



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, April 23rd, 2021

Volume 38, Number 3

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100% funding for local road resurfacing within Mobile Urbanized Area provided by MPO; also, there is some MPO movement on the I-10 Mobile River Bridge. See *MPO Updates*. RAISE Grants (formerly BUILD, TIGER, etc) announced by the USDOT, Mobile MPO Urban FTA 5310, and State and Urban **TAP** are available (see *funding Opportunities*). Biden's and the GOP's infrastructure plans are compared and will they or won't they pass earmarks in congress? in *Legislative Updates*. In *The News*, the new Gulf Shores ICW bridge is one step closer, US 98 needs more funding, and passenger train service inches closer to the area. This week's *Just For Fun* explains why some of the Infrastructure Bill smells a little fishy. 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

100 % Funding for Resurfacing of Local Roads Through the Mobile MPO with CRRSAA

In accordance with the Highway Infrastructure Program Funds Pursuant to the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA) dated January 15, 2021 from the Federal Highway Administration, the Mobile Transportation Management Area (TMA) through the Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is apportioned \$3,193,942 (FY 2021). In consultation with the State of Alabama, it is the intention of the Mobile MPO to use the Mobile TMA apportioned CRRSAA funding (\$3,193,942) for a one time competitive application award program. This funding can be 100% federal funding with no matching requirements; this presents a rare opportunity for the Mobile MPO.

Some of our municipalities in the Mobile MPO, do not have adequate revenue streams to provide the matching requirements when federal funds become available. Further, some of the smaller municipalities in the MPO only have one Federal Aid Route in their municipal limits (US43, SR181). Rarely do these municipalities have the opportunity to spend federal transportation funds through the MPO. Per the above noted guidance, routine maintenance and preventative maintenance on non-federal aid highways is allowed if Special Authority is given to the MPO by the State.

The State of Alabama has awarded the Mobile MPO the Special Authority to proceed.

The cities of Creola, Satsuma, Saraland, Chickasaw, Prichard, Semmes and Bayou la Batre will need to provide a prioritized list of roads that need to be resurfaced within their jurisdiction. No ROW, or additional capacity is allowed, and there will be some responsibility of each municipality in terms of assisting with clear zones, encroachment, and liabilities. This is 100 % funding, with no matching requirements. Communication with MPO staff is through the Mayor of each municipality.

Please call Kevin Harrison 706-4635 if there are any questions.

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.

The I-10 Mobile River Bridge LRTP Amendment

In order for Phase One of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge (the Truck Bridge) to move forward as announced in the March 22nd press release (below), the Mobile MPO and Eastern Shore MPO have to amend each Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to account for the Phase One. Once that happens the project can enter the 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and move to be authorized. A DRAFT Amendment has been proposed by the Mobile MPO staff to be reviewed by ALDOT and the FHWA, to account for the Phase One of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge (the Truck Bridge) to move forward. Once Mobile MPO staff receives comments from FHWA on the Draft Amendment to the LRTP, the draft amendment will be available for public review, a public meeting will be held in conjunction with a Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) meeting, Technical Coordination / Citizen Advisory (TCC/CAC) meeting, and then eventually a MPO Policy Board meeting to amend the LRTP and the TIP to include Phase One. We are anticipating a public meeting in the beginning of May, and a Mobile MPO Policy Board meeting in mid May; dates TBD. As the Biden Infrastructure Bill moves forward, it is critical the bridge project be in each MPO's LRTP and TIP.

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

New bridge plan only includes fees for large trucks

Posted by [Dale Liesch](#) | Mar 22, 2021 (reprinted from LAGNIAPPE with permission)



(PHOTO Kevin Harrison)

New bridge plan only includes fees for large trucks

Posted by [Dale Liesch](#) | Mar 22, 2021

Officials with both local Metropolitan Planning organizations and the Alabama Department of Transportation announced a plan on Monday, March 22 for a cheaper Interstate 10 bridge over the Mobile River that would only serve large trucks.

The idea, introduced by Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson, Fairhope City Council President Jack Burrell, U.S. Rep. Jerry Carl, and former ALDOT Division Engineer Vince Calametti, aims to build a truck-only cable-stayed bridge and to restripe the existing Bayway with three lanes in each direction instead of two.

Priced at \$725 million, about half the funding for the project would come from state and federal sources, in the form of Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle (GARVEE) bonds, Calametti said. Around \$400 million would come from a fee charged to trucks 46 feet and above using the bridge, Calametti said. The bridge would “most likely” be designated an Interstate 10 truck route, he said, and smaller vehicles would not be allowed on it.

“The fee will be less than half the proposed fee included in the previous plan,” he said. “It is estimated between \$10 and \$15. It won’t be more than \$15.”

The 46-foot or longer stipulation, Calametti said, would prevent smaller trucks, like those used for local deliveries, from being impacted. It’s too early to speculate, he said, if the toll would ever sunset. That would be determined at a later date.

Existing routes, including the Bankhead Tunnel, the Wallace Tunnel, the Bayway and the Causeway will remain toll free, Calametti said. By removing large trucks from the Wallace Tunnel, Calametti said, commute time could be cut by 60 to 90 minutes during peak travel time. Trucks will also be diverted from the Cochran Africatown Bridge, he said. The trucks would use the so-called “truck bridge” instead.

The increase from four lanes to six lanes on the Bayway is designed to increase efficiency by some 40 percent, also during peak times, Calametti said. While the new lanes would eat up the shoulders that currently exist on the Bayway, Calametti said ALDOT would double the size of its emergency response team — stationing a truck in both Baldwin County and Mobile County. In addition, turnarounds would be added to allow distressed travelers to pull over if need be.

The phased approach of the project would also see a second bridge and a new Bayway built under later phases, Calametti said. Unlike the last proposal, this project would be controlled completely by the state and would not be a public-private partnership.

The timeline for construction for this concept would be 2022 to 2023, as the state would lose out on a \$125 million federal grant if the project is not underway by the third quarter of 2022. This was a point Stimpson, who is chairman of the Mobile MPO, and Burrell, chairman of the Eastern Shore MPO, said was important. It was one of three points they made in discussions with Gov. Kay Ivey in January about keeping the project alive.

“No. 1, it had to reduce congestion,” Burrell said. “No. 2, it had to protect the \$125 million federal grant and No. 3, it needed to leave all the existing routes untolled. The MPO response has been very, very favorable.”

Stimpson reiterated the importance of keeping the large federal grant active.

“Protecting the \$125 million grant is critically important,” he said. “We need to demonstrate to the federal government that there’s local support or the federal government will redirect the funds.”

The new project, Stimpson said, would help move passengers and commerce across the bay more quickly and more efficiently, which would help secure more jobs and opportunities to the area.

“We believe this plan is a good, solid plan,” he said. “There will be no tolls for cars and small trucks.”

Carl, who was elected to congress in November, told the crowd gathered for a press conference that leaders he has spoken with in Washington — specifically those who’ve been trapped on the Bayway — understand the need for a bridge, as does local leadership.

“Part of my campaign rhetoric was focused on the bridge,” he said. “Everyone agrees the bridge is needed.”

The first step for the new project would be to gain the approval of both the Mobile and Eastern Shore MPOs, Calametti said. Following approval by the boards, ALDOT would begin to hold public hearings.

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 : 100068534 (UT)

Federal aid number : STPMB 4918

County : MOBILE

Project Description : ADDITIONAL LANES WITH REALIGNMENT ON CR-56 FROM 0.28 MILE WEST OF ELIZA JORDAN ROAD TO SNOW ROAD

Old Target start date : September 01, 2022

New Target start date : January 01, 2023

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%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 April 30th, 2021

MOBILE COUNTY

None at this time

BALDWIN COUNTY

- For constructing the Maintenance Dredging of Little Lagoon Pass in Gulf Shores as indicated in the plans. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$838,297 to \$1,024,585 .

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

None at this time.

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

Legislative Updates

Push for infrastructure gas-tax hike loses steam

BY [ZACK BUDRYK](#) - 04/22/21

Longtime proponents of raising the gas tax and recent converts to a vehicle miles traveled tax are sensing it’s increasingly unlikely that either revenue-raiser will be a part of [President Biden’s](#) massive infrastructure proposal.

Administration officials have indicated they would rather raise the corporate tax rate to pay for the \$2.3 trillion package — allowing Biden to keep his pledge on not raising taxes for people making less than \$400,000 — and key Senate Republicans say there’s no interest in their caucus to pursue the first gas tax increase since 1993.

The developments come even as experts say now would be the perfect time to impose a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) tax, one of the few areas of bipartisanship when it comes to raising taxes, since more electric vehicles are on the road each year.

“It is an improvement over a traditional gas tax because it better reflects the wear-and-tear vehicles place on roads, rather than on the amount of gasoline they consume,” said Howard Gleckman, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute.

“Despite these advantages, neither a gas tax hike nor a VMT is likely to pass Congress since both violate President Biden’s pledge to not raise taxes on households making \$400,000 or less.”

Still, the issue may very well be raised by lawmakers when Biden's proposal starts making its way through committees on Capitol Hill.

House Transportation Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) has been supportive of exploring a VMT tax but said he would prefer implementation on a smaller scale in the form of pilot programs before making it universal.

"We still must learn more from these tests — including how to address privacy concerns and how revenue gets collected — before taking additional steps at the federal level," he told The Hill in a statement.

A tax on miles traveled has support on the Republican side as well.

Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.), who as ranking member of the Transportation Committee has called for a national VMT program for years, said last week he would support working with Congress and stakeholders to create a national pilot program if privacy issues are properly addressed and it did not create an undue burden on rural drivers.

A spokesperson for Graves later added that the Missouri Republican "supports entirely eliminating the fuel taxes and switching over to a VMT. That's an important step we need to take regardless, and he is willing to work across the aisle on this issue."

Unlike the gas tax, a VMT tax levies a fee based on miles traveled rather than simply the amount of gas used. The federal gas tax has stood at 18.4 cents per gallon since 1993.

Some lawmakers say a VMT tax is a long-term solution whose time is not here yet. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman Tom Carper (D-Del.) told The Hill in a statement that such a fee "is the future, but we aren't ready to implement a vehicle miles traveled system on a national level today."

"Regardless of whether you're driving a gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicle or an electric-powered vehicle, hydrogen-powered vehicle, you're going to pay directly or indirectly for the construction of our roads, highways and bridges. That's the future. That may be 10 years away," Carper said April 14 at a virtual event hosted by The Hill.

Carper last week also expressed openness to a gas tax hike, asking IRS Commissioner Charles Rettig during a Senate Finance Committee hearing if a rebate for lower- and middle-class households would be possible in the event of an increase.

"I don't expect you to do this on the fly, but I want you to talk to your folks about it," Carper said, adding that he was exploring possible revenue sources for Biden's infrastructure bill that wouldn't violate the president's pledge on not raising taxes for most Americans.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), speaking to reporters Wednesday on Capitol Hill, said a gas tax hike rather than increasing taxes on corporations would only add to "the effective tax rate for working people [being] higher than it is for billionaires."

"I think the American people understand that the wealthy and large corporations have got to start paying their fair share," Sanders added. "If we want to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure, we need money, and that's an expensive proposition, and that's the fair way to get it."

Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) was more blunt on the question of gas taxes, telling reporters: "Oh, hell no. Don't raise them."

Business groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that oppose funding infrastructure with a corporate tax hike are some of the biggest supporters of a gas or mileage tax to finance Biden's proposal.

"We at the Chamber have been calling for adjusting [the gas tax] for the last 10 years, because it's lost about 10 percent of purchasing power due to inflation," said Ed Mortimer, vice president of transportation and infrastructure at the Chamber of Commerce. "A gasoline tax is going to be a depleting source of revenue — we think we need to explore transitioning down the road to a VMT."

Potentially complicating Republican support for a VMT tax is the number of GOP lawmakers, including Graves, who have signed the Americans for Tax Reform's pledge not to raise taxes. The group, led by anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist, said it is opposed to both a gas tax increase and a new VMT tax.

"Americans for Tax Reform and the taxpayer movement are strongly opposed to adding an additional tax on the backs of American households. Voters will recognize this is a tax increase," a spokesperson said.

If the infrastructure package proceeds without a gas or mileage tax, experts say that's likely to put even more pressure on transportation funding mechanisms down the line.

"I think what's happened is now that there's an interest from the administration in increasing the amount of money spent on transportation, the question of how we pay for it becomes that much more pressing," said Asha Weinstein Agrawal, director of Education at the Mineta Transportation Institute.

She said the lack of increase in the gas tax, combined with more electric vehicles, made a mileage tax an increasingly attractive option from a policy perspective.

"People are willing to start thinking about some kind of conceptual replacement [for the gas tax] that relates to how much they use the roads, and the mileage fee is the opportunity that's been discussed most widely in the last decade."

Senate GOP preserves earmark ban, adds strict debt ceiling posture

The largely symbolic decision came after a majority of House Republicans voted to back Democrats' return to earmarking. Neither the earmark ban nor the debt ceiling language is binding — and that means there's nothing to prevent individual senators from requesting earmarks or voting to raise the debt ceiling without corresponding cuts.

By CAITLIN EMMA and BURGESS EVERETT 04/21/2021

Senate Republicans kept their decade-long earmarks ban on Wednesday but installed a new internal GOP rule that demands spending cuts as a condition for raising the debt ceiling.

The decision to keep the earmarks ban by Senate Republicans served as an effective rebuke of their House counterparts — who voted to remove their ban last month — and upheld a central tenet of the fiscal conservatism the GOP abandoned under former President Donald Trump. By the time senators got around to considering changes to conference rules on Wednesday, the earmark debate was so settled that there was no debate about it at all.

"After our discussion this week and last week, it was clear folks weren't there" on reversing the ban, said Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas). "I certainly hope that every member of the Republican Conference complies with what the rules say."

Both the earmark ban and the new debt ceiling posture keep the Senate Republicans on track with tea party-era attitudes toward spending, diverging from a majority of House Republicans who voted in a secret ballot to back Democrats' return to earmarking, with extra guardrails. Still, neither the earmark ban nor the debt ceiling language is binding — and that means there's nothing to prevent individual senators from requesting earmarks or voting to raise the debt ceiling without corresponding cuts.

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) called the debt ceiling language "aspirational." Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), the top Republican appropriator in the upper chamber, said it's "a statement which we all believe in."

"It's a good statement — probably meaningless — but it's a good statement," he said.

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) was among the Republicans who said they will request earmarks as part of the spending process, while Sen. John Kennedy (R-La.) said he would not participate.

The new focus on fiscal conservatism follows years of Republican support for deficit-busting tax cuts, bigger Pentagon budgets and billions of dollars for a southern border wall touted by Trump. With President Joe Biden now in the White House, a number of Republicans have veered back to caring about the federal debt, unwilling to support the president's \$2 trillion-plus infrastructure proposal and instead floating a smaller package totaling roughly \$600 billion to \$800 billion.

"We live in fiscally irresponsible times and both parties are equally guilty," said Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) after the internal discussion on Wednesday.

With Democrats bringing earmarks back no matter what the GOP does, the choice to keep the ban likely won't affect individual senators' behavior, since there are no firm rules precluding them from earmarking — ban or no ban. A number of Senate Republicans already plan to propose earmarks, particularly top appropriators who oversee spending for a third of the federal budget, like Sens. Richard Shelby of Alabama and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia.

"People who want to request earmarks may end up doing that, and people who don't, won't," Cornyn said.

Republicans who don't want to earmark don't have to ask for one, Shelby said.

"Even if you ask for one, you might not get one — because the old earmark days, they're gone," he said. "They're gonna have to be meritorious, they're gonna have to be substantive in nature and meaningful for us to really even consider."

House Democrats are moving forward with a revamp of the spending process that caps the overall amount of money spent on earmarks to 1 percent of discretionary spending and allows lawmakers to submit no more than 10 project requests, among other things.

Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.), who successfully fought in 2019 to make the conference's earmark ban permanent, said he believed that anti-earmark Republicans "would probably" fall short in their push to keep the ban, until a few days ago. The party's inertia shifted as they debated the issue more and more internally, he said.

About one-third of the Senate's 50 Republicans were undecided and "drifting" toward supporting earmarks again before opponents cranked up their arguments, Sasse explained. And Russ Vought, who served as White House budget director under Trump, spoke to Republicans at their lunch on Wednesday to convince them to keep the earmark ban.

"You should care about fiscal responsibility whether you're in [or] out of power," Sasse said in an interview Wednesday. "If it's not a core principle of both parties, it's something Republicans should use to refine our argument about what we stand for. And I think most people in our conference ultimately get that. But it just took a lot of conversations to focus them on it."

Republicans Reveal Five-Year \$568B Infrastructure Proposal

editor@ashto.org April 23, 2021

A group of five key Republican senators unveiled a five-year, \$568 billion infrastructure investment framework on April 22 to serve as an alternative to the \$2.3 trillion American Jobs Plan proposed by President Biden on March 31.

Those four senators are Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., ranking member on the Environment and Public Works Committee; Roger Wicker, R-Miss., ranking member on the Commerce, Science, & Transportation Committee; Pat Toomey, R-Penn., ranking member on the Banking, Housing, & Urban Affairs Committee; Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, ranking member of the Finance Committee; and John Barrasso, ranking member on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

"It's important that any infrastructure legislation have adequate funding levels and not be so large as to fail to launch, which means sticking to actual infrastructure," explained Sen. Capito in a statement. "That's why our framework works. It serves as a realistic, thoughtful approach that addresses the core areas of infrastructure that we all agree upon."

The breakdown of the infrastructure funding within the Republican plan includes:

- Roads and bridges – \$299 billion
- Public transit systems – \$61 billion
- Rail – \$20 billion
- Safety – \$13 billion
- Drinking water and wastewater infrastructure – \$35 billion
- Inland waterways and ports – \$17 billion
- Airports – \$44 billion
- Broadband infrastructure funding – \$65 billion
- Water storage – \$14 billion

The senators said that four key “goals” lay at the heart of the their plan: Boosting economic growth, improving global competitiveness, and creating jobs; improving the quality of life for all Americans; strengthening national security and continuing to improve safety; bolstering infrastructure so it can withstand extreme weather events and natural disasters, all while protecting the environment.

The plan would also specifically preserve all of the provisions of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which set the corporate tax rate at 21 percent. It also proposes levying user fees on electric vehicles to replace reductions in motor fuel tax revenue flowing into the Highway Trust Fund. It would also “repurpose” unused federal spending allocated by the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan to cover the infrastructure investments proposed within Republican plan.

“Congress and the Biden administration must reach a bipartisan agreement that will improve the infrastructure in all states and communities, while achieving important national goals,” according to the plan. “This framework is meant to serve as a guide as we continue to develop bipartisan bills that will move by regular order.”

Jim Tymon, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, said in a statement that AASHTO has “long called for a bipartisan approach” to address the nation’s transportation and infrastructure needs.

“Senate Republicans have put forward a proposal that recognizes the value of using proven existing programs and increasing funding for infrastructure over current levels. But this is only one further step in the process,” he said.

“We look forward to Republicans and Democrats working with the Administration to reach a bipartisan agreement that significantly increases investment and modernizes our nation’s infrastructure as soon as possible,” Tymon added.

Factbox: Republicans vs. Biden: What's in their infrastructure plans?

Reuters

An infrastructure package proposed by U.S. Senate Republicans on Thursday is about a quarter the size of Democratic President Joe Biden's sweeping \$2.3 trillion proposal and focuses narrowly on broadband access and traditional infrastructure projects. [read more](#). Here is a spending comparison between the \$568 billion Republican proposal and Biden's more expansive one, which includes funds for schools and eldercare:

ROADS AND BRIDGES:

Republicans - \$299 billion

Biden - \$115 billion

BROADBAND ACCESS:

Republicans - \$65 billion

Biden - \$100 billion

PUBLIC TRANSIT:

Republicans - \$61 billion

Biden - \$85 billion

AIRPORTS:

Republicans - \$44 billion

Biden - \$25 billion

DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER:

Republicans - \$35 billion

Biden - \$111 billion

RAIL:

Republicans - \$20 billion

Biden - \$80 billion

PORTS AND INLAND WATERWAYS:

Republicans - \$17 billion

Biden - \$17 billion

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY:

Republicans - \$13 billion

Biden - \$20 billion

ELECTRIC VEHICLES:

Republicans - \$0

Biden - \$174 billion

MANUFACTURING:

Republicans - \$0

Biden - \$580 billion

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR:

Republicans - \$0
Biden - \$100 billion
HOME- AND COMMUNITY-BASED CARE:
Republicans - \$0
Biden - \$400 billion

Funding Opportunities

Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) GRANTS

(deadline July 12, 2021)

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) today published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to apply for \$1 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 discretionary grant funding through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants. RAISE, formerly known as BUILD and TIGER, has awarded over \$8.935 billion in grants to projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico since 2009.

“In communities across the country, there is tremendous need for transportation projects that create high-quality jobs, improve safety, protect our environment, and generate equitable economic opportunity for all Americans,” said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg. “With RAISE grants, we are making those needed investments in our communities' future.”

Projects for RAISE funding will be evaluated based on merit criteria that include safety, environmental sustainability, quality of life, economic competitiveness, state of good repair, innovation, and partnership. Within these criteria, the Department will prioritize projects that can demonstrate improvements to racial equity, reduce impacts of climate change and create good-paying jobs.

For this round of RAISE grants, the maximum grant award is \$25 million, and no more than \$100 million can be awarded to a single State, as specified in the appropriations act. Up to \$30 million will be awarded to planning grants, including at least \$10 million to Areas of Persistent Poverty.

To ensure that the benefits of infrastructure investments benefit communities large and small the Department will award an equitable amount, not to exceed half of funding, to projects located in urban and rural areas respectively.

The program is highly competitive with 680 projects funded out of over 9700 applications. It is one of the few DOT discretionary programs for which regional and local governments can directly compete for multimodal transportation funding.

To provide technical assistance to prospective applicants, DOT is hosting a series of webinars during the FY 2021 RAISE grant application process. To register for the webinars visit www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/outreach. The deadline to submit an application is July 12, 2021 at 5pm Eastern.

Inside of Mobile URBAN AREA

Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310) FY 2021 Second Round <https://mobilempo.org/5310.html>

Applications Due Thursday, May 13th, 2021 by NOON

Links to Documents

[FY2021 Mobile Urban Area 5310 Guidelines Second Round](#)

[FY2021 Mobile Urban Area 5310 Application \(PDF\)](#)

[FY2021 Mobile Urban Area 5310 Application \(Word\)](#)

[HERE](#) for Presentation at the Information Session

U.S. Department of Transportation Announces More Than \$10 Million Funding Opportunity for Transit Planning to Address Climate Change and Equity in Communities Nationwide

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Priority will be given to projects that help improve air quality, advance environmental justice, promote housing affordability

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) today announced the availability of approximately \$10 million in competitive grant funds through a [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) for FTA's [Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development \(TOD\) Planning](#). The funds will support comprehensive planning efforts that help connect communities, improve access to public transportation and affordable housing, and support President Biden's call to combat climate change, advance environmental justice, and promote equitable delivery of benefits to underserved communities.

"When people can move safely and easily by public transit, foot, bike, wheelchair, or any other means, it can change a community for the better," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. "This type of investment can save residents money and time, and reduce pollution impacting our neighborhoods. We are thrilled to help more local governments plan creatively around transit, so their communities can benefit from the good jobs, affordable housing, and economic revitalization that accompany it."

In support of the President's January 20, 2021 Executive Orders on Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis (EO 13990) and Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government (EO 13985), FTA will prioritize projects that will help improve air quality in non-attainment and maintenance areas for certain criteria pollutants under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards and promote equitable delivery of benefits and services to underserved communities. This consideration will further the goals of the Executive Orders, including the goal to prioritize environmental justice.

"This announcement comes at an especially fitting time, coinciding with the celebration of Earth Day. Equitable transit-oriented development helps those at the local level respond to climate change and affordable housing challenges, particularly in underserved and overburdened communities," said FTA Deputy Administrator Nuria Fernandez. "The TOD planning program will encourage mixed-use, mixed income development around new transit projects to increase access to opportunities and improve mobility for residents."

FTA's Pilot Program for TOD Planning funds comprehensive planning to increase transit access and to encourage ridership with mixed-use and mixed-income development near public transportation projects. Examples of eligible projects include comprehensive planning studies around station areas for new fixed guideway projects, such as light-rail, heavy rail, commuter rail, or bus rapid transit systems that have a designated right-of-way. Information on previously funded projects can be found [here](#).

In order to apply for program funding, an applicant must be an existing FTA recipient – either a project sponsor of an eligible transit project or an entity with land use planning authority in the project corridor. To ensure that work meets the needs of the local community, transit project sponsors and land use planning authorities must partner to conduct the planning work. The application period will close on Monday, June 21, 2021.

FTA's TOD Pilot Program was established under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and amended by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. The program is authorized through Fiscal Year 2021.

STATE TAP

FY 2022 Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program Call for Applications (TAP) (Deadline May 28, 2021)

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is soliciting applications for the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program (TAP) for FY 2022

Info is on the ALDOT website... <https://www.dot.state.al.us/publications/LocalTransportation/Memorandums.html>

To explore the rest of the new-and-improved ALDOT webpage related to TAP

- <https://www.dot.state.al.us/>
- Publications at the top
- Local Transportation in first search-box
- Local Transportation Memorandums on page 2
- Also
- Programs at the top
- Transportation Alternatives on page 5

The only significant change in this year's program is that applications must be submitted electronically. As noted in the Application and Guidelines....

" All applications **must be submitted electronically** no later than 5:00 pm on **May 28, 2021**. Applications should be sent to tapapp@dot.state.al.us as a .pdf file (25 mb max) with "**FY 2022 TAP Application – Sponsor Name**" in the subject line.

As stated last year, a sponsor with an active TAP project will not be eligible to receive a new TAP project until the existing project is authorized and let to contract. We hope this will do several things:

1. Encourage sponsors to complete projects in a timely manner;
2. Encourage sponsors to actually cancel projects that have major issues and will probably never get built;
3. Eliminate sponsors from transferring funds from one TAP project to another.

MPO TAP

Mobile Urbanized AREA FY 2022 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Announcement and

Documents deadline noon, Friday, May 14th, 2021

[Announcement](#)

[Instructions and Guidelines](#)

[Application](#)

[Ranking Process](#)

For information regarding the FY 2022 Mobile Urbanized Area Call For Projects please contact:

Mr. Tom Piper

tpiper@sarpc.org

(251)706-4622

ELIGIBLE ITEMS

- Streetscape Improvements are eligible and should include items such as sidewalk replacement, landscaping, pedestrian lighting, etc. These enhancements must be located in the downtown area (central business district in front of store fronts). This is the only instance where replacement of deteriorated sidewalks is an eligible item.
- Curb Cut -to achieve ADA compliance.
- Lighting when it is decorative landscape or pedestrian lighting. Lighting is limited to 30%of the project cost.
- Landscaping as included in a streetscape project.
- Signs if there is a direct relationship to the project: Examples include historic interpretation or destination/distance/direction signs.
- Fencing for safety purposes only.

- Paving is approved on a case-by-case basis for repair of a street that may have been unavoidably damaged in the course of the enhancement project.
- Historic streets may be restored or preserved.
- Drainage is approved on a case-by-case basis where it is required for construction of the project. Drainage is limited to a small percentage of the overall project.
- Project Oversight- Construction engineering and inspection: Examples include: certified concrete, architectural, landscaping, and construction inspection, etc. Oversight is limited to 15% of the project cost. If the sponsor chooses to hire a consultant for project oversight, they must follow ALDOT's latest consultant selection procedures.

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)

HERE FISHY FISHY

This weekend is the Mullet Toss Weekend at the Flora-Bama, or as locals call it –“stay away from AL182 (Perdido Beach Blvd) weekend”. It is a two lane section of road in front of “The BAMA”, and it will create an impressive traffic queue, with no way around. If you get stuck in the traffic, you might as well just stop, and go throw a fish. But what do the fish think about all of this? Call it “fish intuition”, but they know something is up.



Below are pictures of actual fish trying to escape the Flora-Bama Mullet toss; they cannot cross the busy two lane AL182. Once the fish are hurled through the air by humans wearing next to nothing, they are then donated to the zoo for their final resting place.



Those poor fish. If only they had a [FISH CROSSING PATH](#). The \$3Trillion Infrastructure Bill currently being proposed by Congress, has funding for various fish crossing locations across the country. In accordance with AASHTO guidelines, proper reflectivity has to be used as fish do not see very well outside of water. Other complexities arise in coastal areas as there may be salt water fish crossing into fresh water areas.



Science has proven that under bridges are shady places, and are not safe for fish. The below “fish bridge” is included in the Infrastructure Bill for busy highways where fish may not be able to cross on the pavement. This is useful where there may be heavy vehicular traffic, like at the FLORA-BAMA.



In the News

ALDOT says \$40 million dollars needed for US-98 safety project after 4 people killed on Moffett Road in a week

by: [Meaghan Mackey](#) Posted: Apr 20, 2021

MOBILE, Ala. (WKRG) – ALDOT says \$40 million dollars in funding is still needed to complete their US-98 safer/extension project after four people were killed in three separate crashes on Moffett Road in the span of a week.

In a statement to us, ALDOT said:

“We at ALDOT extend our sympathies to the families of the victims of the recent US-98 crashes. Highway safety has always been our highest priority. While we have made significant progress on the Safe 98/SR-158 extension project, approximately \$40 million-dollars is still needed to complete the 2-lane connection from the Mississippi line to Schillinger Road. ALDOT is committed to exploring all options to secure the funding needed to complete this much needed project”

STATEMENT FROM ALDOT

On April 19, Mobile police say a woman was killed when her car slammed into a tree near Helen Street.

On April 14, Mobile police say a woman and her one-year-old son were killed when a UPS truck crossed into their lane and collided with them near Wolf Ridge Road.

On April 15, state troopers say a man died after his car collided with an SUV near Big Creek Lake on Highway 98.

New Gulf Shores ICW bridge one step closer

by: [Debbie Williams](#) Posted: Apr 21, 2021

GULF SHORES, Ala. (WKRG) — After almost 10 years of planning and permitting, the city of Gulf Shores is a step closer to getting a new bridge and a new alternative to travel to and from the coastal community.

Some call it a bridge to nowhere, a new span across the Intracoastal Waterway between Gulf Shores and Orange Beach. Now, the permitting process has been completed, and the Corps of Engineers says the project can move forward. “Having another way to get off the island is real important, and we’re obviously very supportive and looking forward to this happening,” says city spokesman Grant Brown.



The progress has come at a cost for several home and property owners. “It hasn’t been fun,” including Tony Diliberto, who surprisingly has always been supportive of the bridge even though it cost him his home of 47 years. The state taking his home and property for a proposed road from Foley Beach Express leading to the new bridge. “It turned our life upside down and there was a lot of stress, 10 years, but we’ve always been for it.”

The Corps says the bidding process could begin as soon as the end of next month with construction beginning in August, although the Alabama Department of Transportation, who will build the bridge, says that is unlikely.

Diliberto says whenever it happens, “it’s priceless, the bridge is going to be great.” He, for one, can’t wait to see it.

ALDOT says the bidding process is several months away. Once construction begins it will take about two years to finish.

Alabama’s House delegation pushes for Amtrak to finish study before restarting Mobile service

Updated Apr 20, 2021; Posted Apr 20, 2021

By [John Sharp](#)

Alabama's entire congressional delegation, including its sole Democratic representative, is backing a push from freight train operators for Amtrak to resume its efforts in completing a feasibility study before restoring passenger rail service out of Mobile.

A letter submitted to the U.S. Surface Transportation Board calls on the federal board to require the completion of a study that would determine potential impacts to the Port of Mobile if Amtrak service is restored along the Gulf Coast. The letter was signed by all seven of Alabama's U.S. House members and echoes past comments [from Republican U.S. Senator Richard Shelby](#) and [Gov. Kay Ivey](#) for the study to be completed before passenger rail service resumes.

"Amtrak's ongoing efforts to reintroduce passenger rail service area concerning, so my colleagues and I are urging the Surface Transportation Board to require the completion of the feasibility study prior the return of Amtrak service to Mobile, because all parties have an obligation to protect the economic interests of Alabama's workers and businesses," said U.S. Rep. Jerry Carl, R-Mobile.

The letter is also signed by Republican Reps. Robert Aderholt, Mo Brooks, Barry Moore, Gary Palmer and Mike Rogers.

U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell, the state's lone Democratic House member, also signed onto the letter and defended the Port of Mobile as a vital economic factor in her congressional district that does not extend into Mobile. Sewell's 7th district does encompass an area that includes businesses which utilize the port for their products.

"A comprehensive feasibility analysis should be conducted before this process moves forward," said Sewell, of Birmingham.

Sewell's position is notable as support for Amtrak grows among her Democratic colleagues even as Republicans have long expressed concerns over subsidizing the nation's passenger rail service. Amtrak is slated to receive \$80 billion within President Joe Biden's proposed \$2 trillion infrastructure initiative, which has the backing of most Democratic lawmakers in Congress. Sewell, earlier this month, [said she is a supporter of Biden's plan](#).

The Alabama State Port Authority has long expressed concerns that a potential restart of Amtrak services to the Gulf Coast will disrupt business. The Port Authority argues that a study should include a look at freight operations involving "eight railroads that use or cross the CSX mainline" at the port, not just the two railroads directly involved in talks with Amtrak – CSX Corps and Norfolk Southern.

The letter says that Alabama's sole seaport has "greatly increased" since passenger rail service was last in Mobile before Hurricane Katrina destroyed much of the rail line in 2005. The 3,700-acre complex provides "over 154,000 jobs and \$25 billion impact," according to the lawmakers.

[Amtrak officials are requesting the STB to fast-track](#) the process of resuming passenger rail service from New Orleans to Mobile, allowing them to operate two daily passenger trains on freight lines owned by CSX Corp. and Norfolk Southern. They argued that they had extensive data that freight rail and passenger service coexisted in other areas of the country with more traffic and weaker infrastructure.

Marc Magliari, spokesman with Amtrak, said they would respond to Alabama officials via "filings through the STB's docket process."

The revised Amtrak service has long been proposed to connect Mobile to Union Station in New Orleans with four stops in Mississippi – Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi and Pascagoula. Amtrak wants to revive the service by Jan. 1, 2022.

Amtrak officials, in February, announced it was planning to restart the Gulf Coast service for the first time since 2005. The announcement occurred after talks between Amtrak and CSX/Norfolk Southern halted in December, concluding after one year when they first started.

Amtrak officials felt the study should have lasted only seven months.

The letter from the Alabama House members suggested it was "worth noting" that that the negotiations would be delayed due to the [COVID-19](#) pandemic.

The viewpoints in Alabama are also the exact opposite of the support the train service is receiving from Mississippi, where Republicans like Senator Roger Wicker have long championed the Mobile-to-New Orleans service. The rail restart is also backed by Louisiana lawmakers, including New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell.

NHTSA Advances Biden-Harris Administration's Climate & Jobs Goals

Thursday, April 22, 2021

FIRST STEP PROPOSES TO WITHDRAW RULE THAT SOUGHT TO PREEMPT STATES FROM SETTING THEIR OWN GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS STANDARDS OR ZERO-EMISSIONS VEHICLE MANDATES

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation today moved aggressively to respond to President Biden's January 20 executive order on Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis. NHTSA proposed to withdraw its portions of the so-called SAFE I Rule, which sought to preempt States, including California, from issuing their own greenhouse gas emissions standards and zero-emissions vehicle mandates. The proposed action would establish a clean slate, enabling the Department to further the Administration's important fuel economy, equity, and climate change priorities — which include reversing unnecessary and potentially unlawful efforts to prevent state action.

"The transportation sector is the biggest contributor to greenhouse gases in our economy – which means it can and must be a big part of the climate solution," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. "This proposed rule would be an important step towards protecting public health and combating climate change."

Today's regulatory action proposes withdrawing NHTSA's regulations and legal analysis regarding preemption under the Energy Policy and Conservation Act. NHTSA is seeking comment on whether the SAFE I Rule, which was finalized in 2019, fell beyond the Agency's statutory authority by purporting to impose broad preemption requirements. If finalized, today's action would wipe clean the regulatory slate. NHTSA's actions in the SAFE I Rule would no longer be a potential barrier to states implementing tough greenhouse gas and zero-emissions vehicle regulations.

"States have been leading the way, especially over the last four years, when it comes to cleaning up pollution and addressing climate change," said Dr. Steven Cliff, NHTSA's Acting Administrator. "NHTSA's proposed rule would remove unnecessary barriers to state leadership in regulating greenhouse gases and other air pollutants that spew from the tailpipes of cars."

The public is invited to comment on the [withdrawal notice](#).

After a Deadly Year on the Roads, States Push for Safety Over Speed

By Rachel Bluth, [Kaiser Health News](#)
APRIL 20, 2021

Lawmakers in California and other states are rethinking how they set and enforce speed limits, and they're proposing to hand more power to local authorities to slow drivers in their communities.

As more Americans start commuting to work and hitting the roads after a year indoors, they'll be returning to streets that have gotten deadlier.

Last year, an estimated [42,000 people died](#) in motor vehicle crashes and 4.8 million were injured. That represents an 8% increase over 2019, the largest year-over-year increase in nearly a century — even though the number of miles driven fell by 13%, according to the National Safety Council.

The emptier roads led to more speeding, which led to more fatalities, said Leah Shahum, executive director of [the Vision Zero Network](#), a nonprofit organization that works on reducing traffic deaths. Ironically, congested traffic, the bane of car commuters everywhere, had been keeping people safer before the pandemic, Shahum said.

"This is a nationwide public health crisis," said Laura Friedman, a California Assembly member who introduced a bill this year to reduce speed limits. "If we had 42,000 people dying every year in plane crashes, we would do a lot more about it, and yet we seem to have accepted this as collateral damage."

California and other states are grappling with how to reduce traffic deaths, a problem that has worsened over the past 10 years but gained urgency since the onset of the covid-19 pandemic. Lawmakers from coast to coast have introduced dozens of bills to lower speed limits, set up speed camera programs and promote pedestrian safety.

The proposals reflect shifting perspectives on how to manage traffic. Increasingly, transportation safety advocates and traffic engineers are calling for roads that get drivers where they're going safely rather than as fast as possible.

Lawmakers are listening, though it's too soon to tell which of the bills across the country will eventually become law, said Douglas Shinkle, who directs the transportation program at the National Conference of State Legislatures. But some trends are starting to emerge.

Some states want to boost the authority of localities to regulate traffic in their communities, such as giving cities and counties more control over speed limits, as legislators have proposed in [Michigan](#), [Nebraska](#) and other states. Some want to let communities use speed cameras, which is under consideration in [Massachusetts](#), [Rhode Island](#), [Florida](#) and elsewhere.

[Connecticut](#) is considering a pedestrian safety bill that incorporates multiple concepts, including giving localities greater authority to lower speeds, and letting some municipalities test speed cameras around schools, hospitals and work zones.

"For decades really we've been building roads and highways that are suitable and somewhat safe for motorists," said Connecticut Sen. Will Haskell (D-Westport), who chairs the committee overseeing the bill. "We also have to recognize that some people in the state don't own a car, and they have a right to move safely throughout their community."

A huge jump in road fatalities started showing up in the data "almost immediately" after the start of the pandemic, despite lockdown orders that kept people home and reduced the number of drivers on the road, said Tara Leystra, the National Safety Council's state government affairs manager.

"A lot of states are trying to give more flexibility to local communities so they can lower their speed limits," Leystra said. "It's a trend that started before the pandemic, but I think it really accelerated this year."

In California, citations issued by the state highway patrol for speeding over 100 miles per hour roughly doubled to 31,600 during the pandemic's first year.

Friedman, a Democrat from Burbank, wants to reform how California sets speed limits on local roads.

California uses something called the "[85th percentile](#)" method, a decades-old federal standard many states are trying to move away from. Every 10 years, state engineers survey a stretch of road to see how fast people are driving. Then they base the speed limit on the 85th percentile of that speed, or how fast 85% of drivers are going.

That encourages "speed creep," said Friedman, who chairs the state Assembly's transportation committee. "Every time a survey is done, a lot of cities are forced to raise speed limits because people are driving faster and faster and faster," she said.

Even before the pandemic, a California [task force](#) had recommended letting cities have more flexibility to set their speed limits, and a [federal report](#) found the 85th percentile rule similarly inadequate to set speeds. But opposition to the rule is not universal. In New Jersey, for instance, lawmakers introduced a [bill](#) this legislative session to start using it.

Friedman's bill, AB 43, would allow local authorities to set some speed limits without using the 85th percentile method. It would require traffic surveyors to consider areas like work zones, schools and senior centers, where vulnerable people may be using the road, when setting speed limits.

In addition to lowering speed limits, lawmakers also want to better enforce them. In California, two bills would reverse the state's ban on automated speed enforcement by allowing cities to start speed camera pilot programs in places like work zones, on particularly dangerous streets and around schools.

But after a year of intense scrutiny on equity — both in public health and in law enforcement — lawmakers acknowledge they need to strike a delicate balance between protecting at-risk communities and overpolicing them.

Though speed cameras don't discriminate by skin color, bias can still enter the equation: Wealthier areas frequently have wide streets and walkable sidewalks, while lower-income ones are often crisscrossed by freeways. Putting cameras only on the most dangerous streets could mean they end up mostly in low-income areas, Shahum said.

“It tracks right back to street design,” she said. “Over and over again, these have been neighborhoods that have been underinvested in.”

Assembly member David Chiu (D-San Francisco), author of one of the bills, said the measure includes safeguards to make the speed camera program fair. It would cap fees at \$125, with a sliding scale for low-income drivers, and make violations civil offenses, not criminal.

“We know something has to be done, because traditional policing on speed has not succeeded,” Chiu said. “At the same time, it’s well documented that drivers of color are much more likely to be pulled over.”

Transportation Research

Fact Sheet: U.S. Department of Transportation Details the American Rescue Plan’s Benefits for Transportation

The U.S. Department of Transportation highlights the transportation elements of the historic American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP), which will provide immediate relief for American workers, help communities that are struggling in the wake of COVID-19, and ensure that our transportation system keeps running. ARP includes a total of \$43.2 billion in resources for the Department to continue its response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. ARP contains relief funding for surface transportation in two main categories: Transit and Amtrak. For transit, ARP contains \$30.5 billion to assist with operating costs, including payroll and PPE expenses. This includes dedicated funds to support rural transit agencies, transit service for the elderly and individuals with disabilities, and transit on Tribal lands. For Amtrak, ARP contains \$1.7 billion to recall employees furloughed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, restore daily long-distance service, and help states cover lost revenue in state-supported routes. For further details click [HERE](#).

URBAN AREA and MSA CRITERIA PROPOSED CHANGE

On February 19, 2021, the U.S. Census Bureau published a Federal Register notice that provided the Bureau’s proposed criteria for defining urban areas based on the results of the 2020 Decennial Census. The U.S. Census Bureau is requesting public comment on the proposed criteria with written comments to be submitted on or before May 20, 2021. After the public comment period has closed, the U.S. Census Bureau will publish another Federal Register notice to provide the final criteria for defining urban areas.

The Federal Register notice for MSA change is available [HERE](#). Urban AREA [HERE](#) It provides a description of the changes from the final criteria used for the 2010 Census, including:

- * Adoption of a housing unit density threshold for qualification of census blocks,
- * Qualify urban areas based on a minimum threshold of 4,000 housing units or 10,000 persons instead of a minimum threshold of 2,500 persons,
- * Cease distinguishing different types of urban areas,
- * Maximum distances of jumps,
- * No longer include the low density hop or jump “corridor” in the urban area,
- * No longer include low-density territory located within indentations formed during the urban area delineation process, and
- * Splitting of large agglomerations of densely settled territory.

OMB introduces proposed changes to MSA Criteria

Changes in MSA Designations: Potential Impact on Alabama Regions

Background

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Census Bureau each use different methods to provide federal statistics and data on population density across the United States. The Census Bureau focuses on creating an urban versus rural distinction based on population density and distance from a “core” dense populated area, while the OMB groups highly-integrated areas into metropolitan versus non-metropolitan categories that can potentially encompass both urban and rural lands. The OMB ultimately uses the Census Bureau’s urban classification system to determine micropolitan and metropolitan statistical areas.

The general concept of a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) is that of an area containing a large population nucleus and adjacent communities that have a high degree of integration with that nucleus. Currently, an MSA consists of one or more counties that contain a city of 50,000 or more inhabitants, a standard which has been in place since 1950. Counties that contain the principal concentration of population are components of the MSA, while additional counties can qualify to be included in the area by meeting both a specified level of commuting to the main counties and other urban population statistics.

Proposed Changes

The OMB periodically reviews the standards used to make MSA determinations, and recommends changes when the review committee believes standards are outdated. In early 2021, the committee recommended the following change in regard to MSA designations:

- (1) The minimum urban area population to qualify a metropolitan statistical area should be increased from 50,000 to 100,000.

If this change is adopted, it could mean that seven areas in Alabama currently designated as MSAs would lose that standing. Anniston-Oxford, Auburn-Opelika, Daphne-Fairhope-Foley, Decatur, Dothan, Florence-Muscle Shoals, and Gadsden all have populations between 50,000 and 100,000, meaning they would fall short of the new threshold for MSA status. The same is true for 137 other cities across the United States, many of which are voicing opposition to the proposed change.

What all would be affected by a loss of MSA status remains unclear for most cities. The OMB overtly states that it “does not take into account or attempt to anticipate any public or private sector nonstatistical uses” that come from its designations, and that MSAs “are not designed to serve as a general-purpose geographic framework applicable for nonstatistical activities or for use in program funding formulas.”

However, the Census Bureau included in its proposed changes a recognition that “some federal and state agencies use the Census Bureau’s urban area classification for nonstatistical uses such as allocating program funds, setting program standards, and implementing aspects of their programs.”

and warned that those agencies “should be aware that the changes to the urban area criteria also might affect the implementation of their programs.” In short, funding could be on the line.

Funding Impacts

Some communities at risk of losing their MSA designation are concerned that they will lose opportunities to obtain federal funding. Communities currently designated as an MSA are not the only ones that could be impacted by the proposed changes. Some rural areas are also concerned that with more micropolitan areas there will be increased competition for federal funding that is designated for rural areas. Several federal funding and grant provisions that take MSA status into account for allocations include:

- *Housing Opportunities for Persons with Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome* (42 USCS § 12903)
- *Rural Emergency Medical Service Training and Equipment Assistance Program* (42 USCS § 254c-15)
- *Rural Housing Stability Grant Program* (42 USCS § 11408)
- *Urban Development Action Grants* (42 USCS § 5318)
- *Assistance with Respect to Housing for Low and Moderate Income Families* (12 USCS § 1701x)
- *Grants to Improve the Commercial Value of Forest Biomass for Electric Energy, Useful Heat, Transportation Fuels, and other Commercial Purposes* (42 USCS § 15855)

Other federal policies and regulations that consider MSA designations include:

- *Hazardous Air Pollutants* (42 USCS § 7412)
- *Payments to Hospitals for Inpatient Hospital Services* (42 USCS § 1395ww)
- *Designation of Enterprise Zones* (42 USCS § 11501)
- *Minimum Federal Fleet Requirements* (42 USCS § 13212)
- *Access to Broadband Telecommunications Services in Rural Areas* (7 USCS § 950bb)
- *Air Traffic Controllers* (49 USCS § 44506)

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.