

ONE to ONE

An Update on the Efforts of the LA 1 Coalition

Spring/Summer 2004

www.LA1Coalition.org • e-mail: info@LA1Coalition.org

WE'RE TURNING DIRT! *Dredging, Test Piles Signal Construction Activity to Come*



Test pile casings are placed near the Leeville Bridge.

(photo: Wilbur Smith Assoc.)

The pre-construction phase of the LA1 Highway Improvement Project entered its most visibly active period this spring, as evidenced by the large dredging barge and test piles near the Leeville Bridge. Dredging began May 7 at this test location, the first of four along the new highway corridor north and south of Leeville, to provide barge access for the installation of lengthy test piles for the new fixed-level bridge. The actual test pile program began soon after, and contractors have already load-tested several different pile types and lengths with good results, according to DOTD Design Project Manager David Miller. The test pile program is expected to be completed at all

four sites within three months.

Meanwhile, contractors continue taking soil borings along the project route as part of the geotechnical investigation, and the right of way process continues to move on schedule toward an end-of-year completion date. Corps of Engineers and Louisiana DNR coastal use permit applications have been submitted for construction of the new highway from Golden Meadow south to Fourchon.

Provided all of the permits and funding are in place, construction on phases 1A and IB, which includes two-lanes of the bridge and elevated highway from Leeville to Fourchon, is scheduled to begin in early 2005.



Dredging operations for the test-pile program officially began May 7 near the existing Leeville Bridge.

(photo: Wilbur Smith Assoc.)

TIFIA Loan Decision Could Come as Early As September

Louisiana highway officials, along with LA 1 Coalition's Roy Francis and Ted Falgout, met with decision-makers from the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program on June 3 in Washington, D.C. to finalize project-related issues before negotiations begin on the terms of a \$50 million TIFIA loan for the LA 1 project. According to La.DOTD's David Miller, the loan should be finalized sometime in September.

"The TIFIA loan is an integral part of our financial package and will hopefully set a precedence for future work of this magnitude in the state," Miller says.

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

PRSR.T. STD.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BATON ROUGE, LA
PERMIT NO. 213

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE COALITION
As of May 31, 2004

Abdon Callais
Allied Shipyard, Inc.
ANS Engines, Inc.
ASCO
Bank One
Barriere Construction Co.
Belle Terre Erosion Control, LLC
Bilco Tools, Inc.
Bayou Civic Club
Bayou Supply & Chemical, Inc.
Bollinger Shipyards, Inc.
Breaux Petroleum Products, Inc.
Buquet Distributing Company, Inc.
C & G Boats, Inc.
Caillouet Land Corporation
Cajun Trucking, Inc.
CanDo, Inc.
Constantin Land Trust
Coastal Commerce Bank
Coastal Environments, Inc.
Community Bank
Crosby Tugs, Inc.
Danos & Curole, Inc.
Deepwater Port Services, Inc.
Delmar Systems, Inc.
Delta Testing & Inspection, Inc.
Deramee, Allemand, Pitre & Richard, LLP
DMF Enterprises
Doucet & Adams, Inc.
E S & H Consulting Services, Inc.

Edison Chouest Offshore, LLC
Edward Wisner Donation Advisory Cmte.
Entergy Louisiana
Francis Drilling Fluids, Ltd.
Galliano Marine Services
G&A Barge Rental & Construction, Inc.
G&B Marine Transportation
Grand Isle Port Commission
Grand Isle Shipyard, Inc.
Greater Lafourche Port Commission
Guidry Brothers Towing Co., Inc.
Hibernia National Bank
Houma Armature Works and Supply
John W. Stone Oil Dist., Inc.
J. Wayne Plaisance, Inc.
L & M Botruc Rentals, Inc.
Lady of the Sea General Hospital
Lafourche Parish Council
Landry House Bed and Breakfast
Larry Griffin Towing
Larry Picciola, Inc.
Legislative Support Group
Leonard Miller Insurance
Louisiana Machinery Co.
Louisiana Offshore Oil Port, LLC
Magnum Mud Equipment Co., Inc.
Martin Terminal, Inc.
Mid Continent Oil & Gas Association
M.I. Drilling Fluids
Morgan City Rentals
Morris P. Hebert, Inc.
NEFF Rental
Ocean Marine Operators, LLC
Orgeron Properties

Picciola & Associates, Inc.
Pointe Fourchon, Inc.
Reggie Melancon
Regions Bank
Ronald Adams Contractor, Inc.
Rousse Marine, Inc.
SJI, Inc.
Southern Scrap Recycling, LLC
Southern Guard
South Lafourche Bank & Trust
South Lafourche Levee District
State Bank & Trust Company
Suard Barge Service, Inc.
Superior Shipyard Fabrications, Inc.
Sureway Supermarket, Inc.
T. Baker Smith & Son, Inc.
Terrebonne Motor Co., Inc.
Tetra Oil & Gas Services, Inc.
Theriot, Duet & Theriot, Inc.
Valentine Sugars, Inc.
Venture Transport, Inc.
Welch Sales and Service

THANK YOU!

*The strength of the LA 1 Coalition lies in
the support of our members.*

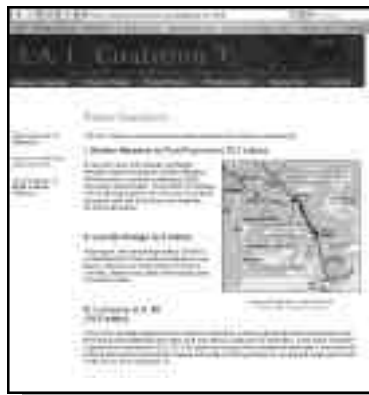
*If you have any comments or suggestions
about any item in the newsletter, please
call us at (985) 448-4485.*

Web Sites Feature Project Info

LA 1 Coalition supporters are just clicks away from the most up-to-date information on the LA 1 Highway Improvement Project.

For facts about the highway's importance to the national energy supply, maps of the existing and proposed roads, as well as bulleted descriptions of the project itself, visit the organization's own site at www.la1coalition.org.

Pre-construction work status and photos are also available at a site maintained by the La. DOTD and pre-construction contractor Wilbur Smith Associates. That address is www.la1project.com.



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 (985) 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. Editor: Jennifer Armand

AN INTERVIEW WITH DOTD'S MICHELE DESHOTELS, ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGER FOR THE LA 1 HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

One to One: Environmental considerations for the LA1 project may not always get the public attention they deserve. Please explain your role in the project.

Deshotels: I was responsible for assuring that the environmental decision on this project was based on high quality information and reached in a timely manner within budget. This project met that goal. In fact, both the quality and the speed of the process was recognized by FHWA Administrator Mary Peters as a national model, setting an example on how the environmental process should work.

One to One: Environmentally, what stands out about the LA 1 improvement project?

Deshotels: From the very beginning, I have been impressed with the concern throughout DOTD and FHWA that this project would not cause harm. It has also been a pleasure to work with an interagency team from resource and permitting agencies who not only understand that this project is essential for Louisiana and the nation, but who have willingly committed the time and agency resources needed to expedite both the environmental decision and the permitting process. While this is an environmentally complex and complicated project in one of the most fragile estuaries in the world, it is also a project where agencies addressed issues and problems with a "how do we make it happen" attitude. The result is a project that minimizes impacts to the marsh and also uses every opportunity to make improvements in an area with high subsidence rates. Our project is a better project because of the work everyone put in.

One to One: Describe the recent public meetings in Larose and Grand Isle for which you were moderator.

Deshotels: Throughout the development of this project, we have stated that funds for construction had not been identified and that tolls were one of the many options being considered as a source of funding. Once an actual funding package was



identified by the Department and tolls evaluated as both a viable and essential component, it was only appropriate that we go to the communities that would be affected and let them know what we proposed to do and the amount of the toll to be collected. We wanted to provide a forum for questions, answers, feedback and input. You have to realize that this project, perhaps more than other project in Louisiana now, is a cooperative effort. What makes this project unique is the intense interest and personal ownership the communities involved have shown.

***"I am very proud to be
part of a state that is showing the rest
of the nation how to do business."***

- Michele Deshotels

Our recent public meetings were a team effort on DOTD's part with David Miller, the Design Project Manager, taking an active role in letting the public know the current status of the project. Another key member of the Department team was Secretary Bradberry. The public meetings provided a wonderful opportunity for our new Secretary to introduce himself and to personally hear concerns and answer questions about this project.

One to One: What kind of feedback do you recall from the public meetings?

Deshotels: The feedback was tremendously supportive, both in Larose and in Grand Isle. People did have questions and

concerns, but overwhelmingly we heard support for the project and approval of our efforts to find a way to finance this project now instead of waiting years and years into the future without a guarantee that money could ever be found. I am very proud to be part of a state that is showing the rest of the nation how to do business. I don't believe that there is another state with citizenry as responsible and far-sighted as the people here in Louisiana.

One to One: In May, the project's Record of Decision was revised. What changes were necessary?

Deshotels: The Record of Decision (ROD) affirms that information in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been considered in making a decision on the project and spells out what that decision is.

Once it was determined that tolls had to be a funding component in order to construct the LA 1 project, we wanted to be sure that this was identified clearly in the ROD, so we moved tolls from only a "possibility" to "essential" in the funding mix. Also, there were minor changes made in the alignment during the design process that reduced impacts to both vegetated marsh and the community of Leeville and we took the opportunity to identify these minor changes in the revised ROD.



Chairman's Report

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



The Fruits of Our Labor Are on the Horizon

It seems the fruit of our highway improvement efforts are surfacing along the corridor. Large dredges and cranes are busy at work conducting an advanced test-pile program that will help take much of the uncertainty out of the construction of our new highway and give us much better estimates of construction costs.

Public hearings on a proposed toll for the new highway were conducted this spring, and resulted in overwhelming support for the project. We are working diligently on the financing package that will allow us to begin construction.

All engines are "full speed ahead" on our project, but this is no time to relax! The critical and complex nature of the financing package cannot be over stated. Don't be fooled into thinking Washington

or Wall Street will loan us \$160 million just because there's a critical need and we deserve it! That just doesn't happen.

Our project is under intense financial scrutiny at this juncture and, to date, we have been able to answer every question and justify every claim made. We are optimistic that we will become the first Louisiana transportation project to successfully obtain a TIFIA loan, one of only eleven in the country! We are breaking

We continue to raise the eyebrows of those who are astonished with the pace of and commitment behind this critical project.

new ground (or should I say treading new water) every day and we have a talented and dedicated team working tirelessly to accomplish our goal.

I hate to single out any group or person in this effort, but without the

unprecedented support of our state Department of Transportation we could be no where near where we are today with this project.

Any time there is a change of administration in this state, projects such as ours normally slip to a back burner during transition, even if they have full support. In this particular case, new Secretary of Transportation Johnny Bradberry has done just the opposite. With the support of Governor Blanco, Secretary Bradberry has "turned up the heat" and we continue to raise the eyebrows of those who are astonished with the pace of and commitment behind this critical project.

I feel more confident than ever that the fruits of our labor are ripening and we are poised for a bountiful harvest!



Shreveport Editor "Sees and Believes" Our Coastal Infrastructure Crisis

On a recent trip to Port Fourchon along LA 1, Shreveport Times editorial page editor Craig Durrett's eyes were opened to the reality of coastal land loss in our region, and the impact on critical infrastructure like LA 1. "South Louisiana really is sinking," reads the headline for his editorial describing the trip, an editorial that was reprinted June 6 in the Houma Daily Courier.

"La. 1 is tenuous sliver of road that connects the nation to one-third of its energy supply... Saltwater from the Gulf of Mexico inches farther each year, inundating marshes and lapping close to the Highway 1 pavement that carries hundreds of workers to and from the beehive that is Port Fourchon," he writes.

"It is here...the southernmost functioning commercial spot on Louisiana's coast, that the abstract threat of coastal erosion becomes a soggy reality... One relatively small Gulf hurricane could play incredible havoc with the vulnerable highway that allows billions of dollars to be made in oil and seafood at this port... Check the price at your gas pump today and then imagine a hurricane disrupting the offshore oil supply," Durrett continues.

Eventually, he concludes, "...it will be commerce that will sell the nation on the need for saving Louisiana's coast..."

To view the entire Durrett editorial, visit www.houmatoday.com.