

2011 ANNUAL REPORT



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And more....

Before this Report went to print, the FHWA approved the reevaluation study!

THE COALITION FOR REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

is committed to securing the tremendous opportunity of the Northern Beltline to improve our regional economy by stimulating significant, consistent jobs growth and an environment that allows our local businesses to thrive.

Roads are a major and essential part of the American economy's circulatory system, along with its railways, airports, ports, and transit systems. For our region to share the benefits of that system, we must anticipate our area's needs, not simply react to them. Decisions made today about those projects – highways, railways, bridges, mass transit and the like – will greatly affect the quality of life for our children and grandchildren as well as their ability to obtain good-paying jobs that will enable them to live productive lives here.

Completion of the Northern Beltline will increase cross-region accessibility, reduce travel times and the cost of travel for the public, improve the state and local economic base, and provide additional markets for Birmingham and Alabama-produced goods. The Northern Beltline will open new areas for

development of much-needed industrial and

commercial sites for Birmingham and the dozens of other cities which will benefit from the route. It is not a coincidence that every major economic development success in Alabama in the last 20 years – Mercedes, Honda, Thyssenkrupp, Hyundai – all located near an interstate highway.

Without our current system of interstate highways – I-65, I-20, I-59, I-459, I-22 – life in the Birmingham region would be quite different. Travel would be riskier, our citizens less prosperous, and our communities lacking in the efficiency and comfort that we now enjoy and take for granted. Intercity travel would occur less often and be more cumbersome. Freight charges would be higher and, therefore, so would prices. People in need of acute care would not be transported to hospitals as quickly.

Our interstate system has yielded unprecedented prosperity for an entire generation, but to provide the same opportunity for success to the next generation we must complete the system for our area. We must build the Northern Beltline – now.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Our accomplishments in 2011 were better than expected absent the anticipated first letting of contracts for construction on the Northern Beltline. As this Report goes to print, the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) has received official Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approval for the environmental reevaluation of the 1997 Federal Environmental Impact Study, the trigger that releases ALDOT to begin construction on the first planned section and take the necessary steps to move toward construction on other sections.

CRT has always been clear - we want the Northern Beltline started without delay, but want it constructed right. CRT expended significant effort in 2011 to support ALDOT's and the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) rigorous defense against legal challenges, and to assure the Northern Beltline is constructed in full compliance with regulations that protect our region's natural resources, general environmental quality, and drinking water sources and safeguard them for future generations.

The highlight of 2011 happened all because of you. When called upon by CRT in September 2011, you demonstrated indisputable enthusiasm for the NBL in remarkable numbers by showing up at the ALDOT public hearings to register your support. By refusing to stand idly by and let a minority of anti-growth individuals be the only voices heard yet again, more than 1,000 of you gave undeniable evidence of the overwhelming commitment to the Northern Beltline and the prosperity of your respective communities.

As of today, we have 39 official resolutions of support and continue to add more. We also secured the support of Governor Robert Bentley as well as that from House Speaker Hubbard and his Commission on Jobs. The Northern Beltline was included as a recommendation in the Commission's Report, which recognized it as a project unrivaled by any other in the sheer number of jobs it will create and encouraged ALDOT to commence the project as soon as possible. We continue to work cooperatively and effectively with the entire Alabama delegation. Senator Shelby, Senator Sessions, and Congressman Bachus have been fully engaged and given extraordinary support to advancing the Northern Beltline. We have also engaged the FHWA Administrator Victor Mendez in efforts to progress the project expeditiously.

A "normal" year in the process of building a road which is subject to oversight and regulation by numerous federal, state, and local government agencies is not something that either the CRT or I can define with precision. In 2011, we consistently encountered unexpected prerequisites to construction, but we are envisioning 2012 as a year of fewer regulatory hurdles and including a construction letting.

The efforts of CRT during 2011 are highlighted throughout this document, but the amount of work contributed by many people in these achievements cannot be captured in a few pages. All who have been a part of the unified and cooperative Coalition efforts to advance the Northern Beltline have my deepest thanks and deserve yours as well.

Sincerely,

Mike Thompson
Mike Thompson, Chairman



GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS

We thank our elected officials for their continued dedication to construction of the Northern Beltline. These official resolutions of support for the Northern Beltline represent the leadership of nearly 300 elected officials committed to making all our communities prosper by creating a robust economic environment that creates job growth and improves the ability of our local businesses to compete in the world economy.



City of Adamsville
City of Argo
City of Bessemer
City of Birmingham
City of Blountsville
City of Brighton
City of Brookside
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 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

NORTHERN BELTLINE

THE ROAD ^{TO} JOBS

In August 2011, ALDOT announced the official Open House Meetings and Public Forums for the Northern Beltline project. The events were held on September 27 in Gardendale and September 29 in Bessemer. During these meetings the public was given opportunity to review project information and maps, ask questions and discuss the project with ALDOT staff.

The Alabama Department of Transportation released the Summary of Preliminary Analysis for the Northern Beltline project in advance of two Public Forums and release of the complete 1,480-page environmental reevaluation. The new report updates the environmental impact study produced by ALDOT and approved by the Federal Highway Administration in 1997, but which expired after no construction work was begun on the Northern Beltline within three years following approval.

Persons who wished to provide comments to ALDOT representatives during the Public Forums signed up for two-minute time slots to comment during the Public Forums. The comments were recorded and reviewed by ALDOT and became part of the public record for the meeting which will be presented to the Federal Highway Administration as part of the Environmental Reevaluation document for its consideration. Written comments were also collected at the events, by email, and by letters to ALDOT 3rd Division to become part of the public record.

YOU made the Public Forums an outstanding success! Your voice was heard – more than 1,000

of you attended, 107 of you spoke in support, and 2,342 of you submitted written comments of support. You took ownership of the support efforts with an impressive example of the unity of our communities and citizens who proved overwhelmingly they want the tremendous opportunities the Northern Beltline will bring our region!

“We need this beltline to come to our area. We need the economic growth this highway project will bring....One day soon, we will be an old city with an old population because our children have no reason to make this their home.”

– Kelley C., Gardendale

“Competitively, we do not want our region to become a sight in the rear view mirror. We need to show vision and move ahead with this transformational project.”

– Congressman Spencer Bachus



**GARDENDALE • SEPTEMBER 27
670 ATTENDEES**

**BESSEMER • SEPTEMBER 29
431 ATTENDEES**

**SPEAKERS
107 IN FAVOR
38 OPPOSED**

**WRITTEN COMMENTS SUBMITTED
2,342 IN FAVOR
75 OPPOSED**



When tornadoes ripped through parts of Birmingham on April 27, 2011, one thing was clear to Hueytown Fire & Rescue Chief Scotty Morris – his first responders needed better access to storm victims in Western Jefferson County. He quickly realized that if there had been better highway access in most of the damaged areas, all the major resources required – communications, personnel, fire units, ambulances and law enforcement – would have been able to respond faster.

And, in some cases, a solution was just a few hundred feet away – the site of the proposed Northern Beltline roadway project.

“From where incident command was established in Concord on that day, to the site of the new Northern Beltline was a mere few hundred feet,” said Morris. “Instead first responders were left to negotiate six miles of congested two-lane county road to the nearest major highway to access all the much needed resources.”

Morris said he believes when the 52-mile Northern Beltline is put in place, the citizens of Western Jefferson County will have direct access to additional emergency resources or evacuation in the event of another local disaster.

STATUS UPDATE

The CRT has closely followed the environmental reevaluation process required to update the 1997 Federal Environmental Impact Study, which continues to be thoroughly scrutinized by ALDOT and the FHWA. In addition, various components of the reevaluation have been submitted for review by multiple other federal, state, and local agencies according to their areas of expertise. 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. This rigorous, exhaustive review process will ensure the Northern Beltline is constructed in full compliance with regulations that protect our region's natural resources

- ALDOT finished buying land for the 2.78 mile section of the Northern Beltline connecting Alabama 79 and Alabama 75, the first portion slated for construction. Utilities relocation work can begin upon FHWA approval of the environmental reevaluation and authorization from FHWA for relocations to begin. The first letting of construction contracts can occur once ALDOT receives the Corps of Engineers permit which will be applied for following the reevaluation's approval.
- By 2013, ALDOT expects to start buying land for sections from Alabama 79 west to Interstate 65. Design hearings have been held on all but one small piece of the Northern Beltline from I-65 to I-59 on the east end. This hearing and an approved environmental reevaluation are all that is required to request right-of-way purchase authorization
- Five consultants were contracted for preliminary design of each of the five Northern Beltline sections. Preliminary design is essentially complete for all five sections. The interchange of the Northern Beltline with I-459/I-59 near Bessemer is nearing approval of the Interchange Modification Study and will complete the preliminary design. Consultants for all sections will proceed to final design upon authorization by FHWA after approval of the reevaluation study.

Before this Report went to print, the FHWA approved the reevaluation study!

BUILD THE NORTHERN BELTLINE, BUILD OUR OWN PROSPERITY

CONSTRUCTION PERIOD ONLY

POST-BUILD ANNUAL EFFECTS

\$7 Billion
Economic Impact

\$2+ Billion
Economic Impact

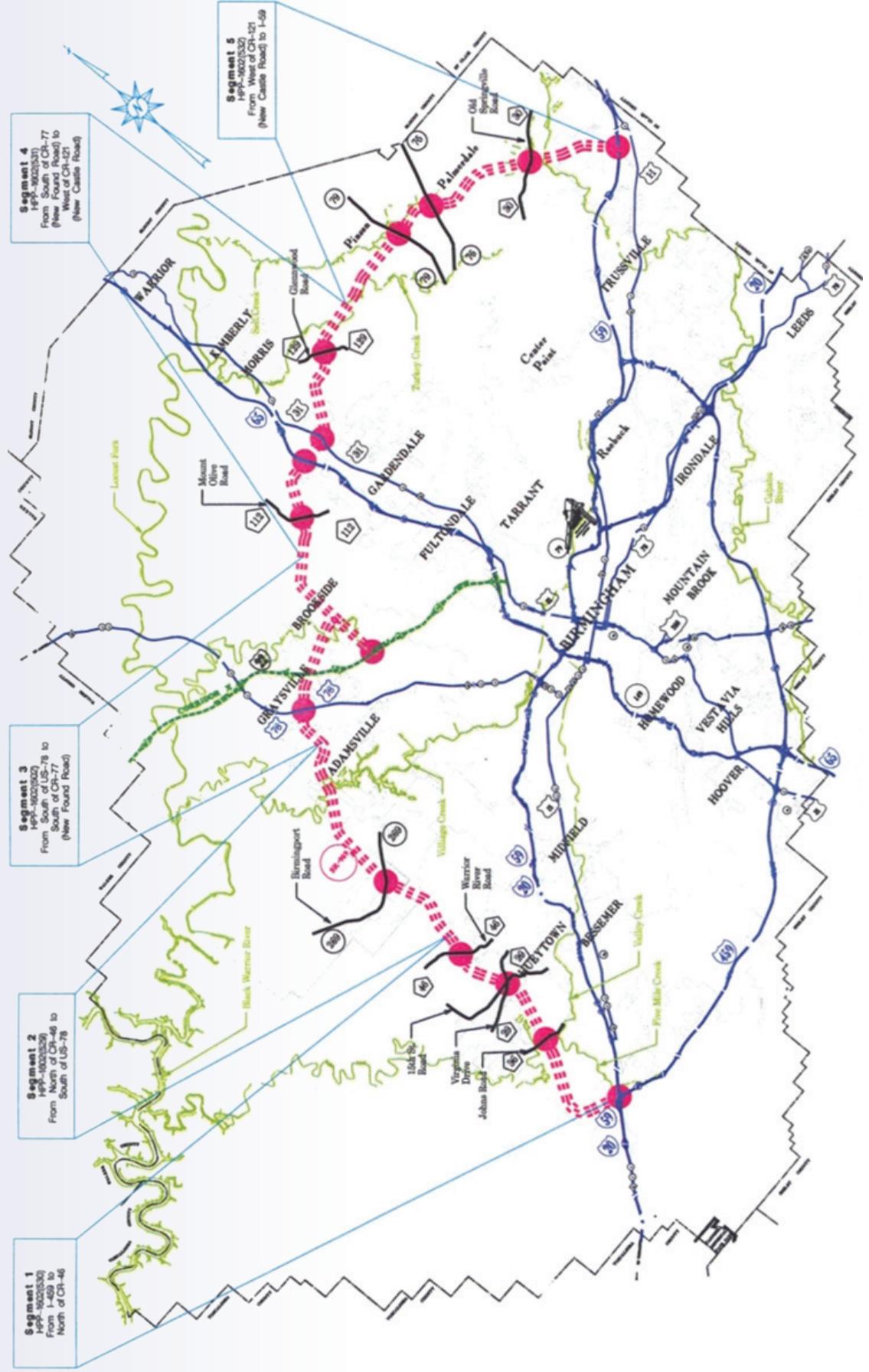
 Nearly **70,000 Jobs**

 Nearly **21,000 Jobs**

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

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

I-422: THE NORTHERN BELTLINE



STATE & FEDERAL SCENE.....

The Birmingham Business Alliance's (BBA) top federal agenda item in 2011 was the full funding and timely completion of the Northern Beltline and opposition to any effort to limit the amount of federal funding available for the project. During the BBA's Washington Fly-In in March 2011, the participants met with Congressman Spencer Bachus and Congressman John Mica (FL) who chairs the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Both Congressmen assured the group of Northern Beltline supporters of their stalwart support to see the project to completion. The Birmingham Business Alliance's Public Policy and Executive Committees again voted unanimously to make the Northern Beltline its top federal priority in 2012.



The CRT has worked closely with Senator Richard Shelby, Senator Jeff Sessions, and Congressman Spencer Bachus to ensure the Northern Beltline funding is not jeopardized by the political debates in Washington. In

addition, Senator Shelby, Senator Sessions, and Congressman Bachus have given enormous support at critical stages of the Northern Beltline's advancement to construction by encouraging the FHWA and ALDOT along the most expeditious procedural path. Their stalwart support of the Northern Beltline is greatly appreciated and essential to making it a reality.



Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) funding for the Northern Beltline through its Appalachian Development



Highway System (ADHS) program remains intact. Although the highway reauthorization bill that requires renewal by Congress every six years has been the subject of much debate, the Northern Beltline funding remains intact at this time. ALDOT continues to receive allocation of \$117.5 million each fiscal year for the federal portion of the project's cost. According to the latest ARC cost-to-complete, the Northern Beltline is a \$3.7 billion project funded over a 21-year period. The ARC funds remain single-purpose, non-transferable, "use it or lose it" dollars. The money can be used only on ADHS-designated roads.

Governor Robert Bentley, who ran for office with a promise to do all he could to create jobs and put Alabamians back to work, remains committed to the Northern Beltline. The Northern Beltline is one of his top transportation infrastructure priorities for his administration. In December 2011, the thirteen governors that make up the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) elected Governor Bentley Co-Chair for 2012. His dedication to beginning construction on the Northern Beltline, which will create 70,000 jobs during construction only, and new position on the ARC are invaluable.



The CRT – the broad and diverse coalition of local elected officials, the business community, members of the general public, members of Congress, and the State of Alabama – has proven that with a unified voice and a cooperative effort, we can bring the Northern Beltline and the tremendous prosperity it will create to benefit all throughout our region. Everyone who has been a part of this extraordinary collaboration should be proud of their contributions.



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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"Completion of this project is important and vital to the continued economic development of the Birmingham metropolitan area and the state"

-Senator Jeff Sessions