

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments
Joint MTC Legislation Committee and ABAG Legislation Committee**

May 8, 2020

Agenda Item 6b

Tom Bulger's Report

Subject: March & April 2020 Report from Washington, D.C. advocate.

Recommendation: Information

Attachments: Attachment A: Tom Bulger's Report – March & April 2020



Therese W. McMillan

March & April 2020 Monthly Washington, D.C. Report



To: Therese W. McMillian, Executive Director

From: Tom Bulger, President GRI

Date: March 28, 2020 updated April 25, 2020

RE: Monthly Report for March & April 2020

I would like to say that the past two months have been unprecedented, and this report is notably light on action items. For the bulk of the past two months, all non-essential businesses have been closed in the D.C. Metropolitan Area. Shelter in place at home is the new norm. People are terrified to leave their homes. On the bright side, I have never seen so many neighbors walking by our house, and our two dogs may be exhausted from so many walks.

- **President Signs \$2 Trillion Economic Stimulus**
- **Business Coalition Pushes Congress on Transportation**
- **Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Rule Part 2**
- **MTC / ABAG 2020 Washington D.C. Trip and Congressional Reception Postponed**
- **White House Announces Joel Szabat's Nomination for United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Under Secretary**

President Signs \$2 Trillion Economic Stimulus

On Friday, March 27, 2020, the President signed a \$2 trillion emergency spending bill into law. His signature followed after the House of Representatives passed their version of the bill by a voice vote, and after two days it gained approval by the Senate. In my many years, I have never seen Federal spending, or for that matter, any Federal legislation approved in this timely manner.

The spending bill directs funding to households, cities, states, businesses, hospitals and transit operators. The MTC staff has made a remarkable effort to explain how the \$25 billion in aid to the nation's public transit systems will unfold. I, therefore, don't feel that this should be repeated.

Business Coalition Pushes Congress on Transportation

On March 12, 2020, a new business coalition from around the country to press Congress on federal transportation policies, priorities, and projects were announced. The new coalition includes top executives from major metropolitan areas, including the Bay Area. The newly formed coalition is called Metropolitan Civic Leadership Alliance. The Bay Area Council and Silicon Valley Leadership are founding members.

Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Rule Part 2

On March 31, the Trump Administration issued a final SAFE Vehicles Rule Part 2, completing the two-part rollback of Obama-era greenhouse gas emissions and fuel economy standards for cars and light trucks. This rulemaking is set to go into effect 60 days after publication in the Federal Register; as of the writing of this memo, publication is scheduled for April 30th. Like the first portion of the SAFE Vehicles Rule—which revoked California's authority to set climate standards that exceeded the federal baseline—the new standards are sure to face legal challenges. Though the long-term fate of the rulemaking will most likely be decided by the courts, in the near-term, states and metropolitan planning organizations should prepare for the possibility that the models used to perform federal air quality analysis for Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) updates and amendments could be invalidated by the SAFE Vehicles Rule Part 2. It is up to the Environmental Protection Agency, working with California, to determine whether or not our models are still valid.

Per MTC staff, at least one project—the I-680 Gap Closure Project in Alameda County—could be delayed if the SAFE Vehicles Rule Part 2 invalidates our model and renders MTC unable to approve the pending amendments to add the project to the Bay Area's RTP and 2019 TIP, planned for May. Given that the full impact of Part 2 of the SAFE Vehicles Rule is still unknown, MTC staff are working with state and federal partners to expedite review and approval of the RTP/TIP amendment for I-680, prior to the rulemaking taking effect.

MTC / ABAG 2020 Washington D.C. Trip and Congressional Reception Postponed

After weeks of organizing, the annual March MTC / ABAG Washington D.C. trip and Congressional reception was postponed. Over 20 Congressional and trade association meetings and the Congressional reception in the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Room were also postponed.

White House Announces Joel Szabat's Nomination for United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Under Secretary

Joel Szabat's nomination to be the Under Secretary at the USDOT was announced on April 20, 2020. This position is third in line after the Secretary and Deputy Secretary. I met Joel through Steve Heminger, who attended Georgetown University together.