



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Volume 25, Number 1

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## Recently Completed Planning Studies

Destination 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan  
 Toole Design Non-Motorized Mobility Study for Downtown Mobile

## 2018 Unified Planning Work Program

2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program  
 Origin Destination Study Using Cell Phones

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Both the State and the Mobile Urban Area TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) Funding have been announced, and are both due May 1, 2018; please see *Funding Opportunities*. In *Legislative Updates*, there are more discussions concerning the Infrastructure Package. *Just For Fun*, are we sick of azaleas yet? Not hardly. In *The News* we are talking ports; the Port of Mobile, and the airport.

Have a great weekend!

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

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

[www.mobilempo.org](http://www.mobilempo.org)  check us out on FACEBOOK

## Mobile MPO Updates

### Please see Funding Opportunities below for the Mobile Urbanized Area TAP Funding announcement

#### 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](#)

#### US 45 Feasibility Study

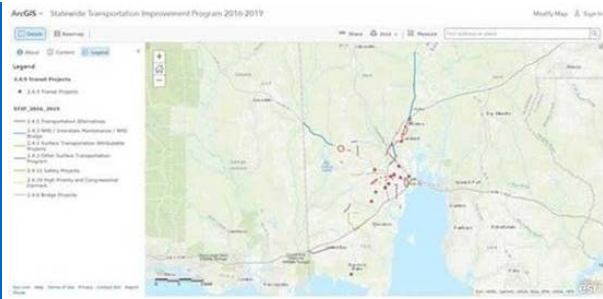
SARPC staff has met with Volkert and CERM as the kick off and introductory meeting to the project; Notice To Proceed was given a couple of weeks ago. The study will have its own web site and will begin shortly as the stakeholders meeting has to be set. Public participation is important for this project, so we expect our stakeholders to be heavily involved. Volkert and SARPC staff are currently compiling data for the project. 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.

**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](http://www.dot.state.al.us).

### Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

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

Project : 100066183 ( FM )

Federal aid number : NH 0016 (523)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : RESURFACING SR-16 (US-90) FROM RAILROAD CROSSING WEST OF I-165 MP 31.246 TO JOINT AT MP 34.207

Old Engineers Estimate : \$1,875,470.00

New Engineers Estimate : \$2,276,655.14

Project : 100067397 ( CN )  
Federal aid number : TAPMB TA17 (947)  
County : MOBILE  
Project Description : SIDEWALKS ON OLD SHELL ROAD BETWEEN DURANT STREET AND UNION AVENUE IN MOBILE  
Old Target start date : March 15, 2018  
New Target start date : December 15, 2018

Project : 100067396 ( CN )  
Federal aid number : TAPMB TA17 (949)  
County : MOBILE  
Project Description : ADDING CURB RAMPS AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS (WINCHESTER, HARMONY RIDGE SUBDIVISIONS IN SEMMES, BROCKTON PLACE, WESTCHESTER PLACE, ASHMOOR PLACE, AND PINE STATION SUBDIVISIONS IN MOBILE)  
Old Target start date : March 15, 2018  
New Target start date : December 15, 2018

Project : 100067315 ( CN )  
Federal aid number : TAPAA TA17 (938)  
County : MOBILE  
Project Description : SIDEWALKS ON DAUPHIN ISLAND PARKWAY BETWEEN THE I-10 INTERCHANGE AND OLD MILITARY ROAD IN MOBILE  
Old Target start date : March 15, 2018  
New Target start date : December 15, 2018

Project : 100067310 ( CN )  
Federal aid number : TAPAA TA17 (935)  
County : MOBILE  
Project Description : SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS ALONG 7TH STREET FROM BAKER ROAD TO BAYOU AVENUE WEST IN SATSUMA  
Old Target start date : March 15, 2018  
New Target start date : December 15, 2018

Project : 100067750 ( CN )  
Federal aid number : TAPMB TA17 (950)  
County : MOBILE  
Project Description : SIDEWALKS ALONG THE NORTH SIDE OF OLD SHELL ROAD FROM THE WEST SIDE OF PARKWAY DRIVE TO UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD IN MOBILE  
Old Target start date : March 15, 2018  
New Target start date : March 15, 2019

## Projects Within Region Let March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018

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### ESCAMBIA COUNTY

- For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, Bridge Rail Retrofit, and Traffic Stripe on I-65 from the Baldwin County Line to the SR-21 Interchange in Atmore. Length 9.722 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$5,420,284 to \$6,624,791.
- For constructing the Permanent Restoration (Ditch Failure Repair) on SR-3 (US-31) from the junction of Sardis Church Road to east of the junction of CR-2 (Old Atmore Road) west of Flomaton. Length 0.084 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$641,270 to \$783,774 .

### MOBILE COUNTY

- For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-13 (US-43) from the Cedar Creek Bridge south of Mt Vernon to the Washington County Line. Length 5.607 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,516,659 to \$1,853,694.
- For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-13 (US-43) from the Cold Creek Bridge north of LeMoyne to the Cedar Creek Bridge south of Mt Vernon. Length 6.936 mi.

### BALDWIN COUNTY

- For constructing the Resurfacing and Roadway Extension (Grading, Drainage, Pavement, Signals, and Traffic Stripe) on Fern Avenue from the junction of Airport Drive in Foley to the Foley Beach Express. Length 3.365 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$3,298,978 to \$4,032,084 .

[What's Under Construction?](#)

[Project Status](#)

## Legislative Updates

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### Trump Cabinet members press Senate panel on infrastructure overhaul

BY [MALLORY SHELBOURNE](#) - 03/14/18 05:40 PM EDT.



© Greg Nash

A Senate panel on Wednesday heard five different Trump Cabinet members press hard on the need for an infrastructure overhaul.

Transportation Secretary [Elaine Chao](#) was joined by four other Cabinet members at a Senate Commerce Committee hearing, as Chao testified for the third time this month on the administration's infrastructure proposal.

Commerce Secretary [Wilbur Ross](#), Labor Secretary [Alex Acosta](#), Energy Secretary [Rick Perry](#) and Agriculture Secretary [Sonny Perdue](#) also made the case for [President Trump's](#) rebuilding blueprint, which allocates \$200 billion in federal seed money that the administration argues will lead to a \$1.5 trillion overhaul.

But neither the administration nor lawmakers have identified a clear revenue stream for Trump's plan, which seeks to incentivize both local and private investment. Commerce Committee Chairman [John Thune](#) (R-S.D.) said he expects some sort of legislation to move this year, but noted that there has been a struggle to identify how to pay for the plan.

"I think it's realistic that something could happen that would constitute a down payment on a bigger, more robust bill," Thune told reporters after the hearing.

"I think the key right now is whether or not we have sufficient resources to fund an infrastructure package."

The question over how to pay for a sweeping infrastructure package has plagued lawmakers for years and has been one of the main issues overshadowing Trump's push for the legislation as Democrats continue to dismiss the \$200 billion pitch.

"So how are we going to pay for it?" committee ranking member [Bill Nelson](#) (D-Fla.) asked during the hearing.

"We can't toll our way out of it," he added in an apparent reference to the administration's suggestion to lift a ban on states' ability to collect tolls on interstates.

But the Cabinet secretaries touted various aspects of Trump's plan that would help their respective departments.

Acosta, for example, emphasized the push for workforce advancement in the framework, which calls to extend the eligibility for Pell Grants, widen the practice of apprenticeships and alter trade licensing requirements.

"As we build infrastructure, we must also ensure that we think about the American workforce that will build this infrastructure and that ultimately benefits from these efforts," Acosta told the committee.

Perry praised the plan for pushing to streamline the permit process and for providing state and local governments with "flexibility" on infrastructure projects.

"First and foremost, the president's plan, it embraces America's time-honored federalist tradition," Perry said. [HERE](#)

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## Trump's infrastructure push hits wall in Congress

BY [MALLORY SHELBOURNE](#) - 03/10/18 12:10 PM EST [5,989](#)

Less than a month after its release, [President Trump's](#) infrastructure plan appears to have crashed and burned in Congress. Republicans are openly questioning whether action on the issue is likely, while their leaders are moving on to other priorities. Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) (R-Wis.) on Wednesday night added another nail in the coffin by declaring a gas tax increase off the table, removing what many lawmakers saw as the most viable funding stream for a rebuilding overhaul. In a bid to regain momentum, the Trump administration [is sending](#) five Cabinet members to testify to a Senate panel Wednesday about the infrastructure plan. But whether the show of force will be enough to jolt Congress into action remains to be seen, with the dispute over the gas tax looming as a major obstacle.

Both Republican and Democratic lawmakers on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, led by Chairman [Bill Shuster](#) (R-Pa.) and ranking member [Peter DeFazio](#) (D-Ore.), have long argued that an increase to the federal gasoline tax would be the quickest way to generate funding for rebuilding projects.

"Right now the simplest and fastest answer is a user fee and the gas tax," Rep. [Lou Barletta](#) (R-Pa.), a member of the committee, told The Hill this week.

"This would be a fix for right now which is what we need. We need some money now."

Money from the 18.4-cent gas tax goes into the Highway Trust Fund to pay for road projects. But that levy hasn't been raised since 1993, eroding the fund's purchasing power. Shuster, who for months maintained that all options were on the table to pay for infrastructure, on Wednesday said "it's time" to increase the gas tax. [HERE](#)

## Five Cabinet members to testify at infrastructure hearing next week

BY [MAX GREENWOOD](#) - 03/09/18 05:10 PM EST [29](#)



© Victoria Sarno Jordan

Five Cabinet secretaries are set to testify before a Senate committee next week on [President Trump's](#) plan to overhaul the nation's infrastructure.

Sen. [John Thune](#) (R-S.D.) [announced Friday](#) that Energy Secretary [Rick Perry](#), Labor Secretary [Alexander Acosta](#) and Agriculture Secretary [Sonny Perdue](#) would appear before the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee next Wednesday. The Cabinet officials will join Transportation Secretary [Elaine Chao](#) and Commerce Secretary [Wilbur Ross](#), who were already expected to appear before the panel.

"Testimony from these five cabinet secretaries will support a comprehensive public discussion with senators about the White House proposal for aligning federal resources with local infrastructure needs and helping complete projects faster," Thune, the committee's chairman, said in a statement.

"The Commerce Committee welcomes the eagerness of Secretaries Chao, Ross, Acosta, Perdue, and Perry to discuss the roles of their departments in the improvement of our infrastructure to support the economy."

[The White House unveiled last month a \\$1.5 trillion plan](#) to overhaul the nation's aging infrastructure. The proposal includes a \$200 billion direct federal investment, half of which would go toward an incentive program to match financing from state and local governments investing in rebuilding projects.

A quarter of the appropriations would be used for rural projects in the form of block grants to states so governors may decide where to invest.

## Funding Opportunities

### Mobile Urban Area Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Funding Availability Announcement

The Mobile MPO has announced the availability of the Fiscal Year 2019 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding. The maximum amount that can be applied for per project with Mobile Urbanized TAP funds is \$200,000 (federal). Applicants are welcome to submit more than one project.

The TAP provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; safe routes to school projects; and projects for planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.

**This year applications will only be accepted electronically. Applicants should email their complete application to [transportation@sarpc.org](mailto:transportation@sarpc.org).**

**Applications are due to the Transportation Planning Department of the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) no later than 12:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 1, 2018.**

Electronic versions of the applications are available online at:

<https://mobilempo.org/TransportationAlternatives.html>.

Project budgets should be itemized and completed by a Professional Engineer that is certified by the State of Alabama.

If you have any questions please call the SARPC Transportation Planning Department at (251) 433 6541.

### The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is soliciting applications for the Transportation Alternatives 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](mailto:miltont@dot.state.al.us)) if you have questions regarding this matter.

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## 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

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### **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](#)

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### **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](#)

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### **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](http://www.grants.gov) in your browser.

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## Just For Fun

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### The Azalea City

Driving down Springhill Ave in Mobile this week, the Azaleas were a blazing and bright. So *Just For Fun* we dug into it, and found out there



is some great history about the median on Springhill Ave. and it's azaleas; thanks to Tom McGehee.

To understand Mobile, it's important to understand the azalea. A city so in love with its past finds the friendly bloom irresistible; it's a living, direct connection to French Mobile, having entered our port straight from gardens in Toulouse. Buildings have crumbled and flags have changed, but through it all, the azalea remains.



Beds of azaleas replaced the abandoned trolley tracks on Spring Hill Avenue's medians in the decades following World War II. By the 1950s, the road had become a major feature of the city's Azalea Trail, even warranting this post card view from the 1960s. Courtesy of Tom McGehee along with below text

There has been a median on Spring Hill Avenue since at least 1860 when Col. Lorenzo Madison Wilson incorporated the Mobile and Spring Hill Railroad. Wilson, who had made a comfortable fortune in the wholesale grocery business, had built his home Ashland (the property would later become Ashland Place) a year or so earlier.

The house sat on 40 acres, which stretched from Old Shell Road north to Spring Hill Avenue.

Mules drew small trolley cars along rails set down the avenue's grassy center. In the early years, these cars were far smaller than their 20th-century electrified descendants. It was not uncommon for the cars to jump the track, leading to an evacuation while able-bodied passengers lifted the car back into place.

The mules resided comfortably in a barn, which stood on the south side of the thoroughfare between Lafayette and Ann streets. The animals quickly learned the routine, knowing to slow down when they heard the conductor click the brake and start up as soon as they heard its release.

The line ran west where it cut south to the foot of Old Shell Road. There the mules were given a rest as a team of oxen pulled the cars uphill, stopping at the gates of Spring Hill College. On the return trip, the trolley gave a memorable ride via gravity down to the foot of the hill where the mules were re-hitched.

#### ELECTRICITY ARRIVES

In 1892, J. Howard Wilson, a Kansas transplant and no relation to the colonel, purchased the line. A newspaper account in September of that year noted that he "and his associates, all outsiders, are erecting an electric street railway so the public will soon have a new method of locomotion."

The mules vanished, along with the familiar sound of their hooves methodically treading down the city's streets. Electric trolley cars, reminiscent of those still operating on St. Charles Avenue in New Orleans today, traveled the grass median of Spring Hill Avenue. Period photographs of other streets in Mobile reveal that the tracks were set within pavement, not sod.

During the 1920s, the number of privately owned automobiles skyrocketed, and ridership on trolleys declined nationwide. In 1939, it was announced that "a fleet of modern buses" would replace all of Mobile's electric trolleys. The final run came on March 10, 1940 as passengers ripped the last car to shreds for souvenirs.

The trolley tracks were soon removed for war-time scrap drives and their space filled with asphalt. Just what saved Spring Hill Avenue's median from annihilation is unclear, but it survived and was ultimately planted with azaleas. By the 1950s, tourists by the thousands would ride down that street to admire the blooms each March.

#### THE MEDIAN DECLINES

By the 1980s, those azaleas and the grassy median along Spring Hill Avenue had seen better days. In 1987, engineers at the Alabama highway department began removing crossings, and the median west of Lyons Park running east to Lafayette Street vanished under a layer of asphalt. Azaleas were removed due to "line of sight" worries.

Ultimately, Spring Hill Avenue's shrinking median caught the attention of the state's preservationists. In May of 2000, the city's once picturesque Spring Hill Avenue was placed on the list of "Places in Peril" by the Alabama Historic Commission due to "rampant demolition and poor planning, which have eliminated much of (its) character and eroded the historic resources along much of its stretch."

In recent decades, planting efforts in the vicinity of the former site of Col. Wilson's Ashland have been successful. Medians further to the east survive in grassy boredom. As national experts continue to promote the installation of medians as a way to calm busy traffic, it can only be hoped that one day this grand avenue's missing median will return, along with those signature blooming pink azaleas.

## In the News

### Mobile port director describes RESTORE process, impact of new docks project

Updated Mar 14; Posted Mar 14



**Jimmy Lyons, Director and CEO of the Alabama State Port Authority, is shown as two new container cranes arrive in late 2017 for an expansion project at the Port of Mobile. (Lawrence Specker/LSpecker@AL.com)**

By [Lawrence Specker](#)

[lspecker@al.com](mailto:lspecker@al.com)

At the start of the month, the Port of Mobile had no money lined up for a new auto-handling facility that could have an economic impact throughout the state and beyond. Two weeks later, thanks to two separate federal grants, it has more than \$40 million.

Jimmy Lyons, Director and CEO of the Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA), said this week that the new docks feature will be a game-changer. His remarks also give some insight into what's ahead for the RESTORE Act process bringing hundreds of millions of dollars in Deepwater Horizon money to Mobile and Baldwin counties.

What the Port of Mobile stands to gain is a type of loading facility called "roll on-roll off," or Ro-Ro for short. It lets new cars, military vehicles and other rolling stock be driven directly onto or off of specialized ships. Lyons is eager to see those ships join the traffic using his port, and not because they're pretty.

"They're like big parking decks, if you will," he said, describing vessels that can hold from 4,000 to 8,000 new cars each. "They're ugly ships."

"I've asked for years, why aren't we shipping automobiles through the Port of Mobile," he said.

One reason was obvious: Building the facility to do it would cost about \$60 million.

The first chunk of funding to come through was a [\\$12.7 million Department of Transportation TIGER grant announced March 6](#). That put the Port of Mobile in select company: [According to the American Association of Port Authorities](#), the latest round of 41 TIGER grants included only 5 project related to ports, and the Mobile project was one of only two that focused directly on shipping facilities at marine ports.

The second came [amid \\$315 million in Mobile and Baldwin County projects](#) recommended for RESTORE Act funding on March 7 by the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (AGCRC). That's money from a trust fund created with penalties paid by the companies involved in the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

Recommended grants include \$28.8 million for a project to "convert a derelict former Bulk Handling Facility into a state-of-the-art Roll On-Roll Off (Ro/Ro)/Mobile Vehicle Processing Facility at the Port of Mobile."

The RESTORE Act was written to distribute money to a range of projects, including environmental recovery and preservation as well as economic development. Mobile's Ro-Ro terminal fits squarely in the latter category. According to a description provided by the AGCRC, "The development of the Facility will allow automobile and equipment manufacturers in Alabama and other neighboring states access to a more cost-effective deep-water gateway for exporting American made products, as well as importing commodities and components that support those manufacturers, creating jobs and improving the regional and national economy."

### In Mobile, 'transformative' effort could move airport from suburbs to downtown



*ViaAir will begin flying a Mobile-Orlando route using Embraer Regional Jets beginning this spring. The flights will depart from Mobile Regional Airport in west Mobile, Ala.. But company officials covet flights departing from the Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley, near downtown,*



by early 2019. (ViaAir photo)

By [John Sharp](#)

[jsharp@al.com](mailto:jsharp@al.com)

In recent years, meetings of the Mobile Airport Authority have barely made a blip on the media's radar screen. Reporters rarely saw much of interest on the agenda. Nor did the flying public, for that matter.

But then came February's surprise from [ViaAir](#), and everything changed.

The upstart Florida airline [announced plans to offer a direct link between Mobile and Orlando](#), the Port City's first such new connection in over a decade. More intriguingly, it wants to fly from the Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley, just minutes from downtown, rather than from Mobile Regional miles away to the west.

Now, the Airport Authority is pursuing a study into the feasibility of relocating all commercial service to Brookley. The study - and its possible consequences - are described by the authority's new executive director as "transformative."

"This organization, the Mobile Airport Authority, is going through a little bit of a metamorphosis," mused Elliot Maisel, chairman of the authority board, noting that it's going to need a bigger meeting room to accommodate the expected new burst of attendance.

Experts who analyze airports, and trends in commercial flights, say a modern-day airport's move from spacious suburbs to a city's core is unheard of.

"Usually the feasibility study is the other way around: moving from the downtown area to a wider area on the periphery where they can expand," said John Kasarda, president of the Aerropolis Institute China and director of the Center for Air Commerce at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Said Reid Ewing, director of the Metropolitan Research Center at the University of Utah: "I know of no other instance of an airport being relocated to downtown."

'Switching roles'

Chris Curry agrees that Mobile is entering uncharted territory. He's been the Airport Authority executive director barely six months, [having been hired in October](#).



*Chris Curry, executive director of the Mobile Airport Authority*

The feasibility study is already under way, with an expected completion in June. From there, the authority anticipates launching a master planning process that will dive into the pro's and con's of relocating commercial flights to Brookley.

The master plan will analyze a 20-year development of Brookley, to include such elements as facilities needs and environmental impacts of commercial flights.

"Mobile has supported two airports for decades," said Curry. "We're not necessarily changing the dynamic. We're just switching roles. Mobile cannot support two commercial service airports"> [HERE](#)

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## Luck of the Irish? Avoid these streets.

If you're downtown this Saturday (and why wouldn't you be?), you may notice a leprechaun or two among the throngs of green-clad folks celebrating St. Patrick's Day. After all everyone is Irish on March 17th! You may have noticed an error in yesterday's email regarding the start time of the parade Saturday. **It begins outside the Cathedral at 11:00 a.m.**, not 11:00 p.m. The routes for the parade and 5K run are below.

The **Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Parade** begins at 11:00 AM on the 17th and will use the following route:

The parade will start on Claiborne St. at Conti St. and travel south on Claiborne St. to Government St.; west on Government St. to Franklin St.; north on Franklin St. to Dauphin St.; east on Dauphin St. to St. Joseph St.; north on St. Joseph St. to St. Francis St.; west on St. Francis St. to Joachim St.; south on Joachim St. to the Admiral Hotel on Government St. and disband.

The **O'Daly's 5K Green Dress Run** begins at 4:00 PM on the 17th and will use the following route:

The run will start on Dauphin St. at Warren St. and travel west on Dauphin St. to Catherine St.; north on Catherine St. just south of Old Shell Rd. and conduct a u-turn around a traffic cone and will reverse the route back to the finish line at Warren St.

## Transportation Research

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### 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 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the *LRFD Bridge Design Specifications*, including information on the major updates that have been made to the Specifications since the 2014 7<sup>th</sup> 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\\_exhrpcJAXEaiWl](https://uah.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_exhrpcJAXEaiWl)



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.

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### **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](mailto:answers@dot.gov)

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

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### **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.

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### **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.

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### **New ADA Sidewalk and Curb Ramp Compliance App**

Download it Today



<http://www.vueworks.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.