



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

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John L. Clerici, Executive Secretary

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Staff Report

Date: March 7, 2024

**AGENDA ITEM 5.01B**

To: Lassen County Transportation Commission

From: John Clerici, Executive Secretary

Subject: Executive Secretary's Report

Transportation Planning

***Lassen County Road/Mobility Workshop***

On January 18<sup>th</sup> a meeting which included staff from Caltrans, Lassen County, the City of Susanville, the Susanville Indian Rancheria and Lassen Rural Bus was held to discuss countywide road/mobility needs and prioritizing those needs. This process was an extension of the update to the Regional Transportation Plan (2023) with the aim to take selected projects from the RTP and determine what funding and planning was required for implementation. A number of projects were identified in each jurisdiction, including transit capital needs, and staff is currently working to develop an action plan for each. A detailed presentation will be made to the Commission at your May meeting.

***US 395 Coalition***

There have been no meetings of the Coalition since my last update. We continue to work on preparing two very important presentations prepared for the Coalition. One will be a more detailed look at the safety project Caltrans D2 has developed for the area north of Hallelujah Junction to about Honey Lake. The second will be an introductory presentation on the Wildlife Crossing grant recently awarded the LCTC by the Wildlife Conservation Board.

Staff has contacted the Lassen County Board of Supervisor to provide an update on all activities on US 395 related to all efforts associated with the Coalition.

***Wildlife Crossing Grant***

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As had been reported previously, LCTC staff (with a consortium of consultants) prepared and submitted a grant proposal to the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), to fund an expansive study of migratory animal populations in the US 395 Corridor south of Susanville.

Data gathering is underway, 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.

### ***Lassen/Plumas County ZEV Infrastructure Grant***

With the successful submission of our ZEV transit roll-out plan in January, work is proceeding to finish up, and close out the project. This should happen before the end of the FY 23/24 FY. After that, staff will prepare and submit annually to CARB.

### ***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.

If successful in attaining PPM funds in 2024 STIP staff anticipates implementing this effort in late summer 2024. Staff has requested project proponents prepare a reduced scope of work, budget and schedule to meet the revised effort.

### ***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**

Governor Gavin Newsom's Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget proposal, released on January 10, 2024, includes significant allocations and strategies impacting transportation infrastructure in California. The total budget is set at \$291 billion, with a substantial portion dedicated to transportation funding, amounting to \$19.6 billion. This investment aims to address a projected \$37.86 billion shortfall while maintaining the state's fiscal stability.

Key highlights of the transportation infrastructure investments in the budget are:

1. **Transit and Rail Infrastructure Projects:** The budget allocates \$7.7 billion for high-priority transit and rail infrastructure projects. These projects are focused on improving connectivity between state and local/regional services, with an emphasis on reducing traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.
2. **High-Speed Rail Authority:** An investment of \$4.2 billion from Proposition 1A is dedicated to continuing the construction of the 119-mile Central Valley Segment of the high-speed rail from Madera to just north of Bakersfield.
3. **Grade Separation Projects:** The budget includes \$350 million for grade separation projects. These are critical for enhancing safety and streamlining the movement of traffic and rail by separating the vehicle roadway from the rail tracks.
4. **Zero Emission Transit Capital Program:** The budget proposes \$1.1 billion for the state's Zero Emission Transit Capital Program, highlighting the state's commitment to environmentally friendly transportation solutions.
5. **State Transit Assistance:** An allocation of \$1.24 billion is set for State Transit Assistance, supporting the broader transit infrastructure.

However, in the face of the significant budget gap, some adjustments have been made:

- A delay of \$3.1 billion in funding from transit and intercity rail programs is proposed, aligning with expenditure schedules. This includes \$2.1 billion from the competitive Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program and \$1 billion for the formula Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program, with the delays stretching as late as 2027-28.
- A reduction in active transportation funding by \$200 million is also noted, alongside a delay of \$400 million from 2021-2022 to align with expenditure schedules.

Overall, the budget reflects a balanced approach, striving to maintain essential investments in transportation infrastructure while addressing the fiscal challenges faced by the state. The California Transit Association has expressed support for the proposal, recognizing the

importance of public transportation and its role in advancing the state's environmental, public health, and equity goals.

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 EDCTC 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: Failed Deadline in Senate (7/14/23) may be acted upon in 2024**

**AB 7 – Friedman (D): Transportation Planning: Project Selection Process**

The Transportation Agency is under the supervision of the Secretary of Transportation, who has the power of general supervision over the Department of the California Highway Patrol, the California Transportation Commission, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Transportation, the High-Speed Rail Authority, and the Board of Pilot Commissioners for the Bays of San Francisco, San Pablo, and Suisun. The secretary, among other duties, is charged with developing and reporting to the Governor on legislative, budgetary, and administrative programs to accomplish coordinated planning and policy formulation in matters of public interest, including transportation projects. On and after January 1, 2025, and to the extent applicable and cost effective, this bill would require the agency, the Department of Transportation, and the California Transportation Commission to incorporate specified principles into their existing program funding guidelines and processes.

**Status: Failed Deadline in Senate (9/14/23) may be acted upon January 2024**

**AB 16 – Dixon (R): Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax Law: adjustment suspension**

Would authorize the Governor to suspend an adjustment to the motor vehicle fuel tax, as specified, scheduled on or after July 1, 2025, upon deciding that increasing the rate would impose an undue burden on low-income and middle-class families. The bill would require the Governor to notify the Legislature of an intent to suspend the rate adjustment on or before January 10 of that year and would require the Department of Finance to submit to the Legislature a proposal by January 10 that would maintain the same level of funding for transportation purposes as would have been generated had the scheduled adjustment not been suspended.

**Status: Re-referred to Committee on Transportation (1/4/2)**

SB 5 – Nguyen (R): Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax Law: limitation on adjustment The Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax Law, administered by the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration, imposes a tax upon each gallon of motor vehicle fuel removed from a refinery or terminal rack in this state, entered into this state, or sold in this state, at a specified rate per gallon. Current law requires the department to annually adjust the tax imposed by increasing the rates based on the California Consumer Price Index, as specified. This bill would limit the above-described annual adjustment to a maximum of 2% for rate adjustments made on or after July 1, 2023. This bill contains other related provisions.

**Status: Reconsideration granted (5/3/23)**

### **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.