



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021

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## In This Issue

- **MOBILE MPO UPDATES**
- **PROJECTS LET MAY 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2021**
- **LEGISLATIVE UPDATES**
- **FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**
- **JUST FOR FUN**
- **IN THE NEWS**
- **TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH**

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Senate Republicans Release \$928 Billion Infrastructure Counteroffer, AND they introduce a Bridge Investment Act in *Legislative Updates*. This all the while in *Mobile MPO Updates* we talk about the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project. Also in *Mobile MPO Updates*, Volkert has been given green light for *Mobile Area Major Road Plan*. In *The News*, Mayor Stimpson gives an update on downtown projects, the Airport is moving, Truckers discuss the Bridge project. Don't forget about the RAISE Grant Applications, plus some America's Marine Highway Program Funding announced in *Funding Opportunities*, and don't get stuck on this week's *Just For Fun*...

The traffic control bible is getting an update in *Transportation Research*

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

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



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

Want to know what other SARPC departments do?

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

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

## Mobile MPO Updates

### Phase One of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project LRTP and TIP Amendment

The Mobile MPO will meet next week on June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 10:00AM in the SARPC Board Room on the first floor of the GMO Building. Items on the agenda are [HERE](#). Of importance is the Amendment to the Envision 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include Phase One of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project. This has been advertised since April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021, with a Public Meeting held on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The deadline for comments to be included into the draft document was May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The draft Amendment and comments can be found below. There are numerous comments in favor of the project, and there are some comments concerning the potential effects of increased truck traffic on Africatown Blvd.; although, hazardous trucks would no longer be signed to Africatown Blvd. There are also several comments regarding the impact to local trucking companies. Several organizations submitted full support of the project

#### SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

For the project as proposed: 150

Against the project as proposed: 153 (Against a Toll 111, Against/Safety/Congestion 20, Completely Against w/ no reason 22)

Alternate: 39

Other: 13

[HERE](#) is the Amendment with update Section 1.7 that summarizes the public comments.

[HERE](#) is APPENDIX A with all of the comments we received prior to deadline

[HERE](#) is a National Geographic article on Africatown that was presented as information.

## Volkert, Inc. is given Notice To Proceed

Volkert has been given notice to proceed on the Mobile Area Major Road Plan. This is intended to be a complete Major Road Plan with regulatory components, current practices, case studies, and guidance for Mobile County and Municipalities within Mobile County. The Plan will include methods and tools for acquiring and preserving right-of-way in the context of expediting the environmental clearance process and review how corridors are prioritized, designated, and adopted for management or preservation. We are excited to get this project moving.

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

(April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021)

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 have provided a prioritized list of roads that need to be resurfaced within their jurisdiction. The CRRSAA Committee is meeting next week to validate the projects and move forward with this program. 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.

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### **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](#).

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### **Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile**

Project : 100037214 Federal aid number : STPMB 7550 (600) County : MOBILE  
Project Description : CR-656 (ZEIGLER BLVD) ADD LANES FROM ATHEY RD TO FORREST HILL DRIVE  
Urban Area : 067 MOBILE  
Current Funding : \$1,500,000.00 Requested Funding : \$1,645,800.00

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## **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

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## **Projects in Region Let May 28th, 2021**

### **MOBILE COUNTY**

For constructing the Additional Lanes (Grading, Drainage, Pavement, Traffic Signals, and Traffic Stripe) on SR-158 from MP 7.750 to the junction of Spartan Drive in Saraland. Length 0.555 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$2,941,386 to \$3,595,027 .

### **BALDWIN COUNTY**

None at this time.

### **ESCAMBIA COUNTY**

None at this time.

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

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## **Legislative Updates**

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### **Senators introduce bipartisan Bridge Investment Act**

BY LIZ CAREY | MAY 28, 2021

A group of more than a dozen senators introduced legislation Wednesday that would invest in nationally and regionally significant bridges.

The group, including U.S. Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Jim Inhofe (R-OK), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Roger Wicker (R-MS), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Rob Portman (R-OH), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), John Boozman (R-AZ), Ed Markey (D-MA), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Debbie Stabenow

(D-MI), Bill Hagerty (R-TN), Patty Murray (D-WA) and Bob Casey (D-PA), introduced the Bridge Investment Act, previously introduced in 2019.

The legislation would create a competitive grant program for repairs to and replacement of deficient and outdated bridges to ease the national bridge repair backlog.

“Rebuilding bridges across the U.S. will create new jobs and make our country more competitive,” said Brown, who serves as chairman of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee. “Ohio has more than 3,200 bridges that need to be repaired or replaced to make them safer and reduce congestion. But states and cities can’t do it alone – they need real investment to help fix these outdated bridges that clog up our roads and leave drivers at greater risk of an accident. This bipartisan program will help deliver a new Brent Spence and make travel safer across Ohio.”

The legislation was introduced before the Senate Committee on Environment, and Public Works began the markup of highway legislation this week. The EPW committee is expected to vote on the legislation Thursday, and then it is expected to be included in a larger surface transportation bill that will head to the Senate floor.

“Oklahomans are well aware of the need to invest in bridges,” said Inhofe. “Our state used to be one of the worst states for having a high number of structurally deficient bridges, but because of my work in SAFETEA-LU, MAP-21, and the FAST Act, Oklahoma received the federal resources needed to make bridge repairs and replacement a priority. Today, we are ninth in the nation for having the fewest number of structurally deficient highway system bridges. Now, we cannot rest on our past success, we need to continue to make improving our nation’s infrastructure a priority.”

The legislation would provide \$3.265 billion to fund the Highway Trust Fund, establishing a bridge investment program for grants covering bridge safety, efficiency, and reliability projects. In addition, the bill would authorize an additional \$3.265 billion in future appropriations for the bridge program. The bill would require projects to operate under strong Buy America rules, ensure that the bill applies to bridges of all sizes, and allow entities of all sizes and scopes to apply for the funding.

“The Ocean State has no shortage of bridges in serious need of repair or replacement,” said Whitehouse. “Competing pressures on state and local budgets over decades have led to a massive national backlog of bridge projects. Our bipartisan Bridge Reinvestment Act will invest billions of dollars in bridge upgrades in Rhode Island and across the country, making roads safer for drivers and creating good jobs in the process.”

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## McConnell: Republicans 'open to spending more' on infrastructure

BY MYCHAEL SCHNELL - 05/27/21

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) on Thursday said Republicans are “open to spending some more” on an infrastructure package after GOP senators unveiled a \$928 billion counterproposal.

When asked if Thursday’s proposal, which was spearheaded by Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), is the caucus’s final offer, McConnell said, “No, we going to keep talking.”

“We would like to get an outcome on a significant infrastructure package,” the minority leader said in an appearance on CNBC. “And what we have already recommended, on a bipartisan basis out of one of the Senate committees just this week, is more than we have done over a multiyear infrastructure bill. So we’re open to spending some more.”

The GOP’s new plan is substantially more than their initial \$568 billion proposal introduced in April, but still falls far short of the \$1.7 trillion counteroffer White House officials offered last week.

The White House welcomed the Republicans’ pitch but said it had concerns with parts of the proposal.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki on Thursday said it was “encouraging” to see Senate Republicans propose a package with a “substantially increased” funding level.

Psaki did, however, say the White House was “concerned” that there was not a proposal for how to pay for the plan.

McConnell said the “best way” to pay for an infrastructure package is by “reopening” the COVID-19 relief packaging and “repurposing” some of those funds.

He said states are getting so much money that they “honestly don’t know what to do with it,” adding, “They like infrastructure, all the states like infrastructure.”

“It ought to be a way that we could pay for a significant portion of what we spend beyond the traditional amount of money that comes in from the gas tax. The gap between that and what we can agree to could easily be paid for by the massive amount of money we sent down to states and localities,” McConnell continued.

Psaki, however, rejected that idea, writing in a statement that the administration is “worried” that major cuts to COVID-19 relief could “imperil pending aid to small businesses, restaurants and rural hospitals using this money to get back on

The White House has proposed increasing the corporate tax rate from 21 percent to 28 percent to pay for their plan.

GOP lawmakers, however, are taking a strong stance against raising taxes. McConnell said the party will not revisit the 2017 tax bill.

“We’re not willing to reopen that, but there are other ways to pay for a significant infrastructure package and we hope to reach an agreement with the Democrats to do just that,” he said.

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## Senate Republicans Release \$928 Billion Infrastructure Counteroffer

By Kelsey Snell Updated May 27, 2021

A group of Senate Republicans on Thursday unveiled a \$928 billion infrastructure proposal to counter President Biden's plan for a nearly \$2 trillion bill.

The [proposal](#) outlines a significant increase from the [most recent GOP plan](#) to spend \$568 billion. The new version includes additional money for roads, bridges, water, rail and airports, but the majority of the proposed spending is part of an existing baseline plan for investments. The total new money is just \$257 billion.

West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito led a group of GOP negotiators in crafting the plan based on ongoing talks with the White House.

"It sticks to the core infrastructure features that we talked to initially," Capito told reporters at the Capitol. "It is a serious effort to reach a bipartisan agreement."

The single-largest spending item is \$506 billion for roads, bridges and major projects — a \$91 billion increase. Other increases include \$48 billion for water infrastructure, \$25 billion for airports, \$65 billion for broadband and \$22 billion for freight and passenger rail.

The shift comes days after Biden [offered to lop off \\$550 billion](#) from his original proposal, moving the two sides closer than they have ever been, though significant challenges remain.

Republicans plan to pay for the vast majority of the spending by repurposing funds Congress has already approved for other projects. They are primarily targeting unspent money meant for COVID-19 relief.

In a statement, White House officials called the GOP counteroffer "encouraging" but said they were concerned about the proposal to use COVID-19 relief funding to pay for the plan and that some concerns remained about funding proposals for VA hospitals, rail, transit, lead pipes and climate. Biden said he plans to meet with Republican senators on infrastructure talks next week.

In a letter sent to the White House on Thursday morning, the group of Republicans framed their offer as evidence that a bipartisan deal can be reached as long as the definition of infrastructure remains focused on mostly physical improvements.

"As a group, we were explicit that policies unrelated to physical infrastructure do not fit in this package," they wrote. "This is not because we do not value these important issues. We simply believe that these policies should be addressed in separate legislation that does not dilute our shared objective of passing this package. We can address these important issues separately without weakening our commitment to building America's infrastructure."

The disagreement over how to pay for infrastructure may eclipse all other arguments going forward.

Democrats want to increase taxes on corporations and high income earners — a plan that Republicans have flatly rejected.

Biden and his allies have also firmly supported plans to pay for the spending by increasing the corporate tax rate to 28%, increasing the top federal income tax rate to 39.6% for those earning more than \$400,000, and expanding the capital gains tax.

Democrats generally dispute the claim by Republicans that the government is sitting on extensive unspent funding from COVID relief.

The White House told reporters traveling with the president that roughly 95% of the \$3 trillion earlier COVID relief money was either already obligated as of March or has been set aside for the Paycheck Protection Program, unemployment insurance or nutrition assistance.

"Of the remaining 5% the largest categories of unobligated balances are in the Health Care Provider Relief Fund—funding for rural hospitals, health care providers and disaster loans for small businesses," the White House said.

Targeting that money risks dragging infrastructure into ongoing political arguments about the coronavirus and the pandemic response.

Capito touched on one particularly heated element as a target for cost savings.

"I think 23 states have said they are not going to take enhanced unemployment," Capito said. "Certainly those dollars aren't going to be spent. We know that."

Democrats have strongly defended enhanced federal unemployment payments as a critical part of supporting workers who lost jobs during the pandemic. Many Republicans blame the payments for keeping some workers out of the job market.

Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., told reporters Wednesday in the Capitol that the proposal would meet White House standards while also appealing to at least some Republicans.

"We will have reached a number that President Biden has said was acceptable," Wicker said. "I think there's a great deal of support for it. Clearly we wouldn't have unanimous support."

Biden has recently called for \$1.7 trillion in spending in a package that broadly redefines the definition of infrastructure as well as expanding federal spending priorities and the role of the federal government in the everyday lives of Americans.

Republicans have sought to narrow the discussion to policies that involve traditional physical infrastructure — such as roads, bridges, ports and highways — and some digital components such as broadband access.

Biden's plan expands the term infrastructure to cover virtually every aspect of a worker's relationship to the economy. His plan includes measures to combat climate change and promote green energy, funding for child care and early childhood education, union-friendly measures and worker protections.

The discussions thus far have focused mostly on Biden's American Jobs Plan and not the additional spending called for in the [American Families Plan](#), which was originally presented by the White House as a legislative companion.

Democrats say they are convinced that there is broad support for expanding federal funding for the programs Biden has outlined, particularly as workers and families continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## **This week: Senate set for chaotic sprint before break**

BY [JORDAIN CARNEY](#) - 05/24/21

The Senate is set to have a jammed-packed week as senators try to bring a massive piece of legislation across the finish line and huddle behind the scenes on a slew of increasingly time sensitive issues.

### **Infrastructure**

Infrastructure talks between the Biden administration and a key group of GOP senators are getting bogged down over big differences between the scope of the bill, the price tag and how to pay for it.

The Biden administration lowered its top line in an offer sent to Republicans late last week from \$2.3 trillion to \$1.7 trillion.

“In our view, this is the art of seeking common ground,” White House press secretary [Jen Psaki](#) told reporters at a briefing Friday. “This proposal exhibits a willingness to come down in size, giving on some areas that are important to the president ... while also staying firm in areas that are most vital to rebuilding our infrastructure and industries of the future.”

But Republicans, who have been led in the talks by Sen. [Shelley Moore Capito](#) (W.Va.), quickly warned that they still saw the figure as substantially above what could get enough GOP support in Congress to overcome a 60-vote filibuster.

“The White House came back with a counteroffer that is well above the range of what can pass Congress with bipartisan support. There continue to be vast differences between the White House and Senate Republicans when it comes to the definition of infrastructure, the magnitude of proposed spending, and how to pay for it,” Capito’s office said.

“The groups seem further apart after two meetings with White House staff than they were after one meeting with President Biden. Senate Republicans will further review the details in today’s counteroffer and continue to engage in conversations with the administration,” it added.

The statement came after a call between White House senior staff and Republican Sens. [John Barrasso](#) (Wyo.), [Roy Blunt](#) (Mo.), [Mike Crapo](#) (Idaho), [Roger Wicker](#) (Miss.), Toomey and Capito.

Time is quickly running out to strike a bipartisan deal. Democrats and the White House have pointed to the end of May as the timeline for Republicans to signal whether they will get on board.

Senate Budget Committee Chairman [Bernie Sanders](#) (I-Vt.) told CBS’s “Face the Nation” that it was “probably right” to assume that Democrats would need to use reconciliation — a budget process that lets them bypass the filibuster — to pass Biden’s plan.

“We would like bipartisanship, but I don’t think we have a seriousness on the part of the Republican leadership to address the major crisis facing this country. And if they’re not coming forward, we’ve got to go forward alone,” Sanders said.

Amid the divisions on Biden’s package, the Environment and Public Works Committee, where Capito is the top Republican, will vote on a surface transportation bill this week that would provide \$303.5 billion for Department of Transportation programs dealing with highways, roads and bridges.

Democrats are poised to have another family meeting this week on the For the People Act, the party’s top legislative priority heading into 2022.

The closed-door talk comes after they met earlier this month but with little movement. The caucus’s biggest holdout, Sen. [Joe Manchin](#) (W.Va.), wasn’t able to attend the last meeting because he was traveling with first lady [Jill Biden](#).

To pass the bill under the current Senate rules Democrats need the support of 10 Republican senators, an impossible task given unified GOP opposition to the legislation. Complicating the political landscape for Democrats, they don’t have the votes to nix the 60-vote legislative filibuster and Manchin has said he doesn’t support the sweeping bill to overhaul elections.

In addition to making changes to voting access, the bill also overhauls campaign finance rules, changes the makeup of the Federal Election Commission, imposes new ethics rules for public officials and establishes new requirements on congressional redistricting.

Manchin isn’t the only hurdle for Democrats, with senators fielding requests for smaller changes to help solidify the backing from the 49 senators already signed on as co-sponsors.

Schumer has said he will give the bill a vote before August, meaning once the Senate returns from the one-week break he’ll have a matter of weeks to figure out how to bring it to the floor and if he’s going to be able to unify his caucus.

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## **Funding Opportunities**

### **Maritime Administration announces Notice of Funding Opportunity**

On Friday, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration (MARAD) announced it would make more than \$10.8 million available in grant funding for the America’s Marine Highway Program (AMHP).

AMHP’s purpose is to encourage the use of America’s 25,000 miles of navigable waterways as an efficient, sustainable and cost-effective transportation system that will alleviate road congestion, reduce carbon dioxide, and support job creation in nearby communities.

“The America’s Marine Highway Program increases the use of environmentally sustainable practices to move freight across our transportation system,” said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg. “These investments help local communities reduce congestion and create more economic opportunities.”

AMHP has designated 45 marine highway projects since its inception. Twenty-one of those projects are currently operational. Marine highways are all-water routes, often running alongside or near major highways. AMHP helps to fund alternatives to traditional shipping by incorporating coastal and inland waterways into the transportation routes. Shipping via water is essential to reducing greenhouse gas emissions because it requires less energy and releases fewer emissions.

By creating new Marine Highway “container on barge” services on commercially navigable waterways, AMHP will create American jobs in ports, in shipyards, on vessels, and in the communities surrounding the Marine Highways.

For example, the DOT said that the Port of Virginia’s 64 Express Service had moved more than 221,000 cargo containers that would otherwise have been moved by trucks.

The route connects Hampton Roads and Richmond, Virginia via the James River and has saved approximately \$5.9 million in road maintenance and supported 1,100 direct and indirect jobs. Through previous MARAD grants, the Virginia Port Authority used \$4 million in grants to leverage \$436 million in private investment into an economically distressed area near the Virginia Port Authority’s Richmond Marine Terminal.

“The America’s Marine Highway Program provides essential funding to support the expanded movement of freight by water, while also supporting port communities on our coasts and inland waterways,” said Acting Maritime Administrator Lucinda Lessley. “By investing in these services, we are able to bolster local communities and generate American jobs.”

Applications for the grants are due by 5 p.m. on June 4, 2021. More information is available in the Federal Register or by contacting Fred Jones, Office of Ports and Waterways Planning, at [Fred.Jones@dot.gov](mailto:Fred.Jones@dot.gov).

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## 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](http://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/outreach). The deadline to submit an application is **July 12, 2021 at 5pm Eastern**.

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### U.S. Department of Transportation Announces More Than \$10 Million Funding Opportunity for Transit Planning to Address Climate Change and Equity in Communities Nationwide *(deadline, June 21, 2021)*

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.

RAISE grant application process. To register for the webinars visit [www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/outreach](http://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/outreach). The deadline to submit an application is July 12, 2021 at 5pm Eastern.

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## Opportunity Zones

EDA's Opportunity Zone Web Page

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

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

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

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

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

It's Memorial Day Weekend and that means the beach, and that means traffic for hours on the Bayway. A couple of weeks ago (May 8<sup>th</sup>) it was reported that some motorists stuck on the Bayway got out and started throwing a football. That sounds like fun, and it is good exercise.



What else can one do while stuck in traffic? Here are some ideas: catch some rays, get a tan, play on your phone, practice Yoga, practice Tai Chi, walk your dog, play some music, dance to some music. From experience, a violin (fiddle) cannot be played from sitting in the driver seat, nor can a right handed guitar, but a mandolin can be played inside the driver seat of a car during a traffic jam.



## In the News

### Stimpson gives status updates on downtown projects at DMA breakfast

Posted by Dale Liesch | May 26, 2021

Plans for the possible redevelopment of the Civic Center are still up in the air four years after Mayor Sandy Stimpson announced his desire to replace the building.

When asked about Civic Center plans at the Breakfast With the Mayor event on Wednesday, Stimpson said the city's discussions with developers on the decades-old building stopped at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and have not moved forward since then. "At the very beginning of the pandemic, everything stopped," Stimpson said. "Things have not really picked up."

While the Civic Center project will remain a focus of the administration, Stimpson said, he mentioned that the city has a number of expenses ahead of it. He listed repairs to the Convention Center, buildout of a bayside park near the Brookley Aeroplex and contributions to the Mobile Airport Authority for the move of commercial flights to the downtown airport.

At the same time, the city has some money to play with, as Stimpson estimated that \$80 million in a rainy day fund could exceed \$100 million by the end of the year. State law requires the city to maintain an emergency fund of about \$40 million, which means Stimpson's office could use about \$60 million on projects as it sees fit.

"It's not bad to have cash on hand to do things we want to do," he said. "We'll wait until after the election to pick that back up."

Stimpson talked about other improvements in the city and future plans, focusing mostly on downtown since the Downtown Mobile Alliance hosted the event at the Riverview Plaza Hotel.

Stimpson discussed plans from the Downtown Park Conservancy to re-image Bienville Square. He mentioned the plans would start with refurbishing the fountain in the center of the park and also adding more seating around it.

Stimpson mentioned the importance of redevelopment of Cooper Riverside Park, calling the idea for an observation wheel or an expanded bulkhead at the park "visionary."

More concrete areas of the Cooper park plan include more developed greenspace, including electrical outlets to allow for vendors and food trucks to hook up to power out there.

As for the area near the park on the east side of Water Street, Stimpson promoted the idea of building a parking deck on the west side of the railroad tracks to help visitors avoid getting stuck behind a passing train. That idea includes the walling-in of a breezeway connecting the Convention Center to the Riverview, as a way to save visitors' hairdos from the wind. A problem, he pointed out, he does not worry about because of baldness.

Stimpson also hopes to improve the lighting on the north-south corridors in downtown to better connect areas.

# Alabama truckers question constitutionality of I-10 toll bridge

Updated May 26, 4:47 PM; Posted May 26, 1:49 PM

By [John Sharp | isharp@al.com](mailto:isharp@al.com)

A truck-only toll would do little to relive congestion through the Wallace Tunnel and could be unconstitutional, according to a letter from the state's trucking association.

The Alabama Trucking Association filed the letter ahead of two key meetings that will determine if a proposed \$725 million truck-only bridge over the Mobile River should be included in the transportation plans for Mobile and Baldwin counties.

"Creating a truck-only toll bridge on an existing interstate highway is an unsubstantiated concept that invites more questions than answers to the problem that is being discussed: How to reduce congestion on I-10 in the Wallace Tunnel," said Mark Colson, president & CEO with the Alabama Trucking Association, in a four-page letter that will be filed to the Mobile County and Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). "It also invites significant challenges to the constitutionality of the proposal, which would put in jeopardy the \$125 million in federal funding due to delays caused by the legal process."

The Mobile County MPO will meet at [10 a.m. on June 2](#), to decide if the project should be added into organization's 2045 long-range transportation plan, and the shorter-term Transportation Improvement Plan or TIP.

Inclusion into the TIP, which documents projects that are considered a priority within a four-year time frame, makes the I-10 project eligible for federal funding, and would provide state transportation officials with guidance on preferred proposal toward addressing congestion through the Wallace Tunnel and the I-10 Bayway.

The Eastern Shore MPO's policy board will meet on June 9 to take up a similar consideration. That meeting is at 10 a.m. at the Daphne City Hall's council chambers.

## Wallace Tunnel congestion

The trucking industry, which employs around 109,000 Alabama residents, has expressed concerns about the toll bridge since it was unveiled in late March. The organization is [expressing doubts about whether the new bridge will divert enough trucks off I-10](#). According to the industry, commercial trucks represent 7-10% of traffic traveling through the Wallace Tunnel.

At peak traffic times, traffic can exceed 100,000 vehicles a day while trucks represent less than 10,000 per day, Colson wrote in his letter to the MPOs. He said the proposal "places 100% of the cost burden on the commercial trucking industry, although trucking accounts for less than 10% of the traffic."

According to the 2017 figures for Wallace Tunnel traffic, truck volume was about 8,500 per day. However, an ALDOT spokesman said in March that those figures have likely gone up in recent years due to growth at the nearby State Docks and increase in shipping.

The association is also raising questions about why certain commercial trucks are being singled out as toll bridge users, while other trucks are not. The proposal calls for a \$10 to \$15 truck on large semi-tractor trailers or trucks that are 46 feet in length or greater.

Said Colson, "To date, no rationale has been provided to substantiate this decision. There are dozens of additional categories of large commercial trucks and vehicles under 46 feet in length that makeup thousands of daily vehicles that would continue to use the tunnel and not pay a toll."

Some of the examples Colson cites: Single-axle tractors pulling bobtail trailers, dump trucks, mixer trucks, fire trucks and garbage trucks.

"Why would not all commercial vehicles be required to use the bridge thus removing more vehicles from the tunnel and adding more tolls to pay off the debt faster?" Colson said.

## Constitutional questions

The trucking association is also [raising questions about the constitutionality of singling out large trucks as the only vehicles that would be tolled](#).

Colson said the proposal raises "serious constitutional questions," and cited a federal court case in Rhode Island in which the industry is seeking to overturn that state's truck-toll system. Continue [HERE](#)

## Mobile airport swap underway: Officials consider project management team for new terminal

By John Sharp Updated May 25, 2021

Mobile's commercial airport swap is on track to be completed by 2024.

But to get to that point, a new airport terminal and parking garage needs to be built and a project team needs to be assigned to oversee the construction.

The Mobile Airport Authority (MAA) on Monday took a step toward assigning the project's lead to Birmingham-based Hoar Program Management (HPM). The firm scored the highest among competitors for the project management job for the design and construction of a proposed [\\$160 million terminal complex](#) at the Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley, a 216-acre industrial complex southeast of downtown Mobile.

The final selection of a project manager comes less than two months after the [Federal Aviation Administration approved the MAA's 20-year master plan for swapping commercial aviation operations in Mobile](#), from the airport's longtime home at Mobile Regional Airport in west Mobile to Brookley.

"I won't be willing to celebrate until we cut the ribbon," said Elliot Maisel, MAA board chairman. "We have made it past the FAA approval stage. We are now talking about hiring a firm to guide us through the construction phase of the terminal, the parking garage and all of the infrastructure work that will take."

Maisel added, "We have a great master plan that accommodates our vision and accommodates the community's need."

The MAA voted on Monday to authorize the airport's management team to hire a consultant to conduct an independent fee estimate not to exceed \$5,000. The independent fee estimate is designed to assist the airport in its negotiations with HPM and is a requirement of the Federal Aviation Administration, according to airport President Chris Curry.

"It's a widely used process in the industry," said Curry.

The airport is expected to negotiate an agreement with HPM by mid-July. If an agreement cannot be worked out with HPM, the airport will proceed with negotiations with the second highest scoring team assessed by airport management, which was Volkert Inc.

HPM, which has offices in Mobile, was the lead design and construction expertise during the \$600 million Airbus final assembly project that opened in 2015.

Curry said an important criteria was for the program manager have an Alabama presence. But Russell Stallings, the airport's capital program manager, said that HPM's work on the Airbus project helped make the firm stand out among competitors as did its experience in Progressive-Design Build projects. PDB project, which include airport terminals, allow for heightened collaboration between the owner, designer, and builders of a project by selecting the key project team early in the project development.

Curry said the airport has a three-year goal to open the new terminal, an eight-gate building that will be around 130,000 square feet, or slightly smaller than Mobile Regional Airport "but will be more efficient," according to airport officials. The new terminal will be close to six times larger than the existing 22,800-square-foot Downtown Mobile Airport terminal, a two-gate facility that was retrofitted in a warehouse as part of an \$8 million project completed in May 2019 to accommodate low-cost carriers.

Curry said the first year of the construction project will involve environmental studies and relocating some businesses that are within the footprint of the new terminal project.



Map of the future Downtown Mobile terminal within the Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley. (map from the Mobile Airport Authority's master plan).

The new terminal be built along Michigan Avenue within Brookley, and will not be far from the existing Downtown Mobile terminal that served as the site for low-cost commercial flights to Denver and Chicago by Frontier Airlines.

Curry said the existing terminal, within the next three years, can serve future low-cost carriers if they choose to come to Mobile. Frontier, during the coronavirus pandemic in early June, discontinued flights out of Brookley. But Curry has said he felt the airport's experience with the airline was positive enough to confirm that the airport swap was justified since around 60 percent of passengers on those flights were Baldwin County residents.

"The airline industry is unpredictable, but Frontier confirmed what we already knew," Curry said. "If we moved to this airport, we could serve a larger percentage of people."

Curry has said that 55 percent of the Mobile market is lost to Pensacola International Airport and Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport for several factors: High air fares, the far-flung location of Mobile Regional Airport about 10 miles from an interstate, and traffic congestion along Airport Boulevard.

Statistics show both airports outperforming Mobile. Pensacola enplaned close to 840,000 passengers in 2017, while Gulfport-Biloxi hosted around 324,000 that year. Mobile Regional, by comparison, enplaned 303,871 passengers in 2018. Forecasts show the future Downtown airport enplaning 523,000 passengers in 2025 – the year after the airport is targeted to open.

Curry said a relocated airport to Brookley offers several synergies with close proximity to I-10 and I-65, the CSX rail line and the Port of Mobile. The new airport is also a quick trip north to the core of downtown Mobile.

But some concerns exist over the airport's future expansions into nearby neighborhoods, and at least one state lawmaker continues to have worries.

State Rep. Barbara Drummond, D-Mobile, said she is concerned that the airport will want to expand into surrounding neighborhoods in Maysville and Oakdale. She said if residential properties were seized within those neighborhoods, she worries that homeowners would not be compensated enough to "maintain a standard of living" in another section of the city.

"The communities around the airport are concerned about what is about to happen to their properties," said Drummond. "Those are valid concerns."

The airport covets nearby property northwest of the Downtown airport that is owned by the Mobile Housing Authority. But airport officials have said they do not plan to expand beyond the Brookley Aeroplex footprint, which means there are few plans to obtain properties west of I-10.

Maisel said, "We worked diligently to locate this (terminal complex) within the existing Brookley campus in such a manner that no homes or residents in that regard, are required or needed or will be requested to move."

## Infrastructure Overhaul Should Focus More on Safety, Advocates Say

By Jenni Bergal, MAY 27, 2021

In Montgomery County, Maryland, a woman was struck by a car and killed while crossing a busy, six-lane road in April—four years after her husband was killed trying to cross the same road. In Denton, Texas, two children and an adult died this month in a head-on crash after a vehicle crossed the center lane and slammed into oncoming traffic on a stretch of highway where there is no median or divider and there have been multiple fatal crashes.

These are the kinds of crashes, repeated daily across the United States, that might have been prevented by relatively simple engineering changes—medians, pedestrian islands, rumble strips, narrower lanes that could slow down drivers.

But as President Joe Biden pushes a huge infrastructure plan and states hash out plans to fix roads and bridges and modernize highways, some critics say safety is getting short shrift. Even though the pandemic kept people off the roads in 2020, traffic fatalities rose by nearly 5%. And the number of pedestrians killed by drivers increased by about 44% between 2010 and 2019.

"We need a fundamentally new approach to transportation at the federal level that makes safety the top priority overall for all projects, not just a separate program," said Steve Davis, a spokesperson for Smart Growth America, a Washington, D.C.-based urban planning advocacy group.

Jane Terry, a vice president at the National Safety Council, an Itasca, Illinois-based organization focused on eliminating preventable deaths, agreed. "There should be more funding available and policy changes to ensure the safety of all roadway users," she said in an email.

Last week, Biden scaled back his massive American Jobs Plan infrastructure proposal from nearly \$2.3 trillion to \$1.7 trillion in a bid to win Republican support. The administration still hasn't spelled out a lot of details about the initial plan, but more than \$400 billion apparently would go to transportation, said Paul Lewis, a vice president at the Eno Center for Transportation, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that analyzes policy. Lewis said \$20 billion of that would be specifically designated for road safety programs.

That includes \$8 billion that would be allotted to states to supplement a current federal highway safety program that makes physical improvements, such as building roundabouts, improving roads and eliminating high-risk railroad crossings, Lewis said. Another billion would go to a program to "support safe driving behaviors" through education and enforcement.

Most of the rest would be allotted for a new "Safe Streets for All" program to fund state and local projects to reduce crashes and fatalities, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists.

"[The Biden administration's] infrastructure plan is not a safety-focused plan; it's primarily a jobs and economic vitality plan," Lewis said. "Safety is playing a relatively minor role."

In an email to *Stateline*, a U.S. Department of Transportation spokesperson wrote that "safety is the highest priority" and noted that Biden's plan to set aside \$20 billion for safety programs would more than double current safety funding levels. The plan also calls for a \$115 billion investment in a new approach to fixing roads and bridges, "not only 'fixing them first' but 'fixing them right' with safety, resilience, and all users in mind," the spokesperson wrote.

Highway safety experts say that with additional federal funding expected and states pumping more money into transportation infrastructure, now is the perfect time to reassess road safety and make necessary changes to protect drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists.

"Sometimes, the question becomes how do we invest in safety and at the same time take care of these critical failing structures that we have? That will continue to be a challenge," said David Harkey, president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, a nonprofit research group funded by auto insurance companies.

"It's always a matter of trying to strike that balance. But we have to figure out how we can use that money to save lives."

Advocates say safety improvements to prevent crashes must be integral to project planning, whether that means changing road design to lower vehicles' speed, or adding traffic signals and medians to protect pedestrians.

"We have to invest in safety and prioritize it when it comes to infrastructure," Terry of the National Safety Council said in an interview with *Stateline*. "It should be incorporated at every single level of discussion."

While it's typically up to federal, state and local transportation departments to decide how projects are engineered and built, the president, Congress, governors, legislators and local leaders should be taking the lead when it comes to safety, Terry said.

"You need to have people at the top signal that the [traffic] fatality rate is unacceptable and that they are not going to put up with it any longer."

Last month, the council urged the Biden administration to do more to protect roadway users by committing to the goal of zero traffic deaths by 2050.

Others are urging the administration to emulate other countries by requiring local governments that receive infrastructure funding to prioritize traffic-calming design features.

### Anticipating Human Error

The National Safety Council and many other highway safety advocates and transportation experts favor what they call a "safe system" approach to road planning. The idea is to anticipate human errors by road users, then engineer and redesign roads systemwide to reduce or eliminate risks that result in serious traffic injuries or deaths.

Among the recommendations in a May report by the Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy and the Institute of Transportation Engineers: replacing dangerous four-way intersections with roundabouts, which slow traffic and reduce deadly side impact and severe crashes by at least 78%; and installing median barriers on rural divided highways, which cut high-speed head-on crashes by 97%.

Other safe system changes include converting four-lane undivided roads to two thru-lanes and a center turning lane, which slows down traffic and provides space for turning vehicles; installing rumble strips on center lines or shoulders to alert inattentive drivers who have strayed from their lane; and building separated or protected bicycle lanes to prevent collisions.

“It’s not hocus pocus. It’s changing the philosophy to be more proactive,” said Robert Wunderlich, director of the Center for Transportation Safety at the Texas A&M Transportation Institute. “If we’re going to be building all this new roadway infrastructure, we need to make it as safe as economically feasible.”

And even if the infrastructure project is simply repairing a crumbling road or bridge, Wunderlich said, officials should first examine whether there is an opportunity to improve safety at that location rather than just rebuild it the way it was.

“On a freeway, they might say, ‘There’s no median barrier. Let’s go put that in,’” he said. “It’s not just fixing the potholes, but thinking, ‘Hey, what kind of shoulder do we have? Maybe a bigger one would really improve safety.’”

### **Racial Disparity**

More than 36,000 people died in traffic crashes in the United States in 2019, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In the first half of 2020, an estimated 16,650 people were killed.

And the pedestrian fatality rate jumped an estimated 21% in 2020, compared with the previous year, according to a recent Governors Highway Safety Association study. It was the biggest increase since federal officials began tracking such incidents in 1975.

More than 6,700 pedestrians were killed even though there was a decrease in traffic during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Older adults, people of color and those in low-income communities are disproportionately represented in fatal crashes involving pedestrians, according to a recent report by Smart Growth America. The report found that Black pedestrians were struck and killed by drivers at an 82% higher rate than White pedestrians from 2010 to 2019.

The lowest-income neighborhoods had a fatality rate that was nearly double the rate in middle-income areas, and nearly triple that of high-income areas, the report found. The authors attributed the disparity to the relative lack of sidewalks, marked crosswalks and street designs that would encourage safer, slower speeds in poorer neighborhoods.

“Many states and localities have spent the last ten years focusing on enforcement, running ineffectual education campaigns, or blaming the victims of these crashes, while ignoring or actively distracting people from the role of roadway design in these deaths,” the report said. “States and localities ... need to acknowledge that their approach to building and operating streets and roads contributes to these deaths.”

No state is more dangerous for pedestrians than Florida, according to the report. Seven of the 10 metropolitan areas with the highest pedestrian fatality rates from 2010 to 2019 were in Florida, and the state ranked worst overall.

Preliminary 2020 numbers from the Governors Highway Safety Association show that 729 pedestrians were killed in Florida in 2020, second only to California, with 1,026. But California’s population is nearly twice as large.

Florida transportation officials say improving that record is a top priority.

The state has created a coalition charged with making changes that would reduce crashes that injure or kill pedestrians and bicyclists and adopted a plan that revises standards and policies that support pedestrian and bicycle safety, Florida Department of Transportation spokesperson Beth Frady wrote in an email.

## **Transportation Research**

### **The traffic control bible is getting an update. Here’s why you should care.**

[Matt Levin](#) May 25, 2021

Some argue the Manual on Traffic Control Devices is too prescriptive when it comes to designing things like crosswalks and bike lanes, and too permissive when it comes to cars. Drew Angerer/Getty Images

In the world of social media stars, Vignesh Swaminathan may seem like an unlikely one. He’s a civil engineer and CEO of Crossroad Lab, a Northern California company that specializes in feasibility studies and intersection design. He spends his time in storm drains and studies things like the role of structural racism in potholes.

But on TikTok, Swaminathan is [Mr. Barricade](#), crusader for bicycle and pedestrian-friendly streets. Mashing beats from Kid Cudi with some signature dance moves and short lessons on roads and bridges, among other things, he’s amassed more than 400,000 followers. You can see some of his creative handiwork at the corner of Fourth and San Fernando streets in downtown San Jose, California. Swaminathan helped redesign this bustling intersection into a bicyclist’s safe space, with bike-only traffic signals, protected bike lanes and inflatable barricades pretty much everywhere.

Like other transportation engineers, Swaminathan begins any project by dutifully consulting the federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, known among urban planning nerds as the [MUTCD](#).

And then sometimes, especially when it comes to things like how bicycles and pedestrians are supposed to interact, he has to deviate from it.

“I’ve read through the MUTCD well. I’ll put in additional extra, extra safety elements,” said Swaminathan. “And that’s how I feel comfortable messing with the MUTCD.”

### **MUTCD geared for drivers**

Pedestrian and bicycle-safety advocates don't want to just mess with the latest edition of the MUTCD, which awaits formal adoption by the Department of Transportation. They want the manual rewritten almost entirely to reduce its heavy bias toward cars, which still rule the road when it comes to the manual.

"By sort of tradition and fiat, [the MUTCD] is mostly geared towards the way drivers use the streets, and it thinks of other users as *other* users," said Zabe Bent, director of design at the National Association of City Transportation Officials.

That "tradition and fiat" dates back to the 1930s, when the MUTCD was first created.

The goal then was fairly basic: Road signs and traffic signals should look the same whether you were driving your Buick Roadster in Boston, California or anywhere in between.

But over the years, the manual has morphed into a sprawling 862-page traffic engineering bible, dictating everything from the width of lane dividers to the proper size and markings for a crosswalk. When the city of Ames, Iowa, [repainted a crosswalk](#) in rainbow colors to celebrate Pride, the Federal Highway Administration chided the city for violating the MUTCD.

Advocates like Bent argue the manual is far too prescriptive when it comes to designing things like crosswalks and bike lanes, and far too permissive when it comes to cars, and especially when it comes to regulating speed.

### **85th percentile rule**

The MUTCD says local governments should base speed limits on something called the 85th percentile rule: the speed at or below which 85% of drivers would travel in free-flowing, unfettered traffic.

"The stance has always been that motorists given to their own devices would pick a prudent speed at which to drive," said Steve Oliver, director of streets for the city of Garland, Texas, and part of the team that updated the 2021 version of the MUTCD.

Pedestrian and bicycle safety advocates object to that methodology and say some tweaks to the rule in the latest MUTCD don't go far enough.

City traffic engineers can work around the MUTCD to make design decisions they think make more sense for their communities.

### **Engineering safety studies**

But there's an expensive reason they often don't: liability. Deviating from the MUTCD may require an engineering safety study to justify any changes.

"The city attorney, for example, will say, 'I won't sign off on that,' or the city engineer will say 'I won't sign off on that,'" Bent said. Unsafe streets may stay unsafe simply because they comply with the manual. It's just easier and cheaper that way.

What warrants a new crosswalk with a traffic signal is another bone of contention.

### **Justifying a crosswalk with a stoplight**

While the exact requirements vary by street type and location, the MUTCD requires roughly 100 pedestrians per hour crossing a street, or multiple accidents involving pedestrians, to justify a crosswalk with a stoplight.

Pedestrian safety advocates argue that logic is circularly flawed — you won't get 100 pedestrians an hour crossing an unsafe street. And cities should not have to wait until someone is killed by a car to fix an obviously unsafe intersection.

Oliver, the Texas engineer who worked on the 2021 MUTCD update, said he understands many of these concerns. But he cautions against scrapping the manual entirely.

"If you reframe and rewrite, it's almost kind of throwing out the baby with the bathwater, and you're starting all over," he said.

The Department of Transportation is reviewing the updated manual. Secretary Pete Buttigieg hasn't weighed in yet. It might be something for him to think about while he bikes into work.

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## **How to Access and Visualize 2020 Census Apportionment Results**

The Census Bureau released the 2020 Census resident population count and apportionment results. This Data Gem will teach you how to access and visualize these data, along with historical census counts from 1910 to 2020, using the Historical Apportionment Data Map.

[Watch Now](#)

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## **BTS Releases Spring 2021 Updates to National Transportation Atlas Database (NTAD)**

04/29/2021

*National Transportation Atlas Database Spring 2021 Includes New Pipeline Dataset, 8 Other Updates*

The Spring 2021 update to the [National Transportation Atlas Database \(NTAD\)](#) was released today with the new pipeline intermodal freight facility layer and eight updated datasets.

The pipeline addition brings to 89 the total number of geospatial datasets in the NTAD collection representing the nation's transportation infrastructure, containing roadways, railways, waterways, and airports. An additional 27 ancillary data tables can be used in this Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) compilation.

The updates in this release include:

- National Bridge Inventory with 2020 characteristics;
- National Tunnel Inventory with 2020 characteristics;
- Alternative Fueling Stations including electric vehicle charging stations;
- National Parks;
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) boundaries;
- Military Bases;
- Marine Highways; and
- Strategic Ports.

The pipeline intermodal freight facility layer includes information on the mode (truck, rail, and/or waterway) a pipeline terminal connects to, what commodity the facility can manage (crude oil, refined petroleum products, petroleum chemicals, natural gas liquids, gasoline, biodiesel, jet fuel, and ethanol), and its storage capacity.

The map below shows the location of the ethanol intermodal pipeline terminals in the Midwest, specifically those that connect to truck facilities. The highest number of ethanol intermodal pipeline terminals in the U.S., 164 out of 463, are in the Midwest, the region with the top 10 corn producing states. In the U.S., ethanol is largely produced from the starch in corn grain.



NTAD is available for download in comma separated values (CSV), Keyhole Markup Language (KML), and shapefile formats through the [BTS Geospatial Data Catalog](#). Additionally, Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) standard [Web Feature Services \(WFS\)](#) (including Web Mapping Services (WMS)) are available for all NTAD datasets. Also available are optimized services that allow for fast rendering of full NTAD datasets, and vector tile services for 13 of the largest NTAD datasets. These full NTAD datasets and their respective [faster services](#) are designated by service names ending in "DS" for each layer, and the vector tiles service names ending in "VT".

BTS now uses a dynamic NTAD publication cycle, making updated data available throughout the year when they become available from their respective government agencies. Follow [@TransportStats](#) on Twitter for announcements of additional dataset releases throughout the year. Contacts: Press: Dave Smullen: (202) 366-5568. For technical information and questions: Dominic Menegus: (202) 366-8717, or email [ntad@dot.gov](mailto:ntad@dot.gov).

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## Opportunity Zones

The Department of Transportation has identified transportation assets that fall within Opportunity Zones with the goal of driving investment of all types to these important areas.

Despite the growing national economy, economically distressed communities are located in every corner of the United States and its territories. These communities have high levels of poverty, failing schools, job scarcity, and a lack of investment. A new tax incentive—Opportunity Zones—was created to spur economic development and job creation by encouraging long-term investment in low-income communities nationwide.

Read about our partner's roles in Opportunity Zones:

- [Housing and Urban Development: Implementation Plan for The White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council](#)
- [The IRS: Tax reform creates opportunity zone tax incentive](#)
- [Treasury Department Community Development Financial Institutions Fund](#)

The Opportunity Zone designation encourages investment in communities by granting investors extensive Federal tax advantages for using their capital gains to finance new projects and enterprises. There are more than [8,700 designated Qualified Opportunity Zones located in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and five United States territories](#). Of the Qualified Opportunity Zones 40 percent are in rural census tracts, 38 percent are in urban tracts, and 22 percent are in suburban tracts.

## South Alabama Opportunity Zones



<https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/subdoc/906/build-fact-sheet2019.pdf>

## 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.