



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, February 7th, 2014

Volume 9, Number 6

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We have had a busy week with all of this climate, and what we mean by that is we have had a series of meetings on the *Gulf Coast Climate Change Phase II*. Don't think of "the North Pole melting" when you hear the term "Climate Change". It is synonymous with "extreme storm", something very real, and very possible: please see *Mobile MPO Updates*. ALDOT has announced its Pre-Construction conference, please see *In The News*. Finally, "Oh Sochi Didn't" the Olympics start today, see *Just for Fun*.

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



www.mobilempo.org check us out on FACEBOOK
706-1CAR

Mobile MPO Updates

Climate Change Workgroup Meeting and Regional Climate Change Workshop

RESEARCH

Recently Completed Planning Studies

Origin Destination Study
Using Cell Phones

Mobile County
Comprehensive Bicycle and
Pedestrian Plan

Intelligent Transportation
System Diversion Route
Planning Study

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



This week there were meetings concerning *The Gulf Coast Study, Phase 2*. On Wednesday the Climate change Workgroup met for the last time, and Thursday was a workshop with attendees from all over the Gulf Coast. The tools that the team created <http://mobilempo.org/climatechange.html> will provide the Mobile MPO with a Vulnerability Score for each “critical” facility. This score can be incorporated into the Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program. One of the “stressors” used was storm surge. The scenarios were A) Hurricane Katrina (Base), B) Hurricane Katrina direct hit, and C) Hurricane Katrina Direct Hit at a Cat 5. Don’t believe in Climate Change? If you remember Katrina was a category 5 before it was downgraded to a 3 when it hit landfall, just west of us...

The project, *Impacts of Climate change and Variability on Transportation Systems and Infrastructure: The Gulf Coast Study, Phase 2*, involved identifying critical transportation systems, projecting the local impacts of climate change, developing scenarios for planning, evaluating vulnerability for key links and assets across all modes of transportation, and evaluating engineering options for adaptation. This study is coming to a close and will allow us these tools:

- **CMIP Climate Data Processing Tool:** An Excel-based tool for utilizing state-of-the-art climate model information in transportation planning. The tool pulls best available climate model information and translates outputs into terms that are relevant to decision makers (e.g., frequencies of extremes).
- **Vulnerability Assessment Scoring Tool:** This Excel-based tool serves as a framework for conducting a quantitative, indicator-based vulnerability screen. The tool is intended for state DOTs and MPOs interested in assessing how components of their transportation system may be vulnerable to climate stressors.

We are hoping for a final roll out of the project by Summer.

Projects Within Region Let February 28th, 2014

BALDWIN COUNTY

- Constructing the Resurfacing and Traffic Stripe on SR-16 (US-90) from just east of the I-10/SR-16 (US-90) Eastbound Ramp (MP 44.748) to just west of SR-181 (MP 47.978). Length 3.229 mi.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

- Constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-21 from 0.2 miles south of I-65 (MP 7.947) to the south abutment of the Little River Bridge. Length 10.760 mi.
- Constructing the Resurfacing (High Performance Chip Seal) and Traffic Stripe on SR-3 (US-31/Twin Bridges Road) from 0.39 miles east of the Railroad Overpass at MP 57.950 to 0.27 miles west of the Little Escambia Creek Bridge east of Flomaton. Length 1.150 mi.

MOBILE COUNTY

- Constructing the Intersection Improvements for CR-358 (Three Notch Road); CR-328 (Dawes Lane); and CR-328 (Dawes Lane Extension) in Mobile. Length 0.100 mi.
- Constructing the Sidewalks and Crosswalks on 12th Avenue and Kansas Street in Chickasaw. Length 0.794 mi.
- Constructing the Welcome Center Replacement (Grade, Drain, Base, Pave, Demolition, Building, Lighting, Landscaping, Sewer, and Lagoon Removal) on I-10 at the Alabama/Mississippi State Line.
- Constructing the Reconstruction (Grade, Drain, Base, Pave, Signing and Signals) of Wilson Avenue from SR-17 (St. Stephens Road) to 12th Avenue in the Cities of Prichard, Mobile, and Chickasaw. Length 2.477 mi.
- Constructing the Resurfacing and Traffic Stripe on SR-16 (US-90) from the Halls Mill Creek Bridge to the Pavement Joint at Pinehill Drive in Mobile. Length 5.203 mi.

What's Under Construction?

Legislative Updates

New Bill Would Make Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects Eligible for Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) Loans

The New Opportunities for Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Financing Act (HR 3978), introduced by Albio Sires (D-NJ) and co-sponsored by Andre Carson (D-IN), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), and Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), would allow communities to access low-cost loans to build bicycling and walking networks. This means a city could get a loan now and build a network of sidewalks, bike lanes and paths to improve safety and increase physical activity—and repay the loan over many years. The bill would set aside 1 percent of TIFIA's \$1 billion and earmark that money for biking and walking. For these projects, TIFIA's minimum project cost would be lowered to \$2 million

Let's be Blunt: Shuster. Mendez. LaHood. Rendell.

This week there was a transportation discussion hosted by Bloomberg Government titled "America on the Move: Investing in U.S. Infrastructure." The speakers included House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA); Action Deputy Secretary at U.S. DOT Victor Mendez; former U.S. DOT Secretary Ray LaHood; and former Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell. Perhaps the most informative was Chairman Shuster, who all but took a gas tax increase off the table as a pay-for in the next surface transportation authorization. He further insinuated that the House Ways and Means Committee, which is responsible for coming up with any bill's pay-fors, has some ideas that will provide solvency to the Highway Trust Fund for a decade and allow for a longer-term authorization the next time around. Former Sec. LaHood – no longer bound by his administration position – was more blunt in his assessment that there was no way a transportation bill will pass before the 2014 mid-term election. Former Gov. Rendell was equally blunt in his criticism of current lawmakers as "wusses" for failing to pass a long-term, well-funded bill passed to increase the nation's level of transportation investments.

Congressional Budget Office Delivers Grim Assessment of Highway Trust Fund

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) this week released its yearly outlook on the nation's economy. One piece that is particularly interesting for transportation contacts is the assessment of the nation's Highway Trust Fund (HTF), which collects the fuel taxes that fund the majority of the surface transportation program. CBO recently began hinting the HTF was in trouble and that the highway account may not make it until the end of the fiscal year (which also happens to coincide with the expiration of the current transportation authorization bill). The CBO release this week confirmed that fear. Though it shows a year-end balance in the highway account of \$1 billion at the end of the current fiscal year, the U.S. DOT requires at least \$4 billion on hand to ensure it can repay current debts, leaving the account technically in default. The cumulative shortfall over ten years (through 2024) is \$172 billion, which represents the difference between expected fuel tax revenues and current spending. To put it another way, just to keep spending levels flat for the next decade, Congress needs to come up with an additional \$17.2 billion each and every year. Given that Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) has already taken a gas tax increase off the table for this next authorization (see related story below), it will be interesting to see where the relevant committees come up with the money to keep the program solvent, to say nothing of growing the program to meet future (and current) needs.

Vehicle to Vehicle Technology Moving Forward

Officials from U.S. DOT and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration announced they will move connected vehicle technology forward in an effort to greatly improve safety and save lives on the nation's roadway. The system allows vehicles to communicate potential risks to drivers and avoid rear-end, lane change, and intersection crashes. Scott F. Belcher, President and CEO of the Intelligent Transportation Society of America, called it "a safety leap exceeding even seat belts and air bags." U.S. DOT is currently conducting a safety pilot program in Michigan, the largest ever of its kind, to test 3,000 vehicles equipped with connected vehicle technology. The purpose is to test the interoperability of the technology from various vehicle manufacturers and suppliers to ensure they are able to work together once on the road.

President's Budget Delayed

According to reports, the Obama Administration plans to roll out its fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget in two segments. During the first week of March, the top-line budget numbers (funding level each department and agency will receive) will be released; the following week, the more detailed justification numbers will be revealed. This doesn't have any particular impact, except that the late release shrinks the window for Congress to pass its appropriations bills under any kind of regular order. On the flip side, this release will be a month earlier than the President's release of the FY2014 budget, which didn't happen until early April last

year (President's budget is technically due the first Monday in February).

Funding Opportunities

STATE TAP FUNDS

Deadline: May 2, 2014

Please be on the lookout for communication from the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) for the announcement and applications for the FY 2014 Transportation Alternates Program (TAP) funding. The TAP provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; safe routes to school projects; and projects for planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways. **ALDOT TAP Funding applications can only come from ALDOT [HERE].** The federal guidance on TAP funds is here: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/guidance/guidetap.cfm>

Please understand that each large Urban Area also receives TAP funds as well and will have a **separate TAP Funding application**. In Mobile, we will have a \$750,000 (fed+match) Program for fiscal year 2014. This includes remaining carryover that was not spent last year and our due date will be May 2, 2014 also. Applications for the Mobile Urban Area TAP are currently not available and will be in the next several weeks; we will keep you posted.

If anyone has any questions concerning TAP Funds, please call Kevin Harrison at 706-4635.

GRANT: Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Funding Opportunity

The *Health Impact Project* is planning to launch a call for funding proposals this month. Grants will support HIA demonstration projects and the development of HIA programs integrating health in decision-making. HIA help to identify and address likely benefits and risks of a decision made in a field outside of the health sector. Eligible organizations include nonprofits, state, local and tribal agencies, and educational institutions. [HERE](#) for additional information

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Transportation and Air Quality (OTAQ) is soliciting proposals that achieve significant reductions in diesel emissions in terms of tons of pollution produced by diesel engines and diesel emissions exposure, from fleets operating at marine and inland water ports. Eligible diesel emission reduction solutions include verified emission control technologies such as exhaust controls and engine upgrades, verified idle reduction technologies, certified engine repowers, and/or certified vehicle or equipment replacement. Additional information can be found [HERE](#).

Round 3 of the Implementation Assistance Program SHRP2:

Deadline: February 14, 2014

FHWA recently released the recipients of Round 2 grants and announced the schedule for rounds 3 and 4. These grants are intended to help transportation agencies deploy new products developed under the second Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP2). If you would like additional information or have questions about the program, please contact Carin Michel, FHWA SHRP2 Implementation Manager at goSHRP2@dot.gov or 410-962-2530. Click [HERE](#) to read the release about the upcoming rounds.

Economic Development Administration

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>

EDA provides strategic investments that foster job creation and attract private investment to support development in economically distressed areas of the United States. Under this FFO, EDA solicits applications from both rural and urban areas to provide investments that support construction, non-construction, technical assistance, and revolving loan fund projects under EDA's Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs. Grants made under these programs are designed to leverage existing regional assets to support the implementation of economic development strategies that advance new ideas and creative approaches to advance economic prosperity in distressed communities. Link to Additional Information: EDA's website Please contact Diane Burnett of SARPC staff for questions 706-4621. Also, don't forget SARPC has a revolving fund loan program. <http://www.sarpc.org/rif.asp> The RLF is a locally controlled source of capital used to finance small business start-up and expansion whose projects will create permanent jobs. By combining RLF and bank financing the borrower can realize an effective rate well below market rates.

Just For Fun

The SOCHI Winter Olympics starts today, so this week's *Just For Fun* has nothing to do with transportation, but it is the top 15 moments of USA in the Winter Olympics. GO TEAM!!



http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/multimedia/photo_gallery/1001/olympics.winter.usa.top15.moments/content_1.html

In the News



<http://aldotapps.dot.state.al.us/preconstruction/index.html>

ALDOT has announced its second annual Preconstruction conference held APRIL 2-4, 2014. All attendees will walk away with a better understanding of the pre-construction process and the role each Bureau, Division and Region has in this process. The Pre-Construction Conference is a great opportunity for you to network with your peers in the transportation engineering field, allowing you to share and gather knowledge.

Margie Wilcox rolls to landslide win as House district in Mobile stays Republican



By [Brendan Kirby | bkirby@al.com](mailto:bkirby@al.com)

Email the author | [Follow on Twitter](#)

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Republican Margie Wilcox, left, defeated Democrat Stephen Carr in a special election for Alabama House of Representatives District 104 on Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2014.

MOBILE, Alabama— Republican Margie Wilcox cruised past Democrat Stephen Carr on Tuesday night in a special election for the Alabama House of Representatives, keeping the GOP's 20-year winning streak alive in District 104.

According to complete but unofficial results, Wilcox won 90.5 percent of the vote, carrying all 15 precincts and the absentee ballots. The owner of Yellow Cab of Mobile and a pair of other transportation companies, Wilcox campaigned on making state laws more business-friendly and reforming homeowners insurance. She said she is looking forward to getting to work in House, which already is in session.

"We are thrilled. We've got a large crowd here," she said. "I am just tickled."

Carr, whose professional background is in disaster relief management, recently finished a stint in the Governor's Office of Faith-Based & Volunteer Services helping victims of the 2011 Alabama tornadoes find housing. He said he wanted to offer a choice to voters who have had no Democratic alternative in recent elections. ([HERE](#))

Foley agrees to \$400,000 purchase of downtown Snook property near future pedestrian bridge



By [Marc D. Anderson | manderson@al.com](mailto:manderson@al.com)

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on February 05, 2014 at 4:36 PM, updated February 06, 2014 at 10:22 AM



The historic Claude Peteet Real Estate office on .14 acres and the adjacent .28-acre lot on Ala. 59, shown on June. 6, 2013, have been approved for purchase by the Foley City Council. The city will pay \$400,000 with closing expected in mid February. Marjorie Younce Snook is selling the two properties through Exit Realty of Gulf Shores. Hotel Magnolia and Magnolia Court Restaurant, seen in the background, remain on the market for \$2.5 million and \$1.5 million, respectively. (Marc D. [Anderson/manderson@al.com](mailto:manderson@al.com))

FOLEY, Alabama -- Increasing its investment in downtown redevelopment, the city is purchasing a nearly half-acre lot next to Hotel Magnolia to serve as a landing area for the municipality's planned \$1 million pedestrian bridge.

The council's \$400,000 offer for the property was accepted by [Marjorie Younce Snook through Gulf Shores-based Exit Realty](#). The property, which had a combined listing price of \$625,000, includes a vacant .28-acre lot on U.S. 98 at Jessamine Avenue and an adjacent .14 acres with the [historic Claude Peteet Real Estate building](#). Closing is expected in mid February.

"We're excited about it because it will kind of give us a landing for the pedestrian bridge," City Administrator Mike Thompson said. "We still haven't firmed up the exact location of where the bridge will land but it's going to land either on or near that property so it's going to give us some flexibility on what we want to do with the area where the bridge lands on the west side of 59.

In September, the city [was awarded a \\$4.7 million federal transportation grant](#) to help construct a pedestrian bridge over Ala. 59, a block north of U.S. 98 and add 30 miles of bike paths and sidewalks throughout the city. The bridge project will likely go out to bid in late 2014. ([continue HERE](#))

Take Action for Bike Equity

by *Carolyn Szczepanski*

Last year, the League of American Bicyclists released a report — "[The New Majority: Pedaling Toward Equity](#)" — that highlighted the prevailing disparities in safe biking and walking in low-income and communities of color nationwide.

Now, an innovative, bi-partisan bill in Congress, [introduced by Representative Albio Sires \(D-NJ\)](#) would take steps to advance equity for bicyclists and pedestrians, and boost funding for bike/ped projects low-income communities.

The **New Opportunities for Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Financing Act of 2014** (NOBPIFA) will allow communities to take advantage of low-cost financing for projects that make streets and sidewalks safer for all users through a new federal credit assistance program that would direct millions specifically for

low-income communities.

[Take action now: Click here to tell your lawmaker to support this important bill!](#)

Transportation Research

Are you Curious how much bike and pedestrian infrastructure costs?

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, through its Active Living Research program, and the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center have developed a document that quantifies how much bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure costs around the country. You can download it [here](#).

"This document (and associated database) is intended to provide meaningful estimates of infrastructure costs by collecting up-to-date cost information for pedestrian and bicycle treatments from states and cities across the country. Using this information, researchers, engineers, planners, and the general public can better understand the cost of pedestrian and bicycle treatments in their communities and make informed decisions about which infrastructure enhancements are best suited for implementation. By collecting countrywide cost information, this database should contain useful information for any state or city, even if costs from that particular state or city are not included for a given treatment."

[SDITE 2014 Annual Meeting in GA - Hotel filling up fast!](#)

The Southern District ITE 2014 Annual Meeting is being held on March 30 - April 2 in Greensboro, GA at the Ritz-Carlton Lodge (Reynolds Plantation). For information on the meeting, visit www.sdite2014.org.

The hotel rooms at the Ritz-Carlton Lodge are actually filling up very fast, so if you are planning on attending the meeting, you will want to go ahead and reserve your hotel room very soon! Visit www.sdite2014.org and click on "Conference Hotel" at the top of the page

ITE 2014 Technical Conference and Exhibit

ITE is pleased to invite you to attend our 2014 Technical Conference and Exhibit, taking place March 9-12, 2014 at the Hyatt Regency Miami, Miami, FL, USA. This is a not-to-be missed conference of 2014 for anyone in the transportation profession seeking to learn about how to address the critical topics in our industry and grow their professional skills.

This year's conference – ***Applying Innovation and Technology to Transportation*** - will focus on the challenges and opportunities of working with multidisciplinary teams to meet customer, community and political expectations for the creation of vibrant regions to safely live, commute, work, and play. The program will include plenary sessions from nationally recognized transportation and policy professionals as well as presentations, peer-to-peer exchanges, technology showcases and workshops focused on safety, design, operations and planning considerations.

The ITE 2014 Technical Conference and Exhibit delivers significant return on investment. Over four days, attendees will receive the immediately actionable tools and techniques and hear about latest industry trends and topics shaping and transforming the transportation landscape. As a focal point of the conference, the ITE Exhibit Hall showcases the latest technology, products, and services for the transportation industry. In addition, technical tours allow participants to see first-hand the practical application of some of the topics presented in the sessions. These technical tours are being finalized. Watch your inbox for an email update shortly.