



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, May 29, 2015

Volume 14, Number 8

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The Mobile MPO TCC/CAC meets next Wednesday, June 3rd and the Policy Committee the following Wednesday, June 10th (*please see Mobile MPO Updates*). Congress has passed a two month extension (see *Legislative Updates*). There is open application for rural FTA JARC and New Freedom and 5310 grants through ALDOT (See *Funding Opportunities*).

We hope you have a safe and enjoyable weekend!

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



www.mobilempo.org check us out on FACEBOOK

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Mobile MPO Updates

Those of the Mobile MPO process, there are a couple of meetings coming up, please put them on your calendar. There is a:

- **TCC/CAC meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June 3rd, 2015 at 10:00 am.**

If you are a TCC/CAC member please plan on attending. The results of the TCC/CAC meeting will go before the:

- **MPO Policy Board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June 10th, 2015 at 10:00 am.**

The first item on the agenda will be to review the 2016 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) which is essentially our budget for next year. This is a draft document that will be adopted in August, and will be handed out at the June meetings.

Also, we will be reviewing the 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is the Mobile MPO discretion funds (STP Attributable schedule). We will discuss a realignment of projects in order to have positive TIP balance for years 2016-2019. Also, there will be a discussion pertaining to **scheduling our Urban TAP Funds**. This also is a draft document that will be adopted in August.

Both the draft UPWP and the draft TIP are being submitted to ALDOT by June 15th for comment prior to public comment. Once we receive comments from ALDOT, both documents must be go through the public involvement process, and the TCC/CAC and MPO Policy board will see these documents again this summer. A couple of other items on the agenda include a self-certification, and an update on the Downtown Mobility Study.

GIS online

We are upgrading and starting to utilize our online GIS capabilities. Please check out some of the current interactive maps we have been working on. Many more to come...

<http://mobilempo.org/maps.html>

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DESTINATION 2040

The Mobile MPO [Long Range Transportation Plan](#), Destination 2040, has been adopted, subsequent comments from ALDOT, FHWA, and FTA. The DRAFT document that was out for public review and reviewed with MPO and TCC/CAC members may have some slight modifications in the FINAL Document. The FINAL will be out next week.

The plan is multi-modal in scope, encompassing long-range plans for highway, public transportation, and bicycle/pedestrian networks. Regional growth, economic development, and accessibility within the study area along with environmental concerns necessitate that the long-range plan addresses not only improved vehicular travel but also improvements to other modes of transportation such as bicycling and walking. Preservation of the existing transportation system coupled with enhancement of all modal choices will contribute to the improvement of the overall quality of life in the region. You can learn more about the plan [HERE](#).

I-10 Mobile River Bridge

ALDOT has released the I-10 Mobile River Bridge Corridor Hearing Report Summary and it is now available online at www.mobileriverbridge.com. This report summarizes all of the comments that were received during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement public comment period in the Fall of 2014. The document suggests most of the support was for the B prime route. Although we are moving closer and closer to having a bridge, there are still several hurdles to cross, including funding, [tolling is an option](#).

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

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

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



Stayed Tuned for all of the details http://mobilempo.org/Mobility_Study.html

Projects Within Region Let May 29th, 2015

Mobile County

- **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 to a point near the SR-158 Interchange in Prichard. Length 1.293 mi.** The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$623,244 to \$761,743 .
- **For constructing the Intersection Improvements on CR-19 (Irvington-Bayou La Batre Highway) at the intersection of CR-24 (Half Mile Road). Length 0.148 mi.** The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$805,388 to \$948,363 .

Baldwin County

None at this time

Escambia County

- **for constructing the Resurfacing and Traffic Stripe on Medical Park Drive/Martin Luther King Drive from the junction of West State Line Road to the junction of Johnson Street. Length 2.975 mi.** The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$641,982 to \$784,645 .
- **for constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-3 (US-31) from north of the intersection of old US-31 (MP 64.710) to the south end of the Burnt Corn Creek Bridge (MP 68.954) in East Brewton. Length 4.244 mi.** The Bracket Estimate on this project

is from \$1,330,991 to \$1,626,767 .

[What's Under Construction?](#)

Legislative Updates

Congress Finalizes Extension

In the early morning hours last Saturday, the Senate finally approved a [two-month extension](#) of the nation's transportation program, which was set to expire May 31. Soon after the voice vote took place, the Senate left town for a week-long recess. This extension kicks the can on the program until the end of July, at which point both the authority and the funding will run out. There is little hope of a long-term bill between now and then, so another short term extension – this one likely through the end of 2015 – is the most plausible outcome, assuming members can find the \$11 billion or so it will need to fund the Highway Trust Fund that long. In the meantime, the Senate Environment and Public Works committee appears ready to move with their policy bill, with a markup tentatively scheduled for June 24.

Blast from the Past: Lessons Learned from 1982 Gas Tax Increase

In a [report](#) released by the Eno Center for Transportation, Senior Fellow Jeff Davis reveals that the Reagan Administration relied heavily on the ideas of federal deficit reduction and 'New Federalism' to gain bipartisan support for a near doubling of the gas tax in 1982. The report, *Reagan Devolution: The Real Story of the 1982 Gas Tax Increase*, explains New Federalism as a philosophy embraced by the Reagan Administration to devolve authority and funding responsibility to the states for transportation programs and infrastructure projects, and unveils internal White House documentation connecting this idea to the 1982 gas tax increase. Though devolution has been widely recognized as detrimental to state and local efforts to implement transportation projects, the Obama Administration and Congress might find lessons here as they seek a long-term, bipartisan solution to transportation funding.

Funding Opportunities

CALL FOR PROJECTS FOR FUNDING TRANSIT SERVICES FOR FY 2016

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), Modal Programs Bureau is now accepting Applications for funding consideration through the Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program and the Section 5317 New Freedom (NF) Program. These Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs provide funding for transit related services that assist the state's population of low income and disabled individuals.

The following organizations are eligible to apply for the Sections 5316 & 5317 programs:

1. Private nonprofit organizations
2. State or local governmental bodies; and
3. Operators of public transportation services, including private operators of public transportation services.

Federal funds administered through ALDOT are only extended to organizations providing transit services in the small urban and rural areas of the State.

Available federal funds for the Section 5316 JARC program are approximately \$550,762 for small urban areas and \$1,023,502 for the rural areas. Available federal funds for the Section 5317 NF program are approximately \$611,584 for small urban areas and \$690,884 for the rural areas.

A 50% local match is required for operating funds and a 20% local match is required for capital and planning funds.

The selection process will be based on the following criteria: statement of need and organizational capacity; project budget and cost effectiveness; coordination and program outreach; implementation plan; and customer service and accessibility. Projects funded through these programs must be derived from a locally regional coordinated transportation plan.

The application package provides specific eligibility requirements, match requirements, and eligible activities. The application and state management plan can be found at <http://www.dot.state.al.us/moweb/transit.htm>.

Completed grant applications must be submitted to the appropriate Regional Planning Council in the respective geographic areas of the state in which Sections 5316 and/or 5317 transportation services are proposed. Each Regional Planning Council must review grant applications to ensure compliance with federal coordination requirements prior to formal submission to ALDOT. Only those grant applications submitted for funding consideration by the Regional Planning Councils will be considered for funding. The deadline for submissions to the appropriate regional planning council in the respective geographic areas of the state in which Sections 5316 and/or 5317 transportation services are proposed is **5:00 P.M. on July 1, 2015**. Applications received after the established deadline will be returned. **Postmarked submissions will not be accepted.**

After applications are reviewed, prioritized, and approved by ALDOT, applications will be submitted to the FTA Region IV office for funding consideration.

For questions or comments concerning the grant application or if the information is needed in another language contact: Sharon Coats, ALDOT, Modal Programs Bureau, 1100 John Overton Drive, Montgomery, AL 36110; (334) 353-6443 or coatss@dot.state.al.us.

Proposed budgets must be emailed to ALDOT no later than June 12, 2015.

ALDOT does not discriminate against any individual because of race, color, or national origin.

FY 2016 SECTION 5310 NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY (June 17th deadline)

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), Modal Programs Bureau, is now accepting Applications for funding consideration through the Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides funding for transit related services that assist the state's population of seniors & individuals with disabilities. The following organizations are eligible to submit an application for the Section 5310 program:

1. Private nonprofit organizations
2. Governmental agencies that provide certifications to ALDOT that transit services furnished by nonprofit organizations are not readily available in the area
3. Governmental agencies approved by the ALDOT to coordinate transit services for seniors and individuals with disabilities Federal funds administered through ALDOT are only extended to agencies providing transit services in the small urban and rural areas of the State.

Available federal funds for the Section 5310 program are approximately \$2,218,584 for small urban areas and \$3,187,286 for the rural areas. A local match of 20% is required for this capital program. The selection process may be based on the following criteria: financial and management capability; service needs; proposed services; utilization of requested equipment; and service coordination. Projects funded through these programs must be derived from a locally regional coordinated transportation plan. The application package provides specific eligibility requirements, match requirements, and eligible activities. The application and state management plan can be found at <http://www.dot.state.al.us/moweb/transit.htm>. Completed grant applications must be submitted to the appropriate regional planning council in the respective geographic areas of the state in which Section 5310 transportation services are proposed.

Each regional planning council must review grant applications to ensure compliance with federal coordination requirements prior to formal submission to ALDOT. Only those grant applications submitted for funding consideration by the Regional Planning Councils will be considered for funding. The deadline for submissions to the appropriate regional planning council in the respective geographic areas of the state in which Section 5310 transportation services are proposed is 5:00 P.M. on June 17, 2015. Applications received after the established deadline will be returned. Postmarked submissions will not be accepted. All applications will be reviewed, evaluated, prioritized, and approved by ALDOT prior to the development and submission of a consolidated grant application to the FTA Region IV office for funding consideration. If there are questions or comments concerning the grant application or if more information is needed in another language or alternative formats, contact Sharon Coats, ALDOT, Modal Programs Bureau, 1100 John Overton

Drive, Montgomery, AL 36110; (334) 353-6443 or coatss@dot.state.al.us

New Round of TIGER Announced

Pre-Applications Due: May 4 (required)

Final Applications Due: June 5

Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx has announced \$500 million in available funding for transportation projects across the country under a seventh round of the highly successful Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) competitive grant program. Click [HERE](#) for more information. The USDOT will host a [TIGER summit](#) at its headquarters on April 16, and a [series of webinars](#) to assist applicants on a number of facets of the process.

Incentive Opportunities

As the third round of the Every Day Counts initiative moves into high gear, the Federal Highway Administration is offering incentives and technical assistance to help the highway community mainstream innovations.

Fiscal year 2015 assistance is now available from the [State Transportation Innovation Council Incentive program](#). The program provides resources—technical assistance and funds—to help STICs make innovations standard practice. States can get up to \$100,000 a year for activities such as implementing system process changes, organizing peer exchanges and developing guidance and specifications. Contact the state FHWA Division Office or Mary Huie at (202) 366-3039 for information.

The Accelerated Innovation Deployment Demonstration program continues to accept applications through Grants.gov. Incentive funding of up to \$1 million may be awarded for projects using innovation on any aspect of highway transportation, including planning, financing, environment, design, construction, materials, pavements, structures and operations. See the [AID Demonstration Web page](#) or contact Ewa Flom at (202) 366-2169 for details.

[Section 1304](#) of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act allows an increase in the federal funding share of up to 5 percent on eligible projects that use innovations.

Just For Fun

Summer is here and many will be traveling for vacation. In a different place, we are often tempted to take pictures of the sites including statues. Here are a few memorable statue photos!

These People Took Epic Photos With Statues And The Results Are Hilarious! Click [HERE](#) to view the photos.



In the News

GOMESA revenue sharing program could be tapped for I-10 Bridge project

By [John Sharp | jsharp@al.com](#)

A revenue sharing program for four Gulf of Mexico states could be used by Alabama to pay for a chunk of the proposed \$850 million Interstate 10 Bridge and Bayway expansion project, U.S. Rep.

Bradley Byrne said Tuesday.

Byrne, speaking before 170 people attending a Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce breakfast at the Battle House Renaissance Mobile Hotel, said he believes money coming into Alabama from the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) can be applied for hurricane route construction and that the I-10 Bridge project would qualify.

[GOMESA](#) money, which will be available to the state in 2017 for projects in Mobile and Baldwin counties only, is supposed to go toward coastal conservation, restoration and hurricane protection. "It has a wide variety of uses that include hurricane evacuation routes," Byrne said. "The question is what the priorities are for that money? If you ask me, as someone who lives in Mobile and Baldwin counties, I don't know of a bigger priority for these two counties than to get this bridge built."

The federal money, which is administered in Alabama through Gov. Robert Bentley's administration, is a separate pool of funds from the [RESTORE Act](#), which is composed of BP Oil settlement money that will be filtered back to Gulf Coast states, including Alabama.

GOMESA provides revenue to Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama and Texas to compensate the states for the environmental impact of oil and gas exploration.

Byrne said the use of the money would be [favorable over tolling](#). The Alabama Department of Transportation is currently awaiting a study to be completed later this summer that will analyze whether the interstate bridge can be paid for through tolls.

"There are quite a bit of ways to fund (the bridge project) between bonding and tolling and GOMESA," Mike Lee, chairman of the chamber's Build the Bridge coalition, said.

Environmental concerns

Utilizing GOMESA money for the bridge could take money away from environmental projects, Byrne acknowledged.

He said BP oil spill settlement money will likely be used for environmental mitigation projects.

"To govern is to choose," Byrne said, referring to prioritizing GOMESA money for the I-10 Bridge and Bayway expansion instead of an environmentally-focused project. "You have to choose what your priorities are."

Casi Callaway, executive director with Mobile Baykeeper – an environmental advocacy organization -- declined to comment specifically about utilizing GOMESA money for the bridge project, but she said that in general, her organization is pushing for a bridge project that "protects the environment" and "does not cause harm."

Specifically, Mobile Baykeeper supports the inclusion of building four flow-through bridges along the Causeway that would allow for more fresh and saltwater exchanges between the Delta and Mobile Bay.

"You can use environmental restoration money right there," Callaway said, estimating the project would cost around \$75 million. "You can mitigate (the bridge project) with a good environmental project that could have a lasting impact."

Byrne also said he's not worried about the Obama Administrations proposal to "redirect" GOMESA money from the Gulf Coast states to the Treasury for national programs.

"I don't sense any movement in Congress to do that," Byrne said about proposals to dilute the money that comes into the Gulf Coast.

Foxx cancellation

Byrne's comments came after U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx canceled his trip to Mobile, [citing concerns about the weather](#). Foxx was scheduled to get an update on the local

support for the I-10 Bridge project, as well as provide details about funding programs that could help pay for the massive infrastructure job.

Byrne said that Foxx plans to reschedule.

"We, of course, are disappointed he didn't make it," Lee said. "The important thing is he has demonstrated that this is a high enough profile of a project and we have his attention and support."

Transportation funding alternatives

Meanwhile, Byrne said he is confident there can be a short-term \$11 million extension of the Highway Trust Fund approved by Congress soon. He said a longer term program – a six-year extension, which could include money that can be utilized for the I-10 Bridge project – could also be approved soon.

Federal lawmakers have not passed a transportation package that lasts longer than two years since 2005.

"I think it's more likely we'll get a long-term highway fix in Washington by the end of July," Byrne said. "We're tired of kicking the can down the road."

Funding continues to be an issue. Raising the federal gasoline tax is not an option, Byrne said, but a proposal to charge taxes on corporate revenue repatriated from overseas is under consideration. Also being discussed is replacing fuel taxes paid at the pump with a per mile charge for use of public roads. Taxes would be determined, through a device installed into vehicles, based on the number of miles driven within a vehicle.

But Byrne said that tracking mileage invites potential invasive action by the federal government. "The privacy concerns are real," he said. "In order to get me to vote for it, they have to make sure they are not invading the citizens' privacy."

System Demands Increase as U.S. Drivers Set New Record in Vehicle Miles Traveled

The Federal Highway Administration said U.S. drivers logged an estimated 261.7 billion vehicle-miles-traveled in March of this year, up 3.9 percent from the same month last year and [the most miles ever driven in March](#).

That continues a trend of recent data showing increased vehicle traffic on the nation's highway system. The FHWA said throughout the first quarter of 2015 motorists drove 720.1 billion VMT, also up 3.9 percent from the 2014 period and the highest level reached for any year's first quarter. The previous record high was 705.7 billion VMT in first-quarter 2006.

"The increase in travel on America's roads underscores the need for greater investment in transportation infrastructure," the agency said in a May 20 press release.

That came as Congress was still considering a two-month extension of the Highway Trust Fund, which will keep its spending at current levels through July, which is about the time the highway account balance is expected to fall below safe levels.

A number of states have already put road and bridge construction projects on hold this year, due to uncertainty about whether the federal funding share would be available to reimburse them on a timely basis when contractors' bills roll in. This short-term extension is expected to increase the uncertainty level for state departments of transportation as they continue their 2015 work schedules.

Meanwhile, the FHWA said the traffic volume data from its [latest monthly "Traffic Volume Trends" report](#), shows sharper gains in some regions.

Traffic in the West – a bloc of 13 states including Alaska and Hawaii – increased 5.3 percent over the previous March and marked the 18th consecutive month of increased traffic. Volume in the FHWA's South Atlantic region that includes seven states and Washington, D.C., rose 5 percent over the previous March.

The state showing the largest year-over-year traffic increase in March was Montana at 9.5 percent, followed closely by South Dakota at 9 percent and Hawaii at 8.2 percent.

Like Taking Pictures?

AASHTO Announces 'Faces of Transportation' Photography and Video Contest

Tony Dorsey
202-412-3690

Tuesday, May 19, 2015

WASHINGTON - The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials today announced the start of its 11th annual Faces of Transportation photography contest with new categories, and a video section open to all participants. The national competition gives state DOT employees and private citizens the opportunity to submit photographs and videos of people, projects, and personal experiences that demonstrate the benefits of transportation in America.

This year's competition, themed "The People Who Power Transportation in America," includes seven awards. Five will be presented in the photography section and two prizes will be awarded in the video portion of competition.

Photography: Photographs will be judged in three new transportation-themed categories: "People Building America," "People Touring America," and "Innovators in Transportation." A \$125 cash prize will be awarded to the best photograph in each of the three categories. \$500 cash prizes will be presented to the winners of both the People's Choice and the Best Overall Photograph award.

Video Section: Videos will be judged on two levels and in two separate categories. Amateur or novice videos must demonstrate travel experiences in a category called Safe, Innovative and/or Fun. Professionally produced videos will be judged in a category called Innovation in Motion.

The videos (one winner in each category), as selected by AASHTO, will each be awarded \$150 cash prizes. The winners, along with other submitted videos, may be featured on AASHTO's Transportation TV.

Winning video and photography submissions must prominently feature people designing, constructing, using and enjoying the nation's transportation systems. All entries must represent the positive effects of all modes of transportation on individuals and communities. Photographs and videos which include recognizable individuals must be accompanied with a model release form regardless of category; all photos and videos must include a caption that describes the scene. Failure to meet these requirements may lead to disqualification.

All entries must be received by July 31, 2015. Judging will begin on August 10, 2015. The general public will vote for the People's Choice Award photograph at the Faces of Transportation web site, www.facesoftransportation.org. Judging will begin August 10 and end August 31, 2015.

The winners of the 2015 Faces of Transportation competition will be announced at the AASHTO Subcommittee on Transportation Communications (TransComm) annual meeting in Annapolis, Maryland in September. Entry forms and contest rules are available at www.facesoftransportation.org.

Transportation Research

FHWA 37-15

Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Contact: Doug Hecox

Tel: 202-366-0660

Driving Topped 262 Billion Miles In March, New Data Show

U.S. Drivers Set New Record with Miles Traveled

WASHINGTON – New estimates released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) show that Americans drove 261.7 billion vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) in March of this year, which is the most ever driven in March. Throughout the first quarter of the year, the nation drove 720.1 billion VMT – the highest for any year's first quarter. The increase in travel on America's roads underscores the need for greater investment in transportation infrastructure.

Earlier this year, the Obama Administration announced a plan to help build and maintain America's roads with a \$478 billion, six-year surface transportation reauthorization proposal, the [GROW AMERICA Act](#). The plan would increase state funding levels to \$317 billion; an increase of about 29 percent over current levels, and makes critical investments in infrastructure needed to promote long-term economic growth, enhance safety and efficiency, and support jobs for the 21st century.

The 720.1 billion VMT driven on U.S. roads in the first quarter of the year beats the previous record of 705.7 billion set in 2006, and doubles the 345.5 billion VMT of the first quarter of 1982. Continue [HERE](#)

Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool

June 3, 3:30 – 5:00 PM ET

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will provide one more webinar to overview and demonstrate their new [EJSCREEN](#) tool, which is designed to highlight places in the U.S. that may have higher environmental burdens and vulnerable populations. The tool offers powerful data and mapping capabilities that display environmental and demographic information at a high geographic resolution across the entire country.

Advancing a Sustainable Highway System

June 25, 2:00 PM ET – Linking Asset Management and Planning

July 29, 2:00 PM ET – Sustainable Pavements

The Sustainable Transport and Climate Change Team within FHWA's Office of Natural Environment will present a series of webinars based on the [Advancing a Sustainable Highway System: Highlights of FHWA Sustainability Activities](#) report produced by the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center last year. The report illustrates how sustainability is incorporated into a wide variety of FHWA programs, projects, policies, processes, and partnerships. Each webinar will focus on a particular section of the report and will feature specific FHWA activities that advance sustainability.