

Letter from LAPC Staff

As we have been completing this transportation plan update these last several months, we have been and continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic. It has impacted every aspect of personal and professional activities.

The immediate impact was a significant reduction in motorized traffic as Stay-at-Home orders were issued, telecommuting replaced going to the office, restaurants closed to sit-down dining, and “non-essential” businesses temporarily closed their doors. Public transportation remained operational for essential workers, but fear of contracting COVID-19 and social distancing requirements resulted in severe drops in ridership. Federal assistance is replacing losses in local revenue to keep transit systems operational, but how long that will or can go on is unknown. One concern is if transit systems will recover ridership after the pandemic is over.

As people sheltered at home, traditional shopping shifted to the internet, resulting in increased demand for freight delivery services. Traditional dine-out shifted to carry-out and delivery from establishments that already provided those services and curbside pick-up from many dine-in restaurants.

Out of this challenging time a few positive impacts have occurred. Walking and biking replaced going to the health club (good for the environment, not so good for the health clubs). Air quality improved as driving was significantly curtailed. Many businesses are realizing they can operate effectively and efficiently through telecommuting.

The few positive impacts, however, cannot overcome the devastating effects this pandemic has had on jobs, livelihoods, and lives. Businesses have closed permanently; former employees are unemployed and without an income; renters are on the edge of eviction; over 153,000 American (667,000 worldwide) lives lost.

Historically, pandemics affecting the United States have been flu pandemics—the most recent being the 2009 H1N1 global flu pandemic. The first cases were detected in April 2009 and the pandemic declared over by the World Health Organization in August 2010. If history tells us anything, the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to be with us into 2021.

Although we are still in the throes of the pandemic, we see businesses opening their doors again, restaurants providing sit-down and outdoor dining, and employees going back to work as policies for social distancing and the wearing of face masks serve to help protect workers and customers alike. Traffic is increasing, which, in this case, is a good sign that we are working our way back to normalcy. But we still need to follow the recommendations of our healthcare professionals to put an end to this pandemic.

We are resilient and adaptive. We will recover.

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