

Supplement #2  
Summary of Outreach Activities  
and Input Received  
Alabama 2040 Statewide  
Transportation Plan



Prepared for  
Alabama Department of Transportation  
Bureau of Transportation Planning and Modal Programs

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# ALABAMA 2040 STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

## SUPPLEMENT #2: SUMMARY OF OUTREACH ACTIVITIES AND INPUT RECEIVED

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### 1. Introduction

Outreach to stakeholders and the general public was a critical component of the Alabama 2040 Statewide Transportation Plan (SWTP) development process. To better understand system needs and issues across the state, input was solicited in several forums and incorporated throughout the SWTP plan development process. The three primary forms of engagement consisted of client coordination, stakeholder outreach, and public involvement.

This supplemental report documents the comprehensive outreach effort. As such, it summarizes:

- Client coordination and Study Coordinating Committee
- Stakeholder involvement
- Public outreach
- Communication

A complete inventory of the materials prepared throughout the course of the plan update are attached to this supplement. The attachments include: copies of meeting handouts, presentations, and comment forms; samples of meeting announcements and notification emails to stakeholders, meeting attendees, and interested citizens; and summaries of comments received at both rounds of public and stakeholder meetings.

### 2. Client Coordination and Study Coordinating Committee

Extensive client coordination activities were ongoing throughout plan development. Regular and frequent email and telephone coordination activities with the ALDOT project manager and staff ensured continual progress leading to particular milestones, findings and interim deliverables. This ongoing coordination was supplemented by in person meetings with ALDOT Transportation Planning and Modal Programs staff.

A Study Coordinating Committee (SCC) composed of ALDOT Central Office staff representatives from the bureaus/sections associated with statewide multimodal transportation planning was established. These bureaus/sections include, but are not limited to, staff for metropolitan and statewide planning, travel demand modeling, GIS, safety, transit, bicycle/pedestrian, bridge, rail, aviation, environment, maintenance, and pavement management. Progress updates and findings included in the interim report deliverables and draft/final plan document were presented to the committee for review, discussion and comment at regularly scheduled quarterly meetings or specially called meetings depending on study schedule. Representatives from the SCC also collected and/or verified data used for the identification of baseline conditions and projected statewide transportation needs.

The SCC structure was two-tiered, depending on the anticipated level of technical involvement in the plan development process. Those most directly involved in the plan development process—known as the Technical Group—included representatives of Metropolitan Planning and Data Collection and Data Management. The broader SCC was composed of the Technical Group as well as representatives of the various modal elements with a macro-level involvement in the general statewide planning process. This included representatives for Safety, Traffic Operations, Transit, Bicycle/Pedestrian, Rail, Bridge Maintenance, Pavement Maintenance, Aeronautics, and Design, including the Environmental Technical Section. In addition, informal coordination with SCC members, particularly regarding recent activities and plans developed by their section/bureau, occurred throughout the plan development process.

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Meetings with the SCC were held at key milestones to review study progress, solicit input and receive feedback. As necessary, a meeting with the Technical Group was held separate to the broader SCC meeting to delve more deeply into technical details related to the plan development process as a whole, the travel demand modeling process, and the data that feeds the model (particularly HPMS). Additional conference call and in-person meetings related to the travel demand model update process were held as required. In addition, SCC members received the interim reports in draft form via email for review and comment.

The first SCC meeting was held on July 28, 2016. Topics discussed during this kickoff meeting included:

- Purpose, process and federal guidelines for a Statewide Transportation Plan
- Data collection and needs
- Updating the statewide travel demand model
- Results of a peer review of neighboring states' plans.

The second SCC meeting was held on December 13, 2016. Topics included:

- Changes to requirements, programs and funding in the federal transportation bill
- Preliminary existing conditions and needs
- Projects in the ALDOT Work Program
- Summary of the first round of regional meetings and other ongoing coordination activities

In addition, the SCC was provided a copy of the draft SWTP Final Report for review and comment prior to its finalization.

### **3. Stakeholder Involvement**

Stakeholder involvement guided plan development activities. Key stakeholders included ALDOT Region Engineers, the MPOs and RPOs, FHWA, and representatives of state agencies and select private sector modal, economic development and advocacy organizations. A full list of stakeholder organizations and representatives was developed at the outset for approval by the client contact. Additional stakeholders who expressed interest in the study through email and/or regional meeting attendance were added to the contact list over the course of the effort.

Initial communication to stakeholders to request their participation in the first round of public and stakeholder regional meetings occurred via US mail and email. Thereafter, email was the primary form of communication. The initial notification informed potential stakeholders of the study's initiation and provided details on the first round of regional meetings. Additional communication was distributed over the course of the effort as appropriate. Examples include notification of the availability of interim documents and the draft Final Report on the study webpage and announcement of the second round of region meeting dates and locations.

In addition to general stakeholder communication, ongoing ALDOT efforts to increase coordination between the Department and the state's Tribes and Tribal Organizations are underway. The State of Alabama recognizes nine Tribes: Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Echota Cherokee Tribe of Alabama, Cherokee Tribe of Northeast Alabama, Ma-Chis Lower Creek Indian Tribe of Alabama, Southeastern Mvskoke Nation, Cher-O-Creek Intra Tribal Indians, MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians, Piqua Shawnee Tribe, and United Cherokee Ani-Yun-Wiya Nation. One Tribe, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, is also federally recognized.

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In follow-up to the first public and stakeholder meeting (discussed below), the study team conducted an individual meeting with a representative of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. During this meeting, the study team was apprised of ongoing efforts at the federal level to more fully incorporate Tribes and Tribal Organizations in the planning process. Recently FHWA convened a rulemaking committee for the Tribal Transportation Self-Governance Program (TTSGP) in order to develop a detailed interpretation of how and when Tribes should be fully involved in federal processes and programs. In the meantime, ALDOT is continuing its efforts towards more fully incorporating the Tribes into its planning processes. With regard to the SWTP, ALDOT is coordinating to receive relevant transportation and socioeconomic data and information, particularly with regard to travel demand modeling and projected growth.

#### **4. Public Outreach**

During the course of the plan development process, two rounds of public and stakeholder outreach meetings were held in each of the five ALDOT Regions across the state (Hoover/Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, Montgomery and Tuscaloosa). The meetings were scheduled to coincide with key milestones in plan development—identification of existing/future needs (late September 2016) and draft plan findings and recommendations (early April 2017). The consultant team coordinated with ALDOT Region Office staff in scheduling the specific meeting locations and times. Likewise, the assistance of ALDOT Region staff and others as appropriate (e.g., MPOs and RPOs) was enlisted to support widespread advertisement of the meeting details within each region.

A briefing for the Region Engineer and his selected staff and/or stakeholders was conducted earlier in the day of each meeting during the first round. In addition to providing Region staff with an overview of the information to be presented later that evening, these meetings enabled the study team to learn more about specific issues, concerns and projects within each region. Detailed discussions involved existing conditions, deficiencies and needs across all transportation modes within the region. Each Region Engineer was offered a similar opportunity for the second round of meetings.

Each public and stakeholder meeting was conducted as a 1.5-hour open house, with a PowerPoint presentation given midway through the meeting. Attendees were requested to sign-in, and those who provided contact information were added to the contact list for notification of future study related announcements. Several handouts were provided, including study fact sheets, copies of the presentations, and comment forms. Consultant and ALDOT study team members were available to explain display boards, answer questions, and address comments.

Attendees at both rounds of regional meetings were encouraged to submit their completed comment forms to a study team member at the meeting or at a later date via email to the designated ALDOT email address ([altransplans@dot.state.al.us](mailto:altransplans@dot.state.al.us)). Attendees were offered additional copies of all handout materials for distribution to others who may be interested in the SWTP effort. In addition, the meeting presentations, handouts, and comment forms were posted on the ALDOT study webpage (<http://www.dot.state.al.us/oeweb/statewideTransportationPlan.html>). The ALDOT webpage address and the email address for providing comments or asking questions were prominently displayed on all materials, including in email notifications, meeting presentation and fact sheet handouts, and comment forms. A direct email link for comments was also provided on the webpage itself.

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A compilation of all verbal and written comments received during each Region Engineer briefing and public and stakeholder meeting was prepared. Anyone who wanted to be contacted by a study team member for further discussion of their comment or question was asked to provide the necessary contact information, and a reply was sent to acknowledge receipt of any emailed comments. Any comments specific to a particular location or project were also forwarded to the Region Engineer responsible for that area to ensure that all appropriate personnel received the comment. The compilation of comments was also posted on the study webpage.

The first round of Region Meetings was held on the following dates:

- Huntsville – Tuesday, September 20, 2016
- Tuscaloosa – Wednesday, September 21, 2016
- Hoover – Thursday, September 22, 2016
- Mobile – Tuesday, September 27, 2016
- Montgomery – Wednesday, September 28, 2016

Materials presented at the meetings included the background and general content of the SWTP; the update schedule, status and next steps; statewide planning emphasis areas and draft SWTP goals; general existing conditions data for each mode in the transportation system; and ways to learn more and provide comments. A total of 151 people signed in at the five meetings, and 38 comment forms were received.

Following these meetings, the Association of County Engineers of Alabama (ACEA) asked the study team to briefly present the region meeting material during its monthly webinar on October 13, 2016. Participants were encouraged to reach out to the study team with any relevant information, to provide comments, or to be directly placed on the contact list.

The second round of Region Meetings was held on the following dates:

- Mobile – Tuesday, April 4, 2017
- Montgomery – Tuesday, April 4, 2017
- Hoover – Thursday, April 6, 2017
- Huntsville – Thursday, April 13, 2017
- Tuscaloosa – Tuesday, April 18, 2017

Presentation topics included an overview of the SWTP, a summary of Alabama’s expected growth through 2040, highlights of key findings and projects for each network mode, and a review of funding sources and levels. A total of 89 people signed in at the five meetings, and 9 comment forms were received.

#### **5. Communication**

The primary method of direct communication with committee members and stakeholders throughout the plan development process was email. In addition, ALDOT’s website was used to efficiently coordinate with all stakeholders and the general public. The study introduction, status updates, and meeting announcements were posted to the SWTP webpage, along with meeting materials and interim reports available for review. Opportunities to solicit further input, including comment forms from the public meetings, were also added to the webpage. The draft Final Report was also posted to the webpage for general review and comment. The webpage address is: <http://www.dot.state.al.us/oeweb/statewideTransportationPlan.html>.

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Contact information for study team members and directions on how to provide input was available on the webpage. A SWTP specific email address, automatically distributing any emails that were received to appropriate ALDOT staff, was established to further facilitate communication with the general public. The email address is: [altransplans@dot.state.al.us](mailto:altransplans@dot.state.al.us).

The team encouraged all stakeholders and planning partners, such as the MPOs and RPOs, to distribute SWTP development updates through their own websites and/or newsletters. They were also encouraged to add a link to the ALDOT SWTP webpage on their own websites.

An email list of interested participants was developed over the course of the study. Individuals who provided their contact information at the regional outreach meetings, as well as those who emailed their requested to be kept informed to the [altransplans@dot.state.al.us](mailto:altransplans@dot.state.al.us) email were added to the list. These individuals were notified by email of the schedule for the second round of regional public and stakeholder meetings and when new materials (interim documents and the draft Final Report) were posted to the webpage.