



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Volume 35, Number 10

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We are praying for everyone in South Alabama in these catastrophic times, and we are here if we can help 433-6541.

Due to Hurricane Sally, the Human Services Coordinated Plan meeting has been postponed to October 1, 2020. Also, the Demand Response Feasibility Study is in final draft; *Mobile MPO Updates*. There is a RPO Meeting coming up; See *RPO Updates*. No Highway Bill in *Legislative Updates*, so this week's *Just For Fun* we have the "Failure To Act"... *ATRIPii* and *FTA 5310* are in *Funding Opportunities* and Mobile County fast tracts environmental projects *In The News*. Have a great weekend.

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

### The MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY

We are nearing the end of Fiscal Year 2020, and VIA has completed The [MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT](#)

There was a stakeholder meeting several weeks ago concerning the study. VIA presented [HERE](#) potential types of operators and potential operating budget. A big challenge is going to the local community support and matching funds.

The current health crisis has affected the potential outcome of the study. The intent of the study was to find potential local sponsors to match federal funds to create a transit system to operate throughout Mobile County to connect with WAVE Transit. The sponsors would have provided assistance through subscriptions or contracts for commuter trips. The current price of gasoline, and the threat of contracting virus on buses, may put a strain on ridership of a new system. However, there are still people in need of transportation, and there is some thought that regardless of the price of gasoline, there will be an increased number of distressed people due to the economy, that will need transportation. This may be the perfect time to consider transportation throughout Mobile County.

Tasks 1, 2 and 3 are [HERE](#).

### Human Services Coordinated Plan Meeting Postponed (It was scheduled for Wednesday September 16<sup>th</sup>)

Due to Hurricane Sally, the meeting has postponed to October 1, 2020 10:00 AM. For GOTO meeting information email [tpiper@sarpc.org](mailto:tpiper@sarpc.org)

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. This plan covers all of Baldwin, Escambia, and Mobile Counties.

The Draft Plan is available for review online at:

<http://mobilempo.org/Documents/Planning/FY2021/2020-2023%20HSCTP%20for%20SARPC.pdf>

If you are interested in, utilize, or provide transit or would like to apply for federal transit dollars for special needs transit services through the FTA 5310 program, please attend an online Public Meeting to be held at **10:00 am on Thursday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020** using the GoToMeeting app. Please email [tpiper@sarpc.org](mailto:tpiper@sarpc.org)

Please contact the Transportation Planning Department at SARPC at 251-433-6541 if you have any questions or would like a printed copy of the draft plan mailed to you.

### ENVISION 2045 IS THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)

The LRTP is multimodal in scope, and is based on public input, and a travel demand forecast model. In 2019, an online survey was conducted with almost 150 respondents. Questions ranged from where is the worst congestion, what roads need improvements, problems with the transit systems, etc. There were a lot of comments about the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and the potential for tolls. Prior to the online survey, staff also conducted a South Alabama Freight Forum, which was an opportunity to hear from large manufacturers and trucking companies, to find out what the top issues are concerning the movement of freight in South Alabama. The Bicycle / Pedestrian plan was updated, and the public transit section was authored by the Wave Transit, less the Demand Response Transit Study. The Climate Change element, or Extreme Event Planning, remained almost unchanged from *Destination 2040* LRTP.

The LRTP *Envision 2045* was adopted by the Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization on April 22, 2020.

More information on the new plan can be found at <https://www.envision2045.org/>

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

# South Alabama RPO Updates

## Online RPO meeting 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, September 24, 2020

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) will host an online Public Meeting of the Rural Planning Organization to be held at **10:00 am on Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020** using the GoToMeeting app. Please see invite below. The agenda includes:

- Adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting (these will be sent out soon)
- Review and adoption of the **Fiscal Year 2021 Work Program** (available for review online at: <http://mobilempo.org/RPO/RPO%20Documents/2021%20Documents/Draft%20FY%202021%20RPO%20Work%20Program.pdf>)
- Review and adoption of the **Fiscal Years 2020-2023 Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan** (available for review online at: <http://mobilempo.org/Documents/Planning/FY2021/2020-2023%20HSCTP%20for%20SARPC.pdf>)

Updating the RPO Transportation Plan Project List (available for review online at <http://www.mobilempo.org/RPODocuments.html>) SARPC Rural Planning Organization  
Thu, Sep 24, 2020 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CDT)

Please join our meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/565927541>

You can also dial in using your phone.  
(For supported devices, tap a one-touch number below to join instantly.)

United States: +1 (872) 240-3212  
- One-touch: <tel:+18722403212,,565927541#>

Access Code: 565-927-541

## Projects in Region Let September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### MOBILE COUNTY

- For constructing the Bridge Replacement on SR-163 over Perch Creek from MP 3.931 to MP 3.983. Length 0.340 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$3,114,592 to \$3,806,724 ..
- For constructing the Facility Upgrade (Generator Replacement) on SR-42 (Bankhead Tunnel) in Mobile. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$844,515 to \$1,032,185 .
- For the Maintenance Bridge Painting on SR-193 (North Bound Lane) over the CSX Railroad. Length 0.107 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$288,336 to \$352,410 .

### BALDWIN COUNTY

None at this time

### ESCAMBIA COUNTY

None at this time

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

## Legislative Updates

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### Congressional Transportation Leaders Back One-Year Extension of FAST Act





Overhead highway view

Highway interchange in Milwaukee. (BanksPhotos/Getty Images)

A soon-to-expire federal law that governs the country's highway policies appears to be headed toward a yearlong extension. Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) and Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), the top transportation policy authorizers on Capitol Hill, have indicated support for extending the provisions in the 2015 FAST Act highway law for a 12-month duration.

Their position comes as stakeholders across the transportation community are publicly calling for such an extension. The FAST Act expires Sept. 30. Barrasso chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee, while DeFazio chairs the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Each chairman led passage in their respective chambers of an update of the FAST Act, but have not met to reconcile differences in their versions of the legislation. Continue [HERE](#)

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## Congress looks to punt on new highway bill funding, kicking problem into 2021

John Schulz · September 18, 2020

Like seemingly everything else in Washington, Republicans and Democrats are light years apart in negotiations over a new five-year federal highway spending bill, and seem likely to kick the problem into 2021.

That inaction—on what was once considered a so-called “must-pass” piece of legislation—is frustrating to leading trucking executives and others who rely on a modern American infrastructure network of interstate highways, bridges, ports and airports.

“We have to get some progress on an infrastructure package that makes sense and modernizes our network for logistics companies and trucking companies,” Derek Leathers, vice chairman, president and CEO at Werner Enterprises, the nation's sixth-largest truckload carrier, told LM. Both sides (Republicans and Democrats) ought to be able to rally around this, but we are not making progress. That keeps me up at night.”

Like most top trucking executives, Leathers said it was “more likely than not” that no decision will be made before the November elections. He said such lack of political will is unfortunate and detrimental to logistics operations.

“It's a decision nobody seems to want to take before the election,” Leathers added. “People are dying for Congress to act, not inaction. People want bold choices. But clearly it takes political will for that. That's tough to muster in an election year.”

At press time, the House and Senate appeared far apart on how to move forward on a bill that would replace the five-year FAST Act that was scheduled to expire on Sept 30.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in July 2019 unanimously passed a \$287 billion, five-year surface transportation bill. But three other Republican-led Senate committees — Commerce, Science and Transportation, Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, and Finance — have sat on it and failed to act. [HERE](#)

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## Groups to Congress: extend surface transportation funding, add emergency funds for states

BY [LIZ CAREY](#) | SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), along with 87 other organizations, is calling on Congress to extend the current surface transportation funding legislation for one-year while adding nearly \$70 billion in emergency funding for state departments of transportation and public transit agencies.

In a letter, AASHTO executive director Jim Tymon said the funding was critical to ensuring state departments of transportation could continue work on critical infrastructure elements throughout 2021.

“Public agencies continue to face COVID-19 pandemic-induced revenue declines. As a result, state and local entities already delayed or cancelled \$8 billion in surface transportation projects, with more on the horizon absent any clear sign of support from the federal government. Failure to approve a one-year extension with increased funding for the purpose of stability would only exacerbate this dire situation,” Tymon wrote in a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (D-KY), Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Speaker of the House Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA). “Passing legislation that includes the

aforementioned priorities would enable critical improvements that increase the safety and efficiency of the surface transportation system. This timely action by Congress would tangibly enhance the quality of life for all Americans and jumpstart America's economic recovery."

The letter asks Congress to authorize a turn-key, one-year extension of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act legislation that funds infrastructure investment and expires on Sept. 31. Additionally, the letter asks Congress to allocate \$37 billion in emergency funding for state DOTs and \$32 billion for public transit agencies and to pass provisions that would ensure the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund at least throughout the extension period.

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## House Republicans roll out "Commitment to America" plan

BY [LIZ CAREY](#) | SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

On Tuesday, House Republicans announced their "Commitment to America" framework that outlines their legislative plan for rebuilding the American economy through a five-year investment in infrastructure.

Under the plan, Republicans committed to a five-year surface transportation reauthorization to fix American surface transportation infrastructure, while reducing the project permitting process.

"House Republicans understand the importance of a modern infrastructure to every state in America and our economy, which is why the 'Commitment to America' includes a five-year surface transportation reauthorization," said Rep. Sam Graves (R-MO), the ranking member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. "This critical long-term bill will be based on the STARTER Act, which Committee Republicans introduced earlier this year once it became clear that a bipartisan surface transportation bill was not in Speaker Pelosi's plans.

The Starter Act focuses on ensuring state flexibility, streamlining project processes, prioritizing core programs and functions of existing federal surface transportation programs, incorporating innovative development into infrastructure, providing for rural infrastructure needs, and addressing long-term sustainability of the Highway Trust Fund.

"The STARTER Act is a commonsense transportation reauthorization and a stark contrast from the Democrats' bill that prioritizes their far-left agenda rather than helping restore American's infrastructure," said Rep. Rick Crawford (R-AR), ranking member on the house Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials. "Transportation workers need certainty, states need flexibility, and Americans need a Highway Trust Fund that is sustainable. This legislation delivers on these needs and secures the future of our Nation's transit systems."

## Funding Opportunities

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### Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program-II (ATRIP-II)

(deadline October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

The purpose of this program is to rehabilitate and improve transportation infrastructure by funding projects of local interest, proposed by one or more local governments, related to the state-maintained highway system. Projects may include local roads and bridges essential to such projects. The program's goal is to address critical needs projects across the state to rehabilitate and improve the in-place facilities and in some cases provide new facilities at locations throughout the state. The program's focus is an emphasis on the public safety, economic growth, and stability of the state and its roads and bridges.

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

[Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#)

[ATRIP-II Procedural Guidelines](#)

[2021 ATRIP-II Project Application](#)

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### Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Mobile Urban Area) (deadline October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020)

The Mobile Urban Area FTA 5310 Funds for FY 2021 grant applications is now available. The 5310 program is intended to assist private or designated public nonprofit agencies in meeting the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities. The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) is responsible for the management and administration of the **Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Enhanced**



**Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program** for the Mobile Urban Area. The application and guidelines for submittal can be found at <http://mobilempo.org/5310.html>

Completed grant applications must be submitted to the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission by NOON on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

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## U.S. Department of Transportation Seeks Applicants for Railway-Highway Crossings Grants

(deadline October 26, 2020)

Tuesday, August 25, 2020

FHWA 17-20

Contact: Neil Gaffney

Tel.: (202) 366-0660

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation today published a Notice of Funding Opportunity that provides up to \$50 million in grants for commuter rail agencies working to improve safety at railway-highway crossings. Applications will be accepted until October 26, 2020.

“This \$50 million federal investment in commuter rail grade crossing safety will protect pedestrians, reduce vehicle accidents, and save lives in rural and urban areas across our country,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

The Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2020, appropriated \$50 million to be awarded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) through the Commuter Authority Rail Safety Improvement (CARSI) Grants Program.

Under CARSI, the FHWA – in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) – will provide competitive grants to commuter rail authorities working to eliminate hazards at railway-highway crossings. Eligible projects include those that separate or protect grades at crossings; rebuild existing railroad grade crossing structures; relocate highways to eliminate grade crossings; and eliminate hazards posed by blocked grade crossings due to idling trains.

“Safety is always our top priority at the Department under the leadership of Secretary Chao,” said Federal Highway Administrator Nicole R. Nason. “These grants will help our state, local and regional transportation partners better protect the lives of those traveling on America’s roads and rails.”

“FRA is always working toward a benchmark of zero fatalities at railway crossings, and such safety improvements to our nation’s infrastructure will go a long way toward that goal,” said Federal Railroad Administrator Ronald Batory.

“Working together with FHWA and FRA, we can improve safety around highway-rail crossings and prevent collisions, injuries and fatalities,” said Federal Transit Administration Deputy Administrator K. Jane Williams. “Rail safety includes encouraging safe behavior around all rail crossings; it’s about making sure the American public is safe near all rail tracks.”

By statute, an eligible commuter authority must have experienced at least one accident investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) between January 1, 2008, and December 31, 2018, and for which the NTSB issued an accident report.

The NOFO, and information on how to apply, is available at

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=328801>

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## ALDOT Rail-Highway Safety Program Grade Crossing Hazard Elimination Application

The Rail-Highway Safety Programs Group of the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) as part of the ALDOT Rail State Action Plan is strategically engaging local agencies, ALDOT Region and Area Offices, railroad companies, and other stakeholders in an effort to improve safety at public grade crossings by eliminating hazards and fulfilling the program’s goal of reducing fatalities and incidents at crossings. Our office is now accepting Grade Crossing Hazard Elimination Applications for funding request. This application process will provide an opportunity for entities to identify and request funds for crossing locations that demonstrate a significant hazard to the traveling public.

Please find attached guidelines and application form. Submission **deadline is Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup> by 5:00 PM CST**. If this application is not applicable in your respective location, please disregard. This application is currently not available online. Feel free to forward the guidelines and application as needed. For application [aldotrail@dot.state.al.us](mailto:aldotrail@dot.state.al.us)

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## New CDBG GRANT Program

To Address COVID-19 Impacts (currently no deadline)

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) is in the process of developing a special Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant program to address COVID-19 impacts.

DETAILS: Currently, no application deadline, grant ceilings or other program details have been finalized.

MORE DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED AT A LATER DATE; however, please download the guide below to get started and identify potential partners as needed.

[CLICK HERE](#) to download the Quick Guide to CDBG Eligible Activities to Support Infectious Disease Response that will assist applicants to begin thinking about possible project needs.

Please note that applications to the CDBG program must be in the name of a local government as the applicant/grantee.

Partnerships and agreements with other agencies/entities, etc. can be developed as necessary. CDBG projects must also benefit primarily low and moderate-income people and this requirement will likely remain for the new funds.

RESOURCES/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The Department has technical assistance providers that may be available to assist grantees in their implementation of CDBG Funds for activities to prevent or respond to the spread of infectious disease.

Please contact your local CPD Field Office Director to request technical assistance from HUD staff or a TA provider.

Submit your questions to:

[CPDQuestionsAnswered@hud.gov](mailto:CPDQuestionsAnswered@hud.gov)

COVID-19 (“Coronavirus”) Information and Resources: <https://www.hud.gov/coronavirus>

CPD Program Guidance and Training: <https://www.hudexchange.info/program-support/>

EDA CARES ACT RECOVERY ASSISTANCE (currently no deadline)

#### OVERVIEW

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, [signed into law](#) by President Donald J. Trump on March 27, 2020, provides the Economic Development Administration (EDA) with \$1.5 billion for economic development assistance programs to help communities prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance, which is being administered under the authority of the bureau's flexible [Economic Adjustment Assistance](#) (EAA) (PDF) program, provides a wide-range of financial assistance to communities and regions as they respond to and recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

On May 7, 2020, Secretary Wilbur Ross made EDA's CARES Act Recovery Assistance funding available with the announcement that EDA had published an Addendum to its FY 2020 Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Notice of Funding Opportunity. EDA intends to deploy its CARES Act funding as quickly, effectively, and efficiently as possible, and in a manner that meets communities needs.

#### RESOURCES

- [EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Scope of Work for EDA Economic Development Districts and EDA Indian Tribe Planning Grant Recipients\\*](#)
- [Specific Award Conditions: Economic Development Districts and Indian Tribes\\*](#)
- [Specific Award Conditions: Revolving Loan Fund Awards\\*](#)
- [EDA's CARES Act Recovery Assistance Revolving Loan Fund Award Flexibilities Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Scope of Work for University Center Grantees\\*](#)
- [Specific Award Conditions: University Centers\\*](#)
- [EDA regional office contacts](#)
- [coronavirus.gov](https://coronavirus.gov)
- [coronavirus.gov/smallbusiness/](https://coronavirus.gov/smallbusiness/)
- [CDC.gov/COVID19/](https://cdc.gov/COVID19/)
- [USA.gov/coronavirus/](https://usa.gov/coronavirus/)

\* As stated in the CARES Act Recovery Assistance Addendum to the PWEAA NOFO, EDA may invite existing grantees, such as Economic Development Districts and Tribes currently in receipt of Partnership Planning awards, operators of existing EDA funded Revolving Loan Funds, and EDA-funded University Centers, to apply for supplemental awards. These standard Scopes of Work and Specific Award Conditions are for use with these supplemental awards only. Existing grantees who are eligible to apply for these awards will be contacted individually for instructions on how to apply. <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=321695>

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FHWA - [Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment \(ATCMTD\)](#) (Closing Date - 8/31/2020: [Apply Here](#))

NHTSA - [State Notification to Consumers of Motor Vehicle Recall Status](#) (Closing Date - 9/15/2020: [Apply Here](#))

FHWA - [Accelerated Innovation Deployment \(AID\) Demonstrations](#) (Closing Date - 9/30/2020: [Apply Here](#))

All Federal grants, including transportation grants, can be seen at [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). To find transportation related funding opportunities, select "All Department of Transportation" under the "Agency" menu on the left-hand side.

[DOT Funding Opportunities for Rural Projects - HERE](#)

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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](https://www.grants.gov).

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

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**Well, Well, Well...** Congress decided to punt on coming together on a transportation bill, that was just for transportation. The Senate had a version that was \$287 Billion, and the House had a version \$494 Billion, now we have something called "Failure to ACT". [HERE](#) is some inspiration for the House and the Senate....



## In the News

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### Alabama Awards \$1.5 Million for Infrastructure Projects

September 14, 2020 12:15 PM, EDT

Eleanor Lamb | Staff Reporter [tnews.com](https://tnews.com)



Gov. Kay Ivey speaks at a past press conference. (Kim Chandler, File/Associated Press)

Leading Alabama officials have announced \$1.5 million in funding will be awarded to cities and counties for local road and bridge projects.

The funding was provided through the Annual Grant Program, which was created as part of the Rebuild Alabama Act and is administered by the Alabama Department of Transportation. The program sets aside \$10 million a year for local road and bridge projects.

This latest round of funding was evenly distributed among six government agencies that will provide a total of \$705,941 in matching funds, even though matching funds are not required to participate in the program.

“Not only will we see these improvements as we drive on our roads, but we will see a ripple effect in areas like public safety and economic development,” Gov. Kay Ivey said in the announcement. “Investing in Alabama’s infrastructure is truly an investment in Alabama’s future.”

One award, for \$250,000, will support widening and resurfacing work on several roads in the town of Elberta, which is located between Mobile and Pensacola, Fla. Another \$250,000 grant will help repair a bridge that crosses over state Route 150 in Bessemer, a suburb of Birmingham.

Limestone County, located in the north-central portion of the state, was awarded \$250,000 for a bridge replacement. The city of Vincent, which is 32 miles east of Birmingham, received the same amount to resurface 17 sites. [HERE](#)

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### Private infrastructure investors see opportunity amid COVID-19 fallout

BY [HIL ANDERSON](#) | SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

While Washington seems deadlocked in its election-year response to the COVID-19 pandemic, international investors see growing opportunities to strike deals on transportation infrastructure projects directly with state and municipal governments.



Voters across the United States still favor campaign-promised improvements to all types of public infrastructure, and going directly to the front lines with ideas for projects and the capital to get them off the ground may be a productive option rather than waiting for the Trump administration or a deadlocked Congress to take the lead.

“The pandemic hit and that, understandably, rearranged everyone’s priorities,” said DJ Gribbin, a former special assistant on infrastructure policy to the Trump administration. “But the good news is that infrastructure is still getting a fair amount of attention.”

Gribbin and the other speakers at the Sept. 15 virtual panel discussion organized by the Global Infrastructure Investment Association (GIIA) considered conditions to be ripe for private capital to make its presence known at state capitals and city halls nationwide that are looking for ways to jumpstart infrastructure projects as a means to create jobs and otherwise improve the lives of their constituents who still need to travel and transport products.

“We don’t need a lot of federal support,” said Gribbin, who is currently a consultant and Senior Operating Partner at Stonepeak Infrastructure Partners. “What we need is action at the state and local levels.”

Although COVID-19 may have sent many municipal governments reeling, they are still often blessed with airports and other enticing infrastructure assets to attract the attention of well-capitalized major investors eagerly looking for new projects in which to invest. “We have a trillion-dollar infrastructure gap in the country, yet private investors cannot find projects,” said Michele Nellenbach, Director of Strategic Initiatives at the Bipartisan Policy Center.

Moreover, the panel concurred that with Congress unlikely to act any time soon on major infrastructure spending and with gasoline tax revenues slumping, striking a private-public partnership (P3) deal with an investor group may be the only practical way to move forward. And investors are recognizing that they can play an active role in seeking out partners at the state and local levels and communicating with them directly as opposed to waiting for a still-elusive infrastructure spending bill to stumble off Capitol Hill.

“We can go to a city, county or state and tell them, ‘If you know you need a new bridge or school built, then it’s a perfect time to do a project,’” said Gribbin.

At the same time, investors could urge these local partners to allow the private sector access to existing infrastructure, particularly airports, and turn them into revenue generators that will provide funding for infrastructure maintenance and lesser projects that will address crowded roads, skimpy broadband service, and myriad other issues that the public can get behind.

Nellenbach said cash-strapped city governments often have no solid idea of the value of their existing infrastructure in terms of leasing or privatization. She urged city leaders to quickly begin taking inventory of their holdings to find out what their current needs are and, equally as important, what will be required down the road in terms of infrastructure expansion and maintenance.

By working with private investors rather than depending on the whims of Washington and the bond market to obtain financing, the GIIA panel saw advantages in terms of capital costs and in overall better planning for the long term. Tom Osborne, Executive Director of IFM Investors in New York City, urged changes to accounting rules to project costs out over a number of years rather than “how much it will cost just to get it built.”

“State and local governments are going to have to find new revenue sources,” Osborne said. “And it will have relevance to either a Democratic or Republican administration.”

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## County approves borrowing plan to fast track environmental projects

Posted by [Jason Johnson](#) | Sep 15, 2020 (reprinted from the Lagniappe with permission)

Mobile County Commissioners have agreed to borrow up to \$30 million through general obligation warrants that will be paid back with revenue from future oil royalties to move forward more quickly with significant environmental and public access projects.

As Lagniappe has reported, Mobile County has received millions of dollars each year through the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA), which distributes a portion of federal royalties from offshore oil and gas mining with the coastal communities impacted by those operations.

Since 2018, the county has received more than \$11.5 million through the GOMESA program — funding that can only be spent on environmental efforts like land conservation, hurricane preparedness projects and coastal protection. This week, the County Commission



voted 2-1 to an agreement that pledges future GOMESA funding to pay off up to \$30 million in general obligation warrants sold on the market.

According to Commissioner Connie Hudson, that will allow the county to collect millions of dollars upfront to begin working on a number of planned GOMESA projects, including major upgrades to public facilities like Chickasabogue Park and the Escatawpa Hollow Campground. “It’s really going to allow us to move forward a lot faster on some of these projects we have lined up, and right now a lot of that focus is on public access to our waterways and land conservation,” Hudson said. “I think it’s a win-win for the county. One of the bright spots is, if for whatever reason those [GOMESA] funds go away, the federal government has guaranteed that debt service will be paid.”

Hudson said that guarantee means there isn’t any risk of the county defaulting the obligation warrants — a kind of borrowing the county has used in the past for big-ticket projects like the multimillion-dollar renovation planned at Mobile Metro Jail.

While Hudson voted in favor of the package Monday along with Commissioner Merceria Ludgood, Commission President Jerry Carl remained opposed. Speaking to Lagniappe, Carl said he didn’t have an issue with the planned uses for the funds, but he doesn’t believe borrowing against future revenue is the best way to fund government projects in general.

“I just have issues with putting the county in further debt borrowing money against the future,” Carl said. “I didn’t make a big fuss about it, but with the debt situation such as it is as far as the federal government, I think the least we can do is try to keep county and city government as debt-free as we can.”

Environmental Grants Director Tina Sanchez said Mobile County will be one of only a handful of jurisdictions along the Gulf Coast that have pledged projected GOMESA funding as a way to pay off debt service incurred from general obligation bonds and warrants. She said local officials waited until larger projects appropriate for GOMESA funding were identified before pursuing this option.

“As part of the county’s GOMESA plan approved in 2018, we looked at master planning for public access parks like the Escatawpa Hollow Campground and Chickasabogue Park,” Sanchez said. “Over time it became clear these waterfront parks are very important to the community and health of the community, but investing in them would require more money than we had projected out in terms of annual revenue.”

The county approved up to \$30 million in warrants, but Environmental Services Director Eddie Kerr said only about \$27 million of funding would be needed to move forward with implementing master plans developed with funding from previous rounds of GOMESA.

Those “implementation” expenses are outlined in a GOMESA expenditure plan commissioners also voted to approve Monday, which will be used to guide a projected \$42 million worth of projects between 2020 and 2025.

“Improvements at Chickasabogue and Escatawpa will definitely be an immediate focus either through the acquisition of additional land or improvements to some of the waterfront facilities,” Kerr said. “We’re acting on those first because we’ve got good estimates as far as costs and good master planning that will let us move forward much faster. But, we’ll still be looking for other opportunities as well.”

Kerr said he’d anticipated seeing \$6 million to \$9 million in immediate improvements at Chickasabogue Park alone, though other GOMESA expenditures in the new five-year plan include a projected \$3.6 million for public land acquisition, \$2.1 million for conservation land management, \$335,000 for storm surge monitoring, and an additional \$750,000 to support the county recycling center on Hitt Road.

Another expense approved as part of the plan is a \$3 million allocation to finish out a “permeable paving” parking lot at the recently opened Mobile County Soccer Complex during future phases of construction.

The county previously approved \$1.4 million for the same project, which drew some criticism from environmental groups like Mobile Baykeeper. However, county officials have contended it is a “green project” and an appropriate use of GOMESA funds because it will prevent stormwater runoff into nearby waterways.

“The goal of the project is for the soccer complex parking area to serve as an example of innovative stormwater management,” Sanchez said. “It employs a permeable parking paver system to control the quantity of stormwater runoff and remove large debris. This helps to protect water quality in the Dog River Watershed by preventing litter and reducing the potential for sedimentation and other pollutants.”

In addition to GOMESA funds, Mobile County has used several other funding sources to take on environmental projects over the past several years, including several sources tied to recovery efforts from the 2010 BP oil spill and the Coastal Impact Assistance Program.

Since 2014, the county has purchased more than 1,500 acres in places like Lightning Point, Big Creek Lake and Saltaire through various preservation and public access projects.

“The availability of these funding sources is allowing us to address a lot of the conservation and environmental-type projects that we as a county have focused on for a long time,” Hudson said. “Land acquisitions are a big part of our preservation efforts. It’s been fortuitous that we’ve had the opportunity to utilize these funds to further these types of critical environmental and infrastructure projects.”

## Transportation Research

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### Transportation Planning to the Extreme for Weather and Climate Change

More intense and more frequent extreme precipitation events are projected in a warming climate. With this risk comes possible detrimental outcomes based on what has happened in the past. Water rises over bridges. Homes, businesses, and roads on steep hills fall away in a landslide.

Tornadoes rip through towns. Planes are grounded. Coastal areas are underwater.

The U.S. Gulf Region is dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Laura and California is beginning to get a handle on wildfires that have been raging for weeks. This fall TRB is offering webinars to help strengthen the transportation industry’s resilience to these events. On October 6, TRB hosts A Resilient Path Forward for the Marine Transportation System and on October 7, Weathering the Storm - Climate Resilience at Airports.

State departments of transportation (DOTs) are also taking changing climate and extreme weather into account when making infrastructure decisions, but they are not always using a formal set of tools for cost-benefit analysis to address climate resilience. A TRB National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) guidebook was developed to fill the gaps in the routine use of cost-benefit analysis and other decisions-making tools in light of extreme weather.

Extremes are not rare

It’s become common to hear that “one-in-a-hundred-year events” are occurring in five-, 10-, and 15-year periods. Scientists identify these extreme weather events based on the historical record of weather in a particular region. A “return time” is a commonly used metric of probability; for example, a 100-year return time means that in any given year, there is a 1-in-100 chance of the threshold being reached.

Eight cases of diverse weather events in the U.S. from 2007-2012 highlighted the broad and evolving nature of keeping up with transportation infrastructure. NCHRP's Response to Extreme Weather Impacts on Transportation Systems offers in-depth lessons learned and effective practices for addressing this specific challenge.

Research leadership from TRB

In April 2020, TRB offered webinars on environmentally sustainable funding and financing at the intersection of federal surface transportation authorization and realignment of state transportation spending. Going further in preventative measures, an April 30 webinar explored the role of ecology in sustainable transportation.

TRB has provided practitioners with research findings of potential impacts of climate change and extreme weather on the U.S. Highway system for years. The 2014 Strategic Issues Facing Transportation research showed the need for a solid foundation to plan for the impacts of climate change through 2050. The increasing demands for highway reconstruction and rehabilitation happening now provide an opportunity to incorporate climate adaptation strategies.

Speakers at a 2018 TRB conference on freight analytics impacts on the Marine Transportation System addressed the role of sea level rise on the field. One presenter specifically spoke on using the expert elicitation of port authorities to assess the vulnerability and the adaptive capacity of ports to the rising threats of extreme weather and sea level rise.

Professionals in the aviation industry are also keeping a step ahead of preparations for extreme weather events and climate change. TRB's Airport Cooperative Research Program (ACRP) provides Climate Resilience and Benefit-Cost Analysis: A Handbook for Airports to assess the benefits, costs, and financial feasibility of infrastructure projects designed to improve resilience. Case studies of airports in Phoenix, Boston, New Orleans, and Little Rock explore how extreme weather events can affect small and large airports. In summary, evaluating climate resilience at airports may be wisely considered part of the overall risk management processes.

ACRP also offers Integrating Sustainability Planning and the Environmental Review Process as a manual for planners who are integrating the environmental review and sustainability planning processes at airports. The fields of sustainability planning and environmental review share overlap, providing another opportunity for planning and infrastructure enhancement in transportation.

Extreme weather effects reach from the sky to deep underground, requiring preparations that are unique to each aspect of transportation. TRB's Transit Cooperative Research Project (TCRP) offers a series of reports on Improving the Resilience of Transit Systems Threatened by Natural Disasters with practices for all sizes of transit systems to absorb the impacts of disaster, recover quickly, and return rapidly to providing the services that customers rely on to meet their travel needs. It notes [resilienttransit.org](http://resilienttransit.org) as a resource to identify tools to help plan for natural disasters.

Escalating preparations from basic to extreme

At TRB's Marine Board Spring Meeting, Suzanne Lemieux of the American Petroleum Institute mentioned the lessons learned from Harvey in terms of resilience, working from home, and managing systems for dealing with the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The 2020 hurricane season started unseasonably early, so the industry was already preparing for facing the dual threats of hurricanes and COVID-19 as early as May. TRB continues to look to the future to better incorporate extreme event and climate change into transportation planning. An active NCHRP project aims to provide guidelines for response planning, assessment, and rapid restoration of service of bridges in extreme events.

## Value Capture Strategies: Tax Incremental Finance Districts & Transportation Reinvestment Zones

September 24, 2020 1:00pm-3:00pm ET

<https://bit.ly/2vMB216>

<https://collaboration.fhwa.dot.gov/dot/fhwa/WC/Lists/Seminars/DispForm.aspx?ID=2288>

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## 'Walk and Bike Safely' roadway safety video teaches kids new safety habits

by Danielle Moody Wednesday, August 5th 2020

SAN ANTONIO– Vision Zero San Antonio has created an important new learning tool for area children through a child-friendly, animated video that teaches children critical roadway safety lessons.

***“Creating an animated video that teaches roadway safety can arm parents, teachers, and with an easy way to save lives,” said Bianca Thorpe, Capital Programs Manager, Transportation Planning & Programming for Public Works. “Teaching children how to cross the street is a good start, but we can’t stop there when preparing them for how to interact with a dynamic transportation system. Through this video, we were able to capture so much of what children need to know in a simple but engaging way.”***

The concern for safety is at an all-time high right now during the warmer months when children are riding their bikes and playing outdoors. In the fall, many children will walk or ride the bus to school.

Walk and Bike Safely, the fifteen minute video, was created with Safe Kids San Antonio and University Health System. It is designed to help children learn important safety habits.

Just some of the lessons your child will learn through the video are:

- Making eye contact with drivers – never assuming a driver sees you
- Always staying alert when on or near a roadway
- The safest place to walk when there is no sidewalk
- The safest place to cross the road
- How to use a pedestrian signal crossing
- How to safely cross the street in front of a parked bus
- Increasing visibility when near or on a road after dark
- Bicycle safety rules and best practices
- How to inspect a bicycle to ensure it is roadway ready
- Hand signals for riding bicycles on roadways
- Safe practices for railroad crossings

You can watch the video by [CLICKING HERE.](#)

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## **DOT Unveils Applicant Toolkit for Rural Communities**

Eleanor Lamb July 28, 2020

The U.S. Department of Transportation created a toolkit intended to help those interested in participating in the Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success program.

Known as ROUTES, the program was created in October 2019, and it is meant to help connectivity in rural communities. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao on July 27 unveiled the toolkit, which provides information and resources. Its purpose is to help rural applicants understand and navigate DOT's discretionary grant funding opportunities.

Specifically, the toolkit outlines applicant requirements and sorts grant programs by applicant type and eligible project activities. The toolkit was designed for applicants with varying levels of experience.

"This toolkit will help both the beginner and the experienced better understand, identify and navigate discretionary grant funding opportunities for rural transportation projects," Chao said during a video announcement. "There are a lot of rural communities who just don't have the resources to hire an army of dedicated staff and contractors to compete for these federal funds.

"We hope that this toolkit will be a reference and a road map to opportunities and resources at the U.S. Department of Transportation that will benefit your community and our country."

Rural roads make up 70% of America's road miles, according to DOT. Maintaining these roadways can be a challenge for rural communities that have thin financial resources. Although geographically sprawling, rural communities generally have low population densities, meaning fewer people to support investment.

Chao noted that infrastructure upgrades can improve safety, which also can be a challenge in rural areas. She said that although 19% of the population lives in rural areas, 45% of highway fatalities occur in rural areas.

In terms of economic activity, Chao said rural communities play an important role. According to Chao, two-thirds of freight moving by rail comes from rural areas, and nearly half the distance traveled by trucks takes place on rural roads.

"Rural transportation is important to our economy and our way of life," Chao said. "Manufactured goods, raw materials and agricultural products travel through rural areas on their way to global markets."

The ROUTES initiative's steering council includes representatives from the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration and the Federal Aviation Administration.

DOT has placed an emphasis on rural community needs through some of its popular grant programs. For example, the Infrastructure For Rebuilding America grant program directs a certain amount of funds toward rural projects. In the latest round of INFRA grants, announced June 18, 53% of the funding was devoted to projects in rural areas.

In the latest round of Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) discretionary grants, issued in November 2019, half of the \$900 million in funding was awarded to projects in rural areas.

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## **U.S. Transportation Secretary Chao Releases Pathways to the Future of Transportation**

Thursday, July 23, 2020

WASHINGTON – One year after announcing the launch of the Non-Traditional and Emerging Transportation Technology (NETT) Council, U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao today released Pathways to the Future of Transportation – a policy document that is intended to serve as a roadmap for innovators of new cross modal technologies to engage with the Department.

"Pathways to the Future of Transportation guidance on new, cross-modal technologies will help address legitimate public concerns about safety, security and privacy without hampering innovation," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

This policy document is the U.S. Department of Transportation's first step in providing a clear path for innovators of new cross modal technologies to engage with the Department. It lays out a process for innovators and stakeholders to approach the Department with their plans and proposals for emerging technologies.



Secretary Chao announced the creation of the NETT Council last year as an internal deliberative body to identify and resolve jurisdictional and regulatory gaps that may impede the deployment of new technologies, such as potential advances in tunneling technology and hyperloop. Pathways to the Future of Transportation intends to help private sector innovators understand the purpose, structure, and function of the NETT Council; lay out the principles guiding the Department's policies and posture toward transformative technologies; and deliver a high-level overview of the federal framework for supporting non-traditional and emerging technologies.

DOT will publish a Request for Comment on Pathways to the Future of Transportation, which will allow the public to comment and provide feedback on the document. More information on the NETT Council's work can be found at <https://www.transportation.gov/nettcouncil>.

## Opportunity Zones

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>

## 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.