

**UNDER EMBARGO**  
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## **EASTERN SHORE, MOBILE MPOs ANNOUNCE NEW I-10 BRIDGE PLAN**

**MOBILE, AL** – The Chairs of the Eastern Shore and Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) today announced a plan for a new Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project, which was prepared for the MPOs by the Alabama Department of Transportation.

The plan meets the framework laid out by the MPOs in December 2021, including the following:

- A comprehensive plan with a new Mobile River Bridge and a new Bayway that meets capacity and safety needs and can be built in five years
- Free, no-toll routes on the Causeway, Wallace Tunnel, Bankhead Tunnel, and Africatown Bridge
- Tolls of \$2.50 or less for passenger vehicles, and \$18.00 or less for trucks
- An unlimited use option for \$40 per month, which is under \$1 per trip for daily commuters between Mobile and Baldwin Counties
- Toll revenue to be used only to pay down project debt, with tolling to end once the debt is paid off
- All infrastructure to be owned and operated by the State of Alabama, with no private concessionaire
- A contribution of at least \$250 million in State funding, in addition to \$125 million in federal funding through an INFRA Grant

“This is a great day for Baldwin County,” said Eastern Shore MPO Chair and Fairhope City Councilmember Jack Burrell. “Baldwin County is the fastest growing county in Alabama, and this plan addresses some of our most important needs. I’m thrilled that this plan creates an option for commuters to Mobile to cross on a new bridge for under \$1 each way. We will continue to work toward new federal funding to lower costs on Alabama taxpayers and drivers as this project moves forward.”

“Moving forward with this plan is a milestone in the history of Mobile and South Alabama,” said Mobile MPO Chair and Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson. “This bridge is a key component to Mobile’s future growth – it connects workers to jobs and businesses to new customers. Building this bridge will be a cornerstone of Mobile’s future success.”

The MPOs will consider and vote on this plan at their meetings over the summer. Scheduling, public comment, and hearing details will be made available on the Eastern Shore and Mobile MPO websites.

Following MPO approval and finalized funding, construction of the new Mobile River Bridge and Bayway would begin in late 2023 and be complete by 2028.

Full details on the plan are available in the Report from ALDOT to the Eastern Shore and Mobile MPOs, below.

**Report from the Alabama Department of Transportation  
to the Eastern Shore & Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organizations  
on the Mobile River Bridge & Bayway Project  
June 24, 2022**

## **Overview**

The current system of bridges and tunnels that cross Mobile Bay and the Mobile River cause severe traffic congestion and limit the region’s ability to grow. The current Interstate 10 route through the Wallace Tunnel and the Bayway was designed to carry 35,000 cars and trucks each day; there are now nearly 100,000 cars and trucks crossing that route on peak days. By increasing road capacity Baldwin and Mobile Countians will see reduced congestion, increased road safety, and improved hurricane evacuation.

On December 15, 2021, the Eastern Shore and Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) announced a framework for a new Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project to address this problem. They also requested that the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) move forward to design a plan that meets this locally-driven framework. The framework includes:

- A comprehensive plan with a new Mobile River Bridge and a new Bayway that meets capacity and safety needs and can be built in five years
- Free, no-toll routes on the Causeway, Wallace Tunnel, Bankhead Tunnel, and Africatown Bridge
- Tolls of \$2.50 or less for passenger vehicles, and \$18.00 or less for trucks
- Toll revenue to be used only to pay down project debt, with tolling to end once the debt is paid off

- All infrastructure to be owned and operated by the State of Alabama, with no private concessionaire
- A contribution of at least \$250 million in State funding, in addition to \$125 million in federal funding through an INFRA Grant

Since then, ALDOT has worked within the framework requested by the two MPOs to produce a plan, described below, that meets the specified criteria as well as relevant state and federal regulations and needs.

In addition, ALDOT also has identified a new potential funding source through the US Department of Transportation's new Mega Grant program. ALDOT has applied for a significant amount of funding through this program, and, per the MPOs' direction, will continue to seek additional revenue sources to help pay for this project.

## **Plan Details**

The plan submitted to the MPOs for consideration meets their framework. Plan details are below:

### *Mobile River Bridge:*

- The plan will create a new six-lane, cable-stayed bridge with a minimum 215 feet of air draft clearance across the Mobile River channel.
- High level approach spans for the bridge will start just east of Virginia Street in Mobile and end between the Bayway bridges.
- The Broad Street, Virginia Street, Texas Street, Canal/Water Streets, and US 90/98 interchanges will be reconstructed to improve traffic flow and ensure free routes.

### *Bayway:*

- The new Bayway will replace the existing four-lane I-10 Bayway bridges across the Mobile Bay with new bridges that will meet capacity needs and modern safety and design standards.
- The new Bayway will run approximately 7.4 miles, from the high-level approach spans to the US 90/98 Eastern Shore interchange in Daphne and will be approximately 12 feet higher than the current Bayway to meet Federal storm surge requirements.
- The existing Bayway will remain open and free throughout the construction of the new Bayway.
- The Mid-Bay and Eastern Shore interchanges will be reconstructed to better serve traffic flow.

### *Toll-Free Routes:*

- Toll-free routes include the Wallace Tunnel, the Bankhead Tunnel, the Africatown Bridge, and the Causeway.

- Approaches and routes connecting the Wallace Tunnel to the Causeway and downtown Mobile will be designed and built to ensure smooth traffic flow for these no-toll routes.
- As a state highway, trucks will be able to use the free routes, though they will remain restricted by existing height and hazardous cargo restrictions at the tunnels.
- ALDOT also is working to mitigate expected traffic increases on the Causeway.

#### *Toll Gantries:*

Only new infrastructure will be tolled, and all tolls collected will go toward paying for the project and not to other uses. The State of Alabama – not a private concessionaire – will own, operate, and maintain all infrastructure.

To keep the Wallace Tunnel toll-free, toll gantries – overhead scanners – will be located at the Mid-Bay interchange. This location ensures that tolls are only charged for vehicles using the new infrastructure, and that traffic does not stop while passing under the gantry.

### **Construction Costs**

Recent inflation has affected construction costs for this project. New construction costs are \$2.7 billion, an increase from the \$2.1 billion construction cost estimate in 2019. On a percentage basis, this is consistent with inflation-driven cost increases on highway projects across the state.

ALDOT and the State of Alabama are doing as much as possible to keep project costs as low as possible for taxpayers and drivers through design changes and efforts to secure new funding.

### **Funding Sources**

ALDOT expects to use the following funding sources to pay for the project:

- At least \$250 million in State funding, \$125 million in Federal INFRA Grant funding, \$500 million in anticipated Federal Mega Grant funding (application submitted), \$1.2 billion in Bond Financing, and \$1.1 billion in Federal TIFIA loans. The debt service will be paid from tolling revenue.

Per MPO direction, tolling will end once the project debt is paid off. ALDOT will also continuously seek additional federal funding to offset project costs and pay down debt as quickly as possible.

### **Toll Schedule**

The toll rates meet the specifications in the MPO framework. ALDOT will make an “ALGO Pass” sticker available for a nominal fee and will ensure that ALGO Pass users see the lowest toll rates. These stickers, which serve as toll transponders, will be modeled after regional

examples like Georgia's Peach Pass or Florida's Sun Pass. These will be placed on a car's windshield, connected to a user account, and toll charges will be paid through previously established accounts.

For non-ALGO Pass holders, cameras will capture license plate information and ALDOT will administer a bill, payable online, to that vehicle owner. All toll payment processes are designed to both ensure maximum traffic flow and minimal administrative costs for Alabama taxpayers.

*Maximum ALGO Pass toll rates are below:*

**A \$40 monthly unlimited rate will be available for 2 axle vehicles under 7.5 feet height, which includes the vast majority of cars, pickup trucks, SUVs, and other common vehicles. For a typical daily commuter between Mobile and Baldwin Counties, this would bring the average one-way toll to under \$1.**

Drivers who do not want to purchase an unlimited pass will have the option to pay on a per-use basis. The per-use ALGO Pass rates are:

**Cars, pickups, motorcycles, SUVs, etc.** (Vehicle height under 7.5 feet)

2 axles: \$2.50

2 axles with any 1 or 2 axle trailer: \$5.00

2 axles with any 3 or more-axle trailer: \$7.50

**Buses, delivery trucks, 18-wheeler trucks, etc.** (Vehicle height over 7.5 feet)

2 axles: \$9.00

Each additional axle: + \$3.00

18-wheeler (5 axle): \$18.00

*Maximum non-ALGO Pass rates follow:*

**Cars, pickups, motorcycles, SUVs, etc.** (Vehicle height under 7.5 feet)

ALGO rate plus \$1.50 per axle

2 axles: \$5.50

2 axles with 1 axle trailer: \$9.50

**Buses, delivery trucks, 18-wheeler trucks, etc.** (Vehicle height over 7.5 feet)

ALGO rate plus \$2.75 per axle

2 axles: \$14.50

18-wheeler (5-axle): \$31.50

ALGO passes will be widely available to all drivers, both online and in retail locations, though ALDOT expects their use to be most prevalent among Mobile and Baldwin County residents. ALDOT will make every effort to ensure that these passes are available in a convenient manner and with nominal costs. This would include the option to receive a pass when a driver registers their vehicle or renews their license, as well as ALGO Pass availability in convenient retail locations like grocery stores, gas stations, pharmacies, and other similar locations.

## **Timeline**

Following MPO approval of this plan, ALDOT will move forward with the RFQ/RFP, bidding, and obligating process for construction. ALDOT will also hold additional public meetings and finalize requisite modeling and environmental documents needed for federal and state regulations.

Construction would begin in late 2023 and be complete by 2028.

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