

1 SB360
2 184405-1
3 By Senators Smitherman, Dunn, Coleman-Madison and Singleton
4 RFD: Transportation and Energy
5 First Read: 06-APR-17

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8 SYNOPSIS: This bill would create the Alabama Public
9 Transportation Trust Fund to fund activities that
10 increase public transportation options across the
11 state.

12 This bill would require the Alabama
13 Department of Economic and Community Affairs to
14 maintain and administer the trust fund.

15 This bill would create the Alabama Public
16 Transportation Trust Fund Advisory Committee to
17 advise the department on the administration of the
18 trust fund and the making of awards.

19 This bill would require the Alabama
20 Department of Economic and Community Affairs to
21 adopt rules, make annual reports, conduct a public
22 transportation needs assessment, enter into
23 contracts, conduct audits, and award grants.

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25 A BILL
26 TO BE ENTITLED
27 AN ACT

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Relating to public transportation; to create the Alabama Public Transportation Trust Fund to fund activities that increase public transportation options across the state; to require the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs to maintain and administer the trust fund; to create the Alabama Public Transportation Trust Fund Advisory Committee to advise the department on the administration of the trust fund and the making of awards; and to require the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs to adopt rules, make annual reports, conduct a public transportation needs assessment, enter into contracts, conduct audits, and award grants.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the Alabama Public Transportation Act.

Section 2. As used in this act, the following words have the following meanings:

(1) ADVISORY COMMITTEE. The Alabama Public Transportation Trust Fund Advisory Committee.

(2) DEPARTMENT. The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs.

(3) DIRECTOR. The Director of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs.

(4) TRUST FUND. The Alabama Public Transportation Trust Fund created pursuant to Section 4.

1 Section 3. The Legislature finds and declares the
2 following:

3 (1) Alabama is in need of more safe and affordable
4 public transportation options for residents and visitors.

5 (2) Inadequate and inefficient public transportation
6 in Alabama adversely affects a community's ability to develop
7 and maintain a viable and stable economy.

8 (3) The establishment of the Alabama Public
9 Transportation Trust Fund is intended to do all of the
10 following:

11 a. Provide a flexible source of funding for all
12 Alabama communities to address their public transportation
13 needs.

14 b. Help families attain economic stability.

15 c. Connect people to work opportunities and meet
16 other vital transportation needs.

17 d. Contribute to economic growth through increased
18 employment in operating and maintaining public transportation
19 infrastructure.

20 e. Increase tax revenue by improving the ability of
21 people to access work and purchase goods and services, thereby
22 benefiting all Alabama residents.

23 f. Alleviate deficiencies in the supply of safe and
24 affordable public transportation for citizens of Alabama and
25 visitors, many of whom are physically disabled, elderly,
26 living with developmental disabilities, or otherwise unable to

1 afford the costs of owning, maintaining, and properly insuring
2 a vehicle.

3 g. Decrease the consequences of impaired and
4 distracted driving by providing new opportunities for people
5 to meet transportation needs without operating a motor
6 vehicle.

7 Section 4. (a) The Alabama Public Transportation
8 Trust Fund is created in the State Treasury for the
9 distribution of designated funds appropriated by the
10 Legislature or collected from grants or other sources for the
11 purpose of increasing public transportation options across the
12 state of Alabama. The trust fund shall be maintained and
13 administered by the department.

14 (b) The department shall do all of the following in
15 maintaining and administering the trust fund:

16 (1) Invest and reinvest all money held in the trust
17 fund in investments under the department's investment
18 policies.

19 (2) Keep books and records relating to the
20 investment, interest earnings, and uses of monies deposited
21 into the trust fund.

22 (3) Establish procedures for the withdrawal,
23 allocation, and use of the monies held in the trust fund for
24 the purposes described in Section 6.

25 (4) Publish, on an annual basis, criteria for
26 determining the distribution of monies from the trust fund.

1 (5) Conduct an annual independent audit of the trust
2 fund.

3 (6) Prepare, in collaboration with the advisory
4 committee, an annual performance report, which shall be
5 provided to the Governor, Speaker of the House of
6 Representatives, and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate,
7 outlining the use of the trust fund monies, including, but not
8 limited to, the trust fund's success in meeting its intended
9 purposes.

10 (7) Conduct or hire an outside entity to conduct a
11 statewide public transportation needs assessment, once every
12 five years to inform the department, its director, and the
13 advisory committee of the public transportation needs in
14 Alabama. The assessment should include evaluating
15 transportation needs for individuals with disabilities,
16 low-income and rural populations, and the elderly.

17 (8) Enter into contracts and agreements in
18 connection with the operation of the trust fund, including
19 contracts and agreements with federal agencies, local
20 governmental entities, community developers, and other persons
21 and not-for-profit groups. This provision shall not authorize
22 contracts and agreements with for-profit entities.

23 (9) Engage in ongoing efforts to increase funding
24 sources for the trust fund, including any additional ongoing
25 state-dedicated funding source.

26 (c) The department shall seek the input of the
27 advisory committee, but the director shall have final

1 decision-making authority on all matters relating to the trust
2 fund and programs administered pursuant to this act.

3 (d) The department shall be paid periodically a
4 reasonable fee from amounts deposited to the trust fund to
5 reimburse it for its services in administering the fund. On an
6 annual basis, the department may not be paid in excess of 10
7 percent of the total annual deposits to the trust fund.

8 Section 5. (a) Activities funded by the trust fund
9 shall be selected through a competitive process pursuant to
10 rules adopted by the department with input from the advisory
11 committee. In establishing criteria for the awarding of funds,
12 the department shall address the transportation needs of the
13 disabled, the elderly, and rural populations, consistent with
14 the input of the advisory committee and the statewide public
15 transportation needs assessment, and work toward the following
16 goals:

17 (1) Increase safe and affordable public
18 transportation options across the State of Alabama.

19 (2) Maintain and repair the existing fleet of public
20 transportation options across Alabama, while acquiring new
21 vehicles, as needed.

22 (3) Serve individuals and families living near urban
23 fixed route public transportation systems, expand such routes,
24 and improve service along the routes.

25 (4) Serve individuals and families living in rural
26 Alabama and connect them to the goods and services that

1 improve their quality of life and bolster their economic well-being.

2 (b) All transportation systems funded under this act
3 must comply with the design standards of the Americans with
4 Disabilities Act.

5 Section 6. (a) There is created the Alabama Public
6 Transportation Fund Advisory Committee for the purpose of
7 advising the director and staff of the department with respect
8 to the administration of the trust fund.

9 (b) The advisory committee shall consist of the
10 following members:

11 (1) A member of the House of Representatives
12 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

13 (2) A member of the Senate appointed by the
14 President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

15 (3) The Lieutenant Governor or his or her designee.

16 (4) The Director of the Department of Mental Health
17 or his or her designee.

18 (5) A representative of the Alabama Association of
19 Habitat for Humanity Affiliates appointed by the organization.

20 (6) A representative of the Low Income Housing
21 Coalition of Alabama appointed by the organization.

22 (7) A representative of the Community Action
23 Association of Alabama appointed by the organization.

24 (8) A representative of the Disability Rights and
25 Resources in Birmingham, the Montgomery Center for Independent
26 Living, or the Independent Living Center of Mobile, jointly
27 appointed by the organizations.

1 (9) A member whose income does not exceed 60 percent
2 of the state median family income appointed by the Governor.

3 (c) To avoid a conflict of interest or the
4 appearance of a conflict of interest, no sitting advisory
5 committee organization may apply for trust fund dollars during
6 its time on the advisory committee. If an affiliate
7 organization applies for funding, the related advisory
8 committee organization shall recuse itself from any discussion
9 or voting on the application.

10 (d) Each member of the advisory committee shall
11 serve a three-year term with the exception of the initial
12 members. The initial members shall draw lots to determine the
13 three members who shall serve for three years, the three
14 members who shall serve for two years, and the three members
15 who shall serve for one year.

16 (e) Each term on the advisory committee shall expire
17 on September 30 of the year in which the term expires. When
18 this occurs, the applicable appointing authority shall appoint
19 a new member or reappoint the current member. If a vacancy
20 occurs, an appointment shall be made within 90 days to fill
21 the vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term.

22 (f) Membership of the advisory committee shall be
23 inclusive and reflect the racial, gender, geographic,
24 urban/rural and economic diversity of the state. The advisory
25 committee shall annually report to the Legislature by the
26 second legislative day of each regular session the extent to

1 which the membership of the advisory committee complies with
2 the diversity provisions of this section.

3 (g) The advisory committee shall elect from its
4 membership a chair, vice chair, and secretary. The advisory
5 committee shall adopt rules to govern its proceedings. A
6 majority of the membership of the committee shall constitute a
7 quorum for all meetings.

8 (h) The advisory committee shall meet within 30 days
9 after the members are appointed and thereafter shall hold
10 regular meetings. Minutes of each meeting of the advisory
11 committee shall be signed and kept by the secretary or an
12 assistant secretary appointed by the advisory committee.

13 (i) The director may remove a member of the advisory
14 committee only for neglect of duty; an unexcused failure to
15 attend more than one of the regularly scheduled meetings held
16 in a calendar year during the term in office of the member;
17 malfeasance, a violation of this act, or the conviction of a
18 felony.

19 (j) Members of the advisory committee shall receive
20 reimbursement for expenses incurred in the performance of
21 duties, as approved by the director.

22 Section 7. The advisory committee shall do all of
23 the following:

24 (1) Review and advise department staff on all
25 policies and procedures for administration of the trust fund
26 including, but not limited to:

1 a. Development of a process for making awards from
2 the trust fund.

3 b. Development of policies and rules for operating
4 the trust fund including priorities for making awards and
5 criteria for evaluating applications, and delineation of all
6 compliance and reporting responsibility of fund recipients.

7 (2) Review and advise department staff on the
8 collection and presentation of data on the use and impact of
9 the trust fund and the preparation of an annual performance
10 report to be submitted to the Legislature, the Governor, and
11 the public.

12 (3) Pursue additional sources of revenue beyond
13 appropriations from the state.

14 (4) Ensure that the dedicated resources alleviate
15 the public transportation and connectivity needs of Alabamians
16 by targeting hard-to-serve, special needs populations,
17 including, but not limited to, the disabled, the elderly, and
18 rural populations.

19 (5) Prepare, in collaboration with department staff,
20 an annual review of the rules, compliance responsibilities,
21 set-asides, funding priorities, policies, funding
22 recommendations, and funding decisions, including any
23 recommended changes to the operation of the trust fund. This
24 review shall be presented to the director for final approval.

25 Section 8. Any of the following entities are
26 eligible to apply to the department for funding from the trust
27 fund:

1 (1) Not-for-profit organizations.

2 (2) Municipalities.

3 (3) Counties.

4 (4) Public Transit Authorities.

5 Section 9. This act shall become effective on the
6 first day of the third month following its passage and
7 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.