



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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## Contact Us

<http://www.mobilempo.org>  
[transportation@sarpc.org](mailto:transportation@sarpc.org)

Kevin Harrison, PTP  
Director of Transportation  
[kharrison@sarpc.org](mailto:kharrison@sarpc.org)

Tom Piper  
Senior Transportation Planner  
[tpiper@sarpc.org](mailto:tpiper@sarpc.org)

Monica Williamson  
Transportation Planner  
[mwilliamson@sarpc.org](mailto:mwilliamson@sarpc.org)

Anthony Johnson  
Transportation Planner  
[ajohnson@sarpc.org](mailto:ajohnson@sarpc.org)

South Alabama Regional Planning Commission  
110 Beauregard St  
Mobile, Alabama 36602  
(251) 433-6541

A Mobile MPO meeting is scheduled for March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020; TCC/CAC on March 4<sup>th</sup>, please see *Mobile MPO Updates* **BUILD GRANT ANNOUNCED! TAP GRANTS ANNOUNCED! (May deadline)**, lots of grant opportunities; please see *Funding Opportunities*. The Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan is being updated, please see *RPO Updates*. More talks about a surface transportation reauthorization bill; see *Legislative Updates*. Baldwin County Commission adopts the Expressway Plan; see *In The News*. This week's *Just For Fun* will set your mind aglow with whirling, transient nodes of thought careening thru a cosmic vapor of invention.

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

[www.mobilempo.org](http://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 MPO Policy Committee Meeting March 25<sup>th</sup>

### TCC/CAC Meeting March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020

There will be a Technical Coordinating/Citizens Advisory Committee TCC/CAC meeting on March 4<sup>th</sup>, followed by a Mobile MPO meeting on March 25<sup>th</sup>. Both meetings are at 10:00 AM in the GMO Building.

The 25 Year Long Range Transportation Plan (*Envision 2045*) is on the agenda for adoption. There was a public meeting concerning the LRTP *Envision 2045*, on January 29<sup>th</sup> with very limited comments. The draft plan, and all of the comments from the early public involvement can be found at [www.Envision2045.org](http://www.Envision2045.org). If you would like a hard copy of the plan to review, please let me know. At this point, the I-10 Mobile River Bridge is not in the fiscally constrained LRTP, yet is a Visionary Project.

Also on the agenda is a transit Program of Projects for the FTA 5310 funding, a TIP amendment to include Preliminary Engineering for Additional Lanes on SR-158 From MP 7.75 to Spartan Drive for \$47,418.



Envision2045

Invest in your transportation Future

Mobile, AL Metropolitan Area Long Range Transportation Plan

<https://www.envision2045.org/public-involvement.html>

The Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is currently updating its Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Mobile Urban Area. LRTPs are multimodal plans that set priorities for spending federal funds on transportation projects in the Mobile Urban Area over the next 25 years. Envision2045 is multi-modal in scope, and projects include improvements to highways, roads, bridges, transit facilities and service, bicycle and pedestrian routes, and related enhancements. 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.

SARPC conducted an online survey in 2019 to give the public a chance on to comment on what is most important in terms of transportation in the Mobile Urbanized Area, to help guide the 25 Year LRTP. **Click [HERE](#) for Full Results.**

A public input meeting on the draft *Envision 2045 LRTP* was held Wednesday, January 29<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm, providing the public a chance to provide input.

Participation and input is encouraged from the community. If you would like a chance to comment, you may send your comments to [transportation@sarpc.org](mailto:transportation@sarpc.org).

More information on the new plan can be found at <https://www.envision2045.org/> or by contacting Kevin Harrison, Director of Transportation, SARPC, at (251)433-6541 or [kharrison@sarpc.org](mailto:kharrison@sarpc.org).

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## ***The MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY is underway***



Over the years, the viability of transit in the underserved segments of Mobile County has been an important task to consider. The ability to connect those populations with daily needs and employment could be an important step in improving the quality of life for residents. Recent advancements in technology have given rise to new transit opportunities, and the Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization / South Alabama Regional Planning Commission are currently engaged in studying the feasibility of a demand response transit model for our County. The demand response transit model uses a technology system to connect those in need of a ride with the provider based on the most efficient route and timing of other riders as well.



An important step in determining the feasibility of such a system includes talking with important stakeholders in the county. To future these efforts, a stakeholder roundtable meeting was held earlier this week. It is our hope that participating in this roundtable will help our consulting group gather information on the populations in need of improved transit access in Mobile County.

This week, SARPC staff and Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood met with the LeMoyné Citizen Advisory Panel (LCAP) and presented the study. It was somewhat well received, with mixed emotions about commuting for shift employees. The further we dig into discovering possibilities of transit outside the WAVE, the more challenges we seem to be finding.

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## **[FY 2020-2023 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM \(TIP\) NOW ONLINE](#)**

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](#).

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## **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](http://www.MobileRiverBridge.com). On August 28, 2019 the Alabama Department of Transportation ceased project development efforts on the proposed Mobile River Bridge & Bayway.

### Mobile MPO Perspective

Although the I-10 Mobile River Bridge is commonly mentioned in the above LRTP comments, currently the I-10 Mobile River Bridge is in the LRTP as a Visionary Project. This means it is NOT in the fiscally constrained LRTP, it is on a wish list of sorts as there is not available funding identified. The Bridge is also not in the current Transportation Improvement Program ([TIP](#)); it has to be in the LRTP in order to be on the TIP.

When the State of Alabama, the Gulf Coast citizens, and the local elected officials agree on how the project can be funded, ALDOT will have a better idea on what type of project can be afforded. Once this happens, and I am confident it will, the Mobile MPO can amend the *Envision 2045 LRTP*, and the TIP to include the I-10 Mobile River Bridge. The Mobile MPO would like to know the facts, like how much funding is available, and where does it come from, before adopting a resolution supporting a plan.

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## **Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile**

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

Project : 100069442 ( CN )  
Federal aid number : NH 0042 (538)  
County : MOBILE  
Project Description : INSTALLATION OF NEW GENERATOR TO REPLACE EXISTING GENERATOR FOR BANKHEAD TUNNEL AND ITS DEVICES  
Old Target start date : April 03, 2020  
New Target start date : April 24, 2020

## South Alabama RPO Updates

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### Public Notice

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) is updating the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan which details which projects are eligible for Federal Transit dollars for Elderly and Disabled, Job Access and Reverse Commute projects, or those transit projects that go above and beyond the requirements of ADA.

If you are interested in, utilize, or provide transit or would like to apply for federal transit dollars for special needs transit services, please attend a Public Meeting at the GM&O Building at 110 Beauregard Street in Mobile, Alabama. The meeting will begin at 10:00 am on Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup> in the board room.

Please contact the Transportation Planning Department at SARPC at 251-433-6541 if you have any questions or need special assistance attending the meeting.

## Projects in Region Let February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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### MOBILE COUNTY

For constructing the Roadway Extension Overpass (Grading, Drainage, Pavement, and Bridge) and Jug Handle on SR-158 over a tributary of EB Seabury Creek and Partial Lott Road to include the Minor Widening, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-158 from 0.020 mile west of the junction of Schillinger Road to 0.400 mile east of the junction of Schillinger Road in Semmes. Length 1.093 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$17,147,508 to \$20,958,065 .

### BALDWIN COUNTY

For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-3 (US-31) from the junction of Crosby Road in Bay Minette to the Escambia County Line. Length 11.308 mi.

The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,982,091 to \$2,422,555 .

### ESCAMBIA COUNTY

For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, Guardrail Installation, and Traffic Stripe on SR-15 (US-29) from the junction of Finlay Lane to the Covington County Line. Length 18.720 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$2,962,024 to \$3,620,251 .

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

## Legislative Updates

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*Congress is in session.*

### U.S. LAWMAKERS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT NEW SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION BILL

At AASHTO's Washington Briefing, members of Congress say they believe a bill will pass this year

FEBRUARY 27, 2020



Senator John Barrasso addresses 2020 AASHTO Washington briefing. Image: AASHTO

At this year's [AASHTO Washington Briefing](#), several key members of Congress expressed optimism that new [surface transportation reauthorization](#) legislation would pass this year before the FAST Act expires.

Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyoming) said that with 2020 being a presidential campaign year, he expects the process for getting a surface transportation bill passed to be "competitive, costly, and combative."

"We need a safe, reliable, and efficient transportation system," Barrasso [said in his address to AASHTO](#). "So I am committed to getting this done this year—passing surface transportation reauthorization." Barrasso emphasized that President Trump called on Congress to pass the senator's bill—[America's Transportation Infrastructure Act of 2019](#)—during the State of the Union speech this year.

House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee [Chairman Peter DeFazio](#) (D-Oregon) and House T&I Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-Missouri) said they were working together to roll out the new legislation, despite the potential for the politics of an election year to play into it.

"We are not going to do things in the same old way," DeFazio said. "It is time now to take a look at what a 21st century system should be. And while we might have some policy disagreements, we can work through those."

Attendees of the AASHTO Briefing also had the chance to hear from Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, [who expressed](#) a commitment to increasing infrastructure funding, particularly for rural parts of the country. She noted that improving safety goes hand-in-hand with the U.S. DOT's [ROUTES Initiative](#) to improve transportation infrastructure in rural areas. The Secretary emphasized that her department will be placing greater emphasis on reducing pedestrian and bicycle fatalities and will continue to further its anti-human trafficking efforts.

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## Trump's Highway Bill Under Review, Secretary Chao Tells US House



*Elaine Chao via C-SPAN*

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WASHINGTON — At a hearing with House lawmakers, Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao said President Donald Trump's legislative vision for the country's highway system — which the White House intends to share with Congress — is being finalized. The plan is central to the president's infrastructure agenda and is expected to be revealed before a key highway law expires this fall.

"The administration's detailed legislative language is currently under review within the administration," Chao said Feb. 27, addressing members of the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. "Once that process is complete and legislation is submitted, the department will be free to discuss its contents in full detail."

A White House document published Feb. 10 that accompanied DOT's fiscal 2021 budget request to Congress proposed \$1 trillion for infrastructure programs, backed by direct federal investments. The infrastructure proposal indicated that it included a 10-year, \$810 billion surface transportation reauthorization measure. Additionally, \$190 billion would target connectivity concerns across corridors, water programs, and broadband accessibility. Specificity on funding metrics were not provided. Continue [HERE](#)

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## Toll roads garner attention in Alabama Legislature

Don Eddins | Musings Feb 27, 2020

Alabama has not ever relied on toll roads much.

About the only toll I can think of that I have used much is the toll bridge over the Intracoastal Canal at Orange Beach and it was built by a private company, which used the tolls to pay for it.

A proposed toll bridge over the I-10 Causeway east of Mobile caused so much controversy recently that the State Department of Transportation took the proposal off the table. That preliminary proposal was to charge \$6 one way, although there was to be a discount for frequent use. But at the base rate, a commuter in Baldwin County would have to pay \$12 to go to work and back in Mobile.

Another private toll project is in the preliminary stages for a bridge over Lay Lake/Coosa River to connect Shelby and Talladega counties.

The social media was used by toll opponents to attack the Mobile project. That pointed to the fact that a major interstate road project was being undertaken in Birmingham without tolls. Now, two legislators want to make it more difficult for public bodies to build toll roads.

Rep. Tommy Hanes, R.-Bryant, proposed the so-called "No Tolls Amendment, which would require pre-approval by the voters. Legislation by Sen. Chris Elliott, R-Daphne, would require state officials to conduct an economic impact study before a toll project is undertaken.

If they clear the Legislature, those bills would have to be approved by the people in a referendum to become law.

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## Funding Opportunities

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**U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao Announces Availability of \$1 Billion to Upgrade American Infrastructure (deadline May 18, 2020)**

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) today published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to apply for \$1 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 discretionary grant funding through the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grants program.

“BUILD grants will upgrade infrastructure across America, making our transportation systems safer and more efficient,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

As the Trump Administration looks to enhance America’s infrastructure, FY 2020 BUILD Transportation grants are for planning and capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure and are to be awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant local or regional impact. BUILD funding can support roads, bridges, transit, rail, ports or intermodal transportation.

Projects for BUILD will be evaluated based on merit criteria that include safety, economic competitiveness, quality of life, environmental sustainability, state of good repair, innovation, and partnership.

To better address the needs of rural America, which has historically been neglected, DOT intends to award 50% of BUILD Transportation grant funding to projects located in rural areas that deliver positive benefits for these communities, consistent with the Department’s R.O.U.T.E.S. initiative. For this round of BUILD Transportation grants, the maximum grant award is \$25 million, and no more than \$100 million can be awarded to a single State, as specified in the appropriations act.

To provide technical assistance to prospective applicants, DOT is hosting a series of webinars during the FY 2020 BUILD grant application process. A webinar on how to compete for BUILD Transportation Grants for all applicants will be held on February 25, 2020. Further details will be made available at <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants>. The deadline to submit an application is May 18, 2020.

For more information, please visit <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants>.

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## Transportation Alternatives Program Grants

Deadline May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020

The Mobile MPO has announced the availability of the Fiscal Year 2021 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., Friday, May 15, 2020.**

Electronic versions of the applications are available online at <http://mobilempo.org/TAP.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.

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## The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is soliciting applications for the Transportation Alternatives Set-aside Program (TAP) for FY 2021.

The guidelines and the application can both be found on the ALDOT website, on the Local Transportation Bureau page under the Operations Section.

<https://www.dot.state.al.us/lweb/operations/index.html>

The deadline for submission of FY 2011 TAP applications including support documentation is Friday, May 15, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

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## Federal Lands Access Program

Deadline June 16, 2020

Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (EFLHD) will be conducting another Call for Projects for the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) in Alabama for Federal Fiscal Years (FY) 2020 through FY 2022. All final project approvals will be contingent upon the availability of funds in the year for which they are being requested. **Funding beyond 2020 is dependent on reauthorization of the Access Program by Congress.**

**The Call for Projects application period opens March 16, 2020 and runs through June 16, 2020. An estimated total of \$1.5M will be available for programming in your State.**

EFLHD has found that a higher level of outreach at local levels has increased both the number and the quality of competitive applications submitted and ultimately recommended for project programming and implementation. We ask that you provide the widest circulation possible of this announcement to provide a robust pool of applications. **Please feel free to use any of the materials included in with this message to assist in your outreach efforts. The Federal Lands Access Program website is: <https://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flap/>**

**Federal Land Management Agencies:** We appreciate your efforts in the provision of an expanded outreach to your units and gateway communities regarding this program opportunity.

**FHWA Federal Aid Division Office:** We appreciate your efforts in the provision of an expanded outreach regarding this program opportunity to the MPOs and RPOs in your state via email or on your website.

**State DOTs:** We appreciate your efforts in the provision of an expanded outreach regarding this program opportunity to your District staff and Local Agency Program Coordinators (if applicable), Public Information Officers, via email and/or on your websites.

**Local Agency Representatives:** We appreciate your efforts in the provision of an expanded outreach regarding this program opportunity to other County, MPO and Local agencies in your state via email and/or on your local websites.

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## **AARP Offering Community Challenge Grants**

Date: February 06, 2020 Deadline April 1, 2020

AARP's Community Challenge provides small grants to fund "quick-action" projects to improve housing, transportation, public space, technology, and civic engagement. Applications are due April 1, 2020. Eligible projects include physical improvements in a community, temporary demonstration projects, and new programs or services. Local government agencies and non-profit organizations are welcome to apply. Grant amounts vary by project. Learn more about the AARP 2020 Community Challenge at [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org).

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## **FTA Offering New Grant Funding For Transit Bus, Ferry Projects**

[editor@ashto.org](mailto:editor@ashto.org) February 14, 2020 Deadline March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020

The Federal Transit Administration issued two notice of funding opportunities or NOFOs for fiscal year 2020 on February 7; one via its Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities program and the other via its Passenger Ferry grant program.

The [transit bus NOFO](#) is offering some \$454.6 million in competitive grant funding for transit bus projects that would replace, rehabilitate, lease, or purchase buses and related equipment. Other eligible projects involve purchasing, rehabilitating, constructing or leasing bus-related facilities, such as buildings for bus storage and maintenance, FTA said [in a statement](#).

The agency said eligible recipients for that grant money include fixed route bus operators, states and local governmental entities that operate fixed route bus service, plus Native American tribes – with applications accepted until 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on March 30.

The FTA also issued a \$30 million [passenger ferry NOFO](#) that will award competitive grants to states and public entities to purchase, repair, or modernize ferry boats, terminals, and related facilities and equipment – both to support existing ferry service as well as establish new passenger ferry service, the agency said in [a statement](#).

FTA noted that eligible projects considered for those grants must be "consistent" with the U.S. Department of Transportation's R.O.U.T.E. Initiative, launched [last October](#), as well as the FTA's Accelerating Innovative Mobility program, kicked off in [January](#).

The agency added that applications for both of those grant programs will be accepted up until 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on March 30.

Lastly, FTA made \$9.3 million worth of [research grants](#) available on February 13 to support the study of "innovative projects" aimed at improving rail transit and bus operator safety.

That pool of grant funding includes \$7.3 million for projects that demonstrate and evaluate new technologies, safer designs, and practices to improve rail transit safety, with the remaining \$2 million reserved for projects that redesign transit bus operator compartments to improve safety for bus operators and the passengers they serve.

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## **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.

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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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To stay up to date on all of the many grants that are available visit [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

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

What do we get in return for sending our gas tax money north? Water, they send us back lots and lots of water. If only we could run our cars on this stuff, it might be a fair trade. But, why can't we run cars on water? Funny I should ask; [check it out](#).



The water level alone on the I-65 General W.K. Wilson Jr Bridge over the Delta could be a Just For Fun by itself, as it is [setting new records](#). The bridge is fine, in fact if you want to look at ALL the bridges in Alabama, check out <https://bridgereports.com/al> for hours of bridge rating fun, it is elevating. In the meantime, stay away from flooded roadways, *Just For Fun*.....



(As far as we know, photo is public domain)



## In the News

### Baldwin County Commissioner withdraws support for new bridge funding plant

Posted by [Lagniappe](#) | Feb 26, 2020 | [Baldwin County](#) | [0](#) | reprinted from the LAGNIAPPE with permission

Baldwin County Commission President Billie Jo Underwood reversed course and bucked the trend of every elected city council member on the Eastern Shore plus her four colleagues on the commission, by voting against a resolution in support of the new Interstate 10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project Feb. 18.

Underwood said it didn't go far enough to ensure locals could travel without paying tolls.

"There's one word in there that bothers me: with the 'hope' that the project can be funded without the use of tolling," she said. "I'm not advocating we change their resolution, but I would like to see the commission add to their resolution with the understanding this project could be funded without a toll."

Last year, the Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization (ESMPO) voted to exclude the previous \$2.1 billion bridge and Bayway plan from its long-range transportation plan, effectively killing the Alabama Department of Transportation's (ALDOT) plan to fund a large portion of the project with tolls of an announced \$6 each way.

But on Jan. 22, ESMPO approved a new, \$1.4 billion scaled-down plan that preserves free "legacy routes," including the existing Bayway, Causeway and tunnels, but did not eliminate the possibility of imposing tolls.

As a member of ESMPO, Underwood herself voted for the same resolution with the same "hopeful" language just last month. But now, even though the city councils of Fairhope, Daphne and Spanish Fort have since unanimously endorsed the new plan, Underwood said she's had second thoughts.

“The question all along has been funding, and I think that’s still the question,” she said. “It’s not that I’m not in support of the project — there is a difference between being in support of the project and being in support of the way the project is funded. I’m just at a point right now where there are a lot of things we can’t answer and just because that door is still open, I’m uncomfortable with it.”

Commissioners Jeb Ball, Joe Davis and Charles Gruber voted to adopt the resolution as written. The Mobile MPO has tabled the resolution until its next meeting.

Gruber suggested if the commission was not unified internally and externally, it could threaten the progress of the plan.

“We have to be all in together on this project because it’s not going to happen if we both have a different plan,” he said. “We all want to be unified and come together. I think that’s where we failed last time.”

Both Gruber and Ball said they were comfortable with the language that preserved legacy routes, and Gruber said as such; he would not be opposed to a “reasonable” toll for those who chose to use the proposed expressway and bridge.

Common Sense Campaign President Lou Campomenosi said unity was paramount to what they are calling a “consensus plan.”

“The argument we’re making for the consensus plan is that it does bring about a consensus,” he said. “And even though we are having some difficulties with Mobile, the fact of the matter is, we have had Spanish Fort City Council unanimously approve it, Daphne City Council unanimously approved it and Fairhope City Council unanimously approved it. We think that it’s important to send a signal to Montgomery that there is a unified approach to what’s going on here.”

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## Commission endorses Eastern Shore MPO expressway plan



**The Baldwin County Commission endorsed a proposal by the Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization calling for an expressway to be built between the bridges of the Interstate 10 Bayway to relieve traffic congestion.**

GUY BUSBY

Posted Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:00 pm

**By Guy Busby**

BAY MINETTE – The Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization’s proposed plan to increase Interstate 10 access across Mobile Bay has another endorsement with a split vote by the Baldwin County Commission.

Commissioners voted 3-1 to endorse the plan for an elevated expressway to be added to the four lanes of the I-10 Bayway and for the construction of the new bridge over the Mobile River.

The city councils have also voted to endorse the plan. All the city votes were unanimous.

Commission Chairwoman Billie Jo Underwood voted against the county resolution on Feb. 17. Underwood said she supported the plan for a new highway, but worried that wording in the MPO proposal could allow tolls to be imposed on the route.

“There’s one word in there that bothers me and it says ‘with the hope that the project can be funded without the use of tolling,’ the word ‘hope’ has bothered me ever since the Eastern Shore MPO passed this,” Underwood said before the vote.

“I do sit on the Eastern Shore MPO and so I’m not advocating that we change their resolution because it’s their resolution, but I would like to see that the commission add to their resolution that with the understanding that this project could be funded without a toll,” she said.

Commissioner Charles “Skip” Gruber said opposition to a toll killed the original state proposal for the project. He said access across the bay must be improved and if a smaller toll on part of the project is the only way to build the route, the wording would allow work to move forward.

“If it comes to it that there’s no other way and the toll is within reason, I think that’s the difference,” Gruber said. “The last time I think the toll was kind of outlandish to say the least. It was quite a bit, but if there is a reasonable, reasonable toll on it, I don’t think we need to completely just block ourselves completely from it.”

Commissioner Jeb Ball said the earlier plan also put a toll on the existing Bayway and Wallace Tunnel. The new proposal would leave that part of Interstate 10 access free.

“On this particular project, it will allow for free access where the old routes will still be in use,” Ball said. “The other plan did not allow any free access whatsoever, so it’s exactly what it says, in hopes that there will not be any.”

Commissioner Joe Davis said the proposal shows state officials that local residents and agencies are willing to work to move the project forward. He said that even if the Alabama Department of Transportation wants to change the plan, the proposal could get discussions started.

“In dealing with some of the governor’s staff it is clear that they recognize that we need to move forward with what’s next and the whole way to do that is to come together and say we’ve got things we need to talk about and figure out,” Davis said.

Gruber said Baldwin officials must also work with the Mobile MPO to develop a plan on which officials on both sides of the bay can agree.

“I think what we’re doing is OK, doing it this way, but I would like us also to work very closely with the folks on the other side of the thing in Mobile,” Gruber said. “We have to be together on this project, because it ain’t going to happen if we both have a different plan. We all have to be unified and come together. I think that’s where it failed last time. We were not unified.”

The original plan called for a new bridge to be built across the Mobile River and the four-lane Bayway replaced by an eight-lane highway. The estimated cost of the project was \$2.1 billion.

State officials planned to impose a toll of up to \$6 for a one-way trip to pay for the project. After residents and officials said a fee that high would damage the local economy, the Eastern Shore MPO voted in August to remove the bridge project from its Transportation Improvement Plan. The removal made the project ineligible for federal funding.

Immediately after the vote, Gov. Kay Ivey said the project was dead.

In January, the Eastern Shore MPO endorsed a new plan that would keep the bridge but called for a four-lane expressway to be built over Mobile Bay. Project supporters said the new project would cost about \$1.23 billion.

The new plan would not change the existing Bayway. The expressway would have fewer access points. One proposal called for exits in the middle of the bay and where the highway reaches the Eastern Shore but would not allow traffic to get on the expressway between Malbis and Virginia Street in Mobile.

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## Roadside litter is costing you lots of money

by Brian Pia, I-Team Investigator  
Tuesday, February 25th 2020

- Alabama taxpayers are spending more than \$6.5 million dollars a year for state transportation workers to clean up the trash on state roads.
- Trash on roadways is not only costing you money. It can cause a lot of other problems.
- 

### ALDOT: More than \$66 million spent over the last 10 years to clean up roadside trash

The Alabama Department of Transportation estimates that it spent more than \$66 million over the last 10 years to clean up litter along state roads.

“That money could be spent going towards bridge maintenance and roadside maintenance,” said ALDOT Public Information Officer John McWilliams.

Byron Prude is a construction worker who travels from job to job. He feels the impact of litter every day.

“That’s a lot of money to waste on picking up something that doesn’t have to be down. Of course, that costs a lot of money that could go towards fixing these roads that are out here that I bump up and down on every day,” Prude said.

### The financial impact of litter

According to the non-profit group, Keep America Beautiful, 36% of business development officials say litter impacts a decision to locate to a community and most realtors say litter reduces property values by about 9%.

Trashing roadways is a recurring problem. ALDOT says the cleanup crews you’re paying are often dispatched to the same areas to clean them up again.

“They’re pushing that stone uphill every time. And that’s something that’s very discouraging and frustrating,” McWilliams said. Litter impacts Rusty Johnson personally.

“I see it in my front yard. My neighbor’s yard. You know, people don’t care. I don’t understand why,” Johnson said.

### Fines have increased

Here’s another reason not to litter.

The fine for a first offense has been increased to \$500.

A second offense is \$1,000 and up to 100 hours of community service picking up litter.

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## Exports of Alabama-made autos, aerospace parts rise in tough trade year

By Jerry Underwood  
Made in Alabama  
February 25, 2020



A ship is loaded at the Port of Mobile. Alabama exports in 2019 were valued at \$20.7 billion, dipping 3% from the previous year in a difficult international trade environment. (contributed)

Despite ongoing disruptions in global trade relationships, Alabama's exports of goods and services totaled \$20.7 billion in 2019 as overseas shipments of motor vehicles, auto parts and aerospace products continued to show strength.

The value of Alabama exports last year declined 3% from 2018's total and fell just 4.6% shy of the state's all-time record of \$21.7 billion, set in 2017, according to new trade figures from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Still, Alabama exports have climbed 7% from 2015 and nearly 68% from 2009.

"Although Alabama exports have shown impressive annual increases and, in a few cases, slight decreases, there has been an overall upward trend in recent years," Gov. Kay Ivey said.

"This highlights the fact that companies across Alabama continue to provide top-quality goods and services that are sought by customers worldwide."



Transportation equipment is Alabama's No. 1 export category, accounting for nearly half of all overseas shipments. (Mercedes-Benz)

Reflecting that global appeal, Alabama business exported goods and services to 194 countries in 2019.

The Top 5 destinations were:

- Canada — \$3.87 billion (down 5.5%)
- Germany — \$3.14 billion (a 23% increase)
- Mexico — \$2.25 billion (a 13.5% decline)
- China — \$2.24 billion (down 26%)
- Japan — \$796.1 million (a 4% dip)

Exports to Germany were boosted by a 45% increase in motor vehicle shipments to total nearly \$2.3 billion in 2019, while China bought significantly less Alabama-made transportation equipment, figures show.

"Already a hub for industry and innovation, Alabama has established a reputation as a successful exporter of products and services," said Greg Canfield, secretary of the Alabama Department of Commerce.

"In spite of headwinds affecting global trade, Alabama is poised to take advantage of new opportunities around the world, which will in turn create more and better-paying jobs here at home," he said. Continue [HERE](#)

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## OWA's RV park prompts Foley to extend Pecan Street

Posted by [John Mullen](#) | Feb 26, 2020 | [Baldwin County](#) | [0](#) | reprinted from the LAGNIAPPE with permission

The coming of a luxury RV park to the OWA entertainment complex has Foley officials changing plans on a couple of road extensions west of the sprawling amusement park, shopping district and the Foley Sports Tourism facility.

City officials say the plan is to extend South Pecan Street farther south to meet up with the northern end of Pride Drive. The previous plan was to extend a road west of the Coastal Alabama Farmers and Fishermen's Market, Moe's Original BBQ and Wolf Bay Lodge northerly to a connection with Stabler Drive.

“We built Stabler that connects Juniper to Pride and then there’s a little stub road right before you get to Wolf Bay, but it kind of goes north and then turns right and comes out between Moe’s and Wolf Bay Lodge,” City Engineer Chad Christian said. “The idea there would be to extend that straight on up to connect to Stabler, so Stabler would connect to Juniper, Pride and County Road 20.”

That road would be a traffic reliever for Juniper, giving residents and visitors another way to access the restaurants and market.

“There’s a plan to extend that due north to connect with Stabler so that, say, you were coming down Juniper and you wanted to go to Wolf Bay Lodge, you could turn on Stabler and then turn on this connector and not have to get out on County Road 20,” Christian said.

That plan has been delayed, according to City Administrator Michael Thompson, but will be put back on the table in fiscal year 2021. The coming of the new RV park made the South Pecan extension a more pressing need.

“Right now, it comes due south and ends at South Lay Lane, which is a very narrow, practically one-lane road that goes over into the Layville area, as they call it,” Christian said. “We would just be taking South Pecan straight south through the margin of the property where the CIEDA RV park is going and then it would connect into the Pride Drive’s northern roundabout.”

CIEDA is the Creek Indian Enterprise Development Authority, the owners of OWA. Besides the new RV park, officials there are also planning an indoor waterpark for the complex.

Christian said the total cost of the extension of South Pecan would be about \$250,000, but the city would see cost savings by doing the base work.

“We estimate the cost to be \$252,000 total, comprised of \$102,000 in materials and equipment rental, with labor performed by public works, and \$150,000 paving bid cost,” Christian said. “The engineer’s estimate is \$442,000 to publicly bid the project, so you can see the potential savings from using public works.”

Councilman Ralph Hellmich said the South Pecan extension is a priority because it provides another north-south road for traffic flow. “There is no other road [to the] east until you get to the Beach Express,” Hellmich said at a recent City Council meeting. “On the west side of Foley we have Cedar Street and Hickory Street and it kind of splits the traffic, so Pecan should be equivalent to Hickory on our east side.”

Christian said it is expected to take six to eight months to complete the project.

## Transportation Research



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration

### ModalPEX:

the multimodal freight peer exchange

This May, the Federal Highway Administration’s Office of Operations will hold a national peer exchange focused on helping State DOTs, MPOs, and their partners plan and deliver multimodal freight projects—and you are invited!

Attending ModalPEX will help you:

- Identify best practices in selecting, prioritizing, and delivering multimodal infrastructure and how to incorporate these concepts into State Freight Plans during the next round of required plan updates;
- Learn innovative multimodal freight data analyses strategies;
- Improve your understanding of multimodal freight networks/supply chains via bus tour of several Memphis freight facilities; and
- Network with your freight stakeholders and peers.

Formal details and RSVP request forthcoming.

Contact: Tiffany Julien (tiffany.julien@dot.gov; 202-366-9241)  
DJ Mason (dj.mason@dot.gov; 617-494-3968)

SAVE THE DATE  
MAY 12-13, 2020  
University of Memphis

### [New FHWA Publication: Transportation Planning Process Briefing Book](#)

Date: February 13, 2020

The U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, has released a new [Transportation Planning Process Briefing Book](#). Part I introduces the planning process, the relationship between transportation planning and decision making, and federal transportation funding. Part II covers products of the transportation planning process—the types of plans that states, MPOs, and RDOs develop, performance measures, public engagement, and planning process considerations related to safety, security, and environmental linkages.

Designed for government officials, planning board members, transportation service providers, and the general public, the book is also a useful resource for new transportation planners.

Visit the Briefing Book web page to download a PDF copy: [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/publications/briefing\\_book/](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/publications/briefing_book/)

# Highway Administration to Explore How AI and Blockchain Can Transform Transportation



By [Brandi Vincent](#)

Staff Correspondent

FEBRUARY 6, 2020 12:00 PM ET

The Federal Highway Administration launched an Exploratory Advanced Research Program this week to usher in "transformational changes and truly revolutionary advances" in highway engineering and intermodal transportation on roads across the United States.

According to a new [broad agency announcement](#), the administration is accepting research effort proposals—with the deliberate intent of awarding either contracts or cooperative agreements—that address three trendy topics in emerging tech: blockchain for highway transportation, artificial intelligence for highway transportation, and incorporating trashed plastic into asphalt cement to reduce waste.

"This program supports scientific investigations and studies that advance the current knowledge and state-of-the-art in the sciences and technologies employed in the planning, design, construction, operation, maintenance and management of the nation's highways," officials wrote in the announcement. "Strategically, this research will enable and expedite the development of revolutionary approaches, methodologies, and breakthroughs required to drive innovation and greatly improve the efficiency of highway transportation."

The agency's EAR programs aim to produce strong public-private partnerships that catalyze solutions through "longer-term, higher risk" research. To inform its ultimate intent, FHWA conducted an extensive investigation ahead of the launch, through which it met with a "large number of stakeholders from within and outside the traditional highway research community to identify topics of research that promise transformation and possible breakthroughs in highway technology, processes and policies." With explicitly inherent exploratory aims, the agency doesn't expect the initial results to be immediately implementable but instead plans to further develop them over time.

The agency said it could make multiple awards for each of the following topics:

## Blockchain Technology for Highway Transportation

Mostly known for underpinning Bitcoin, blockchain is a record-keeping technology that validates information on a decentralized public ledger. Though it's still nascent, the agency argues that blockchain "has the potential to transform the connected and automated vehicle industry or freight logistics providing a platform to share a variety of information from the infrastructure and vehicles in a secure manner." Further, the agency's hopeful that it can provide "security and scalability at lower costs than current private network solutions" and offer a wide range of new technological functions."

FHWA wants proposals that explore how blockchain applications could enable more secure traffic operations and car-to-car and car-to-infrastructure communications, anonymized freight data management, auction-based mechanisms for highway pricing, and beyond.

## Artificial Intelligence for Highway Transportation

The EAR program previously [funded](#) AI-focused efforts that incorporated computer vision and natural language processing, but this time around the agency hopes for projects that empower the use of its growing heaps of data. In this light, the agency said it welcomes proposals that connect traditional and non-traditional highway data to make predictions around the system's performance, improve sensor signal data that are used to evaluate roads and structures, provide decision support in highway system design, and more. [HERE](#).

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Please join FHWA to discuss the concept of "right-sizing" highways to better match land use and transportation on existing streets. Right-sizing enables practitioners who are confronted with obsolete, damaged, or deteriorated facilities to develop innovative, context sensitive solutions that use transportation infrastructure to connect neighborhoods, create livable communities, and promote economic development.

FHWA presenters will discuss a research study, white paper, fact sheets, and case studies on the topic posted here: [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/economic\\_development/right\\_sizing/](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/economic_development/right_sizing/), followed by practitioner presentations, and a question and answer session. Featured case studies include, Seattle Alaskan Way Viaduct, the Rochester Inner Loop, and Milwaukee Park East Freeway. Webinar presenters include, Stefan Natzke and Mike Neathery (FHWA), Alec Williamson (Washington State DOT), Erik Frisch (City of Rochester), Peter Park (Univ. of Colorado).

#### WEBINAR LOGISTICS:

- Tuesday, February 25, 2020
- 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm Eastern Standard Time
- Registration link: <https://collaboration.fhwa.dot.gov/dot/fhwa/WC/Lists/Seminars/DispForm.aspx?ID=2254>

For additional information, please contact Mike Neathery, 202-366-1257 or [mike.neathery@dot.gov](mailto:mike.neathery@dot.gov)

#### Webinar Registration Process

Webinar registration is a two-step process. First, non-DOT users including State DOTs must request access to the FHWA External Portal. Second, non-DOT users including State DOTs must login using the email address used to request access to the site and their requested password. Federal DOT staff and DOT-badged contractors do not need to register for an account. DOT users can click on the registration link and use their DOT credentials to access the site.

In the External SharePoint System, EXTERNAL users (those without a @dot.gov email address) will have to request an account before they can register. Here is the link to request an account: <https://collaboration.fhwa.dot.gov/FBA/Register.aspx>. Step-by step instructions on how to request an account can be found here: <https://connectdot.connectsolutions.com/esnnon-dotstaff/>

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## Sustainable Highway Construction Guidebook

Sustainability is often an element that informs decisions made during the planning, programming, and design phases of highway construction projects. However, the construction phase of a highway project is also an opportunity to advance sustainability.

The TRB National Cooperative Highway Research Program's *NCHRP Research Report 916: Sustainable Highway Construction Guidebook* provides clear and practical information on what constitutes sustainability in the context of highway construction and how to evaluate any proposed construction practice for its sustainability potential.

The guidebook supports implementation by describing ways to explicitly advance sustainability in procurement and contracting and how to develop a sustainability management plan for the construction phase.

An overview of NCHRP Research Report 916 is provided in this [PowerPoint presentation](#). A separate publication, *NCHRP Web-Only Document 262: Sustainable Highway Construction*, describes the research process and outcomes used to develop NCHRP Research Report 916.

A summary of NCHRP Web-Only Document 262 is provided in this [PowerPoint presentation](#).

Project: [Project Information](#)

DOI: [10.17226/25698](https://doi.org/10.17226/25698)

Project Number: 10-91A

E-Newsletter Type: [Recently Released TRB Publications](#)

TRB Publication Type: [NCHRP Report](#)

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## FEDERAL TRUST FUNDS AND OTHER DEDICATED FUNDS:

### Fiscal Sustainability Is a Growing Concern for Some Key Funds

GAO-20-156: Published: Jan 16, 2020. Publicly Released: Jan 23, 2020.

Every major federal department has at least 2 trust funds or dedicated funds that pay for key programs. The money comes from related taxes, fees, and premiums—e.g., U.S. postage stamp revenue goes to the Postal Service Fund.

The overall federal trust fund balance is expected to start declining in 2022 as balances in the Medicare and Social Security trust funds drop. The government is projected to borrow the difference—which isn't sustainable.

Of our 13 case study funds, 11 received general revenue in addition to dedicated revenue. For example, the 2015 Highway Trust Fund reauthorization provided \$70 billion in general revenue to the fund. To continue reading click [HERE](#).

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## The Department of Transportation has identified transportation assets that fall within Opportunity Zones with the goal of driving investment of all types to these important areas.

Despite the growing national economy, economically distressed communities are located in every corner of the United States and its territories. These communities have high levels of poverty, failing schools, job scarcity, and a lack of investment. A new tax incentive—Opportunity Zones—was created to spur economic development and job creation by encouraging long-term investment in low-income communities nationwide.

Read about our partner's roles in Opportunity Zones:

- [Housing and Urban Development: Implementation Plan for The White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council](#)
- [The IRS: Tax reform creates opportunity zone tax incentive](#)
- [Treasury Department Community Development Financial Institutions Fund](#)

The Opportunity Zone designation encourages investment in communities by granting investors extensive Federal tax advantages for using their capital gains to finance new projects and enterprises. There are more than [8,700 designated Qualified Opportunity Zones located in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and five United States territories](#). Of the Qualified Opportunity Zones 40 percent are in rural census tracts, 38 percent are in urban tracts, and 22 percent are in suburban tracts.

South Alabama Opportunity Zones



<https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/subdoc/906/build-fact-sheet2019.pdf>

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## 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.

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