



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, July 31st, 2020

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There is a Mobile MPO Policy Board meeting scheduled for August 19th via GOTO meeting; the TCC/CAC met this week, see *Mobile MPO Updates*. *Legislative Updates* this week are viral, literally, and there are not many *Funding Opportunities* this week. Biking is up and it is the anniversary of the ADA *In The News*. There was a stakeholder meeting this week concerning Demand Response Transit Study, please see *Mobile MPO Updates*. DOT Unveils Applicant Toolkit for Rural Communities in *Transportation Research* and this week's *Just For Fun* is.... 2020

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

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

There is a Mobile MPO Policy meeting scheduled for August 19th via GOTO meeting; the a TCC/CAC met this week (virtually).

The agenda is to include the following:

- Adoption FY 2021 [Unified Planning Work Program](#) (planning budget)
- Modify 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program
 - i. Cost estimate change for 100040584 (CN) US98, EB lanes from MS state line to .5 Mile East of Glenwood Rd, from \$18.2M to \$23.9M, FY 2022
 - ii. Cost estimate change for 100033461 (CN) ADDL lanes on I-10 from CR-39 to Carol Plantation, from \$33.4M to \$41M, FY 2021
 - iii. 100071946; PE; 5 Year Regional Traffic Operations (RTOP) TSMO for 130 Signalized Intersections Along SR-59, SR-16 (US-90), and SR-42 (US-98) Target Start Date : 8/1/2020; \$2,631,200
 - iv. 100073250; PE; Independent Review of Austal's Proposed Road Improvements Over the Wallace Tunnels and Bankhead Tunnel; 9/1/2020; \$170,000
- Review of Demand Response Transit Study
- Potential TAP projects

DRAFT 2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is now available for review.

The Draft 2021 UPWP is essentially the budget of the Mobile MPO staff. Typically in June of every year, MPO staff reviews the draft document with MOP Policy Board Members and the subcommittees, prior to submitting the draft UPWP to ALDOT and federal agencies for review. Because of the COVID-19 virus disruption our MPO meeting schedule, the draft document was submitted to ALDOT to review without committee review. The document is almost identical to the current UPWP, with the exception of no new third party contracts. The DRAFT 2021 UPWP is available for review [HERE](#).

The MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY

There was a stakeholder meeting this week 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.

Please review the Tasks 1, 2 and 3 [HERE](#).

There will be a stakeholder meeting scheduled in the near future to discuss the draft report that came out his week. This will be a GOTO meeting.

The Draft Report is [HERE](#)

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

Project : 100072350 Federal aid number : ST-049-000-013-PE County : MOBILE Scope : PE
Project Description : INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF AUSTAL'S PROPOSED ROAD IMPROVEMENTS ON DUNLAP DRIVE OVER WALLACE TUNNEL AND BANKHEAD TUNNEL
Urban Area : 067 MOBILE
Target Start Date : 9/1/2020
Engineers Estimate : \$170,000.00

South Alabama RPO Updates

DRAFT 2021 RPO Work Program is now available for review.

The RPO work Program is the staff budget for SARPC Rural Planning Organization. This draft is identical to the current work program. The DRAFT 2021 Work Program is available on the RPO Webpage [HERE](#).

Projects in Region Let July 31st, 2020

MOBILE COUNTY
None at this time

BALDWIN COUNTY
None at this time

ESCAMBIA COUNTY
For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, Steel Blockout Replacement, and Traffic Stripe on SR-41 from the intersection of SR-3 (US-31) in Brewton to a point north of Burnt Corn Creek. Length 2.349 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$595,041 to \$727,272 .

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

Legislative Updates

[Congress is in session](#)

Congress Responds to COVID19 and Other Challenges for the Maritime Industry

[Joan Bondareff, Contributor](#)

In response to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, the Congressional Research Service released a report that stated global economic growth has declined by 3% to 6% in 2020 with a partial recovery predicted for 2021. Also, the GDP of the U.S. has fallen by 5% in the first quarter 2020. According to the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the maritime industry, and seafarers themselves, have not been able to escape the significant effects of this crisis.

All sectors of the maritime industry have been adversely affected by the global pandemic. The shipping industry alone can face up to \$1.7 billion loss in revenues to the carriers. Cruise lines in particular have been hit hard by the virus; most companies have essentially shut down operations until the fall at the earliest. Other sectors have also been negatively affected, including ports, terminal operators and their workers according to Lauren Brand, the President of the National Association of Waterfront Employers (NAWE), in her hearing testimony before the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure regarding "the Status of the U.S. Maritime Supply Chain During the COVID-19 Pandemic" on May 29, 2020.

Finally, we have seen seafarers stranded as a result of COVID-19 and makeshift efforts have been made to allow them to travel home. For instance, the IMO has created a Seafarer Crisis Action Team (SCAT) to assist stranded seafarers.

What has Congress done to help the maritime industry? Unfortunately, not much. So far, Congress has passed three COVID-19 stimulus bills: the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L.116-136), the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act (P.L.116-123), and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L.116-127). Anecdotally, these response

packages are referred to as the CARES Act, CARES Act 2, and CARES Act 3, respectively. When they return from July 4th recess on July 20, 2020, Congress is primed to enact their fourth, and likely final, stimulus package for Coronavirus aid. Very few funds were allocated to the maritime industry in these first three stimulus bills.

The fourth package is still in the early stages of negotiation so whether maritime will get aid this time around remains to be seen. The House of Representatives has already enacted their version of the next stimulus bill entitled the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act (H.R. 6800), at over \$3 trillion the bill would constitute the single largest piece of economic support legislation ever, if enacted. On the other side of the Hill, the Republican-led Senate is reluctant to pass another stimulus bill with such a high price tag so negotiations will determine what is stripped or stays in the final legislation. However, with COVID-19 resurging in Republican-led states, Members may have no choice but to provide more money to states, local governments, and even to unemployed workers. Though Congress has set a goal of passage by the end of July, we expect the fourth stimulus bill to be enacted by the end of the summer. To read more click [HERE](#).

Trump Says Republicans, Democrats Far Apart in Stimulus Talks

July 29, 2020

President Donald Trump said that Republicans and Democrats aren't close to resolving their differences over a coronavirus stimulus package, and that Congress may need to pass some stopgap measures to prevent aid from running out.

The final payments of supplemental unemployment insurance that were included in the last stimulus run out this week, and federal protections against evictions expired July 25, while mortgage foreclosures also are expiring with no agreement in sight.

"We ought to work on the evictions so that people don't get evicted, to work on the payments to the people and the rest of it," Trump said at the White House before leaving on a trip to Texas. "We're so far apart we don't care."

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told reporters earlier that the two sides are "very far apart" and that lawmakers should agree on a short-term extension of the unemployment benefits and eviction protections.

But House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has rejected the idea of passing a stimulus bill piecemeal, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has said he wants Congress to act on a comprehensive plan.

Mnuchin and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows have engaged in shuttle negotiations between Senate Republicans and Pelosi and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer to reconcile differences between the \$1 trillion stimulus plan the GOP released July 27 and the \$3.5 trillion package House Democrats passed in May.

The two administration officials are scheduled to be back at the Capitol on July 29.

While there is some common ground on issues like small business aid, stimulus checks for individuals and money to expand coronavirus testing and eventual vaccine distribution, there are major hurdles to any potential compromise.

Shelby Introduces Emergency Coronavirus Funding Package

07.27.20

Legislation Provides \$306 Billion, Including Substantial Investments to Accelerate Testing and Vaccine Development, and to Help Schools Re-Open Safely

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) today introduced legislation containing \$306 billion in emergency appropriations to aid American families and businesses suffering from the COVID-19 global pandemic.

"I believe we need to act with a sense of urgency. The American people are fighters, but the accumulated strain of this pandemic is a serious burden on folks," said Chairman Shelby. "The pressures of working full-time and educating multiple kids at home all at once are simply unsustainable over the long term. That's not to mention the added stress so many of these families bear because they are worried about protecting elderly relatives in nursing homes. We need to step it up for them.

"With the additional resources this legislation provides, I believe we can give them greater confidence that we are getting our arms around this virus. That, I believe, is the key to unleashing the American economy and hitting our stride as a nation once again."

The emergency supplemental appropriations package contains \$105 billion to help schools adapt and provide a safe path for children to return to the classroom; \$16 billion in grants to states for testing, contact tracing, and surveillance; \$20 billion for vaccine, therapeutic and diagnostic development; \$20 billion to assist America's farmers and ranchers who have suffered as a result of the pandemic; and nearly \$30 billion to protect our nation's military and defense industrial base.

Funding Opportunities

Federal Highway Administration Makes \$60 Million Available for Advanced Transportation

Technologies Grants DEADLINE AUGUST 31st, 2020

FHWA 12-20

Contact: Nancy Singer

Tel.: (202) 366-0660

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) today published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for \$60 million in Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Program (ATCMTD) grants to fund new technologies that improve transportation efficiency and safety.

"These grants promote the use of advanced technologies to address critical safety issues and efficiency throughout our nation's transportation network," said Federal Highway Administrator Nicole R. Nason. "This program helps unleash technological potential to improve travel for all Americans."

Created in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, the ATCMTD program works to improve the performance of U.S. transportation systems, reduce traffic congestion, and improve the safety of the traveling public. Now in its fifth year, the ATCMTD program has provided more than \$206 million for projects in 23 states and the District of Columbia.

The program provides funding to help develop model deployment sites for the large-scale installation and operation of advanced technologies that improve safety, efficiency, and system performance. It has funded innovative projects such as Contra Costa Transportation Authority's Bay Area Mobility-On-Demand (MOD) Project to reduce traffic congestion on the I-680 Corridor and surrounding communities in California, the Florida Department of Transportation's Sunstore integrated data system for travelers, and the Texas Department of Transportation's I-10 Corridor Coalition Truck Parking Availability System.

State departments of transportation, local governments, transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, and other eligible entities are invited to apply under the program.

The NOFO is available at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=327953>

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/](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>

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)

The year 2020 has not been good to us. *Just For Fun*, what if 2020 were a street sign...



In the News

Coronavirus pandemic helping local bicycle shop as people opt outside: 'This will be our best year ever'



- [Tyler Fingert](#)
- Updated 11 hrs ago | Posted on Jul 30, 2020

MOBILE, Ala (WALA) -- Changing habits because of the coronavirus has been forcing more people outside, some of those folks have turned to biking to spend their free time.

That in turn made bicycles a hot commodity during this pandemic and Cadence 120 was sold out at one point and customers were waiting days if not weeks to hit the trail.

"There's no way to predict this," said Brad Burton, Owner of Cadence 120 Bicycles. "I wouldn't have even predicted this at the beginning of March."

Bicycles selling out

It would be an understatement to say the bike business is booming.

"This will be our best year ever by far," Burton said. "Not by a little bit, by a long bit."

For months the shop has not been able to keep bicycles on the shelves.

They have a few ready to go right now and they are lucky for that.

"There's literally nothing left in the supply chain in the bicycle business right now even repair parts, tires, tubes," Burton said. "All my distributors are out of them."

The NPD Group, a market research company that tracks the bicycle industry, said there is record sales, up 75% in April compared to last year.

“We’re very fortunate to be busy and doing very well, I certainly feel for the other business owners and everything,” Burton said. “We could just as easily be on the flipside of this.”

New bicycles make up part of their business, but they also do plenty of repairs.

Burton said before the coronavirus repairs would take a few days, now they are so busy it could take three weeks.

“We’ve been working 70-hour weeks for 14-15 weeks now so we’re pretty tired,” he said.

Burton said they were so backed up at points they had to close their doors while they caught up. He said sales have slowed down a little in the last few weeks, but he expects to that change as the weather cools down.

City Transportation Officials Say It’s Time to Slow Traffic Down

SANDY SMITH JULY 29, 2020

“City Limits” Guide Recommends Scrapping the 85th-Percentile Speed-Limit Rule

Right now, speed limits on streets and highways everywhere in the United States are determined by a formula known as the “85th percentile” method. This method examines the speeds at which cars travel on a street and sets the speed limit so that 85 percent of the cars are driving at or under it.

This rule works just fine on open rural highways and freeways. On city streets, however, not so much. They can, and do, end up setting limits high enough to put pedestrians and other non-auto users at greater risk of injury and death.

Smart Cities Dive reports that the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) has decided the time has come to fix this. The organization’s new guidebook, “City Limits,” responds to the National Transportation Safety Board’s (NTSB) call for a total rethinking of the way road speed limits are set.

Its key recommendations:

- Setting default speed limits on many streets at once (such as 25 mph on all major streets and 20 mph on all minor streets),
- Designating slow zones in sensitive areas, and
- Setting corridor speed limits on high priority major streets, using a safe speed study, which uses conflict density and activity level to set context-appropriate speed limits.

NACTO Program Manager Jenny O’Connell called the 85th-percentile method “oversimplified and outdated” in a statement. She elaborated on that for Smart Cities Dive: “That was based on an assumption that drivers act rationally and prudently and know how fast to go for the street conditions,” O’Connell said. “And that’s a flawed assumption. Drivers make decisions based on a lot of cues around them, and those cues aren’t always based fully in rationality.”

The dramatic rise in average traffic speeds on many city streets after COVID-19 took lots of cars off them reinforces her point. Where other groups of users share city streets with cars, their needs for safe travel also need to be taken into account, which means that allowing cars to move as fast as possible should cease to be the top priority for transportation officials and planners.

The article also notes that there is a racial-justice aspect to the setting of speed limits. Current practices make police stops of vehicles driven by non-white people more likely, it says, and road design and speed limits can help reduce the need for police enforcement.

“A safe street is not one where safety is determined by how fast someone can comfortably drive, but rather one where a person can comfortably walk, ride a bike, and cross the street using a wheelchair,” Ryan Noles, senior transportation planner for the City of Boulder, Colo., said in the NACTO news release accompanying the guide’s release.

Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

Thursday, July 30, 2020

WASHINGTON – Today, as part of an event celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao announced the Department will create a first-of-its-kind accessibility strategic plan, as the U.S. Department of Transportation works to achieve access and mobility for all in transportation.

“This strategic plan creates a unified vision for the Department to support the development of new inclusive, affordable transportation technologies that address mobility and access challenges,” said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao.

Secretary Chao made the announcement during a virtual event the Department held today with leadership across the Department and agencies across the federal government to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was signed on July 26, 1990.

While accessibility has always been an important priority for the Department, current accessibility initiatives are spread out through different operating administrations and offices. The strategic plan will provide a single, cohesive strategic plan dedicated to ensuring that the Department is prioritizing and working diligently to increase access to transportation for people with disabilities. This plan will ensure that the Department has a unified vision on accessibility, and that there are no gaps in efforts.

Secretary Chao also announced a new University Transportation Center grant to research the implication of Automated Vehicles and Mobility Services for people with disabilities, which was awarded to the University of Pittsburgh, in consortium with the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences and the Catholic University of America. The Department will provide a \$1 million grant for 18 months to conduct research. The research will explore increasing access for various populations with disabilities by deploying automated technologies

and services. The grant will provide insight regarding accessibility opportunities that may materialize as vehicles and mobility services evolve.

As transportation evolves, the Department is committed to a more accessible future. Secretary Chao also announced that the Department is undertaking a new initiative, at nearly \$1 million, that will establish a library of resources for accessibility in automation, and will work with outside experts to study voluntary best practices for ensuring accessibility in automated vehicles.

The virtual event also included a panel on Building an Accessible Future: Transportation and Beyond. Speakers included Lance Robertson, Administration for Community Living (ACL) Administrator and Assistant Secretary for Aging, Department of Health and Human Services; Harvey Johnson, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Resolution Management and Acting Executive Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Department of Veterans Affairs; Jennifer Sheehy, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Disability Employment Policy, Department of Labor and Mark Schultz, Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, Department of Education. Also joining the event as a special guest was Neil Romano, Chairman of the National Council on Disability.

The event concluded with leaders of the various operating administrations of the Department presenting on the impacts of the ADA on their transportation mode, notable accomplishments, and recent efforts on accessibility.

As part of these ongoing accessibility initiatives, the first phase of the Department's [Inclusive Design Challenge](#) remains open for proposals through October 30. Interested parties are encouraged to submit their ideas.

AASHTO, Industry Letters Highlights Immediate Fiscal Need of State DOTs

editor@ashto.org July 24, 2020

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials urged in a [July 20 letter](#) to Congressional leadership that state departments of transportation across the country need an “immediate infusion” of at least \$37 billion to prevent disruptions to planned transportation projects, keep workers employed, and enable the nation’s mobility network to fully support economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

While AASHTO said the near-term financial need for state DOTs remain the same in fiscal year 2020 – roughly \$16 billion – data compiled over the last three months indicates state transportation revenues will not fall quite as much over the longer-term as [initially projected](#) at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak.

“This change in estimated loss is mainly due to a less severe outlook for FY 2021 from our members compared to earlier this year,” noted Patrick McKenna – director of the Missouri Department of Transportation and AASHTO’s 2019-2020 president – and Jim Tymon, the group’s executive director, in the letter.

“That being said, the recovery period is now expected to be longer than originally anticipated,” they added, pointing out that the requested \$37 billion in emergency funding “will prevent further disruptions to planned transportation projects and allow state DOT employees and transportation construction workers essential to planning and delivering these projects to remain on the job.”

However, overall state transportation revenue losses will still be extremely steep over the next five years, McKenna and Tymon emphasized.

“With millions of Americans following ‘stay-at-home’ orders, many state DOTs are facing severe losses in revenues, including dedicated user fee revenues on which state transportation programs heavily rely,” they said.

“Projections continue to show decreases in state motor fuel tax and toll receipts as nationwide vehicle traffic reduction bottomed out at about 50 percent during the height of the pandemic,” McKenna and Tymon added. “As a result, the ability of state DOTs to carry out their core functions, including capital construction programs, is threatened.”

AASHTO and 39 other transportation organizations also made a similar appeal to Congressional leaders in a [separate letter](#) on July 20

Transportation Research

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.

Virtual Peer Exchange on "Using Virtual Public Involvement to Enhance Engagement with Traditionally Underserved Communities"

The virtual peer exchange will take place on Monday, August 17 from 1:30-3:00 PM ET. Please read the email below for more information about this webinar.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION: Please register for the virtual peer exchange using the link below. **For those external to USDOT and if you have not previously created a user account with FHWA's Collaboration Portal, you will need to create an account before you can register.**

- Date: Monday, August 17, 2020
- Time: 1:30-3:00 PM Eastern Time
- Registration Link: <https://collaboration.fhwa.dot.gov/dot/fhwa/WC/Lists/Seminars/DispForm.aspx?ID=2448>

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>.

Sustainable Highway Construction Guidebook

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

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

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

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

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

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.