

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

August 24, 2017

TO: SBCCOG Board of Directors
FROM: SBCCOG Transportation Committee
RE: SBCCOG Transportation Update – August 2017

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

Proposed FTA Rule Encourages Private Sector Investment In Public Transit

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is writing a new rule aimed at encouraging more private sector investment in public transportation projects.

The U. S. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) issued a notice of proposed rulemaking on July 31st that would allow public transit projects to streamline some steps in the regulatory or permit approval process if they prove that it will attract more private investors. Under the proposed system, public transportation project sponsors could request a waiver or modification to FTA “regulations, practices, procedures or guidance documents” if the applicant proves that the steps are discouraging private sector involvement. However, the system could not be used to avoid any National Environmental Policy Act requirements or any other provision of federal statute.

The FTA is accepting public comments on the proposal until Sept. 29th.

Senate Panel Backs Bill That Funds TIGER Program And Transit Project New Starts

The Senate Appropriations Committee bill approved on September 27th to fund the U.S. Department of Transportation for the 2018 budget year would increase TIGER infrastructure grants to \$550 million, provide \$2.13 billion for federal Capital Investment Grant New Starts program, continue federal subsidy of AMTRAK’s long-distance trains and the Northeast Corridor, avoid rescinding any highway program funds, and not to privatize the federal air traffic control system.

The Senate bill is in sharp contrast with the version House appropriators advanced. The House bill would zero out TIGER, make deeper cuts in transit capital grants, eliminate the AMTAK subsidy, and rescind \$800 million in contract authority from federal-aid highway funds. The proposed Senate bill also bars states from setting their own possibly conflicting regulations around the design, operation and software components of self-driving cars. States still will be to restrict autonomous vehicles on public roads and regulate vehicle regulation and inspection.

Neither the House nor the Senate bill supported Trump's proposal to phase out Essential Air Service subsidies to support commercial air travel to and from rural airports, or to implement his plan to take air traffic control out of the Federal Aviation Administration and hand it to a new nonprofit corporation.

The Senate also noted its opposition to a Trump Administration proposal that would reduce federal highway funding in 2020 to the level provided by the Highway Trust Fund rather than the current practice of supplementing the Trust Fund with federal General Fund revenues. The Senate version allocates \$45 billion from the Highway Trust Fund to be spent on the Federal-Aid Highways Program and, provides \$1.1 billion for the Federal Aviation Administration's modernization program, and provides \$2.1 billion for the program.

The Trump administration's transportation budget proposed cutting federal transportation spending by \$2.4 billion and privatizing air traffic control to avoid spending General Fund revenues for transportation.

Consideration of the broader \$1 trillion Trump infrastructure bill will likely have to wait until next year because Republicans want to tackle tax reform once they finish health care reform. The full House and Senate are expected to take their budget bills up after returning from a summer recess in September leaving only a few weeks to finalize a spending bill before the new fiscal year starts Oct. 1 when a continuing resolution would be needed to keep federal transportation funds flowing at the same level as this year.

Congress Developing U. S. Rules For Self-driving Cars

Members of U. S. Senate and House committees are drafting legislation to allow autonomous vehicles onto the roads under specific safety and "tech neutral" requirements that would preempt state legislation. Although no bill has been introduced in the Senate, the bipartisan House Energy and Commerce Committee sent H. R. 3388 to the House floor. Its bill would create a national standard regarding the design, construction, or performance of highly automated vehicles, automated driving systems, or components of automated driving systems. The bill is aimed at allowing companies like Uber and Google to test up to 100,000 autonomous vehicles across the country.

STATE

State Gas Tax Hike Opponents Sue Over Repeal Initiative's Title And Summary

Proponents of an initiative to repeal SB 1 approved last November in California are suing the state attorney general over the state-drafted title and summary for the ballot measure, which the gas tax opponents say is misleading and negative. At issue is the state attorney general's language that must appear on petitions circulated by people who want to overturn the tax.

The repeal campaigners need to collect 365,000 signatures of registered voters in 150 days to qualify a measure for the ballot that would repeal SB 1, the \$52-billion tax increase legislation signed in April by Gov. Jerry Brown to fund transportation projects in the state.

The gas tax will increase by 12 cents per gallon and the diesel tax will go up 20 cents on Nov. 1. The new law also creates an annual vehicle fee ranging from \$25 for cars valued at less than

\$5,000 to \$175 for cars worth \$60,000 or more. That fee kicks in Jan. 1. Electric car owners will pay a \$100 annual fee in lieu of gas taxes starting in 2020. In signing the bill, Brown said the taxes and fees would cost most Californians less than \$10 per month.

Caltrans Allocates \$34.5 million Cap and Trade For 125 California projects

On July 17th, Caltrans announced that Torrance Transit is one of the projects to be funded by the California Climate Investments Program. The program was created to provide operating and capital assistance for transit agencies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve mobility, with a priority on serving disadvantaged communities.

Of the \$34.5 million in funding allocated, \$29.6 million will benefit disadvantaged communities. Torrance Transit was awarded \$59,487 to purchase and install active transportation infrastructure at the Torrance Regional Park and Ride Transit Center and at other locations.

REGION

L. A. Metro orders 95 Electric Buses In First Step To Replace Entire Fleet by 2030

In the first step toward a new goal of eliminating tailpipe emissions by 2030, the L. A. Metro Board agreed on July 27th to spend more than \$138 million to buy 95 electric buses that will initially run on two Los Angeles County busways. The initial electric bus fleet will total 5% of Metro's 2,200 bus fleet.

Metro's first electric buses will only run along the Orange Line busway in the San Fernando Valley and in the 29-mile Silver Line carpool lane along the Harbor and San Bernardino freeways.

A \$66-million budget was approved to electrify the Silver Line on the San Bernardino and Harbor Freeways including purchase of 60 electric buses from BYD, installing chargers along the route, and updating wiring to handle higher wattages. The line should be finished by 2021.

The \$72 million budget for the Orange Line across the San Fernando Valley includes \$51 million for 35 electric buses from New Flyer, and \$7.8 million for charging stations at each end of the line. The route should be fully electric by 2020.

The agency's buses typically are used in regular service for about 14 years. Although its contracted services still use diesel buses, Metro retired its last diesel bus six years ago, completing a 15-year process to replace diesel with quieter, cleaner engines powered by natural gas. The agency is setting a new goal to replace the CNG infrastructure and engines over the next 13 years. Metro typically replaces 155 buses per year, but would need to increase the rate to nearly 200 per year between 2020 and 2030 to meet its goal. An electric bus currently costs \$200,000 more than natural gas buses but costs are expected to come down as the number of electric bus purchases increases.

There is not currently an electric bus on the market that can meet Metro's needs for its rapid or local service, where buses run 250 miles a day and up to 20 hours without re-fueling. Although batteries have become more efficient and lighter in recent years, battery-powered buses still can't travel as far as their natural gas-powered counterparts, which can run 400 miles on a tank. To

address technology questions and concerns about how far the electric buses can travel between charging, Metro may re-visit the transition schedule in 2019 after testing of the electric buses on the two routes is complete and battery technology has evolved further.

At the same meeting, Metro hedged its all-electric bet by awarding a \$26.5-million contract to Cummins Westport to build and deliver a new type of natural gas engine known as “near zero.” The board also approved purchasing 65 new natural gas buses.

L. A. Metro Launches Workforce Development Program

Approximately 39% of Metro’s workforce will be eligible for retirement over the next three years with 69% of Metro employees currently over the age of 40. In response, L. A. on July 28th announced the launch of Workforce Initiative Now-LA (WIN-LA), a groundbreaking workforce development program focused on creating career pathways in the transportation industry.

The new program will provide support for participants in areas such as placement assistance, life skills development, skill set enhancement and educational attainment services through a collaboration of program partners. It also will increase the resources needed for training and placement of hard-to-fill positions within Metro and the transportation industry.

WIN-LA is designed to be a collaborative partnership between Metro and those institutions and organizations interested in helping job seekers, companies and local communities through demand-driven workforce services. The goal is to create career pathway opportunities in the transportation and construction industries.

South Bay Galleria Draft EIR Has Several Makeover Options And Future Transit Links

Forest City released its Draft EIR on July 27th that contains several options for an ambitious makeover of the 30-acre South Bay Galleria. The report projects unavoidable traffic impacts regardless of the scale of the ultimate development that is approved.

The 651-page document evaluates four versions of a mixed-use revamp of the mall with different densities and configurations that all incorporate expanded retail and dining, open-air promenades, an apartment complex, a boutique hotel and open space, sending much of the existing surface parking into structures and underground. The new mixed-use project would be served by a new transit center and a station on the future Metro Rail Green Line Southern Extension.

Construction would begin in April 2020 and take 31/2 years to complete, according to the draft EIR. The DEIR can be viewed at:

http://redondo.org/depts/community_development/planning/south_bay_galleria_draft_eir.asp

L. A. Metro Bike Share Opens On San Pedro Waterfront

Metro’s bike sharing system expanded to the Port of Los Angeles on July 31st, with 13 stations and 120 bicycles added to the agency’s growing network.

Metro already had 61 stations and around 700 bicycles in downtown L.A. and another 30 stations that were recently added to Pasadena. To date, more than 200,000 trips have been made on the existing bike share system, with more than 495,000 miles traveled, according to Metro. A bike share system in Venice is planned to open later this summer.

Metro Buses Continue To Run Behind Schedule And More Slowly; Ridership Drops 9%
A July 20th L. A. Metro report shows that the agency's bus speeds have slowed 15% in the past 13 years, the buses continue to run behind schedule despite schedule adjustments to reflect the slower speeds, and ridership has dropped 9% in the last year alone. The slower speeds have forced Metro to shift buses from lower ridership lines to higher ridership routes. The agency estimates shifting resources to the impacted lines have cost an incremental \$65 million over the past five years. In addition, because service levels are capped systemwide, service frequencies have been reduced elsewhere in the transit system to allow the reallocation of buses, drivers and mechanics.

Metro is looking for a commitment of local jurisdictions and funding to fix its bus speed problem. The report states that, unlike other transit agencies such as SF Muni, King County Metro, and Chicago Transit Authority, Metro does not control signal timing or street design and doesn't have the engineering resources on staff to address bus priority. As a first step in working with local jurisdictions on such improvements, staff will secure the assistance of a full-time contractor with expertise in traffic engineering and operations to advance efforts for improving speed and on-time performance on key corridors within the Metro system.

TRENDS

LA Metro Considering Ridehailing-like “Microtransit” Service

L. A. Metro announced on July 18th it is exploring whether it could offer more user-friendly transit options, including one patterned after popular ridehailing services like Uber or Lyft. Unlike [Uber or Lyft](#), Metro's plan, known as “Microtransit”, would provide vans and Metro drivers instead of private cars and independent drivers. Trips would be curb-to-curb, trips would include multiple riders with multiple stops, and Metro would use a private partner to allow riders to make reservation using a smartphone.

Paris Launches Autonomous Shuttle Bus Service Pilot Project

As of the beginning of July, a new driverless, electric shuttle bus service has been running in Paris. The trials are taking place in La Défense, Europe's largest business district. Drivers will be on-board during the first three months of the pilot and will not be on-board during the second phase of the trial.

Free of charge for all users, the service offers three different routes that serve the main areas of La Défense. Two of the routes operate at 10-minute intervals at peak times during the week; the third runs every 20 minutes on the weekends. The shuttles are able to take up to 15 people and have a top speed of 45km/h, however this is often kept to 24km/h (28 mph) as a result of the semi-pedestrian areas in which the shuttles are navigating.

Lyft Launches New Push Into Self-Driving Cars

Lyft announced on July 21st that it is creating its own self-driving car division. The firm will hire hundreds of engineers for the self-driving division, which will be housed in a new San Francisco office. Lyft's new division marks a change in the company's strategy, as it shifts from partnerships to its own advancement of self-driving car technology.

Lyft had previously started development in the autonomous vehicle space but had been doing so via partnerships with the likes of Waymo, a Google subsidiary, and General Motors, which had been developing its own technology in the space.

Portland Launches Public Adaptive Bike Rental For People With Disabilities

When Portland launched its bike-share system last year, disability rights advocates questioned why the city wasn't making public bikes accessible for people with disabilities as well. Portland launched a public bike rental program for people with disabilities called Adaptive Biketown on July 21st, which shares its name with the city's Nike-sponsored bike-share system. During the pilot period through this fall, the rental service will offer a mix of tandems, hand-cycles, and three-wheeled bikes.