



**LASSEN COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**  
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANING AGENCY

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John L. Clerici, Executive Secretary

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Staff Report

Date: October 30, 2024

**AGENDA ITEM 5.01B**

To: Lassen County Transportation Commission

From: John Clerici, Executive Secretary

Subject: Executive Secretary's Report

**Transportation Planning**

***US 395 Coalition***

The US 395 Coalition is at an interesting inflection point. There are number of planning and capital projects anticipated for the US 395 corridor south of Susanville to the Nevada state line to be implemented over the next 5 to 7 years. The LCTC is awaiting the release of the US 395 Freight Movement Feasibility Study. Staff was informed on Monday by Caltrans District 2 staff that an administrative draft of the document was under internal review. We anticipate seeing the publicly available draft before your next meeting. Staff believes that the study will inform the next steps for the coalition.

***Wildlife Crossing Grant***

Data gathering has been completed and the consultant team is evaluating potential crossing locations. It was anticipated that this information would be available by this meeting. However, the need for additional consultation with resource agencies (mostly Caltrans and DFG) has pushed that date out to March 2025. Staff and the consulting team do not believe that this will impact on the schedule.

Public release of the draft list of crossing alternatives will mark the beginning of more intense public outreach.

From an administrative standpoint, the LCTC recently signed an agreement making us the CEQA lead on the project and engaged Caltrans in a Cooperative Agreement which allows Caltrans in the project in an official capacity.

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### *Susanville Indian Rancheria – Long-Range Transportation Plan*

The LRTP will all for the inventory and analysis of transportation infrastructure within the SIR transportation network and geographic service area. The LRTP identifies goals and develops strategies to address current and future land use, economic development, traffic demand, public health, safety, and social needs.

The tribal communities and local populations are the beneficiaries of tribal transportation improvements. LCTC staff is committed to working with tribal staff in this very important transportation planning effort. Staff see this as an extension of the work we are currently engaged in to identify and fund improvements to the transportation systems in Lassen County.

### *Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway*

As directed by the Commission, staff engaged under contract an effort to do a visual assessment of the entire byway and provide a framework for actions needed to restore the interpretive assets. The visual assessment is underway and the contractor provided this brief initial observation, “some portions are beautiful, others not so much, and some places are going to need a lot of work. Will be back to you as quickly as we can with the summary and next steps.”

Staff is hopeful that a more detailed report can be made at your January 2025.

### *Lassen County GIS*

The LCTC applied for and received a grant from Caltrans to update and expand the GIS capabilities in the region. The grant provides funding to add transportation layers to the updated system, and to include both the City of Susanville and the Susanville Indian Rancheria in the countywide system.

The GIS Strategic Plan will identify the most efficient and effective way for updating and coordinating GIS databases throughout the region. With accurate GIS databases, the region can identify the locations of greatest need for multi-modal improvements, safety improvements, flooding risk and wildfire evacuation routes in a manner that is equitable to all residents of this disadvantaged community.

Work on this effort is anticipated to be finished during FY 24/25.

### *Caltrans Planning Grant Update*

Staff is currently working on the potential for submitting a couple of grants to Caltrans for the following:

- **Bizz Johnson Extension East** - This project will investigate the feasibility of creating a public, multi-use trail on 23 miles of abandoned railroad grade between Susanville and Wendel, California in CY 2025-2029. The proposal includes trail inventories and the preparation of preliminary engineering and environmental studies. A Feasibility Plan and Business Plan will explore options to acquire the railroad right-of-way (ROW) and convert to a public recreational trail.

- **EV Infrastructure Master Plan** - The plan involves a thorough assessment of the existing charging landscape and the identification of strategic locations for new charging stations. This will enhance the county's commitment to boost economic growth, and improve local and tourist mobility. In collaboration with key stakeholders such as the Susanville Indian Rancheria, City of Susanville, Lassen County, LMUD, Lassen County Chamber of Commerce, and other stakeholders.

## STATE TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION AND FUNDING

### **Caltrans System Investments Strategy**

In early March, Caltrans released the Draft Caltrans System Investment Strategy (CSIS) for review and comment. The review period is open until April 15, 2024. LCTC staff have been engaged with Caltrans and the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) throughout the development of this recent draft, providing many comments and suggestions along the way. The Draft CSIS document and comment form can be found here:

<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/transportation-planning/division-of-transportation-planning/corridor-and-system-planning/csis>. CSIS is intended to be the guiding policy document for Caltrans to lead climate action and advance social equity through targeted transportation investments that are in alignment with the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI, 2021) set forth by CalSTA. CSIS will be used by Caltrans to determine how investments are made on the state system to support the policies and targets set in motion by Governor Newsom's two Executive Orders N-19-19 and N-79-20. LCTC staff will be submitting additional comments on the Draft CSIS to advocate that consideration and recognition be given to rural context, resource limitations, climate threats, high visitation, and other issues and opportunities facing our rural and suburban transportation network.

### **State Budget 24/25**

California's state budget is facing a significant shortfall. Regarding transportation funding and investments, the budget includes several key updates and funding allocations. The budget emphasizes a combination of general fund adjustments, new funding sources, and federal grants to support various State driven transportation initiatives.

1. **Budget Adjustments:** Governor Newsom has proposed reducing General Fund spending on transportation programs by \$4.3 billion over the 2024-25 period. However, about \$3.3 billion of these funds are expected to be restored in future years, resulting in a net savings of \$1.1 billion. Key strategies include cash flow adjustments, delaying certain fund allocations, shifting expenditures to other funds, and reducing spending on specific programs.
2. **Local Transportation Funding:** The budget includes \$5.1 billion for public transportation agencies to address operational deficits. This funding aims to prevent a transit fiscal cliff, support infrastructure projects, and enhance public transit systems across the state.
3. **Active Transportation Program:** Although the Active Transportation Program saw a significant cut in the Governor's May revision, the final budget restores \$100 million for the 2024-25 fiscal year, with another \$100 million promised for 2025/26.
4. **Federal and State Collaboration:** California continues to leverage federal funds, including grants from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (IIJA), to support major transportation projects. Notable investments include \$450 million for zero-emission

infrastructure at ports and \$3.3 billion in federal grants for the high-speed rail project, neither of which support the needs of those jurisdictions in El Dorado County or the City of Placerville.

Efforts highlighted and included in the current budget reflect the Governor's commitment to combating climate change through transportation investments including enhancing public transportation, promoting sustainability, and ensuring equitable access to transportation options across the state.

### **State Legislation**

The California Legislature reconvened its 2024 session on January 3, 2024. The Legislature had until January 31 to pass bills, in each house, that were introduced in 2023. February 16 will be the last day new bills can be introduced into each house. Some of the bills that LCTC is tracking that carried over from the last legislative session include the following. New proposals are highlighted.

The California Legislature began their final recess for the year. They will reconvene after the November elections on December 2, 2024. August 31, 2024, was the last day for each house to pass bills. Some of the relevant bills that Governor Newsom is now considering for signature or veto include the following.

#### **AB 1777 – Ting (D): Autonomous Vehicles.**

Would, commencing July 1, 2026, require manufacturers of autonomous vehicles that operate without a human operator physically present in the vehicle, except as provided to comply with certain requirements, including, among other things, to maintain a dedicated emergency response telephone line that is available for emergency response officials, as defined, and to equip each autonomous vehicle with a 2-way voice communication device that enables emergency response officials that are near the vehicle to communicate effectively with a remote human operator, as specified. The bill would, commencing July 1, 2026, authorize an emergency response official to issue an emergency geofencing message, as defined, to a manufacturer and would require a manufacturer to direct its fleet to leave or avoid the area identified within 2 minutes of receiving an emergency geofencing message, as specified.

#### **AB 1924 – Nguyen-Stephanie (D): Sacramento Regional Transit District.**

The Sacramento Regional Transit District Act provides for the formation of the Sacramento Regional Transit District, with specified powers and duties related to providing public transit services. The act authorizes the district to comprise the Cities of Citrus Heights, Davis, Elk Grove, Folsom, Rancho Cordova, Roseville, Sacramento, West Sacramento, and Woodland, the territory of the County of Sacramento that is the same area as the urban service area of the county, and other specified portions of the County of Yolo, provided those cities and counties have agreed to annexation by the district, as specified. This bill would authorize the district to also comprise the Cities of Galt and Isleton, and the unincorporated portions of the County of Sacramento where the county has declared a need for the district to operate, provided the cities and county agree to annexation, as specified.

#### **AB 2678 – Wallis (R): Vehicles: high-occupancy vehicle lanes.**

Current state law authorizes the Department of Transportation to designate certain lanes for the exclusive use of high-occupancy vehicles (HOVs). Current federal law authorizes, until September 30, 2025, a state to allow specified alternate fuel and plug-in electric or hybrid vehicles to use lanes designated for HOVs. Current state law authorizes the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue decals or other identifiers to qualified vehicles, as specified. Current state law allows a vehicle displaying a valid decal or identifier issued pursuant to these provisions to be operated in a lane designated for the exclusive use of HOVs regardless of the occupancy of the vehicle. These existing state laws, by operation of their provisions, become inoperative on the date the federal authorization expires. Current state law also repeals these provisions on September 30, 2025. This bill would extend the repeal date of these provisions until January 1, 2027.

**SB 936 – Seyarto (R): Department of Transportation: study: state highway system: road safety**

Would require the Department of Transportation to conduct a study to identify certain locations in the state highway system about vehicle collisions, projects that could improve road safety at each of those locations, and common factors, if any, contributing to the delay in the delivery of those projects. The bill would require the department to post the study on its internet website on or before January 1, 2026.

**FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION AND FUNDING**

LCTC staff will be working with Lassen County, City of Susan, and Lassen Rural Transit partners to consider and apply for new and expanded competitive grant programs in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) anticipated to launch over the course of the next year. Some of the programs under consideration include the following:

- **Safe Streets for All (\$6 Billion)** – This program will provide funding directly to local and tribal governments to support their efforts to advance “vision zero” plans and other improvements to reduce crashes and fatalities, especially for cyclists and pedestrians.
- **Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grants (\$15 Billion)** – RAISE grants support surface transportation projects of local and/or regional significance.
- **Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grants (\$14 Billion)** – INFRA grants will offer needed aid to freight infrastructure by providing funding to state and local government for projects of regional or national significance. The BIL also raises the cap on multimodal projects to 30% of program funds.
- **Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Low and No Emission Bus Programs (\$5.6 Billion)** – BIL expands this competitive program which provides funding to state and local governmental authorities for the purchase or lease of zero-emission and low-emission transit buses as well as acquisition, construction, and leasing of required supporting facilities.
- **FTA Buses + Bus Facilities Competitive Program (\$2.0 Billion)** – This program provides competitive funding to states and direct recipients to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities including technological changes or innovations to modify low or no emission vehicles or facilities.
- **MEGA Projects (\$15 Billion)** – This new National Infrastructure Project Assistance grant program will support multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional projects of national or regional

significance.

- **Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program (\$8.7 Billion)** – PROTECT will provide \$7.3 billion in formula funding to states and \$1.4 billion in competitive grants to eligible entities to increase the resilience of our transportation system. This includes funding for evacuation routes, coastal resilience, making existing infrastructure more resilient, or efforts to move infrastructure to nearby locations not continuously impacted by extreme weather and natural disasters.
- **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) competitive grants for nationally significant bridges and other bridges (\$15.77 Billion)** – This new competitive grant program will assist state, local, federal, and tribal entities in rehabilitating or replacing bridges, including culverts. Large projects and bundling of smaller bridge projects will be eligible for funding.
- **Charging and fueling infrastructure discretionary grants (Up to \$2.5 Billion)** – This discretionary grant program will provide up to \$2.5 billion in funding to provide convenient charging where people live, work, and shop.
- **Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program (\$1 Billion)** – This new competitive program will provide dedicated funding to state, local, MPO, and tribal governments for planning, design, demolition, and reconstruction of street grids, parks, or other infrastructure.
- **FHWA Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (\$1.78 Billion)** – This discretionary program provides funding for the construction, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of nationally-significant projects within, adjacent to, or accessing Federal and tribal lands. BIL amends this program to allow smaller projects to qualify for funding and allows 100% federal share for tribal projects.
- **Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grant Program (\$1 Billion)** – The SMART Grant program will be a programmed competition that will deliver competitive grants to states, local governments, and tribes for projects that improve transportation safety and efficiency.
- **Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program (\$2 Billion)** – This new competitive grant program will improve and expand surface transportation infrastructure in rural areas, increasing connectivity, improving safety and reliability of the movement of people and freight, and generate regional economic growth.