



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, November 20th, 2020

Volume 36, Number 8

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Contact Us

<http://www.mobilempo.org>
transportation@sarpc.org

Kevin Harrison, PTP
Director of
Transportation
kharrison@sarpc.org

Tom Piper
Senior Transportation
Planner
tpiper@sarpc.org

Monica Williamson
Transportation Planner
mwilliamson@sarpc.org

Anthony Johnson
Transportation Planner
ajohnson@sarpc.org

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

The Eastern Shore MPO talks about the I-10 Mobile River Bridge while there are plans to **fix the mess at Buc-ees'** *In The News*. This week in *Legislative Updates*, deal making is going to be tough but efforts are underway. This week's *Just For Fun* is celebrating the "err of caution". REBUILD ALABAMA ACT applications are due 11/30/20, and no new *Funding Opportunities* this week; however, we will keep looking....

No newsletter next week (11/27/20) as it is Thanksgiving weekend. Have a great weekend.

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

www.mobilempo.org



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

Want to know what other SARPC departments do?

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

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

Mobile MPO Updates

New MPO Members

The Mobile MPO has 6 new members:

Councilman, City of Prichard Hon. George McCall, Jr.

Mayor, City of Chickasaw- Hon. Barry Broadhead

Mayor, City of Satsuma- Hon. Mark Barlow

Mayor, City of Creola- Hon. Don Nelson

Mayor, City of Bayou La Batre- Hon. Henry Barnes, Sr.

Mayor, City of Semmes- Hon. Brandon Vanhook

To Councilman Lorenzo Martin of Prichard, Mayor Byron Pittman of Chickasaw, Mayor Thomas Williams of Satsuma, Mayor William Criswell of Creola, Mayor Terry Downey of Bayou la Batre, and Mayor David Baker of Semmes- Thank you. Thank you for participation in not just the Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization, but the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission as well. Your passion for your communities is not unnoticed, and it has been a pleasure to work with each one of you. We are always here if you ever need anything from SARPC.

The MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY

VIA and its sub-consultant, Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood, have completed The [MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT](#)

There was a presentation by VIA at the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan public meeting on October 1, and a stakeholder meeting several weeks ago concerning the study. VIA presentation potential types of operators and potential operating budget is [HERE](#). 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.

All documents pertaining to his study are [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

None this week.

South Alabama RPO Updates

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

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

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

Projects in Region Let December 4th, 2020

MOBILE COUNTY

- For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, Guardrail Steel Blockout Replacement, and Traffic Stripe on SR-16 (US-90) from 0.340 mile east of the Cochrane Bridge to 0.360 mile west of the Tensaw River Bridge in Mobile. Length 2.935 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$2,051,743 to \$2,507,686 .
- For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-188 from MP 4.640 to the junction of the Bayou La Batre - Irvington Highway in Bayou La Batre. Length 3.845 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$738,956 to \$903,169.

BALDWIN COUNTY

- For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-182 from the West City Limits of Orange Beach to the Perdido Pass Bridge. Length 3.283 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,476,709 to \$1,804,866.
- For constructing the Micro-Milling, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-180 from a point near the Fort Morgan Historical Site (MP 0.000) to the junction of SR-59 in Gulf Shores. Length 20.779 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$2,197,622 to \$2,685,982 .

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

None at this time

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

Legislative Updates

Senate Appropriations Committee Releases FY 2021 Bills in Effort to Advance Process, Produce Bipartisan Results

Last week, the Senate Appropriations Committee released all twelve of its fiscal year (FY) 2021 federal funding measures, the first major step they have taken for the FY 2021 cycle. Committee Chairman Richard Shelby (R-AL) said, "By and large, these bills are the product of bipartisan cooperation among members of the committee. As negotiations with the House begin in earnest, I look forward to working with [House Appropriations Committee] Chairwoman Lowey, [Senate Appropriations Committee] Vice Chairman Leahy, and [House Appropriations Committee] Ranking Member Granger to resolve our differences in a bipartisan manner." You can find the 302(b) Subcommittee Allocations, as well as the legislative text, explanatory statement, and highlights for each of the FY 2021 appropriations bills [here](#).

Under Biden, Infrastructure Is Back in Play. But Making a Deal Will Still Be Tough

By [Bill Lucia](#) ,NOVEMBER 13, 2020

If Republicans keep control of the Senate, many of the obstacles to a package under President Trump will remain. But advocates along the political spectrum still see hope for a compromise.

There's talk of an infrastructure package stirring again in Washington. In recent days, Democratic lawmakers in Congress and an adviser to President-elect Joe Biden suggested that having him in the White House raises the odds for bipartisan legislation that could pump money toward roads, transit, water systems and other public works.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi last week highlighted infrastructure as an area where her party might be able to work across the aisle, something that will be required if Republicans hold onto their Senate majority.

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, was also upbeat, saying he and “Amtrak Joe” share goals when it comes to things like improving America’s rail network, cutting down on pollution from the nation’s transportation sector and making infrastructure more resilient to extreme weather.

And on Thursday, John Porcari, an adviser to Biden on transportation policy, told an audience of state officials during an online forum that there are “real prospects for a bipartisan, broad infrastructure program” and indicated that the incoming administration will likely seek to beef up funding for existing transportation accounts.

But the rifts between Democrats and Republicans in Congress promise to make a major infrastructure deal difficult no matter who is president. This is true even as groups across the ideological spectrum, from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to environmental organizations, view an infrastructure plan as crucial, both for improving people’s lives and advancing policy changes that they’d like to see.

On Capitol Hill, even routine business can be difficult to accomplish. Lawmakers this year failed to agree on a new surface transportation reauthorization bill, recurring legislation that guides how federal highway and mass transit dollars are spent. Instead, they extended the five-year policy expiring at the end of September for another year.

Democrats and Republicans have for years struggled to reach a consensus on how to raise new funding for infrastructure, especially with transportation. Dwindling gas tax receipts due to more fuel-efficient vehicles are a chronic problem, eroding revenues flowing to the Highway Trust Fund, a major pot of federal money for roads and transit. The rise of electric vehicles and slow growth in the miles people are driving are expected to make this dilemma even worse.

Rather than raising the gas tax, now 18.4 cents per gallon and last increased at the federal level in 1993, or beginning the shift to a mileage-based fee of some sort, lawmakers have instead chose for about 12 years now to siphon money from elsewhere in the federal budget to keep the trust fund afloat. Click [HERE](#) to read the full article.

Transportation Groups Push for Stimulus Funding, Support From New Administration

Transportation groups hope for more funding for state projects, such as the federal money that went to help refurbish the Blue Ridge Tunnel in Virginia.

[Aileen Cho](#) and [Tom Ichniowski](#) November 18, 2020

Transportation groups hope the incoming Biden administration will usher in a stimulus package and address the impending September 2021 deadline regarding extension of the federal transportation bill. An adviser to President-elect Joe Biden is encouraging them to expand their internal lists of priority projects, identifying some that can get started quickly for a rapid economic boost and others that will have long-range “transformative” impacts on their states.

Former Deputy U.S. Dept. of Transportation Secretary John D. Porcari told attendees of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) annual meeting on Nov. 12 that the Biden administration is likely to seek an increase in funding for current programs.

Porcari said the plan would likely include added funds for existing core federal programs with funds distributed by formula.

He said there also would be a focus on existing grant programs that DOT awards via competitions. The longest-running such program is for TIGER grants, which the Trump administration renamed BUILD grants.

Porcari said the new administration would have “a TIGER on steroids,” with more funding. “I think you need to kind of flood the zone with more [dollars] on the formula side, more on the competitive-grant side,” he said.

He predicted one overall goal will be advancing “not just shovel-ready projects but shovel-worthy projects—the ones that are actually worth doing even if they’re not the ones that are the easiest to get off the ground.”

Porcari noted that his comments did not represent the views of the President-elect, but reflected the adviser's own thoughts “on where we’re likely to be going” in transportation policy.

Karen E. Philbrick, Executive Director of the Mineta Transportation Institute, notes that three of the transition team members serve on the Mineta Transportation Institute Board of Trustees—Therese McMillan, Brad Mims, and Toks Omishakin. “The transition team reflects the diversity of our nation and includes the critical voices of labor, operations, the public sector, and academia,” she says. “I believe that the transition team will help select transportation professionals who are ready to lead a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable transportation industry.”

Like Porcari, she noted Biden’s affinity for Amtrak. “I think we will see an emphasis on resilient infrastructure investment and an expansion of transit, intercity rail and high-speed rail. Electrification, as part of aggressive climate change efforts, and an emphasis on shovel ready (and shovel-worthy) projects that create local employment opportunities and jobs with a living wage will likely also be emphasized.”

Dave Bauer, president and CEO of the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, emphasized hopes that Congress, regardless of the Georgia results’ impact on the Senate, will focus on getting infrastructure funding reauthorized. “We’ve had an interesting four years and it won’t get any less interesting next year,” he says. “Highways and transit are not the only infrastructure needs, but they’re the only ones with a Sept. 30 deadline.”

Murphie Barrett, Vice President of Congressional Relations for Infrastructure Advancement with the Associated General Contractors of America and former Congressional staffer, expressed optimism that a long-term reauthorization bill will happen. “I continue to believe it’s a bipartisan issue,” she says.

Chad Chitwood, a spokesperson for the American Public Transportation Association, also expressed hope for transit funding under the new administration. “We as an industry face an existential crisis that continues,” he says, noting that the \$25 billion in aid to transit has more or less run out. The industry hopes for up to \$32 billion in additional aid. “[Congress] saw and addressed the need, and we hope they will continue to do so in a bipartisan fashion,” he says.

Funding Opportunities

Rebuild Alabama Act Annual Grant Program (deadline November 30th, 2020)

[This document](#) contains information regarding the Rebuild Alabama Act (RAA) Annual Grant Program for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. The RAA Annual Grant Program is administered by the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). Prospective project-sponsoring governmental agencies are encouraged to thoroughly review this document, as well as the FY 2021 RAA Annual Grant Program Application and FAQ document, when considering developing a project application.

A. ELIGIBILITY:

- Any political subdivision of the State of Alabama (Municipal and County Governments) is eligible to apply for funding under the RAA Annual Grant Program.
- Project applications may be submitted for improvements to any classified public road or bridge owned and maintained by the applicant that is open to public traffic.
- The final eligibility of applications and proposed project activities will be determined by ALDOT upon evaluation of the application submitted.
- RAA Annual Grant Program funds are awarded through a competitive project selection process.

B. COMPETITIVE SELECTION

- RAA Annual Grant Program funds are awarded through a competitive project selection process.

C. PROJECT FUNDING:

- The RAA Annual Grant Program was established by Legislative Act #2019-2. The program allocates no less than \$10 million annually to eligible projects as identified by ALDOT during a fiscal year.
- The maximum funding provided to any project in FY 2021 will be \$250,000.00.
- RAA Annual Grant program funding is only available for eligible construction activities. No Preliminary Engineering, Right-of-Way, Utility Relocation, Construction Engineering & Inspection or Materials Testing costs will be eligible.
- RAA Annual Grant Program awarded funds will be issued to the sponsoring agency either (1) upon ALDOT’s receipt of a Notice of Award from the sponsoring agency to the contractor, or (2) upon ALDOT’s receipt of a Purchase Order (PO) from the sponsoring agency issued against a valid, eligible in-place bid contract.
- RAA Annual Grant Program awarded funds cannot be transferred to another project and may only be used to fund improvements consistent with the intent of the original project application.
- RAA Annual Grant Program funds may be combined with other funding sources when approved by ALDOT. In such cases, the more restrictive funding requirements may apply to all funds utilized. Note that RAA Annual Grant funding availability deadlines still apply when combined with other funding sources.
- A sponsoring governmental agency may only submit one project application per application cycle. Each County and Municipality will be viewed as an individual sponsor. Any project submitted by multiple sponsors shall be deemed as the eligible submission for all sponsors.
- Sponsors with an active award may not submit another application until the awarded project has been let to contract or a purchase order utilizing a valid, eligible in-place bid contract has been issued.
- Other funding sources to supplement RAA Annual Grant Program funds are not required, but projects containing a commitment to provide supplemental funding may be given favorable consideration.

D. PROJECT PROGRESS:

- RAA Annual Grant Program funds are available to sponsoring agencies for a period of one (1) year from the notice of award. Funding awarded to a sponsoring agency not either let to contract or a purchase order issued against a valid, eligible in-place bid contract within one year of the notice of award are subject to rescission.
- Any overrun in total project costs above the amount awarded, shall be the responsibility of the sponsoring agency.

E. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS:

- Projects must be let to competitive bid. In-place bids may also be utilized as long as those bids were awarded following all required competitive bid laws for eligibility. No other method of construction, such as force account is allowed.
- Any costs incurred prior to issuance of a Notice of Award or a Purchase Order are not eligible.
- RAA Annual Grant Program funds have reporting requirements. Recipients will be required to furnish any and all requested data to ALDOT or other specified or required entities necessary to satisfy any reporting requirements.

F. APPLICATION SUBMISSION & SELECTION

- All applications must be received by ALDOT prior to close of business on **November 30th, 2020**

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

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

[NOAA-NOS-NCCOS-2021-2006594](#)

[FY21 Effects of Sea Level Rise \(ESLR\)](#)

[Department of Commerce](#)

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

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.

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.

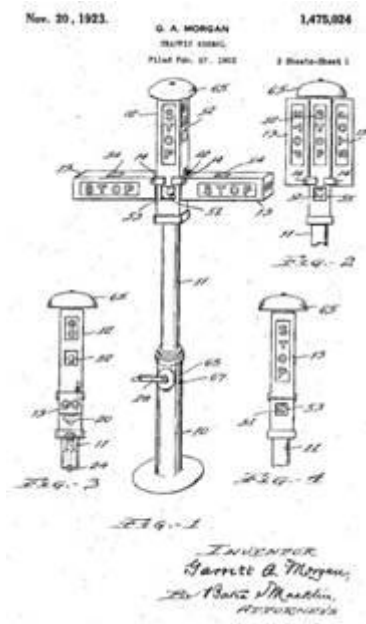
Just For Fun (THIS IS SATIRE, AND JUST FOR FUN)

HELLO YELLOW!

Garrett Morgan patents three-position traffic signal,

On November 20, 1923, the U.S. Patent Office grants Patent No. 1,475,074 to 46-year-old inventor and newspaperman [Garrett Morgan](#) for his three-position traffic signal. Though Morgan's was not the first traffic signal (that one had been installed in London in 1868), it was an important innovation nonetheless: By having a third position besides just "Stop" and "Go," it regulated crossing vehicles more safely than earlier signals had.

Here is his blueprint:



Lots of innovation since then with the traffic signal.



In the News

Mobile River Bridge Project back on the table

James Gordon November 19, 2020

The Mobile River Bridge Project is back on the map. There's still no funding source, but the project is once again on the table.

The project was brought up Wednesday at the Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting. The MPO hopes to breathe new life into the massive bridge project and new members up to speed.

"Until the locals folks come together and be included, this project, it's dead," said Alabama Governor Kay Ivey last year, essentially pulling the plug on the project.

If you thought the bridge project was dead, think again. Wednesday, ALDOT was asked to bring this group up to speed on plans for expanding the Mobile River Bridge.

"We're not talking about bringing up the same set of circumstances. We are talking about bringing up the same purpose, and we are looking for new circumstances," said Commissioner Joe Davis, also a member of the MPO.

Davis says the need for the bridge has never gone away and it's time to talk options again.

"I'm not opposed to a toll as long as the locals have a free option, and that was the crowning blow that killed the project with the eastern shore MPO about a year ago, was that everything was going to be tolled," said Davis.

New MPO chair and Fairhope City Council President Jack Burrell says talking about the project with ALDOT engineers is a positive.

"I believe they have a lot of time and effort invested in this. I have to believe that they want it to move forward and they know that we need it. I'm hoping that, in the very near future, that we can get together and maybe get it on the visionary plan," said Burrell.

A "visionary plan" that will be discussed again in January. ALDOT engineers did not comment on the project but made the same presentation they've made in the past, a project with a \$2 billion price tag.

Buc-ee's road project aims to relieve traffic headache at no cost to taxpayers

by Cory Pippin

Wednesday, November 18th 2020

BALDWIN COUNTY, Ala. (WPML) — Work is underway to fix a traffic nightmare at the intersection of I-10 and the Beach Express, which is partly due to motorists traveling in and out of the Buc-ee's convenience store and gas station.

Traffic cones, signs, and heavy machinery is a familiar sight in Baldwin County, but the road work at I-10 and the Beach Express isn't a state or county project.

Instead, the project is coordinated by Buc-ee's to relieve major congestion at the busy intersection in front of the business.

"I have seen cars out of the parking lot, down the Beach Express, all the way down the exit, and toward the interstate," said Buc-ee's visitor Sondra Simpson, "I feel really bad for the people who live here or just want to stop."

Simpson lives in Texas, where the popular convenience store is based, and regularly visits the Alabama location on her way to see family members.

"Because I like Buc-ees and some of their food so much, I plan my trip a little later in the evening because I know I can get in here without stopping. But if I'm coming by during a busy time, I just don't stop," Simpson said.

It's been an issue since the store opened nearly two years ago.

Alabama Department of Transportation officials said Buc-ee's hired engineers to conduct a study, and approached ALDOT with a plan.

"Buc-ee's is widening the interstate ramp to provide basically a dedicated lane down to the county road and is also widening the beach express going southbound," said Brian Aaron, Asst. Regional Engineer with ALDOT.

Aaron said Buc-ee's crews will also install concrete medians and dividers for added safety and traffic flow, and it won't cost taxpayers a cent.

"They obviously knew they had an issue. They were a great partner to stand firm, stand tall, and come to the table saying we want to get this right," Aaron said.

Simpson said she's glad something is being done, but she worries it might not be enough.

"All the ones back home have four or five different entrances. Widening lanes isn't going to stop their problem that there's only a single way to get in and out. So unless they made another entrance, I don't think more lanes will really help," said Simpson.

NBC 15 News reached out to Buc-ee's for more information, including the cost of the project, but we have yet to hear back.

ALDOT officials said the project is expected to be complete in the spring of 2021.

Study: The Best—and Worst—State Highway Systems

NOVEMBER 19, 2020 02:58 PM ET

North Dakota maintained its first-place ranking in the 25th Annual Highway Report, which uses 13 categories to evaluate the condition and cost-effectiveness of state-run highways.

North Dakota, Missouri and Kansas have the best state-owned highway systems in the country, while New Jersey, Alaska, Delaware and Massachusetts have the worst, according to rankings released Thursday.

The [Annual Highway Report](#), compiled for 25 years by the libertarian think tank [Reason Foundation](#), evaluates the condition and cost-effectiveness of state-controlled highways in 13 categories, including traffic congestion, pavement condition, road fatality rates and spending (capital, maintenance, administrative, and overall) per mile. [This year's report](#) incorporates state highway data from 2018, along with congestion and bridge condition data from 2019.

North Dakota maintained its first-place ranking from last year, thanks to high rankings in traffic congestion (third in the nation, with commuters spending roughly 5.4 hours per year in traffic), total spending per mile (fourth), and pavement condition (fifth for both urban and rural interstates).

New Jersey, in last place, also kept its ranking from the previous year, with dismal scores in total spending per mile (50th), urban interstate pavement condition (45th), traffic congestion (40th) and structurally deficient bridges (29th).

At first glance, researchers acknowledged, those rankings may seem unfair, given the population and geographic differences between the top and bottom states. But “a more careful review suggests that numerous factors, including terrain, climate, truck traffic volumes, urbanization and congestion...all significantly impact state highway performance,” Baruch Feigenbaum, the foundation’s managing director of transportation policy and the report’s lead author, said in a statement.

For example, he said, states that manage the largest highway systems in the country—North Carolina, Texas and Virginia—are all ranked in the top 21 in this year’s report, while states with the smaller systems—Hawaii, Rhode Island and New Jersey—are in the bottom 10.

“Prioritizing maintenance, targeting and fixing problem areas, and reducing bottlenecks are among the successful strategies states can use to improve their quality and efficiency,” Feigenbaum said.

Nationwide, commuters spent slightly more than 33 hours per year in traffic in urban areas in 2019, though “the congestion problem is primarily concentrated in the major cities of just a few states,” the report said. In 31 states, for example, commuters spent less than 35 hours in peak-hour congestion, while drivers in the three lowest-ranked states for traffic delays—Delaware, Illinois and Massachusetts—sat in traffic for more than 100 hours last year.

In general, the quality and safety of highways across the country improved “incrementally” as “spending on state-owned roads increased by 9%, up to \$151.8 billion” since 2016, the most recent previously available data. But pavement condition worsened slightly overall, the report said, noting that more than a quarter of urban interstate mileage in poor condition is confined to just three states: California, New York and Wyoming

U.S. Department of Transportation Seeks Public Comment on Automated Driving System Safety Principles

An advance notice of proposed rulemaking on ADS safety framework

November 19, 2020 | Washington, DC

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is seeking public comment on the potential development of a framework of principles to govern the safe behavior of automated driving systems (ADS) in the future. The advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPRM) was submitted to the Federal Register on November 19 and is available online [here](#).

“This rulemaking will help address legitimate public concerns about safety, security and privacy without hampering innovation in the development of automated driving systems,” said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao.

While no ADS-equipped vehicle is available for sale to the public today and widescale deployment of ADS-equipped vehicles is likely years away, NHTSA and others have identified elements of a framework necessary for objectively defining and assessing ADS competence. This ANPRM seeks public comment on these elements and how they could most appropriately form a framework that provides for motor vehicle safety while also providing flexibility to develop more effective safety innovations.

“ADS technologies are different from more conventional automotive equipment, and it is necessary and appropriate to consider how ADS standards can and should be articulated,” said NHTSA Deputy Administrator James Owens. “The framework of principles would objectively define, assess, and manage the safety of ADS, while ensuring the flexibility to enable further innovation. NHTSA seeks feedback on the approaches described in the ANPRM.”

Loxley council approves agreements for engineering services

By John Underwood / john@gulfcoastmedia.com

LOXLEY, Alabama — The Loxley Town Council approved agreements at its meeting Monday, Nov. 9 with Goodwyn, Mills & Cawood Inc. for a pair of grant projects scheduled for the town.

First the council approved a contract for services for the designing and planning for the construction of sidewalks along Magnolia Street.

The project will be funded by the Alabama Department of Transportation as a Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant.

The council approved the contract with a lump sum payment in the amount of \$35,000, which would not be part of the total grant project, which is estimated at just under \$300,000.

The council also approved a contract for services for preparation of plans and specifications for construction of an access road in the Loxley Industrial Park in order to serve ALDI.

Improvements will include the pavement and widening of the road, along with the installation of turn lanes.

In July, ALDI, one of America’s fastest growing retailers, serving millions of customers across the country each month, announced plans to construct its 26th regional headquarters and distribution center in Loxley.

According to a press release issued in July, the 564,000-square-foot warehouse will have prime access to Interstate 10 and Alabama 59. The facility is projected to serve more than 8 million customers and more than 80 ALDI stores in southern Alabama and the Florida Panhandle, as well as in Louisiana, which will mark the company’s presence in 38 states.

The new Loxley facility, in line with ALDI distribution centers and warehouses across the country, will feature full LED lighting and a roof-mounted solar system, which will run the bulk of the energy-efficient refrigeration.

Additionally, ALDI consulted industry experts to ensure the new facility offers a modern layout designed specifically for ALDI, and Loxley will be the first ALDI facility with a cross-docking system to further optimize efficiency.

ALDI includes more than 2,000 stores across 36 states also announcing in July the installation of a new store in Foley.

The council approved the contract with a lump sum payment in the amount of \$105,000. Construction of the highway is part of a nearly \$800,000 grant project.

Transportation Research

[New Fact Sheet: Boosting Active Transportation through Regional Transportation Plans](#)

October 29, 2020

The Safe Routes Partnership has released a new *Boosting Active Transportation Through Regional Transportation Plans* [Fact Sheet](#). The fact sheet focuses on helping active transportation advocates and stakeholders understand how regional transportation plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs) set the foundation for cycling, walking, and health-oriented transportation strategies and projects.

NHTSA Releases Pedestrian Safety Playbook and Active Transportation Data Visualizations

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) released a playbook with social media strategies and resources to support Pedestrian Safety Month activities. It provides information on vehicle speed enforcement and Walk to School Day activities; distracted drivers and impaired pedestrians; illegal school bus passing; and conspicuity/Day Light Saving Time, and older pedestrians. NHTSA also developed two interactive data visualization dashboards displaying pedestrian and bicyclist fatality data between 2010 and 2018. Based on Fatality Analysis Reporting System data, the dashboard allows users to view key data by State, year, month, time of day, age group, and land type. Click [HERE](#) to see the Playbook.

FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAYS:

States and Local Governments Reported Benefits to Federal Highway Fund Swapping, but Impacts Cannot be Definitively Determined

GAO-21-88: Published: Oct 20, 2020. Publicly Released: Nov 19, 2020.

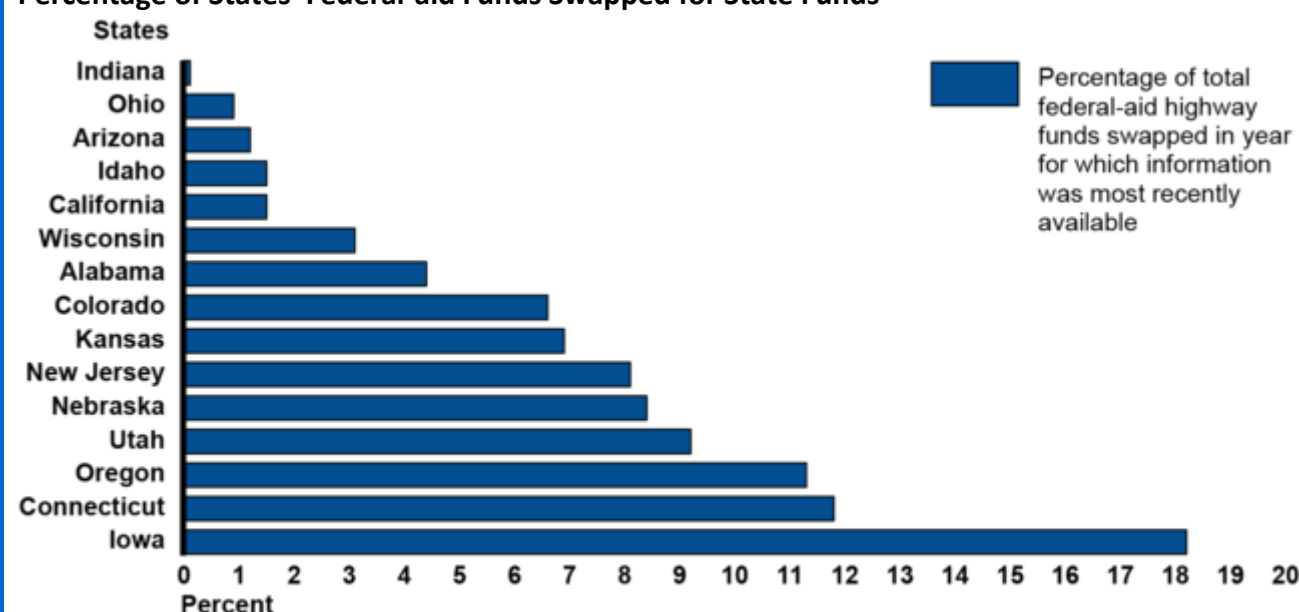
The Federal Highway Administration provides funding to states to build and maintain the nation's roads. When using federal dollars states must follow federal standards such as paying prevailing wages. Some states established programs in which local agencies swap federal for state dollars. When they do, they follow state instead of federal standards.

In the last 5 years, 15 states reported swapping programs. The amount of highway funds swapped ranged from less than 1% (Indiana) to about 18% (Iowa). Reports were mixed on whether this meant lower wages for workers and on other potential effects.

What GAO Found

In the past 5 years, 15 states reported they had fund swapping programs, which allow local agencies, such as cities and towns, to swap their state's proposed suballocation of federal-aid highway funds for state transportation funds. This exchange allows local agencies to undertake local projects with state funds, rendering the projects subject to applicable state and local, rather than federal, requirements. For most states, the reported amount of federal funds swapped is a relatively small portion of the state's overall federal-aid apportionment, ranging from less than 1 percent to 12 percent. However, Iowa swapped about 18 percent (or about \$97 million) of its federal-aid funds in 2019. See figure.

Percentage of States' Federal-aid Funds Swapped for State Funds



Source: GAO analysis of information from state DOT officials and FHWA data. | GAO-21-88

Note: Data are for 2019, except for Alabama, Colorado, New Jersey, and Wisconsin where GAO presents the most recent data these state DOT officials had available.

Officials GAO interviewed from state departments of transportation (DOTs) and selected local agencies said that they participate in fund swapping because it increases project flexibility for local agencies and may result in time and cost savings. Obstacles officials cited included a lack of sufficient state funds to swap with local agencies and the absence of state law authorizing fund swapping.

The impact of fund swapping on wages and other federal requirements cannot be definitively determined because, among other reasons, state DOTs generally do not track data needed to measure these impacts. For example, state officials said that federal funds swapped by local agencies are combined with other federal funds, so they cannot identify which projects were funded with swapped federal dollars. State officials offered mixed views of the impact of swapping on workers' wages and other federal requirements. For example, officials in two states that told GAO their states do not have prevailing wage laws said wages paid were not impacted by the lack of federal prevailing wage requirements because of economic conditions in their states. Officials in two other states said that the lack of a state prevailing wage law potentially enabled contractors to pay their workers less than the federal prevailing wage on swapped projects.

Why GAO Did This Study

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provides funding to states to build and maintain the nation's roadways and bridges. States must follow applicable federal standards such as laws that require contractors to pay locally prevailing wages. States can make federal funding available to local agencies for projects, but the ability of local agencies to comply with federal requirements is a well-documented risk area. Some states have established "fund swapping" programs where local agencies swap proposed federal funding with the state in return for state dollars. FHWA does not directly oversee these programs, and no federal statutes or regulations authorize or prohibit fund swapping.

GAO was asked to review swapping of federal-aid highway funds and its impact. In this report, GAO describes: (1) the extent to which states and local agencies engage in fund swapping; (2) factors affecting whether state and local agencies engage in federal fund swapping; and (3) what is known about the impact fund swapping has on prevailing wages paid to workers and other federal requirements. GAO reviewed relevant regulations and reports; sent a questionnaire to officials in 50 states; and interviewed officials from 15 state DOTs that reported having swapped funds in the past 5 years and 3 local agencies selected for program size and other factors.

The U.S. Department of Transportation provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Repko at (202) 512-2384 or repkoe@gao.gov.

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.