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East Alabama Region MPO & RPO Transportation Monthly Newsletter

April 2021 Issue

Calhoun Area MPO Updates

❖ MPO Meetings

We are still uncertain of how social distancing protocols will change for the upcoming month. We will continue to err on the side of caution and all MPO meetings will be held via conference call. The call-in number for all MPO Committee meetings is 1-866-899-4679 with an access code of 312-611-237. Meeting notifications will be sent similarly to those of prior meetings and will include all meeting information including any changes should they arise. If you are not currently on the MPO notification mailing list and would like to attend, please email Libby at elizabeth.messick@earpdc.org. All MPO meetings are open to the public.

❖ March MPO Project Changes

None

East Alabama RPO Updates

❖ FY 2021 RPO 2nd Quarter Meetings will be held in April

- Northern Counties (Etowah and Cherokee): April 8th @ 11:00
 - Central Counties (Calhoun, Clay, Cleburne, and Talladega): April 15th @ 11:00
 - Southern Counties (Chambers, Coosa, Randolph, and Tallapoosa): April 22nd @ 10:00
- The call-in number is 978-990-5000, Access number 419-691

Meeting information will be updated as they are scheduled.

All meeting minutes and materials can be found at <http://www.earpdc.org/pages/?pageID=29>.

If you have any suggestions on where to house future RPO meetings in your area, please contact Lattisha Royal at lattisha.royal@earpdc.org or 256-237-6741. We would love to have these meetings be both beneficial and enjoyable for all involved.

Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan

- The Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan has been completed.
- Annual update meetings will be held concurrently with RPO meetings in January 2021 and 2022.
- Annual updates/summary reports will be completed and published on earpdc.org in March 2021 and 2022.
- If you have any suggestions, comments, or questions, please contact Libby Messick at 256-237-6741 or elizabeth.messick@earpdc.org.
- 5310 Applications are due to EARPDC by April 23rd, 2021 to be submitted to ALDOT no later than April 30th, 2021.

CEDS Strategy Committee

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, or CEDS, is a regional planning and implementation process designed to create jobs, foster more stable and diversified economies, improve living conditions, and provide a mechanism for guiding and coordinating the efforts of people and organizations involved in economic development.

As we begin the CEDS update, **we invite you to join us on the Strategy Committee!** We are seeking diverse and broad-based stakeholder participation including public sector, private sector, nonprofits, workforce development boards, higher education institutions, labor groups, and more!

If interested, please reach out to Shelby Brown at shelby.brown@earpdc.org.

Projects Proposed to Let March 26, 2021

Calhoun County

- ❖ RP-STPAA-HSIP-FMGR-0009(578) for constructing the micro-milling, resurfacing, bridge guardrail retrofit, and traffic stripe on SR-9 from the junction of SR-4 (US-78) west of Heflin to a point 0.07 mile south of the Nature Trail (MP 230.233). Length 10.921 miles. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$2,804,258 to \$3,427,427.
- ❖ STPOA-0815(263) for constructing the Roundabout Installation on CR-109 (Bynum Leatherwood Road) at the intersection of Old Gadsden Highway in Blue Mountain. Length 0.178 mi. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$933,808 to \$1,141,321.

- ❖ STPOA-0820(250) for constructing the planing, resurfacing, and traffic stripe on Whites Gap Road Southeast from the junction of SR-21 to the southeast Jacksonville City Limits (Site 1) and on Whites Gap Road from the junction of Cottaquilla Road to the junction of SR-9 (Site 2). Length 4.765 miles. The Bracket Estimate on this project is from \$877,489 to \$1,072,478.

Chambers County

none

Cherokee County

none

Clay County

none

Cleburne County

none

Talladega County

none

Coosa County

none

Tallapoosa County

none

Etowah County

none

Randolph County

none

Upcoming Funding Opportunities & Deadlines

It's not too early to be thinking ahead!

- ❖ **The American Association of Retired Persons' (AARP) Community Challenge** provides grants to fund quick-action projects to help communities become more livable for people of all ages. Applications are accepted for projects for public spaces, housing, transportation, civic engagement, coronavirus recovery, diversity, inclusion, and more. Eligible applicants include 501(C)(3), 501(C)(4), and 501(c)(6) non-profit organizations, government entities, and other types of organizations (considered on a case-by-case basis). Grant amounts depend on size and term of project. **Applications are due April 14 at 8 pm ET.**
- ❖ **The Economic Development Administration (EDA)** is accepting applications for the [Build to Scale Program](#), a \$38 million funding opportunity that fuels tech-based economic development in regional economies. The [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) was published on February 23, 2021 and will be open until **April 29, 2021**. Go here to view recording of a webinar hosted by the Center on Rural Innovation that is meant to help rural communities prepare to apply for this funding opportunity: <https://ruralinnovation.us/build-to-scale-venture-challenge/>. The FY 2021 Build to Scale program is comprised of two competitions, the Venture Challenge and the Capital Challenge. The Venture Challenge seeks to support high growth entrepreneurship, accelerate company growth, and scale proven entrepreneurship support models. The Capital Challenge increases access to capital in communities where risk capital is in short supply by providing operational support for early-stage investment funds, angel capital networks, or investor training programs. Eligible applicants include cities, counties, states, other political subdivisions of states, and Indian tribes. Direct any questions to ois@eda.gov or visit www.eda.gov/oie/BuildToScale.
- ❖ The J.M. Kaplan Fund is accepting applications through **April 30, 2021** for the [2021 J.M.K. Innovation Prize](#). Up to ten non-profit and mission-driven for-profit organizations will receive awards of \$150,000 over three years, plus \$25,000 in technical assistance funds, for a total award of \$175,000. In addition, awardees also receive guidance through the Fund and its resource network, including twice-yearly convenings with their Prize cohort and tools and training to turn innovative ideas into social impacts. Eligible organizations should have a focus on one or more of the following focus areas: heritage conservation, social justice, and the environment. Learn more during an informational [webinar](#) (https://zoom.us/webinar/register/7516121847895/WN_F1pePSXZQmGcVkiW0UyreQ) on **March 30 at 1 p.m. ET**. For more information, visit <https://www.jmkfund.org/innovation-prize-2021/>.

- ❖ The **Community Rides Grant Program** offers funding up to \$100,000 for projects that develop or strengthen transportation partnerships that improve social determinants of health in rural and tribal communities. Eligible applicants are current Federal Transit Administration Section 5311 recipients and subrecipients. The application portal opens **April 7, 2021**. All applications are due **May 10, 2021**. Informational webinars will be held at 2 p.m. ET on [March 23](#) and [April 15](#). Visit <https://www.nationalrtap.org/News/Community-Rides-Grants> for more information.
- ❖ **The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development** is seeking applications for loans and grants to support rural water and waste disposal systems. Applications are accepted year-round, and technical assistance is available. USDA's [Water and Environmental Programs](#) can assist with constructing or improving infrastructure through loans, grants, and loan guarantees. USDA can also partner with rural water and waste service providers to finance infrastructure that aims to protect the cyber security of their facilities. The Water and Environmental Programs at USDA were recently expanded, and guaranteed loans are now available to smaller communities that have the financial strength to take advantage of conventional credit as well as larger communities with populations of up to 50,000. USDA also has technical assistance resources available through partnering organizations. USDA's resources are not limited to communities that have already received a loan or grant through Rural Development. Any water or waste disposal system in an eligible rural area may benefit from technical assistance. For more information on the resources available reach out to your local [USDA Community Program Specialist](#). Applications can be submitted through [RDApply](#) (<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rd-apply>).
- ❖ The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) have announced calls for the Traffic and Safety Operations Section's (TSOS) **Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)** applications. **Deadlines are April 1st, July 1st, October 1st, and January 1st. Max funding amount per agency for reducing rural land departures is \$2,000,000; for intersection related projects is \$2,000,000, and for safe transportation for every pedestrian (STEP) is \$200,000.** They are also announcing a new Local Roads Safety Initiative within the Alabama HSIP. The initiative will be open to cities and counties for both rural and urban non-State maintained roadways with significant safety risks. Applications submitted through this initiative must be in accordance with the most recent Alabama Strategic Highway Safety Plan and applicable Local Road Safety Plans if one has been developed by the county that the location falls within. The TSOS is also making available Road Safety Review (RSR) service for those cities or counties that have an identified location(s) but would like some assistance in ensuring the most effective countermeasures are chosen. Applications under this initiative will be submitted electronically to the ALDOT State Traffic and Safety Operations Engineer. PE, ROW, UT, and CN phases are eligible for funding, but may make the application less competitive compared to those with only CN phases requested. Contact John-Michael Walker at 334-242-6123 or walkerjoh@dot.state.al.us with any requests for assistance or questions about the program.
- ❖ The **U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)** has published the **FY 2020 Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs Notice of Funding Opportunity (PWEEA NOFO)**. Under this NOFO (formerly known as the Economic Development Assistance Program NOFO), the EDA solicits applications for construction, non-construction, planning, technical assistance, and revolving loan fund projects under EDA's Public Works program and Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) program, which includes Assistance to Coal Communities. EDA awards

made under these programs are designed to leverage existing regional assets and support the implementation of economic development strategies that advance new ideas and creative approaches to advance economic prosperity in distressed communities, including those negatively impacted by changes to the coal economy. Projects funded by these programs will support work in Opportunity Zones and will support the mission of the Department by, among other things: leading to the creation and retention of jobs and increased private investment, advancing innovation, enhancing the manufacturing capacities of regions, providing workforce development opportunities, and growing ecosystems that attract foreign direct investment. Access this funding opportunity [here](#).

- ❖ The **Economic Development Administration (EDA)** has made available \$587 million to eligible grantees in communities effected by natural disasters in 2018 and floods and tornadoes in 2019. Applications should provide long-term, regionally oriented, and collaborative development strategies designed to generate economic growth and resilience. No application deadlines apply, and the EDA will continue to accept applications on a rolling basis. For more information can be found [here: https://www.eda.gov/disaster-recovery/](https://www.eda.gov/disaster-recovery/).
- ❖ The **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** is accepting requests for Technical Assistance (TA) under the **Distressed Cities Technical Assistance (DCTA)** Program. The TA program is specifically designed to assist communities with populations under 40,000 that are struggling to recover from natural disaster and economic decline. DCTA may be used to build capacity around: financial management, economic revitalization; affordable housing development; disaster recovery and resiliency planning; cross-sector partnership building; and utilizing federal development programs. To learn more, visit the [Distressed Cities Technical Assistance](https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/dcta/) page on the HUD Exchange (<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/dcta/>).
- ❖ The **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** has released FY 2020 Notices of Funding Opportunity for **eight DHS preparedness grant programs totaling nearly \$1.8 billion**. The grant programs provide funding to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, as well as transportation authorities, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector, to improve the nation's readiness in preventing, protecting against, responding to, recovering from, and mitigating terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies. The grants focus on funding for programs that address the nation's immediate security needs and ensure public safety in our communities. Funding opportunities are available for the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP), Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program (THSGP), Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), Intercity Passenger Rail- Amtrak (IPR) Program, Port Security Grant Program (PSGP), Transit Security Grant Program (TSGP), and Intercity Bus Security Grant Program (IBSGP). For more information on DHS's preparedness grant programs visit www.grants.gov or www.fema.gov/grants. Final submissions must be made through the Non-Disaster (ND) Grants system located at <https://portal.fema.gov>. Contact the Office of External Affairs, Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs Division at (202) 646-3444 or at FEMA-IGA@fema.dhs.gov with any questions.
- ❖ The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that it is providing funds to rural projects that support regional economic and community development planning. This [Strategic Economic and Community Development \(SECD\)](#) funding is authorized for applications submitted through the [Community Facilities Loans, Grants and Loan Guarantees, Water and Waste Disposal Program](#)

[Loans, Grants and Loan Guarantees](#), [Business & Industry Program Loan Guarantees](#), and [Rural Business Development Grants](#) programs. Applicants are encouraged to consider projects that provide measurable results in helping rural communities build robust and sustainable economies through strategic investments in infrastructure, partnerships, and innovation. For more information in this opportunity, visit here:

https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDARD_SA_SECD02282020_.pdf.

- ❖ **The Environmental Finance Center Network** is offering technical assistance free of charge to small drinking water systems serving 10,000 or fewer people. Services include a resource help desk, financial health check-up, water and wastewater rates analysis tool, and a financial resilience dashboard. See https://www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/TechnicalAssistanceEFCN_COVID.pdf for more information.

- ❖ **Community Heart & Soul is offering \$10,000 in Seed Grant Funding** to small cities and towns. This program provides startup funding for resident-driven groups in communities with populations of 2,500 – 30,000 to implement the Community Heart & Soul model which engages the entire population of a town in identifying what they love the most about their community, what future they want for it, and how to achieve it. See <https://www.communityheartandsoul.org/seed-grants/> for more information and to apply.

More information regarding deadlines will be distributed as it becomes available. Please don't hesitate to contact Tyler Ferrell, EARPCD Director of Planning and Development at 256-237-6741 or tyler.ferrell@earpcd.org for more information.

April 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4 Easter	5	6	7 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting @ 10	8 Northern RPO District meeting @ 11:30	9	10
11	12	13 Transit Advisory Board (TAB) meeting @ 9	14	15 MPO Policy Committee meeting @ 10 Central RPO District meeting @ 11:00	16	17
18	19	20	21 Administrative Professionals	22 Southern RPO District meeting @ 10:00	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

May 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 Mother's Day	10	11 Transit Advisory Board (TAB) meeting @ 9	12 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting @ 10	13	14	15
16	17	18	19 MPO Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) Committee meeting @ 10	20 MPO Policy Committee meeting @ 10	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					