



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, December 4th, 2015

Volume 16, Number 9

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Recently Completed Planning Studies

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Mobile County
Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
Intelligent Transportation System Diversion Route Planning Study

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

Looks like we're soon to have a new Transportation Act, the FAST Act (See Legislative Updates). The Southern Rail Commission is meeting today (See In the News), and there are some good grants to apply for, so check out Funding Opportunities.

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 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) from 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.

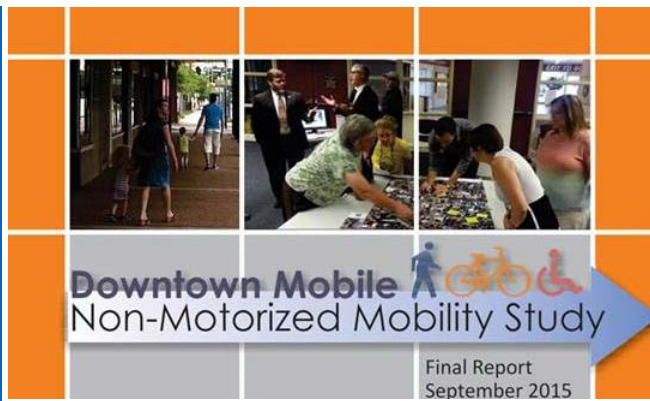
ADA Transition Plans

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

Congress Passes Historic, Bipartisan Surface Transportation Legislation

Passage yesterday of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act marks the first time in a decade that Congress has approved a long-term surface transportation authorization that gives state departments of transportation the certainty to plan and implement significant investments in the nation's aging infrastructure.

Approved by a vote of 83-16 in the Senate and 359-65 vote in the House, the FAST Act now heads to the White House where President Obama is expected to sign it into law. It is the first long-term authorization since 2005's SAFETEA-LU, which expired in 2009. Since then, Congress has used short-term extensions and 2012's MAP-21 authorization - a two-year bill - to support the federal surface transportation program.

House and Senate negotiators reached agreement on a 5-year highway and transit reauthorization package totaling \$305 billion. H.R. 22, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, is the result of negotiations between House and Senate conferees charged with resolving differences between the House's Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 and the Senate's Developing a Reliable and Innovative Vision for the Economy (DRIVE) Act. The bill would require a transfer of \$70 billion in general fund revenue to the Highway Trust Fund from a variety of sources.

Key highlights of the bill:

- Creates a new formula program for highway freight projects
- Establishes a new grant program for large-scale projects, the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects (NSFHP) program
- Modifies the National Highway Freight Network created by MAP-21 and requires re-designation of the network every 5 years
- Continues the set-aside for off-system bridges and expands funding available for on-system bridges located off the National Highway System
- Converts the Surface Transportation Program (STP) to a block grant program; increases STP suballocation to local governments from 50 to 55 percent
- Rolls the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) into STP; allows 50 percent of certain TAP funding suballocated to local areas to be used on any STP-eligible project
- Reinstates a competitive grant program for bus and bus facilities funds with a 10 percent set-aside for rural projects

Click [HERE](#) to view the full text of the bill.

Funding Opportunities

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs is sponsoring a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) application workshop on **Thursday, December 10, 2015**, at the Center for Commerce, 401 Adams Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama in the 7th Floor Auditorium. Registration will begin at 12 noon and the workshop will begin at 1:00 p.m. and end by 5:00 p.m. Participants can access the Center for Commerce parking deck from the South Decatur Street entrance by entering the code 2133#. Everyone interested in competing for LWCF 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, December 4, 2015. 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.

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

This is what happens when you don't listen to your transportation planners..

23 [Road Construction Fails](#) Completely Lacking Common Sense

In the News

Southern Rail Commission Meeting Today

The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) had a Mayors roundtable prior to the full SRC meeting this morning. Several mayors from Alabama and Mississippi plus a representative from New Orleans gave comments concerning the importance in terms of economic development of the Amtrak Crescent.

Joe McAndrew with T4America gave a legislative update. He discussed the FAST Act, which includes a section on passenger rail. The SRC, outside of Amtrak and the NE corridor, is specifically mentioned in the bill. There is \$500,000 a year for a workgroup to help develop service restoration in the Gulf Coast corridor.

Other provisions include 2 grant programs. One is for capital planning, crossings, and research. The second one is a capital operating assistance at \$20 million a year. This means some assistance may be available if there were to be a line from Mobile to New Orleans.

There are provisions in the bill for station redevelopment which is more like TIFIA that is a \$1 billion dollar program that are low interest loans. There is a great opportunity to partner with the private sector for development.

Update to grant proposal- there is an old earmark from 2006 that can support safety implements for SRC. \$2.45 million for projects is available. This grant can fund access to terminals. We should have an answer in a week or two. There is a proposed ride along of the proposed I20/59 SRC corridor that the Federal Rail Administration Director and Vice President Joe Biden potentially could be attending.

Todd Stinnis with Amtrak spoke and said it is a big step that Amtrak is mentioned specifically in the FAST Act. Ridership numbers are climbing, which coincides with the investment these mayors are putting into their terminals. There are not a lot of opportunities for expansion at Amtrak, but they are focusing on those that exist.

Several mayors from the Gulf Coast including Mayor Stimpson of Mobile and Mayor Staff of Atmore spoke of the importance of restoring rail back to the Gulf Coast. Mayor Stimpson made a great analogy in that Mobile is the "apex" for transportation.

The regular business meeting of the SRC included an update on the Birmingham to Mobile study, several proposals to membership, and a legislative update in regards to the FAST Act.

There was an update on the Gulf Breeze line study which would be from Birmingham to Montgomery to Mobile. Phase 1 of that study was done a year ago and was a \$200,000 study with 4 alternates. Phase two would be from Mobile to Montgomery. The statement of work has been submitted to FRA and \$70,000 match from Montgomery and SRC by HDR for a \$140,000 study. The report is expected early to late spring.

Several years ago, Amtrak completed a study that had cost estimates in terms of restoring service to the Gulf Coast. This study was updated to current estimates, however was reviewed in executive session. It will be available to the public shortly.

RESTORE Act Meeting

On Wednesday, December 9 at 10:00 a.m., the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council will meet to vote on the approval of the *Initial Funded Priorities List*. Using funds from the settlement with Transocean Deepwater Inc., the Council is seeking to address critical needs of 10 key watersheds across the Gulf to help restore the region's ecosystem and strengthen economic resilience. Projects and programs in the FPL will help to revitalize the region through skills training for local communities, improvements in water quality, and habitat restoration critical to juvenile fish, endangered birds, and sea turtles.

The public is invited to attend this open meeting, as well as an open house that will begin at 9:00 a.m. The meeting will take place at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center, 2350 Beach Blvd, Biloxi, Mississippi.

Advance registration for the meeting is not required, but appreciated.

To confirm your attendance, email RestoreCouncil@restorethegulf.gov. For more information about the upcoming meeting, visit the Council's website, www.RestoreTheGulf.gov

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.

FHWA Seeks Comment on New Proposal to Encourage Design Flexibility

Comment Period Closes: December 7

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced proposed revisions to encourage the design of lower-speed roads to align better with community and environmental needs. This represents the start of several proposed regulatory and program policy changes at the agency to allow more flexibility for state, city, and county engineers in the design of highway projects. FHWA proposes to reduce the number of design criteria in order to allow engineers to design projects with multimodal and locally-oriented solutions. For more information click [HERE](#).

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.