

# Bay Watch

Spring 2021

A quarterly bulletin to inform local leaders of subregional progress and alert them to emerging issues

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## SOUTH BAY CONNECTED

### South Bay Fiber Network Wins National Award

American City & County, an organization that has served as a voice of state and local government since 1909, has named the South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG) one of six recipients of its 2020 Crown Communities Award for its South Bay Fiber Network (SBN) project.

The SBN is a dedicated, fiber-optic network connecting the South Bay region's city halls and other local and regional public agencies with high-speed, low-cost broadband connectivity.

Each year, American City & County gives its Crown Communities Award to municipal and county governments that have implemented innovative projects. The projects are judged on uniqueness, short- and long-term value to the community and effective/innovative financing.

The SBN provides an essential public asset and resource to city governments as they manage economic viability during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond and creates opportunities to bridge the "digital divide" in communities underserved with broadband.

In developing the concept, the South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB) saw the project as a way to promote economic development and, in

partnership with the SBCCOG, and some funding from Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, developed a South Bay Fiber Optic Master Plan.

The SBCCOG succeeded in obtaining subregional funding dedicated to the South Bay from Los Angeles County Metro to cover capital construction costs, upon showing that the network is needed to implement certain transportation projects.



The project's middle mile ring was completed in August 2020. To date, 27 sites have been connected, including all South Bay city halls, and a number of diverse public agencies.

The project is on pace to have 35 sites connected by the beginning of this summer. Lateral construction connecting sites to the ring, will continue through the fall. New members and connection sites continue to be identified.

To learn more about the SBN, visit <https://www.southbaycities.org/programs/south-bay-fiber-network>.



### Thank you sponsors for your generous support 21<sup>st</sup> Annual (Virtual) SBCCOG General Assembly

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#### SPECIAL THANKS

To Christian Horvath, past SBCCOG chair and Redondo Beach councilmember, for chairing the event.  
See page 2 for a recap of the 2021 General Assembly and how to view presentations.

# NEWS FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## COGTalk Speakers Name Empathy as Foundational Guidepost During “Conversation on Intersections”

One of the biggest challenges to overcome in solving the state’s housing supply and affordability issues is a “lack of empathy,” according to Liam Dillon, a Los Angeles Times reporter who covers issues of affordability and neighborhood change across California.

Dillon shared this observation during his TED-Like COGTalk titled “Why California Has a Housing Crisis,” at the virtual March 18, 21st General Assembly, hosted by the South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG). Following a morning forum where Dillon and other COGTalk speakers individually addressed the conference’s theme, “Intersections: Finding Tomorrow’s Solutions for Today’s Issues,” as it relates to their sometimes-siloed sectors of transportation, housing, public safety, the environment, homelessness, public health, economic development and technology, they came together for the panel discussion, “Conversations on Intersections.” There, they sought to identify areas where they could potentially “intersect” to solve problems. Recognizing a common emphasis on “empathy” during speaker’s individual talks, Christian Horvath, conference chair/moderator, Redondo Beach City Council member and 2019/2020 SBCCOG board chair, encouraged them to advance the discussion further, beginning with the areas of housing and transportation.

Dillon spoke at the conference virtually from Fresno, where he was covering a story about the rising call to export residents to less populated and more rural California cities, based on their reputations for lower housing costs. “I hear a lot of, ‘Sure I support more housing development; I support more affordable housing development, but somewhere else.’” Dillon said. “Part of that is we are so segregated [as a state]. We are segregated racially; we are segregated by class, and that empathy really isn’t there.”

He suggested that more collaborative intersections between siloed communities might help prevent a NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) mindset. “In reality Fresno has had the largest rent increases over the past few years of any city in the country,” he said. “More renters in Fresno spend more than half their income on rent than renters in Los Angeles. So, if you’re exporting folks from L.A., you could be, in many ways, exacerbating some of the issues that already exist in different regions of the state.”

COGTalk speaker Ahmed Darrat lassoed this point to illustrate how similar blind spots in transportation and mobility design could also be prevented through better “hearing and listening” to those outside their sectors. Darrat, an engineer and market leader at Cityfi, a civic consultancy, spoke on “Integrating Empathy into our Mobility Ecosystem.” He emphasized the importance of understanding human behavior when designing and building transportation systems.

“Often times in government, we think about what is happening to us, rather than putting ourselves in the shoes of the community,” Darrat said.

Redirecting the conversation slightly, COGTalk panelist Lila Omura shared how her personal childhood experience with homelessness triggered her own empathy, which led to the desire to help others in similar circumstances. Today she is a housing navigator for San Pedro-based Harbor Interfaith Services, a non-profit that works to empower homeless and working poor to achieve self-sufficiency. “There’s no way we could engage these individuals without empathy,” Omura said.

**Continued on Page 3**



*Conversation on Intersections panel; Top, from left: Hon. Christian Horvath; John P. Keisler; Lila Omura; Chief Keith Kauffman; Middle: Thomas O'Brien, Ahmed Darrat; Liam Dillon; Dave Daigle; Bottom: Kristen Torres Pawling, Kevin Hirai; Dr. Marianne Gausche-Hill.*

Dr. Marianne Gausche-Hill, medical director for Los Angeles Emergency Management Services (EMS) Agency and UCLA professor of clinical medicine and pediatrics, drew a link to how empathy factored into emergency management during the pandemic in balancing the need to deliver health care, with that of protecting workers and the public, when potentially exposed workers themselves needed to quarantine.

Additional speakers in the roundtable included Dave Daigle, CEO of American Dark Fiber, the company that built the SBCCOG's new South Bay Fiber Network; Kristen Torres Pawling, sustainability program director, Los Angeles County Sustainability Office; Kevin Hirai, co-founder and COO of FlyawayHomes, a builder of modular homes for the unhoused; Police Chief Keith Kauffman, city of Redondo Beach; Dr. Thomas O'Brien, executive director for the Center for International Trade and Transportation at California State University Long Beach; and John P. Keisler, economic development director, Long Beach.

In the afternoon, additional thought leaders at the local and state level gathered on the event's virtual platform to explore "Intersections Between the Private and Public Sectors" and "Intersections Between State and Local Governments." The private/public intersections panel included El Segundo Mayor Drew Boyles; Inglewood Mayor James Butts; Kelly Cheeseman, LA Kings/AEG Sports; Jason Gannon, SoFi Stadium; Alan Pullman, Studio One Eleven; and Allen Sanford, Sanford Ventures.

The state/local intersections panel was comprised of Senator Ben Allen, 26th Senate District; Torrance Mayor Pat Furey; Kate Gordon, director, Governor's Office of Planning and Research; former Rolling Hills Estates Mayor Judy Mitchell; Hawthorne Mayor Pro-tem and SBCCOG chair Olivia Valentine; and Lynn von Koch-Liebert, deputy secretary of Housing and Consumer Services, at the California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency.

To view the 21st General Assembly conference sessions, visit <http://bit.ly/SBCCOGGA2021>.

## BIG IDEA ABOUT GOING SMALL

### Local Travel Network Calls For "Right Sizing" Vehicles For Local Trips

The South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG) has just completed a plan for a proposed Local Travel Network – a safe network of routes to accommodate a growing market of personal zero-emission slow-speed vehicles.

The plan, funded by a Caltrans sustainability grant, examines the feasibility of more widespread adoption of a transportation concept known as micromobility, which refers to a range of lightweight vehicles operating at speeds below 25 mph. These include neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs), which appear similar to golf carts, e-scooters, e-bikes, electric skateboards, and other personal transportation devices.

The Local Travel Network (LTN) would entail the development of a 243-mile route network comprised of local streets with low speed limits designated for micromobility vehicles, that are part of the South Bay's existing 2,000 miles of roadways. Automobiles would share the roadway with micro-devices. But on roadways required to connect the network, there would be a dedicated slow-speed lane created.

#### Did you know?

- 70% of vehicle trips are 3 miles or less and 88% are 10 miles or less in the South Bay.
- The region's residents annually pay more than \$1.5 billion collectively for gasoline and \$9,000 individually on auto expenses.

"The traditional gas-fueled passenger car designed to be an all-purpose, go anywhere vehicle, really is an outdated mode of transport for those who have short work commutes, or make frequent trips to their children's school or the corner grocery store," said Wally Siembab, research director, SBCCOG, who conducted the study.



Example of neighborhood sharrow system

"The average car weighs more than 4,000 pounds and carries mostly empty space—on average 1.67 people—which is both inefficient and unsustainable. With 750,000 registered motor vehicles on our South Bay roads, the time is ripe to 'right-size' our vehicles for local trips."

The report proposes the LTN be constructed as a "sharrow system" of markings on the street and wayfinding signage to inform riders and drivers they are using the LTN, and to alert motorists to be aware of slow-moving lightweight vehicles in the vicinity.

The SBCCOG will be working with cities to implement the LTN with funding as an "active transportation safety improvement" through the SBCCOG's Measure M sub-regional construction funds. By visiting <https://bit.ly/LocalTravelNetwork>, South Bay residents can learn more about the LTN, participate in a survey, and also look up their own neighborhood to see if the destinations they frequently visit would be included in the network.

For more information, contact Aaron Baum at [aaron@southbaycities.org](mailto:aaron@southbaycities.org).



# MYTHS VS. FACTS

## SBCCOG Training Promotes Better Understanding of Homelessness

South Bay city employees going about their daily jobs often encounter people experiencing homelessness. When Measure H (Los Angeles County Plan to Prevent and Combat Homelessness) Innovation Funds became available in November, 2019, the SBCCOG issued a call for projects to the South Bay cities. Many cities responded with requests for education and training to help employees better process such encounters. Using these funds, a working group comprised of SBCCOG, LA County Homeless Initiative, LAHSA, South Bay Coalition to End Homelessness, and beach cities staff developed the Education and Training 101 Module: “Introduction to Homelessness” to educate city staff. The module focuses on dispelling common myths about homelessness, customized for each South Bay city to include commonly used resources.

### 5 common myths about homelessness

**Myth:** *People experiencing homelessness are just lazy and need to get a job.*

**Fact:** Many people have full-time jobs but do not earn enough to pay the high cost of local housing. According to recent homeless counts, approximately 60% of newly homeless individuals cite economic hardship as the reason they became homeless. Some common barriers to employment, as cited by the National Coalition for the Homeless, include disabling conditions, criminal record, inconsistent access to showers, transportation challenges and lack of a permanent address. People of color often experience prejudice and hidden racism.

**Myth:** *All homeless people have a mental illness or are on drugs.*

**Fact:** Based on homeless counts, year-to-year, approximately 25-30% of those experiencing homelessness have a severe mental illness, and approximately 30% have a substance use disorder. Many self-medicate with drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism to survive on the streets. Research shows substance use is more likely to be a result of homelessness, rather than a cause.

#### Fact:

- Approximately 25-30% of those experiencing homelessness have a severe mental illness, and approximately 30% have a substance use disorder.

**Myth:** *Homeless people are dangerous, and they are all criminals.*

**Fact:** People who are homeless are more likely to be victims of a crime than to commit a crime, especially among women and young adults. There is an alarming trend throughout LA County and the South Bay that people experiencing homelessness are becoming targets of gangs. It is important to not vilify people without homes, but rather, to see them as neighbors in need of shelter and housing.

**Myth:** *They just made bad choices.*

**Fact:** People's actions are often influenced by circumstances beyond their control, such as losing a job, being a victim of domestic violence, or a physical or mental impairment.



People experiencing homelessness live in a day-to-day survival mode, finding it difficult to make longer-range plans. Their daily frame-of-mind is often about how to find food and water, and how to stay relatively safe and avoid dangerous street situations.

**Myth:** *People on the streets don't want help, they like this lifestyle and the freedom.*

**Fact:** No one wants to experience homelessness, as it can be dangerous, stressful, and humiliating. Living on the streets statistically shortens one's life and ages people by 20 years. In the past couple of years, more than 1,000 people have died on the streets in LA County. The key to having people accept services is to build trust and relationships with them.

Shelters have been offered as temporary solutions, but people have often rejected them, opting instead to live outdoors due to the restrictions imposed. These include limits to the amount of personal belongings they can bring, and not welcoming pets. Occupants can sometimes feel unsafe among strangers, closed-in due to the arrangement of beds/cots and unwelcome due to serious physical or mental illness. A shelter may also be several miles from a person's neighborhood, and in many cases, families fear separation, as many shelters still partition beds into “female” and “male” sections. Many such restrictions have been eased or lifted as county policy makers recognized they were counter-productive. Other requirements have been put into place to mitigate the effects of such restrictions and barriers.

To learn more about the 101 Module: “Introduction to Homelessness,” please contact Grace Farwell at [grace@southbaycities.org](mailto:grace@southbaycities.org) or Laurie Jacobs at [laurie@southbaycities.org](mailto:laurie@southbaycities.org).

#### See Something, Say Something

If you see someone experiencing homelessness who needs help, please make an outreach request through [www.la-hop.org](http://www.la-hop.org), the Los Angeles County Homeless Outreach Portal.



## CASH FOR KITCHENS PROGRAM RECEIVES A COVID-19 UPDATE

The Cash for Kitchens (C4K) Program was developed by West Basin Municipal Water District to provide water efficiency surveys to restaurants and other food service facilities to assist in saving water and gas.

Restaurants and commercial kitchens, including schools are invited to participate in the updated program with proper modifications in place during the pandemic to protect staff and the public. The new West Basin website portal is mobile-friendly, allowing participants flexibility to complete a water use survey online and at their own pace.

The C4K survey collects information on current water usage and efficiency of water-using plumbing fixtures. A custom report will identify water-saving opportunities, strategies and eligibility for water-efficient devices. Technical support is available to ensure surveys are completed successfully.

Participants who take the survey are eligible to receive the following benefits:

- a mailed, contactless water efficiency package, free of charge including water saving spray valves and flow restrictors and
- enhanced rebates up to \$6,000 per device for water saving steamers and dishwashers.



A water efficient spray valve is available through the C4K program.

To qualify, commercial kitchen or food service facilities must be located within the West Basin service area and be a new program participant. The public is encouraged to invite their favorite local restaurants to participate in this program.

To learn more and get started in the program, visit [www.westbasin.org/c4ksurvey](http://www.westbasin.org/c4ksurvey) or contact Martha Segovia at: [martha@southbaycities.org](mailto:martha@southbaycities.org).

## City Showcase

## HAWTHORNE HOSTS DRIVE-THROUGH BUNNY BONANZA AND EARTH DAY FESTIVAL



Liam Iriarte enjoys the drive-through Bunny Bonanza and Earth Day festival.

Mrs. Peter Cottontail greeted visitors at the March 27 Bunny Bonanza & Earth Day Festival at Hawthorne Memorial Center. For 13 years, the city has treated hundreds of children and adults to the “Bunny Breakfast and Earth Day Festival.”

However, last year the coronavirus prevented the city from hosting the event.

This year the Hawthorne Community Services and Public Works Department welcomed hundreds of people as a socially distanced a drive-through celebration. Cars paraded through the Betty Ainsworth parking lot, where tents were set up to hand out goodies and educational information about Earth Day.

The Fine Arts Association passed out literature about the Trash Can Beautification Project. The South Bay Cities Council of Governments provided environmental health information, including Green Business Program flyers. The Hawthorne Public Works Department, with Republic Services, operated e-waste and paper shredding stations and the Holly Park Homeowners Association gave out potted plants.

According to one staff member, “Last year’s cancellation was a disappointment but necessary to keep our community safe. This year we are turning the page on COVID-19 and we are back!”

# PERSPECTIVE

## TAPPING GEOTHERMAL

Are our energy solutions just beneath our feet?

By William Glassley

The world is in a state of transition. We are moving to a new vision of how best to obtain and utilize the energy needed to sustain the societies we have created. Although there is intense debate, one thing is clear—the world of oil and gas will evolve to a new reality. This is particularly significant for the South Bay region because oil and gas fields that were developed throughout the 20th century will become less productive as they are depleted and other energy resources expand. What then will become of that real estate?

Geothermal energy, which is constantly flowing upward from deep in the earth, could be the answer to that question. This energy resource is naturally renewable and provides heat 24 hours a day. It emits very little (if any) carbon, and, once installed, is among the lowest cost electricity producers available. The challenge is finding the areas where it can be most easily tapped. That's where oil and gas fields become important. Wells are, in essence, temperature probes into the subsurface. Data obtained during drilling of the wells can be used in modern computer models to map the heat distribution underground. The results from those models can resolve locations for economically accessing geothermal energy. In other words, oil and gas fields can be transformed to places for geothermal resource use.

Geothermal energy can be deployed for a vast array of uses. The hottest resource areas can be developed into sites for electricity generation, and can also be used for desalination, energy storage and hydrogen production. For those areas where temperatures are not adequate for electricity generation, thermal energy can be used directly to maintain greenhouses, provide heat for laundromats, support heating and cooling systems, and enable food processing. The only limit for that energy use is imagination.

In addition, geothermal resource development can also contribute to environmental enhancement. By diminishing reliance on storage and use of oil and natural gas, the environmental impacts can be significantly reduced. With thorough cleanup and relandscaping, oil and gas fields can be transformed into attractive, multi-use areas through direct community involvement in the transformation process.

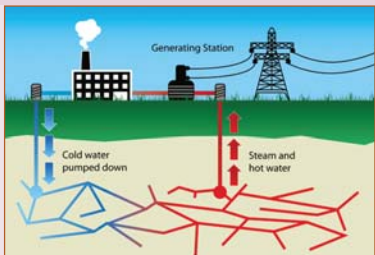
The reasons geothermal hasn't been more aggressively pursued in Southern California in the past are complex. According to a January 22, 2020 Los Angeles Times article, The California Energy Commission lists 43 geothermal plants in the state, most north of the Bay Area and in the Imperial Valley. State lawmakers have rejected proposals in recent years to require more geothermal power. But regulators tasked with charting California's path to 100% clean energy are now contemplating a doubling of geothermal capacity on the state's main power grid by 2030.

Recent developments in geological sciences and computer modeling have made it much less risky to explore for such resources, making the timing right for this undertaking. And, because geothermal wells are sealed more extensively than typical oil and gas wells, and will reach far below oil and gas reservoirs, the chances of an Aliso Canyon-type disruption are very small.

As the globe evolves toward a more sustainable future, the South Bay region could become an attractive example of how such change might equitably unfold, and what it could look like.

*William Glassley received his Ph.D. from the University of Washington in Geology. He has worked with the California Energy Commission as technical lead for geothermal energy, and was also executive director of the California Geothermal Energy Collaborative. He is a researcher in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at U.C. Davis and a guest researcher in the Center for Earth System Petrology, Department of Geoscience, Aarhus University, Denmark.*

A geothermal electricity generation facility pumps hot water from an underground geothermal resource (network of red lines) using drilled wells (red arrows). The heat from the hot water is extracted and used to turn turbines that produce electricity (Generation Station). The cooled water is then re-injected underground (blue arrows). For a "binary cycle" generation station, the water passes through a heat exchanger that powers the turbines and is directly re-injected, thus avoiding emissions. Image Source: <http://energy.gov/eere/geothermal> (2014)



## CALENDAR

Meetings, currently held virtually, are open to the public. Visit <https://www.southbaycities.org/calendar> for more information.

### June

- 1 GIS Working Group
- 14 Steering Committee
- 22 Services for Seniors Working Group
- 24 **Board of Directors**

### July

- TBD Energy Management Working Group
- 6 GIS Working Group
- 7 Homeless Services Task Force
- 8 Legislative District Staff Briefing
- 12 Transportation Committee Steering Committee
- 14 Infrastructure Working Group
- 22 **Board of Directors**

### August

- 3 GIS Working Group
- 9 Transportation Committee Steering Committee
- 11 Infrastructure Working Group
- 24 Services for Seniors Working Group
- 26 **Board of Directors**

For more information on SBCCOG meetings and programs, contact Jacki Bacharach, executive director, at [Jacki@southbaycities.org](mailto:Jacki@southbaycities.org).

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