



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Volume 35, Number 8

## In This Issue

- MOBILE MPO UPDATES
- PROJECTS LET SEPTEMBER 25<sup>TH</sup>, 2020
- LEGISLATIVE UPDATES
- FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
- JUST FOR FUN
- IN THE NEWS
- TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH

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There is a RPO Meeting announced in *RPO Updates*, and there is some good news in *Mobile MPO Updates*. Critical deadlines loom for highways, airlines and transit in *Legislative Updates*. Unless Congress acts soon, airlines may lay off thousands, highway projects may grind to a halt and transit agencies may slash services. Step it up for this week's *Just For Fun*. Have a great weekend.

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

[www.mobilempo.org](http://www.mobilempo.org)



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

Want to know what other SARPC departments do?

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

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

## Mobile MPO Updates

### Some good news..

The Mobile MPO had \$21,123,628.17 in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for project 100037215 ( CN ) ZEIGLER BLVD ADDITIONAL LANES FROM ATHEY RD TO FOREST HILL DR. This project has been in the Mobile TIP for 20 years. The project came in with a really low bid on Friday of \$13,957,536. With admin and CE&I, the estimated total for this project now is \$18,853,215.89 (\$15,082,572.71 federal and \$3,770,643.18 match).

### The MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY

There was a stakeholder meeting last 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

Federal aid number : BRF 0016 (522)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : REPLACE BRIDGE, BIN 008714, SR-16 (US-90) WESTBOUND OVER TENSAW-SPANISH RIVER. (SUFF=49.7, STATUS=SD)

Old Target start date : December 04, 2020

New Target start date : January 29, 2021

**South**

**Alabama**

**RPO**

**Updates**

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

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

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

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

Thu, Sep 24, 2020 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CDT)

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

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

You can also dial in using your phone.

(For supported devices, tap a one-touch number below to join instantly.)

United States: +1 (872) 240-3212

- One-touch: <tel:+18722403212,,565927541#>

Access Code: 565-927-541

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

### MOBILE COUNTY

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

### BALDWIN COUNTY

None at this time

### ESCAMBIA COUNTY

None at this time

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

## Legislative Updates

### Congress is in Recess

#### Critical deadlines loom for highways, airlines and transit

Unless Congress acts soon, airlines may lay off thousands, highway projects may grind to a halt and transit agencies may slash services

By [Jessica Wehrman](#)

Posted August 31, 2020 at 6:00am

With just weeks left in the legislative year, Congress faces two big transportation deadlines on Sept. 30, a transportation to-do list and potentially dire consequences if it does not act.

Without congressional involvement, airlines have signaled they will lay off thousands of workers this fall. State highway departments could grind projects to a halt, and transit agencies could slash services.

With the economy already teetering, analysts fear inaction on these crises, all caused or made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, could hinder eventual recovery.

"There is absolutely an impact of the national economy slowing down if we can't maintain our transportation system to the degree that we have in the past," said Adie Tomer, head of the Metropolitan Infrastructure Initiative at the Brookings Institution.

Among the deadlines lawmakers face:

- An extension of the Payroll Support Program, a tranche of funding that allowed airlines to keep employees on the payroll despite decreased fliers. The program expires Sept. 30.
- The extension of current highway and transit law. While many authorizing laws can stretch past their deadlines, highways and transit are paid for via the federal gas tax-funded Highway Trust Fund. Congress must act by Sept. 30 or the current law expires, and the highway trust fund will run out of money shortly thereafter.
- And while there's no set deadline, virtually every mode of transportation continues to feel the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, with steep drops in ridership and some modes facing possible economic disaster. Transit, in particular, has been hard hit.
- The most urgent need for transportation interests is a new round of pandemic spending.

The House and Senate went home in August with no deal for a next round of funding, and while House Democrats passed a \$3 trillion spending bill May 15, the Senate's bill has not moved. [HERE](#)

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## Centering Planning in the Federal Surface Transportation Debate

JASON JORDAN | SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

This month, the nation's surface transportation law — which funds the implementation of so much of planners' work — will expire.

About a month ago, the House of Representatives passed a sweeping \$1.5 trillion infrastructure bill with a transportation reauthorization at its heart. In the meantime, Congress has been at loggerheads over a new COVID-19 relief package and whether to provide further aid for fiscally strapped state and local governments. Another deadline looms with federal spending legislation also due at the end of September. Even on the doorstep of Election Day, Congress faces a busy and critical period with significant implications for planning and communities. While it may be likely that Congress opts to extend the current transportation program until after the election, both sides on Capitol Hill see the need to tackle infrastructure this year as part of bolstering the economy, tackling longstanding problems, and setting the foundation for recovery. Democrats have signaled in recent days that they may be willing to accept a slimmed down relief bill in hopes of a more expansive and infrastructure-led stimulus in a post-election lame duck session.

When the opportunity does arise to put a new surface transportation bill in place, it appears that Congress is ready to make some significant changes and much needed reforms. Based on action taken by the House and preliminary work completed by a key Senate committee, the next transportation bill is poised to take a planning-led approach to issues ranging from climate change and resilience to new mobility and social equity.

More than a year ago, the American Planning Association outlined four key priorities for transportation reauthorization:

- Provide sustainable and predictable funding
- Tackling climate change and resiliency
- Advance active transportation, safety and public transportation
- Focus on the future of mobility

Embedded in each of these principles is the idea of providing greater authority to regions and localities, advancing equity, and supporting a planning process to meet to meet today's toughest challenges. As we embark on this new and critical phase of action on the legislation, let's take a look at how the bills advanced so far stack up against these priorities.

### **The Hunt for Funding**

Neither the House nor the Senate have come forward with a clear, credible plan to address funding. Election year politics and a deep COVID recession have made it treacherous to talk about the gas tax. Both sides have signaled a willingness to support a variety of finance tools which could provide part of the answer. And, both the House bill and the Senate committee bill advance efforts to move away from the gas tax and toward a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) levy, but a VMT solution still seems to be another reauthorization cycle away from being a likely solution.

There have been discussions about incorporating small patches to the existing revenue structures by taxing electric vehicles that currently do not pay into the system or raising user fees on heavy trucks and freight. Legislators are also looking at a range of 'one-off' funding sources that could be tapped to pay for the bill that both parties seem to want to write.

However, the revenue problem has only worsened. Before the COVID pandemic hit, government projections suggested that the gas tax funded highway trust fund would face insolvency by the end of 2021. The drop in travel and corresponding decline in gas tax revenues since COVID hit in the spring have only accelerated the problem. Furthermore, tax declines at the state and local levels are already contributing to delays in capital projects.

Congress may be able to find temporary fixes and resources to enact a bill in 2020, but the long-term challenges of sustainable and predictable funding must be addressed. [HERE](#)

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## APTA calls on Congress to give \$32B in emergency funding to public transportation

BY LIZ CAREY | SEPTEMBER 4, 2020

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) is calling on Congress to save public transportation with an emergency infusion of \$32 billion in cash.

In a letter to Congress, the association said the cash is needed to shore up lost revenues brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As the crisis has stretched from days to weeks to months, public transportation systems large and small, from coast-to-coast, face an increasingly dire situation. We continue to serve essential employees every day, but without additional emergency funding, many transit agencies will soon need to cut transit services and routes and furloughing transit workers, leaving our communities without service and jobs when they need us most," APTA President and CEO Paul P. Skoutelas said.

According to the association, a survey of its members found that decreases in revenue caused by depressed ridership, paused fare collection, and reduced tax revenues, coupled with increased operating costs, are wreaking havoc on public transit agency budgets. The changes in budgets have forced almost a third of the public transit agencies to furlough or plan future furloughs of employees.



Additionally, the association said, more than one-third of the agencies have had to delay capital projects, and nearly one in five agencies has shifted funds from their capital budgets to their operating budgets.

“As our nation’s transit agencies work to maintain essential services while restoring full services, federal support is critical to ensure that public transit agencies can survive and help our communities and nation recover from the economic fallout of the pandemic. Again, I urge Congressional leaders and the Administration to move swiftly and include at least \$32 billion in emergency funding for our nation’s indispensable public transit industry,” Skoutelas said.

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## Funding Opportunities

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### U.S. Department of Transportation Seeks Applicants for Railway-Highway Crossings Grants (deadline October 26, 2020)

Tuesday, August 25, 2020

FHWA 17-20

Contact: Neil Gaffney

Tel.: (202) 366-0660

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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### New CDBG GRANT Program

To Address COVID-19 Impacts (currently no deadline)

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESOURCES/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

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

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

Submit your questions to:

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

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

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

EDA CARES ACT RECOVERY ASSISTANCE (currently no deadline)

## OVERVIEW

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

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

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

## RESOURCES

- [EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Scope of Work for EDA Economic Development Districts and EDA Indian Tribe Planning Grant Recipients\\*](#)
- [Specific Award Conditions: Economic Development Districts and Indian Tribes\\*](#)
- [Specific Award Conditions: Revolving Loan Fund Awards\\*](#)
- [EDA's CARES Act Recovery Assistance Revolving Loan Fund Award Flexibilities Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Scope of Work for University Center Grantees\\*](#)
- [Specific Award Conditions: University Centers\\*](#)
- [EDA regional office contacts](#)
- [coronavirus.gov](#)
- [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?opId=321695>

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

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

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

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

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

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## Opportunity Zones

EDA's Opportunity Zone Web Page

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

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

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

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

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

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**South Alabama residents take for granted how flat we are. Other places around the world have outside stairways, and then some places have really cool looking stairways.**





## In the News

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### **ALDOT to suspend lane closures to encourage traffic safety during Labor Day weekend**

**Kirsten Fiscus**

Montgomery Advertiser

In an effort to keep Alabama's interstates as safe as possible during the holiday weekend, the Alabama Department of Transportation is reopening previous lane closures around roadwork.

According to a news release, the pause in the lane closures will be in place from noon Friday through midnight Monday.

The state's welcome centers and rest stops will be open to the public, according to the release, but ALDOT encourages motorists to practice social distancing and follow state health orders as well as be courteous to other travelers.

ALDOT also reminded drivers to drive sober as people are seven times more likely to die in a crash where the driver is under the influence, according to crash data ALDOT collects. State law also now requires all occupants of a vehicle, in both front and back seats, to wear a seat belt.

According to the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, during last year's holiday period state troopers investigated 10 traffic fatalities, an increase of four from 2018.

"Safety is one of our top priorities throughout the year, but it's especially important during extended holiday weekends, when there is an elevated number of citizens traveling and enjoying outdoor activities," ALEA Secretary Hal Taylor said. "Our goal is simple; we strive to ensure that Alabama's roadways and waterways are safe for everyone throughout the entire weekend."

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## U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Makes Historic Announcement on America's Freight System

Thursday, September 3, 2020

WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao today announced the release of the first-ever National Freight Strategic Plan (NFSP). It is the latest effort by the Department and the Trump Administration to strengthen America's economic competitiveness. The NFSP lays out a vision for long-term investments in infrastructure, the workforce, and other essential parts of the freight system.

"The Department is unveiling the first-ever National Freight Strategic Plan so that the U.S. can maintain our competitive edge across major industries like agriculture, manufacturing, energy production and E-commerce," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

Every day, America's transportation network moves more than 51 million tons of freight and energy products valued at nearly \$52 billion via highways, railways, ports and inland waterways, pipelines, and airports. The growth in freight demand due to increasing use of e-commerce and global supply chains in recent years has strained our freight system, and could threaten the competitive advantage of American businesses. As these supply chains continue to spread across the world, America's ability to compete could be limited by inadequate infrastructure and a lack of preparation for incorporating innovative technologies.

The NFSP provides a clear path to improve the safety, security, and resilience of the national freight system. It also details how we can modernize freight infrastructure and operations to grow the economy and increase competitiveness. Additionally, the NFSP lays out a plan to prepare for the future by supporting the development of data, technologies, and workforce capabilities that improve freight system performance.

To learn more about the NFSP, visit [transportation.gov/freight/NFSP](https://transportation.gov/freight/NFSP)

Secretary Chao's remarks can be viewed [HERE](#).

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## Is Transit a Private Business or a Public Service? Either Way, We Have to Pay For It

SANDY SMITH SEPTEMBER 2, 2020 "There's no such thing as a free lunch" — or a free anything else, for that matter, save breathing the air.

In our collective wisdom, we consider some things the province of private businesses, which encourage customers to use their products or services in exchange for money that enables them to pay for providing them. Others we consider public services that everyone should have access to, and while we may pay some money to use them, we don't expect them to make a profit.

Historically, mass transit in America had been one of those services that fell into the first category, while roads fell into the second along with mail delivery. We still don't expect roads to turn a profit, but we still regard transit as more business than public service, and we have come to think the same way about the mail. Transportation consultant Jarrett Walker says we're thinking about both in the wrong way: What matters in each of those cases is less how many people use it and more how available it is to everyone and what we expect it to do. That, he says, means we also have to rethink how we pay for it and how we expect it to be run.

If one of those expectations is to reduce the number of cars whizzing to and fro, one way to advance that goal is to stop charging for transit at the point of use. This has led to growing interest in making transit fare-free. So far, the biggest city to propose this has been Kansas City, which announced it would aim for that goal last year. Now, the nation's second-largest transit system is contemplating the same thing.

For now, however, we still expect most transit agencies to get a good chunk of the money they need from the riders, and thanks to COVID-19, they still haven't come back to the buses and trains in the numbers that obtained before the pandemic. And they're not likely to for some time to come. Yet the mass transit agencies are operating service at or close to pre-pandemic levels so it will be available when riders need it. And even with COVID relief, this is producing oceans of red on transit agency balance sheets. This has led several agencies to warn of coming disaster if more relief funding does not materialize or if states don't provide more reliable funding. In a rare show of unity, the head of the largest of those agencies and the head of the union representing most of its workers issued a joint call to Congressional Republicans to get off the dime on providing more COVID relief for transit.

### Transit Planner Says Mass Transit is Like the Postal Service

Noted transit planner Jarrett Walker, [writing in Bloomberg CityLab](#), says that the way we think about transit and about paying for it needs to change. Noting that most transit bond issues and taxes pass handily even though the people voting for them probably won't use the facilities once they open, he argues that most Americans have the same high opinion of public transit that they have of the U.S. Postal Service.

And both transit and the Postal Service operate under a handicap: We expect them to cover their expenses as far as possible out of revenues they generate directly, but in order to provide the universal availability we also expect from both, they must provide service they will lose money providing.

This, he argues, means we need to think about both in different ways than we think about them now. For starters, we should stop thinking of them in terms of "efficiency" in the business sense of serving the most users at the least cost. Instead, we should measure "efficiency" in terms of availability: How well does it provide service to everyone who might use it?

In the past, we subsidized both electric and telephone service to remote areas (and charged paying customers a little more) in order to provide universal service. Walker does not call for a specific method of paying for universal transit service, but he does say we need to get clear about what we expect from that service. "In my work as a transit planning consultant," he writes, "I ask decision-makers this question: 'I know that you want both high ridership and service that goes everywhere, but your budget is fixed, so how much do you want to spend on ridership as opposed to universal availability?' Then, we can design a network that matches that balance of goals, and we can show clearly which services are designed for ridership, and which are for availability regardless of ridership. (Some services are a mix of the two, but we can quantify that too.)"

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## \$11.7 million in federal grants awarded to 5 Alabama airports

Updated Sep 01, 2020; Posted Sep 01, 2020

By [Howard Koplowitz](#) | [hkoplowitz@al.com](mailto:hkoplowitz@al.com)

Five Alabama airports have been awarded nearly \$11.7 million in federal grants for infrastructure upgrades, the U.S. Department of Transportation said Tuesday.

[The FAA grants](#) include \$6 million for a contract tower at Jack Edwards National Airport in Gulf Shores and more than \$3 million for runway and taxiway upgrades at Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport.

Another \$1.6 million was earmarked to build a new airport in Thomasville while more than \$656,000 was allocated to upgrade the runway at Auburn University Regional Airport. Montgomery Regional Airport at Dannelly Field was awarded more than \$228,000 to update the airport's master plan.

The \$11.69 million given to Alabama airports is among \$1.2 billion in grants distributed across the country for the nation's airports.

"This \$1.2 billion federal investment will improve our nation's airport infrastructure, enhance safety, and strengthen growth in local communities, which is especially important as the economy recovers from COVID-19," U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao said in a [statement](#).

## Transportation Research

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

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

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

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

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

Extremes are not rare

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

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

Research leadership from TRB

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

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

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

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

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

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

Escalating preparations from basic to extreme



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

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

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

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

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

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

by Danielle Moody Wednesday, August 5th 2020

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## DOT Unveils Applicant Toolkit for Rural Communities

Eleanor Lamb July 28, 2020

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thursday, July 23, 2020

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

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

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

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

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

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## 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>

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## Transportation Dictionary

The USDOT released a searchable online dictionary that includes over 9,000 transportation terms and acronyms. The terms were collected from a variety of public and private transportation publications and databases. This dictionary presents over 9,000 terms and acronyms related to transportation. The terms and acronyms were obtained from various transportation publications and databases which exist within the federal government, private organizations, Canada and Mexico.

### Search Tips

- Sources are listed in parenthesis after the definition.
- None of the searches are case sensitive. Searching for PEDESTRIAN will produce the same results as searching for pedestrian.
- The Dictionary searches for the word, phrase or acronym as it is entered and returns all records that match or contain that word, phrase or acronym. For example, searching for pedestrian will return records for pedestrian and pedestrian walkway.

Click [HERE](#) for the search engine.