



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, December 5, 2014

Volume 12, Number 9

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Recently Completed Planning Studies

Origin Destination Study Using Cell Phones

Mobile County Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

Intelligent Transportation System Diversion Route Planning Study

Contact Us

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Our Mobile Urban Area 5310 program has received all its final approvals. We are on the home stretch now (see MPO Updates). The SARPC Annual Meeting is coming up in January, and the Alabama Port Authority is building an Intermodal Rail Facility at the Port of Mobile (see In The News). Have a great weekend!

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



www.mobilempo.org check us out on FACEBOOK
706-1CAR

Mobile MPO Updates

Mobile Urban Area FTA 5310 (Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities)

Our 5310 grant has received all of the final stamps! We have been officially awarded the grant. We will begin the procurement process next week.

The approved projects include:

- The City of Bayou La Batre - \$44,600 federal funds for a 15 passenger van
- Mobile ARC \$173,000 federal funds for operating assistance for public transit for disabled clients
- AHEPA - \$40,000 federal funds for a 15 passenger van
- Mercy Life - \$64,000 federal funds for a 28-30 passenger bus
- Mobile Bay Transportation Company - \$64,964 for two vans and \$21,563 for operating assistance for public transit for elderly and disabled clients

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Out of Balance

The funding category STP Attributable in the TIP is once again out of balance. Our carry over funds from previous years was reduced by almost \$2 Million from cost over runs on a project. We will have to schedule a TCC/CAC meeting to rebalance and an MPO meeting to follow. We have some other items to put on the agenda, but we may get close to the Holidays.

Non-motorized Mobility study for Downtown Mobile

We have given Toole Design Group Notice to proceed on the Non-motorized Mobility study for Downtown Mobile. If you would like to be stakeholder, please let us know. There is going to be plenty of time for public input as laid out in the scope of work [HERE](#).

I-10 Mobile River Bridge

Although the comment period is over, please stay tuned to the following web sites for details and information about the I-10 Mobile River Bridge.

For more information on the I-10 Mobile River Bridge:

ALDOT'S Web Site: <http://www.mobileriverbridge.com/>

Build The I-10 Bridge Coalition Web Site: <http://www.buildthei10bridge.com/>

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DESTINATION 2040

The MPO Staff is continuing to develop the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan titled Destination 2040. The objective of the plan is to identify, to the maximum extent feasible, the multi-modal transportation improvements which will be needed in the Mobile urban area between now and the year 2040 in order to maintain an acceptable level of mobility. 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 5th, 2014

Baldwin County

- for constructing the Widening, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on Wilters Street from the intersection of SR-59 to Rock Creek to include the extension of Wilters Street from Rock Creek to the junction of CR-83 (Baldwin Beach Express) in Robertsdale. Length 2.575 mi
- for constructing the Resurfacing and Traffic Stripe on SR-16 (US-90) from the east end of Blakeley River Bridge (MP 42.718) to just west of the I-10 Westbound Ramp (MP 44.083). Length 1.364 mi.

Escambia County

- for constructing the Division wide Emergency Repairs at Various Sites as indicated in the plans.
- for constructing the Resurfacing and Traffic Stripe on SR-21 from just north of the intersection of Sunset Drive (the beginning of the four-lane section) to just south of the junction of CR-14. Length 3.705 mi.

[What's Under Construction?](#)

Legislative Updates

House Passes Fuel Tax Increase

Yes, you read that correctly. It just wasn't *that* fuel tax, and the money won't be going into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). As part of the pay-for package, the *Achieving a Better Life Experience Act* (ABLE; H.R. 647) would increase the diesel fuel tax that barge operators currently pay by 45 percent, from 20 to 29 cents. This makes for an odd offset, given that the funds will be put into the Inland Waterway Trust Fund and spent on dam, lock, and dredging projects on lakes and rivers. The ABLE bill is expected to be coupled with the tax extenders bill and sent to the U.S. Senate, so there is a good chance this provision becomes law.

Tax Plan Disappoints Transit Advocates:

A House-passed package of tax extender provisions (H.R. 5771) boosts the transit tax benefit to match the parking benefit, but only until the end of the 2014 calendar year. Drivers can deduct \$250 a month tax-free to pay for parking, but the maximum transit deduction is \$130 (though there was some parity reached as a result of the stimulus bill in 2008). Transit advocates are pressing to make the modal parity permanent. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) said he wanted to look at establishing permanent parity between transportation modes "early next year." Read the bill text and more [HERE](#).

Bipartisan Agreement on Coast Guard Authorization:

The Republican and Democratic leaders of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee and the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee recently announced that they have reached a bipartisan agreement that authorizes the U.S. Coast Guard. Negotiations

between the House and Senate on the final rule began after the House approved the legislation reauthorizing the Coast Guard on April 1, 2014. Following the authorization, Bill Shuster (R-PA), Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), Nick J. Rahall, II (D-WV), and John Thune (R-SD) released a statement that said “this bipartisan, bicameral measure helps ensure that the Service has the necessary tools to carry out its important missions, and also recognizes how essential a healthy maritime transportation sector is to our economy, our competitiveness, and our national security.” The *Howard Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2014* is named in honor of retiring Congressman Howard Coble, a long-serving member of the House Transportation Committee and the only current Member of Congress to serve in the Coast Guard.

Diaz-Balart New Chairman of T-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee:

Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) was recently announced as the new chairman of the House Appropriations Transportation-Housing and Urban Development (T-HUD) Subcommittee. Diaz-Balart had not previously served on this subcommittee. Several members of the T-HUD Subcommittee are retiring, including Tom Latham (R-IA), Frank R. Wolf (R-VA), and Ed Pastor (D-AZ). Democrats will appoint new ranking members early next year.

FHWA Right-of-Way and Real Estate Proposal:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking regarding the acquisition, management, and disposal of real property for transportation programs and projects receiving funds under U.S. Code title 23. Section 1302 of MAP-21 grants flexibility to grantees regarding such acquisitions. FHWA is proposing to update the real estate regulations to reflect the agency’s experience with the Federal-aid highway program. The FHWA welcomes comments on the proposal from interested parties. Click [HERE](#) for details.

Funding Opportunities

U.S. Forest Service – Community Forest Program Funding

Deadline: January 16, 2015

The Community Forest Program is a grant program that authorizes the U.S. Forest Service to provide financial assistance to establish community forests that provide continuing and accessible community benefits. Click [HERE](#) for the funding opportunity.

HUD \$1 Billion National Disaster Resilience Competition

Application Deadline: March 2015

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently launched a National Disaster Resilience Competition, which makes \$1 billion available to communities that have been struck by natural disasters in recent years. The competition promotes risk assessment and planning, and will fund the implementation of innovative resilience projects to better prepare communities for future storms and other extreme events. Representatives from eligible communities will have the opportunity to attend Rockefeller-supported Resilience Academies across the country to strengthen their funding proposals. Click [HERE](#) to apply.

HUD – Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants

Applications Due: February 9, 2015

The Choice Neighborhoods program supports locally driven strategies to address struggling neighborhoods with distressed public or HUD-assisted housing through a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation. Choice Neighborhoods is focused on three core goals:

Housing: Replace distressed public and assisted housing with high-quality mixed-income housing that is well-managed and responsive to the needs of the surrounding neighborhood;

People: improve educational outcomes and intergenerational mobility for youth with services and supports delivered directly to youth and their families; and

Neighborhood: Create the conditions necessary for public and private reinvestment in distressed neighborhoods to offer the kinds of amenities and assets, including safety, good schools, and commercial activity, that are important to families’ choices about their community.

Click [HERE](#) for more information

Just For Fun

One Hundred and eleven years ago Orville and Wilbur Wright made their first successful flight in December of 1903.

Click [HERE](#) to see 24 hours of air travel today.

In the News

South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) Annual Meeting

Please plan to join us at the SARPC Annual Meeting planned for January 15th and 16th at the Grand Hotel at Point Clear. The annual meeting provides representatives of SARPC's thirty-two member governments as well as other interested citizens an opportunity to participate in a day and a half conference that features informative presentations and information exchanges on a variety of public policy issues confronting the South Alabama region. Please contact Ms. Grace Crawford or Ms. Paula McGlasker at (251) 433 – 6541 for further information.

States and Local Governments Filling the Federal Transportation Funding Gap:

After the 2014 elections, states and local governments across the country are either beefing up transportation trust funds or protecting them from other top priorities. Voters approved 63 of 94 state and local transportation initiatives on the ballot, which provides almost \$15 billion for transportation projects. Polls show that voters overwhelmingly support spending on infrastructure projects. Click [HERE](#) for more information

Traffic goes round and round Mobile County's second roundabout

By [Angela Levins | alevins@al.com](#)

MOBILE, Ala. -- Traffic flowed through Mobile County's second roundabout starting Monday afternoon.

The roundabout is at the intersection of Three Notch Road, Dawes Lane and Dawes Lane Extension.

Mobile County received federal assistance from the Federal Highway Safety Administration to build the roundabout in an effort to reduce the number of right-angle crashes that have occurred at the intersection.

The roundabout's construction helps to eliminate right-angle and head-on crashes, because traffic flows in one direction and is forced to slow down.

By the numbers according to the Federal Highway Administration:

- 67-80 percent reduction in fatalities or incapacitating injuries
- 35 percent reduction in all crashes

Mobile County's first roundabout was built in 2011 at Grelot and Dawes Roads.

Beach traffic 'conundrum': Orange Beach, State to tackle transportation problems at town hall meeting

By [Marc D. Anderson | manderson@al.com](#)

ORANGE BEACH, Alabama-- The unveiling of proposed transportation improvements for Canal Road at a town hall meeting Tuesday will serve as a springboard for talks on preserving the quality of life in the city.

City leaders are encouraging residents and business owners to attend the open meeting set for 6 p.m. at Orange Beach Event Center at The Wharf with John Cooper, director of the Alabama Department of Transportation.

"This state has shown an improved engagement in our issues and are really trying to put forth some efforts," Mayor Tony Kennon said at a recent council meeting. "We're going to unveil some

changes to Canal Road that are hopefully going to take place this year and the following year and will hopefully make a bigger difference.

"And we'll just talk about everything else we're trying to do. We'll unveil some sidewalk programs, other quality of life amenity things that we're looking at trying to put into place."

Councilman Jerry Johnson said the plans for Canal Road are not major infrastructure changes but will improve traffic issues such as the intersection at Orange Beach Boulevard near Doc's Seafood Shack.

State officials will have maps on display at the meeting.

"This is a meeting that will be very important if you live here," Johnson said. "So come and look at the maps, look and see what they're going to do. Ask questions. That's how we have a better understanding. Ask questions. And the people will be there who will answer your questions."

Long-term traffic plans for the city have included the widening of Canal Road to five lanes, building a **cross-island connector** south of the Beach Express toll bridge through Gulf State Park and the **long-sought bridge over Wolf Bay**, which is likely the most viable option, according to Kennon.

Kennon broke down the city's current situation with those projects during the council meeting last month:

"The cross-island connector has been our push for 10 years. But until the governor of the state of Alabama says I want a cross-island connector it will not happen. We have made very clear that is our number one priority and we believe it is the solution with the least amount of issues. However, because it will require federal permits and there will be an environmental lawsuit it will probably take a minimum of 10 years to come to be -- if we started today.

"So what that does is that it sort of takes that off the table for right now.

"So then we're left with five-laning Canal Road. If you five-lane Canal Road you've got to move all the utilities. That's an \$18 million to \$20 million project for two miles of road. And by the state's own calculation it's going to be a minimum three-year project.

"Can y'all imagine Canal Road being torn up for three years? It will kill our business community. It would kill us; we would kill each other. And the problem there is if we five-lane Canal Road all we do is put the bottleneck down at The Wharf because you still only have two lanes going north and south.

"So that brings us to the Wolf Bay bridge.

"The Wolf Bay bridge gives us two more lanes north and south. ... It will go through (George) Barber's property to county road 95 -- 95 will be improved to county road 20, which will take you back to the expressway. ... If you're going east, you just continue up 95 to (U.S.) 98.

"So there are folks out there that don't want a Wolf Bay bridge but they're also the same folks that complain about traffic. But they don't understand, we're in a conundrum. The options are very, very limited."

The new bridge would offer a lot of options and likely push the owners of the Beach Express bridge to reduce the current \$3.50 toll that's charged each way, Kennon said.

The mayor said Gov. Robert Bentley has promised the city that if he's re-elected in November, he will pursue the bridge in his next term.

"It seems like everything we deal with in life up here is always a lesser of evils and nobody wants a beautiful view of Wolf Bay to have a bridge across it," Kennon said. "But at the same time we're not going to fix the traffic problems if we don't have a bridge across it. It's sort of that simple."

Kennon and council members continue to encourage all residents and stakeholders in the city to attend Tuesday's town hall meeting.

"We're open to any advice or ideas on how to fix the traffic problems in Orange Beach," Kennon said. "Because we know we've got one."

Here are the Coastal Alabama traffic areas to avoid during your commute on Friday, December 5th

By [Angela Levins | alevins@al.com](mailto:alevins@al.com)

MOBILE, Ala. -- Here is a look at the road projects underway in Mobile and Baldwin counties that drivers could run into during their commute.

Mobile:

Royal Street: Between Dauphin and Conti streets, work on the Van Antwerp building continues to hamper traffic from time to time. Be cautious of pedestrians and workers.

Satchel Paige Drive: Satchel Paige Drive between Government and Bolling Brothers boulevards is closed to traffic. The road is being widened to a four-lane divided road. Work is expected to take about three months. The road project is part of the McGowin Park Shopping Center construction.

ALDOT Mobile County:

Jackson Creek Bridge: Old Pascagoula Road is closed between Ramsey Road and March Road. Bridge being replaced. Project estimated to last a year.

I-10: Resurfacing and bridge work from Halls Mill Creek to the west end of the George C. Wallace Tunnel. Drivers should expect nighttime closures Sunday to Thursday from 7 p.m. until 6 a.m. Work is expected to be completed next summer.

U.S. 90: From Halls Mill to Pine Hill Drive. Lane closures will be at night. Work is expected to be complete by December.

Welcome Center: The Welcome Center at the Alabama/Mississippi line is shut down until at least spring 2016.

ALDOT Baldwin County:

I-10: CR 68 connector to Baldwin Beach Express. Work is about 95 percent complete. Drivers may see an occasional lane closure on CR 83 for completing remaining work.

Little Lagoon Pass bridge remains under construction. ALDOT reports that the work is about 50 percent complete. There is a detour bridge next to the Little Lagoon Pass Bridge. Expect minimal traffic delays

City of Mobile breaks ground on new skate park

Mayor Sandy Stimpson and city officials broke ground today on Mobile's new skate park at Public Safety Memorial Park on Airport Boulevard.

Stimpson was joined by members of Mobile's skating community along with project contractor Jonathan Aeiker of Aeiker Construction; Brad Christensen, Director of Architectural Engineering for the City of Mobile; Jim Crowe, the consultant from the CSA group and designer of the park; Bill Harkins, Executive Director of Public Works for the City of Mobile.

The project was originally proposed two years ago, but became one of Mayor Stimpson's priorities shortly after he took office. Stimpson thanked members of the skating community and the Mobile City Council for their support of the \$320,667 project.

"Improving the quality of life in Mobile is a core value of my administration," Stimpson said. "Creating a skate park in Public Safety Memorial Park will further activate the space, draw the community together, and engage the skating community in tangible, meaningful way. I am extremely grateful to the skating community for their patience and input during this process."

Funding for the project was designated by the Alabama Trust Fund. Alterations to the initial plan proposed by the previous administration will provide significant cost savings, in the range of \$130,000 - \$140,000.

The local CSA Group in conjunction with Spohn Ranch of Los Angeles designed the park relying on

feedback from Mobile's skating community and Jewel Cullen, owner of local business Wooden Heart Skate Shop.

Local businesses including Foosackly's, BellRose Tattoo, Bob's Speed Shop and Beads and Leather have also expressed interest in supporting the project via a public-private partnership with the City of Mobile. Construction is expected to be completed by summer 2015.

ALABAMA STATE PORT AUTHORITY LETS DESIGN/BUILD CONTRACT FOR AN INTERMODAL RAIL FACILITY AT PORT OF MOBILE

The Alabama State Port Authority has contracted with R.T. Millord Company to develop Phase I of the Garrows Bend Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF) at the Port of Mobile (Ala). The intermodal rail facility is part of the Port Authority's three prong intermodal development that includes a 45 ft. draft container terminal and logistics park.

The \$20.1 million (USD) Millord contract calls for the construction of two (2) operating tracks, a run-around track, and a car repair siding track, each at a minimum of 3,000 ft. in length. Phase I components also include rubber tired gantry (RTG) runways and chassis storage areas, multilane gates, power distribution and lighting, an access road, and related surface improvements. The intermodal rail facility will be equipped with optical character recognition (OCR) portals at rail and truck entrances to increase throughput efficiency.

The Port Authority's Garrows Bend ICTF will service import/export containerized cargoes moving through APM Terminals Mobile as well as domestic containerized cargoes from regional manufacturers. "We are pleased to get this important phase of our intermodal investment program underway," said James K. Lyons, director and chief executive for the Port Authority.

"The delivery of an intermodal rail facility is essential to alleviating time and cost pressures for our shippers, while expanding our market reach."

The Phase I construction compliments the Port Authority's new \$10M rail bridge that connects the Garrows Bend ICTF with up to five Class I railroads serving the Port of Mobile. Both the ICTF rail bridge and the Phase I yard are funded by the Port Authority and a \$12 million (USD) U.S. Department of Transportation TIGER grant. Phase I of the ICTF is expected to be completed by year-end 2015.

Transportation Research

FHWA is offering an 8 hour workshop on the New FHWA Roadway Lighting Handbook.

The purpose of the event is for participants to learn about roadway lighting design and the requirements from the new Handbook. Presentations and discussion will focus on:

The impact of New Solid State LED Lighting technology
Lighting Design Standards from the FHWA, AASHTO and the IES
Warranting and the Impact of Lighting on Roadway Safety
New Innovative approaches to Roadway Lighting Design

The workshop presenters will be:

Dr. Ronald Gibbons, Virginia Tech Transportation Institute,
Paul Lutkevich, Parsons Brinckerhoff and
Don McLean, DMD and Associates

Date/Time: January 20th, 1pm – 5pm,

January 21st, 8am to Noon

Questions? Joseph Cheung - FHWA Office of Safety

202-366-6994 Joseph.Cheung@dot.gov

The 2nd Annual Automated Vehicles Summit will be held on December 15-16 in Orlando.

<http://www.automatedfl.com/event/2014summit/>

**For questions and more information please contact:
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WEBINAR: *The Innovative MPO* Report Launch

December 10, 2014 1:00PM- 2:00PM EST

Join Transportation for America for the launch of *The Innovative MPO*, a guidebook to help MPO staff, board members, and advisors find innovative ways to achieve community goals. The Guidebook is designed to offer a range of ideas in planning, programming, technical analysis, and community partnership. Click [HERE](#) to register.

U.S. Census Bureau Releases the 2009-2013 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

This week the U.S. Census announced the release of the 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year estimates, the most relied-on source for detailed, up-to-date socio-economic statistics covering every community in the nation every year. These estimates give even the smallest communities timely information on more than 40 topics, such as educational attainment, income, occupation, commuting to work, language spoken at home, nativity, ancestry and selected monthly homeowner costs.

New with this release:

- For the first time, data users will be able to access block group level data via the Census Bureau's [American FactFinder](#). Previously, this lowest-level geography was only accessible via the Census Bureau's FTP site.
- The release includes a new edition of [Census Explorer](#), a gallery of interactive maps. This newest map will feature decennial and ACS data on "Young Adults: Then and Now." Users can explore selected characteristics for the young adult population in maps featuring the new 5-year estimates as well as 1980, 1990 and 2000 census long form estimates. Users can zoom in from the nation level to the state, county, metropolitan and tract-levels.

Additional releases and updates:

- Visit the [Table Comparison Tool](#) to find comparable tables between ACS 5-year estimates and Census 2000 Summary File 3 detailed tables.
- The [2009-2013 ACS 5-year Narrative Profiles](#) are available for state, county, place, metropolitan/micropolitan statistical area, ZIP Code Tabulation Area, American Indian Area/Alaska Native Area/Hawaiian Home Land and census tract. Narrative Profiles summarize many topics using nontechnical text and graphs.
- The 5-year [Summary File](#) has been released, as well as additional supporting documentation.
- The 2011-2013 ACS 3-year [Public Use Microdata Sample \(PUMS\) Files](#) are also available, as well as supporting materials on the [PUMS Documentation page](#).

The ACS provides reliable statistics that are indispensable to anyone who has to make informed decisions about the future. These statistics are required by all levels of government to manage or evaluate a wide range of programs, but are also useful for research, education, journalism, business and advocacy. If you have questions about this survey, please call the Customer Services Center on 1 (800) 923-8282.

