

CONNECTION!

Spring 2011





CONNECTION

SPRING 2011

Mississippi
Transportation Commission

NORTHERN DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
Mike Tagert

CENTRAL DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
Dick Hall

SOUTHERN DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
Wayne Brown

SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION
Amy K. Hornback

Mississippi Department
of Transportation

INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AND
CHIEF ENGINEER
Melinda McGrath

Magazine Staff

PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIRECTOR
Carrie Adams

EDITOR
Susan King

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Jeff Humber
Leslie Owens
Steven Foote
Michael Flood

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Lauren Hastings

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Glenn Smith
Jeff Humber
King Ferguson

CONNECTION is a periodical of the Mississippi Department of Transportation, published as a medium of departmental news. Please address all correspondence to the Public Affairs Division 67-01, Mississippi Department of Transportation, Post Office Box 1850, Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1850.

e-mail: comments@MDOT.state.ms.us



An Equal Opportunity Employer

Printed in U.S.A.
by Mississippi Department
of Transportation,
General Services Division
printing office.

Henry Morgan, *director*
Wayne Durrett, *director of printing operations*

Contents

In Memory	4
Laurel S-Curve Reconstruction Project Wins People’s Choice Award	5
The Tenn-Tom Waterway: Sustainable, Efficient Goods Movement	6
Getting “Smart” for Tractor-Trailer Enforcement	8
Promoting Native Plant Life along Mississippi’s Highways	9
‘3-Foot Law’ Raises Awareness of Bicycle Safety	10
Intermodal Transportation: A Mayor’s View	11
Promotions	12
Charles Carr	12
Juan Flores	12
Shirley Wilson	13
Connections Around the State	14
Biloxi Bay Bridge Artwork Dedicated	14
AASHTO National Conference Held in Biloxi	14
Meeting Transportation Needs for the Disabled: Opportunities in Dakar	15

On the cover: MDOT held rallies in October to promote the candidacy of the “Laurel S-Curve Project” for AASHTO’s People’s Choice Award in the City of Laurel and in downtown Jackson. The Laurel S-Curve won the award by garnering more votes than the other nine finalist projects from around the nation. The award was presented during the AASHTO annual meeting, which was held in Biloxi. Pictured on the cover are members of the public and MDOT employees on the State Capitol steps during the Jackson People’s Choice rally.

In Memory of...



Bill Minor



Sam Waggoner

In one day Mississippi lost decades of knowledge and leadership in the field of transportation with the passing of former Transportation Commissioner Sam Waggoner and Transportation Commissioner Bill Minor. These two men were stalwart leaders in the efforts to transform Mississippi's transportation system. Their work helped make Mississippi transportation infrastructure safer and allowed us to be competitive in a global economy. As a personal note, Commissioner Minor not only served with me on the Mississippi Transportation Commission but was also a former colleague in the Mississippi State Senate. Commissioner Waggoner was my mentor. The State of Mississippi is a better place because of the public service of these two visionary and effective gentlemen.

– Central District Transportation Commissioner Dick Hall

Commissioner Minor was a solid, dependable supporter of an effective, efficient transportation system. His vision and leadership in the State Senate and on the Mississippi Transportation Commission will be a positive force for decades. Commissioner Waggoner was a powerful influence in the successful 1987 Four-Lane Highway Program. He was an outstanding engineer who worked tirelessly to move Mississippi into a modern road system that is the envy of the surrounding states. Mississippi is a greater place because of these two talented and committed men.

– Southern District Transportation Commissioner Wayne Brown



Lloyd Arnold



Jeff Kolb

Special Assistant Attorney General Lloyd Arnold was a devoted employee of the State of Mississippi for more than 30 years, ending his career as a Special Assistant Attorney General in the Legal Division of the Mississippi Department of Transportation. Lloyd was a tremendous asset to our division due to his vast knowledge of the law. His absence in our division is and will continue to be felt.

– Special Assistant Attorney General
Chief Counsel Roy Tipton

FHWA Division Administrator Jeff Kolb provided outstanding assistance to the state of Mississippi with his recovery efforts following Hurricane Katrina. I got to know him well and he became a good friend.

– FHWA Mississippi Division Administrator Andy
Hughes

Laurel S-Curve Reconstruction Project Wins People's Choice Award

The Laurel S-Curve Reconstruction Project was recognized by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) as a regional winner of the America's Transportation Award and as the national winner of the People's Choice Award.

The project upgraded Interstate 59 in Laurel to current standards by eliminating the S-Curve and improving vertical alignments and bridge widths. The project was completed in September 2009 at a cost of \$26 million—leaving a \$6 million surplus from the bond issue which was used to make additional improvements in the same corridor. The tremendous cost savings was due largely to the investment in redesign of the bridge using more cost-effective materials, as well as the close coordination throughout design and construction to avoid costly construction issues.

Judges selected the Laurel S-Curve project as one of the top 10 transportation projects nationally, allowing the project to compete for the People's Choice Award, which was decided by popular vote via online voting. MDOT supported the project's candidacy for the award by holding rallies in Laurel and at the State Capitol in Jackson. The People's Choice Award was presented in November 2010 at the AASHTO Annual Meeting in Biloxi.

John Horsley, AASHTO Executive Director, said the Laurel S-Curve Reconstruction project and similar projects from other states are crucial to the nation's transportation infrastructure. "These projects represent a tremendous value to the taxpayer and illustrate the complex tasks that go into modernizing and maintaining the nation's system of highways and bridges," said Horsley. "In these tough economic times, state departments of transportation are making every dollar count and these outstanding projects clearly show how all of us benefit."



The Tenn-Tom Waterway: Sustainable, Efficient Goods Movement

As the overseer of Mississippi's intermodal transportation network, MDOT supports efficient and sustainable avenues to improve freight movement. The Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway is a key asset for Mississippi, allowing inland freight to be moved safely and efficiently by barge.

The Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway (known as the Tenn-Tom) opened in 1985 and runs through northeastern Mississippi and northwestern Alabama, connecting the Tennessee River to the Tombigbee River. The 243-mile-long waterway—which was the largest earthmoving project in world history—took 12 years to construct and cost nearly \$2 billion. Constructing this “missing link” of inland waterway opened up access for freight transportation to 17 states, 14 river systems, and more than half of the nation's population.

MDOT works with the Tenn-Tom Waterway Development Authority and with the ports along the waterway to promote the efficient flow of freight. According to Mike Tagert, former Tenn-Tom Waterway Development Authority Administrator and now MDOT Northern District Commissioner, the Tenn-Tom has continued to create jobs, improve standards of living, and provide opportunities for increased industrial growth within the region and beyond.



Sustainable

The Tenn-Tom Waterway was the first large water resources project constructed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Many design modifications were made to reduce environmental impacts. For example, a nearly 50-mile-long levee was constructed to protect prime wildlife habitat along the upper reaches of the Tombigbee River, which would have been permanently flooded following construction of five Tenn-Tom locks.

Careful attention has also been given to preserving the natural beauty along the waterway corridor. In addition to the project's lands, some 88,000 acres were purchased to provide prime habitat for wildlife. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks manage these lands, which are open to the public. More wildlife lives along the waterway now than did before its construction. Bird species are now so prevalent that organized bird watching tours have become popular.

In addition to being constructed in a sustainable manner, the Tenn-Tom provides an environmentally-friendly mode of freight transportation. Waterborne commerce has significantly less adverse impacts on air pollution and the environment than shipments by truck or rail. For example, trucks release 19 times more nitrogen oxide into the environment and nine times more carbon monoxide than that released by towboats. Shipments on the Tenn-Tom take an estimated 284,000 trucks per year off our highways.

Water transportation also has an excellent safety record—deaths and injuries are 10 times more probable for land modes than for water transportation.



Efficient

Some 1.2 billion ton-miles of goods are shipped on the Tenn-Tom each year, at an annual savings of nearly \$100 million in transportation costs versus rail or highway transportation. One barge can carry as much dry cargo as 16 freight rail cars or 70 tractor-trailers, according to a study conducted by the Center for Ports and Waterways. The numbers are even more impressive for liquid cargo—one barge equals 46 railcars or 144 tractor-trailers.

Water transportation is especially cost-effective for industries whose raw materials or products are extremely heavy, such as steel companies. The Tenn-Tom also provides access to more than 34 million acres of commercial forests and approximately two-thirds of all recoverable coal reserves in the nation. Industries that use these natural resources have found the waterway to be their most cost-efficient mode of transportation.

The presence of the waterway, as a competitor to rail and truck transport, also provides significant shipper savings each year.

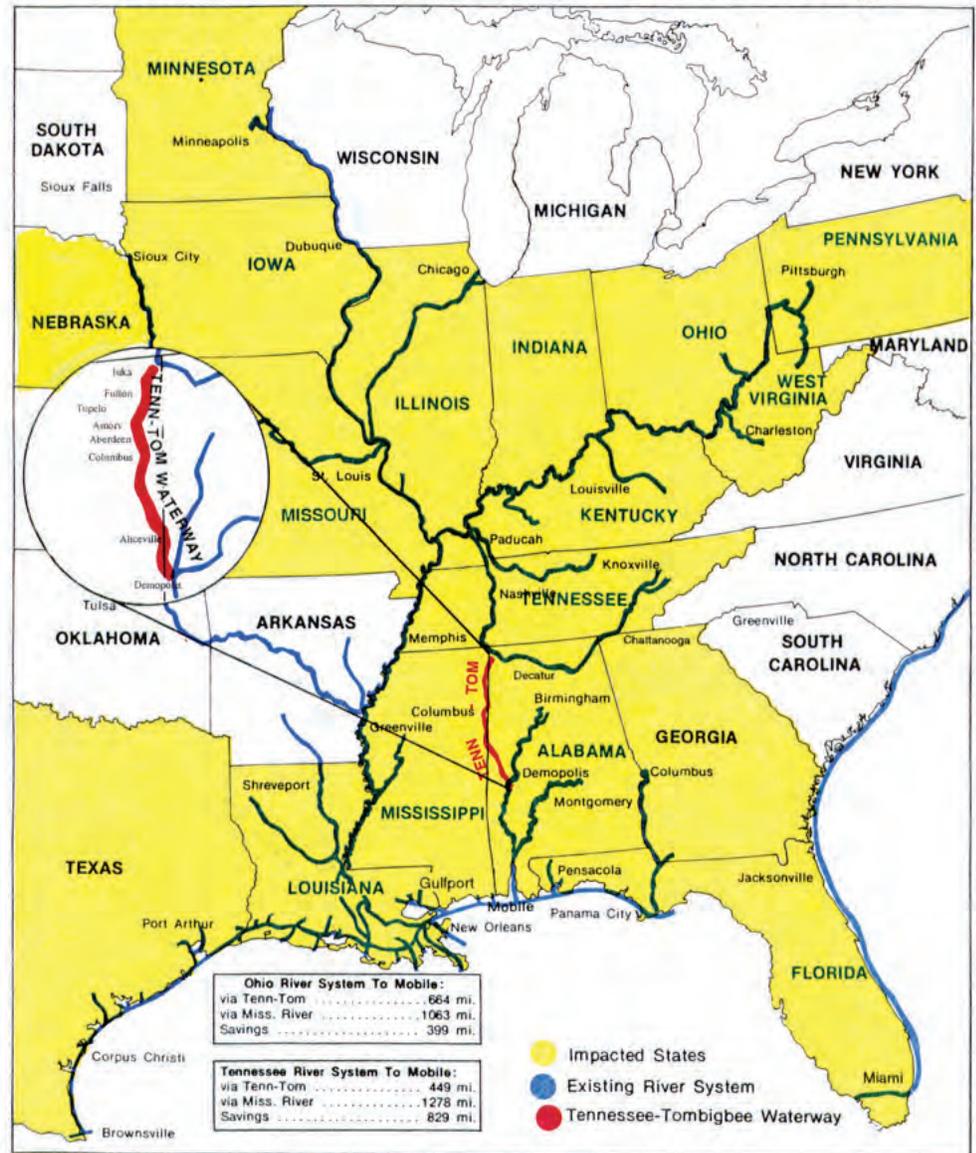
Economic Development

Since 1996, the nation has realized a direct, indirect, and induced economic impact of nearly \$43 billion due to the existence and usage of the Tenn-Tom.

More than \$5 billion in new and expanded industrial development has been located in the waterway's region since its completion. These companies include Boeing, Weyerhaeuser, Kerr-McGee, Nucor, and TMK IPSCO. Steel companies such as Severstal; ThyssenKrupp; U.S. Steel; Dynasteel; and G&G Steel, Inc. have all located near the waterway since 2005. According to a study conducted by the University of West Alabama and Troy State University, these private investments have helped create more than 50,000 new jobs in the region.

The Tenn-Tom is also strategically positioned to serve increased trade with Latin America and other international markets. About 2 million tons of commerce is now exported each year on the Tenn-Tom. Deep-water ports along the Gulf of Mexico can be reached via the Tenn-Tom, making it well-positioned to take advantage of the increased commerce from Latin America and Asia when the Panama Canal expansion is completed in 2014.

THE TENNESSEE-TOMBIGBEE WATERWAY America's New Transportation Artery



In fact, the Tenn-Tom Waterway Development Authority has already entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Panama Canal Authority to foster economic growth, spur international trade, and promote the “All-Water Route”—a route from Asia to the U.S. Gulf Coast and East Coast via the Panama Canal. The agreement will allow for joint marketing ventures, information sharing, and technological interchange.

Beyond freight transport, the waterway has also attracted growth in tourism and recreation. Some \$50 million in modern recreation facilities were built as part of the waterway construction. These facilities provide convenient access to the 40,000 acres of lakes that make up the waterway,

and provide the perfect opportunity for boating, fishing, hunting, and camping.

Mississippi's future prosperity and quality of life will reflect its ability to efficiently handle a surge in global and domestic freight traffic—underscoring the importance of the Tenn-Tom Waterway.

Getting “Smart” for Tractor-Trailer Enforcement

Now in Mississippi a tractor-trailer can be inspected on a back road without ever slowing down.

MDOT is rolling out a new, sophisticated enforcement system—recommended by the Federal Highway Administration—that will make Mississippi’s roadways safer while making enforcement more efficient. Officials with MDOT’s Office of Enforcement have held press conferences around the state to showcase the Smart Roadside Inspection System.

A Better Way

Traditionally, trucks pull off the highway into weigh stations and wait in line to drive onto the scales. After weighing, trucks may be selected at random for a detailed inspection. Officers examine the condition of the truck and load as well as the extensive paperwork related to the truck, driver, trucking company, and the goods being shipped. A typical inspection can take at least 45 minutes, which is costly for MDOT and also the freight industry—especially as the volume of truck traffic continues to increase. Further, randomly inspecting a small sampling of vehicles can mean costly delays for drivers who are in compliance, while others in violation may slip through the cracks.

The Smart Roadside Inspection System has several state-of-the-art components to rapidly collect information and pre-screen a passing truck. Weigh-in-motion sensors detect axle weights without the truck having to stop. Cameras collect information on the condition of the truck—including infrared cameras that can detect whether the truck’s

brakes are excessively hot. License plate and DOT number-readers send information and images wirelessly to the state’s PreView® database, which is part of the federal C-View system. This allows officers to view safety information on the vehicle and the trucking company, as well as Mississippi permit data. “Using this information, the officers determine whether the vehicle is allowed to pass by or is instructed to stop for further inspection and credential verification,” said MDOT Enforcement Chief Willie Huff, noting that the new technology will cut down on routine inspections by 20 percent. “The system helps target those vehicles in violation while allowing trucks that are in compliance to continue on their journey without delay, saving the carrier time and money.”

A Three-Pronged Approach

According to Office of Enforcement Administrator Nan Tarleton, Mississippi is the first state in the U.S. to implement the entire Smart Roadside Inspection System. The system encompasses technology for fixed weigh stations, “virtual” weigh stations, and mobile vans—all linked to a central database—making coverage possible anywhere in the state.

Smart Roadside Inspection System technology has been implemented at Orange Grove, the fixed weigh station on I-10 at the Mississippi/Alabama state line. Two virtual weigh stations have been installed on secondary roads, which truck drivers often used to bypass the fixed scales on nearby interstates. One is located on Highway 27 south of Vicksburg and the other is on Highway 51 in Nesbit. “Twenty-two percent of commercial vehicles passing through the virtual weigh station on Highway 27 have been overweight,” said Tarleton. MDOT also uses a mobile van with infrared capability that can be deployed anywhere in the state, including remote areas or on highways without scales.

The system was funded by a \$3.5 million Commercial Vehicle Information Systems and Networks (CVISN) grant by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.



Industry Buy-In

Most trucking companies support the new system, Tarleton said, because it reduces the number of vehicles stopped randomly for routine inspections, allowing legal carriers with good safety records to keep moving, while enforcement officers focus on risky carriers. “It is estimated that every minute a commercial vehicle is stopped costs the company one dollar,” Tarleton explained. “So avoiding a 45-minute inspection will save carriers \$45. Those savings add up.”

The new system will also be user-friendly for registered carriers, who, with an online account, will be able to add and remove vehicles from the system as their fleet changes over time. In May 2009, carriers located in the Jackson area came online into the system, and carriers from the rest of the state were integrated by February 2010.

Tommy Thames, MDOT Permits Director, said presently MDOT enforcement officers only have in-state permits available on the system, but he expects permits for other states will become available in the future, as more states become C-View-compliant and enter the data in the federal database.

With freight traffic growing exponentially, implementation of the Smart Roadside Inspection System enables Mississippi to keep commerce moving while enforcing highway safety.



Promoting Native Plant Life along Mississippi's Highways

MDOT and Mississippi State University (MSU) are collaborating to research plant life along a Mississippi highway in an effort to allow native species to flourish—while maintaining visibility and safety.

MDOT is supporting research being conducted by Edward D. Entsminger, a graduate student at MSU's College of Forest Resources in Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture, under the instruction of Dr. John Guyton. Entsminger is studying 10 sites along Highway 25 in District 1, each 100 feet long by 100 feet wide. Five sites are in upland (drier) areas and five are in lowland (wetter) areas. Entsminger is documenting the vegetation present, how the specific plant species influence wildlife patterns, and the effects of reduced mowing.

"Early research indicates that approximately 75 percent of the species along the roadside are native to Mississippi," Entsminger said. These include Blazing Star, Partridge Pea, and Coreopsis—Mississippi's state wildflower—as well as native grasses known as Big and Little Bluestems, Indian grass, and Switchgrass. Other species that naturally occur along highways are Primrose, Butter Cup, and Ironweed. Passionflower vine is prevalent on the study sites, and on at least one plot Entsminger found Daisy Fleabane. One of the lowland sites, which was so wet it could not be mowed for an entire year, blossomed with abundant Asters, Goldenrods, and Sunflowers.

Despite the high number of different native species, the proportion of native to non-native species is very low—85 percent of the ground is covered by non-native plant species.

Introduced species include Bahia grass and Bermuda grass, which are useful for re-vegetating roadsides after construction projects. "These grasses are economical and grow quickly to prevent soil erosion and protect water quality," explained MDOT Roadside Development Manager David



Thompson. Certain other introduced plants are undesirable and known as "invasive species." They outcompete native plants and rapidly take over an area. Johnson grass, for example, is allelopathic, meaning it has a chemical compound in its roots that interferes with the growth of other plants. "Continued mowing, construction disturbances, and bare ground all favor invasive species, as they compete with natives for moisture, sunlight, and space," Entsminger said.

As part of his research, Entsminger is studying the results of reduced mowing along the highway—though the traditional 15-foot right-of-way from the roadside edge would continue to be mowed regularly for safety. "Reducing mowing from twice to once a season would allow native species

to reach maturity and to release their seeds," Entsminger explained, noting this would also be beneficial for wildlife as it would improve seed abundance for birds and other small animals.

To study plant growth, one-third of each plot will be mowed twice a year by MDOT, another third will remain completely untouched, and the last third will be augmented with native seeds.

Abundant vegetation can attract deer and result in more accidents, which is one of the greatest concerns associated with reduced mowing. Entsminger will install trail cameras to determine how often deer are using trail corridors and bridges near the sites, and he is currently conducting spotlight counts of white-tailed deer to see whether they're using the growth sites—both for feeding and for bedding down.

To discourage deer on the roadside, Entsminger will plant native grasses that are less palatable to deer and other wildlife. He will also study whether strategic plantings of vegetation that attracts deer can be used to "funnel" them under bridges and ultimately reduce collisions. "This study will help determine whether we have to look at the deer issue in even more depth," Dr. Guyton said.

Thompson said the results of the study will add to MDOT's information base and provide useful data and potential options for best managing vegetation along Mississippi's roadways. MDOT plans to consider the study's recommendations along with other studies on vegetation, such as one being conducted by Dr. Coregg Munshaw at Mississippi State. Entsminger cites Texas and North Carolina as states with successful wildflower programs that could potentially be emulated here.

Thompson notes that this project demonstrates how MDOT must often balance competing interests—in this case promoting native species and protecting water and soil quality while maintaining driver visibility and safety.



Edward D. Entsminger and Dr. John Guyton (right).

'3-Foot Law' Raises Awareness of Bicycle Safety

The Mississippi Legislature took action during its recent session to make roadways safer for bicyclists throughout the state.

Passed in July 2010, Senate Bill 3014—formally the John Paul Frerer Bicycle Safety Act—is known as the “3-Foot Law.” The new safety legislation carries the name of John Paul Frerer, a young bicyclist who was fatally struck by a vehicle while cycling in North Mississippi.

The law calls for at least three feet of space between a cyclist and a passing motor vehicle. The aim is to enable motorists and cyclists to safely share the roadway. MDOT commends the legislation as well as the attention it draws to bicycle safety issues.

MDOT encourages users of all modes of transportation—including cyclists, pedestrians, and motorists—to keep the following safety tips in mind:



Cyclists:

- Always wear proper safety gear, especially a helmet.
- Obey all traffic laws, signs, and signals.
- Never ride against traffic.
- Use hand signals when turning or stopping.

Motorists:

- Reduce speed when passing bicyclists.
- Give bicyclists adequate space to maneuver—allow for a minimum of 3 feet.
- Don't blast your horn when approaching a cyclist—startling them can cause an accident.
- Stop for pedestrians at crosswalks and intersections—it's the law.

Pedestrians:

- Cross the street at marked crosswalks and intersections whenever possible.
- Be aware of your surroundings—watch for vehicles turning or backing out of parking spaces and driveways.
- Use pedestrian pushbuttons to activate/extend the walk signal. Never enter a crosswalk when a signal displays a solid or flashing “Don't Walk” message.
- Use sidewalks. If there are none, walk facing traffic so you see vehicles, and drivers see you.

For more information about bicycle safety, contact Lindsey Netherland, MDOT Bicycle Coordinator, in the Planning Division at (601) 359-7685, or log onto www.goMDOT.com. Click on Travel, then Bicycling.



Intermodal Transportation: A Mayor's View

Gulfport Mayor George Schloegel took a few minutes recently to discuss the importance of transportation to his city and cities like his around Mississippi and the nation. Schloegel has worked closely with MDOT on several Gulf Coast transportation projects.

Q: Mr. Mayor, what is the importance of transportation to a Gulf Coast city such as Gulfport?

A: For any city, transportation is fundamental to economic growth. Major metropolitan and economic centers develop because of transportation crossroads—especially ports. Consider Houston, New Orleans, Gulfport, Mobile, Miami, Tampa, New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco—even inland port cities, like Chicago. Ports connect to commerce that creates jobs and a high standard of living. The same principle holds for air transportation. Atlanta is the city it is because of the airport that was built there after World War II. Rail lines and interstates have the same effect—transportation is the backbone of the economy.

Q: How are MDOT and the federal government assisting Gulfport in improving its overall transportation situation to spur economic development?

A: MDOT understands how fundamental transportation is to economic growth and has been a big proponent of upgrading the state's intermodal transportation system to strengthen Mississippi's economy. At the federal level, the stimulus program was focused on public works projects that center on transportation. Those projects provide immediate as well as long-term benefits.

Q: What is your position on potentially raising the gas tax and what do you want to see happen with highway finance?

A: One of the challenges for the government, especially coming out of a recession, is managing the economy while keeping taxes as low as possible. We have to be very careful about raising any taxes. There is a finite amount people can pay before they'll quit spending—we've seen that when gas prices go up, people don't travel as much. One way to get some new capital for transportation is to let private enterprises build some toll roads. It's been proven that they can do it quicker and cheaper, and then turn the highway over to the public sector after 20 years. It is important to make sure that those who are using the roads are paying their fair share. For example, we know that heavy vehicles are harder on the roads and the roads are much more expensive to build when they are constructed for heavy freight traffic.

Q: So is now a good time to commence with major transportation projects?

A: Right now, the City of Gulfport has the lowest bond rates we've had in a long time. Maybe this is the time to be adding debt and getting our roads in good shape at a fixed low rate. We could get the roads fixed now before inflation takes hold.

Q: How has MDOT helped Gulfport and the coast rebound from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina?

A: The City of Gulfport has an excellent relationship with MDOT. Over recent years MDOT's leaders have proven that they understand municipal and state financing and

that they're working to move transportation forward. Since Katrina, MDOT has spent a billion dollars on the Gulf Coast. MDOT built two of our major bridges back quickly, rebuilt Highway 90 completely, widened I-10, and constructed north-south corridors. Stimulus funding added to that and it has been a tremendous boost to us. And all of that money turns over many, many times in the economy. It stays here because we hire local workers and contractors to build the roads.

Q: What does the port and its proposed expansion mean to Gulfport and the coastal region?

A: Governor Haley Barbour states that the expansion of the Port of Gulfport will be the largest economic project in the history of Mississippi. The only way that can happen is with greatly improved transportation. It means a deeper harbor; a deeper, wider channel; more trains; and more trucks. All of that must be done wisely and well. We can't build enough interstates to move all the freight. One railroad line can handle the freight of about six lanes of interstate traffic, so rail is going to be a key transportation mode. MDOT is emerging very strongly into the rail arena and is embracing rail as the way of the future. So rail improvements are on the drawing board for the port, as well as other parts of the state. We also have to have an interstate connector to link the port with I-10. The process has mainly been driven by local civic and public officials, MDOT, and the Federal Highway Administration. It's been a great partnership. The connector, like many roads of its type, takes a long time to get built, but the project is under way now. We also hope to see a toll road that will run north from I-10 to Jackson connecting with the other interstates. It's very important we get all that done. MDOT has to partner with the ports and the municipalities and I think they are doing so very effectively.

Charles Carr Promoted to Director of Intermodal Planning

Charles Carr was recently promoted to serve as Director of the Office of Intermodal Planning, which encompasses MDOT's Freight, Aeronautics, and Public Transit divisions.

Carr has more than 25 years of experience in the transportation field, encompassing planning, project development, performance evaluation, compliance reviews, and technical assistance. Most recently, as Director of MDOT's Public Transit Division, he was responsible for policy development, contract management, and grants administration for all public and specialized transportation programs administered through MDOT.

Regarding public transit, Carr said, "We've been focusing on coordinating resources to provide greater access to a broader population of consumers, and leveraging resources to increase the efficiency of services delivery. One of our main goals has been to transform the perception of public transit from that of a social service to a community service that can be an engine for both community and economic development."

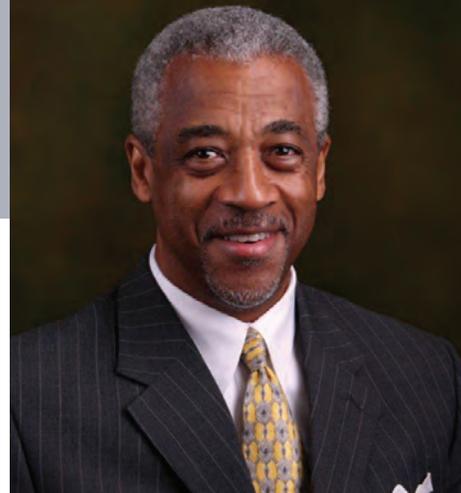
"We've been developing a statewide planning approach that allows public and private

stakeholders to design and invest in mobility networks funded from a variety of sources," Carr continued. "This will greatly increase the sustainability of services."

Carr said his goals for the Office of Intermodal Planning are to improve interconnectivity among the different transportation modes to make them more accessible and efficient for both passengers and freight carriers, and also to improve business processes to increase overall efficiency. Carr added that he would be working with the Freight and Aeronautics Division Directors to assist them with policy, process, and procedures aimed at freight and goods movement projects.

"I consider customer service and effective resource management to be key functions of our office. Thus my responsibility is to assess where we are and identify resources to keep us moving forward. We are going to continue working with our customers to develop projects and fund programs that meet their needs," Carr said.

Carr holds a master's degree from Jackson State University (JSU) and is a graduate of AASHTO's National Transportation Man-



agement Program, as well as the National Transportation Leadership Institute. He is the President of the Community Transportation Association of America's Board of Directors, and a member of AASHTO's Standing Committee on Public Transportation, JSU's Technology Transfer Center Advisory Board, JSU's Institute for Multimodal Transportation Advisory Committee, and the Mississippi Public Transportation Association's Executive Board. Carr is Past President of the National Transportation Consortium of States and has been involved with numerous research projects through the Transportation Research Board's Transit and Highway Cooperative Research Programs. Most recently he was a guest presenter on accessible transportation at the 2011 World Social Forum in Dakar, Senegal.

Juan Flores to Head Freight Division

MDOT has named Juan Flores to serve as Director of its Freight Division, which works with the state's ports, rail carriers, air freight carriers, and trucking companies to promote the efficient movement of freight throughout Mississippi and the region.

Flores, who previously served as MDOT's freight policy advisor, said he will work to make freight considerations a central component of transportation projects around the state, because freight plays such an important and growing role in the transportation industry. "Most motorists don't think of freight issues on a daily basis, but if you don't want to see more and more trucks on the road, we have to have an efficient intermodal goods movement system," he explained. "Also, we live in

a consumer society, and if we're going to keep products from all over the world on the shelves, we're going to have to be ready to move freight around the country and world."

Water transit is both the cheapest and greenest mode for moving freight over long distances, Flores said, noting that Mississippi is fortunate to have the Gulf Coast, Mississippi River, and Tenn-Tom Waterway, which are all valuable for transporting freight. Mississippi has 16 freight ports and is located at a crossroads for several other major ports, such as Houston, New Orleans, and Tampa. "Ports are also only as good as their access to other modes of transportation," Flores noted.

"The more opportunities and options you give a logistics manager the more attractive the



state will be to industry," Flores said. "Take a port—we'll promote it from every aspect including rail connections and proximity to major highways. Assets like those make communities attractive for economic development."

Flores also pointed to several events on the horizon that will further increase freight activ-

Continued on page 13

ity in the state: the auto industry is migrating south, the Panama Canal is being expanded, and Cuba may soon re-open for trade. “We have 28 short line railroads in the state, five class ones (major carriers), and 16 ports,” he said. “That makes Mississippi transportation-rich.”

According to Flores, the West Coast ports

such as Los Angeles are at capacity and the Northeast has union labor issues, so the Southeast is primed for growth. “We’re in a unique situation. We have the opportunity to do freight transportation properly. Instead of just focusing on highways, we’re integrating good port and rail access, which is the future of freight transit. Every project the state considers

will go through the Freight Division to address multimodal freight opportunities.”

Flores is a native of Laredo, Texas, and holds degrees from Purdue University, George Mason University, and Mississippi College. Before coming to MDOT, Flores worked for AASHTO in Washington, D.C., where he was Freight Program Manager.

Shirley Wilson to Head Public Transit Division

MDOT has promoted Shirley Wilson to serve as Director of the Public Transit Division, which oversees the agency’s general public and specialized transportation program grants and contracts.

She previously served as Assistant to the Public Transit Division Director, where she managed the Grants Administration staff and finances, and ensured that transit grant programs were in compliance with state and federal mandates. She also had an active role in the division’s Civil Rights initiatives and in upgrading its computer systems.

As Division Director, Wilson said she will continue to implement new technology and best practices to make the division as efficient as possible. “We deal with a lot of paperwork, so we’re continually trying to transition to more automation,” Wilson explained. “We have a lot of reporting we have to do to the Federal Transit Administration, so we have mechanisms in place to assist us in meeting our reporting requirements.”

Wilson, who has a long background in the public transportation field, said the work is in

her blood. “Our programs provide essential services,” Wilson said, noting that MDOT oversees programs that transport people to jobs, medical appointments, shopping, and other essential destinations. “Getting people to their jobs supports economic development in Mississippi, especially in struggling regions like the Delta,” she added. “It’s so rewarding. You actually see how you’re impacting people’s lives. We see the services firsthand and interact with the riders; we receive a lot of positive feedback from the general public.”

The Public Transit Division currently administers four federal grant programs: the 5311 – Rural General Public Program, the 5310 – Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program, the 5316 – Job Access and Reverse Commute Program, and the 5317 – New Freedom Program. Private/public non-profit agencies are used to deliver services to Mississippians.

Given all the different programs and providers, Wilson said one of her priorities will be to make sure her staff has all the training they need to perform their assigned duties effectively. “We have a responsibility to the

community and the sub-recipients we fund to be good stewards of the federal dollars. I’m also going to ensure that all staff is cross-trained, so that each team member can perform multiple duties as needed,” she added.

Wilson holds a bachelor’s degree from Mississippi Valley State University and a master’s degree from Mississippi State University. She is also a 2007 graduate of MDOT’s Leadership, Enhancement, Assessment, and Development (LEAD) program. Wilson has worked in state government since 1984, beginning with a stint at the Mississippi State Personnel Board. She has worked for the Public Transit Division since 1988.



Connections Around the State

Biloxi Bay Bridge Artwork Dedicated



MDOT held an artwork dedication ceremony on October 14, 2010, to celebrate the artists whose work is displayed along the pedestrian lane of the Biloxi Bay Bridge. Because the bridge was reconstructed following Hurricane Katrina, many of the artists used the theme of renewal. All drew on the area's rich history and culture to inspire their pieces.

Southern District Transportation Commissioner Wayne Brown served as master of ceremonies and congratulated the artists on their beautiful creations and the enjoyment they will bring to pedestrians and bicyclists who use the bridge's walkway. Also speaking at the ceremony were Andy Hughes, Mississippi Division Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration; Biloxi Mayor A.J. Holloway; Ocean Springs Mayor Connie Moran; Wendy Sweetman, President of the Harrison County Board of Supervisors; Tommy Broadnax, Jackson County Board of Supervisors; Glenn Miller, an MDOT employee and one of the honored artists; and sculptor Greg Moran, who transformed the artists' drawings into bronze plaques, using metal salvaged from the bearing plates of the original bridge.



AASHTO National Conference Held in Biloxi

MDOT was honored to host the annual meeting of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) in Biloxi from October 28 through November 1, 2010. In addition to technical meetings and networking events, delegates toured the Port of Gulfport and other sites around the Gulf Coast region.



Above: Victor Mendez, FHWA Administrator, addresses the Board of Directors at the AASHTO Fall Meeting.

Meeting Transportation Needs for the Disabled: Opportunities in Dakar

By Charles Carr
Director of Intermodal Planning



“We know that equality of individual ability does not exist and never will but we still must strive for equality of opportunity.”

– Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Early in my career in transportation and community development I came to realize that mobility is a key quality of life issue. In fact I came to view mobility more as a right than a privilege. Consequently, now more than ever I appreciate the essential role that access to transportation plays in our day-to-day lives.

In February I traveled to West Africa to speak at the 2011 World Social Forum (WSF) in Dakar, Senegal. As those of you that have worked with me know, I love to share information and ideas. Thanks to Carrie Adams and her great staff, through this article, I am sharing some of my experiences there as a conference participant, student, and observer. My intent is to illustrate how important it is to cast our nets broadly as we strive to make a difference in the quality of life of what is becoming a global community, particularly in the transportation industry.

Addressing Global Transportation Challenges

The WSF provides an opportunity for representatives of social movements, networks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other advocacy groups to share ideas and develop strategies and action plans that address a range of issues with national, international, and even global significance.

I had the honor and privilege of being a presenter on Accessible Transportation as part of the Inclusive Development and Accessibility Panel, joining speakers from Brazil, Italy, Canada, and France. I also served as a technical assistance resource in meetings with local elected officials and NGO representatives in Dakar. I owe my invitation to my work with the Community Transportation Association of

America, Mississippi’s success in implementing local transit options, and contacts with representatives of transportation and disability advocacy groups.

Events were held in several venues throughout Dakar, including a striking opening march of well over 50,000 participants, and an impressive opening address by President Abdoulaye Wade at the King Fahd Complex. There I was honored to meet mayors and vice mayors along with the Minister of Culture (who had spent time along the Gulf Coast some 15 years ago). The nerve center of the event was the 60,000-student University of Dakar.

Continued on page 16



Left: The beautiful seaside Plage d’Ouakam Mosque, one of the most impressive in the City.

Above: The colorful “car rapide” (fast car) is Dakar’s most popular means of public transportation. You can find them going almost everywhere, therefore they are often quite crowded.

Exchanging Ideas

My presentation was part of a scheduled four-hour series on inclusion and accessibility. My remarks were based on the premise that disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, and enjoy full inclusion in the mainstream of society. Another central theme followed: “Transportation is about choices, options, and the essential freedom of having full and quality access to the community. For persons with disabilities, cost-efficient, reliable, and accessible transportation means independence.” Many thanks to MDOT staff including Mary Davis, Brenda Christian Smith, and Thaye Haralson for their assistance in preparing my presentation.

Presenting was a bit of an adventure as the session was held in a tent—one of hundreds used during the conference. Although many sessions were held in luxury hotels, there was no universal registration fee and participants numbered in the tens of thousands—thus the broad use of tents to augment meeting space was a matter of practical economy.

Despite the obvious logistical challenges, including the sand floor, wind, and limited lighting, our session was extremely well received by an audience that was committed to hearing more about options for improving access for the disabled and physically challenged. They readily agreed that access to mobility options provides a vital lifeline for persons with disabilities and freely discussed how the lack of these services severely restricts a person’s ability to maintain an independent and inclusive life.

We discussed at length the following questions: 1) To what extent does the lack of transportation limit activities and opportunities for persons with disabilities? 2) Would additional transportation options improve their quality of life? 3) What kinds of transportation assistance would help most? 4) What innovative solutions should be explored to address the needs?



Young artisan working with his hands to create wooden carvings at the Soumbédioune, open-air crafts market

A Portrait of a West African City

Dakar is a beautiful harbor city that has a rich culture, warm people, modern amenities, and an improving infrastructure. The Dakar metropolitan area has approximately 3.5 million residents.

Parts of the city resemble a typical U.S. urban area, complete with multi-story buildings, a modest mall, some western-style shops, a casino, and luxury hotels. We enjoyed very interesting restaurants, viewed the beautiful work of amazing local artisans, and marveled at traffic jams that extended far into the evening. I was astounded that there are no working traffic lights, so near misses—especially in the ever-present turnabouts (traffic circles)—were commonplace.

There was construction going on throughout the city. There is a transit system that serves sizable pockets of the metropolitan area and transportation entrepreneurs that range from motor bikes, a bustling taxi industry, gypsy cabs, and some privately-owned tour buses.



Market stall featuring indigenous handmade drums and string instruments



Riders on one of the many rural community transit vans...notice the monkey perched on top

Coming Together to Improve Transportation

One of the major successes of the conference is that we set the groundwork for a peer-to-peer exchange and demonstration of projects in at least two of Dakar's communities, which are much like boroughs. Plans are being formulated to develop options such as transportation vouchers, volunteer driver and travel training programs through public-private partnerships, and collaborations with NGOs such as Handicapped International. Other ideas and assistance are needed and welcomed, so input from anyone in our MDOT extended family is greatly appreciated. I am really excited about the possibilities. Stay tuned!



Accessibility session planning group (clockwise) standing- Damien Hazard, Association of Brazilian NGO's; Anne Truffillo, Handicapped International; Charles Carr; seated Janice Lorenz, CTAA; and Francesca Piatta, Handicapped International



Janice Lorenz of CTAA joins Vice Mayors of Dakar City who are adorned in beautiful classic attire as they await the President's address.

Right: Towering over the capital city of Dakar is the African Renaissance Monument, a 160-foot statue atop a 100-meter-high hill overlooking the Atlantic (higher than the Statue of Liberty) depicting a man rising triumphantly from a volcano with his outstretched arms wrapped around his wife and child. The monument is a symbol of Africa's rise from centuries of challenges.





Above: Audience members that attended the Inclusive Development and Accessibility session

Right: International guests and dignitaries beginning to fill the amphitheater (King Fahd Complex) to hear the President's opening address



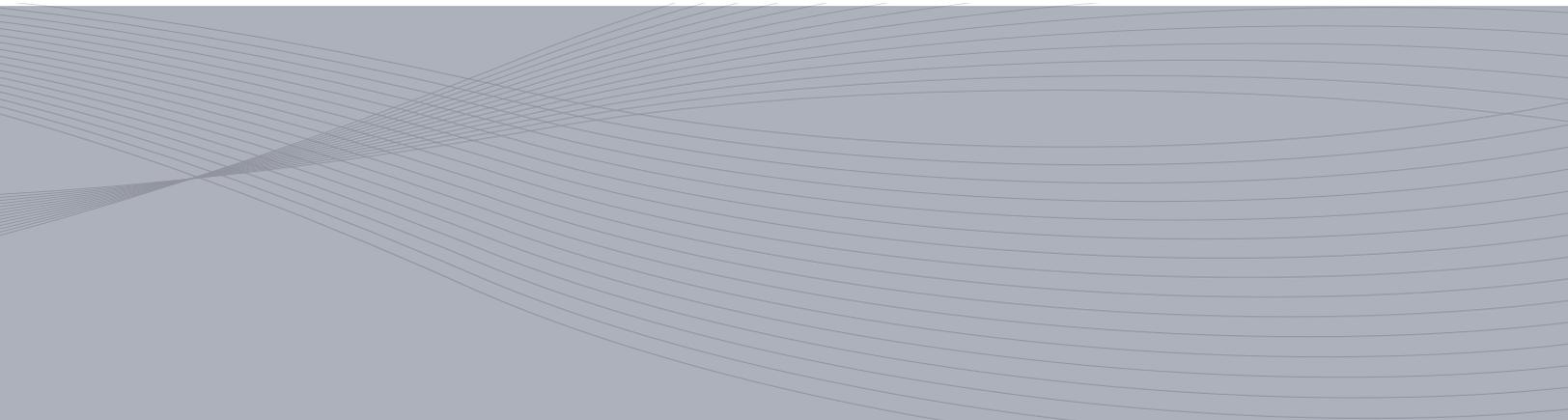
Banner announcing the Inclusive Development and Accessibility session- "Development Inclusive and Disability" - World Social Forum



Office buildings in downtown Dakar



The ever present yellow and black taxis were on the move day and night.



Above: Fixed route public transit bus that serves most of Dakar's central city



Left: Replica of the colorful and utilitarian "Car Rapide" (shown bottom left), a mainstay of Senegalese public transportation, and one of Dakar's most popular souvenirs



CONNECTION

Mississippi Department of Transportation
Post Office Box 1850
Jackson, MS 39215-1850

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PRSR STD
AUTO
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
JACKSON, MS
PERMIT NO. 57