



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, November 13th, 2015

Volume 16, Number 7

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Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
Intelligent Transportation System Diversion Route Planning Study

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The deadline for a new Federal Transportation Bill is November 20th. Please see *Legislative Updates*. The Mobile MPO meets this coming week; please see *Mobile MPO Updates*. ALDOT's TAP Grants (See *Funding Opportunities*), a new bridge in Orange Beach, and the State Docks starts the ICTF (see *In The News*). Finally this week's *Just For Fun* is the ground effect.

Have a great weekend.

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



www.mobilempo.org check us out on FACEBOOK

Mobile MPO Updates

Mobile MPO Meeting Wednesday, November 18th, 10:00 AM

The Mobile MPO will meet this coming week on November 18th. Items on the agenda include:

STP Any Area Funds

- Widening, resurfacing, guardrail and striping Dawes Rd (CR-33) from Three Notch Rd (CR-32) to pavement joint south of Scott Dairy Loop Rd; 12/4/2015; \$1,010,000
- Resurfacing on SR-16 (US 90) from AL.MS state line to pavement joint just east of Ramsey Rd; 5/27/2015; \$2,524,016

National Highway Funds

- Resurfacing on SR-13 (US 43) from joint just south SR-16(US 90) to joint just north of SR-158; 2/26/2015; \$2,302,241

State Funds

- Additional lanes on Schillinger Rd South (CR-31) from Three notch Rd (CR-32) to south of Halls Mill Creek; 10/15/2015; \$10,000,000

Human Service Coordinated Transportation Plan (please see *Rural Planning Organization Updates* below)

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

There was a lot of discussion at last Wednesday's TCC/CAC meeting pertaining to the TAP Program in terms of recent FHWA certification review findings. ALDOT's call for TAP projects has a deadline of January 2016 (see *Funding Opportunities* below). Typically the MPO TAP call for projects has coincided with ALDOT's. The TCC/CAC decided that it would make more sense to have an April 2016 deadline for MPO TAP applications. We will officially announce the Mobile MPO TAP call for Projects in January. It looks like the TAP program will remain, as it is included in the House version of the new Transportation Bill; see *Legislative Updates* below.

ADA Transition Plans

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](#).



South Alabama Regional
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Toole Design Group has finalized the *Non-Motorized Mobility Study for Downtown Mobile*. Thank all of you that had a part in creating this important plan for downtown Mobile.

For anyone interested in the Power Point given by Ernie Boughman with Toole Design Group, please see [HERE](#)

For anyone interested in the FINAL REPORT (large document), please see [HERE](#)

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>

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](#).

Rural Planning Organization (RPO) Updates

Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan (HSCTP)

Staff recently completed the FY 2016-2019 Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan. Meetings were held in July and August - one in each county of the region to gather input about the current transportation services and needs. Federal Transportation Law Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) requires that specialized transit projects for the elderly, the disabled, and people with low incomes be included in a locally developed, coordinated human service transportation plan. The goal of the Plan is to enhance access to transit service in Southwest Alabama through the coordination of existing and future services. The key elements of a Coordinated Plan include the following:

- Identify common origins and destinations for targeted populations
- Inventory existing transit services
- Identify unmet needs
- Identify possible wasteful duplication of efforts
- Recommend provisions for cost-efficient transit services

The final document is available on our website [HERE](#).

Projects Within Region Let November 6th, 2015

Mobile County

None at this time

Baldwin County

- For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on Fairhope Avenue from the intersection of Bancroft Street to the intersection of SR-181 in Fairhope. Length 2.609 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$909,215 to \$1,111,262.
- For constructing the Culvert and Outfall Repair on I-10 at D'Olive Creek in Daphne. Length 0.189 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$582,503 to \$711,948.
- For constructing the Modifications to various driveways and side streets on SR-59 from the junction of SR-182 to the intersection of 20th Avenue in Gulf Shores. Length 1.723 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$637,164 to \$778,755.

Escambia County

None at this time

[What's Under Construction?](#)

Legislative Updates

GOP candidates mum on transport funding in debates

By [Keith Laing](#) - 11/11/15 10:15 AM EST

The Republican presidential candidates were mostly silent on transportation funding issues in their fourth debate on Tuesday night, as Congress grapples with an Nov. 20 deadline for extending the nation's infrastructure funding.

Only one of the eight candidates in the main debate on Fox Business Network — front-runner Donald Trump (R) — made even a passing reference to rebuilding the nation's infrastructure in their two hour debate in Wisconsin.

But even Trump steered clear of offering specific proposals for paying for new transportation projects.

"We have to get smart. We can't continue to be the policeman of the world. We are \$19 trillion dollars in debt, we have a country that's going to hell, we have an infrastructure that's falling apart," Trump said during a debate about potential interventions in standoffs with foreign nations like Russia.

"Our roads, our bridges, our schools, our airports and we have to start investing money in our country," he continued.

Former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum (R) offered more specifics in an earlier undercard debate on Tuesday evening, endorsing a plan to sharply reduce federal gas taxes and transfer responsibility for road building to state governments.

"We need to get the federal government out of this infrastructure business, other than vital economic highways," Santorum said in response to a question about raising the gas tax to pay for road projects.

"It has been said that if we cut the gas tax to 3 to 5 cents and send the rest back to the states, and just take care of the federal infrastructure that's vital for our economy...we don't need the federal government in the road business that it is today," he continued of the plan to sharply cut back the gas tax, which is known as "devolution."

The proposal to sharply reduce the gas tax is popular with staunch conservatives, who argue that development of road and transit infrastructure should be left up to states. Transportation advocates have resisted the concept of rolling back the gas tax, however.

Most devolution proposals typically call for reducing the gas tax to 3.7 cents per gallon and replacing current congressional appropriations with block grants that states would compete for. Continue [HERE](#)

House Approves Reauthorization Legislation

By a [363 to 64 vote](#), the House yesterday overwhelmingly approved a six-year transportation reauthorization bill, the Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform (STRR) Act (H.R. 3763). This vote came after two marathon days of debate regarding amendments to the legislation. The STRR Act would provide \$325 billion in new contract authority for the nation's infrastructure, renew the controversial Export-Import Bank, and make it a real possibility that a long-term transportation bill could reach the president's desk.

Of particular note, the bill:

- Contains six years of policy reform, but only three years of funding. But wait! An amendment approved on the House Floor from Rep. Randy Neugebauer (R-TX) — which replaces two of the Senate's more controversial offsets with a provision that makes funds currently contained in "surplus funds" of Federal Reserve Banks available to the HTF — seems to solve the problem of only three years of funding. Early indications are that this amendment will provide significantly higher funding than contained in the base bill.

- Provides a modest increase in the Surface Transportation Program's funding level and increases the portion of the program suballocated by population from the current 50% to 55% by FY2020. This will provide nearly \$5.0 billion in additional funding for local priorities compared to existing funding levels.
- Preserves the Transportation Alternatives Program, though it makes it a set-aside under STP. The new TAP would be funded at a flat \$819 million annually in each of the bill's six years. This funding level is slightly below the Senate's \$825 million annual level. The Senate bill also suballocates 100% of the program, but the House leaves it at 50% suballocated.
- Increases funding for metropolitan planning by more than \$120 million over the life of the STRR Act.
- Makes on-system bridges that are not on the National Highway System (half of which are owned by counties and cities) eligible for funding under the National Highway Performance Program. This is a vast improvement from the Senate's DRIVE Act reauthorization bill, which funds these bridges (along with off-system bridges) by taking 15% off the top of STP.
- Increases funding for urban and rural public transportation, including a new competitive grant program under the Bus and Bus Facilities Program.
- Contains the same provision as the Senate's DRIVE Act to fix the MAP-21 requirement that transit receive a voting position on the boards of MPOs that represent TMAs. This new provision clarifies that no changes in state law or enabling agreements are required, and explicitly allows an elected official to serve as the designated "transit representative" on the MPO board. These are changes NARC sought from lawmakers in both the Senate and the House. The fact both bills contain this provision dramatically increases the probability that it will be in the final agreement.

Conference is in process between the House and Senate to resolve differences between the two versions. The funding for the program will remain a sticking point. Lawmakers on both sides of Capitol Hill are optimistic that they can complete a bill before November 20, 2015 (the expiration of the current extension of the program). This constrained timeline is more difficult due to a House recess next week, but there is no doubt that the possibility of a long-term bill on the president's desk sometime this year has increased tremendously, and now appears to be the most likely outcome. This is a watershed change from where we were just three months ago, when it seemed the prospects for a bill were approximately zero. The text of the bill is [here](#) (although the text does not include the many amendments that were accepted, most were minor).

Funding Opportunities

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 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

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

GROUND EFFECT

Ground effect is the increased lift (force) and decreased aerodynamic drag that an aircraft's wings generate when they are close to a fixed surface. When landing, ground effect can give the pilot the feeling that the aircraft is "floating". When taking off, ground effect may temporarily reduce the stall speed. The pilot can then fly level just above the runway while the aircraft accelerates in ground effect until a safe climb speed is reached. Some people have tried creating "ground effect" vehicles. Using the "ground effect", some hobby inventors are making hovercraft "boats" fly like airplanes, [HERE](#).



The Russians built an engineering marvel called [Lun-class ekranoplan](#) that could go 340 mph just a couple of feet above the water. It was a flying boat that was equipped for anti surface warfare. [HERE](#)



Just for Fun, this is not a type of anti-ground effect [HERE](#) . It involves cats, and cucumbers, only because it is Friday the 13th.

In the News

Orange Beach unveils proposed route of \$28 million bridge

By: [ERIC MANN](#) | November 11, 2015



According to recent surveys conducted on behalf of Baldwin County's coastal residents and the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), the remedying of traffic woes in Gulf Shores and Orange Beach should be a top priority for state and local officials.

On ALDOT's list of the state's 20 busiest two-lane roads, Canal Road — with a daily average of 15,510 vehicles — ranks 18th. Coincidentally, in an unrelated, informal survey, Orange Beach residents listed traffic improvements as their second priority in a list of 10. A new bridge — either over the Intracoastal Waterway or Wolf Bay — was the second priority in a separate list.

The city is already planning to widen Canal Road and improve its congested intersection with State Highway 161. A separate project will expand William Silvers Parkway near the Orange Beach Sportsplex. But at a town hall meeting Oct. 20, the city unveiled the proposed route of a new bridge to span the Intracoastal Canal, providing a new route between the Foley Beach Express and State Route 182 along the coast.

The proposal includes plans to carve a new road through Gulf State Park, where the state is also planning to spend more than \$85 million in BP oil spill fines to build a resort hotel and convention center. Vince Calametti, ALDOT Southwest Region engineer, said the bridge is necessary to meet the county's needs for additional north-south traffic. According to Calametti, State Route 59 is at capacity and some drivers are still hesitant to use the Foley Beach Express toll bridge because they don't want to pay the \$3.50 fee.

The bridge is still in the design phase and will be the second of three phases of construction on the route, from north to south. The first two phases will create a new road from the intersection of the Foley Beach Express and Baldwin County Road 8 to Baldwin County Road 4, through developed private properties and forested land, past the eastern border of Jack Edwards Airport, on the way to the proposed bridge and its connection to Canal Road. The third phase would connect Canal Road to the beach by cutting through the state park.

ALDOT Director John Cooper said the first two phases have an estimated cost of as much as \$28 million. Continue [HERE](#)

Port announces construction of intermodal container transfer facility

By: [DALE LIESCH](#) | 11/13/2015

The Alabama State Port Authority today announced construction of an intermodal container transfer facility that will open Mobile to several new markets.

The 70-acre facility will make the Port of Mobile a viable option for containerized freight and open up markets, like Memphis and Chicago, Port CEO Jimmy Lyons said. It takes too long by truck for Mobile to be a viable market for those cities, but with containerized freight, goods can travel from the local port to many portions of the Midwest.

"It gets us into the Midwest, which we haven't had access to before," Lyons said. "It provides for new shipping lines into the city."

Unlike traditional rail freight, which features boxcars full of goods and which carry coal, containerized rail shipping is more closely aligned with trucking, in terms of what can be hauled. The difference is containerized rail is more efficient, cost effective and environmentally friendly, Port Vice President of Marketing Judy Adams said.

“Containerized rail is six times more efficient ... and (creates) four times fewer greenhouse emissions,” Adams said. “It takes a truck off the road.”

Officials with Canadian National railway also joined for the announcement. CN will carry the freight from Mobile, through the Midwest and into parts of Canada, John Orr, CN Senior Vice President for the Southern Region, said.

“CN is excited to be here,” he said. “It’s an important investment for our company.”

Crews have already begun work on the facility, which is about a mile past APM Terminal on Ezra Trice Boulevard. Construction of the facility will result in 322 direct jobs and 362 indirect, or induced jobs. The facility will result in \$42.5 million in local purchases, \$1.9 million in state and local taxes, as well as \$21.1 million in personal earnings and local consumption, according to a Port statement.

In addition, Adams said the facility could attract distribution and manufacturing centers, as that type of industry tends to cluster around similar facilities.

While the Port currently has a deal in place with CN, Lyons said they would be in contact with the other four railway companies that serve Mobile, including: Norfolk Southern, CSX, Kansas City Southern and Burlington Northern Santa Fe.

Four centuries separate these ships...both represent the most advanced maritime technology of their time! The Spanish vessel, El Galeon, will be docked at GulfQuest and open for tours beginning November 20th. Thanks to Forrest S Latta for capturing this scene from the RSA Tower. Austal USA



Transportation Research

Regional Models of Cooperation

The Every Day Counts innovation of the month for November is [regional models of cooperation](#).

These models offer a framework and process for transportation departments, metropolitan planning organizations, transit agencies and other groups to collaborate on multijurisdictional transportation plans.

The Federal Highway Administration is working with the Federal Transit Administration to encourage transportation stakeholders to think beyond traditional borders when planning transportation projects and programs. This EDC-3 effort focuses on bringing entities together to support common goals on topics such as congestion management, safety, freight and commerce.

The EDC Regional Models of Cooperation Innovation Deployment Team offers technical assistance and training, including peer exchanges and workshops. For details, contact [Jody McCullough](#) or [David Harris](#) at the FHWA Office of Planning or [Tonya Holland](#) at the Federal Transit Administration.

View the [EDC Regional Models of Cooperation presentation](#) for an overview of the regional models approach.

FHWA Seeks Comment on New Proposal to Encourage Design Flexibility

Comment Period Closes: December 7



The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced proposed revisions to encourage the design of lower-speed roads to align better with community and environmental needs. This represents the start of several proposed regulatory and program policy changes at the agency to allow more flexibility for state, city, and county engineers in the design of highway projects. FHWA proposes to reduce the number of design criteria in order to allow engineers to design projects with multimodal and locally-oriented solutions. For more information click [HERE](#).

New Innovative Center to Increase Options for Investment in Transportation Infrastructure

USDOT unveiled its new Build America Transportation Investment Center (BATIC) this week as a resource for states, municipalities, and other project sponsors. AASHTO is partnering with USDOT to create the BATIC Institute to help state DOTs and other agencies find financing solutions for transportation projects. The Institute will provide specialized education to leaders and decision-makers online as well as in-person.