

# 2012 ANNUAL REPORT



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The interstate highway system, born in the 1940s from the discerning mind of the future President Dwight D. Eisenhower, has been an extraordinary engine driving economic growth and enriching quality-of life in America ever since its launch in 1956.

The interstate highway system democratized mobility in the United States, endowing virtually all Americans with the freedom to move quickly to any destination within their communities, throughout the country, inexpensively, and when their individual needs required it. America became a nation on wheels — reaping benefits from an individual mobility that are unrivaled anywhere in the world.

A vast region of the United States — 205,000 square miles with 25 million people, known as Appalachia — was not included in the national interstate highway system. The terrain is rugged. Building roads in such terrain is expensive, thus much of this region was excluded from the original interstate system. But President John F. Kennedy recognized the economic consequences of isolation for the poverty-stricken residents of Appalachia, who had been denied economic opportunities and the infrastructure

required to create them. His vision and leadership resulted in the President's Appalachian Regional Commission (PARC) charged with establishing a comprehensive program for the economic development of the Appalachian Region.

The PARC placed top priority on a modern highway system as essential to economic development. A broad, bipartisan coalition in Congress authorized the construction of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) in the Appalachian Development Act of 1965. The ADHS was designed to generate economic development in previously isolated areas, supplement the interstate system, and provide access to areas within the region as well as to markets in the rest of the nation.

Nearly fifty years after creation of the ADHS, now that 88% of the total system is complete or currently under construction, Alabama is poised to begin construction on its final 52.5-mile part of the system, the Northern Beltline. After years of lagging behind the twelve other ARC states with only 54% of qualifying miles completed, Alabama is expected to finally see work begin on the Northern Beltline in 2013!

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Although we cannot yet drive by and see physical construction activity along the Northern Beltline route, 2012 brought significant accomplishments that should allow us to do exactly that in 2013.

On March 29, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) officially approved the Federal Environmental Impact Study Reevaluation (FEISR), the most significant regulatory requirement in advancing the project to construction. The FEISR incorporates all of the information in ALDOT's prior 306-page Federal Environmental Impact Study (FEIS) and only adds any new information to the FEIS. The FEISR is a 1,480-page document that not only cleared the required regulatory and legal process of the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) and FHWA, but was also reviewed and approved by multiple other federal, state, and local agencies according to their areas of expertise.

In late June, ALDOT submitted the permit application to the U.S. Corps of Engineers (USCE). The permit is required to let construction on the 3.4-mile portion connecting AL Highway 79 and AL Highway 75. Although complete compilation of required data took several additional months, ALDOT is to be commended for the exceptional attention given to every detail for this project that ensures the Northern Beltline will be constructed in full compliance with regulations that protect and safeguard our region's natural resources, general environmental quality, and drinking water sources.

On June 29, the entire U.S. Congress demonstrated its continued commitment to prioritize completion of the ADHS with inclusion of it as one of the few highway programs specifically identified in the new law. In fact, ADHS projects were given the unique benefit of 100% federal funding for a ten-year period, eliminating the 20% State match and freeing up an estimated \$600 million of State highway funds for use by ALDOT on other projects as it deems needed and appropriate. Perhaps even greater proof of Congress' resoluteness to complete the ADHS system is its requirement of state departments of transportation to submit by mid-2013 a plan for the timely completing of its remaining ADHS projects.

Last year, we also welcomed two additional municipalities to the already impressive coalition of cities and counties – bringing the total to 41 -- which adopted official resolutions of support for completion of the Northern Beltline. Governor Robert Bentley remains committed to beginning construction on the Beltline in 2013, as he publicly reaffirmed in his comments at the BBA Annual Meeting in December. We continue to work with our exceptional representatives in Washington, DC. Senator Shelby, Senator Sessions, and Congressman Bachus remain steadfast in their efforts to advance the Northern Beltline.

You will find highlights of the work of CRT during 2012 throughout this document. Please take the time to read everything included here and appreciate the amount of work contributed by many people in these achievements.

We appreciate your unfaltering commitment to ensuring the vast opportunities of the Northern Beltline become reality for us and for the generations that will follow us. The patience and perseverance you have shown without allowing the processes to diminish your support is admirable and deeply valued.

Sincerely,



Mike Thompson, Chairman



# GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS

We appreciate the leadership shown by nearly 300 of our elected officials throughout the region in their unyielding resolve to secure the jobs and economic opportunities of the Northern Beltline for their citizens and neighbors. These official resolutions of support reflect their commitments to work together to improve the quality of life, save lives, prevent injuries, expand economic productivity, increase international competitiveness, and enhance national security for all they are sworn to serve.



City of Adamsville  
City of Argo  
City of Bessemer  
City of Birmingham  
City of Blountsville  
City of Brighton  
City of Brookside  
City of Clay  
City of Center Point  
City of Fairfield  
City of Fultondale  
City of Gardendale  
City of Graysville  
City of Highland Lake

City of Homewood  
City of Hoover  
City of Hueytown  
City of Irondale  
Town of Kimberly  
City of Locust Fork  
Town of Maytown  
City of Midfield  
City of Morris  
City of Mountain Brook  
City of Oneonta  
City of Pell City  
City of Pinson  
City of Pleasant Grove

City of Riverside  
City of Snead  
City of Springville  
City of Sumiton  
City of Sylvan Springs  
City of Tarrant  
City of Trussville  
City of Vestavia Hills  
City of Warrior  
Blount County  
Jefferson County  
St. Clair County  
Birmingham Water Works Board





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# PERMISSION GRANTED GO FORTH & BUILD!

Until the federal government began collecting taxes and financing highways in the 20th century, state governments and the private sector performed that task. The first federal highway act passed in 1916 and, over the years, the federal highway program expanded. Today, the federal government plays the largest role in transportation policy through its highway programs for state governments and a growing array of regulatory mandates.

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One of the most critical regulatory requirements any road project must meet before construction can begin is compilation and approval by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) of a federal environmental impact statement (FEIS). The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires a detailed statement of environmental impacts approved by the FHWA, the lead agency in the environmental review process for any federally-funded highway project.

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), when it receives federal funds for a project, serves as the joint lead agency for purposes of preparing any environmental document required by NEPA. In 1997, ALDOT received approval of the FEIS from FHWA at which point construction could begin on the Northern Beltline. However, ALDOT allowed the three-year period covered by the approved FEIS to expire because it failed to begin construction.

In 2006, a 'Reevaluation' of the FEIS began. After a resurgence of support for the Northern Beltline in 2010 which focused constant attention on completion of the statement, the FEISR was completed and approved by FHWA on March 29, 2012.

The 2012 FEISR incorporates all of the information in ALDOT's 1997 306-page FEIS and adds any new information since it was completed. The FEISR is a 1,480-page document that examined and addressed a multitude of environmental impacts. Not only has it cleared the required regulatory and legal process of ALDOT and FHWA, but also been reviewed and approved by multiple other federal, state, and local agencies according to their areas of expertise.

The lead agency, FHWA, may identify other federal and non-federal agencies that possibly have an interest in the project, and can invite those agencies to be participating agencies in the environmental review process for the project. The reviewing agencies include the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, Jefferson County Department of Health, Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, Federal Transit Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, and the Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority.

Securing the approved FEISR means that ALDOT can move forward to construction on the Northern Beltline!



**NORTHERN BELTLINE**

**THE ROAD TO JOBS**

# STATUS UPDATE

- In June, ALDOT filed application with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the permit required before beginning construction on the 3.4 miles of the Northern Beltline between AL Highway 79 and AL Highway 75, the first portion slated for construction. On Friday, December 21, ALDOT submitted the final data and information necessary to meet the permit requirements under the Clean Water Act.
- In early December, ALDOT announced the purchase of 31 additional parcels of land, all from the same owners from which they originally bought the needed right-of-way. The additional parcels were deemed needed because the original right-of-way purchases were made before federal regulatory requirements regarding storm water changed, and because ALDOT has placed priority on ensuring the Northern Beltline is constructed in the most environmentally responsible way possible.
- Governor Robert Bentley and ALDOT Director John Cooper have publicly stated they expect to let the first construction contracts for the Northern Beltline in the first half of 2013.
- The utilities relocations work between AL Highway 79 and AL Highway 75 continues.
- ALDOT selected the consultants for all survey and design work between I-65 and I-59. The final design work is nearly completed.



“In other words, folks, this will be the best-designed highway project — from the standpoint of stormwater management — in the history of Alabama.”  
 — ALDOT Director John Cooper

## BUILD THE NORTHERN BELTLINE, BUILD OUR OWN PROSPERITY

### Construction Period Only

**\$7 BILLION**  
 Economic Impact

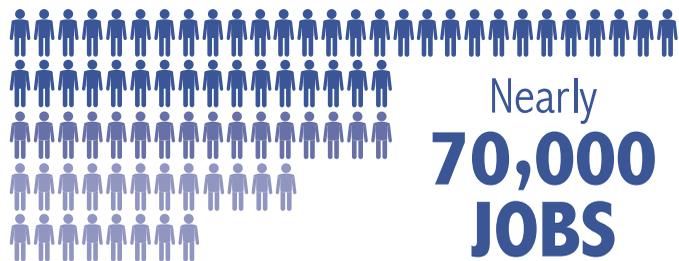


### Post-Build Annual Effects

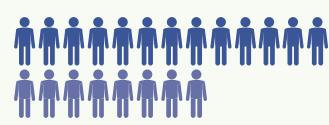
**\$2+ BILLION**  
 Economic Impact



Nearly  
**70,000 JOBS**



Nearly  
**21,000 JOBS**



**\$155 MILLION**  
 in New Tax Revenue  
 (sales and income only)



**\$54 MILLION**  
 in New Tax Revenue  
 (sales, income, property only)



*Socioeconomic Indirect & Cumulative Impact Study,*  
 Center for Business  
 and Economic Research, University of Alabama  
 Full report available at [www.northernbeltline.org](http://www.northernbeltline.org)



# STATE & FEDERAL SCENE.....

In late June, the U.S. Congress showed its continuing commitment to the ADHS with passage of the highway reauthorization bill. A provision in the new highway reauthorization bill provides 100% federal funding for ADHS highway projects, eliminating all requirements for state matching funds for ADHS projects for a 10 year period.



“To move ahead, the Birmingham area needs to move together. The Northern Beltline will put us on a sure path forward to more growth and opportunity. We should strongly unite in support of this transformational project for our region because we simply cannot afford to risk being passed by.”

Congressman Spencer Bachus

“It would be economically, I think, the best news you’ve had since probably since you found coal, limestone and iron ore,”

Senator Richard Shelby



Prior to the 2012 legislation, the ARC provided a funding stream to build the Northern Beltline. That funding stream represented an 80% federal investment that required a 20% match from State funds. The new highway bill (MAP-21), however, removes the required State match for a 10-year period. In other words, up to the \$600 million total that would have been required from the State was released from ADHS obligation. ALDOT may now determine how and where their State funds should and will be spent.



“I know it’s going to take a long time to build it, it’s going to take years but we need to get started on it. But I believe we can start on this project in the early part of next year.”

Governor Robert Bentley, Dec 2012

Congress underlined the priority it places on completion of the ADHS by stating in MAP-21 “...the timely completion of the Appalachian Development Highway System is a transportation priority in the national interest.” To further ensure that states complete all ADHS projects, Congress also included a requirement that within one year each state must establish a plan for the completion of the designated corridors of the Appalachian development highway system within the State. The completion plans must include annual performance targets and a target completion date.



“This project provides funding for important infrastructure development and serves as a vital source of jobs for workers and families across the state of Alabama,”

Congresswoman Terri Sewell



The Coalition for Regional Transportation operates primarily to improve business conditions and the regional economy by promoting the development of the transportation system in and around Birmingham, Alabama.

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