



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, October 29th, 2021

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Update meeting on the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project scheduled – See *MPO Updates*. Washington continues to debate the proposed Infrastructure Bill – In *Legislative Updates* while the *Just for Fun* has some fall fun. ATRIP-II funding, see *Funding Opportunities*. 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](#)
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- [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 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 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 1st, 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 27th, 2021 at Five Rivers, and the second update was on September 20th, 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.

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.

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

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.

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 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 : \$4,678,282.00 New Engineers Estimate : \$4,060,750.64

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 : \$4,060,750.00 New Engineers Estimate : \$7,316,657.86

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 5th, 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

FHWA: Highway Trust Fund Should Be Solvent Into 2022

editor@aaashto.org October 28, 2021 0 COMMENTS

Due to several "true-ups" – the reconciling or matching two and more than two accounts' balances – paid into the Highway Trust Fund by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the HTF should be solvent well into 2022, according to a Federal Highway Administration presentation at the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials annual meeting in San Diego.

"We now have enough balance [in the HTF] to go into late spring or early summer because we received a number of 'true-ups' from Treasury over the last several months," explained Brian Bezio (*seen above*), FHWA's chief financial officer, during a Committee on Funding and Finance discussion at AASHTO's annual meeting.

"Historically, such 'true-ups' are in the hundreds of millions range – but the last four were in the billions," he said. "That has placed us in a much better spot, especially as outlays are slowing down now as we get out of construction season."

Bezio reminded those attending the meeting that FHWA "will never let HTF go bankrupt" – however, he said the agency "would slow down obligations via cash management decisions" in order to keep it solvent.

In [August](#), FHWA held a briefing for state DOTs regarding its contingency plans for potential HTF cash flow shortfalls as the fund has faced a continuous and structural cash flow deficit since 2008.

Cash management procedures would allocate HTF Highway Account funding reimbursements to states in proportion to their share of the total unexpended balances of all the states; however, reimbursement of the full requested amount may not be possible based on cash-on-hand.

Thus, under the cash management procedures, each state would only be able to bill against a state-specific cap, with "billing overages" being covered in the future payment cycle.

As was the case with prior HTF cash shortfalls in 2008 and 2014, reimbursement windows would be limited around the sixth and 17th business days each month, which is when the agency receives its twice-monthly deposits of tax receipts from Treasury for the HTF.

Lorie Tudor – the funding and finance committee's chair and director of the Arkansas Department of Transportation – stressed that state DOTs need to use this "breathing room" created by the Treasury's HTF "true-ups" to convince their respective members of Congress about the need to avoid future lapses in HTF funding.

"If there is one thing we can do and must do, it is to make our congressional delegations understand how bad it would be if FHWA had to go to cash management with HTF funds – and how that would impact our projects and contracting ability," she said.

AASHTO Disappointed With Yet Another Transportation Bill Extension

[Tony Dorsey, AASHTO Program Director for Media Relations and TV Production](#) 10/29/2021

WASHINGTON – The following is a formal statement from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials regarding the short-term extension of the FAST Act through December 3 in lieu of passage of a new long-term surface transportation reauthorization contained in the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

"For the second time in a month, Congress has passed a short-term extension of surface transportation programs, leaving state departments of transportation in limbo once again," said Jim Tymon, AASHTO executive director. "We implore the House to pass—well before December 3—the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, a historic bipartisan bill passed by the Senate almost three months ago. It includes substantial funding increases for all modes of transportation and allows for five years of funding stability for highway, transit, and passenger rail programs—something state DOTs desperately need to deliver a safe, efficient, and multimodal transportation system.

"AASHTO members need certainty to plan transportation projects to meet the needs of their communities and keep our economy moving, and the impact of these short-term extensions is not insignificant. Congress must pass the IJA immediately to lessen the harmful impacts that come from the lack of a long-term surface transportation bill."

Earlier this month, AASHTO released the [results of a survey](#) highlighting the impact of short-term extensions on state departments of transportation. More than 35 AASHTO members detailed the negative effects short-term extensions have in their home states.

Transportation planners wait for money as the infrastructure plan stalls in Congress

Updated October 26, 2021 11:03 AM ET

[DAVID SCHAPER](#)

Many residents of Midwest and Northern states like to joke that there are just two seasons: winter and construction.

While the latter season is about to end and many of the orange barrels and cones will soon go into storage, there's a lot of uncertainty about what projects can break ground next spring.

That's because as of now, House Democrats won't call the Biden administration's trillion dollar infrastructure bill for a final vote without an agreement on a much broader social spending plan, and the clock is ticking.

[Here's what we know is in the scaled back Biden budget bill and what got cut](#)

To keep money flowing from the highway trust fund and other federal transportation programs in motion, Congress passed [a short-term, one month extension](#) of the previous surface transportation authorization bill, but that extension expires Sunday.

And without passage of the bipartisan infrastructure bill this week, or at least another extension, about 3,700 employees in the U.S. Department of Transportation will be furloughed. In the meantime, state and local highway and transit planners from coast to coast are unsure of how much federal funding they will have to fix and replace crumbling roads and bridges, and when they might get it.

"I think a lot of folks in the transportation industry are in limbo," says Jim Tymon, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

AASHTO [surveyed its members](#) about the difficulties caused by the delay in passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and it found that from coast to coast, planners are having delaying their planning or postponing projects because of the uncertainty.

"We are heavily reliant on the federal money," says Bill Panos, North Dakota's director of transportation. "It is more than half of our entire transportation budget."

[3,700 DOT workers head back to work after Congress passes short-term highway funding](#)

Panos told NPR that smaller, rural states like his have fewer options for raising a significant amount of infrastructure funding on their own.

"We need and rely on the federal funding as much or more than other states because we don't have a lot of options," Panos says. "We don't have a large population, but we have a lot of roads and we have a lot of bridges. And many of them were built in partnership with the federal government."

"Really, for us, it's just about maintaining what we've already built."

Panos adds that this is a particularly bad time for there to be delays and uncertainty about federal funding.

"Here in the Northern Plains and North Dakota, we have a construction season which is rather short," Panos says. His agency is making plans right now to put next year's construction projects out to bid, so they are ready to break ground and soon as the ground thaws in spring.

"So this is, right now, the dawn of our construction season, and in fact, some of the delays in the federal funding, some of the uncertainty has created delays in some of our projects right now. We have pushed off some of our projects."

And North Dakota isn't alone. Transportation planners all across the country who were thrilled this summer when the White House and Congress reached a bipartisan infrastructure agreement and it passed the Senate are now getting heartburn over the Congressional gridlock.

"It's incredibly frustrating to those of us in the transportation community to see it get this far and then to see it kind of stall for the last two or three months in the House," says AASHTO's Jim Tymon. "The fact that Congress hasn't gotten that done has really hamstrung some state DOTs and transit agencies because they rely on those federal dollars and the predictability of those federal dollars."

Tymon says transportation planners, construction firms and their workers are getting increasingly anxious, as the short term extension of transportation funding is about to expire.

"And that's changing the approach that a lot of states take and how they put projects out to bid. And as a result, you'll have less work for contractors to bid on and fewer jobs for construction workers."

AASHTO's [survey found examples](#) of state and local transportation departments and transit agencies facing delayed projects and higher costs across the country because of the uncertainty.

"A short-term extension that provides only 1/12th of our contract authority forces us to either delay letting much needed projects due to inadequate funding or requires us to front the cost with state funds which severely impacts our diminishing state cash," wrote the Alabama Department of Transportation in response to the survey.

"[The short-term extension] also increases labor, construction and material costs affecting ALDOT and its contractors, consultants, material suppliers, and Alabama citizens who work for these businesses," the agency added.

Kentucky's Transportation Cabinet says it, too, is facing higher costs and uncertainty about what projects can go forward because of the delay.

"Over the next four months, KYTC has over a quarter of a billion dollars in projects scheduled for construction lettings," the agency noted. "Without the certainty of full federal-aid highway funding, many of these projects could be delayed until federal funds are in hand."

In addition, without the long term funding certainty that would be provided by the five year bipartisan infrastructure bill, highway, rail and mass transit planners say they cannot make decisions about bigger projects that often take several years to complete.

They hope the White House and Democrats in Congress can reach a compromise and figure out a way forward soon, because the shovels are ready, they just need the federal funding.

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.

U.S. Department of Transportation Announces the Availability of \$2.2 Billion in American Rescue Plan Funding to Help Transit Agencies with Additional Service Needs DEADLINE November 8, 2021

Tuesday, September 7, 2021

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) today announced a [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) for \$2.2 billion in competitive grant funding for transit systems demonstrating additional pandemic-associated needs. Funding is provided by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which was signed into law by President Biden on March 11, 2021.

[Additional Assistance Funding](#) may be awarded to transit systems demonstrating additional assistance is needed to cover operating expenses related to maintaining day-to-day operations, cleaning and sanitization, combating the spread of pathogens on transit systems and maintaining critical staffing levels.

"As public transit systems continue to recover from the devastating financial and public health impacts of COVID, they must have the resources they need to keep trains and buses running, especially in heavily transit-dependent communities," said U.S. Transportation Deputy Secretary Polly Trottenberg. "The funding opportunity we are announcing today will help connect people to jobs, services and opportunities, while supporting crucial health and safety measures for the traveling public and our nation's dedicated transit workforce."

FTA will review applications based on the level of financial need, including projections of future financial need to maintain service as a percentage of the 2018 operating costs. Funding that is requested by an eligible applicant must not have been replaced by funding made available through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) of 2021, and other ARP funding.

"The Additional Assistance Funding will support transit agencies demonstrating a continuing need for assistance in maintaining daily operations," said FTA Administrator Nuria Fernandez. "Public transportation connects people to jobs, education and vital services, and this program will help transit agencies continue to provide critical transit services in communities that need it most."

The NOFO will be placed on public inspection at the Federal Register on Wednesday, September 8, and published on Thursday, September 9. An unpublished version of [the NOFO can be viewed here](#). Applications must be submitted electronically through the [Grants.gov](#) website by 11:59 PM ET November 8, 2021.

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)

Happy Fall, Y'all!

Fall brings the pumpkin in all of us. From pumpkin bread to pumpkin spiced latte to pumpkin carving and pumpkin bowling. Some people even step it up a notch to pumpkin racing. Check out how these folks celebrate with pumpkins.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhpro-HKUVc>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJkTJanOq30>

In the News

Mobile city officials OK \$30 million to support new downtown airport project

Updated: Oct. 27, 2021, 9:14 a.m. | Published: Oct. 27, 2021, 9:14 a.m.

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

Relocating Mobile's commercial airline services to a new terminal close to downtown has been described as a "transformational" project for the city and region and one that will lead to lower air fares and more direct flight options in coastal Alabama.

The project, on Tuesday, got the financial backing it needed from the city.

With a unanimous vote, the Mobile City Council authorized transferring \$30 million in General Fund reserves to provide a crucial local funding match toward an approximately \$252 million airport project at the Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley, south of downtown Mobile.

The move is the first financial commitment from a local governing body for a project that will lead to a swap of commercial aviation services from Mobile Regional Airport to Brookley, which is home to Airbus' largest North American manufacturing operations.

The new five-gate airport, which is expected to open in the fall of 2024, will also be the first time an "international" airport has been in operations in Mobile. The objective, according to the Mobile Airport Authority, is to compete with Pensacola International Airport, Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport, and elsewhere for direct flights and low-cost carriers.

"With all of the progress going on in the city of Mobile, we need an international airport and more direct services than just Atlanta, Houston, Dallas and Charlotte," said Councilman C.J. Small, whose district includes Brookley. "This is a lot of money. But the return on this will be much greater than what we have today."

'Sound fiscal policies'

The money was available as a result of eight years of building up the city's General Fund reserves. The \$30 million appropriation carves out less than a quarter of the [more than \\$134 million in surplus the city has built up](#). Mobile is required to maintain a \$45 million reserve, which is enough to operate the city for two months.

Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson, in a statement issued Tuesday, touted "sound fiscal policies" under his administration for the past eight years that allows the city to commit funding toward the airport swap.

"As the Mobile Airport Authority continues to lay the groundwork for moving the airport downtown, the city is prepared to help make this game changing transition possible," Stimpson said.

Stimpson, during the council meeting, credited much of the fiscal discipline to the late Finance Director Paul Wesch, [who died in December](#). The additional reserves are part of the city's overall approach toward paying down its debt and generating additional revenues to address a list of facility-related needs that include, among other things, a new project at the Mobile Civic Center.

"To have the funds in place to make a transfer like this, it's due to the fiscal responsibility and culture Paul created," said Stimpson.

The council's decision was the last major project voted on by three of its longest serving members – Fred Richardson, Bess Rich and John Williams. All three voted in support of the financial transfer, and praised the project for its potential in being an economic and cultural game changer for downtown Mobile.

"We are talking about (building the airport terminal) in the near distance future," said Richardson, who is retiring after 25 years on the council. "We are not talking about someone else's lifetime. We are building this in the next two to three years."

He added, "I'm glad I'm having this opportunity to vote on this so when the airport is built, I can say 'I voted to provide funding for this magnificent airport.'"

Rich said she hopes the new airport can be a transportation hub that includes a bus terminal and a passenger rail stop. Amtrak is currently pushing for a return of a Gulf Coast rail route connecting New Orleans to Mobile, and their [request is currently being weighed by the U.S. Surface Transportation Board](#).

She also said a new I-10 Mobile River Bridge and the [return of the cruise industry to downtown Mobile](#) will help support the airport.

"We have all the pieces and parts that are there," said Rich. "I know it's the right decision to make."

'Quality of life'

Not all the financing has been finalized. Airport officials plan to seek an additional \$30 million from the Mobile County Commission, according to airport president Chris Curry.

"We have not officially asked the county as of yet," Curry said. "We thought the city should take the lead first as far as local funding. With the mayor's and council's approval of this \$30 million, our next step will be to visit the county."

A county spokeswoman declined comment.

Curry said airport staff has met with all three county commissioners and described those meetings as "positive." He said a specific amount of support has not been pitched to commissioners yet.

He said one aspect of a new international airport he would like to see officials tout more is its impact to the Port of Mobile.

"We talk about the passenger aspects and how it will affect the residents of the community in having lower fares and direct flights to destinations," Curry said. "But we haven't talked about the connection with the port. The international piece ... it makes Brookley the main transportation center for this region."

Curry said with a commitment from the county, the first phase of the overall project – the \$252 million terminal and associated developments including a parking garage – will be financed. A lion share of the money comes from the federal government, he said. The authority also plans to ask the state for assistance.

Overall, Curry said the Airport Authority [would like to pursue a \\$403 million project](#) that will include a second phase which would be an expansion of the new terminal. With five gates, the new airport would still be smaller compared to Pensacola International Airport which has operated with 12 gates since the 1990s.

“The new phase could be an expansion,” Curry said. “As needed, we’ll continue to add to the expansion of the terminal.”

Construction on the new terminal is not expected to begin for another year, Curry said. He said environmental work on the site needs to be completed.

“It could take a year to clear up the property before you see vertical construction,” he said.

[The airport swap](#) has been a top priority for the Mobile Airport Authority for several years and has been a priority for Stimpson and his administration and the airport authority has taken steps toward making the project a reality. Recent actions include the [approval of Birmingham-based Hoar Program Management \(HPM\)](#) as the project manager in April and [the reopening of the downtown airport’s main runway earlier this month.](#)

The Federal Aviation Administration [approved the authority’s 20-year master plan for the project back in the spring.](#)

The airport has been [operating a small terminal at Brookley since 2019](#), as part of an \$8 million project financed largely by the authority’s reserves. Denver-based Frontier Airlines [offered flights to Denver and Chicago from the downtown airport](#) during 2019, [but suspended operations in early 2020.](#)

The city has long argued that Mobile Regional Airport in west Mobile is too far from interstates and does not offer competitive fares or direct flights. In 2019, the airport was the nation’s 165th busiest with 328,00 enplanements – the number of people who boarded an airplane from an airport during a calendar year.

Curry anticipates those numbers rising after the terminal opens.

“In three years, we are going to improve their quality of life,” Curry said about the new airport’s impact. “They won’t have to travel as far to access popular markets. They won’t have to pay as much for an airline ticket as we have at Mobile Regional today. The airport will bring in more jobs and support logistics and cargo and improve synergy for the Port of Mobile.”

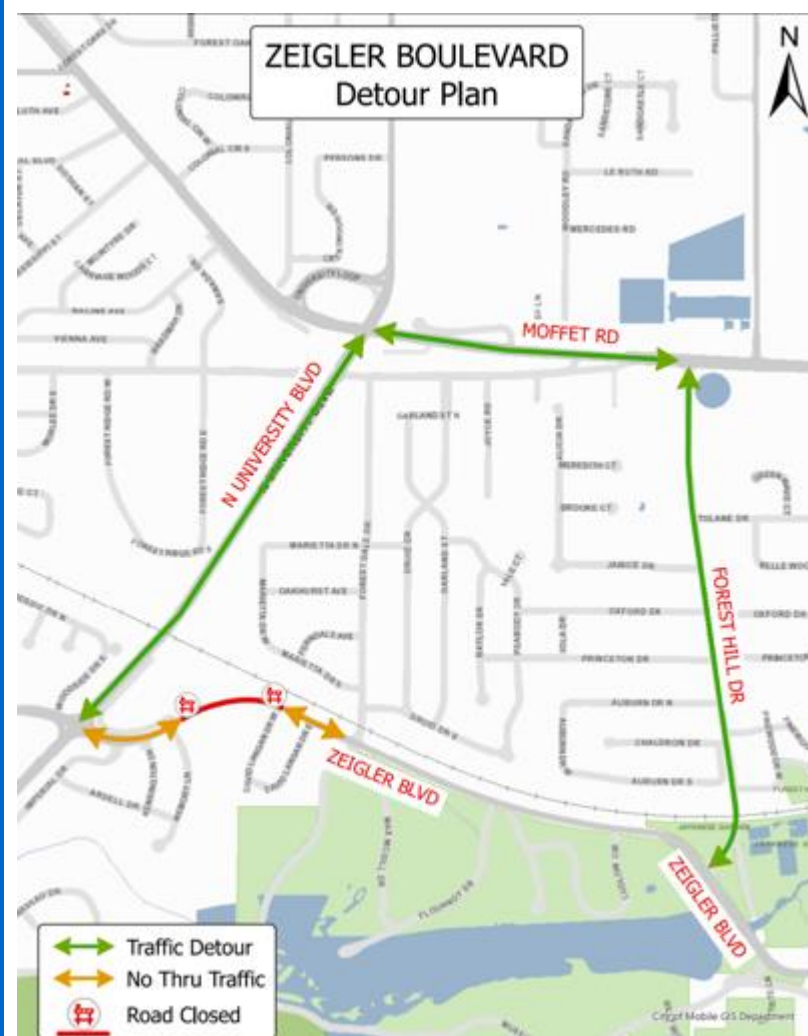
Zeigler Boulevard to be closed for construction starting Nov. 1

UPDATED OCT 27, 2021 | POSTED ON OCT 27, 2021
City of Mobile

MOBILE, Ala. (WALA) -- Zeigler Boulevard will be closed for road construction for approximately two weeks between University Boulevard and Forest Dale Drive beginning Monday, Nov. 1, according to the City of Mobile's engineering department.

The road closure is required to complete drainage construction and utility relocations for the Zeigler Boulevard roadway widening project. The objective is to complete this work by 5 p.m. on Nov. 12.

Zeigler Boulevard traffic will be detoured to University Boulevard to Moffett Road to Forest Hill Drive. Zeigler Boulevard will be closed (no traffic) between Memory Lane and West David Langan Drive.



ALDOT to open bids for new beach express bridge if toll bridge negotiations falter

by Cory Pippin

Thursday, October 28th 2021

ORANGE BEACH, Ala. (WPML) — Time is running out on negotiations that would seek to expand the current Baldwin Beach Express toll bridge.

Alabama Department of Transportation officials said negotiations with the toll bridge owners continue, but if middle ground isn't found soon, the state will open its new bridge project up for bids.

The plan by ALDOT to build another bridge, free to the public, less than a mile east of the toll, was set to begin before it was put on hold in July.

At that time, ALDOT granted Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon 3 months to negotiate with the Baldwin County Bridge Company, the toll bridge's owner.

Kennon's request includes calls for the construction of another lane, expanded toll booths, and a reduced rate for locals.

That time has nearly come and gone. ALDOT representative Tony Harris said they are allowing those discussions to continue for now.

However, Harris also said, in part:

"Our goal is to find a way to relieve traffic congestion on Highway 59. If no other viable solution is identified through our ongoing discussions, we are taking steps to place the ALDOT bridge project in the December 3 bid opening."

The delay sparked controversy in Gulf Shores.

Gulf Shore Mayor Robert Craft previously slammed the idea, saying 3 years of negotiations with the toll bridge owner were fruitless, and another bridge is desperately needed.

Craft also pointed out the city of Orange Beach's financial stake in the toll bridge, as the city makes .30 per car.

Mayor Kennon fired back. He said the money only accounts for 2% of the city's revenue and moving traffic safely is the number 1 priority.

The state has already spent \$20 million buying property for the right of way for the entire length of the project, including millions it paid out to homeowners whose properties were in the way and were condemned.

Both Mayor Craft and Mayor Kennon declined to comment on ALDOT's statement.

If the new bridge plan moves forward, construction would take two years to complete.

Kennon still negotiating with toll bridge company for second Orange Beach span

Orange Beach, Ala. - (OBA) - The Alabama Department of Transportation issued a brief statement saying it's "making steps" to place the new Gulf Shores bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway on the bid letting list for December. The next bid letting for ALDOT projects is set for Nov. 5 but there are no Baldwin County projects listed.

The bridge project, which is part of a new corridor from the Beach Express just south of Coastal Gateway Boulevard to the span on the Intracoastal, was originally on the bid letting for July 30. It was removed after Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon asked for three months to negotiate with the bridge company for a new two-lane span over the Intracoastal at the toll bridge in Orange Beach.

ALDOT said on Oct. 28 that negotiations were ongoing but it is "making steps to include the bridge project in our December bid opening."

Kennon's three-month timeframe comes to a close on Oct. 30.

When the announcement was made that the letting would be delayed, Gulf Shores Mayor Robert Craft said he was disappointed that representatives from his city were not invited to the table.

"I am extremely disappointed to learn through a statement released by Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon that this project has been delayed, once again, after three years of fruitless negotiations with these new (toll bridge) owners," Craft wrote. "The transportation issues we are working to solve impact Gulf Shores as much as any community and it is totally unacceptable that we are not directly involved when decisions like this are made."

Earlier this month Kennon told the OBA Community Website he thought negotiations were "moving forward" and the parties were "getting close to a decision." He declined comment on Oct. 28.

The state has already spent \$20 million buying property for the right of way for the entire length of the project. Those include \$1.2 million for retired Gulf Shores firefighter Tony Diliberto and his wife Patricia Diliberto. Doyce and Shirley Ellenberg were paid \$2.9 million for 21.25 acres, both after jury trials.

Other land taken in condemnation proceedings include Pandion Ridge RV Park with 49.75 acres for \$5.6 million and three sisters named Almaroad, Sprunger and Waters were paid \$8.25 million for 140 acres. Those cases were settled by a jury trial as well.

Others settled out of course include Orlanda Clark-Perrault and Robert Perrault who received \$450,000 for 3.06 acres, the George Wallace family got \$374,300 for 20.38 acres, Darrell Tidwell was paid \$175,000 for 6.69 acres and Marvin Ray and Kathleen Peed got \$70,000 for 4 acres. The Alabama Department of Transportation issued a brief statement Oct. 28 saying it's "making steps" to place the new Gulf Shores bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway on the bid letting list for December. The next bid letting for ALDOT projects is set for Nov. 5 but there are no Baldwin County projects listed.

The bridge project, which is part of a new corridor from the Beach Express just south of Coastal Gateway Boulevard to the span on the Intracoastal, was originally on the bid letting list for July 30. It was removed after Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon asked for three months so he and state officials could negotiate with the bridge company for a new two-lane span over the Intracoastal at the toll bridge in Orange Beach.

ALDOT said negotiations were ongoing but it is "making steps to include the bridge project in our December bid opening." Kennon's three-month timeframe comes to a close on Oct. 30.

ALDOT spokesman Tony Harris also said on Oct. 28 Kennon and the state were working "to see if that process can be fruitful even beyond the three-month window but at the same time, we are taking steps to get (the project) in our December bid letting." Harris said those negotiations include possible improvements to the bridge and toll plaza.

When the announcement was made that the letting would be delayed, Gulf Shores Mayor Robert Craft said he was disappointed that representatives from his city were not invited to the table.

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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](#):