

## Capital Area Road and Bridge District Meeting Minutes

**Time/Date:** 2:00 PM, September 28, 2020

**Location:** Senate Committee Room E, State Capitol

**Members Present:** Chairman J. H. Campbell, Jr., Governor's Appointee  
John Diez (representing Parish President Clint Cointment), Ascension Parish  
Parish President Riley Berthelot, West Baton Rouge Parish  
Hank Grace (representing Parish President Mitchell Ourso), Iberville Parish  
Dr. Shawn Wilson, Secretary, DOTD

**Members Absent:** Parish President Layton Ricks, Livingston Parish, Parish President Sharon Weston Broome, EBR Parish

### Minutes:

- ❖ Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order.
- ❖ Minutes from the June 29, 2020 meeting were approved.
- ❖ Agenda item III pertaining to the 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.
  - Consultants Project Manager Ms. Kara Moree along with input from DOTD Project Manager, Mr. Paul Vaught gave the following project update on the Enhanced Planning of the project:
  - Project area is defined as from the existing I-10 Bridge to the Sunshine Bridge, from LA Hwy. One on the West to LA Hwy. 30 on the East.
  - Draft Data Collection Plan and traffic counts have been submitted to DOTD- with a final draft Data Collection Plan expected within the next 2 weeks- Mr. Vaught explained that essentially, the Data Collection Plan is when the Traffic Consultant outlines their plan to take projected volumes and compare them to actual volumes in order to do a calibrated traffic study. Traffic counts are taken on various important routes that have significant influence on the traffic modeling for the project with intersection counts and turning movements. Data Collection Plans also looks at existing data in DOTD inventory to determine what additional information is needed.
  - The Mesoscopic Model is a larger and more important piece which is underway along with the Traffic Model.
  - The consultant is coordinating with CRPC to validate and calibrate their Model to produce a usable model.
  - Environmental Feasibility and Inventory will take place. Mapping of the draft study area is underway and we now have the first list of environmental constraints to determine the show stoppers in our area.

- Navigation Study: Various meetings have been held with River Pilots, and NOBRA-regarding deep draft vessels. Atlas has met with the pilots regarding shallow draft vessels and have met with the Port of GBR and the Corp of Engineers. A draft study is currently being reviewed and a no pier location Map has been created. When everything is finalized, they will merge navigation study constraint mapping with the environmental study constraint mapping. Mapping for the big picture is underway and visuals should be available by the next quarterly update meeting.
- Draft Bridge design criteria has been developed and submitted to DOTD- final reviews are ongoing and are expected to be finalized in a few weeks.
- Traffic Study also included existing Bridge Studies and relevant data gathered and reviewed. Drafting has been turned in at this point.
- Next big piece is the large Public Engagement Plan being done by Franklin and Associates which should be submitted to DOTD in the next week. A project specific website is also being developed that may be housed on the DOTD website and should be out in a few weeks.
- Progress is being made on the design criteria for approaching roadway and typical sections.
- A letter will be sent that will target Key Agencies such as the Coast Guard, Corp of Engineers, River Pilots, and key Stakeholders to solicit feedback on potential showstoppers and to give them an introduction to the project. A meeting will follow to give a full formal introduction to those who will be key players throughout the life of the project.
- Ms. Moree stated that the key message is that the Project Consultant is on schedule and developing criteria for screening the alternatives. This is a rigorous screening process of the alternatives to identify potential bridge crossing locations within the area.
- Paul Vaught added that we should remember that this is a large study area and there is much existing data as well as data that must be collected. He also stressed that this work has to be done correctly so it will not have to be redone years later. The work being done through the traffic studies, navigational studies, and preliminary environmental mapping is to ensure that when we do draw lines on a map that they are feasible lines, cost constrained and practical lines.
  
- Chairman Campbell asked how much of prior collected data is being used and how helpful is it? Ms. Moree said it is a key piece. Mr. Vaught explained further that 8-10 studies somewhat involving a new bridge have been done since the mid 90's. Some navigational data from the BR Loop Study is still relevant and being used. He also noted that the goals and objectives of what we are trying to do now may not be in line with the goals and objectives of the previous studies.
  
- Secretary Wilson asked Mr. Vaught to summarize, in quarters, the work done on the calendar and identify the deliverables for the next 3-6 months. He also reminded the Commissioners that performing due diligence in crossings does not change the reality that it is within the defined footprint and it will not change the time scope of what the deliverables are expected to be. Dr. Loren Scott's work/study is not confined to a particular crossing but focused on the area in that footprint.
- Mr. Diez asked Mr. Vaught if he agreed that the ultimate success of this bridge would be making connections to I-10 from LA-1 and to I-10 from LA Hwy 30. Mr. Vaught responded that

the idea is to provide an alternate access point across the bridge and to provide redundancy to the network that does not presently exist.

- Mr. Diez also asked if, on a separate project, improvement of those two corridors are on the long-term plan to accommodate the additional traffic a new bridge would bring.
  - Secretary Wilson added that making the connection from I-10 from LA-1 and to I-10 from LA Hwy 30 would bring maximum value. While those connections are a part of the Comprehensive Statewide Transportation Plan, they are not a part of the purpose and need for this project.
  
  - Mr. Grace requested that a copy of the project task and activity list (in an easier to read format) sent to the Commissioners so that they might better monitor the progress. Tasks happen concurrently and the version sent to Commissioners earlier is not easily read. A list was previously provided by the Chairman by email; however Mr. Vaught will try to create a simplified project task list for the next 3-6 months. Mr. Grace also asked if there were new crossings being considered or just the 5 previously considered.
  
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  - Mr. Vaught explained that we must be sure that we do not bias crossings alternatives being considered in a cursory manner. The previous alternatives that were studied were not meant to be an in-depth NEPA level corridor study. Although those 5 crossings will be considered, it is imperative to ensure that whatever location is chosen has been thoroughly considered and vetted. It must meet the thresholds of environmental standards and the threshold for public review and scrutiny as well as meet NEPA requirements.
  
  - At the request of Chairman Campbell, Ms. Moree defined the focal point over the next three months as: Traffic Data Modeling; development of the website; establishing key agency involvement with USACE, U. S. Coast Guard and Levee Districts when dealing with the river constraints; and involvement with other governmental and regulatory bodies.
- ❖ Report and Presentation by Dr. Loren Scott Agenda Item IV,
  - ❖ Updated version of Economic Impact Study presented to Commissioners
  - ❖ Dr. Scott presented Case Study Data and the Process used to provide information on specific Economic Development that would occur if a bridge is built. The study did not compare cost to benefit which is much more costly, rather it is an attempt to give a 30-thousand-foot picture of what we could expect to see in growth and development. One case study was the Horace Wilkerson Bridge or the “New Bridge” in West Baton Rouge Parish, built in 1967. The biggest impact to Economic Development was on the west side of that bridge as there was much land available. On the East side, Downtown Baton Rouge had much more development but was somewhat constrained because of previously built areas.
  - ❖ Growth on the East and West Side of the river near the bridge showed much faster growth than other areas in the state and faster than either other areas of East or West Baton Rouge. Biggest part of growth on the West Side because land was available.
  - ❖ The other was the case study of the Israel Le Fleur Bridge in Lake Charles and the I-210 Loop in Lake Charles This area experienced huge growth in the Chemical Industry
  - ❖ This area is home to the most successful Casino Market in the state because people are attracted from Texas and Louisiana with easy access from the Interstate

- ❖ Evidence clearly indicates that highway bypasses promote economic development near and along a bypass route.
- ❖ There are five alternative locations for the construction of a connector bridge. All five connector routes will traverse areas that are relatively and presently undeveloped. Elevation Data suggest most of these areas are amenable to further development.
- ❖ The economic development on both sides of the 2 bridges in the study increased employment, population, and residences. Similar results could be anticipated if a new bridge is built in the targeted area.
- ❖ Basic Industries came after each bridge was built.
- ❖ Multiplier effect of a Basic Industry ( those with sales outside of the area) is much higher than the multiplier effect of service industries (Those with sales within the area)
- ❖ One would anticipate the expansion of industry with no displacement effect.
- ❖ Chairman Campbell asked Dr. Scott what would best impact for the 5-parish region to have full connectivity. Dr. Scott said the new bridge would allow industry expansion on the west for those who live on the east and commute. Key is to defer traffic off of the current I-10 Bridge.
- ❖ Secretary Wilson said if we had this bridge, the local traffic would not have to come into the I-10 corridor and would accomplish the needed deferring of traffic off of the existing bridge. Our focus should be on the basic need of getting people to and from work.
- ❖ Chairman Campbell reported that the district has a \$508,628.09 bank balance, with no expenditures in the last quarter. A pending Expenditure is now due to Dr. Scott.
- ❖ There was a motion made by President Berthelot, second by Mr. Grace, with a unanimous vote to authorize the payment of the services provided by Dr. Scott for the Economic Impact Study as noted in the agreement.
- ❖ Chairman Campbell opened the floor for public comment. There were no public comments.
- ❖ The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

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Secretary – Riley Berthelot