

## Capital Area Road and Bridge District Meeting Minutes

**Date:** September 29, 2025

**Location:** Louisiana State Capital  
Senate Committee Room “E”

**Members Present:** Chairman, Mr. J. H. Campbell, Jr., Governor’s Appointee  
Mr. Fred Raiford (representing East BR Parish Mayor/President Sid Edwards)  
Mr. Daniel Helms (representing Parish President Clint Cointment), Ascension Parish  
Mr. Wally Avara (representing Parish President Randy Delatte), Livingston Parish  
Parish President Jason Manola, West Baton Rouge  
Secretary of DOTD, Glenn Ledet  
Parish President Chris Daigle, Iberville Parish

**Member Absent:** None

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

### **Minutes:**

Minutes from the June 30, 2025, were approved, on motion made by Mr. Raiford and seconded by President Daigle.

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

Reports available at [www.mrbsouth.com](http://www.mrbsouth.com)

Christina Brignac, the Project Manager, of DOTD, and Ana Choudrie of Atlas reported on the bridge project as follows:

1. After the Design and Conceptual Layout and the Phase 1 ESA was completed, the FHWA gave its approval to initiate the twelve (12) month **NEPA** phase/process. The FHWA approved the use of an EA. ( **NEPA** = National Environmental Policy Act. )

2. NEPA considers Social and Economic Factors, Natural Resources, and Historic Preservation for informed decision-making.
3. Two public meetings will be scheduled in December of 2025 (possible the 9<sup>th</sup> in St. Gabriel and the 10<sup>th</sup> in Plaquemine during December) with additional (possibly four(4)) public meetings during the first quarter of 2026 with two public hearings on the preferred alternative some time in Q2 and Q3 of 2026 so that the “draft” Environmental Assessment (EA) will be available for the public hearings.
4. PEL Document (first draft) was prepared and included all comments submitted, and any comments submitted after the first draft document will be included in the Environmental Assessment document.
5. DOTD identifies and develops projects, then evaluates the impact of the project on the environment and then prepares a Document. The FHWA reviews and ultimately approves the Document.
6. Next steps: Alternatives Finalized; Technical Analysis & Reports; Prepare Draft EA; Final EA; Agency Coordination & Reviews; (6) Public Meetings; (2) Public Hearings; and then FONSI (no environmental impact).

The following comments and questions were raised during and after the above presentations.

1. Mr. Raiford – requested a copy of the presentation documentation which was to be sent via email after the meeting. It was noted that DOTD usually posts each presentation on the project website.
2. President Daigle – The public needs to see what was presented today and should be accessible to the public. The Commissioners should have received a copy in advance of the meeting today. The DOTD apologized since they did not realize that the presentation was not available in advance. President Daigle also asked when public meetings would be held in Q1 of 2026, since such meetings allows the public to get current updates on the project. DOTD stated that most public meetings would be held in Q1 of 2026. DOTD will send a proposed schedule of public meetings to the agencies and they have to accept and approve the dates, days, and times selected.
3. President Daigle questioned whether the connectors, from the Bridge location to Hwy 1 on the West Side of the River, and to Hwy 30 on the East Side of the River, and their locations have changed, and are there any environmental impacts regarding the connectors. DOTD responded that all of these matters are being studied but nothing environmental has arisen. All different alignments will be shown and displayed at the public meetings..
4. Mr. Helms noted that in previous discussions public feedback from the community expressed concerns about the project three alternatives. Helms questioned the possibility of a derived alternative and if such an alternative is a realistic alternative that could happen between now and the development of the draft EA. DOTD responded that all alternatives were thoroughly reviewed and analyzed objectively and were narrowed down from a high of 32 alternatives to the current 3 alternatives.

Paul Voight, the previous DOTD Project Manager for the Bridge Project came to the presentation table to respond to the comments about alternatives to the final three. He stated that DOTD started with a broad array of alternatives so that down the road another alternative that was not considered would surface. He stated that there is still the possibility that the process would require the consideration of a different NEPA alternative. If DOTD needs to shift during the assessment process because one has significant environmental impacts, then that is what DOTD would do. DOTD restated that at the conclusion of the NEPA process, DOTD will have a preferred alternative and a selected alternative. Mr. Helms expressed his concern about the 12-month timeframe. DOTD responded that is why it was important for DOTD to show the District and the public what detailed work has been completed and that DOTD did not wait for the NEPA process to begin to perform said work and the related analyses. DOTD stated that all federal and state agencies are on board with the 12-month timeframe that began in September. If something arises, then DOTD will inform all parties involved.

Next on the Agenda was a report by Paul Voight of DOTD on the **I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge** and its **Public Private Partnership (PPP)**:

1. DOTD obtained the environmental approval for a project to construct improvements on I-10 between its eastern and western interchanges with I-210. DOTD entered into a PPP agreement with Calcasieu Bridge Partners (CBP) to design, build, fund, operate, and maintain a portion of the project along I-10 extending from Ryan Street in Lake Charles to the Western I-210 interchange.
  - i. Mr. Voight was asked to compare the Timelines and Tasks to the actual performance by Atlas on the Mississippi River Bridge (MRB) Project.
  - ii. Mr. Campbell asked when the Calcasieu project started and how long it was before they went through the NEPA process. Voight responded that DOTD signed the contract for the Calcasieu project in July 2000. The primary source of the delay was hazardous material contamination plus other significant issues.
  - iii. Mr. Voight stated that the site selection for Calcasieu was vastly different than the **MRB** project. Mr. Voight also stated that the bridge that exists today is not going to be destroyed but a new crossing will be built over the Calcasieu River adjacent to the existing I-10 bridge.
  - iv. Secretary Ledet added that the benefit received is to look at the process utilized for the Calcasieu Bridge and take the learnings and use them for future projects like the MRB.
  - v. Voight stated that the PPP process started in December 2020 when the Joint Transportation Secretary asked for approval.
2. President Daigle asked about the projected revenue on a 50-year toll. DOTD responded that the sum was in the billions of dollars. Borrowing a significant amount of capital for such a project using a predetermined amortization schedule for the debt repayment requires a higher return on investment than a typical low interest loan or bond issue.
  - a. DOTD reminded all that \$40 million was appropriated each year just for the MRB project from the state vehicle sales taxes but said appropriation was suspended for two years.

3. Mr. Campbell asked Mr. Voight to compare the MRB project to the Calcasieu project. He agreed that there was a lot of work to do in the time frame. However, he did not foresee any reason for significant delays in the advancement of MRB project.

Mr. Campbell asked if the validity and accuracy of tolling estimates was considered critical. DOTD responded that the companies doing this PPP hire their own economists, traffic studies, and modeling, etc. and they are very good at assessing the costs incurred and the needed revenues to make the project successful.

4. President Daigle stated that he has served on the District since January 2024, but he has not been provided with the potential revenue sources for the funding of the MRB Project. He questioned whether the public would be asked to determine their appetite possibly to fund or find sources of revenue. He felt a communication process should be begun.

Mr. Campbell responded to President Daigle that statutorily, this district, was established to consider means of financing this bridge project. 5 parishes are included in the statutorily created district. The District can propose of a limited sales tax, a limited ad valorem property tax, or a small parcel fee or a combination of all three sources. The District has the authority to put together a taxing framework that could include a sales tax, a millage property tax, and/or a parcel fee. The District does not select the site or alignment of the bridge crossing or its connectors. The District is charged with its duty to provide financing alternatives for the MRB Project. Each Parish and its citizens would be able to approve or reject any of the proposed taxes or fees at the Parish level.

**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 and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

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:

**Robert Causey, Clifford Comeau; Laura Comeau; Brian Davis, Lydia Haydel; and Stephen LeBlanc**

Opposition views covered such areas of concern as the impact on the Oak Grove Cypress Forest and its 300–400-year-old trees being removed or damaged expressed by the Sierra Club. Concern was expressed about saving Plaquemine Point, and the location of the bridge greatly affecting the way and quality of life of the residents of the area.

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.

Mr. Comeau continued to state that an EIS is required instead of an EA. He stated that the regulations require an EIS for control access freeways and for lanes of traffic of four or more lanes. DOTD stated that such was not correct. Once again he was reminded that the FHWA made the decision that an EA was appropriate.

Mr. Davis was opposed to both E-11-(iv) and to F-14-(v).

Mr. Campbell stated that 3 years of public comments have been provided to DOTD. He also noted that the Federal Highway Administration made the decision that an EA was the appropriate course of action.

Furthermore, the Public Meetings/Briefings and the Public Hearings are the appropriate opportunity for the public to express opposition to site alternatives.

Sec. Ledet – stated that the formal NEPA process was starting and that the public should contact Christina Brignac of DOTD and make plans to attend the public meetings and the public hearings. Sec. Ledet also stated that feedback from the pre-NEPA process are fully incorporated into the Pel documents.

Mr. Helms encouraged members of the public to attend the planned public meetings and public hearings, not just the District’s quarterly meetings.

**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 3:30 p.m.

Secretary of CARB-D

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President Chris Daigle, Iberville Parish

Attest:

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