



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014

Volume 12, Number 1

## In This Issue

- RPO UPDATES
- MOBILE MPO UPDATES
- PROJECTS LET SEPTEMBER 26<sup>TH</sup>, 2014
- LEGISLATIVE UPDATES
- FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
- JUST FOR FUN
- IN THE NEWS
- TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH

## Recently Completed Planning Studies

Origin Destination Study Using Cell Phones

Mobile County Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

Intelligent Transportation System Diversion Route Planning Study

## Contact Us

<http://www.mobilempo.org>

[transportation@sarpc.org](mailto:transportation@sarpc.org)

Kevin Harrison, PTP  
Director of Transportation  
[kharrison@sarpc.org](mailto:kharrison@sarpc.org)

Tom Piper

Thanks in part to our recent Washington D.C delegation, The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) has announced the reopening of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) Section 1120 Projects of National and Regional Significance (PNRS) survey. From this survey, the Secretary of Transportation will develop a list of PNRS projects and develop recommendations on eligible project cost financing. The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is currently completing this survey for the Interstate 10 Mobile River Bridge project. For further information about the I-10 Mobile River Bridge Project see MPO Updates. We hope you have a great weekend and get out and enjoy Bayfest in Mobile and the Honeybee Festival in Robertsdale.

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



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

706-1CAR

check us out on FACEBOOK

## Mobile MPO Updates

### Interstate 10 Mobile River Bridge Information Site



The I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Widening project is a proposal to increase the capacity of I-10 by constructing a new six-lane bridge with 215 feet of Air Draft Clearance (ADC) across the Mobile River and widening the existing I-10 bridges across Mobile Bay from four to eight lanes. The proposed project would be located in Mobile and Baldwin Counties, Alabama.

The official comment period for the proposed Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Widening Draft Environmental Impact Statement is [HERE](#).

Senior Transportation Planner  
tpiper@sarpc.org

Monica Williamson  
Transportation Planner  
mwilliamson@sarpc.org

Anthony Johnson  
Transportation Planner  
ajohnson@sarpc.org

South Alabama Regional  
Planning Commission  
110 Beauregard St  
Mobile, Alabama 36602  
(251) 433-6541

Please take a moment to fill out a comment form, due by 5 pm on November 7. You may include additional pages but you must fill out and submit the comment form as well.

#### [COMMENT FORM](#)

---

#### **TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Transit Development Plan (TDP) for the Mobile MPO study area is complete and is a rather large document. This TDP summarizes the existing Wave Transit system and provides a series of phased recommendations that comprise the ten-year TDP. The chapters of the TDP include:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction
- Chapter 2 – Market Analysis
- Chapter 3 – Existing Transit Services
- Chapter 4 – Transit Standards
- Chapter 5 – Transit Improvement Program Summary
- Chapter 6 – Phased Transit Improvements
- Chapter 7 – Public Participation
- Chapter 8 – Evaluation of Existing Routes
- Chapter 9 – FTA Section 5311 Program

The TDP is going to be the focus of the Transit Element of the *Destination 2040* Long Range Transportation Plan, and will be adopted as part of LRTP. The document is over 300 pages and 75 mb on disk. If you would like a copy of the TDP, just let us know, copies are available.

---

#### **DESTINATION 2040**

The MPO Staff is continuing to develop the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan titled Destination 2040. The objective of the plan is to identify, to the maximum extent feasible, the multi-modal transportation improvements which will be needed in the Mobile urban area between now and the year 2040 in order to maintain an acceptable level of mobility. 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) Update

---

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) recently hosted a meeting of the Rural Planning Organization (RPO) at the Baldwin County Central Annex in Robertsdale, Alabama. Items on the agenda included adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting, adopting the Fiscal Year 2015 Work Program, updating the RPO Transportation Plan and Safety Needs List of Projects, and a discussion with ALDOT of current and future transportation projects in the rural areas of Mobile, Baldwin and Escambia Counties. The Work Program for Fiscal Year 2015 and the updated RPO Transportation Plan are available for review on the RPO website [\[HERE\]](#). The minutes of the meeting will be made available on the website as well, once they are transcribed

## Projects Within Region Let September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014

---

#### **Baldwin County**

- for constructing the Roadway Extension (Grade, Drain, Base, Pave, and Signals) on Pride Drive from SR-59 (Gulf Shores Parkway) to the intersection of CR-20 and Roadway Improvements on CR-1186 (Juniper Street) from the junction of CR-20 to just north of the Pride Drive Extension in Foley. Length 2.527 mi.
- for constructing the Widening, Resurfacing and Traffic Stripe on CR-20 from the intersection of South Hickory Street to the intersection of SR-59 in Foley. Length 0.996 mi.

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

### Legislative Updates

---

#### **Durbin: Earmark ban preventing federal transportation bills**

By [Keith Laing](#)

Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) said this week that the elimination of earmarks in congressional legislation has "created a situation where you can't get transportation bills passed" in an interview with an Illinois newspaper.

Durbin, who is up for reelection this year, said in an [interview](#) with the *Chicago Daily Herald* newspaper that the earmark ban has negatively impacted the way Congress approaches transportation funding legislation.

The Illinois Democrat said the ban, which was pushed by Republicans when they took control of the House in 2010, has "created a situation where you can't get transportation bills passed, you can't get highways funded," according to the report.

Transportation advocates have lamented the fact that Congress has not passed an infrastructure funding package that lasts longer than two years since 2005.

A two-year highway bill that was approved in 2012, which was scheduled to expire this month, was extended for only eight months earlier this summer.

Durbin told the paper that it was important for Congress to pass a multiyear highway bill to give state and local governments certainty of federal funding.

He stopped short of endorsing ideas such as increasing the 18.4 cents-per-gallon gas tax or increasing the use of tolls to pay for new transportation projects.

"I hope we can meet our obligations to make it unnecessary, but there comes a time in some places where there's no alternative ... there just isn't enough money," he told the paper. "We've got to make a new commitment to infrastructure."

Durbin said of the suggested gas tax increase, which has been pushed by transportation advocates, that he will "try to find a way to put an infusion of money into the federal highway trust fund and be sensitive to the fact many highway users are struggling with their paychecks and this is an expense that hits them hard."

### Funding Opportunities

---

#### **Economic Development Administration (EDA)**

##### **Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance projects**

*Deadline: October 17, 2014*

EDA invites applications for job-creating construction projects for upcoming grant cycles. **EDA's next grant deadline for Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance projects is October 17, 2014.** EDA invites applications for projects that will foster job creation and attract private investment, advance a region's economic development objectives, align with the priorities outlined in the region's CEDS, and have committed and available Matching Share funds at the time of application. Applications need to have either a commitment from a regional employer verifying job creation/retention potential of investment or economic impact study verifying projected impact of investment in order to be competitive. Please don't hesitate to contact me or to refer your regional partners to me to discuss a potential project – it is my pleasure to work with you to ensure EDA's grant requirements and processes are clear and that applicants have all the information necessary to develop a competitive application.

---

#### **DRA Workforce Development Capacity Building & Technical Assistance Fund**

Round 2 Submissions Close: August 25 – November 4

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) has announced that it will establish a competitive, technical assistance and capacity building investment program, which will allow rural counties/parishes and states to develop a connected workforce development system at the local level. DRA will make funds available as a first step in economic development which is needed for growth in the Delta region. Click [HERE](#) for application instructions.

---

### **New! NOFA for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Planning Pilot Program**

*Proposal Deadline: November 3*

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is making \$19.98 million in funding available for its Pilot Program for TOD Planning. This program helps support FTA's mission of improving public transportation for America's communities by providing funding to local communities to integrate land use and transportation planning with a transit capital investment that will seek funding through FTA's *Fixed Guideway Capital Investment Program*. Proposals must be submitted electronically through the Grants.gov website by midnight Eastern Time on November 3, 2014. Click [HERE](#) for additional information.

---

### **USDA – Grants for Increased Economic Opportunity and Improved Quality of Life in Rural Areas**

*Deadline: November 12*

On August 13, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a press release announcing the availability of nearly \$6 million in grants to qualified organizations under the *Rural Community Development Initiative*. These grants will be offered to qualified intermediary organizations that will provide financial and technical assistance to recipients to develop their capacity and ability to undertake projects related to housing, community facilities, or community and economic development that will support the community. Submissions must be made to the USDA Rural Development state office where the applicant's headquarters are located. Click [HERE](#) to apply.

---

## Just For Fun



A Whale-Bus

If we can learn anything from these [1900s French postcards predicting what 2000 would look like](#), it's that our imagination is a lot cooler than reality. Sure, a lot has changed in the last century. But despite all the phenomenal leaps human society has taken over the last 100 years, we still haven't quite met the standards that the French set for us at the turn of the 20th century. In 1899, 1900, 1901 and 1910, French artists like Jean-Marc Côté created a series of drawings predicting what life would look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. And to be perfectly honest, it is difficult to say whether we have failed to meet or completely blown past their expectations.

---

## In the News

### **RESTORE Act Public Meetings Scheduled**

On behalf of the State of Alabama, a member of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (aka

"Federal" Council), the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) is hosting a public meeting on October 9th to provide information about the RESTORE Act and to seek input from the public as to the questions listed below presented by the Federal Council and posted on its website at [www.restorethegulf.gov/resources/public-input](http://www.restorethegulf.gov/resources/public-input).

Meeting Details:

Date: Thursday, October 9, 2014

Time: 6:00 pm

Location: Daphne Civic Center, 2603 U.S. Highway 98, Daphne, AL 36526

ADCNR will also be providing opportunities to learn more about the RESTORE Act and the Federal Council through webinars on the following dates:

Date: Monday, October 6, 2014

Time: 2:30 – 4:00 pm

To register: [Click Here](#)

---

Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2014

Time: 3:30 – 5:00 pm

To register: [Click Here](#)

In addition to providing your input in person at the October 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, you can submit your thoughts on the following questions to the Federal Council at any time via email to [restorecouncil@restorethegulf.gov](mailto:restorecouncil@restorethegulf.gov)

1. What 5 words or phrases best describe your vision for a healthy Gulf of Mexico ecosystem in 5 years? 50 years?
2. People care about restoration, protection and enhancement of our natural resources for many different reasons. Why is ecosystem restoration important to you? What outcomes of restoration activities are most important to you?
3. What three activities do you most rely on or enjoy that depend on healthy natural resources in the Gulf of Mexico? Examples include: fishing, hunting, seafood, cultural heritage activities, bird watching, swimming, etc.

If you have any questions regarding registration for the webinars, please contact Bethany Kraft at [Bethany.kraft@restorethegulf.gov](mailto:Bethany.kraft@restorethegulf.gov) or (504) 444-3434.

For more information about the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, please visit [www.restorethegulf.gov](http://www.restorethegulf.gov). For additional information regarding Coastal Restoration efforts in Alabama and to sign up for email updates, please visit: [www.alabamacoastalrestoration.org](http://www.alabamacoastalrestoration.org)

---

### **SARPC New Officers and Board Members**

Congratulations to SARPC's new officers for the remainder of 2014. In July 2014, Mayor Sandy Stimpson of Mobile was elevated to serve as the Chairman of the SARPC Board of Directors and Mayor Tim Kant of Fairhope was selected to serve as Vice-Chairman of the SARPC Board of Directors. Escambia County Commissioner Larry White remains the Secretary/Treasurer of the SARPC Board of Directors. The SARPC Executive Committee also has two new members to join the three officers named above (Chairman Mayor Stimpson, Vice-Chairman Mayor Kant and Secretary/Treasurer Commissioner White) and Mr. John Murphy, Chairman of the Personnel/Nominating Committee. The new members are Mr. Lee Lawson with the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance appointed as Chair of the SARPC Revolving Loan Fund Committee. Baldwin County Commissioner Skip Gruber selected as Chair of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee.

Finally Congratulations are also in order for Mr. Al Thompson of Bay Minette who has been appointed by Governor Bentley to replace Ms. Tracy Roberts as the District One representative to the State School Board. With his appointment to the State School Board Mr. Thompson will serve on the SARPC Board of Directors. Congratulations also to Mr. Troy Strunk of Baldwin County who was recently appointed to the SARPC Board as the Baldwin County Commission's "private citizen" representative.

---

### **Economic Development Administration (EDA) Funding Opportunities**

In August several members of the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission staff and local economic development staff met with Ms. Stacey Webb, our new state representative for the Economic Development Administration (EDA). The purpose of the meeting was to introduce Stacey to our local economic representatives and have her provide information about EDA funding.

Stacey provided information about EDA grant opportunities and their schedule of grant funding cycles. In FY2013 the EDA was allocated \$111,640,000 for the Public Works program with the average size of a Public Works investment project being approximately \$1.4 million, and investments ranging from \$200,000 to \$3,000,000. The EDA anticipates similar program funding levels in FY2015. The EDA staff reviews grant applications quarterly. The funding cycles are in October, December, March and June. The EDA's primary focus is to promote sustainable job growth.

The FEMA Disaster Declaration, May 2014, made EDA funds available in areas that might not otherwise qualify for EDA funding. This funding opportunity remains for 18 months from the date of the disaster declaration. The **Manufacturing Community** designation by the U.S. Commerce Department also provides special consideration for EDA grant funding in our Region.

Ms. Webb also stressed the importance of using SARPC to assist with grant preparation and applications, as the Region has a long standing relationship with EDA and experience with their grant process.

If you have any question regarding the EDA funding opportunities or need additional information please contact Chris Miller at [cmiller@sarpc.org](mailto:cmiller@sarpc.org) or me at [dburnett@sarpc.org](mailto:dburnett@sarpc.org), or 251-433-6541.

---

### **Baldwin County speaks out on the I-10 Bridge project: 'Just build the darn Bridge'**



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

on September 29, 2014 at 8:07 PM, updated September 30, 2014 at 11:36 AM



SPANISH FORT, Alabama – For the second time in less than a week, and for the final time, the public got a chance to weigh-in on the proposed Interstate in Mobile during a public hearing before state and federal officials.

This time, it was Baldwin County's turn.

Residents, public officials and business leaders overwhelmingly advocated for a project that could cost \$850 million. They spoke before Alabama Department of Transportation Director John Cooper, Southwest Region Director Vince Calametti, among others.

"This problem is not a capacity problem alone or a congestion problem alone, it's an acute problem," Baldwin County Commissioner Chris Elliot said during the one-hour hearing. "It's affecting our quality of life. It's affecting our commerce. This is affecting our safety."

The hearing was the second and last one on the massive bridge project that could take six to eight years to complete. [Public commenting to ALDOT will continue through Nov. 7.](#) The state is expected [to issue a final draft environmental impact study before the end of the year.](#)

The first hearing, held Tuesday, Sept. 23, at the Alabama Cruise Terminal, drew 309 people and lasted for 90 minutes.

The hearing at the 5 River Delta Resource Center in Spanish Fort drew a smaller crowd, but every speaker shared a common view: The bridge must be built.

There were, however, some varying views on how that should be done.

Differences were more recognizable on whether the I-10 Bridge [should include a bicycle and pedestrian path.](#)

"It will add a little cost to the bridge, sure," Richard Akers with Mobilians on Bikes, said. "But it will re-earn that cost in the long run. This is the kind of thing you don't get a do-over on."

Others agreed, including Dr. Edward Flotte, who said the pathway on the bridge has "overwhelming" support. He cited an AL.com poll that showed 65 percent of responders supporting the bike/pedestrian path and a petition that has over 3,100 signatures supporting the feature.

There were detractors who felt the bike/pedestrian path drives up costs and distracts public officials from focusing on building a 215-foot-tall structure that needs to alleviate the region's bottleneck problems along I-10.

James Hall, a past political candidate and Stapleton resident, generated some laughter from the crowd by saying that the bridge is "not a tourist attraction" and that while he would love to see bike paths, a Walmart or a 500-foot-tall cross on the top of it, public officials should be focused on building "the darn bridge and build it straight."

Bike path aside, most of those attending want to see the bridge built near downtown Mobile.

Jimmy Lyons, CEO of the Alabama State Port Authority, said he supports the B-Prime route. That route starts just past the Virginia Street exit, removes the Texas Street interchange and traverses over the Mobile River above the Austal USA facility before connecting with an expanded, eight-lane Bayway.

"(Traffic) is bad enough as it is and it's getting worse by the day," Lyons said. "B-Prime is the route and is the way to go and go fast."

Ben Cummings, a local architect, said the bridge near downtown Mobile would be a "wonderful icon" and the prominent feature of Mobile's skyline. He suggested ALDOT consider seeking a world-renowned designer for the bridge.

"Let's make the bridge an image for Mobile we can all be proud of," Cummings said.

Mobile resident Bob Hanks, however, said the bridge shouldn't be built near downtown Mobile. He advocated for "Alternative C" – [one of four alternatives still under consideration for the route of the bridge](#) – which would be built further south of downtown area.

"Give C a chance," Hanks said. "It's the only one that isn't a serious detriment to downtown Mobile."

Alternative C, which begins at the Virginia Street/I-10 interchange, has the least amount of impact on historical properties. However, it would be the most costly to the maritime industry: \$200 million of impact versus \$6.1 million with B-Prime, [the preferred route among local leaders.](#)

Other concerns raised during the hearing included: Stormwater runoff issues, a lack of an off-ramp near the USS Alabama Battleship and extending the expanded traveling lanes beyond the U.S. Route 98 interchange in Daphne.

## Transportation Research

### [Improving Safety on Rural Local and Tribal Roads](#)

In 2014, the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Safety released the Improving Safety on Rural Local and Tribal Roads Toolkit and two user's guides with scenarios for applying both site-specific and network-level analysis. These resources are available below:

[Safety Toolkit](#)

[Site Safety Analysis – User Guide #1](#)

[Network Safety Analysis – User Guide #2](#)

For more rural safety resources, visit FHWA's [Local and Rural Road Safety Program](#).

---

### **[Integrating Freight Considerations into Collaborative Decision Making for Additions to Highway Capacity](#)**

The 2014 report [Integrating Freight Considerations into Collaborative Decision Making for Additions to Highway Capacity](#) and [Integrating Freight Considerations into the Highway Capacity Planning Process: Practitioner's Guide](#) are two new resources intended to provide guidance for state departments of transportation and regional and local transportation agencies to improve their interactions with the freight community.

The practitioner's guide synthesizes best practices of collaborative, market-based highway-freight planning, while the final summarizes the process and outcomes of the research process. These reports were developed through the Strategic Highway Research Program 2 (SHRP2), project C15.

---

### **A Useful Resource: Roadway Safety Guide: A Primer for Community Leaders**

The Roadway Safety Foundation is a non-profit organization created in 1995 whose mission is to "... reduce the frequency and severity of motor vehicle crashes, injuries, and fatalities through improvements to roadway systems and their environment." Earlier this year, the RSF released an updated version of its Roadway Safety Guide: A Primer for Community Leaders, available online [HERE](#).

The guide is intended to be a document that is useful for people who are not highway safety professionals (such as elected officials and other community leaders). The guide begins by providing a context for highway safety issues and a general primer on roadway safety. This is followed by a series of stories on case studies and best practices. There is a chapter on vulnerable users – older drivers, young drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorcyclists, and suggestions on resources for funding and further information.

---