

CALIFORNIA

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MYRON J. CHEW / LOS ANGELES TIMES

INCREASES in the state gas tax and vehicle fees approved last year are expected to raise \$5.4 billion a year. State officials on Thursday announced \$2.4 billion in spending on dozens of transit projects.

Six Metro projects on fuel-tax funds list

State lays out spending map even as Republicans prepare to file signatures for repeal.

BY PATRICK MCCREERY AND LAURA J. NELSON

SACRAMENTO — State officials announced Thursday that \$2.4 billion from increases in the gas tax and vehicle fees will be spent on dozens of transit projects, including work to prepare Southern California for the

2028 Summer Olympics.

The announcement came just before Republican activists plan to file signatures for a ballot initiative to repeal the increases.

An additional \$1.9 billion for the projects will come from funds collected by the state's landmark climate change program, which requires polluters to buy carbon-emission credits, the officials said.

The money will go to six Metropolitan Transit Authority expansion projects, including light-rail extensions to Torrance and Montclair, and additional rapid transit service along

congested corridors, according to the California State Transportation Agency, which allocated the money.

Officials said money will also go toward making the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner and Metrolink commuter lines faster and more reliable by improving tracks and signals at locations such as L.A.'s Union Station.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, it will help complete the funding for a Bay Area Rapid Transit line to San Jose and the creation of new SamTrans express bus routes along the U.S. 101 corridor.

[See Gas tax, B5]

UC shelves tuition hike while it seeks more funding

Regents had been set to vote on an increase next month but will now seek a revenue boost from the state.

BY TERESA WATANABE

University of California regents will not vote on a tuition increase next month, shelving the plan for now in hopes that state lawmakers will come through with more funding.

"Raising tuition is always a last resort and one we take very seriously," UC President Janet Napolitano said Thursday in a statement. "We will continue to advocate with our students who are doing a tremendous job of educating legislators about the necessity of adequately funding the university to ensure UC remains a world-class institution and engine of economic growth for our state."

Last week, Cal State Chancellor Timothy P. White said the 23-campus

system no longer would consider a plan to raise tuition for the 2018-19 academic year. But unlike Cal State, UC officials have not taken a tuition increase off the table entirely.

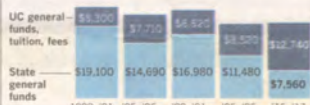
"We don't know what will happen," said George Kieffer, chairman of the UC Board of Regents. "But we have been getting a good deal of reinforcement and support from many members of the Legislature and are hopeful there will be full funding of the university. The better course at this time is to continue lobbying and advocacy efforts."

UC hopes for more funding have been buoyed by reports that state general fund revenues are \$3.3 billion higher than projected when Gov. Jerry Brown released his budget proposal in January.

January, UC regents delayed action until May on a proposal to increase tuition by \$342, which would bring state resident costs to \$12,972 for 2018-19. If ultimately approved, it would be the second consecutive

[See Tuition, B2]

How much California spends per UC student



Figures are in constant 2010-17 dollars. Source: University of California.

LORENA ELLERB / LOS ANGELES TIMES

No exhaust won't mean no toll



TRAFFIC flows along the 110 Freeway. Metro officials say ending the free ride for "green" cars is needed to reduce toll-lane congestion.

BY CAROLINA A. MIRANDA

Solo drivers in zero-emission cars will no longer use the 10 and 10A pay lanes for free.

BY LAURA J. NELSON

In a bid to reduce congestion in toll lanes on the 10 and 10A freeways, Los Angeles County transportation officials on Thursday opted to end a program granting solo drivers of zero-emission vehicles free access to the lanes.

Drivers with state-issued clean-air stickers will be charged a toll starting in November or December of this year, Metropolitan Transportation Authority officials said. They will receive a 10% discount on the per-mile toll lane price.

[See Toll lanes, B5]

LAURA AGUILAR, 1959 - 2018

Chronicled body, Chicano identity

Photographer focused on under-represented subjects like herself: Latina lesbians in L.A.

BY CAROLINA A. MIRANDA

Laura Aguilar's interest in photography began not in a museum, not in school and not while turning the pages of some hallowed book. Instead, she came to the medium as the result of mundane sibling rivalry.

She was in junior high; her older brother, John Lee Aguilar, was in high school. One day he showed up at their home in San Gabriel with a fancy new camera.

"It had all these lenses — the telephoto, right angle, micro and macro, and I wanted to touch them," she recalled in a 2004 oral history for the Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA. "He went, 'No! And I go, 'I want



LAURA AGUILAR UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center

'ONE OF THE GREAT ARTISTS' Laura Aguilar, pictured in a 1993 gelatin silver print, captured critical attention with her series of nude portraits set in expansive Southwestern landscapes.

to do photography. I want to take pictures."

Unlike her late brother, who moved on to other interests, Aguilar kept her passion for photography. In fact, it is for the manner in which she deployed the camera that she will best be remembered.

The Los Angeles photographer, known for chronicling the denizens of a working-class Eastside lesbian bar in the 1990s and for using her made-body like sculpture in desert landscapes, died Wednesday at a Long Beach nursing home. She was 58.

"She died in peace having spent her last day with many loving visitors," said Sybil Venegas, an independent curator and friend who helped manage the artist's affairs toward the end of her life. Aguilar had long contended with diabetes and was suffering from end-stage renal failure.

"Laura's passing is a profound loss," said Chon Noriega, director of the Chicano Studies Research Center. [See Aguilar, B4]

CALIFORNIA JOURNAL

Cosby verdict is a victory for women, justice

ROBIN ABEARIAN



For Bill Cosby, the reckoning was a long time coming. Four years ago, a stand-up comedian joked that America's favorite dad was a rapist. Women took notice, and began to step out of the shadows.

They risked the abuse and scorn that comes with reporting ancient sexual assaults.

But at some point between Cosby's first assault trial, which ended with a hung jury, and his second, which came after the #MeToo movement caught fire, the culture changed.

Justice finally arrived for Cosby, who inflicted an untold amount of horror on dozens of women over many decades.

On Thursday, the disgraced — and disgraced — comedian was convicted by a Pennsylvania jury of three



COSBY PERAINS ASSOCIATED PRESS

BILL COSBY leaves the courtroom in Pennsylvania after being convicted of sexual assault.

felony counts of aggravated indecent assault. Nov. 30, Cosby could receive 30 years in prison for his crimes.

I hope he goes straight to jail; it's the only place he is fit to be.

After years of qualification and hesitation, we can say that in 2004, Cosby drugged and sexually assaulted Andrea Constand. [See Abearian, B5]

Court limits testimony by children

The ruling involves a father removed from his home after his 3-year-old daughter said he molested her. 33

Audit targets zoo nonprofit

The L.A. organization is urged to reveal its financial records in order to be more transparent. 33

Lottery 33

LAURA AGUILAR, 1959 - 2018

Made art from both sides of the lens

[Aguilar, from B1]

"She had an ability to cut through the biases and habits of thought that makes us see a smaller world than actually exists. And she did it as an expression of the stunning beauty of the human body, including her own."

Aguilar had recently been the subject of the retrospective "Laura Aguilar: Show and Tell" at the Vincent Price Art Museum on the campus of East Los Angeles College, and her photography appeared last year in the two-part exhibition "Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A." The shows, part of the Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA series of exhibitions, helped resuscitate her profile at a time when her health had been in decline.

In her review of "Show and Tell" for this newspaper, Leah Ollman said Aguilar pushed portraiture forward "by turning her lens toward photographically under-represented subjects like herself: Latina, lesbian, large-bodied."

The exhibition chronicled the artist's beginnings in the late 1980s, when she created portraits of East Los Angeles artists in Day of the Dead costumes. She photographed high-profile Latina lesbians as a way of countering the whiteness of the mainstream gay-rights movement, and later hauled her camera to a lesbian haunt in El Sereno so she could capture a slice of Latina lesbian working-class life.

"Show and Tell" also captured the moment, in the 1990s, when her work took a turn toward the visceral and the conceptual. In the 1990 triptych "Three Eagles Flying," she renders herself nude, bound in rope and surrounded by the Mexican and U.S. flags — a woman held prisoner by the conventions and ideologies of the two cultures from which she hails.

Her big breakthrough came later that same decade when she created a series of poetic nude photographs that drew widespread critical attention. Inspired by the work of photographer Judy Dater, known for nude self-portraits in nature, Aguilar set out to do her own versions in expansive Southwestern landscapes — draping herself on rocks, curling herself into fetal positions and otherwise inserting her naked body into the landscape in ways both wry and alluring. She'd arrange her body and those of other women like ethereal props.

"She is at once part of the American land, and the viewer's eye, and apart from them," Michelle Hart wrote of these images in the *New Yorker* late last year, "in her own words, both present and persistently unseen."

On the occasion of a solo



Photographs by LAURA AGUILAR UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

Laura Aguilar's work was recently featured in a retrospective at East Los Angeles College's Vincent Price Art Museum. Above, her 1984 gelatin silver print of *Los Illegals*, the Chicano punk band from Los Angeles.

exhibition of these works at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects in 2003, an *LA Weekly* writer said: "She is apparently free from common objectification. She is free to make an object of herself."

Ironically, her work was perhaps most seen — and understood — only at the end of her life.

Venegas, who curated the "Show and Tell" retrospective, and who mentored Aguilar as a student in the 1980s at East Los Angeles College, said Aguilar was an artist ahead of her time.

"Everyone talks about gender and identity and body politics now," she said. "But in 1990, she was way out there. When she started doing the lesbian portraits, there were a lot of people in the [Latino] community, they were not ready to go there. Those ideas were not really embraced by Chicano/Latino artists at the time. It was a very different world than today."

Susanne Vielmetter, who organized several Aguilar exhibitions at her gallery in the early 2000s, said the artist was prescient about so many topics relevant to image-making today.

"I thought what she was doing was decades ahead of its time," Vielmetter said, "especially if you look at race, if you look at the history of landscape photogra-



FIFTH-GENERATION ANGELENA
Aguilar, left, captured working-class lesbian life in the 1990s at *The Plush Pony*, a bar in El Sereno.

phy, if you look at the male gaze, if you look at the body and its relationship to nature and its particular connection to the American West.

"It was all about photography and the gaze. She was both the subject and the object. She was both the photographer and the mood."

Aguilar was born in San Gabriel on Oct. 26, 1959, the daughter of Paul Aguilar, a welder by trade, and Juanita Grisham, a housekeeper — both of whom were of Mexican descent.

She was a fifth-genera-

tion Angeleno who could trace her roots to the middle of the 19th century and has ancestors buried at the San Gabriel Mission. As an adult, she settled in Rosemead — not far from where she was born — in a clapboard bungalow built by her great-grandfather. She remained there until this year, when her deteriorating health required a move to a nursing home.

Aguilar's home life, by her own account, was tumultuous. Her parents had a turbulent marriage and were unaware of her health

ies course taught by Venegas.

"She was this young girl — probably 19 or 20," Venegas said. "Her mother had just died. She was very curious and she was always looking for stuff that might interest her."

Venegas took her to East L.A.'s Self Help Graphics to see exhibitions and to Day of the Dead celebrations to learn about Mexican culture. Inspired by what she saw, Aguilar hungrily threw herself into her work.

"There was a lot of Laura's life that was chaotic," Venegas said. "In her photography, there was nothing disorganized, chaotic or dysfunctional."

The years following East Los Angeles College — the late '80s and '90s — were a fertile time for the artist, a period in which she captured a distinct intersection of Los Angeles life, one in which the Chicano and the queer intersected.

She also explored the nooks and crannies of the human body — taking conventions of beauty that prize thin-ness and exploding them into bits.

In one series of images from 1991, titled "Nude Exercise #12," Aguilar captures close-ups of her body without clothing: her pendulous breasts, the gently undulating folds of skin at her midsection, her tanned brown hands against a white expanse of chest — a woman both vulnerable and proud.

"She is dealing with specific issues," explained Noriega, who first came to know Aguilar and her work in the 1990s. "But she is also doing something that pushes beyond that: She's dealing with class, literacy and the body — and those things belong to everybody. You are dealing with a shared experience of the human condition."

These accomplishments did not go unnoticed. Over the course of her career, Aguilar's images were featured in exhibitions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Hammer Museum, Artpace in San Antonio and the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. In 1993, her photography was included in the Aperto section of the Venice Biennale.

But if critics were encouraging, the market was not. Aguilar made little money from her work — surviving on odd jobs, grants and the occasional residency. After the late 2000s, health and financial troubles made it increasingly difficult for her to make work.

But the Pacific Standard Time exhibitions reignited interest in topics she began exploring back in the '80s.

"I feel Laura has done something that no artist that I know of has done in the past," Vielmetter said. "In my opinion she is one of the great artists and one of the more important photographers of our time."

The artist is survived by a nephew, Michael Aguilar.

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'There was a lot of Laura's life that was chaotic. In her photography, there was nothing disorganized, chaotic or dysfunctional.'

— SYBIL VENEGAS,
curator and friend

problems: She had not only bouts of depression but also a severe case of auditory dyslexia, which made it difficult for her to read and communicate verbally.

At one point, her mother suggested she drop out of high school because she didn't seem to be able to learn to read.

"In school ... people thought she couldn't speak English," Venegas said. "People thought she was incapacitated or mentally slow. But that was not the case."

Aguilar didn't learn she was dyslexic until she was almost 26.

"It was very painful," she stated in the oral history. "How come no one else could have figured that out?"

But if reading and writing proved difficult, photography was not. The camera became her outlet and her unflagging passion, a way to communicate when words often failed her.

Photography, she once stated, "became my escape."

At East Los Angeles College, in the mid-1980s, she began to find her artistic voice — thanks to a Chicano Stud-