



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, April 24th, 2020

Volume 34, Number 3

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Contact Us

<http://www.mobilempo.org>
transportation@sarpc.org

Kevin Harrison, PTP
Director of
Transportation
kharrison@sarpc.org

Tom Piper
Senior Transportation
Planner
tpiper@sarpc.org

Monica Williamson
Transportation
Planner
mwilliamson@sarpc.org

Anthony Johnson
Transportation
Planner
ajohnson@sarpc.org

South Alabama
Regional Planning
Commission
110 Beauregard St

ALDOT has postponed their TAP application deadline until July 1st. The Mobile MPO deadline is still May 15th (See Funding Opportunities). Congress is working on another stimulus package (See Legislative Updates). The Mobile MPO held a virtual meeting this past Wednesday and the 2045 Long Range Plan has been adopted (See MPO Updates).

The SARPC staff is currently working remotely. Our phones, emails, are seamless and if you need us we are here.

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](#)

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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 Held

The Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) met virtually using GOTO Meeting on Wednesday, April 23rd, 2020. This was the first time a Mobile MPO meeting was conducted in this manner, and was executed without any problems. There were test meetings to make sure our MPO members were familiar with the technology. It ended up being a largely attended meeting that included the press, and members of the public attending online. Items on the agenda included the adoption of the Long Range Transportation Plan. The Plan is required to be adopted every 5 years, and the deadline was March of 2020 for this plan. The March 25th meeting was postponed until the April 22 meeting due to the COVID -19 virus.

The LRTP is multimodal in scope, and is based on public input, and a travel demand forecast model. In 2019, an online survey was conducted with almost 150 respondents. Questions ranged from where is the worst congestion, what roads need improvements, problems with the transit systems, etc. There were a lot of comments about the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and the potential for tolls. Prior to the online survey, staff also conducted a South Alabama Freight Forum, which was an opportunity to hear from large manufacturers and trucking companies, to find out what the top issues are concerning the movement of freight in South Alabama. The Bicycle / Pedestrian plan was updated, and the public transit section was authored by the Wave Transit, less the Demand Response Transit Study currently being conducted (see below).

More information on the new plan can be found at <https://www.envision2045.org/>

The Appropriations Act of 2020 provided the Mobile MPO with \$564,549 (fed). These funds were introduced to the MPO during the MPO meeting, and will be discussed at the next TCC/CAC subcommittee meeting. It could be added to the pot to fund future shortfalls, or could be allocated to a specific project; the committee will decide.

The MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY is underway



Via, and Goodwn, Mills, and Cawood, are continuing to conduct the feasibility study. The current health crisis has affected the potential outcome of the study. The intent of the study was to find potential local sponsors to match federal funds to create a transit system to operate

throughout Mobile County to connect with WAVE Transit. The sponsors would have provided assistance through subscriptions or contracts for commuter trips. The current price of gasoline, and the threat of contracting virus on buses, may put a strain on ridership of a new system. However, there are still people in need of transportation, and there is some thought that regardless of the price of gasoline, there will be an increased number of distressed people due to the economy, that will need transportation

[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. 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](#).

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

Mobile MPO Perspective

Although the I-10 Mobile River Bridge is commonly mentioned in the above LRTP comments, currently the I-10 Mobile River Bridge is in the LRTP as a Visionary Project. This means it is NOT in the fiscally constrained LRTP, it is on a wish list of sorts as there is not available funding identified. The Bridge is also not in the current Transportation Improvement Program ([TIP](#)); it has to be in the LRTP in order to be on the TIP.

When the State of Alabama, the Gulf Coast citizens, and the local elected officials agree on how the project can be funded, ALDOT will have a better idea on what type of project can be afforded. Once this happens, and I am confident it will, the Mobile MPO can amend the *Envision 2045 LRTP*, and the TIP to include the I-10 Mobile River Bridge. The Mobile MPO would like to know the facts, like how much funding is available, and where does it come from, before adopting a resolution supporting a plan.

Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

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

Project : 100069797 (CN)

Federal aid number : HSIP 4919 (252)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : ROUNDABOUT INSTALLATION AT CANAL STREET AND BROAD STREET

Old Engineers Estimate : \$1,213,664.00

New Engineers Estimate : \$1,535,099.02

Project : 100069798 (UT)

Federal aid number : HSIP 4919 (252)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : ROUNDABOUT INSTALLATION AT CANAL STREET AND BROAD STREET

Old Delete Indicator :

New Delete Indicator : D

Project : 100069442 (CN)

Federal aid number : NH 0042 (538)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : INSTALLATION OF NEW GENERATOR TO REPLACE EXISTING GENERATOR FOR BANKHEAD TUNNEL AND ITS DEVICES

Old Target start date : May 29, 2020

New Target start date : June 26, 2020

Project : 100071698 Federal aid number : STPAA I065 County : MOBILE Scope : CN

Project Description : CCTV CAMERA DEPLOYMENT (TSMO) ON I-65 FROM THE WEST END OF THE DELTA BRIDGE TO THE EAST END OF DELTA BRIDGE

Urban Area : 067 MOBILE

Target Start Date : 6/28/2024
Engineers Estimate : \$1,389,206.00

Project : 100071697 Federal aid number : STPAA I065 County : MOBILE Scope : PE
Project Description : CCTV CAMERA DEPLOYMENT (TSMO) ON I-65 FROM THE WEST END OF THE DELTA BRIDGE TO THE EAST END OF DELTA BRIDGE
Urban Area : 067 MOBILE
Target Start Date : 11/1/2023
Engineers Estimate : \$208,380.00

South Alabama RPO Updates

[USDA Unveils Tool to Help Rural Communities Address the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue unveiled a one-stop-shop of federal programs that can be used by rural communities, organizations and individuals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. [The COVID-19 Federal Rural Resource Guide](#) is a first-of-its-kind resource for rural leaders looking for federal funding and partnership opportunities to help address this pandemic. Secretary Perdue announced, "This resource guide will help our rural leaders, whether they are in agriculture, education, health care or any other leadership capacity, understand what federal assistance is available for their communities during this unprecedented time."

HSCTP Public Meeting Postponed

In consideration of health concerns of participants regarding COVID-19, the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission will postpone the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan Public Meeting that was scheduled for Wednesday, March 18th at the GM&O Building. The meeting will be rescheduled at a later date. We welcome your comments and questions regarding the plan. If you wish, you may contact us via email at transportation@sarpc.org or by phone at (251) 433 6541.

As part of this effort we are surveying transit providers, riders, and other stakeholders in our region. Please take a moment to answer the following questions and email them back to us.

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Name of your Organization:

Does your organization operate a transit vehicle? If so,

How many vehicles?

How many seats per vehicle?

What is/are the funding sources for your vehicle(s)?

What is your service area?

Do you use or need transit services to get around? If so, which one(s)?

What unmet needs are there in your area?

Things like later hours, rural areas where transit service is needed but isn't available, etc.?

Do you have any suggestions as to how these needs could be met?

Will you be applying for 5310 funding? If so, what will you be applying for?

Projects in Region Let April 24th, 2020

MOBILE COUNTY

None at this time

BALDWIN COUNTY

None at this time

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

- For constructing the Bridge Repairs and Overlay (Grading, Drainage, and Pavement) on SR-41 over the Conecuh River to include the Demolition of Existing Bridges on SR-41 in Riverview. Length 0.826 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$4,240,029 to \$5,182,258 .

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

Legislative Updates

Congress is in session with strict stipulations due to COVID-19 precautions

House passes \$484B coronavirus relief package

BY [MIKE LILLIS](#) AND [JULIEGRACE BRUFKE](#) - 04/23/20

The House on Thursday voted overwhelmingly to pass legislation providing roughly \$484 billion in coronavirus relief for small businesses, hospitals and expanded medical testing, capping weeks of contentious negotiations that had stalled Washington's latest round of emergency aid.

The vote was 388-5-1, with four conservative Republicans breaking with GOP leaders to oppose the measure, citing its effect on federal deficit. Rep. [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#) (D-N.Y.) also voted against the measure, while Rep. [Justin Amash](#) (I-Mich.) voted present.

The four Republicans who voted "no" were House Freedom Caucus Chairman Andy Biggs (Ariz.) and Reps. [Ken Buck](#) (Colo.), [Jody Hice](#) (Ga.) and [Thomas Massie](#) (Ky.).

The legislation, which the Senate passed unanimously on Tuesday, now goes to the desk of [President Trump](#), who has promised to sign it quickly into law.

The massive package is the fourth coronavirus bill to move through Congress over the last seven weeks, and brings the federal response to the global pandemic up to a whopping \$2.8 trillion — by far the largest emergency relief effort in modern U.S. history.

It came after two weeks of tense talks between the White House, led by Treasury Secretary [Steven Mnuchin](#) and the top Democrats in both chambers, Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) (D-Calif.) and Senate Minority Leader [Charles Schumer](#) (D-N.Y.), over the scope and direction of the latest infusion of emergency funds.

Passage was never in doubt: The measure was endorsed by leaders in both parties and chambers, as well as Trump from the White House.

Yet the process was not without plenty of controversy after GOP leaders, nudged by their conservative flank, rejected the notion of passing the measure either unanimously or by voice vote — two procedural options that would have precluded the need for lawmakers to return to Washington amid lingering concerns over public travel.

Instead, Republicans insisted on staging a recorded vote, which required lawmakers to cast their ballots physically on the chamber floor — and forced Democratic leaders to adopt some extraordinary steps to ensure that members conformed to the social distancing guidelines established by public health officials.

To do so, lawmakers — most of them wearing masks — bucked the tradition of gathering all at once on the floor to vote, and instead entered the chamber in nine staggered groups, sorted alphabetically, to prevent overcrowding.

There were other signs that this would be no ordinary vote.

Outside the chamber, staff had set up a table with surgical masks and rubber gloves available to lawmakers as they entered. Inside, there were paper towel dispensers, boxes of sanitary wipes and warning notices taped to all but every fourth chair, lest members be tempted to sit too closely.

Despite the precautionary measures, there was lingering resentment among many lawmakers, particularly Democrats, who were up-in-arms that Republican leaders would force members to board trains and planes to vote formally on a bill whose passage was preordained given the advice that travel and large gatherings of people be avoided.

Those dynamics were a remarkable shift from the debate on March 27, when the House passed the CARES Act by a voice vote. Then, leaders in both parties had united to overcome a threat from Rep. Tom Massie (R-Ky.) to force a recorded vote. On Thursday, virtually every Republican had joined Massie's cause — a reversal that was not overlooked by the libertarian Kentuckian.

"I said if truckers, nurses, & grocers can work, then so can Congress! I was called the most hated man in DC by CNN," Massie tweeted amid Thursday's debate.

"Today, dozens will demand a recorded vote. #winning," he added.

Central to the massive relief package is \$310 billion to replenish the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), a new — and wildly popular — initiative that provides forgivable loans to small businesses devastated by the pandemic. Congress had allotted an initial \$349 billion for the PPP in the last relief bill, a \$2.2 trillion package enacted on March 27, only to see the funds run dry shortly afterward due to the rush of businesses seeking to tap the benefits.

Several weeks ago, Mnuchin and the Republicans had requested an additional \$250 billion for PPP loans, and nothing else, for the next round of emergency relief. Democrats rejected that strategy outright, demanding additional language to ensure that vulnerable small businesses in underserved areas — including those owned by women and minorities — weren't left out of the program.

As a result, the package earmarks \$60 billion for community banks and smaller lenders, who tend to cater to those underserved businesses, while providing an additional \$60 billion for emergency business grants and loans.

Democrats also secured an additional \$75 billion for hospitals and community health centers, and another \$25 billion to boost COVID-19 testing, divided between state and federal governments.

Still, Democrats did not get everything they wanted. Despite their push for additional funding for food assistance programs and state and local governments, those provisions did not make it into the legislation. The exclusions provided a win for Republicans, who argued that funding passed in the previous three coronavirus bills should be exhausted before Congress provides additional money to those areas.

Even before the fourth emergency bill has been signed, there is already plenty of talk of yet another round in the weeks to come.

Pelosi and House Democrats have already been working feverishly on that next package, dubbed CARES 2, with plans to fill it with an expansion of funding for unemployment benefits, food stamps, testing and medical-safety equipment.

They also want provisions to protect November's elections, by providing states with funding to establish all-mail voting — a system designed to encourage participation even for those voters wary of the health risk of visiting the polls in person.

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) and some other GOP leaders are already throwing cold water on the next effort, warning that the historic emergency spending has already exploded the federal deficit.

Yet supporters of another package have a powerful ally in Trump, who wasted no time this week advocating for the next round, including new funding for infrastructure projects, help for hard-hit restaurants and sports leagues, and the assistance for state and local governments that Democrats are promoting.

"After I sign this Bill," he tweeted Tuesday, "we will begin discussions on the next Legislative Initiative."

COMMITTEE LEADERS DEMAND CHANGES TO EPA'S POLICY RELAXING ENFORCEMENT DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

April 21, 2020

Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior and Environment Chairwoman Betty McCollum (D-MN) [sent a letter](#) today to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler demanding transparency and additional changes to the Agency's recently-announced guidance relaxing the enforcement of legal obligations during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Chairs also requested information about whether the EPA has evaluated the effects the new policy will have on human health and the environment.

"We remain concerned that this guidance, as written, fails to achieve EPA's stated objectives while unnecessarily undermining ongoing compliance with environmental laws," wrote Pallone, DeFazio and McCollum. "EPA's mission to protect public health and the environment requires the Agency to implement and enforce our nation's health and environmental laws. This is particularly important for those communities who have long borne a disproportionate burden of pollution and who, according to multiple reports, are experiencing disproportionate mortality rates from COVID-19."

The letter comes after staff of the three Committees were recently briefed by EPA on the proposal. As a follow-up to that briefing, the Committee leaders are seeking additional information on the policy and are requesting that Wheeler modify the guidance to clarify how it will operate in order to further safeguard public health.

"In light of [emerging research](#) connecting air pollution to death rates from COVID-19, it is imperative that EPA insist on compliance with our Nation's health and environmental laws during and after the COVID-19 pandemic," the three Committee leaders continued. "While we recognize that the pandemic presents challenges for compliance and reporting obligations, EPA's temporary enforcement policy, as currently written, needlessly weakens protections for human health and the environment at a time when they are needed most."

The letter requests that EPA address several key concerns and modify its new policy to:

- Establish an end date to the new enforcement policy;
- Require facilities to notify appropriate authorities, if possible, prior to facility operations creating an acute risk or threat to human health or the environment so that there is sufficient time for appropriate response measures to be discussed, identified and implemented;
- Create greater transparency by posting on EPA's website documents modifying existing compliance obligations; and
- Ensure agency enforcement staff have sufficient information to determine whether COVID-19 was the cause of any non-compliance

The letter concludes by asking EPA to provide additional information related to any inquiries EPA received regarding compliance throughout the pandemic, as well as what analyses — if any — were used to evaluate the effects the new policy will have on human health and the environment. The Committee leaders requested that Administrator Wheeler respond in writing by May 5, 2020.

A PDF of the letter is [available here](#).

DeFazio, Peters Urge Trump Administration to Waive Cost-Sharing Requirements for States Battling Coronavirus

April 22, 2020

WASHINGTON, DC —U.S. Representative Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and U.S. Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) today called on President Trump to direct the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to waive all cost-share requirements for states responding to the global Coronavirus pandemic. On March 13, President Trump declared a national emergency related to the outbreak, authorizing federal assistance

to supplement state, tribal, and local recovery efforts. Under the Public Assistance program, emergency work, including Direct Federal Assistance, is authorized at 75 percent federal funding, and state, tribal, and local entities are responsible for the remaining 25%. Due to the scale of the ongoing public health crisis and enormous costs associated with recovery efforts DeFazio and Peters are now urging the Administration to increase the federal cost-share to 100 percent. DeFazio's and Peters' efforts are supported by the National Governors Association.

DeFazio serves as the Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and Peters serves as the Ranking Member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, both of which oversee FEMA.

“With over 825,000 cases and 45,000 deaths in the United States, the unprecedented nature of the necessary COVID-19 response stretches beyond the capabilities of the states and warrants the full resources and support of the federal government,” **DeFazio and Peters wrote**. “Our nation’s governors are calling for robust support from the federal government as they navigate the response to this pandemic.”

The National Governors Association made a similar request earlier this month and support DeFazio’s and Peters’ efforts to waive all cost-share requirements for assistance related to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Text of the letter is available [here](#).

Sen. Doug Jones talks second stimulus bill

Posted by [Dale Liesch](#) | Apr 23, 2020

U.S. Sen. Doug Jones, D-Birmingham, said he expects a second round of COVID-19 stimulus funding to be on President Donald J. Trump’s desk very soon.

In a virtual press conference on Thursday morning, Jones said the \$484 billion supplemental package passed by the Senate and being considered in the House refills the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) with \$321 billion for small businesses. He said another \$75 billion was set aside for hospitals and another \$25 billion would go to “ramp up” testing.

Taking a shot at the original PPP package, which ran out of money before many small businesses could secure the forgivable loans, Jones criticized Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell for pushing a previous supplement that had “no guardrails” and provided less money.

“Democrats objected to it, primarily because it was dumping money into a plan that had already failed,” he said. “We got additional moneys to the tune of \$121 billion and that includes carve-outs for underserved communities and banks.”

The new bill adds some \$60 billion to the Small Business Administration’s Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, Jones said, and allows farmers to be eligible.

“The language allows farmers to access it,” he said. “Now our farmers who have been hurting so bad can have access to help.”

The bill adds \$75 billion more for hospitals, Jones said, “which are struggling to keep doors open right now.”

One disappointment for Jones is that the supplemental bill does not add any funding for state and municipal governments. The previous bill provided money to local governments, but only for COVID-19-related expenses. The funds provided in the first round of stimulus payments didn’t address public safety funding at all. Jones said he hopes that can be rectified in a third bill in the coming weeks.

Alabama alone, Jones said, could lose as much as \$1 billion in tax revenue due to COVID-19. The city of Mobile has anticipated losing between \$7 million and \$12 million in the month of March alone.

Again, taking aim at McConnell, Jones criticized comments the majority leader made suggesting local governments could file for bankruptcy.

“He would rather see governments go bankrupt than provide help,” Jones said of McConnell’s comments. “That’s an absolute travesty. It’s shameful for him to say that to be honest with you.”

Jones did see possible funding available for cities in the future, saying the Trump Administration has said it would “try to unlock” funding to backfill some of the cost of municipal services.

Jones welcomed Mobile-area native Dr. Regina Benjamin to participate in the press briefing. Benjamin, a former U.S. surgeon general, spoke briefly about the impact of COVID-19 on minority and rural communities in the state.

As for the state’s black population, Benjamin said African Americans make up only 25 percent of Alabama’s total population but have accounted for 45 percent of the state’s COVID-19 deaths.

Initially, Benjamin said health care providers focused on the elderly, the critically ill, or sick and thought about cancer patients, or those on oxygen tanks. However, doctors didn’t think as much about diabetic patients, those with pre-diabetes, or hypertension. Benjamin said pre-diabetes, diabetes and heart disease are more common in rural and minority communities.

“We know health disparities are not new,” she said. “We’ve known for a long time that your ZIP code is a better indication of health outcomes than your genetic code. It’s not genetics, it’s those underlying conditions.”

Education level and financial health play a role in health outcomes as well, Benjamin said. There are, however, “simple” steps those in rural and minority communities can do to protect themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic, Benjamin said. First, she said, continue to practice social distancing, wash hands regularly, exercise, get enough sleep and quit smoking.

“If you smoke, stop,” she said. “Don’t smoke.”

In other remarks, Jones said he “applauded” Republican Gov. Kay Ivey for not calling for an end to her shelter-in-place order. That order will remain until the end of the month.

“The governor did absolutely the right thing,” Jones said. “She stood her ground.”

Jones said he knows Alabamians are “itching” to reopen the economy — adding he is one of them — but he said new cases are still on the rise and social distancing has prevented the death toll from being worse.

“There continues to be a rise in the number of confirmed cases,” he said. “That could be attributed to more testing and any number of things, but still, cases are going up.”

Funding Opportunities

CARES Act Grants for Governments

Potential uses: hiring personnel, paying overtime, purchasing protective equipment and distributing resources to hard-hit areas. Funds may also be used to help correctional facilities cover costs related to COVID-19, including, but not limited to, sanitation, contagion prevention and measures designed to address the related medical needs of inmates, detainees and correctional personnel.

The solicitation deadline according to website is May 29th. Subject to Federal rules funds may apply retroactively to January 20, 2020.

For more information <https://bj.a.ojp.gov/funding/opportunities/bja-2020-18553>.

Awards including ADECA, Huntsville, Gadsden, Jasper, etc. are here: <https://bj.a.ojp.gov/program/cesf/awards>.

AARP Community Challenge Grants - May 15 Deadline

AARP's annual Community Challenge is on! Funding is available for eligible government agencies and nonprofit organizations to improve civic engagement, create vibrant public spaces, deliver a range of transportation options, support accessible housing, use Smart Cities data applications, and initiate other community improvements. The grant amount depends on project size.

[Learn more about the Community Challenge and apply.](#)

Innovations in Accessible Mobility Grant - May 1 Deadline

The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) is funding up to 10 communities for projects designed to increase accessible transportation options for older adults and people with disabilities, including projects related to Coronavirus response. Grants of up to \$30,000 each will be awarded. Recent Accessible Mobility grantee INCOG Area Agency on Aging (Tulsa, OK) and its Creating Access to Nutrition Program will be featured during a half-hour [April 23 webinar](#) (12:30 pm Eastern/ 9:30 am Pacific).

[Learn more about the grants and apply.](#)

FTA has extended the deadlines for four competitive grant programs with active notices of funding opportunities (NOFOs). The affected grant programs are the Accelerating Innovative Mobility Program (new deadline 5/18/20), Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Program (new deadline 6/3/20), Buses and Bus Facilities Program (new deadline 4/29/20), and the Passenger Ferry Grant Program (new deadline 4/29/20). NOFOs are available at transit.dot.gov.

The [HOPE program](#) supports planning, engineering and technical studies, or financial planning to improve public transportation services in areas experiencing long-term economic distress. The funding may be used toward coordinated human service transportation planning to improve transit service or provide new services such as rides to opioid abuse treatment and recovery.

Eligible applicants must come from counties with more than 20 percent of the population living in poverty for 30 years or more, as measured by the U.S. Census, or the 2013-2017 American Community Survey. Eligible applicants are defined as eligible recipients or sub-

recipients of Section 5307, Section 5310 or Section 5311 funding. A state department of transportation may apply on behalf of eligible entities within its state.

U.S. DOT updates its COVID-19 Resource page as new information is available.

[transportation.gov/coronavirus](https://www.transportation.gov/coronavirus)

U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Announces \$25 Billion to Help Nation's Public Transportation Systems Respond to COVID-19

Thursday, April 2, 2020

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) today announced [a total of \\$25 billion in Federal funding allocations](#) to help the Nation's public transportation systems respond to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Funding is provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, signed by President Donald J. Trump on March 27, 2020.

"This historic \$25 billion in grant funding will ensure our nation's public transportation systems can continue to provide services to the millions of Americans who depend on them," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

FTA is allocating \$25 billion to [recipients of urbanized area and rural area formula funds](#), with \$22.7 billion allocated to large and small urban areas and \$2.2 billion allocated to rural areas. Funding will be provided at a 100 percent Federal share, with no local match required, and will be available to support capital, operating, and other expenses generally eligible under those programs to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19.

Further, operating expenses incurred beginning on January 20, 2020 for all rural and urban recipients, even those in large urban areas, are also eligible, including operating expenses to maintain transit services as well as paying for administrative leave for transit personnel due to reduced operations during an emergency. Answers to [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about this funding are available on FTA's web site.

"We know that many of our Nation's public transportation systems are facing extraordinary challenges and these funds will go a long way to assisting our transit industry partners in battling COVID-19," said FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams. "These Federal funds will support operating assistance to transit agencies, including those in large urban areas as well as pay transit workers across the country not working because of the public health emergency."

In addition to the \$25 billion funding allocation announced today, FTA has taken a number of steps to support the transit industry during this public health emergency, including [expanding the eligibility of Federal assistance](#) available under FTA's Emergency Relief Program to help transit agencies respond to COVID-19 in states where the Governor has declared an emergency. All transit providers, including those in large urban areas, can now use Federal formula funds under the Urbanized Area Formula Program and Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program for emergency-related capital and operating expenses. This includes the provision of personal protective equipment or special-purpose trips.

FTA also established an [Emergency Relief docket](#) that allows transit providers in States where the Governor has declared an emergency related to COVID-19 to request temporary relief from Federal requirements under 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 as well as any non-statutory FTA requirements.

Additionally, FTA [recently announced](#) that it would provide a 30-day extension of the deadline for current competitive grant program funding opportunities, including: FTA's Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program; Passenger Ferry Grant Program; Accelerating Innovative Mobility (AIM) Challenge Grants; and Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Program.

The U.S. Department of Transportation is working closely with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and other Federal partners to provide guidance to the public transportation industry in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19). FTA has held regular conference calls with transit stakeholders and posted [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) regarding COVID-19 on its web site.

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao Announces Availability of \$1 Billion to Upgrade American Infrastructure (deadline May 18, 2020)

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) today published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to apply for \$1 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 discretionary grant funding through the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grants program.

"BUILD grants will upgrade infrastructure across America, making our transportation systems safer and more efficient," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

As the Trump Administration looks to enhance America's infrastructure, FY 2020 BUILD Transportation grants are for planning and capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure and are to be awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant local or regional impact. BUILD funding can support roads, bridges, transit, rail, ports or intermodal transportation.

Projects for BUILD will be evaluated based on merit criteria that include safety, economic competitiveness, quality of life, environmental sustainability, state of good repair, innovation, and partnership.

To better address the needs of rural America, which has historically been neglected, DOT intends to award 50% of BUILD Transportation grant funding to projects located in rural areas that deliver positive benefits for these communities, consistent with the Department's R.O.U.T.E.S. initiative. For this round of BUILD Transportation grants, the maximum grant award is \$25 million, and no more than \$100 million can be awarded to a single State, as specified in the appropriations act.

To provide technical assistance to prospective applicants, DOT is hosting a series of webinars during the FY 2020 BUILD grant application process. A webinar on how to compete for BUILD Transportation Grants for all applicants will be held on February 25, 2020. Further details will be made available at <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants>. The deadline to submit an application is May 18, 2020.

For more information, please visit <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants>.

Transportation Alternatives Program Grants

Mobile MPO Grant Deadline May 15th, 2020

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.

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.

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

New Deadline July 1, 2020

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 2021 TAP applications including support documentation has been extended until Wednesday, July 1, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Federal Lands Access Program

Deadline June 16, 2020

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.

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.

[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](#)

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

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

I don't remember what day of stay-at-home this is, but if you are like me, you might just be missing the office. Here's the solution....

You can choose the number of colleagues up to ten. Then choose the sounds by clicking on the different shapes that are bouncing around or the different machines. There is a water cooler, a copier and a computer. Personally, I had to turn the whistler off, but to each their own. Click [HERE](#) to play or go to <https://imisstheoffice.eu/>



In the News

This is prime time to increase the federal gasoline tax

BY BERNARD L. WEINSTEIN — 04/22/20

In early 2018, as part of his national infrastructure revitalization suggested raising the federal gasoline tax from 18.4 cents to 43 cents per gallon, a 133 percent increase. At the time, the U.S. average cost for a gallon of gasoline was \$2.63 and the notion of hiking the price another 25 cents was not warmly received.

Today, the national average is \$1.80 and in some locations gasoline prices are under \$1.20 per gallon. Unfortunately, with most states in lockdown mode because of the coronavirus, no one's buying gasoline. Consequently, revenues dedicated to the federal Highway Trust Fund have shrunk dramatically in recent months. State excise taxes from gasoline sales also have plummeted.

Revenues for the highway fund also have languished because the tax, last increased in 1993, is not indexed to inflation — which has increased 77 percent since then. Improved fuel economy, coupled with the growth of electric and hybrid vehicles, has also starved the fund of revenues. These trends don't augur well for fixing America's roads and bridges, currently in a sad state of repair.

The \$2 trillion stimulus package enacted last month included billions for public transit systems, airports and Amtrak, but earmarked nothing for highway infrastructure. As a result, many states are putting construction projects on hold. For example, the North Carolina Department of Transportation has trimmed \$2 billion of projects from its fiscal year that starts on July 1.

Not surprisingly, state transportation agencies, anticipating a second federal stimulus program, are asking for \$50 billion to be dedicated to road and bridge projects. They point out that 30 states have hiked their own gasoline excise taxes and road tolls in recent years, but that these increases are not producing significant revenues with the national economy virtually shut down and commuters, shoppers and vacationers parking their vehicles.

No one likes higher taxes of any sort, and politicians don't get elected or re-elected by advocating for them. But if there ever were an ideal time to increase the federal gasoline tax, it's now — while prices are low and likely to remain so for an extended period. Based on last year's volume, a hike of 25 cents per gallon would generate about \$36 billion of new revenue for the Highway Trust Fund. And the price of a gallon of gasoline would still remain well below its average cost over the past 10 years.

Indeed, Washington should hike the federal gasoline tax regardless of whether specific earmarks for highways and bridges are included in a second stimulus program. Assuming the new revenues were fully rebated to the states, road construction and repair spending would jump dramatically, creating tens of thousands of jobs that can help the nation's economic recovery from COVID-19.

At the same time, drivers of electric vehicles (EVs) should start paying their fair share of road taxes. EV owners received federal tax credits of up to \$7,500 for more than a decade, and because they don't pay federal or state excise taxes on gasoline purchases they're getting a "free ride" on America's highways. This inequity flies in the face of the rationale behind user fees — that consumers of an amenity — in this case roads and bridges — should pay for the services rendered.

Today, EVs account for only 2 percent of U.S. car sales; however by 2040 they're projected to grow to 57 percent. If a mechanism is not adopted that requires EV owners to pay into the federal and state highway funds, spending for road and bridge construction and repair will be further constrained. A number of potential solutions have been proposed, including higher registration fees for electric vehicles, interstate tolling and mileage-based road fees that could be applied to EVs and gasoline-powered vehicles.

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, more than two out of every five miles of America's urban interstates are congested and traffic delays are costing the country \$160 billion in wasted time and fuel each year. One out of every five miles of highway pavement is in poor condition, and America's roads have a significant and increasing backlog of rehabilitation needs.

The inflation-adjusted cost of gasoline today is about where it was 50 years ago. Let's not squander this unique opportunity to hike the federal gasoline tax, replenish the Highway Trust Fund, and rebuild America's critical road and bridge infrastructure.

New data shows the effects of Covid-19 on levels of truck activity across USA

BY [TOM STONE](#) ON APRIL 22, 2020

The American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) has just released new data that quantifies the continued impacts of Covid-19 business disruptions on the trucking industry, with significant highs and lows and some areas now showing signs of returning to normal.

ATRI's latest analysis looked at truck activity across six states from 9 February 2020 through the most recent week ending 18 April, by converting its real-time truck GPS dataset into a truck activity index.

"The GPS data we use is a valuable tool into what is going on in the economy and the trucking industry right now," said ATRI President and COO Rebecca Brewster. "We knew from talking to drivers and carrier executives that there were significant impacts on operations as a result of Covid-19, but now, by analysing this data we are able to put numbers and data to feelings and anecdotes."

From early February into March, the data shows a spike in initial truck activity in the analysed states – documenting the response to high consumer demand for items such as non-perishable food and paper products, as well as the much-needed emergency medical supplies.

The analysis further documents the impacts of the stay-at-home orders that shut down major segments of the economy, with a resulting decline in April trucking operations.

Of the six states analysed, California had the earliest stay-at-home order issued on 19 March. California also experienced the earliest upward spike in truck activity, occurring during the week of March 1. However, truck activity in California is now down 8.3% from early February.

In Florida, Illinois and New York, truck activity spiked the week of 8 March, but is now down on average by over 10% from 9 February. In Pennsylvania and Washington, truck activity spiked during the week of 15 March, but is now down by an average of nearly 9% from 9 February.

There are initial signs of a return to normal, however. In New York, one of the earliest states to experience high numbers of cases, truck activity started a positive uptick during the week of 12 April.

"In these unprecedented times, we need to rely on science and facts, not anecdotes and speculation. This ATRI research is able to tell us in near-real-time what the pandemic is really doing to the trucking industry," said American Trucking Associations chief economist Bob Costello.

New Mobile River Bridge not included in long range transportation plan

- [Steve Alexander](#)
- Updated Apr 22, 2020
- It's been a while since we've heard about it, but the future of a new Mobile River Bridge came up Wednesday.
- The Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization policy board held a virtual meeting.
- Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson, Mobile County Commission President Jerry Carl, and other local government leaders voted on a long range transportation plan for the area.
- The group sets regional transportation policy and determines where federal money should be spent.
- Wednesday morning, they talked about approving a plan through 2045.
- **See Why Digital Video Is Transforming the Way Content Is Distributed**
- Learn best practices for video distribution - how to connect with and build your audience.
- **Ad By Facebook**
- The need for a new bridge came up several times, but it was not included in the long range plan.
- Transportation Planning Director Kevin Harrison said, "There is not a current funding scenario for the I-10 Mobile River Bridge in order for us to put it into a fiscally constrained plan. What that means is, for every project that we put into this plan, you have to have an identified funding source for it and right now, that's not available."
- Earlier this year, the Eastern Shore MPO endorsed a new bridge project from the Virginia Street exit to Daphne, but that was not discussed.
- Harrison said if a proposal comes up with a funding plan that is approved, it can be added to the long range plan.

Transportation Research



ModalPEX:

the multimodal freight peer exchange

This May, the Federal Highway Administration's Office of Operations will hold a national peer exchange focused on helping State DOTs, MPOs, and their partners plan and deliver multimodal freight projects—and you are invited!

Attending ModalPEX will help you:

- Identify best practices in selecting, prioritizing, and delivering multimodal infrastructure and how to incorporate these concepts into State Freight Plans during the next round of required plan updates;
- Learn innovative multimodal freight data analyses strategies;
- Improve your understanding of multimodal freight networks/supply chains via bus tour of several Memphis freight facilities; and
- Network with your freight stakeholders and peers.

Formal details and RSVP request forthcoming.

Contact: Tiffany Julien (tiffany.julien@dot.gov; 202-366-9241)
DJ Mason (dj.mason@dot.gov; 617-494-3968)

SAVE THE DATE
MAY 12-13, 2020
University of Memphis

IIHS: 'Centerline Hardening' For Streets Helps Protect Pedestrians

editor@aaashto.org April 10, 2020

Bollards and rubber curbs that prevent drivers from cutting across intersections at a diagonal can make streets safer for pedestrians, according to a [new study](#) from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

The group said such “centerline hardening” forces drivers to turn more slowly at close to a right angle by blocking the diagonal path through the crosswalk. In Washington, D.C., such infrastructure changes reduced the number of times drivers had to swerve or brake suddenly or pedestrians had to dodge out of the way by 70 percent, according to Wen Hu, IIHS senior research transportation engineer and author of the study.

The calming infrastructure also resulted in a reduction in average left-turn speeds and decreased the odds that drivers made the turn at speeds exceeding 15 mph.

Alabama Center for Business and Economic Research April 2020

A note from our office:

During these complex times, CBER remains committed to serving you and helping you navigate the COVID-19 landscape. Currently, we are following UA's directive to telecommute and social distance, but CBER is continuing to work hard to provide you with insightful data and information. Please reach out to us at [205-348-6191](tel:205-348-6191) or uacber@culverhouse.ua.edu with any project needs. We are here to serve you!

[COVID-19's Impact on the Economy](#)

In the midst of the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, CBER's experts are here to offer some insight. Sam Addy, Ph.D. and Ahmad Ijaz, CBER's Executive Director & Director of Economic Forecasting, weigh in with what we can expect from our local and national economies in the coming months. Click [here](#) to read more.

[CBER Shines in 2020 Census Count Review](#)

Thanks to the hard work of CBER staff, 200 group quarter addresses and 21,470 housing units were added to the Census Bureau's Master Address File for Alabama to include people who otherwise would not have been counted during the 2020 Census. Read more about the 2020 Census Count Review [here](#).

[Q2 2020 ABCI Results Released April 15](#)

The second quarter 2020 Alabama Business Confidence Index (ABCI) results will be available April 15. Business leaders throughout Alabama are invited to register and participate in this unique forecasting tool. Find more details on the [ABCI webpage](#).

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](#)

FEDERAL TRUST FUNDS AND OTHER DEDICATED FUNDS:

Fiscal Sustainability Is a Growing Concern for Some Key Funds

GAO-20-156: Published: Jan 16, 2020. Publicly Released: Jan 23, 2020.

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](#).

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>

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.
