



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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**Both the State and the Mobile Urban Area TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) Funding have been announced**, and are both due May 15, 2020; please see *Funding Opportunities*. A new tax on vehicle miles travelled is being floated around congress, See *Legislative Updates*. Will Amtrak return to Mobile? See *In the News* to read the latest.

**Happy Valentine's Day and Let the good times roll!!**

Check out [ALGO Traffic](#) before you travel!



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[Employment and Economic Development](#)

Anthony Johnson, Monica Williamson, Tom Piper, and Kevin Harrison, PTP

## Mobile MPO Updates

### Mobile MPO Policy Committee Meeting

On January 22, the Mobile MPO Policy Committee met. The Technical Coordinating Committee and Citizen's Advisory Committee (TCC/CAC) Bylaws and committee composition were amended. If you are a MPO Member, or an agency on the TCC/CAC, please take time to review the [Bylaws](#) and who sits on the committee.

Other items on the agenda of the MPO included a couple of cost increases in the Transportation Improvement Program. The cost increases are for the following projects:

- CN 100049566 Replace Bridge Westbound Over Tensaw –Spanish River from \$ 24,841,688 to \$35,165,857, funded with Federal Bridge Funds,
- CN 100060154 SR 158 Extension Lott Road Overpass and Jug Handle from \$20,000,000 to \$25,161,677 funded with National Highway Funds.

The two ATRIPII awards were added to the TIP:

- CN Phase 1 to Widen AL-158 from 2 Lanes to 4 Lanes from Mile Post 7.75 to Spartan Drive in City of Saraland \$4,741,885.95
- CN Intersection Improvements, Including Adding Roundabout at SR-188 and Irvington Bayou La Batre Highway Target Start Date : 1/1/2020 Engineers Estimate : \$246,923.00 City of Bayou La Batre
- Also on the Agenda was a STP Attributable realignment. Additional lanes on Zeigler Blvd from Forest Hill to Athey has had a recent cost increase from \$17,650,000 to \$20,812,530, leaving the STP Attributable schedule out of balance. Additional lanes on Three Notch Road from Schillinger Road to McDonald Road was moved out from FY 2023 to FY 2024.
- 100052463 (UT) Three Notch Road, Schillinger Rd to McDonald Rd (Additional Lanes) \$449,945
  - Originally scheduled in 2022, now scheduled in 2024
- 100052464 (CN) Three Notch Road, Schillinger Rd to McDonald Rd (Additional Lanes) \$4,499,456
  - Originally scheduled in 2023, now scheduled in 2024
- Projects of the Congestion Management Process 2020-2023
  - Government Street CMP Corridor, FY 2020 \$625,000
  - Airport Blvd, Hillcrest Rd to Cody Rd, FY 2021 \$625,000
  - University / Old Shell Road Corridor, FY 2022 \$625,000
  - Moffett Road Corridor, FY 2023 \$625,000
- There was also a discussion of the possibility to allow CMP projects more than one year \$500,000 (fed) CMP Allocation; specifically Government Street downtown.

There was a discussion on the *Envision 2045*, the 25 year Long Range Transportation Plan. ALL federally funded transportation projects must be derived from this plan. It is updated every five years, and must be fiscally constrained, meaning the federally funding must be identified for the each project in the Plan. Currently, the I-10 Mobile River Bridge is not in the fiscally constrained Plan. There was also a

short presentation by Kevin Spriggs with the Common Sense Campaign on a Coastal Alabama Consensus Plan for a four lane Mobile River Bridge and Expressway.

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Envision2045  
Invest in your transportation Future  
Mobile, AL Metropolitan Area Long Range Transportation Plan  
<https://www.envision2045.org/public-involvement.html>

The Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is currently updating its Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Mobile Urban Area and is seeking public input.

LRTPs are multimodal plans that set priorities for spending federal funds on transportation projects in the Mobile Urban Area over the next 25 years. These projects include improvements to highways, roads, bridges, transit facilities and service, bicycle and pedestrian routes, and related enhancements.

A public input meeting was held this past Wednesday, January 29th from 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm, providing the public a chance to provide input on the draft LRTP for year 2045.

Participation and input is encouraged from the community. If you would like a chance to comment, you may send your comments to [transportation@sarpc.org](mailto:transportation@sarpc.org).

More information on the new plan can be found at <https://www.envision2045.org/> or by contacting Kevin Harrison, Director of Transportation, SARPC, at (251)433-6541 or [kharrison@sarpc.org](mailto:kharrison@sarpc.org).

Envision2045 is multi-modal in scope, encompassing long-range plans for highway, public transportation, and bicycle and pedestrian networks. Regional growth, economic development, and accessibility within the study area along with environmental concerns necessitate that the long-range plan addresses not only improved vehicular travel but also improvements to alternative modes. Preservation of the existing transportation system coupled with enhancement of all modal choices will contribute to the improvement of the overall quality of life in the region.

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) invites decision makers, stakeholders, and members of the general public to participate in the development of the plan. SARPC is seeking feedback on transportation major infrastructure projects, initiatives and policies.

Your comments help SARPC's planners to develop a wide-ranging, action-oriented transportation plan. The Envision2045 plan being developed will also serve as a basis for allocating limited federal money aimed at roadways, bridges, and public transportation facilities. The comment period on the early participation online survey is closed; however, there will be several more opportunities for the public to comment on the plan in the near future.

**Results from the Survey conducted online from September 2019 to October 2019 can be found in the following document: Mobile Urban Area 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Survey Report.**

**Click [HERE](#) for Full Results.**

The final LRTP document is expected to be complete by March 2020. The **current version** can be viewed at <http://www.mobilempo.org/.../Destination2040/FINALDOCUMENT.pdf>.

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## Mobile MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Meeting

The Mobile MPO BPAC met last week to discuss bicycle and pedestrian issues throughout Mobile County. The agenda included the election of Chair and Vice-Chair – Mr. John Blanton was elected Chairman and Ms. Carol Hunter was elected Vice-Chairwoman. We would like to thank these kind folks for their continued guidance and support.

There was an update on the Bike/Ped section of the MPO's 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan and a review of upcoming road projects for inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. There was also a brief discussion on acquiring recent crash data involving cyclists and pedestrians. There was also an update on the Coastal Alabama Livable Communities Coalition's Bicycle Safety Training for Law Enforcement Officers.

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***The MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY is underway***



Over the years, the viability of transit in the underserved segments of Mobile County has been an important task to consider. The ability to connect those populations with daily needs and employment could be an important step in improving the quality of life for residents.





County. The demand response transit model uses a technology system to connect those in need of a ride with the provider based on the most efficient route and timing of other riders as well.

An important step in determining the feasibility of such a system includes talking with important stakeholders in the county. To future these efforts, a stakeholder roundtable meeting was held earlier this week. It is our hope that participating in this roundtable will help our consulting group gather information on the populations in need of improved transit access in Mobile County.

In August of 2019, a consultant selection committee selected VIA Mobility to perform the study. VIA Mobility has partnered with local group Goodwin, Mills, and Cawood as a sub consultant. [HERE](#) is Via's presentation from the kick-off.

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#### [FY 2020-2023 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM \(TIP\) NOW ONLINE](#)

The TIP represents a four year program (2020-2023) for improvements in the various transportation systems located within the Mobile study area as identified in the Mobile MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the twenty-five year plan for the Mobile Urban area [Destination 2040](#). The LRTP establishes the transportation programs that are needed to meet travel demand by the study year and study area. LRTP projects that become funded are moved into the TIP and submitted to the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), where they are programmed into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). For MPO projects, TIP project selection is based on priorities established by MPO member governments and the availability of funds through the Surface Transportation Attributable program. For other projects, ALDOT has discretion of project funding based on availability of funds from various types of funding categories. Most often, projects in the TIP are derived from the LRTP. The TIP guides ALDOT in its annual allocation of funds for transportation improvements and becomes a part of the STIP.

ArcGIS Online is now being utilized by MPO staff to map all federally funded surface transportation projects within our area. Check it out [HERE](#).

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## Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project:

<http://mobileriverbridge.com/>

About the project:

The Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project would reduce congestion on I-10 in South Alabama through the addition of additional capacity: a new six-lane bridge over the Mobile River, full replacement of the existing Bayway with an eight-lane structure, and redevelopment of seven interchanges. The project would run from Virginia Street in Mobile to the US 90/98 interchange in Baldwin County. Information in the project is available at [www.MobileRiverBridge.com](http://www.MobileRiverBridge.com).

On August 28, 2019 the Alabama Department of Transportation ceased project development efforts on the proposed Mobile River Bridge & Bayway.

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## Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

The target start date, plan status, or project engineers estimated amount has changed for the following:

Project : 100070795 Federal aid number : ST-049-158-004-PE County : MOBILE Scope : PE  
Project Description : ADDITIONAL LANES ON SR-158 FROM MP 7.75 TO SPARTAN DRIVE  
Urban Area : 067 MOBILE  
Target Start Date : 11/5/2019  
Engineers Estimate : \$47,418.00

Project : 100052601 ( UT )  
Federal aid number : STPMBF 7508 (600)  
County : MOBILE  
Project Description : MCGREGOR AVENUE WIDENING FROM AIRPORT BOULEVARD TO DAUPHIN STREET AND INSTALLATION OF A ROUNDABOUT AT DAUPHIN STREET  
Old Target start date : May 01, 2020  
New Target start date : December 01, 2020

Project : 100052602 ( CN )  
Federal aid number : STPMBF 7508 (600)  
County : MOBILE  
Project Description : MCGREGOR AVENUE WIDENING FROM AIRPORT BOULEVARD TO DAUPHIN STREET AND INSTALLATION OF A ROUNDABOUT AT DAUPHIN STREET  
Old Target start date : November 06, 2020  
New Target start date : May 28, 2021

Project : 100052458 ( RW )  
Federal aid number : STPMB 7533  
County : MOBILE  
Project Description : DAUPHIN STREET ADDITIONAL LANES FROM SAGE AVENUE TO WEST OF I-65 AT SPRINGHILL MEMORIAL HOSPITAL.  
Old Target start date : August 01, 2020  
New Target start date : October 01, 2020

# South Alabama RPO Updates

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## Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Update

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) is updating the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan which details which projects are eligible for Federal Transit Administration dollars for Elderly and Disabled (5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute projects (5316) or those transit projects that go above and beyond the requirements of ADA (5317).

If you are interested in, utilize, or provide transit, or would like to apply for federal transit dollars for special needs transit services your organization needs to be involved in this process.

SARPC staff will be holding public meetings to explain the plan, solicit input, and review the FTA 5310 application process in the coming weeks.

If you would like to comment on the plan or have any questions please contact the Transportation Planning Department at SARPC at 251-433-6541.

## Projects in Region Let February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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### MOBILE COUNTY

For constructing the Roadway Extension Overpass (Grading, Drainage, Pavement, and Bridge) and Jug Handle on SR-158 over a tributary of EB Seabury Creek and Partial Lott Road to include the Minor Widening, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-158 from 0.020 mile west of the junction of Schillinger Road to 0.400 mile east of the junction of Schillinger Road in Semmes. Length 1.093 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$17,147,508 to \$20,958,065 .

### BALDWIN COUNTY

For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-3 (US-31) from the junction of Crosby Road in Bay Minette to the Escambia County Line. Length 11.308 mi.

The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,982,091 to \$2,422,555 .

### ESCAMBIA COUNTY

For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, Guardrail Installation, and Traffic Stripe on SR-15 (US-29) from the junction of Finlay Lane to the Covington County Line. Length 18.720 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$2,962,024 to \$3,620,251 .

[What's Under Construction?](#) [Project Status](#)

## Legislative Updates

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*Congress is in session.*

### House Republican floats new tax as opening bid to spark infrastructure bill

By [Gabriella Muñoz](#) - *The Washington Times* - Wednesday, February 12, 2020

Rep. [Sam Graves](#), the top Republican on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, has offered up a new tax on every mile traveled in cars or trucks to help pay for roughly \$1 trillion for badly needed highway, bridge and other infrastructure projects.

Mr. [Graves](#) floated the vehicle mileage tax, or VMT, despite the inevitable blowback he will receive from the party's anti-tax base.

It is a bold opening bid compared to the Democrats' top tax writer, Rep. Richard Neal of Massachusetts, who said they want to wait for President [Trump](#) to make the first move on paying for infrastructure.

"The president doesn't pass legislation," Mr. [Graves](#), of Missouri, told *The Washington Times*. "I think Congress needs to step up and let's do our job."

The VMT would formulate a fee based on how much a person drives. In other words, tax road use.

The fee could be imposed immediately on commercial vehicles that already track mileage and easily formulated to record mileage of private vehicles, Mr. [Graves](#) said.

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### Legislation would ensure medium-size cities receive infrastructure funding

BY [MELINA DRUGA](#) | FEBRUARY 12, 2020

Five members of Washington state's delegation in the U.S. House of Representatives recently introduced legislation that would ensure medium-size cities receive federal funding for surface transportation and infrastructure projects.

The Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development for Underfunded Projects (BUILD UP) Act would require a minimum of 30 percent of funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation's BUILD grant program be awarded to cities with 10,000 to 75,000 residents.

The BUILD grant program awards federal funding to local surface transportation projects. Still, priority is given to large metropolitan areas, and medium-size cities often must delay or indefinitely postpone transportation projects.

The bill was introduced by Reps. Suzan K. DelBene (D-WA), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), Derek Kilmer (D-WA), Rick Larsen (D-WA), and Kim Schrier (D-WA).

“As House Democrats develop a broad plan to rebuild our nation’s roads, bridges, transit systems, and other critical infrastructure, it’s critical that suburban cities and small towns don’t get left behind,” Jayapal said. “By driving badly-needed federal transportation funds to smaller cities and towns that have been neglected by existing federal transportation programs, the BUILD UP Act will help ensure cities ... have the support they need to rebuild ages-old infrastructure.”

The BUILD program was formerly called the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery Act.

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## Carriers and shippers call for long-term infrastructure funding

[John Gallagher, Washington Correspondent](#) . Thursday, February 13, 2020

U.S. lawmakers negotiating new surface transportation legislation will need to include a long-term infrastructure funding plan if they’re going to satisfy the nation’s truck, rail and ocean carriers, as well as the carriers’ customers.

That theme was prevalent throughout roughly 75 comments submitted to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) in response to the agency’s request for information [on a National Freight Strategic Plan](#). While DOT has acknowledged that investment in freight infrastructure must be considered in transportation initiatives, users of the infrastructure assert that not enough attention or money is coming from the federal government.

“Lagging investment in critical infrastructure and inadequacy of long-term funding solutions” is one of the three most important challenges facing the U.S. freight transportation system, asserted the Consumer Brands Association (CBA) in comments filed in response to DOT’s request. CBA represents the \$2 trillion consumer packaged goods industry. Its members include some of the country’s largest private truck fleet operators.

Eliminating freight “pinch-points” would “be an easy way to evaluate progress on the most strategically important national freight system goals,” the group noted, and evaluating long-term success “may require the development of new KPIs [Key Performance Indicators], as a way of capturing overall impact and contribution to the national freight system.”

“There’s no national vision or strategy that evaluates how individual investments impact the overall safety and reliability of the goods movement system,” Elaine Nettle, executive director for the Coalition for America’s Gateways and Trade Corridors (CAGTC), told FreightWaves. “Even though states have plans that have focused state investments on intrastate commerce, we haven’t taken that systemwide approach needed to make those investments across the entire supply chain.”

In comments filed with DOT, Nettle and CAGTC, whose members include the nation’s largest container ports, called for minimum annual federal funding of \$12 billion for a multimodal competitive grant program. The current multimodal grant program, Infrastructure for Rebuilding America, [made available \\$900 million for 2020](#).

The American Trucking Associations (ATA) agreed, noting only the federal government is in a position to “look at investment decisions in the context of national impacts and determine which investments can produce the greatest economic benefits regardless of jurisdictional considerations.”

While ATA ranked a shortage of labor as the No. 1 challenge in the trucking industry, the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA), which represents small-business trucking companies, ranked underinvestment in highway infrastructure as the country’s most important freight challenge.

“Owner-operators and independent drivers must foot the bill for repair costs caused by inadequate infrastructure,” the group emphasized, citing an internal study finding that OOIDA members spend roughly \$5,000 a year on repairs due to highway damage or poor road conditions. “For owner-operators, these costs result in less income and less investment for maintenance, equipment, and other critical safety upgrades.”

Nucor Steel [[NYSE: NUE](#)], one of a handful of shippers providing comments, placed infrastructure at the top of its main challenge list. “Significant additional spending on transportation infrastructure is critically needed including, but not limited to, highways, bridges, rural connectors, locks and dams,” the company stated. “Additionally, with the growth of trade associated with the new USMCA, the nodes where the infrastructure of the US, Canada, and Mexico come together will need to be addressed.”

Even railroads, which compete with trucking for certain types of freight and frequently point out that they rely on their own profits to pay for their networks, acknowledged that a long-term funding plan is needed.

Norfolk Southern [[NYSE: NSC](#)], one of the four largest U.S.-based railroads, maintained that DOT “should institute policies that ensure long-term viable funding sources for public and private transportation infrastructure, including highways, and that ensure that the primary users are paying for that infrastructure in some manner.”

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## Statement from USDOT on Presidential Executive Order on Positioning, Navigation, and Timing

Wednesday, February 12, 2020

On February 12, 2020, President Donald J. Trump signed an Executive Order (EO) establishing the first comprehensive national policy promoting the responsible use of positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT) services by the Federal Government and critical infrastructure owners and operators to strengthen critical infrastructure resilience.

With this EO, the Trump Administration is strengthening American resilience by identifying and promoting approaches to manage the risks to critical transportation systems and supporting commercial infrastructure from the disruption and manipulation of PNT services.

PNT services, such as the U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS), are critical to the safe and efficient use of the national transportation system by the traveling public, the freight community, other commercial and private entities, and Federal agencies using PNT within their owned and operated systems, as well as Federal users of the roads, rails, waterways, and airspace within the United States.

Safety is the Department of Transportation’s top priority. We must ensure that reliable PNT services are available to meet current and emerging transportation applications and supporting infrastructures (e.g., communications, energy, information systems, etc.) with the



goal of reducing deaths and injuries on our highways, rail systems, transit, aviation, and maritime modes and ensuring America's transportation network continues to be the safe and technologically advanced.

DOT looks forward to partnering with other departments and agencies; state, local, and tribal partners; and the private sector to implement this EO on "Strengthening National Resilience through Responsible Use of PNT Services." The Department is committed to working with industry, as well as the other departments and agencies, to ensure expeditious implementation of the framework and resulting transportation PNT profiles created in accordance with this EO. Our challenge is to enable increased resilience across our transportation systems and ensure the traveling public and freight transporters experience an increased level of safety and efficiency without the possibility of interference caused by loss or manipulation of PNT.

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## Trump administration proposes billions in transportation cuts — and new spending

Early rush hour traffic rolls along Interstate 10 in Phoenix on Jan. 24. Work on an 11-mile section of the road — an artery for commuters, shipping freight and access to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport — will undergo a major reconstruction starting in spring 2021.

By [Michael Laris](#) Feb. 10, 2020

The Trump administration on Monday proposed cutting billions in discretionary spending in next year's Department of Transportation budget, while also calling for broad increases in spending over the next decade, a disconnect that left some in Congress and outside groups struggling to interpret the administration's intentions.

The proposed budget cuts discretionary spending by 13 percent, including deep reductions in spending on Amtrak and airport grants. It also cuts more than \$2 billion in highway infrastructure funds and more than \$500 million in transit grants.

At the same time, the administration presented what it called a "historic 10-year, \$810 billion reauthorization of surface transportation programs," which would cover highways, transit rail and other programs.

The new \$810 billion transportation package would replace a five-year transportation bill, known as the FAST Act, set to expire later this year.

Administration officials acknowledged the wide gap between that long-term proposal and existing funding levels, and did not offer suggestions for closing the gap, saying instead they would work with Congress to do so.

Joel Szabat, the Transportation Department's acting undersecretary, pointed to the deep shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund, which covers road and transit projects nationwide. The fund's main source of money, the gas tax, has failed to keep up with inflation or national needs. But the disagreement over whether to raise the gas tax to replenish the fund remains a major sticking point.

"We estimate that there's \$261 billion in additional Highway Trust Fund cash that's required to support the administration's proposal over 10 years," Szabat said.

A Transportation Department official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to describe the administration's thinking, added that "baseline insolvency under current law is \$185 billion. This administration's policy proposal adds an additional \$75 billion on top of this spending."

Szabat said the administration is "committed to working with Congress on a bipartisan basis to find a responsible way of funding that money going forward."

While President Trump voiced openness to a gas tax hike earlier in his term, that stance met stiff resistance from conservatives, and the administration has not gotten behind such a move.

Some congressional Democrats, including House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard E. Neal (D-Mass.), said they think a bipartisan deal for funding new infrastructure investments is possible, and talks have begun with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. But skepticism remains strong among some in Congress and the administration itself.

Lana Hurdle, a senior Transportation Department budget official, said the spending plan released Monday "proposes the \$810 billion blueprint for the administration's future surface transportation bill," but added that "other details and how that will work are all in administration clearance," including with the White House's Office of Management and Budget, so officials cannot discuss them.

"Once that review is completed, we'll be able to give you some more information about the different changes and additions in that proposal," Hurdle said.

The budget document says the administration will submit a "comprehensive" surface transportation reauthorization proposal "in the coming months."

Beth Osborne, director of the group Transportation For America, said she's "trying to figure out the difference" between the administration officials' long-term proposals and their ideas for short-term cuts. She said she also is trying to understand how officials would pay for their ambitions.

But Osborne said she is already concerned about a number of policies being advanced in the budget documents released Monday, including one she said would undercut efforts to protect pedestrians and bicyclists, who are being killed in increasing numbers.

The administration's budget "eliminates a required set-aside" for a program known as Transportation Alternatives, according to the proposal. It says that program "restricts States from choosing the most meritorious projects."

But Osborne said the roughly \$850 million in the program this year, which is used to “provide safety infrastructure for people walking and biking,” including crosswalks, sidewalks and bike lanes, represents just a fraction of the billions in overall highway spending.

“Right now, our transportation program is overwhelmingly based on infrastructure that moves vehicles quickly,” and the Transportation Alternatives program is a “very small” effort to help “fix the most dangerous parts,” she said.

But according to the administration’s budget, the proposal would simply give states “additional flexibility” and would allow them to “rehabilitate or expand highways in a manner that supports interstate or regional commerce.”

The Transportation Department official said the “proposal eliminates the mandate that a portion of formula funds be spent by states on these projects and allows them to spend the funds on road and bridge projects as well, if they choose.”

Rep. Peter A. DeFazio (D-Ore.), chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, assailed administration budget proposals that would cut clean water and environmental programs.

But DeFazio found a possible avenue for optimism.

“One positive aspect of the President’s budget is that it signals he is interested in at least talking about the need to invest in our nation’s crumbling infrastructure,” DeFazio said in a statement.

“But without further details, it’s hard to say whether he is more interested in the status quo or whether he actually wants to move forward with innovative solutions that would tackle carbon pollution in the transportation sector, create jobs and support American manufacturing, and bring our outdated infrastructure into the 21st Century and beyond.”

DeFazio said he is drafting a bill “right now” to do those things, and “I welcome the input of anyone who is truly interested in making our infrastructure smarter, safer, and made to last.”

## Funding Opportunities

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### Transportation Alternatives Program Grants

The Mobile MPO has announced the availability of the Fiscal Year 2021 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding. The maximum amount that can be applied for per project with Mobile Urbanized TAP funds is \$200,000 (federal). Applicants are welcome to submit more than one project.

The TAP provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; safe routes to school projects; and projects for planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.

**This year applications will only be accepted electronically. Applicants should email their complete application to [transportation@sarpc.org](mailto:transportation@sarpc.org).**

**Applications are due to the Transportation Planning Department of the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) no later than 12:00 p.m., Friday, May 15, 2020.**

Electronic versions of the applications are available online at <http://mobilempo.org/TAP.html>

Project budgets should be itemized and completed by a Professional Engineer that is certified by the State of Alabama.

If you have any questions please call the SARPC Transportation Planning Department at (251) 433 6541.

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### The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is soliciting applications for the Transportation Alternatives Set-aside Program (TAP) for FY 2021.

The guidelines and the application can both be found on the ALDOT website, on the Local Transportation Bureau page under the Operations Section.

<https://www.dot.state.al.us/ltweb/operations/index.html>

The deadline for submission of FY 2011 TAP applications including support documentation is Friday, May 15, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

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### Infrastructure For Rebuilding America

#### U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Announces Availability of More Than \$900 Million for Infrastructure Investments Across America

**February 25, 2020 deadline**

WASHINGTON – U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Secretary Elaine L. Chao today announced the latest round of the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) discretionary grant program, which is making available more than \$900 million for American infrastructure investments. The INFRA program is expected to award \$906 million to significant projects that support the Administration’s focus on infrastructure improvements as outlined in the NOFO.

“The Department will invest more than \$900 million in major projects that will improve transportation infrastructure, economic productivity, and quality of life across our nation,” said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao.

INFRA advances a grant program established in the FAST Act of 2015 to help rebuild America’s aging infrastructure. INFRA utilizes selection criteria that promote projects with national and regional economic vitality goals while leveraging non-federal funding to increase the total investment by state, local, and private partners. The program also incentivizes project sponsors to pursue innovative strategies, including public-private partnerships. INFRA promotes the incorporation of innovative technology, such as broadband deployment and intelligent transportation systems, that will improve our transportation system. INFRA will also hold recipients accountable for their performance in project delivery and operations.

The Department will make awards under the INFRA program to large and small projects. For a large project, the INFRA grant must be at least \$25 million. For a small project, the grant must be at least \$5 million. For each fiscal year of INFRA funds, 10 percent of available funds are reserved for small projects.

The Department will award at least 25 percent of INFRA grant funding to rural projects, which often play a vital role in supporting our national economic vitality. Addressing the deteriorating conditions and elevated fatality rates on our rural transportation infrastructure is a key objective of the Department. For rural communities in need of funding for highway and multimodal freight projects with national or regional economic significance, INFRA is an opportunity to apply directly for financial assistance from the federal government.

INFRA grants may be used to fund a variety of components of an infrastructure project, however, the Department is specifically focused on projects in which the local sponsor is significantly invested and is positioned to proceed rapidly to construction. Eligible INFRA project costs may include: reconstruction, rehabilitation, acquisition of property (including land related to the project and improvements to the land), environmental mitigation, construction contingencies, equipment acquisition, and operational improvements directly related to system performance.

The NOFO application period will remain open through February 25, 2020. For more information, visit: [www.transportation.gov/INFRA](http://www.transportation.gov/INFRA).

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## Federal Lands Access Program

Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (EFLHD) will be conducting another Call for Projects for the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) in Alabama for Federal Fiscal Years (FY) 2020 through FY 2022. All final project approvals will be contingent upon the availability of funds in the year for which they are being requested. **Funding beyond 2020 is dependent on reauthorization of the Access Program by Congress.**

**The Call for Projects application period opens March 16, 2020 and runs through June 16, 2020. An estimated total of \$1.5M will be available for programming in your State.**

EFLHD has found that a higher level of outreach at local levels has increased both the number and the quality of competitive applications submitted and ultimately recommended for project programming and implementation. We ask that you provide the widest circulation possible of this announcement to provide a robust pool of applications. **Please feel free to use any of the materials included in with this message to assist in your outreach efforts. The Federal Lands Access Program website is: <https://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flap/>**

**Federal Land Management Agencies:** We appreciate your efforts in the provision of an expanded outreach to your units and gateway communities regarding this program opportunity.

**FHWA Federal Aid Division Office:** We appreciate your efforts in the provision of an expanded outreach regarding this program opportunity to the MPOs and RPOs in your state via email or on your website.

**State DOTs:** We appreciate your efforts in the provision of an expanded outreach regarding this program opportunity to your District staff and Local Agency Program Coordinators (if applicable), Public Information Officers, via email and/or on your websites.

**Local Agency Representatives:** We appreciate your efforts in the provision of an expanded outreach regarding this program opportunity to other County, MPO and Local agencies in your state via email and/or on your local websites.

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## [America Walks Accepting Applications for the 2020 Walking College](#)

Date: February 03, 2020

America Walks is now accepting applications through February 28th for its [2020 Walking College](#), a six-month remote learning fellowship that culminates in a walking action plan for each participant’s community or region. Fellows learn about walkable design, engaging decision makers and the public around walkability plans, and fostering local advocacy for accessible, livable communities. Twenty-five fellowships are awarded each year. Applications for the 2020 program are due February 28. Learn more at [americawalks.org](http://americawalks.org) and consider joining the [#WalkingCollege](#) Twitter Chat on February 11 at 1:30pm Eastern/10:30am Pacific to find out more about the program!

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## [AARP Offering Community Challenge Grants](#)

Date: February 06, 2020

AARP’s Community Challenge provides small grants to fund “quick-action” projects to improve housing, transportation, public space, technology, and civic engagement. Applications are due April 1, 2020. Eligible projects include physical improvements in a community, temporary demonstration projects, and new programs or services. Local government agencies and non-profit organizations are welcome to apply. Grant amounts vary by project. Learn more about the AARP 2020 Community Challenge at [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org).

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## FTA Offering New Grant Funding For Transit Bus, Ferry Projects

[editor@ashto.org](mailto:editor@ashto.org) February 14, 2020

The Federal Transit Administration issued two notice of funding opportunities or NOFOs for fiscal year 2020 on February 7; one via its Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities program and the other via its Passenger Ferry grant program.

The [transit bus NOFO](#) is offering some \$454.6 million in competitive grant funding for transit bus projects that would replace, rehabilitate, lease, or purchase buses and related equipment. Other eligible projects involve purchasing, rehabilitating, constructing or leasing bus-related facilities, such as buildings for bus storage and maintenance, FTA said [in a statement](#).

The agency said eligible recipients for that grant money include fixed route bus operators, states and local governmental entities that operate fixed route bus service, plus Native American tribes – with applications accepted until 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on March 30.

The FTA also issued a \$30 million [passenger ferry NOFO](#) that will award competitive grants to states and public entities to purchase, repair, or modernize ferry boats, terminals, and related facilities and equipment – both to support existing ferry service as well as establish new passenger ferry service, the agency said in [a statement](#).

FTA noted that eligible projects considered for those grants must be “consistent” with the U.S. Department of Transportation’s R.O.U.T.E. Initiative, launched [last October](#), as well as the FTA’s Accelerating Innovative Mobility program, kicked off in [January](#).

The agency added that applications for both of those grant programs will be accepted up until 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on March 30.

Lastly, FTA made \$9.3 million worth of [research grants](#) available on February 13 to support the study of “innovative projects” aimed at improving rail transit and bus operator safety.

That pool of grant funding includes \$7.3 million for projects that demonstrate and evaluate new technologies, safer designs, and practices to improve rail transit safety, with the remaining \$2 million reserved for projects that redesign transit bus operator compartments to improve safety for bus operators and the passengers they serve.

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## Opportunity Zones

EDA's Opportunity Zone Web Page

EDA now has an [EDA Opportunity Zone Web page](#) for economic development stakeholders and others to use as a resource to further help foster job creation and attract private investment to support development in economically distressed areas across the United States.

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## FTA makes \$130M in funding available for bus program

BY [MELINA DRUGA](#) | JANUARY 28, 2020 |

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recently made available up to \$130 million Low or No Emission (Low-No) Bus Program competitive grant funds.

The program provides funding for the purchase or lease of low- or no-emission vehicles that use advanced technologies for transit revenue operations. The program also includes related equipment and facilities.

Eligible applicants include state transportation departments, public transit agencies, and tribes. The FTA will award grants on a competitive basis.

The FTA will evaluate projects on numerous criteria, including project implementation strategy, project benefits, demonstration of need, and capacity for implementing the project. The criteria were defined by federal law.

The Notice of Funding Opportunity also included criteria in accordance with the R.O.U.T.E.S. and Accelerating Innovative Mobility initiatives that apply to rural challenges and innovation.

“The U.S. Department of Transportation is committed to improving safety, rebuilding our transportation infrastructure, and preparing for the future with new technologies,” FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams said.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act 2020 appropriated \$130 million in fiscal year 2020 for Low-No Program grants.

The program received applications from 157 projects during fiscal year 2019 requesting \$500 million, and 38 were funded totaling \$84.95 million.

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## [Section 5307, 5310, and 5311: Using Non-DOT Funds for Local Match](#)

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [Administration for Community Living](#) (ACL) has worked with the [National Aging and Disability Transportation Center](#) to clarify the ability of grantees to use Older Americans Act Title IIIB Supportive Services Funds to match Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs. These FTA programs include Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307), Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and People with Disabilities (Section 5310), and Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311). This information has been publicized [HERE](#)

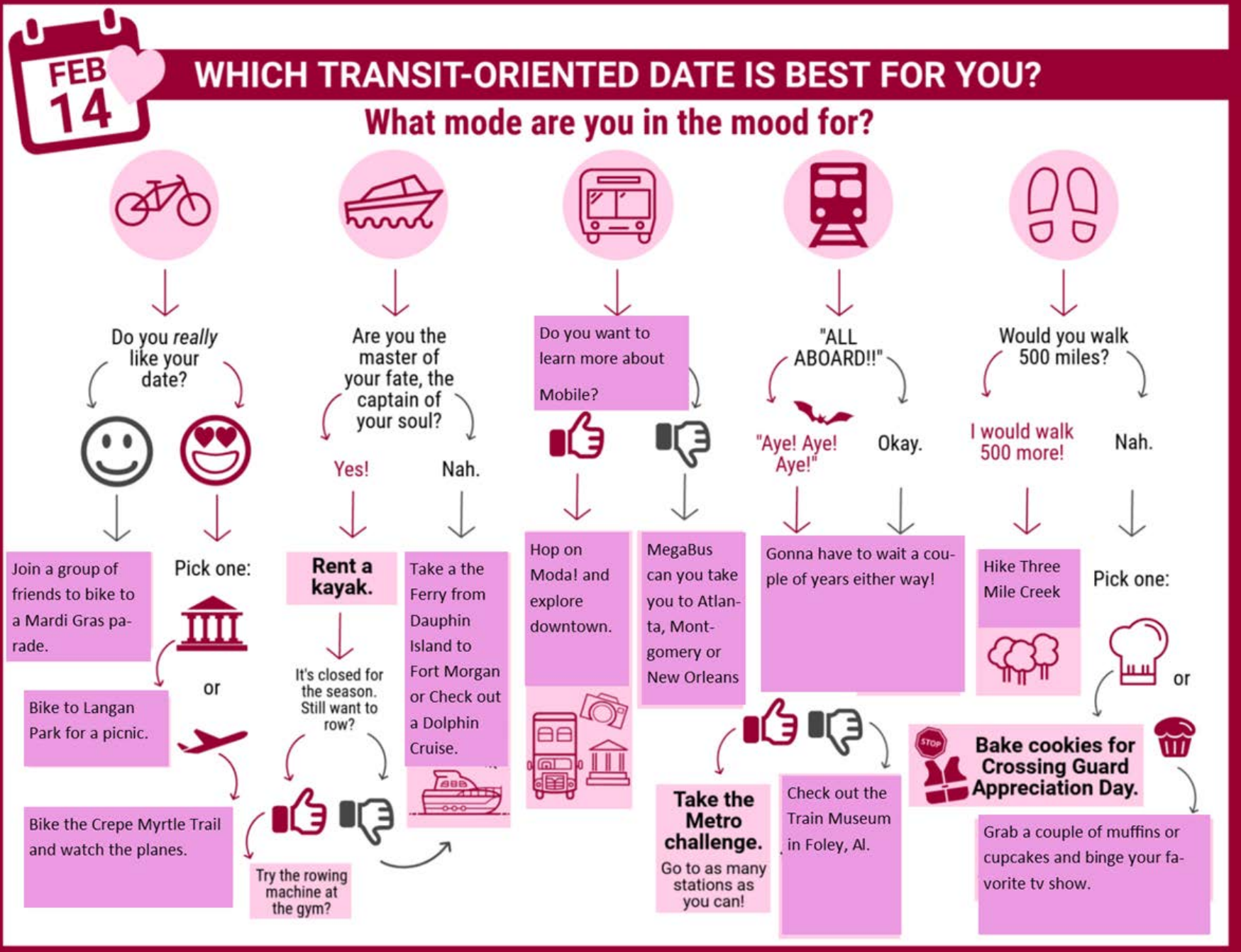
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To stay up to date on all of the many grants that are available visit [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

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**Just For Fun** (THIS IS SATIRE, AND JUST FOR FUN)

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## In the News

### Fate of Amtrak's return to Mobile falls to county commission

Posted Feb 10, 2020

By [John Sharp | jsharp@al.com](mailto:jsharp@al.com)

Amtrak's return to Mobile could hinge on support from the three-member Mobile County Commission, which could be asked to pony up public money to improve train tracks or to help finance a new train station for a new service connecting the Port City to New Orleans.

But at least two commissioners interviewed on Monday said they believe it's a bit early for them to decide how the project will proceed.

Commissioners Merceria Ludgood and Connie Hudson said there has been no "formal" presentation or request of the commission to dedicated funding for the project.

The county's third commissioner, Jerry Carl, said he supports the project and anticipates the county potentially spending up to \$3 million over a three-year period to support the construction of a new train station of platform.

"Our original conversation was for the county to come up with \$1 million a year for three years," said Carl. "That would build a train station and would be the maximum we could put into it. But we are waiting on (passenger rail advocates) to figure out their numbers. We'll have our legal team talking to the city to make sure they OK with it. Nothing is guaranteed on (the project) until we see final numbers."

Wiley Blankenship, a representative of the Southern Rail Commission – the 21-member group that has long advocated for the return of Amtrak to the Gulf Coast – said the conversations are likely to happen sooner rather than later.

"We don't want to ask (for county assistance) until they are fully educated (on the issue) and that we give them all the information so they can evaluate it and so they can make the best decision for the taxpayers," said Blankenship. "We're planning on doing that over the next few weeks."

The fate of Amtrak's revival along coastal Alabama and into Mobile is shifting to the commission after the Mobile City Council, [with a 6-1 vote Tuesday](#), committed to funding the train's operations at around \$3 million spread out over three years starting in the year 2023.

The council's support, however, was contingent on several factors including the backing of other governmental or private entities for capital improvements that are estimated to cost \$2.2 million.

Hudson said she anticipates the county partnering with the state on funding the capital improvements. But she said that support is contingent on the outcome of a study that is underway which will assess passenger rail's impact on the freight trains that currently run along the Gulf Coast rail line. The study involves CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern, and Amtrak, and is expected to be completed this summer.

“Depending on what comes out of the study, I think the state will step in and it will be determined what role the state and county will play in terms of infrastructure,” said Hudson.

Overall, the cost of improving the tracks, siding and switches from the Mississippi line to downtown Mobile is expected to run \$5.786 million. Of that, \$2.89 million is being financed through a \$33 million grant from the Federal Railroad Administration, and \$671,000 through Amtrak.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey’s administration, last week, said it was waiting to see where the county commission stood on the project.

The project includes connecting Mobile [at the Brookley Aeroplex](#) to New Orleans via an Amtrak state-supported route. Four coastal Mississippi cities are also included along the route – Pascagoula, Biloxi, Gulfport and Bay St. Louis. Louisiana and Mississippi state governments have both [dedicated resources toward the capital and operations of the project](#).

Amtrak hasn’t routinely rolled along the Gulf Coast since Hurricane Katrina damaged much of the line in 2005.

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## With federal funding secured, channel expansion should start this Fall

Posted by [Jason Johnson](#) | Feb 10, 2020

The United States Army Corps of Engineers has included \$274 million to deepen and widen the port of Mobile in its 2020 Work Plan, which means after years of environmental and economic studies, construction on the project is officially on schedule to begin later this year.

U.S. Sen Richard Shelby, who has long advocated for expanding Mobile’s federal shipping channel, announced Monday the Corps had included the sizable allocation for the project among other federal projects it plans to fund in 2020.

The \$274 million allocation accounts for the federal government’s full share of the project’s estimated cost and will cover the construction of the deepening and widening of the navigation channel shipping vessels follow as they enter and exit the Port of Mobile.

As Lagniappe has reported, the Corps plans to deepen the 36-mile channel by five feet to a total depth of 50 feet, with even deeper depths in some locations. Following construction, the total depths of the Bar, Bay, and River Channels will be 56, 54, and 54 feet respectively. The Corps will also expand three miles of the existing channel by 50 feet on either side — increasing the width from 400 feet to 500 feet.

The Alabama State Port Authority [ASPA] and federal officials have been discussing some kind of expansion for years to better accommodate larger, Post-Panamax vessels that can’t safely navigate the channel at capacity.

Now, with funding secure, construction is expected to begin in Fall 2020.

“Today marks a historic moment and a victory for Mobile and the entire state of Alabama,” Shelby said. “The completion of this transformative project is expected to stem immeasurable economic growth and will position Alabama and the Gulf Coast region for success for generations to come.”

Last fall, the Corps’ Mobile District wrapped up a four-year, \$7.8 million study of the most economically and environmentally feasible ways to expand the channel, which is how the planned dimensions were determined.

Despite those efforts, some environmental groups and homeowners concerned with the impact that dredging has on the erosion of Dauphin Island have expressed concerns that the Corps’ study [didn’t seem to identify any significant negative impact](#). Mobile BayKeeper took those criticisms a step further, calling the study [“incomplete” and “inadequate.”](#)

As it stands now, the federal government’s \$274 million will cover 60 percent of the project — one the Corps projects will cost more than \$400 million altogether. The state of Alabama will cover the rest of the cost using up to \$150 million in new bonds that will be [paid off with revenues generated by the 18-cent gas tax increase](#) the legislature passed in 2019.

Jimmy Lyons, ASPA’s director and chief executive officer, has previously said the expansion will make Mobile’s port one of the first in the Gulf of Mexico to hit these depths, making it more competitive nationally.

“Sen. Shelby clearly understands the economic value of seaports. His leadership in delivering an innovative and efficient program to deepen and widen Alabama’s only seaport is a game changer,” Lyons said in response to the Corps’ inclusion of the project in its 2020 work plan. “This innovative program generates efficiencies in the Corps civil works program, affirms our project’s value to the state and the nation, and delivers the federal funding to complete our project much faster than anticipated.”

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## SRC still needs funding to bring passenger rail to Mobile

Posted by [Dale Liesch](#) | Feb 12, 2020

Despite a victory at the Mobile City Council meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 4, the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) has a long way to go before it can fully restore Amtrak service along the Gulf Coast.

The restoration of passenger rail service between Mobile and cities westward to New Orleans was [buoyed by the council’s 6-1 vote to help SRC apply for a federal grant to operate the train](#), with \$3 million in local matching funds over three years. The grant would allow Amtrak to operate twice-daily, round-trip service from Mobile to New Orleans.

However, the organization with representatives from Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana still needs the state, or county, to chip in at least \$2.2 million in infrastructure upgrades before the service can begin, Alabama SRC member Stephen McNair said.

Those infrastructure needs were highlighted as part of an 18-month freight and passenger rail study in a previous attempt to restore service between Mobile and Jacksonville, Florida. The rest of the \$6.6 million the project needs could, most likely, be paid for through a U.S. Department of Transportation grant.

The previous study focused on three improvements in Alabama, McNair said, including two new switch stations; one in Theodore and one at Choctaw Point near the McDuffie Coal Terminal.

“The manual switches would need to be converted to automatic switches to improve freight traffic,” he said. “The one at Choctaw Point is east of Brookley and will not impact passenger rail. However, we are interested in safety and working with the freight industry.”

The improvements also include a “house track” the train would use when not in service, McNair said.

“That track will be maintained by Amtrak,” he said.

Those numbers do not include a station, which the city has already used SRC grant money to design. However, that design put the station near Cooper Riverside Park and there is interest now in placing a station at the Brookley Aeroplex. Federal grants are available for station design and construction. Some stations, McNair said, are little more than Americans with Disability Act-compliant platforms with a ticket office. Others, however, have heated and cooled waiting rooms.

“The hope is that we get a proper station,” McNair said. “The site and particulars of the station is something we’ll discuss with the Mobile Airport Authority (MAA).”

McNair defined a “proper station” as one that includes restrooms and a climate-controlled waiting room. More information on a station at Brookley will most likely be available after the MAA completes its master plan of the Brookley Aeroplex this summer.

The \$2.2 million also does not include any needed improvements found and agreed upon through a new engineering study funded by Amtrak, Norfolk Southern and CSX. That study will produce a report within about the next six months, McNair said. SRC members do not expect it to differ much from the previous 18-month study, he said.

SRC has been in communication with the Mobile County Commission about its infrastructure funding needs in the past, but McNair said the group probably won’t begin lobbying the body again until the latest study is complete. McNair has said the group has also been in contact with Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey’s office and she has seemed more receptive to helping, despite balking initially at using state money to fund operating costs.

Given the six-month study time and time needed to make the improvements, McNair said the area could see its first train in 2022.

For weeks, excited Mobilians encouraged Mobile councilors to vote in favor of the train, despite the reality it would operate at about a \$7 million loss each year, given Amtrak’s “conservative” estimates. Bill Boswell, a representative of the Government Street Collaborative, told councilors he believed Amtrak service would make an already great city even greater.

Councilors in favor of the service, including Council President Levon Manzie, have argued public transportation is not meant to make a profit.

Officials in one of Mississippi’s largest Gulf Coast cities are excited Mobile voted to join the Amtrak party.

Biloxi Spokeswoman Cecilia Dobbs Walton said while Mobile’s decision to help fund the train’s operation did not impact the Mississippi city’s efforts to become a stop on the trip to New Orleans, Mayor Andrew Gilich and councilors were excited by the news.

“We encouraged people in Mobile to talk to their local leaders and let them know how important it is,” she said.

Biloxi will update its platform at the Coast Transit Authority building in downtown Biloxi, Walton said, which would put passengers within walking distance of hotels, restaurants, casinos and MGM Park.

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## Eastern Shore cities support scaled-down Bayway plan

Posted by [Gabriel Tynes](#) | Feb 12, 2020

The Fairhope City Council joined the Eastern Shore cities of Daphne and Spanish Fort Monday in adopting a resolution in support of the scaled-back \$1.2 billion plan to build a new bridge and expressway over Mobile Bay and the Mobile River, while the Baldwin County Commission is expected to consider a similar move on Feb. 18.

The Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) adopted the resolution Jan. 22, nearly five months after it voted to omit the Alabama Department of Transportation’s (ALDOT) larger, \$2.1 billion project from its Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), which effectively crippled the state’s proposal to levy tolls as high as \$6 each way for daily commuters.

Eastern Shore business owner Kevin Spriggs appeared before the City Council prior to its vote, explaining that his Common Sense Campaign was tasked with reviving the proposal without tolls, and worked with local elected officials and engineers to draft the Coastal Alabama Consensus Plan.

That plan shaves about \$800 million off the project’s price by reducing the number of bridge lanes from eight to six and adding express lanes in the center of the existing Bayway, rather than building an entire new span across the bay. While it does not eliminate the possibility

of tolls, it does preserve toll-free “legacy routes” along the existing Bayway and Causeway, including through the Wallace and Bankhead tunnels.

“That expressway could have a toll on it, but it would be a minimal toll, not a \$6 toll,” he said. “And it’s possible, depending on the state funding sources, that maybe a toll isn’t necessary. Our objective is to show Montgomery — Gov. [Kay] Ivey, [ALDOT] Director John Cooper — that we do have a consensus on what we would like to see happen.”

But a true consensus, Council President Jack Burrell said later, would require the Mobile MPO to pass its own resolution supporting the expressway plan. At its own meeting Jan. 22, the Mobile MPO tabled the resolution, with Mayor Sandy Stimpson indicating he was waiting for feedback from ALDOT and County Commissioner Jerry Carl, saying it was too early to fully evaluate the proposal.

“We are working very hard with the Mobile MPO to speak in one voice to the people in Montgomery and hopefully we’ll get this project moving along,” Burrell said.

If both MPOs sign on, Ivey has indicated the state may put the project back on its transportation list to begin detailed engineering, and apply for federal grants and other funding opportunities.

In other business, the council approved a contract for professional services with Kopesky & Britt LLC for closing costs and title insurance related to its purchase of the “clock corner” at the intersection of Fairhope Avenue and Section Street, paying 50 percent of the \$525,000 asking price. The Fairhope Single Tax Colony paid the other half.

The council also approved intermittent street closures March 8, 13 and 15 for the filming of “The Map of Tiny Perfect Things,” a young adult movie being produced for release on Amazon Prime.

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## Wave employees sign petition against general manager

Posted by [Dale Liesch](#) | Feb 12, 2020

More than half of the current employees of Mobile’s transit system have signed a petition showing “no confidence” in the organization’s general manager.

More than 50 members of a local advocacy group representing Wave transit employees signed a petition complaining about GM Damon Dash’s management style. Group president Antonie Maiben has emailed copies of the petition to the offices of members of the Mobile City Council and Mayor Sandy Stimpson.

In the letter addressed to Stimpson on Tuesday, Feb. 4, Maiben wrote he was hoping to discuss the issues with a third party since his attempts to resolve the issues had been unsuccessful to this point.

“The members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 770 [are] filing a petition of no confidence with your office regarding ongoing issues at the Wave Transit with the General Manager, Damon D. Dash,” the letter states. “These charges range from the demeaning acts bestowed on employees to the incompetence of the general manager.”

A total of 56 members have signed the petition sent to Stimpson’s office. Maiben said the petition represents more than half of all Wave employees. Wave currently has 101 active employees, he said.

In a phone interview with Lagniappe, Maiben said the union is hopeful for resolution through the city government because they have few other options.

“People are not happy,” he said. “They feel like they have nowhere to go.”

Kendra Evans, a current dispatcher for Wave, said problems for her began after a “random check” through Wave’s third-party system revealed, incorrectly, her commercial driver’s license was expired. She was fired, but brought back after Maiben emailed Wave’s director of operations a printout of her up-to-date paperwork from the local license office. After that issue, she said Dash began to nitpick — despite her good work ethic — in an attempt to get her to resign. Evans said she was unfairly disciplined for another issue, while a male co-worker did not suffer any punishment.

“Morale is at an all-time low,” she said.

It’s low morale Evans and former employee Lamar Howard cited as issues with Wave’s annual Senior Bowl shuttle service. Evans said bus drivers normally volunteer to work extra shifts on that day, but many refused this year. The service usually has 10 to 15 buses running between Hank Aaron Stadium and Ladd-Peebles Stadium, but only had eight this year, Maiben said. Some of those drivers did not have seniority, Maiben said, and had to work an extra shift. The poor service resulted in hour-and-a-half wait times for fans trying to leave the game, he said. A supervisor actually drove buses that day because drivers declined to work, Maiben said.

Dash even exploited a previous incident between Evans and another female employee in the hopes they would fight and he could fire one or both of them, she claimed. Evans told Lagniappe Dash made a comment it “would solve one of my problems.”

Working conditions, in general, have deteriorated since Dash took over, she said. Dash has “no regard for anyone,” Evans said.

“He talks to you how he wants to,” she said. “You’re supposed to just let him do it and not stand up for yourself in any way.”



Douglas Poe, former Wave maintenance director, was laid off in March of last year after more than 22 years with the system. While Poe believes the decision to let him go was a “budget issue,” he called Dash a “tough person to reason with.” He also doesn’t understand why he wasn’t hired back when he applied for one of two open mechanic jobs. The two mechanic jobs, he said, were paid as much together as he made as a supervisor. He was later told there was a “hiring freeze.”

“I believe [Dash] came in and made a lot of changes,” Poe said. “Not all changes are good, though.”

More curious to Poe, he said, two weeks after he was laid off Wave lost a mechanic. He applied, but didn’t get the job.

“I put in for the position and all of a sudden it was rescinded,” he said.

Howard said he was let go after 17 years on the job and no discipline problems.

“After 17 years and no discipline problems, he let me go just like that,” he said.

Howard, Maiben and Evans all told Lagniappe Dash regularly threatens employees’ jobs by telling them if they complained they could “get a box.”

Dash did not respond to an email or a phone call asking for comment on this story.

[First Transit, the company managing Wave through a contract with the city](#), said in a statement from Regional Vice President Jarod Varner the issues would be looked into.

“Any concerns from our employees are very important to us; therefore, all employment concerns are taken seriously and addressed quickly,” the statement read. “We ask that if employees do have concerns, to follow the grievance process as outlined by their collective bargaining agreement.”

## Transportation Research

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### [New FHWA Publication: Transportation Planning Process Briefing Book](#)

Date: February 13, 2020

The U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, has released a new [Transportation Planning Process Briefing Book](#). Part I introduces the planning process, the relationship between transportation planning and decision making, and federal transportation funding. Part II covers products of the transportation planning process—the types of plans that states, MPOs, and RDOs develop, performance measures, public engagement, and planning process considerations related to safety, security, and environmental linkages. Designed for government officials, planning board members, transportation service providers, and the general public, the book is also a useful resource for new transportation planners.

Visit the Briefing Book web page to download a PDF copy: [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/publications/briefing\\_book/](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/publications/briefing_book/)

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## Highway Administration to Explore How AI and Blockchain Can Transform Transportation



By [Brandi Vincent](#)

Staff Correspondent

FEBRUARY 6, 2020 12:00 PM ET

The Federal Highway Administration launched an Exploratory Advanced Research Program this week to usher in “transformational changes and truly revolutionary advances” in highway engineering and intermodal transportation on roads across the United States.

According to a new [broad agency announcement](#), the administration is accepting research effort proposals—with the deliberate intent of awarding either contracts or cooperative agreements—that address three trendy topics in emerging tech: blockchain for highway transportation, artificial intelligence for highway transportation, and incorporating trashed plastic into asphalt cement to reduce waste.

“This program supports scientific investigations and studies that advance the current knowledge and state-of-the-art in the sciences and technologies employed in the planning, design, construction, operation, maintenance and management of the nation’s highways,” officials wrote in the announcement. “Strategically, this research will enable and expedite the development of revolutionary approaches, methodologies, and breakthroughs required to drive innovation and greatly improve the efficiency of highway transportation.”

The agency’s EAR programs aim to produce strong public-private partnerships that catalyze solutions through “longer-term, higher risk” research. To inform its ultimate intent, FHWA conducted an extensive investigation ahead of the launch, through which it met with a “large number of stakeholders from within and outside the traditional highway research community to identify topics of research that promise transformation and possible breakthroughs in highway technology, processes and policies.” With explicitly inherent exploratory aims, the agency doesn’t expect the initial results to be immediately implementable but instead plans to further develop them over time.

The agency said it could make multiple awards for each of the following topics:

#### **Blockchain Technology for Highway Transportation**

Mostly known for underpinning Bitcoin, blockchain is a record-keeping technology that validates information on a decentralized public ledger. Though it’s still nascent, the agency argues that blockchain “has the potential to transform the connected and automated vehicle industry or freight logistics providing a platform to share a variety of information from the infrastructure and vehicles in a secure manner.” Further, the agency’s hopeful that it can provide “security and scalability at lower costs than current private network solutions” and offer a wide range of new technological functions.”

FHWA wants proposals that explore how blockchain applications could enable more secure traffic operations and car-to-car and car-to-infrastructure communications, anonymized freight data management, auction-based mechanisms for highway pricing, and beyond.

#### **Artificial Intelligence for Highway Transportation**

The EAR program previously [funded](#) AI-focused efforts that incorporated computer vision and natural language processing, but this time around the agency hopes for projects that empower the use of its growing heaps of data. In this light, the agency said it welcomes proposals that connect traditional and non-traditional highway data to make predictions around the system’s performance, improve sensor signal data that are used to evaluate roads and structures, provide decision support in highway system design, and more. [HERE](#).

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Please join FHWA to discuss the concept of “right-sizing” highways to better match land use and transportation on existing streets. Right-sizing enables practitioners who are confronted with obsolete, damaged, or deteriorated facilities to develop innovative, context sensitive solutions that use transportation infrastructure to connect neighborhoods, create livable communities, and promote economic development.

FHWA presenters will discuss a research study, white paper, fact sheets, and case studies on the topic posted here: [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/economic\\_development/right\\_sizing/](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/economic_development/right_sizing/), followed by practitioner presentations, and a question and answer session. Featured case studies include, Seattle Alaskan Way Viaduct, the Rochester Inner Loop, and Milwaukee Park East Freeway. Webinar presenters include, Stefan Natzke and Mike Neathery (FHWA), Alec Williamson (Washington State DOT), Erik Frisch (City of Rochester), Peter Park (Univ. of Colorado).

#### **WEBINAR LOGISTICS:**

- **Tuesday, February 25, 2020**
- **2:00 pm – 3:00 pm Eastern Standard Time**
- **Registration link:** <https://collaboration.fhwa.dot.gov/dot/fhwa/WC/Lists/Seminars/DispForm.aspx?ID=2254>

For additional information, please contact Mike Neathery, 202-366-1257 or [mike.neathery@dot.gov](mailto:mike.neathery@dot.gov)

#### **Webinar Registration Process**

Webinar registration is a two-step process. First, non-DOT users including State DOTs must request access to the FHWA External Portal. Second, non-DOT users including State DOTs must login using the email address used to request access to the site and their requested password. Federal DOT staff and DOT-badged contractors do not need to register for an account. DOT users can click on the registration link and use their DOT credentials to access the site.

In the External SharePoint System, EXTERNAL users (those without a @dot.gov email address) will have to request an account before they can register. Here is the link to request an account: <https://collaboration.fhwa.dot.gov/FBA/Register.aspx>. Step-by step instructions on how to request an account can be found here: <https://connectdot.connectsolutions.com/esnnon-dotstaff/>

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## **Sustainable Highway Construction Guidebook**

Sustainability is often an element that informs decisions made during the planning, programming, and design phases of highway construction projects. However, the construction phase of a highway project is also an opportunity to advance sustainability.

The TRB National Cooperative Highway Research Program's *NCHRP Research Report 916: Sustainable Highway Construction Guidebook* provides clear and practical information on what constitutes sustainability in the context of highway construction and how to evaluate any proposed construction practice for its sustainability potential.

The guidebook supports implementation by describing ways to explicitly advance sustainability in procurement and contracting and how to develop a sustainability management plan for the construction phase.

An overview of NCHRP Research Report 916 is provided in this [PowerPoint presentation](#). A separate publication, [NCHRP Web-Only](#)

[Document 262: Sustainable Highway Construction](#), describes the research process and outcomes used to develop NCHRP Research Report 916.

A summary of NCHRP Web-Only Document 262 is provided in this [PowerPoint presentation](#).

Project: [Project Information](#)

DOI: [10.17226/25698](#)

Project Number: 10-91A

E-Newsletter Type: [Recently Released TRB Publications](#)

TRB Publication Type: [NCHRP Report](#)

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## FEDERAL TRUST FUNDS AND OTHER DEDICATED FUNDS:

### Fiscal Sustainability Is a Growing Concern for Some Key Funds

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Every major federal department has at least 2 trust funds or dedicated funds that pay for key programs. The money comes from related taxes, fees, and premiums—e.g., U.S. postage stamp revenue goes to the Postal Service Fund.

The overall federal trust fund balance is expected to start declining in 2022 as balances in the Medicare and Social Security trust funds drop. The government is projected to borrow the difference—which isn't sustainable.

Of our 13 case study funds, 11 received general revenue in addition to dedicated revenue. For example, the 2015 Highway Trust Fund reauthorization provided \$70 billion in general revenue to the fund. To continue reading click [HERE](#).

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### The Department of Transportation has identified transportation assets that fall within Opportunity Zones with the goal of driving investment of all types to these important areas.

Despite the growing national economy, economically distressed communities are located in every corner of the United States and its territories. These communities have high levels of poverty, failing schools, job scarcity, and a lack of investment. A new tax incentive—Opportunity Zones—was created to spur economic development and job creation by encouraging long-term investment in low-income communities nationwide.

Read about our partner's roles in Opportunity Zones:

- [Housing and Urban Development: Implementation Plan for The White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council](#)
- [The IRS: Tax reform creates opportunity zone tax incentive](#)
- [Treasury Department Community Development Financial Institutions Fund](#)

The Opportunity Zone designation encourages investment in communities by granting investors extensive Federal tax advantages for using their capital gains to finance new projects and enterprises. There are more than [8,700 designated Qualified Opportunity Zones located in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and five United States territories](#). Of the Qualified Opportunity Zones 40 percent are in rural census tracts, 38 percent are in urban tracts, and 22 percent are in suburban tracts.

South Alabama Opportunity Zones



<https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/subdoc/906/build-fact-sheet2019.pdf>


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## Transportation Dictionary

The USDOT released a searchable online dictionary that includes over 9,000 transportation terms and acronyms. The terms were collected from a variety of public and private transportation publications and databases. This dictionary presents over 9,000 terms and acronyms related to transportation. The terms and acronyms were obtained from various transportation publications and databases which exist within the federal government, private organizations, Canada and Mexico.

### Search Tips

- Sources are listed in parenthesis after the definition.
- None of the searches are case sensitive. Searching for PEDESTRIAN will produce the same results as searching for pedestrian.



· The Dictionary searches for the word, phrase or acronym as it is entered and returns all records that match or contain that word, phrase or acronym. For example, searching for pedestrian will return records for pedestrian and pedestrian walkway.

Click [HERE](#) for the search engine.

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