

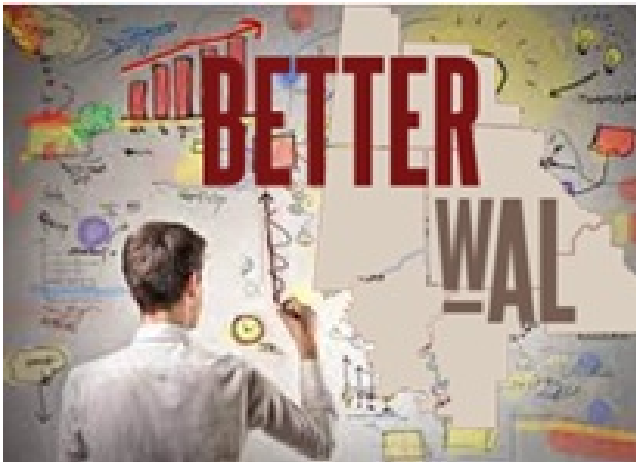


Creating a BETTER West Alabama

Quarterly Update

January 2022

What's BETTER in West Alabama?



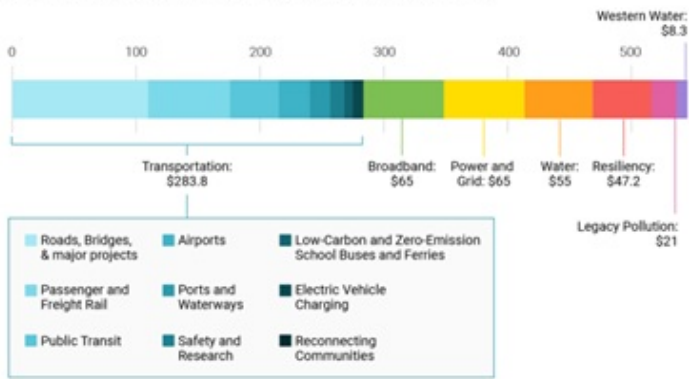
BETTER West Alabama Action Planning Continues

Leaders from West Alabama have been gathering to prioritize strategic goals and actions at both county and local levels to support their economies as they continue to address the COVID-19 pandemic. After an initial kick-off session with

Greene, Hale, and Tuscaloosa counties, and another with Bibb and Pickens counties, the BETTER Team has had follow up sessions with each county.

Municipal and county leaders have continued to look at their community and economic development needs and are now finalizing action planning exercises to identify the steps necessary to implement their plans. Harder than it looks, this work requires careful attention to details. Participants were given homework to determine what steps would be needed, who needs to be involved, the resources that will be required, and who will coordinate activities to achieve progress. In a companion effort, action planning for Fayette and Lamar counties is also taking place as part of the **I-22 Corridor Strategic Development Project** being carried out by the Appalachian Regional Commission and The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development with support from the West Alabama Regional Commission and the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments.

Figure 1. Topline above-baseline spending in IIJA (billions of USD)



Source: Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Summary

Metropolitan Policy Program
at BROOKINGS

Preparing for Influx of Federal Dollars Coming to Alabama

BETTER West Alabama's action planning efforts are crucial because one of the largest infusions of federal dollars in history is about to begin. Jurisdictions have already started spending funds directly allocated by the American Rescue

Plan Act and the newly approved \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) that will bring additional opportunities to address local needs, particularly those related to transportation infrastructure. Much of the new funding will come to the state over five years and will be administered through various existing or new programs for which jurisdictions will compete. Now is the time to prepare for upcoming planning centered on coordinating grant applications.

- For insights on what's next, read what the Brookings Institution **has to say**.
- For a detailed summary of the IIJA, check out **this analysis** from the National Association of Regional Councils.
- Need information from a county perspective? See **this legislative analysis for counties** from the National Association of Counties.
- Like infographics? Check out this **IIJA overview** from the American Society of Civil Engineers.



ARPA in Appalachia: Local Fiscal Recovery Fund Training Series

Training Session 1: ARPA 101

Part I: January 25, 10 am - 11 am EST

Getting Down to the Basics of the ARPA Fiscal Recovery Fund

Part II: January 27, 10 am - 11 am EST

Nuances, Compliance Considerations, and Eligible Use Focuses

The American Rescue Plan Act, enacted in March 2021, makes unprecedented funding available to combat the devastating health and economic impacts of COVID-19. The Appalachian Regional Commission research department's preliminary analysis shows that Appalachian counties will receive approximately \$5.3B in Local Fiscal Recovery Fund allocations. How can local governments, and the local development districts that support them, make the most impactful use of this funding? This training series will build capacity in local governments to take advantage of this large amount of funding and support their communities.

With support from the Appalachian Regional Commission and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness is partnering with the National Association of Counties and EntreWorks Consulting on a series of training sessions in 2022 to share key requirements, best practices for long-term economic transformation, and successful case studies related to ARPA's Local Fiscal Recovery Fund.

Registration is now open.

This training is reserved solely for local government officials & staff & local development districts in the ARC region.

YOUR

TOWN

ALABAMA

Clear Your Calendar in April 2022

It's time to plan BIG!

There is no better way to do it than by attending the premier event of the year, the **Your Town Alabama** workshop at Camp McDowell in Winston County near the Bankhead National Forest. This program brings together a diverse group of passionate individuals that want to shape their communities and make them the best they can be. This year's workshop will be held in April; the specific dates for the 2 ½ day event will be released soon, but we're eager to get this into your plans and on your calendar! To learn more, visit www.yourtownalabama.org and explore.

BETTER will provide sponsorships to the workshop and is taking advance registration for those able to commit NOW to attend in April. A limited number of sponsorships are available, so we are accepting nominations of one person per county/municipality to attend. A designated alternate will also be required to fill in if the person registered will not be able to attend.

Contact: cory.johnson@westal.org.

Who is Making West Alabama a BETTER Place?



Britton Lightsey, Community Relations Manager for Alabama Power

Britton was selected to be one of 40 fellows to participate in the third class of the [Appalachian Leadership Institute](#). The class represents Appalachia's 13 states and includes professionals who live and/or work in the region in a variety of sectors including education, healthcare, economic development, tourism, and others. As a part of the Leadership Institute, each fellow will participate in an extensive, nine-month series of skill-building seminars featuring regional experts, peer-to-peer learning, and case study analysis. The program began virtually in October and will culminate with the Class of 2021-2022's graduation in July. Participation in this program will empower fellows to take action to positively impact the future of Appalachia with collaborative solutions to the region's greatest challenges. Fellows will learn to: identify and implement best practices and strategies to inspire positive change in their communities; build a robust network of leaders across the region; integrate community assets into long-lasting economic development strategies; and appreciate the diversity as well as the commonalities of the 13 states in the Appalachian region. More than 115 qualified applications were received for this year's program.



Teirdre Owens, Outreach Coordinator, Office of Congresswoman Terri Sewell

Teirdre was one of 33 community leaders spanning eight states chosen to participate in the Delta Regional Authority 2022 [Delta Leadership Institute Executive Academy](#) (DLI). DLI is an extensive, nine-month executive leadership program that brings together public, private, and nonprofit sector leaders from the Mississippi River Delta and the Alabama Black Belt. The DLI Executive Academy empowers fellows with the tools, experiences, and networks needed to address local and regional challenges. Sessions led by local, regional, and national experts cover policy areas such as infrastructure and transportation, small business and entrepreneurship, workforce development, public health, and other sectors necessary to facilitate economic growth in the region. As a result, DLI fellows graduate with improved decision-making skills, policy development know-how, strengthened leadership capacity, and a mutual understanding of regional, state, and local cultures and issues.



Tools to BETTER Your Community



Alabama Green Book

Looking for another great way to celebrate Black History Month this February?

Encourage local Black-owned business owners in your area to list their business in the Alabama Green Book. This statewide directory pays homage to “The Negro Motorist Green Book” popularly known as the Green Book. The Green Book was a travel guide published in 1936-67 during the U.S. segregation era and identified businesses that would accept Black customers. Compiled by Victor Hugo Green, a Black postman, it helped make travel comfortable and safe for African Americans in the period before the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In a similar vein, **the Alabama Green Book**, an online directory published by the Alabama State Black Chamber of Commerce, seeks to increase overall business patronage and economic growth of Black-owned businesses.



Tour West Alabama

West Alabama holds the promise of nature, history, the outdoors, and great food, all coupled with good, old-fashioned Southern hospitality. But of course, you knew that.

The Appalachian Regional Commission and The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development launched **Tour West Alabama**, a public-facing destination website, to create economic impact in the region and foster opportunities for expanding economic development throughout West Alabama.

Please submit any **new attractions** or **upcoming events** to keep the website up-to-date and help bring tourist dollars into the region!