



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, January 29, 2016

Volume 17, Number 4

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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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The MPO TCC/CAC and Policy Committees are meeting soon *See Mobile MPO Updates*. Members of Alabama's Joint Transportation Committee have been here this week to discuss raising Alabama's gas tax, and AMTRAK executives are visiting the Gulf coast, please see *In The News*. Today is the deadline to finish your TAP Application for ALDOT, see *Funding Opportunities*. 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 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 doolinj@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

Alabama considering gas tax hike

By Keith Laing - 01/28/16 12:53 PM EST

Alabama is considering a plan to increase the amount of money drivers in the state will have to pay at the pump to help pay for transportation projects as federal road funding dries up, The Alabama Media Group [reports](#).

The Alabama Legislature's Permanent Joint Transportation Committee meet this week to discuss an increase in the state's approximately 21 cents per gallon gas tax, according to the report.

An Alabama state House committee voted last year to approve legislation that would [increase the state's gas tax by 5 cents](#), but the measure was not passed into law by the state's legislature.

Alabama state Rep. Mac McCutcheon (R) is planning to reintroduce legislation increasing the state's gas tax when the Legislature reconvenes for 2016 on Feb. 2, according to the report.

Any new Alabama fuel levy will be collected on top of an 18.4 cents per gallon federal gas tax that is charged to all drivers in the nation to fill the federal government's transportation funding coffers.

The American Petroleum Institute says the gas tax increase will bring the total amount of money that drivers in Alabama are charged at the pump to more than 44 cents per gallon.

Alabama is the latest state to consider increasing its own gas taxes in recent years as Congress has resisted a federal hike. Six states implemented such hikes on July 1 of last year.

Transportation advocates had pushed lawmakers to increase the federal gas tax during a debate about a multiyear highway funding bill last year, but lawmakers adopted instead to turn to other areas of federal budget to pay for a five-year, [\\$305 billion highway bill](#) instead of asking drivers to pay more at the pump.

Supporters of increasing the gas tax pointing to the willingness of states like Alabama to raise their own fuel levies as evidence that a national hike would be politically palatable this year.

Conservative groups in Washington have made clear that they would consider a federal increase to be a tax hike, however, and Republican lawmakers ruled it out even as they were searching for ways to pay for a new highway bill.

The national gas tax has been the traditional source of transportation funding since its inception in the 1930s. The tax has not been increased since 1993, however, and improved fuel efficiency has sapped its purchasing power.

The federal government typically spends about \$50 billion per year on transportation projects, but the gas tax only brings in approximately \$34 billion annually at its current rate.

Lawmakers turned to other areas of the federal budgets to close the \$16 billion per year gap last year, but transportation advocates have said the federal gas tax will have to eventually be increased or replaced with a more sustainable funding source to keep pace with rising costs for infrastructure projects.

The Congressional Budget Office has projected that it will take about [\\$100 billion](#), in addition to the annual gas tax receipts, to pay for a six-year transportation funding bill.

Lawmakers relied on a package of approximately \$70 billion of offsets from other areas of the federal budget to help pay for the recently completely highway bill, which lasts until 2021.

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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Alabama Department of Environmental Management

1400 Coliseum Boulevard

Montgomery, Alabama 36110-2059

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 **TODAY, 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

How Fast Does a Float Go?

If Parade Route A is 3 miles long, and it takes maskers 2 hours to parade around the entire Route A, what is the average speed of a Mobile Mardi Gras Float?



Given the average distance of a moon pie toss is 12 feet, at an average height of 6 feet off the pavement in a float, what is the distance a moon pie travels from the point it leaves the maskers hand?

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.

Alabama joint transportation committee talks gas tax, roads in need

By Cassie Fambro

Alabama Joint Transportation Meeting in Mobile, Jan. 26:

Below are comments made. A cohesive post will come after the meeting.

Updates:

Committee on the gas tax: Gas tax has not increased to meet present needs due to more fuel efficient vehicles. Gives example that in 1994, a basic Accord contributed \$184 in taxes driving 12,000 miles. In 2013, that vehicle contributes \$142.

"That clearly shows the current transportation model is not sustainable."

Mobile County Commissioner Connie Hudson- "The needs far outweigh the funding that is available, here in Mobile county, we have some severe needs," said Hudson. "The county commission has been very communicative with our legislative delegation."

"The citizens here are very interested in seeing the projects that have been on the books for many years that have become a critical issue with public safety," said Hudson.

"One project that for us has been head and shoulders above the others is the Highway 98 project. It has been on the books of ALDOT for the better part of 20 years, and in that period of time only 5 of 13 phases have been completed. There is appx a 10 mile stretch of road that needs to be improve. It is referred to as Bloody 98. Between 2012 and 2014, the accident picture with injuries has increased 62 percent, it's one of the most dangerous two-lane roads in the state."

Hudson said she brought information and data that gives statistics and data on Highway 98 to give to the delegation.

Monroe County probate judge: "We have about 22,000 very good citizens and some very bad roads," he said. "About half are eligible for federal funds and half are not."

"We are about half a million short of what we need to do every year," he continued. We simply don't have the resources to do what we need to do."

Fairhope Mayor: "In Fairhope, we have Highway 181," he said. He added they have been trying to get that done since 1999.

"We do our fair share of bringing monies to the state, all we are asking you is to get our fair monies returned," he said.

Mr. Ward, filling in for president of Alabama trucking association: "Obviously trucking is very important to Alabama," he said.

Ward makes note of how much revenue in gas tax comes from trucks. "Typical 5-axle semi pays \$3,800 in state highway user fees in addition to federal fees."

"Trucks transport 73 percent of total tonnage in the state, 83 percent of Ala. businesses depend on trucks exclusively." Says two aspects that cost truckers are time and safety.

"Airbus, automobile factories, require on-time delivery. It's a serious issue that we are on time."

"In order to meet consumer demand, trucks will increase in number in coming years. Crashes result in injuries and fatalities, freight does not meet its destination on time. It's proven fact that 70 percent of crashes between cars and trucks are caused by the automobile. One fatality or injury is too many. A well-maintained highway system will reduce the instance of accidents between trucks and other vehicles..."

Mobile EMA's Mike Evans: "Every day, what we do is try to work with local and state and federal partners to mitigate, repair, respond and recover from emergencies."

"As we plan and prepare for disasters, a big part of our plan is our critical infrastructure. Evacuation during a disaster... Highway 98 project would be an additional way to evacuate citizens."

"Quicker, more resilient our roads are, quicker we can get our utility partners out for water, gas, etc."

"It's about our family, our friends, our citizens and keeping them safe."

Mobile Airport Authority rep: "One new supplier coming to Brookley a month," he said. He added that Airbus, others coming to Mobile heightens the need for solid infrastructure and that the companies come to Mobile because of assets that are available.

"We are working to build one of most competitive aerospace clusters in the world," he added.

Mark Nix, Infirmary Health: \$45,000 has been spent on telemetry units being installed in ambulances because the time it takes to get people to the hospital in Baldwin County is increasing, he said. He mentioned the upcoming \$20 million free-standing emergency room to better serve the growing Daphne/Fairhope area in Baldwin County. Specifically mentioned Highway 98 traffic in Daphne during rush hour.

Mike Lee, chairman of build the bridge coalition: "Building bridge could benefit many areas. No single thing addresses so many issues as this one thing," he said. He cited emergency evacuation, tunnel clog. Cited tourism as a reason travel needs to improve at tunnel bottleneck.

Kendall Kilpatrick: Al. society of civil engineers: One of three drivers will drive over a structurally obsolete bridge every day.

"Rough roads cost Alabama drivers \$320 a year." (in maintenance, etc.)

"Only one third of the bridges in the state are maintained by ALDOT."

"A gas tax offers a great way to do that," Kilpatrick said, referring to paying for road maintenance.

Mobile County Engineer Joe Ruffer: "I've been here 40 years... we are team players in Mobile," he said. "When I came to Mobile, we were talking about Bloody 98. We are still talking about Bloody 98."

"US 98 has one of highest fatality rates of any road in the state of Alabama."

"You heard Mark Nix talk about the importance of transport time," he said referring to ambulances. "Two-lane roads that look like county roads," he said, disparagingly.

"Please give that your favorable consideration."

Chase Cobb, Association of County Commission: "This is the third joint transportation meeting." The other two meetings, some things have been common.

Mentions a guy with convenience stores who has spoken at previous two meetings that is concerned what would happen to them if gas tax was levied.

Cobb explains that he doesn't believe it would hurt gas stations much.

Convenience Store Rep: "I've never met the gentlemen who just spoke."

"I feel a little bit like the Donald Trump supporter at a Hillary Clinton rally."

"We represent post-sale and retail petroleum markets across the state." "We have a different opinion." 12 cent per gallon increase... 66 percent increase in current motor fuels tax. I do have a different opinion. I'm not going to stand here and tell you today that my organization opposes providing adequately funding infrastructure.

"More roads and bridges we have that are in better shape, more people drive."

"To imply that our industry would be against adequately funding infrastructure is untrue."

"We've heard several times today that the gas tax has not been increased since 1992. While that's true of the state level... unlike many of our sister states, cities and counties are allowed to add city and county rates to state rates."

"We are actually going to have a 4 cent rate increase next Monday in Ozark," he said. "Bringing their total tax to 6 cents a gallon."

"Mobile County, are the poster children for local option taxes." He says at least 7 municipalities level taxes on top of a 2 cent county tax.

"We have to take that into account," he said.

"Our concern is that if we do not do something to eliminate these local option taxes... think of what an addl 12 cents will do to that trucking firm."

Says Mississippi has a state-wide flat tax of 18 cents.

"Our position is that we hope the legislature has political will to solve all problems associated with motor fuels tax... as well as infrastructure."

Says he thinks citizens should be able to vote on local options.

He also mentions how much it costs to run credit cards, 2 and a half percent, to run transaction.

City of Satsuma council member: "I take exception to gentleman who just spoke, he said. If that local fuel tax...it's vital," he said. If your city is taking 4 percent and that's cut to two percent, then you've lost half of your funding."

Semmes resident: Between Snow Road and MS state line, five lanes to two lanes, to three lanes, back to two lanes..."

"There is a partially completed bridge that's been there for 20 years."

"I look forward to the day when we can talk about how it used to be called Bloody 98."

"The travel there, anytime, is dangerous. The three-lane sections, some people seem to think that third lane is a

turning lane and it's not, it's a passing lane."

"You get what you pay for, and right now, we're not getting much. I would support a tax increase. I would gladly pay 12 cents more a gallon... to have these projects either finished, completed or even just started."

Escatawpa canoe and campground owner: He said Mississippi roads are better than what is going on Highway 98. "I don't go east. I go west and go to Lucedale if I have to go to Home Depot or Lowe's." He says he watches tags and sees Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Missouri tags coming through Highway 98. He says people are going to start going to 49 and heading down to Gulfport and avoiding 98 altogether. The man lost his daughter in a car accident and follows infrastructure news passionately. Urges people to contact Vincent Calametti, director of district 9 with ALDOT. Says Calametti is commendable for how he communicates.

"Don't let any more money in the golden road at the northern bypass, put that money here." This situation is ridiculous because John Archibald said it was. (Referring to AL.com columnist.)

Another local resident: "Let the people who use the bridge pay for the bridge," she said, advocating for the Interstate 10 bridge to become a toll bridge.

Semmes firefighter: "Everyone wants to visit the beach, go to Baldwin County Beaches." He cites revenue in the millions for Baldwin County beaches, amount of money that people pay in order to travel to the beaches. Says he has seen people from New Mexico, Colorado, traveling to Gulf Shores, Orange Beach.

He says that Highway 98 has awful accidents that are graphic.

"These people travel to the beaches on very nice, maintained roadways until they reach Alabama," he said.

Mayor Sandy Stimpson: Says he just got back from U.S. Conference of Mayors, said they handed out a survey. Number one issue is infrastructure, survey said.

In 2014, infrastructure topped their list of greatest shared challenges. In 2015, they said it was the under-investment in infrastructure. Topping the list overwhelmingly, was roads, said Stimpson.

"There are possibly multiple pathways to do what we have to do to fund this infrastructure." He said this is absolutely not an issue that we cannot kick down the road.

US drivers travel record 3 trillion miles in 2015

By [Keith Laing](#)

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U.S. drivers traveled a record 3 trillion miles on the nation's roads and highways in 2015, according to statistics from the Department of Transportation.

The agency said Monday it has calculated there were 2.88 trillion miles traveled between January and November of 2015, which each month showing an increase between 2.5 and 4.9 percent over the previous year's corresponding month.

The agency said that the number of vehicle miles traveled would top 3.1 trillion if December's figures, which have not yet been calculated, remain even with last year's numbers.

"Last week, the Federal Highway Administration reported that, with the data from November now in, it looks pretty clear that 2015 was a record year for Vehicle Miles Traveled," the agency wrote in a [blog post](#) on its website.

"Even if the December 2015 data show no gain from December 2014, which is unlikely, that would put the 2015 total over 3.1 trillion," it added. "That's an increase over 2014 of more than 100 billion miles."

The number of miles that are traveled on U.S. roads is closely watched because states are beginning to test taxing drivers based on how many miles they travel, instead of how many gallons of gas they buy.

The plan, known in transportation circles as Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), faces opposition in Washington, where it has been floated as an alternative to the 18.4 cents per gallon gas tax that is currently used to pay for infrastructure projects.

But Oregon and California are moving ahead with [pilot mileage fee programs](#), and transportation advocates in Washington have suggested moving to a national mileage-based fee system as receipts from the gas tax have dwindled in recent years. But the push has little support in Congress.

The Transportation Department said Monday that the data on the number of miles that are traveled could be used to inform decisions about future transportation projects, even if Congress does not switch to a mileage fee taxation

system to pay for the nation's roads.

"The data from 2015 reaffirm the growing demands challenging the nation's roads and underscore the value of the recently enacted FAST Act, which will invest \$305 billion in America's surface transportation infrastructure — including \$226 billion for roads and bridges — over the next five years," the agency wrote.

"These new figures confirm the trends identified in our Beyond Traffic report, which projects a 43 percent increase in commercial truck shipments and population growth of 70 million by 2045," the blog post continued. "So, even though we have seen indications that individuals might be driving fewer miles per person, an increasing population with increasing freight demands still leads to more and more total miles traveled and more challenges on the road ahead."

The normal source for transportation projects is revenue collected by the federal gas tax. The tax has not been increased since 1993, however, and the pace of infrastructure expenses is outpacing it, as cars become more fuel efficient.

The federal government typically spends approximately \$50 billion per year in road and transit spending, but the gas tax only brings in about \$34 billion per year.

The [\\$305 billion](#) transportation bill approved by Congress last year included a package of offsets from other areas of the federal budget that totaled about \$70 billion to close the gap long enough to pay for five years' worth of highway and transit projects.

Transportation advocates have suggested a switch to a mileage-based program as an alternative to raising the gas tax, but critics have raised concerns about government officials tracking the movements of drivers.

The Obama administration and Republicans in Congress have in the past distanced themselves from both mileage-based driver fees and an increase in the gas tax. The president and lawmakers have instead talked up using revenue from taxing corporate profits that are stored overseas to pay for roads.

The 2015 highway bill includes a grant program known as the Surface Transportation System Funding Alternatives that provides \$95 million to help states like California study alternatives to dwindling gas tax revenues.

Prior to passing the highway bill, Congress had not passed a transportation funding package that lasted longer than two years since 2005, much to the chagrin of infrastructure advocates in Washington.

The transportation department said the 2015 mileage total shows that the nation can ill-afford future highway bill delays.

"No matter how you slice it, that's a lot of miles ... in terms of absolute value, and also as an indicator of what kind of volume America's roads are bearing," the agency wrote.

"Because each of those miles is wear and tear on the roadway surface. And when combined, those miles represent a significant challenge to our capacity. And that means traffic congestion. Which means lost time, lost money, and increased greenhouse gas emissions," the blog post continued. "So, while we appreciate that our roads made possible those 3+ trillion vehicle miles traveled, we aren't exactly celebrating this new record."

Transportation Research

Study: States wasting billions on highways

By Keith Laing - 01/19/16 11:07 AM EST

State governments are wasting \$24 billion on highway projects that are unnecessary, according to a new study released Monday by the United States Public Interest Research Group Education Fund.

The study "details how despite America's massive repair and maintenance backlog, and in defiance of America's changing transportation needs, state governments continue to spend billions each year on new and wider highways," according to the group, which typically pushes for more transit investment.

"Many state governments continue to prioritize wasteful highway projects that fail to effectively address congestion while leaving our roads and bridges to crumble," John Olivieri, the national campaign director for 21st Century Transportation at the United States Public Interest Research Group Education Fund, said in a statement.

"This in turn saddles future generations with massive repair and maintenance backlogs that only grow more painful and expensive to fix the longer we wait to do so," he continued.

The finding comes after Congress passed a five-year, \$305 billion highway measure last fall. The measure, known as the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, calls for spending approximately \$205 billion on highways and

\$48 billion on transit projects over the next five years.

The authors of the study said state governments are too focused on using the money to build new highways, however.

"America's long-term travel needs are changing, especially among Millennials, who are driving fewer miles, getting driver's licenses in fewer numbers, and expressing greater preferences to live in areas where they do not need to use a car often," Tony Dutzik, senior policy analyst at Frontier Group, said in a statement.

"Despite the fact that Millennials are the nation's largest generation, and the unquestioned consumers of tomorrow's transportation system, states are failing to adequately respond to these changing trends," he added.

The study recommended that states "adopt fix-it-first policies that reorient transportation funding away from highway expansion and toward repair of existing roads and bridges." [HERE](#)

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](#)