

ONE to ONE

An Update on the Efforts of the LA 1 Coalition

Spring 2000

“Leeville Bridge, Leeville Bridge, Leeville Bridge”

Coalition Members Make Their Message Clear During Legislative Committee Meeting In Houma

Citing the Leeville Bridge as the “weakest link” in the LA 1 highway system, Coalition members and other community leaders in the region urged members of the Joint Legislative Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works to fund bridge improvements during a committee meeting in Houma February 28.

The legislators were in the area as part of an annual “road show,” during which House and Senate members travel to each of the state’s nine highway districts to hear about local infrastructure priorities. Although replacement of the Leeville Bridge and construction of a four-lane highway from Golden Meadow to Port Fourchon are not included on the state’s priority list at this time, the importance of the bridge project to local business and government leaders was clearly evident during committee testimony.

“It’s understandable that this state can’t afford to commit hundreds of millions of dollars to construct an entire highway at this time,” LA 1 Coalition Chairman Ted Falgout explained. “We’re not asking that, but certainly we can afford to construct the weakest link, the Leeville Bridge.”

In an effort to gain the state’s commitment, Falgout also pointed to the widespread regional support that the LA 1 and Leeville Bridge projects have gained, most notably in the membership and substantial contributions made by the members of the LA 1 Coalition. “We’ve not only been the squeaky wheel, but we’ve also put our money where our

continued on page 3



“Leeville Bridge, Leeville Bridge, Leeville Bridge,” stressed LA 1 Coalition Board member Charlotte Bollinger to the legislative panel in her testimony concerning the bridge’s importance.

“Fair Share” Legislation Still Alive ***Sen. Landrieu Submits Revised Proposal That*** ***Mirrors House Committee-Approved CARA***



After a long but successful fight in a House committee, the push to more fairly compensate states like Louisiana that bear the brunt of offshore oil and gas production now takes center stage in the Senate.

On March 1, Senator Mary Landrieu introduced in the Senate a new compromise version of the proposed Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), based on legislation that was approved by the House Resources Committee in November. She is confident

that the blending of her original bill and the companion House legislation will produce a version that can be passed by Congress and receive the President's signature.

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assistance, and to all states for environmental and conservation efforts,” Landrieu said.

The House bill, introduced by La. Congressman Billy Tauzin now has more than 300 sponsors in the House, representing more than two-thirds of its members, including the entire Louisiana Congressional delegation. Co-authors of the Senate version include Landrieu and Senators Breaux, Lott, Murkowski and Feinstein.

Under CARA, coastal states would share about \$2.8 billion per year - half of federal OCS revenue - for conservation and infrastructure programs. Louisiana could stand to receive between \$200 and \$300 million per year, up from \$15.3 million it received for conservation projects last year.

Local Business Leader Tapped to Head Millennium Port Panel

Billy Coyle, Jr., owner of Bilco Tools, Inc. of Houma and an active member of the LA 1 Coalition, will serve a two-year term as chairman of the newly created 11-member Millennium Port Authority. Coyle was elected to the post by fellow panel members during the group's first meeting on March 29. The Louisiana Port Association's Philip Prejean was elected vice-chairman, and LA 1 Coalition Chairman Ted Falgout was named an ex-officio member of the Site Location Committee.

Created by the Legislature last year, the mission of the Millennium Port Authority is to develop a major containerized cargo shipping terminal in South Louisiana. According to Coyle, the first order of business for the new group will be to review a study on the Millennium Port Proposal conducted last fall for the Port of New Orleans. That study pointed to a location about 50 miles upriver from the mouth of the Mississippi River, Head of Pass and Port Fourchon as three likely sites for the \$1 billion terminal.

Preliminary plans call for constructing the port in several phases over the next two decades, with financing coming primarily from private investors like shipping companies and dock operators. Federal and state money would likely be used to construct infrastructure like highways and railways leading to the port. In that respect, the possibility of a Port Fourchon location could have significant positive impacts on the efforts of the LA 1 Coalition.

“Geographically and economically, Port Fourchon would be an excellent choice for the Millennium Port,” says LA 1 Coalition Executive Director Roy Francis. “And if it is chosen as the site, LA 1 would have to be improved.”

The next meeting of the Millennium Port Authority is scheduled for May 2 in Baton Rouge.

Chairman's Report



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

In spite of a general down turn in Port Fourchon's main industry, oil and gas, 1999 proved to be another banner year for the Port in terms of port activity. Cargo tonnage, port construction and revenue all sported record numbers. Compared to 1998, which represented the eve of the boom cycle of the mid 90's, 1999 showed significant gains as a result of oil and gas' continued commitment to the deepwater areas of the Gulf.

The Port handled a record 19.5 million tons of domestic cargo, a 21 percent increase over 1998, ranking it 17th in the nation in terms of domestic cargo handled.

Port revenues increased 9.5 percent to \$6.5 million in 1999. Additionally, over \$9 million was attained from outside federal and state sources.

A record \$16 million was spent on capital construction projects while we were able to hold our operating expenses under \$3 million, same as 1998.

"If we can continue to affect the necessary land-side improvements to the LA Highway 1 system, this 'golden egg' of ours will continue to reap benefits for our entire region."

Other interesting highlights of 1999 were that over 7 million tons of cargo traveled by truck, 17,000 tons by air and the remainder by barge. Over 150,000 oil and gas workers utilized the Port as their land base for crew changes in 1999, and over 200 large vessels per day are

navigating our entrance channel.

As impressive as these numbers may be, we have only scratched the surface of the Port's potential. If we can continue to affect the necessary land-side improvements to the LA Highway 1 system, this "golden egg" of ours will continue to reap benefits for our entire region. A challenge in this new decade will be to educate the people of this state, especially in our neighboring parishes, about the existing and potential benefits of Louisiana's only port on the Gulf. And we must let everyone know why making the necessary infrastructure improvements to accommodate this growth should be a priority in this state and the entire country.



"Leeville Bridge, Leeville Bridge, Leeville Bridge"

continued from page 1

mouth is, raising over over \$1 million to inform others about the significance of the highway system."

Other Coalition representatives, as well as members of the Terrebonne legislative delegation and Parish President Bobby Bergeron, stressed the economic and safety importance of LA 1 and the Leeville Bridge to the state and the increasing impacts being experienced by the highway system.

"We do not have the population of an urban area, but we do have 24 percent of the United States' energy here in South Louisiana," said Executive Director Roy Francis. "The Leeville Bridge is the gateway to the Gulf of Mexico."

Hurricane evacuation for area residents should also be seriously considered when deciding the fate of highway funds, according to Windell Curole, Assistant Director of the Lafourche Parish Office of Emergency Preparedness. "If you can promise us we'll be lucky for the next 50 years and be spared the threat of a

hurricane, then we don't have to talk about the Leeville Bridge," Curole said.

State Rep. Loulan Pitre, Jr., a member of the legislative panel, voiced his strong support for LA 1 and Leeville Bridge improvements as part of a regional approach to long-term infrastructure goals. "The key component to this system is linking Port Fourchon and Grand Isle at the Gulf of Mexico all the way to U.S. 90 and all the way up to Interstate 10," he explained.

The cooperative effort exhibited by all presenters during the February 28 meeting seemed to have a lasting impression on the committee members, which may go a long way in helping to solidify statewide support for Leeville Bridge and LA 1 projects. "This highway district meeting had, by far, the best attendance of all nine meetings we have had across the state, and over 60 percent of the presentations dealt with projects in Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes," explained Rep. Reggie Dupre, vice-chairman of the House Transportation

Committee. "I think what impressed the committee members the most was how everyone has come together as a region to look at the most important transportation needs of the entire Lafourche/Terrebonne area. Since the Leeville Bridge is the only access to Port Fourchon and Grand Isle, it has become a local priority."



Grand Isle Port Commissioner Andy Galliano spoke to the committee on behalf of the Leeville Bridge.

LA 1 COALITION
P.O. Box 2048-NSU
Thibodaux, LA 70310

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Public Hearing Held for New Connector Road

On April 11 at the Larose Civic Center, the LA DOTD heard public comments concerning the newest area road project. The plan calls for replacement of the pontoon bridge on LA 310 in Larose with a new vertical lift bridge. The new bridge will cross Bayou Lafourche slightly downstream from the existing bridge, and will join the proposed LA 657 extension planned to be built between West 14th and 15th Streets in Larose to connect LA 3235, now under construction, with LA 1. The project's environmental assesment and preliminary plan are also available for review at the Larose/Cut-Off library.

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.