

ONE to ONE

An Update on the Efforts of the LA 1 Coalition

Fall 2000

CARA Falls Short of Passage *Louisiana Secures Some Coastal Impact Funds in Last-Minute Appropriations Bill*

October was not a good month for the State of Louisiana. For nearly a year, residents throughout the state closely followed a popular piece of federal legislation known as CARA through Congress as it gained strong bi-partisan support. And yet, in the end, the bill that spelled millions of dollars a year for Louisiana in coastal impact mitigation, could not beat one final challenge.



In what seemed like a surprise attack on the Conservation and Reinvestment Act sponsored by La. Senator Mary Landrieu and Congressman Billy Tauzin, a small group of opponents succeeded in effectively killing the bill before it reached the Senate floor. With a presidential election in the wings and Congressional adjournment approaching in a matter of days, the Louisiana delegation put up a vigorous

fight for the legislation, but could not overcome the powerful pressures of deadlines and politics. In the waning days of the session, Louisiana was able to secure \$30 million in coastal impact funds as part of the commerce, state and justice departments' appropriations bill, but the money falls short of the \$300 million annual distribution from offshore oil and gas royalties that the state could have realized with the passage of CARA.

The LA 1 Coalition was an important and vocal advocate of CARA, and while the bill's defeat this year means a loss of millions for possible highway improvements, the news isn't all bad. "We have to be proud of the fact that, even though CARA was a huge piece of national legislation, the LA 1 Coalition was successful in bringing much-needed attention to the infrastructure needs of South Louisiana. Key members of the president's administration, as well as a fair amount of senators and congress are now fully aware of our situation," explains Francis.

"Along with other groups, we helped to bring the discussion of industry impacts on coastal environment and infrastructure to the forefront. And because of our work, no one can deny the need for improvements to LA 1."

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Pitre Proposes Combination of State & Local Funds for Leeville Bridge Improvements

State Representative Loulan Pitre will submit a proposal in the next legislative session that would allow the state Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) to accept local funds that, combined with state funds, could pay for improvements to LA 1 from Golden Meadow to Grand Isle, including much-needed improvements to the Leeville Bridge.

"It is obvious that the state is in a serious financial situation, which makes it very difficult for DOTD to take on any new infrastructure projects," explains Pitre. "When you combine this with the

failure of CARA in Congress this year and the fact that the Leeville Bridge does not qualify for federal bridge replacement funds under existing criteria, it has become necessary to be more aggressive on the local front as far as our highway is concerned."

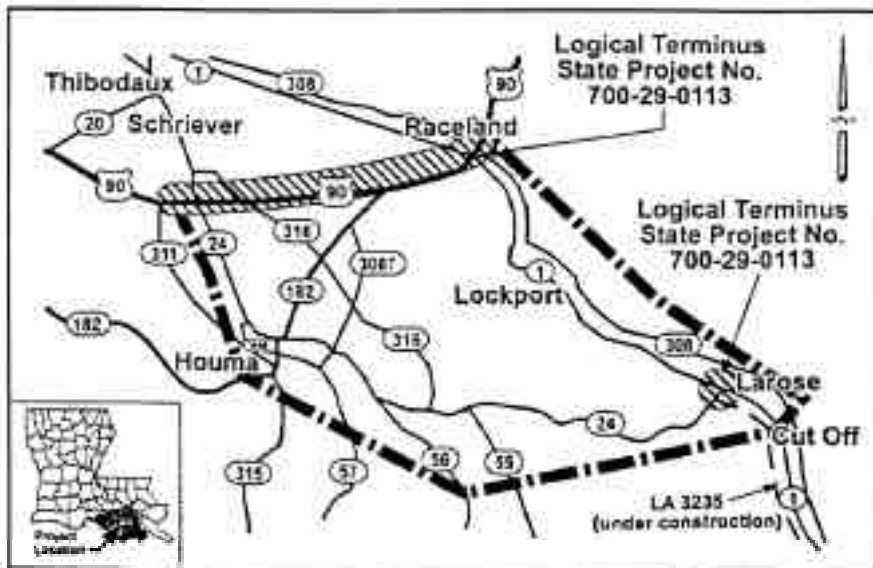
Pitre's proposal would allow the Greater Lafourche Port Commission to enter into a cooperative agreement with the DOTD in which existing local revenue could be added to state appropriations to fund the \$60 million in highway and bridge work that is anticipated. The existing local revenue source is an ad valorem

tax currently assessed by the Port Commission on all taxable property in the 10th ward of Lafourche Parish.

"We have already discussed this option with DOTD officials and the response has been promising. I am hopeful that we will see favorable action on this issue during our spring legislative session," Pitre concluded.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE NEEDS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Members of the Louisiana Legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation, Highway and Public Works will conduct a public hearing on November 14 to review local highway construction priorities for the current fiscal year. The meeting is scheduled for 3:00 pm at the Alairo Center in Westwego. At a similar meeting held last spring, numerous members of the LA 1 Coalition spoke extensively about the challenges faced by the southernmost section of LA 1, and most importantly, the importance of upgrading the Leeville Bridge. According to many legislators present, our message was heard loud and clear. Let's not lose the momentum...make a date to join us on November 14!



Good Turnout at Public Hearing for Feasibility Study

Attendance was great at a DOTD public meeting held October 19 in Larose on a feasibility study evaluating alternatives to connect LA 3235 from Larose to relocated U.S. 90 north of Houma. This study is a supplement to the Hurricane Evacuation Corridor Study completed in the summer of 1999. A map of the study area is indicated above.

Chairman's Report

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



In my job with the Greater Lafourche Port Commission, I have attended hundreds of meetings over the years with other port officials, legislators, transportation officials and parish leaders, all concerned about Louisiana's infrastructure. In fact, no matter if my associates are from Shreveport, Baton Rouge or South Louisiana, we can always agree on the importance of a quality transportation system to our economic strength, the safety of our residents and the preservation of our fragile environment.

A few months ago, Roy Francis and I began seriously thinking about a comprehensive plan that could perhaps solve many of our transportation needs in South Louisiana, as well as meet the needs of another top priority—coastal restoration. Working together, we have developed a “silver bullet,” so to speak, a plan that, if properly funded, could provide Louisiana with a safe, dependable infrastructure system while facilitating an effective mechanism for rebuilding our disappearing coast line.

We consider our proposed approach not only multi-modal, but multi-environmental because it is based on the coordination of six targeted transportation and environmental priorities. These include:

1. A proposed new regional airport to be located between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, with emphasis on cargo and commercial trade.

2. A Port-Fourchon based Millennium Port for containerized cargo, predominately from Central and South America.

3. An upgraded La. Highway 1 from Port Fourchon to U.S. 90.

4. A north-south hurricane evacuation route from U.S. 90 to Interstate 10.

Tying these priorities together gives us the weight and impact of an infrastructure and coastal restoration “system” rather than a multitude of “projects” vying for limited funds.

5. A conveyance channel that would divert sediment from the Mississippi River to the Barataria-Terrebonne basins.

6. Barrier island restoration made possible by excavation for port channel improvements.

What we have determined is that by looking at these multi-faceted priorities regionally instead of in isolation, each could provide benefits to the others that would not only have positive impacts on Louisiana's economy and environment, but provide a greater chance for funding. Tying these priorities together gives us the weight and impact of an infrastructure and coastal restoration “system” rather than a multitude of “projects” vying for limited funds.

For example, connecting the Millennium Port to the airport via the conveyance channel would allow marine shipments to easily move between the two sites, as well as help to build up our coast and ensure our drinking water supply. Similarly, an upgraded highway system would make the port facility more accessible to truck traffic, and the evacuation route would not only provide a safe link to the interstate for residents, but commercial traffic as well.

I plan to present this innovative plan to the Millennium Port task force on November 14. We'll keep you posted on its status. Until then, we'd be happy to hear your comments, suggestions or concerns. Let us hear from you.



CARA Falls Short

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According to Falgout, the LA 1 Coalitions's fight for highway funds will not stop with CARA. “Our need remains the same, the justification is still there. As a group of concerned residents and business people, we will continue to fight for our highway needs, as well as begin to aggressively consider alternative funding mechanisms to provide a safe and reliable highway for our area.”

LA 1 COALITION
P.O. Box 2048-NSU
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**Stay Tuned for Info. On
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

The LA 1 Coalition will soon be making plans for its annual general membership meeting regularly held in South Lafourche. Members will be receiving a notice as to the date, time and location of the annual meeting once the details are decided.

Each year, the Coalition conducts the gathering in order to review the accomplishments of the previous year, as well as discuss plans for the upcoming months. Members are encouraged to attend and share their suggestions with regard to improving the effectiveness of the coalition's efforts and actions the group should take in the future.

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.