



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, January 18th, 2019

Volume 29, Number 3

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There is a Mobile MPO meeting scheduled for January 30th, including a new project to Install Two Way Left Turn Lane and Bike/Ped Friendly Shoulders on US 90 East End of Cochrane Bridge to West of Bankhead Tunnel , please see *Mobile MPO Updates*. Governor Ivy and Alabama County Commissioners are calling for a gas tax to fund roads in *Legislative Updates*. Senator Shelby was in Mobile this morning and Airbus is making its mark in Alabama *In the News*. *This week's Just For Fun* is a stretch...

Have a great weekend! Check out [ALGO Traffic](#) before you travel!

www.mobilempo.org  Check us out on FACEBOOK

SARPC Transportation Video, this is what we do [HERE](#)

Want to know what other SARPC departments do?

[Planning and Community Development](#)

[Area Agency on Aging](#)

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

Mobile MPO Updates

Mobile MPO meetings

There is a MPO meeting scheduled for January 30th. The agenda items are a variety of changes to the 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the upcoming 2020-2023 TIP. The Preliminary Engineering (PE) for Celeste Rd from I65 to Forest Ave will be added to this TIP, with the other phases in the outer years of the TIP. We have a lot of projects this year; about \$35 million worth of projects to do in FY 2019.

NATIONAL HIGHWAY FUNDS

- 100069441 (PE) INSTALLATION OF NEW GENERATOR TO REPLACE EXISTING GENERATOR FOR BANKHEAD TUNNEL AND ITS DEVICES; 1/1/2019; \$75,000.00
- 100069442 (CN) INSTALLATION OF NEW GENERATOR TO REPLACE EXISTING GENERATOR FOR BANKHEAD TUNNEL AND ITS DEVICES; 6/28/2019; \$750,000.00
- 100054972 (CN) EXTEND EASTBOUND BRIDGE ON SR-42 (US-98) OVER BIG CREEK EAST 1440' New Delete Indicator : D

STP ATTRIB

- 100055880 (PE) ADDITIONAL LANES ON CR-656 (ZEIGLER BLVD) FROM CR-70 (TANNER WILLIAMS RD) TO CR-31 (SCHILLINGER RD) Current Funding : \$30,000.00 Requested Funding : \$420,000.00
- 100052450 (CN)MCDONALD ROAD (CR-39) ADDITIONAL LANES FROM NORTH OF I-10 TO OLD PASCAGOULA ROAD. Old Target start date: June 28, 2019 New Target start date: June 26, 2020
- 100066704 (PE) DAUPHIN ST SAGE TO SPRINGHILL HOSP CMP; FY 2018; \$62,500; DELETE
- 100066706 (PE) AIRPORT BLVD UNIV TO HILLCREST CMP CORRIDOR: FY 2019; \$62,500; DELETE
- 1000xxxxx (PE) CELESTE ROAD FROM I-65 TO FOREST AVE; FY 2109; \$1,363,500

BRIDGE FUNDS

- 100068521 (PE) BRIDGE REPLACEMENT (BIN 003691) ON SR-16 (US-90) OVER HALLS MILL CREEK; 11/1/2018; \$900,000.00
- 100068523 (UT) BRIDGE REPLACEMENT (BIN 003691) ON SR-16 (US-90) OVER HALLS MILL CREEK; 11/1/2021; \$25,757.00
- 100068522 (CN) BRIDGE REPLACEMENT (BIN 003691) ON SR-16 (US-90) OVER HALLS MILL CREEK;1/28/2022; \$8,860,588.00
- 100068528 (CN) BRIDGE REPLACEMENT (BIN 005712 AND BIN 005856) ON SR-13 (US-43) OVER COLD CREEK; 6/25/2021; \$5,100,500.00
- 100068526 (PE) BRIDGE REPLACEMENT (BIN 005712 AND BIN 005856) ON SR-13 (US-43) OVER COLD CREEK; 1/1/2019; \$500,000.00
- 100069460 (PE) BRIDGE PAINT ON VARIOUS BRIDGES ALONG I-65. GULF COAST RR, US 43, NORFOLK SOUTHERN RR, GUNNISON CREEK; 1/7/2019, \$100,000
- 100069478 (CN) BRIDGE PAINT ON VARIOUS BRIDGES ALONG I-65. GULF COAST RR, US 43, NORFOLK SOUTHERN RR, GUNNISON CREEK; 1/7/2019; 9/25/2020; \$2,778,588
- 100049566 (CN) REPLACE BRIDGE, BIN 008714, SR-16 (US-90) WESTBOUND OVER TENSAW-SPANISH RIVER. Old Target start date : July 26, 2019 New Target start date : November 08, 2019

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TAP FUNDS

- 100069054 (CN) SIDEWALKS ALONG EASTERLING STREET FROM W CLARK AVENUE TO GARRISON AVENUE, ON GARRISON AVENUE FROM EASTERLING STREET TO MAGEE STREET, AND ON MAGEE STREET FROM GARRISON AVENUE TO W CLARK AVENUE; 12/15/2019; \$252,426.00 (\$200,000 fed)
- 100069055 (CN) ADA COMPLIANT CURB RAMPS IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF MOBILE COUNTY TO INCLUDE KINGS BRANCH ESTATES, WOODBRIDGE PLACE AND CUMBERLAND SUBDIVISION; 9/18/2019; \$250,178 (\$200,000 fed)

HSIP

- 100069517 (PE) Install Two Way Left Turn Lane and Bike/Ped Friendly Shoulders on US 90 East End of Cochrane Bridge to West of Bankhead Tunnel; 1/10/2019; \$540,000

Please see our web page for further details www.mobilempo.org

FREIGHT DATA

APM Terminals has provided us with their second quarterly survey report. Just as last quarter, for one day APM Terminals had on-board tablets for drivers to answer a series of questions in terms of where they came from and where they are going. APM Terminals will continue to gather this information quarterly for our benefit of validating truck data for the travel demand forecasting model. This second survey report had a significant increase in truckers answering the survey, which helps refine our understanding of container truck trip patterns in the area. See more [HERE](#)

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) NOW ONLINE

The TIP represents a four year program (2016-2019) 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.

2016-2019 E-TIP [HERE](#)

Stay Up To Date on the Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project:

<http://mobileriverbridge.com/>



ALDOT is doing some preliminary building demolition for the archaeology work associated with the Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project. More details are in the release below.

The schedule is in flux, so please contact Allison Gregg (251-604-9790) to coordinate site visits.

ALDOT to Begin Building Demolition

Building demolition is preliminary work ahead of the Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) will demolish nine buildings at the intersections of S. Emanuel Street/Canal Street and Canal St./S. Royal in preparation for construction for the Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project.

The demolition of the existing structures will allow for the archaeology work to begin ahead of construction of the Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project.

The demolition is on-going in the 300 block of Conception Street in Mobile.

Traffic will not be impacted during the demolition, however drivers should obey posted speed limits and be aware of crews in the area. Passersby and observers should remain a safe distance away from the sites during the demolition.

About the project:

The Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project will 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 runs from Virginia Street in Mobile to the US 90/98 interchange in Baldwin County. Information in the project is available at www.MobileRiverBridge.com.

Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

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

Project : 100060154 (CN)

Federal aid number : NHF 0158 (505)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : SR-158 EXTENSION LOTT ROAD OVERPASS AND JUG HANDLE. GRADE, DRAIN, BASE, PAVE, AND BRIDGE (EB SEABURY CREEK TRIBUTARY AND PARTIAL LOTT ROAD)

Old Target start date : June 28, 2019

New Target start date : November 08, 2019

Project : 100061588 (CN)

Federal aid number : BR 0013 (601)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : CULVERT REPLACEMENT, BIN 5715, SR-13 (US-43) OVER STEELE CREEK

Old Engineers Estimate : \$2,709,313.00

New Engineers Estimate : \$3,200,000.00

Project : 100052812 (CN)

Federal aid number : NHF 0042 (517)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : CONSTRUCT BRIDGE ON GLENWOOD ROAD OVER SR-42 (US-98)

Old Target start date : June 28, 2019

New Target start date : September 27, 2019

Projects in Region Let January 25th, 2019

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

- For constructing the Interchange Lighting Rehabilitation on I-65 at SR-21 (Exit 57) in Martinville. Length 0.927 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$763,849 to \$933,594 .

MOBILE COUNTY

- For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, Sidewalk Installation, and Traffic Stripe on I-165 (Service Roads) from 0.040 mile south of the junction of Bay Bridge Road to 0.080 mile north of the intersection of Whistler Street in Mobile. Length 1.630 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,603,050 to \$1,959,283 .

BALDWIN COUNTY

- For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on I-10 from the SR-59 Interchange in Loxley to 0.300 mile east of the CR-64 (Wilcox Road) Interchange. Length 9.460 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$2,413,888 to \$2,950,308

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

Legislative Updates

Ivey calls for new gas tax for roads, prison construction

By [Michele Gerlach](#)

Published 1:00 am Tuesday, January 15, 2019

Gov. Kay Ivey called for increased funding for the state's infrastructure in her inaugural address yesterday.

Citing the state's history as it prepares to celebrate its bicentennial this year, Ivey said when Gov. (Thomas) Kilby was sworn in during the state's centennial in 2019, and Gov. Lurleen Wallace was sworn in 50 years ago, each asked for greater funding "to build and improve our roads."

"Today, I follow in Governor Lurleen Wallace's footsteps in many ways and make the same ask to the members of the Alabama Legislature," Ivey said. "After all, if we want to compete in a 21st century global economy, we must improve our infrastructure by investing more in our roads, our bridges and our ports. Improving our infrastructure is more than an investment in our roads and bridges; it's an investment in economic development, public safety and local communities."

Legislators said last week that Ivey wanted a "reasonable increase" in the state gas tax to fund road and bridge repairs, but to date, she has not publicly asked for a specific amount. She did not ask for a specific increase on Monday, either.

"It has been nearly three decades since we last made any changes to our current funding, and the challenge has grown with the passing of time," Ivey said. "Now is the time to increase our investment in infrastructure – now is the time to solve this problem! We will have only one chance to do so. With the people's help – and the support of the Alabama Legislature – I am confident we will do the right thing."

The governor called for bipartisan support of the initiative, and also said the state has to give attention to its prison system.

"Much like our roads and bridges, our prison system, too, has been sorely neglected for decades," she said. "The poor conditions of our prisons create a risk to public safety and are placing a heavy burden on taxpayers."

Ivey said she hopes progress in these areas "will inspire us to tackle other pressing challenges, such as health care, rural economic development, access to broadband and other important issues."

"With your help – and with God's amazing grace – the next four years will not only mark the beginning of our third century, they'll be the foundation for our best years to come," she said. "May God bless each of you. And May God continue to bless our Sweet Home Alabama!"

Platform guests at the inauguration included former Govs. Jim Folsom Jr., Don Siegelman, Bob Riley and Robert Bentley. Former Speaker of the House Seth Hammett also was a platform guest, as was Rep. Mike Jones, who in his capacity as a municipal judge, administered the oath of office to Secretary of State John Merrill.

Ivey became governor in April of 2017 when then-Gov. Robert Bentley plead guilty to two misdemeanor campaign finance law violations and resigned.

Alabama County Commissioners group head: New gas tax revenue must go directly to roads — asphalt and concrete

By Jeff Poor

In an [appearance](#) on Huntsville radio's WVNN on Wednesday, Association of County Commissions of Alabama executive director Sonny Brasfield [reiterated his plea](#) for the state legislature to consider raising the gas tax.

Brasfield acknowledged that transparency and accountability must be elements of any proposal.

He also argued the new revenues should be mandated solely for roads and not equipment or personnel.

"What we heard in 2017 and we tried to be very responsive to that, and there were a number of people who during this election in the House and Senate, candidates who were not afraid to say they were in favor of infrastructure improvements, is that we said this money has got to be more transparent, and this new money has got to be more accountable," Brasfield said on "The Jeff Poor Show." "From our association is what we're promoting is that the county portion of this money, and I think you'll see it handle in the state portion and city portion as well, needs to be accounted for separately from all other gas tax funds."

"We need to ensure that money doesn't go to salaries," he continued. "It doesn't go to equipment. The money goes directly on the roads in asphalt and concrete. And the response from the public has been much more positive when they know we're not just trying to do the same old thing with this new money, that we recognize that if we're going to ask for additional revenue, then we owe it to the voters, to the people that are going to be expecting the money out of their wallets, to ensure them the money is going to be put in a place where they can benefit from it. I think that is honestly changed the narrative on this issue."

Counties, cities want possible gas tax increase money

By Lydia Nusbaum, WSFA

MONTGOMERY, AL (WSFA) - With a possible gas tax increase on the minds of state leaders, cities and counties are trying to tap into that money.

In general, right now the pie is divided up three ways. The Alabama Department of Transportation gobbles up half. The remaining funds go mostly to the county with cities splitting just the last 10 percent.

But the League of Municipalities said they want to see this city/county share go to 50-50.

"As more and more citizens have moved into cities and into populated areas, we've had to widen roads, put more lanes into our city roads and we've had to upgrade those roads," said Greg Cochran, with the Alabama League of Municipalities.

Cochran said it is more expensive to put lanes in cities roads than in county roads. He said there are many inferior roads in cities.

"Inferior roads are roads that haven't been updated and up-kept in some time because the resources were just not there," Cochran said. The Association of County Commissions of Alabama said counties also need a lot of this money.

"One of the important things to remember is even the smallest city in Alabama has the ability to raise the gasoline tax tonight if they wish," said Sonny Brasfield, with the association.

He said only about 10 county commissions can levy this type of tax.

"That means all of the citizens and all of the industries that rely on county roads and bridges, rely on the money from the state gasoline tax," he said. And it's up to lawmakers to divvy up the possible gas tax increase. Rep. Bill Poole said he may sponsor a gas tax bill. He said they are discussing how to distribute the money so all parts of the state benefit.

Tony Harris, a spokesperson with ALDOT, said the need for additional funding is critical.

"ALDOT has specific plans to address rural and urban congestion and economic development corridors that could be rapidly implemented based on the level of new funding passed by the legislature," Harris said.

Funding Opportunities

Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair Program

A Notice by the [Federal Railroad Administration](#) deadline **5:00 p.m. EDT, on March 18, 2019**

FRA recently issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the **Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair Program** (Partnership Program). The NOFO makes **\$272,250,000 million** in grant funding available. Here's the link to FRA's Partnership Program website which includes a link to the NOFO: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P1107>

The Partnership Program is intended to benefit both the Northeast Corridor ("NEC") and the large number of publicly-owned or Amtrak-owned infrastructure, equipment, and facilities located in other areas of the country, including strengthening transportation options for rural American communities. The NOFO will assist in funding capital projects to repair, replace, or rehabilitate publicly-owned railroad assets, and to improve intercity passenger rail performance. Eligible projects include those that replace existing assets in-kind; replace existing assets with those that increase capacity or provide a higher level of service; and those that ensure existing assets maintain service while being brought into a state of good repair.

Selection preference will be given to projects where Amtrak is not the sole applicant; multiple applicants submit applications jointly; the proposed federal share of total project costs does not exceed 50 percent; non-federal shares consist of funding from multiple sources, including private sources; and applications indicate strong project readiness. Applications for capital projects funding under this solicitation must be submitted via www.Grants.gov and are **due no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on Monday, March 18, 2019**. Prior to the application deadline, FRA plans to provide Web-based training and technical assistance to answer questions from applicants.

- **WEBINAR: Wednesday, December 12 at 1:00 PM and Tuesday, January 8 at 1:00 PM - How to Apply for Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair Program Grants – Register now for either the [December 12 session](#) or the [January 8 session](#)**

The Federal-State Partnership Program is authorized by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act and this [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) makes available funding from the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, and Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018. During the webinar, FRA will provide information about the new grant opportunity and how to apply for grant funding. For additional information about this grant opportunity, please see FRA's Competitive Discretionary Grant Programs website at <https://www.fra.dot.gov/grants>

[Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Program](#)

Applications Due: January 31, 2019

The Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Program (FMA) provides funding to states, territories, federally-recognized tribes, and local communities for projects and planning that reduces or eliminates long-term risk of flood damage to structures insured under the National Flood Insurance Program. FMA funding is also available for management costs. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires state, tribal, and local governments to develop and adopt hazard mitigation plans as a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for Hazard Mitigation Assistance projects. Generally, local communities will sponsor applications on behalf of homeowners and then submit the applications to their state.

[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](#)

FHWA Offers New Funding for Innovative Demonstration Projects

New funding is available from the Federal Highway Administration's Accelerated Innovation Deployment Demonstration program to encourage the transportation community to adopt proven innovations. [Funding](#) or the AID Demonstration program, launched in 2014 as part of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, was continued by the 2015 [Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act](#). Since AID Demonstration was introduced, FHWA has provided more than \$43 million for 61 awards.

Under the program, funding of up to \$1 million may be awarded for projects that use proven innovations in any project phase, including planning, financing, operation, structures, materials, pavements, environment and construction. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis through [Grants.gov](#), the federal government's website for information on funding opportunities. For more information on the AID Demonstration program, contact [Ewa Flom](#) of the FHWA Center for Accelerating Innovation.

The FHWA continues the Accelerated Innovation Deployment (AID) Demonstration authorized within the Technology and Innovation Deployment Program (TIDP) under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. The AID Demonstration provides incentive funding for any project activities eligible for assistance under title 23, U.S.C. in any phase of a highway transportation project between project planning and project delivery including planning, financing, operation, structures, materials, pavements, environment, and construction that address the TIDP goals. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) published on September 1, 2016 (<https://federalregister.gov/a/2016-21063>) requests grant applications and provides selection criteria, application requirements, and technical assistance with [Grants.gov](#) during the grant solicitation period.

Link to Additional Information: [FHWA Center for Accelerating Innovation Grants page](#)

Industrial Access Road and Bridge

Industrial access funds are intended to provide adequate public access to new or expanding distribution, manufacturing and industrial firms. The industry must be committed to new investment and the creation of new jobs. The new access must be on public right of way for public use (state, city or county) and the project sponsor (city or county) must maintain the completed facility unless the facility consists of turn lanes, crossovers, etc., that are located on state highways. Industrial access funds are limited to construction, construction engineering and inspection costs. The project sponsor is responsible for all preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation costs.

Prior to the date the qualifying (new or expanding) project is "placed in service," the sponsoring entity or its local development agency must notify the Alabama Department of Commerce of its intent to claim the incentives under Section 41-9-202.1, Code of Alabama 1975. Effective October 9, 2008, the Industrial Access Road and Bridge Corporation application submittal should include the notification acknowledgment letter from the Secretary of Commerce. For more info, see [HERE](#)

To stay up to date on all of the many grants that are available visit www.grants.gov.

Just For Fun

This week New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo proposed additional regulations on the state's limousine industry, including a ban on "stretched" limousines following a deadly crash last year involving one of the vehicles. A deadly crash is nothing to make light of; however, some limousines throw out practicality and sensibility and should be banned, well that is *Just For Fun*.

First they should ban all limo driving like in the video below; it will make your day to watch this CRAZY limo driver. [HERE](#)



I am not sure this a luxury limo ride....



In the News

Shelby big on port, cautious on I-10 bridge funding

By [Lawrence Specker](#)



Sen. Richard Shelby speaks to reporters in Mobile on Jan. 18, 2019.

lspecker@al.comSpeaking

Friday in Mobile, U.S. Sen Richard Shelby shared a few thoughts on development of the port, the proposed I-10 bridge, current federal government shutdown and the possibility that U.S. Rep. Bradley Byrne might seek to join him in the Senate.

Shelby gave prominence to developments at the port, which perhaps was no surprise given the venue: A Chamber of Commerce "Forum Alabama" breakfast sponsored by the Alabama State Port Authority.

Shelby expressed unstinting support for a plan, currently being developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to widen and deepen the ship channel that permits big vessels to travel up Mobile Bay.

"Why is Mobile here?" he asked. "The port of Mobile is Mobile."

Shelby said the channel project "will be a lifetime change" for the area and might be the most important local development in a hundred years. Shelby also expressed support for the I-10 bridge but didn't exude the same bullish confidence that it was going to happen. The challenge was securing the funding for such a big-ticket item, he said. "I'm pushing for it," he said, but "the bridge is going to have to come out of a massive infrastructure bill. We haven't gotten it."

On the shutdown, Shelby expressed pride that through a series of "minibus" bills, Congress had handled 75 percent of its appropriations before the impasse was struck.

Shelby said the problem as he sees it is that President Trump and congressional Democrats have been taking shots at each other rather than making any significant attempt at striking a compromise. Meanwhile, he said, unpaid federal employees are experiencing increasing hardship. "These are innocent people," he said. "They deserve better than that. We deserve better than that."

"I do believe the president is right on protecting the border," he said. "How do you get there, I don't know."

Shelby said he thought there was some room to negotiate of whether protecting the border meant "a wall, a fence, a barrier, or just border security." "I tell people it's going to end in some kind of negotiations," he said.

Looking ahead to 2020, Shelby put a friendly spotlight on Byrne, who was in the audience. "Rumor has it," he said, that Byrne would be a contender for the seat long held by Republican Jeff Sessions and captured by Democrat Doug Jones in a 2017 special election.

"I like Doug Jones fine," said Shelby. But he said that as a Republican, he wanted to see another member of his own party in the seat.

Shelby's remarks fell short of a formal endorsement, and Byrne didn't take the opportunity to address the crowd about his rumored run. But Shelby's friendly mention drew an equally friendly round of applause from the audience of area business leaders.

Alabama's incentives for Airbus: 'Public relations donation' or "investment in future"?

By John Sharp | jsharp@al.com

Alabama competing for the SEC championship in college football each year may be the only surer bet than the predictability of bureaucrats offering lavish incentives to large companies in an effort to lure jobs and tax revenue into the state.

Airbus provides the latest example, thanks to a series of multimillion-dollar packages approved this week by Mobile city and county officials. State officials announced their own deal on Wednesday.

In return, European-based Airbus is building a \$300 million assembly plant for its newly acquired A220 family of planes as it battles Seattle-based Boeing for worldwide commercial aircraft supremacy.

The project is expected to add 432 new jobs by 2021, and the plant is expected to churn out up to four planes a month once it reaches full capacity.

The new plant is adjacent to the \$600 million assembly plant that Airbus opened in 2016, to build the A320 family of aircraft. That facility was subsidized with an estimated \$158 million in state, county and city incentives awarded several years ago.

“What we are doing is investing in the growth of an operation that is establishing Mobile and the state of Alabama as the fourth-largest producer of large commercial aircraft,” said Alabama Commerce Secretary Greg Canfield. “It’s an investment in the future revenue growth in our state. Nothing is being given away here.”

Said Mobile County Commissioner Jerry Carl: “You will always hear some voices from the community saying that, ‘It’s not a good idea,’ and, ‘You are giving our tax money away.’ But it’s the market we live in and we have to compete with these other cities for jobs.”

Incentive skeptics

The recent city and county packages are worth a combined \$8 million over 10 years, although additional incentives come with a property tax abatement and tax credits on construction-related materials.

The state’s incentive is valued at around \$17.8 million, which includes an upfront \$8 million payout toward construction of the new assembly plant, which will be operational in 2020. Also, the state is offering a \$9.8 million jobs-creation incentive, to be applied to the company’s payroll tax.

Canfield said the state anticipates a whopping 270 percent return on investment from the Airbus plant, which includes an additional payroll of \$824 million over the next decade and nearly \$100 million in new state revenues.

Mobile city and county officials are praising the latest deals.

Carl, one of three county commissioners, said that adding another manufacturing facility for another Airbus class of planes solidifies the company’s presence in coastal Alabama.

“It’s like an anchor,” said Carl. “They will be here for life.”

Economists and critics of incentive programs, however, are skeptical that global players like Airbus would shun Mobile in favor of another suitor for its manufacturing plant. Mobile is the only U.S. city where Airbus assembles.

Megan Randall, a research associate at the Urban Institute’s Tax Policy Center in Washington, D.C., said that the first thing that should be asked of state and city politicians is whether a tax incentive package is “really necessary to attract” the company in the first place.

In Airbus’ case, it is already in Mobile and has an established relationship with current and past governors and mayors.

“People want to cut a ribbon for an Amazon and an Airbus and a General Electric,” said Randall, who added that, oftentimes, the long-term jobs benefits fail to match up to the promises made at splashy press events.

“There is evidence to suggest that it can drive the tax base down and economically to insufficient levels if cities are trying to outbid each other,” said Randall.

Semoon Chang, a longtime Alabama economist who is known for his analyses of the worth and impacts of new ventures and industries, said the Airbus support from Alabama appears to be more for show.

“As a rule, I have a serious reservation in handing out financial incentives to existing companies,” said Chang. “Incentives of several millions of dollars, according to my opinion, represent a public relations donation from elected officials to company leaders rather than economic incentives that may be needed for the company to survive.”

He added, “Although Airbus is a super company and a pride of Alabama as well as for me personally, I doubt that financial incentive at this stage makes any difference on the company’s profitability.”

Fierce competition

Carl said the incentives are crucial for Alabama and cities like Mobile to compete in an economy driven by competitive deal-making.

“In the business community, especially right now, every city is trying to lock these jobs in,” said Carl.

He said city and county officials attempted a few years ago to lure a corporate giant to coastal Alabama as part of a deal to build a distribution center. That, instead, went to Texas.

But the region did attract a massive Walmart distribution center to Mobile County, thanks to a combined \$12 million in economic incentives.

Carl said other factors played a role in attracting Walmart with a project that added 500 jobs.

Mobile city and county officials are poised to vote for economic incentive package to lure a Walmart distribution center to the area.

“We had to sell them on location and location,” said Carl, who explained that Mobile was bidding for the project against New Orleans and Savannah, Georgia.

Alabama has benefited, significantly, in outmuscling other states to land massive manufacturers in the past year even if it wasn’t the highest bidder.

The \$1.6 billion Toyota-Mazda plant in Huntsville is backed by an impressive array of incentives totaling around \$380 million. But Alabama’s successful bid came in far behind North Carolina, which offered \$1.5 billion in a losing effort for the state to land its first auto plant.

How did Alabama do it? Several factors may have been the difference.

“In terms of the state of Alabama, they are good at designing these packages but in my opinion, they aren’t much different than what other states are doing,” said Amanda Ross, assistant professor of economics at the Culverhouse College of Commerce at the University of Alabama. “It’s the norm for the state and local governments to offer these incentive packages to attract a company to come. And these companies are so used to it.”

Canfield, however, said that, with Airbus, the company could’ve easily settled on building the new A220-family of planes in Canada, which is home to the jet’s developer, Bombardier.

Airbus agreed last year to form a joint venture with Bombardier, which already builds A220 jets, formerly known as the CSeries, at a plant near Montreal.

“The CSeries could’ve been manufactured in its existing location,” said Canfield. “It did not have to come to Mobile. Part of the decision to come here is that you have a state-supportive investment that is made here.”

Bombardier has benefited from the Canadian government before, and the company got \$1 billion to support the CSeries program in 2015. But Bombardier lacked the heft to truly bring the aircraft into the world marketplace before Airbus came along.

“Here in Montreal, the amount of funding that Bombardier has received from the Province of Quebec and from Canada has been controversial,” said Karl Moore, an associate professor at McGill University in Montreal. “My analysis suggests that, on balance, Canada and Quebec have gained from a viewpoint of job creation and taxes paid by the employees and Bombardier in the long term.”

While Airbus company officials praise Mobile and its current and past leaders, there are no guarantees from company officials that they will undertake plant expansions without incentive packages.

Airbus Americas CEO Jeff Knittel, in an interview with AL.com after the groundbreaking ceremony Wednesday, acknowledged that competitive incentive programs are important.

“We’re a company that has to protect our shareholders also,” said Knittel. “Having an economic model helping to propagate is usually helpful. It bridges the gap economically, and puts us in a situation where we have a true partnership for success.”

Said Canfield, “Incentives don’t make a company come to a particular state. But what they do is help those companies minimize those risk impacts from making large capital investments in an area.”

Transparency push

While Alabama’s state and local governments continue to roll out incentives, there is an increasing push for more transparency and scrutiny in the process.

In 2016, the Legislature approved a requirement to have its tax incentives evaluated on a four-year cycle. Alabama is one of 30 states with a legal provision calling for such evaluations.

The Alabama incentive program could use some improvement, according to a Pew Charitable Trusts analysis. The biggest weakness is that Alabama law gives state agencies the responsibility to judge the effectiveness of the same incentives that they administer.

Josh Goodman, senior officer at the Pew Charitable Trust, said Mississippi, Florida and Oklahoma do the best jobs in handling those kinds of reviews. In Oklahoma, for instance, a private firm is charged with the analysis. In Mississippi, it’s done through a university research center.

Alabama has produced well-received reviews in recent years on several incentive programs including the historic preservation tax credit program and the state film tax credit.

“Clearly, there is a model to make a policy analysis,” said Goodman, referring to Alabama. “As this evaluation process in Alabama matures, the hope is that it produces information that policy makers can use to make good decisions for the state’s budget and economy.”

Canfield said his office produces two reports yearly, both which provide updates on the performance of tax incentives.

An Alabama legislative hearing is scheduled for January 29 in Montgomery, which will focus on economic tax incentives. State lawmakers, though, are not expected to make any changes to what Alabama offers during the 2019 legislation session, which starts in March.

“We do not foresee any changes coming to any incentive programs,” said William Califf, spokesman with Alabama State Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh.

Federal Shutdown Impacting Project Planning For State DOTs

editor@aaashto.org January 11, 2019

As the partial shutdown of the federal government over border wall funding stretches past 20 days, some state departments of transportation are beginning to curtail planning for new projects while several mass transit systems are scrambling as many rely on federal grants for both operating revenues and capital funding.

In his first media briefing as the new executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, Jim Tymon (pictured above) explained that since the 115th Congress did not pass Fiscal Year 2019 appropriations for seven of the 12 annual spending bills, including the Transportation-Housing and Urban Development or THUD package, states to date are limited to only about a quarter of the federal funding they are scheduled to receive this year.

However, he stressed in the Jan. 8 conference call that the U.S. Department of Transportation employees paid out of the Highway Trust Fund – including all Federal Highway Administration employees – are reporting to duty with pay as usual and that FHWA is able to continue reimbursing states for projects approved prior to the shutdown.

“I think what you’ll see in the short term is states finding ways to move money around from different pots in order to keep their systems operating as efficiently as possible. It’s not something they can do forever,” Tymon said on the call. “The longer this drags on, you’re going to see states start to draw back on their letting for new projects because they won’t have their full allocation of federal money for 2019 yet.”

For example, while a Jan. 8 FHWA funding notice makes \$30 billion worth of FY 2019 transportation funding available to be committed by states as authorized under the five-year Fixing America's Surface Transportation or FAST Act, the agency also said that it would be "inadvisable" for states to commit a large amount of new federal dollars provided under today's notice.

For example, if there is a new continuing resolution from Congress lasting just 30 days, any dollars obligated beyond that prorated amount (i.e., 30/365th of full year funding) would then have to be deobligated or returned to FHWA.

Tymon added that the effect of this past Tuesday's FHWA notice is that even if full FY 2019 highway dollars are now technically available, for all practical purposes, states can't really commit all of those dollars because there's a real risk of having to return some of them if the shutdown ends with another continuing resolution.

"This remains a fluid situation and is becoming one with less and less precedence," he pointed out.

In terms of transit concerns, the Citrus Connection bus system in Lakeland, Florida, has been drawing from annual operating cash and cash reserves to stay open; a tactic it told The Ledger newspaper that will no longer be possible if the delay on federal payments extends to mid-February. That's because 50 percent of the local bus agency's funding comes from federal sources, Citrus Connection Executive Director Tom Phillips told the paper on Jan. 9

Another worry among state DOTs is how a prolonged federal shutdown could impact the spring/summer construction season.

Oklahoma DOT Executive Director Mike Patterson explained in a presentation before the Oklahoma Transportation Commission on Jan. 7 that roughly 45 upcoming highway, county road, and city street projects set to go out for bid in January and February totaling more than \$137 million had to be delayed due to the lack of federal funding authorization.

"While we're very grateful that the Highway Trust Fund remains available to pay for the federal share of projects already under construction, the inability to award new contracts with federal funds could delay some projects from starting for several months," Patterson said. "If this budget impasse continues, contractors could miss out on some of this year's prime construction season in the spring and summer."

Airbus to invest \$300M, create 400 jobs in new Alabama plant

BY [TAL AXELROD](#) - 01/16/19

Airbus [announced on Wednesday](#) that it will create 400 jobs at a new factory to produce its A220 aircraft in Mobile, Ala.

The European plane manufacturer announced the plans at a groundbreaking ceremony for the \$300 million factory, which will neighbor an existing site that builds its A320 passenger jet and employs 700 people, [according to Reuters](#).

"We're not competing with the U.S. We're competing in the U.S.," Airbus Chairman Jeffrey Knittel said.

"The United States is one of the largest markets for us and this is our largest industrial base in the U.S. We have the skills and employees and it is the logical thing to do."

Airlines have already ordered about 500 of the A220 aircraft, the company said. Airbus intends to build four planes per month at the new factory, with the goal of delivering them in 2020. The company said Alabama would provide an unspecified amount of state funding to support the plant's construction.

"[T]he A220 has all the credentials to win the lion's share of the 100- to 150-seat aircraft market estimated to represent at least 7,000 aircraft over the next 20 years," the company said.

The adjacent site currently produces 54 A320 aircraft per year, though that number could rise by the end of 2019, according to Reuters.

Airbus has other sites in Kansas, Virginia, California, Georgia, Texas, Mississippi and Florida.

Transportation Research

The Downtown Mobile Alliance wants to hear from you!

The Downtown Mobile Alliance has been guiding downtown redevelopment since 2005. Much has changed since then, but much remains to be done! Every five years they survey stakeholders to determine how their scope of work aligns with the needs and desires of the people they serve. Please take 15 minutes to complete the 2019 survey...your input will help create the new management plan for downtown's Business Improvement District.

As a little incentive, you'll be able to leave your email address to be entered in a drawing to win one of five \$50 Downtown Mobile Gift Cards. So, set aside

15 minutes, and tell them what you think!

[2019 Stakeholder Survey](#)



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[The Data Collected by Dockless Bikes is Helping Cities Map Your Movement](#)

Dockless bikes use a combination of GPS, 3G wireless connections, and solar power to transmit their location to providers and consumers. Providers, and the cities they partner with, have unparalleled access to rider behavior and are leveraging this knowledge to meet the needs of their consumers. In South Bend, IN, Lime is providing aggregate statistics on travel and heat maps showing where most riders occur in the city. South Bend used this data to paint drop-off areas for the bikes and is now hoping to use this information to plan for new bike paths and lanes. Lime is also working with cities to identify a format that makes it easy for them to pull data from multiple operators into their databases to analyze with their own tools.

Transportation Safety Planning and the Zero Deaths Vision: A Guide for Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Local Communities

FHWA has released this new [guidebook](#) geared towards MPOs and local stakeholders to reduce fatalities and serious injuries across transportation systems. To address this, USDOT seeks to foster collaboration across all stakeholders to improve the behaviors and conditions that impact these safety outcomes. The Guide seeks to assist MPOs, communities, and other transportation agencies to utilize, implement, and evaluate their safety planning processes to further the zero deaths vision.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO): Transportation Partnerships for the 21st Century

This work will deliver a historical review and contemporary analysis of the institutional structures and performance of MPOs, producing conclusions and lessons learned that are relevant to current challenges. This research will address ways in which MPOs can respond more nimbly and effectively to rapidly changing transportation demands, conditions, and technologies. It will provide a range of strategies and tools drawn from cases and practice in order to better equip MPOs and MPO-state partnerships in planning, maintaining, and improving transportation systems for U.S. metropolitan areas and the economies reliant on those systems.


Staff Contact: Harlan Miller, 202-366-0847

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.