



LASSEN COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANING AGENCY

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John L. Clerici, Executive Secretary

Staff Report

Date: August 8, 2024
To: Lassen County Transportation Commission
From: John Clerici, Executive Secretary
Subject: Executive Secretary's Report

AGENDA ITEM 5.01B

Transportation Planning

US 395 Coalition

Staff is trying to organize a meeting of the Coalition in late September.

Wildlife Crossing Grant

Data gathering (animal tracking, videos, carcass counts, etc), and LCTC staff is actively coordinating with the project team, and will provide a more detailed review of the project will be provided at an upcoming meeting. In addition, there will be significant community outreach associated with this effort, as well as web and other social media presence.

The consulting team has prepared a draft list of potential crossing locations along US 395. It is currently in administrative review. Once it is cleared for public review staff will provide it to the commission.

Lassen/Plumas County ZEV Infrastructure Grant

This project was closed out in June. We are now compliant with all CARB requirements for ZEV conversion of the transit fleet.

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

Through most of 2023 LCTC staff has been working with the “Lassen County Transportation Commission/Volcanic Legacy Community Partnership” to fund an evaluation, and potential restoration, of signage and other visual and educational elements along the Scenic Byway.

Staff was unsuccessful in obtaining a Caltrans grant for this purpose and has since then, met with project proponents and Caltrans staff to determine the best way forward to fund this very important effort. Staff is exploring using alternative funding (Planning, Programming and Monitoring – PPM) through the State Transportation Improvement Program to fund all or a portion of this work.

An agenda item was placed on the LCTC August 2024 Agenda to implement a project using PPM Funds. Assuming the LCTC supports staff’s recommendation, an update on gathering foundational information on the status of the byway will be provided at your November 5 meeting.

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.

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

The current California budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2024-25 emphasizes significant investments and adjustments in transportation and infrastructure, reflecting the state's ongoing commitment to enhancing its infrastructure while managing fiscal challenges. Governor Gavin Newsom's budget includes \$19.6 billion dedicated to transportation funding, addressing key areas such as high-priority transit and rail infrastructure, goods movement modernization, and safety improvements through grade separation projects. The proposal aims to improve connectivity, reduce traffic congestion, and lower greenhouse gas emissions by funding projects like the High-Speed Rail Authority's Central Valley Segment and zero-emission modernization projects at ports. Additionally, the budget introduces measures to expedite infrastructure projects, streamline permitting processes, and leverage federal funds to maximize investment in climate-resilient infrastructure. To balance the budget amid a projected \$37.86 billion shortfall, the proposal includes \$3.2 billion in spending delays and shifts \$791 million to the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, ensuring the continuation of essential transportation projects while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

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.

AB 6 – Friedman (D): Transportation Planning : Regional Transportation Plans: Solutions for Congested Corridors Program: reduction of greenhouse gas emissions

Current law requires each regional transportation plan to include a sustainable communities strategy prepared by each metropolitan planning organization, to, among other things, achieve certain targets established by the State Air Resources Board for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles and light trucks in the region for 2020 and 2035, respectively. This bill would state the intent of the Legislature to enact subsequent legislation that would require regional transportation agencies to prioritize and fund transportation projects, including those funded by a local sales tax measure, that significantly contribute towards the goals outlined in a region's sustainable communities' strategy and the state's climate goals.

Status: Referred to Committee on Transportation 6/11/24

AB 3177 – Carrillo, Wendy (D): Mitigation Fee Act: mitigating VMT

Current law requires a local agency that imposes a fee on a housing development for the purpose of mitigating vehicular traffic impacts to set the rate for the fee to reflect a lower rate of automobile trip generation if the housing development satisfies specified characteristics, including that the housing development is located within a one-half mile of a transit station. Current law defines transit station for these purposes to mean a rail or light-rail station, ferry terminal, bus hub, or bus transfer station. This bill would instead require the housing development to be located within a one-half mile of a transit priority area for purposes of a local agency setting the rate for a mitigating vehicular traffic impacts fee to reflect a lower rate of automobile trip generation. The bill would define “transit priority area” as an area within one-half mile of a major transit stop that is existing or planned, if the planned stop is scheduled to be completed within the planning horizon included in a Transportation Improvement Program or applicable regional transportation plan.

Status: Referred to Commission on Local Government and Housing 5/29/24

ACA 18 – Wallis (R): Road Usage Charge: voter approval requirements

The California Constitution requires any change in state statute that increases the tax liability of any taxpayer to be imposed by an act passed by 2/3 of the membership of each house of the Legislature and prohibits specified taxes on real property from being so imposed. For these purposes, the California Constitution defines a “tax” as any state levy, charge, or exaction, except as described in certain exceptions. The California Constitution describes one of those exceptions as a charge imposed for entrance to or use of state property, or the purchase, rental, or lease of state property, except charges governed by a specified provision of the California Constitution. This measure, on or after its effective date, would provide that the exception described above does not include a road usage charge, as described, thereby requiring the imposition of this type of charge to be subject to the 2/3 vote requirement.

Status: From Printer 6/4/24

SB 786 – Caballero (D): CEQA: VMT study

Current law requires the Office of Planning and Research to prepare, develop, and transmit to the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency for certification and adoption proposed revisions to guidelines establishing criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts of projects within transit priority areas to promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses. Current law establishes the Transportation Agency in state government with various duties and responsibilities. The agency is under the supervision of the Secretary of Transportation, who has the power of general supervision over specified departments and offices, including the Department of Transportation. This bill would require the Transportation Agency, in consultation with local governments and other interested parties, as specified, by January 1, 2028, and subject to an appropriation by the Legislature for this purpose, to conduct and post on its internet website a study on how vehicle miles traveled is used as a metric for measuring transportation impacts pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The bill would require the study to include, among other things, an analysis of the differences in the availability and feasibility of mitigation measures for vehicle miles traveled in rural, suburban, and urban areas. The bill would repeal those provisions on January 1, 2029.

Status: Referred to Committee on Natural Resources 6/10/24

SB 936 – Seyarto (R): Office of Planning and Research: road safety projects

Would require Office of Planning and Research (OPR), in coordination with the Department of Transportation, to conduct a study to identify certain locations in the state highway system with regard to vehicle collisions and crash exposure, 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 OPR to post the study on its internet website on or before January 1, 2026.

Status: Referred to Committee on Transportation 6/3/24

SB 1159 – Dodd (D): CEQA: roadside wildfire risk reduction

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the Office of Planning and Research to prepare and develop, and the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency to certify and adopt guidelines for the implementation of CEQA. CEQA requires the guidelines to include a list of classes of projects that have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment and are exempt from the requirements of CEQA, commonly known as categorical exemptions. This bill, on or before January 1, 2026, would require the office to evaluate, and the secretary to consider, the inclusion of roadside projects no more than 5 road miles from a municipality or census-designated place that are undertaken solely for the purpose of wildfire risk reduction in the classes of projects subject to a categorical exemption. The bill would require the office to consider appropriate eligibility criteria for these projects, as specified.

Status: Referred to Committee on Transportation 6/3/24

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.