



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, August 6th, 2021

Volume 39, Number 6

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There is a TCC/CAC meeting scheduled for Wednesday August 18th and a MPO Policy Committee Meeting on September 1st - *See MPO Updates*. The Mobile MPO TAP Grant Application deadline has been extended and ADECA is hosting a Recreational Trails Program Workshop this Monday - *please see Funding Opportunities*. In *Legislative Updates*, the infrastructure bill continues to move forward and ALDOT wants to hear from the public about US 90 - *In the News*. 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

The Mobile MPO and Eastern Shore MPO both met separately on June 2nd, 2021. Of importance on each agenda, was the amendment to 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. 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.

Last week, the Alabama Department of Transportation held an update on the Mobile River I-10 Bridge and Bayway project. It was presented to the Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization and Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization at the Five Rivers Delta Center on the Causeway. Mr. Edwin Perry III with the ALDOT Southwest Region was on hand to talk about the current status of the project and field questions from attendees.

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

Wednesday, August 18th, 2021 at 10:00 am
GM&O Building 1st Floor Board Room

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

110 Beauregard Street, Mobile, AL 36602

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
- 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 I-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 Alabama Transportation Infrastructure Bank for the future STP Attributable projects.

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. *In The News* below this week has several new articles concerning the meeting.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

For the project as proposed: 150

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

Alternate: 39

Other: 13

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

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

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

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

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

The target start date or project engineers estimated amount has changed for the following :

Project : 100068528 (CN)

Federal aid number : BR 0013 (614)

County : MOBILE

Project Description : 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

Project : 100069478 (CN)

Federal aid number : BR I065 (515)

County : MOBILE

Project : 100073895 Federal aid number : HSIP 0017 County : MOBILE Scope : CN

Project Description : ADDING TURN LANES AND OTHER SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS ON SR-17/SR-57 (US-45) FROM I-65 (MP 4.5) TO THE MISSISSIPPI STATE LINE

Urban Area : 067 MOBILE

Target Start Date : 1/27/2023

Engineers Estimate : \$1,530,150.00

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 July 30th, 2021

MOBILE COUNTY

BALDWIN COUNTY

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Legislative Updates

Historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal

The Senate moved a \$1.2Trillion bill forward, that will now go into debate before it hits the floor. It includes \$16 Billion for new bridges....

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/07/28/fact-sheet-historic-bipartisan-infrastructure-deal/>

The bill includes a total of \$40 billion of new funding for bridge repair, replacement, and rehabilitation, which is the single largest dedicated bridge investment since the construction of the interstate highway system. The bill also includes around \$16 billion for major projects that are too large or complex for traditional funding programs but will deliver significant economic benefits to communities.

Infrastructure Bill Advances with \$550 Billion in New Spending

After weeks of back-and-forth negotiation and a failed procedural vote, last week the Senate voted to advance a bipartisan infrastructure bill in a 67-32 vote, with 17 Republicans joining every Democrat in the motion to invoke cloture. Still, even with broad bipartisan support in the Senate — including the blessing of Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) — the measure faces significant challenges in the House, where progressive Democrats and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) have said they will not consider the bipartisan legislation until a more ambitious reconciliation package is passed by the Senate. That proposal, however, faces its own challenges, as the more moderate Senator Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) has already said she does not approve of its \$3.5 trillion price tag. Still, senators from both parties are optimistic about their negotiated bill, which includes, among other things, a \$32.9 billion one-time infusion into public transit, \$7.5 billion for a national network of EV-charging stations, and \$50 billion on infrastructure resiliency programs. It will be funded through a combination of reallocated COVID-relief funds, targeted corporate user fees, and stronger tax enforcement on cryptocurrencies.

Schumer Puts Infrastructure Plan on Path Toward Passage

By Steven T. Dennis, Laura Litvan, and Laura Davison

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer moved to wrap up a days-long debate on a \$550 billion infrastructure package, setting up the Senate for a Saturday vote to approve the largest infusion of cash for roads, bridges and other domestic projects in decades.

Schumer on Thursday teed up a procedural vote on that would limit further debate on the bipartisan measure when the Senate reconvenes on Saturday. Schumer attempted to move more quickly and vote Thursday night, but last-minute disagreements on amendments held up progress. Among the unresolved issues is how to modify a provision of the bill dealing with reporting requirements for cryptocurrency transactions for tax collections. The cryptocurrency industry said the original version of the bill unfairly targeted them and was too broad in scope.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden and Republican Senators Pat Toomey and Cynthia Lummis proposed a narrower approach focused on those who conduct transactions on exchanges. But an 11th-hour alternative was proposed by Senators Rob Portman, a Republican, and Democrats Mark Warner and Kyrsten Sinema and endorsed by the White House. It would target some software companies and cryptocurrency miners.

“We believe that the alternative amendment put forward by Senators Warner, Portman, and Sinema strikes the right balance and makes an important step forward in promoting tax compliance,” White House spokesman Andrew Bates said in a statement.

Toomey said they were at “an impasse” on the issue.

Another pending amendment would allow state and local governments to use up to 30% of their unspent Covid relief funds on infrastructure projects. GOP Senator John Cornyn of Texas, who sponsored the change with Democratic Senator Alex Padilla, said he bargained with the Biden administration on the change, which would free up between \$80 billion and \$100 billion for projects. But it has yet to be scheduled for a vote.

The overall legislation includes \$110 billion in new spending for roads and bridges, \$73 billion for electric grid upgrades, \$66 billion for rail and Amtrak, and \$65 billion for broadband expansion. It also provides \$55 billion for clean drinking water and \$39 billion for transit.

The Congressional Budget Office said Thursday that the bill would add \$256 billion to the federal deficit over a decade, though negotiators say the nonpartisan agency didn't give full credit for the package's offsets.

Passage of the infrastructure package would set the stage for later consideration of President Joe Biden's \$3.5 trillion economic package, a partisan drive to overhaul policies on climate change, taxes, health care, immigration and other areas.

Senate Democrats will advance to the Senate in just a few days a fiscal blueprint that helps them trigger a Senate procedure that could short-circuit the filibuster and clear the economic package this fall with only Democratic support.

The infrastructure package still faces challenges in the House, where Democrats can only afford three defectors if Republicans vote in unison against the bill. House Democrats are divided over whether the package spends enough and many Republicans oppose the bill.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has said she will hold onto the package until the Senate also acts on the larger economic plan, meeting a demand of progressives in her party.

Rep. DeLauro reintroduces legislation creating public bank to facilitate transportation infrastructure projects

BY LIZ CAREY | JULY 22, 2021

U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) reintroduced the National Infrastructure Development Bank Act on Friday.

The bill would create and fund a public bank that would facilitate public-private partnerships to rebuild American roads, highways, bridges, and environmental and energy projects of national or regional significance.

"Our country is in dire need of massive investments in infrastructure. We need a robust investment to not only fix our current infrastructure state but to invest in new projects to bring our infrastructure system into the 21st century," DeLauro said. "My bill creating a National Infrastructure Bank would help build the architecture for the future by addressing the tremendous shortfall in infrastructure investment, creating American jobs, spurring long-term economic growth, and improving our competitiveness across the globe."

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers in their latest Infrastructure Report Card, continued underinvestment in the country's infrastructure will cost \$10 trillion in GDP, more than 3 million jobs, and \$2.4 trillion in exports over the next two decades.

DeLauro's National Infrastructure Development Bank would finance surface transportation projects, as well as energy, environmental, and telecommunications projects. The bank would consider each project's economic and environmental impacts, social benefits, and costs objectively before selecting projects to finance.

The Congresswoman's office said that construction employment fell by nearly 60 percent in metro areas over the course of the pandemic. DeLauro said creating the National Infrastructure Bank would boost infrastructure building, thus creating thousands of new jobs with good wages and benefits across all facets of the construction industry in rural and urban areas of the country.

"The time to act is now," DeLauro continued. "The National Infrastructure Bank would help supplement other federal programs to allow Congress to pursue a clear, comprehensive infrastructure policy that addresses the broad scope of this issue."

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>

ADECA Hosting Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Workshop

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) will be conducting an application workshop for the FY 2022 Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Due to public safety concerns regarding COVID-19 the workshop will be virtual and held Monday, August 16, 2021, at 9:30am. Additionally we will hold a test session one week prior on Monday, August 9, 2021, at 9:30 am. You are encouraged to log in to the test session to ensure your equipment is working properly to prevent technical difficulties the day of the workshop. Please visit <https://adeca.alabama.gov/trails/> under the news header for meeting participation links and instructions. Application materials will be posted to <https://adeca.alabama.gov/trails/rtpinformation-and-application-ocuments/> by the Friday following the workshop.

If you plan to participate in the workshop, please notify Ms. Denise Molina at denise.molina@adeca.alabama.gov. You may contact Ms. LaToya Edwards, Recreation and Conservation Programs Specialist, at (334) 242-5382 or latoya.edwards@adeca.alabama.gov if you have any questions regarding the RTP or the application process.

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) will be conducting an application workshop for FY 2022 Recreational Trail Program (RTP) funding cycle. Due to public safety concerns regarding COVID-19, the workshop will be virtual and held Monday, August 16, 2021, at 9:30am.

Webex Meeting Information: Join meeting

Join from the meeting link

<https://al.gov.webex.com/algov/j.php?MTID=ma17c7b2f3eadf55ed3f7797f1448c758>

Meeting number (access code): 1777 27 1610

Meeting password: 4tMWdfR6dR4

Tap to join from a mobile device (attendees only)

+1-415-655-0001,1777271610## US Toll

Join by phone

+1-415-655-0001US Toll

Global call-in numbers

Join from a video system or application

Dial [1777271610@al.gov.webex.com](tel:1777271610@al.gov.webex.com)

You can also dial 173.243.2.68 and enter your meeting number.

Join using Microsoft Lync or Microsoft Skype for Business

[Dial1777271610](tel:1777271610).algov@lync.webex.com

RTP applications for FY 2022 will be accepted beginning Monday, August 16, 2021, through 12:00 Noon on Tuesday, October 12, 2021. Applications may be mailed to:

ADECA

CED Division- Recreational Trails Program

Attention: Ms. LaToya Edwards

Post Office Box 5690

Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690 delivered to:

ADECA

CED Division- Recreational Trails Program

Attention: Ms. LaToya Edwards

401Adams Avenue, Room 524

Montgomery, Alabama 36104

or emailed to:

latoya.edwards@adeca.alabama.gov

Please note that whichever method of submission is used, the application must be received by the CEO Division no later than 12:00 Noon on Tuesday, October 12, 2021. Questions regarding the program or application process may be submitted to Ms. Edwards at the email address provided above.

Additionally, we will host a test session one week prior to the workshop. The test session will be held at 9:30am on Monday, August 9, 2021. The purpose of the session is for participants to be sure that all equipment is working properly so that they may participate in the workshop. The details for the test session Webex meeting are below:

Join meeting

Join from the meeting link

<https://algov.webex.com/join?MTID=m83688addc10d302eb5af14883d1f76b3>

Meeting number (access code): 1779 09 1458

Meeting password: XdEwM7Pn67

Tap to join from a mobile device (attendees only)

+1-415-655-000111 1779091458## US Toll

Join by phone

+1-415-655-0001US Toll

Global call-in numbers

Join from a video system or application

Dial [1779091458@algov.webex.com](tel:1779091458)

You can also dial 173.243.2.68 and enter your meeting number.

Join using Microsoft Lync or Microsoft Skype for Business

Dial [1779091458.algov@lync.webex.com](tel:1779091458)

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)

Infrastructure Bill To Fund 11,000-Mile-Long Detour Around Nation During Construction

Tuesday 1:45 PM



WASHINGTON—Following delicate bipartisan negotiations to update U.S. roads, highways, and bridges, the Senate moved forward Tuesday on a landmark infrastructure bill that would fund an 11,000-mile-long detour around the nation during construction. “It’s taken years, but we have finally reached a deal on a pair of massive, 20-lane temporary roads that will allow motorists to bypass America while it is being rebuilt,” Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said of the \$1 trillion plan that reportedly provides enough cones, flares, large orange barrels, and concrete barriers to block off the country’s 4.18 million miles of road. “Under the new agreement, drivers will be able to simply follow the detour signs, winding their way through several states until they reach one of the two alternate routes that will loop around the country to the north and south—through Canada and Mexico, respectively. We urge Americans to follow the signs closely, lest they take a wrong turn and end up thousands of miles off course, or worse, at the bottom of the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean.” While acknowledging the detour could delay commutes by up to three weeks, Schumer remarked that the temporary inconvenience would all be worth it once the nation’s construction was complete in 2065.

In the News

Improvements coming to US-90 from Tillman's Corner to Theodore

LACEY BEASLEY UPDATED AUG 2, 2021

Mobile, Ala. (WALA)-- Transportation leaders want to hear from the public about improving one of the busiest roads in Mobile. US-90 is a hot spot for traffic and accidents, so the Alabama Department of Transportation wants to smooth traffic flow, improve safety, and reduce delays.

"I think we need a lot of safety signs for those that ride motorcycles, for those that ride bicycles," said Angie Jones, an employee at a business off US-90. "We have homeless around here that are on foot and on bicycles." Another woman is stumped on how to reduce traffic.

"I don't know how you do it," said Shellie Campbell. "I don't see where you could expand, put another lane. Maybe have another route somewhere else."

While all are against rush hour gridlock, Campbell still sees the upside to having more people in town.

"You never know the growth of a place," she said. "Especially now with everything we've gone through in the past couple years, you see growth." And a word of caution to those driving up and down a busy Highway 90.

"Just try to keep in mind the rules of the road," said Jones. "Safety first. Get where you are safely, and make everyone around you safe. I think that's the biggest thing we need to learn here in Tillman's Corner. Just take it slow, be safe, and look out for the people around you."

There are several ways to submit opinions and thoughts. Visit here to fill out a form, print, fax, or email a comment.

The last day for submissions is Monday, August 30th..

Gulf ports expanding their way to bigger profits

Ports across US Gulf Coast will spend \$5.4B on expansion projects by 2027

Noi Mahoney Tuesday, August 3, 2021

FREEPORT, Texas — Located in southeast Texas where the Brazos River empties into the Gulf of Mexico, Port Freeport is one of the ports best poised to accommodate bigger ships crossing the enlarged Panama Canal, officials say.

It is one of several ports that have embarked on massive expansion projects in recent years, anticipating more traffic and larger vessels coming through the canal.

"The canal's expansion is a big part of our growth," Cecil Booth, project engineer at Port Freeport, told FreightWaves during a recent tour of the facilities. "The ships that are sailing on the sea now are getting bigger, with deeper drafts, longer and wider. So in order to accommodate the deeper draft ships, Port Freeport elected to deepen the channel and widen the channel."

The canal expansion, completed in 2016, has opened the Gulf of Mexico to Neopanamax ships, as well as very large crude carriers (VLCCs), capable of hauling millions of barrels of crude oil.

Neopanamax ships are next-generation ships built to use the widened Panama Canal. That allows increased cargo and more container revenue for U.S. ports.

Port Freeport has several major projects underway, including the channel-deepening and an expansion of its container terminal.

"Shipping has become a big containerized process all over the world. To be able to compete in the container market, Port Freeport elected to expand their container port," Booth said.

Other ports across the Gulf Coast aren't resting on their laurels either. Ports from Brownsville, Texas, to New Orleans, to Mobile, Alabama, are expanding and will spend about \$5.4 billion on expansion projects by 2027.

- Port of New Orleans (cost: \$1.5 billion)

The Louisiana International Terminal project will build a 350-acre container terminal with a 3,500-linear-foot wharf on more than 1,000 acres, aimed at handling 2 million twenty-foot equivalent units annually. Completion scheduled by 2027.

- Port of Beaumont (\$1.2 billion)

The Sabine-Neches Waterway, which connects this East Texas port to the Gulf of Mexico, is undergoing a deepening of its 57-miles of waterway to allow larger ships to move in and out. Completion is expected in 2027.

- Port Houston (\$877 – \$1 billion)

The Project 11 program will deepen and widen the Houston Ship Channel to handle two-way traffic of next-generation-size containerships. Completion is scheduled by 2027.

- Port of Corpus Christi (\$651 million)

The Corpus Christi Ship Channel Improvement Project in Southeast Texas will widen and deepen the channel in order to accommodate very large crude carriers (VLCC) for crude oil export. Scheduled for completion in 2023.

- Port Freeport (\$424 million)

The \$130M Velasco Terminal expansion project will support container roll-on/roll-off cargo. The \$295M Freeport Harbor Channel Deepening and Widening project is aimed at accommodating post-Panamax container vessels and post-Panamax tankers. The \$41.8M Parcel 14 Stabilization project will construct a 200-acre multi-modal facility with more rail capacity. Completion will be about 2025.

- Port of Mobile (\$366 million)

The Alabama Seaport Modernization Program for the Mobile Ship Channel will deepen and widen Mobile Bay and existing river channels to accommodate larger container ships from the Panama Canal. Completion is scheduled for 2025.

- Port of Brownsville (\$350 million)

The Brazos Island Harbor Channel Improvement Project in South Texas will deepen the port's 16-mile ship channel from 42 feet to 52 feet to accommodate larger container and tanker ships. Scheduled for completion in 2024.

- Port of Port Arthur (\$55 million)

The Berth 6 Expansion project for this East Texas port will create a new wharf and deepen the port's channel to add capacity and increase berth capability for larger ships. The projected completion is 2023.

To read the full story click [HERE](#).

Bridge debate a hot topic on the island

Orange Beach mayor addresses public's questions

By Melanie LeCroy Posted Wednesday, August 4, 2021

ORANGE BEACH - At the start of Tuesday's city council meeting, Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon took time to address the online chatter and questions over the bridge debate.

In a statement Friday, July 30, Kennon said that Alabama Governor Kay Ivey and Alabama Department of Transportation Director John Cooper agreed to a three-month negotiation period with the Baldwin County Bridge Company (BCBC), and Alabama Department of Transportation suspended the process to take bids on the new Waterway Bridge that were to open July 30.

Shortly after Kennon's statement was released to the media and online, Gulf Shores' Mayor Robert Craft released his own statement expressing his disappointment regarding the delay. The Waterway Bridge project has been in the works for many years but has finally received all the permits and right-of-way and the \$70 million in funds secured by the state of Alabama to build a free bridge.

"Unfortunately, there was a press release put out by Gulf Shores that essentially indicted us for selfish and nefarious and profiteering off the bridge and that was behind our reason for our support on a certain route. That invites us, invites the bridge company and the state of Alabama because it is a tri-party agreement. I need to address that. It did make it to social media and there were lots of comments and lots of questions. I feel that whenever it makes it to social media that needs to be dealt with immediately so more urban myths and rumors don't move through the community," Kennon said.

According to Kennon, the city of Orange Beach was approached by the state of Alabama three years ago and asked to start negotiations with the previous toll bridge company to help the state get 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 added within three years. The financial burden of the expansion would be shouldered by the BCBC.

Throughout the meeting, Kennon highlighted traffic conflict points and the number of intersections the new Waterway Bridge could create over the toll bridge expansion plan.

“Orange Beach and Gulf Shores are a drive destination. We are going to have traffic and it is going to continue to grow as we grow,” Kennon said. “Efficient traffic flow results in a better quality of life not just for our visitors but also those of us that live here and have to deal with it, especially in the summer season. Expansion of the current toll bridge does not increase the number of intersections or conflict points. The current Waterway proposal is a north/south route to the west with a north/south route at the bridge with no toll booth expansion whatsoever because they are not going to invest to any degree when they have a competing bridge to the west. It creates three very complicated intersections: County Road 8, County Road 4 and at the base of the bridge on Canal Road.”

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.

“Any traffic inefficiencies created by a new roadway with three conflicting intersections, the burden will be bore by the city of Orange Beach and our residents. It’s not going to be bore by Gulf Shores or Foley, it’s going to be bore by us,” Kennon said.

The city of Orange Beach entered into an agreement in 2004 with the toll bridge company at the time, to loan them \$12 million. The funds were paid back over time. The contract is now worth \$0.30 per car over the toll bridge totaling \$1.5 million this year. According to Kennon, this is the first year they have received \$1.5 million. The contract is good through 2033 when the city will have the option to buy the bridge at ten times revenue or extend the contract through 2063 which is worth close to \$70 million to the city of Orange Beach. The funds Orange Beach receive from the toll bridge are placed in the general fund and used to provide quality of life amenities, beach cleaning and parks, says Kennon.

“I don’t know about Gulf Shores, maybe they have \$70 million laying around, but \$70 million is a lot of money to the city of Orange Beach. It is also our fiduciary responsibility to honor and protect that contract and not walk away from it because someone else decides they have a way to bypass it that is more convenient for them,” Kennon said.

Kennon also addressed comments that 34% of the traffic coming down the Expressway bypass the toll bridge to avoid paying a toll.

“That is false. If they are bypassing the toll bridge, it’s because they realize coming down the Expressway to go to Gulf Shores is faster than coming down Highway 59 to go to Gulf Shores. Are there a few people that out of principle will drive 30 minutes out of the way to bypass the toll? There are, I know them and there are some in this room. But the point I am making is it is very few and far between. The majority of that traffic going down County Road 4 is going to Gulf Shores,” Kennon said.

The one thing Kennon and Craft both have expressed is the desire to reduce summer traffic on Highway 59, but the state of Alabama and ALDOT will ultimately make the decision as to how it will be accomplished. The three-month negotiating period will end at the end of October.

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.