



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, March 4, 2016

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The Mobile MPO was scheduled to meet this past week. The meeting was not called to order because there was not a quorum; no action could be taken on the items of the agenda that needed resolution. Please see *Mobile MPO Updates*.

There are some very good funding opportunities available right now, including TIGER Grants and Recreational Trails Grants. 2015 set a record for the highest roadway traffic, and the Crepe Myrtle Trail Bike ride is coming up. This week's *Just For Fun* will get you jumping...

Have a great weekend!

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



www.mobilempo.org check us out on FACEBOOK

Mobile MPO Updates

MOBILE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) MEETING THIS PAST WEDNESDAY

The MPO Policy Board meeting was not called to order Wednesday as there was not a quorum; no official action could be taken. There was some discussion among members present regarding the following:

- Changes to the MPO Attributable funded project list
- The right of way for Ziegler Blvd. from Cody to Schillinger has been authorized
- A letter received from Mobile City Councilman Fred Richard concerning improving US 45 from Three Mile Creek to I-65, Widening Old Shell Road from I-56 to Bay Shore Drive, and widening Mobile Street from Fillingim to Prichard Ave.
- A discussion of the Wave's public meeting last week (see last Friday's newsletter)
- An update on the ADA transition plans for the MPO member governments.

There are items that need to be resolved. Projects that needed to be included into the 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) will be held up until the next MPO meeting is scheduled. That meeting has not been scheduled yet. Although some of this is due to an internal misunderstanding, **if you are a MPO member, and cannot attend the meetings, please be sure that you have a proxy eligible under the [Mobile MPO Bylaws](#) that can attend.**

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION CHANGES

States and MPO's have been asked to review all roads classified as principal arterials that existed on October 1, 2012, and identifying any necessary functional classification changes to rural and urban principal arterials. For your jurisdiction please [review your Principle Arterials](#) and if there should any changes. If you have any questions, please call staff.

Functional Classification Manual, http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/processes/statewide/related/highway_functional_classifications/
NHS Maps and Procedures, http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/national_highway_system/
NHS Questions and Answers, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/qandas/qanhs.cfm>

At some point in the near future staff will be prepared to have a conversation with each local government in the Mobile Urbanized Area about the Functional Classification of their roads. Please stay tuned...

The 2016 Alabama Statewide Freight plan is now available in DRAFT.

The Purpose of the Freight Plan is to:

- Assess existing and projected freight conditions to identify needs and significant project to meet those needs
- Align Alabama's freight policy with federal and related guidance
- Provide guidance to MPO's for freight planning.

Previous Efforts

- 2010 Alabama Statewide Freight Study and Action Plan
- 2013 Alabama Rail Plan and Rail Directory

2016 Alabama Statewide Freight Plan



Projects Within Region Let February 26th, 2016

Mobile County

- For constructing the Permanent Restoration of a damaged site on SR-17 (US-45) at MP 13.130 near the junction of Hogg Road northwest of Prichard. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$105,716 to \$129,208 .
- For constructing the Historic Whistler Bike Trail (Bike Path along an abandoned Railroad Corridor) along SR-17 from a point near the I-65 Interchange (Exit 9) to a point near the SR-158 Interchange in Prichard. Length 1.293 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$525,351 to \$642,096 .

Baldwin County

- For constructing the Resurfacing and Traffic Stripe on SR-180 from 0.560 mile east of the Foley Beach Express (MP 26.038) to just west of SR-161 (MP 28.264) in Orange Beach. Length 2.226 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$783,958 to \$958,171 .

Escambia County

- For constructing the Resurfacing and Traffic Stripe on SR-3 (US-31) from north of the intersection of Tiger Drive/Douglas Lane (MP 71.961) to just south of the Conecuh County Line (MP 81.196) in Brewton. Length 9.235 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,761,504 to \$2,152,950 .

[What's Under Construction?](#)

Legislative Updates

House T&I Leaders Say Panel Will Soon Begin Exploring Sustainable Funding Options

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will soon turn its attention back to the Highway Trust Fund, two senior committee members told state officials, and begin what could be a lengthy discussion of how Congress can provide a sustainable, long-term revenue stream.

Rep. Sam Graves, R-Mo., made his remarks in a Feb. 24 speech to the Washington Briefing of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. Graves chairs the T&I highways and transit subcommittee.

He said the work could take a year or more but said lawmakers will put all funding options on the table including a higher motor fuels tax, increased tolling and a conversion to charging drivers for their actual vehicle miles traveled as a direct fee to use the road system. Graves made clear that he thinks the effort will eventually move toward VMT pricing.

Graves said lawmakers should be able to agree on a funding solution in a year or two, and "I really believe we'll end up with some form of vehicle miles traveled."

Graves was part of a session that included speeches by ranking T&I Democrat Peter DeFazio of Oregon; Senate EPW Chairman James Inhofe, R-Okla.; and EPW Ranking Member Barbara Boxer, D-Calif. Complete comments to the conference from each of the four congressional members are available at TransportationTV.org.

DeFazio in his speech said Congress needs to substantially increase infrastructure investment and provide a sustainable funding stream, which the new FAST Act does not do.

He told the conference he had added language in the FAST Act to provide that if Congress finds extra revenue for surface transportation in the next few years the money would automatically be distributed through the trust fund's formula programs.

DeFazio noted that Oregon has a major VMT pricing system pilot program under way. But he cited some difficulties with adopting a VMT-type user fee across the country, including its complexity and the privacy concerns it raises for some. He said he favors an upstream wholesale tax on the portion of oil used in transportation, and said it could be collected easily.

DeFazio also told AASHTO Journal he expects T&I Chairman Bill Shuster, R-Pa., to begin talks on finding a long-term funding solution sometime this spring, after the House completes work on a reauthorization of aviation programs.

The current aviation law expires March 31, but DeFazio said Congress will need to extend it since both the House and Senate are not likely to agree on that measure in just one more month.

On Feb. 25, news agencies reported that House leadership was shelving for now the T&I Committee's bill to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration and split off its air traffic control functions to a nonprofit corporation. Reports said lawmakers would now prepare an extension of current FAA authority while they sort out how to proceed on a long-term aviation bill.

Graves did not say specifically when the long-term funding talks would begin but told AASHTO Journal: "We're actually going to start right away." He said he and Shuster might hold both discussion roundtables and formal hearings, but he expected much of the effort to be in roundtable discussions with various stakeholders.

Graves also said his goal would be to not just cover the annual shortfall between what the trust fund spends and how much it receives in dedicated funds, but to also increase funding for infrastructure investment.

CBO: Congress Could Boost Highway Program Productivity With Funding Changes

The Congressional Budget Office said Congress could [make federal highway spending more productive in an era of constrained funding levels](#) by charging drivers directly for their miles, using benefit-costs analysis to guide more funding or by tying federal funds to system performance measures.

In a [new report](#), the CBO offered these approaches as options and did not specifically endorse any. However, its discussion of the pros and cons of the three approaches suggested the most upside and least downside could come from allocating more federal funds through a benefit-cost analysis of how the money would be spent.

That would appear to favor providing more funds through competitive programs such as the TIGER infrastructure grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Transportation. But the CBO also suggested Congress could provide more benefit-based funding "rather than allocating funds on a geographic basis or providing fixed allocations to states," which is the way most of the federal highway program now operates.

It noted that, according to the Federal Highway Administration, "funding projects with the highest net economic benefits could realize most of the benefits of highway spending for about 25 percent less cost, or allow the same amount of spending to have a greater economic payoff."

Early in the report, the CBO said the need to get the most economic impact from highway spending is highlighted by two factors – the lack of a sustainable Highway Trust Fund revenue stream and the fact that federal highway spending today "buys less" than any time since the early 1990s after accounting for the rise in construction costs.

And it said the current method of applying federal dollars in the highway program "does not correspond very well with how the roads are used and valued. Almost all federal spending for highways occurs through formula grants to state and local governments, and historically less than half of the funding has been tied directly to the amount of travel on the roads."

It said direct road-use pricing through variable tolls or charges for vehicle miles traveled "would increase economic output by allowing highly valued transportation to move more quickly and more reliably." Such pricing could help control congestion and raise revenue for improvements.

But the CBO warned that relying on direct usage pricing could raise privacy concerns about tracking personal travel, put a proportionately greater burden on low-income households and stir public resentment over paying tolls. And at bottom, the CBO added, the costs of operating a direct-pricing system "remain higher than those for collecting revenues through the gasoline tax."

The report looked at tying federal dollars to performance measures such as ones for traffic congestion or road quality "by providing additional funds to states that meet standards or penalizing states that do not."

But it also said that "using such measures would be less effective than using pricing or benefit-cost analysis" and could award funding to boost a segment's performance when that would have less of an economic benefit than spending the money elsewhere.

Funding Opportunities

U.S. Transportation Secretary Foxx Announces \$500 Million in Eighth Round of TIGER Funding (Due April 29th, 2016)

WASHINGTON –Today, U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx announced \$500 million will be made available for transportation projects across the country under an eighth round of the highly successful Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) competitive grant program.

"The TIGER program funds vital transportation projects that provide real benefits to communities all across the country. Every year, we see hundreds of compelling applications that have the potential to improve people's access to economic opportunities, make people safer, and improve their well-being," said Secretary Foxx. "I am proud that for seven rounds, TIGER has been able to make a valuable contribution to improving our nation's transportation infrastructure, and I look forward to this year's competition."

Like the first seven rounds, FY 2016 TIGER discretionary grants will fund capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure and will be awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant impact on the nation, a metropolitan area, or a region.

The 2016 TIGER grant program will continue to make transformative surface transportation investments by providing improvements over existing conditions. The grant program will focus on capital projects that generate economic development and improve access to reliable, safe and affordable transportation for communities, both urban and rural.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, does not provide dedicated funding for the planning, preparation, or design of capital projects; however, these activities may be funded as part of an overall construction project. Continue [HERE](#).

Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Application Workshop

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs is sponsoring a RTP application workshop on **Tuesday, March 22, 2016**, at the

Center for Commerce, 401 Adams Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama in the 7th Floor Auditorium. Registration will begin at 8:00 a.m. and the workshop will begin at 9:00 a.m. and end by 12 noon. Participants can access the Center for Commerce parking deck from the South Decatur Street entrance by entering the code 3308#. Everyone interested in competing for RTP grant assistance during this funding cycle is encouraged to attend.

Registration is required. To register, please call Kim Martin at (334) 353-3151 or email her at kim.martin@adeca.alabama.gov by Friday, March 11, 2016. Please provide the name(s) of the workshop attendees and the organization they will be representing. The maximum capacity for the meeting location is 100. Should registration exceed 100, a second workshop will be scheduled.

The workshop will be accessible to all persons. If you have a disability that requires special services, materials, or assistance, please notify Ms. Martin when you preregister. We look forward to working with you during the next funding cycle.

USDOT Opens Applications for \$800 Million in New "FASTLANE" Freight Grants Program

The U.S. Department of Transportation [began soliciting applications for \\$800 million in freight project grants for fiscal 2016](#) that were authorized in the FAST Act, setting in motion the process for state departments of transportation and other agencies to tap this new funding program.

"Our nation needs a strong multimodal freight system to both compete in the global economy and meet the needs of consumers and industry," Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said in announcing the grant applications Feb. 26. "We now have an opportunity to fund high-impact projects that address key challenges affecting the movement of people and freight."

Deputy Transportation Secretary Victor Mendez had told state agency CEOs at the AASHTO Washington Briefing on Feb. 24 to soon expect [that formal notice of funding opportunity](#), which would activate the initial round of what will be five years of freight-related competitive grants.

The department also issued a three-page [set of fact sheets](#) that sum up how the program works.

While state project planners knew the grant pool would be available under the new surface transportation law, they could not actively seek the funds until the notice was issued that opened applications and spelled out the details.

That notice also comes days after the department opened applications for [this year's separate TIGER infrastructure grants program](#), which provides a \$500 million grant pool in 2016 and can help fund a wider array of projects.

The FAST Act called the new program "Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects." The department is calling them FASTLANE grants, an acronym that stands for "Fostering Advancements in Shipping and Transportation for the Long-term Achievement of National Efficiencies."

It is the first program in the USDOT's 50-year history that establishes broad, multiyear eligibilities for freight infrastructure projects including intermodal.

The USDOT announcement said FASTLANE applications will be due by 8 p.m. eastern time on April 14, and more information will be included in a series of webinars on the <https://www.transportation.gov/fastlanegrants/webinar-series>

Those eligible to seek the grants include state DOTs, metropolitan planning organizations, port authorities, tribal governments and other agencies. Eligible project categories, the notice said, include various freight-related types of work plus projects that add capacity and mobility to the interstate highway system in a national scenic area.

Of the \$800 million in available 2016 funding, 25 percent or \$190 million is reserved for rural projects and 10 percent or \$76 million for smaller ones. Over the five years of the FAST Act, the program will provide \$4.5 billion in project grants.

The USDOT said the FASTLANE grants will fund large projects equal to the lesser of \$100 million or a certain specified statutory percentage of the project state's fiscal 2015 apportionment that are eligible for a minimum award of \$25 million. Smaller projects below the minimum large-project size are eligible for awards of at least \$5 million.

2015 Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) Diesel Emissions Reduction Grant Program

Approx. Grant Amount: \$155,000

The DERA program provides public and/or private on-road and off-road diesel fleet owners and operators funding to help reduce diesel emissions within the State of Alabama. Reducing diesel emissions, such as carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and particulate matter will help improve air quality and human health in Alabama. We would like to partner with fleet owners/managers to retrofit 2006 or older on-road diesel engines and 2009 or older off-road engines with diesel emissions control devices and/or anti-idling systems.

Diesel Emissions Exhaust Control Devices and Anti-Idling Systems Used in Previous Projects:

- Diesel Oxidation Catalysts (DOC)
- Closed Crankcase Ventilation (CCV)
- ZTR Smartstart II (Locomotive Anti-idling System)
- Tri-Pac (Long Haul Truck Anti-idling System)
- Arctic Breeze (Long Haul Truck Anti-idling System)

All devices and systems must be EPA and/or CARB-certified.

Entities awarded funding under this program must secure vendors and contractors through a competitive bidding process required by the U.S. EPA and the State of Alabama.

Interested parties should contact:

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1400 Coliseum Boulevard
Montgomery, Alabama 36110-2059

EDA releases FY 2016 Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Funding Opportunity, announces new grant process to stream application process

EDA recently released the Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) notice announcing the availability of funding through the Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs. The Public Works program is designed to provide funding for design, construction, or renovation of critical public infrastructure needed to create or retain jobs in a locality. The Economic Adjustment Assistance Program provides resources for both design, construction and renovation as well as technical assistance to support long-term job creation/retention in cases of sudden and severe economic events.

This funding solicitation also announced that EDA is moving towards a two-step application process where applicants can submit a proposal at any time to determine alignment with EDA priorities before submitting a full application. This means there are **no longer any quarterly deadlines for the Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs**. Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact EDA's state representative to develop their project and EDA application. To learn more about EDA's grant programs and opportunities, please feel free to contact Diane Burnett at dburnett@sarpc.org.

Industrial Access Road and Bridge

Industrial access funds are intended to provide adequate public access to new or expanding distribution, manufacturing and industrial firms. The industry must be committed to new investment and the creation of new jobs. The new access must be on public right of way for public use (state, city or county) and the project sponsor (city or county) must maintain the completed facility unless the facility consists of turn lanes, crossovers, etc., that are located on state highways. Industrial access funds are limited to construction, construction engineering and inspection costs. The project sponsor is responsible for all preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation costs.

Prior to the date the qualifying (new or expanding) project is "placed in service," the sponsoring entity or its local development agency must notify the Alabama Department of Commerce of its intent to claim the incentives under Section 41-9-202.1, Code of Alabama 1975. Effective October 9, 2008, the Industrial Access Road and Bridge Corporation application submittal should include the notification acknowledgment letter from the Secretary of Commerce. For more info, see [HERE](#)

Just For Fun

NOW DROP AND GIVE ME 30...

Russia has figured out how to make you get trim, AND take transit; do 30 squats, and you get free a commute. What are the potential applications of this technology? Perhaps we need to install some of these in our downtown areas. We would love to see these on the parking meters at Bienville Square; you wanna park ON Dauphin Street? Give me 20 pushups!!! HA HA!! The thought of that is *Just For Fun*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1sWY1q9ygo>



In the News

2015 Set Record High for Roadway Traffic

It had been expected but now it is official: The Federal Highway Administration said U.S. traffic volume in 2015 [set an all-time annual high for vehicle miles traveled](#), a record that underscores the rising demand on roadway infrastructure.

The FHWA said preliminary data from its monthly "Traffic Volume Trends" report showed [VMTs reached 3.148 trillion miles last year, up 3.5 percent from 2014](#). "For a sense of scale, 3.148 trillion miles is roughly the same distance as 337 round trips from Earth to Pluto," the agency said.

It also said the 2015 VMT level beat the prior record set in 2007, which was before the deep 2008-09 recession briefly knocked volume down.

VMT began steadily rising again in 2012.

The likelihood that 2015 would set a new annual record had been evident for a while, as most months of that year also set all-time highs for their turn on the calendar. It was confirmed when preliminary estimates from the FHWA's "Traffic Volume Trends" report showed drivers racked up 264.2 billion miles in December, up 4.2 percent from the same month in 2014.

That report is based on [information collected from more than 5,000 "continuous count" stations](#) nationwide. December traffic on a seasonally adjusted basis also set a new high, even when adjusting for holiday travel.

The agency said the volume trend highlights "the growing demands facing the nation's roads."

At 11.3 percent, California led the nation with the largest unadjusted single-state traffic percent increase in December, compared with the same month a year earlier, followed by Hawaii at 7.2 percent and Arkansas at 6.2 percent. At 4.6 percent, Washington, D.C., had the largest unadjusted traffic single-month decrease.

Mobile United and other local groups to host the third Crepe Myrtle Trail Bike Ride along Mobile Bay

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Email: kpitman@mobileunited.org Email: Callaway@MobileBaykeeper.org

When and Where?

- **WHEN:** Saturday, April 2, 2016; 8:00 a.m. registration; 8:30 a.m. ride
- **WHERE:** Starts at Arlington Park, 1814 15th Street South, Mobile

MOBILE, Ala. -- The Crepe Myrtle Trail Bike Ride, presented by Mobile United, is planned for 8 a.m. on Saturday, April 2, 2016, beginning in Arlington Park near downtown Mobile. This event offers an historic opportunity to ride the Mobile Bay-side of the Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley.

This ride is special because it is the only time during the year that people on bikes have access to the proposed Crepe Myrtle Trail. Thanks to the Mobile Airport Authority, the USA Foundation and Mobile Area Water & Sewer Service, for access to the Brookley by the Bay and Airport property, and other portions of the trail are granted for the event.

Fun and educational talks about the Crepe Myrtle Trail and other important environmental topics will be featured during this fun event. While the ride is free and open to the public, **registration is required**. To register before the event online, visit www.crepemyrtleride.com through March 31, 2016. Registration will also be available starting at 8:00 am on the morning of the ride.

The 185+ participants who took part in the 12-mile group ride last year said it was a unique experience that offered beautiful views of Mobile Bay. The ride is expected to run from 8:30 to 11 a.m. *No training wheels will be allowed.* Children should be experienced riders and be able enough to ride the full 12 miles in potentially warm weather. Helmets are strongly encouraged for adults and required on riders under 16.

Mobile United's Natural Resource Committee organized the inaugural ride in 2014 in an effort to draw awareness to the proposed Crepe Myrtle Trail Bike and Pedestrian Path. The Crepe Myrtle Trail is an integral part of the Mobile Greenway Initiative, a multi-use waterfront trail stretching from the University of South Alabama and Langan Park along Three Mile Creek to Dog River and eventually, Dauphin Island.

This ride is made possible by Mobile United, Delta Bike Project, Alabama Coastal Foundation, Keep Mobile Beautiful, Mobile Airport Authority, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Mobile Baykeeper, Partners for Environmental Progress (PEP), Dog River Clearwater Revival, Mobile County Health Department, Bicyclemobile.org, Downtown Mobile Alliance, USA Foundation, Mobile County Sheriff's Office, National Park Service, Mobile Area Water & Sewer System (MAWSS), The Peninsula of Mobile, Brookley By the Bay, the City of Mobile, Wrico Signs and other partners.

Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. on the day of the ride at Arlington Park. For more information, call Casi Callaway, Chair of Mobile United's Natural Resources Committee at 433-4229 or Katherine Pitman, Mobile United Executive Director, 432-1638.

Bike Ride info:

COST: Free, with required registration www.crepemyrtleride.com

LENGTH: 12 miles

SPEED: Beginner friendly pace, 8-12 mph

WHEN: Saturday, April 2, 2016; 8:00 a.m. registration; 8:30 a.m. ride

WHERE: Starts at Arlington Park, 1814 15th Street South, Mobile

DIRECTIONS: From I-10, south on Broad Street for 0.8 miles, then left into Arlington Park

Notes: No training wheels allowed. T-shirts are \$20 before the event and \$25 on April 2.

CREPE MYRTLE TRAIL

BIKE RIDE

4.2.2016

PRESENTED BY



Mobile United

Empowering change. Inspiring tomorrow.



COST:

Free, with required registration

LENGTH:

12 miles

SPEED:

Beginner friendly pace, 8-12 mph

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DIRECTIONS:

From I-10, south on Broad Street for 0.8
miles, then left into Arlington Park

*Notes: No training wheels allowed. T-shirts
are \$20 before the event and \$25 on April 2.*

BRING YOUR HELMET!

Steve Perry Memorial Ride



REGISTER AT:

crepemyrtileride.com



Transportation Research

TIGER Grant Application Webinar

On February 23, 2016, U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx announced the availability of \$500 million for transportation projects across the country under an eighth round of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) competitive grant program. TIGER applications are due April 29, 2016. This is an explanatory webinar on how to apply for TIGER funding and is intended for all applicants.

The Federal Highway Administration is offering a webinar to assist applicants:

[How to Compete for TIGER Discretionary Grants](#) – March 8, 1:30 – 3:30 PM ET

Water Street in Downtown Mobile to be Transformed

A new web site has been created to show folks how Water Street can potentially look. Check it out, really great stuff.... [HERE](#)

Created by: DREW BUCHANAN, PUBLISHER AND SENIOR EDITOR Drew Buchanan is a founding partner of The Pulse who currently serves as publisher and senior editor.



[See the Future of Transportation](#)