



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, June 25th, 2021

Volume 38, Number 13

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THE MOBILE MPO IS 50 YEARS OLD! June 23, 1971 was the first resolution. What was in the Long Range Transportation Plan in 1971???? *Just For Fun* this week we took a look....

In *Legislative Updates*, news on the Infrastructure Bill is changing by the minute. Biden says we have a "deal", but some senators are saying there is [no deal](#), talk is cheap, and it is [political theater](#) to announce that there "is" a deal. The House is also sending a Surface Transportation Bill to the House Floor next week. *In The News*, Alabamians are back on the road, but not in electric cars; Baldwin County vehicle miles traveled is UP 37% from last year pre-pandemic!

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

Mobile Area Major Road Plan

Last week was the Kick Off meeting with SARPC and Volkert for the Mobile Area Major Road Plan. The Plan is for better integration and connectivity of land use and transportation planning, to ensure existing and future on-system corridors are managed and/or preserved as part of the long-range comprehensive planning efforts and as development occurs. A complete Major Road Plan to include regulatory components, current practices, case studies, and guidance for Mobile County and Municipalities within Mobile County. The Plan will include methods and tools for acquiring and preserving right-of-way in the context of expediting the environmental clearance process and review how corridors are prioritized, designated, and adopted for management or preservation. This will require coordination with all planning jurisdictions in Mobile County.

Phase One of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project are added to LRTP and TIP

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

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

For the project as proposed: 150

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

Alternate: 39

Other: 13

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

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

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

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 have provided a prioritized list of roads that need to be resurfaced within their jurisdiction. The CRRSAA Committee is meeting next week to validate the projects and move forward with this program. This is 100 % funding, with no matching requirements. Communication with MPO staff is through the Mayor of each municipality.

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

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

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

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

Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

Project : 100071557 (CN)

Federal aid number : STPMB 4920

County : MOBILE

Project Description : INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS ALONG UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD FROM OLD SHELL ROAD TO USA DRIVE AND ALONG OLD SHELL ROAD FROM MITCHELL CENTER DRIVE TO UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD

Old Target start date : November 05, 2021

New Target start date : May 27, 2022

Project : 100052602 (CN)

Federal aid number : STPMB 7508 (600)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : MCGREGOR AVENUE WIDENING FROM AIRPORT BOULEVARD TO DAUPHIN STREET AND INSTALLATION OF A ROUNDABOUT AT DAUPHIN STREET

Old Target start date : November 05, 2021

New Target start date : March 25, 2022

South Alabama RPO Updates

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

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

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

Projects in Region Let June 25th, 2021

MOBILE COUNTY

None at this time.

BALDWIN COUNTY

None at this time.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

For constructing the Planning, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-113 (US-29) from the Florida State Line to the junction of SR-3 (US-31) northeast of Flomaton. Length 0.799 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$432,574 to \$528,701.

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

Here's What's Included In The Infrastructure Deal That Biden Struck With Senators

June 24, 2021 BARBARA SPRUNT

After weeks of negotiations, President Biden and a bipartisan group of senators have announced a deal on infrastructure spending. The agreement focuses on investments in roads, railways, bridges and broadband internet, but it does not include investments Biden has referred to as "human infrastructure," including money allocated for child care and tax credits for families.

According to the White House, the price tag comes in at \$1.2 trillion over eight years, with more than \$500 billion in new spending. How the measure would be paid for was a central point in negotiations, with Republicans opposed to undoing any of the 2017 tax cuts.

The plan "makes transformational and historic investments in clean transportation infrastructure, clean water infrastructure, universal broadband infrastructure, clean power infrastructure, remediation of legacy pollution, and resilience to the changing climate," said a White House fact sheet on the plan released Thursday.

Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., touted the plan with his colleagues at the White House announcement, saying: "There's going to be a lot of jobs that come out of this."

The bipartisan deal is just the beginning of what could be a long and difficult process. Biden told reporters Thursday that he will not sign any legislation unless it is paired with a separate bill to address other elements of his broader infrastructure proposal. It is unclear at this point whether the parallel process has enough Democratic support to pass it without any Republican votes.

Here's a look at what's included in the agreement, according to the White House fact sheet:

Transportation: \$312 billion
Roads, bridges, major projects: \$109 billion
Safety: \$11 billion
Public transit: \$49 billion
Passenger and freight rail: \$66 billion
Electric vehicles: \$7.5 billion
Electric buses/transit: \$7.5 billion
Reconnecting communities: \$1 billion
Airports: \$25 billion
Ports and waterways: \$16 billion
Infrastructure financing: \$20 billion
Other infrastructure: \$266 billion
Water: \$55 billion
Broadband: \$65 billion
Environmental remediation: \$21 billion
Power, including grid authority: \$73 billion
Western water storage: \$5 billion
Resilience: \$47 billion

Goals of the plan

- The White House said the plan, known currently as "The Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework" would, according to the fact sheet:
- Improve healthy, sustainable transportation options for millions of Americans by modernizing and expanding transit and rail networks across the country, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Repair and rebuild roads and bridges with a focus on climate change mitigation, resilience, equity and safety for all users, including cyclists and pedestrians.
- Build a national network of electric vehicle chargers along highways and in rural and disadvantaged communities.
- Electrify thousands of school and transit buses across the country to reduce harmful emissions and drive domestic manufacturing of zero emission vehicles and components.
- Eliminate the nation's lead service lines and pipes, delivering clean drinking water to up to 10 million American families and more than 400,000 schools and child care facilities that currently don't have it, including in tribal nations and disadvantaged communities.
- Connect every American to reliable high-speed internet.
- Upgrade the power infrastructure, including by building thousands of miles of new, resilient transmission lines to facilitate the expansion of renewable energy, including through a new grid authority.
- Create a first-of-its-kind Infrastructure Financing Authority that will leverage billions of dollars into clean transportation and clean energy.
- Make the largest investment in addressing legacy pollution in American history.
- Prepare more infrastructure for impacts of climate change, cyberattacks and extreme weather events.

How would they pay for it?

The White House said the plan will be paid for with unused coronavirus relief funds, unused unemployment insurance and sales from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, among other measures. Here's a full look at the sources they've proposed, according to the fact sheet:

- Reduce the IRS tax gap.
- Unemployment insurance program integrity.
- Redirect unused unemployment insurance relief funds.
- Repurpose unused relief funds from 2020 emergency relief legislation.
- State and local investment in broadband infrastructure.
- Allow states to sell or purchase unused toll credits for infrastructure.
- Extend expiring customs user fees.
- Reinstate Superfund fees for chemicals.
- 5G spectrum auction proceeds.

- Extend existing spending restraints over mandatory government programs.
- Strategic Petroleum Reserve sales.
- Public-private partnerships, private activity bonds, direct pay bonds and asset recycling for infrastructure investment.
- The expectation that infrastructure investment will generate economic growth.

Business groups applaud bipartisan infrastructure deal

BY KARL EVERS-HILLSTROM - 06/24/21 02:22 PM EDT

Business groups applauded the bipartisan infrastructure deal announced by [President Biden](#) on Thursday and urged Congress to swiftly pass the proposal.

Biden and a [bipartisan group of senators](#) reached an agreement that includes \$579 billion in new spending on infrastructure projects for a total of \$1.2 trillion over eight years.

In a major win for business groups, the infrastructure plan would not raise taxes on corporations. Instead, it would be paid for with unused COVID-19 relief money, user fees, increased tax compliance and other measures.

“Our nation’s economic strength and long-term competitiveness depend on a robust and modern infrastructure,” U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Suzanne Clark said in a statement Thursday. “We applaud the White House and [bipartisan] group of senators for agreeing on a framework to invest in critical, physical infrastructure.”

National Association of Manufacturers President and CEO Jay Timmons echoed those sentiments in a separate statement saying: “This is how we build to win. This shows that governing with big ideas is still possible in America.”

“Bold infrastructure investment will secure a better future for our nation and industry and help more Americans reach their full potential,” Timmons added. “And building it on a foundation of bipartisanship and consensus will help restore faith in our institutions — and prove that America can still bridge party divides to do great things.”

Biden initially proposed a \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan that included a series of tax hikes on corporations, drawing pushback from influential business groups that have called for revamping the nation’s infrastructure but oppose higher corporate taxes.

The bipartisan proposal focuses on traditional infrastructure such as roads, bridges, rail and broadband. The plan includes \$7.5 billion for electric vehicle infrastructure, far less than Biden initially proposed.

Progressive lawmakers have complained the proposal is too small compared to Biden’s original plan. They’re prodding Biden and moderate Democratic senators to commit to backing a separate, larger spending package that can sidestep a GOP filibuster after the bipartisan measure.

“There is not going to be a bipartisan agreement without a major reconciliation package,” Senate Budget Committee Chairman [Bernie Sanders](#) (I-Vt.) told reporters Thursday afternoon.

Business groups are pushing Democrats to take the bipartisan deal and reject a larger spending package that would pass through budget reconciliation without Republican votes.

DeFazio and Pallone Share Details of \$715 Billion Surface Transportation and Water Infrastructure Bill Heading to House Floor Next Week

June 24, 2021

Washington, DC— Today, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Chair Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and House Committee on Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) shared new details of the INVEST in America Act, which is scheduled to be on the House floor next week. The INVEST in America Act will create good-paying jobs rebuilding and reimagining our nation’s roads, bridges, transit, rail, and wastewater and drinking water infrastructure, helping meet key pieces of President Biden’s vision as laid out in the American Jobs Plan.

“I’m proud to partner with Chairman Pallone to put forth this bold legislation that will invest in American workers, communities, and manufacturing, and catapult our country into a new era of smarter, safer, more resilient infrastructure that fits our evolving economy and society and cuts carbon pollution,” **Chair DeFazio said.** “I also want to commend my committee colleagues, especially subcommittee Chairs Eleanor Holmes Norton, Donald Payne, Jr., and Grace Napolitano, for their hard work helping craft this legislation. The INVEST in America Act delivers what the American people expect and deserve: safe roads and bridges, reliable transit options, a modern passenger rail network, wastewater systems that aren’t on the brink of failure, water that that comes out of the tap safe to drink, and a commitment to address the existential threat of climate change. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity that we can’t afford to miss. I look forward to bringing the INVEST in America Act to the House floor and continuing to move this legislation toward the finish line.”

“The INVEST in America Act is transformative legislation that takes a giant step to fulfilling President Biden’s promise to Build Back Better,” **Chairman Pallone said.** “I commend Chair DeFazio for his committee’s work on the surface transportation and wastewater provisions in this legislation and am thrilled to include the drinking water and assistance provisions that advanced out of my committee yesterday. This legislation makes the critical investments and reforms that are necessary to ensure that all Americans have access to safe drinking water. I also thank Subcommittee Chairman Paul Tonko for authorizing the drinking water provisions in this legislation and for his longtime leadership on this issue. By modernizing our infrastructure, we will also revitalize our economy for the future, create millions of new jobs, combat climate change, and ensure no community is left behind. I look forward to House action on this legislation next week.”

[Resources on the INVEST in America Act:](#)

Lawmakers, Public Officials and Advocates to Speak at Virtual Workshop on Transportation Funding

Learn the latest transportation funding strategies and insights from state lawmakers, public officials, and industry experts at the 8th Annual National Workshop for State & Local Transportation Advocates. The July 13-14 virtual event is free but [requires an early reservation](#).

Topics include:

Implementing a road usage charge program;

Diversifying states' transportation revenue streams;

Best practices in conducting a successful transportation investment campaign;

Protecting revenue from diversion, and how that leads to successful investment in the future;

Analysis of federal funding discussions;

State and local transportation investment trends; and

The impact of Covid-19 on transportation programs.

[See full agenda.](#)

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.

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)



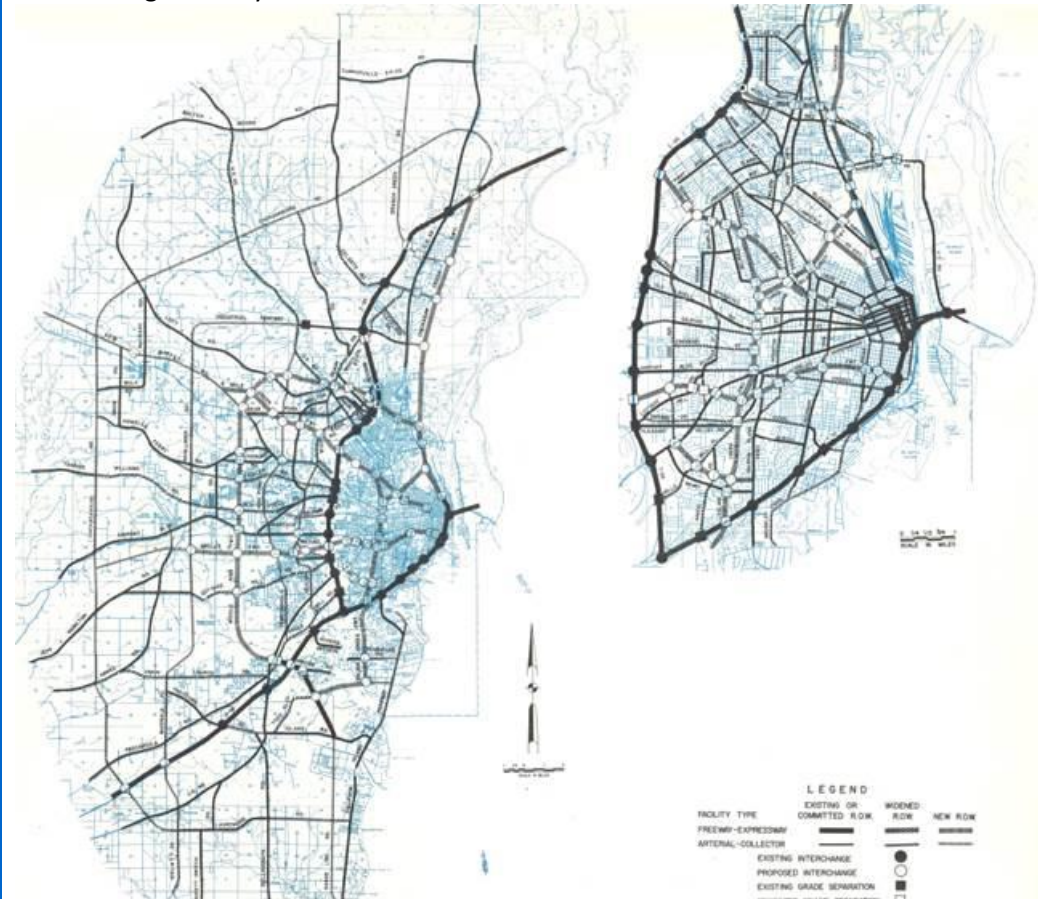
June 23, 1971, was the first Mobile MPO meeting, so happy 50th birthday to the Mobile MPO!! ALDOT started working on the model and the Long Range Transportation Plan in 1969, but it was all done by hand, and took years. BTW, 25 years would have been 1995. What did transportation planners think should happen to the road network by 1995? Keep in mind, this Plan was not fiscally constrained, like the LRTP has to be today. There were some crazy roads thought of in 1971 that are no longer on the map.

So, *Just For Fun*, we are going to have contest. The first person to send transportation@sarpc.org the correct answer, wins some hand sanitizer, and maybe a pen.

CONTEST

Click the map below to go to the big PDF to zoom in. Which of the following roads, were NOT on the original plan?

Chickasabogue Road
Eight Mile Creek Freeway
Grelot Freeway
Eslava Creek Freeway
Three Mile Creek Freeway
Donald Street Freeway
Chickasaw Creek Freeway
Branch Creek Road
Middle Ring Freeway



In the News

Alabamians are back on the road, averaging more miles per day than before lockdown

Posted Jun 23, 7:00 AM

By [Ramsey Archibald | rarchibald@al.com](mailto:rarchibald@al.com)

Alabama - along with the rest of the country - stood still in the second half of March 2020. The coronavirus was here, and people headed into lockdowns. The result was fewer people driving, with many who did drive doing so less often.

Today people are back on the road. And Alabamians are driving even more than they did before that first lockdown.

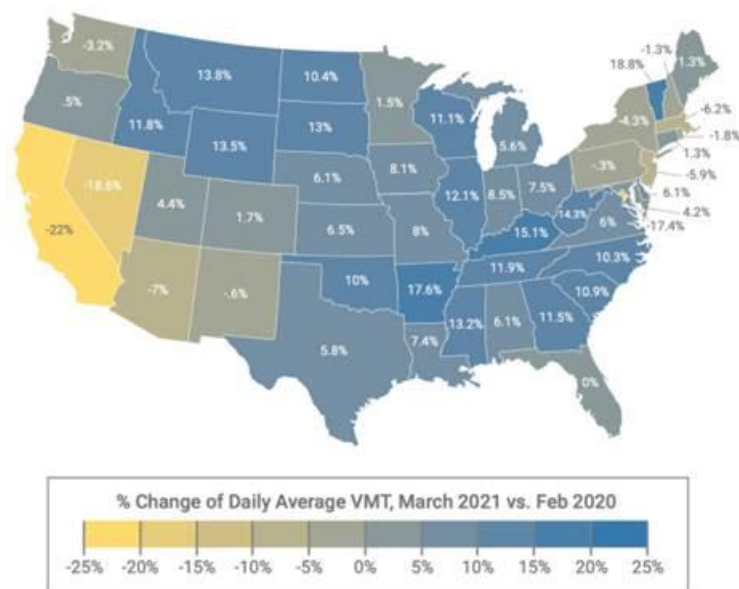
According to data on vehicle miles traveled per day from [StreetLight Data](#), people in Alabama were driving more miles each day in March of 2021 - the last month for which data was available - than they were in February of 2020, the last full month before the pandemic began.

[Can't see the map? [Click here.](#)]

Overall, the state saw about a 6% increase in vehicle miles traveled per day this March compared to last February, and 62 of the state's 67 counties saw driving increases over that time. Three of the state's largest counties - Jefferson, Madison and Montgomery - were among the five that were still driving less in March than they were prior to the pandemic.

The only other counties still driving less were Dallas and Perry counties - each in the state's Black Belt region.

Alabama's increase in miles came even as the nation as a whole was still traveling about 12% less this March compared to last February. But that nationwide decrease came mostly along the coasts. California still saw 22% fewer miles traveled in March than before the pandemic - the largest decrease of any state. New York and much of New England also saw decreases.



Click [HERE](#) for article

Report: Alabama ties for worst state to buy electric vehicles Alabama bans the direct sale of EV's to customers and charges additional registration and annual fees.



By EDDIE BURKHALTER

Alabama tied with nine other states in being the worst state to buy electric vehicles, according to a report released Tuesday by Consumer Choice Center.

Alabama ranked so low because of the state's ban on direct-to-consumer sales and an electric vehicle licensing fee that's four times as high as the fee for standard vehicles, according to the center's Electric Vehicle Accessibility Index.

"Various state governments, and the Biden administration, have really made transportation electrification a priority," said David Clemont, North American Affairs Manager for the center and co-author of the report. Speaking to APR this week. "Our concern is that there are several states that have outdated regulations and licensing fees that will make that electric vehicle transition more difficult."

Alabama bans electric vehicle manufacturers from selling vehicles directly to buyers and instead requires those carmakers to send their vehicles to car dealerships. Electric car manufacturers, including Tesla, usually opt to avoid the dealer franchise model, Clemont said.

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"They much prefer the direct to consumer route. It can be a lot simpler and easier in terms of dealing with customers or reaching customers and it really reduces costs in terms of eliminating the middleman," Clemont said.

In Alabama, buyers can order a used electric vehicle directly from the maker, but not a brand new model, Clemont said.

"The second major issue is that the registration fee for an electric vehicle is \$200 higher than it would be for a standard passenger vehicle," Clemont said of Alabama's licensing fee.

A law that went into effect in 2020 means that owners of electric vehicles in Alabama must pay an additional \$200 over the standard registration fee and an additional \$100 annually. State lawmakers who supported the legislation said that the fee was needed to offset the loss in gas tax revenue.

"Here we have a scenario where essentially licensing or tax policy is actively discouraging against the purchase of electric vehicles, and it's our opinion that all state governments should stay neutral and just treat passenger vehicles equally across the board," Clemont said.

With more and more electric vehicles being manufactured by the biggest names, including Mercedes and Chevrolet, the trend toward moving away from standard, gasoline-powered vehicles is clear.

"EVs can no longer be categorized as a novelty. They are here to stay," said Allen Parrish, executive director of the Alabama Transportation Institute and senior policy advisor for the Energy Institute of Alabama, in an April op-ed.

“GM has announced that they are investing \$2.3 billion in their US manufacturing for electric batteries. Honda has committed to sell only EV’s by 2040. Hyundai is investing \$7 billion into the U.S. electric vehicle market, and even Ford has announced that nearly half of all Lincoln’s produced could soon be emissionless,” Clemont said.

Clemont noted that the Mercedes plant in Tuscaloosa announced this month plans to hire as many as 400 additional workers to meet the demands of the plant’s plans to build more electric vehicles. Mercedes is investing \$3 billion into the project, which includes a battery pack assembly plant in Bibb County.

“Alabamians who work in the industry may reap the benefits of the EV boom, but unfortunately because of these outdated laws consumers are going to be left behind, and I think that’s a real shame,” Clemont said.

ALDOT alerts drivers to new law upping fines for violations in construction zones

by: [Aubree Bailey](#)

Posted: Jun 24, 2021 / 03:37 PM CDT / Updated: Jun 24, 2021 / 03:37 PM CDT



(AP Photo/Matt Rourke)

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (WIAT) — As motorists plan to travel Alabama highways for the Fourth of July holiday, the Alabama Department of Transportation and the Alabama Road Builders Association want travelers to be aware of changes to a state law to protect the lives of road construction and maintenance workers.

Effective, Thursday, July 1, the fine for any moving traffic violation committed in a construction zone where workers are present will result in a \$250 fine or double the regular fine, whichever amount is greater.

[City of Birmingham and Jefferson County plan to repave ‘failing’ parts of Grants Mill Road](#)

ALDOT is also announcing that it will have no temporary lane closures on the interstate after noon Friday, July 2, through Monday, July 5 for the safety of construction industry workers, maintenance crews and the traveling public.

The Alabama Legislature amended the construction zone law this year, as the number of injury and fatal crashes in work zones increased in 2020. Preliminary numbers for 2020 show there were 2,378 work zone crashes in Alabama, resulting in 19 fatalities and 616 injuries. These numbers include road workers and motorists.

“As underscored by the recent change to our highway laws, unsafe driving in work zones can be life-altering and sometimes life-ending,” said Allison Green, Drive Safe Alabama Coordinator with ALDOT. “It’s to everyone’s advantage to slow down and follow the rules of the road when driving through a work zone.”

[Indiana man abandons child, bites trooper while fleeing traffic stop](#)

With the change to the construction zone law, fines are increased for not only speeding, but for any traffic law broken while driving through the work zone when workers are present. Those violations include driving under the influence, hit and run, following the vehicle ahead too closely, changing lanes without signaling and driving around barricades, among other violations.

“The law calls them workers, some may call them employees, but it’s more important we recognize they are moms, dads, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters that need to be able to go home to their families,” said Jeff Webb with Ozark Striping Company, Inc. and current president of ARBA. “We believe this law will help bring change to driver’s unsafe driving habits.”

ALDOT Southwest Region
@ALDOT_SW_Region

Crews will be performing asphalt leveling operations at the SR-104/SR-181 intersection from 8 PM to 5 AM tonight through Thursday, 7/1. Impacts to traffic will be limited to the intersection. Expect alternating lane closures and use caution in the area.

Transportation Research

[Roundabouts vs Traffic Lights](#)

Jun 1, 2021

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQ0pnCx76Nk>

Hate it when you're the only car stopped at a light?

Roundabouts are a solution to that, and more.

Roundabouts are "safer. They save lives. They cost less!" Carmel, Indiana mayor Jim Brainard explains.

He's replaced nearly every stoplight in his town with a roundabout. His town now accounts for about 2% of all roundabouts in America.

Roundabouts are safer.

A study in Wisconsin found that when roundabouts replaced typical intersections, deaths fell 38%. Crashes actually rose 12%, but they were more minor crashes. "Instead of a T-bone, you get a sideswipe," Brainard explains.

Roundabouts pass cars through intersections faster, they look nicer, save tax money, and pollute less. Yet America's politicians have been slow to adopt them. Europe has about 200,000 roundabouts — compared to America's roughly 6,000.

Why so slow? I ask Jim Brainard in the video link above.

How to Access and Visualize 2020 Census Apportionment Results

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

[Watch Now](#)

The traffic control bible is getting an update. Here's why you should care.

[Matt Levin](#) May 25, 2021

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

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

But on TikTok, Swaminathan is [Mr. Barricade](#), crusader for bicycle and pedestrian-friendly streets. Mashing beats from Kid Cudi with some signature dance moves and short lessons on roads and bridges, among other things, he's amassed more than 400,000 followers.

You can see some of his creative handiwork at the corner of Fourth and San Fernando streets in downtown San Jose, California. Swaminathan helped redesign this bustling intersection into a bicyclist's safe space, with bike-only traffic signals, protected bike lanes and inflatable barricades pretty much everywhere.

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

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

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

MUTCD geared for drivers

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

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

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

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

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

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

85th percentile rule

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

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

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

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

Engineering safety studies

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

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

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

Justifying a crosswalk with a stoplight

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

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

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

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

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

FHWA to host series of Value Capture Strategies webinars

FHWA is hosting a series of Value Capture Strategies webinars beginning in March, 2021. The webinar series will detail the Value Capture techniques promoted in the Federal Highway Administration's Every Day Counts initiative. This year's series focuses on the intersection of Innovative Finance and Innovative Project Delivery Tools. These webinars will detail more Value Capture best practices collected from throughout the nation. They will also highlight FHWA's recently completed Value Capture Primer series of technical documents.

Value Capture is a set of powerful techniques that recover a portion of land value created by public infrastructure investments, and can:

- Address funding gaps;
- leverage and optimize Federal and State resources;
- accelerate project delivery;
- meet and improve system performance goals;
- maintain transportation infrastructure assets in good repair; and,
- save time and money.

The program features subject matter experts and peers who successfully utilized Value Capture in tandem with innovative finance and project delivery techniques to advance new and modernized infrastructure projects. Registration is free but is limited. Certificates of Completion and Confirmation of Attendance are available! [Register now!](#)

TARGET AUDIENCE

This webinar is intended for professionals from States, cities, counties, Tribes, and metropolitan and rural transportation agencies looking for innovative funding and financial strategies to pay for transportation projects. This would include professionals involved with directing and managing aspects of highway-related programs and projects, such as planning, environment, project development, design, construction, operations, maintenance, and finance.

For additional information, please contact:

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

04/29/2021

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

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

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

The updates in this release include:

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

- Marine Highways; and
- Strategic Ports.

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

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



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

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

Opportunity Zones

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

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

Read about our partner’s roles in Opportunity Zones:

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

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

South Alabama Opportunity Zones



Transportation Dictionary

The USDOT released a searchable online dictionary that includes over 9,000 transportation terms and acronyms. The terms were collected from a variety of public and private transportation publications and databases. This dictionary presents over 9,000 terms and acronyms related to transportation. The terms and acronyms were obtained from various transportation publications and databases which exist within the federal government, private organizations, Canada and Mexico.

Search Tips

- Sources are listed in parenthesis after the definition.
 - None of the searches are case sensitive. Searching for PEDESTRIAN will produce the same results as searching for pedestrian.
 - The Dictionary searches for the word, phrase or acronym as it is entered and returns all records that match or contain that word, phrase or acronym. For example, searching for pedestrian will return records for pedestrian and pedestrian walkway.
- Click [HERE](#) for the search engine.