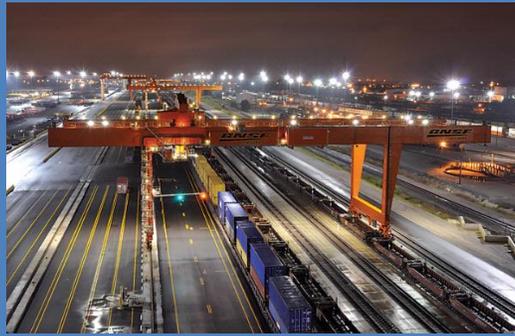




# 2017 Alabama Statewide Freight Plan Executive Summary



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### ES.1 INTRODUCTION

The Alabama Statewide Freight Plan (Freight Plan) establishes the freight planning and performance monitoring activities to be undertaken throughout the state by the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). This plan is an update to the *2016 Alabama Statewide Freight Plan*, which was completed under guidance set forth in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). The 2017 Freight Plan considers recent policy changes at the federal level. The plan complies with the current federal transportation bill, known as the FAST Act (Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act), and aligns Alabama's freight policy with current guidance from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Freight Management and Operations. In addition, the plan utilizes the most recent transportation and commodity flow data available, including FHWA's Freight Analysis Framework Version 4.3 (FAF 4.3) commodity flow data and the Statewide Travel Demand Model developed during the recently completed Alabama 2040 Statewide Transportation Plan effort.

Key plan elements include:

- An overview of relevant policy that influences freight planning at the statewide level.
- A discussion of existing and projected commodity flows and freight network characteristics, which provide the baseline for identifying needs statewide.
- A profile of the Interim National Multimodal Freight Network (NMFN) within the State of Alabama.
- A summary of freight improvements of statewide significance, which forms the basis for the overall Freight Investment Plan.
- A description of the measures and procedures that will be used by ALDOT to monitor transportation system performance with respect to freight mobility.

### ES.2 EXISTING AND PROJECTED FREIGHT BOTTLENECKS

Characteristics of the existing bottlenecks and freight volumes include:

- Nearly all existing bottlenecks are along the Interstate system.
- All of the roadway segments with 15,000 or more trucks are Interstate facilities.
- The Birmingham area currently has the most facilities experiencing bottlenecks, which affect all of the Interstates as well as other major routes such as US 11 and US 280.
- The Huntsville area experiences freight bottlenecks along I-565, US 231, and US 72.
- Existing bottlenecks also occur along I-10 and I-65 in the Mobile area, along I-65 and I-85 in the Montgomery area, on I-20 near Anniston, and along I-85 in the Auburn-Opelika area.
- Many highways in rural areas carry truck traffic that equals 15 percent or more of total traffic.

With respect to the projected 2040 bottlenecks and freight volumes:

- The Birmingham area will continue to have the highest levels of congestion in the state, occurring along its Interstates and the principal arterials that carry freight traffic.
- Conditions at all existing bottlenecks are projected to worsen if action is not taken.
- Smaller pockets of bottlenecks and greater freight volumes are projected to occur or worsen on non-Interstate facilities such as US Alternate 72, US 231, and US 280 (which already experiences significant bottleneck conditions during peak hours).

### ES.3 NATIONAL HIGHWAY FREIGHT NETWORK (NHFN)

The National Highway Freight Network (NHFN) is comprised of the primary roadways providing access and connectivity across the US freight transportation system. Alabama’s total NHFN mileage by component is identified in Table ES-1. There are approximately 1,037 miles of NHFN facilities in Alabama, with Interstate facilities comprising approximately 97 percent (over 1,000 miles). Within Alabama, a key benefit of inclusion on the NHFN is the eligibility to utilize National Highway Freight Program (NHFP) funding for improvements along all NHFN facilities. This eligibility is due to the fact that Alabama contains less than 2 percent of the national Primary Highway Freight System (PHFS) mileage; states over the 2 percent threshold may not invest NHFP funds along non-PHFS facilities.

**Table ES-1: National Highway Freight Network (NHFN) Mileage in Alabama**

NHFN Facility Types	Miles	Percentage
PHFS Interstates	783.8	75.6%
PHFS Intermodal Connectors	29.3	2.8%
Non-PHFS Interstates	217.9	21.0%
Critical Rural Freight Corridors	6.2	0.6%
Critical Urban Freight Corridors	0.0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1037.1</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: FHWA, 2017

Critical Rural Freight Corridors (CRFCs) and Critical Urban Freight Corridors (CUFCs) provide critical connectivity to the NHFN. Per FHWA guidance, it is at the discretion of ALDOT to designate CRFCs and CUFCs within the state. In response, ALDOT conducted an analysis for potential corridors throughout the state. Potential corridors were preliminarily identified through GIS-based technical analysis and FAC input. Information provided by FAC members included the locations of present and future freight generating sites as well as proposed corridor segments for inclusion. The potential corridors were then individually assessed to determine whether they satisfied one or more of the FHWA criteria for CRFC and CUFC designation, and could therefore be considered for federal freight program funding. The assessment resulted in the identification of a candidate network of approximately 214 miles of CRFCs and approximately 82 miles of CUFCs. At this time, ALDOT has determined to restrict the total mileage of designated CRFCs and CUFCs due to the limited amount of NHFP funding available throughout the state. Only one corridor has been designated as a CRFC – a 6.2-mile segment of US 82 through Pickens County in western Alabama – and no CUFC mileage has been designated at this time.

### ES.4 FREIGHT INVESTMENT PLAN

Alabama’s Freight Investment Plan outlines ALDOT’s planned expenditures of NHFP funding on freight projects. The projects funded through the NHFP program and in the Freight Investment Plan were identified through input from ALDOT staff based on high priority needs for freight mobility and economic development. The Freight Investment Plan projects listed below are presented in order of their projected authorization year, with the exception of the debt service (included as #9).

1. Widen and relocate US 82 to four lanes, Pickens County (2016)
2. Resurface I-65 from 0.4 mi. south of CR-141 to 0.8 mi. south of Beaver Creek, Butler County (2017)
3. Resurface I-20 from Coosa River to beginning of full three-lane segment, Talladega County (2017)
4. Resurface I-65 from SR-145 to just north of CR-48 overpass and resurface northbound and southbound rest areas, Chilton County (2017)

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5. Resurface I-65 from US-278 to near Hurricane Creek, Cullman County (2018)
6. Improve I-65 at US-43 interchange, Mobile County (2018)
7. Widen I-10 from east of Bayway Bridge to 0.5 mi east of SR-181 to six lanes, Baldwin County (2020)
8. Widen I-85 bridges, Lee County (2021)
9. Debt service related to Interstate improvements in downtown Birmingham (2017-2021)

Table ES-2 provides projected expenditures for NHFP funds through 2021. More detailed information on Alabama’s overall Freight Investment Plan is included in Appendix D of the Freight Plan document. Several highlights of the Freight Investment Plan are:

- The State of Alabama is estimated to receive approximately \$121.5 million in NHFP funds through the life of the FAST Act.
- Of the NHFP funds through 2020, all but approximately \$20 million has been allocated to project and/or debt service at the time of this report.
- Two projects included in the Freight Investment Plan (#3 and #6 in the list) do not use any NHFP funding, but have been included due to their importance to freight mobility.
- The I-85 bridge widenings project and the last year of debt service in Birmingham are programmed beyond the FAST Act period; however, it is assumed that NHFP funding will remain consistent.
- Of the NHFP funding, approximately 31 percent is for capacity projects and 24 percent for maintenance and operations projects (including bridges). The remainder is for debt service.
- All but one of the Freight Investment Plan projects are on the Interstate system. The US 82 project is on a newly designated Critical Rural Freight Corridor (CRFC).

**Table ES-2: NHFP Freight Investment Plan Expenditures by Year**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*	TOTAL from FAST Act (2016-2020)	TOTAL beyond FAST Act (2021)
Annual NHFP Allocations from FAST Act	\$ 22,188,355	\$ 21,223,644	\$ 23,153,066	\$ 26,047,198	\$ 28,941,332	\$ 31,835,466	\$ 121,553,595	\$ 31,835,466
Annual Programmed Expenditure of NHFP Funds	\$ 21,745,000	\$ 20,665,000	\$ 22,436,000	\$ 11,387,000	\$ 25,269,000	\$ 14,641,000	\$ 101,502,000	\$ 14,641,000
Difference	\$ 443,355	\$ 558,644	\$ 717,066	\$ 14,660,198	\$ 3,672,332	\$ 17,194,466	\$ 20,051,595	\$ 17,194,466

\*Annual allocation for 2021 (beyond the FAST Act) was estimated by applying the same increase from 2019 to 2020.

### ES.5 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures are an important aspect of the FAST Act, and ALDOT is currently conducting a parallel effort to develop performance measures consistent with FHWA national performance goals. The FAST Act states that ALDOT must establish two-year and four-year targets by May 20, 2018. Those targets will be reported in the State’s baseline performance period report, which is due by October 1, 2018. The State DOTs have the option to adjust 4-year targets in the mid-performance period progress report that is due October 1, 2020. MPOs must either support the State target or establish their own quantifiable 4-year targets within 180 days of the State establishing its target. ALDOT may develop performance metrics at its own discretion. However, FHWA dictates the Truck Travel Time Reliability (TTTR) Index be utilized to assess freight movement.