



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, November 22, 2019

Volume 32, Number 8

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Contact Us

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The preliminary results for our online survey for the Envision 2045 Long Range Plan are now available, *See MPO Updates*. It looks like there will not be a Federal funding rescission in 2020 and another government shutdown is avoided temporarily, *See Legislative Updates*. The Rebuild Alabama Annual Grant program deadline is quickly approaching, *See Funding Opportunities*. There will not be a newsletter next week as we will be closed for Thanksgiving.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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

www.mobilempo.org  Check us out on FACEBOOK

SARPC Transportation Video, this is what we do [HERE](#)

Want to know what other SARPC departments do?

[Planning and Community Development](#)

[Area Agency on Aging](#)

[Employment and Economic Development](#)

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

Mobile MPO Updates

MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY is underway



In August of 2019, a consultant selection committee selected VIA Mobility to perform the study. VIA Mobility has partnered with local group Goodwin, Mills, and Cawood as a sub consultant. The consultants were given notice to proceed last week, and the kick off was last Friday and there was a teleconference this morning. [HERE](#) is Via's presentation from the kick-off.

There is a lot of work to be done in a short amount of time, and if you would like to be part of this study, we are compiling a stakeholders list. Please call Kevin Harrison for details.

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Envision2045
Invest in your transportation Future
Mobile, AL Metropolitan Area Long Range Transportation Plan

Envision2045 is multi-modal in scope, encompassing long-range plans for highway, public transportation, and bicycle and 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 alternative modes. 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.

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission(SARPC) invites decision makers, stakeholders, and members of the general public to participate in the development of the plan. SARPC is seeking feedback on transportation major infrastructure projects, initiatives and policies. Transportation priorities such as congestion, freight, transit, roadways, bicycle and pedestrian, and other transportation modes will be addressed in the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan.

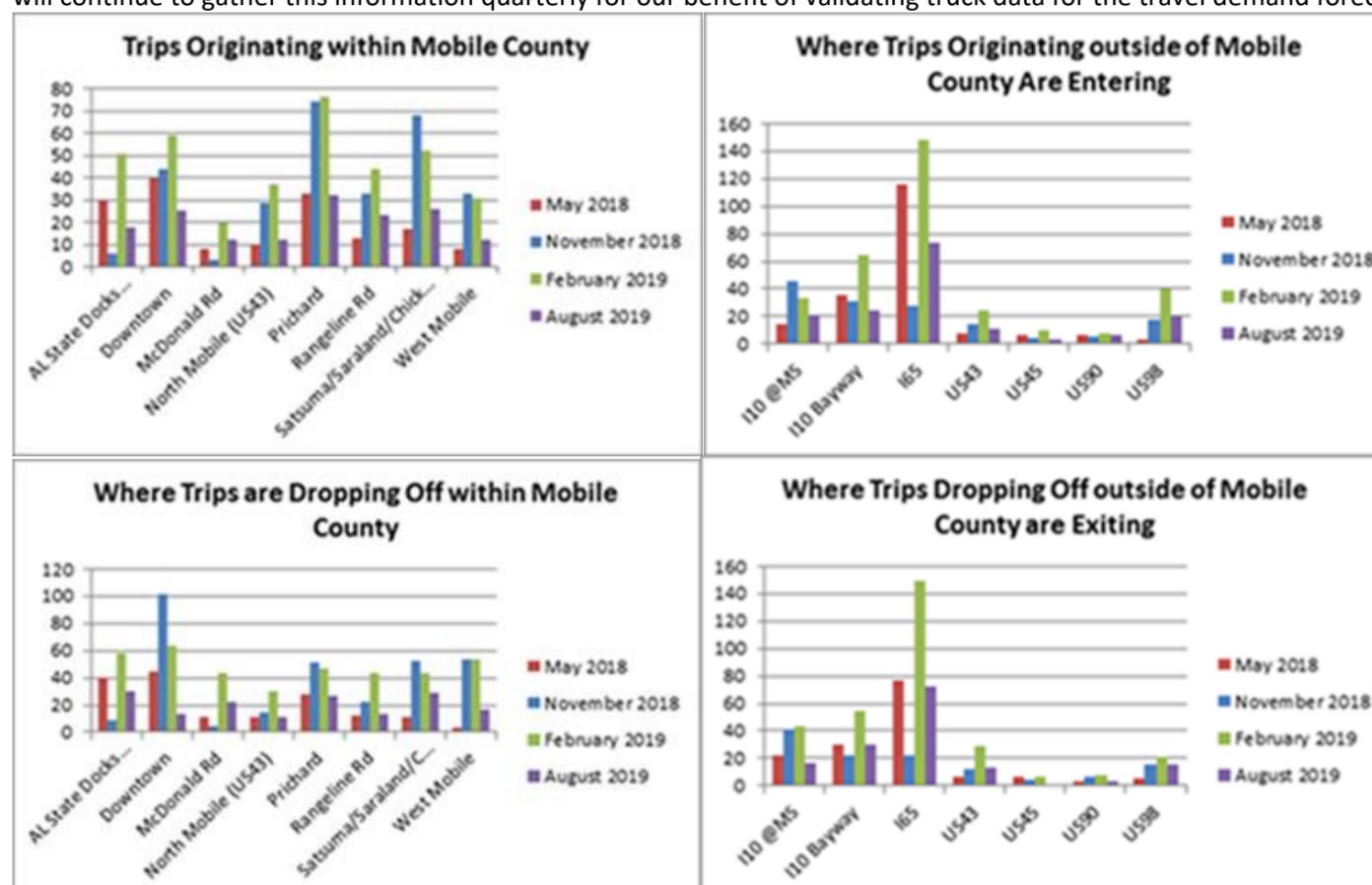
Your comments help SARPC's planners to develop a wide-ranging, action-oriented transportation plan. The Envision2045 plan being developed will also serve as a basis for allocating limited federal money aimed at roadways, bridges, and public transportation facilities. The comment period on the early participation online survey is closed; however, there will be several more opportunities for the public to comment on the plan in the near future.

Please contact Kevin Harrison at kharrison@sarpc.org with any questions or requests for further information.

Preliminary Survey Results have been posted [HERE](#) and will be updated as more of the questions are put into graph and chart form.

FREIGHT DATA

APM Terminals has provided us with their fourth quarterly survey report. Just as last quarter, for two days APM Terminals had on-board tablets for drivers to answer a series of questions in terms of where they came from and where they are going. APM Terminals will continue to gather this information quarterly for our benefit of validating truck data for the travel demand forecasting model.



The TIP represents a four year program (2020-2023) 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 [HERE](#).

Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project:

<http://mobileriverbridge.com/>

About the project:

The Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project would reduce congestion on I-10 in South Alabama through the addition of additional capacity: a new six-lane bridge over the Mobile River, full replacement of the existing Bayway with an eight-lane structure, and redevelopment of seven interchanges. The project would run from Virginia Street in Mobile to the US 90/98 interchange in Baldwin County. Information in the project is available at www.MobileRiverBridge.com.

The Alabama Department of Transportation on August 28, 2019 ceased project development efforts on the proposed Mobile River Bridge & Bayway.

Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

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

None this week.

South Alabama RPO Updates

Rural Planning Organization (RPO) Meeting

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) had a meeting of the Rural Planning Organization (RPO) Committee last Thursday, September 19, 2019 at the Baldwin County Central Annex at 22251 Palmer Street in Robertsdale, Alabama.

Items discussed were current and future transportation projects in the rural areas of our region by the ALDOT Southwest Regional Office.

Other items on the agenda included:

Adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting

- Review and adoption of the Fiscal Year 2020 Work Program (available for review online at <http://www.mobilempo.org/RPODocuments.html>)
- Updating the RPO Transportation Plan with Project List (attached and available for review online at <http://www.mobilempo.org/RPODocuments.html>)

Projects in Region Let December 6th, 2019

MOBILE COUNTY

None at this time

BALDWIN COUNTY

- For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, Steel Blockout Replacement, and Traffic Stripe on SR-59 from the junction of East 29th Avenue to the junction of CR-12 in Foley. Length 5.268 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$2,691,921 to \$3,290,125 .

- For constructing the Safety Widening, Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-181 from the junction of SR-42 (US-98) west of Barnwell to just south of the junction of Quail Creek Drive in Fairhope. Length 7.065 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,486,034 to \$1,816,264

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

None at this time

[What's Under Construction?](#) [Project Status](#)

Legislative Updates

Congress is in session.

AASHTO Applauds Congress For Saving Billions For Transportation

[editor](#) 11/22/2019

WASHINGTON – The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials thanked Congress and the President for their bipartisan support for eliminating the \$7.6 billion rescission of Highway Trust Fund contract authority, originally set to occur July 1, 2020.

“On behalf of the 50 state departments of transportation, as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, that unanimously supported rolling back this rescission, I extend our thanks to the leadership in the House and Senate, committee leaders and their staffs, and the President for removing the threat of disruption and potential delays in the coming construction season,” said Jim Tymon, AASHTO executive director. “The resolution of this issue comes at a time when states are preparing their budgets for the coming construction season, eliminating potential uncertainty that could have delayed important transportation infrastructure investments,” he said.

In his first segment of a new video series on Transportation TV entitled *On Time with Tymon*, AASHTO Executive Director Jim Tymon expresses his gratitude on camera. Watch the segment here: <https://youtu.be/bri1bPEKD4Q>

Trump Signs Bill to Extend Government Funding

[Eugene Mulero](#) | Staff Reporter

November 21, 2019

Agencies at the U.S. Department of Transportation and throughout the federal government will continue to operate through Dec. 20 after President Donald Trump signed a month long funding bill the Senate passed Nov. 21.

The White House had signaled support for the temporary funding measure, known as a continuing resolution, which the senators backed by a vote of 74-20.

The funding authority for the federal apparatus was set to expire Nov. 21.

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) indicated the short-term measure would provide funding leaders with additional time to finalize the fiscal 2020 spending bills. Negotiations are ongoing, with partisan disagreements lingering over proposed funding for a wall between the United States and Mexico.

The Senate’s action came two days after the House advanced the measure by a vote of 231-192. House Democrats praised the vote.

“I am pleased that we are keeping government open, assuring full funding for a fair and accurate Census, and ensuring a pay raise for our military,” House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) said. “Even with passage of this [continuing resolution], American families, businesses and communities need the certainty of full-year funding. Only by coming together in good faith can we settle subcommittee allocations and enact responsible, full-year spending bills that invest in critical priorities.”

The continuing resolution would maintain current funding levels across the government. A provision added to the measure would repeal a section of the 2015 FAST Act highway law to avoid the rescission of \$7.6 billion in highway funding from states in fiscal 2020. Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy, the top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, explained the issue: “Without this provision, each of our states would have seen significant cuts to their highway funding — the last thing we need given the dire state of infrastructure in America today.”

Nearly four dozen groups, including the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, had urged congressional leaders to sign off on the repeal.

“It is especially critical to repeal this provision during the current calendar year because in the worst-case scenario, states may be forced to de-obligate existing projects in order to provide the necessary amount of contract authority to be rescinded. If this happens next spring or summer at the peak of the construction season, the effect would be especially devastating,” the transportation groups wrote Nov. 14.

The House has passed its [fiscal 2020 appropriations bills](#). This fall, the Senate advanced a legislative package that included a bill that would provide [\\$74.3 billion for programs across the federal transportation system](#), as well as provide for housing assistance and community development through fiscal 2020. Specifically, the bill would provide \$1 billion for infrastructure grants and \$679 million for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

While appropriators on Capitol Hill continue to negotiate a path forward on fiscal 2020 funding, the House is proceeding with an impeachment inquiry of Trump. Additionally, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) signaled the potential for scheduling a vote this fall on the new [United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement](#), which was signed last year.

Trump told his Cabinet on Nov. 19 that USMCA remains a priority. As he put it, “The Democrats want to have it. The unions want it. The farmers want it. The manufacturers want it. ... And we’re having a problem, because Mexico and Canada are calling, saying, ‘What’s going on?’ And it’s sitting on [Pelosi’s] desk.”

“So she’s using USMCA to get the impeachment vote,” the president added.

Bill Seeks To Fund Transportation Worker Recruitment Campaign

[Sean Kilcarr](#) November 22, 2019 [0 COMMENTS](#)

Legislation proposed by three members of Congress on November 15 would provide \$30 million to the U.S. Department of Transportation to develop a series of broadcast, digital, and print media public service announcement campaigns to promote job opportunities and improve diversity in the transportation workforce.

Rep. Rick Larsen, D-Wash., Rep. Don Young, R-Ala., and Rep. Angie Craig, D-Minn., introduced the Promoting Service in Transportation Act – known as H.R. 5118 – to specifically promote career opportunities in the transportation sector, including pilots, safety inspectors, mechanics and technicians, air traffic controllers, flight attendants, truck drivers, engineers, transit workers, railroad workers, and other transportation professionals.

“In Washington state and across the country, transportation means jobs,” said Rep. Larsen [in a statement](#), who serves on the House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. “As demand continues to grow, it is important all Americans are aware of the career opportunities available in the transportation sector to grow the next generation workforce.”

[State departments of transportation are engaged in their own efforts to recruit more workers into the transportation industry. The Oregon DOT, for example, brought 500 high school students to its annual Construction and Utilities Career Day this past May; an event that allowed students to operate heavy equipment in a controlled environment and talk one-on-one with contractors, utilities, state agencies, two and four-year colleges and trade apprenticeship programs.]

He emphasized that the need for more professional airline pilots, air traffic controllers, railroad workers and truck drivers, mechanics – among other transportation job categories – is growing more acute.

For instance, the aviation industry will need more than 800,000 pilots, 769,000 technicians and nearly 20,000 air traffic controllers to meet demand over the next 10 years, Rep. Larsen said, while the trucking industry needs 60,000 to 100,000 more drivers each year.

Proposed House Bill Would Codify CDBG-DR

A [modified version of H.R. 3702](#), the *Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2019*, would codify supplemental assistance for disaster relief provided under the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Department’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The CDBG-Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) program does not currently have its own authorization, so HUD applies rules for CDBG grants and any additional stipulations made by the supplemental appropriations law that provides the funds. According to *Bloomberg Government*, Congress has provided more than \$80 billion in CDBG-DR assistance since fiscal year 1993. Along with codifying CDBG-DR, it would add requirements for grant recipients to spend a portion of their funds on mitigation planning, include modified requirements for reconstruction in hazard-prone areas, and extend the availability of funds for insular areas. The bill approved by a vote of 58-0 by the House Financial Services Committee back in July, and the House was expected to vote on the bill on the floor this week.

Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hold Markup

November 19, 2019

Washington, DC- The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a Full Committee markup this past Wednesday, November 20, 2019, at 10:00 am in 2167 Rayburn House Office Building to consider the following measures:

- H.R.5120, SAFER Pipelines Act of 2019;
- H.R. 5047, GSA Lease Transparency Act of 2019;
- H.R. 5139, Stop Sexual Assault and Harassment in Transportation Act;
- H.R. 5119, Safe Aircraft Maintenance Standards Act; and
- Approval of an updated Committee roster due to changes on the Majority side;
 - Congressman Conor Lamb (D-PA) to join the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

More information about the markup, including expected agenda order, legislative text, and a webcast, will be posted [here](#) as it becomes available.

Funding Opportunities

Rebuild Alabama Act (RAA) Annual Grant Program

The RRA Program is an ALDOT administered transportation infrastructure grant program for project of local interest created in the Rebuild Alabama Act of 2019.

Project applications may be submitted for improvements to any classified road or bridge open to public traffic. Any local governmental entity (county or municipality) may apply.

The maximum award for 2020 is \$250,000.00

There is no funding match required however projects containing a commitment to partial local funding may be given favorable consideration.

The deadline to apply for this grant is November 30, 2019.

The Application packet and other information may be found [HERE](#).

U.S. Department of Transportation Announces Funding Opportunity for Roadway Safety Tools

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation today published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to build the capacity of state, local, and tribal governments to use innovative data tools and information to improve roadway safety.

“This is part of the Department’s ongoing effort to utilize predictive data analytics to identify and address systemic factors contributing to crashes and improve roadway safety in communities across America,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

The NOFO is an important step in the Department’s [Safety Data Initiative](#), which helps communities devise policies to reduce roadway fatalities. This funding opportunity makes available up to \$3 million to develop, refine, and deploy safety tools that address specific roadway safety problems. The Department anticipates making awards of \$250,000 to \$500,000 to each successful applicant.

Eligible applicants are state or local governments, metropolitan planning organizations and regional governments, other political subdivisions of a state or local government, and tribal governments. The funding complements existing safety data improvement programs at the Federal Highway Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration by focusing on improving data tools practitioners use to inform their policy and decision-making.

The NOFO is available on grants.gov at: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=322472>

On December 3, 2019 at 2:30 PM ET, the Department will hold a webinar to provide an overview of this funding opportunity. Information about registering for the webinar is available on the Department’s [Safety Data Initiative](#) webpages.

Applications are due by January 17, 2020 at 3:00 PM ET.

[FTA Mobility Program](#)

Applications due by January 6, 2020.

Following Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao's recent [announcement](#) to fund new programs to develop and deploy innovations in technology to improve access and mobility, FTA published a [notice of funding](#) for the [Mobility for All Pilot Program](#), which seeks

to improve mobility options and access to community services for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and people with low incomes.

The \$3.5 million grants program will fund projects that enhance transportation connections to jobs, education and health services. A complete list of members and related contact information by clicking [here](#).

AASHTO Releases a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Enhancement and Support of AASHTOWare Bridge Design & Rating

October 21, 2019

A Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit competitive proposals for professional services to complete the development and delivery of the first release of the planned modernized AASHTOWare Bridge Design-Rating system (BrDR 7.0) and to provide ongoing maintenance, support, and enhancements to the AASHTOWare Bridge Design-Rating products.

A project to deliver a modernized version of the AASHTOWare Bridge Design-Rating software was initiated in July 2016. The goals of the original BrDR modernization effort were to redesign the overall system architecture, update the analysis modules and the product's user interface utilizing up-to-date development processes, tools, and programming languages. The BrDR Modernization Project was scoped to deliver the modernized analysis engine (completed and released in October 2018 as part BrDR 6.8.3), and the fully modernized BrDR software with the modernized user interface in a separate release, during a second phase of the project.

The user interface slated for delivery in phase two as part of BrDR 7.0, encompasses all of the bridge design, analysis and rating capabilities in the current product release, and will permit configuration options to meet the user's needs and familiarity with the software. Completion of the software envisioned as part of the modernization project (currently partially-developed) will represent delivery of the fully modernized BrDR system that will include both the modernized user interface, and the previously released modernized analysis engine. As stated, work on the fully modernized BrDR software that includes the updated user interface is partially complete. AASHTO estimated that design activities are 95% complete, development activities 70% complete, and software testing activities 10% complete.

AASHTO seeks a contractor to complete the remaining development tasks for phase two (BrDR 7.0), support the delivery of BrDR 7.0 to the end-user community, and provide maintenance, support, and enhancement services for the last two legacy versions of BrDR (6.8.3 and 6.8.4) as well as BrDR 7.0, once delivered.

Due to the confidential information disclosed in the RFP, a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) must be signed and emailed to Judy Skeen Tarwater at jtarwater@aaashto.org to obtain a copy of the RFP document. For a copy of the Non-Disclosure Agreement, please [click this link](#).

Please note, all proposals are due by November 25, 4:00 pm ET. If you have any questions, please contact Judy Skeen Tarwater at jtarwater@aaashto.org.

Opportunity Zones

EDA's Opportunity Zone Web Page

EDA now has an [EDA Opportunity Zone Web page](#) for economic development stakeholders and others to use as a resource to further help foster job creation and attract private investment to support development in economically distressed areas across the United States.

[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](#)

To stay up to date on all of the many grants that are available visit www.grants.gov.

Just For Fun *(THIS IS SATIRE, AND JUST FOR FUN)*

People in Iceland are so happy, that their traffic signals have hearts for red, and happy faces for green. Can you imagine on a Friday, during Summer, on Government Street, it might prevent some road rage to have happy faces and hearts.....



The real reason is drivers that are color blind, will be able to see shapes. Another examples of this are different shapes:



Or Couples Only...



Here are some alternative signals



In the News

Sessions sees hope for federal bridge funding

[BALDWIN COUNTY](#)

Senate candidate is counting on infrastructure money in a second Trump term



by: [Peter Albrecht](#)

Posted: Nov 18, 2019 / 05:43 PM CST / Updated: Nov 18, 2019 / 05:43 PM CST

Former Senator, U.S. Attorney General, and now Senate candidate Jeff Sessions says he thinks there's a way to get federal funding for a new I-10 bridge over Mobile Bay.

Planned for more than 20 years, the project is now on hold after virtually all federal funding disappeared and locals balked at paying a six dollar toll to fund it.

Sessions says federal money, at least for a scaled-down version of the bridge, might be freed up if President Trump wins a second term.

"The President's plan is to have a national infrastructure bill," he said. "It will be maybe a trillion dollars. It might provide us with one of the best opportunities we have."

Sessions says securing bridge funding and protecting defense contracts for Mobile's Austal shipyard will be among his top priorities for the area, if voters return him to the Senate. He held the seat from 1997-2017. Sessions faces seven other Republicans in the Alabama Primary Election March 3rd.

[Federal Railroad Administration Feasibility Study – Phase 2](#)

Passenger Rail Study:

A feasibility study regarding the restoration of passenger railroad service between Birmingham and Montgomery is now complete. The study examines the costs, benefits and projected ridership for a variety of potential routes and schedules and was completed with input from local officials and a survey of residents.

 [Click here to read the full study.](#)

Federal Railroad Administration Feasibility Study – Phase 2:

The "Notice of Availability" and the Report and Drawings to the Federal Railroad Administration on the State of Alabama's Montgomery to Mobile Intercity Passenger Rail Service Feasibility Study are available here:

 [Montgomery to Mobile Passenger Rail Feasibility Study - Narrative](#)

 [Montgomery to Mobile Passenger Rail Feasibility Study - Drawings](#)

 [Notice of Final Report Availability](#)

Program areas:

A wide range of programs fall under the category of community and economic development, and they exist to improve Alabama communities in very specific ways.

Some community needs addressed by [Community Development Programs](#) include providing clean water, paving the way for new jobs, eliminating health and safety hazards, and assisting minority-owned businesses.

The [Recreation and Conservation Unit](#) administers grants that fund walking trails, playgrounds and other outdoor areas that improve communities.

The [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) has been working to improve lives, create new jobs, spur economic development, build roads and infrastructure, advance education and promote wellness in central and north Alabama since its establishment in 1965.

The [Delta Regional Authority](#) works to improve many aspects of communities in 20 Alabama counties.

[Alabama Advantage](#) provides information for those looking to relocate or retire in our state.

Bill would require GOMESA funds be spent in Coastal Alabama

Posted by [Jason Johnson](#) | Nov 20, 2019

Gov. Kay Ivey recently announced a \$28 million suite of projects in Mobile and Baldwin counties that will be funded with Alabama's share of royalties from offshore oil leases, but one state senator wants to make sure money generated from those leases in the future stays on the Gulf Coast as well.

The Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) established a program that splits a portion of federal oil royalties with Gulf states and their coastal municipalities. In Alabama, 80 percent of the nonfederal portion goes to the state government, while 20 percent is split between the two coastal counties.

The intent of the program was to help coastal communities mitigate the risks of offshore oil drilling, and there is perhaps no better example of those risks than the 2010 BP, Deepwater Horizon, oil spill. But Alabama's handling of roughly \$1 billion it received in a settlement after that spill has not sat well with many on the Gulf.

While coastal communities bore most of the environmental and economic burden from the oil spill, the Legislature ultimately voted to spend the lion's share of its BP settlement paying down old debts and plugging a multi-million dollar funding gap in the state's Medicaid program back in 2016.

Now, with the state set to receive more through the GOMESA program than ever, Sen. Chris Elliott, R-Fairhope, wants to make sure that doesn't happen again. He has already pre-filed a bill for the 2020 legislative session that, if passed, would require state GOMESA funds to be spent in Mobile and Baldwin counties.

Speaking with Lagniappe, Elliott said he believes Ivey, her chief of staff, Joe Bonner, and Conservation Commissioner Chris Blankenship will keep the coast in mind when allocating GOMESA funds, but he also said there's currently nothing on the books to stop future administrations from changing course.

"The state's portion is not necessarily required to be spent in Mobile and Baldwin counties, and ultimately it's the governor's decision where that money goes," Elliott said. "I'm confident that Ivey, [Blankenship] and [Bonner] will make sure that money continues to come to Coastal Alabama, but I was also sure that would happen with the BP money and that turned out not to be the case."

Elliott said he hasn't heard of any sustained effort to divert future GOMESA funding from the coast to other areas of the state, but that's also why he wanted to move ahead with SB3 this year — hoping to get that bill or something similar through the legislature "before anybody really notices that money is there."

The timing of the bill, Elliott said, is also important.

For years the revenue generated by GOMESA was relatively small, but as oil operations in the Gulf have moved to the east and closer toward Alabama's coastline, proceeds from GOMESA have increased dramatically. In 2018 alone, Alabama and its two coastal counties received close to \$30 million.

The current process for allocating the state's GOMESA dollars runs through the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) but stops at Ivey's desk. Blankenship, who heads ADCNR, noted GOMESA has federal limitations on what type of projects it can fund.

Earlier this year, ADCNR began accepting project suggestions and then, over time, whittled those down to a recommendation for Ivey's office. Blankenship said his staff considers a number of factors, including whether a project aligns with GOMESA's intended purposes and whether it could also be implemented through other funding streams like the Restore Act, which was passed to address injuries from the 2010 BP spill.

“We look at what projects we feel have the most merit and then try and see whether they can be funded through any of the other Deepwater Horizon sources,” he said. “Some projects don’t fit well under funding sources. Boating and water access is one of those things that’s really easier under GOMESA.”

That seems to be evident looking at the 16 projects officially announced earlier this month, which include boating ramp construction and enhancements in Bayou La Batre, Dauphin Island, Gulf State Park and the Middleton Causeway. They also include more environmentally focused projects as well, like funding algal monitoring near Mobile Bay’s oyster beds and various other watershed enhancements.

A full list of Alabama’s GOMESA projects is available at lagniappemobile.com, but relative to Elliott’s proposed legislation, the most important thing about the selections are that none of them fall outside Mobile and Baldwin counties. Still, Elliott said his pre-filed bill was a way of “making darn sure” it stays that way.

Blankenship told Lagniappe he’s yet to read Elliott’s bill, but did note — even prior to this year — all of the projects the state has funded through GOMESA have been in Mobile and Baldwin counties.

“I don’t really see how that’s been an issue or where those funds have gone anywhere outside of those coastal areas,” Blankenship said. “Mobile and Baldwin counties also get their own share of GOMESA funds that do not come out of the state’s funding. It’s a separate allocation.”

Those separate allocations Blankenship is referring to are the dollars that go directly to the county commissions. Last year, Baldwin County saw \$2.4 million and Mobile County received \$2.8 million and those numbers are projected to stay around that same level through at least 2020.

The Mobile County Commission adopted a three-year plan for its GOMESA funds last year that includes, among other things, land acquisition and support for its recycling center.

Commissioner Charles “Skip” Gruber said Baldwin County’s dollars are directed toward environmental projects, and specifically mentioned dirt road paving efforts the county has undertaken in sensitive areas prone to erosion.

Cost of deferred maintenance for U.S. infrastructure tops \$1 trillion, new report finds

BY [LIZ CAREY](#) | NOVEMBER 21, 2019

A new report from the non-profit Volcker Alliance warns that repairs to the nation’s aging infrastructure could cost more than \$1 trillion, or 5 percent of the country’s gross domestic product, a figure that represents the United States’ deferred maintenance costs for its roads, highways and other critical public assets.

The report entitled, “[America’s Trillion-Dollar Repair Bill: Capital Budgeting and the Disclosure of State Infrastructure Needs](#),” unveiled on Nov. 20, outlines how state and local governments do not fully disclose the costs of deferred maintenance to their infrastructure.

“States say their budgets are balanced but too frequently, they fail to account properly for the immense cost of infrastructure maintenance that has been deferred,” said William Glasgall, Volcker Alliance senior vice president and director of state and local initiatives. “You cannot make a truly balanced budget if you do not know what your costs are. Taxpayers deserve to know how much it will cost to repair our deteriorating infrastructure.”

State and local governments provide about 80 percent of U.S. public infrastructure investment, the report said, adding that infrastructure spending as a share of GDP has declined in recent decades.

According to the report, only four states disclose the cost of deferred maintenance for unfunded capital projects in their state documents. In Tennessee, New Jersey, Michigan and the District of Columbia, researchers found federal reports that showed the deferred maintenance gap, said Camila Fonseca-Sarmiento, one of the paper’s authors. In three other states, Hawaii, Kentucky and Washington, university research outlined the costs of deferred maintenance.

Those reports were handled by a separate commission to specifically identify those costs, said Fonseca-Sarmiento, who is with the Institute for Urban and Regional Infrastructure Finance at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota. In some cases, such as in Tennessee and D.C., the commission created a database that listed all of the assets in the state or district, and their condition. According to those reports, between 60 to 70 percent of repairs or maintenance to their infrastructure remain unfunded.

The organization estimates that the total state maintenance gap could be more than \$873 billion. Combined with a federal maintenance gap of \$170 billion, deferred maintenance on the country’s infrastructure tops out at \$1.04 trillion, the report said.

Reflecting the poor condition of U.S. infrastructure, the American Society of Civil Engineers assigned America’s infrastructure a D+ grade in 2017.

The Volcker Alliance report outlines a 10-point action plan to help states close their deferred maintenance gaps, in part by setting common standards, improving asset management and creating a better-informed decision-making process for capital projects.

The recommendations include:

- Designating a separate agency within the government to prepare the capital budget;
- Separating the capital budget from the operating budget;
- Describing and creating a database of the state's assets;
- Standardizing capital improvement plans, and connecting them to the capital budget;
- And developing a statewide report on infrastructure needs across the state.

The Volcker Alliance said in its report that states frequently fail to report on how deferring maintenance liabilities will impact the cost of future maintenance.

Speaking during a webinar to discuss the infrastructure paper, Tennessee state Sen. Bo Watson (R-Hixson), who serves as chair of the Tennessee Senate Finance, Ways and Means Committee, said his state works to ensure that it doesn't tackle transportation projects unless it has the money to pay for it, so the state doesn't carry any debt.

But, he said, waiting to afford those projects can impact their cost.

"A report from last year on projects that were not completed shows that their cost has already increased by \$5 billion," he said.

Tennessee's infrastructure needs in 2017 were \$25.4 billion, Watson said, but only \$968 million of that was appropriated.

Jerry Zhirong Zhao, another of the paper's authors, also with the Institute for Urban and Regional Infrastructure Finance at the University of Minnesota, said the public-private partnership model of financing may be a solution to financing parts of projects, but that it was not an alternative means of funding projects.

Addressing the deferred maintenance costs associated with U.S. infrastructure is critical going forward.

"At the Volcker Alliance, we believe that government should be a responsible steward of financial resources," said Thomas W. Ross, president of the Volcker Alliance. "America's economic vitality and growth depends on all types of infrastructure, and it is alarming that our governments are not adequately tracking or disclosing the amount that repairs will cost taxpayers."

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

REPORT TO FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION
ON STATE OF ALABAMA'S
MONTGOMERY TO MOBILE INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE FEASIBILITY STUDY

State of Alabama's Passenger Rail Feasibility Study:
Phase 2 – Montgomery to Mobile Route

On behalf of the State of Alabama, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) and AECOM Technical Services, Inc. of Atlanta, Georgia (AECOM) have produced a Final Report on the *Montgomery to Mobile Intercity Passenger Rail Service Feasibility Study*. This Study and its Report were funded from federal grant funds allocated under the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration. This Study comprises Phase 2 of an overall study concerning the feasibility of returning passenger rail service between the cities of Birmingham, Montgomery, and Mobile, with Phase 1 involving the Birmingham to Montgomery rail corridor and Phase 2 involving the Montgomery to Mobile rail corridor. This Report summarizes the Study's revenue, cost, ridership analysis, stakeholder outreach, and service planning activities that were conducted from 2017 through 2019 by AECOM for the Montgomery to Mobile rail corridor. This Report will be available for use in assisting the State when considering and/or determining future plans for establishing an overall Birmingham to Montgomery to Mobile passenger rail system should funding be made available for such establishment at a future date.

The Report may be viewed online at www.adeca.alabama.gov or at the ADECA office at 401 Adams Avenue, Room 500, Montgomery, Alabama 36104, beginning on Wednesday, November 13, 2019. Interested parties may offer public comments on the Report by submitting written comments to ADECA. Any and all written comments should be received in the ADECA office no later than Friday, November 22, 2019. Such comments should be addressed to Dr. Kathleen Rasmussen, ADECA, P.O. Box 5690, Montgomery, AL 36103-5690, or e-mailed to Kathleen.rasmussen@adeca.alabama.gov.

Transportation Research

FHWA Webinar Announcement:

USLIMITS2: A Tool to Aid Practitioners in Determining Appropriate Speed Limits

You are invited to register for this free webinar, sponsored by FHWA, about the USLIMITS2 speed setting tool. USLIMITS2 is a web based tool designed to help practitioners set reasonable, safe, and consistent speed limits for specific segments of roads. USLIMITS2 is applicable to all types of roads ranging from rural local roads and residential streets to urban freeways. However, the tool is not applicable to school zones or construction zones.

When: December 11, 2019

Time: 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm ET/11:00 am – 12:30 pm PT

Registration: <https://collaboration.fhwa.dot.gov/dot/fhwa/WC/Lists/Seminars/DispForm.aspx?ID=2212> You must register in advance in order to attend this webinar. Space is limited so please register as soon as possible. Once you register you will receive an email with login instructions. Non-USDOT employees must have an FHWA external collaboration account to register. If you do not have an account please visit <https://collaboration.fhwa.dot.gov/FBA/MembershipRequest.aspx> to request one. Once you receive your account confirmation you can then register through the registration link above.

Description: This webinar will begin with an overview of USLIMITS2, how it works, the decision rules behind the tool that lead to the speed limit recommendations, recent updates made to the tool, and plans for future updates. This presentation will be followed by presentations from a local agency and a State agency discussing how they have used USLIMITS2 and the benefits that have been recognized.

Presentations:

- USLIMITS2: An Overview presented by Doug Cobb, PE, PTOE, RS1, Transportation Operations and Safety Lead, Toxcel
- The City of Maryland Heights, Missouri's Experience with USLIMITS2, by Debbie Wright, PE, Engineer II, City of Maryland Heights Department of Public Works
- The Connecticut Department of Transportation's Experience with USLIMITS2, by Eamon Flannery, EIT, Transportation Engineer III, Connecticut Department of Transportation

Aspen Institute Releases Rural Development Research

Posted on: November 20th, 2019 by [Carrie Kissel](#)

The [Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group](#) has released the new research report [Rural Development Hubs: Strengthening America's Rural Innovation Infrastructure](#). The report is drawn from interviews with 43 rural development practitioners to address what works to address community and economic development in rural America. The report focuses on the roles of intermediaries, called Rural Development Hubs in the report, that operate on a regional level to improve assets, increase local ownership and control of assets, and address equity and inclusion. NADO member Region Five Development Commission was one of the organizations featured in the report. Learn more at www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/rural-development-hubs-report.

2020 Alabama Recreational Trails Conference

SAVE THE DATE

February 5-7, 2020
Gulf State Park and Lodge
21196 E Beach Blvd., Gulf Shores, AL 36542

A fun and informative event with mobile workshops and speakers from across Alabama and the United States presenting sessions on the latest trends and ideas in creating recreational trails that are inclusive, accessible, and connected to enhance quality of life and economic development in our state!

Registration announcement coming soon!

RURAL ROADWAY DEPARTURE WEBINAR ON 12/12

Rural Roadway Departure Webinar on 12/12

On December 12, 1 – 2:30 p.m., the Federal Highway Administration will present the webinar Reducing Rural Road Departures. Overall, one third of all traffic fatalities are caused by rural roadway departures. Using data-driven systemic analysis, local and tribal agencies can target problem areas in their rural roadway networks. By implementing targeted safety improvements, local and tribal agencies can improve roadway safety and save lives! This webinar will be useful to staff of local government agencies and the regional rural transportation planners who often work with them. Register for the free webinar [here](#).

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.

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- 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.