

# ONE to ONE

An Update on the Efforts of the LA 1 Coalition

Winter 2004

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## LA 1 MOMENTUM BUILDS ON 2003 COALITION ACHIEVEMENTS

The year 2003 was a successful one for the LA 1 Coalition, and our accomplishments would not have been realized without the support and involvement of our members. From language in the energy bill to recognition in national publications, we have gained widespread exposure and support, and most importantly, we have advanced our project toward construction.

In this issue of "One to One," we feature these achievements, as well as real progress being made in pre-construction work for our new highway and the real dangers faced by the existing Leeville Bridge. The dedication of our membership will help us continue to move closer to our goal of securing funding to improve the critical highway infrastructure we know as LA 1 in 2004 and beyond.

### *Funding Mechanism for LA 1 Included in Stalled Energy Bill*



In the eyes of the founders of the LA 1 Coalition, the key to gaining federal funding for highway improvements has long included national recognition of LA 1 as critical energy infrastructure that must be protected.

In 2003, this mission was realized on several fronts, the most important being the federal energy bill.

Much of the Coalition's efforts over the past year have focused on this monumental legislation, which, as it approached a vote in the Senate last fall, contained language identifying LA 1 as significant infrastructure supporting a focal point of outer-continental shelf (OCS) oil and gas production, namely Port Fourchon. The bill also lays out a new system for distributing shares of federal offshore royalty revenue to impacted coastal states like Louisiana and mandates that these states direct a majority of the funds annually to address the most impacted areas first. For Louisiana, this would mean essential funding for LA 1 highway improvements and coastal restoration projects, for which OCS impacts are deemed "significant" and "progressive."

"Several times, we have traveled to Capitol Hill to plead our case for funding to save the critical energy infrastructure we know as LA 1," says Coalition Executive Director Roy Francis. "The language included in the proposed energy bill shows us that our Congress is listening. Now, we need them to act."

- continued on page 2 -



# *Scouring Threatens Stability of Leeville Bridge*



*Leeville Bridge*

Increased water depth and strong currents resulting from erosion of nearby wetlands are threatening the future stability of the Leeville Bridge. According to state transportation officials, the scouring of the bridge's underwater foundation could make the structure very vulnerable in the event of a major storm.

"It's the second worst critical scour problem we have in the state," says DOTD's David Miller. However, he points out, the bridge is safe today for vehicular traffic and is closed to traffic when hurricanes or rising water threaten the area.

DOTD has charted the water bottom underneath the bridge every three months and closely monitors the scouring effect of strong currents on the lift bridge out of concern for the important Bayou Lafourche crossing. As a result, officials have determined that increased water movement has produced a 40-foot-deep hole in Bayou Lafourche directly under the bridge, compared to the bayou's 14-foot depth nearby.

The high water and strong currents are also a hazard to boat traffic. Eleven boats hit the bridge in 2003.

"There is very little room for a mismaneuver when you are threading the needle under the Leeville Bridge," says the Greater Lafourche Port Commission's Ted Falgout.

The LA 1 highway improvement plan includes a new, fixed-level bridge over Bayou Lafourche at Leeville.

## *Energy Bill*

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While the energy bill failed to pass the Senate before the 2003 holiday break, Congressman Billy Tauzin, Senators Mary Landrieu and John Breaux, and other members of the Louisiana delegation are committed to getting Congressional approval of an energy bill this year. Likewise, the Coalition will continue to actively support this legislation that is so vital for the survival of our domestic energy supply and our communities in coastal Louisiana.

Following are excerpts from Congressman Billy Tauzin's November 18, 2003 statement on the Energy Policy Act of 2003:

***"...In the case of Louisiana, the conferees have determined activities in Port Fourchon/LA 1 should be recognized as OCS oil and gas activities and the conferees direct the Secretary to provide funds...to address these impacts before any other activities in the state.***

***"...any state with significant offshore oil and gas operations will address impacts that are 'significant' or 'progressive.' ... The term 'significant' means only infrastructure supporting 'focal points of impact' (LA 1) as identified in a relevant EIS. The term 'progressive' means only coastal wetlands restoration."***

## STATE SUBMITS TIFIA LOAN REQUEST FOR LA 1 PROJECT



On December 16, state and federal officials, as well as LA 1 Coalition representatives, urged U.S. Highway Administrator Mary Peters and members of a Department of Transportation (DOT) task force to approve a \$50 million loan for the LA 1 project as part of the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program.

The four-hour state TIFIA presentation included remarks by outgoing House Transportation Committee Chairman Juba Diez, Treasurer John Kennedy, La. DOTD Secretary Kam Movassaghi and Assistant Secretary John Basilica, Deputy Director of the U.S. Minerals Management Service Walter Cruickshank, British-Petroleum's Liz Reicherts, and the LA 1 Coalition's Ted Falgout and Roy Francis.

Through TIFIA, the U.S. DOT may provide a total of \$2 billion in credit assistance to surface transportation projects of national or regional significance. The goal is to leverage these federal funds by attracting substantial non-federal investments in critical highway improvements.

With an approved TIFIA loan and private investments, construction of a new fixed-level bridge and a portion of the elevated highway system from Golden Meadow to Fourchon could be completed by 2007. A decision on the LA 1 loan request is expected this summer.

# Chairman's Report

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



## *Time and Tide Waits for No Man*

The year 2003 almost seems like a blur. I guess the old adage, "The busier you are, the faster time passes," certainly applies to our efforts to improve our highway system. The great news is that we haven't been just busy. Our accomplishments are increasing at an almost unbelievable pace as well.

If I were to try to list all what I consider to be the Coalition's accomplishments in 2003, we would have to extend this newsletter a couple of pages! Yes, that much has happened and we are not just inching towards our aggressive goals any longer. We're having to measure out accomplishments with a yardstick!

Who would have thought when we started with a project that wasn't on anybody's radar screen in 1996, that we could be driving on a substantial portion of our dream of an elevated highway by 2008? Yes, this very well could happen. It's not just a wish. It's a realistic schedule that over 100 professionals are working to meet.

We have administrators, engineers, environmental consultants, real estate specialists, and a host of other people in a fast track mode to accomplish this critical project in a time frame that is unheard of in this state. Our state DOTD is energized like never before to accomplish this feat and I cannot say enough about the cooperation we are experiencing. Without the commitment and support of DOTD Secretary Dr. Kam Movassaghi and his dedicated staff, we would not nearly be this advanced in achieving our goals.

***In our particular case,  
we are in a race against both.***

Likewise, were it not for the hard work and dedication of our Congressional delegation, we would not have the funding necessary to advance this project. To date, we have received over 16 million in federal appropriations, which members of the Louisiana delegation seem to

deliver consistently at the time of our need in order to prevent delays to our project. These federal funds must be matched by non-federal funds and to date, we have been successful in securing commitments from DOTD, State Capital Outlay, Port Commission and LA1 Coalition sources for matching funds, again without delay.

It takes all of this effort and millions of dollars just to get us to the "big dance," that being, of course, funding for actual construction. That's when the big bucks are needed and unfortunately, we haven't found a genie in a bottle or a tooth fairy that will give us a half billion dollars, but we're still looking. We are, however, willing to make a commitment to place a toll on this highway, which hopefully will allow us to borrow enough money to initiate this critical project within the time frame I have explained.

As the saying goes, "Time and tide waits for no man." In our particular case, we are in a race against both.

• PROJECT UPDATE •

## Pre-Construction Work Advances On Schedule

With a September 15, 2004 anticipated completion date on the horizon, DOTD officials and the Wilbur Smith and Associates team continue to proceed on schedule with the \$11.5 million pre-construction phase for the LA 1 improvement project.

In addition to the surveying, engineering, design and right-of-way acquisition that is ongoing during this pre-construction phase, crews are beginning an advanced test-piling program along the new highway corridor just north and south of Leeville, and east toward Fourchon.

DOTD Project Manager David Miller says permits have also been submitted for actual highway construction of phases 1A (Southern Section) and 1B (Leeville Section) of the new highway, which includes a two-lane, elevated highway just north of Leeville to Fourchon and a fixed-level bridge over Bayou Lafourche north of the existing Leeville Bridge. Provided all of the permits are in place, construction on phase 1A of the project from south of the existing Leeville Bridge to Fourchon, is scheduled to begin in early 2005.

## LA 1 Project Gets Support from Louisiana's New Governor

Gov. Kathleen Blanco pledged her full support for the LA 1 project in a December 15, 2003 letter to La. DOTD Secretary Kam Movassaghi.

"This highway is of strategic importance, not only serving a major oil support facility on the Gulf of Mexico, but it is also a lifeline for a number of citizens living in Lafourche Parish," she writes.

"In my administration, we will support doing everything possible to expedite this project and move it forward."



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**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.*

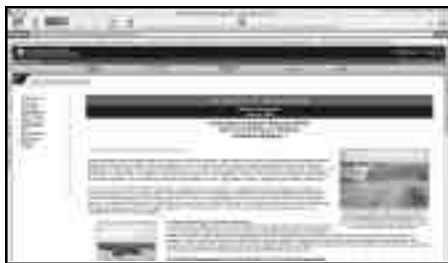
**LA 1 Project: "Success in Streamlining"**

The U.S. DOT featured the LA 1 project and its EIS Record of Decision in the January 2004 issue of the "Successes in Streamlining" newsletter.

"Although the LA 1's location-specific issues are not the norm, transportation officials can gain valuable insight from the project's holistic approach," the article states.

To read the full story on-line, visit:

[www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/strmlng/newsletters/jan04nl.htm](http://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/strmlng/newsletters/jan04nl.htm)



**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