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Big news today as \$315 million is coming to infrastructure, environmental restoration and economic development projects in Mobile and Baldwin Counties, courtesy of the RESTORE Act and the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council – see *In the News*. The Alabama DOT has announced their TAP application period - see *Funding Opportunities*, and the Alabama Port Authority has been awarded a TIGER Grant - see *In the News*.

Have a great weekend and don't forget to "Spring Forward" Sunday Morning!

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

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

www.mobilempo.org  check us out on FACEBOOK

Mobile MPO Updates

Alta Pointe picks up vans funding through the Mobile MPO 5310 Program

Today SARPC handed over the keys to two 12+2 passenger vans with wheelchair lifts to Alta Pointe Health Services. The vans were purchased through the Mobile MPO's Urban Area 5310 program which provides funding for transit related needs for the elderly and the disabled.



NEW SARPC Transportation Video



[HERE](#)

Want to know what other SARPC departments do?

[Planning and Community Development](#)

[Area Agency on Aging](#)

[Employment and Economic Development](#)

Stay UP To Date on the Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project: <http://mobileriverbridge.com/>

This critically important, high-priority transportation project will involve constructing a new six-lane bridge across the Mobile River to increase Interstate 10's capacity and replace the existing four-lane Bayway with an eight-lane facility at an elevation above the 100 year storm surge event to reduce traffic headaches for thousands of commuters each day by saving motorists time.

The Wallace Tunnel currently averages 75,000 vehicles per day, reaching up to 100,000 vehicles during the peak tourism season. With almost double the daily traffic originally anticipated for the crossing, heavy congestions and longer travel times impact motorists, businesses, and the quality of life in the region. ALDOT expects this project to:

- Reduce travel time between Mobile and Spanish Fort/Daphne.
- Increase reliability in travel times and accessibility to jobs, educational facilities, medical services, and recreational activities.
- Facilitate access to/from major industries and freight destinations in Mobile and Baldwin Counties and provide hazardous material vehicles a direct route away from the downtown district.
- Take all efforts to preserve and protect the Mobile Bay so that generations to come can enjoy the view and natural beauty from the bridge.

Hyperlinks within the advisory:

Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project: <http://mobileriverbridge.com/>

ALDOT's mission is to provide a safe, efficient, environmentally and economically sound transportation network across Alabama. For further information, visit www.dot.state.al.us.

US 45 Feasibility Study

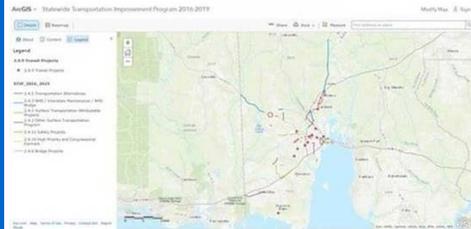
Last week, SARPC staff met with Volkert and CERM as the kick off and introductory meeting to the project; Notice To Proceed was given last week. The study will have its own web site and will begin shortly as the stakeholders meeting has to be set. Public participation is important for this project, so we expect our stakeholders to be heavily involved. We will keep you posted with the progress of the Study.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) NOW ONLINE

The TIP represents a four year program (2016-2019) for improvements in the various transportation systems located within the Mobile study area as identified in the Mobile MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the twenty-five year plan for the Mobile Urban area [Destination 2040](#). The LRTP establishes the transportation programs that are needed to meet travel demand by the study year and study area. LRTP projects that become funded are moved into the TIP and submitted to the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), where they are programmed into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). For MPO projects, TIP project selection is based on priorities established by MPO member governments and the availability of funds through the Surface Transportation Attributable program. For other projects, ALDOT has discretion of project funding based on availability of funds from various types of funding categories. Most often, projects in the TIP are derived from the LRTP. The TIP guides ALDOT in its annual allocation of funds for transportation improvements and becomes a part of the STIP.

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

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



Mobile MPO 101

Here are a couple of great videos that were produced by our counterpart in Birmingham (Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham). The videos are a summary of the MPO planning process and are below:



Funding a Project with an MPO: <https://vimeo.com/210829210>



Inside an MPO: <https://vimeo.com/210825997>

[HERE](#) are the slides and presentations of the Mobile MPO 101 training.

Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

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

Project : 100066916 (RW)
Federal aid number : NH 0042 (517)
County : MOBILE
Project Description : CONSTRUCT BRIDGE ON GLENWOOD ROAD OVER SR-42 (US-98)
Old Target start date : March 01, 2018
New Target start date : April 01, 2018
Project : 100052600 (RW)
Federal aid number : STPMB 7508 (600)

County : MOBILE
Project Description : MCGREGOR AVENUE WIDENING FROM AIRPORT BOULEVARD TO DAUPHIN STREET AND INSTALLATION OF A ROUNDABOUT AT DAUPHIN STREET
Old Target start date : May 01, 2018
New Target start date : June 01, 2018
Project : 100066916 (RW)
Federal aid number : BP-NH 0042 (517)
County : MOBILE
Project Description : CONSTRUCT BRIDGE ON GLENWOOD ROAD OVER SR-42 (US-98)
Old Engineers Estimate : \$65,650.00
New Engineers Estimate : \$267,257.76

Projects Within Region Let February 23rd, 2018

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on Sowell Road from south of the junction of Rankin Street to the intersection of Gordon Lane in Brewton. Length 1.135 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$917,893 to \$1,121,869 .

MOBILE COUNTY

For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, Cable Guiderail Installation, and Traffic Stripe on I-10 from west of the CR-39 (McDonald Road) Interchange to the CR-59 (Carol Plantation Road) Underpass. Length 4.569 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$7,096,527 to \$8,673,534

BALDWIN COUNTY

For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-59 from the junction of Windbigler Drive north of Foley to the junction of CR-54 in Robertsdale. Length 9.062 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$3,061,371 to \$3,741,676 .

[What's Under Construction?](#)

[Project Status](#)

Legislative Updates

Shuster & Graves Statements from Hearing on Long-Term Funding for Highways & Transit Programs

Shuster and Graves Opening Statements

Hearing on "Building a 21st Century Infrastructure for America: Long-Term Funding for Highways and Transit Programs"

March 7, 2018

(Remarks as Prepared)

Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA)

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

We're here today for a very important reason. Long-term certainty and stability in infrastructure funding is critical for our states. Without it, our states, our economy, and the American people face the consequences. Highway and transit projects get delayed, project costs go up, and our people and businesses continue to suffer the impacts of congestion and inefficiency. Through the FAST Act, we made great progress in providing states the certainty they need to make critical investments in projects that will build a modern and efficient 21st century infrastructure. But that certainty ends soon and once again the Highway Trust Fund will face insolvency. Congress is running out of options to cover the periodic Trust Fund short falls. We need to be forward-looking, and fundamentally address this issue in a sustainable manner.

Fortunately, the President's focus on infrastructure has given us an opportunity to tackle the problem. I look forward to working with the White House and my colleagues in Congress, including the Ways and Means Committee, on a bipartisan infrastructure plan that includes a fiscally responsible solution for the Highway Trust Fund. I know our witnesses have some ideas on how to best do that and I thank them for participating in today's hearing.

Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO)

Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

The question before us today is: how do we ensure we have the resources in place to build and maintain a surface transportation system that will meet the needs of our growing population and guarantee our Nation remains competitive in the 21st century?

Forecasts predict that America's population will grow to nearly 400 million by 2050. The movement of freight is expected to increase by 40 percent over the next 30 years, while vehicle miles traveled are projected to increase by nearly 20 percent. At the same time, driverless vehicles and other advances in technology are going to change the way freight and passengers move through our Nation.

Our surface transportation system needs to keep pace with these changes. Unfortunately, our current method of providing the funding necessary to maintain and improve the system is no longer sustainable.

Beginning as early as the spring of 2020, states may have to halt construction of surface transportation projects because, once again, the Highway Trust Fund will not be able to meet its obligations. There are many reasons for this – motor fuel taxes have not been raised in 25 years, fuel economy standards have increased, not all users pay into the Trust Fund. But the fact remains, the Highway Trust fund is going broke and Congress must act to fix it. However, continuing to rely on bailouts from the General Fund is not the answer. There simply isn't any money left under the couch cushions.

We need to work together to reform the Highway Trust Fund to ensure that users that benefit from the system, pay into the system. We need a long-term, sustainable solution that gives our states the certainty they need to plan and build surface transportation projects. We need a solution so we can build a modern and efficient transportation system. A system that will move people and goods at less cost, grow American jobs, and ensure we retain our position in the global marketplace.

Our witnesses will offer potential solutions, and discuss some innovative new approaches to funding our surface transportation programs. I thank them for appearing before us today.

[Click here for additional information from the hearing, including testimony, video, and background information.](#)

Ryan Says Infrastructure Overhaul Will Be Done in 5 to 6 Bills

'We don't want to do one big bill,' speaker says

By Lindsey McPherson

Speaker Paul D. Ryan, R-Wis., said an infrastructure overhaul is easier to pass if broken into pieces. (Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call)

Speaker [Paul D. Ryan](#) on Thursday affirmed House Republicans' intentions to complete an infrastructure overhaul this year but said that the effort will be broken into pieces.

"We don't want to do one big bill," the Wisconsin Republican said at an event in Georgia with Home Depot employees.

Rather, Ryan said the infrastructure overhaul will be tackled in five to six bills.

"We think it's easier to break it into pieces," he said.

The effort will start "in about a week and a half" with a short-term reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration, whose authorization is scheduled to expire March 31.

The FAA extension, likely to last sometime in the summer, is expected to be attached to the fiscal 2018 omnibus spending bill.

The spending measure will include a "down payment" on infrastructure funding, Ryan said. He was referring to a budget deal reached earlier this year on raising the sequestration spending caps that sets aside \$10 billion in fiscal 2018 and fiscal 2019 for infrastructure from the nondefense spending increase agreed to for those years.

Other specific bills Ryan said would be part of the piecemeal infrastructure overhaul, which he expects to be ongoing through the summer, include a longer-term FAA reauthorization, the biennial Water Resources Development Act authorizing water infrastructure projects like ports and inland waterways and legislation to streamline the permit approval process.

Congress had planned to do the FAA and WRDA measures this year anyway, separate of the larger infrastructure push from President Donald Trump and his administration.

Ryan also alluded to a traditional highway funding bill that would infuse money into the Highway Trust Fund.

"We're going to do the traditional infrastructure you're thinking of, which is like highways and roads and bridges," he said.

The current surface transportation authorization lasts through fiscal 2020 and the Highway Trust Fund that pays for federal highway and transit spending is projected to run out of money shortly after.

Democrats and some Republicans, like Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman [Bill Shuster](#), R-Pa., have called for an increase in the federal fuel taxes that flow into the trust fund. Ryan, however, has ruled that out.

"We're not going to raise gas taxes. ... We're just not going to do that here," the speaker said Wednesday on a telephone town hall with conservative activists from Americans for Prosperity. "There are some people who are talking about that, but the last thing we want to do is pass historic tax relief in December and then undo that, so we are not going to raise gas taxes."

House Transportation and Infrastructure ranking member Peter A. DeFazio said an infrastructure funding bill cannot pass without new revenue attached to it. He prefers a gas tax increase and said it was up to Trump to convince Ryan.

"I've said all along: Ryan is ideologically opposed to the federal government funding a national transportation system," the Oregon Democrat said. "I never expected him to be supportive and I told President Trump if he wanted to do a real gas tax increase that he was gonna have to take on the speaker of the House and his leadership team."

Shuster Hopeful for 2018 Investment Plan; Eyes Possible Lame-Duck Session, Fuel Fee

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster, R-Pa., told executives of state departments of transportation he hopes Congress can pass major new infrastructure investment legislation before its long August recess, or perhaps in a lame-duck session after the November elections.

[Shuster made the remarks Feb. 28](#) at the annual Washington Briefing of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

A day earlier, Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, the assistant majority leader, told Bloomberg News that with a busy Senate legislative calendar "[I don't know if we will have time](#)" to push through an infrastructure package this year.

But Shuster, in remarks to the AASHTO conference and to reporters afterward, emphasized that Congress needs to put together legislation that invests in projects and raises new revenue to bolster the Highway Trust Fund for the long term.

If it does not do so, he warned, state DOTs by early 2020 would be cutting some planned projects for lack of federal dollars.

He made clear that he would work with T&I ranking member Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., on a bipartisan plan that would be paid for with new funds and would take care of the trust fund's future needs.

Shuster also laid out the case for increasing the federal motor fuel "user fee" or excise tax, as an easily understood way to efficiently raise more road and transit funds. "It's the easiest thing to understand," he noted.

And he urged the state officials in their visits to congressional offices to help build support for revenue increases that can sustain the trust fund.

Noting that some advocate for implementing taxes on vehicle miles traveled instead of hiking fuel user charges, Shuster said "I don't believe that's ready for prime time," although the next generation of leaders would probably move to implement one.

In separate remarks to the AASHTO conference, DeFazio said that without a strong presidential effort on increasing revenue there would be no infrastructure investment plan to pass Congress this year. He said House leadership currently opposes hiking taxes for infrastructure, so no bill could move forward without President Trump pushing for more revenue.

DeFazio also [dismissed the president's investment proposal as a "devolution" plan](#) to put more of the federal role back to state and local governments along with private investors.

The leaders of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee also told state officials they want to see project investment legislation but indicated they are not yet working together.

[EPW Ranking Member Tom Carper](#), D-Del., said he and Chairman John Barrasso, R-Wyo., are working on their own proposals.

[Barrasso told state officials](#) he knew of their concerns about the trust fund, but told reporters that increasing motor fuel taxes would be a "nonstarter" for him.

[In a statement the next day](#), Barrasso noted that EPW leaders and members are working together on bipartisan water projects legislation. Then he added: "We need to expand that bipartisan cooperation to roads and bridges as well."

Funding Opportunities

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is soliciting applications for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for FY 2019.

There are several changes to the State's TAP application and instructions this year. Application information packets were mailed out to city and county agencies this week.

The deadline for submission of FY 2018 TAP applications including support documentation is Tuesday, May 1, 2018 at 5:00 p.m.

Please contact Tina Milton at (334) 353-6441 (miltont@dot.state.al.us) if you have questions regarding this matter.

Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant programs

Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program (FY 2017)

CRISI program: Applications are due no later than [5:00 p.m. EDT June 21, 2018](#).

More information on FRA's CRISI website: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P1079>

Overview: This program will fund projects that improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of passenger and freight rail. See the [FY 2017 Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) for more information.

Legislative Authority: This program was authorized in Section 11301 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, Pub. L. 114-94 (2015); 49 U.S.C. § 24407. Funding under this program was made available by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, Public Law No. 115-31, Division K, Title I. **Amount:** \$65,232,400

Restoration and Enhancement Grants Program (FY 2017)

REG program: Applications are due no later than [5:00 p.m. EDT May 22, 2018](#).

More information on FRA's REG website: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P1081>

Overview: This program will fund operating assistance grants for initiating, restoring, or enhancing intercity rail passenger transportation. See the [FY 2017 Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) for more information.

Legislative Authority: This program was authorized in Section 11303 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, Pub. L. No. 114-94 (2015); 49 U.S.C. § 24408. Funding under this program was made available by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, Public Law No. 115-31, Division K, Title I. **Amount:** \$4,796,500

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 II-B Supportive Services Funds to match Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs. These FTA programs include Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307), Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and People with Disabilities (Section 5310), and Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311). This information has been publicized [HERE](#).

FHWA Offers New Funding for Innovative Demonstration Projects

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

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

more information on the AID Demonstration program, contact [Ewa Flom](#) of the FHWA Center for Accelerating Innovation.

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

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

Industrial Access Road and Bridge

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

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

To stay up to date on all of the many grants that are available click [HERE](#) or type www.grants.gov in your browser.

Just For Fun

Just as Spring Break is approaching, we thought we would look at one of the oldest forms of communication during one's travels. In 1886, sailors on a German barque called Paula tossed a gin bottle with a message into waters hundreds of miles off the Western coast of Australia. Just recently, one hundred and thirty-one years later, a Perth resident stumbled upon the bottle on Australia's Wedge Island. The note was not to send more rum, and was not for wishes of romance. *Just For Fun*, see what the German sailors were thinking of when they were out to sea, and wanting to send a "message in a bottle" [HERE](#).



In the News

\$315 million from RESTORE Act to fund projects in Mobile, Baldwin counties

By Lawrence Specker

A whopping \$315 million is coming to infrastructure, environmental restoration and economic development projects in Mobile and Baldwin Counties, courtesy of the RESTORE Act and the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council.

It's funding nearly 50 projects, some of which have obvious potential to change life on the coast. The biggest include \$56 million for five major road expansion projects in Baldwin County, \$28 million for a new facility at the Port of Mobile, \$27 million for projects affecting Dauphin Island's Aloe Bay and \$21 million to redevelop the docks in Bayou La Batre. Tens of millions of dollars will go to projects to improve water-sewer systems and eliminate sewage overflows.

The money comes from penalties paid by companies involved in the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. The RESTORE Act established a trust fund to hold much of that money aside for "programs, projects, and activities that restore and protect the environment and economy of the Gulf Coast region."

Deciding where that money goes has been a complex multi-year, multi-agency process. On Wednesday the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (AGCRC) announced the first round of funding, which may be the largest -- but not the last.

"There are some really great ones," Eliska Morgan, the council's executive director, said Thursday. "We've been working toward this end for some time."

Morgan said more than 400 projects were submitted by various organizations and governmental entities. Many that didn't make the cut for this round may be eligible for future consideration, she said.

"Key points" in an AGCRC presentation include a statement that "(t)he Council intends to distribute RESTORE Act funds between Baldwin and Mobile Counties on an equitable basis for projects deemed viable. While this equity may not be realized in the First Round, it will be achieved over time as amended plans are developed."

Mobile County had more requests, totaling nearly twice the money as Baldwin County requests, meaning more Mobile County projects were deferred until future rounds, according to the AGCRC presentation.

An upcoming 45-day comment period will give the public a chance to weigh in on the selected projects. To see the full article and the list of projects for which funding has been committed Click [HERE](#). Grants are listed alphabetically by project name.

Shelby Praises TIGER Grant Awarded to Alabama State Port Authority

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) today announced that the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has awarded the Alabama State Port Authority a \$12.7 million grant to convert an abandoned bulk handling facility at the Port of Mobile into a roll-on, roll-off mobile vehicle processing facility.

"Advancing the Port of Mobile is critical to driving economic success in our state," said Senator Shelby. "We have one of the fastest growing harbors in the nation. This grant will help facilitate the demands of Alabama's booming automotive industry. I am encouraged by the current growth opportunities directly tied the harbor and will continue working to make the Port of Mobile one of the most competitive harbors in the country."

"This project will add needed capability to this region of the Gulf of Mexico and greatly enhance the Alabama State Port Authority's ability to serve the automotive and equipment industries. Including other funds secured by the Port as well as the cost of the land, the total project is valued at approximately \$60 million, representing a great value for taxpayers," said Alabama State Port Authority Director Jimmy Lyons.

The grant was awarded as part of DOT's Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program. Following the renovation, the facility will be capable of handling automobiles, military vehicles, trucks, other rolling stock, and heavy cargo.

"The highly competitive TIGER program recognizes projects that will have a significant impact on a region, metropolitan areas, or our country as a whole," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

Alabama's state port is currently the nation's 10th largest seaport and is a major economic driver in the state. In any given year, between 52-67 million tons of cargo move annually through the harbor. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is currently conducting a General Reevaluation Report (GRR) to examine the potential impacts of deepening and widening the federal navigation channel of the Port of Mobile. The GRR is expected to be completed in fall of 2019.

FHWA: Traffic Crowded U.S. Roads at Record Annual Level in 2017

Motor vehicle traffic on U.S. roads and highways hit an all-time high in 2017 of more than 3.208 trillion vehicle miles traveled, the Federal Highway Administration said.

In its latest [monthly "Traffic Volume Trends" report](#), which uses preliminary reports from state highway agencies, the FHWA said traffic volume increased in all of 2017 by 1.2 percent or 39.3 billion vehicle miles.

That made 2017 the third straight year that traffic hit new record highs, [according to an FHWA table](#). And 2017 was the first year in which volume topped 3.2 trillion vehicle miles.

The traffic growth increases congestion on the nation's road system, and adds to wear on road and bridge pavement and supporting infrastructure. It also underscores the need across the country to invest in maintaining existing roads along with new projects to try to keep pace with rising user levels.

The FHWA report comes as Congress begins to consider proposals to increase investment in transportation systems and other vital infrastructure, and after President Trump offered a plan to increase federal project spending by \$200 billion over 10 years in hopes of leveraging another \$1.3 trillion in state, local and private spending.

Meanwhile, Congress is also negotiating a full-year appropriations bill for the rest of fiscal 2018 that began Oct. 1, and under a recent budget accord lawmakers have agreed to add \$10 billion in new infrastructure funds in 2018 and again in 2019.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials has urged appropriators to route such added funds through formula-based highway and transit programs.

AASHTO said that would let state and local officials put the money into projects they most need, rather than using grant programs than have federal officials decide which projects to support and then award the money only after a delay.

[In a Feb. 16 letter to lawmakers](#), AASHTO said using the formula programs could let state departments of transportation and other agencies put the added funds to use in their spring construction projects.

But it said putting the new money into grant programs would add uncertainty about when and how the money would be distributed. AASHTO noted that the USDOT "is currently reviewing hundreds of applications" to award \$2 billion in 2017 and 2018 project grant funds.

"Further increases in federal funding for discretionary programs will add to this backlog and run the risk of not being effectively utilized by state and local governments this construction season," AASHTO said. "The only way to ensure these dollars are dedicated to projects in the 2018 construction season is to distribute the funding through formula programs."

Part of that amount is \$500 million in 2017 TIGER grants that can help fund a wide range of infrastructure projects, while the rest is the INFRA grants for 2017 and 2018 that are to have a heavy focus on projects to improve major freight corridors.

USDOT Secretary Elaine Chao told state officials Feb. 28 that the department will [issue the TIGER awards "very soon,"](#) with the INFRA grants to soon follow.

Trump Aide Gribbin Assures State DOT Execs Administration is Aware of Trust Fund Issues

President Trump's top aide for infrastructure, who has played a key role in crafting the president's project investment plan, assured state officials that the administration is aware of the looming shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund and believes Congress will address it.

D.J. Gribbin, special assistant to the president, told state department of transportation executives that the president's proposal was just the opening bid in what he said would be multiple rounds of discussions with lawmakers and stakeholders on how to boost investment in transportation and other infrastructure.

Gribbin made his remarks in a March 1 luncheon address to the Washington Briefing of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, along with the Road Gang, a Washington, D.C., group of transportation professionals.

While introducing Gribbin to the audience, AASHTO Executive Director Bud Wright noted that through the past year the presidential aide had regularly reached out to AASHTO and state officials directly to involve them in the discussions about President Trump's infrastructure plan.

That plan's proposed steps to speed up projects by shortening the federal permitting process reflects the views of many state DOT officials, who say they can move major transportation improvements into the construction phase more quickly while protecting the environment if federal agencies can shorten their reviews.

One of the concerns voiced by state officials and industry groups since the White House released its plan was that it left out any mention of the trust fund and any ideas on how to shore it up over the long term. At present, the trust fund is on course to run out of enough money in 2020 to cover its project spending obligations.

But Gribbin emphasized that the White House was aware of the trust fund issues and wants to address them. And he said Trump is the first president since Bill Clinton in the 1990s to talk about possibly increasing federal motor fuel user fees to help fund transportation investment.

"Yes, we need a long-term solution for the Highway Trust Fund," [Gribbin said in his prepared remarks](#). "The president has been clear that he supports working with Congress on finding a solution that is more than just a short-term, kick-the-can-down-the-road solution."

He also explained his view of how the administration's proposed \$200 billion in new federal investment could leverage an additional \$1 trillion or more in nonfederal project spending, by providing federal "seed money" to match funding packages proposed by state DOT officials and other stakeholders.

One audience member asked why the administration in its proposal takes the view that increasing federal infrastructure loan programs would be successful now, when Congress tried it before and found that not enough project sponsors took advantage of the expanded loan availability.

Gribbin responded that it could work because the president's proposal would expand the long-term, low-interest loans "to more asset classes" including airports and seaports, which could then use the federal credit for projects they directly finance. Project sponsors that use such federal loans now often tout the savings they allow compared with financing the projects in regular capital markets, and how they can plow those savings into more improvements.

Transportation Research

FHWA Publishes White Paper on Nature-Based Solutions for Coastal Highway Resilience

FHWA's recently published [White Paper: Nature-Based Solutions for Coastal Highway Resilience](#) briefly describes the current state of practice regarding the use of natural and nature-based features to protect coastal roads from flooding. It provides an overview of available tools for design, implementation challenges, and knowledge gaps. The white paper is part of an [FHWA project](#) that also includes five pilot projects, regional peer exchanges, and an implementation guide. The project's research and technical assistance will enable transportation agencies to use natural and nature-based features to improve the resilience of transportation systems.

Nature-based features mimic characteristics of natural features and processes but are created by human design and engineering. Examples include restoration of dunes, wetlands, maritime forests, beaches, and reefs. These features can protect coastal highways from the brunt of storm surges and waves. Some can adapt to sea level rise by accreting sediment or migrating inland. They can also provide benefits such as recreation opportunities, habitat needed for commercial fisheries, and a healthier environment.

Those interested in FHWA's white paper may also be interested in the [US Army Corps of Engineers request for proposals for beneficial use of dredge material pilot projects](#), where the dredged material would:

- Reduce storm damage to property and infrastructure;
- Promote public safety;
- Protect, restore and create aquatic ecosystem habitats;
- Stabilize stream systems and enhance shorelines;
- Promote recreation;
- Support risk management adaptation strategies; and
- Reduce the costs of dredging and dredged material placement or disposal, such as projects that use dredged material for: construction or fill material; civic improvement objectives; and other uses and placement alternatives that produce public economic or environmental benefits.

USACE notes that public bodies are eligible to apply. **Applications are due March 12, 2018.**

New Competitive Rail Development Grant Programs Webinar

On March 22, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will provide webinar on the new competitive rail development grant programs that I described to you in the emails below. During the webinar, FRA will provide information about the new grant programs and how to apply for grant funding. When registering for the webinar (link below), registrants are encouraged to submit questions for the webinar's Q&A session.

New Competitive Rail Development Grant Programs Webinar

Thursday, March 22, 2018

1:00-2:30 PM Eastern

[Click here to register!](#)

NEW! AASHTO LRFD Bridge Design Specifications, 8th Edition

Check out this video for details about the new 8th edition of the *LRFD Bridge Design Specifications*, including information on the major updates that have been made to the Specifications since the 2014 7th edition.

For more information or to purchase a copy, visit the AASHTO Bookstore online at <https://bookstore.transportation.org>, and search by the item code, LRFD-8.



Bicycle Safety Survey

ALDOT is conducting a research project "Comprehensive Investigation of Bike Crash Causes, Patterns and Countermeasures in Alabama". Please help us share this link to participants (both drivers and bicyclists). This survey is being conducted by the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) on behalf of the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). The main objective of this survey is to identify the status of drivers' and bicyclists' understanding of cycling regulations and rules in Alabama. The survey results will help design the appropriate outreach programs to better educate both drivers and bicyclists.

https://uah.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_exhrpcJAXEaiiWl



Sign up today to attend the [2018 SDITE Annual Meeting](#) to be held in Mobile from April 8 - 11, 2018. Since our section is hosting, we need to have great representation from all our section members. The Early Bird Registration rate of \$350 ends soon.

FHWA Publishes Guidance on TPM Travel Time Metric Data Reporting to HPMS

The third performance measure regulation in the National Performance Management Measures requires state DOTs to submit performance metric and related data to the Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) by June 15, 2018 and annually thereafter. The national travel time-based performance measures include the: Interstate Travel Time Reliability Measure, Non-Interstate NHS Travel Time Reliability Measure, Freight Reliability Measure, and CMAQ Peak Hour Excessive Delay Measure. FHWA released a document with information and guidance on complying with these requirements

2018 USDOT Webinar Series: What's New in Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Deployment

February 20, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET
March 6, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET
March 27, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET

USDOT ITS Joint Program Office will host a new three-part webinar series highlighting the latest trends and developments in ITS deployment. To measure the deployment of ITS technology nationally, the USDOT's ITS Deployment Tracking Project surveys transportation agencies in the largest U.S. cities on a regular basis. The ITS Knowledge Resources Portal summarizes the benefits, costs, deployment levels, and lessons learned for ITS deployment and operations from over 20 years of ITS evaluation studies, research syntheses, handbooks, journal articles, and conference papers tracking the effectiveness of deployed ITS. The webinar series will provide an overview of these resources to support informed decision making on ITS investments, highlight recent additions to the survey, and solicit feedback from participants on how best to redesign the portal to improve its usability and value.

BTS Releases Pocket Guide to Transportation Mobile App

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) has released a new dynamic mobile app for the [Pocket Guide to Transportation 2018](#) – a quick reference guide to transportation statistics. This popular guide provides the latest transportation statistics at your fingertips in mobile app and printed formats. It covers data on major trends, moving people and goods, system use and performance, the economy, safety, infrastructure, and the environment. [Download](#) the app now to access all the features of the classic Pocket Guide plus enhanced navigation, sharable graphics to social media and email, and dynamic data updates to highlight the most recent up-to-date statistics. The app is available on the App Store and on Google Play (keyword: BTS Pocket Guide). To access the *Pocket Guide*, go to [BTS Pocket Guide to Transportation](#) or text USDOT BTSPG to 468311. This publication can also be obtained by [ordering online](#), by contacting BTS by phone at 202-366-DATA or by e-mail at answers@dot.gov

For inquiries other than placing orders contact Dave Smallen: david.smallen@dot.gov or 202-366-5568.

Policy Change Announcement on Small and Custom Geography in CTPP

Following the release of the Census Transportation Planning Products (CTPP) 2012-2016 dataset in early 2019, the Oversight Board to the CTPP Program announces that it will no longer include Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ) and Transportation Analysis District (TAD) geographies in future requests for special tabulations of the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) data. Future CTPP special tabulation requests will include the standard census block group geography instead. To best adapt to this change, the CTPP Board urges travel demand modelers, MPOs, state DOTs, and anyone who uses CTPP data by census TAZ and census TAD to participate in the 2020 Census Participant Statistical Areas Program (PSAP), and through it, adjust their census block group boundaries to better align with their model TAZ geographies. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Making a Model a Good Predictive Tool

A basic part of travel demand model validation is running the model for a "base year" and comparing the outputs to observed data. In this [FHWA project](#), two model versions for each of two metropolitan areas were run twice each: 1) the more recent version for its base year and a backcast scenario (for the base year of the earlier model version), and 2) the earlier version for its base year and a forecast scenario (for the base year of the later model version). This research was intended to produce useful data on which model components are most stable over time and their sensitivities to the factors affecting travel demand that vary over time. The report includes lessons learned and recommendations for planning agencies.

New ADA Sidewalk and Curb Ramp Compliance App

Download it Today



<http://www.vieworks.com/sidewalks-and-curb-ramps-application/>

- Simple to Use
- Download from Apple Store or Google Play
- Collect information at your pace
- Gathers ADA Compliance inventory and condition information
- Location is automatically collected in GIS

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.