

Alabama Transportation Safety Fund

SB 180 - Sen. Gerald Dial

This bill creates the Alabama Transportation Safety Fund for the purpose of maintenance, improvement, replacement and construction of Alabama roads and bridges. This bill is unique in that it includes accountability and transparency measures related to those who receive monies from the fund, provides the public access to the expenditure of the funds and ensures that the funds go directly to road and bridge projects in a way unseen in Alabama today.

Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), counties and municipalities are each eligible to receive distributions from the fund, which will receive any new revenue generated from legislation to be introduced later in this session. A key feature of this bill is that all three levels of government are limited in how these funds may be spent:

*Each group must keep these monies in separate accounts and these accounts shall be audited by the Examiners of Public Accounts.

*ALDOT is limited to expending funds on roads and bridges, repaying debt on road and bridge projects, or as matching funds on federally-funded projects. There are a few exceptions related to ALDOT expenditures aimed at satisfying federal highway administration concerns.

*Counties and municipalities are limited to expending funds on road and bridge projects, as matching funds on federal projects, and for the repayment of debt on road and bridge projects. Counties and municipalities are prohibited from using the funds for salaries, equipment or maintenance of structures other than roads or bridges.

What is unlike today, however, is the transparency features this bill imposes to ensure the public has knowledge of how the money is expended and the funds are audited to ensure compliance with the new process. All projects funded with money from the fund must be made public in a manner separate and apart from today's processes:

*ALDOT shall announce its annual projects and post quarterly progress reports on its website.

*Counties and municipalities shall also adopt annual plans which identify the road and bridge projects for the year and shall post the plan throughout the jurisdiction.

*At the close of each year, the county or city engineer will provide an annual written report detailing the expenditures made during the prior fiscal year.

*All plans and reports will be made available to the general public.

Current law sets out a separate distribution formula for both gasoline and diesel fuel tax dollars. This legislation combines all new revenue into the Alabama Transportation Safety Fund. The bill utilizes the comprehensive distribution of both diesel and gasoline taxes to replicate – as closely as possible – the distribution of gasoline and diesel fuel proceeds today. To achieve that goal, some 65.9 percent of the new revenue will go to ALDOT and the remaining 34.1 percent will go to the cities and counties utilizing the same formula in place today.