



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, September 25th, 2020

Volume 35, Number 11

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Due to Hurricane Sally, the Human Services Coordinated Plan meeting has been postponed to October 1, 2020. There were some FTA 5310 vehicles delivered this morning; see *Mobile MPO Updates*. There was a RPO meeting this week; See *RPO Updates*. No Highway Bill but a House Continuing Resolution in *Legislative Updates*. This week's *Just For Fun* we have social distancing. *ATRIPII and FTA 5310 are in Funding Opportunities* and the Alabama gas tax is increasing on October 1st, which is a state trend, *In The News*. Have a great weekend.

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

www.mobilempo.org



Check us out on FACEBOOK; SARPC Transportation Video, this is what we do [HERE](#)

Want to know what other SARPC departments do?

- [Planning and Community Development](#)
- [Area Agency on Aging](#)
- [Employment and Economic Development](#)

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

Mobile MPO Updates

Congratulations to The Learning Tree on the delivery of three new vehicles this morning! These vehicles were funded through the Federal Transit Administration 5310 (Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities) funding that the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission is the Designated Recipient of. The "call for projects" is currently open for the FY2021 round of funding; please see *Funding Opportunities*.



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 16th)

Due to Hurricane Sally, the meeting has postponed to October 1, 2020 10:00 AM. For GOTO meeting information email 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 1st, 2020** using the GoToMeeting app. Please email 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](#).

Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

-None this week

South Alabama RPO Updates

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) met this week using the GoToMeeting app. The agenda included:

- 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%20HSCPT%20for%20SARPC.pdf>)

The RPO Transportation Plan Project List (available for review online at <http://www.mobilempo.org/RPODocuments.html>) SARPC Rural Planning Organization

Projects in Region Let September 25th, 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

House Appropriation Committee's continuing resolution would extend FAST Act

By [The Trucker News Staff](#) September 24, 2020

WASHINGTON — The House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations issued a [continuing resolution](#) that would fund federal government programs from the beginning of fiscal year 2021 on Oct. 1 through Dec. 11, but its fate remains uncertain as the House’s Democratic leadership continues negotiating with the White House.

Key for state departments of transportation is that a proposed extension of current surface transportation funding legislation — the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act — is contained within the continuing resolution for one year, with an additional \$13.6 billion added to the Highway Trust Fund.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and 87 organizations had urged Congressional leadership to pass this type of “turn-key” bill in a [Sept. 9 letter](#).

Jim Tymon, AASHTO’s executive director, noted that a one-year extension of current surface transportation funding legislation gives state DOTs the “certainty” needed for planning, letting and building projects through the 2021 construction season.

“Ideally, if this extension can be provided with increased funding, our industry will be able to employ more Americans in the construction sector which, in turn, will bolster market certainty for the transportation industry in 2021, making businesses more likely to hire workers while investing in new equipment and technologies,” he said.

According to an analysis by the AASHTO policy team, the FAST Act extension within the continuing resolution provides:

- Obligation limitation through Dec. 11, estimated to be \$9.1 billion for the Federal-aid Highway Program.
- An extension of FAST Act funding and provisions from fiscal year 2020 to all of fiscal year 2021, including contract authority formula apportionments to states.
- A \$10.4 billion general fund transfer to the Highway Trust Fund’s Highway Account and a \$3.2 billion transfer to the Mass Transit Account.
- A \$14 billion general fund transfer to the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, making up for the aviation excise tax holiday included in the \$2 trillion CARES Act passed in March.
- Suspension of the Rostenkowski fiscal solvency test for the Mass Transit Account for fiscal year 2021. Without suspending that “test” — crafted by the late Rep. Dan Rostenkowski (D), who served as chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee in the 1980s — significant reductions in transit obligation funds would occur in fiscal year 2021.
- An increase to the “multimodal cap” within the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) discretionary grant program from \$500 million to \$600 million.
- An extension of 2017 and 2018 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program obligation deadlines through Sept. 30, 2021.

While the goal is to get the continuing resolution signed into law by Sept. 30 — the end of the current 2020 federal government fiscal year — providing aid to farmers remains a political stumbling block for the moment.

The short-term duration of the continuing resolution is also an issue, noted AASHTO’s policy team, so it remains to be seen how the final fiscal year 2021 appropriations picture will look by Dec. 11.

House Democrats Unveil Bill to Avert Government Shutdown

Earlier this week, House Democratic leadership [released their version of a continuing resolution](#) to address some of the upcoming federal deadlines coming up on September 30th. The bill would extend current federal funding levels through December 11, kicking the can on fiscal year (FY) 2021 negotiations until after Election Day. Under the CR, the FAST Act, which is set to expire at the end of the month, would receive a one-year extension. The bill did not include \$30 billion in aid for farmers impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, which the White House requested in CR talks last week. House Democrats are aiming to pass the bill this week to get it over to the Senate to consider as the September 30th deadline looms. It is unclear whether Senate Republicans will try to amend the bill once it reaches their chamber, setting up a situation for further negotiations in a tight timeframe. A senior administration official said that it is unlikely the president will sign the bill if the farm aid provision is not included.

U.S. Department of Transportation Announces Final Rule to Streamline Project Management Oversight for Major Capital Projects

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Transit Administration (FTA) today announced a final rule amending FTA regulations for Project Management Oversight (PMO) of transit capital investments. The final rule streamlines the PMO regulation by reducing the number of projects subject to FTA project management oversight and modifies the regulation to make it consistent with statutory changes. The [final rule](#) published today in the Federal Register.

“The number of transit capital projects and the infrastructure costs associated with them has increased significantly since the PMO program was first authorized in 1987,” said FTA Deputy Administrator K. Jane Williams. “This rule tailors the level of FTA oversight to the real costs, complexities, and risks of major capital projects and right-sizes the role of Federal oversight while eliminating unnecessary red tape for state and local leaders.”

The rule redefines a “major capital project” as a new fixed guideway project — or an expansion, rehabilitation or modernization of an existing fixed guideway system — with a total project cost of \$300 million or more and with a Federal investment of \$100 million or more.

The previous threshold defined a major capital project as a project costing \$100 million or more but did not include Federal support as a factor.

Under this Administration, DOT has saved \$4.37 billion in regulatory costs to the economy and consumers. The Department has also far exceeded the President's 2-for-1 plan, issuing at its peak 23 regulatory reform actions for every new single regulatory action. To date, DOT has issued 65 regulatory reform actions and only 6 significant regulatory actions.

Federal public transportation law [49 U.S.C. § 5327(d)] requires FTA to maintain a PMO regulation. The rule has not been updated since 1989, and the industry and economic conditions have changed significantly since then. Other changes to the rule include updates to the elements of the required Project Management Plan that reflect industry best practices.

Problem Solvers Caucus Unveils “March to Common Ground” COVID Stimulus Framework

Last week, the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus released its “March to Common Ground” framework to help break the gridlock on the latest COVID-19 package. The package includes several key areas, including COVID-19 testing, unemployment insurance, direct stimulus, worker and liability protection, small business and non-profit support, food security, schools and child care, housing, election support, and state and local aid. The framework is designed for a six month horizon and through the inauguration except for state and local funding, which would last a full year. The framework would also call for new stimulus money and reallocation of previously appropriated “CARES Act” funding. Click [HERE](#) for further information.

Funding Opportunities

FY2021 Effects of Sea Level Rise (ESLR) (deadline 1/8/21)

There is a notice of funding opportunity concerning the effect of sea level rise that has a relatively short time frame to submit a letter of intent. This is the link to the grant program, <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?opId=328992>.

NOAA-NOS-NCCOS-2021-2006594
FY21 Effects of Sea Level Rise (ESLR)
Department of Commerce

This solicitation is to improve adaptation and planning in response to regional and local effects of sea level rise and coastal inundation through targeted research on key technologies, natural and nature-based infrastructure, physical and biological processes, and model evaluation. The overall goal of the ESLR Program is to facilitate informed adaptation planning and coastal management decisions through a multidisciplinary research program that results in integrated models of dynamic physical and biological processes capable of evaluating vulnerability and resilience under multiple SLR, inundation, and management scenarios.

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

(deadline October 30th, 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](#)

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

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?oppld=328801>

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 16th 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

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

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
- coronavirus.gov/smallbusiness/
- CDC.gov/COVID19/
- 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>

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](#)

Opportunity Zones

EDA's Opportunity Zone Web Page

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

[Section 5307, 5310, and 5311: Using Non-DOT Funds for Local Match](#)

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [Administration for Community Living](#) (ACL) has worked with the [National Aging and Disability Transportation Center](#) to clarify the ability of grantees to use Older Americans Act Title IIIB Supportive Services Funds to match Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs. These FTA programs include Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307), Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and People with Disabilities (Section 5310), and Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311). This information has been publicized [HERE](#)

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

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

On August 27th, Governor Kay Ivey issued her seventeenth supplemental emergency proclamation containing an amended Safer at Home Order that included a statewide mask requirement. Individuals are required to wear a mask or other facial covering when in public and in close contact with other people, as described in the order. This amended order extends until Friday, October 2, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. So, just a reminder until next week.....



In the News

Alabama gas tax increasing on October 1st

by Stephen Quinn Tuesday, September 22nd 2020

The two cent increase is the second part of a 10-cent increase that will bring Alabama's total tax rate to 26-cents per gallon effective Thursday, October 1st. (abc3340.com)

HOOVER, Ala. (WBMA) — Drivers across Alabama will see a slight increase in how much they pay at the pump as Alabama enters the second-phase of its gas tax plan meant to fund repairs for the state's ailing infrastructure.

The two cent increase is the second part of a 10-cent increase that will bring Alabama's total tax rate to 26-cents per gallon effective Thursday, October 1st. The Rebuild Alabama Plan is projected to raise an estimated \$300 million in gas tax revenue by 2021.

The road construction plans for each county are available on the Association of County Commissions of Alabama's [website](#).

Gas tax hikes pile up: States become desperate for road repair revenue as COVID-19 reduces driving

Nathan Bomey USA TODAY

Americans who want to stay socially distant during the COVID-19 pandemic now have another reason to think twice before going out for gas.

Several states have increased gas taxes in recent months to make up for sudden shortfalls in revenue devoted to road repairs. As Americans drive less during the pandemic due partly to social distancing and remote work arrangements, gasoline demand has fallen. That's one key factor triggering the tax increases as lawmakers seek to limit the impact of lower revenue on road repair budgets.

Supporters say the increases, most of which were triggered automatically due to existing laws, are necessary to keep transportation infrastructure in good shape.

Critics say the gas-tax increases are poorly timed and will hurt low-income drivers at a time when they are more likely to be facing unemployment, reduced hours or pay cuts.

Gasoline demand is currently about 15% lower than usual, according to oil analysts.

The good news for motorists is this: They're currently saving at the pump because the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the economy to slow, pushing down demand and prices for petroleum and gasoline, which is made from crude oil. The national average price of gasoline was \$2.18 a gallon on Tuesday, down 49 cents from a year earlier, according to AAA.

"Gas prices are low, and so that presents a big opportunity for politicians that are looking at very grim (revenue) numbers," said Patrick DeHaan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy.

New York City resident Adam Librot, who used to fuel up his SUV when he drove across the river to go shopping in New Jersey, is upset about the state's plan to increase its gas tax by 9.3 cents per gallon to nearly 51 cents, not including the federal levy.

"This is the latest in a string of disincentives to go to New Jersey," he said.

But Librot said he does not expect many locals to notice the tax increase because people typically blame fuel increases on oil companies.

"It's embedded in the price," Librot said of the gas tax. "It's hidden from sight, so unless you're aware of it when the flurry of articles come out, it's gone from the headlines and you don't feel the tax itself."

The states averaged 36.4 cents per gallon in gas taxes and fees as of July 1, according to the American Petroleum Institute. The federal tax of 18.4 cents, which is added to the state taxes, hasn't changed since 1993.

Recent increases have included Virginia (5 cents), Nebraska (3.9 cents), California (3.2 cents), South Carolina (2 cents) and Illinois (0.7 cents). Increases coming Oct. 1 include New Jersey and Alabama (2 cents).

Oil Price Information Service analyst Tom Kloza predicted that more hikes will follow since gasoline demand will remain around 85% of normal demand for the foreseeable future.

"We think there will be a ton of them," Kloza said. "Most of them are going to come after the election, (taking effect) Jan. 1 or July 1 of next year."

The problem is that while the gas tax increases are likely to fund tens or hundreds of millions of dollars in road repairs, they won't make up for a projected \$5 billion loss in revenue due to declining gasoline demand, DeHaan said.

"It's hard to quantify as a windfall because so many of these states have just been decimated," he said. "It's akin to putting a Band-Aid on a gaping bullet hole in the middle of your chest."

Still, lawmakers need to consider the economic burden of gas tax increases during the pandemic, said Ulrik C. Boesen, senior policy analyst at the Tax Foundation, a Washington-based think tank.

"That being said, gas taxes pay for our roads, and it is appropriate that the people who use the roads pay for the roads," Boesen said in an email. "But even though 36 states have raised gas taxes over the last decade, currently, there are very few states that raise enough money from transportation-related taxes to cover transportation-related expenses."

As a result, lawmakers are expected to look to other sources, such as general fund revenue, to help pay for road repairs.

“If gas taxes aren’t raising enough revenue, taxpayers are simply funding the roads through other taxes,” Boesen said.

Court Order Keeps Census in Limbo as Counting End Date Looms

The winding down of the 2020 census must remain on hold nationwide through September 24 at the latest, a federal judge in California has ordered. The move by U.S. District Judge Lucy Koh throws the national head count further into uncertainty as a coalition led by the National Urban League continues a legal fight to provide the U.S. Census Bureau with more time to tally the country's population and review results. Career officials at the bureau have warned that they need more time to avoid risking serious errors in the count that cannot be fixed under a curtailed timeline. Justice Department attorneys must now produce a complete record of internal Commerce Department documents for the lawsuit. This week, a bipartisan group of senators introduced last-minute legislation with deadline extensions that they hope can be passed by the end of this month. Follow this [link](#) for more information

Southeastern States Start Recovering From Hurricane Sally

editor@aaashto.org September 18, 2020

Hurricane Sally made landfall on September 16 near the Alabama and Florida border: a Category 2 storm that triggered “catastrophic flooding,” heavy rainfall, damaging storm surge and strong winds that even affected inland areas across the Southeast in Georgia, the Carolinas, and into Virginia.

According to [news reports](#), the heaviest rainfall occurred along parts of the Alabama coast and the western Florida Panhandle. The highest measured rainfall total so far is just over two feet at the Pensacola Naval Air Station in Florida.

State department of transportation crews along with National Guard units and other agencies engaged in a variety of rescue, debris clearing, and infrastructure restoration efforts in the wake of Hurricane Sally.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency noted that President Trump has approved emergency declarations for Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi to provide federal assistance and coordinate all disaster relief efforts in response to Hurricane Sally across the Gulf Coast.

Those declarations authorize FEMA to provide assistance, including direct federal assistance for emergency protective measures for 30 parishes in Louisiana, 24 counties in Mississippi, 51 counties Alabama, and 7 counties in Florida.

FEMA added in a [statement](#) that “significant and widespread flooding” is expected across inland portions of Alabama, central Georgia and upstate South Carolina, with widespread flooding still possible across western/central North Carolina and southeast Virginia.

Transportation Research

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 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>

'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.](#)

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.

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.