TRANSPORTATION IN ALABAMA

Alabama’s robust transportation network includes roadways and bridges, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, railroads, airports and seaports, and serves the needs of a broad group of users. The transportation system has been key to the State’s ability to encourage economic development and to attract a growing number of new citizens. The following profiles Alabama’s transportation resources.

State Highways

- Alabama has a state highway system that includes 906 miles of Interstate and 10,018 miles of state routes.
- The Interstate System is the workhorse of the state’s transportation network, serving 22 percent of the truck traffic and 23 percent of the total vehicle miles traveled in 2005.
- There are 5,684 bridges on the state system, including 1,148 on the Interstate System.
- Alabama has several nationally recognized scenic byways. The Scenic Byways Program, which is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, is a grassroots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. Scenic byways in Alabama include:
  - Natchez Trace Parkway
  - Selma to Montgomery March Byway
  - Talladega Scenic Drive
- The wetland bank mitigation program developed by the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) has soared from one 75-acre bank in 1992 to 13 banks totaling 5,422 acres in 2006. Banks have been set up in nearly all of Alabama’s major river basins.

Transit Systems

- Alabama has urban and rural transit systems, which are classified by the size of the urban area population for purposes of federal funding.
- Urban systems in areas with population of less than 1,000,000 include:
  - Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority (MAX)
  - Mobile (The Wave Transit) and LoDa Moda (MODA Trolley System)
  - City of Huntsville
- Urban systems in areas with population of less than 200,000 include:
  - LETA / Phenix City Express (Auburn/Opelika/Lee and Russell counties)
  - Montgomery Area Transit System (MATS)
  - Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (Florence/Muscle Shoals)
  - Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority
  - Dothan (Wiregrass Transit Authority)
  - Gadsden Trolley Company (GTC) and Demand and Response Transportation (DART)
  - Anniston Express
  - Morgan County Area Transit System (Decatur)
• Rural transit systems are present throughout the state, and the approximately 28 rural transit systems serve a broad range of passengers.

• Alabama has 3 intercity bus terminals located in Birmingham, Mobile and Montgomery, with passenger service at a total of 83 Alabama communities.

Freight and Rail Systems

• Trucking use of Alabama’s public roads represented 6 percent of all roadway traffic in the state, with trucks transporting almost 70 percent of the total manufactured tonnage in the state in 2004. Alabama’s Interstate network is of particular importance to trucking.

• Ports and waterways are also an important part of the transportation network. Alabama has navigable inland waterways along 6 river corridors, connecting to inland waterways in 23 states via the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway and the Gulf Coast Intracoastal Waterway.
  o The Port of Mobile is the 12th largest port in the United States. It has facilities that attract export trading movements from an active international market. Top import commodities include iron ore, aluminum, iron and steel while export commodities include petroleum, coal and forest products. Expansion of port facilities at Pinto Island are expected to support the recently announced ThyssenKrupp AG development in north Mobile County.
  o The Port of Mobile’s Choctaw Point Terminal handles container traffic for the port.
  o Inland docks are located at Bridgeport, Claiborne, Columbia, Cordova, Demopolis, Eufaula, Montgomery, Phenix City, Selma and Tuscaloosa-Northport.

• Freight rail is an important element of the freight transportation network, and over 5,200 miles of track serve Alabama commerce. Rail operations support Gulf Coast and other port cities in the state. Birmingham is a key railroad hub for Alabama as well as the southeast region.
  o There are 4 Class I railroads in Alabama: Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF), CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT), Canadian National/Illinois Central Railroad Company (CNIC) and Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NS).
  o A number of shortline railroads serve as feeders to the Class I railroads.

• AMTRAK passenger rail service is provided on two routes. The Crescent operates between New York and New Orleans with stops in Anniston, Birmingham and Tuscaloosa. The Sunset Limited operates between Orlando and Los Angeles with stops in Mobile and Atmore.

Aviation

• There are 99 public use airports in Alabama, including 8 commercial service airports. The cities of Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, Montgomery and Phenix City (located in Columbus, GA) are served by major carriers.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

• Alabama has initiated a study of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and needs statewide, with study results expected soon. Urban transportation studies statewide have actively pursued identifying bicycle and pedestrian opportunities in local transportation plans.