

THE ROAD TO JOBS

BREAKING GROUND ON
THE NORTHERN BELTLINE

CRT 





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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

For many years, the Coalition for Regional Transportation has worked to help transform transportation in Alabama and improve economic outcomes for our state's businesses and residents. Thankfully, the Coalition's efforts are leading to real, tangible outcomes.

On April 21, 2014, we took a vital first step in working to make the Northern Beltline a reality. On that morning, key stakeholders and partners—including Governor Robert Bentley and Congressman Spencer Bachus—gathered to celebrate and acknowledge the Northern Beltline's groundbreaking. It was a monumental event that illustrated what happens when multiple stakeholders come together, collaborate and advocate to achieve shared dreams.

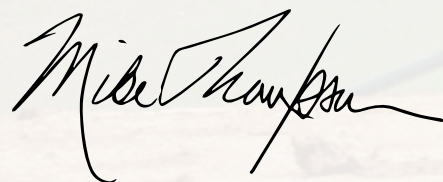
By breaking ground, the residents and businesses of Alabama are closer to realizing the unmistakable economic benefits that the Northern Beltline will provide. As we learned from the University of Alabama's impact study, the Northern Beltline will yield a \$7 billion economic impact – during construction alone. Nearly 70,000 jobs will be created during the project. These figures certainly are impressive, but it is important to note that they only reflect the benefits that will be realized during construction. Once the Northern Beltline is complete, more benefits to Central Alabama will follow. Specifically, we will see an annual economic impact that will exceed \$2 billion, and we will generate close to \$54 million in new tax revenue.

Stakeholders of the Coalition for Regional Transportation understandably are excited about achieving these outcomes, but our team of stakeholders recognizes another very important point too – the Northern Beltline will improve overall quality of life for all Alabamians. Through this work, we hope to alleviate congestion, increase safety, improve air quality and engage in responsible development. When we accomplish these goals, we certainly will experience these and other benefits on a daily basis.

While we recognize that much has been achieved, we still have a significant amount of work to do. This project is decades in the making. During that time, the Coalition is planning to support and advocate for other significant transportation projects in the region. As we move forward, we recognize that our work only will be successful if we continue to cultivate our organization and build broad support for projects that are critical to our state, region and country.

In closing, I want to express my deep gratitude to our current partners, elected officials and the Alabama Department of Transportation. You are helping bring an important dream to life - a dream that positively will impact all of Alabama's residents. It is through your support that we are able to achieve real success and truly work to improve transportation in our beautiful state.

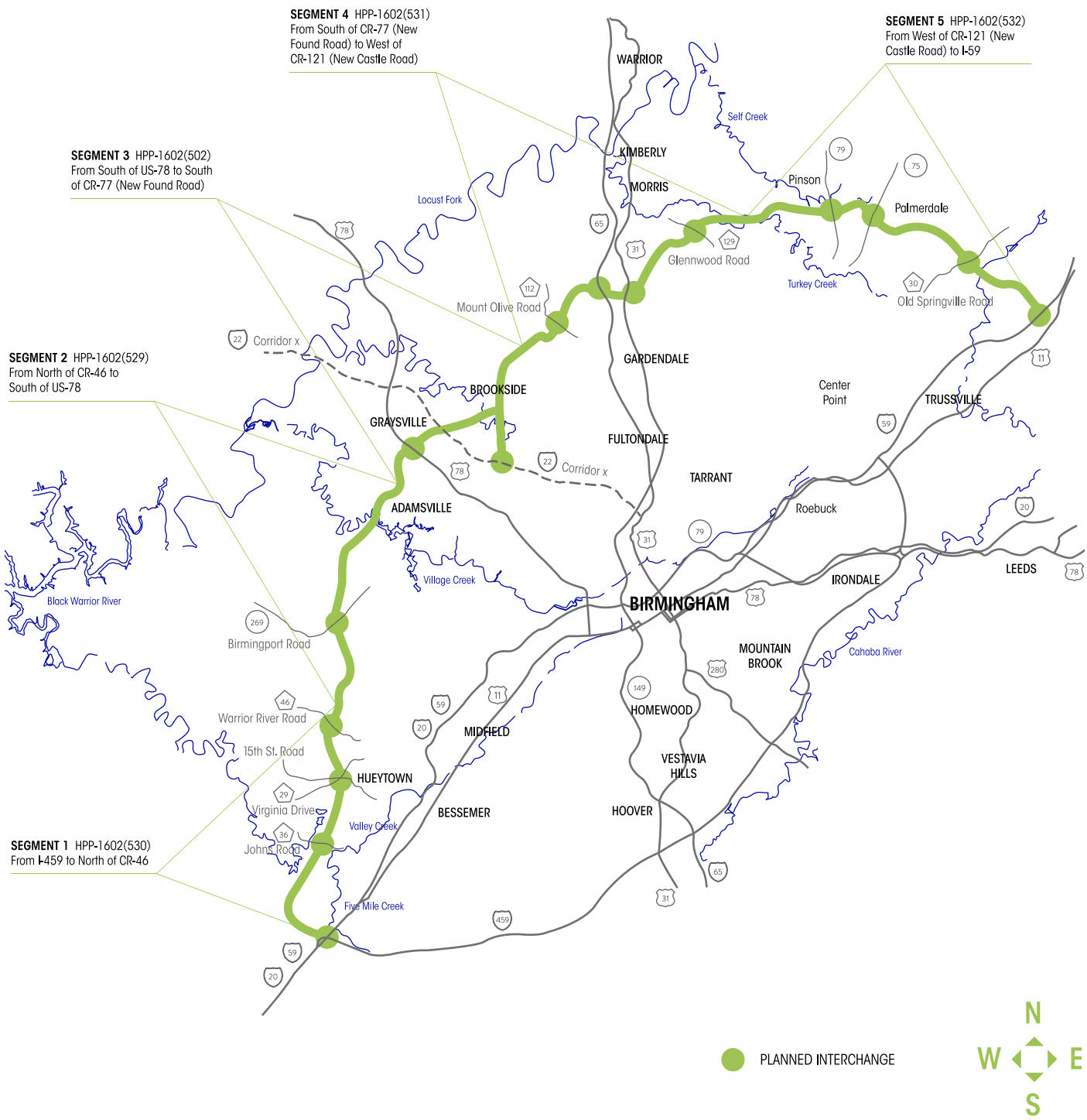
Sincerely,



Mike Thompson
Chairman of the Board

“By breaking ground, the residents and businesses of Alabama are closer to realizing the unmistakable economic benefits that the Northern Beltline will provide.”

THE NORTHERN BELTLINE



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Moving Forward with the Road to Jobs

In June 2012, the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) submitted an application for a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) 404 permit to begin construction on the first portion of the Northern Beltline. On October 1, 2013, Governor Robert Bentley announced that the USACE had issued the requested permit. During the fifteen months between the submission of the application and the issuance of the permit, ALDOT and the USACE actively worked to ensure the protections of our environment at every stage of construction.

The federal Clean Water Act requires a USACE 404 permit for any construction work that impacts a body of water (which falls under the consideration of "water of the U.S."). As part of this permitting process, the USACE closely analyzes permit applications to ensure that the reasonably-anticipated benefits and detriments of proposed projects are balanced. Throughout the process, they consider

the critical value of the U.S. aquatic ecosystems to the public, and the reasonable use of private property, infrastructure development and growth of the economy. In addition, the USACE takes into account the opinions of other federal, state and local agencies, as well as those of interest groups and the general public.

“ Finally, after years of detailed planning, exhaustive reviews and legal challenges, ALDOT began construction on the first portion of the Northern Beltline in 2014! ”

Throughout the months leading up to the issuance of the permit, ALDOT answered numerous questions, provided additional data and made adjustments to the final design, where needed. Upon completion of its rigorous and thorough analysis, the

USACE determined that the Northern Beltline project met, and in some cases exceeded, all requirements of the federal Clean Water Act, and granted ALDOT the permit to begin construction of the first phase of the Northern Beltline.

After the permit was granted, opponents sought to stop construction of the Beltline by filing an appeal of the permit and



Over 100 members of the public attended the USACE permit press event at the Gardendale Library with Governor Robert Bentley.



requesting an injunction in U.S. District Court. The U.S. District Court Judge, however, denied the injunction request and, in his 19-page Opinion and Order, declared every allegation made by the opposition invalid.

The very strong order of the federal court validated the Northern Beltline as a necessary and justifiable transportation project that tremendously will benefit the Birmingham region.

Finally, after years of detailed planning, exhaustive reviews and legal challenges, ALDOT began construction on the first portion of the Northern Beltline in 2014! In celebration, the Coalition for Regional Transportation (CRT) held a groundbreaking ceremony with Governor Robert Bentley, Congressman Spencer Bachus and elected leaders from across the region who strongly have supported the Northern Beltline.

Altogether, nearly 300 committed Northern Beltline supporters attended the groundbreaking ceremony. This diverse group of stakeholders came together to represent a unified voice of all the communities that make the Birmingham region a vibrant



place to live and work. This group reflects an unprecedented partnership and, by working together, has succeeded in catalyzing the benefits of the Northern Beltline for all to enjoy.

Moving forward, elected officials, supporters and stakeholders throughout the region must continue to stay engaged and contribute to the ongoing progress and ultimate completion of the Northern Beltline. By doing so, they will help to create jobs, reduce commute times and improve overall quality of life for people living and working in the Birmingham region.

THE DESPERATE NEED FOR THE NORTHERN BELTLINE

Opinion by John Cooper, Director of the Alabama Department of Transportation | *The Birmingham News*, November 29, 2013

People often ask me why we need the Northern Beltline. The answer is simple. Today, any problem that develops on Birmingham's current interstate system can quickly deteriorate into traffic gridlock.

During the early hours Friday, Oct. 25, a hole developed in the pavement at the south end of the I-20/59 bridges in front of the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center in downtown Birmingham. This was the Friday before the Magic City Classic at Legion Field and the Alabama-Tennessee football game in Tuscaloosa. With the additional traffic generated by these events, this was a bad time to work on Birmingham's interstates. But, the road was unsafe and the bridge had to be fixed. With my approval, ALDOT Third Division Engineer Brian Davis decided to close several lanes of the interstate for about six hours to make repairs. It was a decision we knew would cause additional congestion during an extremely busy travel day.

I relate this to illustrate our need for the Northern Beltline. The lack of a Northern Beltline leaves east-west travelers who pass through Birmingham no choice but to use the I-20/59 corridor through downtown. This pass-through traffic greatly magnifies problems when they occur.

Look at what happened when I-20 East was recently closed for rebuilding. During peak travel periods, traffic from downtown Birmingham to the interchange between

I-20/59 and I-459 was gridlocked. I know this because I was stuck there with you. And, as we inched along together, I noticed the line in front of me was dominated by large trucks. Knowing how information travels quickly among truckers, I couldn't help but wonder why they were in this situation. Why did they not go another route?

Again, the answer is simple: there is no other route.

“ We can no longer hide our heads in the sand and ignore the need for the Northern Beltline. ”

The Birmingham area is served by four interstate highways – 65, 22, 20 and 59. I can identify only a few other cities in the United States that are served by this many interstates. I'm sure most of us would consider this an advantage for Birmingham.

We are directly connected by the interstate system to Atlanta, Chattanooga, Nashville, Memphis, Jackson, New Orleans and Mobile. By the connections that are available in those cities, we are only a few hours away from any destination in the southern United States. Birmingham is truly the geographic hub of the Southeast.

However, while Birmingham's location serves us well in many respects, it imposes a huge burden on our transportation infrastructure. It also mandates that we plan and develop a transportation network that will accommodate the traffic.

While the traffic traveling through the Birmingham area is significant, it is made even more demanding by the presence of so many trucks. Of the traffic on I-20 at the Georgia state



Committed supporters of the Northern Beltline help to kick off construction on April 21, 2014.

GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS

line, 46 percent is trucks. The normal truck presence on our interstates is less than 20 percent. A large portion of the truck traffic today has no choice but to travel through downtown Birmingham.

One reason for this is the pending completion of I-22, including the interchange with I-65. Another is we have become the truckers' preferred route between Memphis and Atlanta.

Without a direct Memphis to Atlanta interstate route through north Alabama, trucks from Memphis to Atlanta use I-22 and pass through Birmingham, because the terrain is better and approximately 90 miles shorter than the alternative route across Tennessee through Nashville and Chattanooga.

Approximately 160,000 vehicles travel I-20/59 through the Birmingham's Central Business District each day. The main part of that route is composed of approximately 6,600 feet of elevated bridge structures that run from the route interchange between I-20/59 and I-65 to the route interchange between I-20/59 and the Red Mountain Expressway. The bridges are reaching the end of their useful life and must be replaced. This will require the interstate system in this area to be closed while the work is performed.

Therefore, alternative routes must be found for this traffic. Some of the traffic may choose to use I-459. But that route is not feasible for much of the traffic. Some will find another route – for example, truckers traveling from Memphis to Atlanta may revert to the route through Nashville and Chattanooga. Other traffic will find local alternatives which will result in increased traffic loads to those road and streets. In any case, the imposition on those who use the I-20/59 corridor through the area will be immense.

From the standpoint of transportation convenience and cost, a Northern Beltline would solve or mitigate many of these problems in the long-range future. It would provide for much more convenient, efficient and timely traffic flow through and around the Birmingham area and significantly decrease the frequency and duration of the disruptions caused by daily traffic gridlock and the emergency situations described above.

We can no longer hide our heads in the sand and ignore the need for the Northern Beltline. Traffic along the downtown Birmingham I-20/59 corridor is expected to increase to over 230,000 vehicles per day by 2035. So, if you think it's bad now, just wait!

THANK YOU!

We appreciate our incredible leaders throughout the region and their unyielding resolve to secure jobs and economic opportunities for their citizens and neighbors.

CITY OF **ADAMSVILLE** | TOWN OF **ALLGOOD**

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**

TOWN OF **CLEVELAND** | CITY OF **FAIRFIELD**

CITY OF **FULTONDALE** | CITY OF **GARDENDALE**

CITY OF **GRAYSVILLE** | CITY OF **HIGHLAND LAKE**

TOWN OF **HOMEWOOD** | CITY OF **HOOVER**

CITY OF **HUEYTOWN** | CITY OF **IRONDALE**

CITY OF **KIMBERLY** | CITY OF **LEEDS**

CITY OF **LOCUST FORK** | TOWN OF **MAYTOWN**

CITY OF **MIDFIELD** | CITY OF **MORRIS**

CITY OF **MOUNTAINBROOK** | CITY OF **ONEONTA**

CITY OF **PELL CITY** | CITY OF **PINSON**

CITY OF **PLEASANT GROVE** | CITY OF **RIVERSIDE**

TOWN 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**

TOWN OF **WEST JEFFERSON** | **BLOUNT COUNTY**

JEFFERSON COUNTY | **ST. CLAIR COUNTY**

BIRMINGHAM WATER WORKS BOARD

CENTRAL ALABAMA FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT AUTHORITY

CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT



Senator Richard Shelby:

"[T]he Northern Beltline means job creation and economic growth in Alabama, and I am proud to be a longtime advocate of its construction. We have reached this point thanks to the concerted and sustained efforts of many in the public and private sectors who appreciate the Northern Beltline's potential to spur meaningful economic development and opportunity in our state."



Senator Jeff Sessions:

"[T]he Northern Beltline is important to the continued development throughout this part of Birmingham's metropolitan area. I am glad to work with leaders of the state and region to see action begin on one of their top priorities. Our state officials have worked hard for this project, including Governor Bentley, Representative Bachus, our entire delegation, and Mike Thompson. I worked on the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century which was an initial step in the process of planning for the Northern Beltline. Moving forward, we should ensure that the entire beltline is eventually completed. I look forward to supporting this and other priority transportation projects for Alabama."



Congressman Spencer Bachus:

"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."



Congresswoman Terri Sewell:

"During the course of a career, there are very few projects that you can champion that have the ability to create jobs and transform a region. The Northern Beltline does just that. We all know about the immediate jobs, but what cannot be measured today is the jobs and the economic impact over the next generation. The Northern Beltline is a viable and critical infrastructure development project for the region. For this reason, I will continue to support and push for full funding and completion of the Northern Beltline."



ECONOMIC IMPACT

Construction Period Only



\$7 BILLION

Economic Impact



Nearly

70,000 JOBS



\$155 MILLION

in New Tax Revenue

(sales and income only)

Post Build Annual Effects



\$2 BILLION

Economic Impact



Nearly

21,000 JOBS



\$54 MILLION

in New Tax Revenue

(sales and income only)



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.