



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, May 7th, 2021

Volume 38, Number 5

In This Issue

- MOBILE MPO UPDATES
- PROJECTS LET APRIL 30TH, 2021
- LEGISLATIVE UPDATES
- FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
- JUST FOR FUN
- IN THE NEWS
- TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH

Contact Us

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

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

Tom Piper
Senior Transportation Planner
tpiper@sarpc.org

Monica Williamson
Transportation Planner
mwilliamson@sarpc.org

Anthony Johnson
Transportation Planner
ajohnson@sarpc.org

John F. "Rickey" Rhodes
SARPC Executive Director
rrhodes@sarpc.org

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

There is a public meeting scheduled for next Wednesday to discuss amending the Mobile MPO's Long Range Plan to include I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway, and the TCC/CAC, BPAC, and Policy Committees will be meeting soon. *See MPO Updates*. The Mobile MPO Urban **TAP** grants and Mobile Urban FTA 5310 funds are due next week (*see funding Opportunities*). Efforts for a bipartisan transportation funding bill are building steam in *Legislative Updates*. In *The News*, Foley plans to synchronize 59 and Atmore releases survey results. This week's Just For Fun is noisy..... but speaks volumes. 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.

PUBLIC MEETING

ENVISION2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Amendment

The Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization will hold a public meeting for public input on amending the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan ([Envision 2045](#)) to include Phase 1 of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project.

PRESS RELEASE CLICK [HERE](#)

Wednesday, May 12th, 2021 from 4:00- 6:00PM

Building T (Training Building)

1701 I-65 West Service Road, North

Mobile, AL 36618

The meeting will also be on YouTube

More info on YouTube stream soon.

To view the DRAFT Amendment, [CLICK HERE](#).
To submit comments electronically on the amendment, click [HERE](#)
AGENDA for the June 2nd, 2021 MPO Meeting, Click [HERE](#)
Upcoming Meetings

TCC/CAC Meeting: Wednesday, May 19th at 10:00 am

BPAC Meeting: Thursday, May 20th at 10:00 am

MPO Policy Board: Wednesday, June 2nd at 10:00 am

In Person Meetings to be held at:

110 Beauregard Street, Mobile, AL 36602

GM&O Building

Click [HERE](#) for more meeting information

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, 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 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.

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

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

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

Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

None at this time

South Alabama RPO Updates

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

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

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

Projects in Region Let 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](#)

Legislative Updates

The Senate is in session. The House is doing committee work only. They will return Tuesday, May 11th.

House Committee, White House Prepare for Highway Bill's Consideration

Eugene Mulero May 6, 2021

The White House intends to schedule meetings with transportation leaders next week before the congressional committees' consideration of multiyear highway policy bills.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki indicated she anticipates President Joe Biden will meet with Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), and other key policymakers, for negotiations on infrastructure policy.

Biden has been promoting his \$2.25 trillion American Jobs Plan, meant as a transformative proposal consisting of comprehensive surface transportation measures, and climate change policies. The corporate tax rate would increase to 28% from 21% to fund many of the plan's components.

"The president believes Congress can and should move forward with multiple policies at the same time," Psaki said May 5. "I know those members who are playing central role, roles in these negotiations, and obviously they can speak to the frequency of the discussions and the status of them and we defer to them; they will be important participants, of course, in any outcome of negotiations around the American Jobs Plan."

Capito and her Republican colleagues recently unveiled a nearly \$600 billion surface transportation-centric blueprint as an alternative to Biden's plan. She has expressed a willingness to meet at the White House.

"Let's get serious about really trying to reach a negotiated infrastructure package," said the senator May 3. She is the top Republican on the Environment and Public Works Committee. "I'm very encouraged by this. I've talked to a lot of my colleagues and certainly talking constantly with the White House and others. I just feel like there is a real desire and will for us to work together on something we've traditionally worked together on through many, many years."

On the House side, several transportation policymakers have announced funding requests for projects in their districts as the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee readies its consideration of a highway policy bill this month.

Infrastructure Stories

The panel intends to review the funding requests during its consideration of a legislative update to the 2015 FAST Act federal highway law. The law's provisions expire at the end of September. Democratic leaders point to the legislative update as being a pillar of Biden's \$2.25 trillion infrastructure agenda.

The requests are part of the committee's revived practice of considering member-designated transportation projects, commonly referred to as earmarks. These requests from lawmakers, including the panel's leaders, range in size.

Per the funding requests, Reps. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) and Sam Graves (R-Mo.), the committee chairman and ranking member, respectively, are seeking approval for projects related to freight and commuter corridors, ports and multiuse features.

Specifically, DeFazio announced he is seeking approval for 10 projects, such as \$4.5 million for the Port of Coos Bay, as well as \$1.5 million for the River Road-Santa Clara pedestrian and bicycle bridge in Eugene, Ore.

Graves announced he is seeking \$19 million for a safe streets and sidewalks plan in Excelsior Springs, Mo., and \$5.5 million for Interstate 35 improvements in Kearney, Mo.

At a hearing last month, DeFazio reiterated his support for member-designated projects, or earmarks. "I appreciate the committee's ranking member Sam Graves for our ongoing dialogue and for working with me on including member-designated projects in our surface [transportation] bill," said the chairman. "Just like I know my district better than someone at a federal agency and am held accountable by my constituents, so do the members."

The chairman continued, "I know that members of our committee share a lot of goals, regardless of which side of the aisle you're on, and we have a proven track record of achieving results."

Other notable requests include \$1 billion for upgrades along the I-26 and I-526 interchange in North Charleston, S.C., sponsored by Rep. Nancy Mace (R-S.C.); \$2 million for the Berkshire Valley Road Truck Circulation project in Kenvil, N.J., sponsored by Rep. Tom Malinowski (D-N.J.); and \$3.5 million for the Hamilton Road East-West Connection project in Bloomington, Ill., sponsored by Reps. Rodney Davis (R-Ill.) and Darin LaHood (R-Ill.).

As Davis explained in a letter to the committee's leadership: "The funding is designated for the final connection of a 7.2-mile east-west transportation improvement project, providing safer, easier roadway travel."

Democratic leaders during this session of Congress revived the legislative earmarking practice, suggesting that doing that would facilitate adoption of comprehensive transportation legislation. Earmarks, which were banned in Congress about a decade ago amid controversy, are proposals to legislation specifying a funding amount. Earmarks sometimes bypass debate in committees with jurisdiction over certain projects.

Women Break Ground in Shaping Infrastructure Plans in Congress

May 6, 2021 By Nancy Ognanovich and Lillianna Byington

President Joe Biden and men on powerful House and Senate committees are laying out their visions of an ambitious infrastructure strategy they want to get enacted this year. But women are likely to steer much of the work as Congress gets ready to begin moving legislation that could cost in the trillions of dollars.

For the first time in history, staffs of both the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee are led by women, and the subcommittees overseeing transportation programs also have female staff directors. The rise of senior women staffers mirrors the increasing number of female lawmakers, with 142 women in voting positions now—or about 26% of seats—up from just 26 women in the late 1980s.

“Women do have a much bigger role than they did 20 years ago,” said Kathy Dedrick, who was named the House transportation committee’s first female chief of staff when Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) became chair two years ago. “It’s not just at the staff level, but across the board. Women are in leadership positions, and they weren’t in the past.”

Kathy Dedrick, chief of staff for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

Biden proposed a \$2.25 trillion infrastructure package, including about \$621 billion for transportation, and billions more for water projects, digital upgrades, and other areas under a more expansive definition of infrastructure. Now, from the broad outlines in the president’s plan, Dedrick and other women in top staff jobs will help set transportation, environmental, broadband, and other policy for decades to come. They also could decide each state’s share of a massive funding pie. Lawmakers plan to earmark billions of dollars for projects.

In contrast, the development of the Interstate Highway System in the second half of the 20th century, that era’s biggest public works program, was shaped largely by men, with a narrower focus on transport of goods and national defense.

DeFazio said women are well equipped to shape these policy solutions. Although men are “not insensitive” to issues, he said having female voices in the room is needed for the complexity and breadth of what the committee deals with, such as transit and commuter needs of parents and care providers.

“Things we’ve done, like mandating that airports have to have booths for nursing, gender-specific things we’ve done, that just hadn’t been considered previously,” DeFazio said in an interview. “I think that has made a tremendous difference.”

‘Smarter Than Me’

He also said women can drive a hard bargain. Dedrick, who came to Capitol Hill as his first congressional page, cut her teeth on the 2005 transportation bill, which set records for its spending and long list of earmarks.

“We negotiated that bill for months; she’d be calling me to come over to the Capitol at three in the morning,” DeFazio said. “It just went on day after day, night after night.”

Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) said he detailed a woman to lead the Environment and Public Works Committee staff after he became chairman this year. He said naming Mary Frances Repko to the post is consistent with his overall approach: his chief of staff in his personal office is a woman and most of his aides—including his transportation adviser—are female.

“I surround myself with people smarter than me,” Carper said in an interview. “My wife says it’s not hard to find them. As it turns out, a lot of them are women.”

Mary Frances Repko, chief of staff for the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

As Delaware governor in the 1990s, Carper said he also named Anne Canby as his secretary of transportation. Canby had also been New Jersey’s first female transportation commissioner.

Canby, now director at OneRail Coalition, said women often tend to focus on listening versus telling, an approach that helps bring in different transportation perspectives—including from those who use transit and walk to get where they need to go.

“You got to look like the people you’re serving,” Canby said in an interview. “If you have just one type of person and perspective, then you’re never going to do anything except that.”

Men are still prominent in pushing the infrastructure plans, with Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg taking a visible role in selling the package to Congress and the public. But behind the scenes, women staffers have been busy hammering out the details of the legislation.

Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), the Environment and Public Works ranking member, said in an interview she is also relying on women as she prepares for negotiations with the White House to win a smaller and more traditional package than Biden proposed.

“Girls get the job done,” Capito said of her staff, adding that they bring a new perspective to the table.

Climate, Livability Concerns

Dedrick’s team at the House transportation committee also includes women in other top slots. Jill Harrelson, who previously served on the Senate Budget Committee, is the full committee’s new chief counsel and Alice Koethe serves as deputy counsel.

The Subcommittee on Highways and Transit staff is led by Helena Zyblikewycz, a 14-year veteran there. Before joining the panel, Zyblikewycz represented the Transportation Trades Department of the AFL-CIO during negotiations over the 2005 highway bill.

The subcommittee will be drafting the legislation and figuring out details, Zyblikewycz said in an interview. “We have a strong team of six, and four of us are women.”

Helena Zyblikewycz, staff director for the House’s Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, where Dedrick also worked, previously had female staff directors, Repko said in an interview. But having both panels headed by women is new—as are the transportation challenges, she said.

“I’m not sure that any of us 10 or 15 years ago would have imagined the availability, even in Washington, D.C., of alternative modes like being able to get a JUMP Bike on your phone, or being able to use an Uber or Lyft,” said Repko, who has a long-standing interest in urban development. “We’re also looking at climate change. Transportation is now the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in our economy.”

Rebecca Higgins, Carper’s senior transportation adviser, said in an interview that men long dominated in engineering, and looked to build roads for maximum efficiency and resilience.

“There’s more and more recognition of our transportation decisions for broader community outcomes,” said Higgins, previously a Transportation Department analyst examining issues such as environmental reviews and project delivery.

‘Unmatched’ Expertise

Aiding the effort to write the transportation bill will be Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), the first female chair of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, which has jurisdiction over safety, rail, and aviation. The Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee is led by Chairman Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), but with Laura Swanson as staff director. That panel is working on the bill’s mass transit portions.

Capito’s team already drafted a bill proposing \$600 billion for traditional infrastructure, paid for with user fees and money left over from previous pandemic relief packages.

Her top committee aides include Lauren Baker, who previously served as policy adviser to former Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao. Murphie Barrett, senior adviser for infrastructure and economic development, hails from the House transportation committee, where she worked for former Chair Bill Shuster (R-Pa.).

“Their expertise in transportation issues is unmatched, and they have a great history in working with the department and the House side,” Capito said.

Transportation and Infrastructure ranking member Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.) detailed Corey Cooke as general counsel to look out for House GOP interests. He described her as a “great example of the smart, effective, determined female leaders” he’s hired over the years. In addition to other committee service, Cooke was a Trump administration appointee at the General Services Administration.

Corey Cooke, general counsel for House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Republicans

“We can’t keep delaying infrastructure,” Cooke said in interview, adding that the goal is to have “a bipartisan agreement in place that moves the needle forward.” She said she feels fortunate to have always seen women in leadership roles both as members and congressional staffers whose voices are heard.

There has been a shift from years past when Canby, from OneRail Coalition, said she was told she was “pretty good for a woman” when she led state transportation departments—while others questioned her qualifications.

“I can assure you they were not ready for a woman, particularly to lead,” Canby said. When she got comments that doubted her abilities, Canby said “you just stay focused on what you’re trying to do.”

Bill Would Create National EV Charging Network in Five Years

Riley Beggin May 5, 2021

WASHINGTON — Rep. Andy Levin (D-Mich.) is [reintroducing legislation](#) that seeks to build a nationwide electric vehicle charging network within five years.

President Joe Biden has promised to roll out half a million new public charging stations nationwide at the cost of at least \$15 billion in federal investment. The bill, dubbed the [EV Freedom Act](#), “is the comprehensive policy we need to make President Biden’s request a reality,” Levin said in a statement.

There are just under 103,000 electric vehicle charging outlets in the country, according to the Department of Energy, and experts have estimated it will cost \$50 billion to \$60 billion to reach the president’s goal. Industry analysts also have found that range anxiety — concern that they wouldn’t be able to go longer distances in an EV — is one of the main barriers to people buying electric vehicles.

The bill directs the Departments of Transportation and Energy to create a plan to build out a network of public electric vehicle charging stations placed far enough apart to allow drivers to drive anywhere in the country without their battery running out.

The plan would be due to Congress within one year of the bill passing. A funding plan would be due two years after passing and the plan would have to be completed five years afterward.

At least half of the funding made available through the program would be required to go to vulnerable communities and grant recipients would be required to pay at least prevailing wage. Priority would go to projects in “frontline, vulnerable and disadvantaged communities” and to projects hiring workers trained in EV charger installment by labor organizations.

“Imagine the new avenues for economic and community success we’ll create by setting clear goals on the road to a low-carbon economy,” Levin said. “Tackling the climate crisis is going to be a tremendous job-creating proposition and our government has a crucial role to play in guiding the transition to a green future.”

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) will co-sponsor the legislation.

The Department of Transportation would be able to set minimum charging speed requirements every two years based on the best available technology. Levin said the bill seeks to enable high-speed charging “as we look toward a future where you can charge your vehicle in the time it takes to fill up your gas tank.”

Current charging speeds are far from that: The fastest and most expensive chargers can bring an EV battery up to around 80% in less than an hour. The second-fastest and most common charger does the same thing over the course of several hours and is most frequently used by EV drivers overnight.

Experts say ready access to both types of chargers, placed in locations that fit easily into people’s lives, would be needed to prompt widespread EV adoption.

Senators introduce bill to fund grade crossing separations

4/30/2021

U.S. Sens. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) and Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) have introduced the Railroad Crossing Elimination Act, which would provide \$500 million annually for five years to support grade crossing separations and other track relocation projects designed to improve safety or reduce congestion.

Although rail is consistently rated one of the safest modes of transportation by the U.S. Department of Transportation, crossings are the second-leading cause of rail-related fatalities. Grade separations would eliminate those intersections, greatly improving safety and mobility for communities across the country, the senators said in a press release.

"Communities throughout Washington state know the safety and congestion challenges posed by grade crossings," said Cantwell, who chairs the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. "Too many people are injured or killed at at crossings, and the safest crossing is one that does not exist. Crossings can also delay the movement of people and goods all across the United States, hurting our competitiveness."

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) endorsed the legislation.

"Railroads strongly support this common-sense solution to increase safety, reduce emissions and enhance transportation," said AAR President and Chief Executive Officer Ian Jefferies in a statement. "AAR looks forward to working with Sen. Cantwell and Sen. Blunt to advance this much-needed program, which will dramatically benefit the communities in which our members serve and improve the mobility of people and goods."

The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) also welcomed the new bill.

"While short line railroads strive to work closely with our communities and customers to avoid causing any unwelcome impacts, there are many opportunities throughout the country to eliminate crossings to improve the mobility of people and goods, and improve the health and safety of communities," said ASLRRA President Chuck Baker in a statement. "If passed, this legislation will help provide funds to our government and tribal partners to allow them to work with us to close, relocate or improve many challenging crossings."

Behind-the-scenes efforts on bipartisan infrastructure bill pick up steam as Democrats more openly weigh splitting up package

By [Lauren Fox](#) Mon May 3, 2021

Democrats are engaging in broad, bipartisan conversations on infrastructure as the party weighs seriously whether to break off some of the bipartisan pieces of infrastructure first and tackle the bigger, more ambitious plan later in the summer.

The move comes out of both political necessity and an interest from President Joe Biden himself to give bipartisan talks a serious chance, sources have told CNN. In recent weeks, a handful of Senate moderates, including West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, a Democrat, have signaled they wouldn't move forward with Democratic-only bill without seeing the administration and Democratic leaders on Capitol Hill engage seriously with their Republican counterparts. That effort is underway now.

In a narrowly divided Senate where Majority Leader Chuck Schumer can't afford to lose a single vote, moving ahead with a smaller bipartisan infrastructure bill before tackling a broader bill that encompasses paid family leave, an extension of the child tax credit and other larger, legacy items may offer Democrats the best chance of giving Biden another legislative victory. While sources have emphasized that no final decisions have been made on the process, aides on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue emphasize that the effort to broker a deal with Republicans is both real and serious. How long it takes and whether it will ultimately be successful is another question entirely.

The bipartisan talks are happening at multiple levels. The first negotiations are happening between the White House and top Republicans on the relevant committees. Biden himself is engaged in these talks as the President spoke with Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, a West Virginia Republican, over the phone last week after meeting with both her and Sen. Roger Wicker.

Biden plans to invite another bipartisan group of lawmakers to the White House this week, and administration officials tell CNN the staff talks between the White House and key GOP senate staffers have ramped up significantly in the last week.

Aides tell CNN that lawmakers will continue working in their committees to try and find agreement where they can on infrastructure. Those efforts will take not days but weeks, with the hope being that those negotiations in coordination with the White House talks can move the needle. Meanwhile, a small group of bipartisan members is also trying to find agreement among themselves. While those talks are still in the starting phases, the existence of multiple, bipartisan tracks underscores how serious this effort is.

With all of that said, Democrats are not going to completely cease work on their own priorities. Think of this like a dual track; bipartisan talks cannot go on forever. Senate Budget Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders of Vermont told CNN last week that he will try and advance a budget in May, a move that would begin the process for Democrats to use reconciliation down the road if either the bipartisan talks collapse or as a tool for Democrats to try and push through a more expansive package after a more, modest bipartisan bill passes.

The White House strategy

Biden has said it publicly for several weeks now, but administration officials describe his desire to try and find some kind of pathway toward a bipartisan agreement as genuine. His decision to launch direct engagement with Capito was driven by his read, from advisers and from Capito's public statements, that she is a fair broker, one administration official told CNN. But officials caution that it remains early -- and even a smaller bore infrastructure deal is packed with potential pitfalls, most notably on how it would be paid for.

Officials also make clear that while Biden is open to passing pieces of his plan separately (and that there are several vehicles that could allow pieces of his sweeping proposals to ride), the intent is still very much to get his agenda through.

In other words, bipartisan talks may lead to pared back deal, but in the words of one Democratic official: "Don't think that means the ambitions would be pared back." Instead, they'd likely just be wrapped into a future package designed to move with Democrats only.

A lesson learned

While this legislative process is night and day from the Covid relief effort, White House officials do make clear there was a lesson learned during that process they won't hesitate to deploy this time around. Biden, in both internal and external polling, got credit for bipartisan outreach even though [that package passed with Democrats only](#). White House officials view Biden's words in public calling for bipartisan talks, along with his Oval Office meeting with bipartisan senators, as key to that.

This time around, Biden is doing the same thing, at some points with even more emphasis. Again, officials say his desire to find a bipartisan deal is real. But they're also keenly aware that public perception on that front can be just as important, officials say.

Biden emphasized during his joint session address that he wanted GOP ideas and negotiations. But he also emphasized his bottom line: "I just want to be clear: From my perspective, doing nothing is not an option."

Some perspective

It's key to remember that these talks are going to be long, arduous and winding. This effort is not like Covid relief, multiple aides say, and members have stressed to CNN that the Covid relief bill was an emergency -- crumbling roads and bridges may be a priority, they may be important, but this is not a piece of legislation that has to come together in 30 days.

This effort is about more than just action, it's about how this effort defines the next several years of Biden's presidency and the President has taken to heart that there is a serious interest in trying to find something all parties can agree on. Last week, the Senate passed a bipartisan water bill. And lawmakers are confident they could find agreement on a bipartisan surface transportation bill like they have in the past. Those items are far less ambitious than the plans Biden rolled out, but they are a start and Democratic leaders are aware they can always go back and pass more once Biden gets a bipartisan legislative win if they want to.

Progressives are not going to be comfortable with spending much time on bipartisan talks, not because they are opposed to some of the items being discussed but because they view the progress as too incremental and as potentially hurting the chances of passing the more ambitious items.

Even before last week, Sanders had argued he wanted infrastructure passed in one part, not two. Holding the roads and bridges together with proposals to raise taxes and provide other expansions of social programs makes the massive expansion of social programs Biden rolled out more palatable to moderates. Progressives are aware that breaking the proposal apart could endanger their ability to pass the other pieces they've been working toward for years.

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)

[To continue last week's Just for Fun about roundabouts and in light of the upcoming bridge plan, here are some of the most unique bridges around the world.](#)



In the News

ALDOT prepares synchronization project along Highway 59 in Foley

Plans in place to synchronize entire 59 corridor

Posted Friday, May 7, 2021 12:00 am

By Jessica Vaughn

FOLEY - The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is preparing to begin a synchronization project on Foley traffic lights along Highway 59. The work will be part of ALDOT's RTOP (Regional Traffic Operations Program.) After the new technology is installed, motorists can expect to find more traffic signals synchronized to be green simultaneously, allowing for improved traffic flow. These improvements will contribute to reduced wrecks, quicker evacuations during emergency situations, more consistency, less fuel used and less pollution.

The Foley project is projected to begin during May with hopes for completion set by the end of June. Currently the Loxley corridor and Eastern Shore municipalities have received the upgraded technology.

"Short term goal is to get all of Foley updated with cellular modems into each traffic signal along Highway 59, and we'll start seeing some changes for the summer traffic patterns," said TSMO Engineer Daniel Driskell. "Then longer-range goal is to have the whole 59 corridor to I-65 in Bay Minette updated, so we'll have the whole corridor done within 12 months."

Driskell said the projected timeline for the project is fluid and will be affected by weather and availability of resources, including people and materials. The funding for the project is in place.

“The cellular modems provide a network, so we’ve got a central server located in our office that communicates to all the cellular modems and we use that to connect all the signals together,” Driskell said. “Last year, we were sending personnel out into the field to make the traffic signal adjustments and they’d have to stay all day when it happened, whether it was for hurricane evacuations or a bad wreck on I-10 that diverted into Loxley or Daphne. Now that the modems are in I’ve got one guy at a computer who is able to communicate with all the signals.”

The signals can be adjusted from the computer, making it quick and easy to change signals as needed. Previously, ALDOT used fiber optic cables that ran from traffic signal to traffic signal, eventually running to the ALDOT offices. Driskell said the department didn’t always have funding for the expensive process, whereas the new cellular modems offer the same network for a tenth of the cost.

“Recently we’ve updated signals along the Highway 90 & Tillmans Corner corridor in Mobile, and what we’ve seen is about a 50 percent reduction in travel time,” said Driskell. “When you’re talking about going from 14 minutes to six or seven, that’s big, it’s getting a lot of time back in your day. Now when we talk about peak travel times, this isn’t going to eliminate congestion. It’s going to move the needle less during those travel times because you’re overcome with volume, but in the nonpeak times is when you’ll see the most benefit. It will still make a difference in peak times, but it’ll be less.”

Over the next three years, Driskell says plans are in place to upgrade traffic signals throughout multiple counties, including Baldwin, Mobile, Escambia, and Conecuh. With the upgrade, his department will easily be able to monitor and communicate with traffic signals throughout its footprint.

Along with the synchronization project, multiple intersections within Foley will see upgraded mast arm poles going up sometime within a year’s time. These include the intersections at County Road 10 and Highway 59, County Road 12 and Highway 59, and the Foley Beach Express and Highway 59.

“This will make us more resilient during hurricane season, because the lights that hang can easily get knocked down and things like that,” said Foley Mayor Ralph Hellmich. “We’ve been working really hard on traffic because of growth in the community, we know everyone is worried about traffic. It’s an important issue, and we’re working to make Highway 59 more efficient ... This is really like getting new highways when you make yours more efficient.”

For more information, check out www.dot.state.al.us.

Main Street Atmore holds survey results presentation

By [Andrew Garner](#)

Published May 5, 2021



Main Street Alabama and Atmore officials April 29 released results from a consumer survey that details economic development and enhancement initiatives in downtown Atmore.

Between 20-25 residents came for the presentation, which was given by Downtown Professionals Network Owner Jay Schlinsog.

Four-hundred-and-seventeen Atmore residents and business professionals participated in the survey, which was held in February.

Schlinsog said after the presentation that there were several areas of the survey that jumped out to him.

“The fact that it’s recognized that downtown is a good investment, especially from some of those who recognize that is really important,” Schlinsog said. “That certainly will provide a launching pad for opportunities going forward.”

Using a scale between 1-5, Schlinsog noted that consumers and businesses rated downtown as a good place to invest. According to the survey results, the average rating from consumers was 3.81, and 4.19 from businesses.

One other area that jumped out to Schlinsog was consumers’ interest in downtown housing.

According to the survey, 41 percent of consumers surveyed answered yes or maybe when asked if they’d consider living in downtown Atmore.

Some 77.2 percent said they’d own, and 22.8 percent said they’d rent, according to the survey.

Schlinsog said there are opportunities in Atmore that can be potential residential areas, where residents can have access to the services downtown.

Other notable results from the survey included:

- 68 percent of consumers visit downtown most often for dining;
- 66 percent visit downtown daily or weekly for errands or office/service-related purposes;
- 14 percent identified The Coffee House LLC as the downtown business or place visited most often. Gather, Philanthropic Seed, Gulf Winds Credit Union, the U.S. Post Office, United Bank, Walmart, We Care Thrift Store, First National Bank and Trust and The Junky Pearl round out the top 10;
- 77 percent of consumers rely on social media for Atmore area news and information. 50.4 percent of consumers said they rely on local newspapers’ online editions, and 31.4 percent rely on newspapers’ print editions;
- Consumers gave a high rating for how special events create vibrancy in downtown;
- Some 49.4 percent of consumers, and 50 percent of businesses said that downtown is improving or making progress;
- 67 percent of consumers surveyed agree completely (39 percent) or somewhat (28 percent) with the statement that during the pandemic, shopping in a small town environment is safer than shopping in a larger metro area;
- On what would make consumers visit downtown more often, survey results indicate that 37 percent selected a steakhouse for eating and drinking, and 32 percent selected specialty foods grocer, deli and wine as a retail establishment;

- 56 percent of responding businesses plan to expand services or product lines and to start or complete building improvements; and,
- 40 percent said gross sales or revenues increased in 2020 as compared to 2019.

To view the complete survey results, click [here](#).

Bridge proposal opening for public comment

Posted by [Gabriel Tynes](#) | May 5, 2021

The Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization (ESMPO) has issued a notice of public comment period, a public meeting and a special called policy board meeting regarding an amendment to reintroduce the Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project to its 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

The move is an important step toward breathing life back into a potentially \$2.1 billion project ESMPO originally delayed in late 2019 over concerns about tolling. At the time, the organization removed the project from its Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), ensuring it couldn't receive state funding.

Last month, officials on both sides of the bay announced a new plan for a scaled-back ["truck bridge" concept](#), which would essentially build the bridge and Bayway in separate phases, beginning by constructing a truck-only bridge over the Mobile River and re-striping the existing Bayway to add a third lane in each direction. Only the trucks that use the new bridge would be required to pay the toll, and all existing routes would remain free.

But during an ESMPO policy board meeting just a few weeks later, officials had [already begun to pick apart the new plan](#). Primarily, they were concerned the truck bridge concept made no improvements to Exit 35 at Highway 98, essentially moving the bottleneck of the Wallace Tunnel a few miles to the east. Also, officials said a multiphase project would mean ongoing construction for 15 years or more, while the total price will only increase with inflation. Further, damage to the existing Bayway by a storm may make the new bridge unusable.

A financing plan will likely not be included in the amendment, but Chairman Jack Burrell said last month new funding potentially available under the Biden administration could allow the state to eliminate tolling altogether, or keep it low enough to be attractive to all motorists. Burrell said the details of the project can be worked out in the future, but the transportation planning organizations on both sides of the bay need to add the project to their LRTPs to get any traction.

Dr. Lou Campomenosi, who has opposed excessive tolling for the project, said he was encouraged by the developments.

"If they had taken that approach since the beginning, maybe 'toll' wouldn't be such a four-letter word and maybe we'd be building the bridge right now," he said. "But what is 'reasonable' is the issue. If you can preserve the free routes and have a toll of only \$2, maybe \$3 for the new bridge, that's probably reasonable for most people."

But engineer Don Epley said regardless of the tolls, the phased approach is not ideal. Epley has worked with a small group of other engineers to [encourage officials to advance the project](#), even as funding is uncertain.

"The proposed truck bridge plan raises three concerns, the first being potential hazard and safety concerns," he wrote, citing the trucks merging with other traffic on the Bayway. "Secondly, traffic flow studies project that automobiles and pickups will be almost nine times the amount of truck traffic. The congestion caused by passenger vehicles is not adequately addressed by the truck bridge plan. The third concern is that prior to the initiation of Phase 2, funds utilized for Phase 1 would have to be repaid. This would also hold true for Phase 3. In both cases, a significant number of years could lapse between each phase. The successful beginning of Phases 2 and 3 can be expected to encounter similar concerns as Phase 1 in design and funding.

"An interesting dilemma appears when a discussion of Phase 1 funding arises which is similar to the old adage of which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Does the final bridge and Bayway plan come first in need of a funding source, or does the funding come first, which dictates the final design? Currently, a final plan is not on the table, and the source of money remains tentative."

The draft amendment will be posted on ESMPO's website and available for public comment May 12-26. The ESMPO will host a public meeting to receive comments on the draft amendment at the Baldwin County Satellite Courthouse in Fairhope on May 19, 5:30-7:30 p.m. The ESMPO Policy Board will consider adopting the amendment at a special called meeting at Daphne City Hall on June 9 at 10 a.m.

For more information visit easternshorempo.org.

FHWA Issues Guidance To Clarify Highway ROW Uses

editor@aaashto.org April 30, 2021

The Federal Highway Administration issued a [guidance document](#) on April 27 to provide "clarification" to both its division offices and state departments of transportation on leveraging highway right-of-way or ROW for "certain uses" such as climate change, equitable communications access, and energy reliability.

The agency added that its guidance document aims to support "consistent utilization" of the ROW for renewable energy generation, electrical transmission and distribution projects, broadband projects, vegetation management, inductive charging in travel lanes, alternative fueling facilities, and other "appropriate uses."

Those "appropriate uses" especially encompass projects related to electrification and the deployment of connected and autonomous vehicles or CAVs, FHWA stressed.

The agency added that its guidance seeks to help state DOTs gain the "full value and productivity" of existing ROW assets while also reducing or eliminating the ongoing maintenance expenses.

For example, state DOTs may create new revenue opportunities through participation in public-private-partnerships to develop renewable energy projects – such as [solar arrays](#) – and negotiating agreements that include land lease or land license payments and power purchase agreements that reduce their energy costs, both actual and over the life cycle of the project.

In considering state DOT requests pertaining to such ROW uses, FHWA is encouraging its division offices to develop “programmatic approaches, where appropriate” under the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Several states – notably California – expect this guidance to help them further a number of ROW-related projects.

“[This FHWA] guidance makes it possible for California to greatly expand the network of [electric vehicle charging stations](#) along highways [and] supports the state’s broadband deployment efforts,” noted David Kim, secretary of the California State Transportation Agency or CalSTA, which oversees the California Department of Transportation.

“[It] bolsters the historic efforts we’re making to transform our transportation system,” he said in a [statement](#).

Biden’s huge infrastructure plan raises big question: Can the U.S. do it?

Published May 07, 2021 Michael Laris and Ian Duncan, The Washington Post

WASHINGTON - Dueling proposals to fund the nation's ailing infrastructure network follow decades of timidity in Washington - a period that has seen roads crumble and a warming climate threaten investments of the past.

A line of presidents couldn't make transformational investments in infrastructure, despite big promises and yawning national needs. For those in the trenches, the question in 2021 is whether the nation still can make good on its aspirations - from upkeep of its physical foundations to meeting the challenges experts say will intensify with a changing planet.

"NASA just landed on Mars and we had a big vaccine," said Costa Samaras, who worked as a transportation engineer in New York City and now studies infrastructure resilience at Carnegie Mellon University. "We can do big things - but we should be doing big things in infrastructure, right?"

Biden and his supporters have echoed those appeals in seeking to build support for a \$2.3 trillion infrastructure and jobs proposal, which Republicans have knocked as too sprawling and expensive. Biden also set a goal of halving U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, work that would be spurred by his infrastructure plan.

But experts say achieving those ambitions would take a level of creativity and perseverance that have failed a generation of leaders in Washington.

Standing at a union shop floor in Pittsburgh to unveil his proposal, Biden invoked the collective accomplishments of the 20th century as a national muse, citing World War II, the build-out of interstate highways and the space race against the Soviets as inspirations for his approach.

He called for modernizing transportation networks while battling climate change through a vast addition of new jobs targeting both priorities. "A blue-collar blueprint to build America," he called in a joint address to Congress.

Republicans have seized on his broad definition of infrastructure - which includes racial justice issues, worker rights and community colleges - to dismiss Biden's plan as a grab bag stuffed with liberal priorities, backed by job-killing tax hikes.

Both parties say they want action on infrastructure. That's where the consensus starts to fray, as it has many times before. Communities across the nation are looking to Washington's leaders, wondering whether the outcome in this time will be different. To continue reading this article click [HERE](#).

ALDOT Launches Work Zone Campaign: Move Over, Slow Down, Save Lives

April 22, 2021

Support Work Zone Awareness Week April 26 - 30

MONTGOMERY – The Alabama Department of Transportation is joining many states across the nation to encourage drivers to slow down and eliminate distractions in work zones in recognition of National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 26 - 30. To help bring awareness to the importance of driving safely in work zones, ALDOT is launching the Move Over, Slow Down, Save Lives safety campaign.

During the spring and summer, motorists will see more construction and work zones on Alabama’s highways and interstates. This time of year is also when traffic on some Alabama roads increases with people heading south for vacation.

“Tragic loss of life that happens each year in work zones can be avoided,” said Allison Green, ALDOT Drive Safe Alabama coordinator. “Just move over and slow down, so that those working along the roadway and you and your passengers can all get home safely.”

A common misconception is that most of those killed in work zone crashes are workers. National statistics show that four out of every five of those killed are motorists. Although, when workers are present, workers are the most vulnerable to injury and death. Most work zone crashes are rear-end collisions, resulting from speeding or distractions such as cell phones.

Penalties for Construction Zone Violations Could Soon Change in Alabama

In Alabama, fines are doubled if a driver is caught speeding in a work zone where workers are present. The Alabama Senate passed a bill this year to expand the existing law regarding violations and fines in designated construction zones from only speeding fines to all moving violations. The bill also changes fines for violations in construction zones to the greater of \$250 or double the amount prescribed by law outside a construction zone. If the bill passes the House

of Representatives, it will go to Governor Ivey to be signed.

Preliminary numbers for 2020, show there were 2,378 work zone crashes in Alabama, resulting in 19 fatalities and 616 injuries. This is an increase in fatal crashes compared to

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2019, when there were 3,126 work zone crashes, resulting in 16 fatalities and 812 injuries. In the United States, 842 people died in roadway work zone crashes in 2019.

ALDOT offers these tips for driving safely in work zones:

- Drive alert. Don't drive distracted by texting, eating or other activities that take your hands off the wheel. Look for highway workers, reduced speed limits and narrow driving lanes.
- Slow down. Don't drive beyond the posted speed limit through the work zone. Keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead of you.
- Don't tailgate. Watch for large trucks. Maintain a safe distance on all sides of your vehicle, so that you don't clip a nearby vehicle and cause that vehicle to also crash into the work zone.

In recognition of this national campaign, Governor Kay Ivey has issued a proclamation naming April 26-30 as Work Zone Awareness Week in the state of Alabama.

May is Bicycling Safety Month: A message for all road users

April 28, 2021

Many of us are anxious to get back on our bicycles and get out of our homes, to walk down to the local café or roll along to our favorite shopping center. Safety advocates are encouraging all users of the roads – those who drive, walk and roll – to “Look out for each other.” When we pay attention to what’s around us, we are better able to avoid tragedies that can result from interactions involving people driving, walking, riding and rolling.

“As communities continue to open up during the beautiful spring weather, I expect to see increases of people on our roads walking, riding, rolling and driving,” said Heidi Manlove. “More people will be out all over the state, so I’m asking all our partners to spread the word: Look out for each other.”

“The main way we can stay safe on the transportation system is to take personal responsibility for our behaviors and remember we are all in this together,” Manlove said. “Oregon’s goal is zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries, and watching out for each other is an effective step in the right direction.”

Be prepared, be safe

People bicycling can use a handy [field guide](#) and [bicycling manual](#) to get ready for a safe ride.

People driving are reminded that people on bicycles have the same rights and responsibilities as people behind the wheel of a vehicle. When driving, you should:

- Yield to people bicycling as you would to people driving and do not underestimate their speed. This will help avoid turning in front of a bicyclist traveling on the road or sidewalk, often at an intersection or driveway.
- Search your surroundings for bicycles when you are in parking lots, driveways, intersections, when backing up, or when parking.
- Stop completely and look left-right-left and behind before turning right on red and make sure you use your turn signal.
- Obey the speed limit and reduce speed for road conditions – especially in the early morning, dusk, night time, and when it is overcast and raining.
- When passing a person bicycling, allow at least 3 feet of safe passage distance to avoid contact with the rider. You can drive in an adjacent lane to pass if safe from oncoming traffic. If there is not enough room to give safe passage, slow down and wait to pass until it is safe to do so.

Highway 181 Widening Delayed Again

Fairhope, Alabama

FOUR LANING UNDERWAY

ALDOT's regional engineer Matt Eriksen told the ESMPO policy board the timeline for the highway 181 widening project in east Fairhope has slipped back again.

The contractor now says all traffic will be shifted to the new northbound lanes after Memorial Day (during the school break) and then "about a year of work" remains to finish the southbound (west) lanes before completion, according to Eriksen.

No reason was given for the change, but weather is often a factor in roadbuilding. The project had been scheduled for completion early next year.

County commissioner Davis said meetings are planned with the Hollowbrook neighborhood to discuss access issues during construction.

Transportation Research

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.

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

04/29/2021

National Transportation Atlas Database Spring 2021 Includes New Pipeline Dataset, & 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.

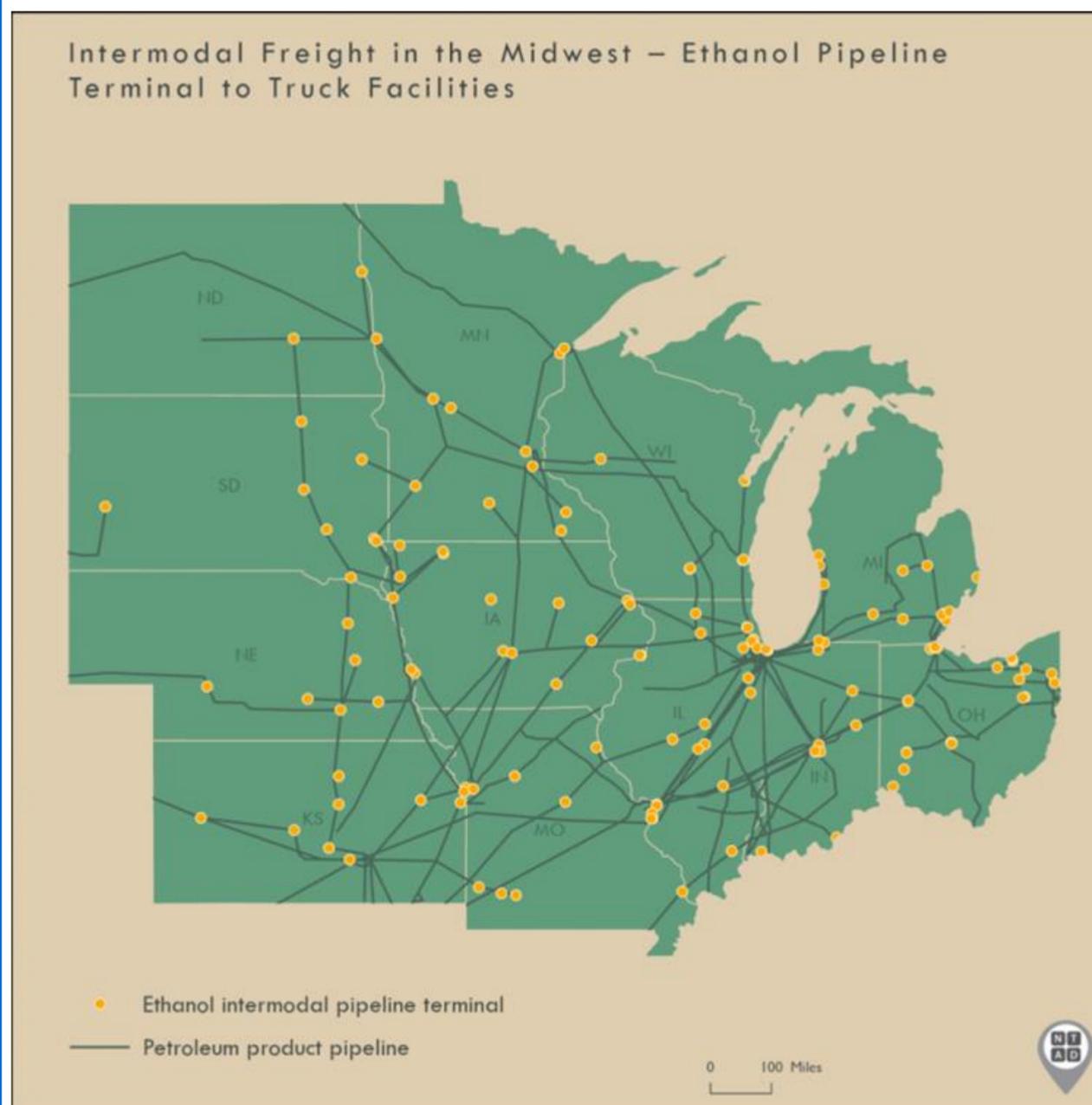
The pipeline addition brings to 89 the total number of geospatial datasets in the NTAD collection representing the nation's transportation infrastructure, containing roadways, railways, waterways, and airports. An additional 27 ancillary data tables can be used in this Bureau of Transportation Statistics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

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](#)

