

'1,100 miles of roadway'

By Will Whaley | Posted: Friday, March 24, 2017 8:31 am

While it is not a fix-all solution, the Jackson County Commissioners and the Jackson County Engineer Jonathan Campbell said that the proposed ATRIP-2 would be able to buy some time in order to find a more permanent solution for some of the roads in the county.

What is ATRIP-2?

ATRIP-2 is a bond issue with a total of \$1.2 billion that would likely be in two issuances to take advantage of savings and shorten the repayment schedule. This project comes from the Association of County Commission of Alabama (ACCA). If passed by Alabama State Legislators, the proposed project would increase the statewide gasoline and diesel fuel tax by 3-cents per gallon beginning on July 1 of this year. This would levy an increase in tag fees for those vehicles that utilize alternative fuels. The proceeds of the 3-cent increase in gasoline and diesel fuel taxes would be pledged to repay the bonds.

The bond's proceeds would be divided among the state's 67 counties using the gasoline tax formula. The proposal also states that 20 percent of the revenue allocated to each county would be spent inside the municipalities within the counties. Jackson County would receive nearly \$15 million dollars for paving. Campbell said taking the 20 percent out of the total for the municipalities would leave the county with nearly \$12 million.

"We would probably spend \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year maybe in paving ourselves in Jackson County," said Jackson County Commission Chairman Matthew Hodges. "Then, we would spend another \$100,000 in federal projects.

"We could use these dollars on any projects we need within the county, whether it be bridges, roads that are not federal routes, federal route roads, whatever we need to we could use these dollars towards that," said Hodges. "We have nearly 1,100 miles of roadway. This bond issue would cover about a quarter of the roadways."

Campbell talked about benefits of ATRIP-2.

"The benefit to this is the no strings attached part," said Campbell. "Right now we get \$500,000 in federal aid. That \$500,000 typically will not do a 2-mile project. So, we take one year's allocation from federal aid, and a little bit of the next year's and piece together a project to do a 2-mile section. The most recent project was County Road 33. Aside from the federal aid dollars, there is no resurfacing except what we can scratch up local money to do."

With that federal aid, there are requirements that come with that money. For example, Campbell said when it comes to rebuilding bridges, if federal aid money is used, the bridge might have to be completely replaced, whereas the bond issue with the "no strings attached" part would allow Campbell and the Jackson County Public Works Department to utilize the substructure of bridges that are still stable, and would allow the department to be conservative with their spending.

“It would allow us to rehab as we see fit instead of replacing the bridges,” said Campbell. “It would allow us to do something aligned with pavement preservation instead of just a full blown resurfacing.”

Campbell said there is a theory that the department is working towards maintaining.

Roads are divided into three categories: good roads, bad roads and roads that are in the middle.

“You want to stop the progression of good roads becoming bad roads, while you are also working on the bad roads,” said Campbell. “There is a less expensive application to good roads that are about to be just okay roads versus a road that is bad and falling apart. Working on a really bad road is way more expensive than preserving an okay road.”

Campbell said this theory does present problems.

“It is a really hard sale when you go to work on a road that people think is a good road,” said Campbell. “Especially when you have a back log of roads falling to pieces. We understand that people are saying, but we have to stop the bleeding here all while we are fixing the bad. So creating something that we can show them that we are making factual and defensible decisions is the challenge. That is something that we are headed to but we are not there yet.”

County Road 92

When it comes to bridges, Campbell uses the word structurally deficit.

“We have about 18 in the county that are structurally deficit,” said Campbell.

A bridge on County Road 92 on Sand Mountain leads into DeKalb County. It is right at the county line that a bridge is one of the 18 bridges that are considered structurally deficit.

“You can see how some of the cracking along the concrete,” said Campbell. “The caps and precast channels would need replace, and the back walls and wings would need to be replaced also.”

The bridge is approximately 72 feet long and 24 feet wide, and Campbell estimates that it would cost between \$150,000 and \$200,000 to do the rehab.

County Road 60

“This bridge would be a good rehab candidate,” said Campbell adding that the support beams of concrete had started to deteriorate in some spots.

“This structure is 38-feet long and 24-feet wide,” said Campbell. “The precast channel and caps are all bad. The Pile and back walls are OK, however. It would cost approximately between \$75,000 and \$100,000 for a rehab.”

Campbell talked about the problems with concrete.

“Concrete is porous,” said Campbell. “When it stays moist then the water is absorbed and you start seeing parts of it fall off. Over time the concrete becomes more porous, and you get to the end of the life cycle with concrete.”

Other roads and bridges

On County Road 118 near North Sand Mountain School, Campbell said part of the road had already been worked on, but ATRIP-2 would help provide funding to finish the rehabilitation plans.

Campbell also said County Road 290 was an example where rehabilitation utilized existing structure instead of a complete replacement.

“We utilized existing pile, encased the splash zone, painted, replaced back wall and wings and reconstructed fill and reset the precast bridge section,” said Campbell. “We also installed a new guardrail and is waiting to be paved. With ATRIP-2, the same principles would be applied to other structures in the county, but would be done by contract forces.”

Let your voice be heard

Campbell encourages residents of Jackson County to visit the website, Drive Alabama. It provides a section that allows you to input what you think the biggest projects should be in the county should ATRIP-2 be approved. Campbell said this allows him and his team to see what citizens are the most concerned about. You can visit the website to fill out the survey by visiting www.drivealabama.org/about/survey.