



TRANSPORTATION QUARTERLY



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News & Notes: MPO Commuter Study and Public Review

What is a Commuter Study?

At the March MPO meeting, the Board approved funding for a Regional Commuter Study. How are Commuter Studies done? What type of Commuter Study will the Huntsville-Area MPO choose? Commuter studies identify existing and future commuter travel patterns. The Journey to Work numbers currently used in many MPO planning documents do not include federal employees. One out of every five workers in the MPO Study Area are federal employees.



Photo courtesy of Jeronimo Nisa and DecaturDaily.com

Anonymous cell phone data, like what's used to measure traffic congestion on Google Maps, might be used to more accurately visualize where our regional commuters are going and where they're coming from. The MPO's commuter study will inform an update to the MPO's Congestion Management Process, as well as the upcoming 2020-2023 TIP and the Year 2045 Transportation Plan. No new funding was necessary for this study. ALDOT informed the MPO that \$51,800 of rollover planning funds were available from FY 2016 that could be used to fund such a study. The MPO approved this funding strategy and an RFP will go out this summer.

Public Review Needed!

The MPO's Public Participation Plan (PPP) will be open for public comment for 45 days: **April 11th through May 29th**. To see a physical copy of this plan, here's where to find it in the wild:

1. **Huntsville Planning Department**, City Hall, 2nd Floor, 308 Fountain Circle, Huntsville, AL 35801
2. **Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, Main Branch**, Second Floor Information Desk, 915 Monroe Street, Huntsville, AL 35801.

Of course, you can also find the plan on the MPO's website: www.huntsvillempo.org

You can also request your own copy to review by calling **256-427-5188**.



Huntsville Area
Metropolitan Planning
Organization



⇒ **Bridges: replacements and new additions**



⇒ **Bicycle Lanes, Bicycle Plans, Bicycle options**



⇒ **Intersections: Plus additional lanes**



⇒ **Greenways: Plus more pedestrian options**



⇒ **Road Maintenance and Beautification**



⇒ **Interstates: Lane additions, on/off ramps**



⇒ **Public Transit: TRAM, Handi-ride and Shuttle**



⇒ **Redstone Arsenal and Research Park**



The Bridges of Madison County: Construction is Complete on Winchester Bridge!

During the winter months, the County hoped to pave the bridge along with the widening from the bridge to Bell Factory Rd. Because of the cold weather, and the requirements that paving be placed above a specified temperature, the paving was put off until after the first of the year or when the temperatures would allow. Now that the weather has warmed up, the bridge and widening portion of Winchester Road has been paved and striped. All lanes are now open to the public. The combined bridge and widening project cost \$11.37 million and was an Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement (ATRIP) project.



Bicycle News: Don't miss Huntsville Mayor's Bike Ride on Cinco De Mayo (May 5th)

On Saturday, May 5th, join Mayor Tommy Battle and the Healthy Huntsville team for the annual Mayor's Bike Ride, a family-friendly four-mile loop around downtown Huntsville. The ride will start and end at Big Spring Park this year. There will be bike related vendors to share information such as the Zagster Bike Share program. Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m. and the Mayor's Ride begins at 10 a.m. This Healthy Huntsville event is FREE to the public! Helmets are required. Other Healthy Huntsville activities are expected to take place before and after the ride in Big Spring Park. Come join the fun!



MPO Safety Performance Measures Progress

This year, the MPO is working with ALDOT and FHWA to adopt Performance Measures for our MPO Area. The first set of Performance targets required by FHWA were Safety measures. The MPO's Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) met in January to review and adopt the state's safety targets for annual highway collisions with serious injuries or fatalities. The MPO has the option to adopt the state's Safety targets or create targets specifically for our area. The TCC recommended the MPO adopt ALDOT's Safety Performance Measures targets for the 2014-2018 reporting period.

Potholes? Service Request?

Huntsville Connect app:

huntsvilleal.gov/huntsvilleconnect/

City of Madison:

Call: 256-772-0000 or madsional.gov

Madison County: Call your Commission District office. Find numbers here:

madisoncountyal.gov



Rockets & Research: Airport Master Plan Update presented to MPO

Rick Tucker, Executive Director at Huntsville International Airport, gave a presentation on the status of the airport's master planning efforts at the March MPO meeting. The process began in October 2016 and is currently at the end of phase three. Various alternate plans for the airport's future were presented and refined in recent months. A preferred development alternative will soon be selected and an implementation plan developed. These will be reported to the public at the final public meeting for the project to be held in Mid-May.





Intersections & Additional Lanes : Construction begins on Blake Bottom Overpass

Reed Contracting has begun construction on the ATRIP-funded interchange at Blake Bottom Road and Research Park Boulevard. The project will provide direct access to Blake Bottom Road from Research Park Boulevard. Current construction activities include installing the drilled shafts for the bridge supports, MSE wall construction, and bridge abutment construction. Drivers in the area are encouraged to be aware that various equipment and personnel will be active during normal business hours and that traffic conditions may change. Motorists should heed traffic control signals, all advance warnings and instructions, and be aware of personnel, to ensure a safe construction zone as progress continues on the project. This project costs \$7.8M dollars and is currently 15% complete with construction estimated to be complete by the fall of 2019.



Regional Greenway “Singing River Trail” announced with big public meetings

Over one hundred and fifty people attended two public meetings held at the beginning of March to announce a major regional project called The Singing River Trail. In 2016, the Committee of 100 began their “Launch 2035” regional visioning project. A Land Use subcommittee for Launch 2035 was formed. Over the next two years, this Land Use group envisioned The Singing River Trail as a regional land use goal. The committee began this project as a greenway connecting Calhoun Community College’s two campuses in Decatur and Huntsville. By the time of the two public meetings, the Singing River Trail was presented as a 70 mile trail connecting Huntsville, Decatur and Athens. The Land Trust of North Alabama is a leading partner on the project. Alta Planning and Design, who consulted with City of Huntsville on the cycle track project on Spragins Street, led the presentations at the public meetings.



Interstate Updates: I-565 gets an updated Interchange at Greenbrier Road exit

Earlier this year, a major economic development announcement affected transportation plans for the entire MPO Area. The Toyota-Mazda plant that will soon be located on the City of Huntsville’s mega-site in Limestone County will require transportation infrastructure improvements and additions in the next three years before it opens. The first MPO project to come from this announcement is an interchange improvement on I-565 at Greenbrier Road. During the March MPO meeting, the project was added to the MPO’s 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). A new slip ramp will create free flow eastbound to northbound, plus new lighting will be added throughout the interchange. Design, right of way and utility relocation are complete. Construction is to be completed by the end of 2018. The project costs \$11,500,000 and is funded mostly by the federal government with an ALDOT match and no local funds.



Transit: City of Huntsville Public Transit conducts Earth Day celebration

Students of the local colleges and universities were given the option to ride the City of Huntsville shuttle bus for free during the week of April 16th through 20th in celebration of Earth Day on Sunday April 22nd. Alabama A&M University has partnered with City of Huntsville Public Transit for several years on this program, with the Mayor and City Council endorsing the event each year. A member of the transit staff at Alabama A&M leads students on a bus ride to various destinations throughout the city during the free fare week. This year, the BIG Picture partnered with the program and gave a presentation about a visionary Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project to the students. The BRT line presented would run from Alabama A&M to Bridge Street Town Centre along Meridian, Holmes and Old Madison Pike.

Complete Streets Policy Adopted by Planning Commission

The Complete Streets Policy for the City of Huntsville was adopted at February's Planning Commission meeting. This policy was discussed at the Smart Growth America Complete Streets workshop in June 2016. It was written by BIG Picture staff in 2017 and is now a living document and part of the City of Huntsville transportation policy.



What's next for Complete Streets?

This summer, BIG Picture staff will add an appendix to the adopted Complete Streets policy to include a list of potential corridors for improvements. These will be discussed during the city's budgeting process. Now that the policy is adopted, implementation strategies must be developed and initiated. For example, committees may be formed to review proposed Complete Streets improvements throughout the city. This may be similar to the city's current Zoning and Subdivision committee processes. This way, Complete Streets improvements would go through the same public review as other infrastructure improvements and new developments currently do.

The Future of Five Points and NE Huntsville Transportation

The BIG Picture held its second Five Points/Northeast Huntsville Small Area Plan meeting in February. Around 60 residents and interested citizens turned out on a (very) rainy evening. Following a brief presentation of the first meeting's results, attendees participated in several interactive exercises, including:

Pedestrian Connectivity

The tables for this exercise were covered in large maps. Residents drew desired sidewalk and greenway connections on the maps. Stickers were placed on the map to indicate desired crosswalk locations on busy streets.

Streetscapes for Pratt, Andrew Jackson, and Oakwood

While other street segments in the study area could change, these three have the potential for the most visible improvements, including lane reduction (from 4-5 lanes to 3). On each segment, multi-use paths, decorative street lighting, landscaped medians, and bike lanes were the most requested improvements.

Land Use for Andrew Jackson and Pratt

This exercise used two boards, one for residential land use and one for commercial land use. Participants were asked to choose three general types of development that are desired within two miles of the corridors. Small scale developments and mixed use developments were popular in both categories.

Transportation Quarterly Goals:

1. Report news of multi-jurisdictional transportation projects in the cities of Huntsville, Madison and throughout Madison County in a user-friendly, easy to digest, and visually pleasing format.
2. Educate the public on transportation plans and connect transportation projects of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) with the BIG Picture Huntsville visions and goals for the Huntsville area.

Questions or comments? Call me, Planner Paige, at 256-427-5188 or email me at paige.colburn@huntsvilleal.gov

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CHECK OUT our Blog! : <http://www.huntsvillempo.org/category/tqr/>