



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, January 15th, 2021

Volume 37, Number 2

In This Issue

- MOBILE MPO UPDATES
- PROJECTS LET JANUARY 29TH, 2021
- LEGISLATIVE UPDATES
- FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
- JUST FOR FUN
- IN THE NEWS
- TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH

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South Alabama was awarded several ATRIPii projects (congratulations to Gulf Shores, Foley, and Atmore), please see *In The News*. Congress has a bill to tear down freeways and build communities, while Biden calls for \$350 billion in State and local aid as part of massive stimulus; see *Legislative Updates*. There are no new Funding Opportunities this week, and this week's *Just For Fun* is EYE CATCHING. 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

Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Listing of Obligated Projects Available Online

The federal metropolitan transportation planning statute states:

“In metropolitan planning areas, on an annual basis, no later than 90 calendar days following the end of the program year, the State, public transportation operator(s), and the MPO(s) shall cooperatively develop a listing of projects (including investments in pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities) for which funds under 23 U.S.C. or 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 were obligated in the preceding program year.”

The Federal Highway Administration defines obligation as the federal government's legal commitment (promise) to pay or reimburse states or other entities for the federal share of a project's eligible costs. Thus, an obligated project is one that has been approved by the federal government for reimbursement, though not necessarily reimbursed yet. The obligated project cost reflected in this report also may not equal final project cost.

This report responds to the directive set forth in statute. It lists all federally-funded transportation projects in the Mobile Area Transportation Study (MATs) Area that were obligated in federal fiscal year 2020 (October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020). The MATs Report is available online [HERE](#).

SARPC staff have been working on statistics concerning how COVID-19 has affected travel patterns in the Mobile Urbanized area. For information on these statistics and travel patterns please contact ajohnson@sarpc.org

MOBILE MPO

COVID-19 EFFECTS ON TRAVEL PATTERNS

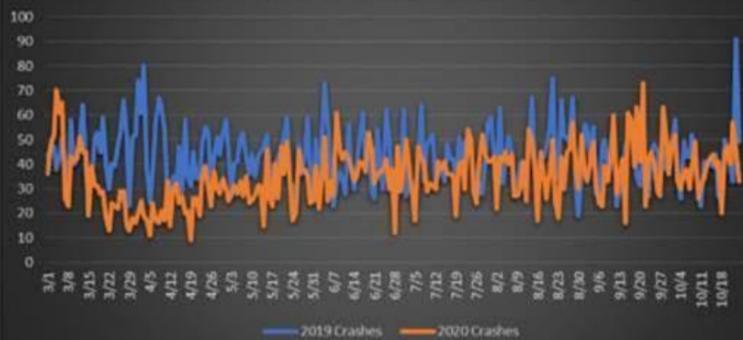
Relative Change in Weekly Average Crashes



Relative Change in Weekly Average Traffic Volumes



Total Daily Crashes in Mobile County



Average Daily Traffic Volumes in Mobile County



ENVISION 2045 IS THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)

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

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

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

FY 2020-2023 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) NOW ONLINE

The TIP represents a four year program (2020-2023) for improvements in the various transportation systems located within the Mobile study area as identified in the Mobile MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the twenty-five year plan for the Mobile Urban area. The LRTP establishes the transportation programs that are needed to meet travel demand by the study year and study area. LRTP projects that become funded are moved into the TIP and submitted to the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), where they are programmed into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). For MPO projects, TIP project selection is based on priorities established by MPO member governments and the availability of funds through the Surface Transportation Attributable program. For other projects, ALDOT has discretion of project funding based on availability of funds from various types of funding categories. Most often, projects in the TIP are derived from the LRTP. The TIP guides ALDOT in its annual allocation of funds for transportation improvements and becomes a part of the STIP.

ArcGIS Online is now being utilized by MPO staff to map all federally funded surface transportation projects within our area. Check it out [HERE](#).

Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

Project : 100055881 (RW)

Federal aid number : STPMB 7550 (602)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : ADDITIONAL LANES ON CR-656 (ZEIGLER BLVD) FROM CR-70 (TANNER WILLIAMS RD) TO CR-31 (SCHILLINGER RD)

Old Target start date : February 01, 2021

New Target start date : March 01, 2021

South Alabama RPO Updates

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) met in October 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%20HSCTP%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 January, 29th, 2021

MOBILE COUNTY

for constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, Guardrail Steel Blockout Replacement, Curb & Gutter Installation, Sidewalk Installation, and Traffic Stripe on SR-16 (US-90) from the junction of Lawrence Street to the junction of Water Street and Telegraph Road in Allenville. Length 0.670 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$516,796 to \$631,639 .

BALDWIN COUNTY

None at this time.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

None at this time.

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

Legislative Updates

Congress Considering Money to Unbuild Freeways and Rebuild Communities

SANDY SMITH JANUARY 13, 2021

An economic-justice bill now before the Senate could spell the end for urban freeways through low-income and minority neighborhoods in a number of cities. Streetsblog USA [reports](#) that the \$435 billion bill, introduced by then-Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and 25 Democratic senators before Congress recessed for Christmas, includes \$10 billion for a pilot program that would enable communities to demolish freeways and knit their communities back together.

The program's formal title is the Restoring Neighborhoods and Strengthening Communities Program; advocates are calling it the "Highways to Boulevards" initiative. Program funds would be available only to projects in regions with a high concentration of low-income residents or residents of color.

The key feature of the program is the funds it will offer communities to determine how the funds will be used to reunite the shredded neighborhoods. "There's already funding available for highway deconstruction in various other pots of money at the Department of Transportation, especially as so many of our highways reach the end of their life," Lynn Richards, president and CEO of the Congress for the New Urbanism, which collaborated on the writing of the bill, told Streetsblog. "And, of course, there always seems to be money for highway construction. What there's almost no money for are for the feasibility studies, the capacity-building, and the coalition-building with the people who are actually impacted by highway projects — or by highway removal projects. That's what's really special about this bill."

The funds can be used for just about any purpose save adding car-carrying capacity in a corridor. One of the things the money can go to is the establishment of community land trusts that acquire property that would allow low-income residents to remain around as their neighborhoods become more attractive to outsiders.

With the change in administrations and control of the Senate, the bill's chances for passage improve. Incoming Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg has called undoing the damage caused by urban freeways "an imperative" for his tenure as head of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Biden Calls for \$350 Billion in State and Local Aid as Part of Massive Stimulus

By Bill Lucia, Senior Reporter JANUARY 14, 2021

The president-elect released details on Thursday for a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package.

President-elect Joe Biden is urging Congress to provide state, local and territorial governments with \$350 billion in emergency aid, along with billions of dollars in assistance for schools and transit, as part of a sweeping coronavirus relief package that he unveiled on Thursday.

The \$1.9 trillion proposal also outlines plans for putting \$20 billion towards a national vaccination program. Additionally, it would provide \$1,400 one-time payments to many Americans whose earnings are below a certain amount, while also extending unemployment insurance programs adopted in response to the pandemic and boosting them with a \$400 per-week supplemental payment.

"We need to move quickly, we need to move fast," the president-elect said during a speech about his proposal on Thursday evening.

Biden also wants to see the federal minimum wage raised to \$15 an hour from the current level of \$7.25. Many cities and states have taken action in recent years to raise their minimum wages to that level.

On the education front, Biden is calling for \$130 billion to help K-12 schools reopen safely and \$35 billion for a higher education relief fund directed at public institutions, including community colleges. Biden has set a goal of reopening the majority of the nation's kindergarten through 8th grade schools within his administration's first 100 days.

The scale of what he is proposing is substantial compared to earlier relief packages. The law known as the CARES Act, [approved in March](#), totaled about \$2 trillion. A more recent deal that President Trump [signed into law](#) at the end of December was around [\\$900 billion](#).

Some Republicans were quick to knock Biden's proposals.

Rep. Kevin Brady, of Texas, the top Republican on the House Ways and Means Committee, called the plan an "economic blind buffalo that does nothing to save Main Street businesses, get people back to work, or strengthen our economy."

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio [said on Twitter](#) that Biden "knows the plan he outlined tonight can't pass 'quickly'" and that pushing all of it together would delay the proposed \$1,400 payments to individuals.

"Let's get the extra money to people first," added Rubio, who is among the Republicans who have backed \$2,000 payments to individuals. The last round of relief legislation included payments topping out at \$600.

A description of Biden's new plan says the \$350 billion in proposed emergency funding for states, localities and territories would help them keep public workers on the job, distribute the vaccine, scale up virus testing, reopen schools and maintain other services.

There's also \$20 billion in the plan for public transit agencies that have seen ridership and fare revenue plummet due to the virus outbreak.

Biden said during his remarks that he and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have been speaking with county officials, mayors and governors of both parties on a regular basis. "We're ready to work with them, help them get the relief they need," he said.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors on Thursday night welcomed the president-elect's proposal and said they were briefed on it earlier.

"Cities of all sizes must have direct, flexible assistance so that they can be a driver rather than a drag on America's recovery," the group's president, Louisville, Kentucky Mayor Greg Fischer, said in a statement. "President-elect Biden has made clear he intends to solve this crisis, and mayors are grateful for his leadership," he added.

Including the funding for the vaccination push, Biden is proposing about \$160 billion of spending centered around a slate of public health efforts to battle the virus, such as expanded testing and a public health jobs program. His overall plan also calls for \$30 billion in rental and utility assistance for households.

There's a raft of other proposals as well, ranging from bolstered food assistance for struggling families, to support for child care programs, and billions in loan and grant offerings for small businesses.

Failure to address infrastructure could cost the \$10 trillion in GDP, report says

BY [LIZ CAREY](#) | JANUARY 13, 2021

Failure to address inadequacies in U.S. infrastructure could stifle economic growth, cause the loss of \$10 trillion in GDP, and lead to a decline of more than \$23 trillion in business productivity over the next 20 years, a new report says.

The report, "[Failure to Act: Economic Impacts of Status Quo Investment Across Infrastructure Systems](#)," from the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), finds that the continued underinvestment in the country's infrastructure will result in a cascade effect that will affect the economy, families, businesses and the country's GDP.

But, in a webinar on Jan. 12, the ASCE and other infrastructure stakeholders said the incoming Biden administration has a far-reaching plan to address the country's infrastructure. And there is bipartisan support for investment in infrastructure as not only a way to fix America's crumbling roads and bridges, but also as a means to spur economic recovery from COVID-19 and create jobs.

"America's infrastructure bill is overdue, and we have been ignoring it for years," said Tom Smith, ASCE executive director. "There's no better way to jumpstart the economy, while also lessening the financial burden on businesses and families, than by making a down payment on our infrastructure now – transit systems, bridges, water treatment plants, and the grid – to ensure these systems are sustainable, resilient and safe for communities across the nation."

According to the study, U.S. companies across the spectrum would suffer if infrastructure needs are not addressed. U.S. manufacturers would be vulnerable because their production lines rely on energy, water and transportation systems in order to get goods from raw

materials to the consumer. If inadequacies in infrastructure remain, U.S. exports will drop by \$2.4 trillion, causing the national trade deficit to rise to \$626 billion by 2039.

Lack of investment in infrastructure could also lead to 3 million jobs lost by 2039 – nearly half of which will be high wage and high production jobs in manufacturing, finance, insurance and real estate, professional services and healthcare.

Most of the economic declines, the report says, will happen between 2030 and 2039, when the effects of the underinvestment will escalate. The report estimates the country will see \$18.8 trillion in gross output loss, \$8.1 trillion in GDP declines, and a loss of \$76 trillion in disposable household income.

ASCE estimates that the country will need to invest nearly \$13 trillion across 11 infrastructure areas: highways, bridges, rail, transit, drinking water, stormwater, wastewater, electricity, airports, seaports and inland waterways. Planned investment into infrastructure currently totals more than \$7.3 trillion, leaving a \$5.6 trillion investment gap by 2039.

“Once again, the American Society of Civil Engineers has demonstrated, in stark detail, the high price Americans pay for failing infrastructure,” said U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR). “The cost of inaction is too great for Congress to sit idly. I look forward to working with ASCE, President-elect Biden and Secretary Buttigieg to finally get the job done and rebuild and renew America.”

Blumenauer, a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, said he felt that Biden’s nomination of former South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg as Transportation Secretary meant good things for infrastructure investment, as Buttigieg has been an advocate of infrastructure investment for some time.

“President-elect Biden has a concrete plan for infrastructure and the House Democratic leadership is already involved with the Biden administration’s plans,” Blumenauer said.

ASCE says by increasing the investment in infrastructure by \$281 billion a year, the U.S. can eliminate the infrastructure gap and save \$10 trillion in GDP, 3 million jobs in 2039, and \$3,300 in disposable income for families each year from 2020 to 2039.

“Infrastructure is a budget busting issue for America’s communities and families. So many local governments are struggling to balance their budgets due to the additional financial pressures of COVID-19. Meanwhile, Washington has failed to step up on infrastructure,” said Clarence Anthony, CEO and executive director of the National League of Cities. “America’s cities, towns and villages are ready to work with Congress, President-Elect Biden and his Administration to break out of this vicious cycle of emergency repairs and get our nation’s infrastructure fixed.”

Paying for the infrastructure investment probably won’t come from raising the gas tax, Blumenauer said. As the nation moves further toward electrification, gas taxes will become obsolete and new systems to pay for infrastructure investment have to be found. Congress was on a path to eliminate the gas tax, he said, but it would take some time to figure out how to replace it and to put in place a system that is fairer to everyone.

Buttigieg looking to put “politics aside” in push for extensive \$1 trillion transportation

infrastructure plan

‘Politics aside, there is solid economic thinking behind a sizeable infrastructure push,’ he said.

By [Wimberly Patton](#) January 11, 2021

Failure to address infrastructure could cost the \$10 trillion in GDP, report says

Soon-to-be Transportation Secretary, Pete Buttigieg, is already making plans to improve American roadways through an infrastructure package officials are describing as “big” and “bold.”

Although recently-resigned Transportation Secretary, Elaine Chao, called on Buttigieg to take the reins of the Department of Transportation, he is yet to be sworn in as the 19th Transportation Secretary – the youngest on record at 38-years-old.

Still, Buttigieg has already been discussing a major infrastructure package with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, and hopes the plan could make a huge difference.

“We discussed the need to finally deliver on a big, bold infrastructure agenda that centers on jobs, equity and climate,” Schumer said on Dec. 30 after discussing infrastructure plans with Buttigieg, reported Logistics Management.

“With the coronavirus pandemic upending our economy, including areas of the transportation sector like airlines and hard-hit public transit systems, Pete and I discussed the need to continue delivering relief to workers in those industries in future COVID-19 relief legislation,” Schumer said.

“[I am] thrilled to finally have a willing and effective ally in the administration who will work with Congress to use transportation projects as an opportunity to create jobs, grow our economy and address the climate crisis,” Schumer continued.

Parts of the trucking industry agree with Schumer, pointing out Buttigieg’s experience as a mayor, and how that position makes him uniquely qualified to tackle infrastructure issues.

“Transportation is an issue that touches all Americans—urban, rural, coastal and in the heartland of our nation,” American Trucking Associations President and CEO Chris Spear said in a statement. “Having served as a mayor, Pete Buttigieg has had an up close and personal look at how our infrastructure problems are impacting Americans, and how important it is to solve them.”

In fact, just last year, Buttigieg called for the fortification of the fast-disappearing Highway Trust Fund, and even supported a change in the user fee system, replacing fuel tax with a ‘vehicle miles traveled’ system. Fuel Tax has remained unchanged since 1993.

Prior to the election, Biden demanded a \$1.3 trillion plan over the span of 10 years – which would allocate \$50 billion for the repair of highways and bridges, \$400 billion for research and development of clean energy, and \$5 billion for electric vehicle batteries.

“We selected Pete for transportation because the department is at the intersection of some of our most ambitious plans to build back better,” Biden said at the press conference at Buttigieg’s nomination.

“Politics aside, there is solid economic thinking behind a sizeable infrastructure push. For one thing, there are few better ways to get millions of workers back to work. Communities have a desperate need for better roads, bridges, water and sewage systems, and internet access. And with the prime rate near zero, identifying projects that make compelling economic sense won’t be difficult,” Buttigieg said, according to [Logistics Management](#).

“We should be leading the world when it comes to transportation infrastructure, not catching up. [We need] opportunity, equity, and empowerment.”

Funding Opportunities

FY 2021 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Application Workshop Announced RTP Application due March 3, 2021

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) will be conducting a virtual application workshop for FY 2021 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funds due to public safety concerns regarding COVID-19. The workshop will be held on Wednesday, January 13, 2021, at 9:00 am.

Join from a video system or application

Dial 1772540392@al.gov.webex.com

You can also dial 173.243.2.68 and enter your meeting number.

RTP applications for FY 2021 will be accepted beginning Wednesday, January 13, 2021, through 12:00 Noon on Wednesday, March 3, 2021.

For more information email: latoya.edwards@adeca.alabama.gov

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)

What are you looking at?

This week *In The News* (below), has a piece by Lenise Ligon from Fox 10 News in Mobile about visual displays being put into vehicles that have eye trackers, so you can always see the screen. This fandangled eye catching technology has been around, but never a practical application for drivers inside of vehicle. What are you actually looking at when your drive? [HERE](#)

What are some other applications of this technology, what do soccer players see when they are trying to block a goal? [HERE](#). What about dating sites? [HERE](#) What does your dog look at? [HERE](#)



In the News

Governor Ivey announces ATRIP-II projects for 2021



MONTGOMERY, Ala. -- Governor Kay Ivey and the Alabama Department of Transportation on Tuesday announced that more than \$45 million in funding is being awarded to cities and counties for various road and bridge projects.

The funding is made available through the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program-II (ATRIP-II), a program created under the Rebuild Alabama Act. The Rebuild Alabama Act requires ATRIP-II to be an annual program setting aside a minimum of \$30 million off the top of ALDOT's share of new gas tax revenue for projects of local interest on the state highway system.

"In Alabama, across our country and around the globe, we are all still working to get COVID-19 behind us, but here at home, we have not forgotten other priorities. Even as we are overcoming new challenges with the virus, we remain ever committed to making needed improvements to our infrastructure," Governor Ivey said. "I am proud that Rebuild Alabama continues making these investments possible in areas all across our state. Alabama continues to show progress and tangible results for the people of our state."

There were 27 projects selected for funding for a total of \$45.99 million. Of those awarded projects, 20 were from cities and counties putting forward local funds, for a total of approximately \$15.7 million. However, matching funds were not a requirement to be eligible.

The projects were selected by the ATRIP-II Committee created by the Rebuild Alabama Act. It is anticipated that a number of projects will be under contract during the 2021 fiscal year, however all projects are required to move forward within two years of the awarding of funds.

For more information about the ATRIP-II Program, visit <https://www.dot.state.al.us/atrip2/>

ATRIP II Projects in our Region:

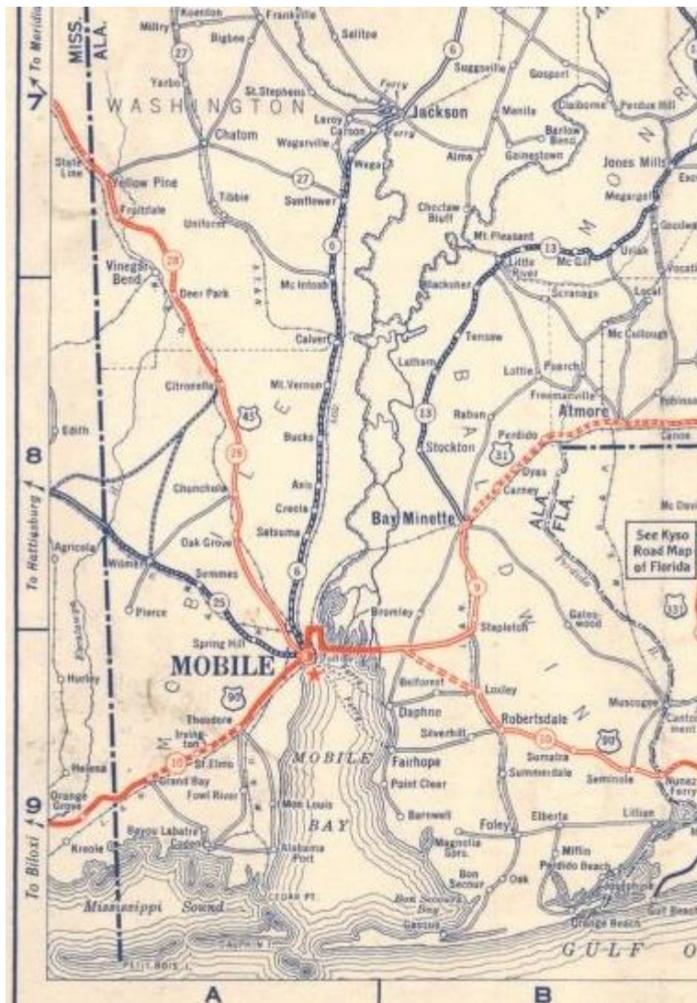
- Gulf Shores WIDEN SR-59 SOUTH FROM 2 LANES TO 3 LANES FROM CR-8 (COASTAL GATEWAY BLVD.) TO CR-4 (COTTON CREEK DR.) \$2,273,258.54
- Foley INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS AT SR-59 AND CR-12 INCLUDING ADDING RIGHT TURN LANES ON SR-59 NORTH AND SR-59 SOUTH AND ADDING LEFT TURN LANES ON CR-12. \$1,250,700.00
- Atmore INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS ON SR-21 AT PORCH RD EAST INCLUDING ADDING A RIGHT TURN LANE ON SR-21 NORTH, ADDING A LEFT TURN LANE ON SR-21 SOUTH, AND MODIFYING THE EXISTING TRAFFIC SIGNAL. \$446,669.00

Lawmakers urge ALDOT to catch up to Mississippi, four-lane U.S. Highway 45 from state line to Mobile

For nearly a century, the route that is now Alabama's portion of U.S. Highway 45 has stretched from downtown Mobile to the Alabama-Mississippi state line, initially parallel to the old Mobile and Ohio Railroad line. Although there have been some subtle changes in the actual route, and, obviously, many coats of asphalt over the decades, the route remains true to form.

After a 278-mile jaunt down from the Tennessee-Mississippi state line down the eastern portion of Mississippi on a four-lane highway, southbound U.S. Highway 45 travelers are welcomed to Alabama by a narrowing from four to two lanes, and a sign posted "Welcome to Sweet Home Alabama, Governor Kay Ivey."

Although it shows some signs of age, the portion of U.S. Highway 45 from Meridian, Miss. to the Alabama-Mississippi line, a route possibly familiar to Alabama football fans driving up from Mobile to Tuscaloosa through Mississippi, was completed in 2007.



(1928 KYSO Road Map of Alabama/University of Alabama Historic Maps Collection)

When the state legislature raised the fuel tax in the early 1990s, the route was statutorily mandated for improvement to Mobile. However, the language was removed.

“There never was a justification,” State Rep. Brett Easterbrook (R-Fruitdale) said during an interview with FM Talk 106.5 in Mobile. “They opened the bill and removed the words. There was no justification behind it.”

Easterbrook blames a lack of voters in the vicinity for the deprioritization of the route.

“It has been far down the list for years,” he said. “It is the deadliest highway in the state of Alabama. My belief is it is down the list because of the number of voters in that area of the state. North of I-65, there’s not a four-lane highway all the way to I-20 with the exception of [U.S. Highway] 43. It becomes a pig trail at Thomasville. We can’t go north, we can’t go east, and we can’t go west. Highway 45 is four lanes from the Mississippi to Chicago.”

“It would also serve as an evacuation route for hurricanes if it were four lanes,” Easterbrook added. “There’s really no excuse for this not to have already been done.”

State Rep. Shane Stringer (R-Satsuma) also says it is time for Alabama to catch up with Mississippi.

He told FM Talk 106.5 that he has met with Gov. Kay Ivey, Ivey chief of staff Jo Bonner and Alabama Department of Transportation director John Cooper to keep it “fresh in their minds.”

However, he also said officials at ALDOT appear not to be convinced of the project’s urgency, given it is not considered one of the top 10 projects under consideration.

“It is the deadliest highway in Alabama,” Stringer said. “We’re reminded of that about once a month. We have a major wreck up here. Somebodies’ lives are changed, but we’re constantly reminding them of it. I’m constantly meeting with ALDOT. I did get a list of the top 10 projects in Alabama, and Highway 45 is not on that list. Just trying to work on to see what we can do to get that, working with the other politicians, legislators trying to get as much assistance as I can to put pressure on the governor and the state to do something with this.”

Infrastructure gap reaches \$5.6 trillion: Trade group

BY NIV ELIS - 01/12/21

America's infrastructure gap has reached to \$5.6 trillion, according to the trade group American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE).

The group said the gap is a problem that, unaddressed, could lead to the loss of 3 million jobs over two decades.

"When we fail to invest in our infrastructure, we pay the price," said ASCE Executive Director Tom Smith.

The group in its annual report card outlined how much infrastructure investment is falling behind. Of the \$13 trillion in investment the country needs, only \$7.3 trillion is expected, leaving a \$5.6 trillion gap. There was a \$100 billion increase in the gap of surface transport investment alone over the past four years.

Rundown infrastructure, the report says, costs the average household \$3,300 a year in everything from hitting potholes to power outages and lost productivity due to traffic.

By 2039, the group warns, lacking infrastructure would lead to \$10 trillion in lost gross domestic product, \$23 trillion in lost business productivity, and a \$626 billion spike in the trade deficit.

The report's main message is likely to find an amenable audience in Washington. President-elect [Joe Biden](#) is expected to roll out a legislative outline for both COVID-19 relief and a major infrastructure package Thursday.

During his campaign, Biden proposed a \$2 trillion infrastructure plan, which included many of his climate change goals.

The need for infrastructure investment has long been an area of bipartisan agreement, though the parties differ considerably when it comes to questions of scale, funding and ownership.

Many expected infrastructure to be an area for cooperation during [President Trump](#)'s term, but little advanced amid fierce disagreements, tensions and regular scandals that boiled over into policy discussions.

ASCE is not alone in calling for improved infrastructure.

Many economists say such investments could help spur significant growth, especially during an economic downturn when jobs are scarce and the interest rates for borrowing are low.

An analysis by S&P Global found that a \$2.1 trillion infrastructure plan along the lines of Biden's proposal could add as much as \$5.7 trillion to the economy over the course of a decade.

"That's 10 times what was lost during the recession," said S&P Global U.S. Chief Economist Beth Ann Bovino.

Driver Experience with Augmented Reality Head-Up Display

- [LENISE LIGON](#)
- POSTED JAN 12, 2021



The head-up display, which projects information onto the windshield for drivers, has been available in some cars since 1988. But while over the past decade they've gone from relatively simple information displays like speed and music selections, Panasonic wants to take things to another level by precisely linking up symbols and text with real-world objects and roadways in front of the car.

Panasonic showed off its Augmented Reality HUD at 2021's all-online Consumer Electronics Show. In a demonstration video, Panasonic's system laid blue navigation lines, indicating the direction the driver should go, over the actual road. A yellow symbol pointed out a bicyclist to the side of the road and flashing signals warned of cars that were getting too close.

In the decades since they made the jump from fighter jets to cars, head-up displays, or HUDs, have become a commonly available option on all kinds of vehicles. These displays project information, such as speed and navigation instructions, onto a car's windshield or a clear plastic screen in front of it so the driver doesn't have to glance down at the gauges or at a screen in the car.

The numbers and symbols usually appear as if they're floating somewhere just above the car's hood. Some companies have figured out how to make them lay over real objects -- including other cars, pedestrians and bicyclists -- in the real world, creating a sort of augmented reality experience for the driver. It's the next big step for head up displays, and systems like this have recently begun hitting the market. Mercedes will have a similar system on its new S-class sedan, and Volkswagen will include a similar system on the new ID.4 electric SUV in some markets.

This kind of real-world alignment is difficult to do because it requires knowing exactly where all the features of the road outside are, moment by moment, but also precisely where the driver's eyes are at all times. It's necessary to know both, because otherwise the graphics can't be lined up properly.

To do this, Panasonic's AR HUD uses eye-tracking technology to closely follow the driver's eyes. A vibration control system helps compensate for bumps and other vibrations, and keeps the images in the windshield steady from the driver's point of view. Imaging radar scans the road ahead across at least three lanes of traffic, according to Panasonic.

If the driver is using the navigation system, the head-up display will show a line on the road to indicate the correct route. The system can also highlight faded lane lines that might be hard to see. If the vehicle gets too close to a car ahead, a warning symbol can flash at the back of the other car to warn the driver to allow more space.

The 2021 Cadillac Escalade has a somewhat similar feature, but it's not projected in the windshield. In the Escalade, a video camera captures an image of the road ahead which gets displayed on a screen in front of the driver. Navigation cues and other information are then incorporated into that image. That's simpler to do, technically, because it doesn't require the complex alignment a heads-up system does.

Panasonic is making its system available to various automakers so they can offer it as an option on their vehicles.

Panasonic Automotive Systems Company of America is a division company of Panasonic Corporation of North America and is a leading global supplier of automotive infotainment and connectivity system solutions. Panasonic Automotive is headquartered in Peachtree City, Georgia, with sales, marketing and engineering operations in Farmington Hills, Mich. For more information on Panasonic Automotive, visit: <http://us.panasonic.com/automotive>.

Transportation Research

U.S. Department of Transportation Releases Draft Strategic Plan on Accessible Transportation

Friday, January 15, 2021

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) this week published a draft of its first [Strategic Plan on Accessible Transportation](#) (Accessibility Strategic Plan), a noteworthy step in making America's transportation system more accessible for all travelers. The draft Accessibility Strategic Plan is available for [public review and comment](#), and will be announced this month in the Federal Register.

"This first-of-its-kind Accessibility Strategic Plan creates a unified vision for the Department to achieve access and mobility for all in transportation," said Acting U.S. Secretary of Transportation Steven Bradbury.

The draft Accessibility Strategic Plan reflects ongoing and future initiatives across the DOT's operating administrations to enhance accessibility and remove barriers in transportation for people with disabilities. It represents a unified vision for progress in accessible transportation that will guide the DOT's efforts in Fiscal Years 2021-2025.

DOT also released a [Request for Information](#) (RFI) regarding the launch of an [Inclusive Design Reference Hub](#) to establish a library of resources for accessibility in automation, and to work with outside experts to study voluntary best practices for ensuring accessibility in automated vehicles. Responses to the RFI are requested no later than 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on February 19, 2021.

U.S. Department of Transportation Releases "Hyperloop Standards Desk Review"

Friday, January 15, 2021

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) today released the "[Hyperloop Standards Desk Review](#)," sponsored by the Department's Non-Traditional and Emerging Transportation Technology (NETT) Council. This document serves to assess the status of hyperloop standard development; begin a dialogue for future hyperloop standardization efforts; and identify stakeholder perspectives on the applicability of existing standards to domestic testing and deployment.

In July 2020, the U.S. Department of Transportation released *Pathways to the Future of Transportation: A Non-Traditional and Emerging Transportation Technology (NETT) Council Guidance Document (Pathways to the Future of Transportation)* to provide a framework for the Department's approach toward non-traditional and emerging technologies, including hyperloop. In response to Pathways to the Future of Transportation, stakeholders shared that it would be helpful for the Department to consider the applicability of international or private sector standards to hyperloop systems in the United States.

The "Hyperloop Standards Desk Review" provides a preliminary mapping of existing standards and regulations to specific hyperloop systems components, but is not intended to be comprehensive, prescriptive, or definitive. To that end, the USDOT will soon publish a Request for Comment on the "Hyperloop Standards Desk Review," which will allow the public to comment and provide feedback on the document.

The NETT Council was established in March 2019 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.

More information on the NETT Council's work can be found at:

<https://www.transportation.gov/nettcouncil>.

USDOT announces first-ever plan targeting pedestrian injuries, fatalities

BY [DOUGLAS CLARK](#) | NOVEMBER 25, 2020

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) said its recently released Pedestrian Safety Action Plan seeks to address the reduction of pedestrian injuries and fatalities on America's roads.

"This unprecedented comprehensive safety effort is focused solely on protecting pedestrians because crossing a street should not be lethal for thousands of adults and children every year," Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao said.

Under the guidance of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Administrator Nicole R. Nason and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Deputy Administrator James Owens, the plan targets NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System findings revealing 17 percent of all traffic fatalities last year involved pedestrians – noting 6,205 pedestrians were killed in traffic crashes, representing 44 percent more than in 2010.

"Reducing pedestrian fatalities is a team effort that requires collaboration between federal, state, and local transportation leaders," Nason said. "We need safer roads and this plan provides a road map to get us there."

The USDOT maintains the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan endeavors to promote expanded use of countermeasures, technology, and data-driven practices to address pedestrian fatalities and injuries.

"At some point in the day, we are all pedestrians – especially right now, when everyone wants to get outside for some fresh air," NHTSA Deputy Administrator James Owens said. "Everyone has a role to play in ensuring pedestrian safety, and this Pedestrian Safety Action Plan will help communities, drivers, and pedestrians take steps to save lives."

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.

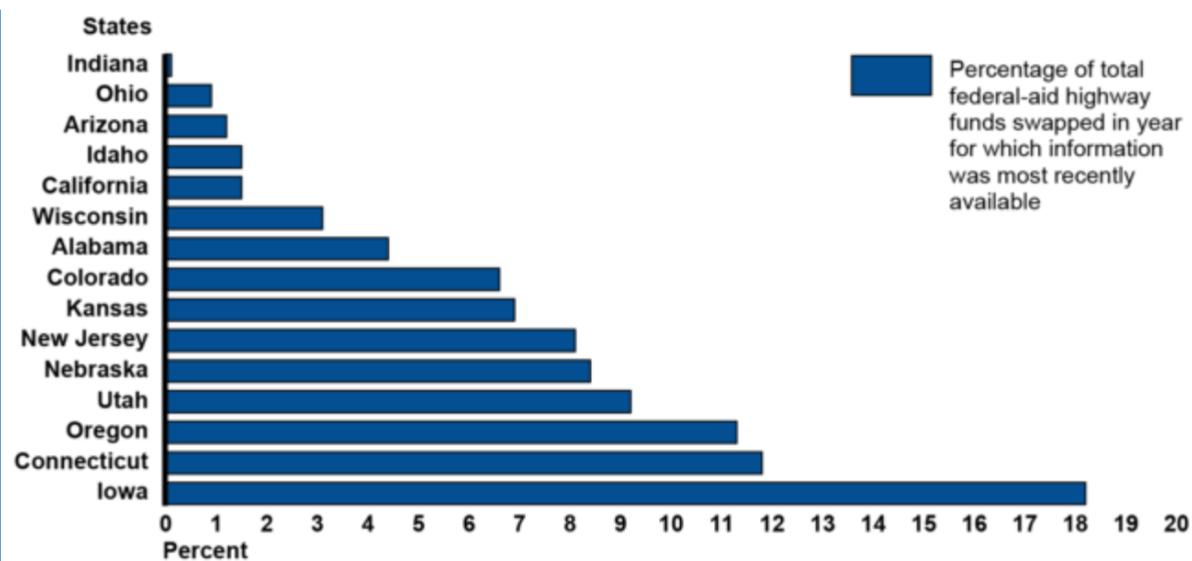
The Federal Highway Administration provides funding to states to build and maintain the nation's roads. When using federal dollars states must follow federal standards such as paying prevailing wages. Some states established programs in which local agencies swap federal for state dollars. When they do,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