

*Press Release*

*Southern Environmental Law Center and Black Warrior Riverkeeper*

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## **Proposed Northern Beltline to Consume Half of Region's Transportation Federal Funding**

**Contact:**

Sarah Stokes, Southern Environmental Law Center, Staff Attorney, 205-745-3060, [sstokes@selcal.org](mailto:ssokes@selcal.org)

Representing:

Black Warrior Riverkeeper – Nelson Brooke, 205-458-0095, [nbrooke@blackwarriorriver.org](mailto:nbrooke@blackwarriorriver.org)

Birmingham, AL — Two local groups have asked the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to remove the Northern Beltline from the proposed four-year funding plan because of the project's ballooning price tag, questionable economic benefits, and harmful effects on the environment. In [comments filed with the MPO today](#), the groups point out that approximately 45% of total federal funding for the region is programmed for the Northern Beltline, even though the project ranks only 36<sup>th</sup> (out of 54 projects) in the regional transportation plan.

At about \$4.7 billion—or \$90 million per mile—the Northern Beltline is one of the most expensive highways ever built in the U.S.

Black Warrior Riverkeeper and the Southern Environmental Law Center are urging the MPO to instead invest in transportation projects that will provide both jobs and sustainable economic growth for the region sooner and in a more cost-effective manner than the Beltline. Given Congress's passage of the 2012 transportation bill which frees this funding for other needed infrastructure not just in the region but throughout Alabama, the groups ask the MPO to remove the Northern Beltline from the Transportation Improvement Program until further cost-benefit analyses are completed. The comments note that based on available information, the cost to taxpayers per permanent job that the Beltline is purported to create is between \$281,824 and \$456,016 depending on when the Beltline is built.

By law, the MPO is required to consider projects and strategies that will “protect and enhance the environment” and “promote energy conservation.” Instead, the two environmental groups say, the Northern Beltline will do the exact opposite.

For more information about the Northern Beltline, visit:

<http://blackwarriorriver.org/northern-beltline.html>

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Black Warrior Riverkeeper ([www.blackwarriorriver.org](http://www.blackwarriorriver.org)) is a citizen-based nonprofit environmental advocacy organization whose mission is to protect and restore the Black Warrior River and its tributaries. A member of Waterkeeper Alliance, Black Warrior Riverkeeper was the Alabama Environmental Council's 2007 Conservation Organization of the Year and the American Canoe Association's 2008 Green Paddle Award winner. Nelson Brooke, Riverkeeper, won the Alabama Rivers Alliance's 2010 River Hero Award.

The Southern Environmental Law Center ([www.southernenvironment.org](http://www.southernenvironment.org)) is a regional conservation organization using the power of the law to protect the health and environment of the Southeast (Virginia, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama). Founded in 1986, SELC's team of 50 legal experts represent more than 100 partner groups on issues of climate change and energy, air and water quality, forests, the coast and wetlands, transportation, and land use.