



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Volume 16, Number 3

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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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It's time again for the Downtown Mobile Streets Alive Family friendly block party. The City of Orange Beach is having a Town Hall Meeting October 20<sup>th</sup>, and Amtrak may be back on track on the Alabama Gulf Coast. (Please see *In The News*).

Have a great weekend.

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



[www.mobilempo.org](http://www.mobilempo.org)

check us out on FACEBOOK

## Mobile MPO Updates

### Obligational Authority

This week we [received notice](#) that MPOs will be subject to ALDOTs' 94% obligational authority for FY 2016. This could greatly impact what gets done this fiscal year by the MPO (the Mobile MPO has over \$27 Million scheduled for this fiscal year). We are further investigating what this could mean for the MPO, and the State. Ultimately, the TCC/CAC is going to have to meet in order to provide some good recommendations the MPO in terms of project priorities. Please look for meeting announcements next week.

### ADA Transition Plans

We now have an executed agreement with Neel-Schaffer, and they have been given the Notice To Proceed for the *ADA Transition Plans for Public Rights of Way for the Mobile MPO*. The scope of work is [HERE](#).

The FHWA has required that every city and county in the state have an ADA Transition Plan, and Urban Areas will have a one year deadline. The ADA Coordinators create a nine member ADA Subcommittee of the MPO. The first task was to select a consultant through the ALDOT Alternative Consultant Selection Procedures. The available ADA Coordinators have met, and selected Neel-Schaffer to do the work. The ADA Coordinators met yesterday for a kick off meeting. They met the Consultants, reviewed the scope of work, and identified the next steps. Neel-Schaffer hopes to begin the inventory of facilities next week. *(for areas outside the boundaries of an MPO, ALDOT is working on a time line for you, and you will not follow the same timeline as the Urban areas)*

**The Alabama Transportation Planners Association (ATPA) is hosting an ADA Day in Birmingham on October 29<sup>th</sup>. If you are an ADA Coordinator for your city or county, you are welcome and encouraged to attend this meeting. Lunch will be provided. You can register [HERE](#)**



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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](#)

#### **FTA 5310 ( Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities) Awards**

The Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the Designated Recipient for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5310 *Urban Area Funding* for the Mobile Urban Area. In July, we awarded \$265,410 of federal funds for both operating and capital. We had almost \$500,000 remaining of un-awarded funds for capital only, so we re-advertised the call for projects. The FTA 5310 Project Selection Committee met on September 11, 2015 and awarded the following for capital projects:

<u>AGENCY</u>	<u>FEDERAL AMOUNT</u>	<u>CAPITAL / OPERATING</u>
Mobile ARC	\$163,886	Capital
City of Saraland	\$43,200	Capital
City of Satsuma	\$24,800	Capital
Goodwill Easter Seals	\$43,200	Capital
City of Prichard SAIL Center	<u>\$43,200</u>	Capital
	\$318,286	

This coming summer we will have another round of funding. There will only be around \$100,000 for operations (paying your drivers) and about \$300,000 for capital (vehicles).

#### **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](#).

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## **Projects Within Region Let October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015**

### **Mobile County**

None at this time

### **Baldwin County**

None at this time

### **Escambia County**

None at this time

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

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## **Legislative Updates**

**Congress is in recess after the close of business yesterday. Both chambers return October 20.**

### **Reauthorization on Track for Committee Markup**

With the text of a reauthorization bill expected tomorrow, the Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committee is on-track to hold a bill markup next Thursday, October 22. The Committee has provided scant detail as to what the bill contains and rumors are swirling, and we have nothing firm yet regarding what the bill does for STP or any of the other programs that are critical for our members. Once the text is in our hands, we'll be doing a full analysis, so please continue to check our newsletter for important updates as they become available.

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### **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](#).

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## **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](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

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### **Industrial Access Road and Bridge**

Industrial access funds are intended to provide adequate public access to new or expanding distribution, manufacturing and industrial firms. The industry must be committed to new investment and the creation of new jobs. The new access must be on public right of way for public use (state, city or county) and the project sponsor (city or county) must maintain the completed facility unless the facility consists of turn lanes, crossovers, etc., that are located on state highways. Industrial access funds are limited to construction, construction engineering and inspection costs. The project sponsor is responsible for all preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation costs.

Prior to the date the qualifying (new or expanding) project is "placed in service," the sponsoring entity or its local development agency must notify the Alabama Department of Commerce of its intent to claim the incentives under Section 41-9-202.1, Code of Alabama 1975. Effective October 9, 2008, the Industrial Access Road and Bridge Corporation application submittal should include the notification acknowledgment letter from the Secretary of Commerce. For more info, see [HERE](#)

### **Just For Fun**

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#### **Uber Vs. Taxis**

The rise of on-demand car service Uber has been the subject of much scrutiny for its effects on existing local taxi services, with cities unsure how to regulate it and consumers debating which one to use. Here is a side-by-side comparison of these two modes of transportation via [theonion.com](#)

	TAXIS	 UBER
<b>Hailing Procedure</b>	Stand on curb with arm extended to signal cab	Stand on curb with arm extended to catch sufficient Wi-Fi signal
<b>Surge Pricing</b>	Only in the event of vomit	Only in the event of inclement weather, music festivals, or Fridays
<b>Overtime and Worker's Compensation</b>	Provided by taxi company	That app sure is convenient
<b>5-Star Driver Rating System</b>	Nonexistent	Arbitrary
<b>Service Model</b>	Get into car with stranger, trust them not to hurt you	Get into car with stranger, trust them not to hurt you
<b>Cost</b>	\$2.50 flag-pull charge plus \$0.40 per mile	15-minute conversation with another human being
<b>Availability</b>	Dependent on wealthiness of neighborhood	Dependent on life of battery
<b>Regulated By</b>	Cab companies, city officials	Fate
<b>Best Selling Point</b>	Is not public transportation	Is not public transportation

## In the News

### Mobile Streets Alive aims to create family friendly 'block party' downtown Sunday

By [Lawrence Specker | lspecker@al.com](#)

On Sunday, the second annual Mobile Streets Alive event will transform a swath of downtown into a car-free, bicycle-friendly zone filled with arts, music, fitness and family activities.

According to information provided by the Downtown Mobile Alliance, the event is Alabama's first Open Streets project, part of a movement gaining popularity around the country. The goal, in part, is to "bring together families and neighbors to mingle, recreate and shop in their communities in a safe, car-free environment."

To that end, the length of Dauphin Street between Washington Avenue and Jackson Street (on the east side of Cathedral Square) will be closed to automotive traffic while Streets Alive presents a slate of activities running from 1:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 18.

Event coordinator Ashley Dukes said organizers hope to build on last year's strong response. "We really didn't know what to expect," she said. "We were hoping 200 people would show up, and we estimated 1,200 were there."

"We really want people to feel welcome," she said, "just like it's a big neighborhood block party. We want people to see downtown in a way they've never seen in before."

"It's going to be a great afternoon where you can enjoy hanging out with friends, meeting new friends," and enjoying a wide range of free, fun activities, Dukes said.



# MOBILE STREETS ALIVE

**1** **ICE'S**  
ROCK CLIMBING WALL

**2** **BIKE SHOP'S**  
ADULT BIKE "RACE"

**3** *Mini golf*

**4** **WINTZELL'S BIG**  
**OYSTER**  
AFTER PARTY

**5** **O'DALLY'S**  
STREET GAMES

**6** **DESTINATION**  
**MOBILE**  
EXHIBIT

**7** **FITNESS ZONE**

**8** *Mobile Makers'*  
**GARDEN**

**9** **DANCE ZONE**

**10** **KID'S BIKE SAFETY**  
**RODEO**

**11** **FUN MOBILE**

**12** *Fencing*

**13** **PURE BARRE,**  
**KID'S BIKE**  
**MEETUP,**  
**BIKE POLO,**  
& **ROLLER DERBY**

**LEGEND:**  
INFORMATION TENTS  
VOLUNTEER CHECK-IN  
PORT-A-POTTIES  
MUSIC  
BETTER HOMES & GARDENS DOG PARK  
FIRST AID STATION  
WATER STATION



The street party kicks off at 1:30 p.m. with a new event, the Wintzell's Big Oyster 1-Mile Run/Walk. While Streets Alive is almost entirely free, the run does have a registration process and fee; the cost is \$17 for adults and \$12 for youth 12 and younger with shirt not included, or \$20 and \$15 with T-shirt. [For online registration](#), visit [the event website](#). Proceeds benefit the Oyster Trail art public art project. The run/walk starts at finishes at Wintzell's Oyster House, with an after party featuring root beer floats made with Abita root beer and Cammie's Old Dutch ice cream.

[Pre-registration is also recommended](#) for a free Kids' Bike Derby at 3 p.m. It's being presented by the Delta Bike Project and Team Share the Road as part of their Kids' Bike Rodeo, which gives children an opportunity to learn about bike handling, bike safety and bike maintenance, as well as a chance to decorate their bikes.

According to promotional information, a Mobile Maker's Garden in the 500 block of Dauphin Street will feature more than a dozen artists and artisans. Other attractions include a rock climbing wall, street games, dance and hip-hop demonstrations, a fitness boot camp, a CrossFit competition, mini golf, bike polo and more.

Concluding activities include two novelty bike races taking place at 5 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.: One requires adults to compete on kids' bikes, and the other is a "how slow can you go?" competition. Participation is free, but [registration is required](#).

According information provided by organizers, Mobile Streets Alive "is an initiative of One Mobile in partnership with Downtown Mobile Alliance, Delta Bike Project, Alabama Coastal Foundation and Team Share the Road."

For updates, visit [www.mobilestreetsalive.org](http://www.mobilestreetsalive.org) or [www.facebook.com/MobileStreetsAlive](https://www.facebook.com/MobileStreetsAlive).

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**A SPECIAL INVITATION FROM THE CITY OF ORANGE BEACH**

**ANNOUNCING  
CITY OF ORANGE BEACH  
TOWN HALL MEETING  
6:00 P.M. TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2015  
EVENT CENTER AT THE WHARF**

**AGENDA:**

**CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS**

**TRAFFIC SOLUTIONS**

**GROWTH PATTERNS**

**BEACH INITIATIVE**

**GUESTS:**

**AL DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION REPRESENTATIVES**

Message from Mayor Tony Kennon: Thank you Orange Beach citizens for a tremendous response to our recent citizen survey gathering input on your perceived priorities and important projects as related to our city. Thanks to your input we received over 1,400 completed surveys giving us current data on the needs of our community. We invite you to a Town Hall Meeting on Tuesday, October 20 following our regular council meetings around 6 PM to hear the results of the survey and to discuss some important initiatives coming up for our Orange Beach. Transportation, Quality of Life investments, clean beaches and spring break are a few of the key topics of public conversation as we relay our 2016 plan of action. I encourage you to invite a friend or neighbor and let's top our recent attendance record for Town Hall Public Meeting involvement. Thank you for your commitment to the City of Orange Beach!

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**Norman J. Walton, Sr. Regional Award**

It is time once again to nominate, at your discretion, your government for the annual South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) Norman J. Walton, Sr. Regional Award. There are five award qualification criteria: Problem Solving, Intergovernmental Cooperation, Innovation, Benefit to Regional Quality of Life, and Cost Effectiveness. The Norman J. Walton, Sr. Regional Award provides a great opportunity to give such recognition in these areas. SARPC encourages all member governments, municipalities and counties, to submit a nomination form for this award. The nomination form and any supporting documentation should be compiled and submitted to SARPC's office **no later than November 13, 2015**. The award will be **presented on December 10, 2015** at a meeting of the Full Board of Directors and membership of the Commission during the SARPC Annual Meeting conducted at the Grand Hotel in Point Clear, Alabama.

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**Momentum builds for Amtrak's Gulf Coast return**

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

It might not be the "All clear!" that rail enthusiasts want to hear, but a December visit by Amtrak representatives to Mobile could signify a key moment in restoring passenger train service to the Gulf Coast.

The Dec. 4 meeting of the [Southern Rail Commission](#) will reveal findings of an Amtrak study focusing on reviving passenger rail in a region that saw it disappear 10 years ago after Hurricane Katrina.

"Mobile sits to gain a whole lot if this is established," said Wiley Blankenship, CEO of the Coastal Alabama Partnership, which promotes collaborative development.

Momentum to reboot passenger rail from New Orleans to Mobile, and possibly further east to Jacksonville or Orlando, appears to be gaining steam. The Southern Rail Commission recently named Andalusia's Greg White as its chairman for the next two years. He's a firm proponent of coastal passenger service.

Moreover, coastal rail supporters are pressing for Congress to take up the issue.

White will lead the commission meeting in Mobile. "To reinstate that service is going to take some commitments from local government, state government and other officials. So this will be a step toward understanding what commitments are required," he said.

He continued, "This will be a large step toward understanding what has to be brought to that table."

#### **'Informed voice'**

White's role in the process will be crucial, according to pro-passenger-rail groups. An accountant and former Covington County commissioner, White, 59, was selected for a rail commission seat by Gov. Bob Riley five years ago. He recently served a two-year stint as the group's vice chairman.

Formed by Congress in 1982, the 21-member rail commission has been a leading advocate for passenger service, and pursues grants and other funding to support its mission.

"Greg brings a stable, measured and informed voice," said John Robert Smith, board chairman for [Transportation for America](#), a nonprofit alliance that encourages grassroots ideas for transportation innovations. "Greg is very much about the economic development potential rail serves, by connecting generations within Alabama to the entire region."

Smith envisions a Southern rail network with major metro areas functioning as "anchor cities."

White said that stability in the rail commission's leadership will be an important factor in furthering relationships in Washington, D.C., and influencing lawmakers. Along with White in top roles are vice chairman John Spain of Louisiana, and secretary/treasurer Knox Ross of Mississippi, a former chairman.

They're urging Congress to move ahead with the Passenger Rail Reform and Investment Act of 2015, [which would establish a group to evaluate restoring passenger service](#) between New Orleans and Orlando. [A final version of the act could be included in a transportation package](#) that's in line for a possible vote this year.

#### **Let's ride**

The commission is also expected to spearhead a "ride along" trip on the route once taken by the Sunset Limited on weekly journeys between Mobile and New Orleans.

Passenger rail supporters, however, are calling for Amtrak to explore a daily service along the line.

Plenty of concerns are also at play. U.S. Rep. Bradley Byrne, R-Fairhope, for instance, [doubts the wisdom of taxpayer subsidization of the rail industry](#), but "strongly supports" a study for private investment to restore the Sunset Limited route with stops in Mobile and Atmore.

Amtrak, created in 1971, is the only passenger rail entity allowed by the federal government to operate on freight lines similar to the CSX line that runs through Mobile.

White said, "We hope to get congressional support across the board. They've always been accepting and encouraging.

But to make funding commitments is an additional step that is necessary."

It's important, he said, to "get them excited about passenger rail."

#### **Other objectives**

The rail commission is also eyeing a possible passenger line between Montgomery and Mobile that would connect to Birmingham. That, too, is being studied.

For Mobile, such a scenario is a "perfect world," said Blankenship, of the Coastal Alabama Partnership. The city, he said, would find itself with north-south and east-west connections. "Mobile is a winner," he said.

Various other rail projects are under way elsewhere in Alabama, such as a new [\\$30 million intermodal facility in Birmingham](#), the assessment of a rail station in Tuscaloosa and improvements near a station in Anniston. But it's the revitalization of the Gulf Coast line that's the plum.

Said White: "It's been 10 years since the New Orleans to Jacksonville service was in place. There is just a tremendous amount of traffic that flows across the Gulf Coast."

## **Transportation Research**

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### **Federal Highway Administration addresses misconceptions about Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Design.**

This announcement follows FHWA's recent publication of [Bicycle and Pedestrian Funding, Design, and Environmental Review: Addressing Common Misconceptions](#), which debunks several myths about the federal rules regarding

pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and attempts to distinguish between federal standards and state and local practice.

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**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