



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, February 12, 2016

Volume 17, Number 6

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The Technical Coordinating / Citizens Advisory Committee will meet next week. The mobile MPO Policy Committee meets on March 2<sup>nd</sup>; *See Mobile MPO Updates*. President Obama is proposing "Clean Transportation", paid by taxing oil... see *Legislative Updates*. The WAVE Transit is proposing some major changes, how do Alabama roads fair, and do you want passenger rail in Alabama? What is the White House up to? Please see *In The News*. How much of a transportation geek are you? To find out is *Just For Fun...* Mardi Gras is over, and it is just one of the reasons we love Mobile... [Here are 10 photos of Mobile](#), like you have never seen

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



[www.mobilempo.org](http://www.mobilempo.org) check us out on FACEBOOK

## Mobile MPO Updates

### TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE (TCC)/CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) & MOBILE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) MEETINGS COMING UP

Please plan on attending two very important meetings coming up. For TCC/CAC members, there will be a short TCC/CAC meeting on February 17<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 AM in the SARPC Training Room, and for both the MPO Policy Board and TCC/CAC members there will be a MPO meeting on March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 10:00 AM in the SARPC Board Room. There are some modifications that need to be made to the Transportation Improvement Program; please plan on attending. Some of the items on the agenda include:

#### New Project with Interstate Maintenance Funds

I-165 service Road concrete repair from end of north ramp to south ramp; CN; 9/30/2016; \$600,000

#### Projects being deleted

Emergency Bridge Funds: SR-42 (US-98) Extend Bridge over Big Creek East 1440'; 5/28/2021; \$ 10,376,246.24.  
Bridge funds: SR-42 (US-98) Extend Bridge over Big Creek East 1440'; CN; 5/28/2021; \$ 10,791,296.08.

#### Projects being moved with National Highway Funds

SR-158 Extension from Lott Road (SR-217) to Schillinger Road. Grade Drain, Base, Pave and Bridge (EB Seabury Creek, EB Ramp over Seabury Creek Tributary, EB Rogers Road, and Schillinger Road Intersection); CN; From 7/31/2020 To 5/31/2019; \$24,532,239.53.

Construct Bridge on Glenwood Road over SR-42 (US-98); CN; From 5/31/2019 To 5/28/2021; \$ 5,590,990.05.

#### Projects being moved with Emergency Bridge Funds

Extend Eastbound Bridge on SR-42 (US-98) over Bridge Creek; CN; From 5/31/2019 To 5/28/2021; \$4,204,040.00.

#### Add the following projects using FTA 5310 Funds

- City of Saraland - \$43,200 Federal funds for a 15 Passenger Bus
- Goodwill Industries - \$43,200 Federal funds for a 15 Passenger Bus
- City of Prichard - \$43,200 Federal funds for a 15 passenger bus
- Mobile Association of Retarded Citizens - \$163,886 Federal funds for four small transit bus
- City of Satsuma - \$24,800 Federal funds for GIS Equipment/Vehicle Shelter

#### ADA Transition Plans

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 has completed

the initial assessment and well underway in the compiling the inventory of sidewalks and ramps not in 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.

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.

The Alabama Transportation Planners Association (ATPA) hosted an ADA Day in Birmingham on October 29<sup>th</sup>. The Federal Highway Administration gave a presentation on the Americans with Disabilities Act and Transition Plans, then each urban area 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](#).

## Projects Within Region Let February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016

### **Mobile County**

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

### **Baldwin County**

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

### **Escambia County**

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

### [What's Under Construction?](#)

## Legislative Updates

### **Obama proposes \$320B for 'clean transportation'**

By Keith Laing - 02/09/16 11:45 AM EST

President Obama proposes spending \$320 billion over the next ten years on a "clean transportation" plan in his final budget released on Tuesday. The plan calls for spending \$32 billion per year to green the transportation sector by funding public transit, an urban planning initiative and clean vehicle research. The White House said the plan, part of a \$4.1 trillion budget for fiscal 2017, could be paid for by a proposed \$10-per-barrel fee on oil production.

"By placing a fee on oil, the president's plan creates a clear incentive for private-sector innovation to reduce America's reliance on oil and invest in clean energy technologies that will power our future," the White House said of the clean transportation plan. "It continues the president's call to utilize one-time revenues from business tax reform to provide a temporary near-term surge in investment to set us on the right path for the years ahead.

"In addition to transportation investments, 15 percent of revenues would be allocated to provide assistance to families with burdensome energy costs, including a focus on supporting households in the Northeast as they transition from fuel oil for heating to cleaner forms of energy," the White House added.

The new transportation proposal from Obama comes after lawmakers passed a five-year, \$305 billion highway bill last fall. The White House said the president's new proposal would increase annual spending on road and transit projects by approximately \$20 billion per year.

The plan includes a \$10 billion annual increase for Federal Transit Administration programs that have been used to help states build new light rail and streetcars that have been touted by the Obama administration. The White House

said the plan also includes \$7 billion per year to reaffirm "the administration's commitment to high-speed rail."

The proposal would also double the amount of money that is available for the popular Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program that was created by the 2009 economic stimulus bill. The TIGER program, which currently authorized at about \$500 million, allows states to apply for funding for transportation projects that "will have a significant impact on the nation, a metropolitan area or a region," according to the DOT's website.

Obama said that the highway bill passed by Congress last year was just a down-payment on a backlog of transportation projects that are badly-needed. Continue [HERE](#)

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## **Obama: Low gas prices make now right time for oil tax**

By Timothy Cama - 02/05/16 01:12 PM EST

Now is the right time to create a new tax on oil, while gasoline prices are at historic lows, President Obama said Friday.

Speaking with reporters at the White House, Obama used the recent decision to lift the ban on crude oil exports to justify the \$10-per-barrel oil tax proposal his staff unveiled Thursday.

"It's right to do it now, when gas prices are really low," Obama said in a speech largely focused on the unemployment rate, which is the lowest in eight years. "And they will be low for quite some time to come, so it's not going to be a disruptive factor in terms of the economy."

The proposal was roundly mocked by Republicans and the oil industry, who mostly refused to accept it as a serious idea.

Obama framed the tax as a trade-off now that the 40-year-old ban on crude exports has been lifted, in a major boon to oil producers.

"If we say to them, 'Alright, oil companies, we know that you're having to retool, we know that prices are low right now, you're allowed to export,'" he said.

"But what we're also saying is that we're going to ... impose a tax on a barrel of oil — imported, exported — so that some of that revenue can be used for transportation, some of that revenue can be used for the investments in basic research and technology that's going to be needed for the energy sources of the future."

Obama wants to use the oil tax to fund clean energy and transportation initiatives like research and technology.

He predicted that in a decade or two, the tax would bring the country significantly closer to weaning off of fossil fuels.

The American Petroleum Institute (API) said that the new tax would amount to 25 additional cents for a gallon of gasoline, which now averages \$1.82 a gallon nationally. West Texas Intermediate crude oil settled at \$31.42 a barrel Thursday, about a third of its price a year and a half ago.

Republicans declared the idea "dead on arrival" in Congress, ripping it apart as a massive tax increase for the middle class and others who could not afford it.

But the White House disagreed. Press secretary Josh Earnest said the tax is "in the best interest of the economy."

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## **Departments of Transportation Team Up with Climatologists, Engineers to Address Sea-Level Rise- Congress takes (some) action on climate change**

by Christine Parrish

Thursday, February 11, 2016 10:25 AM

"Efforts are under way to construct new building materials, design bridges, and coordinate efforts to rebuild roads and bridges that can withstand severe storms and floods. " In a little-publicized move, the U.S. Congress recently took a forward step to address the impacts of climate change on the nation's infrastructure — a move that will change how billions of federal dollars are spent on construction in flood plains.

In related news, engineers and transportation experts have teamed up with climatologists and planners to work on how to improve America's roads, bridges, railways, and transportation networks in the face of rising sea levels and more-frequent severe floods.

As part of the 2016 omnibus budget bill that passed in December, Congress approved strengthening flood standards in the construction of federal buildings (including hospitals and low-income housing), roads, bridges, and other transportation infrastructure. Any new federally funded construction, or re-construction after a storm, that is located in flood-prone areas will need to meet the new standards.

Flooding is the most expensive of natural disasters. It caused more than \$260 billion in damages between 1980 and 2013 and accounts for approximately 85% of all disaster declarations, according to InsideClimate News. On average, it also kills more people than other natural disasters.

The building standard that has existed since the 1970s was to build to the level that could withstand a 100-year storm, which traditionally had only a one-percent chance of happening on any given year. But 100-year storms are becoming increasingly common. The new standard will require federally funded projects in flood-prone areas to adopt one of three approaches: to use the best available scientific data and methods that integrate current and future changes in flooding, to build up to three feet higher in elevation above the 100-year storm levels, or to adopt the 500-year storm level that conventionally would have a 0.2-percent chance of happening in a given year.

The new standards will not affect the cost or availability of flood insurance, but they will apply to all federally funded projects in flood-prone areas that are in and beyond the flood-zone boundaries indicated on FEMA flood maps.

Continue [HERE](#)

## Funding Opportunities

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

Approx. Grant Amount: \$155,000

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

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

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

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

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

Interested parties should contact:

Anthony Smiley  
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Email: [asmiley@adem.state.al.us](mailto:asmiley@adem.state.al.us)

Dale Hurst  
Office Number: 334-271-7882  
Email: [adh@adem.state.al.us](mailto:adh@adem.state.al.us)

Alabama Department of Environmental Management  
1400 Coliseum Boulevard  
Montgomery, Alabama 36110-2059

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### 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](mailto:dburnett@sarpc.org).

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## 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

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**Are you a Geek, or are you on transportation overload? Let's find out how much of a transportation geek you are?**

1. In North America, road signs facing this direction usually wear out first.
2. A non life-threatening emergency at sea is radioed as?
3. The oldest, commissioned, warship that is still afloat today is?
4. Someone whose hobby is collecting street car transfers is called?
5. Why are ceramic tiles used in underground vehicle tunnels?
6. The deepest anyone has safely gone underwater is?
7. The first stop sign in the U.S. was put up in what city?
8. The standard width between railroad tracks is?
9. The first practical, pedal driven, 2 wheeled device was?
10. This bubble shaped car was nicknamed the 'Rolling Egg'.

The answers are at the bottom of today's **Transportation Friday E-Newsletter**. If you get all of them correct (and be honest), you will receive a link to a free *Destination 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, OR Transportation Improvement Program... YOUR CHOICE!!*

## In the News

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### White House wants to divert federal money for Alabama to Alaska

Posted: Feb 10, 2016 7:21 PM CST Updated: Feb 10, 2016 7:21 PM CST  
By Bob Grip, FOX10 News Anchor  
[CONNECT](#)



MOBILE, AL (WALA) -

Members of Congress from the Gulf Coast are blasting the White House for proposing to help Alaska deal with rising seas by taking money away from similar efforts along the Gulf Coast, including Alabama.

In its proposed budget for 2017, the White House said it wanted to repeal a 2006 provision that establishes a formula for sharing revenues from offshore drilling in the Gulf of Mexico with four Gulf states, commonly called GOMESA. It is a bill that passed after catastrophic damage from Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Revenues from offshore drilling are an important part of the federal budget, and damage by Katrina played a big role in getting the federal government to give up a chunk of those revenues.

The vast majority of those revenues now go to the federal government, but starting next year Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and Texas are slated to begin receiving a large portion of those funds.

In its new budget proposal, the White House called for "repealing" those payments, saying they were "unnecessary and costly." The White House also questioned revenue sharing because the payments go to a "handful of states."

Alabama Rep. Bradley Byrne has made it clear he wants to use the GOMESA money, which is scheduled to increase as new leasing areas open up, to help pay the Alabama's portion of the I-10 bridge project. Byrne's office says he is opposed to efforts that would take that money away from the coastal counties and spread it all around the country.

The President made the same proposal in his budget last year, but it wasn't included in the final House passed budget or the final House passed appropriations bill.

<http://www.fox10tv.com/story/31192829/white-house-wants-to-divert-federal-money-for-alabama-to-alaska>

## WAVE TRANSIT

### Public Hearing

Thursday, February 25, 2016, 6:00 p.m. (CST)

The GM&O Transportation Center

110 Bearegard Street, Mobile, Alabama 36602

The Wave Transit System will be seeking comments from the public regarding proposed transit service changes. The public is encouraged to attend the public hearing. Written comments are welcome and should be mailed to [The Wave Transit System, Attention: Public Comment-#2016, The GM&O Transportation Center, 110 Bearegard Street, Suite 104, Mobile, Alabama 36602](mailto:Public Comment-#2016, The GM&O Transportation Center, 110 Bearegard Street, Suite 104, Mobile, Alabama 36602). All correspondence should include name and address for the official records and will be received until **FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2016, 5:00 p.m. (CST)**. You may also submit comments through The Wave Transit Systems website at [www.thewavetransit.com](http://www.thewavetransit.com)

ROUTE	ROUTE #	ACTION
Highway 45	#5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate weekday and Saturday bus service operating after 7pm</li> </ul>
Dauphin Street	#7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate weekday and Saturday bus service operating after 7pm</li> <li>Eliminate weekday and Saturday bus service to Bel-Air Mall</li> <li>Modify weekday and Saturday bus service, with direct service along Dauphin Street between the GM&amp;O and Springhill Memorial Hospital</li> </ul>
Broad Street	#9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate weekday and Saturday bus service operating after 7pm</li> </ul>
Crosstown	#10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate weekday and Saturday bus service operating after 7pm</li> <li>Eliminate weekday and Saturday bus service to Chickasaw Center</li> </ul>
Plateau	#16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate weekday and Saturday bus service operating in Happy Hills and to Eight Mile Shopping Center</li> </ul>
Highway 90	#12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate weekday and Saturday bus service to Pleasant Valley Road, Cottage Hill Road, I-65 West Service Road, and Bel Air Mall</li> <li>Modify weekday and Saturday bus service along Government Street, with service expansion to McGowin Park</li> </ul>
Tillman's Corner Circulator	#20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate bus service</li> </ul>
Downtown Modal	#14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modify weekday bus service</li> <li>Eliminate Saturday bus service</li> </ul>
Jury Shuttle	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate bus service</li> </ul>

**Alabama's 50 most needed road improvements would cost \$4.6 billion, report states**

By Ivana Hrynkiw | [ihrynkiw@al.com](mailto:ihrynkiw@al.com)

Email the author

on February 11, 2016 at 11:39 AM, updated February 11, 2016 at 12:23 PM

It would cost \$4.6 billion to address Alabama's 50 greatest road improvement needs, a national transportation research group stated in a report today.

Of the 50 problems across the state, seven of the top 20 are in Birmingham. Rocky Moretti, the Director of Policy and Research for [TRIP](#), said today that the organization chose to construct a report on Alabama because the state's overall traffic fatality rate is "significantly higher than the national average."

Moretti also said that Alabama's rural roads have two-and-a-half times the fatality rate of all other state roads. The improvements in the report are aimed to increase economic growth and safety in the state.

According to the report, 13 percent of Alabama's bridges are functionally obsolete- meaning the bridges are not up to national design standards because of alignment, narrow lanes, or inadequate clearances. Additionally, 16 percent of the state's urban roads are in poor condition.

Speakers at today's press conference included Jefferson County Commissioner Joe Knight, Chairman of the Coalition for Regional Transportation Craig Fleming, and Executive Director Blount County Economic Development Council Don Mitchell.

Moretti said that travel in Alabama has increased 3 percent in the last few years, and increased 53 percent from 1990-2012.

To make all of the improvements mentioned in the report would cost the state \$4.6 billion.

"It's meant to be a blueprint over the years," Moretti said about the cost of the report's suggestions.

"We're looking get the issues out there... to get appropriate safety features on the roadway."

In closing, Fleming said, "We need to make our state a true economic competitor... [the roadway improvements] are the only responsible thing to do."

To view the full report, [click here](#).

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## Alabama's roads received a grade of D+

By Joe Meads, P.E., legislative chair, Alabama Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers;  
and Shelia Montgomery Mills, P.E., president, Alabama Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers

The Report Card for Alabama's Infrastructure, released in December by the American Society of Civil Engineers, offers a snapshot of the conditions of our state's infrastructure and provides legislators a roadmap for how to improve it. This legislative session, addressing the needs of roads, bridges, and dams needs to be a priority.

The Report Card revealed that the state has a backlog of needs, and routine maintenance will go a long way in avoiding costly emergency repairs and strengthening our economy. We've made some progress thanks to Gov. Bentley's work to pass the ATRIP program to help local roads, but we still have a ways to go.

Roads received a grade of "D+" in large part because almost half of interstate and state highways are in fair, poor, or very poor condition.

Driving on rough roads is costly, as the average driver in Birmingham pays \$593 in extra vehicle operating costs a year. We can combat our poor roads and lower the cost to motorists by increasing investment into the system. For example, the 5-cent gas tax increase that was proposed last year would cost a typical driver less than \$40 a year, but could cut that \$593 in extra vehicle costs significantly. It makes economic and common sense for the legislature to jump at this opportunity to improve the quality and safety of our transportation network.

Similarly our lawmakers need to consider implementing a dam safety program that would ensure we know the location of the dams throughout the state. Dams received a grade of "Incomplete" in the Report Card, because the last complete inventory of the state's dams was done in the 1970s.

Think of all that has changed in that time, including building below dams that were not designed to protect a community below it. Without a complete, updated inventory, we don't know what's at risk below a dam, or have Emergency Action Plans for all high-hazard dams. This creates a lot of uncertainty, and that uncertainty equates to unnecessary risk. By implementing a dam safety program, Alabama can avoid a potential tragedy, and protect homes, families, businesses, and property more effectively.

To function at our best, we need our infrastructure to be at its best. Like most things in life, that means we need to

make it a priority and give it attention. In Gov. Bentley's State of the State address, he outlined a vision of Alabama being home to innovation, enhancing quality of life, and creating jobs. Infrastructure fits directly into that vision.

We're approaching our 200th birthday as a state, and our infrastructure is showing its age. The Report Card's cumulative grade of "C-" demonstrates that as of late we have not done the best job of caring for our infrastructure the way it deserves. By making the additional investment we can improve the backbone of our economy and reap the benefits, preparing our infrastructure for Alabama's next major milestone. Now it's up to our elected leaders to make the vision a reality.

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## Do you want more passenger rail service in Alabama?

By **John Previsich**, president of SMART – Transportation Division [www.utu.org](http://www.utu.org) and **Edward Wytkind**, president of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO [www.ttd.org](http://www.ttd.org).

Alabamians sure love their college football, but what we've just recently learned is that they also like their passenger trains — and they're willing to pay for them. A [recent state-wide poll](#) by [DFM Research](#) shows that passenger trains don't only thrive in the big cities on the corridor between Washington, D.C. and Boston – they are quite popular in the Heart of Dixie, too.

More than half of those polled in Alabama say they want to see an increase in the service provided by Amtrak, our national passenger railroad. When asked about expanding Amtrak's once-daily passenger service through Alabama, nearly 85 percent support the idea of adding an additional route from Birmingham or Mobile to New Orleans or Atlanta. This poll shouldn't surprise anyone given that others in Gulf Coast states are pushing aggressively to [restart Amtrak service](#) lost after the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

The people of Alabama aren't alone in their views. All across the country, in red states and blue, in rural counties and major metropolitan cities, Americans are calling for more passenger rail service — and it's easy to see why. With 31 million passengers last year alone, Amtrak's popularity has soared, and over the last decade, Amtrak has broken its ridership record almost annually. Here's the best part: during a time when pollsters are churning out the views of voters on a daily basis, our national passenger railroad actually polls better than anyone auditioning for president. Continue [HERE](#)

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## Transportation Research

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### Design-Build Push Button Contract Significantly Reduces the Time It Takes to Implement Safety Improvements

*An FHWA Roadway Safety Noteworthy Practices Webinar*

**Date:** February 25, 2016

**Time:** 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET

[Register here.](#)

This webinar is based on this [FDOT roadway safety noteworthy practice](#).

As other States may well have discovered, Florida found that making simple safety improvements to local roads could take as long as 3 to 5 years. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) believes that this is way too long when lives are at stake.

In response, FDOT's District 7 (Tampa Bay, Florida), working closely with the Florida Division of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), developed a "design-build push button" contract that has reduced the time to deliver simple, low-cost safety improvement projects to roughly 1 year. Transportation agencies in FDOT's District 7—which includes the Tampa metropolitan area (Hillsborough County) and four neighboring counties—now can access Federal funds more easily and roll out safety improvements on local roads more quickly.

FHWA's Roadway Safety Noteworthy Practice webinar series will host a presentation on the FDOT Design-Build Push Button contract. The Design-Build Push Button contract reduces the delivery of simple or low cost safety improvements from 3-5 years to 3-9 months. This innovative process helped FDOT achieve their EDC goals and increased the NPV of Safety projects.

**Presenters:**

- Matthew Weaver, P.E., District Traffic Safety Program Engineer, Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
- In addition to FDOT's presentation, **Kevin E. Burgess, P.E.**, Safety Engineer from the Florida FHWA Division will give a brief presentation about FHWA regulations that permitted the implementation of the Design-Build Push Button contract.

**Host:**

- Melonie Barrington, Transportation Specialist, FHWA Office of Safety

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### [See the Future of Transportation](#)

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#### Answers to Today's *Just For Fun*:

- 1> South - Because of the effects of the sun.

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- 2> 'Pan-pan-pan' - Out of fuel, for example.
  - 3> USS Constitution - Built in 1797, undefeated in battle, resides in Boston harbor.
  - 4> Peridromophile - Started by Bill Sidis in 1926.
  - 5> Easy to clean - Cheaper, easier to replace also.
  - 6> 35,820 ft. - In 1960, on the Swiss built submersible 'Trieste'.
  - 7> Detroit - In 1915, black letters on a white piece of sheet metal.
  - 8> 4 ft 8.5 inches - This standard goes back to Roman times.
  - 9> Velocipede - Made around 1870, of wood and metal including the 'tires'.
  - 10> Isetta - Made by BMW.