Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, October 30th, 2015 Volume 16, Number 5

In This Issue

- MOBILE MPO UPDATES
- RPO UPDATES
- PROJECTS LET October 23rd, 2015
- 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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2015 TIGER AWARDS ANNOUNCED… BAD NEWS FOR OUR REGION…. Please see in the news. There is a TCC/CAC Meeting this Wednesday (See Mobile MPO Updates). Action yesterday from Congress created a 3 week extension of the Transportation Bill, and Rep. Davis (R-IL) said of Amendment 28: *"Increasing local control of transportation funding apportioned to States, I feel strongly that local municipal leaders are the ones who can decide best what their regional transportation priorities are"* (See Legislative Updates). ALDOT's TAP Grants (See Funding Opportunities). Have a great weekend, and *Just For Fun,* look out for trick or treaters!

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

www.mobilempo.org check us out on FACEBOOK

Mobile MPO Updates

TAP GRANTS AT WORK

This is a project that Mobile County was awarded from the State TAP Funds in 2013. The 10' width multi-purpose path from the Semmes Community Center westward to Ed George Road has turned out great.

TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE (TCC)/CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) of the MOBILE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) MEETING

The Mobile MPO Technical Coordinating Committee/Citizen Advisory Committee (TCC/CAC) will meet on Wednesday, November 4, 2015 at 10:00 am at the GM&O Building in the Training Room at 110 Beauregard Street. The purpose of the meeting is to review the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission's FY 2016-2019 Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan, review and rebalance the STP Attributable funding schedule. Discuss adding the following items to the 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program:

STP Any Area Funds

Widening, resurfacing, guardrail and striping Dawes Rd (CR-33) from Three Notch Rd (CR-32) to pavement joint south of Scott Dairy Loop Rd; 12/4/2015; $1,010,000

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Resurfacing on SR-16 (US 90) from AL.MS state line to pavement joint just east of Ramsey Rd; 5/27/2015; $2,524,016

National Highway Funds
Resurfacing on SR-13 (US 43) form joint just south SR-16(US 90) to joint just north of SR-158; 2/26/2015; $2,302,241

State Funds
Additional lanes on Schillinger Rd South (CR-31) from Three notch Rd (CR-32) to south of Halls Mill Creek; 10/15/2015; $10,000,000

The Mobile MPO Policy Board will vote on the recommendations by the TCC/CAC at a meeting on Wednesday, November 18, 2015 at 10:00 am at the GM&O Building in the Board Room. In addition the FHWA/ALDOT/FTA will present their findings from the certification review of the planning process of the Mobile MPO in March of 2015.

Obligational Authority

A couple of weeks ago we received notice that MPOs will be subject to ALDOTs' 94% obligational authority for FY 2016. This could greatly impact what gets done this fiscal year by the MPO (the Mobile MPO has over $27 Million scheduled for this fiscal year). We are further investigating what this could mean for the MPO, and the State. The TCC/CAC is going to have to provide some good recommendations the MPO in terms of project priorities. Please see the meeting announcements above.

ADA Transition Plans

The Alabama Transportation Planners Association (ATPA) hosted an ADA Day in Birmingham yesterday, October 29th. The Federal Highway Administration gave a presentation on the Americans with Disabilities Act and Transition Plans, then each urban are in the State gave a brief benchmark report as to where they are in developing the Transition Plans for each local government in an Urban Area, if they did not already have them. The afternoon was a question/answer period with a panel of ALDOT and FHWA officials. For a copy of those questions and answers, and the FHWA ADA Presentation, please see HERE.

Toole Design Group has finalized the *Non-Motorized Mobility Study for Downtown Mobile.* Thank all of you that had a part in creating this important plan for downtown Mobile.

For anyone interested in the Power Point given by Ernie Boughman with Toole Design Group, please see **HERE**

For anyone interested in the FINAL REPORT (large document), please see **HERE**

GIS online

We are upgrading and starting to utilize our online GIS capabilities. Please check out some of the current interactive maps we have been working on. Many more to come…

http://mobilempo.org/maps.html

DESTINATION 2040

The Mobile MPO Long Range Transportation Plan, Destination 2040, has been adopted, subsequent comments from ALDOT, FHWA, and FTA. The DRAFT document that was out for public review and reviewed with MPO and TCC/CAC members may have some slight modifications in the FINAL Document. The FINAL will be out next week.

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.

Rural Planning Organization (RPO) Updates

Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan (HSCTP)

Staff recently completed the FY 2016-2019 Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan. Meetings were held in July and August - one in each county of the region to gather input about the current transportation services and needs. Federal Transportation Law Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) requires that specialized transit projects for the elderly, the disabled, and people with low incomes be included in a locally developed, coordinated human service transportation plan. The goal of the Plan is to enhance access to transit service in Southwest Alabama through the coordination of existing and future services. The key elements of a Coordinated Plan include the following:

- Identify common origins and destinations for targeted populations
- Inventory existing transit services
- Identify unmet needs
- Identify possible wasteful duplication of efforts
- Recommend provisions for cost-efficient transit services

The final document is available on our website HERE.

Projects Within Region Let October 23rd, 2015

Mobile County

None at this time

Baldwin County

None at this time

Escambia County

None at this time

What's Under Construction?

Legislative Updates

Transportation Reauthorization: Decidedly Hopeful

After the Senate surprised us in August with its version of a long-term transportation reauthorization bill, the House is on the verge of doing the same next week. Though the schedule hasn't been finalized, the House appears ready to provide floor time to the Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform (STRR) Act, which passed out of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee last week. The House bill will likely include the Senate's package of payfors, which would help clear the single biggest hurdle to getting a bill through the chamber. If a House bill does pass, the road to a conferenced version that can be signed by the President becomes a very real possibility. Not a done deal, mind you, but possible.

Neither piece of legislation is perfect, of course, and NARC is working to improve the House version during the floor debate. In particular, Representatives Rodney Davis (R-IL) and Dina Titus (D-NV) are expected to file an amendment that would increase STP suballocation substantially and provide billions in additional funds for local projects. We'll send more information soon on how to weigh-in on this important amendment, and if you are able, please make

your voice heard. In the meantime, if you want to watch the inspiring remarks made about STP during the T&I markup, you can find them HERE

Congress Passes Three Week Highway Bill Extension

The House and Senate this week approved an extension of the nation's transportation program, and provided a three-year extension of Positive Train Control (PTC) requirements. The measure extends federal funding for transportation for three weeks, until November 20th. This three week extension was passed in hopes that an agreement can be reached on a long term bill next month. The President signed the bill extending to the November 20th date.

Paul Ryan Elected Speaker of the House

After being approved by the House Republican conference yesterday, Paul Ryan (R-WI) was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives yesterday morning, receiving 236 votes. Ryan's departure leaves the House Ways and Means Committee without a Chairman, as a yet-unfunded transportation bill winds its way through the chamber. There is also some feeling, however, that the transportation reauthorization bill will serve as the first proof that Speaker Ryan can govern.

Funding Opportunities

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is soliciting applications for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for FY 2016.

This year you will find the TAP application and instructional information for completing the application on the ALDOT web site. The web site address is: http://www.dot.state.al.us/moweb/specialprograms_section.htm. After clicking on this page you will see the TAP Application listed. The types of improvements eligible for TAP funding are listed on page 2 of the instructional information. The deadline date for submittal of FY 2016 TAP applications and support documents is Friday, January 29, 2016 at 5:00 PM.

Some major application requirements of the TAP are as follows:

- Only cities, towns and county commissions can apply for funding ;
- Due to limited funding, there is a cap on the amount of Federal Funds that a sponsor can apply for and that amount is $400,000.00;
- Due to limited funding, an eligible sponsor can submit only one application for possible funding;
- The funding ratio for TAP projects is 80% federal funds and 20% sponsor funds and the sponsor is responsible for the cost of the required preliminary engineering;
- Public involvement is optional;
- Fifty (50) percent of the TAP funds are sub-allocated to the MPO's by population and fifty (50) percent is distributed to any area of the state by ALDOT;
- All TAP projects have to be selected by a competitive application process administered by ALDOT ;
- Landscaping as an independent project is not eligible;
- Transportation museums are not eligible;
- For cities/towns that are located within the six largest MPO's (Birmingham, Huntsville, Montgomery, Mobile, Columbus, GA and Pensacola, FL), the TAP funds that are being administered by ALDOT are completely separate from the TAP funds that are dedicated to the stated MPO's.

Please contact Bob Kratzer with ALDOT at (334) 353-6442 if you have questions regarding this matter

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

Just For Fun

IT"S HALLOWEEN…

A dad in Kaizer, Oregon, is fulfilling the wildest dreams of some children in wheelchairs, one epic Halloween costume at a time. It is really an awesome idea for these kids. We just hope the sidewalks they use are ADA Compliant…. Look out for those trick or treaters this weekend.

http://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/kids-tricked-wheelchair-costumes-epic-halloween-treat/story?id=34803397

In the News

DOT Announces TIGER Recipients

Yesterday, USDOT Secretary Anthony Foxx announced 39 projects selected to receive funding from the $500 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) competitive grant program. This program supports projects that have difficulty receiving traditional DOT funds and can provide capital funding directly to any public entity. Selected projects are located in 34 states in both rural and urban communities. HERE

Improvements made to downtown Mobile street corners

By Steve Alexander, FOX10 News Reporter

Fox Ten News is committed to making sure public money is spent wisely on services for you.

We want to alert you to a new project in downtown Mobile designed to especially serve people with disabilities.

HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBILITY

Mobile city officials say several dozen street corners downtown are being re-designed to become handicapped accessible. The intersection of North Joachim Street and St. Michael Street is one corner that has been upgraded.

City engineer Nick Amberger says crews are re-designing the corners to make them accessible for people in wheelchairs, and those with other disabilities. The aim is increasing compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA.

Amberger said, "There is such a thing as an ADA transition plan, and we're working through that, so, we're trying to be very systematic in how we address the needs with the dollars that are available."

WHERE DID THE MONEY COME FROM?

The "dollars" in this case are $1.1 million that come from a grant awarded by the Alabama Department of Transportation. Amberger says the city is working first on areas in downtown Mobile with heavy pedestrian traffic.

Amberger said, "It makes the sidewalk easier to walk on, bicycle, push a stroller. It just makes it much more functional for anybody that's using the sidewalks."

HELPING VISUALLY IMPAIRED
If you've passed by the re-designed corners, you might have noticed mats with these raised bumps.

They help the visually impaired. Think of a large braille tablet that can be read with shoe soles and walking canes.

Amberger said, "It's almost a sensor for them. They can walk up, and that gives them a directional pattern of where the actual crossing is."

KEEPING CORNERS CLEAR
Virginia Young is encouraged by the improved street corners, but she says motorists need to be vigilant, too.

Young said, "When they get through with all of them, it will be great, if the people wouldn't block where we've got to come down. But, sometimes, we have the problem of people blocking it with their cars." City officials hope as more street corners are modified, everyone will become more familiar with the improvements. They say several dozen street corners are being worked on, and it will be a couple of more months before the project is finished.

http://www.fox10tv.com/story/30194472/improvements-made-to-downtown-mobile-street-corners

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Norman J. Walton, Sr. Regional Award

It is time once again to nominate, at your discretion, your government for the annual South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) Norman J. Walton, Sr. Regional Award. There are five award qualification criteria: Problem Solving, Intergovernmental Cooperation, Innovation, Benefit to Regional Quality of Life, and Cost Effectiveness The Norman J. Walton, Sr. Regional Award provides a great opportunity to give such recognition in these areas. SARPC encourages all member governments, municipalities and counties, to submit a nomination form for this award. The nomination form and any supporting documentation should be compiled and submitted to SARPC's office **no later than November 13, 2015**. The award will be **presented on December 10, 2015** at a meeting of the Full Board of Directors and membership of the Commission during the SARPC Annual Meeting conducted at the Grand Hotel in Point Clear, Alabama.

Transportation Research

USDOT Releases New Freight Transportation Data

Earlier this week, the first product of the newest *Freight Analysis Framework* was released by FHWA and the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS). This set of comprehensive publicly accessible data produces information on freight movement and can help transportation planners target resources to improve operations or increase capacity. The release of the **Freight Analysis Framework** comes after USDOT released the draft *National Freight Strategic Plan* with specific policy solutions to address freight challenges.

FHWA Seeks Comment on New Proposal to Encourage Design Flexibility

Comment Period Closes: December 7
The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced proposed revisions to encourage the design of lower-speed roads to align better with community and environmental needs. This represents the start of several proposed regulatory and program policy changes at the agency to allow more flexibility for state, city, and county engineers in the design of highway projects. FHWA proposes to reduce the number of design criteria in order to allow engineers to design projects with multimodal and locally-oriented solutions. For more information click **HERE.**

New Innovative Center to Increase Options for Investment in Transportation Infrastructure

USDOT unveiled its new Build America Transportation Investment Center (BATIC) this week as a resource for states, municipalities, and other project sponsors. AASHTO is partnering with USDOT to create the BATIC Institute to help state DOTs and other agencies find financing solutions for transportation projects. The Institute will provide specialized education to leaders and decision-makers online as well as in-person