

Montgomery Advertiser

Thursday, February 18, 2016

EDITORIAL

Take politics out of ALDOT

Montgomery Advertiser

The Feb. 12 *Montgomery Advertiser* article, “[Gas, fuel taxes the cure for Alabama road woes?](#),” reported that officials said the top transportation projects in Alabama could be addressed for \$4.6 billion. According to the report from TRIP, a transportation research nonprofit, Alabama’s 50 most needed road improvements could be built for half a billion dollars less than it will cost to build the Birmingham Northern Beltline.

The Beltline was not ranked in TRIP’s report, unsurprising given its recent ranking as the [nation’s 7th biggest boondoggle by GoBankingRates.com](#). This highway would only relieve 1 to 3 percent of traffic on existing highways. It will not be completed for another 75 more years, if ever. Yet ALDOT has chosen to prioritize this project over other pressing transportation needs in the state.

Before asking more from Alabama taxpayers, we must ask more from ALDOT. Before handing over millions of additional taxpayer dollars to ALDOT, the agency should guarantee it will address legitimate transportation needs of the state, not boondoggles and pork projects. Those needs – projects that would address safety and congestion issues – are not being met, nor is ALDOT legally obligated to meet them.

Other states, including Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee, are required to prioritize and choose projects based on objective criteria. In contrast, ALDOT is an unelected bureaucrat; dictating all road decisions for the entire state regardless of whether those projects actually serve the public interest. ALDOT should be held to these other states’ standards and take politics out of the transportation decision-making process.

Sarah Stokes
Southern Environmental Law Center
Birmingham