



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, February 5, 2016

Volume 17, Number 5

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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

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Mardi Gras is upon us; SARPC will be closed 2/8 and 2/9. The MPO TCC/CAC and Policy Committees are meeting soon. See *Mobile MPO Updates*. AMTRAK executives are visiting the Gulf coast, and congratulations to Nick Amberger; please see *In The News. Just For Fun* will light up your day. Have a great weekend and get out and enjoy the parades! [HERE](#) is the parade schedule.

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



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 TCC/CAC meeting on February 17th, 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 2nd 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. We will be mailing memorandum notices next week with details. If you wish to add anything to the agenda, please let us know. Thank you.

SARPC received the first vehicle purchased with Urban 5310 Funds, as the Mobile MPO is the Designated Recipient (DR) of the Urban FTA 5310 Funds (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities). The vehicle was awarded to Mercy Life of Alabama with FY 2014 Funds with a purchase price of \$53,062. The MPO is apportioned about \$320,000 annually and the FY 2017 call for projects will be this summer.



ADA Transition Plans

Staff is meeting with the consultant today to get a full update of where the project is. It looks like the majority of the data collection is complete.

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 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](#).

SARPC has contracted with Neel-Schaffer to conduct the municipal ADA Transition Plans for Public Rights of Way, and

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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.

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.

Rural Planning Organization Updates

In October of 2015, the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) adopted the "Non-Metropolitan Local Officials Cooperative Process. This process includes notification to non-metropolitan local officials of the periodic development of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and review and revisions to the Alabama Statewide Transportation Planning Process (ASTPP). ALDOT will review and consider the comments and suggestions received before the development of the draft STIP and ASTPP and commencing the public involvement process. After adopting the STIP and modified ASTPP, ALDOT will advise non-metropolitan local officials of the comments received and the resultant actions. For any proposed modification not adopted, ALDOT will provide its reasoning. ALDOT is soliciting comments from local government officials on the effectiveness of this process. The comments may be submitted to Mr. Jim Doolin at doolini@dot.state.al.us or Bureau of Transportation Planning and Modal Programs, 1409 Coliseum Boulevard, Montgomery, Alabama 36110. The comments should be received no later than February 1, 2016.

Projects Within Region Let January 29th, 2015

Mobile County

None at this time

Baldwin County

- For constructing the Intersection Improvements (Roundabout Installation) on CR-48 (Fairhope Avenue) at the intersection of CR-13 in Fairhope. Length 0.135 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,245,603 to \$1,522,404.

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 to push \$10-per-barrel oil tax for green transportation plan

By Devin Henry - 02/04/16 03:49 PM EST

President Obama will propose a \$10-per-barrel fee on oil production to fund a new green transportation plan, the White House announced Thursday.

The proposal would go toward a \$32.4 billion annual push to green the transportation sector by funding public transit, an urban planning initiative and clean vehicle research, the White House said in a fact sheet. Obama will include the plan in the budget request he releases next week.

The plan will likely die in the GOP-controlled Congress, which will vet Obama's budget request before writing spending bills later this year.

But the proposal represents a new front in Obama's climate change end-game: After finalizing carbon reduction regulations for the electricity sector last year, he is turning his attention back to the transportation sector, which accounts for 30 percent of American carbon emissions every year.

"The president's plan does what we need to once again have a transportation system that is a source of American

strength while at the same time taking steps to reduce carbon emissions and fight climate change,” Jeff Zients, the director of the National Economic Council, told reporters Thursday.

Charging the fee to oil companies, the White House said, is both a funding mechanism for the transportation initiative and an incentive for the private sector to move toward cleaner fuel.

“By placing a fee on oil, the president’s plan creates a clear incentive for private sector innovation to reduce our reliance on oil and at the same time invests in clean energy technologies that will power our future,” the White House’s fact sheet said.

The plan, the White House said, would lead to new investments in clean vehicle research and expand funding for public transportation.

Nearly \$20 billion annually would go toward public transit, according to the fact sheet. Another \$10 billion would be put toward new federal funding streams for cities and states that cut carbon emissions from their transportation sectors.

The plan would invest another \$2.4 billion annually into clean vehicle research and innovation.

Obama has looked to cut transportation sector emissions over the course of his term. He worked with the auto industry on raising fuel efficiency standards for cars and heavy-duty trucks in 2012, and the 2009 stimulus act included investments in emissions-free transit.

But Obama’s oil fee plan will likely fail in Congress, where Republicans have looked to both support the oil industry and prevent new taxes and fees proposed by Democrats and the Obama administration.

“President Obama’s proposed \$10 per barrel tax on oil is dead on arrival in the House,” Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.) said in a statement. “The House will kill this absurd proposal, and instead focus on lowering costs and growing our economy.”

The oil industry, which has seen declining profits as it fights oil prices that are near their lowest levels in a decade, was already pushing back against the plan on Thursday, warning that the tax would eventually be passed on to consumers.

Alabama Legislature's diamonds in the rough for 2016



By [Cameron Smith](#)

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

on February 03, 2016 at 7:00 AM, updated February 03, 2016 at 7:04 AM

By now, you’ve probably realized we’re going to have budget issues again in the State of Alabama. The General Fund won’t have enough money largely because of Medicaid. Helmed by state public education officials, the newly formed Alabama Unites for Education coalition will pick up the banner left by the Alabama Education Association (AEA) pushing for more education spending and keeping the Education Trust Fund sacrosanct.

Legislators will hem and haw about passing budgets, think about raising taxes and then decide they’d like to continue to be legislators in Alabama by opting for lower or relatively flat spending levels.

Oh, we’ll also talk about gambling and a lottery. Right now, it seems like there’s a better chance of Bear Bryant coming back to life and coaching Auburn than voters signing off on a blank-check lottery where the legislature could spend the proceeds however they see fit. While most Alabamians probably wouldn’t mind a lottery, those who oppose it are well funded and active.

Plenty of moneyed interests want to see casino-style gambling in Alabama, but they want it served up on a silver platter where they don’t have to compete. Cronyism anyone?

The same song and dance doesn’t mean there aren’t positive opportunities on the horizon. Here are a couple of them:

Budgeting Reforms – When it comes to setting spending levels, the devil is always in the details. Most Alabamians don’t recognize that state budgets are essentially based off the prior year’s budget. State agencies advocate for any spending increases, but the assumption is that the prior year’s spending level is justified. Agencies bristle at the idea of explaining every penny every year, but there’s certainly a compromise to be reached. Requiring top-to-bottom spending justification once every four years on a staggered cycle shouldn’t be an insurmountable proposition.

RAISE Act – Teachers should be well compensated and the RAISE Act is looking to do that in Alabama. The latest iteration of the measure would also focus on building evaluations for teachers and administrators that focus on individual performance and student achievement. The bill would increase the standards for tenure and provide a mechanism for removing chronically underperforming tenured educators. The bill will be controversial and will almost definitely change as it goes through the process. That said, it will open up important conversations about how we evaluate, compensate, develop and retain educators.

Transportation Infrastructure Funding – There are plenty of reports suggesting, much like the rest of the nation, that Alabama's transportation infrastructure is in serious need of repair. Let's just stipulate that. Alabama hasn't been great at long-term planning and now those chickens are coming home to roost. We're not out of money. The Alabama Department of Transportation projects state and federal revenue of \$1.2 billion in 2015. At the same time, we're collecting less per vehicle on our roads thanks to higher fuel efficiency standards. Alabamians don't like taxes, but they don't like potholes either. This has the potential to be a diamond or a dud depending on the details.
Continue [HERE](#)

Budget, lottery, teacher raise among key issues for Alabama lawmakers



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

Email the author | [Follow on Twitter](#)
on January 31, 2016 at 7:23 AM, updated February 01, 2016 at 7:03 AM

The sparring over tax increases has mostly come to a stop. But that's not because the budget is fixed. Tough choices on paying for state services will again be the dominant issue when Alabama lawmakers begin the 2016 legislative session on Tuesday. Last year, it took legislators almost seven months and two special sessions to pass a budget.

They raised the tax on cigarettes and moved money from education to close most of a hole in the General Fund. Those changes stay in place and will help again, but not enough to match rising costs for Medicaid, prisons and other programs in 2017. Besides the chronic General Fund woes, other topics figure to be front and center. Lawmakers from both parties say this could be the year to send a lottery proposal to voters. There is a consensus that teachers are overdue for a pay raise, but details are still to come. And county officials and some business groups are calling for a gasoline tax increase to support road construction and maintenance. Gov. Robert Bentley will announce his agenda during the State of the State address on Tuesday.

The governor said Alabamians will be excited when they hear his plans for the last three years of his administration. Unlike last year, he won't seek tax increases for the General Fund, leaving it to the Legislature to figure out how to balance the budget. Senate Democrats are backing a proposed property tax increase and a combined income tax reporting bill they say would close a loophole for out-of-state companies doing business in the Alabama. But Republicans are in control, holding 71 of 104 seats in the House (one is vacant) and 26 of 35 in the Senate...

GAS TAX

Some lawmakers, business groups and county officials are calling for [an increase in the state gasoline tax](#) to support road and bridge construction. The Legislature raised the gasoline excise tax to its current level of 16 cents a gallon in 1992. Inflation, as well as improved gas efficiency in vehicles, means that the tax no longer generates enough dollars to adequately maintain roads and bridges, according to those calling for an increase. Rep. Mac McCutcheon, R-Monrovia, who chairs the Permanent Joint Transportation Committee, said it would take a 12-cents-per-gallon increase to raise revenues back to the purchasing power of 1992. The committee has held a series of meetings around the state to present information about the needs and gather input from the public. McCutcheon, who proposed a gas tax increase last year, said he would use the meetings as a way to gauge the need and public support before introducing legislation this year. Bentley has said he would support a gasoline tax increase.

Funding Opportunities

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:

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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.

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

Ever caught a glow in the dark Mardi Gras cup?

One Dutch designer has drawn upon the bioluminescent qualities of jellyfish and fireflies to create glow-in-the-dark trees. The potential is that they will take the place of street lamps. Imagine the savings in power bills, maintenance, and just the cool factor of having glow in the dark trees lining your sidewalks. Do you think TAP funds would be an eligible funding source? Maybe, *Just For Fun*...

[HERE](#)



In the News

Mobile visit planned as Amtrak considers New Orleans to Orlando route

By [The Associated Press](#)

Amtrak and the Southern Rail Commission are conducting a tour along the Gulf Coast to consider the feasibility of bringing passenger rail back to the Gulf Coast, more than a decade after Hurricane Katrina damaged the tracks.

The Southern Rail Commission announced recently that the so-called "Inspection Train" will include 14 stops in four states, beginning Feb. 18 in New Orleans and concluding the next day in Jacksonville, Florida. Other stops will include Gulfport and Biloxi, Mississippi; Mobile; and Pensacola and Tallahassee, Florida.

News outlets report that Amtrak President and CEO Joe Boardman will host elected officials and others on the trip, which is being taken to examine the existing railroad infrastructure.

Southern Rail Commission Chairman Greg White says he's urging Amtrak to re-establish daily, round-trip service between New Orleans and Orlando.

Mayor Troy L. Ephriam to Host The Alabama Conference of Black Mayors Quarterly Meeting

Prichard, AL, February 4, 2016– From Saturday, February 6th, 2016 to Monday, February 8th, 2016, Prichard, Alabama Mayor, Troy L. Ephriam will host The Alabama Conference of Black Mayors (ACBM) from all over Alabama. Founded in 1972, by Mayor Johnny Ford of Tuskegee and Former Prichard Mayor, A. J. Cooper; this organization realized the value of working together in unity and strength to support each other and their cities around the state.

This year's theme is; "Mayors for Healthy Communities" with the Honorable Dr. Oluwatoyosi Adekeye, Director, Division of Health, Satcher Health Institute, Morehouse University. During this historic event, the Mayors will participate in various Mardi Gras events and ACBM sessions.

On Monday, February 8, 2016 at 9:30 a.m., there will be a press conference. All media venues are encouraged to attend.

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Melanie Baldwin at 251-452-6510 , 251-423-5548 or email at m.baldwin@thecityofprichard.org.

(The views and opinions of the following article are that of the author, not of the MPO staff)

Alabama blunders build highways from Hell



By [John Archibald | jarchibald@al.com](#)

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

on February 05, 2016 at 12:31 AM, updated February 05, 2016 at 7:59 AM

You probably know the two classic Alabama blunders.

Never try to reason with a politician when money is on the line. And...

Don't assume the Alabama Department of Transportation does anything it doesn't want to do.

Just ask Birmingham. Ask the moneyed and influential people who have tried to fight ALDOT in recent months about the I-20/59 bridge. They convince more and more people that widening the river of asphalt through downtown Birmingham is bad for business and for the city, and for Birmingham's pursuit of ... pleasantness.

But they run smack dab into the wall of ALDOT.

Like always.

ALDOT Director John Cooper argues that the bridge must be replaced for safety reasons, that other alternatives have been studied and rejected, and this project must go on.

Members of the advocacy group Move I-20/59 argue that ALDOT gallops ahead with blinders on, that widening the highway from six lanes to 10 in the freshly bustling downtown is like setting up a barrier to progress.

Many in Birmingham have bought in. Because – let's face it – it is a convincing argument. A group opposed to the bridge came to Birmingham City Council this week to show support for a resolution opposing the plan. But council members were divided. Some said the work should proceed because the bridge is unsafe. Which is a good point. Others simply said ALDOT knows best. Which is not.

In the end Council President Johnathan Austin – who has called this project the "Berlin Bridge of Birmingham" -- withdrew the resolution, promising to bring it back later. Continue [HERE](#)

Mayor Stimpson congratulates Engineering Manager of the Year

February 02, 2016

MOBILE, Ala. - Mayor Stimpson today recognized City Engineer Nick Amberger on being named Engineering Manager of the Year by the Mobile Area Council of Engineers (MACE).

"Nick's leadership in the engineering department has been crucial as we begin to fix what is broken in the City of Mobile," said Mayor Stimpson. "He has proved to be instrumental to our team, especially as we begin to implement the 2016 Capital Improvement Plan, Nick has demonstrated a willingness to exceed expectations and always puts in the extra effort required to get the job done regardless of the challenge."

Stimpson honored Amberger during the Mobile City Council meeting on Tuesday.

MACE honors engineers who advance the engineering profession through their contributions to industry, education and the community. Award recipients will be honored at a formal ceremony at the Gulf Coast Exploreum Center on Thursday, February 25 at 6 pm.

Transportation Research

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

Pedestrians and Cyclists: Cities, States, and DOT Are Implementing Actions to Improve Safety

The Government Accountability Office released a new [report](#) highlighting the growing number of traffic fatalities to pedestrians and cyclists. The report interviewed cities and states to learn more about their challenges with this problem and how to solve it.

[See the Future of Transportation](#)