

Memorandum for the Record

Subject: Alabama Coastal Comprehensive Plan (ACCP) Webinar Meeting – Transportation and Businesses

1. Welcome. The subject meeting was virtually held on Tuesday, 30 June 2015 from 3 pm to 4 pm. The Transportation and Business focus group meetings were combined into one afternoon session. A list of meeting attendees included representatives from South Alabama Regional Planning Center, Mobile Chamber of Commerce. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) welcomed everyone and facilitated the virtual meeting.
2. Introductions and Purpose. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), outlined the ACCP's intent and need to identify ways to reduce vulnerability in order to achieve a coastal vision. USACE, highlighted that the ACCP will build off previous studies and synthesizes various entities' presented input from this meeting and others associated with the ACCP effort. USACE continued that the ACCP will provide a roadmap, which considers sea level change, storm inundation, and future needs for a more resilient coastal Alabama. USACE presented a PowerPoint presentation.
3. Business and Transportation Coastal Vision. USACE asked the team what their vision for coastal Alabama is for today, in 10 years, 25 years, and the next 50 years. Highlights of the virtual meeting are presented below. Initial comments were general in nature and then those comments became more focused on the time spans identified above. Beach re-nourishment funds must be readily available and the municipalities need confidence that FEMA can provide assistance following a natural disaster. If these funds are not attainable, municipalities must be prepared with sufficient funds to recover from disasters in order to sustain the local economy. A transportation plan exists forecasting the next 25 years that addresses continued movement of people. Given this plan, a bridge must be built over the river to ensure adequate transportation movement over the next 10 to 25 years. The Federal Highway Administrator selected the City of Mobile as the climate change study, which analyzed its critical infrastructure, assessed those stresses, and determined how to apply those findings to its critical infrastructure. Economic and population growth support a Mobile Bay bridge to ensure transportation cohesion between the counties. The Mobile Chamber is very supportive of this action. In addition, storm water management is an environmental and economic issue, and considering Baldwin County is the State's fastest growing county, these issues must be given priority. Coastal Alabama has an opportunity for a huge waterfront community but the Port's activity must be protected because of its economic importance.

Today's Coastal Vision – Needs & Problems and Successes & Opportunities

- Causeway Connection between our two coastal counties is a concern due to flooding and its vulnerability, in addition, to its environmental impacts to Mobile Bay. A considerable amount of public water access along the causeway exists for ecotourism - fishing piers, walking trails, etc.
- Floodplain zoning is a concern in regards to flood insurance.
- School capacity must increase given coastal population growth in the area. (Example - Baldwin County School funding not being passed)
- In Southern Baldwin County, affordable housing for the service industry workforce is commonly an issue given their low pay compared to housing costs.

(Example – Bussed workforce; Baldwin County in 2006 and 2007 was 30% understaffed)

- With current high growth rates, concern is given to Coastal Alabama's future becoming congested as seen in other coastal areas. Furthermore, internal traffic in Baldwin County has become an issue (Example - Gulf Shores has limited ingress and egress points in the area.)

10 Year Coastal Vision

- Transportation remains an issue.
- Brookley Air Force Base should be a focal point for growth.
- Continued focus should be given to schools, housing, and workforce strains. Proactive efforts should focus on these needs because the quality of an education system in an area indicates the quality of life one could expect.
- Alabama State Port Authority must remain competitive with other National Ports; therefore, additional Port infrastructure must be evaluated, such as rail, etc.
- Auto-Assembly Qualified Mega-Plant in Baldwin County establishment could result in considerable growth in that area of the county, which has historically consisted of agriculture, etc.
- Re-establish passenger service rail back to Mobile from Gulf Shores.

25 Year Coastal Vision

- Given AL DOT has \$150 M/Year to build roads, additional funds must be sought from MPN to remain viable in the future.
- Sea level rise must be accounted for when establishing critical infrastructure/ assets. Tools must be established to project future changes so those impacts are accounted for in a plan (Example - Vulnerability score given, project sponsor given score)
- Baldwin County must establish a more sophisticated transportation system.
- Centralization of Airports (Mobile and Pensacola) should be considered to promote connectivity in addition to expansion. Currently, Pensacola Airport is at capacity and Mobile Airport could be expanded but is not in a centralized location to promote connectivity.
- When the Alabama State Port Authority was developing the Container Terminal, increased transportation within that area was addressed. Given the container growth at that facility, the rail component may have to be increased to accommodate transit of that commerce.

50 Year Coastal Vision

- Transportation, infrastructure, and space for workforce would still need to be addressed 50 years into the future.
- When you think back 50 years ago, are we the same as in the past? The answer is no. Consideration to aging infrastructure must be addressed because it will be a concern.
- Aside from sea level rise, beaches will persist and Baldwin County would continue to strive for a stable economy so expansion from its 40% tourism dependence should

have been explored by now. Long-term expect to see continue growth and with the university's presence a rise in skill level would be expected.

- Private sector will drive where infrastructure sprawls out which will likely be inexpensive land. Given the energy sector is changing; a "greener" community would need to occur to account for population growth. (Example - Commuter rail, connected airports, natural resources protection, abundant water supply, sewage management).
- In the future, Coastal Alabama would likely consist of a more international community. A strong education system is necessary to sustain this health of the area.
- Storm water management would likely continue to be an issue now given the rainfall we experience in Coastal Alabama.
- Protection of the aquifer is vital, which Auburn studies show it is moving.

General Discussion

- How do you finance the above suggestions? Reliance on Federal government is uncertain. Therefore, creativity with the municipalities and private/public partnerships may need to occur in the future. (Example - Gulf Shores' strategic plan to promote tourism away from the beach - ACME restaurant., Collier Complex – public/private partnership, hotel at State park. Funding could be an obstacle in achieving the vision.)
- Websites - MobileMPO.org – urban and EasternShoreMPO.org – urban