



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, May 30th, 2014

Volume 10, Number 9

In This Issue

- MOBILE MPO UPDATES
- PROJECTS LET MAY 30TH, 2014
- LEGISLATIVE UPDATES
- FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
- JUST FOR FUN
- IN THE NEWS
- TRANSPORTATION 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

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We hope everyone is enjoying the spring on the Gulf Coast so far. All of the schools are out or will be next week so remember to watch out for kids on the roadways. Check out the *Funding Opportunities* section this week for ADEM's Diesel Emissions Reduction Grant Program. If you're in Mobile this Saturday morning don't forget to head downtown to Cathedral Square for the Market on the Square, for fresh local produce, flowers and more. We would also like to congratulate all the 2014 graduates in the area.

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



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

Mobile MPO Updates

The Mobile MPO met last week. The board approved the draft funding schedule for a FY 2015 Unified Planning Work Program (annual budget) for the MPO Staff. The full document is being developed and will be made available for public review later this summer. The UPWP will include carryover planning funds that will be used to fund a study for Downtown Mobile that will be in cooperation with and parallel to, the ALDOT Water Street modifications, Bring Back Broad Street Initiative, and various other needed bicycle pedestrian projects downtown.

The MPO Staff is continuing to develop the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan titled Destination 2040. The objective of the plan is to identify, to the maximum extent feasible, the multi-modal transportation improvements which will be needed in the Mobile urban area between now and the year 2040 in order to maintain an acceptable level of mobility. The plan is multi-modal in scope, encompassing long-range plans for highway, public transportation, and bicycle/pedestrian networks. Regional growth, economic development, and accessibility within the study area along with environmental concerns necessitate that the long-range plan addresses not only improved vehicular travel but also improvements to other modes of transportation such as bicycling and walking. Preservation of the existing transportation system coupled with enhancement of all modal choices will contribute to the improvement of the overall quality of life in the region. You can learn more about the plan [HERE](#).

Projects Within Region Let May 30th, 2014

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

- for constructing the Resurfacing and Traffic Stripe on Old US-31 (Section located on the west side of the existing SR-3/US-31) from the junction of SR-3 (US-31) north of Pollard to the junction of SR-3 (US-31) near Keego. Length 2.935 mi.

BALDWIN COUNTY

- for constructing the Resurfacing and Traffic Stripe on Windsor Drive and Ridgewood Drive from North Main Street to Bayview Drive in Daphne. Length 1.226 mi.

[What's Under Construction?](#)

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Legislative Updates

Orphan Earmarks Act Introduced:

Rep. James Lankford (R-OK) recently introduced legislation that would void earmarked funds in U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) accounts with 90 percent or more of the original dollar amount left unobligated after ten years. Approximately \$120 million worth of earmarks were appropriated more than ten years ago and are dedicated to projects that were either never started or are substantially incomplete. The bill would also require U.S. DOT to submit a report each year on which projects received earmarked funding. Click [HERE](#) for additional information.

Funding Opportunities

2014 Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA)

Diesel Emissions Reduction Grant Program

Approx. Grant Amount: \$60,000

The DERA program provides public and/or private on-road and off-road diesel fleet owners and operators funding to help reduce diesel emissions within the State of Alabama. Reducing diesel emissions, such as carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and particulate matter will help improve air quality and human health in Alabama. We would like to partner with fleet owners/managers to retrofit 2006 or older on-road diesel engines and 2009 or older off-road engines, with diesel emissions control devices and/or anti-idling systems.

Diesel Emissions Exhaust Control Devices and Anti-Idling Systems Used in Previous Projects:

- Diesel Oxidation Catalysts (DOC)
- Closed Crankcase Ventilation (CCV)
- ZTR Smartstart II (Locomotive Anti-idling System)
- Tri-Pac (Long Haul Truck Anti-idling System)
- Arctic Breeze (Long Haul Truck Anti-idling System)

All devices and systems must be EPA and/or CARB-certified.

Entities awarded funding under this program must secure vendors and contractors through a competitive bidding process required by the U.S. EPA and the State of Alabama.

Interested parties should contact:

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Alabama Department of Environmental Management
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Walk Friendly Communities Now Taking Applications

CHAPEL HILL, NC — The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) has opened the eighth round

of the Walk Friendly Communities (WFC) application process. Communities are able to submit applications to the program by visiting <http://www.walkfriendly.org/assessment>.

Applications are due by June 16, 2014.

PBIC recently named Boulder, Colo., Denver, Colo. and Lakeland, Fla. as new Walk Friendly Communities and re-designated Charlottesville, Va. as a Gold Level community. Currently, 47 communities nationwide have earned Walk Friendly status.

To assist applicants in collecting and preparing their responses, PBIC offers an interactive version of the application. This text version can be circulated among an application team to facilitate the internal review process prior to submission on June 16. All applications must still be submitted through the online application system by creating an account. To download the text version of the application, please visit http://www.walkfriendly.org/get_started.cfm.

WFC is a national recognition program to encourage towns and cities across the United States to establish or recommit to a high priority for safe walking. Assessing the communities' commitment to improve conditions related to walking, including safety, mobility, access and comfort, PBIC makes designations based on a Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze level, and all communities receive detailed feedback on where and how they can improve. A list of current Walk Friendly Communities is available at www.walkfriendly.org/communities.

Officially launched in October 2010, the WFC program is funded by FedEx Corp. and the Federal Highway Administration. For more information, visit www.walkfriendly.org, or direct your questions to info@walkfriendly.org.

Freight opportunity: Off-hours delivery research pilots

The FHWA Office of Freight Management and Operations is currently requesting applications to result in the award of a minimum of three cooperative agreements to conduct applied research on the subject of Off-Hours Freight Deliveries. FHWA has partnered with EPA in order to research and demonstrate the efficacy of implementing off hours movements and delivery programs in small to medium size urban areas with emerging or growing congestion problems. The Federal Highway Administration will award up to \$450,000 in research pilots and it is expected that recipients collaborate with the European Commission (EC) on similar projects. The solicitation is posted at [HERE](#) and the closing date for applications is June 12, 2014. Please contact Coral Torres at (202) 366-7602 coral.torres@dot.gov if you have any questions.

Please feel free to share this announcement with freight carriers, shippers, or receivers (retailers) who would be interested in participating in the program.

Just For Fun

We hear some folks complain that bikes are too slow for major roadways. Well this guy has worked that problem out. Check out his latest invention [HERE](#).

In the News

General W.K. Wilson Bridge repairs may take months, Satsuma community helping drivers navigate

By Cassie Fambro | cfambro@al.com

May 29, 2014

MOBILE, Alabama-- Travel on the General W.K. Wilson Bridge at northbound Interstate 65 is still limited to one lane after a [fiery crash a week ago](#) that left one man dead.

At midday Thursday, traffic flowed smoothly alongside concrete barriers separating traffic from the damaged side of the roadway that is just under a mile past the "Dolly Parton" section of the bridge. The 6-miles-long bridge spans the Mobile, Middle and Tensaw rivers, stretching from Mobile County

on the south end to Baldwin County to the north.

Vince Calametti, department of transportation's southwest region engineer, told Alabama Media Group that [eight inches of the bridge deck](#) will have to be replaced as a result of both the heat and longevity of the fire from the May 22 accident. The repairs will likely take months to complete. Read the complete story [HERE](#).

Hopes for Long-Term Transportation Bill are Fading

KENNETH ORSKI

May 29, 2014

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With federal transportation spending outpacing tax receipts by some \$1.25 billion a month, the cash balance of the Federal Highway Trust is drawing perilously close to the point where the U.S. Department of Transportation will be obliged to institute cash management strategies -- such as slowing down or delaying state reimbursements -- to keep the Trust Fund account solvent.

Based on current spending and revenue trends, this point -- a cash balance of \$4 billion in the Highway Account -- will be reached in late July, according to the latest U.S. DOT estimate. However, CBO estimates that "both the highway account and the transit account will end the end of the fiscal year with a positive balance," according to an April 14 memo from the Congressional Budget Office (Subject: CBO's Highway Trust Fund Runs, April Baseline)

Of more serious concern is what will happen at the end of the fiscal year (September 30) when the existing surface transportation program is set to expire. While it is virtually certain that Congress will not allow the program to lapse, it is far from clear what form Congressional action will take.

The transportation stakeholders and the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee are pressing for a six-year reauthorization funded at the current spending level of \$54 billion a year plus inflation. They contend a multi-year bill is essential to implement large-scale multi-year projects, and they are warning that failure to maintain current spending levels will oblige states to tighten their belts, cut back on planned construction projects, and forego any new capital investment. The EPW Committee marked up a proposed six-year bill on May 15, admittedly not a final product, because the transit and safety titles of the bill still await action by the Senate Banking and Commerce committees, respectively.

Enacting a multi-year reauthorization at current spending levels faces long odds in this election year. At bottom, it comes down to how much money can be raised to supplement the regular annual Trust Fund income of \$39 billion (\$34 billion credited to the Highway Account and \$5 billion to the Transit Account). And at this point, the answer is far from clear.

Searching for Funds . . .

A six-year surface transportation measure would require roughly \$330 billion to maintain current FY 2014 spending levels (an average of \$55 billion a year including inflation). Trust Fund revenue and interest over the same period are projected to bring in only \$234 billion, according to the latest (April 2014) Congressional Budget Office estimate. This would leave a staggering funding gap of \$96 billion (or \$108 billion -- \$18 billion a year -- according to Sen. Barbara Boxer of California, chairman

of the Senate EPW Committee). How such huge sums of money could be raised on a short notice in this tax-averse, deficit-conscious Congress, remains unanswered.

"The hunt has been under way for the last year and a half to find a funding mechanism to fund our infrastructure needs," House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) told reporters on February 27. "I wish I could report to you that we've found it, but we haven't."

Nor has the Senate been any more successful in its search for extra funds. At a May 6 hearing on "Funding and Financing of Highways and Transit," members of the Finance Committee (which is responsible for coming up with the funding for the transportation bill drafted by the EPW Committee) gave no indication of their thinking, other than agreeing on the "dire" consequences of inaction.

Much of the testimony at that hearing focused on the financial tools (TIFIA, Private Activity Bonds, Build America Bonds) and on public-private partnerships, suggesting that the Committee will give significant weight to the role of private financing in its future deliberations. But as to federal funding, no concrete solutions were offered either for the immediate future -- how to replenish the Trust Fund when it runs dry later this year; or for the long term -- how to place the Trust Fund permanently on a sound financial footing.

. . . But Finding Few Answers

The most straightforward solution -- increasing and indexing the federal gas tax -- a proposal recently resuscitated by Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and endorsed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, has not been widely accepted as an option. "I'm going to be very honest with you, I don't see support for raising the gas tax," Sen. Boxer told the audience at a February 26 AASHTO legislative briefing.

Talk of increasing the gas tax remains anathema in Congress for a good reason: a Gallup poll in April 2013 found two-thirds of Americans opposed to a gas tax hike even if it went toward infrastructure improvements. Nor has the White House changed its negative stance on this matter. Even progressives are ambivalent because of the gas tax hike's regressive nature.

Another solution -- using general funds to supplement Highway Trust Fund revenue -- has been severely limited by the bipartisan budget agreement negotiated between Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) and Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) in late December 2013. This agreement requires any General Fund transfers into the Highway Trust Fund to be fully offset during the year in which the transfer occurs (In MAP-21, some "pay-for's" were spread over a period of up to 10 years, provoking much criticism). General fund transfers are "not a sustainable formula for the future," said Sen. John Thune (R-SD) the ranking Republican on the Senate Commerce Committee, reflecting a widely held view in both Houses.

"We have transferred more than \$50 billion of general fund money into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) to maintain funding levels, making a mockery of having a self-sustained trust fund", wrote Sen. Bob Corker (R-TN) to the Senate leadership on May 14. He went on to say that he could not support a multi-year reauthorization bill unless the bill either increases user fees to match spending levels, reduces spending to match HTF revenues, or offsets HTF spending that exceeds revenues by reducing other government spending by an equal amount.

A third solution -- a wider use of highway tolling -- has proven to be an increasingly popular tool to fund major highway and bridge projects, says IBTTA. Existing toll roads in 28 states generate more than \$10 billion a year in revenue --nearly one-third of the annual federal gas tax revenues. The Administration has given a big boost to tolling in its proposed transportation bill by offering to allow states to toll existing interstates. But revenues from tolling flow into individual state treasuries or those of toll road authorities and do not augment federal transportation revenue or enhance the long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund.

A fourth approach -- a proposal advocated by the White House and embraced by the US DOT in its legislative transportation proposal sent to Congress on April 29 -- is to use transition revenue generated from corporate tax reform tied to a repatriation of overseas corporate profits. The details of the proposed tax reform have not been released by the Administration, and Congressional leaders in both Houses have dismissed the proposal as vague and premature.

A comprehensive tax overhaul is "not something that's going to happen this year," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. House GOP leaders have declined to endorse a corporate tax reform plan or to commit to a vote. Sen. Orrin Hatch, the top Republican on the Finance Committee has likewise expressed opposition to this idea.

In sum, tax reform as a source of revenue for transportation is dead, at least for this session of Congress.

Which leaves most observers agreeing with Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and several of his Senate colleagues that a short-term bill extending the current transportation program (MAP-21) into next year and funded with a relatively modest general funds appropriation, is probably the most one can expect from this deeply divided Congress, whose attention is singularly focused on the upcoming November election -- and whose Senate Majority Leader, Harry Reid (D-NV) himself reportedly does not want to bring up the controversial EPW bill to a vote before the election.

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Transportation Research

Combined Intelligence - Working Together for Smarter Transportation

In September of 2014 the Gulf Region Intelligent Transportation Society (GRITS), the Intelligent Transportation Society of Florida (ITSFL) and the Intelligent Transportation Society of Georgia (ITSGA), will come together for a joint annual meeting. Join us in 2014 for the ITS 3C Summit.

ITS 3C Summit

The conference will be held **September 14-17, 2014** at the Arthur R. Outlaw Convention Center along the waterfront in Mobile, Alabama.

Arthur R. Outlaw Convention Center

One South Water Street

Mobile, AL 36602

The League of American Bicyclists publishes new report of Bicycle Safety

Last week, The League of American Bicyclists released a new report cataloging findings from a year of tracking bicyclist fatalities. For a 12-month period, they set about the grim task of tracking and documenting every fatal traffic crash involving a bicyclist. They also wanted to offer a place to remember the victims and raise the hope that their deaths would at least inform efforts to prevent such tragedies in the future. The result was the Every Bicyclist Counts initiative. Over the course of the project they documented 628 fatal bike crashes. You can read more and find the report [HERE](#).