Both the Federal and State Legislatures have been busy this week, in terms of transportation. An Alabama Highway Commission? Federal Funding Issues and Infrastructure talks? See Legislative Updates. Passenger rail is coming to Mobile again, and in the future there will be driverless deliveries; see In The News. There is a new Funding Opportunity for federal lands (in S. AL= Grand Bay NWR, Bon Secour NWR, Barin Field, Conecuh NF). Also, there are some new items in Transportation Research. This week’s Just For Fun is a romantic dinner....

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

January 22, the Mobile MPO Policy Committee met. The Technical Coordinating Committee and Citizen’s Advisory Committee (TCC/CAC) Bylaws and committee composition were amended. If you are a MPO Member, or an agency on the TCC/CAC, please take time to review the Bylaws and who sits on the committee.

Other items on the agenda of the MPO included a couple of cost increases in the Transportation Improvement Program. The cost increases are for the following projects:

- CN 100049566 Replace Bridge Westbound Over Tensaw -Spanish River from $24,841,688 to $35,165,857, funded with Federal Bridge Funds,

- CN 100060154 SR 158 Extension Lott Road Overpass and Jug Handle from $20,000,000 to $25,161,677 funded with National Highway Funds.

The two ATRIPPI awards were added to the TIP:

- CN Phase 1 to Widen AL-158 from 2 Lanes to 4 Lanes from Mile Post 7.75 to Spartan Drive in City of Saraland $4,741,885.95

- CN Intersection Improvements, Including Adding Roundabout at SR-188 and Irvington Bayou La Batre Highway Target Start Date : 1/1/2020 Engineers Estimate : $246,923.00 City of Bayou La Batre

- Also on the Agenda was a STP Attributable realignment. Additional lanes on Zeigler Blvd from Forest Hill to Athey has had a recent cost increase from $17,650,000 to $20,812,530, leaving the STP Attributable schedule out of balance. Additional lanes on Three Notch Road from Schilling Road to McDonald Road was moved out from FY 2023 to FY 2024.

- 100052463 (UT) Three Notch Road, Schillinger Rd to McDonald Rd (Additional Lanes) $449,945
  - Originally scheduled in 2022, now scheduled in 2024

- 100052464 (CN) Three Notch Road, Schillinger Rd to McDonald Rd (Additional Lanes) $4,499,456
  - Originally scheduled in 2023, now scheduled in 2024

- Projects of the Congestion Management Process 2020-2023
  - Government Street CMP Corridor, FY 2020 $625,000
  - Airport Blvd, Hillcrest Rd to Cody Rd, FY 2021 $625,000
There was a discussion on the *Envision 2045*, the 25 year Long Range Transportation Plan. All federally funded transportation projects must be derived from this plan. It is updated every five years, and must be fiscally constrained, meaning the federally funding must be identified for each project in the Plan. Currently, the I-10 Mobile River Bridge is not in the fiscally constrained Plan. There was also a short presentation by Kevin Spriggs with the Common Sense Campaign on a Coastal Alabama Consensus Plan for a four lane Mobile River Bridge and Expressway.

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Envision2045
Invest in your transportation Future
Mobile, AL Metropolitan Area Long Range Transportation Plan
https://www.envision2045.org/public-involvement.html

The Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is currently updating its Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Mobile Urban Area and is seeking public input.

LRTPs are multimodal plans that set priorities for spending federal funds on transportation projects in the Mobile Urban Area over the next 25 years. These projects include improvements to highways, roads, bridges, transit facilities and service, bicycle and pedestrian routes, and related enhancements.

A public input meeting was held this past Wednesday, January 29th from 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm, providing the public a chance to provide input on the draft LRTP for year 2045.

Participation and input is encouraged from the community. If you would like a chance to comment, you may send your comments to transportation@sarpc.org.

More information on the new plan can be found at https://www.envision2045.org/ or by contacting Kevin Harrison, Director of Transportation, SARPC, at (251)433-6541 or kharrison@sarpc.org.

Envision2045 is multi-modal in scope, encompassing long-range plans for highway, public transportation, and bicycle and 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 alternative modes. 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.

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) invites decision makers, stakeholders, and members of the general public to participate in the development of the plan. SARPC is seeking feedback on transportation major infrastructure projects, initiatives and policies.

Your comments help SARPC’s planners to develop a wide-ranging, action-oriented transportation plan. The Envision2045 plan being developed will also serve as a basis for allocating limited federal money aimed at roadways, bridges, and public transportation facilities. The comment period on the early participation online survey is closed; however, there will be several more opportunities for the public to comment on the plan in the near future.

Results from the Survey conducted online from September 2019 to October 2019 can be found in the following document: Mobile Urban Area 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Survey Report.

Click HERE for Full Results.

The final LRTP document is expected to be complete by March 2020. The current version can be viewed at http://www.mobilempo.org/.../Destination2040/FINALDOCUMENT.pdf.

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Mobile MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Meeting
The Mobile MPO BPAC met last week to discuss bicycle and pedestrian issues throughout Mobile County. The agenda included the election of Chair and Vice-Chair – Mr. John Blanton was elected Chairman and Ms. Carol Hunter was elected Vice-Chairwoman. We would like to thank these kind folks for their continued guidance and support.

There was an update on the Bike/Ped section of the MPO’s 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan and a review of upcoming road projects for inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. There was also a brief discussion on acquiring recent crash data involving cyclists and pedestrians. There was also an update on the Coastal Alabama Livable Communities Coalition’s Bicycle Safety Training for Law Enforcement Officers.

**The MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY is underway**

Over the years, the viability of transit in the underserved segments of Mobile County has been an important task to consider. The ability to connect those populations with daily needs and employment could be an important step in improving the quality of life for residents.
Recent advancements in technology have given rise to new transit opportunities, and the Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization /
South Alabama Regional Planning Commission are currently engaged in studying the feasibility of a demand response transit model for our
County. The demand response transit model uses a technology system to connect those in need of a ride with the provider based on the most efficient route and timing of other riders as well.

An important step in determining the feasibility of such a system includes talking with important stakeholders in the county. To future these efforts, a stakeholder roundtable meeting was held earlier this week. It is our hope that participating in this roundtable will help our consulting group gather information on the populations in need of improved transit access in Mobile County.

In August of 2019, a consultant selection committee selected VIA Mobility to perform the study. VIA Mobility has partnered with local group Goodwin, Mills, and Cawood as a sub consultant. HERE is Via’s presentation from the kick-off.

**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 **Destination 2040**. 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.

**Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile**

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

Project : 100071115 Federal aid number : ATRP2-49-2020-442-CN  County : MOBILE Scope : CN
Project Description : WIDENING FROM 2 TO 4 LANES ON SR-158 FROM MP 7.75 TO SPARTAN DRIVE
Urban Area : 067 MOBILE
Target Start Date : 12/4/2020
Engineers Estimate : $2,020,000.00

Project : 100066703 ( CN )
Federal aid number : STPMB 0016
County : MOBILE
Project Description : INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS - CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROCESS - SR-16 (US-90) FROM BROAD STREET TO BANKHEAD TUNNEL
Old Engineers Estimate : $899,410.00
New Engineers Estimate : $1,372,715.00

Project : 100055881 ( RW )
Federal aid number : STPMB 7550 (602)
County : MOBILE
Project Description : ADDITIONAL LANES ON CR-656 (ZEIGLER BLVD) FROM CR-70 (TANNER WILLIAMS RD) TO CR-31 (SCHILLINGER RD)
Old Target start date : April 01, 2020
New Target start date : May 01, 2020

Project : 100037215 ( CN )
Federal aid number : DBMB-STPMB 7550 (600)
County : MOBILE
South Alabama RPO Updates

Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Update

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) is updating the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan which details which projects are eligible for Federal Transit Administration dollars for Elderly and Disabled (5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute projects (5316) or those transit projects that go above and beyond the requirements of ADA (5317).

If you are interested in, utilize, or provide transit, or would like to apply for federal transit dollars for special needs transit services your organization needs to be involved in this process.

SARPC staff will be holding public meetings to explain the plan, solicit input, and review the FTA 5310 application process in the coming weeks.

If you would like to comment on the plan or have any questions please contact the Transportation Planning Department at SARPC at 251-433-6541.

Projects in Region Let February 28th, 2020

MOBILE COUNTY
For constructing the Roadway Extension Overpass (Grading, Drainage, Pavement, and Bridge) and Jug Handle on SR-158 over a tributary of EB Seabury Creek and Partial Lott Road to include the Minor Widening, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-158 from 0.020 mile west of the junction of Schillinger Road to 0.400 mile east of the junction of Schillinger Road in Semmes. Length 1.093 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from $17,147,508 to $20,958,065.

BALDWIN COUNTY
For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, and Traffic Stripe on SR-3 (US-31) from the junction of Crosby Road in Bay Minette to the Escambia County Line. Length 11.308 mi.

The Bracket Estimate on this project is from $1,982,091 to $2,422,555.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY
For constructing the Planing, Resurfacing, Guardrail Installation, and Traffic Stripe on SR-15 (US-29) from the junction of Finlay Lane to the Covington County Line. Length 18.720 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from $2,962,024 to $3,620,251.

What’s Under Construction? Project Status

Legislative Updates

Congress is in session.

Bill Introduced to establish a Alabama Transportation Commission

Sponsor
Session
Regular Session 2020

Title
Transportation Commission, established, five members appt from five regions of dept, duties, compensation, appointment of Transportation Department director, department not subject to Budget Management Act, Secs. 23-1-21, 23-1-21.2 am'd.

Description
Under existing law, the Department of Transportation is under the direction of the director who is appointed by the Governor

This bill would create the State Transportation Commission composed of five members appointed by the Governor from the five regions of the Department of Transportation to coordinate and develop the activities of the department

This bill would provide for the appointment of the Director of the Department of Transportation by the commission and for the duties of the director

This bill would also provide that the department would not be subject to the Budget Management Act

Relating to the Department of Transportation; to establish the State Transportation Commission; to provide for the members, duties, responsibilities, and compensation and expenses of the commission; to prohibit a person serving on the State Transportation Commission from benefiting by entering employment with or contracting with companies that do business with the Department of Transportation while he or she serves on the Commission or for a period of two years thereafter; to provide for the appointment and duties of the Director of the Department of Transportation; and for this purpose to amend Sections 23-1-21 and 23-1-21.2, Code of Alabama 1975, relating to the appointment and authority of the Director of the Department of Transportation.

Rep. Chris Pringle introduced this bill as HB-19 in the House on 02-04-2020. In the House it was read for the first time and referred to the House of Representatives committee on Transportation, Utilities and Infrastructure

The Senate and House bill are currently the same. HERE: http://alisondb.legislature.state.al.us/ALISON/SearchableInstruments/2020RS/PrintFiles/HB19-int.pdf

House Lawmakers Agree on Infrastructure Investments, but Lack Funding Proposals

Democrats and Republicans on the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee in the House demonstrated a rare show of bipartisanship Feb. 6 by endorsing stakeholders’ consistent calls for investing in multimodal connectivity. Neither party, however, has revealed a long-term plan meant to provide funding for transportation projects.
During a hearing of the Trade Subcommittee, lawmakers saw eye-to-eye on the need for enhancing conditions at major freight corridors and commercial distribution centers. Such improvements, they agreed, could facilitate trade, leading to improvements to local and regional economies.

Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), who led the subcommittee hearing with freight stakeholders, pointed to an outline unveiled by fellow Democrats last month that aims to invest $760 billion in infrastructure systems over five years. The policy blueprint calls for advancing severe-weather resilience policy while relying on the White House for input on how to address funding concerns. A White House official recently said the president’s team would welcome such ideas from Congress.

The account used to assist states with projects, the Highway Trust Fund, is on a path toward insolvency in about two years. The account relies on insufficient revenue from the fuel tax. Congress set the 24.4 cents-per-gallon diesel tax rate and 18.4 cents-per-gallon gas tax rate in 1993.

“Today, much of our nation’s infrastructure is nearing the end of its useful life. Aging locks and dams on our inland waterways, deteriorating roads and outdated airports hamper our quality of life and result in costly delays for U.S. commerce,” said Blumenauer, who has championed raising fuel taxes at the federal level to boost funding for highway projects. HERE

Ways & Means Hearing Tackles Transportation Funding Issues

Analyzing the effectiveness of current funding transportation infrastructure investment practices while investigating new methods served as the focal point for a House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means hearing on January 29.

[Seen above testifying at the hearing from left to right: Jo ung Lee, Philip Fischer, Laura Canter, and Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti. D.J. Gribbin, missing from the photo, also testified.]

“We all recognize the need to fix our roads, bridges, transit, water systems, and electrical grids,” noted Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., chairman of the Ways & Means committee, in his opening remarks.

Rep. Richard Neal

“With that in mind, we will use this hearing to explore how to best direct our federal infrastructure investments to ensure that we invest wisely,” Rep. Neal said. “We will also discuss ways to build on the federal-state partnership that is the cornerstone of America’s infrastructure financing system.”

Ranking Member Rep. Kevin Brady, R-Texas, added that America’s infrastructure needs today “are more regional than national in scope” and thus “different thinking” is required when it comes to redesigning existing public financing to meet that challenges.
Rep. Kevin Brady

“Of course, user fees should remain a key source of financing, but that shouldn’t stop us from thinking creatively on how to meet those undeniable 21st century challenges,” Rep. Brady said in his remarks.

Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti, commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Transportation, stressed in her testimony before the committee that there is “no more important funding decision” than that which involves the nation’s transportation network.

“Not unlike utilities, the transportation network is used every day by everyone, and perhaps the single service each of us takes for granted,” she said. “Whether it be by car, train, truck, walking, or biking, everything depends on safe and reliable transportation.”

Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti

However, Gutierrez-Scaccetti stressed that “when the transportation system fails, our economy is in jeopardy ... families are disconnected and, most importantly, our national defense is compromised.”

And “unpredictable funding” – especially where the federal motor fuels tax is concerned – is generating such failures, she warned.

“Since its inception in 1956, the Highway Trust Fund [HTF] remains the bedrock foundation of a strong federal surface program on which every state and their local partners rely,” Gutierrez-Scaccetti explained. HERE

Trump Urges Congress to Back Senate Committee’s Highway Bill

President backs bill that Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved in July. (Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

February 4, 2020

Tom Ichniowski

Infrastructure advocates had to wait until President Trump was about an hour into his State of the Union address, but they finally heard what they were listening for: a “mention” about investing in public works. [View White House transcript of speech here.]
Trump said in his Feb. 4 speech before a joint session of Congress, “We must…rebuild America’s infrastructure.” Then he got more specific, calling on Congress to approve the highway authorization bill that the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee cleared unanimously on July 30.

Trump referred to the measure as “Senator John Barrasso’s highway bill,” which would “invest in new roads, bridges and tunnels across our land.”

In fact, the legislation was the result of a bipartisan effort in which Barrasso, a Republican from Wyoming, joined with the committee’s top Democrat, Tom Carper of Delaware.

It would authorize $287 billion over five years for highways, a figure that the committee said is a 27% increase over the current authorizations.

But it’s only a piece of what a full surface-transportation bill traditionally contains. Other Senate committees with jurisdiction over transit, highway safety, and—crucially—revenue have yet to write their sections of a possible transportation package.

A 27% increase in funding would require additional revenue, from somewhere.

Shortly after the speech, Barrasso issued a statement, saying, “The president spoke loud and clear tonight about putting partisan politics aside to pass a monumental American infrastructure plan.”

Barrasso called his committee’s bill “the largest highway infrastructure bill in our history,” and noted that it “cuts red tape so we can build better, smarter, faster and cheaper.”

Though the impeachment process had yet to conclude in the Senate, Barrasso said, “Impeachment has been a costly distraction “and called on lawmakers “to put the partisan fights behind us and get this done now.”

The president didn’t touch on such other types of infrastructure as drinking water, wastewater treatment, airports, rail and transit.

In the Democrats’ response , Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer spent more time than Trump did on infrastructure.

She pointed to 13-year-old Monte Scott of Muskegon Heights, Mich., who, in Whitmer’s words, “grabbed a shovel and a bucket of dirt” and filled in the potholes on his street.

Whitmer cited Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, who she said supported a major plan to upgrade highways and bridges, and New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, who proposed a plan to replace lead drinking-water pipes in his state.

Whitmer said, “Congressional Democrats have presented [infrastructure] proposals to keep us moving forward. But President Trump and Republicans in the Senate are blocking the path.”

A key House player on public works issues, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (Ore.), also weighed in. In a post-State of the Union statement DeFazio criticized Trump for just touching on infrastructure in his speech.

He added, “That is incredibly disappointing,” saying that the lack of an administration infrastructure push “is a massive missed opportunity.”

DeFazio pointed out that House Democrats recently unveiled a $760-billion infrastructure framework that goes beyond highways to include other transportation sectors, along with non-transportation areas such as water and energy.

But the Democrats’ framework also has a missing section—it also is silent on how to finance it.

Rep. Lipinski: Grade crossing safety a priority for FAST Act reauthorization bill

For the first time in 15 years, the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials held a hearing yesterday on issues surrounding grade crossing safety.
The hearing was called as part of the subcommittee's work on legislation to reauthorize the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, said Chairman Dan Lipinski (D-Ill.) in a prepared statement of his opening remarks. Addressing issues related to grade crossings is one of his "top priorities" in the legislation, including finding more funding for grade separations and quiet zones.

Lipinski's district has the most grade crossings of any congressional district due to the number of railroads that operate in the Chicago region, he said. On a daily basis, his constituents experience issues related to living near a high number of grade crossings, such as blocked crossings, train horn noise and railroad property upkeep, he said.

The Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) recent launch of a blocked crossing reporting system is a "step in the right direction," Lipinski said.

"But ... the notion that the way a community experiencing blocked grade crossing should try to solve the problem is to fill out a report and submit to the FRA or call the railroad and hope the railroad will unblock the crossing is ridiculous," he said.

Both Lipinski and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) also noted the high cost of some crossing safety improvement projects.

"With only $245 million available nationwide this year for projects through Section 130 Railway-Highway Grade Crossing Program, many states struggle to cover the costs of multimillion-dollar projects," said DeFazio, according to a prepared statement of his opening remarks.

As a result, Democrats plan to provide more funding opportunities for crossing safety projects through grants in the rail title of the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill, DeFazio added.

Among those scheduled to testify at yesterday's hearing were Karl Alexy, the FRA's associate administrator for railroad safety and chief safety officer; Brian Vercruysse, rail safety program administrator for the Illinois Commerce Commission; Mark Christoffels, chief engineer of the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments/Alameda Corridor-East Project; Rachel Maleh, executive director of Operation Lifesaver Inc.; and Jason Morris, assistant vice president of safety and environment for Norfolk Southern Corp.

## Infrastructure For Rebuilding America

### U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Announces Availability of More Than $900 Million for Infrastructure Investments Across America

**February 25, 2020 deadline**

WASHINGTON — U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Secretary Elaine L. Chao today announced the latest round of the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) discretionary grant program, which is making available more than $900 million for American infrastructure investments. The INFRA program is expected to award $906 million to significant projects that support the Administration's focus on infrastructure improvements as outlined in the NOFO.

"The Department will invest more than $900 million in major projects that will improve transportation infrastructure, economic productivity, and quality of life across our nation," said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao.

INFRA advances a grant program established in the FAST Act of 2015 to help rebuild America's aging infrastructure. INFRA utilizes selection criteria that promote projects with national and regional economic vitality goals while leveraging non-federal funding to increase the total investment by state, local, and private partners. The program also incentivizes project sponsors to pursue innovative strategies, including public-private partnerships. INFRA promotes the incorporation of innovative technology, such as broadband deployment and intelligent transportation systems, that will improve our transportation system. INFRA will also hold recipients accountable for their performance in project delivery and operations.

The Department will make awards under the INFRA program to large and small projects. For a large project, the INFRA grant must be at least $25 million. For a small project, the grant must be at least $5 million. For each fiscal year of INFRA funds, 10 percent of available funds are reserved for small projects.

The Department will award at least 25 percent of INFRA grant funding to rural projects, which often play a vital role in supporting our national economic vitality. Addressing the deteriorating conditions and elevated fatality rates on our rural transportation infrastructure is a key objective of the Department. For rural communities in need of funding for highway and multimodal freight projects with national or regional economic significance, INFRA is an opportunity to apply directly for financial assistance from the federal government.

INFRA grants may be used to fund a variety of components of an infrastructure project, however, the Department is specifically focused on projects in which the local sponsor is significantly invested and is positioned to proceed rapidly to construction. Eligible INFRA project costs may include: reconstruction, rehabilitation, acquisition of property (including land related to the project and improvements to the
land), environmental mitigation, construction contingencies, equipment acquisition, and operational improvements directly related to system performance.

The NOFO application period will remain open through February 25, 2020. For more information, visit: www.transportation.gov/INFRA.

Federal Lands Access Program

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 now has an [EDA Opportunity Zone Web page](https://www.eda.gov/opportunityzones) 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.

FTA makes $130M in funding available for bus program

BY MELINA DRUGA | JANUARY 28, 2020

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recently made available up to $130 million Low or No Emission (Low-No) Bus Program competitive grant funds.

The program provides funding for the purchase or lease of low- or no-emission vehicles that use advanced technologies for transit revenue operations. The program also includes related equipment and facilities.

Eligible applicants include state transportation departments, public transit agencies, and tribes. The FTA will award grants on a competitive basis.

The FTA will evaluate projects on numerous criteria, including project implementation strategy, project benefits, demonstration of need, and capacity for implementing the project. The criteria were defined by federal law.

The Notice of Funding Opportunity also included criteria in accordance with the R.O.U.T.E.S. and Accelerating Innovative Mobility initiatives that apply to rural challenges and innovation.

“The U.S. Department of Transportation is committed to improving safety, rebuilding our transportation infrastructure, and preparing for the future with new technologies,” FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams said.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act 2020 appropriated $130 million in fiscal year 2020 for Low-No Program grants.

The program received applications from 157 projects during fiscal year 2019 requesting $500 million, and 38 were funded totaling $84.95 million.

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)**

**Next Friday is Valentine’s Day**
Believe it or not, this holiday was not made up by Hallmark to get you to buy cards and chocolates. It is a Christian Feast Day honoring an early Saint named Valentinus. Valentine’s Day is recognized as a significant cultural, religious, and commercial celebration of romance and romantic love in many regions around the world. But, not everyone has a life partner, and there are some bitter relationship endings.

So as a Public Service Announcement from the JFF writers, please do not take your bad relationship aggression out on automobiles....

Instead, contact the San Antonio Zoo. The San Antonio Zoo in Texas said it will name a rat after your ex and feed it to a snake on Feb. 14. The zoo is charging $25 for this service, but there’s a cheaper alternative that’s just as spiteful. For only $5, you can name a cockroach after your ex, and the zoo will feed it to a bird or another animal. Even if you (or your exes) don't live in Texas, you can still participate in this “feeding frenzy” because the zoo will be live-streaming the event on Facebook.

You must submit the first name of your ex on the zoo’s website by Feb. 13.

**In the News**

**Mobile City Council approves passenger rail resolution**
Posted by Dale Liesch | Feb 4, 2020 | Latest News | 0 | reprinted with permission from the LAGNIAPPE

The return of passenger rail service in Mobile is still on track, after the Mobile City Council voted to provide $3 million over three years to help fund operation of a train.

Councilman Joel Daves was the only dissenting vote on an amended letter of intent to support the Southern Rail Commission (SRC) in its efforts to apply for a federal grant to operate twice-daily, round-trip service between Mobile and New Orleans, with stops in several Mississippi cities along the way. Councilors voted unanimously to incorporate most of the language Mayor Sandy Stimpson had suggested be added to it.

SRC member Stephen McNair said the $3 million is capped and will not be exceeded, alleviating fears the service could become a financial burden to the city.
“This cannot become another GulfQuest,” McNair said, alluding to a doomed project beset early on by costly delays. “It’s not possible with the way this grant is written.”

The city funding will only cover a local match for a grant to operate the service. The Mobile County Commission or the state would be responsible for any needed infrastructure, McNair told councilors. SRC has had conversations with commissioners and Gov. Kay Ivey’s office as it relates to infrastructure costs, he said.

“The governor is supportive of SRC and is open about her interest in this,” McNair said. “The door is open as it relates to infrastructure.”

Councilors remaining on the fence following previous debate on the subject seemed to be swayed, in part, by Stimpson’s support of the measure. In a letter to Council President Levon Manzie, Stimpson wrote he was in favor of moving forward, given a number of contingencies related to concerns from port officials.

“Our goal is to deliver this amenity to our citizens while protecting the city’s financial interests and ensuring that this new service does not impede the tremendous job growth we are experiencing through growth at the port of Mobile,” he wrote.

The city’s support, Stimpson wrote, should be contingent upon the completion of a freight impact study, currently being conducted by Norfolk Southern, CSX and Amtrak. Stimpson also wrote the city must not be committed to any future improvements to rail lines and the city’s contributions start in 2022 and end in 2024.

Councilwoman Gina Gregory and Councilman John Williams credited Stimpson’s letter with helping to move them to an affirmative vote.

Before the final vote, Daves again addressed his concerns publicly. In addition to concerns over the impact to port operations, Daves said the service is expected to lose close to $7 million per year, even if the roughly $700,000 annual projected passenger revenue is considered. It’s a cost that would be split evenly among Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. The state, he said, would be on the hook for about $2.3 million per year, which would put the subsidy at about 10 to one.

“For every $1 spent by a passenger, it would be $10 for taxpayers, by Amtrak’s own numbers,” he said. “With that level of subsidy, it might as well be free.”

Daves also attacked the idea a four-hour ride to New Orleans, with possible ticket prices as high as $35, represented a new form of public transportation for the Port City.

“This isn’t a viable form of alternative transportation,” Daves said. “It’s a joy ride for the affluent.”

Feds clear the way for Nuro's driverless deliveries

Nuro's second-generation delivery vehicle, R2. Photo courtesy of Nuro

The U.S. Transportation Department is giving its regulatory blessing to the first autonomous vehicle with no steering wheel, pedals or human occupant.

Why it matters: Vehicle safety standards were written for today’s cars and trucks, mostly to protect humans riding inside them. By granting an exemption to Nuro's self-driving delivery vans, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is beginning to pave the way for the driverless era.
The big picture: Congress has yet to pass self-driving legislation and the Department of Transportation has so far issued only voluntary guidelines to companies developing the technology. Absent federal rules, many states permit testing of self-driving cars as long as they comply with existing vehicle safety standards.

What's happening: The exemption announced today allows Nuro to deploy its occupant-free R2 delivery vehicle without some familiar features.

- “Since this is a low-speed self-driving delivery vehicle, certain features that the department traditionally required – such as mirrors and windshield for vehicles carrying drivers – no longer make sense,” said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao.
- Instead, Nuro replaced the side and rearview mirrors with cameras and other sensors and rounded the vehicle body to take up less road space, making it safer for others nearby.
- They also did away with the usual windshield and replaced it with an energy-absorbing front panel to help protect pedestrians and cyclists.
- Under the federal exemption, Nuro doesn't have to worry about a driver-distraction rule requiring rearview cameras to shut off when the vehicle is moving forward. Instead, those cameras help see 360 degrees around the vehicle.

Yes, but: NHTSA is keeping a tight leash on the company as its deploys the vehicles as part of a delivery service for Kroger, Wal-Mart and Domino's Pizza starting in Houston. Among the conditions:

- Nuro may deploy no more than 5,000 R2s during the two-year exemption period and must supply the agency with real-time safety data.
- To ensure transparency, it must also meet regularly with NHTSA and do community outreach in neighborhoods where its vehicles are operating.

What to watch: Nuro said it hopes the testing will help the government write rules for a new category of low-speed self-driving vehicles.

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Downtown e-scooters undergo safety changes for Mardi Gras

Gotcha scooters will operate will additional safety features starting tonight through Mardi Gras on Feb. 25.

Among the changes, the scooters will automatically slow to a walking pace near parade routes. Those slow speed zones will go into effect two hours before a parade starts. Parade zones will be marked in the Gotcha application.

Scooters are not permitted in parades and are also not allowed inside parade barricades. Riders will also be charged a fee for ending a ride in a no parking zone.

Gotcha encourages all riders to wear a helmet while riding and those riders should be aware of increased traffic and vehicles.

Gotcha mobility began placing its 200 e-scooters downtown at the end of last year. The scooters have been popular, but have been the subject of interest due to incidents and injuries early on.

Last month, the Mobile Police Department announced officers would begin enforcement of scooter laws, including all the rules of the road that currently exist downtown. In addition, scooters are not allowed on sidewalks, via city ordinance.

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Councilors to review CIP progress, judge pay next week

A Mobile City Council committee will receive an update on the city’s capital improvement program (CIP) early next week.

The council’s CIP committee, chaired by Councilman C.J. Small and featuring councilmen John Williams and Fred Richardson, will meet at 1 p.m. in the council conference on the ninth floor of Government Plaza to hear an update on the program as a whole as well as updates on projects in each district.

The CIP takes about $21 million in sales tax revenue and splits it evenly among the city’s seven council district. During each fiscal year councilors and city staff coordinate with one another to complete infrastructure projects compiled through resident surveys and 3-1-1 calls.
When the program was first instituted, the city estimated it had a backlog of $250 million in infrastructure projects. In a recent Lagniappe story, Executive Director of Public Works Jim DeLapp said the city has worked through roughly 26 percent of the list, with more than $63 million spent since 2016.

Following the CIP committee meeting, the council’s ad-hoc committee on municipal judges salaries will meet at 2 p.m. Councilwoman Gina Gregory, who chairs the committee, and members councilmen Joel Daves and C.J. Small will discuss a request from judges for council-appointed, fill-in judges and raises for both full and part-time judges.

As a result of Mardi Gras on Tuesday, Feb. 25, the council will hold its regularly scheduled meeting that week on Wednesday, Feb. 26 at 10:30 a.m. A pre-conference meeting will precede it at 9 a.m. in the council conference room.

Transportation Research

Highway Administration to Explore How AI and Blockchain Can Transform Transportation

The Federal Highway Administration launched an Exploratory Advanced Research Program this week to usher in "transformational changes and truly revolutionary advances" in highway engineering and intermodal transportation on roads across the United States.

According to a new broad agency announcement, the administration is accepting research effort proposals—with the deliberate intent of awarding either contracts or cooperative agreements—that address three trendy topics in emerging tech: blockchain for highway transportation, artificial intelligence for highway transportation, and incorporating trashed plastic into asphalt cement to reduce waste.

“This program supports scientific investigations and studies that advance the current knowledge and state-of-the-art in the sciences and technologies employed in the planning, design, construction, operation, maintenance and management of the nation’s highways,” officials wrote in the announcement. “Strategically, this research will enable and expedite the development of revolutionary approaches, methodologies, and breakthroughs required to drive innovation and greatly improve the efficiency of highway transportation.”

The agency’s EAR programs aim to produce strong public-private partnerships that catalyze solutions through “longer-term, higher risk” research. To inform its ultimate intent, FHWA conducted an extensive investigation ahead of the launch, through which it met with a “large number of stakeholders from within and outside the traditional highway research community to identify topics of research that promise transformation and possible breakthroughs in highway technology, processes and policies.” With explicitly inherent exploratory aims, the agency doesn’t expect the initial results to be immediately implementable but instead plans to further develop them over time.

The agency said it could make multiple awards for each of the following topics:

Blockchain Technology for Highway Transportation

Mostly known for underpinning Bitcoin, blockchain is a record-keeping technology that validates information on a decentralized public ledger. Though it’s still nascent, the agency argues that blockchain “has the potential to transform the connected and automated vehicle industry or freight logistics providing a platform to share a variety of information from the infrastructure and vehicles in a secure manner.” Further, the agency’s hopeful that it can provide “security and scalability at lower costs than current private network solutions” and offer a wide range of new technological functions.”
FHWA wants proposals that explore how blockchain applications could enable more secure traffic operations and car-to-car and car-to-infrastructure communications, anonymized freight data management, auction-based mechanisms for highway pricing, and beyond.

**Artificial Intelligence for Highway Transportation**

The EAR program previously funded AI-focused efforts that incorporated computer vision and natural language processing, but this time around the agency hopes for projects that empower the use of its growing heaps of data. In this light, the agency said it welcomes proposals that connect traditional and non-traditional highway data to make predictions around the system’s performance, improve sensor signal data that are used to evaluate roads and structures, provide decision support in highway system design, and more. [HERE](#).

Please join FHWA to discuss the concept of “right-sizing” highways to better match land use and transportation on existing streets. Right-sizing enables practitioners who are confronted with obsolete, damaged, or deteriorated facilities to develop innovative, context sensitive solutions that use transportation infrastructure to connect neighborhoods, create livable communities, and promote economic development.

FHWA presenters will discuss a research study, white paper, fact sheets, and case studies on the topic posted here: [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/economic_development/right_sizing/](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/economic_development/right_sizing/), followed by practitioner presentations, and a question and answer session. Featured case studies include, Seattle Alaskan Way Viaduct, the Rochester Inner Loop, and Milwaukee Park East Freeway. Webinar presenters include, Stefan Natzke and Mike Neathery (FHWA), Alec Williamson (Washington State DOT), Erik Frisch (City of Rochester), Peter Park (Univ. of Colorado).

**WEBINAR LOGISTICS:**
- Tuesday, February 25, 2020
- 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm Eastern Standard Time

For additional information, please contact Mike Neathery, 202-366-1257 or mike.neathery@dot.gov

**Webinar Registration Process**

Webinar registration is a two-step process. First, non-DOT users including State DOTs must request access to the FHWA External Portal. Second, non-DOT users including State DOTs must login using the email address used to request access to the site and their requested password. Federal DOT staff and DOT-badged contractors do not need to register for an account. DOT users can click on the registration link and use their DOT credentials to access the site.

In the External SharePoint System, EXTERNAL users (those without a @dot.gov email address) will have to request an account before they can register. Here is the link to request an account: [https://collaboration.fhwa.dot.gov/FBA/Register.aspx](https://collaboration.fhwa.dot.gov/FBA/Register.aspx). Step-by step instructions on how to request an account can be found here: [https://connectdot.connectsolutions.com/espnon-dotstaff/](https://connectdot.connectsolutions.com/espnon-dotstaff/)

**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](#).

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**TRB Publication Type:** NCHRP Report
63rd Annual Alabama Transportation Conference
February 11 – 12, 2020
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Conference Brochure

Register Now

Need a place to stay? The Staybridge Suites at 275 Lee Street is located across the street from the Transportation Conference. For more information and to reserve your room click here.

Trade Expo
FEDERAL TRUST FUNDS AND OTHER DEDICATED FUNDS:

Fiscal Sustainability Is a Growing Concern for Some Key Funds


Every major federal department has at least 2 trust funds or dedicated funds that pay for key programs. The money comes from related taxes, fees, and premiums—e.g., U.S. postage stamp revenue goes to the Postal Service Fund.

The overall federal trust fund balance is expected to start declining in 2022 as balances in the Medicare and Social Security trust funds drop. The government is projected to borrow the difference—which isn’t sustainable.

Of our 13 case study funds, 11 received general revenue in addition to dedicated revenue. For example, the 2015 Highway Trust Fund reauthorization provided $70 billion in general revenue to the fund. To continue reading click HERE.

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.

Despite the growing national economy, economically distressed communities are located in every corner of the United States and its territories. These communities have high levels of poverty, failing schools, job scarcity, and a lack of investment. A new tax incentive—Opportunity Zones—was created to spur economic development and job creation by encouraging long-term investment in low-income communities nationwide.

Read about our partner’s roles in Opportunity Zones:

- The IRS: Tax reform creates opportunity zone tax incentive
- Treasury Department Community Development Financial Institutions Fund

The Opportunity Zone designation encourages investment in communities by granting investors extensive Federal tax advantages for using their capital gains to finance new projects and enterprises. There are more than 8,700 designated Qualified Opportunity Zones located in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and five United States territories. Of the Qualified Opportunity Zones 40 percent are in rural census tracts, 38 percent are in urban tracts, and 22 percent are in suburban tracts.

South Alabama Opportunity Zones


Transportation Dictionary

The USDOT released a searchable online dictionary that includes over 9,000 transportation terms and acronyms. The terms were collected from a variety of public and private transportation publications and databases. This dictionary presents over 9,000 terms and acronyms related to transportation. The terms and acronyms were obtained from various transportation publications and databases which exist within the federal government, private organizations, Canada and Mexico.

Search Tips
Sources are listed in parenthesis after the definition.

None of the searches are case sensitive. Searching for PEDESTRIAN will produce the same results as searching for pedestrian.

The Dictionary searches for the word, phrase or acronym as it is entered and returns all records that match or contain that word, phrase or acronym. For example, searching for pedestrian will return records for pedestrian and pedestrian walkway.

Click HERE for the search engine.