



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, August 13th, 2021

Volume 39, Number 7

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WE HAVE TAP FUNDS AVAILABLE - deadline extended (please see *Funding Opportunities*). There is a Mobile MPO Policy Board meeting on September 1st, and a virtual TCC/CAC for the Mobile MPO on August 18th; please see *Mobile MPO Updates*. Pelosi puts the Infrastructure Bill on hold, the bill contains breathalyzers for all cars in 6 years, and investigates a VMT tax; all in *Legislative Updates*. *In the News* this week, some new US Census data came out, the U-Turn in Orange Beach is a success, and Mayor Kraft supports the bridges. *Just For Fun* is electric (boogie woogie woogie) 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

Update on Phase One of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project

On July 27th, ALDOT presented to the Mobile MPO and the Eastern Shore MPO an update on Phase One of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project at Five Rivers Resource Center in Spanish Fort. This meeting was the first of many updates that ALDOT will provide to both MPOs.

When the Mobile MPO and Eastern Shore MPO both met separately on June 2nd, 2021, both MPOs amended each Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include Phase One of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project. Both MPOs passed the amendments unanimously. Both the Mobile and Eastern Shore LRTPs included funding for Phase One to be a toll on heavy trucks, with the potential for voluntary vehicular tolls. All legacy routes would remain free.

It was recognized by the Mobile MPO and ESMPO Chairman, that there needed to be more communication between the two MPOs concerning this project, and more transparency from all those involved. The next time ALDOT reports an update to the joint MPOs will be in late September. It is intended that these public meetings will be every two months.

VIRTUAL TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE (TCC)/CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) of the MOBILE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) MEETING

TCC/CAC Meeting
Wed, Aug 18, 2021 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CDT)

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/478185365>

You can also dial in using your phone.
(For supported devices, tap a one-touch number below to join instantly.)

United States: +1 (408) 650-3123
- One-touch: <tel:+14086503123,478185365#>

Access Code: 478-185-365

On the agenda is a discussion concerning the Alabama Transportation Infrastructure Bank for the future STP Attributable projects.

We have a couple of projects that will need to be reviewed by the Committee including

There are several items on the agenda to review and recommend to the MPO. The Committee will review and recommend for approval the following changes to the 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Modify the 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program to include:

- 100073892 PE SOUTHWEST REGION - Mobile Area Ready Mix Concrete Paving Projects Target Start Date : 8/1/2021 Engineers Estimate : \$250,000.00
- 100074079 CN SOUTHWEST REGION - Mobile Area Ready Mix Concrete Paving Projects intersection improvement at SR 13 and Jackson Road in Satsuma. Removal of deteriorated asphalt using concrete pavement Target Start Date : 8/1/2021 Engineers Estimate : \$400,000.00
- 100068528 (CN) Bridge Replacement (Bin 005712 And Bin 005856) On SR-13 (US-43) Over Cold Creek; Old Target start date : June 30, 2023; New Target start date : January 31, 2025

- 100069478 (CN) Bridge Painting On Bridges Along I-65. On I-65 Over AL Gulf Coast RR (10195,10196) On I-65/I-65 NB Off Ramp Over US-43 (10197,10198,10199) On I-65 Over 1-65 NB Off Ramp/Norfolk So. RR (10200,10201) On I-65 Over Gunnison Crk (10202,10203); Old Target start date : November 04, 2022; New Target start date : November 08, 2024

Other agenda items include a discussion concerning the STP Attributable Table and the Alabama Transportation Infrastructure Bank for the future STP Attributable projects. Consultants will be presenting at MPO meeting on September 1.

The Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board will meet to vote on the recommendations by the TCC/CAC at a meeting on:

**Wednesday, September 1st, 2021 at 10:00 AM
GM&O Building 1st Floor Board Room
110 Beauregard Street, Mobile, AL 36602**

Physically challenged persons who need special accommodations should contact SARPC in advance so arrangements can be made to meet their needs. Additional information may be obtained from the Transportation Planning Coordinator at the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission, (251)433-6541 or transportation@sarpc.org.

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 on June 2nd at 10:00AM in the SARPC Board Room on the first floor of the GMO Building. 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

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

LINK TO MAP [HERE](#)

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 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 : 100073813 (CN)

Federal aid number : HSIP 0017 (586)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : CENTERLINE SCORING ON SR-17/SR-57 (US-45) FROM SR-158 TO THE MISSISSIPPI STATE LINE

Old Engineers Estimate : \$548,172.00

New Engineers Estimate : \$549,884.75

South Alabama RPO Updates

The Rural Planning Organization for the SARPC Region is currently updating the Transportation Plan for the rural areas of Baldwin, Escambia, and Mobile Counties. Each year all RPO member governments are contacted concerning the updating of the RPO Transportation Plan and list of Safety Projects. This includes road and bridge projects, intersection improvements and the like, transit projects and bicycle and pedestrian projects. This is an annual process whereby the rural transportation needs and safety issues in the region are identified and submitted to ALDOT. The current list is available for review online at <http://www.mobilempo.org/RPODocuments.html>.

The RPO will meet in the coming weeks to adopt the updated Transportation Plan and the RPO Work Program for Fiscal Year 2022.

Projects in Region Let August 27th, 2021

MOBILE COUNTY

For constructing the Safety Improvements (Curve Warning Sign Installations) on various routes in the Southwest Region (Mobile Area) as indicated in the plans. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$699,803 to \$855,314 .

BALDWIN COUNTY

For constructing the Safety Improvements (Curve Warning Sign Installations) on various routes in the Southwest Region (Mobile Area) as indicated in the plans. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$699,803 to \$855,314 .

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

For constructing the Safety Improvements (Curve Warning Sign Installations) on various routes in the Southwest Region (Mobile Area) as indicated in the plans. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$699,803 to \$855,314 .

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

Legislative Updates

Pelosi breaks bad news to moderates: No vote on infrastructure this month

BY [SCOTT WONG](#) AND [MIKE LILLIS](#) - 08/11/21 02:16 PM EDT

Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) made clear to rank-and-file Democrats on Wednesday that the House will not take up the Senate-passed bipartisan infrastructure package this month, rejecting calls from moderates in her caucus who are demanding a quick vote.

The announcement, in her first call with House Democrats since the successful Senate vote on Tuesday, was largely expected. Pelosi, since the infrastructure talks launched in earnest months ago, has adopted the position that the House will not turn to the \$1 trillion infrastructure package until the Senate passes a much larger \$3.5 trillion package chock full of Democratic social benefits programs and climate initiatives.

That strategy has been championed by progressive lawmakers in the House who don't quite trust some of the centrist Democrats in the Senate and want to use the bipartisan infrastructure bill as leverage — critics say as hostage — to ensure the larger \$3.5 trillion package clears the upper chamber.

Pelosi, during Wednesday's call, leaned on the sentiments of those liberals in making her case to push the infrastructure vote until later in the year.

"I am not freelancing. This is the consensus," she said, according to a source familiar with her message.

Pelosi praised both the Senate and President Biden for reaching a bipartisan agreement on infrastructure — a massive spending proposal that the Senate passed in a 69-30 vote, garnering support from 19 Republicans and all 50 members of the Democratic caucus.

But the Speaker has also been clear that the infrastructure package alone is insufficient to tackle the challenges facing the country when it comes to economic inequality, health care disparities, workers rights and the warming planet. It's those issues that Democrats will address in the second legislative package, which is expected to move under special budget rules, known as reconciliation, which preclude the Republicans' filibuster powers and allow Senate Democrats to pass the measure with a simple majority.

The Senate passed the budget blueprint early Wednesday morning, setting the stage for the \$3.5 trillion package, and the House will come back to Washington the week of Aug. 23 to adopt that Senate-passed budget. The \$3.5 trillion package would include funding for expanded child tax credits, community college, universal pre-kindergarten and an expansion of Medicare to include dental and vision coverage.

"The president has said he's all for the bipartisan approach ... bravo! That's progress, but it ain't the whole vision," Pelosi said on the call. "The votes in the House and Senate depend on us having both bills."

The message is sure to disappoint moderate Democrats, including members of the Blue Dogs and Problem Solvers Caucus, who have urged party leaders for weeks to stage a vote on the bipartisan infrastructure bill as soon as it arrives from the Senate. Many of those centrists are facing tough reelection campaigns and want the opportunity to claim a big bipartisan victory during the long summer recess.

"If we've got \$1 trillion in infrastructure spending sitting there, I think we should vote on it," Rep. Scott Peters (D-Calif.) said just before the August break.

Senate OKs infrastructure bill; fate in House tied to bigger budget bill

Bill provides \$550 billion extra for roads, rail, broadband and more

By [Jessica Wehrman](#) August 10, 2021

Months of back-and-forth negotiations, squabbles over pay-fors and Zoom calls culminated in a long-expected, much-delayed Senate vote Tuesday to pass a sweeping bipartisan infrastructure package.

The bill passed 69-30, a margin that demonstrated its popularity in the evenly divided chamber. All 50 Democrats voted for final passage, as did 19 Republicans. [Mike Rounds](#), a South Dakota Republican, did not vote.

The legislation includes \$550 billion in new spending and reauthorizes highway and water programs, among other provisions. It would inject federal cash into roads, bridges, water systems, broadband, rail and transit, among other things.

And, though Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg estimated it's about two-thirds of what President Joe Biden requested when he proposed his infrastructure package in March, it still represents what he called "a generational investment" in infrastructure.

Biden, touting the Senate vote in a White House event with Vice President [Kamala Harris](#), called the measure transformative.

"After years and years of infrastructure week, we're on the cusp of an infrastructure decade that I truly believe will transform America."

But despite stops and starts over policy issues as granular as transit formula funding, the hard part may just be beginning.

The Senate followed Tuesday's vote by moving to take up the second part of Biden's ambitious domestic agenda, a \$3.5 trillion budget resolution that will set the guidelines for a reconciliation package that will address everything from Medicare to climate change to immigration policy to universal prekindergarten for all 3- and 4-year-olds.

The success of the reconciliation package, which the Senate is not expected to begin debating until September or later, will determine when the bipartisan bill approved Tuesday hits the House floor.

Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) has vowed not to put the bipartisan infrastructure package on the floor until she can also schedule the reconciliation package, with Biden's other priorities, before the House as well.

Rep. [Tom Malinowski](#), D-N.J., a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the House Problem Solvers Caucus, predicted both measures would pass.

"Basically, we have several planes up in the air, trying to come in for a landing in stormy weather, and we have air traffic controllers — our leadership in the House and the Senate — that are going to bring those planes down," he said. "I'm not sure what order, or exactly when, but I'm absolutely certain the House will pass this infrastructure bill."

Despite some resistance on the left and right flanks, he said, "I just don't see anybody who is committed to governing saying no to this bill at the end of the day."

Senators had sought to pass the bipartisan package as early as last Thursday, but were thwarted by Sen. [Bill Hagerty](#) of Tennessee, a freshman Republican who opposes the bipartisan bill because a Congressional Budget Office score found it will add \$256 billion to the deficit over 10 years. Hagerty delayed another opportunity to speed the process on Saturday, insisting that senators take up the full 30 hours for debate of both a substitute amendment and the overall bill.

That insistence initially put the bill on a path to final passage vote shortly after 3 a.m. Tuesday, but Senate leadership agreed to delay the vote until the far more tenable hour of 11 a.m.

The legislation was negotiated by a bipartisan group of 22 senators led by Sens. [Kyrsten Sinema](#), D-Ariz., and [Rob Portman](#), R-Ohio. Two of the Republicans who had early on been part of the negotiations, [Todd Young](#) of Indiana and [Jerry Moran](#) of Kansas, announced this week

that they would not back the bill. Both are up for reelection next year, and both expressed concern about the bill's impact on deficits in their statements announcing opposition.

In an interview Monday, Buttigieg said the bill will provide a legislative road map for many of the priorities of the Biden administration, including equity and climate change.

"I think last year the conversation was largely on, you know what happens if there's no legislative majority and you just have to cobble together what you can with administrative action rule-making," he said. "Now we find ourselves in a place where we're in a position to do all of those things, so of course within the department."

As the bill moves to the House, it will likely face pushback from progressive Democrats who want to include things the Senate negotiators did not, and by conservative Republicans, many prodded to oppose it by former President Donald Trump.

On Tuesday, hours before the Senate was to vote on the bill, Trump sent out yet another statement urging Republicans not to give his successor in the White House a win. This one focused on Senate Minority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), who voted for final passage.

"Nobody will ever understand why [Mitch McConnell](#) allowed this non-infrastructure bill to be passed," Trump wrote.

Program to study vehicle mileage tax included in infrastructure package

by Nick Minock Thursday, August 12th 2021

WASHINGTON D.C. (7News) — President Joe Biden's infrastructure bill that passed the U.S. Senate this week would establish a new pilot program to test the design and implementation of a national motor vehicle per-mile user fee.

"We will not raise taxes by one cent on people making less than \$400,000 a year," Biden said earlier this week when he applauded the Senate's passage of the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure deal.

"Do you think this bill, this pilot program violates the President's tax pledge?" 7News Reporter Nick Minock asked Mike Palicz with Americans for Tax Reform.

"While the VMT pilot program is voluntary for now, it sets the groundwork for a mandatory program later," he answered. "The White House made clear the vehicle miles traveled tax would be a violation of their \$400,000 tax pledge."

If the VMT pilot program is successful, Palicz warns the federal government might mandate all motorists to pay for each mile they drive.

"I think drivers and taxpayers should be concerned they are setting the groundwork to move towards a VMT in the future," he said.

With federal gas tax revenue not keeping pace with the increasing cost of infrastructure repairs, and the administration's push for electric vehicles, policymakers are looking for new ways to make the Highway Trust Fund solvent.

That's why the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) supports miles traveled fees.

"I really think it's a kind of next step in looking at what's the next step in a sustainable equitable way to collect revenue to support our transportation system," said Susan Howard with AASHTO. "The federal gas tax has been stagnant since 1993, our needs haven't dissipated, and the gas tax hasn't kept up with inflation, so we find ourselves in a situation in which there isn't enough revenue to meet the needs of our country."

Howard said some states have already begun testing collection methods for VMT.

"The State of Oregon does have a VMT in place and does collect revenue," she said. "They give several options to consumers. Folks have tested out using smartphone technology, eventually someday if this does come to fruition it could become part of the manufacturing of a vehicle itself, but for now I think the most standard way is to use some kind of plug-in device. The State of Hawaii has done it the old fashion way with literally checking the odometer and writing it down each year when you get your car inspected."

Infrastructure bill would mandate vehicles have alcohol monitoring systems

by JANE FLASCH | WHAM Staff

Monday, August 9th 2021

HENRIETTA, N.Y. (WHAM) — WHAM-TV's morning anchor [Matt Molloy](#) drives a Volvo equipped with sensor technology to help keep him safe. "It's actually steering for me now," he said as he engaged cruise control. "If it senses I'm not touching the wheel, it will beep." The beep comes through his dashboard.

Now," he continued, "it's telling me to apply steering again or it's going to disengage."

A bipartisan [infrastructure bill that was passed in the Senate Tuesday](#) takes things a step further. It is a trillion-dollar plan to fix the country's roads and bridges.

Yet halfway through the plan, on page 1,066, there's a requirement involving the cars we'll be purchasing six years from now. They'll have to contain alcohol monitoring systems.

The full bill, showing page 1,066 regarding alcohol monitoring systems, is embedded below:
[2021 U.S. Senate Infrastructure Bill](#) by [Adam Forgie](#) on Scribd

The plan calls for "passive" systems to monitor the performance of a driver, for example, by using eye scans. Or, it requires automakers to passively gauge blood alcohols levels, perhaps by measuring them in the air of the vehicle.

It stops short of mandating breathalyzers or ignition devices but leaves the door open.

Lindsay Tomidy is with the [Monroe County Stop DWI Program](#) and sees people who have been convicted of DWI, perhaps involving a crash or injury, who are required to use those devices.

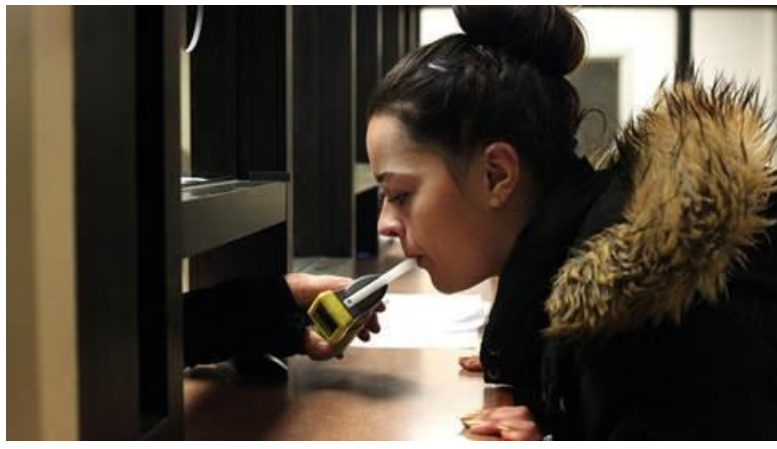
The difference being that this is getting ahead of the problem before it happens," she said. "We're just going to see the injuries and fatalities decrease.

The proposed requirement is a surprise to many drivers.

If it's added value and they've done research, I would be supportive of it," said Jennifer Harris, a nurse from Pittsford, N.Y. "Anything we could do to protect individuals from harm.

"This is the first I've heard of it being added to the bill. With the infrastructure bill, it seems like it should be based on infrastructure," said Danny Daniele.

The required technology would also measure impairment from prescription drugs or drowsiness.



FILE - In this Sept. 21, 2015, file photo, Autumn Regimbal blows into a Breathalyzer in the wing of the county jail dedicated to the state's 24/7 Sobriety Program in Sioux Falls, S.D. (AP Photo/Jay Pickthorn, File)

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This Jan. 1, 2021 photo shows a collection of empty beer cans, consumed during the pandemic, at a home in North Andover, Mass. (Mary Schwalm via AP)

Previous auto safety measures mandated by the U.S. government have focused on airbags and crash impact, protecting users in the event they are in an auto accident.

This would require carmakers to have technology that prevents or limits operation once potential impairment is detected. Systems currently under development by Volvo and others would issue a warning to drivers, then slow the speed of the vehicle and pull it over. It would give the vehicle and its sensors, not the driver, the final say.

Funding Opportunities

Mobile Urbanized AREA FY 2022 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) deadline extended to 9/3/21

The Mobile MPO has extended the deadline for submission of the Fiscal Year 2022 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding.

The maximum amount that can be applied for per project with Mobile Urbanized TAP funds is \$400,000 federal (\$500,000 Total).

Applicants are welcome to submit more than one project.

Applications are due to transportation@sarpc.org no later than 3:00 p.m., Friday, September 3, 2021.

The application and other pertinent information is available on our website at <https://www.mobilempo.org/TAP.html>

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)

The Infrastructure Bill has a lot of “green” policy, including innovations in electric car charging. [HERE](#) are a few examples



In the News

Huntsville rockets past Birmingham in 2020 Census, now Alabama's largest city

Updated Aug 13, 2021; Posted Aug 12, 2021

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

Huntsville is officially the largest city in Alabama, and grew significantly faster than expected over the last decade. Meanwhile Birmingham, for decades the largest city in the state, is headed in the opposite direction.

The [U.S. Census Bureau](#) on Thursday released official population counts for cities and counties from the 2020 Decennial Census - the once-a-decade headcount of all people living in the country. The numbers showed Huntsville was home to more than 215,000 people, a growth of nearly 35,000 - or around 19%, since the last Census in 2010. Birmingham, on the other hand, is shrinking, shedding 11,500 people in the last decade, a 5% decline.

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

Alabama is home to roughly 5,024,000 people now, making it the 24th most populous state. The state as a whole beat expectations by about 100,000 people when [statewide population totals were released earlier this year](#). Alabama grew by 5.1% since 2010, enough to keep all seven congressional seats. Huntsville was one of the places in Alabama that grew faster than expected.

“The numbers released today by the Census Bureau are not surprising and reflect what we’ve known for a long time – the Rocket City is on the move,” Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle said in a statement to AL.com Thursday. “The investments we’ve made in our infrastructure, public safety and quality-of-life make us attractive to job creators, from the largest industries to the smallest retail startups. Jobs bring people. We’re happy they’ve chosen to make Huntsville their home, and together we’ll build on our strong foundation in the years to come.”

“The numbers validate predictions we’ve heard for a while. And while we may be the biggest city in the state, we’re not going to stop striving to be the best in everything we do.”

Birmingham city is now essentially tied with Montgomery in size - both are just below 201,000 people. Mobile, the smallest of Alabama's "Big Four" cities, shrank slightly to 187,000. Huntsville, which was the smallest of the four in 2010, is the only one trending up.

While Huntsville is the largest city in the state, its metro area is still less than half the size of the Birmingham-Hoover Metro.

Birmingham-Hoover is home to more than 1.1 million people across six counties, according to the Census count. Huntsville metro area, second largest in the state, is home to around 492,000 in two counties.

Both are growing. Despite losing population in Birmingham city, the greater metro area grew by about 5% since 2010, adding more than 54,000 people. Huntsville metro is growing faster, though, adding 74,000 people since 2010, for a growth rate of nearly 18%. The Birmingham-Hoover metro grew thanks in part to Hoover, which added nearly 11,000 people since 2010, a 13% growth. Many of the Birmingham-area suburbs also grew, including Vestavia Hills, which grew by 15%, and Trussville, which grew by 31%. In the Huntsville metro, Madison City added nearly 14,000 people between 2010 and 2020, a growth rate of 33%.

Awkward U-turn intersection in orange beach a success, study shows

- [HAL SCHEURICH](#)
- UPDATED 12 HRS AGO | POSTED ON AUG 12, 2021



The U-turn intersection at Perdido Beach Boulevard and Highway 161 in Orange Beach has made things much safer for motorists and pedestrians. That's according to a study just finished this summer which considered several years of accident data. It's the first intersection of its kind in Baldwin County.

Those who've visited Orange Beach in the last few years have probably gone through it to get from east bound Perdido Beach Boulevard to Highway 162, then to Canal Road. The city of Orange Beach and ALDOT initiated a two-mile-long project in 2016 focused on improving safety on that stretch of road.

"It also had involvement with future development of condominiums and developments that were getting right-in, right-out driveways on an ALDOT highway, so all of it was how do we move that traffic? How do we move those cars? ALDOT presented the U-turn project, and everyone was concerned because obviously now, it puts you in this, you can't get left...you can't get left but over time, as the projects were built, the data began to show that, okay, it's going to make an impact," said Orange Beach City Administrator, Ken Grimes.

Study completed by UAB summer intern shows U-turn intersection at Perdido Beach Blvd. and Hwy 161 cutting back on serious collisions. In stepped Logan Lonsdale. For his senior internship at the University of Alabama Birmingham (UAB), he spent the summer with the city. With his strong background in research, he took on the task of crunching accident data before the U-turn project compared to the three years since it's been completed. An interesting finding is while the overall number of accidents went up, the more damaging and deadly ones have gone down considerably.

"We've cannulized traffic, you know. You can only make U-turns in select locations. We're having increased traffic incidents because you can't make that direct left turn, so we've got more traffic and that's leading to more front to rear accidents," Lonsdale explained. "The plus side to this is these are slow moving accidents. They're front to rear...bumper to bumper. Vehicles aren't being towed away. Ambulances aren't being called. There's not any significant injuries."

It's a trade-off city officials said they'll take any day.

As part of the two-mile-long project, grassy medians were also put in. This gives pedestrians who cross the road outside of the designated crosswalks a place to land if they can't make it across all four lanes. This has also reduced the number of pedestrians struck.

Gulf Shores Mayor Craft endorses three bridge plan



Posted Thursday, August 12, 2021 8:00 pm

By Melanie LeCroy / melanie@gulfcoastmedia.com

GULF SHORES - On Monday night Gulf Shores' Mayor Robert Craft told Gulf Shores City Council meeting attendees that he believed the island needs three bridges.

It was the first time he spoke publicly about the project since expressing his disappointment regarding the delay in late July.

"We are supportive of the ALDOT bridge but we are not against the bridge at The Wharf. I honestly believe with the way the future is going we are going to need all three of them. I believe the state could build their bridge and the bridge company could build their new lane and we would still need more," Craft said.

The need for more roads leading off the island has grown in recent years as both the resident population and tourism has increased in the island towns of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach.

The planning of those bridges has become contentious in recent months as Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon pushed for expansion of the Beach Express toll bridge despite a decade-long plan by the Alabama Department of Transportation to build a toll-free bridge connecting the Baldwin Beach Express to Canal Road East in Gulf Shores.

In Monday's meeting, Craft said he wanted those involved to understand that the issue was not which city should construct a bridge but rather how to safely evacuate everyone from the island in an emergency and reduce traffic.

"We are working closely with the governor's office and ALDOT making sure they understand exactly what the city of Gulf Shores is concerned about. We are not against what Orange Beach is doing and I understand why Tony is doing it. I wouldn't do it the same way, but he is trying to protect the revenue stream the city of Orange Beach has and we are not worried about that," Craft said, referring to the \$1.5 million in toll revenue Orange Beach received this year.

"We have no revenue stream. When we talk about we, we are not talking about we being Gulf Shores. We are talking about we being this island. Everybody on this island has got to get out of here in a storm situation. Everybody goes back and forth to Foley on a regular basis or at least up to Publix and areas in the north part of Gulf Shores on a regular basis. We are overwhelmed with traffic. We need all three bridges. I don't think it has to be us or them. I think we can focus on getting them all," Craft said.

Kennon has been in negotiations with the previous and current owners of the Baldwin County Bridge Company (BCBC) to help the state move traffic off Highway 59 and onto the Foley Beach Expressway.

Those negotiations resulted in the BCBC agreeing to expand from five to 11 toll booths with electronic toll capability, permanent Freedom Pass lanes and add another span to the bridge resulting in two northbound and two southbound lanes. The expansion of the toll bridge booths would happen within 18 months and a new span would be added within three years. The financial burden of the expansion would be shouldered by the BCBC.

The Waterway Bridge route runs along the Gulf Shores and Orange Beach line that ends in Orange Beach with a large roundabout intersection. Kennon said Orange Beach will be charged with policing the new intersections, dealing with traffic and accidents.

Plans for the toll-free route were put on hold this month after Alabama Governor Kay Ivey and Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) Director John Cooper agreed to a three-month negotiating period with the Baldwin County Bridge Company (BCBC), and the Alabama Department of Transportation suspended the process to take bids on the new Waterway Bridge that were to open July 30.

The topic of the bridges came up during the open discussion period of the Gulf Shores City Council meeting Monday night. Gulf Shores resident of over 40 years, Tony Diliberto, praised Gulf Shores Mayor Robert Craft for his statement July 30 in response to the delay of bidding for the Alabama Department of Transportation bridge project.

"As you all know I went through this for a long time. I've got seven years with this garbage with the bridge and I supported it from day one. We need this bridge," Diliberto said.

Diliberto's home was one of several taken by the state for the proposed road from Foley Beach Express leading to the new bridge.

“We need another access. I ask the city council, all of you get real vocal. It’s time to get downright nasty and dirty and tell the state of Alabama who we are. We want our fair share. We pump them millions every year and we want our share and we want our bridge,” Diliberto said.

Congestion at U.S. ports means there’s now a shortage of shipping containers

Mayra Rocha August 11, 2021

The demand for imported goods coming to the U.S. is still outpacing supply. Everything from cars to clothing and everyday items ordered online during lockdown come from abroad in metal shipping containers.

The containment measures during the pandemic impacted the global shipping supply chain, and now there aren’t enough containers to go around.

Shippers had already been feeling the squeeze when [President Joe Biden issued his recent executive order](#) urging regulators to crack down on the few shipping firms essentially controlling the market — and charging higher fees for container space.

David Lee, a partner at Genesis Resource Recycling who also manages a paper mill in Sacramento, California, says that the congestion has left him unable to load his recycling material for export to Asia.

“It causes a natural hazard, a fire hazard, and safety for the yards,” Lee said, “but at the same time, I also have a huge risk in market fluctuation of goods.”

He worries that the longer his material sits around, the more value it can potentially lose.

Jessica Alvarenga, with the [Pacific Merchant Shipping Association](#) in Long Beach, is aware of the problem.

“We had a lot more vessels coming in then we were used to. We had our terminals full of containers and so they couldn’t unload them as fast as they could previously or as fast as they would like to,” she said.

When operations stopped in Asia at the start of the pandemic, Alvarenga said there were many “blank sailings,” a shipping term used to describe vessels that skip scheduled routes or ports.

Seiji Steinmetz, an economist at California State University Long Beach, explained that all the port setbacks created a bottleneck, with containers getting stuck in ports and inland railroads.

“So there are plenty of containers in the world, they just started piling up and ending up in the wrong places,” he said.

In the meantime, the container space also got more expensive. It now costs around \$1,500, making it three times more expensive than pre-pandemic.

The overall effect of fewer U.S. exports has meant [exports have decreased](#) 3.5% in June.

Steinmetz predicts that the congestion will last until sometime in 2022

Transportation Research



The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provides a strong foundation of resources for transportation practitioners researching or seeking technical assistance on Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL). In addition to the [FHWA website](#) covered in an earlier RuralTransportation.org [post](#), research institutions and technical assistance centers offer resources, state of the practice data and case studies. This post takes a look at two national resources for environment-related transportation issues: the [Transportation Research Board](#) (TRB) and the [AASHTO Center for Environmental Excellence](#).

Transportation Research Board Snap Searches

TRB offers [Snap Searches](#) that are information sheets on a variety of transportation topics including *Environmental Process*, *Environment and Sustainability* (includes wildlife considerations), and *Natural Resources*. Each **Snap Search** lists research, recent publications, current and upcoming projects, committees and panels, and upcoming events. Research is categorized by the Airport Cooperative Research Program (ACRP), National Highway Cooperative Research Program (NCHRP), Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), and Special Reports. Here are a few **Snap Search** highlights:

[Environmental Process](#): A current research project scheduled for August 2021 completion is [NCHRP 10-99: Guidebook for Implementing Constructability Across the Entire Project Development Process: NEPA to Final Design](#).

[Environment and Sustainability](#): Current research underway includes [NCHRP 20-06/Topic 25-07 Review of Statutory and Case Law on Planning and Environmental Linkages](#). The research aims to produce a digest that answers the questions:

What is the litigation history behind judicial review of purpose and need statements and PEL?

How are the various approaches to PEL different from each other and what deference do courts provide for each?

What legal risks are associated with each approach?

Natural Resources: Research underway includes [NCHRP 08-124 Quantifying the Impacts of Corridor Management](#) which will address building a framework that incorporates the range of measures required to evaluate impacts of corridor management, will define what constitutes corridor management, and identify factors that need to be considered to develop an analytical methodology for impact measurement.

Center for Environmental Excellence by AASHTO

The [AASHTO Center for Environmental Excellence](#) was developed in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration. The Center provides technical assistance, partnership-building, training, and resources with a website covering 20 different environmental topics including the NEPA process, air quality, and cultural resources.

In addition to a website, the Center offers a peer exchange, communities of practice, handbooks, and webinars, as well as a library with environment and transportation case law. The Center also connects with Transportation Research Board research and committees through [NCHRP Project 25-25](#). This quick-response research program, which ran through 2020, examined analytical methods, decision-support tools, procedures, and techniques employed by environmental practitioners in environmental streamlining, environmental stewardship, transportation planning, program delivery, and project development. Copies of reports developed under NCHRP 25-25 are available at both the [TRB website](#) and at the Center for Environmental Excellence [website](#).

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.