

Capital Area Road and Bridge District Meeting Minutes

Time/Date: 2:00 p.m., December 16, 2024

Location: Louisiana State Capital
Senate Committee Room “F”

Members Present: Chairman, Mr. J. H. Campbell, Jr., Governor’s Appointee
Mr. Daniel Helms (representing Parish President Clint Cointment),
Ascension Parish
Parish President Jason Manola, West Baton Rouge Parish
Mr. Wally Avara (representing Parish President Randy Delatte), Livingston Parish
Secretary Joe Donahue, DOTD
Parish President Chris Daigle, Iberville Parish

Member Absent: No Representative from the Parish of East Baton Rouge

❖ Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

❖

Minutes:

Minutes from the September 30, 2024, were approved, on motion made by Sec. Donahue and seconded by President Manola.

Next on the Agenda, there was an update on the progress being made by DOTD and Atlas Technical Consultants, LLC., since the last meeting, on the Bridge Project, and its identified tasks and timelines.

- A. Introduction of Representative(s) of DOTD – Ms. Christina Brignac.
- B. Comments from Representative(s) of DOTD.
- C. Other Bridge Project updates from attending representatives of DOTD.
- D. Comparison of Timelines and Tasks to actual performance by Atlas.
- E. Further updates on the three remaining alternatives for potential Bridge location.
- F. Report on amount of funds expended/disbursed by DOTD to Atlas.
- G. Status of Phase II.

Reports available at www.mrbsouth.com

Christina Brignac of DOTD reported on the bridge permitting process with an anticipated end to the permitting process anticipated in the Spring of 2026

The Pre-NEPA field work is complete. The final Geotech report is being prepared. The conceptual design of the bridge and cost estimates will follow after the Geotech report is submitted. Traffic submittals are under review at DOTD. Tolling analysis is under review.

The NEPA field work is near completion. Wetlands report is under review. Cultural Resources field work is ongoing. Phase 1 ESA is being finalized and will be submitted for review in Quarter 1 of 2025. Conceptual stage relocation is ongoing.

Federal Highway Administration's new NEPA requirements will be followed based upon clarifications received with an anticipated completion of the Spring of 2026. Public meetings will take place near the end of Quarter 2 of 2025, and a preferred alternative will be selected by the Third Quarter of 2025.

State funding changes: The vehicle sales tax which was scheduled to provide \$40 million each year to the Bridge Project was paused and reallocated to the state's needs for fiscal year 2025-2026 and fiscal 2026-2027. Current funding available is estimated to be: \$391.1 Million

President Daigle asked if NEPA had been started and was told only pre-NEPA work has begun.

Chair Campbell asked if any additional approvals were needed for Atlas and was told Atlas had received all necessary approvals.

Ms. Brignac indicated NEPA should begin in the Spring of 2025.

Ms. Brignac indicated the NEPA process was already fully funded.

Sec. Donahue asked about the total funds currently available for the bridge and was told it was just over \$390 million

Under New Business:

Chairman Campbell sought ratification of the disbursement made to **Franklin Associates** in the amount of \$250.43 to reimburse **Franklin Associates** for the payment to GoDaddy for annual website hosting and service for the Capital Area Road and Bridge District (capitalareabridge.org) , and for one email account (info@capitalareabridge.org) for one year.

A motion to ratify the disbursement made by the Chairman to Franklin Associates in the amount of \$250.43 was made by President Daigle, second by Secretary Donahue and the motion passed without objection.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Chairman Campbell called for public comments. He reminded all in attendance that the **Capital Area Road and Bridge District (CARB-D)** does not make any decision about the actual location of the site where the Bridge would make its crossing. He

reminded all in attendance that the CARB-D was created as a Taxing District, and the entities involved in the site selection process were the DOTD, and their Contract Consultant, Atlas Technical.

Campbell asked if there was any opposition to any of the proposed crossings other than **Location E-11-(IV)**.

All Public Comments were received only on **Location E-11-(IV)**, as follows:

Speaking in **Opposition** to **Location E-11-(IV)** were:

Clifford Comeau; Laura Comeau; Lydia Haydel; and Harvey Stern

Opposition views covered such areas as the impact on drainage and the Cypress Forest and its 300–400-year-old trees being removed or damaged. One concern was about saving Plaquemine Point, and the location of the bridge greatly affecting the lives of various species of animals.

Questions were asked about input being included in the Environmental Documents. Also, questions were asked about public involvement in the NEPA process, and the scope of the engagement and investigation by the Public. Another question involved the FHWA meetings, and the level of public “input” permitted at the public meetings and the format of the public meetings.

All residents expressed concerns about certain questions not being answered, and they wanted the filed documents modified to include info provided by several people expressing opposition to this site location. All landowners wanted to receive notice of any and all meetings of the public. Again, it was noted that such Cypress trees are allegedly protected by state laws.

Secretary Donahue indicated that wetland mitigation is being evaluated. Stakeholder involvement is sought. The Corps of Engineers has jurisdiction over wetlands determinations. He also noted that the Federal Government makes the decision about whether an EA or an EIS is required. He reminded everyone that the DOTD is in the information gathering stage, and that NEPA has not started. Pre-NEPA is being done to identify impacts, quantify impacts, and that current alternatives sites cannot be eliminated until the process is followed and completed. Kara Moree added (from Atlas Technical) that the formal process must be followed with public meetings and a public hearing. Sec. Donahue highlighted that the FHWA makes the final decision on the preferred bridge site alternative.

Chairman Campbell thanked Mayor-President Broome and her designee, Fred Raiford, for their faithful and consistent participation at every CARB-D meeting. He also welcomed the participation of the new Mayor-President of the Parish of East Baton Rouge, Mr. Emile “Sid” Edwards, as a new Commissioner of the Bridge District.

ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Campbell called for a motion to adjourn. Motion to adjourn was offered by President Daigle.

Without objection, the meeting was deemed adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Secretary of CARB-D

President Chris Daigle, Iberville Parish

Attest:

J.H. Campbell, Jr. Chairman of CARB-D