



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

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Contact Us

<http://www.mobilempo.org>
transportation@sarpc.org

Kevin Harrison, PTP
Director of Transportation
kharrison@sarpc.org

Tom Piper
Senior Transportation Planner
tpiper@sarpc.org

Monica Williamson
Transportation Planner
mwilliamson@sarpc.org

Anthony Johnson
Transportation Planner
ajohnson@sarpc.org

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

We're working on finalizing the Mobile MPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for next fiscal year and we'll be having a MPO meeting to adopt it soon. Congress is not in session, but FTA has issued a final rule requiring transit grant recipients to develop asset management plans. (See *Legislative Updates*). We will continue to follow this and keep you abreast of any ramifications it may have for transit operators in our region. There are several interesting news articles to check out (*In the News*) and this week's *Just for Fun* will stop you in your tracks.

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

We are currently working on the scheduling of a Technical Coordinating / Citizens Advisory Committee (TCC/CAC) and a Mobile MPO Policy Board meeting for August and September. There are going to be a couple of items on the agenda, including the Self Certifications, Unified Planning Work Program and some items concerning the Transportation Improvement Program. We will keep you posted.

ADA TRANSITION PLANS

The ALDOT deadline of July 20th to have an adopted ADA Transition Plan for Public ROW within an Urban Area has been extended until September of this year. We will have an MPO meeting in September to adopt the Mobile MPO Self-Certification, as we can say with sincere honesty, that yes we have nine ADA Transition Plans for Public ROW. We are currently working on a Mobile MPO ADA Web page that will eventually have links to the nine plans, and ADA Coordinators.

The inventory is complete, public meetings have been had, and final plans have been adopted (still waiting on one). I want to thank everyone for getting these plans adopted as fast as you have been. If you have any questions, please call Kevin Harrison.

FTA 5310 FUNDING

The Mobile MPO is the Designated Recipient of the FTA 5310 Urban Area funding. Available this fiscal year was \$110,042 (federal) for operating and \$387,964 (federal) for capital. The Independent Living Center, City of Satsuma, and the Mobile ARC were awarded operating funds for FY 2017. Mobile ARC, The Learning Tree, Independent Living Center, and Alta Pointe were awarded capital grants totaling \$377,164 federal dollars for 2017. Congratulations to the grantees.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM (TAP) FUNDING

The Mobile MPO is also the Designated Recipient of Urban Area TAP funds. We had available this fiscal year \$551,000 in federal funds. Congratulations to Mobile County for their ADA Compliance TAP Project, and the City of Mobile for Sidewalks along Bit and Spur form Old Shell Rd to University Blvd and Old Shell Rd Sidewalk Improvements from Union Ave to Hyland Avenue. We are now scheduling the pre-agreement meetings or these projects.

Projects Within Region Let July 29th, 2016

Mobile County

For constructing the Additional Lanes and Interchange Modifications (Grade, Drain, Base, Pave, Bridge Replacement, and Signals) on I-65 at CR-41 (Celeste Road) in Saraland. Length 0.207 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$4,925,026 to \$6,019,476

For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-16 (US-90) from the Mississippi State Line to east of the intersection of Ramsey Road (MP 5.730) east of Grand Bay. Length 5.729 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,464,508 to \$1,789,954

For constructing the Installation of Centerline Rumble Strip along SR-42 (US-98) from a point near the Mississippi State Line (MP 0.290) to MP 7.089. Length 4.040 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$66,183 to \$80,890

For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-13 (US-43) from just south of the junction of SR-16 (US-90) in Prichard to just north of the intersection of SR-158 in Saraland. Length 4.691 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,524,351 to \$1,863,095 .

Baldwin County

There are no projects at this time.

Escambia County

There are no projects at this time.

[What's Under Construction?](#)

[Project Status](#)

Legislative Updates

Congress Adjourns until September; Future of FY2017 Appropriations Unclear

The House and Senate adjourned last week for a 7-week recess. Before adjourning, the House approved its fiscal year (FY) 2017 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill by a vote of 231 to 196. This was the first time since 2009 that the House was able to approve this bill which funds the U.S. Department of Interior and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. When Congress returns in September, they will face a short time frame for addressing FY2017 spending as the new fiscal year begins on September 30. There is speculation about the possibility of Congress moving a 6-month Continuing Resolution (CR) to run through March 2017. The other option is a short-term CR followed by negotiation of an omnibus spending package before the end of the year. A decision on a course of action is not expected until Congress returns in September.

FTA Finalizes Rule for Transit Systems to Develop Asset Management Plans

The Federal Transit Administration issued a final rule July 26 that requires transit agencies that receive FTA grants to [develop management plans to improve their public transportation assets](#) including vehicles, facilities, equipment and other infrastructure.

Under the rule, each FTA-supported transit provider will be required to inventory and assess the conditions of their assets, develop priorities for investment based on the inventory and set performance targets to keep assets in a state of good repair.

The FTA said this regulation, which was required under the 2012 MAP-21 law and takes effect in October, "is intended to close the gap on aging and poorly maintained transit assets." [The Federal Register notice with the rule is here.](#)

Agencies must complete asset management plans within two years and establish preliminary state of good repair performance targets by January. The rule also establishes new reporting requirements to the National Transit Database.

The FTA noted that in 2013 transit agencies reported spending \$2.2 billion on mechanical failures. "If only 1 to 2 percent of breakdowns are avoided thanks to better transit asset management practices, the rule will be cost-effective," the FTA said. "Moreover, agencies will realize benefits from improved asset management such as increased reliability, transparency and accountability."

U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said the "new transit asset management rule will ensure that large and small transit operators take a commonsense, strategic approach to maintaining their assets. This rule is a big step toward ensuring safe and efficient transit service for the tens of millions of Americans who rely on public transportation each day."

The FTA also said in 2013 it estimated the transit industry had nearly \$86 billion worth of deferred maintenance and replacement needs, more than of it in rail systems. And it estimated that "nearly half of all buses are in either poor or marginal condition, meaning that they are due – or soon due – for replacement."

The transit asset management regulation lays out a strategic approach for agencies to maintain and improve their capital assets through careful planning and improved decision-making, such as reviewing inventories and setting performance targets and budgets to achieve state of good repair goals.

"We've worked inclusively with our grantees to develop the TAM rule, setting clear requirements for transit agencies to identify and prioritize state of good repair needs," said FTA Acting Administrator Carolyn Flowers. "The good news for both transit operators and the traveling public is that the rule will improve safety and reliability and result in fewer travel delays for passengers."

The FTA is offering technical assistance in this effort through guidebooks, webinars, newsletter articles highlighting TAM case studies, FTA's annual state of good repair roundtables and a National Transit Institute course devoted to asset management.

Funding Opportunities

Creative Placemaking Grants and 2017 Guidelines Announced

[Creative Placemaking Grants](#)

Application Deadline: September 12, 2016

Creative placemaking is increasingly a tool of choice for those working to forge solutions to community development challenges. As one of the leaders in the creative placemaking field, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) announces its latest round of funding through its signature creative placemaking program, Our Town. NEA will award \$4.3 million in grants to fund 64 projects in 36 states in cities ranging from Los Angeles, California to Lewiston, Maine. [Guidelines and application materials](#) for 2017 Our Town funding are

posted on NEA's website. [All 2016 Our Town projects](#) are available in the related content section.

The Big Jump Project

[The Big Jump Project](#) applications Due: October 28, 2016

Building on the momentum of the Green Lane Project, The Big Jump will put bikes at the center of connecting people to the places where they live, learn, work and play. Through a mix of on-the-ground infrastructure, smart outreach and community engagement, The Big Jump will partner with community leaders in the U.S. to identify opportunities for improvements specifically tailored to each community's needs. The Big Jump Project is a three-year effort to help 10 places achieve a big jump in biking – a doubling or tripling of people riding – by building a network of safe and comfortable places to ride and engaging the community. The goal is also to validate a core concept: that if a city does all the right things, more people will ride and the community will be a better place to live, work and play. The Big Jump team is looking for 10 places that will achieve great things for biking between now and 2020.

Mayors' Challenge for Safer People, Safer Streets Extended

September 2016

Last year, Secretary Foxx challenged city leaders to raise the bar for bicyclist and pedestrian safety by joining a year-long Mayors' Challenge for Safer People and Safer Streets effort. Mayors and other elected city officials created local action teams to advance safety and accessibility goals by taking on challenge activities. Over the course of the year, USDOT invited Challenge Cities to participate in forums, webinars, and learn about available resources to help them accomplish their goals. The challenge is now open until September 2016. Interested cities can still join the more than 200 Challenge cities committed to improving walking and biking by emailing pedbikesafety@dot.gov

Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs

Deadline: Rolling

Grants made under these programs will leverage regional assets to support the implementation of regional economic development strategies designed to create jobs, leverage private capital, encourage economic development, and strengthen America's ability to compete in the global marketplace. Through the Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO), the Economic Development Administration (EDA) solicits applications from rural and urban communities to develop initiatives that advance new ideas and creative approaches to address rapidly evolving economic conditions. EDA is employing a new two-phase review process for proposals/applications submitted under this FFO. Proposals will be reviewed by EDA within 30 days of receipt; and following the proposal review, full applications will be reviewed within 60 days of receipt.

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

On this day, August 5th, in 1914 in Cleveland, Ohio, the first electric traffic light was installed. It had two colors, red and green, and a buzzer to provide a warning for color changes.



(click to enlarge)

The world's first, *manually* operated gas-lit traffic signal, PREDATES the automobile and was short lived in London in December, 1868. It exploded less than a month later, killing it's policeman operator.



[HERE](#) is the history and all you ever wanted to know about traffic signals.

Did you know that in China, you must stop on the Yellow? [HERE](#)

In British Columbia, the Green light on the signals flash before they go to yellow! [HERE](#)

A [flashing yellow arrow](#) is pretty explanatory, but for some unexplained reason, there are some people in Mobile that think you are supposed to stop at an intersection with a yellow flashing lens.

DON'T STOP AT A YELLOW FLASHING, [PROCEED WITH CAUTION](#). If you get a flashing RED, STOP.

JUST FOR FUN, OBEY THE LAW!!!!

2012 Code of Alabama

Title 32 - MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC.

Chapter 5A - RULES OF THE ROAD.

Section 32-5A-34 - Flashing signals.

(2) *Flashing yellow (caution signal). When a yellow lens is illuminated with rapid intermittent flashes, drivers of vehicles may proceed through the intersection or past such signal only with caution.*

In the News

Highway 59 to close overnight Aug. 8 and 9

SUBMITTED BY LaDonna Hinesley / City of Foley

A new Foley landmark is scheduled to be installed on the night of Aug. 8, when a pedestrian bridge will be hoisted into place between two towers located on Highway 59, just north of the intersection with Highway 98. City officials say that on Aug. 8, Highway 59 is expected to be closed from roughly 8 p.m. until 6 a.m. the following morning to allow a crane to lift the bridge into place, and again on Aug. 9 during the same hours for the pouring of lightweight concrete on the bridge deck.

The bridge will allow safe crossing for pedestrians over the busy highway. Stairs and elevators on each side provide access to the bridge. The floor of the bridge will be 18 feet above Hwy. 59. The bridge was designed to match other downtown landmarks, including Centennial Plaza, built in Heritage Park to commemorate the city's 100th birthday, and the columns located along the Wilbourne Antique Rose Trail. The bridge was designed by Sted McCullough of McCullough Architecture.

"I am very excited to see this project moving to completion," said Foley Mayor John Koniar. "It will be a big step forward for our downtown revitalization efforts and a have a positive impact on pedestrian safety; it's a great addition to our community."

A map showing the detour route will be available several days before the highway closure. It will be available on the city website at [CityOfFoley.org](#), and also at Foley's city hall, the welcome center and the library.

The bridge is a component of Foley's TRIP (Transportation Regional Infrastructure Pedestrian System) plan, developed with citizen input to make Foley a more pedestrian-friendly city. The bridge is one of three projects funded by a federal TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) Grant, which the city received in 2013. Foley was awarded \$4.7 million, which required a 25 percent match, bringing the project total to \$6.3 million.

Other components in this project include almost 30 miles of new sidewalks and walking paths. An important section of pedestrian path currently under construction is located along the north side of Highway 98, running from Juniper Street to Hickory Street. A path located along the east side of Highway 59 south of Highway 98 is also under construction.

Additional components of the plan include pedestrian cross walks and signals at major intersections. These will be installed along Highway 59 at intersections with Azalea Avenue, Michigan Avenue and County Road 20.

NHTSA Kicks-Off 'Safe Cars Save Lives' Bus Tour, August 9-13

The bus will travel to 9 cities and provide consumers with free safety checks for vehicle recalls, tire inflation, car seat installation and heatstroke prevention at each stop

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) [Safe Cars Save Lives bus tour](#) is kicking-off in select cities from August 9-13 to spread the word about vehicle and passenger safety. A team of experts will be deployed to each stop to teach motorists about recalls, tires, car seats and heatstroke.

"Summer road trip season is in full swing and we want car owners to stay safe on their travels and in their daily lives," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "We're hitting the pavement and rolling up our sleeves to bring free safety checks to consumers because we believe that Safe Cars Save Lives."

The 'Safe Cars Save Lives' bus will travel from Florida to Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas. At each stop, safety experts will be on the ground running free safety checks for vehicle recalls, tire inflation, car seat installation and heatstroke prevention. These community events are open to the public and co-sponsored by NHTSA, Safe Kids Worldwide, AAA and the Rubber Manufacturers Association, among others.

"We're meeting motorists in their communities to show them that protecting their vehicles means protecting their loved ones," said NHTSA Administrator Dr. Mark Rosekind. "We want to show people how simple it can be to take safety into their own hands. Taking a few minutes to run a safety check on your car, tires or car seats could help prevent a crash and save a life."

The public safety checks for vehicle recalls is a first for NHTSA and is an offshoot of the ['Safe Cars Save Lives' campaign](#) the agency launched in January. According to NHTSA, millions of cars are recalled each year, yet, on average, 25 percent are left unrepaired.

The bus tour builds on NHTSA's current efforts to provide consumers with information to help them make informed vehicle safety decisions, including the online recall lookup tool and mobile apps for [Apple](#) and [Android](#) devices; [tire safety](#), [car seat safety](#) and [heatstroke prevention](#).

Bus Tour Schedule

Miami, FL	Aug. 9	8:30–10 a.m.
Orlando, FL	Aug. 9	3–4:30 p.m.
Tampa, FL	Aug. 10	8:30–10 a.m.
Tallahassee, FL	Aug. 10	3–4:30 p.m.
Mobile, AL	Aug. 11	9–10:30 a.m.
New Orleans, LA	Aug. 11	2–3:30 p.m.
Houston, TX	Aug. 12	9–10:30 a.m.
San Antonio, TX	Aug. 12	3:30–5 p.m.
Fort Worth, TX	Aug. 13	9–10:30 a.m.

Obstacles, alternatives emerge in Alabama's push for more passenger rail

By John Sharp

Amtrak's Coast in February was met with large, flag-waving crowds, and created a sense of momentum among rail supporters to figure out a way to bring passenger rail service back to the four-state region.

But as a federally formed working group approaches its Sept. 4 deadline to complete its report on the restoration efforts, obstacles are emerging.

Among them:

- Republicans, during the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, rail. Their new party platform, instead, encourages American's passenger rail service to be privatized.
- While the Southern Rail Commission pushes to re-establish Amtrak connections on the Gulf Coast, Chicago-based Corridor Capital has sought to gin up investor interest for a privately run north-south rail service between Birmingham and Mobile.
- The Alabama State Port Authority is raising concerns about the potential of passenger rail cars clogging up downtown Mobile's freight-centric rail lines. Mobile has been labeled as a potential "hub" of passenger rail activity.
- Mobile and Atmore – Alabama's two stops along the Gulf Coast route – will have to find dollars for rejuvenated passenger stations. In Mobile's case, the city's old loading platform still exists, but there's no station, nor is anything budgeted for next year to build one.

Despite these issues, Southern Rail Commission representatives say they are focused on the task at hand – forwarding an analysis on

restoring Amtrak service to the Gulf Coast to the Federal Rail Administration after Labor Day.

The coast has been without a passenger rail service linking New Orleans to Florida since Hurricane Katrina heavily damaged the rail line in 2005.

"I'm encouraged we'll have a good report when it's delivered," said Greg White, chairman of the 21-member Southern Rail Commission, which serves as a leading advocate for rail service in the Deep South. "We are hopeful we'll see Gulf Coast passenger rail within the next 24 months."

'Not an alarm'

The federally formed working group met Thursday in Mobile and has two more meetings planned in which members will finalize a report they'll forward to Federal Rail Administrator Sarah Feinburg.

The group is looking at a preferred alternative of restarting the Gulf Coast rail line to include four daily stops in Mobile. There are two proposed services: Round-trip runs from Mobile to New Orleans, which would be state-supported, and further links that would tie New Orleans to Jacksonville and Orlando.

This would be a considerable step up in daily rail activity than the former Sunset Limited line, which stopped in Mobile only three days a week.

But the conditions of various train stations and platforms pose problems. Atmore and Mobile were among those singled out by Amtrak officials as needing potentially expensive upgrades, such as new concrete platforms, signage, lighting and other amenities.

White said he wasn't surprised. "I think each of those communities were well aware," he said. "I think they can address that. I think they are fine."

To offset the costs, White said, grants would be available through the federal government.

Dan Dealy, a consultant who has long focused on examining the restoration of passenger rail along the Gulf Coast, echoed White's comments. "It's not an alarm," he said.

But he was surprised that Amtrak is requesting Mobile replace sections of its platform that are not up to the industry's 12-foot-wide standard.

"I'm not sure what it means as far as how much needs to be reworked," Dealy said. "We know in Mobile, it needs a touch up. It's making sure we can get the funding."

Mobile city officials, on Tuesday, rail and expressed a desire to have a train station – or canopied platform – built on Water Street near Cooper Riverside Park. It's the same location where the city's old train station sat before it became a Katrina casualty.

[Amtrak talks come to Alabama](#)

The Mobile City Council votes Tuesday on a resolution in support of restoring passenger rail along the Gulf Coast. Two days later, a federally formed working group will meet in Mobile to further discuss the issue. Mobile is the largest city along the rail line without a train station for passengers.

'Connect Alabama'

There are questions about how much that Mobile is willing to spend on passenger rail. The city declined to get involved in a Montgomery-based study of restoring a north-south passenger rail along the former Gulf Breeze line, active from 1989-1995.

According to Robert Smith, director of planning with the city of Montgomery, both Mobile and Mobile County were approached. Mobile city officials, Smith said, explained that they couldn't afford to participate. The county didn't provide a formal response.

Montgomery local governments along with the city of Birmingham invested in a study of restoring the rail line between those two cities. Now, the city of Montgomery and Montgomery County, along with the Southern Rail Commission, are providing a \$90,000 local match to analyze a southern link to the coast.

"If the study is feasible, the service ... would be very beneficial to the state of Alabama by connecting each of the major cities to each other with rail as a mode of travel and connect other major Alabama cities to the national passenger rail network," Smith said.

Amtrak is not involved in the study, which is being conducted by HDR Inc. of Omaha, Neb. Amtrak, however, is aware of the work.

Privatization emerges

Corridor Capitol, meanwhile, hopes to establish a permanent presence in Alabama and scouting for a headquarters in Montgomery.

"What we are looking at beyond operating trains throughout Alabama is a whole corporate headquarters for railroad in Alabama with a lot of expensive jobs attached to it," said Bruce Richardson, the company's vice president.

Richardson described Corridor Capital's efforts as "early in our process," and admitted that no talks have taken place with companies such as CSX that operate freight cars along the rail lines.

[Corridor Capital](#) has met once with the Southern Rail Commission, in December when it convened in Mobile.

A series of June [stories from Montgomery media](#) sources indicated that Corridor Capital was on the verge of moving into Alabama and establishing rail routes. Richardson, though, said the [initial reports](#) were "overly enthusiastic" and "missed a couple of details." He added, "That is why things started sounding like something would happen tomorrow. I think it was simply a misstatement."

The articles prompted the Southern Rail Commission [to issue a release indicating that the reports were "erroneous and misleading."](#) It stated, "The SRC does not currently have any business with Corridor Capital, nor pending business."

Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari added, "It's important that all parties work together and speak in one voice which is why we are working with the Southern Rail Commission and CSX is working through the Southern Rail Commission. There is a process in place."

Billy McFarland, the appointee of Gov. Robert Bentley to the Southern Rail Commission, was among those speaking favorably of Corridor Capital's aims, even as the commission was partnering with Amtrak to push forward with the Gulf Coast line.

McFarland resigned from the post in the days following the media stories. He has since been replaced by Jerry Gehman of Atmore.

McFarland, whose father helped found the Southern Rail Commission in 1982, said he resigned because of increasing responsibilities with his other jobs and because of a "fundamental disagreement" with the commission on how Alabama's passenger rail future ought to unfold.

McFarland said he has no "ill personal feelings" toward the SRC, and he plans to stay active with passenger rail interests by teaming up with former state lawmaker Perry Hooper of Montgomery to push for privatization.

Hooper said he would like to see more passenger rail options in Alabama. Only three cities – [Anniston, Birmingham and Tuscaloosa](#) – have operating train stations for Amtrak trips between [New York and New Orleans](#).

Bentley spokeswoman Yasamie August said the governor has no position on whether the state should contract with private rail companies or Amtrak.

"I'm totally a fan of private enterprise," said Hooper, who also described himself as a fan of passenger rail, with hopes that it returns to Montgomery. "I think it works better than government spending."

Hooper said that Corridor Capital, and other "blue chip rail companies" could provide a more economical approach toward passenger rail service in Alabama.

Questionable service

Nonetheless, questions have surfaced in recent years about the viability of Corridor Capital, which currently does not operate a private passenger rail service.

Drawing particular attention was the company's dealings in Indiana, where that state's Department of Transportation [opted to end contract negotiations with Corridor Capital in 2014](#) for a rail service between Indianapolis and Chicago.

[According to one media account](#), quoting a so-called whistle-blower, the company lacked financing, experience and didn't have any rail cars ready to go.

"Corridor Capital submitted the highest-scoring proposal," said Will Wingfield, spokesman with the Indiana Department of Transportation. "INDOT and Corridor Capital could not agree on financial terms to reduce costs as desired ... and INDOT began negotiations with the next-highest-ranked proposer, Iowa Pacific Holdings."

Iowa Pacific is now providing restored heritage train cars, on-board WiFi and food and beverage service for Indiana, Wingfield said, while Amtrak continues to operate along freight rail lines.

Richardson said that Indiana was "a disappointment to us" but criticized the so-called whistle-blower quoted in media articles. "He was never an employee. He represented himself as that, but he was never paid a dime."

Richardson said the company does have the rights to older rail cars – built in the '50s and '60s – that can be repurposed into "brand new cars."

He said the company doesn't have a time table on its entry into Alabama, but added "Alabama is on our radar. We believe Alabama is absolutely the center of things in the Southeast for passenger rail when you look at all the directions that can be served."

Conflicting positions

Privatization of passenger rail has been at the forefront of interests among Republican lawmakers in Alabama. At the same time, it's put some conservative Southern lawmakers in a peculiar position with the party's national platform.

U.S. Sen. Roger Wickers, a Republican from Mississippi, has been among the politicians openly championing for a return of Amtrak to the Gulf Coast.

U.S. Rep. Bradley Byrne, R-Fairhope, who [has pushed for more privatization](#) in the past, said last week that he is now "agnostic" about whether a private carrier or Amtrak controls a restored Gulf Coast line.

"But if it's public, I want to make sure we maximize the taxpayers' dollars," he said. "We've been running an Amtrak system that is running a pretty significant deficit. My understanding is the way they are working toward a proposal is it would have minimal impact

toward the federal budget. I don't want to pre-judge, it. I want to see how they propose it. If it's put together in such a way that it makes sense ... I would be supportive of it."

Republican lawmakers have cringed over Amtrak's budget in recent years, and became vocal about the entity's subsidies, which eclipsed \$1.4 billion in 2012.

Magliari, the Amtrak spokesman, declined to comment about political party platforms.

Byrne, meanwhile, said he is supportive of capital improvements along the rail line, which also services freight rail. And Byrne said he believes there can be a resolution to any concerns from the Port Authority about an influx of rail cars into the State Docks if passenger rail is restarted.

"There are enough rail lines and enough hours in the day that we should be smart enough to handle that," Byrne said.

New Fairhope roundabout officially opened

By Cliff McCollum

Elected officials from across the Fairhope area came out Monday morning for the ribbon cutting on the newly-opened roundabout at the intersection of County Road 13 and Fairhope Avenue.

Fairhope area residents can take joy in the opening of the newly-constructed roundabout at the intersection of Baldwin County 13 and Fairhope Avenue.

City and county officials met at the roundabout early Monday morning for a ceremonial ribbon cutting and all were pleased that the project was finished on schedule.

"I want to thank everyone for their cooperation on this joint Baldwin County and City of Fairhope project," Commissioner Chris Elliott said. "This is an ATRIP project and we're thrilled to have everyone coming together to make this a reality. This is a project we've been able to get done on time and on budget to make sure this road is open before school starts."

State Representative Joe Faust said he was glad that some of the money set aside for ATRIP funds made its way into the community.

"This is a great day for the city of Fairhope and the county," Faust said. "It's something we've been looking forward to for a long time. We're happy that we could be a part of it."

Fairhope Mayor Tim Kant praised Fairhope's council members for being willing to contribute city funds to help make sure the project became a reality.

"Our city council voted to appropriate moneys to work with the county on this with some additional costs, so we split the costs with the county to make sure this happened," Kant said. "It was everybody working together that helped get this done."

Fairhope Council President Jack Burrell said the new roundabout should help with the area's traffic issues.

"We're very proud of this new roundabout in Fairhope," Burrell said. "We hope that once people get used to it, they'll really appreciate how it helps with the traffic flow here through the city. I know from having kids in the school right up the street how important it is to be able to get them there on time and this will help facilitate that as well."

Kant said the city hoped to be able to conduct traffic studies on the area soon to show what effect the roundabout placement has had.

"With the way this roundabout was constructed, it can also give us the ability to add another lane to it if it becomes necessary to three-lane Fairhope Avenue," Kant said. "We're always trying to make sure we're planning for growth and for the future here in Fairhope."

How about one-way traffic in the Bankhead Tunnel? Councilman floats idea, ALDOT nonplussed

By Lawrence Specker

Here's a novel idea for the Bankhead Tunnel: Make it one-way some of the time, and one-way the other way some of the time.

The idea was floated at Tuesday morning's Mobile City Council meeting, but not as part of any official motion, agenda item or policy goal. Instead, District 4 Councilman John Williams pitched it as part of his remarks at the end of the meeting. He began by saying he applauded the Alabama Department of Transportation's recent recreational closings of the tunnel, which allow pedestrians and bicyclists to use it during limited time periods.

Then he laid out a vision:

"We can fix a bunch of our traffic problems if we'll turn the Bankhead Tunnel in one direction in the evening, that is out, and one direction in the morning, that is in," he said. "And with just a little bit of modifications and help from our traffic engineering and traffic department and the police department, we can fix a lot of things that people have been asking for, including a way to get across the bay by bicycle or walking or running."

In the greater scheme of things, it might not be that outlandish. Some municipalities beset by chronic commuter traffic jams use so-called "flex lanes," which carry traffic one way during the morning rush and the other way during the evening rush. And the state has

a plan to use "contraflow" on I-65 during a hurricane evacuation scenario, using southbound lanes for northbound traffic.

The Bankhead Tunnel will once again be open to bicyclists, pedestrians and other recreational users this Saturday morning, according to the Alabama Department of Transportation.

Though ALDOT's recent willingness to conduct recreational closings of Mobile's older, two-lane tunnel might seem to indicate a hint of playfulness, its institutional response to a query about Williams' suggestion was, well, institutional.

Cheyenne West, public information officer for ALDOT's southwest region, said the proposal hadn't actually been brought to the department, and "a formal request would have to be made" before the department would begin to think about it. And thinking about it would entail some extensive research into what it would take to make it happen.

Translation: You won't be seeing "One-Way" signs on the Bankhead Tunnel anytime soon.

ALDOT sets recreational tunnel closing for Saturday

By Lawrence Specker

The Bankhead Tunnel will once again be open to bicyclists, pedestrians and other recreational users this Saturday morning, according to the Alabama Department of Transportation.

ALDOT announced the recreational closing [via Twitter](#), saying it will run from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 6. The agency has conducted several such trial closings, in which vehicular traffic is required to take a detour.

[The most recent such closing](#) occurred on Saturday, July 30; ALDOT reported that more than 1,000 people took advantage of the opportunity to run, walk or wheel through the two-lane tunnel. According to ALDOT, the breakdown was 568 pedestrians and 521 cyclists.

Some who participated used roller skates and skateboards to make the passage.

SHOCKING STATS: Mobile County roads deadliest in the state

By Alexa Knowles, FOX10 News Reporter

MOBILE, AL (WALA) -

It's certainly not a category you want to lead, but that's exactly where Mobile County stands when it comes to traffic deaths this year. Shocking numbers from Alabama State Troopers show already this year, more than 40 people have died on the road, which is a big spike from last year.

We noticed we were covering more deadly wrecks the past couple months, so we started asking questions. FOX10 News found traffic deaths are up statewide and the roads in our area are the deadliest.

Mangled metal and police lights are all too familiar a scene in Mobile County; it happened again Tuesday on Cody Road. Thankfully, no one died.

So far this year, there have been more than 1,000 wrecks in Mobile County. 23 people have died and hundreds of others have been injured. Those numbers top the state.

And it's the same story for the city of Mobile. Since January, 18 people have died...that's about the same as the total number of deaths in the city for all of last year, which is 19.

We asked Alabama State Trooper Jamie Maloy if there's a reason for this alarming spike. He says distracted driving, including texting, is a big part of it.

"We have a problem with distracted driving and it's not necessarily just the phone, I mean you have the radio in the car, people are eating in the car, other people in the car are carrying on a conversation and just not paying attention to their surroundings."

With I-10 and I-65 both going straight through the county, Trooper Maloy says that adds to how dangerous it can be when people drive distracted and speed. Drivers tell FOX10 News they see more eyes on the phone, than on the road.

"I see them at stop lights all the time texting while they're driving, just looking down, just staring away going nowhere," says Andy Odle.

"I'm really upset, I actually just want to pull them down and it's like hey, we've had a lot of people die because of texting and driving we really have and it's like one of the worst things you can do," says Annette T. Petite.

Last year was an all time low for the state in traffic deaths. This year, the state is already up almost 100 deaths from this time last year.

In 2014, 281 people died from January to July. In 2015, that number went down to 264 deaths. But this year is up by almost 100, with 358 deaths since January. Out of those crashes, 149 were not wearing a seat belt, and 112 were wearing one. Many of the cases are undetermined.

Here are this year's numbers comparing Mobile to counties of a similar population, from January to July 31st:

- Mobile County: 23 deaths

- Cullman County: 17 deaths (2nd after Mobile)
- Baldwin County: 5 deaths
- Jefferson County: 5 deaths
- Madison County: 9 deaths
- Montgomery County: 6 deaths
- Tuscaloosa County: 16 deaths

Most counties did not go above 10 deaths.

The number of crashes is also alarming. In Mobile County, there have already been more than 1,000 wrecks. In Baldwin County, there have been almost 900. That's also high compared to the other counties. Of those wrecks, 453 have been injured in Mobile County, and 358 in Baldwin County. Madison County has the most with 1,090, and less than 400 injuries.

Trooper Maloy says the number one cause of crashes is speeding, with number two being DUI. He also says many of those deaths could have been prevented had the victims been wearing seat belts.

Transportation Research

Upcoming webinar on “Community Connections: Redesigning Highways to Improve Neighborhood Access and Livability.”

This webinar is part of the Context Sensitive Design and Solutions webinar series and is sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration's Office of Planning, Environment, & Realty and Project for Public Spaces. This webinar will discuss strategies to improve livability and neighborhood connectivity through collaborative efforts to reconnect communities, create economic development opportunities, and promote multimodal accessibility in areas with major highways. Following a Federal overview, four speakers will provide examples of their collaborative experiences with improving neighborhood connectivity. Presentations will describe: the “Infra-Space” Program and how it helps to identify redevelopment opportunities in areas under elevated roads, bridges or viaducts; the process of converting a segment of I-295 to a boulevard and creating opportunities for economic development and connecting Southeast DC to the Anacostia riverfront; efforts to reconnect communities through context sensitive design and other public works initiatives; and community connectivity and cohesion efforts associated with the Reviving I-95 Corridor Plan in Pennsylvania.

WEBINAR PRESENTERS

Moderator: David Harris, Acting Livability Team Leader, FHWA Office of Human Environment

- Shari Schaftlein, Director, FHWA Office of Human Environment
- Robin Blatt-Eisengart, MassDOT Office of Real Estate and Asset Development
- George Fleagle, Senior Transportation Engineer, FHWA Pennsylvania Division Office
- Michael Smart, Program Delivery Team Lead, FHWA DC Division Office
- Jennifer Hughes, Design Specialist, National Endowment for the Arts

WEBINAR LOGISTICS:

Date: Wednesday, August 17, 2016

Time: 2:00pm – 3:30pm ET

Registration: <https://collaboration.fhwa.dot.gov/dot/fhwa/WC/Lists/Seminars/DispForm.aspx?ID=1050>

Once registered, participants will receive an email with instructions on how to access the webcast.

NOTE: NEW REGISTRATION SYSTEM FOR EXTERNAL PARTICIPANTS - In order to register for the webinar, participants who are external to US DOT will first need to request an account by clicking on this link <https://collaboration.fhwa.dot.gov/FBA/Register.aspx>. It may take one business day to establish an account. For step-by step instructions on how to request an account please click here: <https://connectdot.connectsolutions.com/espnnon-dotstaff/>. Once the account information is received, access the site by clicking on the registration link and logging in. Make sure to save the registration link and password for the day and time of the webinar.

Please forward this notice to your State and local planning partners. The webinar is intended for internal and external audiences, however registration is limited. For more information contact Fleming El-Amin at 202-366-0233 or fleming.el-amin@dot.gov.

FHWA has just published the [Bike Network Mapping Idea Book](#).

This resource highlights ways that different communities have mapped their existing and proposed bicycle networks. It shows examples of maps at different scales, while also demonstrating a range of mapping strategies, techniques, and approaches. It is intended to serve as a resource as communities work to identify, plan, and improve their bicycle networks.

AASHTO Releases Federal Surface Transportation Authorization Portal

AASHTO has developed a portal for information on federal surface transportation authorization. This is a regularly updated resource on MAP-21 reauthorization and implementation of the **Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act**. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Advancing Collaborative Planning: Summary of a Focus Group on Transportation and Economic Development

by Carrie Kissel

In March 2016, the NADO Research Foundation held a focus group on the link between transportation and economic development, and how state departments of transportation and regional planning and development organizations can work together to better plan for those issues in an integrated way. The focus group participants included regional, state, and federal agency staff and others with experience in both transportation and economic development programs. During the conversation, the focus group participants developed a definition of economic development that emphasizes doing economic development and transportation planning differently, and can be used to help frame related planning efforts:

Economic development in transportation involves deliberate interventions to produce tangible benefits that are specific to the context, are sustained over time, and make a place more resilient.

This new report, [Advancing Collaborative Planning: Summary of a National Focus Group on Transportation and Economic Development\(PDF\)](#), explores how the participants' definition of economic development can be applied in transportation planning. The report documents the themes of the focus group discussion, including economic development impacts, resilience, and state department of transportation (DOT) and regional planning and development organization roles in working together. Read about the highlights of the discussion and about noteworthy practices shared by participants that can institutionalize consideration of transportation and economic development together.

Transportation Dictionary

The USDOT released a searchable online dictionary that includes over 9,000 transportation terms and acronyms. The terms were collected from a variety of public and private transportation publications and databases. This dictionary presents over 9,000 terms and acronyms related to transportation. The terms and acronyms were obtained from various transportation publications and databases which exist within the federal government, private organizations, Canada and Mexico.

Search Tips

- Sources are listed in parenthesis after the definition.
- None of the searches are case sensitive. Searching for PEDESTRIAN will produce the same results as searching for pedestrian.
- The Dictionary searches for the word, phrase or acronym as it is entered and returns all records that match or contain that word, phrase or acronym. For example, searching for pedestrian will return records for pedestrian and pedestrian walkway.

Click [HERE](#) for the search engine.

[See the Future of Transportation](#)