



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Volume 35, Number 5

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The new Highway Bill is stuck in limbo and no Corona deal in *Legislative Updates*. There is a Mobile MPO Policy Board meeting scheduled for August 19th via GOTO meeting; the TCC/CAC met two weeks ago and there is an update to the Demand Response Transit Study- see *Mobile MPO Updates*. There are not many *Funding Opportunities*. In *The News*, a judge rules Uber and Lyft to classify drivers as employees, and this week's *Just For Fun* will catch your eye.

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

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

### MEETINGS SCHEDULED

There is a Mobile MPO Policy meeting scheduled for August 19<sup>th</sup> via GOTO meeting; the a TCC/CAC met last week (virtually).

The agenda is to include the following:

- Adoption FY 2021 [Unified Planning Work Program](#) (planning budget)
- Modify 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program
  - Cost estimate change for 100040584 (CN) US98, EB lanes from MS state line to .5 Mile East of Glenwood Rd, from \$18.2M to \$23.9M, FY 2022
  - Cost estimate change for 100033461 (CN) ADDL lanes on I-10 from CR-39 to Carol Plantation, from \$33.4M to \$41M, FY 2021
  - 100071946; PE; 5 Year Regional Traffic Operations (RTOP) TSMO for 130 Signalized Intersections Along SR-59, SR-16 (US-90), and SR-42 (US-98) Target Start Date : 8/1/2020; \$2,631,200
  - 100073250; PE; Independent Review of Austal's Proposed Road Improvements Over the Wallace Tunnels and Bankhead Tunnel; 9/1/2020; \$170,000
- Review of Demand Response Transit Study
- TAP projects (*last week the TCC/CAC recommended to increase the maximum to \$400,000 fed*)

### DRAFT 2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is now available for review.

The Draft 2021 UPWP is essentially the budget of the Mobile MPO staff. Typically in June of every year, MPO staff reviews the draft document with MOP Policy Board Members and the subcommittees, prior to submitting the draft UPWP to ALDOT and federal agencies for review. Because of the COVID-19 virus disruption our MPO meeting schedule, the draft document was submitted to ALDOT to review without committee review. The document is almost identical to the current UPWP, with the exception of no new third party contracts. The DRAFT 2021 UPWP is available for review [HERE](#).

### The MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY

There was a stakeholder meeting this week concerning the study. VIA presented [HERE](#) potential types of operators and potential operating budget. A big challenge is going to the local community support and matching funds.

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.

Please review the Tasks 1, 2 and 3 [HERE](#).

There will be a stakeholder meeting scheduled in the near future to discuss the draft report that came out his week. This will be a GOTO meeting.

The Draft Report is [HERE](#)

### ENVISION 2045 IS THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)

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. The Climate Change element, or Extreme Event Planning, remained almost unchanged from *Destination 2040* LRTP.

The LRTP *Envision 2045* was adopted by the Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization on April 22, 2020.

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

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### **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](#).

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### **Recent Scheduling Changes This Week for Mobile**

Project : 100070821 ( CN )  
Federal aid number : IM I010  
County : MOBILE  
Project Description : RESURFACE I-10 THROUGH WALLACE TUNNEL  
Old Target start date : January 29, 2021  
New Target start date : March 26, 2021

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## **South Alabama RPO Updates**

### **DRAFT 2021 RPO Work Program is now available for review.**

The RPO work Program is the staff budget for SARPC Rural Planning Organization. This draft is identical to the current work program. The DRAFT 2021 Work Program is available on the RPO Webpage [HERE](#).

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## **Projects in Region Let August 28th, 2020**

### **MOBILE COUNTY**

For constructing the Additional Lanes (Grading, Drainage, Pavement, Culvert Extension, Traffic Signals, and Traffic Stripe) on Zeigler Boulevard from the junction of Athey Road to the junction of Forest Hill Drive in Mobile. Length 2.762 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$15,625,639 to \$19,098,003 .

### **BALDWIN COUNTY**

None at this time

### **ESCAMBIA COUNTY**

None at this time

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

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## **Legislative Updates**

[Congress is in session](#)

### **Highway Bill Stuck in Limbo Amid Negotiations**

Eugene Mulero August 12, 2020

Less than two months before the country's current highway policy law expires, congressional leaders and the White House are plodding through negotiations on a new highway bill.

Senate panels with jurisdiction over freight, transit and taxes have not contributed to highway legislation the Environment and Public Works committee approved last year. The U.S. House this summer passed along partisan lines an update of the 2015 highway law.

Like the Senate, the House did not adopt a fix for the Highway Trust Fund's looming insolvency. Fuel tax revenue backs that highway account.

EPW panel chairman Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) is said to be working with his chamber's leadership team to realize passage of his highway bill, a spokesman for the committee recently told Transport Topics. The legislation, titled America's Transportation Infrastructure Act, proposes long-term investments in roads and bridges, as well as regulatory streamlining provisions and environmental protections aimed at assisting in an economic recovery. Barrasso's bill, marked by bipartisan backing, would authorize \$287 billion over five years. It also includes a section addressing climate change, primarily promoting construction of severe-weather resilient infrastructure and targeting carbon emissions across transportation modes.

As Barrasso pledged to advance his highway bill, he lambasted House Democrats' legislative version. As he put it, "Democrats in the House of Representatives need to get serious. Their partisan bill is going nowhere. It does seem the Democrats in the House are all about politics, and nothing about progress — the progress we need to make as a country. They are over there pushing socialism, and right here, we are pursuing solutions. The country needs less grandstanding, and it needs more governing. I am going to continue to work across the aisle. I will work with the [Trump] administration."

On the other side of the Capitol, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) also called on colleagues to approve House-passed multiyear legislation meant to avoid a short-term extension of the expiring FAST Act. Shortly after passage of a \$1.5 trillion infrastructure policy bill that included his five-year reauthorization of the FAST Act, DeFazio remarked, "I challenge my Senate

colleagues to join the House in thinking big and being bold on long-overdue investments not only in our infrastructure, but also in the communities and the people we all represent.” During the bill’s consideration, House Republican leaders accused DeFazio and Democrats of disregarding their input.

At the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, the Trump White House issued harsh viewpoints about the Democrats’ bill. In a note to Transport Topics, a White House spokesman reaffirmed those viewpoints, which were published in what’s known as a “Statement of Administration Policy.”

“The nation needs a back-to-basics bipartisan plan to move its infrastructure into the 21st century, one that focuses on streamlining project delivery; providing flexibility for states, localities and the private sector; providing long-term funding certainty; accelerating innovation; and right-sizing the federal role,” according to the June 29 White House statement. “President [Donald] Trump has consistently supported bold new investment to rebuild and modernize the nation’s infrastructure, strengthen our economic competitiveness, and support well-paying jobs.”

The White House has not produced a highway policy proposal this year. At the State of the Union address, Trump encouraged Congress to approve Barrasso’s highway bill.

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Executive Director Jim Tymon pointed to the potential for Congress to advance a surface transportation reauthorization bill sometime this calendar year.

“It’s going to be a heavy lift, but we’re really hopeful that they are able to get that done this year,” Tymon said recently. “Historically, it’s been an area where they’ve been able to come together and reach an agreement.”

“We urge Republicans and Democrats to come together this year to enact legislation to rebuild our core infrastructure platforms, including roads, bridges and transit,” said U.S. Chamber of Commerce CEO Tom Donohue earlier this year. The chamber — a member of the Americans for Transportation Mobility advocacy coalition with the American Public Transportation Association, the American Society of Civil Engineers, and American Trucking Associations — has proposed a 25 cents-per-gallon increase to the federal fuel tax to stabilize the Highway Trust Fund.

An argument from a significant number of freight stakeholders, the business community, and construction firms, among others, is that lacking long-term federal highway legislation raises the potential for halting construction projects.

Jeff Davis, senior fellow at the Eno Center for Transportation, explained ensuring the trust fund’s solvency is key to avoiding interruptions, primarily for projects directly linked to the Federal Highway Administration. The fund which is projected to run low in the coming months, is backed by dwindling revenue from the 24.4 cents-per-gallon diesel tax and 18.4 cents-per-gallon gas tax. Those rates were set during the Clinton administration.

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## Senate breaks for August recess with no coronavirus deal in sight

By [Niels Lesniewski](#) August 13, 2020

The Senate has given up on its August legislative session without any agreement on a new COVID-19 relief bill as jet fumes — leaving town in Senate parlance — have overtaken any hope for a bipartisan deal.

“If the speaker of the House and the minority leader of the Senate decide to finally let another rescue package move forward for workers and for families, it would take bipartisan consent to meet for legislative business sooner than scheduled,” Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Thursday.

The reality is that any senator, including the roughly 20 members of McConnell’s own conference who are of the belief that enough action has already been taken to respond to the pandemic’s economic consequences, could block action before Labor Day.

While no deal between the Trump administration and Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California and Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer is expected any time soon, the formal move to perfunctory Senate sessions is just further evidence little is expected to happen.

Under the agreement announced on the floor, the Senate is functionally gone until 3 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 8, which is the day after Labor Day. The Senate would likely have been out of session the next two weeks in any case because of the Democratic and Republican political conventions. But since the pandemic has rendered those events largely virtual, it’s unlikely that would be a hindrance to meeting, either.

Until then, there will only be brief [pro forma sessions](#), allowing the Senate to fulfill its constitutional responsibility to meet while blocking President Donald Trump from making any recess appointments.

“As has been the case, the senators would receive at least 24 hours notice before any unanticipated votes,” McConnell said. “The American people need more help, coronavirus is not finished with our country, so Congress cannot be finished helping our people.”

The majority leader moved to limit debate on a number of Trump’s judicial nominations before shutting down the floor, meaning that the scheduled business on the floor after Labor Day will be another steady drumbeat of the president’s picks for lifetime appointments to the federal bench.

The Senate completed routine business prior to effectively adjourning for the rest of the regular August recess.

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## Federal Highway Administration Proposes New Rule to Advance Broadband Technology in Rural America

Thursday, August 13, 2020

FHWA 16-20

Contact: Nancy Singer/Doug Hecox

Tel.: 202-366-0660

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration today proposed a new rule to improve coordination in the use of highway rights-of-way to support the installation of broadband technologies.

“The ‘dig once’ rule will help reduce inefficiencies during highway construction projects and increase access to broadband capabilities for communities,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

Highway rights-of-way are commonly used to accommodate public utilities, such as phone lines, electrical lines and pipelines. Expanding their use to include wireless broadband technology is a critical next step in advancing connectivity in rural America.

The proposed rule would help improve coordination with construction projects and ensure that the digging required to install utilities also be utilized for installation of broadband infrastructure, decreasing repeat excavation and minimizing disruption to the traveling public.

“By streamlining the process and improving coordination, we will help improve access to broadband technology in rural areas,” said Federal Highway Administrator Nicole R. Nason.

Nason added that broadband is also necessary to support a highway system of the future calling for the safe and effective integration of automated vehicles.

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking appears in today’s [Federal Register](#).

The public is invited to submit its comments during the 30-day public comment period.

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## House won’t take votes Labor Day week, citing COVID-19 concerns

By [Chris Cioffi](#) and [Lindsey McPherson](#) August 10, 2020

The House will only hold committee work during the week of Labor Day in an attempt to minimize the number of people in the Capitol complex, Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer announced Monday.

“The September schedule will follow the same format as June and July, so that we can conduct our necessary work while protecting public health,” Hoyer said in a release.

The announcement was made in a [newly updated House calendar](#) for the remainder of 2020 — it is the only change in the calendar. That means there will be no House votes until Sept. 14, unless there is a coronavirus relief deal between now and then that merits calling the chamber back into session in the interim.

Hoyer’s announcement comes after the breakdown of talks last week on Capitol Hill between Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer and White House negotiators led by Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

President Donald Trump on Saturday signed a series of executive actions intended to extend and expand COVID-19 relief, although members of Congress have said they’re not a substitute for legislation passed by Congress.

The Senate’s August recess was scheduled to get underway Friday and last until after Labor Day in early September. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell made comments last week suggesting the Senate will technically be in session this week, but there will be no votes and only a minimum number of members and staff will be around.

In the remaining three weeks of September, the House will take votes on a “range of important issues, including ensuring the government is funded before the end of the month,” Hoyer said.

The House advanced appropriations bills for most government agencies last month, and Hoyer pointed out that the Senate has not yet advanced any, previewing the next big showdown right before this year’s elections: appropriations.

“We cannot risk a government shutdown in the middle of a pandemic and an economic crisis,” Hoyer said. “I hope Republicans will join us and act quickly to provide certainty that they will not shut the government down again.”

## Funding Opportunities

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### Federal Highway Administration Makes \$60 Million Available for Advanced Transportation

Technologies Grants DEADLINE AUGUST 31<sup>ST</sup>, 2020

FHWA 12-20

Contact: Nancy Singer

Tel.: (202) 366-0660

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) today published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for \$60 million in Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Program (ATCMTD) grants to fund new technologies that improve transportation efficiency and safety.

“These grants promote the use of advanced technologies to address critical safety issues and efficiency throughout our nation’s transportation network,” said Federal Highway Administrator Nicole R. Nason. “This program helps unleash technological potential to improve travel for all Americans.”

Created in the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, the ATCMTD program works to improve the performance of U.S. transportation systems, reduce traffic congestion, and improve the safety of the traveling public. Now in its fifth year, the ATCMTD program has provided more than \$206 million for projects in 23 states and the District of Columbia.

The program provides funding to help develop model deployment sites for the large-scale installation and operation of advanced technologies that improve safety, efficiency, and system performance. It has funded innovative projects such as Contra Costa

Transportation Authority's Bay Area Mobility-On-Demand (MOD) Project to reduce traffic congestion on the I-680 Corridor and surrounding communities in California, the Florida Department of Transportation's Sunstore integrated data system for travelers, and the Texas Department of Transportation's I-10 Corridor Coalition Truck Parking Availability System.

State departments of transportation, local governments, transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, and other eligible entities are invited to apply under the program.

The NOFO is available at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=327953>

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## 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](mailto: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 (currently no deadline)

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](#)
- [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](#)
- [Scope of Work for University Center Grantees\\*](#)
- [Specific Award Conditions: University Centers\\*](#)
- [EDA regional office contacts](#)
- [coronavirus.gov](https://coronavirus.gov)
- [coronavirus.gov/smallbusiness/](https://coronavirus.gov/smallbusiness/)
- [CDC.gov/COVID19/](https://cdc.gov/COVID19/)
- [USA.gov/coronavirus/](https://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. <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=321695>

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## U.S. Department of Transportation Active Funding Opportunities

FHWA - [Tribal Transportation Program Safety Fund \(TTPSF\)](#) (Closing Date - 8/20/2020: [Apply Here](#))

FTA - [Public Transportation on Indian Reservations \(Tribal Transit\)](#) (Closing Date - 8/24/2020: [Apply Here](#))

FHWA - [Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment \(ATCMTD\)](#) (Closing Date - 8/31/2020: [Apply Here](#))

NHTSA - [State Notification to Consumers of Motor Vehicle Recall Status](#) (Closing Date - 9/15/2020: [Apply Here](#))

FHWA - [Accelerated Innovation Deployment \(AID\) Demonstrations](#) (Closing Date - 9/30/2020: [Apply Here](#))

All Federal grants, including transportation grants, can be seen at [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). To find transportation related funding opportunities, select "All Department of Transportation" under the "Agency" menu on the left-hand side.

DOT Funding Opportunities for Rural Projects - [HERE](#)

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## 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.

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[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](http://www.grants.gov).

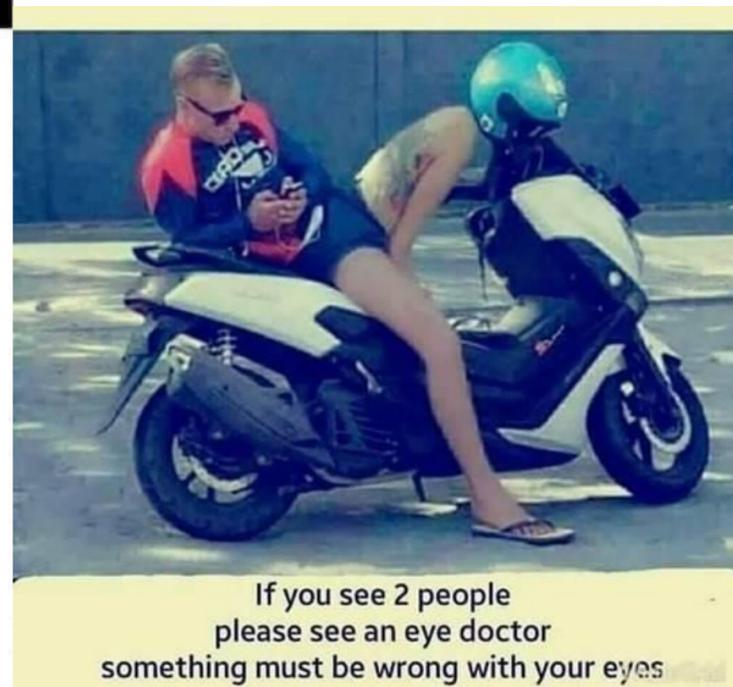
## Just For Fun (THIS IS SATIRE, AND JUST FOR FUN)

On August 27, 2020, it is said [we will have two moons](#). This is a hoax, but mars will look like another moon? If anything, this is an optical illusion. Here are some our favorite transportation related optical illusions....

*This is brilliant. Not sure who the photographer is. "Stealing the sun"*



## World's Tallest Bus



## In the News

### Why you shouldn't hang your face mask from your rear-view mirror

Updated Aug 13, 9:40 AM; Posted Aug 13, 9:40 AM

By [Leada Gore | lgore@al.com](#)

We're all trying to keep up with face masks and it seems natural that, if you're in the car, you would hang it on your rear-view mirror. That can be dangerous, however, AAA Alabama warns. Hanging a mask from your rear-view mirror can block your field of vision and increase the risk of a crash.

"Having a clear field of vision is extremely important to your safety when on the road," said Clay Ingram, AAA Alabama spokesperson.

"Items such as masks, air fresheners, parking placards or anything else that reduces your ability to see things around you is a safety hazard."

In a typical city, a driver encounters as many as 200 situation per mile, AAA said, with the eyes providing nearly 90% of the information needed to respond to things such as road conditions, traffic patterns, signs and signals. Obstructing the field of vision, even partially, can cause you to miss things that should be seen, including signs, pedestrians, wildlife, motorcycles, bikes or other vehicles.

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## Judge rules Uber, Lyft must classify drivers as employees

BY [CHRIS MILLS RODRIGO](#) - 08/10/20 05:29 PM EDT

A California judge on Monday ruled that Uber and Lyft must classify their drivers as full employees rather than independent contractors, a ruling that if upheld could represent a significant loss for the ride-hailing giants.

The San Francisco Superior Court judge is giving the companies a 10-day window to file appeals before the injunction takes effect, and spokespeople for both told The Hill they will be doing so.

The case forcing Uber and Lyft to comply with AB5, a landmark law requiring a company to classify its workers as full employees if the firm has control over how they perform tasks or if the tasks are a routine part of the company's core business, was brought by California Attorney General [Xavier Becerra](#) and a group of city attorneys.

"Our state and workers shouldn't have to foot the bill when big businesses try to skip out on their responsibilities," Becerra said in a statement to The Hill on Monday. "We're going to keep working to make sure Uber and Lyft play by the rules."

In his decision, Judge Ethan Schulman agreed with Becerra's case that both Uber and Lyft were violating AB5 by continuing to classify drivers as contractors.

"It's this simple," he wrote in his ruling, "Defendants' drivers do not perform work that is 'outside the usual course' of their business. Defendants' insistence that their businesses are 'multi-sided platforms' rather than transportation companies is flatly inconsistent with the statutory provisions that govern their businesses as transportation network companies, which are defined as companies that 'engage in the transportation of persons by motor vehicle for compensation.'"

Veena Dubal, associate professor of law at the University of California, Hastings called the decision "incredible, probably the most important one that has come out globally."

"California is such a huge market for them, and... the judge made such clear legal statements about how this is not a technology company but a transportation company and they are clearly in violation of the law," she told The Hill.

Both Uber and Lyft have resisted the law since it went into effect this January, arguing that their core business is technology platforms rather than ride-hailing. Continue [HERE](#)

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## Will toll opposition continue to make a difference in mayoral elections Fairhope and beyond?

By  
[Beth Cann](#)  
August 10, 2020



In the summer of 2019, the opposition to the toll bridge on I-10 in Alabama reached a fever pitch. The **project included** a new 2.5-mile-long, six-lane cable-stay bridge and involved a complete replacement of the existing I-10

Bayway. The project would cost a considerable amount of money, with the price tag rising exponentially as the plans were finalized. **John Cooper**, the director of the Alabama Department of Transportation and Governor **Kay Ivey** insisted the only way to fund the project would be to toll drivers. While they expected opposition, those in Montgomery thought that they'd steamroll the opposition. State Auditor Jim Zeigler explained what opponents were up against, **telling AL.Com** on the night project died, "When we first started, several people told me that 'you're wasting your time. It's a done deal, and there isn't a thing you can do. It's a done deal. But now, it's a dead deal."

It's easy to look back at the fight, especially the end of the battle when politicians started tripping over themselves to rush to the side of the overwhelming majority of residents opposed to the plan and see its death coming by 1,000 cuts, but it's essential when we look to the future that we look at the history and what happened. There's no better place to look than Zeigler's book, **Blocking the 1-10 Toll Scheme: A Successful Citizen Movement**. In the book, he describes in detail the timeline from start to finish of the grassroots efforts to stop the bridge. In an interview with Alabama Today, he noted, "The book doesn't favor any one person or seek to endorse anyone. It simply gives a timeline of what progressed."

A free copy of the book is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/BlockingTheToll>

In it, he describes the Fairhope City meeting, which was planned to be at the Fairhope Civic Center, in the large city council meeting room. There were 33 people who opposed the toll scheduled to testify. Only two people were slated to testify in favor of the toll. Neither of those people ended up speaking. The meeting lasted four hours. In the end, the ESMPO members voted 8 to 1 in favor of the motion to remove the toll project from the TIP. Zeigler stated in his book that the community effort to kill the toll was partly due to the skilled organization of several people, including Karin Wilson.

Fairhope's mayor, **Karin Wilson**, played a vital role in stopping the toll plan. Mayor Wilson was the first member of the Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization to oppose the toll plan. She made the argument that the state should have invested the BP settlement money to fund the project instead of using the money as part of their operating budget. Wilson took to her **Facebook** page to express her opposition. Continue [HERE](#)

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## Alabama trying to reduce \$7 million cost of cleaning up litter

August 8th, 2020 | by Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — A new campaign by the Alabama Department of Transportation highlights both the huge cost of removing roadside trash and the potential penalties for being a litterbug.

The fine for a first conviction for littering is \$500, and a second conviction can cost \$1,000 plus community service. Lawmakers increased the penalties last year as the cost of removing litter reached \$7 million.

The trash highlighted in the "Trash Costs Cash" public service announcement includes cigarette butts, fast-food trash, plastic bottles and old drink cans.

"If we each play our part in keeping our state clean, we won't be impacted by the rising litter fines. More ALDOT funding can be spent on improving the roads we drive instead of litter pickup," Allison Green, coordinator of Drive Safe Alabama, said in a statement.

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## \$464 Million in Grant Awards Nationwide to Revitalize America's Bus Infrastructure

Tuesday, August 11, 2020

WASHINGTON – U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao today announced the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) will award \$464 million in transit infrastructure grants nationwide to improve the safety and reliability of America's bus systems and enhance mobility for transit riders. A total of 96 projects in 49 states and territories receive funding from FTA's Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program. A list of the [selected projects](#) is available online.

"This Administration is committed to rebuilding our nation's transportation infrastructure even through the current COVID-19 crisis, and this \$464 million in federal grants will help improve the safety and reliability of transit bus service nationwide as the economy returns," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

The funding supports projects to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment, as well as projects to purchase, rehabilitate, and construct bus-related facilities.

"Millions of Americans rely on public transportation to access healthcare, jobs, and other vital services," said FTA Deputy Administrator K. Jane Williams. "During this unprecedented time, we need to ensure access and mobility for the riders who depend on our nation's bus systems."

Among the projects selected to receive funding:

- In Florida, five projects will receive a total of \$27.8 million to purchase new electric buses and upgrade bus maintenance facilities and infrastructure in the Orlando metropolitan area, Collier County, Hillsborough County, the Jacksonville metropolitan area and Pinellas County.

- In Pennsylvania, two projects will receive a total of \$11.5 million to construct a new bus maintenance facility in Hazleton in Luzerne County, and purchase new Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses to replace older diesel buses that have exceeded their useful life in Erie County.
- In Wisconsin, two projects will receive a total of \$7.7 million to purchase new articulated buses to reduce crowding on high demand bus routes in the City of Madison in Dane County, and replace an aging roof on a bus maintenance facility in Milwaukee County.

Demand for FTA's Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program far exceeded available funds, as FTA received 282 applications totaling approximately \$1.8 billion in funding requests, from 51 states and territories. Project proposals were evaluated based on criteria outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Federal public transportation law (49 U.S.C. § 5339(b)), as amended by the [Fixing America's Surface Transportation \(FAST\) Act](#), authorizes FTA's Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program through Fiscal Year 2020.

## Transportation Research

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### 'Walk and Bike Safely' roadway safety video teaches kids new safety habits

by Danielle Moody Wednesday, August 5th 2020

SAN ANTONIO– Vision Zero San Antonio has created an important new learning tool for area children through a child-friendly, animated video that teaches children critical roadway safety lessons.

***“Creating an animated video that teaches roadway safety can arm parents, teachers, and with an easy way to save lives,” said Bianca Thorpe, Capital Programs Manager, Transportation Planning & Programming for Public Works. “Teaching children how to cross the street is a good start, but we can’t stop there when preparing them for how to interact with a dynamic transportation system. Through this video, we were able to capture so much of what children need to know in a simple but engaging way.”***

The concern for safety is at an all-time high right now during the warmer months when children are riding their bikes and playing outdoors. In the fall, many children will walk or ride the bus to school.

Walk and Bike Safely, the fifteen minute video, was created with Safe Kids San Antonio and University Health System. It is designed to help children learn important safety habits.

Just some of the lessons your child will learn through the video are:

- Making eye contact with drivers – never assuming a driver sees you
- Always staying alert when on or near a roadway
- The safest place to walk when there is no sidewalk
- The safest place to cross the road
- How to use a pedestrian signal crossing
- How to safely cross the street in front of a parked bus
- Increasing visibility when near or on a road after dark
- Bicycle safety rules and best practices
- How to inspect a bicycle to ensure it is roadway ready
- Hand signals for riding bicycles on roadways
- Safe practices for railroad crossings

You can watch the video by [CLICKING HERE.](#)

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### DOT Unveils Applicant Toolkit for Rural Communities

Eleanor Lamb July 28, 2020

The U.S. Department of Transportation created a toolkit intended to help those interested in participating in the Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success program.

Known as ROUTES, the program was [created in October 2019](#), and it is meant to help connectivity in rural communities. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao on July 27 unveiled the toolkit, which provides information and resources. Its purpose is to help rural applicants understand and navigate DOT's discretionary grant funding opportunities.

Specifically, the toolkit outlines applicant requirements and sorts grant programs by applicant type and eligible project activities. The toolkit was designed for applicants with varying levels of experience.

“This toolkit will help both the beginner and the experienced better understand, identify and navigate discretionary grant funding opportunities for rural transportation projects,” Chao said during a video announcement. “There are a lot of rural communities who just don’t have the resources to hire an army of dedicated staff and contractors to compete for these federal funds.

“We hope that this toolkit will be a reference and a road map to opportunities and resources at the U.S. Department of Transportation that will benefit your community and our country.”

Rural roads make up 70% of America’s road miles, according to DOT. Maintaining these roadways can be a challenge for rural communities that have thin financial resources. Although geographically sprawling, rural communities generally have low population densities, meaning fewer people to support investment.

Chao noted that infrastructure upgrades can improve safety, which also can be a challenge in rural areas. She said that although 19% of the population lives in rural areas, 45% of highway fatalities occur in rural areas.

In terms of economic activity, Chao said rural communities play an important role. According to Chao, two-thirds of freight moving by rail comes from rural areas, and nearly half the distance traveled by trucks takes place on rural roads.

“Rural transportation is important to our economy and our way of life,” Chao said. “Manufactured goods, raw materials and agricultural products travel through rural areas on their way to global markets.”

The ROUTES initiative’s steering council includes representatives from the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration and the Federal Aviation Administration.

DOT has placed an emphasis on rural community needs through some of its popular grant programs. For example, the Infrastructure For Rebuilding America grant program directs a certain amount of funds toward rural projects. In the latest round of INFRA grants, announced June 18, 53% of the funding was devoted to projects in rural areas.

In the latest round of Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) discretionary grants, issued in November 2019, half of the \$900 million in funding was awarded to projects in rural areas.

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## U.S. Transportation Secretary Chao Releases Pathways to the Future of Transportation

Thursday, July 23, 2020

WASHINGTON – One year after announcing the launch of the Non-Traditional and Emerging Transportation Technology (NETT) Council, U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao today released *Pathways to the Future of Transportation* – a policy document that is intended to serve as a roadmap for innovators of new cross modal technologies to engage with the Department.

“Pathways to the Future of Transportation guidance on new, cross-modal technologies will help address legitimate public concerns about safety, security and privacy without hampering innovation,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

This policy document is the U.S. Department of Transportation’s first step in providing a clear path for innovators of new cross modal technologies to engage with the Department. It lays out a process for innovators and stakeholders to approach the Department with their plans and proposals for emerging technologies.

Secretary Chao announced the creation of the NETT Council last year as an internal deliberative body to identify and resolve jurisdictional and regulatory gaps that may impede the deployment of new technologies, such as potential advances in tunneling technology and hyperloop. Pathways to the Future of Transportation intends to help private sector innovators understand the purpose, structure, and function of the NETT Council; lay out the principles guiding the Department’s policies and posture toward transformative technologies; and deliver a high-level overview of the federal framework for supporting non-traditional and emerging technologies.

DOT will publish a Request for Comment on Pathways to the Future of Transportation, which will allow the public to comment and provide feedback on the document. More information on the NETT Council’s work can be found at <https://www.transportation.gov/nettcouncil>.

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## Opportunity Zones

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:

- [Housing and Urban Development: Implementation Plan for The White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council](#)
- [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

