



# Transportation Friday

An electronic newsletter concerning regional transportation issues

Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Volume 36, Number 5

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Voters on November 3<sup>rd</sup> will be voting for the much needed [Mobile County Pay-As-You-Go](#), and Baldwin Beach Express Extension Toll Authority; see *In The News*. Lawmakers say infrastructure efforts are falling victim to deepening partisan divide, but Republicans have Plan; see *Legislative Updates*. This week's *Just For Fun* is GR8FN4u. Slow Streets and Pedestrian Safety in this Week's *Transportation Research*.

Happy Halloween!

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

### New MPO Members

The Mobile MPO will have 6 new members once the new mayors take office. The new members will be:

- Councilman, City of Prichard TBD
- Mayor Elect, City of Chickasaw- Mr. Barry Broadhead
- Mayor Elect, City of Satsuma- Mr. Mark Barlow
- Mayor Elect, City of Creola- Mr. Don Nelson
- Mayor Elect, City of Bayou La Batre- Mr. Henry Barnes, Sr.
- Mayor Elect, City of Semmes- Mr. Brandon Vanhook

To Councilman Lorenzo Martin of Prichard, Mayor Byron Pittman of Chickasaw, Mayor Thomas Williams of Satsuma, Mayor William Criswell of Creola, Mayor Terry Downey of Bayou la Batre, and Mayor David Baker of Semmes- Thank you. Thank you for participation in not just the Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization, but the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission as well. Your passion for your communities is not unnoticed, and it has been a pleasure to work with each one of you. We are always here if you ever need anything from SARPC.

### The MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY

VIA and its sub-consultant, Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood, have completed The [MOBILE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT](#)

There was a presentation by VIA at the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan public meeting on October 1, and a stakeholder meeting several weeks ago concerning the study. VIA presentation potential types of operators and potential operating budget is [HERE](#). 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.

All documents pertaining to his study are [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**

NONE THIS WEEK

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## **South Alabama RPO Updates**

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) met a couple of weeks ago using the GoToMeeting app. The agenda included:

- Adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting (these will be sent out soon)
- Review and adoption of the **Fiscal Year 2021 Work Program** (available for review online at: <http://mobilempo.org/RPO/RPO%20Documents/2021%20Documents/Draft%20FY%202021%20RPO%20Work%20Program.pdf>)
- Review and adoption of the **Fiscal Years 2020-2023 Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan** (available for review online at: <http://mobilempo.org/Documents/Planning/FY2021/2020-2023%20HSCTP%20for%20SARPC.pdf>)

The RPO Transportation Plan Project List (available for review online at <http://www.mobilempo.org/RPODocuments.html>) SARPC Rural Planning Organization

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## **Projects in Region Let November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

MOBILE COUNTY  
None at this time

BALDWIN COUNTY  
For the Maintenance Bridge Painting along I-10 on SR-16 (US-98) over I-10 (Site 1); on I-10 over the Fish River (Site 2); on I-10 over Three Mile Creek (Site 3); on I-10 over Cowpen Creek (Site 4); and on I-10 over the Styx River (Site 5). The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$1,154,733 to \$1,411,340 .

ESCAMBIA COUNTY  
None at this time

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

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## **Legislative Updates**

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### **In Hill Op-Ed, T&I Ranking Member Graves Discusses Republicans' Plan for Infrastructure in the Next Congress**

Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-MO), published an op-ed in The Hill this week, sharing his views on how infrastructure failed in 2020 and how Republicans will be prepared to come to the table with their priorities and work across the aisle in the 117th Congress. In the article, Graves places blame for Congress's failure to pass a bill this year on Democrats, calling the bill House Democrats put forward a "\$1.5 trillion dollar wish list for the progressive wing of [Speaker Pelosi's] party." Looking forward, Graves states that "in the 117th Congress, [transportation reauthorization] remains a top priority, and Republicans are ready to get a long-term reauthorization bill done. This effort will be a focus of ours immediately out of the gate in 2021, and our priorities in this bill will be no secret." Click [HERE](#) to read the full article.

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### **Lawmakers say infrastructure efforts are falling victim to deepening partisan divide**

BY LILLIAN BAUTISTA - 10/29/20

Partisan politics and stalled negotiations over another COVID-19 relief bill are impeding progress toward much needed infrastructure bills, lawmakers said Thursday.

"We've got to do more, and the only way to do more is to get politics out of infrastructure once again," Rep. [Rodney Davis](#) (R-Ill.) said at The Hill's "[America's Agenda: Infrastructure](#)" event. "Unfortunately, that's what killed any long-term infrastructure bill that we could've passed to address our crumbling roads and bridges."

Davis, a four-term lawmaker and the top Republican of the House Transportation and Infrastructure subcommittee on highways and transit, said he witnessed "bipartisan cooperation in the past" for legislation like the Highway Reauthorization Act, but months-long pandemic relief negotiations are worsening relations between the two parties are having an effect on issues like infrastructure.

"We saw the Highway Reauthorization becoming a partisan bill for the first time in my congressional career, and it's disappointing," he told The Hill's Steve Clemons.

Rep. [Sam Graves](#) (R-Mo.), the ranking member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee who also spoke at the event, expressed a desire to see a standalone bill for the aviation industry.

"Right now in the middle of this pandemic, we have an aviation crisis going on too, so that has to be a priority," he said. "We need to get it done and we need to get it done right away. Unfortunately, politics are playing a role in that process, so it's kind of hung up in these negotiations when it comes to the overall COVID relief."

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) has said he does not want infrastructure legislation considered as part of a potential coronavirus relief package.

Del. [Eleanor Holmes Norton](#) (D-D.C.), who's head of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, said infrastructure projects are uniquely suited to aid the economy in the pandemic.

"What would give our economy more of a kick than an infrastructure bill now?" she said. "You can do infrastructure without close quarters, one of the few kinds of work you can do now."

Norton criticized Republicans who voted against the \$1.5 trillion Moving Forward Act, an infrastructure bill that included projects designed to address climate change. The bill also would provide funding for roads and bridges, while requiring states to adhere to carbon emission decreases and other climate mitigation measures in order to receive funding.

"Every Republican in the House voted against our bill," she said. "They were largely opposed to the environmental sections, yet we are in a time when everyone is focused on climate change and it would be a fundamental error not to begin to take some steps on environmental issues."

The White House [threatened to veto](#) the Moving Forward Act, saying it should eliminate or reduce environmental reviews and arguing it wouldn't provide enough resources for rural America.

Davis said that the divided behavior of the House is "not good for how our country should govern," but he predicts that progress on infrastructure bills can be made after the election.

"I'm optimistic that once we get through this whole election, we come back in the lame duck session, that it's good common sense policies like this that politics will frankly be pushed aside and this will be pushed through."

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## The gas tax was already broken. The pandemic could end it.

As states and cities face infrastructure budget crunches with gas tax revenues down, some are thinking about alternative ways to secure funding.

[Jason Plautz@Jason Plautz](#) Oct. 26, 2020

After months of travel and work restrictions to support public health amid COVID-19, drivers may find their roads in less-than-ideal condition when they're able to get back behind the wheel.

The [sharp dips in driving](#) that accompanied early stages of lockdowns meant less gas tax revenue for state and local governments, exposing what many transportation agencies and lawmakers have feared for years: the gas tax is no longer adequate for America's infrastructure funding. Budgetary problems existed long before the pandemic, but new driving trends may accelerate conversations on what innovative approaches can replace it.

"It remains our message that the current model is not sustainable in the long term. The pandemic has just exacerbated those points," said Susan Howard, program director for highway finance at the American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO). "We all believe in a user-pay principle where the amount you drive determines what you're paying ... but this has certainly highlighted some of the weaknesses with that approach."

### Infrastructure funding woes

City and state governments are facing difficult decisions about how to address infrastructure with budget shortfalls, with some looking to reduce maintenance or stall capital projects designed to improve road travel.

Maryland, for example, has proposed [cutting \\$3 billion](#) from its projected 6-year Consolidated Transportation Program budget, including delaying some \$900 million in road projects and cutting some bus and train service. Meanwhile, a [report](#) from the California Legislative Analyst's Office predicts the state's 2020-2021 revenues will be \$1.2 billion lower than the original \$12.8 billion prediction, largely affecting transit programs and the shared revenues for local streets and roads.

New Jersey even had to [raise gas taxes](#) by more than 9 cents per gallon this fall, part of a 2016 law that automatically requires a tax increase if the state is falling short of necessary revenue.

Nationally, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) has [forecast](#) a deficit of \$37 billion over the next five fiscal years for state departments of transportation, and is asking Congress to fill the gap in a future coronavirus relief bill.

Because states all have different revenue mixes and formulas for sharing funds with local governments, cities will see disparate impacts. Public transit agencies are seeing particular challenges: The [American Public Transportation Association](#) has said that six in 10 transit systems nationally will need to reduce service and furlough employees without federal help, and a National League of Cities (NLC) [survey](#) in June found that 65% of cities were delaying or canceling capital expenditures and infrastructure projects.

Bottom of Form

Overall, transportation departments are now more likely to focus on the nuts and bolts of filling potholes and shoveling snow — [in addition to regaining ridership](#) — rather than more innovative long-term work.

"What's at stake is the enormous gains we've made in looking at mobility in new ways," said Brooks Rainwater, director of the NLC's Center for City Solutions. "Expanding transit systems, offering micromobility options, designing car-free streets — these are societal shifts that take a great deal of work and investment from governments."

### Empty streets lead to empty coffers

The most visible symbol of the early-pandemic lockdown was the rise in empty streets. Closed offices meant no commuters, shuttered downtowns lacked suburban traffic and travel restrictions halted casual trips around town.

In March, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) dropped nearly 19% compared to [March](#) 2019, according to the Federal Highway Administration. In [April](#), the year-to-year drop was nearly 40%. Driving has ticked up throughout the summer and as of August, the [cumulative drop](#) is about 15%.

Reduced driving means fewer people putting gas in their cars and, thus, lower tax revenues. Even as driving has recovered, [receipts](#) for the Highway Trust Fund remain roughly 10% below the previous year. More than 80% of the Fund comes from the gas tax, but it is also fed by taxes on tires and heavy vehicles. State departments have their own sources, including gas taxes above the federal level, but rely on funding from Washington.

VMT can often lag after economic downturns as people are slow to return to work or resume leisure travel. Federal data shows that [VMT dipped](#) in the 2008 recession and did not recover until 2015, and states are already facing years of potential losses by stalling or cutting long-term projects. Pennsylvania withdrew advertising for bids on 19 projects and canceled 7 other projects that had been unveiled, according to Alexis Campbell, a spokesperson for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Up to \$550 million in losses are forecast through the end of the state's fiscal year, Campbell said.

"Our funding challenges are not new, and COVID-19 underscores the fact that the gas tax is not sufficient to fund our highway and bridge needs," said Campbell. "We have made significant progress in improving our transportation system, but more investment is necessary to keep up with funding challenges, increasing costs and other funding impacts."

The VMT slowdown has also highlighted the importance of diversification. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), for example, [announced](#) an estimated \$170 million in revenue loss for 2020 and 2021, with a projection of \$250 million in lost revenue through 2024 compared to an October 2019 forecast. The department's fund comes from a mix of the state and federal gas tax, Department of Motor Vehicle fees and a tax on trucks based on mileage and weight. That last source has stayed stable, helping the state avoid more red ink, said Travis Brouwer, ODOT's assistant director of revenue, finance and compliance.

"That tax on trucks is about 35% of our budget, much higher than other states that have a similar requirement," Brouwer said. "With our three-legged stool of revenue sources, having that makes it much more stable. Those other legs are a little wobbly right now."

### Can Congress find a new path?

Despite the impacts of COVID-19, transportation funding has been on shaky ground for more than a decade. As cars become more fuel efficient and electric vehicles rise in popularity, the [effectiveness](#) of the federal gas tax has dwindled and Congress has been forced to cover shortfalls in the Highway Trust Fund with transfers from the Treasury since 2008. Congress has also not raised the tax since 1993, and it is not indexed to inflation.

Even before the onset of the pandemic, the Congressional Budget Office [projected](#) that the federal Highway Trust Fund would be out of cash in 2021. Congress was poised to work on a long-term reauthorization bill for transportation programs this year, but legislators ultimately passed a [one-year extension](#) that sidestepped the funding debate.

Now that reauthorization debate will happen under the shadow of states cutting projects and scrambling for cash, which could put more pressure on Congress to look seriously at a replacement for a gas tax. The most commonly discussed idea is [a VMT fee](#) that would charge drivers based on mileage.

"The gas tax is a relatively consistent source, and that's powerful, but it's losing purchasing power as we move off of fossil fuels," said Adie Tomer, a Metropolitan Policy Program fellow at the Brookings Institution. "The VMT looks more like a utility fee, the way we pay for water or electricity. It sends a price signal to the user."

Alternative proposals face technical hurdles in tracking and properly charging drivers, but a handful of states are piloting their own programs. Oregon, for example, has a voluntary VMT pilot that is seeing growth, though ODOT's Brouwer did not have data on how it had been affected by the lockdowns. Meanwhile, Washington is actively exploring a road user charge. A [coalition of states](#) along the I-95 corridor is also considering ways to implement their own user fee.

Cities have [less of a role](#) to play in implementing VMT or funding alternatives than states, though some have started exploring congestion charges. New York City has approved a [congestion fee](#) for cars entering Manhattan's business district, which was scheduled to start in January 2021 but has been [delayed](#) pending approval from the Federal Highway Administration. Other cities have debated their own congestion fees, which may grow more appealing as a way to help cities restore pandemic losses without relying on the state or federal government.

"This conversation on long-term funding needs to take place at all levels of government, as well as the private sector," said NLC's Rainwater. "What we need to see is greater cooperation among all those levels to get where we need to go. Figuring out the best mix of funding mechanisms is something we should look at now that we've seen the consequences of relying on only a few."

Of course, VMT and congestion pricing schemes rely on normal driving habits, which may change coming out of the pandemic as more companies allow remote work.

In a recent Bloomberg Intelligence webinar, tax policy analyst Andrew Silverman noted that the next administration and Congress may need to [think beyond taxes](#) — which can disproportionately affect middle- and low-income drivers — to meet the country's infrastructure needs. That could include bonds and public-private partnerships in combination with taxes and tolls.

There are even proposals to use a carbon tax to fund a transition away from single-car use; 12 Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states in the [Transportation and Climate Initiative](#) are exploring a cap-and-invest program to support funding on public transit, zero-emission vehicles and biking and walking infrastructure.

AASHTO's Howard said that as legislators resume work on a transportation bill, they should consider the lessons of the pandemic and look to the more innovative states and cities to find a new funding strategy.

"A program so contingent on the purchase of gasoline can create challenges in forecasting when something like this happens," Howard said. "Long-range forecasting assumes a certain level of sustained use and things are changing in the long term. This whole situation has continued to shed a light on how we haven't modernized."

## Funding Opportunities

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### **Rebuild Alabama Act Annual Grant Program** (deadline November 30th, 2020)

[This document](#) contains information regarding the Rebuild Alabama Act (RAA) Annual Grant Program for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. The RAA Annual Grant Program is administered by the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). Prospective project-sponsoring governmental agencies are encouraged to thoroughly review this document, as well as the FY 2021 RAA Annual Grant Program Application and FAQ document, when considering developing a project application.

#### **A. ELIGIBILITY:**

- Any political subdivision of the State of Alabama (Municipal and County Governments) is eligible to apply for funding under the RAA Annual Grant Program.
- Project applications may be submitted for improvements to any classified public road or bridge owned and maintained by the applicant that is open to public traffic.
- The final eligibility of applications and proposed project activities will be determined by ALDOT upon evaluation of the application submitted.
- RAA Annual Grant Program funds are awarded through a competitive project selection process.

#### **B. COMPETITIVE SELECTION**

- RAA Annual Grant Program funds are awarded through a competitive project selection process.

#### **C. PROJECT FUNDING:**

- The RAA Annual Grant Program was established by Legislative Act #2019-2. The program allocates no less than \$10 million annually to eligible projects as identified by ALDOT during a fiscal year.
- The maximum funding provided to any project in FY 2021 will be \$250,000.00.
- RAA Annual Grant program funding is only available for eligible construction activities. No Preliminary Engineering, Right-of-Way, Utility Relocation, Construction Engineering & Inspection or Materials Testing costs will be eligible.
- RAA Annual Grant Program awarded funds will be issued to the sponsoring agency either (1) upon ALDOT's receipt of a Notice of Award from the sponsoring agency to the contractor, or (2) upon ALDOT's receipt of a Purchase Order (PO) from the sponsoring agency issued against a valid, eligible in-place bid contract.
- RAA Annual Grant Program awarded funds cannot be transferred to another project and may only be used to fund improvements consistent with the intent of the original project application.
- RAA Annual Grant Program funds may be combined with other funding sources when approved by ALDOT. In such cases, the more restrictive funding requirements may apply to all funds utilized. Note that RAA Annual Grant funding availability deadlines still apply when combined with other funding sources.
- A sponsoring governmental agency may only submit one project application per application cycle. Each County and Municipality will be viewed as an individual sponsor. Any project submitted by multiple sponsors shall be deemed as the eligible submission for all sponsors.
- Sponsors with an active award may not submit another application until the awarded project has been let to contract or a purchase order utilizing a valid, eligible in-place bid contract has been issued.
- Other funding sources to supplement RAA Annual Grant Program funds are not required, but projects containing a commitment to provide supplemental funding may be given favorable consideration.

#### **D. PROJECT PROGRESS:**

- RAA Annual Grant Program funds are available to sponsoring agencies for a period of one (1) year from the notice of award. Funding awarded to a sponsoring agency not either let to contract or a purchase order issued against a valid, eligible in-place bid contract within one year of the notice of award are subject to rescission.
- Any overrun in total project costs above the amount awarded, shall be the responsibility of the sponsoring agency.

#### **E. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS:**

- Projects must be let to competitive bid. In-place bids may also be utilized as long as those bids were awarded following all required competitive bid laws for eligibility. No other method of construction, such as force account is allowed.
- Any costs incurred prior to issuance of a Notice of Award or a Purchase Order are not eligible.
- RAA Annual Grant Program funds have reporting requirements. Recipients will be required to furnish any and all requested data to ALDOT or other specified or required entities necessary to satisfy any reporting requirements.

#### **F. APPLICATION SUBMISSION & SELECTION**

- All applications must be received by ALDOT prior to close of business on **November 30th, 2020**

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### **FY2021 Effects of Sea Level Rise (ESLR)** (deadline 1/8/21)

There is a notice of funding opportunity concerning the effect of sea level rise that has a relatively short time frame to submit a letter of intent. This is the link to the grant program, <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=328992>.

NOAA-NOS-NCCOS-2021-2006594  
FY21 Effects of Sea Level Rise (ESLR)  
Department of Commerce

This solicitation is to improve adaptation and planning in response to regional and local effects of sea level rise and coastal inundation through targeted research on key technologies, natural and nature-based infrastructure, physical and biological processes, and model evaluation. The overall goal of the ESLR Program is to facilitate informed adaptation planning and coastal management decisions through a multidisciplinary research program that results in integrated models of dynamic physical and biological processes capable of evaluating vulnerability and resilience under multiple SLR, inundation, and management scenarios.

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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?opId=321695>

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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](#)

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To stay up to date on all of the many grants that are available visit [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

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

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### TAG YOUR IT

This week, one of the local news channels went back to 1977, and looked at license plates in the State of Alabama. It was in 1977 that the State of Alabama went to annual stickers rather than getting a new plate every year, [HERE](#). It was said to conserve TONS of steel, and a large savings on postage; sounds like a winner.



Speaking of Alabama license plates and winners, are a few winners since 1977....



## In the News

### Voters to consider statewide and local amendments

Posted by [Gabriel Tynes](#) | Oct 28, 2020 | [Cover Story](#), [Latest](#) | [0](#) |

In addition to candidates for federal and local offices, voters in the general election Nov. 3 will be faced with the decision to adopt several statewide and local amendments. Of the six statewide amendments, only four are applicable to Mobile and Baldwin counties.

**STATEWIDE AMENDMENT 1:** Proposed in a 2019 bill sponsored by State Sen. Del Marsh, if passed, Statewide Amendment 1 provides that “only” a citizen of the United States has the right to vote. The existing language specifies “every” citizen of the United States has a right to vote. Chalked up primarily as political semantics, the change has no legal effect on any citizen’s right to vote.

**STATEWIDE AMENDMENT 2:** The result of another bill that passed the Legislature last year, this amendment seeks to make several substantive changes to Alabama’s Unified Judicial System. In the Administrative Office of the Courts, administrative duties are assigned to a director of courts, who is appointed by the chief justice of the Supreme Court.

Citing a high turnover rate and little continuity between appointees, the amendment would remove the right to appoint the director from the chief justice and award it to the entire Supreme Court, after three nominees are forwarded by a commission. However, if passed, court administrators would be appointed to 10-year terms. The amendment also seeks to add two members to the existing nine-member Judicial Inquiry Commission (JIC), which investigates claims of misconduct by judges. Further, it would exempt judges on the higher courts from impeachment clauses and instead subject them to the JIC’s disciplinary protocols.

**STATEWIDE AMENDMENT 3:** Another amendment pertinent to the judiciary, Statewide Amendment 3 seeks to extend the terms appointed judges accept before they must run for reelection. Currently, judicial vacancies created by the death, resignation, retirement or removal from office of sitting judges are filled by an appointment of the governor. This amendment extends the time of service for an appointed judge from the general election after one year of service to the general election after two years of service.

**STATEWIDE AMENDMENT 4:** Passage of this amendment would allow the Legislature to “recompile” the Alabama Constitution when it meets in 2022, to remove racist language, remove outdated or redundant language, consolidate amendments related to economic development and reorganize local amendments so they are grouped together by the county in which they are applied. If approved, the recompiled constitution would have to be ratified by voters.

**STATEWIDE AMENDMENTS 5 and 6:** Pertaining only to Franklin and Lauderdale counties, these amendments provide “that a person is not liable for using deadly physical force in self-defense or in the defense of another person on the premises of a church under certain conditions.”

**MOBILE COUNTY:** A special election at the end of the ballot reauthorizes [Mobile County's Pay As You Go](#) program, which would provide \$58 million for transportation projects.

**BALDWIN COUNTY:** Four local amendments are on the ballot in Baldwin County, two of which seek to create landmark districts, one to authorize a toll authority to obtain funding for the Baldwin Beach Express Extension between Interstates 10 and 65, and one to allow the judge of probate to act as a Circuit Court judge in equity cases. The landmark districts would be created in Barnwell and Rosinton, and would restrict surrounding cities — namely Fairhope, Loxley and Robertsdale — from legislatively annexing unincorporated areas without the property owners' consent. If voters approve the toll authority, tolling would be restricted to the 25-mile length of the proposed Baldwin Beach Express Extension, and would not be applicable on any other road in the county. Additional information about these amendments is embedded with this article on [lagniappemobile.com](#).

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## FHWA Awards \$6.5 Million for State Highway Innovation Projects

Seven states and the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma have been awarded funding through the Federal Highway Administration's Accelerated Innovation Deployment Demonstration program.

The AID Demonstration program is meant to incentivize recipients to enhance safety and rebuild infrastructure using technological innovations. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao announced Oct. 22 that \$6.5 million had been awarded through this round of funding.

The grant funding was distributed among Alabama, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, North Carolina and the Pawnee Nation in Oklahoma.

"These federal grants will advance innovative transportation solutions to improve safety and mobility on America's roadways," Chao said.

The Idaho Transportation Department received a grant for \$1 million to use hydraulic modeling technology to help design safer and more cost-effective structures. The tools will help streamline environmental, regulatory and engineering activities on 18 projects in Idaho.

Some \$544,000 will allow the Alabama Department of Transportation to invest in fiberglass-reinforced geotextile paving fabrics that can withstand extreme temperatures and result in fewer cracks.

In conjunction with the Clinton County Secondary Road Department, the Iowa Department of Transportation will use a \$440,000 grant to pilot cape seal treatments, which can reduce the severity of cracks and extend the life of pavement up to eight years. Located in eastern Iowa, Clinton County borders the Mississippi River. Continue [HERE](#)

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### What's Better in the Pandemic: Public Transportation or Ride Share?

If transit is further spreading the coronavirus, it has not been detected by contact-tracing efforts. Few studies have evaluated public transportation; those that did in [Paris](#), [Austria](#) and [Tokyo](#) found no evidence that the virus transmitted from traveler to traveler. But across the world, workers and riders continue to test positive. The Washington Post spoke with an infectious-disease researcher, environmental microbiologist, and epidemiologist about which are the safest options and how to reduce the threat of spreading the virus. All three public-health experts agreed the soundest choice is whatever involves the least contact with others, which would probably be a solo car ride or one where the only other person in the vehicle is the driver. But that does not exclude other considerations: Is there enough ventilation? How much space is there to distance? Are those around you masking up? Click [HERE](#) to read the full article.

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## More time needed to get Census right in Alabama

This year has been filled with challenges for all of us. Ever since the U.S. was struck by an unprecedented pandemic, we have dealt with a sputtering economy, and more recently Alabama and other states near the Gulf have been hammered by coastal storms. These challenges have each forced us to be flexible and adapt to very different day-to-day lives than the ones we had grown used to.

Much like we have been finding ways to work through this crisis, so have our Census workers who have diligently worked this year to carry out their Constitutional duty to perform the once-a-decade count of American citizens. However, even with all the logistical challenges presented by the ongoing pandemic and the raging storms, Census workers recently concluded their initial count on a condensed timeline after a Supreme Court ruling determining the count could be stopped early. Now, they only have until the end of the year to formally report their findings — just two and half months, where in a normal year they would be given five.

That brief window for reporting data just is not enough. The pandemic and recent storms made it incredibly difficult for Census workers to carry out the follow-up process with those who did not self-report for the Census. Given that in-person follow-up is hard to do in the current situation, a lot of follow-up responses were compiled using dated records from government sources, or even second-hand interviews with neighbors or landlords. Without time to verify that information is accurate, Alabama could be in trouble.

In Alabama, [more than 36%](#) of all of our Census responses came through these Nonresponse Followup processes. With such a high volume of responses coming this way, a two-and-a-half-month window could very well mean that we get an inaccurate Census count that underestimates how many people live in our state, with those living in more difficult-to-reach rural areas at a particular risk of being undercounted.

The effects of this would be felt both immediately and over the entire course of the next 10 years. Pandemic relief aid that has been discussed in Congress will almost certainly be distributed by the results of this year's Census, meaning that if we are undercounted, we will have an even more difficult time of fully recovering from the damage this year brought with it.

Other government funding is tied to the Census count, as well. Right now, research estimates that Alabama could lose [just shy of \\$40 million](#) every single year in education, healthcare and jobs programs funding if we are undercounted by just 1%. Those are our tax dollars, but instead of coming back home to help Alabamians, it will be sent off to other states that have more accurate Census counts.

Of course, it goes well beyond just those types of programs. Some estimates show Alabama received more than [\\$13 billion](#) in 2016 alone because of the results of the 2010 Census. That funding went to all sorts of critical programs, like nearly \$800 million for highway construction, \$18.5 million for business loans, \$62 million for vocational training, \$111 million for rural electric loans, and so much more. That is money our state needs, and hardworking Alabamians will be the ones left out to dry if it ends up getting funneled to other states instead.

Our tax dollars are not the only thing that could be sent off to other states with a more accurate count, either. Our congressional seats may soon follow as well, given that the number of seats each state has in the House of Representatives is determined by the Census. Instead of staying where they belong so that people who live in rural states can be properly represented, those seats will be going to bigger liberal states that did not have to rely as extensively on Nonresponse Followup.

Perhaps now more than ever, we need Alabama's voices in Washington to speak up and ensure our state is not held back by an inaccurate Census count. Senator Richard Shelby must join efforts currently underway to delay the Census reporting deadline so we can rest easy knowing Alabama will get a fair shake once all of the Census processes are said and done.

People across the U.S., especially those of us here in Alabama, have faced some tough challenges this year. Through it all, we have persevered and remained adaptable. Now, we need our lawmakers in Washington to follow suit and recognize that the timeline Census officials have been given to complete their work is not enough, and allow them more time to report their results. The Census directly affects us all, and we only get a chance to do it right once each decade.

*CJ Pearson is a freshman at The University of Alabama and president of the Free Thinker Project*

## Transportation Research

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### NHTSA Releases Pedestrian Safety Playbook and Active Transportation Data Visualizations

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) released a playbook with social media strategies and resources to support Pedestrian Safety Month activities. It provides information on vehicle speed enforcement and Walk to School Day activities; distracted drivers and impaired pedestrians; illegal school bus passing; and conspicuity/Day Light Saving Time, and older pedestrians. NHTSA also developed two interactive data visualization dashboards displaying pedestrian and bicyclist fatality data between 2010 and 2018. Based on Fatality Analysis Reporting System data, the dashboard allows users to view key data by State, year, month, time of day, age group, and land type. Click [HERE](#) to see the Playbook.

### Slow Streets Were a Success. Should Cities Keep Them?

A recent study examined projects to reduce car use and increase walking and biking on neighborhood streets in five cities, offering a look into how transportation data can be used to craft similar future projects.

SKIP DESCANT, GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY | OCTOBER 29, 2020

The modification of miles of local streets in cities across the nation during the COVID-19 pandemic cleared the way for bikers and walkers, and allowed neighborhoods to see their streets in all new ways.

New data indicates these moves were largely successful, with residents enjoying the extra space to bike and walk safely with lots of room to properly social distance. In cities like Seattle and Minneapolis, car use on the selected streets plummeted, while other users happily selected these routes.

"We saw a substantial dip in the number of vehicles on them, and we saw a pretty significant uptick in people biking and walking on them," said Dawn Schellenberg, public affairs manager for the Seattle Department of Transportation. "They seemed to be successful," she added.

Seattle and Minneapolis, along with three other cities, were part of a review of a modified streets study by INRIX, a transportation analysis firm. Seattle and Minneapolis experienced some of the largest levels of increased activity out of the five cities surveyed in the report: *Utilization of COVID-19 Street Programs in 5 U.S. Cities*. Seattle transitioned some 26 miles of neighborhood streets to its new Stay Healthy Streets program. They were selected, in part, because these corridors were already designated as "neighborhood greenways," for their friendly walking and biking potential.

In Minneapolis, three routes totaling 11 miles were identified and the city placed traffic control devices to signal to motorists the changed nature of the streets. Like in Seattle, these routes had already been identified as streets suitable for walking and biking, in some cases known as "bicycle boulevards." In both cities, and many others, the streets were not entirely closed to vehicles, and could be accessed by residents, delivery drivers and other vehicles.

"We didn't fully close the streets... but we used the traffic control devices to essentially slow down cars, and make it clear that there would be people walking and biking in the streets," explained Matthew Dyrdaahl, a transportation planner and bicycle and pedestrian coordinator in Minneapolis.

The project in Minneapolis and has been discontinued and the streets have returned to their normal operation. However, the experiment served as a pilot project and a data baseline as the city considers similar biking and walking modifications to right-of-way infrastructure in the future, said Dyrdaahl.

“We consider the Stay Healthy Streets a success,” he added. “And we will consider how the Stay Healthy Streets, or other new ideas, maybe restarted or modified in the future. But it may not look the same.”

The INRIX study, which also examined slow streets programs in Washington, D.C., New York City and Oakland, Calif., presented its findings as a big-data analysis showing how car traffic declined sharply on these streets while other uses expanded.

Non-car activity on restricted streets in New York City saw little change compared to the rest of the city, according to the INRIX study, likely due to the loss of commuter and other activity in the city. Activity on restricted streets in Minneapolis was 133 percent of normal in July, while activity citywide was only at 85 percent.

Transportation data, say INRIX officials, can and should offer a wealth of insights into how transportation infrastructure decisions are made.

“In the past, we had to rely on physical, in-person counts, in-ground loop detectors or video analysis to count the utilization of slow or restricted streets,” said Bob Pishue, a transportation analyst and author of the INRIX report. “Yet, today there are ways to provide data at a fraction of the cost and offer a high degree of accuracy.”

The data and analysis also points down a path of more data-based decision-making because the kind of approaches to restrict car access on one street may not be the best solution in another neighborhood.

“[City transportation officials] could use data to remove, change or make these projects more permanent,” said Pishue. “But the key is also making these projects a better fit from the beginning.

“Street restrictions are put in place for a number of reasons: to stop cut-thru traffic, allow families to walk and bike in their neighborhood, social distancing, etc.,” he added. “Yet not all street designs and locations are good for all purposes. Data allows transportation officials the ability to implement the best project for that specific need and measure against those goals.”

In Seattle, transportation officials are beginning the process of resident engagement and outreach to learn more from the community about what Stay Healthy Streets solutions worked, or didn’t, and how they could be modified as the city plans to make permanent some 20 miles of restricted car streets in the future.

“We did some really quick back-of-the-napkin analysis to figure out where they might be most beneficial, but let’s go out now and talk to people who have experienced them,” Schellenberg offered. “Would these be a benefit to your neighborhood?”

A community survey seeking input on the project yielded lots of interest, with 9,000 participating in the survey offering some 30,000 “open-ended responses.”

In Minneapolis, the project offered an opportunity to test out various traffic-calming solutions, gather data, and determine how to move efforts like these forward, said Dyrdaahl, adding that a larger mission is to use the momentum generated by these projects to encourage more non-motorized mobility in the future to change behavior and achieve actual mode-shift.

“We use a wide variety of data to determine where we’ll invest in transportation, including walking and biking. We have an evaluation program that looks at sort of before data, and after a project is built,” he added.

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## Transportation Planning to the Extreme for Weather and Climate Change

More intense and more frequent extreme precipitation events are projected in a warming climate. With this risk comes possible detrimental outcomes based on what has happened in the past. Water rises over bridges. Homes, businesses, and roads on steep hills fall away in a landslide. Tornadoes rip through towns. Planes are grounded. Coastal areas are underwater.

The U.S. Gulf Region is dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Laura and California is beginning to get a handle on wildfires that have been raging for weeks. This fall TRB is offering webinars to help strengthen the transportation industry’s resilience to these events. On October 6, TRB hosts A Resilient Path Forward for the Marine Transportation System and on October 7, Weathering the Storm - Climate Resilience at Airports.

State departments of transportation (DOTs) are also taking changing climate and extreme weather into account when making infrastructure decisions, but they are not always using a formal set of tools for cost-benefit analysis to address climate resilience. A TRB National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) guidebook was developed to fill the gaps in the routine use of cost-benefit analysis and other decisions-making tools in light of extreme weather.

Extremes are not rare

It’s become common to hear that “one-in-a-hundred-year events” are occurring in five-, 10-, and 15-year periods. Scientists identify these extreme weather events based on the historical record of weather in a particular region. A “return time” is a commonly used metric of probability; for example, a 100-year return time means that in any given year, there is a 1-in-100 chance of the threshold being reached.

Eight cases of diverse weather events in the U.S. from 2007-2012 highlighted the broad and evolving nature of keeping up with transportation infrastructure. NCHRP’s Response to Extreme Weather Impacts on Transportation Systems offers in-depth lessons learned and effective practices for addressing this specific challenge.

Research leadership from TRB

In April 2020, TRB offered webinars on environmentally sustainable funding and financing at the intersection of federal surface transportation authorization and realignment of state transportation spending. Going further in preventative measures, an April 30 webinar explored the role of ecology in sustainable transportation.

TRB has provided practitioners with research findings of potential impacts of climate change and extreme weather on the U.S. Highway system for years. The 2014 Strategic Issues Facing Transportation research showed the need for a solid foundation to plan for the impacts of climate change through 2050. The increasing demands for highway reconstruction and rehabilitation happening now provide an opportunity to incorporate climate adaptation strategies.

Speakers at a 2018 TRB conference on freight analytics impacts on the Marine Transportation System addressed the role of sea level rise on the field. One presenter specifically spoke on using the expert elicitation of port authorities to assess the vulnerability and the adaptive capacity of ports to the rising threats of extreme weather and sea level rise.

Professionals in the aviation industry are also keeping a step ahead of preparations for extreme weather events and climate change. TRB's Airport Cooperative Research Program (ACRP) provides Climate Resilience and Benefit-Cost Analysis: A Handbook for Airports to assess the benefits, costs, and financial feasibility of infrastructure projects designed to improve resilience. Case studies of airports in Phoenix, Boston, New Orleans, and Little Rock explore how extreme weather events can affect small and large airports. In summary, evaluating climate resilience at airports may be wisely considered part of the overall risk management processes.

ACRP also offers Integrating Sustainability Planning and the Environmental Review Process as a manual for planners who are integrating the environmental review and sustainability planning processes at airports. The fields of sustainability planning and environmental review share overlap, providing another opportunity for planning and infrastructure enhancement in transportation.

Extreme weather effects reach from the sky to deep underground, requiring preparations that are unique to each aspect of transportation. TRB's Transit Cooperative Research Project (TCRP) offers a series of reports on Improving the Resilience of Transit Systems Threatened by Natural Disasters with practices for all sizes of transit systems to absorb the impacts of disaster, recover quickly, and return rapidly to providing the services that customers rely on to meet their travel needs. It notes [resilienttransit.org](http://resilienttransit.org) as a resource to identify tools to help plan for natural disasters.

Escalating preparations from basic to extreme

At TRB's Marine Board Spring Meeting, Suzanne Lemieux of the American Petroleum Institute mentioned the lessons learned from Harvey in terms of resilience, working from home, and managing systems for dealing with the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The 2020 hurricane season started unseasonably early, so the industry was already preparing for facing the dual threats of hurricanes and COVID-19 as early as May.

TRB continues to look to the future to better incorporate extreme event and climate change into transportation planning. An active NCHRP project aims to provide guidelines for response planning, assessment, and rapid restoration of service of bridges in extreme events.

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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



<https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/subdoc/906/build-fact-sheet2019.pdf>

### 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.