



Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, May 8th, 2020

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ALDOT has postponed their TAP application deadline until July 1st. The Mobile MPO deadline is still May 15th. Several other deadlines next week and several new funding sources announced this week pertaining to the COVID-19 (See *Funding Opportunities*). Although the Senate is in session and the House is out until further notice due to coronavirus concerns, there are a lot of *Legislative Updates* this week including the Alabama Legislature passing the state general fund budget. FTA provides guidance for COVID-19, Amtrak New Orleans to Mobile receives some help, the WAVE is back up and running and has an RFQ, all *In The News* this week. So, this week's *Just For Fun* is Mobile and it's transit system. Is a virtual meeting allowed? See [HERE](#)

Please help us learn how the shelter-in-place order due to the COVID-19 situation affected how you travel. Dr. Steven Jones from the University of Alabama is conducting a study called "Travel Impacts of the COVID-19 response in Alabama". All information you provide will be anonymous and will remain confidential. In order to participate in the survey please click the link below:

https://universityofalabama.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5dsRKTZ8O8rDIHL

The SARPC staff is currently working remotely. Our phones, emails, are seamless and if you need us we are here.

Check out [ALGO Traffic](#) before you travel!



www.mobilempo.org Check us out on FACEBOOK

SARPC Transportation Video, this is what we do [HERE](#)

Want to know what other SARPC departments do?

[Planning and Community Development](#)

[Area Agency on Aging](#)

[Employment and Economic Development](#)

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

Mobile MPO Updates

Mobile MPO Policy Committee Meeting Held

The Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) met virtually using GOTO Meeting on Wednesday, April 23rd, 2020. This was the first time a Mobile MPO meeting was conducted in this manner, and was executed without any problems. There were test meetings to make sure our MPO members were familiar with the technology. It ended up being a largely attended meeting that included the press, and members of the public attending online. Items on the agenda included the adoption of the Long Range Transportation Plan. The Plan is required to be adopted every 5 years, and the deadline was March of 2020 for this plan. The March 25th meeting was postponed until the April 22 meeting due to the COVID -19 virus.

The LRTP is multimodal in scope, and is based on public input, and a travel demand forecast model. In 2019, an online survey was conducted with almost 150 respondents. Questions ranged from where is the worst congestion, what roads need improvements, problems with the transit systems, etc. There were a lot of comments about the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and the potential for tolls. Prior to the online survey, staff also conducted a South Alabama Freight Forum, which was an opportunity to hear from large manufacturers and trucking companies, to find out what the top issues are concerning the movement of freight in South Alabama. The Bicycle / Pedestrian plan was updated, and the public transit section was authored by the Wave Transit, less the Demand Response Transit Study currently being conducted (see below).

More information on the new plan can be found at <https://www.envision2045.org/>

The Appropriations Act of 2020 provided the Mobile MPO with \$564,549 (fed). These funds were introduced to the MPO during the MPO meeting, and will be discussed at the next TCC/CAC subcommittee meeting. It could be added to the pot to fund future shortfalls, or could be allocated to a specific project; the committee will decide.

The MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY

SARPC staff is continuing to meet (virtually) with Via, and Goodwn, Mills, and Cawood, for the feasibility study. The current health crisis has affected the potential outcome of the study. The intent of the study was to find potential local sponsors to match federal funds to create a transit system to operate throughout Mobile County to connect with WAVE Transit. The sponsors would have provided assistance through subscriptions or contracts for commuter trips. The current price of gasoline, and the threat of contracting virus on buses, may put a strain on ridership of a new system. However, there are still people in need of transportation, and there is some thought that regardless of the price of gasoline, there will be an increased number of distressed people due to the economy, that will need transportation. This may be the perfect time to consider transportation throughout Mobile County.

[FY 2020-2023 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM \(TIP\) NOW ONLINE](#)

The TIP represents a four year program (2020-2023) for improvements in the various transportation systems located within the Mobile study area as identified in the Mobile MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the twenty-five year plan for the Mobile Urban area. The LRTP establishes the transportation programs that are needed to meet travel demand by the study year and study area. LRTP projects that become funded are moved into the TIP and submitted to the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), where they are programmed into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). For MPO projects, TIP project

selection is based on priorities established by MPO member governments and the availability of funds through the Surface Transportation Attributable program. For other projects, ALDOT has discretion of project funding based on availability of funds from various types of funding categories. Most often, projects in the TIP are derived from the LRTP. The TIP guides ALDOT in its annual allocation of funds for transportation improvements and becomes a part of the STIP.

ArcGIS Online is now being utilized by MPO staff to map all federally funded surface transportation projects within our area. Check it out [HERE](#).

Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project:

<http://mobileriverbridge.com/>

About the project:

The Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project would reduce congestion on I-10 in South Alabama through the addition of additional capacity: a new six-lane bridge over the Mobile River, full replacement of the existing Bayway with an eight-lane structure, and redevelopment of seven interchanges. The project would run from Virginia Street in Mobile to the US 90/98 interchange in Baldwin County. Information in the project is available at www.MobileRiverBridge.com. On August 28, 2019 the Alabama Department of Transportation ceased project development efforts on the proposed Mobile River Bridge & Bayway.

Mobile MPO Perspective

Although the I-10 Mobile River Bridge is commonly mentioned in the LRTP comments, currently the I-10 Mobile River Bridge is in the LRTP as a Visionary Project. This means it is NOT in the fiscally constrained LRTP, it is on a wish list of sorts as there is not available funding identified. The Bridge is also not in the current Transportation Improvement Program ([TIP](#)); it has to be in the LRTP in order to be on the TIP.

When the State of Alabama, the Gulf Coast citizens, and the local elected officials agree on how the project can be funded, ALDOT will have a better idea on what type of project can be afforded. Once this happens, and I am confident it will, the Mobile MPO can amend the *Envision 2045 LRTP*, and the TIP to include the I-10 Mobile River Bridge. The Mobile MPO would like to know the facts, like how much funding is available, and where does it come from, before adopting a resolution supporting a plan.

Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile

The target start date, plan status, or project engineers estimated amount has changed for the following:

Project : 100067047 (CN)
Federal aid number : BR 0163 (505)
County : MOBILE
Project Description : BRIDGE REPLACEMENT ON SR-163 OVER PERCH CREEK BIN 011865 FROM MP 3.931 TO MP 3.983
Old Target start date : July 31, 2020
New Target start date : August 28, 2020

South Alabama RPO Updates

[USDA Unveils Tool to Help Rural Communities Address the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue unveiled a one-stop-shop of federal programs that can be used by rural communities, organizations and individuals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. [The COVID-19 Federal Rural Resource Guide](#) is a first-of-its-kind resource for rural leaders looking for federal funding and partnership opportunities to help address this pandemic. Secretary Perdue announced, "This resource guide will help our rural leaders, whether they are in agriculture, education, health care or any other leadership capacity, understand what federal assistance is available for their communities during this unprecedented time."

HSCTP Public Meeting Postponed

In consideration of health concerns of participants regarding COVID-19, the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission will postpone the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan Public Meeting that was scheduled for Wednesday, March 18th at the GM&O Building. The meeting will be rescheduled at a later date. We welcome your comments and questions regarding the plan. If you wish, you may contact us via email at transportation@sarpc.org or by phone at (251) 433 6541.

As part of this effort we are surveying transit providers, riders, and other stakeholders in our region. Please take a moment to answer the following questions and email them back to us.

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Name of your Organization:

Does your organization operate a transit vehicle? If so,

How many vehicles?

How many seats per vehicle?

What is/are the funding sources for your vehicle(s)?

What is your service area?

Do you use or need transit services to get around? If so, which one(s)?

What unmet needs are there in your area?

Things like later hours, rural areas where transit service is needed but isn't available, etc.?

Do you have any suggestions as to how these needs could be met?

Will you be applying for 5310 funding? If so, what will you be applying for?

Projects in Region Let May 29th, 2020

MOBILE COUNTY

For constructing the Micro-Milling, Resurfacing (Micro-Surfacing Seal Coat), and Traffic Stripe on I-10 from 0.280 mile west of the Carol Plantation Road Overpass in Theodore to 1.360 miles east of the of the SR-193 Overpass in Mobile. Length 3.892 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$3,068,532 to \$3,750,429 .

BALDWIN COUNTY

For constructing the Intersection Relocation and Traffic Signal Installation (Grading, Drainage, Pavement, and Signalization) on SR-16 (US-90) at SR-59 in Loxley. Length 0.337 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,438,788 to \$1,758,519 .

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

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

Legislative Updates

The Senate is in session. The House is out until further notice due to coronavirus concerns.

Senator requests feedback from transportation industry on COVID-19 impacts

BY [LIZ CAREY](#) | MAY 6, 2020 |

U. S. Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS), chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, is asking leaders in the infrastructure and freight transportation industry how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected elements of their industry.

Wicker said he wants to know how COVID-19 has impacted the supply chain, freight movement, transportation networks, and consumers, as well as how to ensure that the freight transportation network can react to future unforeseen events.

"The COVID-19 crisis has brought serious new challenges and hardships to our nation," Wicker wrote in his letter to the heads of critical infrastructure and freight transportation industries. "As these difficult times continue to affect our lives, the resilience and resourcefulness shown by our frontline workers has been remarkable. They are providing critical care, services, goods, and supplies to the people and communities that need them. These contributions are seen across industries, and the surface transportation sector is no exception. Our truck drivers, railroad workers, port operators, pipeline engineers, and many others are working to ensure that our freight transportation network and critical infrastructure continue to deliver during this unprecedented time."

The May 4 letter was sent to representative from the American Trucking Association, the American Association of Port Authorities, the Association of American Railroads, the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association, the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, the American Petroleum Institute and the Inland Rivers, Ports and Terminals.

Wicker asked if critical infrastructure employees have been affected during the pandemic and what have member organizations done to protect that staff. Wicker also asked if the authorities from the U.S. Dept. of Transportation and whether or not additional authorities were needed to provide additional support to the transportation sector.

Lawmakers Still Eyeing Highway Bill Despite Coronavirus Relief Efforts



Paul Sancya/Associated Press

Legislators are keeping an eye on advancing a new highway policy measure as the federal response to the novel coronavirus dominates much of lawmakers' time and attention.

"Even though the global pandemic upended the congressional schedule as we know it, our committee has been pushing ahead with a surface transportation reauthorization bill and we hope to share more details in the coming weeks," a spokeswoman for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee told Transport Topics.

The panel's leaders have said their aim is to advance improvements to freight and commuter connectivity, as well as provisions related to severe-weather resilience, as part of their update of the 2015 FAST Act highway law, which expires Sept. 30. Before the coronavirus reached pandemic status, transportation committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) had pointed to a March-April timeline for both introducing and considering his version of the highway policy bill. That bill would likely follow a five-year, \$760 billion infrastructure policy blueprint House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's caucus unveiled in January.

The blueprint proposed \$329 billion for highway programs, \$105 billion for transit systems, \$86 billion for investments in broadband, \$60.5 billion for wastewater and other water infrastructure programs, and \$55 billion for rail networks.

The Democrats' plan did not identify a long-term source of funding for highway projects. The Highway Trust Fund, an account used to support highway programs around the country, operates on dwindling revenue from the federal gas tax and diesel tax. Congress set the 18.4 cents-per-gallon gas tax and 24.4 cents-per-gallon diesel tax in 1993.

DeFazio's Senate counterparts also did not propose a sustainable source of funding for highway programs in a version of the reauthorization they approved last year. On May 6, after his committee advanced two water policy measures, Environment and Public Works Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) noted the potential for debating infrastructure policy in the not-so-distant-future.

"President [Donald] Trump has called on Congress to pass infrastructure legislation," Barrasso said. "Our highway infrastructure legislation, combined with these two water infrastructure bills, will answer the president's call to help revive our nation's economy once we have moved beyond the immediate health crisis."

For several weeks, Trump has argued that injecting up to \$2 trillion into the infrastructure network would assist with an economic recovery. He has proposed borrowing the funds to back the massive plan. While Congress has approved for the president nearly \$3 trillion for emergency recovery efforts, neither Pelosi nor Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) have announced their intention to prioritize funding for infrastructure. The two have instead focused on boosting businesses and assisting the health care sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key stakeholders observing from the sidelines have stepped up their calls for amplifying the transportation systems.

For instance, former Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell, a Democrat, and former Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, with the Building America's Future advocacy group, recommended congressional leaders dedicate funding for infrastructure improvements. [HERE](#)

[Pelosi Sees \\$1 Trillion in State, Local Aid for Next Stimulus](#)

Last week, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi reported that states and cities are seeking as much as \$1 trillion in aid in the next coronavirus relief package. Speaker Pelosi said state governments are still finalizing their request but have so far sought \$500 billion, while local governments have requested a similar figure. Lawmakers also are considering other proposals including another round of cash payments to taxpayers, expanded unemployment insurance, assistance to renters, and wider broadband access. With the economy stalled, the next coronavirus spending bill may end up being more costly than the \$2.2 trillion package enacted last month. The rising price tag of coronavirus response has fueled objections from some conservatives and deficit watchdogs as the U.S. budget deficit for fiscal 2020 soars above \$4 trillion

Infrastructure investment urged for future economic stimulus bill

BY PHIL YACUBOSKI | APRIL 29, 2020

Infrastructure funding is critical to getting America's economic gears moving again, especially at the local level, argue stakeholders who seek to shape the next COVID-19 recovery package.

"In today's environment if we get this right, then we align federal and local interests around infrastructure," said Rick Jacobs, CEO and co-founder of Accelerator for America, a nonprofit transit, infrastructure and economic development group that develops solutions for economic insecurity. "The local folks on the ground tend to know the very best about what jobs and careers are needed as soon as it's possible after the all-clear is given."

Jacobs said he's working with several groups putting together a 'playbook' for the federal government to get a lot of infrastructure built quickly. Accelerator for America has worked with The U.S. Conference of Mayors, WSP USA, the ACEC Research Institute, and other groups to help shape whatever the upcoming stimulus package will look like when it hits President Donald Trump's desk.

President Trump wanted a \$2 trillion infrastructure package to put Americans back to work post-pandemic. The money would come at a zero-interest rate, he has said. The White House has been talking with Democrats and Republicans about how to best make it happen, but so far there has been no deal.

Some argue that should the money be doled out from the federal government, local governments could put it to use best.

"There's a common misconception that policy is made at the federal level and then it trickles down to the local level where it's implemented," said John Porcari, president of Advisory Services for WSP USA, an engineering consulting firm, and former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Transportation during the Obama Administration. "The real innovations are at the local level and they bubble up. We have to use that to drive changes at the federal level."

Porcari argues there must be an overhaul as to how infrastructure projects are funded and move to a system that incentivizes local, state and federal investment. "I'm confident there will be an infrastructure package as part of the national recovery effort," said Porcari. "We have to make it as effective as possible by focusing on the local employment."

For every \$1 billion in highway infrastructure spent, 13,000 jobs are created, according to The Brookings Institute. And nearly 64 percent of those jobs are concentrated in the 100 largest metro areas. The Bureau of Labor Statistics found in 2017 that infrastructure jobs pay an average of \$37,690. It also found infrastructure jobs will grow exponentially well into 2026.

Porcari said he thinks of the stimulus package as triage. "What Congress has done already is to stop the bleeding of small and medium-sized businesses. But what it doesn't do is get us to the recovery phase. If you want to get us to the recovery phase, it has to be built on a solid foundation. Infrastructure is that solid foundation investment."

That's as basic as street projects, stormwater upgrades, or bringing broadband to underserved areas.

"All of the big infrastructure projects," said Porcari, "we built by our parents and our grandparents. This is about lasting recovery. These are jobs you can't export."

After President Trump was elected, he had hoped to strike a deal with members of Congress on a large infrastructure package, an investment that appealed to many Democrats. So far, that hasn't happened. One concern from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has been over how to pay for it. Regarding the next coronavirus relief bill, McConnell recently noted that he sees infrastructure as unrelated to the current pandemic, although pushing forward on a separate infrastructure bill is a possibility.

"Recovery will happen," added Jacobs. "There's at least a \$2 trillion deficit of stuff that has to be built. It's just a question of when."

Alabama Legislature passes state general fund budget

Brandon Moseley Published 3 hours ago on May 8, 2020 By Brandon Moseley

The Alabama House of Representatives on Thursday passed the 2021 state General Fund budget, which funds non-education state agencies. The 2021 SGF is \$2,391,206,601, which is \$168,860,692 more than the \$2,222,345,909 in the 2020 budget.

The 2021 general fund budget goes into effect Oct. 1.

Alabama has an arcane budgeting system in which over 90 percent of the money is earmarked and the budget are divided into two major pots, the General Fund and the Education Trust Fund, which funds education.

There are also billions, most of it earmarked, outside of the budgeting process — gas tax money to fund the Alabama Department of Transportation being but one example. The General Fund is largely funded through insurance premium taxes, sales and use taxes, interest on the Alabama Trust Fund, utility taxes and other sources.

The House Ways and Means General Fund Committee is chaired by State Rep. Steve Clouse, R-Ozark. Senate Bill 157 is sponsored by State Senator Greg Albritton, R-Atmore, but Clouse carried the bill on the floor of the House. The version of the budget that passed the Senate was substituted on the House floor by a new version written by Clouse.

The General Fund budget passed on a bipartisan 76 to 1 vote. Most Democrats did not attend for fear of the coronavirus.

Clouse said that because income taxes are earmarked for the ETF and not the SGF that the General Fund is less affected by the current economic downturn. Clouse said that if the economic shutdown was to continue at length, business owners might stop paying their insurance premiums and the state could start losing insurance premium tax dollars.

If Alabamians were to stop buying things online then there could a drop in internet sales taxes for the general fund. The committee will be watching for that going forward. [HERE](#)

Funding Opportunities

New CDBG GRANT Program

To Address COVID-19 Impacts (currently no deadline)

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) is in the process of developing a special Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant program to address COVID-19 impacts.

DETAILS: Currently, no application deadline, grant ceilings or other program details have been finalized.

MORE DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED AT A LATER DATE; however, please download the guide below to get started and identify potential partners as needed.

[CLICK HERE](#) to download the Quick Guide to CDBG Eligible Activities to Support Infectious Disease Response that will assist applicants to begin thinking about possible project needs.

Please note that applications to the CDBG program must be in the name of a local government as the applicant/grantee.

Partnerships and agreements with other agencies/entities, etc. can be developed as necessary. CDBG projects must also benefit primarily low and moderate-income people and this requirement will likely remain for the new funds.

RESOURCES/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The Department has technical assistance providers that may be available to assist grantees in their implementation of CDBG Funds for activities to prevent or respond to the spread of infectious disease.

Please contact your local CPD Field Office Director to request technical assistance from HUD staff or a TA provider.

Submit your questions to:

CPDQuestionsAnswered@hud.gov

COVID-19 (“Coronavirus”) Information and Resources: <https://www.hud.gov/coronavirus>

CPD Program Guidance and Training: <https://www.hudexchange.info/program-support/>

EDA CARES ACT RECOVERY ASSISTANCE

OVERVIEW

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, [signed into law](#) by President Donald J. Trump on March 27, 2020, provides the Economic Development Administration (EDA) with \$1.5 billion for economic development assistance programs to help communities prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance, which is being administered under the authority of the bureau’s flexible [Economic Adjustment Assistance](#) (EAA) (PDF) program, provides a wide-range of financial assistance to communities and regions as they respond to and recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

On May 7, 2020, Secretary Wilbur Ross made EDA’s CARES Act Recovery Assistance funding available with the announcement that EDA had published an Addendum to its FY 2020 Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Notice of Funding Opportunity. EDA intends to deploy its CARES Act funding as quickly, effectively, and efficiently as possible, and in a manner that meets communities needs.

RESOURCES

- [EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance Frequently Asked Questions](#)
 - [EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance Frequently Asked Questions](#) (Printable .PDF)
- [Scope of Work for EDA Economic Development Districts and EDA Indian Tribe Planning Grant Recipients*](#)
- [Specific Award Conditions: Economic Development Districts and Indian Tribes*](#)
- [Specific Award Conditions: Revolving Loan Fund Awards*](#)
- [EDA’s CARES Act Recovery Assistance Revolving Loan Fund Award Flexibilities Frequently Asked Questions](#)

- [EDA's CARES Act Recovery Assistance Revolving Loan Fund Award Flexibilities Frequently Asked Questions](#) (Printable .PDF)
- [Scope of Work for University Center Grantees*](#)
- [Specific Award Conditions: University Centers*](#)
- [EDA regional office contacts](#)
- [coronavirus.gov](#)
- [coronavirus.gov/smallbusiness/](#)
- [CDC.gov/COVID19/](#)
- [USA.gov/coronavirus/](#)

* As stated in the CARES Act Recovery Assistance Addendum to the PWEAA NOFO, EDA may invite existing grantees, such as Economic Development Districts and Tribes currently in receipt of Partnership Planning awards, operators of existing EDA funded Revolving Loan Funds, and EDA-funded University Centers, to apply for supplemental awards. These standard Scopes of Work and Specific Award Conditions are for use with these supplemental awards only. Existing grantees who are eligible to apply for these awards will be contacted individually for instructions on how to apply.

Applications are now being accepted for EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance. Please see the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) and apply today! For up-to-date info on COVID-19, visit [www.coronavirus.gov](#).

CARES Act Grants for Governments

Potential uses: hiring personnel, paying overtime, purchasing protective equipment and distributing resources to hard-hit areas. Funds may also be used to help correctional facilities cover costs related to COVID-19, including, but not limited to, sanitation, contagion prevention and measures designed to address the related medical needs of inmates, detainees and correctional personnel.

The solicitation deadline according to website is May 29th. Subject to Federal rules funds may apply retroactively to January 20, 2020.

For more information <https://bjao.gov/funding/opportunities/bja-2020-18553>.

Awards including ADECA, Huntsville, Gadsden, Jasper, etc. are here: <https://bjao.gov/program/cesf/awards>.

AARP Community Challenge Grants - May 15 Deadline

AARP's annual Community Challenge is on! Funding is available for eligible government agencies and nonprofit organizations to improve civic engagement, create vibrant public spaces, deliver a range of transportation options, support accessible housing, use Smart Cities data applications, and initiate other community improvements. The grant amount depends on project size.

[Learn more about the Community Challenge and apply.](#)

U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Announces \$25 Billion to Help Nation's Public Transportation Systems Respond to COVID-19

Thursday, April 2, 2020

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) today announced [a total of \\$25 billion in Federal funding allocations](#) to help the Nation's public transportation systems respond to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Funding is provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, signed by President Donald J. Trump on March 27, 2020.

"This historic \$25 billion in grant funding will ensure our nation's public transportation systems can continue to provide services to the millions of Americans who depend on them," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

FTA is allocating \$25 billion to [recipients of urbanized area and rural area formula funds](#), with \$22.7 billion allocated to large and small urban areas and \$2.2 billion allocated to rural areas. Funding will be provided at a 100 percent Federal share, with no local match required, and will be available to support capital, operating, and other expenses generally eligible under those programs to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19.

Further, operating expenses incurred beginning on January 20, 2020 for all rural and urban recipients, even those in large urban areas, are also eligible, including operating expenses to maintain transit services as well as paying for administrative leave for transit personnel due to reduced operations during an emergency. Answers to [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about this funding are available on FTA's web site.

"We know that many of our Nation's public transportation systems are facing extraordinary challenges and these funds will go a long way to assisting our transit industry partners in battling COVID-19," said FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams. "These Federal funds will support operating assistance to transit agencies, including those in large urban areas as well as pay transit workers across the country not working because of the public health emergency."

In addition to the \$25 billion funding allocation announced today, FTA has taken a number of steps to support the transit industry during this public health emergency, including [expanding the eligibility of Federal assistance](#) available under FTA's Emergency Relief Program to help transit agencies respond to COVID-19 in states where the Governor has declared an emergency. All transit providers, including those in large urban areas, can now use Federal formula funds under the Urbanized Area Formula Program and Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program for emergency-related capital and operating expenses. This includes the provision of personal protective equipment or special-purpose trips.

FTA also established an [Emergency Relief docket](#) that allows transit providers in States where the Governor has declared an emergency related to COVID-19 to request temporary relief from Federal requirements under 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 as well as any non-statutory FTA requirements.

Additionally, FTA [recently announced](#) that it would provide a 30-day extension of the deadline for current competitive grant program funding opportunities, including: FTA's Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program; Passenger Ferry Grant Program; Accelerating Innovative Mobility (AIM) Challenge Grants; and Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Program.

The U.S. Department of Transportation is working closely with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and other Federal partners to provide guidance to the public transportation industry in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19). FTA has held regular conference calls with transit stakeholders and posted [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) regarding COVID-19 on its web site.

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao Announces Availability of \$1 Billion to Upgrade American Infrastructure (deadline May 18, 2020)

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) today published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to apply for \$1 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 discretionary grant funding through the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grants program.

"BUILD grants will upgrade infrastructure across America, making our transportation systems safer and more efficient," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

As the Trump Administration looks to enhance America's infrastructure, FY 2020 BUILD Transportation grants are for planning and capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure and are to be awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant local or regional impact. BUILD funding can support roads, bridges, transit, rail, ports or intermodal transportation.

Projects for BUILD will be evaluated based on merit criteria that include safety, economic competitiveness, quality of life, environmental sustainability, state of good repair, innovation, and partnership.

To better address the needs of rural America, which has historically been neglected, DOT intends to award 50% of BUILD Transportation grant funding to projects located in rural areas that deliver positive benefits for these communities, consistent with the Department's R.O.U.T.E.S. initiative. For this round of BUILD Transportation grants, the maximum grant award is \$25 million, and no more than \$100 million can be awarded to a single State, as specified in the appropriations act.

To provide technical assistance to prospective applicants, DOT is hosting a series of webinars during the FY 2020 BUILD grant application process. A webinar on how to compete for BUILD Transportation Grants for all applicants will be held on February 25, 2020. Further details will be made available at <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants>. The deadline to submit an application is May 18, 2020.

For more information, please visit <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants>.

Transportation Alternatives Program Grants

Mobile MPO Grant Deadline May 15th, 2020

The Mobile MPO has announced the availability of the Fiscal Year 2021 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding. The maximum amount that can be applied for per project with Mobile Urbanized TAP funds is \$200,000 (federal). Applicants are welcome to submit more than one project.

The TAP provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; safe routes to school projects; and projects for planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.

This year applications will only be accepted electronically. Applicants should email their complete application to transportation@sarpc.org.

Applications are due to the Transportation Planning Department of the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) no later than 12:00 p.m., Friday, May 15, 2020.

Electronic versions of the applications are available online at <http://mobilempo.org/TAP.html>

Project budgets should be itemized and completed by a Professional Engineer that is certified by the State of Alabama.

If you have any questions please call the SARPC Transportation Planning Department at (251) 433 6541.

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is soliciting applications for the Transportation Alternatives Set-aside Program (TAP) for FY 2021.

New Deadline July 1, 2020

The guidelines and the application can both be found on the ALDOT website, on the Local Transportation Bureau page under the Operations Section.

<https://www.dot.state.al.us/ltweb/operations/index.html>

The deadline for submission of FY 2021 TAP applications including support documentation has been extended until Wednesday, July 1, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Federal Lands Access Program

Deadline June 16, 2020

Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (EFLHD) will be conducting another Call for Projects for the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) in Alabama for Federal Fiscal Years (FY) 2020 through FY 2022. All final project approvals will be contingent upon the availability of funds in the year for which they are being requested. **Funding beyond 2020 is dependent on reauthorization of the Access Program by Congress.**

The Call for Projects application period opens March 16, 2020 and runs through June 16, 2020.

An estimated total of \$1.5M will be available for programming in your State.

EFLHD has found that a higher level of outreach at local levels has increased both the number and the quality of competitive applications submitted and ultimately recommended for project programming and implementation. We ask that you provide the widest circulation possible of this announcement to provide a robust pool of applications. **Please feel free to use any of the materials included in with this message to assist in your outreach efforts. The Federal Lands Access Program website is:** <https://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flap/>

Federal Land Management Agencies: We appreciate your efforts in the provision of an expanded outreach to your units and gateway communities regarding this program opportunity.

FHWA Federal Aid Division Office: We appreciate your efforts in the provision of an expanded outreach regarding this program opportunity to the MPOs and RPOs in your state via email or on your website.

State DOTs: We appreciate your efforts in the provision of an expanded outreach regarding this program opportunity to your District staff and Local Agency Program Coordinators (if applicable), Public Information Officers, via email and/or on your websites.

Local Agency Representatives: We appreciate your efforts in the provision of an expanded outreach regarding this program opportunity to other County, MPO and Local agencies in your state via email and/or on your local websites.

Opportunity Zones

EDA's Opportunity Zone Web Page

EDA now has an [EDA Opportunity Zone Web page](#) for economic development stakeholders and others to use as a resource to further help foster job creation and attract private investment to support development in economically distressed areas across the United States.

[Section 5307, 5310, and 5311: Using Non-DOT Funds for Local Match](#)

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [Administration for Community Living](#) (ACL) has worked with the [National Aging and Disability Transportation Center](#) to clarify the ability of grantees to use Older Americans Act Title IIIB Supportive Services Funds to match Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs. These FTA programs include Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307), Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and People with Disabilities (Section 5310), and Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311). This information has been publicized [HERE](#)

To stay up to date on all of the many grants that are available visit www.grants.gov.

Just For Fun (THIS IS SATIRE, AND JUST FOR FUN)

There is a lot of transit *In The News* today, and sometime it is neat to look back at our transportation system, *Just For Fun*.



Downtown Mobile Like New York City. You could catch a bus from almost any neighborhood, ride it to the square, hop off and spend an entire day walking the streets.



A sign of the times



In the News

SRC awarded millions for return of Gulf Coast rail service

Posted by [Dale Liesch](#) | May 6, 2020 | [Bay Briefs](#) | [0](#) |

The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) has successfully navigated another roadblock, making the return of Amtrak to the Gulf Coast more likely than ever. But one last hurdle remains for Mobile and it comes at a time of uncertainty.

With local and state budgets in flux due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a \$5.4 million Federal Railroad Administration grant to the SRC means the commission will need to pressure the state of Alabama even more to make needed safety improvements that would ensure a project to bring twice-daily train service between Mobile and New Orleans moves forward.

“There’s still a question of money, infrastructure-wise, in Alabama,” SRC Chairman Wiley Blankenship said. “With the economy in flux and tax revenue down, it’s going to have an impact.”

The state government has already balked at supporting the project once, which forced the Mobile City Council to fund the current grant’s match of a maximum of \$3 million over three years. With estimates that the state could lose at least \$1 billion due to the virus outbreak, Blankenship understands there might be hesitation on the part of the state and county governments.

“It’s going to have an impact on everything,” he said. “There will be priorities all over the state.”

While Blankenship said he’s “worried” from a local perspective because of the uncertainty in the economy, he believes rail is a “viable way to travel.” At roughly \$3 million, Blankenship said, the safety improvements are not a “huge lift.”

“I think it’ll be an integral part of getting the economy going,” he said. “It’s clear in Mobile and along the Gulf Coast that people want this.”

If local and state governments can’t make it work, Blankenship said the SRC would work to find other sources of funding.

“We’re not going to stop as the SRC,” he said. “We’re going to be turning over rocks to find funding.”

Another issue impacting the return of passenger rail is a station in Mobile. Whether the city and SRC continue with a plan to build a train terminal at the Brookley Aeroplex, or if it just becomes a simple platform, Blankenship said a station is needed.

“A station has to be done,” he said. “Put it down on the list.”

Local SRC member Stephen McNair struck a more optimistic tone when asked about the grant. First, McNair thanked the city for the match.

“The Southern Rail Commission is thrilled that a large part of the operating costs has been allocated,” he said. “It would not have been a successful federal grant application without the city’s commitment to the return of passenger rail.”

McNair said the SRC would begin planning for the infrastructure improvements and was still on track to open the new line in 2022.

“This is a very positive step forward,” McNair said. “We remained committed to reinstating passenger rail along the coast.”

[Driven Miles in the U.S. Could Hit Their Lowest Levels in Decades](#)

Total vehicle miles traveled in the U.S. this year could potentially fall to levels not seen since as far back as the 1970s if shelter-in-place orders continue for a few more months, according to a [new report from the Brookings Institute](#). “We’ve never seen a drop in VMT like the one underway today,” write Adie Tomer and Lara Fishbane. The report goes a level deeper with numbers from Streetlight Data, which uses vehicle and cell phone location services to track driving habits. A few insights: “Metropolitan populations were responsive to stay-at-home orders, leading to larger drops in driving the longer orders were in place,” the report says. They also saw larger shares of workers in high-information and management industries have a significant negative impact on driving. And Democratic leaning counties were also far more likely to reduce their driving.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is working closely with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and other federal partners to provide guidance to the public transportation industry in response to the [coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). Today, FTA posted 13 new [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) regarding COVID-19 on its website that cover Administrative Relief, Civil Rights, the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#), and Emergency Relief program requirement questions. The new questions that have been added include:

WAVE to restart full service

Posted by [Dale Liesch](#) | Apr 30, 2020

The city’s transit service will resume full service on Friday, May 1, with a number of precautions in place to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

Mayor Sandy Stimpson, in a virtual briefing on Thursday, said WAVE Transit buses would be back on the roads, but with stricter “cleaning protocols and social distancing.”

“We feel a reduction in ridership will also help ensure social distancing,” he said.

Antonie Maiben, president of the local chapter of the Amalgamated Transit Union, said members are “antsy” to get back to work, but also hoped for a pay bump given the hazardous conditions that await them.

“We have concerns for the front-line workers at high risk of contracting COVID-19,” he said. “WAVE employees deserve hazard pay.”

First Transit, the management company paid by the city to operate WAVE is supplying drivers with masks, gloves and sanitizer, Maiben said, but he still wants workers to receive time-and-a-half, while the coronavirus is still a threat.

The city stopped service last month amid concerns over the spread of COVID-19. Despite Gov. Kay Ivey’s stay-at-home order, other major Alabama cities, like Montgomery and Birmingham kept transit service largely in operation, as buses were deemed an essential service. At the time, Maiben and ATU International Vice President Anthony Garland criticized the city’s and First Transit’s decision to suspend most WAVE routes.

Transit Management of Mobile

D/b/a The Wave Transit System
The Wave Transit System, GM&O Transportation Center, 110 Beauregard Street, Ste. 104 Mobile, Alabama 36602, 251-344-6600
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Graphic Design Services **Project Number: WTS-05-1120**

Issue Date: May 11, 2020

Deadline for Questions:

Request for Information Due Date:

Tuesday, May 26, 2020

Friday, May 29, 2020, 5:00p.m. (CST)

Transit Management of Mobile D/b/a The Wave Transit System (The Wave) is seeking information from qualified vendors or individuals for graphic design services. Graphic design services will include a re-design The Wave Transit Systems bus route guides.

Interested parties should contact Gerald E. Alfred, Director of Planning & Capital Projects at 251-344-6600, extension 225 or via email at galfred@thewavetransit.com.

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) ONLY. This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes. It does not constitute a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a promise to issue an RFP in the future. This request for information does not commit The Wave to contract for any supply or service whatsoever. Further, The Wave is not at this time seeking proposals and will not accept unsolicited proposals. Respondee are advised that The Wave will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in response to this RFI; all costs associated with responding to this RFI will be solely at the interested party's expense. Not responding to this RFI does not preclude participation in any future RFP, if any is issued. If a solicitation is released, it will be synopsisized on The Waves website at www.thewavetransit.com local media outlets and vendors registered on The Wave bidder's directory. It is the responsibility of the potential offerors to monitor these sites for additional information pertaining to this requirement.

The Scope of Services may include but is not limited to:

- Design proposal templates in Word, as required.
- The design colors will be white paper with black imprint. (weight TBD)
- Create custom Maps, Schedules, Illustrations, and other graphics
- Import content into approved template
- Provide final compilation of documents in print and electronic formats (PDF).
- (Quantity to be determined)
- Provide photography retouching and editing

Other

- The contractor will provide all labor equipment and materials to perform the services.
- The Waves branding artwork will be provided to ensure consistent branded materials are created.
- Work may be completed remotely.
- Travel time and expenses are not anticipated in the scope of the contract.

Contractor Requirements:

- Strong understanding and experience in graphic design for above scope
- Expertise in design of templates in InDesign and Word
- Expertise in graphic design using Adobe Creative Suite
- Expertise in route maps designs
- Ability to furnish tools, equipment, and materials needed to perform the services

RFI Proposal Requirements:

The Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) for this RFI may not exceed five (5) pages. The proposal should be submitted electronically as a PDF to galfred@thewavetransit.com. Technical capabilities, fees, and work examples should address the scope of work.

Cover Letter

Letter should introduce you / your company and provide a summary of your qualifications. Briefly describe any project approaches or ideas that make you / your company unique

Attachments

- Statement of Interest and Technical Capabilities
- Fee Schedule (Hourly Rate)
- List of recent experience in RFI subject matter area mentioned in Scope
- 2 samples of self-performed graphics design, including at least one proposal example for the Airport Route (Route 1). Please visit the website at www.thewavetransit.com (Routes and Schedules) to view proposal example.

Summary

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) ONLY to identify sources that can provide Graphic Design Services. The information provided in the RFI is subject to change and is not binding on The Wave. The Wave has not made a commitment to procure any of the items discussed, and release of this RFI should not be construed as such a commitment or as authorization to incur cost for which reimbursement would be required or sought.

Transportation Research

[FHWA STEP Initiative Aims to Boost Pedestrian Safety](#)

Pedestrian fatalities increased 53 percent between 2009 and 2018, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Crashes with vehicles killed 6,283 pedestrians in 2018, the highest number since 1990. To help address this national safety problem, the Every Day Counts (EDC) initiative on [safe transportation for every pedestrian](#) (STEP) is promoting proven safety countermeasures for pedestrian crossings. In EDC round five (EDC-5), 34 States set goals to advance implementation of some or all of what the STEP team calls the “spectacular seven” countermeasures. By early 2020, 12 States have advanced or met their EDC-5 goal. Seven States have institutionalized the use of STEP countermeasures. The STEP team has helped more than 20 states develop STEP action plans. “State officials creating action plans meet to identify opportunities for strengthening policy and project-level decisions to incorporate the STEP countermeasures,” said Becky Crowe, Federal Highway Administration transportation specialist and team co-leader.

Alabama Center for Business and Economic Research April 2020

A note from our office:

During these complex times, CBER remains committed to serving you and helping you navigate the COVID-19 landscape. Currently, we are following UA’s directive to telecommute and social distance, but CBER is continuing to work hard to provide you with insightful data and information. Please reach out to us at [205-348-6191](tel:205-348-6191) or uacber@culverhouse.ua.edu with any project needs. We are here to serve you!

[COVID-19's Impact on the Economy](#)

In the midst of the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, CBER's experts are here to offer some insight. Sam Addy, Ph.D. and Ahmad Ijaz, CBER's Executive Director & Director of Economic Forecasting, weigh in with what we can expect from our local and national economies in the coming months. Click [here](#) to read more.

[CBER Shines in 2020 Census Count Review](#)

Thanks to the hard work of CBER staff, 200 group quarter addresses and 21,470 housing units were added to the Census Bureau’s Master Address File for Alabama to include people who otherwise would not have been counted during the 2020 Census. Read more about the 2020 Census Count Review [here](#).

[Q2 2020 ABCI Results Released April 15](#)

The second quarter 2020 Alabama Business Confidence Index (ABCI) results will be available April 15. Business leaders throughout Alabama are invited to register and participate in this unique forecasting tool. Find more details on the [ABCI webpage](#).

Sustainable Highway Construction Guidebook

Sustainability is often an element that informs decisions made during the planning, programming, and design phases of highway construction projects. However, the construction phase of a highway project is also an opportunity to advance sustainability.

The TRB National Cooperative Highway Research Program's *NCHRP Research Report 916: Sustainable Highway Construction Guidebook* provides clear and practical information on what constitutes sustainability in the context of highway construction and how to evaluate any proposed construction practice for its sustainability potential.

The guidebook supports implementation by describing ways to explicitly advance sustainability in procurement and contracting and how to develop a sustainability management plan for the construction phase.

An overview of NCHRP Research Report 916 is provided in this [PowerPoint presentation](#). A separate publication, [NCHRP Web-Only Document 262: Sustainable Highway Construction](#), describes the research process and outcomes used to develop NCHRP Research Report 916.

A summary of NCHRP Web-Only Document 262 is provided in this [PowerPoint presentation](#).

Project: [Project Information](#)

DOI: [10.17226/25698](#)

Project Number: 10-91A

E-Newsletter Type: [Recently Released TRB Publications](#)

TRB Publication Type: [NCHRP Report](#)

The Department of Transportation has identified transportation assets that fall within Opportunity Zones with the goal of driving investment of all types to these important areas.

