



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Volume 40, Number 6

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ATRIP-II is announced in *Funding Opportunities*. November 18<sup>th</sup> will be the next ALDOT update to the Joint MPOs at Five Rivers at 2:00PM; see *MPO Updates*. The Infrastructure Bill has some traction in *Legislative Updates* and *In The News* this week, some bad news for Amtrak, Eastern Shore wants more sidewalks, and US 31 is almost completed. This week's *Just For Fun* is word play playing words, on a play on words. Have a great weekend!

Check out [ALGO Traffic](#) before you travel!  
[www.mobilempo.org](http://www.mobilempo.org)



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

Want to know what other SARPC departments do?

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

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

## Mobile MPO Updates

### Update of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project Scheduled

ALDOT will present a Bridge Update to the Mobile MPO and the Eastern Shore MPO of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project at Five Rivers Resource Center in Spanish Fort on November 18, 2021 at 2:00 pm. This will be the third of may updates that ALDOT will provide to both MPOs.

When the Mobile MPO and Eastern Shore MPO both met separately on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 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 meeting will likely be in November or early December.

South Alabama Regional Planning Commission has created a web site that will house the Joint MPO updates from ALDOT on the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project [HERE](#)

### Mobile Area Major Road Plan

The Steering Committee met last week to talk about next steps in the planning process. Some topics discussed included identifying which municipalities have complete Streets requirements, and how to best go about identifying underground utilities and stormwater systems. The consultant and MPO Staff will be setting up individual meetings with leaders from each municipalities in the coming weeks to discuss the 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

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, a letter was submitted to ALDOT from both the Eastern Shore MPO and the Mobile MPO, requesting that ALDOT investigate the possibilities of building the project in less than the three phases.

ALDOT has agreed to provide formal updates to both MPO's every two months. The first Update was held July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at Five Rivers, and the second update was on September 20<sup>th</sup>, at Five Rivers at 2:00PM in the Theater. The slide presentation can be found [HERE](#). The Mobile MPO will house all of the slide presentations from these ALDOT Updates at [www.mobilempo.org](http://www.mobilempo.org).

The next step is that ALDOT will authorize the Preliminary Engineering (PE) that was approved as part of the project, and begin a Toll and Revenue Study to further hone in on potential tolling revenues. These tolling revenues will not be from just trucks, but voluntary vehicles willing to pay the toll as well; all legacy routes will remain free.

Moving forward, at a minimum, we have a way to build a bridge. The federal government, federal legislature, and new administration are currently developing numerous bills that potentially may help us move past this "at a minimum" scenario.

[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.

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## 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 resurfacing program. This funding can be 100% federal funding with no matching requirements; this presents a rare opportunity for the Mobile MPO.

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 PE projects (design projects) were sent to FHWA for fund authorization.

Neel Shafer received the Notice To Proceed earlier this week on the following seven Projects listed below:

CRSAMB-4921(251)	<b>\$27,420.00</b>
CRSAMB-4921(252)	<b>\$32,285.00</b>
CRSAMB-4921(253)	<b>\$31,456.00</b>
CRSAMB-4921(254)	<b>\$65,000.00</b>
CRSAMB-4921(255)	<b>\$53,492.00</b>
CRSAMB-4921(256)	<b>\$31,124.00</b>
CRSAMB-4921(257)	<b>\$37,828.00</b>

Soon, the cities will begin to see activities in terms of some survey work, geotechnical work, etc.. on the streets proposed for resurfacing. Also, Neel Shafer will soon begin the process of reaching out and working with the cities to provide the necessary documents required for the federal funds to be spent. This include documents such as the ROW certification, encroachment notices, etc...

As of now, due to the scope of these projects, the proposed letting date is sometime late spring/early summer in 2022, assuming no issues with the city certifications, etc.

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

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

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

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

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### **Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile MPO**

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

Project : 100071917 ( FM )  
Federal aid number : STPAA-HSIP MR22 (900)  
County : MOBILE  
Project Description : RESURFACING, 2' SAFETY WIDENING, AND STEEL BLOCKOUT REPLACEMENT ON I-65 SERVICE ROADS FROM SR-16 (US-90) TO SR-17 (US-45)  
Old Engineers Estimate : \$7,316,657.00  
New Engineers Estimate : \$4,316,657.86

Project : 100069458 ( FM )  
Federal aid number : NH 0013 (621)  
County : MOBILE  
Project Description : RESURFACING ON SR-13 (US-43) FROM SR-158 TO PLATEAU AVENUE  
Old Target start date : January 28, 2022  
New Target start date : February 25, 2022

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## South Alabama RPO Updates

The South Alabama Rural Planning Organization met recently using the GoToMeeting app.

One item on the [agenda](#) was to amend the [Fiscal Year 2021 Work Program](#) to include assisting ALDOT by facilitating the public involvement process for ALDOT's draft Public Involvement Plan for Statewide Transportation Planning.

The purpose of the plan is to implement effective ways for ALDOT to gather information from the public about their transportation needs. The plan is available on ALDOT's website. All comments must be received on or before October 4, 2021.

ALDOT's Draft PIP is posted here:

<https://www.dot.state.al.us/news/publicinvolvement.html>.

Other items on the [agenda](#) included:

- Approve the [minutes of the previous RPO meeting](#)
- Review and Adopt the [Fiscal Year 2022 Work Program](#) which includes a new task of assisting ALDOT by hosting public meetings for the Statewide Long Range Transportation Process
- Amend the [RPO's Public Involvement Procedures](#) to include online virtual meetings when necessary
- Amend the [Annual Transportation Plan List of Projects](#)

RPO Staff is working to finalizing the RPO Transportation Plan. We're also building an online interactive map of all of the RPO projects. Once it's complete we will send out a link to all the RPO members and they'll be able to reference it for grant applications and the like.

## Projects in Region Let November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### MOBILE COUNTY

- for constructing the Bridge Replacement (Grading, Drainage, Pavement, and Retaining Walls) on Glenwood Road over SR-42 (US-98) west of Semmes. Length 0.529 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$7,788,506 to \$9,519,286
- for constructing the Base and Pave on SR-42 (US-98) (Eastbound Lanes) from the Mississippi State Line to 0.500 mile east of the intersection of Glenwood Road to include the Westbound Lanes to station 187+29.290 west of Semmes. Length 8.654 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$25,940,951 to \$31,705,606 .

### BALDWIN COUNTY

None at this time

### ESCAMBIA COUNTY

None at this time

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

## Legislative Updates

### House of Representatives Clears Transportation and Infrastructure Bills Advanced by Committee with Bipartisan Support

November 04, 2021

Washington, DC - Today, the House of Representatives passed eight bills that the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure approved on a bipartisan basis earlier this year.

"I applaud the House for passing eight bills today that were approved by our committee on a bipartisan basis," said Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Peter DeFazio (D-OR). "In particular, I'm pleased to see the House pass my bill to name the U.S. Department of Transportation's headquarters in Washington, DC, after Secretary Norm Mineta—the longest serving Transportation Secretary and a former chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. I urge the Senate to take up these bipartisan bills and pass them without delay."

"The House passed some good bipartisan bills today, including my E-BRIDGE Act that cuts red tape to enable communities to use existing EDA funds for broadband and last mile internet infrastructure projects. In addition, Rep. Guest's bill will save taxpayer dollars when negotiating federal leases, and Rep. Katko's bill will reduce delays in getting disaster assistance to survivors," said Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-MO).

Legislation passed today includes:

H.R. 3193, E-BRIDGE Act

H.R. 3193, the Eliminating Barriers to Rural Internet Development Grant Eligibility (E-BRIDGE) Act, introduced by Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-MO) and Rep. Michael Guest (R-MS), amends the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-136) to remove hurdles for broadband projects under Economic Development Administration grants, including difficult last-mile efforts that often delay rural broadband deployment. The bill also ensures that local communities can partner with the private sector in carrying out broadband projects and gives communities more flexibility in complying with their funding match requirements.

H.R. 1339, Advanced Air Mobility Coordination and Leadership Act

On February 25, 2021, Committee Vice Chair Sharice Davids (D-KS) introduced H.R. 1339, the "Advanced Air Mobility Coordination and Leadership Act." Aviation Subcommittee Ranking Member Garret Graves (R-LA) is an original cosponsor of the bill. H.R. 1339 would establish an advanced air mobility (AAM) interagency working group at the U.S. Department of Transportation, comprised of federal departments and agencies, the public sector, civil aviation industry leaders, labor unions, and other relevant stakeholders to evaluate, plan, and coordinate efforts to help advance U.S. leadership in the emerging AAM industry.

H.R. 1917, Hazard Eligibility and Local Projects Act

H.R. 1917, introduced by Reps. Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX) and Michael McCaul (R-TX), will expedite the start of certain types of projects following presidentially declared disasters while waiting for FEMA's full approval. It is intended to allow simple land acquisition and simple construction projects not requiring an environmental review to begin immediately without risk of losing federal matching dollars.

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## House sprints for Build Back Better, infrastructure votes today

BY ALEXIS SIMENDINGER AND AL WEAVER - 11/05/21

Today, House Democrats believe they are on track after a flurry of meetings and last-minute adjustments to bring President Biden's Build Back Better agenda to a vote, which would allow them to turn to a bipartisan infrastructure bill before a week-long recess.

Democratic leaders late Thursday prepared for separate floor votes today on both a \$1.75 trillion spending bill and a \$1 trillion infrastructure package. Text of a modified Democratic spending wish list cleared the House Rules Committee and the House convenes this morning, sprinting toward passage of an agenda that lawmakers have debated for half a year (The Hill).

The initial plan to pass the mammoth social spending bill on Thursday was thwarted as leaders tried to shore up the bill on multiple fronts. However, Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) worked throughout the day to massage a number of topics in the Democratic-only bill, with breakthroughs taking place throughout the evening to put them in a position to vote on the bill before recess.

Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-Texas), a leading centrist, told reporters as of Thursday afternoon there were more than enough members standing in the way. Among the reasons: absence of a budget score from the Congressional Budget Office, immigration issues, changes to the state and local tax (SALT) deduction and a proposed methane fee, about which Cuellar and Rep. Lizzie Fletcher (D-Texas) raised concerns.

"There is certainly a lack of trust among some of the moderates on that," said Cuellar (pictured below), referring to Pelosi's twice-made pledge to hold a vote on the bipartisan infrastructure proposal before backing down. "I still want to know: what are the differences? What have the 50 senators agreed to?"

As The Hill's Mike Lillis and Scott Wong write, Pelosi spent much of the afternoon twisting arms in a race against the clock to pass the bill. The whip effort also involved Biden, who called multiple Democratic holdouts urging them to support the package when it hits the floor (Politico). Adding to the trouble, there was also an eleventh-hour snag on an effort to reduce prescription drug prices. However, negotiators were able to reach an agreement to add an additional year of exclusivity before Medicare will be able to negotiate prices for certain complex drugs known as biologics, moving the total from 12 years to 13 years.

The Hill's Peter Sullivan reports that the last-minute dispute arose from how the text of the drug pricing agreement was drafted. The agreement announced earlier this week was to allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices after a period of exclusivity: nine years for many drugs and 12 years for more complex biologics.

Additionally, Pelosi struck a deal with Democrats from high-tax states to raise the cap on the SALT deduction. The new version of the provision would raise the cap from \$10,000 to \$80,000, and have the limit be in place at that level through 2030. The cap would then return to \$10,000 for 2031. A previous version of the bill would have set the cap at \$72,500 through 2031 (The Hill).

"We're confident that with this agreement, we can move forward on this crucially important package and we will continue working to ensure that this tax cut gets signed into law to deliver this relief to our constituents as soon as possible," Reps. Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.), Tom Suozzi (D-N.Y.) and Mikie Sherrill (D-N.J.) said in a joint statement on the SALT deal early this morning.

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## House sets up Friday votes for Biden agenda

BY CRISTINA MARCOS AND SCOTT WONG - 11/04/21

House Democrats are now planning to vote Friday on their long-sought social spending package as well as the bipartisan infrastructure bill as they rush to deliver on President Biden's agenda after disappointing state election results earlier this week.

The House Rules Committee met late Thursday night to advance the final text of the social spending legislation.

Next, according to Democratic sources familiar with the plan, the House will convene at 8 a.m. Friday to debate and vote on the package, titled the Build Back Better Act. A vote to clear the bipartisan infrastructure bill — which has stalled in the House since its Senate passage in August due to progressive resistance — will follow.

The House already completed floor debate on the bipartisan infrastructure bill in late September, when Democratic leaders had first hoped to clinch a deal on the two measures.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and her leadership team have been laboring for more than a month to pass both the social spending package and the bipartisan infrastructure bill, but have repeatedly had to delay House floor action due to stubborn internal divisions over strategy.

The Friday votes would come three days after Democrats suffered a disappointing loss in the Virginia gubernatorial election — the first time in 12 years that Democrats lost statewide, and only a year after Biden had carried the state by 10 points.

And in New Jersey, another diverse blue state, Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy only narrowly won reelection in a race that wasn't expected to be so close.

The electoral setbacks on Tuesday have heightened Democrats' anxiety about their prospects in next year's midterm elections, where Republicans only have to flip five seats to take back the House and just one to control the Senate.

In a sign of the high stakes for his agenda, Biden made calls Thursday night to House Democrats to urge support for the social spending package, according to a White House official. Biden did not advocate for specific timing, however.

House Democratic leaders spent the day trying to iron out the remaining issues to round up the votes for the social spending package, which includes an extension of the child tax credit, universal preschool, four weeks of paid family and medical leave, and tax credits to incentivize climate change initiatives.

Democratic leaders made a late change Thursday night to their deal to lower prescription drug prices to clarify the drafting of the original legislative text. According to a source familiar with the process, the compromise will add an additional year of exclusivity before Medicare will be able to negotiate prices for certain complex drugs known as biologics, moving the total from 12 years to 13 years.

Democrats also made a late change to raise the cap on the state and local tax deduction from \$10,000 to \$80,000, and to have that limit be in place at that level through 2030. A previous version of the bill released Wednesday would have set the cap at \$72,500 through 2031.

Other issues that Democratic leaders were working furiously to resolve Thursday night included immigration and concerns from centrists about having enough time to review the legislative text and independent analyses of the bill's fiscal impact.

Three members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus met with Pelosi late Thursday night to discuss the immigration provisions, which currently include providing certain immigrants with work permits and protection from deportation. It's not yet clear if the immigration provisions will pass muster with the Senate parliamentarian, who determines whether bills comply with the upper chamber's arcane budget reconciliation rules that permit circumventing the filibuster.

Rep. Lou Correa (D-Calif.) tweeted after meeting with Pelosi that they "continue to explore all options," but were not drafting new legislative language.

At least five centrist Democrats have also demanded in recent days that they have enough time to read the massive legislation as well as a formal analysis on the final text from the Congressional Budget Office.

“What I'd like to do is be a reasonable legislator and understand the full context of the bill as well as how much it's going to cost taxpayers,” Rep. Stephanie Murphy (D-Fla.), a co-chair of the Blue Dog Coalition, said earlier Thursday.

Pelosi cited an analysis from the Joint Committee on Taxation, which estimated that the social spending package's revenue measures would raise \$1.5 trillion over a decade, excluding an additional \$650 billion in savings from the IRS tax enforcement and prescription drug pricing provisions.

Aside from immigration, the Senate is likely to make additional changes before the bill is signed into law. Some senators have offered a different proposal for the state and local tax deduction, and key centrist Sen. Joe Manchin (W.Va.) has expressed opposition to including paid family leave.

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## Funding Opportunities

### ATRIP-II Funding Announcement

Grants to Alabama local government agencies to enhance public transportation, improve public safety, and promote economic development has been announced for Fiscal Year 2022. Funding is intended to upgrade and renovate transportation infrastructure through projects of local interest related to the state-maintained highway system. Projects may include local roads and bridges essential to such projects.

The program's goal is to address critical projects across the state to rehabilitate and improve the in-place facilities and in some cases provide new facilities at locations throughout the state. The program's focus is an emphasis on the public safety, economic growth, and stability of the state and its roads and bridges.

Project deliverability issues include, but are not limited to, design, environmental, right-of-way acquisition, cost, or other factors that could affect or impede project timeframe and advancement consistent with program goals will be considered during application evaluation. When provided, the ATRIP-II Committee will appraise and consider coordination by local government sponsors that reflect racial and ethnic diversity.

For application and information about allowable costs see: <https://www.dot.state.al.us/programs/ATRIPII.html>. The deadline for the application is November 19, 2021.

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## Opportunity Zones

EDA's Opportunity Zone Web Page

EDA now has an [EDA Opportunity Zone Web page](#) for economic development stakeholders and others to use as a resource to further help foster job creation and attract private investment to support development in economically distressed areas across the United States.

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### [Section 5307, 5310, and 5311: Using Non-DOT Funds for Local Match](#)

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [Administration for Community Living](#) (ACL) has worked with the [National Aging and Disability Transportation Center](#) to clarify the ability of grantees to use Older Americans Act Title IIIB Supportive Services Funds to match Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs. These FTA programs include Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307), Enhanced Mobility of SENIORS and People with Disabilities (Section 5310), and Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311). This information has been publicized [HERE](#)

To stay up to date on all of the many grants that are available visit [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

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## Just For Fun (THIS IS SATIRE, AND JUST FOR FUN)

With all of the ships waiting to port (in other places, not Mobile) we thought, *Just for Fun*, to revisit (we have posted this before) a shipping ship, shipping shipping ships on shipping ships.



This is a truck-trucking truck, trucking trucking trucks.



More impressive, this is an Outback, pulling an Outback, out it's back, out back, at an Outback.



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## In the News

### Alabama State Port Authority: Amtrak's return 'would be calamitous'

Updated: Nov. 04, 2021, 5:48 p.m. | Published: Nov. 04, 2021, 5:25 p.m.

Alabama State Docks and rail yard in Mobile. Mobile photos 2021. (Joe Songer | [jsonger@al.com](mailto:jsonger@al.com)). Joe Songer | [jsonger@al.com](mailto:jsonger@al.com)

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

The potential harm to the Alabama State Docks “would be calamitous” in Mobile if Amtrak is allowed to restart passenger rail and operate 28 train trips per week connecting the Alabama Port City with New Orleans, a filing before the U.S. Surface Transportation Board says.

The Alabama State Port Authority, in its Wednesday filing, urges that Amtrak’s Gulf Coast project be denied by the STB and argues that not enough “appropriate mitigation” has been presented by the passenger rail entity to illustrate that no harm would occur to freight operations crucial to the State Docks in downtown Mobile.

But Amtrak, since an October 20 filing before the STB, does not consider the Port Authority a party to the proceedings, and is not commenting on their concerns. According to last month’s filing, Amtrak believes the Port should not be allowed to present evidence during the proceedings or make arguments.

The Port Authority’s filing comes at the same time that CSX and Norfolk Southern, the two main freight operators along the Gulf Coast line, predict “systematic failure” if improvements are not made to avoid potential delays of what they predict will be up to 2-1/2 hours at grade crossings.

The two freight operators, in a study they jointly conducted this year, identify 14 projects that would cost Amtrak more than \$400 million to complete before either company could be supportive of passenger rail’s return.

“We will review the filings from the railroads – in this case, CSX and NS – and respond accordingly,” said Marc Magliari, spokesman for Amtrak. “As for the Port, we previously filed about two weeks ago their need to establish themselves as a party to the action.”

The Port, behind its attorney Robert Wimbish, is “alarmed” over Amtrak’s characterization that it’s not a “party of record” in the STB’s case, and that it should therefore be prevented from submitting evidence. Port officials are also pointing to a STB order on Aug. 6 in which the federal entity recognizes concerns expressed by Alabama state leaders and port entities on the the potential impact of passenger service on freight, and the “need for a study to assess those impacts and identify mitigation measures.”

Continue [HERE](#)

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### ALDOT Launches Campaign to Inform Drivers of New Work Zone Fines

November 4, 2021

**Changes to Alabama Highway Safety Law, Not a Game**  
*ALDOT Launches Campaign to Inform Drivers of New Work Zone Fines*

(MONTGOMERY, Ala.) – Recent deaths of road workers along Alabama highways are a sober reminder that there is little room for error when driving through a work zone. A new campaign from the Alabama Department of Transportation promotes [work zone safety](#) while making drivers aware of recent changes to the state’s construction zone law.

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

Double fines aren't just for speeding anymore. Distracted driving, tailgating, aggressive driving or any moving violation will result in a double fine under the amended Alabama law. The Alabama Legislature's amendments to the construction zone law went into effect July 1, 2021, as the number of injuries and fatal crashes in work zones increased in 2020. There were 2,378 work zone crashes in Alabama in 2020, resulting in 19 fatalities and 616 injuries. These numbers include road workers and motorists.

"Not a game," is the theme of the new Drive Safe Alabama work zone public service announcement (PSA) from ALDOT and the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency. The PSA uses the popularity of game shows to bring attention to the state's current work zone safety law. TV and radio stations statewide will broadcast the PSA, and the campaign will be shared on the [Drive Safe Alabama Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.

"We want drivers to be aware not only of the new fines in a work zone, but of the people who are putting their lives at great risk to keep Alabama roads in good condition," said Allison Green, Drive Safe Alabama Coordinator with ALDOT. "Driving through a work zone is not a game, and our new PSA highlights some of the violations that will result in double fines and could cost a road worker their life."

"As Rebuild Alabama projects begin to cover the state, more and more traffic related work zones will be encountered," said John Whitman with Mobile Asphalt Co. and current president of the Alabama Road Builders Association. "With the implementation of the new "Double Fines" law, we anticipate slower speeds and heightened awareness from the traveling public, which will no doubt provide a much safer environment for the dads, moms, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters who wear the vest every day."

#### Work Zone Safe Driving Tips

- **Drive alert.** Don't drive distracted by texting, eating or other activities that take your hands off the wheel. Look for highway workers, reduced speed limits and changes to the roadway.
- **Move over.** Give workers more space if the roadway allows.
- **Don't tailgate.** Keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead of you.

Safe driving tips are available on the [Drive Safe Alabama Facebook page](#).

#### Know Before You Go

Motorists can find out if a work zone is along their route before they get on the road by going to [www.ALGOtraffic.com](http://www.ALGOtraffic.com) or by downloading the ALGO Traffic app. ALDOT asks motorists to use ALGO Traffic responsibly. Drivers should never text, tweet, or use a mobile device while operating a vehicle.

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## Work on 31 nears completion in Spanish Fort

Project had been scheduled to be done in April



Work to widen U.S. 31 in Spanish Fort is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2021, state highway officials said.

GUY BUSBY Posted Tuesday, November 2, 2021 5:00 am By Guy Busby, [guy@gulfcoastmedia.com](mailto:guy@gulfcoastmedia.com)

SPANISH FORT – Work to widen U.S. 31 in Spanish Fort should be completed by the end of 2021, Matt Ericksen, division engineer of the Alabama Department of Transportation, said.

Ericksen said Wednesday, Oct. 27 that the contractor is completing the final part of the work and should be finished by the end of December.

The project was announced in 2018 and work began in 2019. Spanish Fort Mayor Mike McMillan said the completion date has been moved back several times in the last year.

"We were April, then we were October, now we're talking December," McMillan said to Ericksen during a meeting of the Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization. "Is the problem the contractor? Are there underlying factors? You keep moving it back."

Ericksen said the weather delayed some of the work and the contractor has been charged for the delays.

"We've had a rainy season, but contractually all we can with at ALDOT is charge him time that's been allocated to the project and if he runs out of his time, we will access liquidated payments," Ericksen said.

At a meeting of the Spanish Fort City Council on Oct. 18, McMillan said to council members he was also told that utility lines may have also been a factor in the completion. He said residents are complaining about the delays.

First of all, we've all heard complaints about how long the project has taken," McMillan said. "The project actually started March of '18. It was postponed for a solid year to March of 19 because of the relocation of utilities up and down our right of way, which proved to be a lot more than they anticipated. They were buried there for a long time, and nobody knew they were there, before we were a city. The contract for the project was 445 working days. As of last progress report, the contractor's now incurring penalty charges as of then it was 30 days.

The mayor said city officials plan to add streetlights and sidewalks along the highway, but that project cannot start until the widening is completed.

"I sure wanted to have the lights up by Christmas, but that isn't happening. Once we get the lights, and really determine that we can start next year, we can budget it," McMillan said.

Council members said residents have also complained about dark unlit areas of the highway. McMillan said the new lights will improve visibility.

"They're LED lights," he said. "I think it's going to be so bright going up and down that road, you're not going to have any problems seeing."

State highway officials are also working on plans for another project on U.S. 31 in Spanish Fort, Ericksen said.

He said that project will realign the intersection of U.S. 31 and Old Highway 31.

"That project is under plan development the right of way has been authorized so the county is proceeding on the right of way acquisition, and we hope to get that one let to contract next year," Ericksen said.

Under the proposal, Pinyon Drive would be extended north to U.S. 31 to create a 90-degree intersection, according to earlier reports. The move would replace the current intersection to the west.

Old Highway 31 now intersects with U.S. 31 at a 155-degree angle. Vehicles on U.S. 31 turning right on to Old Highway 31 must slow down to make the sharp angle and have been struck from behind by highway traffic. Drivers turning left from Old Highway 31 cannot see oncoming traffic due to the sharp angle of the intersection, according to an ALDOT report.

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## Eastern Shore wants more sidewalks in area



The Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization has placed a sidewalk on Parker Road in Fairhope on its list of needed projects. The walkway would link U.S. 98 and Scenic 98.

GUY BUSBY Posted Tuesday, November 2, 2021 12:00 pm

By Guy Busby, [guy@gulfcoastmedia.com](mailto:guy@gulfcoastmedia.com)

DAPHNE – Sidewalks linking U.S. 98 and Scenic 98 in Fairhope and Montrose are among the construction projects being considered by the Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The MPO Policy Board voted Wednesday, Oct. 27, to add five projects to its Visionary List of needed infrastructure improvements on the Eastern Shore. The MPO oversees the allocation of some federal highway funding for Eastern Shore projects.

Sarah Hart Sislak, MPO director, said projects on the Visionary List do not yet have funding approved, but are identified as needed.

The list includes a sidewalk on Parker Road in Fairhope, Sislak told board members.

"We do have the Eastern Shore Trail that is on Scenic 98," she said. "The city of Fairhope also has a path on U.S. Highway 98 that runs near Publix and this would be a connection between those two paths."

Another sidewalk on the list proposed for Gabel Street in Montrose would also link U.S. 98 and Scenic 98.

"There is a public access to the bay near this area," Sislak said. "We've received complaints that people are walking in the road to get down to the bay. This would be another connection there."

A third sidewalk project on Baldwin County 1 is also on the list. That walkway would extend from the end of the existing sidewalk, south of Mullet Point, to Pelican Point.

Fairhope City Councilman Jack Burrell, chairman of the Policy Board, said residents have been asking for the walkways. He said the routes are used by hikers and visitors as well as residents.

"These do seem to achieve more of a regional function," Burrell said. "They're not in some neighborhood or in a subdivision. These are going from, say, U.S. 98 to the Eastern Shore Trail and do seem to be locations that are heavily traversed and where I see people on a daily basis walking down these areas where there are not sidewalks, so in fact, even though these are only on the Visionary List, these are some good ideas."

Board members said residents in several areas outside municipalities have expressed a need for sidewalks. County Commissioner Billie Jo Underwood said Marlow residents walking to a store on Baldwin County 9 must walk in the street or on the dirt right of way.

Commissioner Joe Davis said officials need to find ways to pay for such projects.

"As fast as we're growing, these are the kinds of things we need to have a dialogue here and with our communities to be able to identify the needs and then possible funding source," Davis said.

Sislak said most funding programs are for roads. She said on possible source would be federal Transportation Alternatives Program.

Several projects on the Eastern Shore have been paid for by TAP grants. Daphne Mayor Robin Lejeune said, however, that Daphne had to wait 12 years to get approval for one sidewalk.

"We finally received that TAP grant this year. If it's one that you want, you just have to stay at it," he said.

LeJeune said the Daphne sidewalk will extend from apartment complexes on U.S. 98 to the shopping center where Publix and other stores are located.

“That’s a dangerous area but that’s a large ask for a TAP grant for it to be done,” LeJeune said.

Two other projects approved for the Visionary List are turn lanes on Baldwin County 13 at the intersection of Alabama 104 and turn lanes at U.S. 98 at Johnson Road in Daphne.

Sislak said the Baldwin County 13 project would provide right-turn lanes for vehicles turning onto Alabama 104. The work on U.S. 98 would build turn lanes for cars moving off the highway.

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## Transportation Research

### State seeks feedback from Alabamians on broadband access

Posted on September 21, 2021

**MONTGOMERY** – Want to see further improvements in broadband access in Alabama? Here’s is a simple way Alabamians can help. The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs is requesting information about broadband internet access and speed from Alabama residents and businesses.

Alabamians are encouraged to take the speed survey at <https://alabama.speedsurvey.org/> to help the state more precisely locate gaps in broadband service areas. The information gathered will be used for more specific mapping of service gaps and planning efforts to help fill those gaps.

*“The COVID-19 pandemic shined a spotlight on the importance of having access to high-speed internet across the Alabama,” ADECA Director Kenneth Boswell said. “Taking this speed survey will help us gather the data we need to map and plan our efforts to help close those service gaps.”*

ADECA administers the Broadband Alabama program, which includes the Broadband Accessibility Fund created by the Alabama Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Kay Ivey. Since 2018, the fund has assisted broadband providers with extending high-speed internet service for households, businesses and community anchors in unserved areas of the state or in areas lacking minimum threshold service.

Many Alabama homes and businesses receive less than the current federal definition of broadband service, which is 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download speed and three Mbps upload speed. The information gathered from the speed survey will help pinpoint the specific areas that lack this coverage. Your address will not be made public and the information will be used solely for the state’s planning efforts.

*“Broadband is a huge economic driver for recruiting industry and jobs,” Boswell said. “This survey is quick and easy and helps show us precisely where the service gaps are, so we encourage all Alabama residents and businesses to take it and help us continue Gov. Kay Ivey’s efforts to grow Alabama’s economy.”*

A video explaining the survey is available on the [ADECA YouTube channel](#):