



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, May 21st, 2021

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The STARTER ACT to replace the FAST ACT? Plus, talks of Highway Trust Fund options while partisan politics is muddying the Infrastructure Bill; all in *Legislative Updates*. This week there was a ESMPD public meeting and TCC/CAC met concerning Phase One of the Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project; please see *Mobile MPO Updates*. If you are in favor of the bridge project, or not, please submit comment [HERE](#) by May 26th. *In The News* this week, the comment deadline on the Bridge, Ziegler is closed for a while, and the EDA has some money.... *Just For Fun* this week we are making tracks... Have a great weekend.

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

www.mobilempo.org



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

Want to know what other SARPC departments do?

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

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

Mobile MPO Updates

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

There was a public meeting last week and a TCC/CAC meeting this week concerning the LRTP And TIP Amendment (ESMPO had a public meeting this week). The Envision 2045 Amendment public meeting was advertised since April 28th as a "public meeting", not a hearing. Voting members of the MPO Policy Board were not at the meeting to hear and field questions, which is why it was advertised as a "public meeting". MPO staff is requesting public comment to be provided in writing to be included into the document for MPO members to review prior to voting on the Amendment. A video of the presentation is on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/iltDaGDeZrM>

To view the DRAFT Amendment, CLICK [HERE](#).

To submit comments electronically on the amendment, click [HERE](#)

Comment period closes May 26th, 2021 at 5 pm.

AGENDA for the June 2nd, 2021 MPO Meeting, to include amending the TIP for Phase 1 of the Mobile River Bridge Project, Click [HERE](#)

- May 19th, 10:00AM TCC/CAC Meeting in person; SARPC Offices
- May 20th, 10:00 AM BPAC Meeting in person; SARPC Offices
- May 26th, 5:00PM End Public Comment Period
- No later than May 27th, by 5:00 PM, all MPO Policy Board members will be provided an updated Amendment, with fulfilled Public Involvement Section and Appendix of comments.

- June 2nd, 10:00AM MPO Policy Board in person meeting SARPC Offices

Click [HERE](#) for more meeting information

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

(April 16th, 2021)

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

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

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

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

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

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 : 100073585 (CN)

Federal aid number : RHCH RR21

County : MOBILE

Project Description : RAILROAD CROSSING IMPROVEMENTS, INCLUDING INSTALLING TWO CANTILEVERS WITH LIGHTS, GATES AND SIGNALS ON SPRINGHILL AVENUE AT ALABAMA EXPORT RAILROAD IN MOBILE, REF NO. (2105HE); DOT# 304230T

Old Target start date : December 15, 2021

New Target start date : September 15, 2021

Project : 100052449 (UT)

Federal aid number : STPMB 7612 (600)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : MCDONALD ROAD (CR-39) ADDITIONAL LANES FROM NORTH OF I-10 TO OLD PASCAGOULA ROAD.

Old Target start date : August 01, 2021

New Target start date : May 01, 2022

Project : 100052450 (CN)

Federal aid number : STPMB 7612 (600)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : MCDONALD ROAD (CR-39) ADDITIONAL LANES FROM NORTH OF I-10 TO OLD PASCAGOULA ROAD.

Old Target start date : January 28, 2022

New Target start date : September 30, 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%20HSCTP%20for%20SARPC.pdf>)

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

Projects in Region Let May 28th, 2021

MOBILE COUNTY

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

BALDWIN COUNTY

None at this time.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

None at this time.

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

Legislative Updates

Republican Committee Leaders Introduce the STARTER Act 2.0 – an Investment in Roads, Bridges, Transit, and Highway Safety

Washington, D.C., May 19, 2021 | [Justin Harclerode](#)

Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-MO) and other Republican Committee leaders today introduced a long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill that provides historic levels of investment in America's roads, bridges, and core infrastructure to meet the Nation's growing transportation needs.

The *Surface Transportation Advanced through Reform, Technology, & Efficient Review (STARTER) Act 2.0* provides more than \$400 billion over five years – the largest percentage increase for these programs in the last quarter-century – for the federal highway, transit, and motor carrier and highway safety programs.

Reforms in the bill will also cut red tape to get meaningful transportation improvements completed in a timely manner, making federal investment go farther by actually getting projects done with fewer delays. The legislation lays out key Republican principles for a much-needed bipartisan agreement to authorize these programs before October, and it's based upon similar legislation introduced last year with input from Committee and House Members, the transportation community, and others.

"I strongly believe that the path to improving America's infrastructure is through partnership – not partisanship. Republicans want to work together on bipartisan infrastructure solutions, but in order to reach that goal, key principles must be addressed in this process," said Ranking Member Sam Graves. "The *STARTER Act 2.0* puts forward our Republican principles; provides historic levels of funding for our roads, bridges, and other surface transportation infrastructure; and ensures that we invest those funds wisely and efficiently.

Graves continued, "Our bill focuses on the core infrastructure that helps move people and goods through our communities every single day, cuts red tape that holds up project construction, and gets resources into the hands of our states and locals with as few strings attached as possible. As the process for considering legislation on infrastructure moves forward, I am eager to see these proposals become part of a robust bipartisan effort – just as the President continues to call for."

"Streamlining the federal permitting and environmental review process absolutely must be a part of an infrastructure package," said Highways and Transit Subcommittee Ranking Member Rodney Davis (R-IL), a cosponsor of the bill. "That's why the One Federal Decision Act is a key part of our House Republican infrastructure proposal, the *STARTER Act 2.0*. Cutting red tape that delays infrastructure project delivery will save taxpayer dollars and complete projects more quickly, while still protecting the environment. Reforming the permitting and environmental review process has received bipartisan support in the U.S. Senate and endorsements from business and labor groups and trade associations. It's time that this important reform be considered as Congress and the White House continue infrastructure talks."

"As the country opens back up, Americans will once again be commuting on crumbling roads, bridges, and highways that are in desperate need of repair. The *STARTER Act 2.0* not only creates a safer and more efficient transportation system, but it also includes provisions like the *AFFRM Act* that take important steps to combat China's economic aggression in the transportation industry. This legislation puts true transportation infrastructure first and prioritizes building a resilient transit system," said Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee Ranking Member Rick Crawford (R-AR), a cosponsor of the bill.

"America is the greatest country in the world, but there's nothing great about it taking us 20 years or more to address traffic problems or roads that our parents and grandparents were complaining about. Dumping more money into a grossly expanded definition of infrastructure just results in more wasted money, more re-reviews of reanalysis and few solutions. The *STARTER Act 2.0* changes that," said the Ranking Member of the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis and of the Subcommittee on Aviation, Garret Graves (R-LA), a cosponsor of the bill. "This legislation streamlines the way that projects are designed and built by focusing on turning dirt and making solutions happen. By cutting the fat, red tape and bureaucracy, your tax dollars can actually work for you rather than against you. This would result in a significant increase in available funding so that the issues our parents and grandparents complained about actually get fixed, and the transportation investments that our children and grandchildren need can become reality too. These principles and the benefits are in evidence across most successful enterprises – think LEAN, Six Sigma, Top Quality Management. But here's how you'll really know that this approach is in taxpayers' best interest: Liberals will balk and deride the *STARTER Act* and continue to insist on all the silly abuse in their infra-free-for-all. Let's get it done."

The *STARTER Act 2.0*:

- Authorizes over \$400 billion over five years – the largest percentage increase for surface transportation programs in the last quarter-century.
- Prioritizes proven programs that address core infrastructure functions – by improving our core system of highways and bridges, facilitating commerce, and focusing on safety and efficiency.
- Streamlines project delivery – by cutting red tape to reduce project delays and costs, putting federal dollars to work faster to improve our transportation system.
- Meets rural America's infrastructure needs – by investing in small and rural communities, where 71% of public road mileage runs.
- Ensures flexibility for states and non-federal partners – by giving states more decision-making authority to meet their own unique infrastructure needs.
- Fosters transportation innovation and technology – helping to improve transportation efficiency, safety, resiliency, and the environment.
- Works to sustain the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) – by recognizing that continued reliance on fuel taxes is not a long-term solution to HTF solvency.
- Supports building more resilient infrastructure – because every \$1 invested in mitigation and resiliency saves \$4 to \$11, reduces risk, and saves lives.

Click [here](#) for the legislative text of the *STARTER Act*.

Click [here](#) for a section-by-section summary of the *STARTER Act*.

Infrastructure Funding Options Debated At Senate Hearing

editor@ashto.org May 19, 2021

Without timely reauthorization of surface transportation funding legislation, revenue for the Highway Trust Fund will become uncertain. That uncertainty presents a problem for state departments of transportation, which will find it “nearly impossible” to plan future infrastructure investments without knowing if they will have the necessary multi-year funds available.

Those are some of the arguments made by Victoria Sheehan – commissioner for the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials 2020-2021 president – during a May 18 Senate Committee on Finance [hearing](#).

As a result, Congress should consider a mix of new short- and long-term funding options to provide more fiscal support for transportation investments nationwide, she explained.

“Projects that state DOTs undertake connect people, enhance the quality of life for our citizens, and – just as important – stimulate economic growth in each community where they are built,” Sheehan said in her [written testimony](#).

“However, the current trajectory of the HTF – the backbone of the federal surface transportation program – is simply unsustainable as it will have insufficient resources to meet current federal investment levels beyond fiscal year 2021,” Sheehan noted.

She said, according to recently released baseline projections from the Congressional Budget Office, that in order to simply maintain the current HTF spending levels adjusted for inflation, Congress will need to identify \$74.8 billion in additional revenues for a five-year surface transportation reauthorization bill through 2026.

Meanwhile, the purchasing power of HTF revenues dropped substantially over the last several decades – mainly as the federal government has not adjusted its per-gallon motor fuel taxes since 1993.

Sheehan noted in the question and answer portion of the hearing that in 2019 AASHTO’s board of directors passed a resolution that suggested several potential revenue solutions for the HTF. Those include raising the federal motor fuel tax and indexing it to inflation; adding freight-based user fees; adding per-barrel oil fees; and continuing to advance a mileage-based or [vehicle miles traveled](#) (VMT) fee solution.

Separately, AASHTO’s board of directors stressed in a [recent resolution](#) that any mileage-based user fee program should “build on the leadership and expertise of state DOTs,” as many are currently conducting long-term VMT test pilots.

For example, the Oregon Department of Transportation [noted in January](#) that it is now pilot testing the state’s pay-per-mile road usage charge or RUC system, known as [OReGO](#), at the city and county level. The agency said in a [statement](#) that it is now recruiting motorists via a [survey](#) to determine their eligibility for this study, which will run through the summer of 2021.

Sheehan emphasized during her testimony that one key to managing a successful transition to a VMT program is managing the collection cost of fees from system users.

“As we transition to any new solution, we need to study the cost of collection closely,” she explained. “Because it is extremely important that state DOTs have certainty around funding. Any shortfall is disruptive to the communities we serve and creates challenges for construction communities that conduct that work.”

With all that said, however, Sheehan said AASHTO “strongly believes” federal surface transportation funding must continue to be focused on direct formula-based apportionments from the HTF to states and transit agencies.

“And the HTF can only be fixed with real revenue solutions, and not be substituted by financing tools such as the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act program, infrastructure banks, or any program that provides direct loans or loan guarantees to support transportation projects,” she added.

“Whichever revenue tools are utilized, AASHTO looks forward to assisting you and the rest of your Senate colleagues in finding and implementing a viable set of revenue solutions that will renew our national heritage of investment in our country and our future through transportation,” Sheehan said.

[Eugene Mulero](#) May 20, 2021

The leaders of the congressional tax-writing committees remain divided over how to fund comprehensive infrastructure policy legislation that President Joe Biden would prefer to enact this year.

Pressed by the White House to adopt a sustainable source of funding for myriad infrastructure programs, top Democrats continue to endorse Biden's call to increase the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%. Republicans, however, push back on such a proposal, pointing instead to a broader portfolio associated with fees on transportation modes.

Biden, who unveiled the \$2.25 trillion American Jobs Plan backed primarily by raising the corporate tax rate, said he will refuse inaction from Congress on infrastructure policy. Both the White House and Democratic leaders in Congress note recent studies that have determined significant aspects of the country's mobility grid and freight networks would benefit from major upgrades.

"The fact is, the infrastructure tab has been growing for decades due to Congress' negligence and corporations failing to pitch in fairly," said Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) during a hearing on May 18. "I'm not going to tell a rancher in eastern Oregon or a home health aide on the coast that they've got to make up the shortfall. Working people driving long distances are willing to pay their fair share; they've been doing so every time they pull up to the pump. They aren't going to support immunizing mega-corporations from paying anything at all."

"We have the opportunity to make smart investments that create good jobs, protect against costly environmental disasters and fortify our economy," said Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.), chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, during a hearing the following day. "Under the leadership of President Biden, we again have the opportunity to propel our country forward, by not only updating outdated infrastructure networks, but also with investments in reducing carbon emissions and actions to mitigate the threat of climate change."

While most Democrats support increasing corporate taxes that would back Biden's infrastructure agenda, Republican leaders push back, arguing such an approach would hinder a post-pandemic economic recovery. Top Senate Republicans have been negotiating with the White House over funding provisions that would be included in comprehensive infrastructure legislation. Earlier this year, the Senate GOP unveiled a nearly \$600 billion infrastructure policy framework, meant as an alternative to Biden's proposal.

"Consideration of offsetting the cost of infrastructure with a corporate tax rate increase or increases in international taxes, especially coming out of the largest negative shock to the economy on record, is counterproductive and a nonstarter on my side of the aisle," said Finance Committee ranking member Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) on May 18.

Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas), Ways and Means panel ranking member, observed during a hearing May 19, "No president has ever raised taxes on businesses to recover from an economic crisis. The largest tax increase in half a century landing on job creators just as we are asking them to hire more; that makes no sense."

Brady continued, "Why should American businesses have the worst tax rates among our global competitors, worse than Communist China, for heaven's sake."

[Infrastructure Stories](#)

Neither side has offered measures that would approve raising federal fuel taxes to provide long-term funding primarily for surface transportation projects. The federal Highway Trust Fund account operates on revenue from fuel taxes that is insufficient to meet long-term obligations. The fund assists states with transportation projects. The federal 24.4 cents-per-gallon diesel tax and 18.4 cents-per-gallon gas tax rates were set in 1993.

Meanwhile, the Democratic leadership of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is aiming to consider a multiyear surface transportation policy bill before the end of the month. House transportation committee Democrats plan to consider their version in June. Any measure the congressional highway committees panel approves would necessitate funding input from the tax-writing panels.

Treasury readies first batch of \$350B aid to states, localities

Money can be used for health care, aid to businesses and households, front-line workers

By [David Lerman](#)

Posted May 10, 2021 at 1:07pm

State and local governments gained access Monday to \$350 billion in pandemic relief, as the Treasury Department opened a new program designed to replenish lost revenue and help address economic hardships.

The new funding, part of a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief law enacted in March, will provide a two-year cash infusion for states, localities, U.S. territories and tribal governments that have shed an estimated 1.3 million jobs since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic last year. Treasury officials released guidance Monday outlining the rules that will govern applications for the aid.

The money can be used for a wide range of purposes that include public health, assistance to families and businesses, the replacement of lost public sector revenue, and "premium pay" for essential workers. It also could be used for infrastructure work that is limited to water and sewer systems and broadband internet access.

State and local governments could begin applying for the aid Monday and the first payments could be processed "in a matter of days," a senior administration official told reporters in a conference call. But not all the funding will come immediately.

Local governments will receive half their money beginning this month, followed by the second half 12 months later. Some states would receive payments on that schedule as well. But states that have had an increase in the unemployment rate of more than 2 points since February 2020 could receive their full allocation in a single lump sum, according to the guidance.

The funding, which follows \$150 billion in state and local aid awarded last year, amounts to a conviction by the Biden administration that a hefty cash infusion at the local level would accelerate the economic recovery. Officials cited a lack of sufficient aid after the 2008 recession as a reason for sluggish growth.

“This is responding to the lessons of the past in a powerful way,” said Gene Sperling, President Joe Biden’s top coordinator of pandemic relief. If state and local governments had sufficient aid to grow at their normal recovery rates after the Great Recession, the country’s economic growth would have been 3 percent on average instead of 2.3 percent, he said.

But the program could still trigger fights over how the money can be used, particularly as some states or localities seek to offer tax cuts. Some Republican-led states have already filed court challenges to the pandemic relief law, saying a provision barring the aid for tax cuts violates state sovereignty.

The guidance released Monday said the aid can’t be used to fund “reductions in net tax revenue.” If states or localities choose to cut taxes, it said, “they must demonstrate how they paid for the tax cuts from sources other than Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds.” It said they could do so “by enacting policies to raise other sources of revenue, by cutting spending, or through higher revenue due to economic growth.”

A senior administration official said the government would conduct “checks” to ensure that money is not used to finance a tax cut, but that tax cuts could be enacted through other means.

“If they meet that test, they have that sovereign right as states to do whatever they like,” the official said. An interim final rule on the program was scheduled to be published later Monday, officials said.

The guidance also prohibits the aid from being used to shore up state or local pension funds — a concern raised by many Republican lawmakers.

Sperling said the aid is also designed to ensure an “equitable recovery” by assisting disadvantaged communities with education and housing assistance.

Of the total \$350 billion in available aid, \$195.3 billion is reserved for states and the District of Columbia. Another \$65.1 billion will go to county governments and \$45.6 billion will go to metropolitan cities.

House GOP Unveils \$400 Billion Highway Policy Bill

Eugene Mulero May 20, 2021

Legislation that would authorize \$400 billion over five years for surface transportation programs was unveiled by Republican policymakers in the U.S. House of Representatives May 19.

The Surface Transportation Advanced Through Reform, Technology and Efficient Review (STARTER) Act 2.0 would update a 2015 highway law that expires at the end of September.

The bill would extend or create programs related to highway funding, autonomous vehicles, the trucking workforce and autonomous technology, among other provisions.

The measure, which also aims to streamline parts of the federal environmental permitting process, comes ahead of the Democrats’ surface transportation proposal. The Democratic leadership on the House transportation panel is expected to consider their version after the Memorial Day holiday on May 31. Highway policy legislation would represent a pillar of President Joe Biden’s infrastructure agenda.

Infrastructure Stories

“Our bill focuses on the core infrastructure that helps move people and goods through our communities every single day, cuts red tape that holds up project construction, and gets resources into the hands of our states and locals with as few strings attached as possible,” said Transportation and Infrastructure Committee ranking member Sam Graves (R-Mo.), the bill’s chief sponsor. “As the process for considering legislation on infrastructure moves forward, I am eager to see these proposals become part of a robust bipartisan effort, just as the president continues to call for.”

Highways and Transit Subcommittee ranking member Rodney Davis (R-Ill.), a cosponsor, added: “Streamlining the federal permitting and environmental review process absolutely must be a part of an infrastructure package.”

Specifically, the legislation would maintain an infrastructure grants program, update a national highway freight plan and require agencies to develop a single permitting timetable for environmental reviews.

For trucking, the legislation would enhance resources for states to pursue additional parking options for trucks. It would establish an apprenticeship program designed for commercial driver’s license holders between 18 to 20 to allow for interstate driving and it would standardize industry best practices for hiring carriers. The bill also would ensure flexible hours-of-service guidelines for certain farm operations and livestock haulers.

Additionally, the bill would dedicate funding for rural programs. According to a summary of the legislation, it “provides greater flexibility and supports greater mobility in rural areas by increasing the federal share of project costs for projects located in qualified opportunity zones, in medically underserved areas or areas with medically underserved populations.”

It also would establish a competitive grant program for connected vehicle applications, pave the way for a national vehicle-miles-traveled fee system, and create the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation, or PROTECT, grant program pertaining to natural disasters.

“This legislation puts true transportation infrastructure first and prioritizes building a resilient transit system,” said Rep. Rick Crawford (R-Ark.), ranking member of the Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee. He is a co-sponsor.

While the Republican measure emphasizes surface transportation policies, committee Chairman Peter DeFazio has insisted his version would propose transforming the country’s mobility grid, including transit systems. The chairman indicated his five-year legislative update of the 2015 highway law would propose \$100 billion to address a backlog in transit state-of-good repair criteria.

“America is facing serious challenges: Crumbling infrastructure, the threat of climate change, inequality and racial injustice, a rising China that threatens our domestic workforce and manufacturing,” said DeFazio May 18. “We can’t solve these problems by doing the status quo.”

Meanwhile, the White House and Republicans continue to negotiate infrastructure policy and funding parameters. The Senate GOP has unveiled a nearly \$600 billion policy framework, as Democrats aim to pursue a significant higher legislative proposal. Biden's infrastructure plan calls for \$2.25 trillion by increasing the corporate tax rate.

"We believe we can find a bipartisan deal on infrastructure," said Biden May 18 in Michigan. "But we've made one thing clear: We'll compromise, but doing nothing is not an option."

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.

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

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

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

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

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

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

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

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

In order to apply for program funding, an applicant must be an existing FTA recipient – either a project sponsor of an eligible transit project or an entity with land use planning authority in the project corridor. To ensure that work meets the needs of the local community, transit

project sponsors and land use planning authorities must partner to conduct the planning work. The application period will close on Monday, June 21, 2021.

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

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

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 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.

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)

It's TAP season, and by that I mean Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for sidewalks. Our deadline was last week, the State's deadline is coming up, so let's look at what might go wrong, leaving tracks.....



This is all reminiscent of the 15 foot tall penguin on the beaches of Florida, one of the greatest pranks ever!!



In 1948, a man wore 30-pound, three-toed lead shoes and stomped around a Florida beach during the night. The footprints lead people to believe that a 15-foot tall penguin was roaming their lands. He kept up the prank for 10 years, visiting various beaches. The hoax wasn't revealed until 40 years later.

In the News

Deadline nears for public comment on I-10 'truck bridge' proposal

Posted by [Gabriel Tynes](#) | May 20, 2021

The Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization (ESMPO) hosted a public hearing last night on the proposed Interstate 10 Truck Bridge, but few members of the public attended. Similar to a hearing last week on the opposite side of the bay, representatives of Africatown and the trucking industry were there to express their concerns, but they were joined by Baldwin County toll critics Kevin Spriggs and Lou Campemenosi.

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) didn't have anything new to report about the project, other than to remind the public a deadline to receive comments is approaching May 29. Currently the proposal calls for a [three-phase project](#), with the first phase — a four-lane span over the Mobile River, new interchanges in Mobile and re-striping the Bayway to accommodate three lanes in each direction rather than two — paid for by a toll on trucks of "not more than \$15."

The first phase is estimated to cost \$675 million. The federal government has offered a \$125 million INFRA grant toward the project while the state has pledged \$250 million. The other \$300 million will be "paid back" through toll revenue.

In separate meetings scheduled June 2 and June 9, each MPO is expected to vote on whether to include the toll scheme and phased concept on long range planning documents. If so, ALDOT can proceed with final engineering studies and financing arrangements. If not, state or local leaders may be forced back to the drawing board.

Fairhope City Council Chairman Jack Burrell and Baldwin County Commission Chairman Joe Davis, both members of the ESMPO, remain unconvinced. Both expressed concerns that Phase 1 does not provide any improvements to I-10 on the Eastern Shore, namely the Bayway and Exit 35 at Daphne and Spanish Fort.

There are additional concerns about the life expectancy of the Bayway and that the pending vote to approve Phase 1 does not guarantee that subsequent phases will ever be completed.

"I propose that Phase 2 begin now, with design and environmental studies approved by appropriate federal and state agencies," Davis said, noting the original \$2.1 billion proposal raised the Bayway in concert with the two-span bridge construction, also alleviating pressure on Exit 35. "A new Bayway must be finished as a bridge is constructed."

Burrell [repeated his claim](#) that the entire project can be built at once, if the state can secure a \$1.75 billion low-interest loan from the federal government.

"It's a big 'if,'" he said. "In the discussions I've had, the common theme has been we need the full scope of the project but we don't have a way to pay for the full scope of the project. We need the entire scope done sooner rather than later. Even if we don't need the capacity now, by the time [Phase 1] is finished, we're going to need the additional capacity."

Burrell said 20 years amortization on a \$1.725 billion loan would equal a toll of about \$1.64 per vehicle based on current traffic projections. Additional fees would likely raise the toll a dollar more, but Burrell said studies suggest most through traffic would support a low toll.

The votes next week will include draft amendments calling on ALDOT to study whether car drivers could voluntarily use the truck bridge with a fee of no more than \$2.

"We don't think a \$2.25 or \$2.50 toll is going to dissuade the average I-10 traveler from taking it," Burrell said, emphasizing that existing free routes would remain free.

Public comments on the proposal will be accepted until 5 p.m. May 26 and [may be submitted online](#). The [Mobile MPO](#) Policy Board will vote on the amendment June 2 at 10 a.m. at 110 Beauregard Street in Mobile. The Eastern Shore MPO will vote on the amendment June 9 at 10 a.m. at Daphne City Hall.

Zeigler Boulevard to close between Forest Dale Drive and Forest Hill Drive

Zeigler Blvd. will be closed for road construction for approximately two weeks between Forest Dale Drive and Forest Hill Drive beginning Monday, May 17. Traffic will be detoured to Forest Hill Drive to Moffett Road to University Boulevard.

Access to Langan Park (local traffic only) will be maintained from the west from Forest Dale Drive to Flournoy Drive and from the east from Ludlow Circle (west) to Forest Hill Drive. Road will be closed (no traffic) between Flournoy Drive and Ludlow Circle (west).

All activities are weather-dependent and may be delayed or rescheduled in the event of inclement weather. Motorists are asked to use caution when travelling through the work zone, especially at night, and keep watch for construction workers and equipment entering and exiting the roadway



A \$4.5B Pool of Economic Recovery Funds States, Localities Can Tap Into

By Bill Lucia | MAY 6, 2021

The U.S. Economic Development Administration received an influx of Covid relief dollars over the past year that is more than 10 times the size of its usual budget. That money is now flowing as grants.

The U.S. Economic Development Administration is flush with cash these days. In fiscal 2020, the federal grant-maker had a budget of about \$330 million. Now, two rounds of coronavirus relief passed by Congress have pumped more than \$4 billion dollars its way, money that is destined for grant recipients that include state and local governments and certain nonprofit groups.

"It's been both a challenge and a tremendous opportunity for the agency," Dennis Alvord, EDA's deputy assistant secretary for economic development and chief operating officer, said of the funding surge during an interview with *Route Fifty* last week.

"We definitely have had to think differently about our business model and how we undertake our grant-making mission to aid the nation's most economically distressed communities," he added.

Amid the influx of funding, the agency last month revised its investment priorities to include "equity" for the first time. There were other updates as well, like adding references for—and thereby giving greater consideration to—"coal and power plant communities," "tech-based economic development" and environmental sustainability.

The amended investment priorities matter for grantees because they provide a framework for the types of projects and programs EDA is looking for when it awards competitive grants. In other words, proposals that mesh with the priorities have a better shot at funding.

The changes also mean EDA will put more of an emphasis on outreach and assistance for communities that may have missed out on past funding opportunities because they didn't know about them, or that lack the capacity to go after funding, according to Alvord.

“What we’ll be looking at is how communities—when they are applying for EDA assistance—is how they articulate how their particular grant proposal is going to further the objectives outlined in one or more of the new investment priorities,” he said

He also said he’d encourage grant applicants to talk about how their proposals will help to “advance more equitable outcomes” for people living in places like tribal lands, underserved rural areas, or counties or pockets of cities that have persistently high levels of poverty.

Created in 1965, EDA bills itself as the only federal agency focused exclusively on economic development. In recent years, the agency has also taken on more of a role in assisting with economic recovery efforts after natural disasters.

The March coronavirus relief legislation known as the American Rescue Plan included a giant pool of roughly \$350 billion in direct state, city and county relief funding that is bound for thousands of jurisdictions all across the country. That money, managed by the Treasury Department, continues to draw heavy attention from the state and local government community.

But \$3 billion that EDA is now overseeing is an example of another funding stream available through that law that communities can potentially tap into. Of that total, Congress specifically set aside \$750 million, or 25%, for places that were negatively affected by drops that the coronavirus has caused in the tourism, travel and outdoor recreation sectors.

This money comes atop of \$1.5 billion the agency received from the CARES Act, the pandemic relief measure Congress passed last year.

‘Diverse Mix’ of Proposals So Far

EDA is still working on funding opportunity notices that will provide more detailed guidelines for American Rescue Plan grants. But awards the agency provided with CARES Act dollars, which have gone toward a variety of projects, give a sense of how future grants might be used.

In the final days of April For example, EDA awarded \$3.8 million to Salina, Kansas, for drainage and road improvements meant to allow for business expansion and \$3 million to the Business Council of Alabama, in Montgomery, to establish a long-term pandemic recovery strategy for businesses, nonprofits and communities.

Alvord said one trend EDA has seen during the pandemic is grant applications for broadband expansion projects, including planning and infrastructure build-outs.

The agency has also run an initiative centered specifically around health and biomedical endeavors and related entrepreneurship. And it has distributed grants to recipient organizations that run revolving loan fund programs that can help businesses gain access to capital—something that became difficult for some of them during the early days of the pandemic.

“We’re really seeing a very diverse mix of program needs that have bubbled up,” Alvord said.

To get the CARES funding distributed quickly, EDA awarded about half of it through a noncompetitive process to grantees it had worked with before, with known track records.

Congress gave EDA authority to beef up its staff to help handle the additional dollars, and the agency has done so. It is also providing its employees with extra training in how to detect waste and fraud and boosting the ranks of its performance and evaluation division to track whether grants are achieving intended outcomes.

Alvord said last week that the funding announcements and notices for the American Rescue Plan money would likely be released in phases over the coming weeks and months, but didn’t provide an exact timeline for that process.

“We’re on the precipice,” he said. “Stay tuned.”

Transportation Research

How to Access and Visualize 2020 Census Apportionment Results

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

[Watch Now](#)

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.

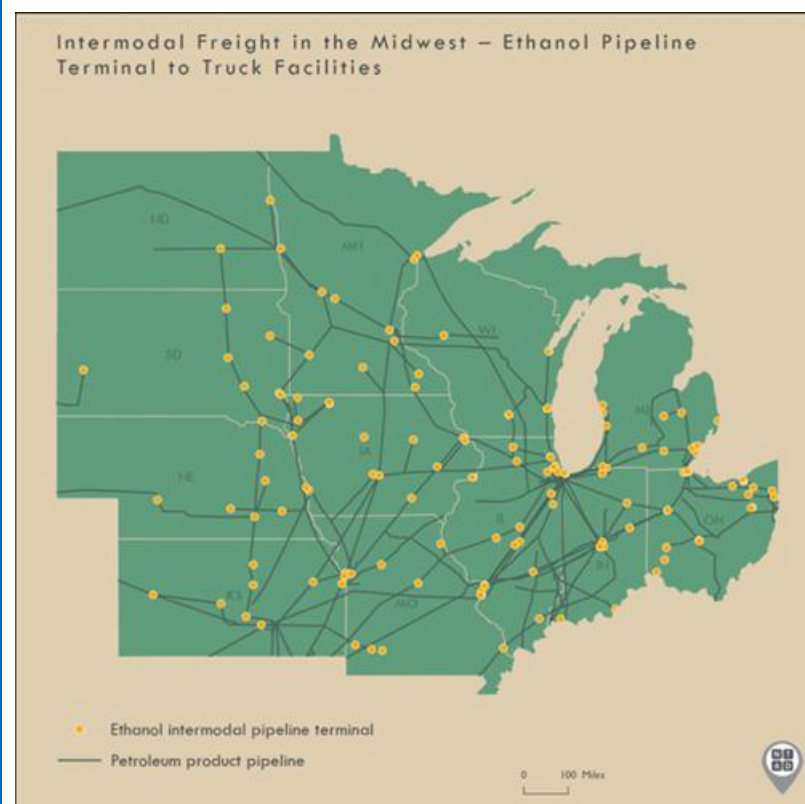
The updates in this release include:

- 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 Smallen: (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



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

Transportation Dictionary

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

Search Tips

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