



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, July 17th, 2020

Volume 34, Number 14

In This Issue

- [MOBILE MPO UPDATES](#)
- [SOUTH AL RPO UPDATES](#)
- [PROJECTS LET JULY 31st, 2020](#)
- [LEGISLATIVE UPDATES](#)
- [FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES](#)
- [JUST FOR FUN](#)
- [IN THE NEWS](#)
- [TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH](#)

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
Mobile, Alabama
36602
(251) 433-6541

There is a Mobile MPO Policy Board meeting scheduled for August 19th via GOTO meeting; prior to the MPO meeting there will be a TCC/CAC meeting of the Mobile MPO on July 29th via GOTO meeting, see *Mobile MPO Updates*. President Trump announces a policy change to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) while federal funds may be withheld in MN if riots don't stop; see *Legislative Updates*. Today is deadline for ALDOT's FTA 5310 applications; see *Funding Opportunities*. What COVID-19 is doing to our transportation, Jeff Sessions thoughts on tolls, and AL bond rating *In The News*. The Draft Demand Response Transit Study is ready for review, please see *Mobile MPO Updates*. This week's *Just For Fun* is hot...

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](#)

[Area Agency on Aging](#)

[Employment and Economic Development](#)

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

Mobile MPO Updates

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

There is a Mobile MPO Policy meeting scheduled for August 19th via GOTO meeting; prior to the MPO meeting there will be a TCC/CAC meeting of the Mobile MPO on July 29th via GOTO meeting.

The agenda is to include the following:

- Adoption FY 2021 [Unified Planning Work Program](#) (planning budget)
- Modify 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program
- Cost estimate change for 100040584 (CN) US98, EB lanes from MS state line to .5 Mile East of Glenwood Rd, from \$18.2M to \$23.9M, FY 2022
- Cost estimate change for 100033461 (CN) ADDL lanes on I-10 from CR-39 to Carol Plantation, from \$33.4M to \$41M, FY 2021
- 100071946; PE; 5 Year Regional Traffic Operations (RTOP) TSMO for 130 Signalized Intersections Along SR-59, SR-16 (US-90), and SR-42 (US-98) Target Start Date : 8/1/2020; \$2,631,200
- Update Performance Measures
- Review of Financial Agreement
- Review of Demand Response Transit Study
- Potential TAP projects

DRAFT 2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is now available for review.

The Draft 2021 UPWP is essentially the budget of the Mobile MPO staff. Typically in June of every year, MPO staff reviews the draft document with MOP Policy Board Members and the subcommittees, prior to submitting the draft UPWP to ALDOT and federal agencies for review. Because of the COVID-19 virus disruption our MPO meeting schedule, the draft document was submitted to ALDOT to review without committee review. The document is almost identical to the current UPWP, with the exception of no new third party contracts. The DRAFT 2021 UPWP is available for review [HERE](#).

The MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY

SARPC staff is continuing to meet (virtually) with Via, and Goodwyn, Mills, and Cawood, for 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. This may be the perfect time to consider transportation throughout Mobile County.

Please review the Tasks 1, 2 and 3 [HERE](#).

There will be a stakeholder meeting scheduled in the near future to discuss the draft report that came out his week. This will be a GOTO meeting.

The Draft Report is [HERE](#)

ENVISION 2045 IS THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)

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. The Climate Change element, or Extreme Event Planning, remained almost unchanged from *Destination 2040* LRTP.

The LRTP *Envision 2045* was adopted by the Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization on April 2, 2020.

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

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](#).

Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

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

Project : 100037215 (CN)

Federal aid number : STPMB 7550 (600)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : ZEIGLER BLVD ADDITIONAL LANES FROM ATHEY RD TO FOREST HILL DR

Old Engineers Estimate : \$20,812,530.00

New Engineers Estimate : \$21,123,628.17

Project : 100067957 (FM)

Federal aid number : STPAA 0188 (505)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : RESURFACING ON SR-188 FROM LAKELAND DRIVE TO THE IRVINGTON BAYOU LA BATRE HIGHWAY

Old Target start date : February 26, 2021

New Target start date : November 06, 2020

South Alabama RPO Updates

DRAFT 2021 RPO Work Program is now available for review.

The RPO work Program is the staff budget for SARPC Rural Planning Organization. This draft is identical to the current work program.

The DRAFT 2021 Work Program is available on the RPO Webpage [HERE](#).

Projects in Region Let July 31st, 2020

MOBILE COUNTY

None at this time

BALDWIN COUNTY

None at this time

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, Steel Blockout Replacement, and Traffic Stripe on SR-41 from the intersection of SR-3 (US-31) in Brewton to a point north of Burnt Corn Creek. Length 2.349 mi.

The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$595,041 to \$727,272 .

Legislative Updates

Congress is in session

Public transportation leaders request \$36B in emergency funds

BY J. EDWARD MORENO - 07/14/20 02:49 PM EDT

Leaders from America's largest transportation systems are asking for \$36 billion in emergency federal funding as part of a new coronavirus relief bill.

In a virtual press conference Tuesday, the group said that the \$25 billion provided to them in the March CARES Act is running dry. The coalition is urging the Senate to take up the House-passed relief bill known as the HEROES Act, which included \$15.7 billion for public transportation.

Senate Republicans, who return from recess on July 20, have rejected the House bill and are split on how much to spend on additional relief funds.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in New York received \$3.8 billion in the CARES Act. MTA Chairman Patrick Foye said Tuesday that the only way for the agency to avoid bleak measures is for them to obtain another \$3.9 billion in the coming weeks.

"The money received from the federal CARES Act — and we want to thank the government for that funding — is just about gone," Foye said of the federal funds obtained in March. "Without action from the Senate we don't have a path forward without cuts that will devastate our system and drag down the regional economic recovery."

The nearly \$4 billion the MTA is asking for is only for them to make it through this year; they noted further funds will be needed to make it through 2021.

U.S. transit has experienced a historic decline in ridership, with the MTA experiencing a 90 percent decline in March, Foye said. This comes while transportation agencies also increase spending on sanitary measures. Foye said the MTA is losing up to \$800,000 in revenue per month.

President Trump, Secretary Chao visit Atlanta to announce major policy change



ATLANTA - U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao believes the UPS Hapeville Airport Hub is the perfect backdrop for President Donald Trump to announce a policy change to expedite infrastructure projects by amending the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Secretary Chao told FOX 5's Portia Bruner the environmental law is outdated and long overdue for an upgrade.

"Just the permitting alone can take up to seven years, so the President is announcing a new rule that will set time limits to construction permitting processes, improve the coordination between various governmental agencies, reduce the paperwork and allow more public comment," Secretary Chao told Bruner during a Skype interview Tuesday morning.

Enacted in 1970, NEPA was designed to ensure agencies consider the environmental impact of road, bridges, highway and airport construction and other projects. Secretary Chao said the policy change will directly benefit Georgia's infrastructure.

"These changes are going to expedite the environmental reviews for the I-75 commercial vehicle lane project in Atlanta, Georgia, so it's very good news," said Chao, who served as the Labor Secretary under President George W. Bush. [HERE](#)

Lawmaker asks federal transportation funds be withheld from Minnesota if highway protests continue



Protesters march on Interstate 94 in St. Paul on July 1, 2020. Photo: KSTP. Protesters march on Interstate 94 in St. Paul on July 1, 2020.

Josh Skluzacek

Created: July 14, 2020 04:43 PM

A Minnesota lawmaker says he's asked federal authorities to withhold transportation funding to the state if protests on highways continue.

Rep. Cal Bahr, R-East Bethel, said he sent letters to U.S. Attorney General William Barr, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao, Gov. Tim Walz, Minnesota Department of Transportation Commissioner Margaret Anderson Kelliher and Department of Public Safety Commissioner John Harrington regarding protests blocking highways in Minnesota.

"In the last few months, we have seen two of our primary interstates blocked by protesters, Interstate 35 and Interstate 94," said Bahr. "State and local officials have seemingly acquiesced and allowed protesters to illegally commandeer the interstate highway system at their leisure. I have sent letters to state and federal leaders requesting that such criminal activity be stopped, and that federal transportation funds be withheld if these actions are allowed to continue."

Bahr, who owns a trucking company and works as a commercial driver outside of the legislative session, said the protests on Minnesota's highways can't continue.

"The right to assemble and peacefully protest is a constitutional right that is essential to our nation," said Bahr. "Furthermore, peaceful protests are a terrific exercise of individual liberty. However, no individual or group has the right to restrict other citizens from travelling freely. The unlawful blocking of highways by protesters is a severe infringement on the rights of all Minnesotans. Finally, state and local leaders have failed to maintain order when protesters have blocked highways. The May 31st incident on 35W demonstrates that blocking highways is not only illegal, but extremely dangerous for drivers and pedestrians alike."

Funding Opportunities

Federal Highway Administration Makes \$60 Million Available for Advanced Transportation Technologies Grants DEADLINE AUGUST 31st, 2020

FHWA 12-20
Contact: Nancy Singer
Tel.: (202) 366-0660

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) today published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for \$60 million in Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Program (ATCMTD) grants to fund new technologies that improve transportation efficiency and safety.

"These grants promote the use of advanced technologies to address critical safety issues and efficiency throughout our nation's transportation network," said Federal Highway Administrator Nicole R. Nason. "This program helps unleash technological potential to improve travel for all Americans."

Created in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, the ATCMTD program works to improve the performance of U.S. transportation systems, reduce traffic congestion, and improve the safety of the traveling public. Now in its fifth year, the ATCMTD program has provided more than \$206 million for projects in 23 states and the District of Columbia.

The program provides funding to help develop model deployment sites for the large-scale installation and operation of advanced technologies that improve safety, efficiency, and system performance. It has funded innovative projects such as Contra Costa Transportation Authority's Bay Area Mobility-On-Demand (MOD) Project to reduce traffic congestion on the I-680 Corridor and surrounding communities in California, the Florida Department of Transportation's Sunstore integrated data system for travelers, and the Texas Department of Transportation's I-10 Corridor Coalition Truck Parking Availability System.

State departments of transportation, local governments, transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, and other eligible entities are invited to apply under the program.

The NOFO is available at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=327953>

USDOT announces more than \$291M in grants available for rail projects

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) is now accepting applications for more than \$291 million in grants for railroad capital projects.

Wednesday, the USDOT issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair Grant Program that will allocate funds to help repair or rehabilitate intercity passenger railroad assets.

“This Administration has continuously emphasized the importance of investing in the safety and efficiency of our Nation’s rail infrastructure, and these federal dollars will help make grade crossings safer and enhance service reliability,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

The money stems from the Fiscal Year 2020 Partnership Program, as well as from funds that were left over from the Partnership Program’s Fiscal Year 2019 funding.

Eligible projects will support the repair, replacement, or rehabilitation of qualified railroad assets to reduce the backlog of maintenance issues while improving intercity passenger rail performance.

“All eligible parties should take full advantage of this opportunity to leverage private, state, and local investments that boost capital projects, including those that enhance safety in track and equipment and improve safety at highway-rail grade crossings or otherwise grade-separate rail intersections,” said FRA Administrator Ronald L. Batory.

The department said that grants will be awarded on a competitive basis, taking into consideration the project’s objectives, how the project leverages federal funds, how the project uses innovative approaches to enhance safety, and how the grant recipients are held accountable for achieving specific outcomes. The federal share of the project’s funding must not exceed 80 percent, the department said.

Applications are due no later than 5 p.m. EST, July 27.

New CDBG GRANT Program

To Address COVID-19 Impacts (currently no deadline)

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) is in the process of developing a special Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant program to address COVID-19 impacts.

DETAILS: Currently, no application deadline, grant ceilings or other program details have been finalized.

MORE DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED AT A LATER DATE; however, please download the guide below to get started and identify potential partners as needed.

[CLICK HERE](#) to download the Quick Guide to CDBG Eligible Activities to Support Infectious Disease Response that will assist applicants to begin thinking about possible project needs.

Please note that applications to the CDBG program must be in the name of a local government as the applicant/grantee.

Partnerships and agreements with other agencies/entities, etc. can be developed as necessary. CDBG projects must also benefit primarily low and moderate-income people and this requirement will likely remain for the new funds.

RESOURCES/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The Department has technical assistance providers that may be available to assist grantees in their implementation of CDBG Funds for activities to prevent or respond to the spread of infectious disease.

Please contact your local CPD Field Office Director to request technical assistance from HUD staff or a TA provider.

Submit your questions to:

CPDQuestionsAnswered@hud.gov

COVID-19 (“Coronavirus”) Information and Resources: <https://www.hud.gov/coronavirus>

CPD Program Guidance and Training: <https://www.hudexchange.info/program-support/>

EDA CARES ACT RECOVERY ASSISTANCE (currently no deadline)

OVERVIEW

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, [signed into law](#) by President Donald J. Trump on March 27, 2020, provides the Economic Development Administration (EDA) with \$1.5 billion for economic development assistance programs to help communities prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance, which is being administered under the authority of the bureau’s flexible [Economic Adjustment Assistance](#) (EAA) (PDF) program, provides a wide-range of financial assistance to communities and regions as they respond to and recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

On May 7, 2020, Secretary Wilbur Ross made EDA’s CARES Act Recovery Assistance funding available with the announcement that EDA had published an Addendum to its FY 2020 Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Notice of Funding Opportunity. EDA intends to deploy its CARES Act funding as quickly, effectively, and efficiently as possible, and in a manner that meets communities needs.

RESOURCES

[EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Scope of Work for EDA Economic Development Districts and EDA Indian Tribe Planning Grant Recipients*](#)
[Specific Award Conditions: Economic Development Districts and Indian Tribes*](#)
[Specific Award Conditions: Revolving Loan Fund Awards*](#)
[EDA's CARES Act Recovery Assistance Revolving Loan Fund Award Flexibilities Frequently Asked Questions](#)
[Scope of Work for University Center Grantees*](#)
[Specific Award Conditions: University Centers*](#)
[EDA regional office contacts](#)
[coronavirus.gov](#)
[coronavirus.gov/smallbusiness/](#)
[CDC.gov/COVID19/](#)
[USA.gov/coronavirus/](#)

* As stated in the CARES Act Recovery Assistance Addendum to the PWEAA NOFO, EDA may invite existing grantees, such as Economic Development Districts and Tribes currently in receipt of Partnership Planning awards, operators of existing EDA funded Revolving Loan Funds, and EDA-funded University Centers, to apply for supplemental awards. These standard Scopes of Work and Specific Award Conditions are for use with these supplemental awards only. Existing grantees who are eligible to apply for these awards will be contacted individually for instructions on how to apply.

Applications are now being accepted for EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance. Please see the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) and apply today! For up-to-date info on COVID-19, visit [www.coronavirus.gov](#).

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)

Today we celebrate a VERY important American; Mr. Willis Carrier. On this day in 1902, Mr. Carrier invented the air conditioner. It is July in South Alabama, and that means it is hot, almost too hot for our tomatoes... It is so hot (*how hot is it*) that under certain conditions, road temperatures can reach 140 °F - 160 °F [HERE](#). That is hot enough to kill the COVID-19, and hot enough to melt a few roads...





In the News

AASHTO Council Meeting Highlights COVID-19 Impact On Transportation

editor@ashto.org July 9, 2020

A virtual meeting of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Council on Highways and Streets examined the fiscal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the different approaches applied by state departments of transportation to handle the ongoing needs of the nation's surface transportation network.

"One of the things we've been doing is working with Congress to show them how state DOTs have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic," explained Jim Tymon, AASHTO's executive director, during the council's July 1 virtual conference. "Congress has already acted to provide emergency funding for transit agencies and airports but has not come to the table to help state DOTs. So we continue to make the case that Congress must come in and provide financial assistance."

The focus of that "financial assistance" continues to be a nearly \$50 billion "backstop" originally requested of Congress back in April, with a more recent appeal sent to President Trump by a coalition of 44 transportation industry stakeholders on June 5.

071020Tymon1That "backstop" is needed to address the shortfall in motor vehicle fuel taxes, toll receipts, and other transportation revenues caused by the dramatic drop in vehicular traffic that has occurred during the pandemic, Tymon noted.

A quick poll found that 39 percent of the state DOT members attending council meeting said their organizations are dealing with that funding shortfall by delaying construction or maintenance projects, while 36 percent are cutting funding from other operations and 11 percent are resorting to furloughs.

A recent report issued by the American Society of Civil Engineers – dubbed COVID-19's Impacts on America's Infrastructure – also noted that municipal and state budgets are "re-prioritizing spending" due to falling tax and fee revenues: reducing fiscal support for parks, schools, and other publicly owned infrastructure.

Tymon also noted during the council meeting that it is "very interesting" to see how state DOTs are reacting to COVID-19. "Some states initially shut down [transportation] construction while others accelerated it," he said. "That reinforces one of our overarching principles, which is that each state is very different in how they handle the day-to-day management of the nation's transportation system – some felt they had to completely shut down work while others felt it important to keep moving forward, despite the revenue decline."

Brian Bezio, chief financial officer of the Federal Highway Administration, also spoke during the council meeting and highlighted how both an ongoing decline in revenue and the COVID-19 pandemic are speeding up the shortfall being experienced by the Highway Trust Fund.

"Multiple excise taxes flow into Highway Trust Fund; taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel, plus truck, trailer, truck tire sales taxes," Bezio explained. "We experienced a significant downward adjustment of \$1.3 billion by the U.S. Treasury that has no correlation with COVID-19. Treasury conducts a reconciliation of Highway Trust Fund estimates on an ongoing basis. They are now reconciling January thru March and we expect to see that reconciliation in August. Still, we are still outside of the impact of COVID-19."

However, he noted that HTF receipts "tie very closely" to vehicle miles traveled or VMT data collected by FHWA and the agency's most recent VMT data indicates that motor vehicle travel on all roads and streets dropped by 39.8 percent or 112 billion vehicle miles this April compared to April 2019.

"There is a lag in the collection of data – essentially a one-month lag between economic activity and when [HTF] taxes are deposited," Bezio said. "While [HTF] deposits are trending back up a little bit, they are still way below comparative 2019 levels; we're down \$2.7 billion for the year so far."

And though he stressed that the HTF "won't go broke or insolvent," payouts to states will be "resized" in accordance with tax money coming into it.

"When the [HTF] balance falls below \$4 billion is when we start looking at reducing disbursements to the state," Bezio said. "The last time we approached this situation was in 2014. Our original [COVID-19 impact] model projected a 40 percent reduction [in HTF tax revenues] thru May before then slowly increasing back to normal levels by October 1. Now the balance may start to hover at that \$4 billion [level] by the fall and winter months this year."

Jeff Sessions clarifies I-10 bridge project remark to say he strongly opposes massive tolls

Updated Jul 13, 2020; Posted Jul 13, 2020

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



Former U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, on the eve of the Tuesday's GOP Senate runoff, is clarifying his position on the Interstate 10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project saying that he "strongly opposes" a project that involves tolling "all transit between Mobile and Baldwin" counties.

Sessions, of Mobile, issued the clarifying remarks after his quotes in an [AL.com](#) article on Saturday were published on [an anti-toll Facebook page that is administered by Alabama Auditor Jim Zeigler and followed by over 53,000 people](#). Sessions faces former Auburn University head football coach Tommy Tuberville with the winner squaring off against incumbent Democratic U.S. Senator Doug Jones in November.

[In Saturday's article](#), Sessions said an "alternative plan being floated about could result in quite a reduction in costs." The original I-10 project was estimated to cost around \$2.1 billion and was slated to be a public-private partnership (P3) project financed through a toll plan assessed on all motorists, including those living in Mobile and Baldwin counties.

"When you get the costs down, you only have to finance a much lesser amount," Sessions said. "There's a lot of difference in financing \$700 million than \$1.25 billion. It's a huge difference. That's where the tolls can be reduced."

Sessions, in a news release Monday, said he opposes the original toll plan, and that he had met with "engineering experts" who said the state's original toll plan "was not necessary."

"An [AL.com](#) article has been shared on social media with the claim that I believe in reduced tolls," said Sessions. "This is not accurate. I was simply commenting on a plan that is being floated as a possibility, not endorsing that plan. As Senator, you need to be aware of all options, but it certainly does not mean you agree with all of them."

He added, "I commend my fellow citizens of Mobile and Baldwin counties who stood up and defeated this monstrosity of a tax hike, via a toll, on the working people of South Alabama. This was a true people's movement and the government needs to take notice."

Sessions said he is "quite optimistic" new plans will "do the job at significantly less cost, and with no tolls." [An alternative I-10 project has surfaced](#), but it has yet to be fully endorsed by local and state officials.

"I know the traffic jams that occur; I have been caught in them many times myself," said Sessions, who served in the U.S. Senate from 1997-2017, before joining the Trump Administration as attorney general. "We have to have much better transportation for daily work commutes, vacation traffic, and hurricane evacuation routes."

He added, "We have a great window of opportunity with President Trump's infrastructure plans to have the federal government assist in the financial burden of this much needed project. This needs to be completed, and it needs to be completed without tolls on the hardworking people of South Alabama."

Zeigler posted Sessions' statement on the ["Block the Tolls. Support Accountability" Facebook page](#), and included comments Tuberville made in opposing toll projects during a radio interview in Huntsville.

Tuberville said, "I've always complained – you know, I pay property taxes. I pay sales tax. I pay gas tax. We pay federal tax. But we still have to pay tolls at some of these roads. It makes no sense. And when they're supposedly paid for, you know they still keep going. They still keep using the tolls. That's all over the country."

Under the original plan pitched by the Alabama Department of Transportation, motorists would have paid a \$6 one-way toll to drive over the new bridge, the Bayway and the Wallace Tunnel. The Spanish Fort Causeway, and the Bankhead Tunnel, would have remained untolled.

But the entire plan was opposed on social media. [It was declared "dead" by Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey](#) about 11 months ago after the Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization voted to remove the project from its short-term plans.

Baldwin prepares for more traffic congestion



Traffic coming off Interstate 10 backs up at the Alabama 181 exit.

GUY BUSBY

Posted Monday, July 13, 2020 5:00 am

By Guy Busby

FAIRHOPE – With Baldwin County’s population expected to increase by about 50 percent in the next 20 years, local officials are working to prepare for the traffic and congestion that growth will bring.

The Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization is developing a Long-Range Transportation Plan Update to study traffic growth and congestion over the next 25 years. The MPO assists with transportation planning for the area that includes Spanish Fort, Daphne, Fairhope, Loxley and nearby unincorporated areas.

The MPO policy board is scheduled to discuss a draft proposal of the plan later this month.

Baldwin County’s population, now more than 200,000, is expected to top 300,000 by 2040 and continue climbing. At a board work session on Wednesday, July 8, planners said road improvements needed to keep the same level of service and congestion drivers now experience could cost up to \$125 million.

John Gardner, senior transportation planner with J.R. Wilburn and Associates, which is helping to develop the plan, said that growth will expand population centers to the north and east of the Eastern Shore.

The forecast -- you really see a lot of growth north of I-10 in Spanish Fort and Loxley,” Gardner said. “You also see a lot of growth in that 181-corridor. You start to see the households spreading out to Robertsdale and in that area around Silverhill.”

Roads where congestion is expected to increase include Interstate 10 at Mobile Bay, Jimmy Faulkner Drive, US 31, Alabama 59 at I-10, Alabama 104 and other areas of I-10 and 59.

Some of the highest priorities in the draft include widening US 98 at I-10 to six lanes and US 31 to four lanes east of where the highway is being widened now. Corridor studies on Alabama 59 and US 98 are also listed as top priorities.

The draft does not include funding for widening I-10 to six lanes between Alabama 181 and Alabama 59. That \$76-million project is one of the most needed, but money for that work would come from Alabama Department of Transportation’s budget and not funds overseen by the MPO, so it was not included on the list, Gardner said.

If ALDOT can’t pay for that work, however, it will have an impact on other roads, he said.

“We think it’s reasonable to assume that section of I-10 gets widened to six lanes,” Gardner said. “If we don’t assume that, we see a lot bigger need for widening in the rest of the network because as it becomes congested, you’ll see traffic shift to the parallel streets.”

During the work session, some local officials questioned the priorities given to some projects. Baldwin County Engineer Joey Nunnally said Baldwin County 64 in Belforest was listed as a medium priority project, but the region has some of the highest growth in the area.

“There’s a crazy amount of development going on out there right now,” Nunnally said. “There’s one subdivision that’s got 900. Another one’s got 600 houses. Another one’s got 300 or 400 houses. The only one that’s under construction right now is the 900 houses. The others are fixing to come online. I’m just trying to get ahead of the ball game, trying to be proactive instead of reactive.”

Rod Wilburn of JRWA said County 64 was not given a top priority because it is in better condition than some other two-lane highways in the area. He said, however, that planners need to work with local officials to get information on areas such as Belforest before a final plan can be completed.

Alabama (State of) -- Moody's assigns Aa2 to Alabama Highway Finance Corp.'s Special Obligation Revenue Bonds, Series 2020A

Rating Action: Moody's assigns Aa2 to Alabama Highway Finance Corp.'s Special Obligation Revenue Bonds, Series 2020A

Global Credit Research - 16 Jul 2020

New York, July 16, 2020 -- Moody's Investors Service has assigned a rating of Aa2 to the Alabama Highway Finance Corporation's (AHFC) planned \$121 million issuance of Special Obligation Revenue Bonds, Series 2020A. The outlook is stable. At the same time, we have affirmed ratings on the separately secured Alabama special obligation highway revenue bonds, at Aa1, and on the Federal Highway Grant Anticipation Bonds Series 2012, at A1. The outlook assigned to these outstanding securities, all of which were issued by the Alabama Federal Aid Highway Finance Authority, also is stable.

RATINGS RATIONALE

The Aa2 rating on the AHFC bonds is supported by the pledge of a portion of revenue from per-gallon taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel taxes imposed by the 2019 Rebuild Alabama Act. The pledge consists of a statutory first claim on monthly revenue from the law's specific

fuel tax increments, up to an amount equal to scheduled maximum annual debt service. Total revenue available to provide this statutory allocation will greatly exceed debt service requirements, even factoring in the effects of a recession driven by the coronavirus pandemic. We estimate coverage on this basis at 16 times debt service using the tax increments already in effect (6 of the 10 cents per gallon enacted) and at more than 25 times when the new taxes have been fully phased in (starting in fiscal 2022). Because the authorizing statute allows issuance of \$150 million of this debt, the corporation could issue as much as \$28.9 million of additional bonds if needed to finance the project discussed below ("Use of Proceeds"). Beyond the \$150 million authorization, additional parity bonds are not allowed by the bond resolution, except to refund the initial bonds for debt service savings.

The Alabama Federal Aid Highway Finance Authority's special obligation revenue bonds' Aa1 rating is supported by very strong debt service coverage provided by revenue from two sources: the state's pre-existing motor fuel tax rates and from the state's share of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) reimbursements for eligible projects. Together, these sources will provide ample debt service coverage. The program's leverage constraint requires that federal revenue alone provide three times coverage of future maximum annual debt service following the issuance of new debt. The legal structure ensures timely debt service payment from pledged revenue.

The A1 rating assigned to the 2012 grant anticipation revenue bonds issued by the Alabama Federal Aid Highway Finance Authority is consistent with substantial debt service coverage provided by FHWA grant revenue. The grant anticipation bonds' claim on the state's FHWA funding is on parity with the special obligation bonds that are additionally secured by state motor fuel tax revenue. The rating further incorporates the lack of additional state resources pledged for debt service and the need for periodic reauthorization by Congress of the federal highway program under which the grants are provided.

We regard the coronavirus outbreak as a social risk under our ESG framework, given the substantial implications for public health and safety. The coronavirus crisis is not a key driver for this rating action. We do not see any material immediate credit risks for the Alabama Highway Finance Corporation's special obligation revenue bonds. However, the situation surrounding the coronavirus is rapidly evolving and the longer-term impact will depend on both the severity and duration of the crisis. If our view of the credit quality of the bonds changes, we will update the rating and/or outlook at that time.

RATING OUTLOOK

The stable outlook is consistent with the strong coverage of scheduled debt service even in the face of adverse economic conditions.

FACTORS THAT COULD LEAD TO AN UPGRADE OF THE RATINGS

- Upgrade of the State of Alabama
- Only for AFAHFA-issued grant anticipation bonds: Addition of other resources to pledged revenue

FACTORS THAT COULD LEAD TO A DOWNGRADE OF THE RATINGS

- Downgrade of the state's general obligation bond rating
- Sharp decrease in taxable motor fuel sales in the state, reflecting economic stagnation, technological changes or any other conditions

Transportation Research

Statewide and Metropolitan Transportation Programming

[FHWA-NHI-151055](#)

The National Highway Institute (NHI) is pleased to announce the launch of the new transportation planning course:

[FHWA-NHI-151055 - Statewide and Metropolitan Transportation Programming](#)

The three-hour, web-based training (WBT), will help you to learn the following:

- Recognize how metropolitan areas and States reach decisions on transportation policies, plans, and programs.
- Identify major funding sources and the flexibility to use funds in addressing metropolitan and statewide transportation needs.
- Identify the role of key documents in transportation decision-making.
- Define the concept of fiscal constraint in relation to financial planning and programming.
- Identify how projects are selected and programmed in the STIP/TIP.
- Identify processes related to transportation program approval and implementation.

Transportation planning and programming professional will learn the connection between long-range transportation planning and prioritizing projects within TIPs and STIPs. You will also earn 0.3 continuing education units (CEUs) for certification.

Improve your organization's transportation decision-making process and register for this course today!

[Register Now](#)

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](#)

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

Are you a transportation planning or programming professional interested in learning about metropolitan transportation improvement programs? If so, this web-based training is for you!

This new course provides introductory-level information on the process and requirements for developing and implementing metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Programs (STIPs). The training includes administrative modifications and amendments, public involvement, financial planning and performance-based planning and programming (PBPP).

The training highlights the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)/Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements for statewide, non-metropolitan, and metropolitan transportation planning and programming processes.

- 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.

