

# South Bay Cities Council of Governments

July 28, 2016

TO: SBCCOG Board of Directors

FROM: Jacki Bacharach, SBCCOG Executive Director  
Steve Lantz, SBCCOG Transportation Director

RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update – June 2016

## **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**

### **Autonomous Cars Could Free Up Lots of Land for Economic Development**

Pensa, a New York City design consultancy, recently reported on its project to re-imagine the streets of the future. Pensa's vision is called the *Third Space* - an illustration of how cities could use the wealth of urban space that autonomous cars promise to free up by removing all those parallel parking spaces or moving them to offsite automated parking structures.

There are an estimated one billion parking spots in the U.S. and only a quarter billion cars. Pensa believes a 4:1 ratio of supply to demand makes little sense for a world where cars can drive around the block, network to a central database, and park themselves in an open spot (or in a nearby automated garage). That might be especially true if the automated cars only stop for passengers and fuel.

So how can the empty parking spaces be reimagined? Pensa believes the space that most of us currently use to get from the inside of a building to the idle car, or to walk to the bus stop or loading area for that Uber ride, can be far more productively utilized. If you're not worried about standing on the edge of the curb and being hit, or the noise, or the pollution from vehicles, you can think of that old parking space as an expansion opportunity for the adjacent business, an al fresco conference room, or a latte-powered lounging or waiting area. And, because public agencies typically own the sidewalk and abandoned curbside parking spaces, there may be revenue available from a public-private partnership between the adjacent property owners.

### **Bus Agencies Are Teaming With Uber or Lyft To Connect Riders To Transit Rides**

Several Bay Area bus agencies are looking to partner with the ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft. Bus operators are hoping the ride hailing services can help solve transit's "first-and-last-mile" problem: getting riders, especially ones in more suburban communities, to and from fixed bus routes.

Rather than having nearly empty buses on meandering suburban bus routes that serve every local neighborhood, transit planners are quietly exploring restructuring their routes and partnering with

private-sector services like UberPool or Lyft Line to offer a more nimble, time-efficient solution for the travel needed to get from the neighborhood to the regional transit lines.

Lyft launched its "Friends in Transit" program in November 2015, a public information campaign encouraging customers to use Lyft to connect to public transit. Uber launched a pilot project with Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) in Florida in February to provide publicly-subsidized service that allows low income riders to use Uber once a month to travel within a specific area to get to or from a series of designated bus stops. The pilot project also allows low income people without smartphones to call a hotline and order an Uber ride from a telephone dispatcher. Although the dispatcher has the discretion to determine whether a situation qualifies as urgent and "life sustaining," the program will cover things as minor as grocery shopping and as major as a medical emergency.

The call-in dispatch center will be run and funded by the PSTA, which received a \$300,000 state grant in June that will subsidize Uber rides. Uber will provide call-in software that will enable dispatchers to send Uber drivers to call-in customers. The county will pay Uber directly for the ride subsidies, which will cover fares above a three-dollar flat fee that qualifying riders will pay.

Public agencies that are interested in creating the public private partnerships may have obstacles to overcome such as exclusive transit agreements with their current municipal shuttle operators and federal regulations mandating background checks for bus company drivers, including drug testing. Uber and Lyft recently closed their services in Austin, Texas after deciding not to comply with the city's operating requirements.

### **LED Streetlights Could Lead To Sleepless Nights**

While LED streetlights may be saving cities energy and money, doctors say their blue glow may be leading to sleepless nights. Apparently, Stanford researchers have concluded that switching from the yellow light emitted from the older sodium street lamps to the blue of the LED bulbs has an impact on the sleep area of your brain by suppressing secretion of melatonin, one of the key hormones for initiating sleep.

## **STATE**

### **After Shelving Bill To Expand Metro's Board, State Senator Mendoza Introduces New Bill**

After two months of behind the scenes wrangling, a bill that would have expanded and changed the balance of power on the Metro Board of Directors was ordered to the inactive file on June 2<sup>nd</sup> by State Senator Tony Mendoza, the author of the bill, after debate on the California Senate floor. Senate Bill 1472, which had initially proposed adding two members to the current 14 member board (selected by the state assembly and senate) would have expanded the Metro Board to 22 by the time it was shelved.

Following Metro's June 23<sup>rd</sup> decision to place the sales tax on the November 8<sup>th</sup> ballot, Senator Mendoza introduced a new bill, SB 522, to re-open the debate. However, the senator is reported to be more concerned with the order of projects in Metro's proposed ballot measure at this time than with the makeup of the board itself.

## **California's Cap-And-Trade Program Faces Daunting Funding Gap**

The funding cornerstone of California's climate change program, known as Cap and Trade, is being challenged by legal, financial and political troubles that threaten to derail the state's plans to curb greenhouse gas emissions. The Cap and Trade program has been targeted as a key source of funding for a range of GhG initiatives including the high-profile high-speed rail project connecting San Francisco and Los Angeles.

But the legality of Cap and Trade is being challenged in court by a business group, and questions are growing about whether state law allows it to operate past 2020. In addition, at the most recent auction held in May, only 11% of the emission permits offered for sale were purchased. The latest auction produced just \$2.5 million and drove the price of each permit to the minimum set by the State. It has been reported that corporations and speculators are holding 120 million excess permits, more permits than are currently needed to cover the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in the state through 2017.

If revenue remains weak, the California High Speed Rail project could run out of money needed next year to match a federal grant. The state rail authority is depending on annual cap-and-trade revenue of \$500 million to build the first operational segment from San Jose to Shafter.

Cap and Trade is also facing a legal challenge from the California Chamber of Commerce. Their lawsuit, filed nearly four years ago, argued that Cap and Trade was unconstitutional because it functions like a tax, and the law was not passed by the two-thirds majority in the Legislature needed to approve taxes. State Senator Fran Pavley, who wrote the 2006 law, expressed confidence the law would survive the legal challenge. A ruling is expected in the new few weeks.

## **REGION**

### **Southern California Tops National Stolen Cars List**

Southern California was the top city in the nation. The L.A.-Long Beach-Anaheim metropolitan area saw a total of 57,247 cars stolen last year, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau, almost twice as many as closest rival San Francisco's 30,554 and more than double Houston's 25,433 or New York-New Jersey's 22,391. Despite its high overall numbers, Southern California ranked only 26th in per capita thefts.

### **LAPD Can't Enforce Speed Limits On Most City Streets**

The L. A. City Council Transportation Committee on June 8<sup>th</sup> discussed solutions that would allow LAPD to again enforce posted speed limits on a majority of city streets. To enforce speed limits using radar or laser equipment, State law requires speed surveys less than 10 years old. Budget and staffing cuts during the recession reduced the city's ability to conduct new surveys, so speeding tickets can't be issued. About three-quarters of L.A. streets haven't been checked in that time period.

The newly approved city budget includes funding to hire two new employees to help with the back log of street surveys. City officials are also pushing California to change its speed enforcement law so police have more flexibility to enforce speeding limits. But, there's a potential Catch 22. The same state law could also trigger speed limit increases if the surveys determine the average speed of driving on the streets has risen.

## **Moving Goods, Not People: Deliveries Are The Newest Congestion Challenge**

As internet companies compete to bring books, milk, and goodies to your doorstep, millions of personal shopping trips are being converted into freight traffic. Apartment-building lobbies have begun to look like warehouses, and residential streets hum with idling delivery truck engine sounds. Businesses, too, have adapted to delivery-on-demand to reduce in-house inventory by receiving three or four deliveries per day.

All that could be spelling trouble for urban traffic, according to a new report on the future of freight from the New York Regional Plan Association (RPA). The report documents that delivery-induced congestion is already here. And the rise of e-commerce and the allure of next-day and same-day delivery, for all its convenience to consumers, has increased congestion to the point that the RPA suggests trying to *discourage* home delivery.

One of the problems cities are facing is that their tools for reducing traffic are focused on the movement of people rather than goods. Improvements like bus corridors and bike lanes do little for freight; in fact, they can impede its progress. A Saturday trip to the mall has evolved into 10 separate home deliveries, at different times on different days. In dense urban centers, errands once run on foot are now carried out by vehicles. And compounding the problem, Texas A & M researchers have reported that trucks represent only 7 percent of urban travel in the U. S., but account for 18 percent of congestion cost (wasted fuel and time).

What can be done to address the first/last mile warehouse to house congestion and pollution? Europe may be providing glimpses of future options. For example, in France, according to a Metrans MetroFreight report released last year, more than 20 percent of internet orders are picked up at a local receiving center. Local businesses can sign up to be pickup points for neighbors, offering a safe, flexible, local point for getting your online purchases. Amazon has explored the use of automated parcel systems, located in gas stations or subway stops, that allow consumers to pick up packages 24 hours a day.

Ultimately, the relationship between home delivery and traffic will come down to two things. The first is whether shipping companies will bundle their packages with enough efficiency to produce a cumulative decline in vehicle miles traveled. The second, and perhaps determining, issue is whether those companies will be held accountable for the maintenance and societal costs of truck traffic, like congestion (e.g. through daytime delivery charges or anti-idling laws), degrading pavements, and environmental pollution (e.g. through higher gas taxes, vehicle miles travelled fees, or local delivery or low-emission zones).