicles, batteries and other technology. To meet its goals for zero-emission vehicles, the administration will have to overcome production delays caused by computer chip shortages and install enough charging stations to make the vehicles practical. And although the auto industry is planning to churn out dozens of new models of electric cars and trucks in the coming years, specialized vehicles, like the U.S. Forest Service's wildland fire engines, could be harder to source.

A California policy mandates that, by 2025, half of all the cars the state buys must be emissions-free. State law requires that only certain low-carbon building materials can be used in public works projects.

### **State**

#### **Caltrans To Require 'Complete Streets' Features In All New Projects It Funds Or Oversees**

Caltrans announced on December 21<sup>st</sup> a new policy that requires all new transportation projects it funds or oversees to include “complete street” features that provide safe and accessible options for people walking, biking, those using assistive mobility devices, and taking transit. This policy is intended to expand the availability of sustainable transportation options to help meet the state’s climate, health and equity goals.

As part of the new policy, Caltrans commits to remove administrative barriers and partner with communities and local agencies to ensure more projects on state and local transportation systems improve the connectivity to pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities, and accessibility to destinations. If not appropriate to the context or community of the project, projects must receive approval from Caltrans before complete streets features are excluded. The new policy can be viewed at: [DP-37 \(ca.gov\)](#)

One major shift seen in this new policy is the reversal of what is standard and what is considered an exception. Under the prior policy getting safety features for bike riders and pedestrians added to state highway projects was accomplished through an onerous exception process. Now, engineers and planners will need to seek approval, including justification, for why they *can’t* do so.

## **Region**

### **Speed Limits On L.A. Streets Have Increased For Decades; That’s About To Change**

The method used by cities to determine its speed limits changes on January 1st, 2022 when AB 43 is effective. AB43 allows cities more control and makes it easier to lower speed limits in areas where there are safety concerns, like business districts where there’s lots of foot traffic and streets with a history of pedestrian collisions. While the law goes into effect in 2022, cities can’t start enforcing lower speed limits until June 30, 2024 or whenever the state creates an online portal to adjudicate the new infractions – whichever comes sooner.

Prior to Assembly Bill 43, the California Vehicle Code required local jurisdictions to complete a speed survey every few years and set the new speed limit at the 85th percentile of surveyed speeds. In the last cycle prior to AB43, LADOT had to raise speed limits on 200 miles of city streets, often on streets with the highest frequency of fatal or severe injury crashes.

The full text of AB 43 and all the changes that come with it is available at: [Bill Text - AB-43 Traffic safety. \(ca.gov\)](#).

### **LA City, Metro Partner To Offer Mobile Security App On Their Free WiFi Services**

LA Metro and the City of Los Angeles launched a free mobile security app in mid-December to protect people in L.A. County from cybersecurity threats on public transit WiFi systems. The new LA Secure app offers technology to ensure all the activity the travelling public conducts on their mobile devices remains safe, private and secure. All of LA Metro’s 2,300+ transit buses already have free WiFi access.

Once the app is downloaded, it alerts the user to threats in real time and offers information about how to proceed. If someone attempts to connect to a rogue WiFi network, the app will immediately notify the user about the security risk. The app also provides protection against "phishing" -- emails designed to fraudulently gather personal information. Cyber attackers increasingly target mobile devices because they do not have the same protections as desktops and laptop computers,

The app can be downloaded free on the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.

## **Metro Board Moves To Require Vaccinations For Law Enforcement Officers**

The LA Metro Board of Directors on December 2<sup>nd</sup> approved a COVID-19 vaccine requirement for law enforcement officers who are contracted to provide security. The details of the requirement, which was included as an amendment proposed by Supervisor Janice Hahn, will be considered early in 2022.

It is possible that the vaccine mandate will not only apply to officers who work with Metro, but to entire law enforcement organizations, which could put Metro in conflict with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, one of three law enforcement agencies that have contracts with Metro.

## **Metro Fare Payment Enforcement To Resume January 10, 2022**

Metro suspended fare payment enforcement and enabled all-door boarding during the pandemic. However, with vaccinations well underway and masks wearing required, Metro will resume front door boarding and fare enforcement on January 10<sup>th</sup>. Students will be offered a new Go Pass that will allow them to ride free through 2022.

## **Trends**

### **With Ridership Still Down, APTA Report Makes Recommendations Re: Post-Pandemic Travel**

Transit systems across America are facing an existential moment. Ridership remains dramatically down from its 2019 levels and budgets are only kept afloat by federal subsidies that will not continue indefinitely.

An APTA report published in November summarized how transit agencies across the country are planning for the post-pandemic future. The report focuses on Denver, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Richmond, Virginia, and Spokane.

A common theme is that transit officials were spurred to think differently as a result of the pandemic and social justice protests over George Floyd's murder.

During the pandemic, some officials reoriented their service patterns to better serve lower-income areas, increasing frequency in neighborhoods that saw higher ridership in 2020. Wealthier and often more suburban communities where remote work was most prevalent were more likely to see service declines as the agencies coped with budget limitations and labor shortages.

It's not by coincidence that the Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) is the only transportation system in the study that has largely recouped its ridership. Virginia's capital city redesigned its bus system with an eye towards racial equity before 2020. That resulted in higher frequencies through denser neighborhoods with lower median household incomes. During the pandemic, the GRTC then cut service to suburban-focused commuter routes while preserving those higher inner-city services.

Pittsburgh increased bus and rail service in 37 percent of the neighborhoods the transit system covers, principally in areas home to more people of color and those living below the poverty line. However, systemwide, ridership dropped by more than 80% initially with late October 2021 bus ridership still 50% of pre-pandemic levels and light rail continuing to be down 73%.

All of the agencies studied in the APTA report eliminated fares for at least part of the COVID-19 period, largely to limit potentially dangerous interactions between riders and transit workers. Across the cities,

fares made up 16 to 25 percent of 2019 transit budgets. Transit systems like the MTA in New York or Metro in Washington, D.C., which get 30 to 50 percent of their operating costs from fares, will have a tougher time extending or adopting such policies once emergency federal subsidies end. In Los Angeles, where service was only minimally reduced, the period of free transit has not induced higher ridership.

**Study: Shifting To EVs Won't Save Our Planet Without Creating Compact "15-Minute" Cities**

Car companies are accelerating the electric vehicle share of their fleets faster than some analysts predicted. But the shift to EVs will not be sufficient to address climate change by keeping earth temperature rise below 1.5 degrees. The world also needs to walk, bike and take transit more.

According to a report from the Institute for Transportation Development Policy, which partnered with the University of California Davis, greenhouse gas emissions from urban passenger transportation need to drop by 53 billion metric tons between 2020 and 2050. If cities around the globe move aggressively to transition to electric cars, urban-transport emissions would drop by around 44 billion metric tons.

Moving quickly to shift people from cars to walking and public transit also isn't enough on its own, with the potential to cut emissions by 33 billion metric tons. Only by combining both approaches is it possible to cut emissions in line with climate science.

According to the report, governments can use several policies to make the changes happen, from incentives for electric vehicles and new charging infrastructure to incentives for new and existing compact, mixed-use development near public transportation and new investments in dedicated bus lanes, separated bike lanes, and low-emissions or car-free zones in central neighborhoods.

The recommended strategy of growing up, not out, gets people out of their cars by planning and developing walkable, bikeable utopias where they can get to work, go shopping, or grab a bite to eat without having to travel more than 15 minutes from their home and simultaneously electrifying the remaining passenger transport fleet.

**SBCCOG response**

The Local Travel Network and focus on micromobility apparently were not looked at in the above study. With 70% of trips being 3 miles or less, South Bay residents using their own zero emission slow speed vehicles could address the issue of meeting greenhouse gas reduction goals much faster than studies such as the above are predicting.