

ONE to ONE

An Update on the Efforts of the LA 1 Coalition

Spring 1999

Work of LA 1 Task Force Extended to November *Group Will Push for Local Support of Recommendations*

There are few roads in Louisiana that cover as many miles, service as many industries and are traveled by as many residents as LA Highway 1. Now, the highway is getting some of the attention it deserves. Members of a governor's task force are now in the process of making final recommendations for improving the state highway and gaining local support for the projects.

Created by Governor Mike Foster's Executive Order #MJF98-46 in October 1998, the Louisiana Highway One Project Task Force was charged with evaluating the feasibility of upgrading LA 1 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane highway or interstate on a 262-mile stretch of the road from Grand Isle to Alexandria. The executive order recognized that the roadway is important for hurricane evacuation in the area between Grand Isle and Raceland, and the significance of the highway to the economic life of southeast Louisiana.

An original April 1 deadline for submitting improvement recommendations to the Governor was extended to November 1 to give the task force more time to compile its findings and present feasibility of projects and funding needs. Committee members say they plan to have a draft report complete in April, but that the recommendations themselves don't signify the end of their work.

"A very important part of our task force mission is to get public input and gain public support for any projects that are recommended. We expect to present our findings to local governments during the next few months in hopes of getting resolutions passed supporting our suggestions and plans for LA 1 improvements," Coalition Executive Director and

task force vice-chair Roy Francis explained. Getting on parish meeting agendas may take some time, he added.

State Representative Mitch Theriot is chairman of the LA 1 task force, and the LA 1 Coalition played an active role

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in the group's work. In addition to Francis, Coalition representatives Ted Falgout, Charlotte Bollinger, Billy Coyle and Roger White are members of the 23-member panel. Administration officials,

legislators, business leaders and interested citizens from throughout the LA 1 route round out the committee membership.

"If the Coalition is serious about getting the financing for improving LA 1 from Port Fourchon to Raceland, we must have the support of our state officials and voters from across Louisiana. By playing an active role in this task force and helping shape the written recommendations, we have made a big impact in informing others about our infrastructure needs and getting our projects in public view," Francis said. "We stand to benefit tremendously if the task force recommendations are carried out."



New Stretch of Highway Opens to Traffic

Photo courtesy of Randolph Publications

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on February 10 to officially open LA Highway 3161 in Cut Off. The new road connects Highway 3235 to LA 1, allowing use of the segment of LA Highway 3235 stretching from the South Lafourche bridge to LA Highway 3161, just north of West 69th Street. On hand for the ribbon-cutting were several local and state government leaders as well as LA 1 Coalition representatives.

North-South Corridor Study Proposes Evacuation Routes

The active hurricane season of 1998 strengthened the call of south Louisiana residents for an improved hurricane evacuation route. A recent study conducted by URS Grenier Woodward Clyde for the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development proposes three such routes with a goal of getting residents out quickly and efficiently should a hurricane threaten the region.

The study, completed in February, considered environmental impacts, cost and evacuation time when determining the recommended routes. All of the routes considered would involve new roadway construction to connect relocated U.S. 90 with Highway 3127. The alternatives then follow the existing Gramercy/Wallace Bridge or the Sunshine Bridge over the Mississippi River to Interstate 10, providing a south

to north movement of evacuation traffic.

According to URS Grenier, the alternative routes known as 6, 6a and 7a are recommended at this time for any future construction of a hurricane evacuation route. As seen on the map below, routes 6 and 6a follow the LA Highway 311 corridor from Houma into Thibodaux. Route 7a ties into LA Highway 316 at Bayou Blue as does alternative 7, which, while not recommended by Granier, may be reserved for further consideration.

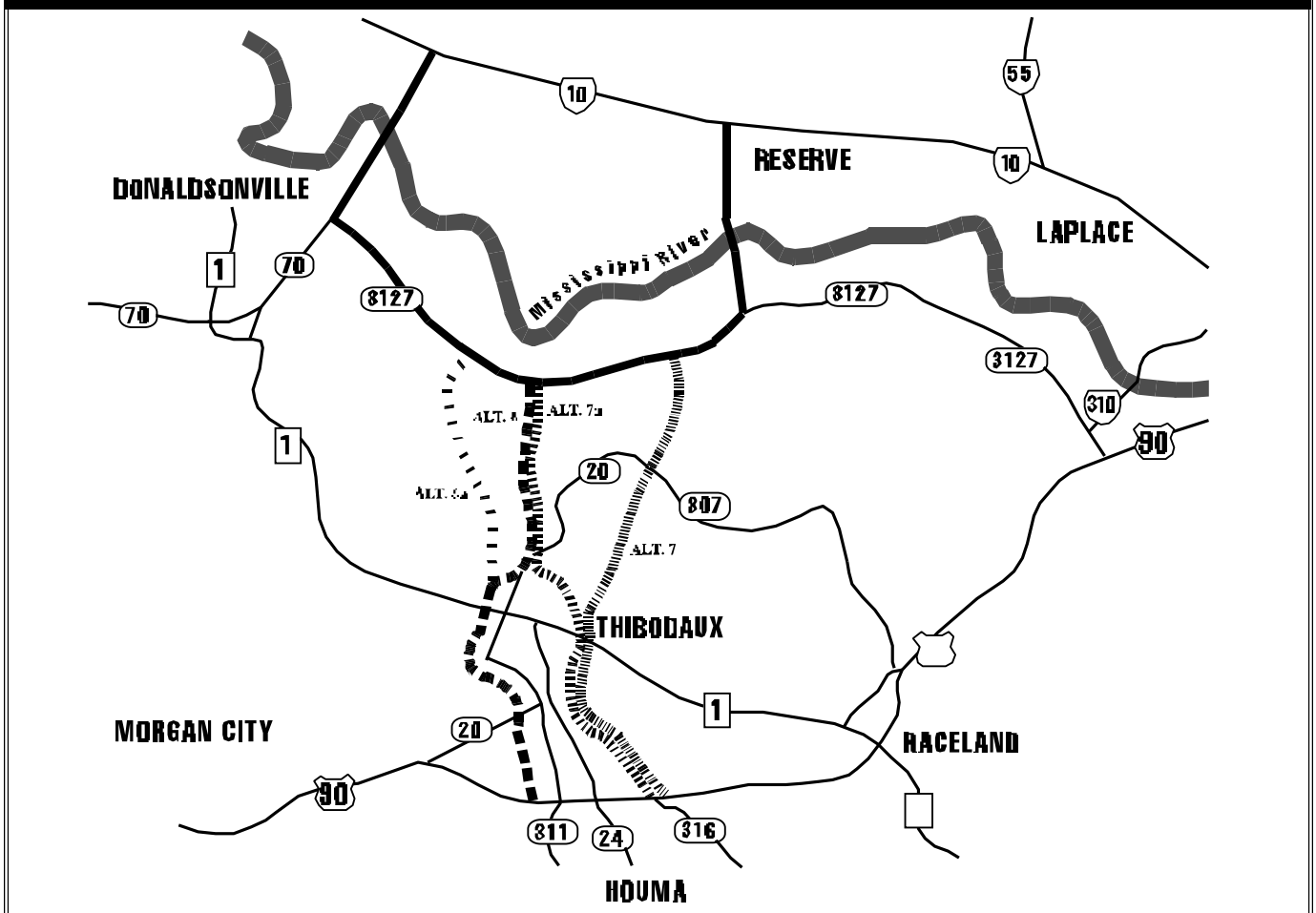
However, since immediate construction of a north-south evacuation corridor may not be economically feasible at this time, the Grenier study did suggest an implementation plan that involved the completion of critical highway links over a 15-year period. Three of these critical links include improving relocated Highway 90 West from Terrebonne Parish

to Morgan City and Highway 90 East near Raceland, and connecting Highway 3127 to the Gramercy-Wallace Bridge.

After reviewing the Granier report, the LA 1 Coalition Executive Committee resolved to support alternative routes 7 and 7a since they more closely align with traffic movement in and out of South Lafourche on LA 1, pose less impact and would be less expensive to construct. The Governor's LA 1 Task Force has also reviewed the proposals and recommended that routes 6 and 6a be combined, and that both routes 7 and 7a also be considered as future hurricane evacuation route alternatives.

DOTD will hold a public hearing on the North-South Corridor Study at Nicholls State University on Thursday, April 29. LA 1 Coalition members are encouraged to attend.

Reasonable and Feasible Alternative Corridors



Chairman's Report



-by Ted Falgout, Executive Director, Greater Lafourche Port Commission

I guess the hottest buzz word of 1999 is the word "millenium." It's a word that pushes people to think of the future. To some, it brings to mind Y2K and the problems of adjusting to the next thousand years. To others, it provides the medium to dream of unlimited possibilities.

One of the concepts that has had this buzz word added to it is the "Millenium Port." This concept was initiated by the Port of New Orleans as a part of its strategic master planning for the future. As part of this process, it became evident that the existing container facilities on the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO), for a number of reasons, would not allow

the port to compete for a larger share of a very lucrative and rapidly expanding South American container market.

These constraints have led the Port
"The leadership in this state also recognizes the potential of the "Golden Gulf."

of New Orleans to look beyond its boundaries and commission a study to determine if this business could be attracted to Louisiana or if it will go to competing states with ports on or near the Gulf, allowing Louisiana to "miss the boat" once again.

Preliminary results do indicate that

Louisiana could be competitive. In fact, the closer our port would be to the Gulf, the more competitive it would be, **IF** adequate landside infrastructure was in place to serve this port of the next millenium.

This concept is exciting to me and is just one of the endless opportunities for our area if the goals of the LA 1 Coalition are realized. It is comforting to know that this highway, which can be justified purely on its significance to this nation's energy supply, holds so many additional benefits that may allow us to diversify from energy-related industries and cushion us from the booms and busts of this dominant industry.

It seems that the leadership in this state also recognizes the potential of the "Golden Gulf" and actions like the creation of the Governor's LA 1 Task Force and legislation pending to create the Millenium Port are all moves in a positive direction.

We're not there yet, but we sure have gotten the ball rolling. With a little luck and a lot of hard work, we will see some major highway improvements to LA 1 in the first decade of the new millennium.

Push Continues for OCS "Share the Wealth" Plans

Louisiana's Congressional delegation continues to push for a redistribution of revenue from outer-continental shelf (OCS) drilling that would provide an equitable share to directly impacted states like Louisiana.

In the House of Representatives, Congressman Billy Tauzin recently chaired two days of hearings on his OCS proposal, HR 701, before the House Natural Resources Committee. Described as a comprehensive plan for addressing environmental conservation and restoration and infrastructure improvements, Tauzin's proposal has garnered great bi-partisan support. According to Tauzin staffer Garrett Graves, there are currently 65 co-sponsors to the bill and the list is growing every week.

At the end of March, Congressman Tauzin and Resources Committee members conducted a field hearing on the proposal in Alaska, and a field hearing is scheduled in **New Orleans on May 5**. Tauzin is also working with the House Budget Committee to offset OCS revenue in the federal budget bill based on the proposed revenue redistribution.

On the Senate side, Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu is pushing similar "fair share" legislation. Senate bill

25 has recently gained support from several important groups, including the National Association of State Treasurers, and hearings before the Energy Committee are scheduled for April 20 & 27 and May 4.

At Sen. Landrieu's request, LA 1 Coalition Executive Director Roy Francis and Chairman Ted Falgout will travel to Washington, D.C. in April to talk to some senators and congressmen who are not yet in favor of the "fair share" legislation. Francis and Falgout will give first-hand accounts of the impact OCS activity has on the infrastructure of states like Louisiana.

State Department of Natural Resources Secretary Jack Caldwell has joined in the push for OCS revenue distribution as well. He is forming a non-profit organization to help inform and educate national interests about the issue and gain support for related legislation.

Louisiana experiences the environmental and infrastructure impact of 91 percent of all OCS oil and gas production. During the past 45 years, the federal government has collected more than \$120 billion from oil and gas production off the Louisiana coast, yet the state has only received \$991 million, or one percent of the total revenue.

Study Updates

- DOTD has amended an existing contract with U.S. Granier and has given the firm notice to proceed on a **feasibility study** for LA 1 upgrades from Larose to relocated U.S. 90. The work will include analyses of need, potential alignment, right-of-ways, cost and impacts, and would be funded by appropriations from the 1998 federal TEA-21 bill and a state funding match.
- The national engineering firm Mike Baker has been selected by DOTD to conduct the **Environmental Impact Statement** for LA 1 improvements from Golden Meadow to Port Fourchon. The state agency and Mike Baker engineers are now in the process of negotiating the scope of services and cost of the study, which has been put on a fast track thanks to private funding from members of Mid Continent Oil and Gas Association.

LA 1 COALITION MEMBERS

As of March 31, 1999

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Spreading the Word

LA 1 Coalition Executive Director Roy Francis has had the opportunity to speak to several local groups recently about the Coalition's goals and activities.

- On February 2, he met with participants of the Leadership Lafourche program. The group was interested in discussing the need for infrastructure improvements, particularly in the area of hurricane evacuation.

- Francis made a presentation to the Bayou Industrial Group on February 8. BIG has been supportive of the

Coalition's efforts to upgrade LA 1 and help sustain the economic activity of the region.

- He also represented the Bayou Vision Infrastructure Committee at Bayou Vision's Legislative Summit on March 10 at Nicholls State University. Several local legislators attended the meeting.



For Your Information...

If you would like to receive additional copies of "One to One" or more information on the LA 1 Coalition, call Roy Francis, Executive Director, at (504) 448-4485 or write to us at P.O. Box 2048-NSU, Thibodaux, LA 70310. Our office is located on the campus of Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, LA, within the offices of the South Louisiana Economic Council. The LA 1 Coalition is a non-profit 501-c4 corporation.