

MOBILE AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Fall 2003

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Update: Ferry/Light Rail Study

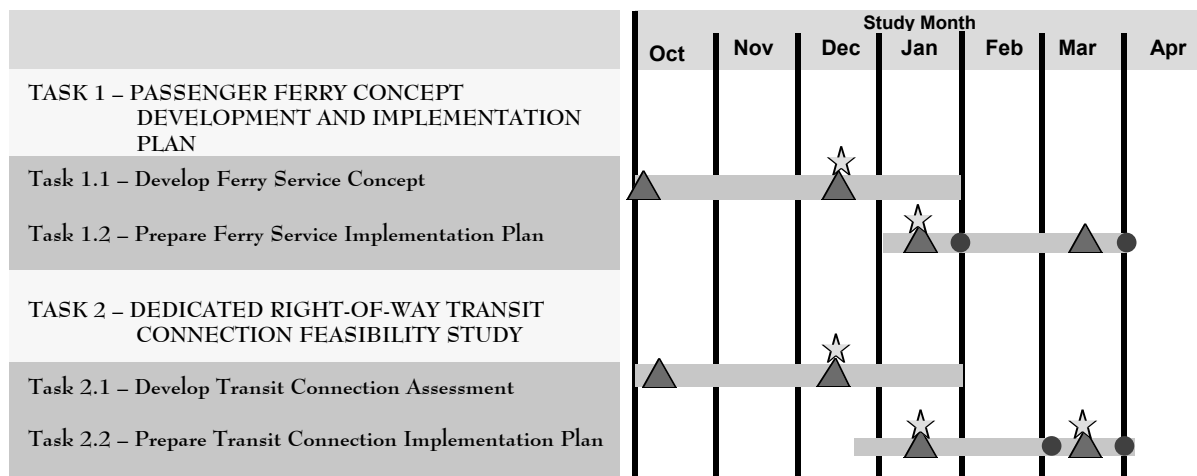
During the last few weeks, work has begun on the Mobile Passenger Ferry/Light Rail Feasibility Study. The first step in the study is travel surveys. The process involves four types of surveys in Baldwin and Mobile Counties. The motorist surveys were completed at several Baldwin County intersections to determine basic information on origin/destination of the trip, purpose of the trip, and attitude towards alternate transportation options. The response rate averaged 25%. The lead consultant, Day-Wilburn of Atlanta, has also begun an airport survey, tourist site surveys, and major employer surveys.

In addition to the surveys, the consultants have begun developing a new mode choice travel demand model which will include parts of Baldwin

County. When complete, the new model will be used to help forecast the demand for passenger ferry and light-rail service.

As shown below, study completion is projected to be the end of March. Over the next few months, multiple tasks will be completed for each portion of the study. Upcoming tasks for the ferry portion include determining potential ferry ridership, determining potential routes, contacting potential ferry operators, researching terminal characteristics, performing an economic analysis, and performing an environmental review. Upcoming tasks for the light-rail portion include determining potential markets, researching transit technologies, determining optimum modes, and

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- ★ Public Meetings
- ▲ Status Meetings
- Deliverables



Figure 1: Mobile Ferry and Transit Connection Feasibility Study



Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The FY 2004 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) was adopted at the September 3 Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting. The plan has generated substantial local discussion because the state failed to advance several high priority road projects to the plan's first two years. Traditionally, the first two years of the program are committed projects, that is, funding is virtually guaranteed. Third year projects usually move into the first two years of the next TIP. But many projects that were in the third year of the last TIP were not advanced in the 2004 TIP, and some were actually moved back to the fourth and fifth years. Several projects have been delayed years by this action.

The problem begins with the distribution of

highway funding within the state. Each year, Mobile County sends about \$98 million in fuel taxes to the state and federal governments, yet our average return has been about \$52 million (53%) for road projects over the last several years. This is not an isolated instance--these numbers have been relatively constant over the past decade--and the low rate of return has forced the postponement of several badly needed projects. The federal government guarantees that each state will receive at least 90% of its federal fuel taxes back in the form of transportation funds. It has been suggested that the state should follow this example and provide a guaranteed funding floor for each county. Whether that guarantee is 65% or 90%, it would lend stability to what is now a very unstable system.

Projects that were not advanced to the first two years of the 2004 TIP:

- * Additional lanes on I-10 from Rangeline Road to McDonald Road
- * Reconstruction of the I-65 interchange at Celeste Road
- * Construction of new US98 west of Snow Road
- * Additional lanes on Rangeline Road from south of Hamilton Boulevard to Laurendine Road, and construction of a four lane extension of Rangeline from Laurendine Road to Fowl River
- * Additional lanes on US45 from Wilson Avenue to I-65
- * Replacement of the US90 Bridge at Fowl River
- * Additional lane on Mobile and Fillingim Streets from Springhill Avenue to Stanton Road

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investigating potential alignments.

Throughout the next five months, the study team will seek the public's involvement in the various components of the study. Public input will help determine the feasibility of these ambitious projects. Public meetings are now being scheduled for mid-December. See chart to the right for details. Call April Guthrie at SARPC, 433-6541, with any questions.

Wednesday, December 10, 2003

- * 11:30 am-1:00 pm - Bay Minette, Commission Chambers, Baldwin County Administration Bldg., 312 Courthouse Square.
- * 3:00 pm-4:30 pm - Foley, Satellite Courthouse, County Commission Office, 201 E. Section St.
- * 6:30 pm-8:00 pm - Daphne, Bayfront Facility, Jubilee Room, 6200 Bayfront Park Drive.

Thursday, December 12, 2003

- * 11:30 am-1:00 pm - City Council Pre-Conference Room, First Floor, Mobile Government Plaza, 205 Government Street.
- * 2:30 pm-4:00 pm - Moorer/Spring Hill Public Library, 4 McGregor Avenue South.
- * 5:30 pm-7:30 pm - West Regional Public Library, 5555 Grelot Road.

Public Involvement: Fiscal Year 2004 Status Report



During FY2003, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has explored multiple public involvement avenues. A total of \$4,794 was spent on advertising in the *Mobile Register*, including public notices for the FY2002 Authorized Projects, one TIP adoption, three TIP modifications, one UPWP adoption, one public involvement program update, the ferry/light rail study, proposed revisions to the MATS membership, one 2025 Mobile Area Transportation Study Plan revision, and the Environmental Justice Update. In addition, documents were placed for public review at 38 to 40 sites throughout the Mobile Area Transportation Study (MATS). Two new sites were added in Bayou La Batre after MATS was expanded. In an effort to increase public participation in underserved areas, a highly visible colored cover sheet was used at the Housing Offices for one document.

Four MPO meetings were held during the year. A total of 11 guests were present, including

Malcolm Steeves from the Mobile Area Water and Sewer System and Senator Gary Tanner.



In addition, three newsletters were produced. The newsletter was reformatted to include transportation related statistics and research. Some examples are child safety seat usage and traffic fatality statistics. The newsletter mailing list grew from 168 to 310, an 85% growth rate.

Forty-two phone calls were logged to the MPO staff requesting information on the MATS program or plans.

Lastly, the website featuring the MATS Long Range Plan received an average of 148 page views a month with a high of 197 in January and a low of 82 in April. Recently, the website was updated to include a link to a list of all the Document Review Sites in Mobile County and the list of the Fiscal Year 2003 Authorized Federal Aid Projects in the MATS area. The MATS homepage is located at <http://www.sarpc.org/transport.htm>.

Public Involvement Plan

The MPO and staff are reviewing the public involvement plan, which is an annual task. Participation and education of the public is a key goal of the plan. To increase our outreach to typically underserved populations and areas in the Mobile area, we have increased the number of document review sites. We have also expanded the mailing lists to include various state and local government offices, local businesses, and individuals. The goal over the next few months is to include more community and topical groups to increase discussion among stakeholders. If you would like to add or remove a group or business on the mailing lists please contact:

April Guthrie
 Transportation Planner
 South Alabama Regional Planning Commission
 651 Church St.
 Mobile, AL 36602
 Phone: (251) 433-6541

Metropolitan Planning Organization News



The Metropolitan Planning Organization met on September 3, 2003 to review and adopt the FY 2004 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP details all federal-aid transportation projects programmed in this area for the next five years. It was advertised in the *Mobile Register* from August 4, 2003 to September 2, 2003. During the same time frame, a copy of the TIP was available for review and comment at 40 sites throughout the Mobile Area Transportation Study (MATS). For more information on this plan, please contact April Guthrie at (251) 433-6541.

Graduated Licensing: Increasing the Safety of Teenage Drivers

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, graduated licensing is a "system for phasing in on-road driving, allowing beginners to get their initial experience under conditions that involve less risk and introducing them in stages to more complex driving situations." The program consists of three stages.

The first stage is the learners permit phase. The optimal program requires a minimum age of 16 and a minimum of six months in this phase. In addition, parents or guardians are required to certify that between 30 and 50 hours of supervised driving took place.

The second phase, after obtaining a drivers license, allows unsupervised driving in low-risk situations. Night-time driving is restricted. Research indicates crashes are reduced by night-time restrictions. The most effective programs do not allow driving between approximately 9 or 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Some exceptions are generally made to this rule for church, school and work related activities. A second restriction is passengers. Research shows that the

risks of collision increase with every passenger. The most effective programs allow no teenage passengers to one teenage passenger. The recommended time in this phase is until the age of 18.

The last phase is unrestricted driving. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety recommends teenagers have driving restrictions until age 18. In addition, an exit driving test is recommended to enter the final phase.

Without graduated licensing, 16 year old drivers are 10 times more likely to be in an accident than 30 to 59 year olds and three times more likely than older teenagers.

The Alabama Graduated Licensing Law went into affect October 1, 2003. Some aspects of the recommended program were incorporated, while others were not. In the learners permit phase, a minimum of 30 hours must be certified by a parent or legal guardian, but the minimum age is 15. In the Intermediate stage, driving is restricted from midnight to 6 a.m., but there are no limits on the number of teenage passengers. Alabama teens are subject to these restrictions until age 17 and 6 months.



Update: Alabama Traffic Crash Facts 2002

In 2002, Alabama had 3.61 million licensed drivers and 4.6 million motor vehicles registered. There were a total of 140,437 traffic accidents with 1,038 fatalities and 44,414 injuries. Over 70% of car accidents were in urban settings, but over 71% of fatal car accidents were in rural areas. Almost half of all fatal car accidents occurred at night. There were a total of 1,089 motorcycle accidents with 45 fatalities and 808 injuries. There were 5 fatalities and 250 injuries in accidents involving bicyclists, and there were 62 fatalities and 579 injuries in crashes involving pedestrians.

A total of 7,497 crashes, including 208 fatal crashes, involved alcohol or drugs. The majority of alcohol and drug related crashes occurred on Friday, Saturday and early Sunday.

The most traffic accidents occurred on Fridays, while the highest percentage of fatal accidents occurred on Saturdays. The most accidents occurred in October, while the highest percentage of fatal accidents occurred in March. Overall, \$6.24 billion was lost due to traffic accidents in 2002. For more information go to: <http://care.cs.ua.edu>.

Metro Transit: Comprehensive Operational Analysis

The Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) was completed this past summer by a consultant. The major objectives of the COA were to perform a system ride check, including a fare box, transfer, operational and performance analysis, to analyze potential route modifications, to complete a customer survey, and to recommend a monitoring system for transit service.



The data collected during the system ride check was used to detail ridership, schedule adherence, and financial performance of the system and each route. A total of 3,468 weekday boardings, or 11.8 passengers per hour and 0.76 passengers per mile, and 1,600 weekend boardings were recorded, or 8.4 passengers per hour and 0.52 passengers per mile. Routes 5 and 12 had the highest passenger per hour ratio on week days, while routes 5 and 7 performed best on weekends. During the work week, 52% of trips were operating on schedule, while 53% were operating on schedule during the weekend. Using the NTD 2001 Metro Transit financial summary, the average cost of each unlinked passenger trip was \$3.64 on weekdays and \$5.16 on weekends. The fare box recovery was 20.6% for weekdays and 14.5% for weekends.

The transfer analysis described the pattern of movement from route to route within the transit system. The most transfers originated with Routes 5 and 9 on weekdays, while routes 5 and 7 were the highest on weekends. The most transfers were destined for Routes 5 and 12 on weekdays, while routes 7 and 5 had the most on weekends.

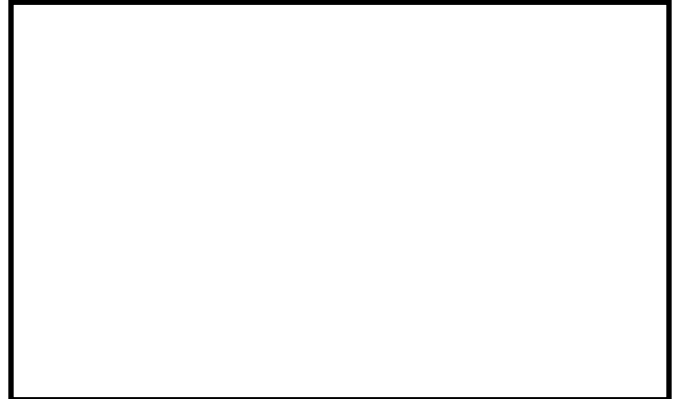
The onboard customer survey revealed that most customers reside in the zip codes 36603, 36605, 36610 and 36617. Approximately 39% are male, while 61% are female. About 36% were between the ages of 45 and 65; 34% were between the ages of 25 and 44; 10% were 66 or older. Other questions revealed the trip purpose, level of service satisfaction, information sources, radio station preferences, and awareness of other services.

After analyzing all data collected, the consultants recommended changes to each route to address service inefficiencies and underused route

segments. The Airport Route (route 1) should decrease headways to 30 minutes. The Prichard Route (route 2) should eliminate service outside of Prichard. The service on the Crichton-Springhill-Moffett Route (route 4) west of University Boulevard should be eliminated. On the USA-Hillsdale Route (route 6), the portion west of the University of South Alabama should be eliminated. The Dauphin-Cromwell/Westlawn-Mall Route (route 7) should provide a weekday 30 minute headway. The Plateau-Alabama Village Route (route 8) should be eliminated from Prichard to downtown Mobile and the north portion should be extended out U.S. Highway 45 to Lott Road; discontinue the Saturday extension to Saraland. The Broad-Southside-Bel Air Mall Route (route 9) should be coordinated with routes 1 and 11. The Crosstown Route (route 10) should eliminate service on the Chickasaw Loop, and the route should be extended north to Wal-Mart and/or K-Mart. In addition, service should be restored to Infirmary Hospital. The Texas-Dauphin Island Parkway Route (route 11) should be terminated at Dauphin Island Parkway/Duval Street with selected weekday morning and afternoon trips to B.C. Rain High School. The U.S. Highway 90-Knollwood Route (route 12) should be rerouted from the I-65 service road to Pleasant Valley, eliminating the Festival Center portion, and should operate across Cottage Hill to Azalea. The Hillcrest Route (route 13) should be run as a route deviation service. The Toulminville-Allison/ Pleasant Route (route 15) should be extended from the Bay Shore area to Bel Air Mall, and correspondingly, route 10 should utilize I-65 for an "express" operation from Prichard to Bel Air Mall. In addition, the routes affected by Metro's move to the GM&O facility should be changed to reflect the new transfer station. For more information, please contact: Ron Tanner, Transportation Planner, Metro Transit, (251) 344-6600.

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MPO Voting Membership

- * Mobile County Commissioner - Hon. Samuel Jones, Chairman
 - * Mayor, City of Bayou La Batre - Hon. Stan Wright
 - * Mayor, City of Mobile - Hon. Michael Dow
- * Councilman, City of Mobile - Hon. Reggie Copeland
- * Councilman, City of Mobile - Hon. Thomas Sullivan
 - * Mayor, City of Prichard - Hon. Charles Harden
 - * Mayor, City of Chickasaw - Hon. Jim Trout
 - * Mayor, City of Saraland - Hon. Ken Williams
 - * Mayor, City of Satsuma - Hon. William Bush
 - * Mayor, Town of Creola - Hon. Cleo Phillips
- * General Manager, Metro Transit - Mr. Bob Williams
- * Ninth Division Engineer, ALDOT - Mr. Ron Poiroux
 - * Member, SARPC - Mr. Norman Walton