



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, December 18th, 2015

Volume 16, Number 11

In This Issue

- MOBILE MPO UPDATES
- RPO UPDATES
- PROJECTS LET
December 4th, 2015
- LEGISLATIVE UPDATES
- FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
- JUST FOR FUN
- IN THE NEWS
- TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH

Recently Completed Planning Studies

Origin Destination Study Using Cell Phones
Mobile County
Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
Intelligent Transportation System Diversion Route Planning Study

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The FAST Act is [HERE!](#) Plus, the House passes spending bill which funds a familiar roster of grants for transportation projects (See *Legislative Updates*) Talks of an increase in the Alabama Gas Tax, ALGO and what is going on in New Orleans?(See *in the News*). A new *Funding Opportunity* if you've got what it takes and are up for a challenge... hint, hint, Mobile. This week's *Just For Fun* is flat...

No Transportation Friday Newsletter for the next 2 weeks. See you next year! Have a great Holiday season.

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



www.mobilempo.org

check us out on FACEBOOK

Mobile MPO Updates

Mobile MPO Met Wednesday, November 18th

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) was at the last Mobile MPO meeting, and presented the findings of the certification review of the Mobile MPO Planning Process that was conducted in March of 2015. The certification review is every four years, and is somewhat of an audit of everything the MPO should be doing; the review was a positive review. The Mobile MPO has some noteworthy practices in terms of organizational structure and public involvement (this E-newsletter included), but did have some recommendations from the FHWA:

1. Bike and Pedestrian Planning Activities: The MPO should perform a gap analysis and transit stop overlay to connect bike paths and pedestrian walkways. The analysis should identify needed connections to transit, as well as, identify critical pinch points such as railroads, bridges, overpasses, and other type of intersections to ensure any additional multimodal accommodations are included in the current Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.
2. Transit: The MPO's long range transit planning and Transportation Improvement Program should be fully developed for the Mobile urbanized area transit program to include all capital projects, as well as, operation and maintenance costs. Fiscal constraint should be demonstrated based on the 25 year projection of historical revenues and 4 year projections, respectively.
3. Outreach and Public Participation: The MPO should keep their website contents updated.
4. Title VI and Related Requirements: The MPO should create a link on the home page of their website with point of contact information for the public to file Title VI and ADA related complaints, in addition to submitting questions and comments.
5. ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plans: The MPO should coordinate with ALDOT on procedures of compliance planning to meet ADA documentation requirements.
6. Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP): The MPO TAP program should include projects throughout the TIP. The MPO should program for two years at the beginning of the TIP, and have a call for projects each following year to maintain a two year program of projects.
7. Inactive Projects: The MPO and ALDOT should evaluate and improve the process to maintain and track the status of all MPO projects as well as State projects that take place within the MPO planning boundary. As part of the process, the MPO and ALDOT should work to re-scope and/or close projects that are not in the current LRTP.
8. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP): Tasks must specify a schedule in sufficient detail to describe the activity completion or timeframe. The MPO should avoid using "NA," and provide a more specific brief description of timeframe activity/task is to be completed for all activities/tasks.
9. Congestion Management Process (CMP): The MPO should reevaluate and update their current CMP to make it a more valuable tool for the MPO and locals.
10. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): The MPO should follow procedures outlined in new STIP MOU for TIP revision, include a description of the 1% inflation rate of project cost estimate (Year of Expenditure) for transparency, and coordinate with ALDOT of new procedures to format Transit funds.

In addition to the certification review findings, the MPO approved the following items to be included into the 2016-2019 Transportation

Improvement Program:

STP Any Area Funds

- Widening, resurfacing, guardrail and striping Dawes Rd (CR-33) from Three Notch Rd (CR-32) to pavement joint south of Scott Dairy Loop Rd; 12/4/2015; \$1,010,000
- Resurfacing on SR-16 (US 90) from AL.MS state line to pavement joint just east of Ramsey Rd; 5/27/2015; \$2,524,016

National Highway Funds

- Resurfacing on SR-13 (US 43) form joint just south SR-16(US 90) to joint just north of SR-158; 2/26/2015; \$2,302,241

State Funds

- Additional lanes on Schillinger Rd South (CR-31) from Three notch Rd (CR-32) to south of Halls Mill Creek; 10/15/2015; \$10,000,000

In addition, the MPO adopted the Human Service Coordinated Transportation Plan (please see *Rural Planning Organization Updates* below)

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

There was a discussion pertaining to the TAP Program in terms of recent FHWA certification review findings. ALDOT's call for TAP projects has a deadline of January 2016 (see *Funding Opportunities* below). Typically the MPO TAP call for projects has coincided with ALDOT's. The TCC/CAC decided that it would make more sense to have an June 2016 deadline for MPO TAP applications. We will officially announce the Mobile MPO TAP call for Projects in January. It looks like the TAP program will remain, as it is included in the House version of the new Transportation Bill; see *Legislative Updates* below.

ADA Transition Plans

The Alabama Transportation Planners Association (ATPA) hosted an ADA Day in Birmingham on October 29th. The Federal Highway Administration gave a presentation on the Americans with Disabilities Act and Transition Plans, then each urban are in the State gave a brief benchmark report as to where they are in developing the Transition Plans for each local government in an Urban Area, if they did not already have them. The afternoon was a question/answer period with a panel of ALDOT and FHWA officials. For a copy of those questions and answers, and the FHWA ADA Presentation, please see [HERE](#).

SARPC has contracted with Neel-Schaffer to conduct the municipal ADA Transition Plans for Public Rights of Way, and assist Mobile County in conducting their ADA Transition Plan for Public Rights of Way. The consultant is well underway in the surveying of the sidewalks and ramps for condition and compliance in terms of the Americans with Disabilities Act within the MPO Study Area. ALDOT has provided us with State and US "shielded" routes and cross sections that they have inventoried.

The ADA Transition Plans are moving along, and we will keep you posted. Please keep in mind, that every city and county in the State, should have an ADA Transition Plan for not just public Rights of Way (sidewalks), but all public buildings and open spaces. It is your responsibility to have the ADA Transition Plans in place.



Toole Design Group has finalized the *Non-Motorized Mobility Study for Downtown Mobile*. Thank all of you that had a part in creating this important plan for downtown Mobile.

For anyone interested in the Power Point given by Ernie Boughman with Toole Design Group, please see [HERE](#)

For anyone interested in the FINAL REPORT (large document), please see [HERE](#)

GIS online

We are upgrading and starting to utilize our online GIS capabilities. Please check out some of the current interactive maps we have been working on. Many more to come...

<http://mobilempo.org/maps.html>

DESTINATION 2040

The Mobile MPO [Long Range Transportation Plan](#), Destination 2040, has been adopted, subsequent comments from ALDOT, FHWA, and FTA. The DRAFT document that was out for public review and reviewed with MPO and TCC/CAC members may have some slight modifications in the FINAL Document. The FINAL will be out next week.

The plan is multi-modal in scope, encompassing long-range plans for highway, public transportation, and bicycle/pedestrian networks. Regional growth, economic development, and accessibility within the study area along with environmental concerns necessitate that the long-range plan addresses not only improved vehicular travel but also improvements to other modes of transportation such as bicycling and walking. Preservation of the existing transportation system coupled with enhancement of all modal choices will contribute to the improvement of the overall quality of life in the region. You can learn more about the plan [HERE](#).

Projects Within Region Let December 4th, 2015

Mobile County

None at this time

Baldwin County

- For constructing the Bridge Replacement (Bridge Culvert) and Approaches on CR-55 over an Unnamed Branch of Polecat Creek west of Summerdale. Length 0.151 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$828,021 to \$1,012,026.
- For constructing the Grade, Drain, Base, Pave, and Drainage Structure Replacements on CR-32 at various sites from the intersection of CR-73 to the junction of CR-83 in Summerdale. Length 0.173 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$733,627 to \$896,655.
- For constructing the Bridge Replacement and Approaches on CR-34 over Negro Creek east of Summerdale. Length 0.317 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,303,136 to \$1,592,722 .

Escambia County

None at this time

[What's Under Construction?](#)

Legislative Updates

House passes \$1.14 trillion spending bill avoiding government shutdown



By [The Associated Press](#)

on December 18, 2015 at 9:11

The House on Friday easily passed a \$1.14 trillion spending bill to fund the government through next September, capping a peaceful end to a yearlong struggle over the budget, taxes, and Republican demands of President Barack Obama.

The 316-113 vote exceeded expectations and sent the legislation to the Senate for action later Friday. Senators planned to vote on the spending measure in combination with a year-end tax plan that would give breaks to working families and a wide variety of business interests.

With the series of votes, lawmakers were on track to conclude a surprisingly productive, bipartisan burst of late-session legislation in a divided Congress.

Obama has promised to sign the legislation, which includes many of the spending increases he has demanded all year. Among the Republican victories are a big boost for the military and an end to the four-decade ban of exporting U.S. crude oil.

The measure received big majorities in the House from Republicans and Democrats. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi of California, a key negotiator, swung forcefully behind the measure after showing frustration over its lifting of oil export ban.

"They wanted big oil so much that they gave away the store," Pelosi said. But she cited successes in driving away most GOP policy proposals from the measure. Democratic also pushed through higher domestic budgets and tax breaks for working families and renewable energy.

The measure won support from Republicans by a 150-95 margin. Democrats followed Pelosi's lead and backed the bill by a 166-18 margin.

Both parties scored political coups.

More than 50 expiring tax cuts will be extended, with more than 20 becoming permanent, including credits for companies' expenditures for research and equipment purchases and reductions for lower-earning families and households with children and college students.

The spending measure would fund the operations of every Cabinet agency. It awards increases of about 6 percent, on average, above tight spending caps that were a relic of a 2011 budget and debt deal — and were opposed by both GOP defense hawks and Democrats seeking boosts in domestic spending.

The House vote bundled with the spending measure a tax bill that passed on Thursday. The Senate was expected to approve the package and send it Obama later Friday, even though presidential candidates in the Senate such as Republican Marco Rubio of Florida threatened to delay the votes.

After the Senate action, Congress planned to adjourn until January.

The budget pact was the last major item in a late-session flurry of bipartisanship in Washington, including easy passage of long-stalled legislation funding highway programs and a rewrite of education programs.

Many on each side saw the budget deal as the best they could get under divided government. The need to win Obama's signature helped rid the measure of most of the controversial GOP provisions: killing federal money for Planned Parenthood, limiting the flow of Syrian refugees and undoing dozens of Obama actions on the environment, labor, financial regulation and relations with Cuba.

The measure contains large spending boosts for veterans and medical research, and funds a familiar roster of grants for transportation projects, first responders and community development. Continue [HERE](#)

Lawmakers Pass 5-Yr Authorization/Funding Bill for Highway, Transit, Rail Programs



The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act or "FAST Act"

On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed into law the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or "FAST Act." It is the first law enacted in over ten years that provides long-term funding certainty for surface transportation, meaning States and local governments can move forward with critical transportation projects, like new highways and transit lines, with the confidence that they will have a Federal partner over the long term. Secretary Foxx and his team at U.S. DOT have worked tirelessly to advocate for a long term bill, underscoring the needed sense of urgency to the American people.

As Secretary Foxx said, "After hundreds of Congressional meetings, two bus tours, visits to 43 states, and so much uncertainty – and 36 short term extensions – it has been a long and bumpy ride to a long-term transportation bill. It's not perfect, and there is still more left to do, but it reflects a bipartisan compromise I always knew was possible."

Overall, the FAST Act largely maintains current program structures and funding shares between highways and transit. It is a down-payment for building a 21st century transportation system, increasing funding by 11 percent over five years. This is far short of the amount needed to reduce congestion on our roads and meet the increasing demands on our transportation systems. In comparison, the Administration's proposal, the GROW AMERICA Act, increases funding by 45 percent.

The law also makes changes and reforms to many Federal transportation programs, including streamlining the approval processes for new transportation projects, providing new safety tools, and establishing new programs to advance critical freight projects.

Below is a more detailed summary of some FAST Act provisions. More detailed descriptions of how the FAST Act will affect each mode of transportation will be released in the coming weeks.

Funding Opportunities

SMART CITY CHALLENGE

On Monday December 7th, U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx announced a Smart City Challenge to create a fully integrated, first-of-its-kind city that uses data, technology and creativity to shape how people and goods move in the future. The winning city will be awarded up to \$40 million from the USDOT (funding subject to future appropriations) to implement bold, data-driven ideas by making transportation safer, easier, and more reliable. Additionally, Paul G. Allen's Vulcan Inc., has announced its intent to award up to \$10 million to the USDOT winner of the Smart City Challenge. The winning city will need to work with Vulcan to secure this funding.

The Smart City Challenge builds on the USDOT's Beyond Traffic draft report issued in February of 2015. Beyond Traffic reveals that our nation's aging infrastructure is not equipped to deal with a dramatically growing population in new regions throughout the country and the need for increased mobility options in developing megaregions. This public-private collaboration represents the USDOT and Vulcan Inc.'s joint belief that creativity and innovation will be absolutely essential to meeting the significant transportation challenges of the future. Lessons learned from this competition will be used in other cities to improve networks nationwide and demonstrate a practical path to replacing carbon-based fuel consumption. The USDOT welcomes the participation of other entities who share the vision and goals in the Notice of Funding Opportunity found at Smart City Challenge website: <https://www.transportation.gov/smartcity>

"This is an opportunity for the winning city to define what it means to be a 'Smart City' when it comes to transportation. We encourage cities to develop their own unique vision, partnerships and blueprints to demonstrate to the world what a fully integrated, forward-looking transportation network looks like," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "America can remain the global leader in maintaining the safest, most efficient system in the world: I am looking for mayors who share that belief to join us in pushing the

boundaries of what is possible."

The USDOT is kicking off its Smart City Challenge today by inviting cities to submit a high-level description of their vision of a Smart City by February 4, 2016, consistent with the Notice of Funding Opportunity. The USDOT will then announce five finalists in March 2016, who will then compete for up to \$40 million to be awarded to one city in June 2016. The Smart City Challenge will allow the selected city to demonstrate how advanced data, technologies, and applications can be used to reduce congestion, keep travelers safe, protect the environment, respond to climate change, and support economic vitality.

The following are attributes of the ideal Smart City Challenge candidate:

- * Mid-sized city with a population between approximately 200,000 and 850,000 people within city limits as of the 2010 Census;
- * A population density typical of a mid-sized city using 2010 Census data;
- * Represents a significant portion (more than 15 percent) of the overall population of its urban area using 2010 Census data;
- * An established public transportation system;
- * An environment that is conducive to demonstrating proposed strategies;
- * Leadership and capacity to carry out the demonstration throughout the period of performance.

"Transformative innovation takes ambitious support from both the government and the private sector. That's why we're partnering with the DOT to inspire innovative, scalable, proof-of-concept solutions to address some of our planet's most urgent challenges," said Vulcan President and Chief Operating Officer Barbara Bennett. "We hope that together we can spur change by demonstrating what is possible through replicable models."

Applicants are invited to submit ideas - designed to address or enhance community needs - across a range of innovation and data-driven platforms. Critical system improvements that increase safety, reduce carbon emissions, and enhance mobility are especially encouraged for review. Specifically, these innovations will connect people, vehicles, public transportation, and infrastructure through ITS, sharing economy, and other technologies that improve the way Americans move, whether it be to drop off kids at school, pick up their groceries, get to work, and receive critical services.

Secretary Foxx will host a national webcast on December 8, and a Smart City Forum will be web streamed on December 15 to discuss this funding opportunity, the application requirements, and the award selection process, and to answer relevant questions from interested parties. Participation in the webinars is not mandatory to submit an application under this solicitation.

The Smart City Challenge Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is available online at www.grants.gov at the following direct link: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppid=280384>. It is also been posted on the Smart City Challenge website: <https://www.transportation.gov/smartcity>

Please refer interested parties to the information available online and let them know they can submit questions to: SmartCityChallenge@dot.gov

Microsoft Co-Founder Backs Contest to Find Traffic Solutions

The tech billionaire Paul Allen and the U.S. government together are offering a \$50 million prize Monday to encourage cities to come up with innovative solutions to traffic and transportation problems, reports Seattle TV station [KOMO](#).

The Microsoft co-founder will put up \$10 million for the winner-take-all competition, which is open to cities with populations of 200,000 to 850,000. The goal of the competition is to develop and implement futuristic solutions to worsening congestion and accompanying environmental problems.

Barbara Bennett, president of Mr. Allen's company, Vulcan, said the contest will "enable the most innovative, ambitious, and forward-thinking city in America to show just how practical and rewarding it really is to start transitioning from carbon-based fuels to clean and renewable energy sources."

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is soliciting applications for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for FY 2016.

This year you will find the TAP application and instructional information for completing the application on the ALDOT web site. The web site address is: http://www.dot.state.al.us/moweb/specialprograms_section.htm. After clicking on this page you will see the TAP Application listed. The types of improvements eligible for TAP funding are listed on page 2 of the instructional information. The deadline date for submittal of FY 2016 TAP applications and support documents is Friday, January 29, 2016 at 5:00 PM.

Some major application requirements of the TAP are as follows:

- Only cities, towns and county commissions can apply for funding ;
- Due to limited funding, there is a cap on the amount of Federal Funds that a sponsor can apply for and that amount is \$400,000.00;
- Due to limited funding, an eligible sponsor can submit only one application for possible funding;
- The funding ratio for TAP projects is 80% federal funds and 20% sponsor funds and the sponsor is responsible for the cost of the required preliminary engineering;
- Public involvement is optional;
- Fifty (50) percent of the TAP funds are sub-allocated to the MPO's by population and fifty (50) percent is distributed to any area of the state by ALDOT;
- All TAP projects have to be selected by a competitive application process administered by ALDOT ;
- Landscaping as an independent project is not eligible;

- Transportation museums are not eligible;
- For cities/towns that are located within the six largest MPO's (Birmingham, Huntsville, Montgomery, Mobile, Columbus, GA and Pensacola, FL), the TAP funds that are being administered by ALDOT are completely separate from the TAP funds that are dedicated to the stated MPO's.

Please contact Bob Kratzer with ALDOT at (334) 353-6442 if you have questions regarding this matter

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.

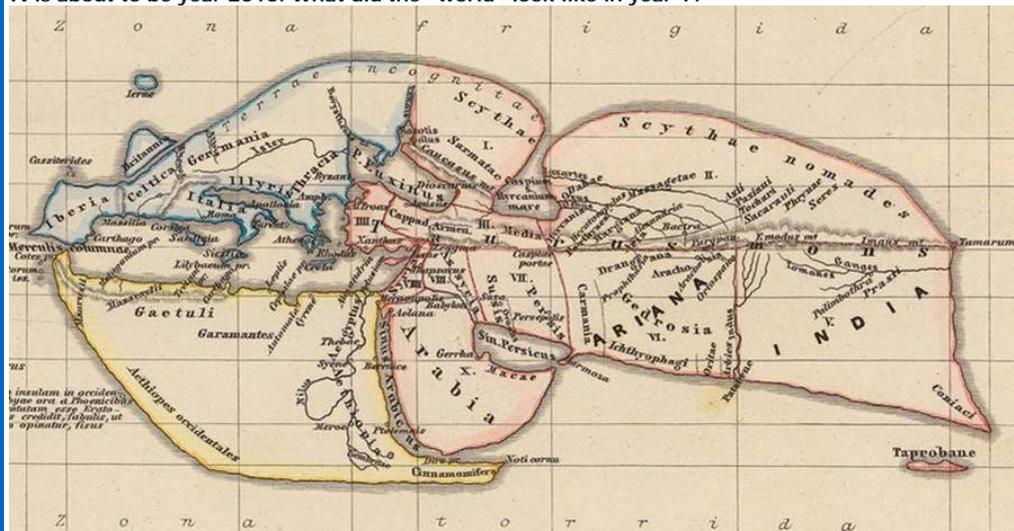
Industrial Access Road and Bridge

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

It is about to be year 2016. What did the "world" look like in year 1?



Two thousand years ago, around the time that Jesus of Nazareth was born, the second Holy Temple was still standing in Jerusalem. The Great Pyramid at Giza was already 2,500 years old, but the Library of Alexandria was still around. In Rome, the Colosseum hadn't been built yet. [HERE](#)

In the News

ALGO TRAFFIC APP IS COMING!!



<http://www.fox10tv.com/story/30771815/aldot-will-offer-a-real-time-traffic-app>

MOBILE COUNTY, AL (WALA) -
The app will be called "ALGO."

The goal is to allow users to make a decision before heading out the door. The Alabama Department of Transportation's (ALDOT) only around-the-clock traffic management center is located in Mobile. Inside the facility is an impressive wall of monitors, which stands 10 feet tall, 35 feet long, and displays 96 simultaneous video feeds. From stalled vehicles, to traffic back-ups, automatic traffic system monitors see it all.

David Johnson with the ALDOT said it's a view that will be offered to the public. "We don't want to see congestion, we don't want to see traffic come to a stop, and it would be great if we never had an incident but it's going to happen," Johnson said. The department is in the final stages of delivering an app for iPhone and Android devices.

"The app will give users real-time information," he said.

That information will include roadside camera feeds, construction areas, incidents reports, you'll even be able to read message boards. "We're trying to maintain the safety of the traveling public while trying to ensure an efficient travel pathway," Johnson said. The app will roll out in phases beginning next month.

Read more: <http://www.fox10tv.com/story/30771815/aldot-will-offer-a-real-time-traffic-app#ixzz3ughVbDmj>

Alabama's infrastructure gets a C- in report card from civil engineering group



By [Dennis Pillion | dpillion@al.com](mailto:dpillion@al.com)

Email the author | [Follow on Twitter](#)
on December 11, 2015 at 12:08 PM

Alabama's infrastructure -- the roads, bridges, dams, power lines and pipes that make modern living, transportation and industry possible -- got an overall grade of C-minus in a report card released this week by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

"This report card is not one we would want our kids to come home with," said Joe Meads of Sain Associates civil engineering firm in Birmingham and the governmental affairs director for the Alabama chapter of ASCE. "This is the first step. This gives us the baseline for knowing where we need to improve on infrastructure in the state of Alabama."

The report card graded 11 different categories of Alabama's infrastructure on current condition and capacity, expected longevity, funding, maintenance, public safety and innovation. The results are as follows:

Aviation: B-
Bridges: C-
Dams: Incomplete
Drinking water: C+
Energy: B
Inland waterways: D+
Ports: B-
Rail: B-
Roads: D+
Transit: D
Waste and storm water: C-
State has no dam safety program

Dams received an incomplete under this system because Alabama has no state dam inspection or even inventory program, and some areas may lack emergency action plans for what to do if a dam fails.

"What we do not know about our infrastructure can be as concerning as what we do know," said Shelia Montgomery-Mills, chair of the Report Card for Alabama's Infrastructure committee.

According to ASCE, Alabama is the only state without such a program, meaning only about 2 percent of the state's dams receive inspections, including just one in five dams that had previously been identified as high-hazard dams.

Dusty Myers, president-elect of the Association of State Dam Safety Officials, said that South Carolina learned about dam safety the hard way this October, when heavy rains caused more than 30 dams to fail, flooding homes and businesses in the state.

"Many of those dams should not have failed, given an effective dam safety program that could have identified deficiencies in the dams and worked with owners to correct them," Myers said. "The resources invested in an effective dam safety program would have produced significant savings in dollars and avoided misery for South Carolina citizens.

"We do not want to see what happened in South Carolina happen here in Alabama."

Aging infrastructure cited as a problem

One key potential problem cited in the report is that much of Alabama's existing infrastructure is reaching retirement age at around the same time, and like a senior citizen without an IRA, state and local officials may be hard-pressed to find money when the bills are due.

"Despite being essential to our lives and economy, we have let our infrastructure languish," Meads said. "Much of Alabama's infrastructure has reached its useful service life and is now hobbling along with emergency repairs."

According to the report, this aging infrastructure impacts Alabamians in a number of ways. The average Alabama driver spends an additional \$300 per year on vehicle repairs thanks to the condition of interstate or state highways.

Continue [HERE](#)

Five public meetings planned on Alabama gasoline tax



By [Mike Cason | mcason@al.com](mailto:mcason@al.com)

Email the author | [Follow on Twitter](#)

on December 15, 2015 at 6:01 PM

A legislative committee plans to hold five regional meetings in January about a possible proposal to increase the state gasoline tax to support road construction and maintenance.

Rep. Mac McCutcheon, chairman of the Permanent Joint Transportation Committee, said the committee will meet in Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, Montgomery and Tuscaloosa as it considers whether to propose raising the state gasoline tax for the first time in 24 years.

McCutcheon, a Republican from Huntsville, said there's not yet a final draft of a bill. He said the purpose of the meetings is to collect facts and figures about road projects and determine the level of need.

"I want to make sure we're sensitive to needs and we're not just trying to use low fuel prices to get more revenue," McCutcheon said.

The legislative session begins Feb. 2.

Gov. Robert Bentley last week told the Alabama Asphalt Pavement Association that he would support an increase in the gasoline tax.

The state gasoline tax hasn't changed since 1992, when the Legislature raised it by a nickel, to 16 cents a gallon.

"We're operating and trying to build and repair roads on 1992 revenue," McCutcheon said.

Also, improved vehicle fuel efficiency means that drivers pay less per mile than they did two decades ago because the tax is based on volume, not price.

Sen. Gerald Dial, R-Lineville, vice chairman of the Joint Transportation Committee, said that trend is bound to continue.

The Obama administration has issued standards requiring cars and light duty trucks to get the equivalent of 54.5 miles per gallon by model year 2025.

"We eventually have got to do something," Dial said.

There is some support in the business community for raising the gas tax.

Business Council of Alabama President William Canary said the BCA "believes that it is past time for Alabama to address this growing problem with a reasonable long-term solution that puts Alabama's transportation infrastructure back in working order and allows us to invest in our future."

"Specifically, we support a solution to fix our roads and bridges and invest in Alabama's future that includes reforms and is dedicated to road and bridge construction and maintenance," Canary said in a statement.

Tom Layfield, executive director of the Alabama Road Builders Association, said if the gasoline tax had been indexed for inflation in 1992, it would be 11 cents higher today.

"It's coming up on 24 years since the last time we addressed transportation infrastructure funding," Layfield said. Continue [HERE](#)

Governor Robert Bentley supports the gas tax increase [HERE](#)

In historic accord, FEMA to pay New Orleans \$1.2 billion in extra disaster aid for streets, water pipes



By [Richard Rainey, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune](#)

Email the author | [Follow on Twitter](#)

on December 10, 2015 at 2:40 PM, updated December 10, 2015 at 6:17 PM

Hailed as the largest single downpayment for infrastructure repairs ever delivered to an American city, the federal government has agreed to pay New Orleans \$2 billion to fix its crumbling streets and cracking water pipes.

It came as welcome news Thursday (Dec. 10) to a city where the potholes and water leaks outnumber the beignets and Sazeracs.

"This is a huge amount of money and it's going to go a long way, but again it is part of a much larger picture," Mayor Mitch Landrieu said.

The deal includes an extra \$1.2 billion from FEMA's Public Assistance Program to repair devastation wrought when the levees broke after Hurricane Katrina. Coupled with the \$800 million FEMA had already promised and almost \$1 billion in revenue City Hall and the Sewerage & Water Board has collected through additional fees, grants and bond sales, the money will be part of a \$3 billion initial investment in the city's decrepit infrastructure, Landrieu said.

"Every neighborhood in the city will benefit from it," he said. Thursday's announcement was a long time coming. The often testy negotiations with the federal government stretched back further than Landrieu's tenure in City Hall. The plodding pace was a symptom of concerns that any mistake could end with local agencies forced to return already-spent disaster money.

A major breakthrough came when federal laws governing public assistance funding changed in the wake of Superstorm Sandy's strike on the eastern seaboard, FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate said.

Congress changed rules after that 2012 storm to let engineers estimate a storm's total damage to a city's infrastructure system rather than account for every pavement crack and waterlogged swatch of insulation as storm damage or a preexisting condition.

"With these tools, we are speeding up recovery," Fugate said.

In the end, Cedric Grant, Landrieu's infrastructure czar and the city's chief negotiator with FEMA, said his team got almost every extra dollar they sought.

Flanked by Grant, Fugate, Chief Administrative Officer Andy Kopplin, Public Works Director Mark Jernigan and Kevin Davis, who heads up the state agency overseeing federal disaster payments, Landrieu said: "I can't thank the individuals standing around me enough for staying at the table and making sure that the people of the city of New Orleans got what they were due, no more, no less."

The accord closely echoes a similar deal struck among FEMA, the state and the Orleans Parish School Board in 2010 that delivered \$1.8 billion to rebuild 85 schools across New Orleans.

Statewide Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is currently developing a Statewide Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Team received over 1500 responses from its online survey, and the Team is currently processing survey responses. This is an important tool to assess existing conditions and future needs of bicycle and pedestrian transportation.

The next step in this process is the five scheduled workshops - one in each of ALDOT's regions. Organized as open houses, those attending will have an opportunity to review findings and ask questions.

Workshop Schedule

- January 19, 2016, 4 – 7 PM
23445 US Highway 431
Guntersville, Alabama 35976
- January 20, 2016, 4 – 7 PM
1020 Bankhead Highway West
Birmingham, Alabama 35204
- January 21, 2016, 4 – 7 PM
2715 East Skyland Boulevard
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35405
- January 26, 2016 4 – 7 PM
1701 W I65 Service Rd North
Mobile, Alabama 36618
- January 24, 2016 4 – 7 PM
1525 Coliseum Boulevard
Montgomery, Alabama 36110

Follow this link for the City of Mobile Final FY2015-FY2016 Capital Improvement Plan

http://www.cityofmobile.org/2015_cap_imp_projects.php

Transportation Research

Regional Models of Cooperation

The Every Day Counts innovation of the month for November is [regional models of cooperation](#).

These models offer a framework and process for transportation departments, metropolitan planning organizations, transit agencies and other groups to collaborate on multijurisdictional transportation plans.

The Federal Highway Administration is working with the Federal Transit Administration to encourage transportation stakeholders to think beyond traditional borders when planning transportation projects and programs. This EDC-3 effort focuses on bringing entities together to support common goals on topics such as congestion management, safety, freight and commerce.

The EDC Regional Models of Cooperation Innovation Deployment Team offers technical assistance and training, including peer exchanges and workshops. For details, contact [Jody McCullough](#) or [David Harris](#) at the FHWA Office of Planning or [Tonya Holland](#) at the Federal Transit Administration.

View the [EDC Regional Models of Cooperation presentation](#) for an overview of the regional models approach.

2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates Released

The U.S. Census Bureau released the 2010-2014 five-year census data with supplemental documents to help users understand the report. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

New Innovative Center to Increase Options for Investment in Transportation Infrastructure

USDOT unveiled its new Build America Transportation Investment Center (BATIC) as a resource for states, municipalities, and other project sponsors. AASHTO is partnering with USDOT to create the BATIC Institute to help state DOTs and other agencies find financing solutions for transportation projects. The Institute will provide specialized education to leaders and decision-makers online as well as in-person.