

ALDOT WINTER 2024

Inside Lane

67th Alabama Transportation Conference Highlights Safety and Innovation

The 67th Alabama Transportation Conference, held in Birmingham at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex February 6-7, brought together industry leaders, contractors, exhibitors and ALDOT employees to discuss the future of the transportation industry and how safety is going to play a large role.

Approximately 1,000 transportation professionals attended the conference. Opening the conference was keynote speaker David Harkey, Ph.D., with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety with a presentation 30 by 30: Moving Toward Safer Roads. Luther H. Roberts, Jr., Chief Executive Officer of the Huntsville Port Authority gave an update on The Port of Huntsville and how it plays a part as one of Alabama's top multimodal transportation centers.

ALDOT Director John Cooper addressed the crossroads of politics and planning road projects at the Transportation Director's Luncheon on Tuesday, Feb. 6. Director Cooper noted that, with the passing of the Rebuild Alabama Act, Mobile has seen improvements on I-10,

many parts of the state have seen infrastructure improvements. Prattville has seen construction on US-82, and West Alabama is in the beginning stages of the much-anticipated Linden Bypass and the West Alabama Corridor.

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Director Cooper with Steve Walker, East Central Region Engineer for Operations, celebrating his 25+ years of service with ALDOT.

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Winter weather on Singing River Bridge in the North Region. *cover image above*



67th Alabama Transportation Conference Highlights Safety and Innovation *continued from cover*

Gov. Kay Ivey addressed the conference on Wednesday at the Governor's Luncheon. She praised attendees on being some of the chief architects of Alabama's progress, explaining that economic development and quality of life depends on Alabamian's access to safe roads and bridges throughout the entire state. The governor thanked conference attendees for their support in approving a plan to increase funding to repair and upgrade Alabama's aging transportation system. She also praised the Rebuild Alabama Act as one of the most transformative pieces of legislation in decades.

Steve Walker, East Central Assistant Regional Engineer for Operations, was recognized at the Governor's Luncheon for his 25+ years of service with ALDOT.

Auburn University Transportation Research Institute and the Conference Program Committee designed the 67th Annual Alabama Transportation Conference for federal and state highway personnel, road building contractors, general contractors, city and county engineers, consulting engineers, construction material vendors and university faculty members. It provides an opportunity for these groups to share

ideas and innovations in transportation planning, design, construction, operations and maintenance.

above Gov. Ivey speaks to transportation conference attendees.

Alabama Drivers More Distracted than Ever

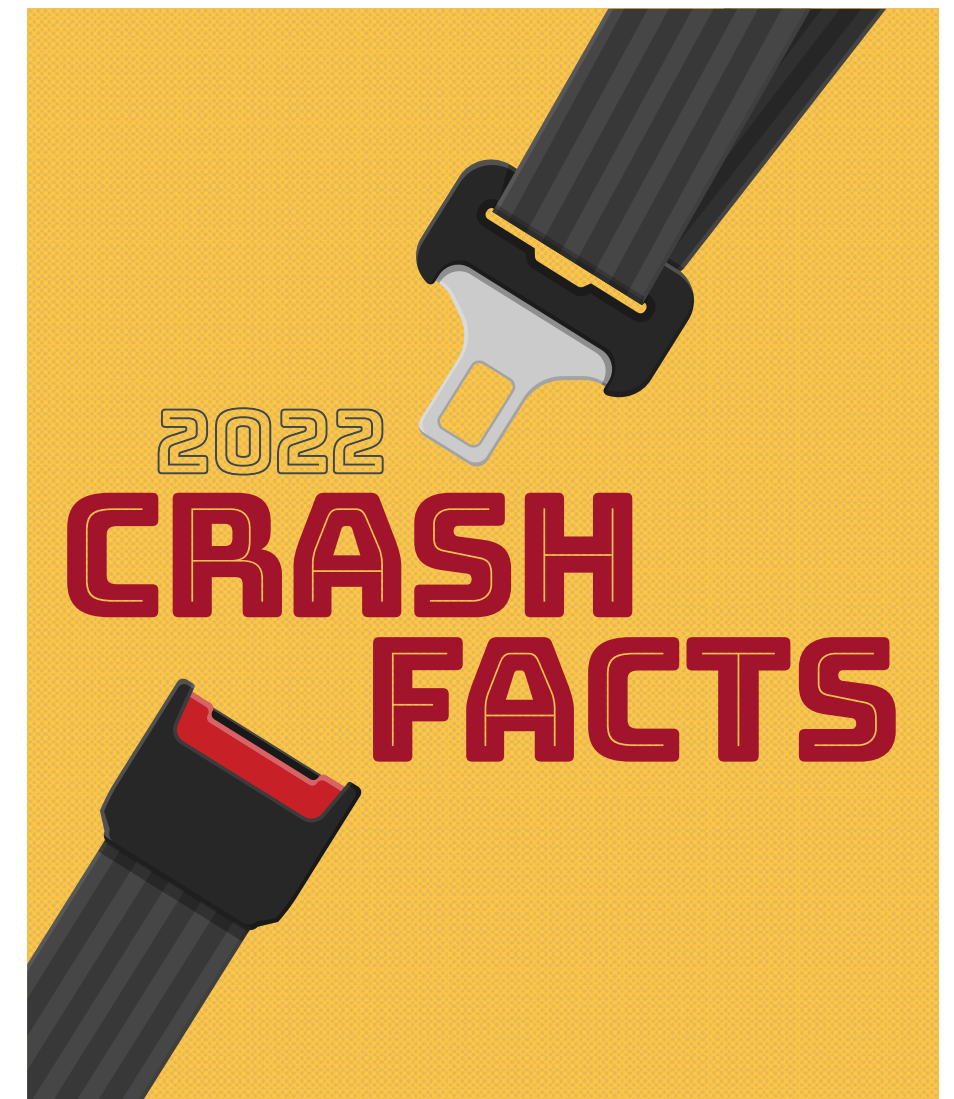
According to the Alabama Crash Facts publication, there were 986 fatalities on Alabama roads in 2022. Almost seven percent of those fatal crashes were the result of the motorist being distracted while driving. To address this issue, the Alabama Legislature passed a hands-free driving law in June 2023. The purpose was to reduce distractions and make roads safer for everyone.

One of the leading causes of distracted driving is cellphone usage. Whether texting, making calls or using social media, focusing on a cellular device takes the driver's concentration away from the road. When a driver's eyes are off the road, the risk of crashing and causing a fatality increases significantly.

The hands-free law states it is illegal to hold a cellular device to write, send or read any text-based communication, watch a video or use more than a single button or swipe to initiate voice communication.

Each year, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency and local law enforcement provide information and data to the Center for Public Safety at the University of Alabama for the Alabama Crash Facts publication. ALDOT and local transportation agencies use this data to identify specific engineering and operational opportunities to improve the safety of our transportation system.

Crash Facts is a resource that motorists can use to identify ways to stay safe on the road. Through its Drive Safe Alabama public information campaign, ALDOT is working to create a culture where drivers put safety first.



Distracted driving crash data and other driving crash data can be found in the 2022 Crash Facts publication now available on the Drive Safe Alabama website. To learn more, scan the code or visit <https://drivesafealabama.org/uploads/files/ALDOT-CrashFacts2022.pdf>

Launching ALDOTNews

Alabamians have a new way to learn about road projects, traffic conditions, highway safety and more, thanks to ALDOTNews.com. This digital news source was launched by the ALDOT Media & Community Relations Bureau in collaboration with the ALDOT regional public information officers March 2024.

On the home page, articles about the most current news from ALDOT will be featured. At the top of the page, the Projects & Programs link will take readers to a map where they can find details about active road projects in their area.

A link to the latest schedule of public involvement meetings for upcoming projects is also easy to find from the ALDOTNews home page. For up to the minute traffic information and live traffic camera feeds, there will be a link to the ALGO Traffic website.

Answers to many frequently asked questions related to transportation in Alabama can be found in the FAQ section of ALDOTNews. There is an easy to find list of details from how to report a road concern to where to find ALDOT reports and other documents. Job seekers can use

the Join the Team link to find out about current ALDOT job openings.

"We are pleased to provide ALDOTNews to Alabamians as the primary source of state transportation news," said Media and Community Relations Bureau Chief Tony Harris. "We believe this new initiative will help people stay better informed of the projects designed to enhance quality of life and economic success across the state."

Visit [ALDOTNews.com](https://algotnews.com) and stay connected with us for a brighter and more informed future on the road.

ATIB Helps Fund Local Transportation Projects

The Alabama Transportation Infrastructure Bank (ATIB) is an ALDOT program that provides government units with low-interest loans to help fund transportation projects within the state. The goal is to leverage state and federal funds, accelerate priority transportation projects, spur economic development, and assist local governments with their transportation needs.

The ATIB provides a low-cost means to fund projects. The bank can provide the money to accelerate a construction schedule or to complete a funding package. The minimum loan amount is \$5 million and can be based on the funding of multiple projects.

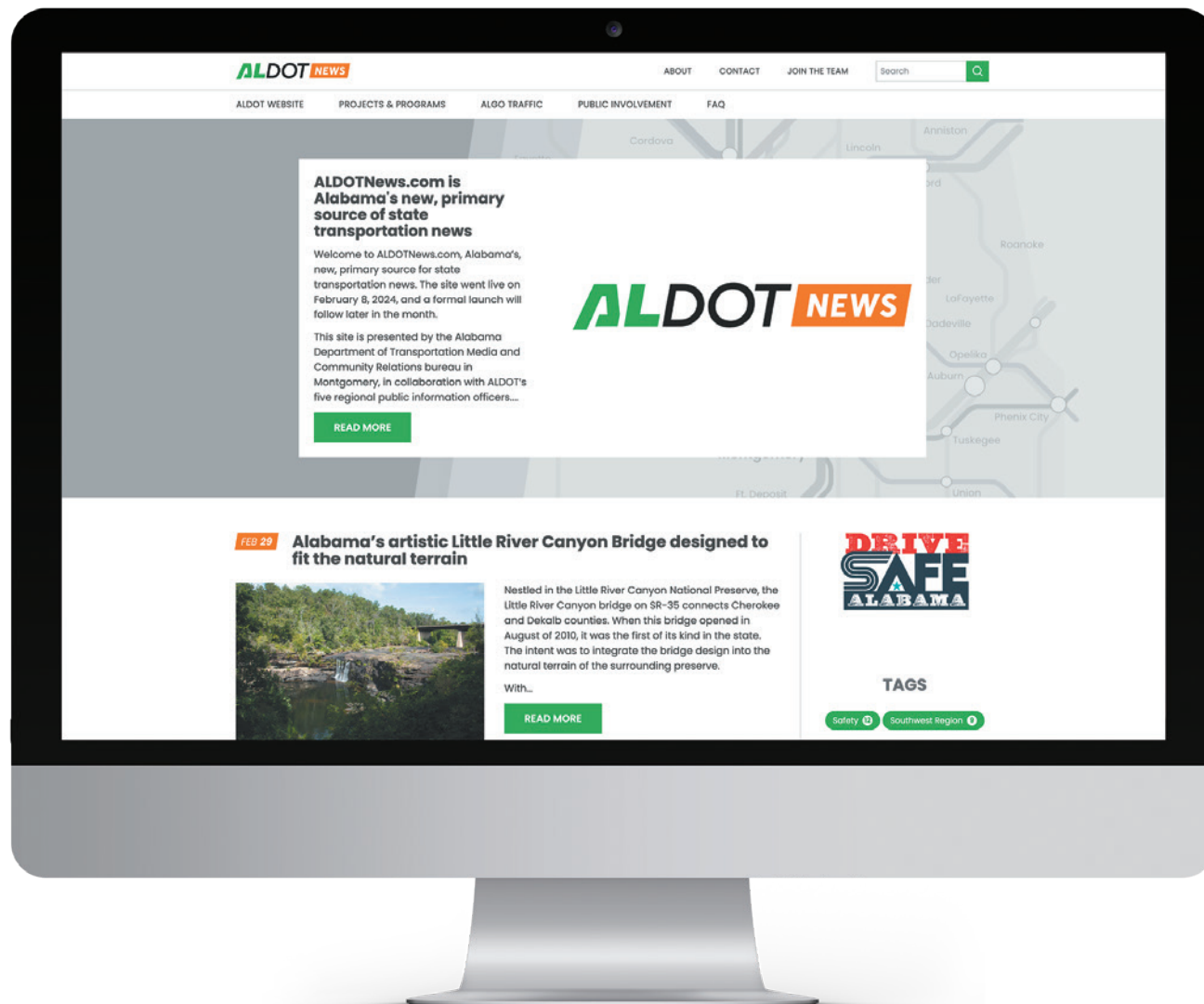
Bullock County will benefit from the ATIB, as the Bullock County Commission entered into an agreement to secure \$5 million dollars of funding that will be used to improve the county's road system. Through the ATIB, the county obtained favorable borrowing rates and reduced transaction costs in securing a fifteen-year revenue bond.

This funding source will allow for needed road improvements to be constructed more quickly. Over seventy miles of the county's road system are slated to be improved with this money. All the Bullock County projects are expected to be completed within three years of the funding approval.

The ATIB has also provided a loan to Jefferson County for bridge replacement, intersection improvements, major road reconstruction and other multi-jurisdictional projects.

Jackson County has used ATIB funds for road improvements, resurfacing and preserving critical roads.

The City of Saraland received an ATIB loan for major improvements to Celeste Road to give the city better access to I-65.



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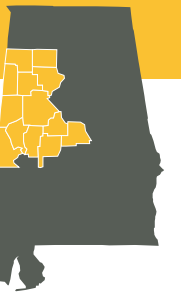
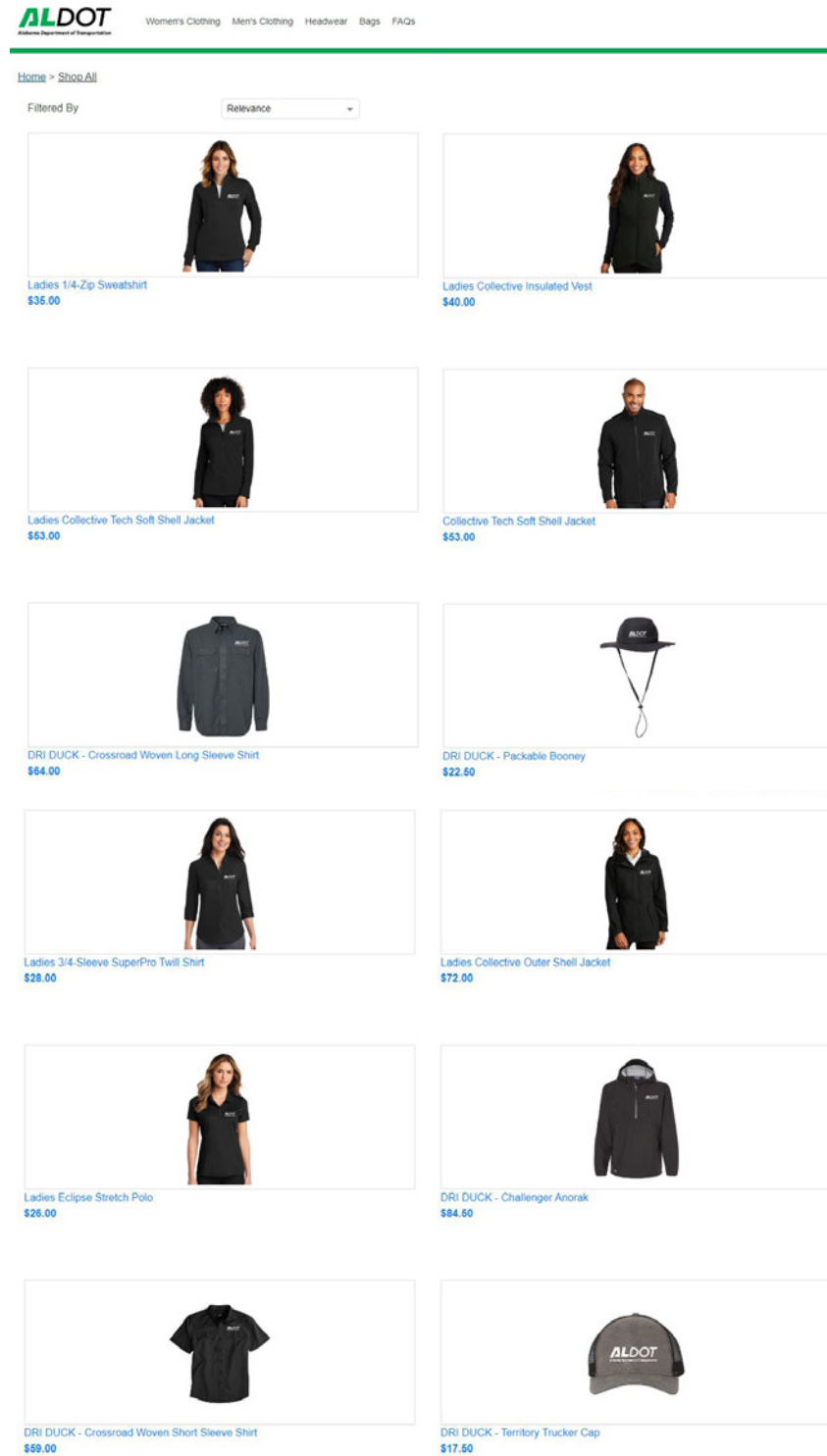


Employee Store Launches on Intranet

Employees can now order ALDOT branded clothing items directly from the intranet. ALDOT has partnered with Logo Branders to create a website that offers employees branded items such as polos, rain jackets, sweatshirts, and more. Anything ordered from this site will be the responsibility of the employee to pay for. This site cannot be used to order promotional items that should be purchased through the state contract.

Shoppers will have the option to have their items delivered to their work location via ALDOT Hand Mail for free, or you can pay to have items delivered to a personal address via UPS shipping. Below is a link to the site where you can access the store, and please visit the FAQ link at the top of the page for answers to frequently asked questions. If you have questions about orders, contact Logo Branders at customerservice@logobranders.com and include the fact that you work for ALDOT.

webstore.online/ALDOT



Crews Make a Difference with Winter Weather Response

ALDOT responded in force as road conditions across west central Alabama deteriorated in mid-January due to a winter storm.

West Central Region crews treated and cleared approximately 9,500 lane miles of state-maintained roads and bridges and worked diligently to alleviate icy conditions. ALDOT's Fayette Area treated or plowed approximately 7,500 of those lane miles and used more than 120,000 gallons of salt brine, 10,000 gallons of calcium chloride and 3,500 tons of salt to ensure travel resumed as quickly and safely as possible.

Fayette Area Maintenance Engineer, James Kyzar, said he was proud of how well everyone worked together to get the job

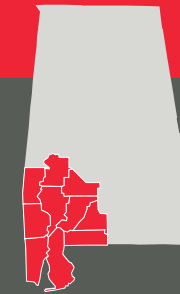
done, as crews worked two days before the forecasted arrival time to pretreat roads and prepare their in-event response. He said that the 115 employees who promptly responded to the call were forced to change tactics after the temperature dropped faster than expected, bringing more rain. Temperatures remaining well below freezing only made things worse.

"This combination leads to icy conditions, and winter storms are one of the more difficult things we face," Kyzar said. "Our District Administrators were constantly adjusting plans and methods to get the most out of our material and time. Most of our crews worked through the night with very little rest, for multiple nights in a row, to restore and maintain our routes. I cannot

praise our crews enough for their positive, never-quit attitude and the effort they expended this week."

West Central Region Engineer, Wallace McAdory, said he was thankful for the effort and determination each crew displayed throughout the weather event.

"I am grateful for their unwavering commitment and tireless efforts in ensuring the safety and functionality of our roadways," McAdory said. "Even in the face of challenging weather conditions, they continued to work until the job was finished. Their hard work, resilience, and attention to detail have not gone unnoticed, and I appreciate their contributions."



Rural RTOP Improvements

In January, ALDOT traffic engineers completed the expansion of a successful traffic signal program into the rural counties of Choctaw, Marengo, Wilcox, Clarke, Washington, and Monroe. The new signals will reduce delay and congestion, improve safety and reliability along heavily traveled roadways, and allow for one seamless and efficient traffic grid in the larger metropolitan area.

ALDOT's Regional Traffic Operations (RTOP) started as a five-year program in 2021 to modernize all 492 signals on state routes in ALDOT's Southwest Region. All 70 traffic signals on state routes in the region received the upgrades.

ALDOT has been partnering with a dedicated team of consultants from

AECOM, Arcadis, and Kimley Horn to implement the program. This includes outfitting all traffic cabinets on state routes with updated timing plans and hardware that allows for remote signal monitoring and control. The most recently installed signals are in Thomasville, Monroeville, Butler, Jackson, Demopolis, and Camden, along with some smaller communities.

"Traffic crashes don't discriminate, and every community deserves equal access and mobility," said Jeremy Borden, ALDOT Signal Systems Engineer.

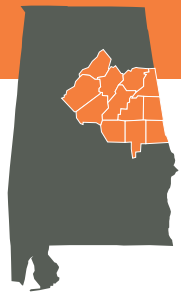
The completion of this recent expansion effort in these rural communities signals the completion of the RTOP upgrades in ALDOT's Southwest Region. It also represents a huge milestone for the state



of Alabama. It is the first ALDOT region in the state to successfully connect, retime, monitor, and operate every signal on state routes. Engineers will now spend the next few years building on that success to continue refining and improving signal performance in its pursuit of excellence.

"The impact of these signal improvements is a welcome change for motorists in these smaller communities. ALDOT continues to assess signal performance and has set up a dedicated email and phone number for reporting complaints and encourages the communities to start using them," said Borden.

above Camera signal monitoring at ALDOT Traffic Management Center.



ECR Operations Engineer Thanks Employees During Recent Ice Storm

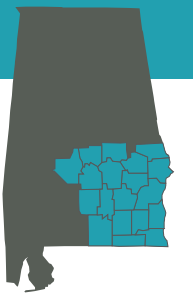
During the mid-January ice storm, the East Central Region staff worked around the clock to ensure that the roads and bridges were safe for our citizens.

- The Area produced and placed over 91,000 gallons of salt/hot brine from Saturday to Wednesday (this doesn't include brine the Area made for other Areas). All lanes of all interstates were pretreated as well as many of our US routes along with trouble spots.
- Overall, the Area placed over 27,000 lbs (nearly 14 tons) of dry calcium chloride mixed with aggregate in spreaders.
- The Area also placed over 6,000 gallons of potassium acetate in pretreating our bridges (all bridges, all lanes, areawide).

They did this on over 1,200 lane miles of interstates and much of the remaining 2,000 lane miles of our other routes. We didn't lose any roads and were not forced to close any either. The only ones blocked were mainly from large trucks trying to go places they shouldn't have in an ice storm. "To my knowledge, all routes stayed passable, and none were closed due to ice," said Area Operation Engineer William McDaniel. "Conditions and precipitation obviously played a role, but our folks had a lot to do with it as well. Suffice it to say, I am extremely proud of our personnel. Some worked almost 48 continuous hours to save our roads and it showed."

	District 1	District 2	District 5
DRY CMA (in pounds)	800	0	0
SALT BRINE (in gallons)	10,200	15,600	4,100
ROCK SALT (in tons)	0	0	40.48
DRY CALCIUM CHLORIDE (in pounds)	0	13,150	14,000
LIQUID CALCIUM CHLORIDE (in gallons)	0	0	1,000
#8910 STONE (in tons)	70	45	121.5
SAND (in tons)	0	0	1,149.74
LIQUID POTASSIUM ACETATE (in gallons)	1,700	1,200	650
DRY POTASSIUM ACETATE (in pounds)	1,550	0	0
ICE FIGHTER PLUS DE-ICER (in boxes)	42	0	0

below A tanker in the Birmingham area ready for winter weather.



Teamwork Praised in Response to I-85 Bridge Fire



Shortly after 7 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 29, a truck traveling on I-85 South in downtown Montgomery, crashed into the South Perry Street bridge and caught fire engulfing the bridge in flames.

Montgomery Area Maintenance Engineer Jesse Mooney, was faced with various issues when arriving to the chaotic scene with Area and District personnel.

To verify the extent of damage to the bridge structure, ALDOT first had to close all lanes of traffic on I-85 South and the South Perry Street bridge. Interstate and local traffic had to be rerouted to avoid traveling over the damaged bridge and relieve further congestion.

The Montgomery Area worked closely with the Region, as well as Bridge and Maintenance to find a solution for traffic and repairing the damaged bridge.

Southeast Region PIO, Brantley Kirk, notified the public through TV, radio, newspaper, and Twitter and responded to inquiries from the media and traveling public while Southeast Region TSMO Engineer, Kris Kiefer, utilized the ALDOT Help Alert System for the first time in the state.

Using the ALDOT Help Alert System, the Southeast Region TMC was able to draw a fence around the affected area and push an alert to cell phones within that fence about the closure. Once someone received the alert, they were able to opt out of messages or ask questions regarding the incident. The ALDOT Help Alert System allowed ALDOT to reach a total of 176 people.

Kiefer said, "The ALDOT Help Alert System was able to inform motorists in the affected area with real time updates including detours. The system also allowed those that were in need to contact the TMC so ASAP could provide assistance. This incident was a successful use of the ALDOT Help Alert System."

As soon as the fire was extinguished, ALDOT crews began inspecting the bridge and determined that a bridge column and portion of the bridge cap were severely damaged.

The interstate and South Perry Street bridge remained closed to traffic for the safety of the traveling public and emergency repairs began immediately to reopen two lanes on I-85 the next day.

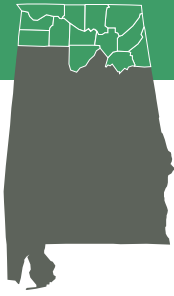
Once the damaged portion of the bridge was removed, ALDOT finalized plans for permanent repairs. The Area was able to expedite the bidding process and awarded the project to McInnis Construction, LLC., on Tuesday, September 5.

McInnis worked continuously to open the South Perry Street bridge a week later on Tuesday, September 12.

"Some of my proudest and happiest moments at ALDOT are when people in various capacities work together without question or hesitation to accomplish a goal larger than themselves," Mooney stated.

left top Column forms being removed.

left bottom More column work and the cap being replaced.



Crews Take On Extended Winter Weather Event

January's winter weather event reached deep into the state, but the most severe and long-lasting effects were seen in north Alabama, where thousands of miles of highway were covered in ice and snow for several days.

The cost of preparations and response across the two areas and seven districts in ALDOT's North Region totaled more than \$2 million. Regionwide, crews applied more than 3,000 tons of salt to roads in a single week. Workers pretreated roads with salt brine over the weekend in advance of the storm, then equipped dump trucks with snowplows and salt spreaders to be ready to respond once the storm hit. Crews reported to district offices, and many would not return home for several days.

Precipitation began the afternoon of Jan. 14, in the northwest corner of Alabama, and, over the next two days, the system moved across the state. In some areas, particularly along the Tennessee state line, snow fell heavily. However, many counties got little or no snow, instead receiving some combination of rain, freezing rain, sleet, and ice pellets, creating extremely hazardous driving conditions.

District 14 Administrator Wayne Stephens said he was expecting snow in Cullman County based on forecasts. "It rained for three and a half or four hours at 25 or 26 degrees out there, so all your pretreatments washed off," said Stephens.

Then the water on the pavement suddenly froze.

For the next two days and nights, crews were fighting ice on parts of I-65 in Cullman County. They ran into the same challenges crews all over the region encountered—temperatures remained so cold that salt had little to no effect on ice and hot brine would freeze on contact. Salt had to be applied at much higher rates than usual to get results.

"We had the outside lanes open, and (tractor trailers) thought they could pass on the inside lanes, and they would jackknife and clog up the whole interstate," Stephens said.

To remedy those situations, crews would back tankers or spreaders down the hills, treating the pavement until they reached the stuck vehicles giving them a path forward. But drivers were often reluctant to move, continuing to block traffic and preventing further treatment, Stephens said.

"We had message boards saying 'Follow me,' and they wouldn't move," he said.

Stephens said he greatly appreciated the assistance of the Alabama National Guard, who removed crashed or stuck vehicles with wreckers, and state troopers, who motivated drivers to start moving again.

This scenario played out a couple more times, with trouble spots appearing on steep parts of I-65 in Cullman County, but by the morning of Jan. 17, crews were able to keep the interstate clear.

Stephens said that during the event, his crews made many minor repairs to vehicles and equipment, sometimes with mechanics talking them through it over the phone, to avoid having to take vehicles back to the shop or wait for mechanics to arrive on scene.

Late in the week, ALDOT had cleared or partially cleared most major routes, though problems persisted on many minor highways, particularly in mountainous or shady areas. District 21 Assistant Manager Eli Borelli said two tractor trailers got stuck on the hills of SR-17 north of Florence in Lauderdale County on Jan. 18. The area had about seven inches of snowfall that compacted to two inches of solid ice.

"These hills were so slick, a wrecker would not have been able to get to the 18-wheelers," Borelli said. "ALDOT forces cleared the way with a combination of salt spreading, snowplowing, and motor grader blading." Borelli said salt had to be applied at a higher rate than usual to be effective.

There were many other instances of trucks getting stuck on icy roadways. Even responders had difficulty at times. Jason Humphrey, of the Guntersville Area paving crew, was driving a dump truck with a



spreader to treat SR-65, a remote two-lane highway in Jackson County, which remained iced-over Jan. 19. With the mountain on one side of the curvy road and the Paint Rock River on the other, Humphrey rounded a bend to see abandoned vehicles blocking the narrow road below. Rather than go careening into the river, Humphrey slid off into the ditch on the mountain side of the road.

"There was about a half inch of ice up there," Humphrey said.

Humphrey and firefighters who came to his aid spread salt by hand behind the truck. He used the ditch to get traction and backed to the top of the hill, then turned around to work the spreader backwards down the hill to the abandoned vehicles.

"A farmer had his tractor with a box blade trying to get what he could off (the road) to help get things moving again," Humphrey said. "That community—they're used to doing a lot of that on their own. It's not unusual to have them helping you."

above top Icy conditions on the Singing River Bridge

above bottom Florence Boulevard covered in snow and ice



Relocated US-411 Opens to Traffic

Cherokee County residents received an early Christmas present—one that had been on their wish list for decades—when the new US-411 opened to traffic in December.

Cherokee County is now connected to I-59 and I-759 by a four-lane highway from the county seat at Centre into Gadsden in neighboring Etowah County. The final, nearly six-mile segment between Turkeytown and Leesburg was constructed on a new alignment, located between the old two-lane road to the west and Shinbone Ridge and Lookout Mountain to the east.

Gov. Kay Ivey joined state and local officials Nov. 29 to cut a ribbon in celebration of substantial completion of the nearly \$52 million project three years after breaking ground. The project was funded entirely with state dollars through Rebuild Alabama.

Constructing four-lane connections to interstates for counties that do not already have any four-lane connections to interstates has been a priority for Transportation Director John Cooper.

Birmingham-based Vulcan Materials began work on the \$34.3 million construction contract in November 2020. The project included clearing, excavation, filling, construction of ten culverts

over streams, including eight box culverts and two bridge culverts, and construction of the aggregate base and asphalt paving.

North Region Engineer Curtis Vincent said he was proud of ALDOT employees, who encountered multiple hurdles during planning and execution.

"This was a project that was very challenging from the beginning—a lot of environmental issues that we had to overcome and a lot of different factors in construction that we had to overcome—but our guys pulled it all together and made it happen," Vincent said.

A corridor study in the early '90s led to planning for two projects to relocate US-411 on a new, divided four-lane. A 7.4-mile segment between Gadsden and Turkeytown was completed in 2015 at a total cost of more than \$58 million. The total cost of design, right-of-way acquisition, utility relocations and construction for both projects—covering 13 miles—is expected to be about \$110 million.

INSIDE LANE is a newsletter published for the employees of the Alabama Department of Transportation. Publication is managed by the Media & Community Relations Bureau in conjunction with ALDOT's Regions and Bureaus.

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Work Zone Awareness Week

April 15-19 is National Work Zone Awareness Week visit nwzaw.org to learn more.

