

December 15, 2021

Mr. Edward N. Austin  
Chief Engineer  
Alabama Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 303050  
Montgomery, AL 36130

Dear Mr. Austin:

Earlier today, the Eastern Shore MPO and Mobile MPO met to discuss the Bayway project and the critical importance to our region of formulating a plan to resolve the severe traffic congestion problem facing our area.

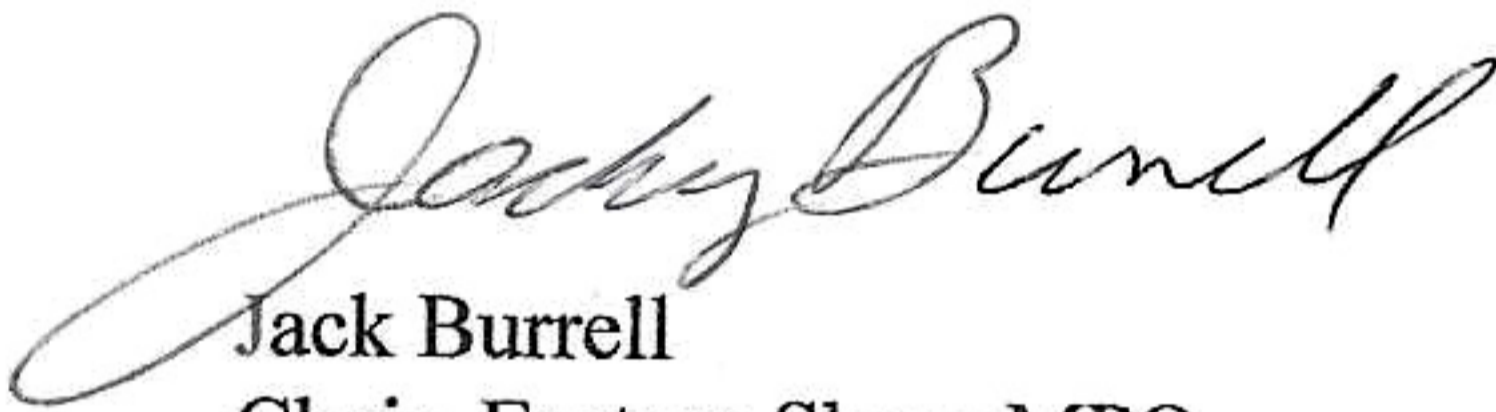
As you may know, over the past year local officials from both sides of Mobile Bay have been meeting to discuss this important matter and how we can develop a framework for a plan moving forward. Our two groups strongly agree that a plan must be developed now. We unanimously concur that any plan must include several important parameters:

- **Be comprehensive.** Our area cannot support a piecemeal plan that will take 25 years or more to complete. We would hope any plan would be completed in about five years once construction begins.
- **Free, no toll options.** We must have free, no toll options for passengers who do not wish to pay a toll. Unlike the previous plan, we strongly believe the Wallace Tunnel should be toll free as well as the Bankhead Tunnel, Africatown Bridge, and causeway. Under no circumstances should there be a toll on existing infrastructure that continues to be used.
- **Significant federal and state funding** should be made available to help pay for this project. We must move very quickly to protect \$125 million in federal money that has been dedicated to this project. We anticipate at least \$250 million to be contributed from the State of Alabama.
- **Toll fees should be significantly reduced.** Any tolls that must be charged to pay for infrastructure should be cut by more than half for cars and trucks from the previous plan. We recommend a maximum toll of \$2.50 or less on all passenger vehicles if a person chooses to use the new infrastructure, despite the fact that toll-free options remain available. Tolls for 18-wheeler-type trucks should be \$15 to \$18.

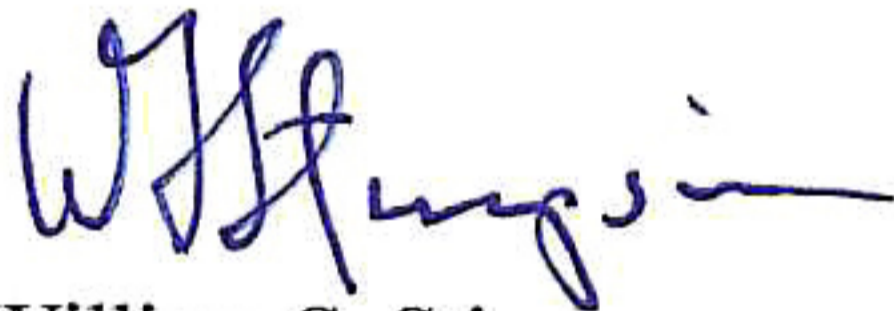
- **Local input.** We are forwarding to you other requests that have been developed by local officials. At the end of the day, local officials and local citizens must drive the process — not the state or federal government. Through our MPO process we will continue to be involved in this project moving forward and we strongly encourage continued public input throughout the process.

In the coming days we look forward to meeting with you and your staff to further discuss our recommendations and work together toward a plan that both solves this major congestion problem and has strong local input and support. We can assure you that all members of our MPOs stand ready to partner with you on this most important project, and we ask that you begin developing a plan for us to consider that incorporates the guidelines in the attached document, which has been reviewed and is supported by the Eastern Shore MPO and Mobile MPO.

Sincerely,



Jack Burrell  
Chair, Eastern Shore MPO



William S. Stimpson  
Chair, Mobile MPO



## ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

1409 Coliseum Boulevard  
Montgomery, Alabama 36110

Telephone: (334) 242-6311 • Fax No.: (334) 262-8041

*Kay Ivey*  
Governor



*John R. Cooper*  
Transportation Director

January 10, 2022

The Honorable Sandy Stimpson  
Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization

The Honorable Jack Burrell  
Eastern Shore Metropolitan Planning Organization

### **VIA EMAIL**

Dear Chairman Burrell and Chairman Stimpson,

The Alabama Department of Transportation has received your letter sharing the framework for a solution to the traffic congestion problem crossing Mobile Bay that has been developed by the Eastern Shore MPO and Mobile MPO. We appreciate the framework and commend your leadership for developing this locally-supported solution.

I am tasking Edward N. Austin, our Chief Engineer, and Matt Ericksen, Southwest Region Engineer, with developing a detailed plan based on your framework. For the past several weeks, our personnel have been working to update the environmental document for the project as well as re-start the traffic and revenue studies necessary to support a detailed financing plan for the project. While much work remains to be completed, preliminary results are encouraging. We look forward to completion of this work and the project plan at the earliest possible date.

The plan to be developed from your framework will include the following key parameters:

- Rather than taking a piecemeal approach, we will recommend a plan that is comprehensive and should be completed in five years once construction begins. While this is a very short timeline for such a massive project, we agree with your assessment that a comprehensive solution must be

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developed now. This should include a new six-lane Mobile River bridge, a new Bayway built to current safety and longevity standards, and appropriate interchanges in Baldwin and Mobile Counties.

- The plan moving forward must include free, no toll options to cross Mobile Bay, including free use of the Causeway, the Africatown Bridge, and the Wallace and Bankhead tunnels.
- We anticipate a plan based on financial data and traffic counts to fund all new construction using at least \$250 million in state funding, \$125 million in federal funding and a toll that shall not exceed \$2.50 for passenger vehicles that choose to use the new infrastructure. We will continue to work with the MPOs on flat-rate tolling for frequent business and personal travel across the Bayway.
- Revenue from this project, as well as any new federal or state funding that may become available in the future for this project will be applied to pay off debt for this project only. All tolls will end when debt is paid.
- All new infrastructure will be owned by the state and this project will not include any private concessionaire.

In summary, from a state perspective, we support the framework that has been developed by the Eastern Shore MPO and Mobile MPO. Please notify your respective staffs that our team will be reaching out to them in the coming days to take the next steps to prepare a plan for your organizations to consider soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John R. Cooper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

John R. Cooper  
Transportation Director



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*Kay Ivey*  
Governor

*John R. Cooper*  
Transportation Director

March 23, 2022

TO: EASTERN SHORE MPO MEMBERS  
MOBILE MPO MEMBERS

FROM: EDWARD N. AUSTIN   
CHIEF ENGINEER, ALDOT

RE: MOBILE RIVER BRIDGE AND BAYWAY PLANNING PROCESS

I want to share an update with you about the Alabama Department of Transportation's (ALDOT) progress developing a plan related to the new Mobile River Bridge and Bayway project. While we have been able to make much progress in many areas of this plan development, we are challenged to finalize cost estimates due to significant marketplace volatility driven by inflation, supply chain issues, fuel costs and financial uncertainty. We remain focused on getting a final proposal to you as quickly as possible, however, it is even more important that we get these next steps right.

While no one can predict the future, we are hopeful - based on conversations with our outside financial experts, federal partners, and others - that a draft plan will be ready for your review by June 1, if not sooner. At that time, we hope to discuss construction details, cost estimates, financing options, and the possibility of additional state and federal funding with each Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Our efforts are directed towards a plan that will incorporate the framework that was approved by you and your fellow MPO members in December 2021.

We deeply appreciate the work you have done and continue to do on this important project. This has been a team effort. We will continue to keep you up to date with our progress.