

ONE to ONE

An Update on the Efforts of the LA 1 Coalition

Summer 2000

CARA Clears Another Hurdle *Impact Relief Legislation Passes Out of Committee and Heads to Senate Floor*

For more than six years, since passage of the Royalty Relief Act, oil and gas production in the Gulf of Mexico has flourished like never before. As billions of dollars of federal revenue pour into Washington each year, infrastructure in coastal states like Louisiana suffers the impacts of industry traffic and related commerce. LA 1 is one of the hardest hit highways, and important legislation now awaiting final Congressional approval has the potential to be an excellent source of funding for road and coastal improvements.



On July 25, the Senate Energy and Resources Committee favorably reported Senate Bill 2123, commonly known as the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) sponsored by La. Senator Mary Landrieu, to the Senate floor. With Congress off for a summer recess throughout the month of August, the full Senate could take up the CARA debate in early September.

At stake in the CARA debate are millions of dollars in impact relief funds that Louisiana could see as early as next year. While the state's potential share has fluctuated throughout

the lawmaking process, efforts by groups like the LA 1 Coalition have kept the state's interest in the forefront.

"We realized early on that CARA was our best opportunity to help get the level of funds needed to make significant improvements to LA 1. For that reason, the Coalition has been very aggressively supporting the CARA proposals," said Executive Director Roy Francis.

When CARA legislation sponsored by La. Congressmen Billy Tauzin and Chris John passed the House on May 10, the amount of funds to be redistributed to Louisiana from offshore oil revenues stood at \$300 million per year. After intense debates and concessions between representatives of coastal and inland states, environmental advocates and landowner's rights groups, and congressmen and administration officials, the Senate's version of the bill reduces Louisiana's annual share to approximately \$170 million. However, it keeps intact the state's ability to provide relief to impacted land and infrastructure. Through it all, the LA 1 Coalition has been in the race.

"We've cleared another giant hurdle and the finish line is in sight," Francis said.

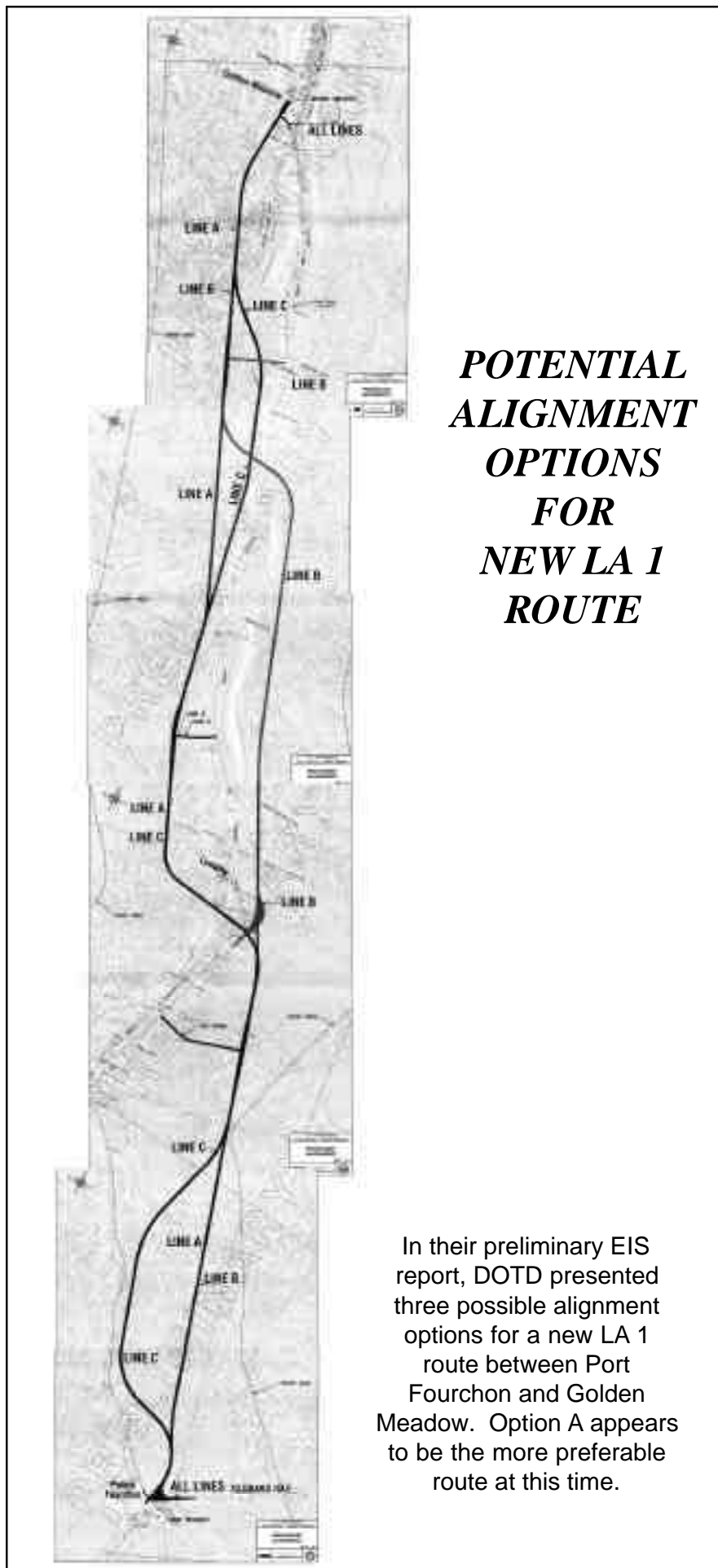


DOTD Presents Preliminary Results of LA 1 EIS

If a new, improved LA 1 route is to be built between Port Fourchon and Golden Meadow, identifying the most beneficial alignment for the road is of the utmost importance. That's why, for nearly a year, DOTD and contract engineering firm Michael Baker, Jr., Inc. have been studying possible highway alignment locations and the environmental impacts of each. The preliminary Environmental Impact Statement, funded by T-21 and members of the LA 1 Coalition, was presented to a group of local residents on May 23 at the Larose Civic Center during a DOTD public meeting.

As pictured right, the three alignment options all begin in the north at the existing end of LA 3235 in Golden Meadow. From there, all three options head south to the west of the hurricane protection levee, down to near the Leon Theriot Floodgate. It is here that the options begin to take varying paths, with options A and C remaining on the west-side of Bayou Lafourche until crossing the bayou at Leeville, and option B crossing over to the east of Bayou Lafourche a few miles north of Leeville. All options end at LA 3090 / Fourchon.

Based on cost, distance, access and environmental impact on the marsh, the 16.2-mile Alignment Option A appears to be the preferable highway alignment location, and those in attendance at the public meeting seemed to be content with the plan. Now that the EIS is nearly complete, further work on the proposed highway plan will depend on an adequate federal or state funding source such as CARA, now awaiting approval in the U.S. Senate.



POTENTIAL ALIGNMENT OPTIONS FOR NEW LA 1 ROUTE

In their preliminary EIS report, DOTD presented three possible alignment options for a new LA 1 route between Port Fourchon and Golden Meadow. Option A appears to be the more preferable route at this time.

Chairman's Report

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



As Chairman of the LA 1 Coalition, every quarter, I take this opportunity to express my views and insights of the Coalition's efforts. Recently, the wisdom of investing public dollars into the LA 1 Coalition was questioned, and it was asserted that Parish monies would be better spent fixing pumps and potholes rather than investing in the Coalition.

This has prompted me to reflect on the accomplishments of the Coalition, which I believe are extraordinary and clearly show the return on investment that, in my opinion, has been nothing short of phenomenal.

To date, the LA 1 Coalition has raised \$1,047,850 in donations, over two-thirds of it from private sources. With these funds, the Coalition has been able to further its goal of highway improvements between U.S. 90 and Grand Isle.

This newsletter does not afford me the space to detail the countless ways the Coalition has positively impacted efforts to improve our transportation infrastructure, but it does afford me the chance to highlight some of the most significant achievements.

For starters, this million-dollar investment by private companies, individuals and governmental entities with a positive vision for our future, has returned us over \$6,000,000 in federal and state funds for furthering our cause. That's a pretty good return on investment in just three years! This infusion of additional money has enabled the Coalition to pursue its goals and advance our efforts by years. Without the Coalition's support and involvement, DOTD would not be planning to construct a two-lane connector road (Highway 657) from Highway 3235 to existing LA 1 in an effort to ease truck traffic. Likewise, we would not have already conducted a toll revenue study from Port Fourchon to Golden Meadow. We would not be in the middle of conducting a million-dollar Environmental Impact Statement for a four-lane elevated highway from Port

Fourchon to Golden Meadow. We would not be conducting a feasibility study for an improved highway system between Larose and U.S. 90. These are all things that are required before we can even begin to do any construction. And while they usually take decades to achieve, we have accomplished these things in under three years.

The significance of the public awareness campaign conducted by the Coalition to inform others about the significance of LA 1 cannot be overstated. In three short years, we have taken a project that wasn't even on anybody's radar screen and promoted it to the most talked about infrastructure project in both this state and many departments in Washington. This just doesn't happen in the regular political world, as some would have you think. It takes a sound strategy, a focused effort and money!

To achieve the level of awareness necessary to fast track a project, countless meetings must be attended, some which appear to have little relationship to our objective, but often yield the greatest reward. You have to be constantly in touch with the dozens of agencies that play some role in this plan. One particular effort that the Coalition has had a major impact on is the effort to get Louisiana its fair share of Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas revenues. This monumental piece of legislation is closer to passage than ever before, and this would be the logical pot of money to fund our project. It is not by coincidence that Senator Landrieu chose Port Fourchon as the site to announce this effort.

This aggressive presence has caused state and federal agencies to conduct studies that have supported our claims. The MMS study, for instance, that documents OCS impact on LA 1 has repeatedly been used by the Coalition and the Louisiana Congressional delegation to justify the need for infrastructure funds. In addition, the Coalition is one of only two groups specifically mentioned by

the U.S. Congress that FEMA must consult with before conducting a \$500,000 emergency evacuation study of southeast Louisiana.

I could go on and on listing actions of the Coalition that have resulted in immediate and long-term improvements to our area, most concerning our highways, but many benefitting other concerns in our region.

Again, I hope I have been able to shed some light on our achievements and communicate clearly that these things just don't happen following the standard channels. I've often said, "Extraordinary needs take extraordinary measures." People with vision have determined that our needs are in fact extraordinary and we can't afford to sit on the sidelines and let highway projects take 60 years to build like Highway 90 did. Our extraordinary measures are clearly yielding extraordinary accomplishments.

REP. PITRE TAKES HELM OF LA 1 TASK FORCE

Governor Mike Foster has appointed newly elected State Representative Loulan Pitre of Cut Off as Chairman of the LA 1 Project Task Force. Pitre was a co-founder of the LA 1 Coalition and has served on its Executive Committee since 1997.

Coalition representatives Roy Francis, Ted Falgout, Charlotte Bollinger, Billy Coyle and Roger White also serve on the task force.

Along with Pitre's appointment, the Governor amended an Executive Order, extending the life of the task force in order that funding and implementation of the LA 1 Project can be considered. In October, task force members submitted a report to Foster identifying the southern-most section of the state highway as most in need of improvement.

LA 1 COALITION
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**Wetland Restoration Project Bordering LA 1
Planned Near Leeville**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be conducting an Environmental Impact Statement for a wetland restoration and creation project in the Barataria Basin near Leeville. A public scoping meeting for the process was held at Nicholls State University on June 20.

This particular wetland project is significant in that it is located adjacent to LA 1, providing a very visible location for the public to see marsh restoration in action. In addition, since LA 1 was identified as an important route in the Coast 2050 report, the restoration project will help to sustain and preserve the fragile two-lane highway.

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.