



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Volume 38, Number 1

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**State and Urban FTA 5310, and State and Urban TAP** are available (see *funding Opportunities*) and the Biden Infrastructure Plan dominates *Legislative Updates*. *In The News* is more continued stories about Amtrak, a poll supports the <https://www.mobilerivertruckbridge.com/>, and US 45. This week's *Just For Fun*, is big data, being big brother, knowing your thoughts.... Have a great weekend.

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

### New bridge plan only includes fees for large trucks

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



(PHOTO Kevin Harrison)

### New bridge plan only includes fees for large trucks

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

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

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

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

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

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

Existing routes, including the Bankhead Tunnel, the Wallace Tunnel, the Bayway and the Causeway will remain toll free, Calametti said.

By removing large trucks from the Wallace Tunnel, Calametti said, commute time could be cut by 60 to 90 minutes during peak travel time. Trucks will also be diverted from the Cochran Africatown Bridge, he said. The trucks would use the so-called "truck bridge" instead.

The increase from four lanes to six lanes on the Bayway is designed to increase efficiency by some 40 percent, also during peak times, Calametti said. While the new lanes would eat up the shoulders that currently exist on the Bayway, Calametti said ALDOT would double the

size of its emergency response team — stationing a truck in both Baldwin County and Mobile County. In addition, turnarounds would be added to allow distressed travelers to pull over if need be.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Carl, who was elected to congress in November, told the crowd gathered for a press conference that leaders he has spoken with in Washington — specifically those who’ve been trapped on the Bayway — understand the need for a bridge, as does local leadership. “Part of my campaign rhetoric was focused on the bridge,” he said. “Everyone agrees the bridge is needed.”

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

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## The Mobile MPO met on March 10, 2021, 10:00AM

The Mobile MPO met on Wednesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 10:00 am via GoToMeeting.com. The agenda was as followed:

1. Call to Order
2. Consider amendment to 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) STPAA, Mobile County, 100072915 Gopher Tortoise Mitigation Habitat Development \$300,000 [Resolution 21-001](#)
3. Consider amendment to 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) STPMB (CN) - New Alignment of CR-25 (McFarland Road) From CR-28 (Old Pascagoula Road) to CR-358 (Three Notch Road) \$13,100,000 [Resolution 21-002](#)
4. Delete 100056130; ( UT ); BR; Replace Bridge, Bin 008714, SR-16 (US-90) Westbound Over Tensaw-Spanish River. [Resolution 21-003](#)
5. Consider amendment to 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) FTA 5310 funds to include the Program of Projects [Resolution 21-004](#):  
City of Satsuma (\$33,085 Federal/\$33,085 Local); Via Health and Fitness Center (\$38,400 Federal/\$9,600 local) and the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission for program administration (\$31,736 Federal/\$0 Local)
6. Approval of the [FY2020-2023 Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan Resolution 21-005](#)
7. Review report of the Mobile MPO Pubic Participation Process. (No Resolution)
8. Approve modification to the [Mobile MPO Public Participation Plan \(PPP\)](#), which outlines the public involvement procedures for the Mobile MPO transportation documents, to include the Limited English Proficiency Plan. [Resolution 21-006](#)
9. Modification of the 2021 [Unified Planning Work Program](#) to account for a Mobile Area Wide Major Road Plan, in regards to Mobile County and it’s connectivity to all municipal planning documents. [Resolution 21-007](#)
10. Approve updated performance measures for Transit Asset Management, Transit Safety, PM1 (Safety), and PM 3 (Congestion and Freight) [Resolution 21-008](#)
11. Approve modification to the Mobile MPO Bylaws creating MPO Vice Chairperson [Resolution 21-009](#)
12. Approve modification to the Mobile TCC/CAC Bylaws creating TCC/CAC Vice Chairperson [Resolution 21-010](#)
13. Discussion of [FHWA Notice N4510.851](#) – Apportionment of Highway Infrastructure Program Funds Pursuant to the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021: \$3,193,942 Highway/ \$55,000 Transit apportioned to Mobile MPO (No Resolution)
14. Discussion on the I-10 Mobile River Bridge (No Resolution)
15. Old Business
16. New Business
17. Adjourn

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## Covid-19 in Mobile County Preliminary Findings of Traffic Pattern Impacts

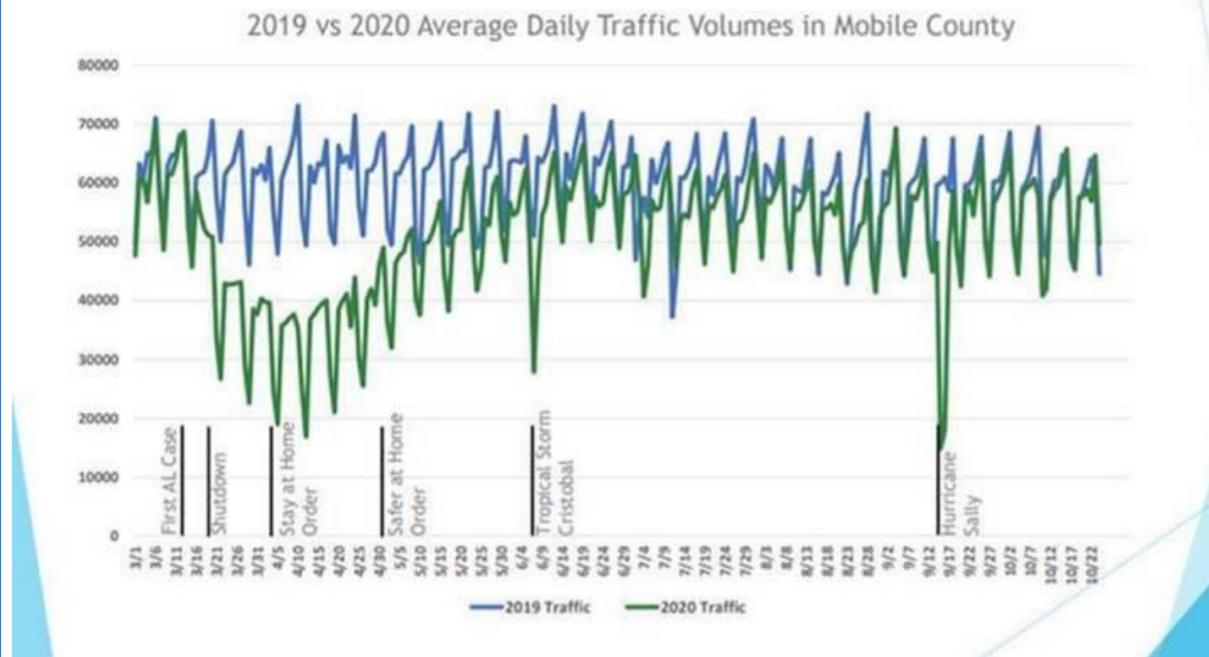
Mobile MPO Staff recently analyzed the traffic patterns in Mobile, and how COVID -19 effected the volume, speeds, and crashes from 2019-2020. This presentation is the MPO’s interpretation of data provided by ALDOT.

In terms of impacts on travel patterns, the following were the impacts of COVID-19.

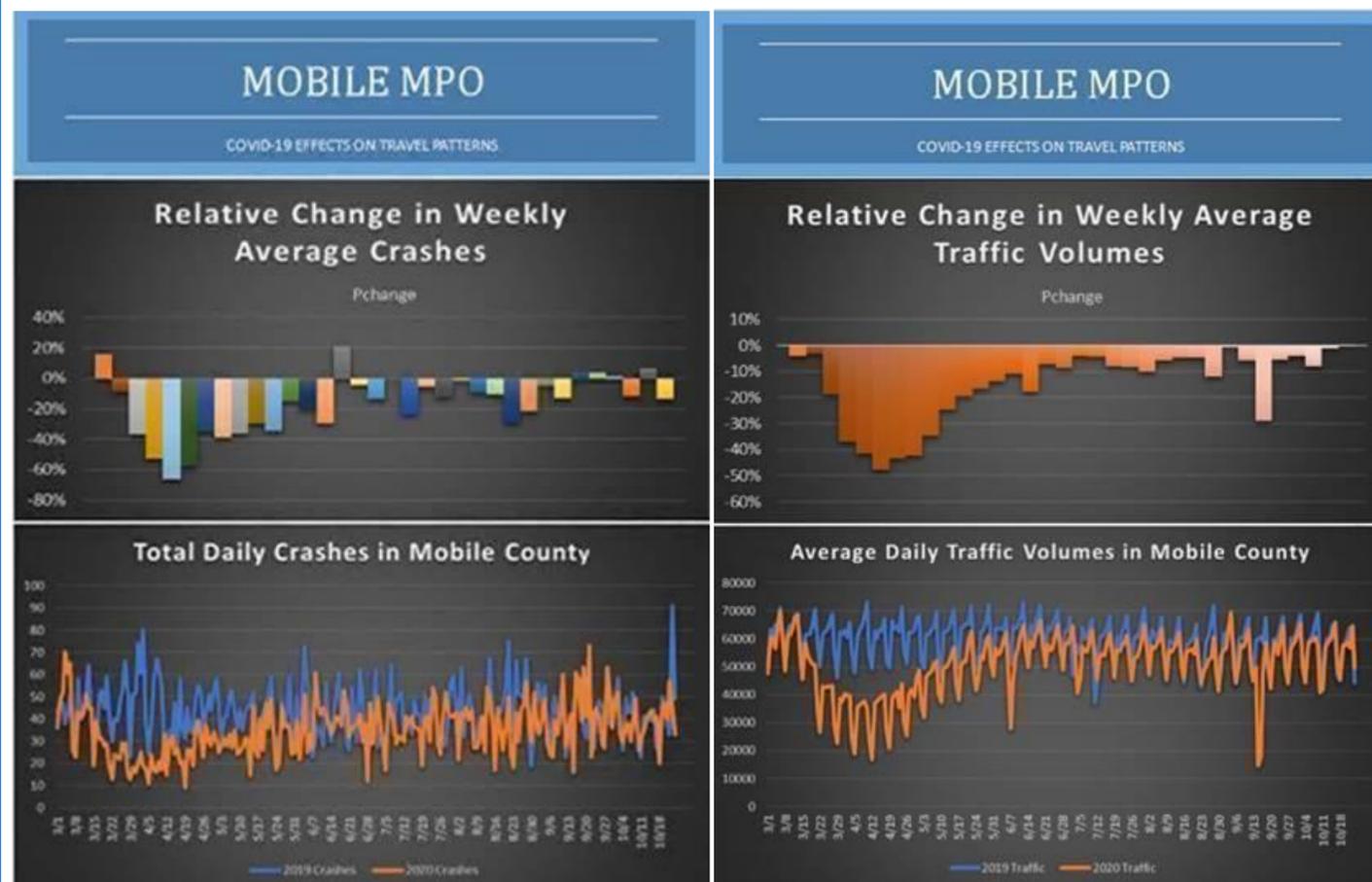
- Traffic volumes reduced considerably
- Speeds reduced slightly
- Crashes dropped significantly

[HERE](#) is the entire presentation .

## Traffic Volumes



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



### ENVISION 2045 IS THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)

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

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

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

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

The TIP represents a four year program (2020-2023) for improvements in the various transportation systems located within the Mobile study area as identified in the Mobile MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the twenty-five year plan for the Mobile Urban area. The LRTP establishes the transportation programs that are needed to meet travel demand by the study year and study area. LRTP projects that become funded are moved into the TIP and submitted to the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), where they are

programmed into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). For MPO projects, TIP project selection is based on priorities established by MPO member governments and the availability of funds through the Surface Transportation Attributable program. For other projects, ALDOT has discretion of project funding based on availability of funds from various types of funding categories. Most often, projects in the TIP are derived from the LRTP. The TIP guides ALDOT in its annual allocation of funds for transportation improvements and becomes a part of the STIP.

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

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### Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

Project : 100055881 ( RW )

Federal aid number : STPMB 7550 (602)

County : MOBILE

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

Old Engineers Estimate : \$1,880,000.00

New Engineers Estimate : \$918,595.00

Project : 100049566 ( CN )

Federal aid number : BRF 0016 (522)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : REPLACE BRIDGE, BIN 008714, SR-16 (US-90) WESTBOUND OVER TENSAW-SPANISH RIVER. (SUFF=49.7, STATUS=SD)

Old Target start date : June 25, 2021

New Target start date : September 24, 2021

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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%20HSCPT%20for%20SARPC.pdf>)

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

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## Projects in Region Let April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### MOBILE COUNTY

None at this time

### BALDWIN COUNTY

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

### ESCAMBIA COUNTY

None at this time.

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

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## Legislative Updates

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### Biden willing to compromise on \$2.3T infrastructure plan but is not open to 'doing nothing'

by: [Sydney Kalich](#), [Elyse Russo](#) Posted: Apr 7, 2021

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden delivered remarks Wednesday to drum up public support for [his \\$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan](#) as Republicans remain opposed to the costly proposal.

Biden said Wednesday that he is willing to listen to lawmakers opposed to his proposal to increase the corporate tax rate to 28 percent, but reiterated his pledge not to raise taxes on any American making less than \$400,000.

“Ask the moms and dads in the sandwich generation, the folks carrying enormous personal financial strains trying to raise their children and care for their parents, their elderly parents, or members of their families with a disability,” said Biden in a bid to build urgency and gain bipartisan support. “Ask them what infrastructure they need to build a better life, to be able to breathe a little bit.”

Biden proposed a sweeping infrastructure package last week, which invests in traditional projects but also seeks to change the course of the economy by addressing climate change and boosting human services such as eldercare. In his remarks Wednesday, Biden stressed the importance of evolving infrastructure to fit the needs of America such as internet access.

“200 years ago, trains weren’t traditional infrastructure either, until America made a choice to lay down tracks across the country. Highways weren’t traditional infrastructure until we allowed ourselves to imagine that roads could connect our nation across state lines,” Biden said. “The idea of infrastructure has always evolved to meet the aspirations of the American people and their needs.”

The plan would largely be funded by an increase in the corporate tax rate to 28% and an expanded global minimum tax set at 21%. Republicans in Congress have continuously expressed disapproval over the proposal, saddling the Democrats with its ownership and the corporate tax hike Biden says is needed to pay for it.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said Monday that Biden’s plan is “something we’re not going to do.”

“We will not be open to doing nothing,” Biden said Wednesday. “Inaction is simply not an option.”

McConnell said Republicans could support a “much more modest” approach, and one that doesn’t rely on corporate tax hikes to pay for it.

Biden is expected to meet with a bipartisan group of lawmakers on infrastructure next week, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said early Tuesday.

The disagreement almost ensures a months-long slog as Congress hunkers down to begin drafting legislation and the White House keeps the door open to working across the aisle with Republicans, hoping that continued public attention may encourage their support.

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## DOT Lists Transport Projects in \$2 trillion Plan to Woo Congress

According to reports from CQ/RollCall, the Department of Transportation is engaging with lawmakers by sending out a spreadsheet filled with specifics as an opening salvo in what promises to be a pitched debate over President Joe Biden’s \$2 trillion infrastructure plan. In an email unveiling “the next level of detail” on transportation aspects of the plan, Edward McGlone, deputy assistant secretary for Congressional Affairs, attached for Democratic and Republican lawmakers a spreadsheet proposing how the \$621 billion in transportation money in the roughly \$2 trillion proposal would be spent. McGlone noted that the spreadsheet “is intended to reflect the President’s vision and an initial set of proposals” and promised in his letter to follow up to hash out details.

Of that \$621 billion:

- \$50 billion would be for “cross-cutting resilience investments;”
- \$115 billion for roads and bridges;
- \$174 billion to support the electrification of vehicles;
  - The bulk of the electrification money, \$100 billion, would pay for consumer rebates, while \$15 billion would support building some 500,000 electric-vehicle charging stations nationwide. Zero-emission transit vehicles would get \$25 billion, while \$20 billion would go toward school-bus electrification.
  - The rest of the \$174 billion for electric vehicles would be in the form \$14 billion worth of tax incentives, which were scored in the tax portion of the package.
- \$50 billion would go toward modernization;
- \$40 billion for bridges;
- \$5 billion for Community Transportation Block Grants;
- \$5 billion for a program called transportation alternatives;
- \$10 billion for a carbon reduction program and \$5 billion for congestion mitigation and air quality.

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## Bipartisan Group of Lawmakers introduce legislation supporting transit in smaller communities

BY LIZ CAREY | APRIL 9, 2021

The Small Community Transit Improvement Act, H.R. 2306, would increase the apportionment for the Small Transit Intensive Cities Program (STIC) from 2 percent to 3 percent to urban areas with populations of less than 200,000.

“The Small Transit Intensive Cities Program (STIC), which rewards high performing small transit systems, has been incredibly successful over the years at supporting transit in communities in central Illinois and across the country,” said Davis, ranking member of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit. “I have four prime examples of cities in my district that have benefited from this program, including Bloomington-Normal, Champaign-Urbana, Springfield, and Decatur. Our bipartisan bill ensures funding for this program is keeping up with demand so we can continue to help successful, small transit systems like these make investments to improve efficiency and service.”

Lawmakers said the legislation would increase support for transit in small communities without the need for new funding. Congress previously raised the STIC set aside from 1.5 percent to 2 percent. An increase to 3 percent, the legislators said, would provide a “much-needed boost” for successful transit providers in smaller communities.

“We’re taking steps to improve access to great public transportation options in communities of all sizes,” said Stanton, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. “By increasing the funding available to support small transit systems in Arizona communities such as Flagstaff, we can help them serve more riders and bounce back strong after this pandemic.”

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## Infrastructure plan has positives and negatives for GDP

Sabri Ben-Achour Apr 8, 2021

Pro? Getting actual infrastructure. Con? Taxes, for one. Andrew Burton/Getty Images

The Biden administration says its massive infrastructure package will provide jobs and move the country into a greener, better-connected economy. Economists are digging into the \$2 trillion plan to see what it will mean for GDP and growth.

In general, spending on infrastructure has its positives and its negatives. On the positive side, the government’s spending a lot of money in the economy for a few years.

“You’ll be hiring construction workers to be building roads and installing broadband,” said Benjamin Page with the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center. And, of course, spending on infrastructure gets you ... infrastructure.

“It only takes a little bit of traveling around the world to realize that the U.S. has fallen way behind,” said Luis Servén, a professor of economics at CEMFI in Madrid who used to run macroeconomic research for the World Bank. Infrastructure, he said, adds to gross domestic product.

“The ability of the economy to generate goods and services is increased over time,” Servén said.

Now here come the negatives.

For starters, taxes, needed to pay for infrastructure.

“The Biden tax increases would reduce investment in fixed asset and that includes infrastructure by the private sector,” said Veronique de Rugy with the Mercatus Center.

Also, if the government has to borrow more, it can drive up interest rates, which makes it more expensive for private companies to borrow. That’s also a drag on GDP.

Analysts at the University of Pennsylvania’s Penn Wharton Budget Model took a look at Biden’s infrastructure plan.

“When you wrap it all together, we find by 2031 GDP will fall by around 1%,” said Kent Smetters, the faculty director. But, he said, GDP’s not everything. It doesn’t, for example, measure internet connection speeds or commute times.

## Funding Opportunities

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### 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

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### Outside of Mobile URBAN AREA

#### ALDOT FY-2022 SECTION 5310 NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY

*This is for the Rural Areas of Baldwin, Escambia, and Mobile Counties and  
the Eastern Shore MPO Urban Area*

#### **ALDOT extending the deadline for submission of the FY 2022 5310 application**

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), Local Transportation Bureau, is now accepting Applications for funding consideration through the Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides funding for transit services that assist the state’s population of seniors and individuals with disabilities.

The following organizations are eligible to submit an application for the Section 5310 program:

1. Nonprofit organizations
2. Public bodies/Governmental Authorities that certify to the Governor that no nonprofit corporations or associations are readily available in the proposed area to provide the service
3. Public bodies/Governmental agencies approved by ALDOT to coordinate transit services for seniors and individuals with disabilities

Federal funds administered through ALDOT are only extended to agencies providing transit services in the small urban and rural areas of the State.

Available federal capital funds for the Section 5310 program are approximately \$ 1,162,225 for small urban areas and \$ 1,638,050 for rural areas. A local match of 20% is required.

The application package provides specific information on eligible activities and match. The Section 5310 application and the current State Management Plan can be found at: <https://www.dot.state.al.us/ltweb/transit/index.html>.

Applications are evaluated based on the following criteria: financial and management capability; need for service; utilization of requested service; proposed service characteristics; and service coordination. Projects funded through the Section 5310 Program must be derived from a locally developed, coordinated transit-human services transportation plan (“coordinated plan”).

Completed grant applications must be submitted to the designated Regional Planning Council (Council of Governments) in the respective geographic area of the state in which Section 5310 transportation services are proposed. Each Regional Planning Council must review grant

applications to ensure compliance with federal coordination requirements prior to submitting applications they endorse to ALDOT. Only those grant applications formally submitted to the Regional Planning Councils for review will be considered for ALDOT funding.

The deadline for submitting applications to the Regional Planning Councils (Councils of Governments) is **5:00 P.M. on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021**. Councils of Governments who either apply directly for funding or who apply for funding on behalf of other entities/organizations must submit applications directly to ALDOT no later than **5:00 p.m. on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021**. **Applications received late will be returned.**

All applications will be reviewed, evaluated, prioritized, and approved by ALDOT before ALDOT develops and submits a consolidated ALDOT grant application to the FTA Region IV office for funding consideration.

If you have questions or comments concerning the grant application, or if information is needed in another language or alternative format, contact Kasey Rogers, ALDOT, Local Transportation Bureau, 1409 Coliseum Boulevard, Montgomery, AL 36110; (334) 242-6764.

ALDOT does not discriminate against any individual because of race, color, or national origin.

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## **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/ltweb/administration/memorandums.html>

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](mailto: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.

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## **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](mailto: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.

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](mailto: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.

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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)

The Mobile MPO has advertised on billboards in the past, and for the most part they were not very effective. But if you want to mess with someone, and spend some money, billboards can be very effective to BUY THE DRESS!!! Billboards and advertising companies use big data, and we also use big data in our transportation planning process from places like Inrix, NPMRDS, HERE, AirSage.... But sometimes, big data **knows what you are thinking**.... [WATCH](#) this hilarious video, *Just For Fun*.



# Poll shows support for I-10 truck toll bridge; 90% concerned over congestion

Updated Apr 01, 2021; Posted Apr 01, 2021



A rendering of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge project from a few years ago. Local leaders introduced the concepts behind an alternative plan for Interstate 10 that keeps the bridge portion of the project. The overall \$725 million project includes building a new bridge that will be financed, in part, by the trucking industry through tolls assessed on large trucks. (John [Sharp/jsharp@al.com](mailto:jsharp@al.com)).

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

A new poll shows support for a new Interstate 10 bridge over the Mobile River financed largely through a truck-only toll.

The poll was commissioned by the Coastal Alabama Partnership, and included 500 responses from March 24-25, two days after local officials [unveiled the concepts of a new \\$725 million plan to build a new bridge aimed at removing trucks from the Wallace Tunnel](#). Poll respondents support the new truck toll bridge concept by a two-to-one margin, with 51 saying they support it while less than 26% voice opposition. Another 24% are unsure.

“The concept unveiled by local leaders for a truck bridge and expanded Bayway is a creative idea to address the serious concerns people are expressing over traffic congestion and the threat it poses for our economic future,” said Wiley Blankenship, president & CEO with the Coastal Alabama Partnership, a non-profit organization focused on providing a platform for regional leaders to convene, collaborate, build consensus, and advocate for coastal Alabama’s priorities.

The poll shows that a whopping 90 of respondents say that “from an economic development standpoint,” it is with “very” or “somewhat important” to solve the traffic jams crossing the Mobile River. Another 86% surveyed rate traffic congestion on the Bayway and through the Wallace Tunnel as “very bad” or bad” during peak travel times.

Close to 77% of poll respondents believe that removing the trucks from the Wallace Tunnel – which is part of the new concept – would “significantly improve” or “improve” traffic flow. Another 64% believe that separating cars from 18-wheelers into designated lanes so they are not traveling in the same lanes would improve traffic safety, while 15% said it would not and 21% said they were unsure.

“With so many positive economic changes taking place, the sky should be the limit for coastal Alabama,” said Blankenship. “One key issue that could hold us back is the serious traffic congestion that impedes the smooth flow of commerce through our area. This is a significant problem for our workers and our businesses, especially the trucking industry.”

A proposal that will be considered by the Metropolitan Planning Organizations in Mobile and Baldwin counties calls for a truck-only toll that would cost between \$10 to \$15. The toll, as proposed, will help pay for the new bridge. Also part of the project is a restriping of the existing Bayway from two lanes to three each way.

[The plan has received initial skepticism from the trucking industry](#), which has concerns about tolls assessed only on truck drivers. The industry is challenging some states, such as Rhode Island, for assessing tolls on the industry.

The truck toll bridge is an alternative to the \$2.1 billion I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project the Alabama Department of Transportation supported, but was killed amid local opposition to assessing tolls on all drivers who use the new bridge and the Wallace Tunnel. The Spanish Fort Causeway would have remains untolled in both the current and former projects.

The latest I-10 plan considers the following:

-Prohibits large trucks over 46 feet in length from driving through the Wallace Tunnel, thus requiring them to diver over the Mobile River Bridge to the dedicated truck-only bridge. The new bridge’s design would be similar to a previous concept – a cable-stay structure that is 215 feet of “air draft” height, or [high enough to accommodate large shipping vessels and cruise ships passing](#) underneath. Officials believe that removing large trucks from the tunnel will decrease the average passenger car delays by “approximately 60 to 90 minutes” during peak travel periods. In 2019, during the debate over the previous plan, ALDOT anticipated the average number of vehicles traveling daily on I-10 through the Wallace Tunnel going from 75,000 per day to 95,000 per day in 2040. The peak holiday travel periods, before the coronavirus pandemic, typically draw around 100,000 vehicles per day to the Bayway, according to ALDOT.

-[Divert hazardous cargo routes from the Africatown community north of downtown Mobile](#). Large trucks often travel through Africatown via the Cochrane-Africatown USA Bridge. Mobile city and county officials are looking at transforming the neighborhood into a tourist attraction following the 2019 discovery of the slave ship Clotilda.

-Restripe and convert the Bayway from two lanes to three lanes in each direction. Officials say the restriping will increase traffic flow by an estimated 40%. The Bayway, under the previous plan, would have been replaced with a new 7.5-mile, eight-lane span crossing the Mobile River connecting downtown Mobile with U.S. 98 in Daphne.

-Protect existing routes from tolls and fees. Only 18-wheelers and similar large trucks traveling over the truck bridge would pay a fee that would be, according to officials, less than half the fee considered in the previous plan. No cars or small trucks would be assessed a toll. [The previous plan called for a \\$6 one-way toll assessed on users of the new Bayway](#), although the Spanish Fort Causeway would have remained toll-free. Criticism under the previous plan was the inclusion of the Wallace Tunnel as part of the toll plan. Officials are examining the truck toll bridge concept as the fate of a federal grant looms large.

Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson said recently that protecting a \$125 million federal grant that U.S. Senator Richard Shelby secured for the previous iteration of the project “is critically important.” The deadline to utilize that grant is in the third quarter of 2022.

## **Mobile-New Orleans Amtrak service could require 90% taxpayer per-passenger subsidy, warns Mobile City Councilman Joel Daves**

By Jeff Poor

One of the less-publicized casualties of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 was the termination of passenger rail service on the Gulf Coast east of New Orleans, which included stops in Mobile and Atmore before setting on to its final destination of Jacksonville, Fla.

Nearly 16 years later, Amtrak is pushing for the resumption of passenger rail to Alabama’s Gulf Coast. However, it’s not something that would happen without imposing a toll on the local infrastructure as well as a potential significant cost to the taxpayer.

During an appearance on FM Talk 106.5’s “The Jeff Poor Show,” Mobile City Councilman Joel Daves discussed the pitfalls of having Amtrak’s passenger rail service return to Mobile, which could threaten the flow of freight rail service in and out of the Port of Mobile.

“When this came up, and this was a year ago, I spent a lot of time looking into it,” Daves said. “I talked to the people of the Southern Rail Commission, the Amtrak people when they came to visit, and I just came to the conclusion that there are some serious issues that have to be dealt with. And I want to start out at the beginning and say I’m not against passenger rail, but it has to come to Mobile under appropriate circumstances. The first thing that has to be done that has been in the news recently is we’ve got to figure out what the impact on the port is.”

“The Port of Mobile is the biggest driver of our economy, and there are tens of thousands of jobs in Mobile that are dependent upon that port. We wouldn’t have Austal. We wouldn’t have Thyssen-Krupp. We wouldn’t have Airbus without that port,” he continued. “And so we’ve got a very congested port, and we’ve got to figure out if passenger rail can be restored to Mobile without any significant impact to the port. And if it is going to have a significant impact — how that can be mitigated and how much it is going to cost to mitigate it.”

According to Daves, early reports of a \$20 fare, which would make passenger rail competitive with bus fare between the two cities, would require a significant taxpayer subsidy, which he said could be in the realm of 90% of the overall operating cost per passenger.

“The other part of it was who is going to pay the cost of the ticket. When I started looking into it, Jeff — and these aren’t Joel Daves numbers — these are Amtrak, OK? Every time someone gets on that train in Mobile and rides to New Orleans or the other way around, the operating cost, leaving aside all the capital — the operating cost is about \$200 for that train ride,” he explained. “Now, what they were talking about doing is having about a \$20 ticket. The rider would pay \$20, and the taxpayer would pay \$180 every time someone got on that train. I asked — when the Amtrak people were here — I asked, and they said, ‘Well, you know public rail is subsidized all over the country.’ That’s true. It is. But I asked them to name me one train in this country that they knew of that the subsidy — where there was anything close to a 90% subsidy. They couldn’t name that.”

“My two preconditions are: Let’s make sure there’s no impact to the port, and let’s make sure the people who are actually going to ride the train pay most of the expense of operating the train,” Daves added.

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## **City planning consultant pitches more on-street parking, fewer lanes for downtown streets**

Posted by [Dale Liesch](#) | Apr 7, 2021 reprinted with permission from the LAGNIAPPE

There are 10 changes the city of Mobile can make to improve safety for pedestrians downtown and add to the walkability of the corridor from Broad Street to Water Street, a consultant said during a presentation recently.

Jeff Speck, a national city-planning consultant who promotes walkability, told members of the Downtown Mobile Alliance and others during a virtual presentation the city could make inexpensive changes, like adding bike lanes or on-street parking to wider-than-average streets, to enhance pedestrian and cyclist participation along the Central Business District.

Speck also suggested turning some one-way streets into two-way streets as a way to slow traffic and make the area safer for those on foot or bike.

“It all boils down to driving speeds,” he said. “A car going 35 miles per hour is seven times more likely to kill you than a car going 25 miles per hour. This is all about how to get drivers closer to the lower end of the spectrum.”

Slower driving speeds are especially important in Alabama, a state that ranks as the second deadliest in the United States for pedestrians, Speck said.

“Most of that is not happening in Mobile,” he said. “It’s a place where people drive more slowly than in the rest of the state.”

However, the design of many of Mobile’s downtown streets, Speck said, invites speeds that are inconsistent with the goal of a more vibrant area.

“Slower means a healthier and more productive downtown,” he said.

One of the keys to slowing traffic in the downtown area, Speck said, is to make sure streets don’t have any more lanes than are needed. “The more lanes a street has the more it looks like a highway,” he said.

Speck said he and other consultants did what is called a lane audit on the streets downtown. A lane audit is where they calculate the number of lanes and the number of vehicle trips per day during peak hours to find the number of lanes needed for a particular street.

“A two-lane street can handle 10,000 car trips each day,” he said. “If you do it right, there won’t be added congestion.”

As expected in downtown Mobile, there are a lot of vehicles each day on Water Street, Government Street and the areas near the interstate onramps. However, if the perimeter areas of downtown, including Government Street and the outer portions of the Henry Aaron Loop aren’t included, the vast majority of downtown streets see less than 5,000 trips per day, Speck said.

That’s about half the amount of what a normal, one-lane street can handle, he said.

“Mobile has so many choices,” Speck said. “Most cities are blessed with this. There’s not a single one of these streets that can’t be one lane or less.”

Streets with too many lanes are prime candidates for re-striping, Speck said, to include additional on-street parking or bike lanes.

For example, he said, Canal Street has about two and a half more lanes than it needs, but unfortunately, it’s not a good candidate for added on-street parking because there is not a demand for parking in that area of downtown. In addition to Canal, Congress Street could be two lanes instead of four, Spring Hill Avenue could be two lanes instead of four and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard could be two lanes instead of its three or four in places.

Meanwhile, Washington Avenue, Royal Street and Claiborne all have extra turn lanes that are not needed, Speck said.

These streets are all better candidates for additional parking — where it doesn’t already exist — or bike lanes, he said.

Interestingly, Speck said, Dauphin Street, west of Claiborne, has an extra lane it doesn’t need.

“That’s all money in the bank in terms of opportunities to make downtown better,” he said.

In places where there are the right amount of lanes downtown, the lanes may be too wide and invite faster driving, Speck said. A 10-foot lane is plenty wide enough to handle traffic on a “high-capacity” street, he said.

There was an effort beginning in the 1980s to mesh highway design and residential street design, Speck said. The result of this trend, he said, was lanes that were too wide in downtown areas all over the country. Mobile is no exception.

“A 12-foot lane is a 70-mile-per-hour lane,” Speck said. “There’s no reason for a 12-foot lane downtown.”

Speck gave several examples of streets downtown that were too wide: a section of Congress Street has 15 extra feet, St Joseph Street should be 30 feet wide, but is 45 feet wide, North Washington Avenue is too wide, Claiborne is too wide, as are Conti and Conception streets. St. Michael is 16 to 17 feet wide and should be 12 feet wide at most, Speck said.

A solution for some of those extra-wide streets is to revert them from one-way to two-way. This could be the case for St. Michael and St. Joseph streets. The city is already working to make St. Joseph a two-way street.

“It turns out one-way streets are more dangerous than two-way streets,” Speck said. “Studies show two-way streets make drivers more comfortable and are more successful for business.”

Dauphin Street, although very wide and even two-laned in places, is not a good candidate to swap back to two lanes, Speck said. To make Dauphin a two-way street would force the city to remove the ability to park on both sides.

However, Hamilton and Jefferson streets could be good candidates for two-way traffic.

Speck also came up with a recommendation for a series of connected bike paths that would increase the presence of cyclists downtown. He said bike lanes could be added inexpensively all over downtown by either re-striping streets or adding planters to protect the lanes. Speck also recommended more crosswalks be added to Government Street, and with a project to better synchronize traffic signals along the corridor on the horizon, add some flashing beacons.

Mayor Sandy Stimpson listened to the presentation and seemed enthusiastic about the possibility of changes to the streets.

“I was very impressed with Jeff Speck’s presentation and work that has gone into the Downtown Mobile [Alliance’s] Street Optimization initiative,” he said in a statement. “There still needs to be a good deal of internal conversation with our traffic and engineering teams, but there are already some recommendations from this initiative I believe the city of Mobile could and should implement.”

# ‘10% of traffic count, 100% of cost’: Truckers fret over Alabama toll plan for I-10

Updated Mar 26, 2021; Posted Mar 26, 2021

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

About 10% of the daily traffic through the Wallace Tunnel in Mobile is truck traffic, according to data recorded in 2017, the latest available. And that figure is front and center for the trucking industry as it considers the prospect of a new truck-only toll bridge in Mobile.

“They are asking questions like, ‘If we are 5-10% of the traffic count, is it fair to bear the 100% of the cost?’” said Mark Colson, president & CEO with the Alabama Trucking Association, who added that more information and details are an “imperative” for the project.

An Alabama transportation official agrees that the most recent truck data for Interstate 10 is outdated, and said that further studies would commence if local politicians in Mobile and Baldwin counties support the bridge concept.

[The \\$725 million project was unveiled on Monday](#) and calls for a \$10 to \$15 toll on large semi-tractor trailers as its financing cornerstone.

The new bridge would take big trucks out of the Wallace Tunnel, leaving it for cars and smaller trucks only.

According to the 2017 figures for Wallace Tunnel traffic, truck volume is about 8,500 per day. “Those numbers have likely gone up with growth at the State Docks and increased shipping in general,” said Tony Harris, spokesman with the Alabama Department of Transportation.

He said ALDOT will conduct “some very detailed analysis on truck volumes” so long as the Metropolitan Planning Organizations in Mobile and on the Eastern Shore get on board with the truck bridge. Those decisions are expected to occur within the next six months, if not sooner.

“We believe the concept has potential, but ultimately, it’s the continued support of local leaders and residents that will determine the path forward,” Harris said. Continue [HERE](#)

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## Officials seek support for improvements to ‘deadly’ U.S. Route 45

Posted by [Gabriel Tynes](#) | Apr 7, 2021 reprinted with permission from the LAGNIAPPE

Elected officials in North Mobile County are calling attention to what they claim is the deadliest highway in the state. U.S. Route 45 is a four-lane highway between Chicago and the Mississippi-Alabama border, where it becomes a heavily trafficked, high-speed two-lane terminating on Springhill Avenue in Midtown.

On March 28, four people were killed, including an 8-month-old infant, in a head-on collision on U.S. Route 45 in Saraland, the latest in a string of deaths over recent years.

“We’ve lost 73 to 75 people since 2016,” State Rep. Shane Stringer said. “Highway 45 is the deadliest highway in Alabama. Over the years, the traffic has picked up more and more due to the industry, and we still have a lot of traffic coming in from the other states that are going to our beaches in South Baldwin County. And with the recent wreck that took the lives of four people, including the 8-month-old child, it really sparked my interest.”

On Monday, Stringer gathered officials from Washington County, Citronelle, Saraland, Prichard and Mobile for a press conference, where they stood behind photographs of deadly accident scenes along the highway and asked state transportation officials to add it to its priority list.

Stringer claims the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) typically puts more emphasis on traffic counts than accidents when vetting projects for its priority list, so U.S. Route 45 often comes up short when compared to faster-growing areas of the state.

State Rep. Brett Easterbrook, of Fruitdale in Washington County, said the road was targeted for expansion in a fuel tax bill in the 1990s, but the earmark was pulled after the bill was passed. Stringer said ALDOT has cost estimates to four-lane all 50 miles of the road in Alabama, and money should be available through the Rebuild Alabama Act, a gas tax increase that was passed in 2019.

“This is not a cheap venture, but when you start putting safety ahead of congestion, it becomes an important factor,” Easterbrook said. “Once we place safety as the highest priority, they will start laying asphalt on this road. This is the deadliest road in the state and it’s time to adjust.”

Tony Rutland lost his sister, 49-year-old Tracy Sheffield, in a deadly two-vehicle crash on U.S. Route 45 in 2015.

“When my sister lost her life, it didn’t only kill her, but it started killing my family and it killed my mother,” he said. “It’s a sad situation for us, but also for many other people.”

Citronelle Mayor Jason Stringer, Shane’s brother, is a first responder. He said in his career he’s personally picked up the pieces of 25 fatalities on the highway.

"You've got speed, you've got congestion, very few places to pass, so people take undue risks," he said. "The majority of accidents we have are head-on collisions. It's to the point now where we expect support from the state or we're going to let our voices be heard through the voting process and get people elected who will support what is a huge safety issue for our community."

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## Transportation Research

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

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

### URBAN AREA and MSA CRITERIA PROPOSED CHANGE

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

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

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

\* Splitting of large agglomerations of densely settled territory.

## OMB introduces proposed changes to MSA Criteria

### Changes in MSA Designations: Potential Impact on Alabama Regions

#### Background

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

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

#### Proposed Changes

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

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

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

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

However, the Census Bureau included in its proposed changes a recognition that “some federal and state agencies use the Census Bureau’s urban area classification for nonstatistical uses such as allocating program funds, setting program standards, and implementing aspects of their programs,” and warned that those agencies “should be aware that the changes to the urban area criteria also might affect the implementation of their programs.” In short, funding could be on the line.

#### Funding Impacts

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

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

Other federal policies and regulations that consider MSA designations include:

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

## Opportunity Zones

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

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

Read about our partner’s roles in Opportunity Zones:

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

The Opportunity Zone designation encourages investment in communities by granting investors extensive Federal tax advantages for using their capital gains to finance new projects and enterprises. There are more than [8,700 designated Qualified Opportunity Zones](#)

