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OLD METAIRIE RAILROAD PROJECT
METAIRIE, JEFFERSON PARISH, LOUISIANA

State Project No. 736-10-48
Federal Aid Project No. RR-022R(007)

FINAL
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

AND

STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT

FEBRUARY, 1989

SECTION 1

SUMMARY

Proposed Action

Rail operations on the New Orleans Terminal Company (N.O.T.) tracks located in the Old Metairie, Louisiana, neighborhood have been a source of conflict between the community and the railroad company since the end of World War II. These conflicts include traffic congestion, noise and safety problems.

Study Area

The study area is located in unincorporated Metairie, a suburban community located adjacent to New Orleans, Louisiana. The boundaries of the study area are the Orleans Parish/Jefferson Parish boundary on the east (17th Street Canal), Interstate-10 Highway on the north, Causeway Boulevard on the west, and Airline Highway on the south. Figure 1 illustrates the study area boundaries, streets and railroad line.

Single family residences comprise the largest land use in the study area. Commercial outlets are concentrated along Metairie Road. There are five schools and nine churches located in the study area. There are two major recreational facilities in the study area. There is very little vacant, undeveloped land located in the study area.

Metairie Road and Bonnabel Boulevard are the major arterial streets located within the study area. Metairie Road carries the heaviest vehicular volumes in the study area. Seven other study area streets have been classified as collector streets and the remaining streets in the study area have been classified as residential.

The rail corridor traverses the study area in a generally southwesterly direction, entering the study area at the Orleans Parish/Jefferson Parish line in the northeastern corner of the study area, and exiting the study area near the intersection of Airline Highway and Causeway Boulevard in the southwestern corner of the study area.

There is one main track from the Orleans-Jefferson Parish line to just westerly of Metairie Road, where a second main starts and continues to the crossing of Airline Highway. There is also a side track commonly called "the Long Siding" on the northerly side of the mains which extends from near Hollywood to near Labarre Road. Two yard tracks, also on the northerly side, start just westerly of Labarre Road and extend across Airline Highway. There

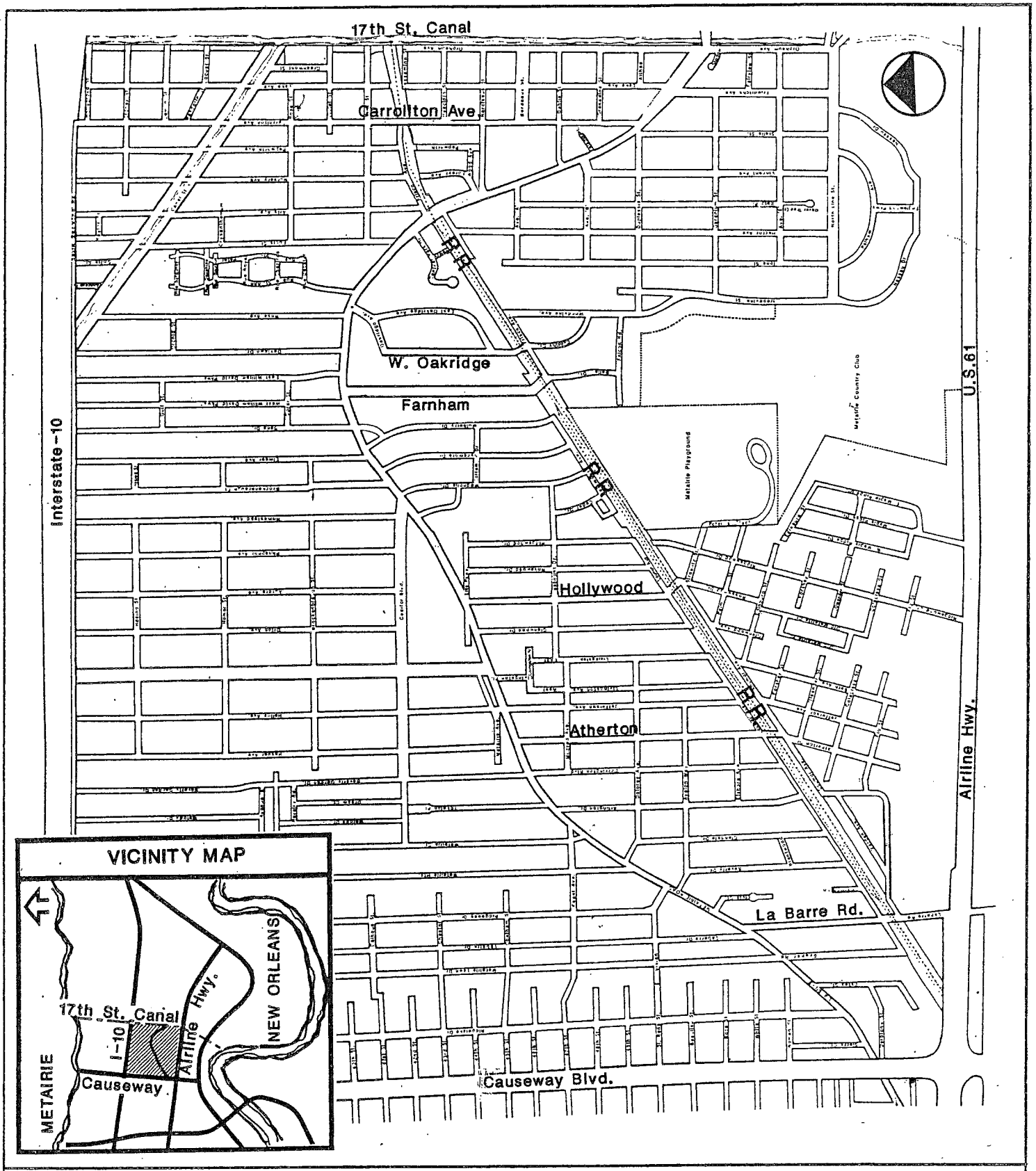

Figure 1

VICINITY MAP AND STUDY AREA

are other yard tracks southwesterly of Airline Highway but they are out of the limits of this study.

There are seven at-grade highway/railroad crossings located in the study area at: Carrollton Avenue, Metairie Road, Farnham, Cuddihy, Hollywood, Atherton, and Labarre Road. Field surveys indicate that an average of 20-22 trains pass through the study area daily (24-hour period). These trains average between 44 and 70 cars and block grade crossings in the area on average less than five minutes. There is no interchange activity in the study area. Interchange activity refers to the transfer of railroad cars from one railroad's train to another. However, there are daily occurrences of switching activities in the vicinity of the Labarre Road crossing. These activities are responsible for the longest blockage of crossings observed.

Field surveys found that 51% of all vehicular traffic crossing the railroad corridor in the study area during the average 24-hour period crosses at Metairie Road. Labarre Road (16%) and Carrollton Avenue (12%) serve the next highest vehicular volumes crossing the railroad corridor. During peak periods, approximately 25% of the traffic on Metairie Road crossing the tracks is through traffic without an origin or destination within the study area. The smaller crossings (Farnham, Cuddihy, Hollywood, and Atherton) serve primarily internal trips.

Summary of Major Alternatives Considered

A total of 30 alternative actions were initially identified for analysis concerning alleviating the railroad/community conflicts. Initially eight of these alternatives were dropped from further consideration after initial evaluation determined that they were infeasible due to cost, engineering, residential relocation, availability of land for construction or other factors as described in Table 1.

The list of 30 alternatives is listed below. Those with an asterisk (*) preceding the number have been dropped from consideration.

List of Alternatives

General

1. Do nothing

Rail Operations

2. Relocation/removal of railroad tracks
3. Construction of double tracks between Metairie Road and Jefferson/Orleans line
4. Removal of long siding
5. Restriction of train movements during peak traffic periods
* 6. Depression of railroad tracks in Metairie Corridor
* 7. Elevation of railroad tracks in Metairie Corridor
8. Removal of second track from Metairie Road to Labarre Road
9. Enforcement of existing rail ordinances
10. Reduce number of trains using tracks
11. Park waiting trains in area outside of study area
12. Increase speed of trains.

Vehicular Traffic Operations

13. Construction of an underpass at Metairie Road
14. Construction of an overpass at Metairie Road
*15. Construction of an underpass at Labarre Road
*16. Construction of an overpass at Labarre Road
*17. Construction of an underpass at Carrollton Ave.
*18. Construction of an overpass at Carrollton Ave.
19. Closing of one and/or more of the smaller crossings at Atherton, Hollywood, Cuddihy, and/or Farnham
20. Redesign the roadway layout of Metairie and Labarre Roads
21. Implementation of Transportation System Management techniques on the street system serving the study area
22. Construction of service streets parallel to the railroad tracks from Metairie Road to Labarre Road

Noise

23. Construction of noise barriers
24. Elimination of all train horns

Safety

25. Placement of additional warning device at crossings
26. Fencing off of the tracks
27. Construction of one or more pedestrian/bicycle overpasses
*28. Reopening the pedestrian/bicycle underpass located at Metairie Playground
*29. Construction of additional pedestrian/bicycle underpasses
30. Restriction of hazardous materials rail shipments

*Indicates alternative has been dropped from consideration.

Preferred Alternatives

After further evaluation of the remaining alternatives under consideration, including input from the public at two public meetings and a public hearing, a package of preferred alternatives was selected. The preferred alternatives are presented as a package because they are interrelated and dependent on each other. Although any one or more of the preferred alternatives could be successfully implemented, the implementation of the preferred alternatives as a complete package will best accomplish the intent of reducing rail/community conflicts.

The preferred alternatives presented below are predicated on the premise that a concensus of the community, business people, and the railroads is needed to allow for realistic possibility of implementation.

Because the preferred alternatives comprise a package, no importance or significance should be placed on the order in which they are presented.

Alternative 4: Removal of long siding
Alternative 9: Enforcement of existing rail ordinances
Alternative 20: Redesign the roadway layout of Metairie and Labarre Roads
Alternative 21: Implementation of Transportation System Management techniques on the street system serving the study area
Alternative 24: Elimination of all train horns
Alternative 25: Placing of additional warning devices at crossings

In addition, there are three railroad operational recommendations which would help alleviate rail/community conflicts. These evolved through the course of the project and their implementation is at the discretion of the railroads. These recommendations are that the railroads make a commitment to operating only run-through trains in the area, that switching activities in the vicinity of Labarre Road be relocated or restructured to eliminate blockage of Labarre, and that the railroads continue to maintain the tracks in the study area in the good condition they presently are.

Summary of Environmental Impacts

Because of the developed, built-up nature of the study area, there is very little natural or open space. There are no substantial concentrations of vegetation and two large recreational areas, Metairie Country Club and Metairie Playground, represent the only substantial acreages of open space in the study area.

The study area does not serve as the habitat of any endangered species. Wildlife consists primarily of those species who have

adapted to urban settings such as squirrels, rabbits, birds, raccoons, opossum, rodents, etc. The only waterway located in the study area is the 17th Street Canal, a drainage canal located on the eastern boundary of the project area.

No archaeological sites are located in the study area according to a recent field survey of cultural resources conducted as a component of the Jefferson Parish Coastal Zone Management Plan. According to Mr. Robert DeBlieux, Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer, this section of Old Metairie contains a concentration of twentieth century residences which have not yet been inventoried for sites of historical significance.

Overall, the project area is characterized as an affluent residential area with many expensive homes. The vast majority of the residents possess high school diplomas. According to a demographic profile prepared by the Jefferson Parish Planning Department using 1980 Census Data which separated the project area into four neighborhoods, median incomes are $16,701, $20,734, $22,115, and $29,356, for an overall average of $22,226. There are three private schools and a large, private country club in the project area.

Table One summarizes the comparative impacts of the alternatives. An examination of Table 1 reveals that alternatives #2 and #13 would provide positive benefits in terms of the natural environment. Alternatives #14 and #22 would cause negative effects on the natural environment, and there would be no impact on the natural environment for the rest of the alternatives.

Impacts on air quality would be positive for twelve alternatives and negative for one alternative. No impact on air quality would occur should any of the rest of the alternatives be implemented.

Thirteen alternatives would provide positive noise impacts for the project area, while four alternatives would increase the noise problem. The rest of the alternatives would have no effect on noise in the study area.

Just one alternative would provide positive land use impacts, while three alternatives would negatively impact land use in the project area. No effect on land use would occur with implementation of any of the other alternatives.

Social and economic impacts are mixed. While eleven alternatives would create positive social and economic impacts, eleven would create negative social and economic impacts.

Overall, ten alternatives have net positive effects, and ten have net negative effects. Two alternatives have no net impact.

TABLE 1

COMPARATIVE IMPACTS OF ALTERNATIVES

Alternative #	Natural Environment	Air Quality	Noise	Land Use	Social & Economic	Overall
1	No Impact	No Impact	Negative	No Impact	Negative	Negative
2	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
3	No Impact	Positive	No Impact	No Impact	Negative	No Impact
4	No Impact	Positive	No Impact	No Impact	Positive	No Impact
5	No Impact	Positive	Negative	No Impact	Negative	Negative
6 [1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
7 [1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	No Impact	Positive	Positive	No Impact	Positive	Positive
9	No Impact	Positive	Positive	No Impact	Positive	Positive
10	No Impact	Positive	Positive	No Impact	Positive	Positive
11	No Impact	Positive	Positive	No Impact	Positive	Positive
12	No Impact	No Impact	Negative	No Impact	Negative	Negative
13	Positive	Positive	Positive	Negative	Negative	Negative
14	Negative	Positive	Positive	Negative	Negative	Negative
15 [2]	-	-	-	-	-	-
16 [3]	-	-	-	-	-	-
17 & 18 [4]	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	No Impact	Positive	Positive	No Impact	Negative	Negative
20 & 21	No Impact	Positive	Positive	No Impact	Positive	Positive
22	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative
23	No Impact	No Impact	Positive	No Impact	Negative	Negative
24	No Impact	No Impact	Positive	No Impact	Positive	Positive
25	No Impact	No Impact	Positive	No Impact	Positive	Positive
26	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	Negative	Negative
27	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	Negative	Negative
28 & 29 [5]	-	-	-	-	-	-
30	No Impact	Positive	No Impact	No Impact	Positive	Positive

1 Considered infeasible because of cost and engineering issues.
2 Traffic volumes do not warrant grade separation.
3 Traffic volumes do not warrant grade separation and adequate land space unavailable for construction.
4 Traffic volumes do not warrant grade separation plus residential relocation impacts, and engineering costs outweigh benefits.
5 Vandalism, crime, and drainage problems make alternatives impractical.

Areas of Controversy

A review of past actions and community complaints indicates that the major issues concerning railroad operations in the study area are: vehicular traffic delays at the grade crossings, especially at Metairie Road; the noise generated by rail operations; and safety considerations.

The Old Metairie Railroad Project Steering Committee was established by the Jefferson Parish Council in July, 1984, to serve in an advisory capacity to the consultant during the study effort. This twenty-two member committee consists of citizens and business persons in the study area, several railroad representatives, and representatives from Jefferson Parish, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, and the Federal Highway Administration. The Steering Committee will ultimately make a recommendation to the Jefferson Parish Council regarding the results of the study and the implementation of the chosen alternative(s).

In order to identify current issues, a 600-person sample scientific telephone survey was conducted. The results of the survey were confirmed at two public meetings and a series of meetings with the Old Metairie Railroad Project Steering Committee. The pressing issues currently concerning rail operation in the study area are:

- Vehicular traffic delays at crossings, especially Metairie Road and Labarre Road.
- Noise disruptions.
- Movement of hazardous materials rail cars through the study area.
- Safety considerations.

The relocation/removal of the railroad was found to be the most widely supported solution to the rail problem among community residents. Restrictions on rail operations, such as removal of all hazardous materials cars, no trains passing during peak periods, and removal of the second track, were also found to have widespread community support. The construction of grade separations or noise barriers were not found to be well received by the community, receiving support from less than a quarter of area residents and business people.

Numerous questions were raised from citizens and Steering Committee members regarding the legality of various solutions to the rail problems and the enforcement of existing Jefferson Parish rail ordinances. Legal assistance was obtained in order to respond to the above questions, and the result of this legal research is presented in Appendix E.

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SECTION 2

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the need for the project. A time line is presented in Appendix I which is a chronology of pertinent events related to this issue since the Metairie railroad line was installed in 1895.

Need for Project

The New Orleans Terminal Company tracks cross the study area in a diagonal direction from the northeast corner of the area at the Orleans Parish/Jefferson Parish line to the southwest corner at the intersection of Airline Highway and Causeway Boulevard, as illustrated in Figure 2. A single track measuring 2.0 miles in length traverses the study area in this manner. A second track, measuring 1.7 miles in length and located within the same railroad right-of-way, travels from the Airline Highway and Causeway Boulevard intersection in the southwest corner of the study area to just south of the Metairie Road grade crossing. A third set of tracks, located within the same railroad right-of-way and known as the Long Siding, begins just north of Labarre Road and ends south of Farnham Place. The Long Siding measures 5,600 feet in length. Basically, there is one set of through tracks located in the study area between the Orleans Parish/Jefferson Parish line and the Metairie Road grade crossing, and two sets of through tracks from south of the Metairie Road grade crossing to the southwestern boundary of the study area. The Long Siding is considered a storage track and has been used as an interchange track in the past.

There are seven railroad/highway grade crossings located in the study area. These crossings are located at:

Carrollton Avenue
Metairie Road
West Oakridge Avenue/Cuddihy Drive
Farnham Place
Hollywood Drive
Atherton Drive
Labarre Road

Metairie Road is classified as the only major arterial street in the study area which crosses the railroad tracks. Labarre, Carrollton and Hollywood are classified as collector streets, and West Oakridge, Cuddihy, Farnham, and Atherton are classified as local residential streets. The majority of the land use in the

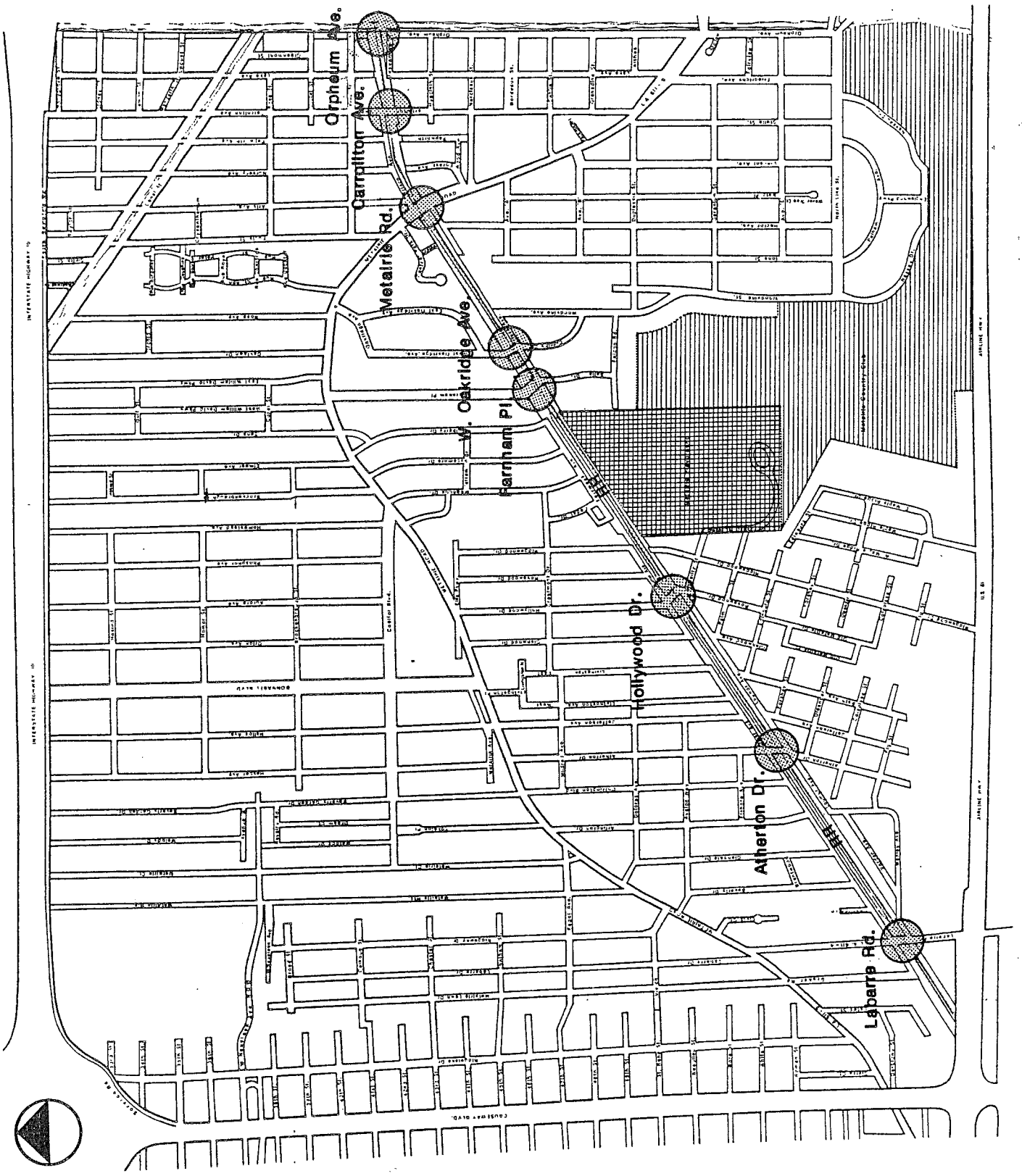

Figure 2

LOCATIONS OF RAILROAD TRACKS AND AT-GRADE CROSSINGS

area is residential, primarily single family, with commercial concentrations located on the length of Metairie Road and, with some industrial land uses, along Airline Highway. There is very little vacant land available in the study area. There are several schools and churches located in the study area, and the Metairie Playground and Metairie Country Club comprise the major recreational land uses in the area.

Over the past 40 years, residents and business people in the Old Metairie community have voiced numerous objections to the railroad operations on the New Orleans Terminal Company tracks. Since World War II, residents have approached local, state, and federal authorities seeking relief from such railroad related problems as delays at grade crossings, noise generated by rail operations, and safety issues including hazardous materials. Efforts were made to limit the number of cars in trains travelling through the neighborhood and to limit the blockage of grade crossings to no more than 5 minutes. Also, a community group based effort guided by the Citizen's Committee to Relocate the Railroad, Inc. pushed strongly for the total relocation of the railroad from the neighborhood.

In 1975, the Federal Railroad Administration sponsored a study of the railroad/community conflicts. Conducted by the CONSAD Research Corporation of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (and hereinafter referred to as the CONSAD report), the study effort identified community concerns in the areas of traffic disruptions and delays at grade crossings, noise generated by rail operations, and safety considerations. The CONSAD report presented several alternative packages for relieving the identified problems.

The neighborhood analysis report prepared by the Jefferson Parish Planning Department, October, 1984, discusses the results of a 1983 Citizen Attitude Survey. In all four neighborhoods located in the study area, the number one problem identified was "delays at railroad crossings." The top three needed services identified in each of the four neighborhoods located in the study area are presented in Table Two.

TABLE 2

TOP THREE NEEDED SERVICES BY FOUR NEIGHBORHOODS
IN STUDY AREA ON 1983 CITIZEN ATTITUDE SURVEY
(Source: Jefferson Parish Planning Department)

Beverly Knoll	
1. Delays at railroad crossings	(65%)
2. Drainage after rain	(65%)
3. Reducing congestion on major arteries	(38%)
Metairie Club Gardens	
1. Delays at railroad crossings	(79%)
2. Drainage after rain	(48%)
3. Reducing congestion on major arteries	(40%)
Old Metairie North	
1. Delays at railroad crossings	(61%)
2. Enforcing zoning laws	(44%)
3. Reducing congestion on major arteries	(41%)
Old Metairie	
1. Delays at railroad crossings	(68%)
2. Reducing congestion on major arteries	(47%)
3. Drainage after rain	(33%)

In order to identify the current issues concerning the railroad operations in the study area, a telephone survey was conducted in January, 1986, of 600 residents in the study area. The results of the survey question concerning the degree of impact on resident activities by the railroad operations are presented in Table Three.

TABLE 3				
RESIDENT SURVEY: RAILROAD IMPACT ON RESIDENT ACTIVITIES				
Crossing Delays:	None	Minor	Major	DK/WS*
Metairie Road	6.7%	21.7%	69.8%	1.8%
Labarre Road	17.5%	28.0%	45.8%	8.7%
Other Crossings	21.7%	31.7%	37.7%	8.8%
Noise Disruptions	38.2%	38.5%	18.2%	5.2%
Safety Problems	35.0%	32.0%	26.2%	6.8%
Property Values	44.2%	27.5%	13.0%	15.3%
*Don't know/won't say				

As noted in Table Three, crossing delays at Metairie Road followed by delays at Labarre and at the smaller crossings were cited most often as the major impact of the railroad on the residents surveyed. Safety problems and noise disruptions were noted by many residents as major impacts on their activities.

The results of the survey track fairly closely the issues raised by area residents at a community meeting held May 21, 1986. Crossing delays, noise levels, and safety considerations, especially concerning hazardous materials, were the primary issues raised by those residents attending the meeting. Several other issues were also raised concerning the enforcement of the five-minute crossing regulation, the process for citing trains violating this regulation, and the potential impact on the community of some alternative actions such as construction of a grade separation (overpass or underpass) at the Metairie Road grade crossing.

In summary, it appears that the problems of delays at grade crossings, noise levels, and safety considerations remain the primary issues among community members. Secondary issues have been raised concerning the potential impact of solutions proposed in the past (i.e., increase in traffic caused by construction of grade separation at Metairie Road or the loss of neighborhood access if smaller crossings are closed).

The purpose of the preferred alternative(s) is to alleviate conflicts between the community and the railroad operations. A wide range of altervatives were identified and an analysis of these alternatives is presented in Section 5.

SECTION 3

ALTERNATIVES

Identification of Alternatives

The process of identifying alternatives to address the railroad related issues involved the following:

- Review of similar study efforts in other areas of the country;
- Review of the 1975 CONSAD study recommendations;
- Review of the results of the inventory of existing conditions in the study area;
- Input from the members of the community and the Steering Committee.

The "Eighth Progress Report on Railroad-Highway Demonstration Projects" prepared by the U.S. Department of Transportation presented descriptions of the 19 railroad demonstration projects, including the Metairie project, around the country. These descriptions provided information concerning the nature of the problems associated with each project and the proposed solutions to these problems. The majority of problems cited in these 19 projects concerned rail operations in commercial and residential districts and traffic delays and safety issues associated with these operations. The proposed solutions included construction of grade separations, consolidation of rail operations and rail relocation.

The May, 1975, report Analysis of Alternatives in Alleviating Railroad-Community Conflicts in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana prepared by the CONSAD Research Corps presented two categories of alternatives. A copy of an analysis of these alternatives prepared by the Environmental Section of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development is presented in Appendix B of this report.

It should be noted that, with the exception of the relocation of the interchange and the implementation of centralized train control, none of the alternative packages presented in the CONSAD report to deal with the Old Metairie neighborhood were implemented.

The results of the inventory of existing conditions and the input received from members of the community and the Steering Committee served to identify a number of alternatives in addition to those reviewed in the past.

Preferred Alternatives

Initial evaluation of alternatives was accomplished through the preparation of a Preliminary Engineering Study by the project team, presentation of the alternatives to the public at a public meeting, and presentation of the alternatives to the Steering Committee.

The Preliminary Engineering Study involved a comprehensive inventory of existing vehicular and rail traffic operations, an inventory and analysis of land use, and a detailed analysis of the ambient and rail related noise levels in the study area. In addition, an analysis of each identified alternative was conducted. Evaluation factors considered in this analysis included:

- Rail Impacts
- Auto Traffic Impacts
- Safety Impacts
- Aesthetics
- Impact on Community
- Noise Impacts
- Impacts on the Natural Environment
- Land Use Impacts
- Construction Period
- Cost
- Implementation Factors
- Overall Effectiveness in Solving Identified Problems

The results of the Preliminary Engineering Study were presented to the Steering Committee, state and federal officials, and the public at a public meeting.

Based on the Preliminary Engineering Study, and input from the public and Steering Committee, eight of the alternatives were eliminated from further consideration. These alternatives were eliminated generally because they were infeasible due to cost, engineering, residential relocation impacts, availability of land for construction or other factors. Alternatives eliminated from further evaluation were:

Alternative 6:	Depression of railroad tracks in Metairie Corridor
Alternative 7:	Elevation of railroad tracks in Metairie Corridor
Alternative 15:	Construction of an underpass at Labarre Road
Alternative 16:	Construction of an overpass at Labarre Road
Alternative 17:	Construction of an underpass at Carrollton Avenue
Alternative 18:	Construction of an overpass at Carrollton Avenue

Alternative 28: Reopening the pedestrian/bicycle underpass located at Metairie Playground

Alternative 29: Construction of additional pedestrian/bicycle underpasses.

The Detailed Description of Alternatives section of this Chapter provides a description of each of these alternatives and a discussion of the basis fo their elimination.

The remaining alternatives received additional evaluation from the project team which included input from the public and Steering Committee. In addition, a legal analysis was performed at the request of the Steering Committee to answer legal questions relative to some of the alternatives. This analysis had an impact on the feasibility of implementing some of the alternatives. Based on the further evaluation of alternatives, a set of preferred alternatives was developed.

In addition to information developed during the evaluation of alternatives, the following factors were considered in identifying the preferred alternatives

- The major issues concerning the rail operations are traffic delays (especially at Metairie Road), noise, and safety (primarily hazardous materials);

- The study area is nearly completely developed, and significant increases in locally generated traffic volumes are not anticipated;

- The grade crossing at Metairie Road is only one of many capacity constraints and causes of delays along the Metairie Road corridor in the study area.

- Acknowledgement of resistance among residents and business people to a grade separation alternative;

- Acknowledgement of the economic and operational realities of the railroad operations;

- Acknowledgement that for legal, engineering, and fiscal reasons, the relocation of the NOT tracks is an infeasible alternative.

The preferred alternatives presented below are predicated on the premise that a concensus of the community, business people, and the railroads is needed to support implementation of any alternative.

It should be noted that the preferred alternatives are presented as a package and are interrelated and dependent on each other.

Although any one or more of the alternatives in the package could be successfully implemented, the implementation of the preferred alternatives as a complete package will best accomplish their intent.

(Because the following preferred alternatives comprise a package, no importance or significance should be placed on the order in which they are presented.)

Alternative 4:	Removal of Long Siding
Alternative 9:	Enforcement of existing rail ordinances
Alternative 20:	Redesign the roadway layout of Metairie and Labarre Roads
Alternative 21:	Implementation of Transportation System Management techniques on the street system serving the study area.
Alternative 24:	Elimination of all train horns
Alternative 25:	Placement of additional warning devices at crossings

In addition, there are three railroad operational recommendations which would reduce rail/community conflicts. These evolved through the course of the project and their implementation is at the discretion of the railroads. These recommendations are that the railroads make a commitment to operating only run-through trains in the area, that switching activities in the vicinity of Labarre Road be relocated or restructured to eliminate blockage of Labarre, and that the railroads continue to maintain the tracks in the study area in the good condition they presently are. The first two of these recommendations will help reduce blockage and blockage time at crossings and the third will reduce the potential for derailments. These are areas of concern to the community.

Rationale for Preferred Alternatives

The rationale for the Preferred Alternatives is threefold. First, the removal of the Long Siding will provide the community with tangible evidence of the railroad's commitment to addressing the problems caused by the railroad's operation in the community. Although the removal of the Long Siding will have very little impact on existing rail operations, the action will serve as an act of good faith by the railroads.

Second, the recommendations concerning the operations of the railroad, the enforcement of existing rail ordinances and the removal/relocation of switching operations from the Labarre Road crossing should positively impact the issue of traffic delays in the study area. The removal of the train horn will substantially reduce the noise generated by the trains. The additional warning devices and the maintenance and inspection of the tracks will improve safety. As a package these alternatives address the

primary issues of traffic delays, noise, and safety in direct, cost effective ways. Also, these alternatives appear to be the most acceptable to all parties concerned in addressing these issues.

Third, the redesign and implementation of TSM measures on Metairie Road will serve to improve traffic flow on this roadway, thereby reducing the impact of delays at the grade crossing.

Overall, the preferred alternatives package requires a joint effort on the part of the community, business people and the railroads in negotiating, committing to, and implementing solutions to the rail related issues. Very little construction, and related disruptions and impacts, is required, and the bulk of the package can be funded and implemented in a timely fashion. Most of all, as a package, it presents a series of alternatives that addresses the identified issues in ways that should be acceptable to all parties.

Due to the long history of rail/community conflicts in the Metairie area, a number of measures to mitigate impacts has evolved. An effort was made to include any conceivable alternative which might mitigate rail/community conflicts so that it could be evaluated and presented to the community, railroads, Steering Committee, and state and federal officials.

The complete list of alternatives is presented below:

Description of Alternatives

General

1. Do nothing

Rail Operations

2. Relocation/removal of railroad tracks
3. Construction of double tracks between Metairie Road and Jefferson/Orleans line
4. Removal of Long Siding
5. Restriction of train movements during peak traffic periods
6. Depression of railroad tracks in Metairie Corridor
7. Elevation of railroad tracks in Metairie Corridor
8. Removal of second track from Metairie Road to Labarre Road
9. Enforcement of existing rail ordinances
10. Reduce number of trains using tracks
11. Park waiting trains in area outside of study area
12. Increase speed of trains.

Vehicular Traffic Operations

13. Construction of an underpass at Metairie Road
14. Construction of an overpass at Metairie Road
15. Construction of an underpass at Labarre Road
16. Construction of an overpass at Labarre Road
17. Construction of an underpass at Carrollton Ave.
18. Construction of an overpass at Carrollton Ave.
19. Closing of one and/or more of the smaller crossings at Atherton, Hollywood, Cuddihy, and/or Farnham
20. Redesign the roadway layout of Metairie and Labarre Roads
21. Implementation of Transportation System Management techniques on the street system serving the study area.
22. Construction of service streets parallel to the railroad tracks from Metairie Road to Labarre Road

Noise

23. Construction of noise barriers
24. Elimination of all train horns.

Safety

25. Placement of additional warning device at crossings
26. Fencing off of the tracks
27. Construction of one or more pedestrian/bicycle overpasses
28. Reopening the pedestrian/bicycle underpass located at Metairie Playground
29. Construction of additional pedestrian/bicycle underpasses
30. Restriction of hazardous materials rail shipments

Detailed Description of Alternatives

The following analysis provides a description of identified alternatives and the construction period and cost associated with each alternative. Comments are included that discuss reasons for rejection of alternatives and the reasons for preference of alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE #1: Do Nothing

The do nothing alternative serves to maintain the status quo. It fails to address existing identified problems which could be exacerbated by possible future increases in vehicular and/or rail traffic.

ALTERNATIVE #2: Relocation/Removal of Railroad Tracks

Description: This alternative involves relocating all rail traffic out of Metairie and physical removal of the railroad tracks. This alternative was examined in the 1975 CONSAD Report, which examined alternatives for alleviating railroad-community conflicts in Jefferson Parish.

Several potential corridors were examined to relocate traffic out of the Metairie area. The Carrollton Curve relocation alternative would route traffic using Union Passenger Terminal Right-of-Way along Airline Highway and Interstate 10 (Figure 3), thus bypassing the Metairie area. This alternative requires the trains to operate through a 60° curve to turn from the east-west alignment along Airline Highway to the north-south alignment along I-10.

The Carrollton Reverse movement utilizes the same alignment except that, instead of the 60° curve, the train would continue to the east across the Carrollton Avenue railroad bridge. Once the train cleared the bridge, the engine would run around the train picking the train up at the opposite end and proceed north along I-10 on the Union Passenger Terminal Tracks.

The remaining possible relocation route, also examined in the CONSAD Report, is over the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad (N.O.P.B.), commonly referred to as the riverfront route (Figure 4). It should be noted that all railroad cars which move from the southeastern U.S. to the southwestern U.S. and vice versa will move over either the N.O.T. line in Metairie or the N.O.P.B. There is no other practical route at this time. If the rail traffic was removed from Metairie and rerouted over the N.O.P.B., the condition of the N.O.P.B. may need improvement. This may include the installation of heavier rail, raising and smoothing the track, and changing the connection for the Kansas City Southern Railroad (KCS). Current railroad interchange points (tracks designated to be used for transferring railroad cars from one railroad company's train to another railroad's train) may need relocating. Since the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Missouri Pacific Railroad are the only railroads with authority to operate on the N.O.P.B., the State Constitution would need to be amended to allow other railroads currently using the Metairie tracks (Southern, Seaboard, Kansas City Southern, and Illinois Central Gulf) to use the N.O.P.B. See Appendix E for further information on legal issues associated with this alternative.

Construction Period: The total construction period would last 2-3 months for removal of the Metairie tracks, with each at-grade crossing necessitating closure for one day. It is not possible to estimate the construction period for N.O.P.B. improvements at this time.

Cost

The estimated cost to the New Orleans Terminal Company for railroad track removal is as follows:

Removal -	$264,320.00
Salvage -	263,680.00
Net Cost -	$ 640.00

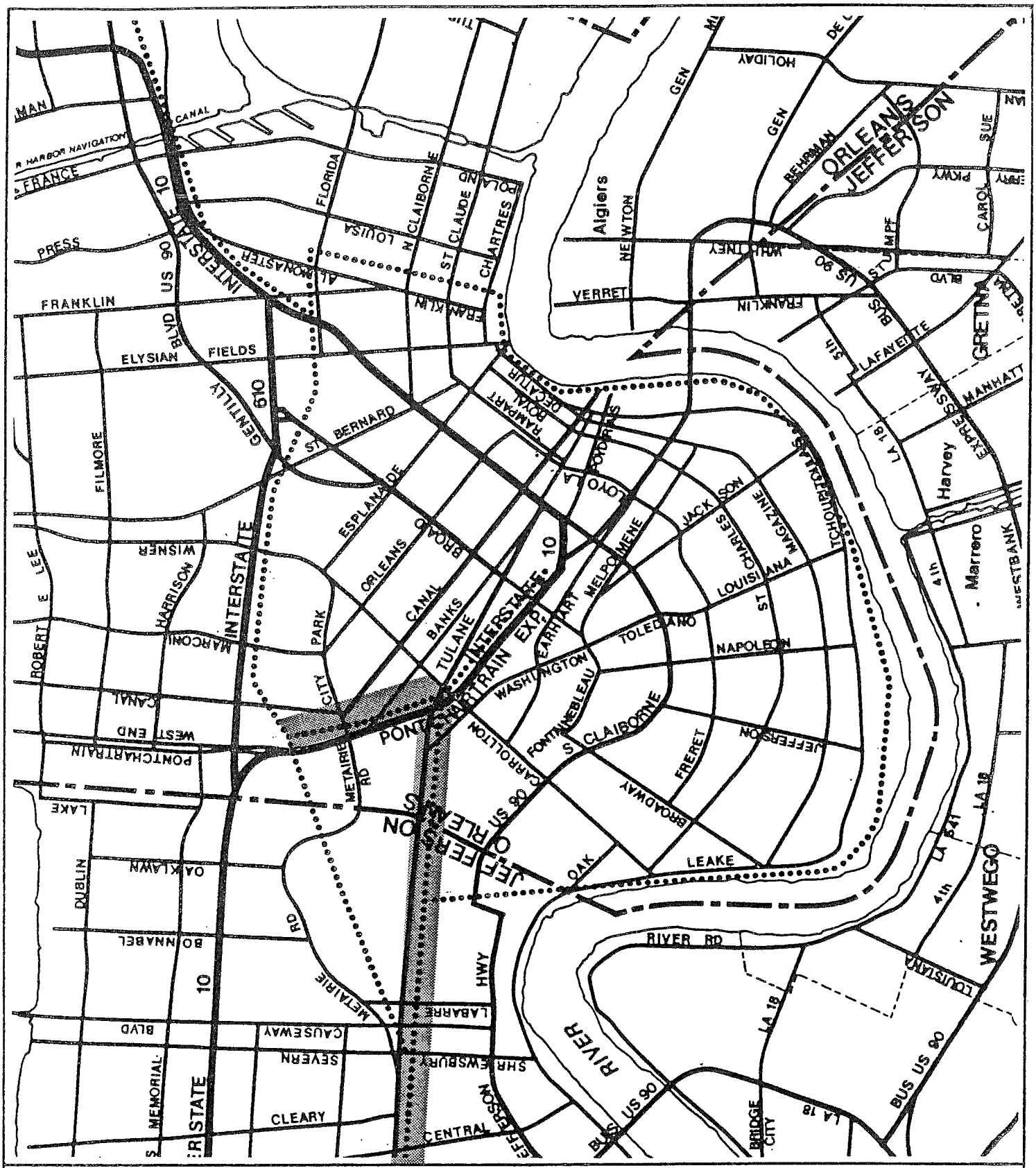

Figure 3

PROPOSED CARROLLTON CURVE ROUTE

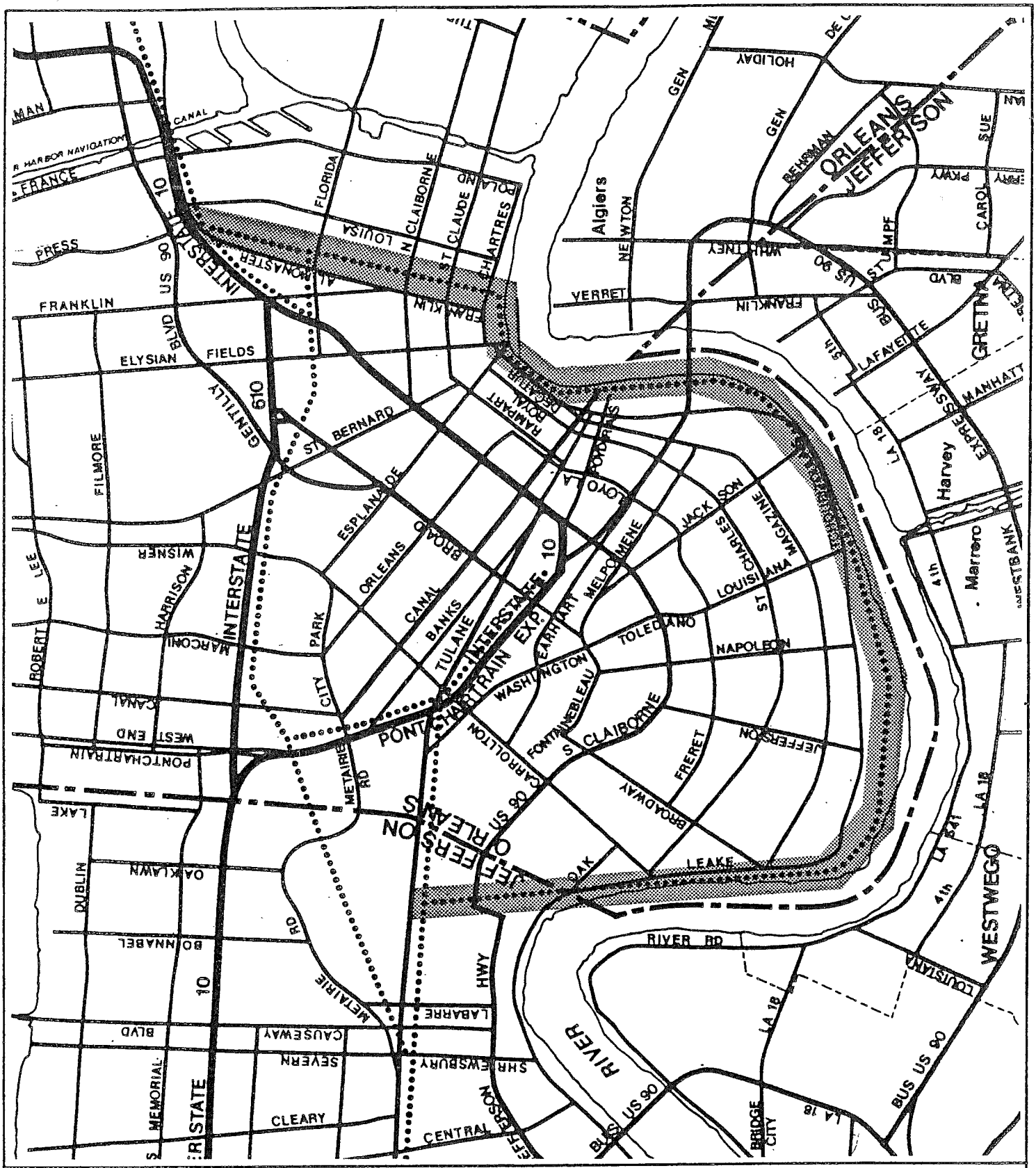

Figure 4

NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC BELT (N.O.P.B.) ROUTE

The required improvements to the N.O.P.B. is an estimated $1.3 million.

Comments: There are several reasons why the Carrollton Curve alternatives were not adopted after the Consad Report. The railroads maintain that they cannot operate over the 60° curve which would be required for the Carrollton Curve alternative. In addition, both the Curve and Reverse move alternatives would necessitate reconstruction of highway overpasses. Even if these problems were resolved, the 1947 Union Passenger Terminal Agreement prohibits freight trains from using Union Passenger Terminal tracks, thus effectively eliminating the possibility of implementing these alternative routings.

There are a number of impediments to the use of the NOPB riverfront route. This routing adds approximately 10 miles over the existing routing and thus increases the railroads' operating costs which they object to. The route, while eliminating seven grade crossings in the Metairie area, would involve movements over 26 grade crossings that the trains are not currently crossing. The City of New Orleans Planning Commission by letter dated April 28, 1988, expresses strong opposition to this route because of the dense development in the Central Business District and the French Quarter. The Commission feels increased rail traffic in the corridor would mean an increase in vehicular and pedestrian delays caused by increased blockage of at-grade crossings and an increased risk of an accident involving pedestrians and/or hazardous materials.

The question of whether Jefferson Parish could take legal action to force removal of the tracks from Metairie was examined. While the Parish has expropriation rights, the railroad also has expropriation rights. This is a unique situation in that the parish can expropriate from the railroad, but the railroad has the right to expropriate the land back to itself. Under Louisiana law, when this situation arises, a special act of the state legislature is necessary for expropriation. Even if the parish could secure such an act from the legislature, the property could not be removed from control of the railroads without just compensation. This compensation would not only include land cost but additional expenses for any property and new railway which may have to be constructed. While estimates of these costs are not available, it is almost certain that the railroads would fight relocation through every legal means possible and would expect considerable compensation for property and expenses.

While total relocation of the railroad is favored by the Metairie community, the impediments to implementation are very real and in all probability would not allow implementation. Strong opposition by the railroads, the City of New Orleans, the routing of trains an additional 10 miles through populated areas, and legal

questions do not allow this alternative to be recommended as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #3: Construction of Double Tracks between Metairie Road and the Jefferson/Orleans Parish Line.

Description: The purpose of this alternative is to facilitate the flow of rail traffic through the study area by providing for through train movements on both tracks and reducing the possibility of waiting trains. Construction of the double tracking option begins southwest of the Metairie Road intersection and continues eastward to the east side of the 17th Street Canal spanning a distance of approximately 2,200'. Construction includes a new double track at the grade crossing at Metairie Road, a new trestle over the canal, and an additional track in between (Figure 5).

Construction Period - The construction period would be approximately six months.

Cost - The estimated cost would be $1,400,000.

Comments: This alternative would have some impact on the reduction of rail/community impacts by reducing auto delays caused by waiting trains. Run through trains would still cause delays. The alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative because of community opposition voiced at all public meetings and the public hearing. Implementation of this alternative would further accentuate the adversarial relationship between the railroads and the community.

ALTERNATIVE #4: Removal of Long Siding

Description: This alternative involves physical removal of the Long Siding switching track, eliminating switching activity from the project area (Figure 6), and the resultant traffic delays and noise problems.

Construction Period: The construction period would be approximately one month with the Atherton Drive and Hollywood Drive grade crossings closed one day each.

Cost - The cost would be an estimated $35,000 (net of salvage).

Comments: This alternative was selected as a preferred alternative. Railroad officials have indicated that they use the Long Siding to store rail cars on an emergency basis and use it infrequently for switching activities. Also, the removal of the Long Siding would cost the railroads little, if anything,

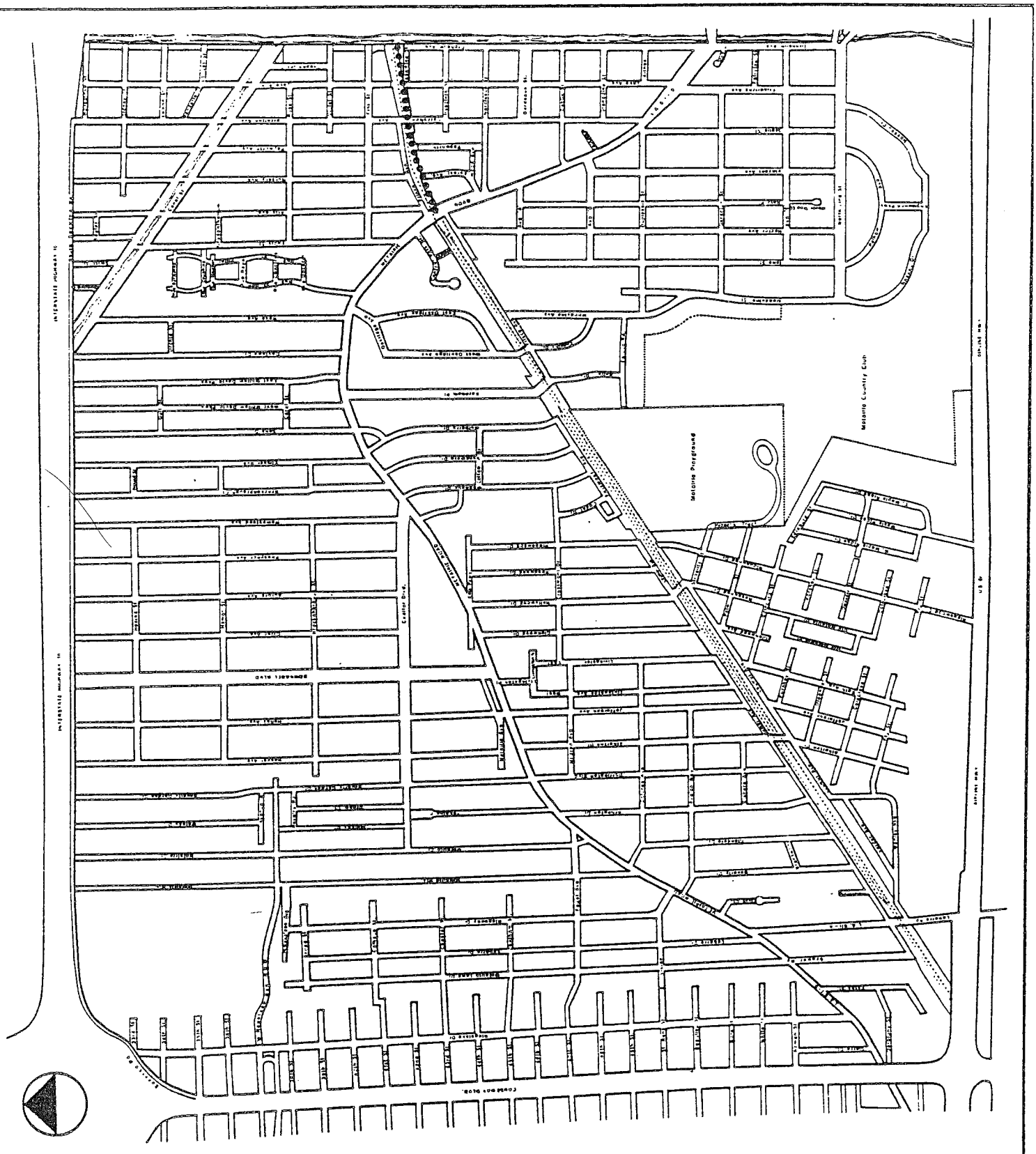

Figure 5

Alternative #3:

LOCATION OF PROPOSED COMPLETION OF DOUBLE TRACK SEGMENT

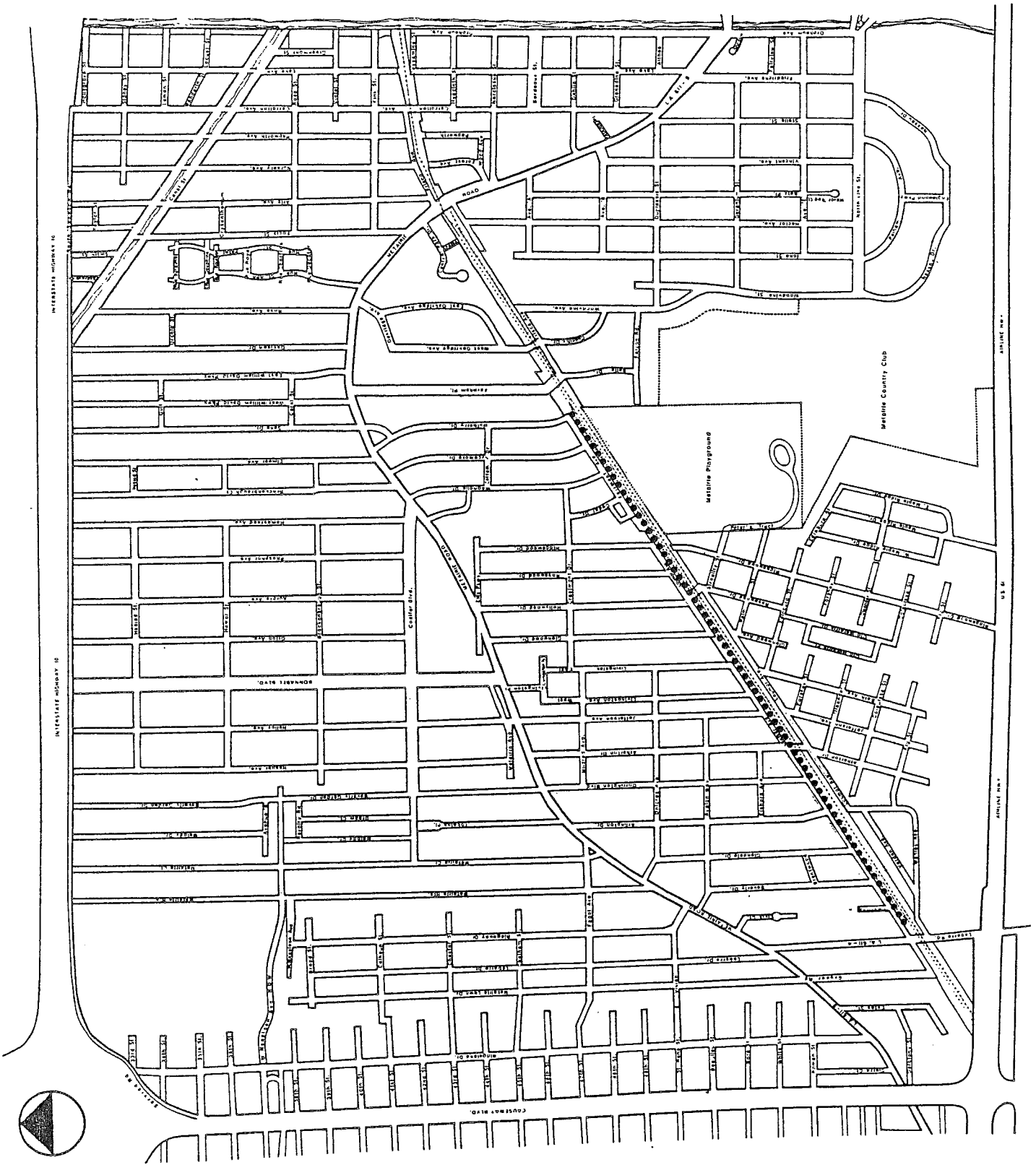

Figure 6

Alternative #4:

LOCATION OF LONG SIDING TRACK

considering salvage value. From the community's standpoint, the removal of the Long Siding would serve two purposes: it will provide tangible evidence of the railroad's desire to cooperate with the community in addressing the rail issue, and it will remove a potential storage area for hazardous materials cars, which will reduce the likelihood of the community experiencing a hazardous materials incident. During the course of this study, the railroad removed the Long Siding.

ALTERNATIVE #5: Restriction of Train Movements During Peak Traffic Periods

Description: This alternative involves the railroad companies operating on this line voluntarily restricting all train movements through Metairie during the peak commuting hours of 7-9 A.M. and 4-6 P.M. in order to facilitate the flow of traffic and improve vehicular safety. See Appendix E for legal issues associated with this alternative.

Construction Period - not applicable.

Cost: No construction costs would be incurred; however, the railroads would experience costs in terms of delays and occasional crew overtime.

Comments: This alternative would have positive impacts during the hours of restriction. To accomplish these benefits, however, other times of the day would be impacted with more trains because of "bunching up" of trains prior to and following restricted hours. The railroads would have to adhere to this restriction on a voluntary basis, which they have not agreed to because of operational problems. If a legal attempt were made to force the railroads to restrict movements, the parish would have to prove the restriction would not unreasonably obstruct the free flow of commerce across state lines in contravention of the Commerce Clause of the United States Constitution. See Appendix E for legal issues associated with this alternative.

This alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative because it only alleviates rail/highway conflicts during the restricted hours while increasing these conflicts in the remaining hours of the day. Also, the railroads would have to be legally forced to adhere to such restrictions and it is questionable whether this could be legally accomplished.

ALTERNATIVE #6: Depression of Railroad Tracks in Metairie Corridor

This alternative was rejected from further study for several reasons. Although depressing the railroad tracks will completely alleviate the auto/rail traffic conflict and the noise problems attributed to train horns, major negative impacts related to construction feasibility are noted. For example, the depressed track will require a bridge of some sort at all crossings that remain open. Also, crossing the 17th Street Canal will require a tunnel under the canal or the track must rise to cross the canal above ground. In the latter case, the traffic conflict at Metairie Road will not be solved because the railroad will rise to grade before crossing Metairie Road. Rail operations will cease intermittently throughout a multi-year construction period. Drainage is a major consideration in terms of cost as well as operations and maintenance. The estimated cost of such a project is expected to exceed 15 million dollars.

Fairly severe construction impacts would occur in the neighborhood. Closures of crossings for construction would impact traffic flow throughout the construction period. Access to the construction area over neighborhood streets by heavy construction equipment and trucks would be disruptive to the neighborhood and potentially caused severe damage to streets not constructed for high tonnage traffic. The high cost of this alternative, engineering requirements and the community impact during construction are the reasons this alternative warrants no further evaluation.

ALTERNATIVE #7: Elevation of Railroad Tracks (2) from the Seventeenth Street Canal to South of the Farnham Crossing

Description: The purpose of this alternative is to eliminate the auto/rail traffic conflicts at Metairie Road and possibly two other crossings, and to eliminate the necessity to blow the train horn at these crossings, reducing noise problems. Construction of a railroad overpass includes three options that were assessed which pertain to length of the overpass. In all three options the rail begins its vertical change east of the 17th Street Canal. In Option 1, the rail is elevated over Metairie Road and reaches existing grade before West Oakridge/Cuddihy. In Option 2, the rail remains elevated beyond Farnham (Figure 7). In Option 3, the rail is elevated through the entire length of the study corridor. Option 3 was removed from consideration early because of major cost considerations with little benefit.

Construction is proposed such that the lower reaches of the elevated track is an earth embankment. Middle reaches of the

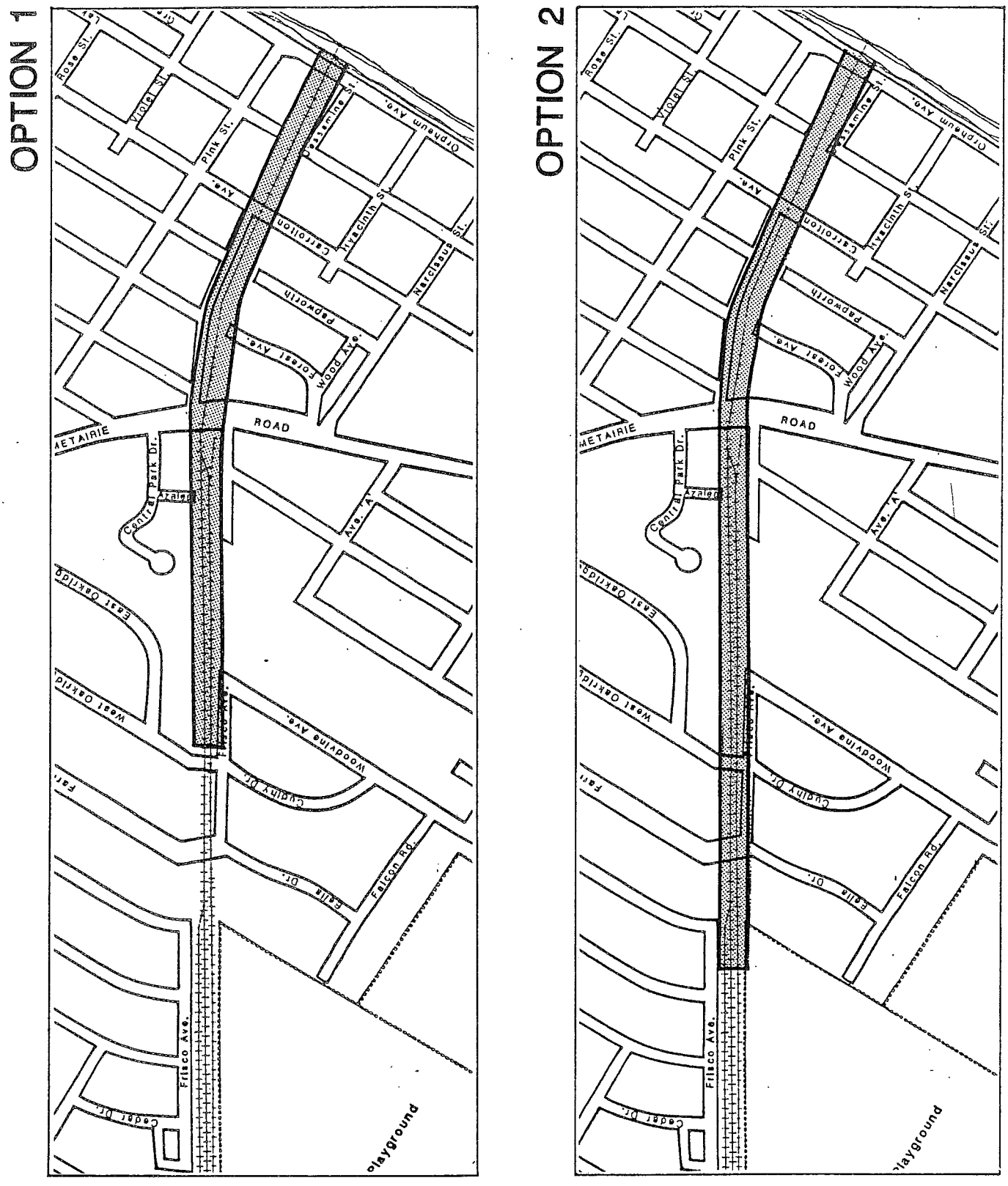

Figure 7

Alternative #7:

ELEVATION OF THE RAILROAD TRACKS, OPTIONS 1 AND 2

vertical change is on earthen embankment and the upper reaches on steel reinforced concrete structure. In all options, the elevated portions are double tracked and the long-siding eliminated. Vertical clearance at Metairie Road is 16-1/2 feet and 14 feet for smaller crossings. The 100' railroad right-of-way that exists will be maintained while right-of-way between Carrollton and Nursery will likely require enlargement to 100'.

Construction Period: It is estimated this project would take approximately 2 to 3 years to complete.

Cost: The estimated cost would be $10-12,000,000.

Comments: Elevation of the tracks as proposed in this option would essentially address the Carrollton and Metairie Road crossing blockages. While this is desirable, the estimated costs of such a project are prohibitive considering the benefits. Elimination of crossing conflicts at Metairie Road, which is the most heavily traversed crossing in the neighborhood, by highway overpass or underpass would cost less than four million dollars. The high cost of this alternative and relatively low benefits are the primary reasons this alternative was eliminated from further consideration.

ALTERNATIVE #8: **Removal of Second Track from Metairie Road to Labarre Road**

Description: This alternative involves physical removal of the second track from just west of Metairie Road to Airline Highway, leaving a single track for through rail movements in the project area (Figure 8). This would eliminate trains waiting on the second track in the study area for the main track to clear. See Appendix E for legal issues associated with this alternative.

Construction Period: Construction would take less than two months, with each grade crossing closed one day.

Cost - The cost would be an estimated $91,200 (net of salvage).

Comments: This alternative would cause operational problems for the railroad, particularly on tracks to the west of the study area. Trains approaching from the west would have to stop on the Huey P. Long Bridge when having to wait for trains to clear the single track. The bridge has two tracks; however, daily track maintenance is performed on bridge tracks, and many times only one track is available, thus a waiting train would block all train traffic using the bridge. The railroads are not in favor of this alternative and would have to be legally forced to implement it. The prospects of legally accomplishing this are doubtful. See Appendix E for the legal issues associated with this alternative.

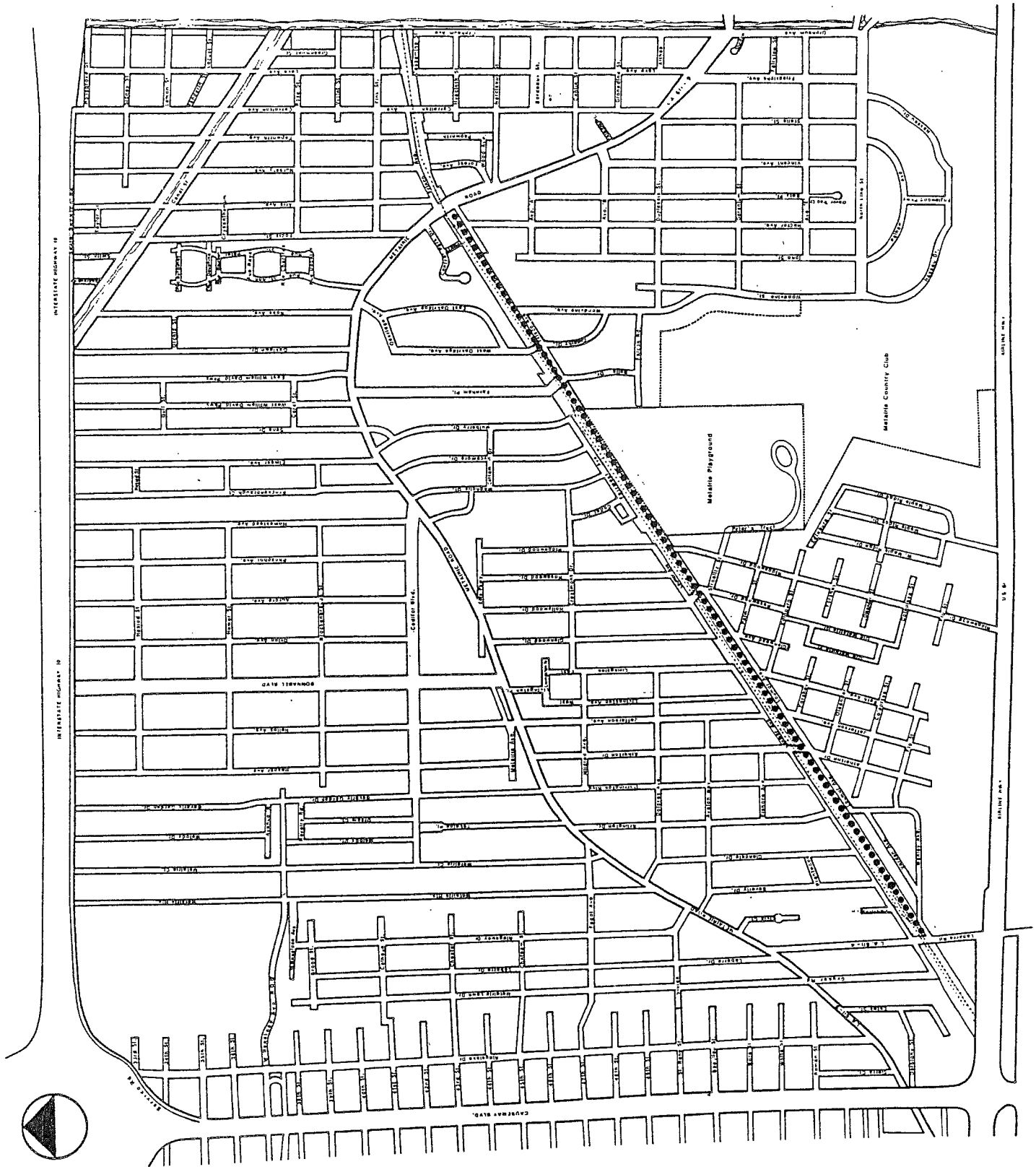

Figure 8

Alternative #8:

REMOVAL OF SECOND TRACK FROM METAIRIE ROAD TO LABARRE ROAD

For these reasons, this alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #9: Enforcement of Existing Rail Ordinances
(Rail Ordinances are listed in Appendix C)

Description: The Jefferson Parish ordinances listed in Appendix C apply to rail operations in the study area. In the past, these ordinances have not been strictly enforced. The purpose of this alternative is to recommend strict enforcement of the existing ordinances which can legitimately be enforced. Section 28-9 is not enforceable because it counters State law. See Appendix E for legal issues associated with this alternative.

Construction Period: Not applicable.

Cost: The major cost associated with enforcement of this alternative is incurred by the Jefferson Parish Attorney's Office who examines and prosecutes railroad complaints, and by the courts handling the cases. Additional costs may be incurred by the railroads in the form of fines for violating these ordinances. If the railroads strictly comply with Sec. 28-1, they may incur further costs by having to increase the number of trains to make the train lengths shorter. These costs are not quantifiable.

Comments: The community, at public meetings, the public hearing and through written and telephone communication has expressed a strong desire to see parish ordinances applying to rail operations strictly enforced. There is no question that, if the intent of the ordinances is accomplished, there will be a reduction in rail/community conflicts. A legal review of the ordinances has been performed and recommendations made for strengthening the ordinances' legality (Appendix E). Enforcement of the ordinances in the future is solely dependent on the efforts of local enforcement authorities. Because of the positive reduction in rail/community conflicts that enforcement would result in, this has been selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #10: Reduce the Number of Trains Using the Tracks

Description: This alternative involves reducing the present level of train traffic in the project area by a currently unspecified amount. This would reduce the effects of traffic, noise and safety problems. Traffic would have to be rerouted over the N.O.P.B. For a discussion of the issues involved with rerouting trains over the N.O.P.B., please refer to Alternative #2. See Appendix E for legal issues associated with this alternative.

Construction Period: The construction period associated with improving the N.O.P.B. to accommodate additional traffic cannot be predicted at this time.

Cost: All costs associated with this alternative would be borne by the railroad companies. A reduction in trains using the Metairie tracks would necessitate rerouting traffic. The costs associated with rerouting an unspecified amount of train traffic cannot be quantified.

Comments: This alternative, while desirable from a community standpoint, would require legal action to force the railroads to do this. The success of such legal action is questionable, as discussed in Appendix E. This alternative would also raise opposition from the City of New Orleans for the reasons cited in the discussion of Alternative 2 Relocation/Removal of Railroad Tracks. For these reasons, this alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #11: Park Waiting Trains Outside of Study Area

Description: This alternative involves prohibiting all waiting trains from parking in the project area, thereby eliminating the noise, safety and traffic problems associated with waiting trains.

Construction Period: Not applicable.

Cost: A minimal cost would be incurred by the railroads due to a slight delay in operations.

Comments: This alternative would cause rail operational impacts to the west of the study area. Trains approaching from the west would have to wait on the Huey Long Bridge for trains to clear the single track in the study area. As discussed previously, this would cause blockage of the bridge for use by other trains, because frequently only one track on the bridge is open because of daily maintenance. The railroads would have to voluntarily agree to this alternative but, because of operational problems, would probably not implement the alternative. For these reasons, this alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #12: Increase Speed of Trains

Description: This alternative involves raising the currently allowed train speed of 20 m.p.h. by an unspecified amount to allow trains to move faster and reduce grade crossing delays through the project area. Capital expenditure would be necessary to provide additional super elevation in the curve between Metairie Road and Carrollton Avenue to accommodate faster speeds. Additional warning devices and lighting may need to be installed at each of the seven at-grade crossings (refer to Alternative #25).

Construction Period: Approximately two weeks would be required for construction of the curve improvements and installation of warning devices.

Cost: Curve improvements would cost approximately $8,000 and the addition of warning devices and lighting would cost up to $64,000.

Comments: There was strong negative community reaction to this alternative. Citizens complained at public meetings and the public hearing that faster speeds would be unsafe and would create additional train vibrations. While traffic delays would be shortened somewhat, the safety impacts and potential increases in vibration offset the benefits of this alternative. For these reasons, this alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #13: Construction of an Underpass at Metairie Road

Description: This alternative involves constructing a vehicular underpass below the railroad track at Metairie Road. The project was considered utilizing a double track crossing and a three-lane or four-lane highway section. This would eliminate traffic delays at Metairie Road due to the grade crossing, eliminate the need for trains to blow their whistles at the Metairie Road crossing, and improve the safety of that intersection.

Several alternatives were considered including the underpass with the track at the present elevation and with the track raised several feet. Raising the track allowed for shorter underpass distance along Metairie Road in both directions. The final analysis includes raising the track approximately four feet higher than its present elevation. The estimated length of the underpass is 1,300' with a design speed of 30 to 40 mph dependent upon the section utilized.

The layout assessed includes an underpass beneath the slightly raised track with service roads on to and off of Metairie Road. A layout of this alternate is depicted in Figure 9 on the following page. As noted on the layout diagram, service roads paralleling the track are utilized in all four quadrants of the project area. East of Metairie Road, traffic on Frisco and Focis access Metairie Road from the service road as does traffic on Wood/Forest and Narcissus Streets. On the west side of Metairie road at the rail crossing intersect, traffic from Avenue "A" has direct access to Metairie Road while traffic to and from Frisco use Hector Avenue. Central Park Drive is also provided with access on to and off of Metairie Road via a service road.

Drainage considerations are also major considerations of this alternative. The most effective approach to handling stormwater runoff is to pump it from the underpass to the 17th Street Canal. This solution will improve the existing drainage situation in the vicinity of the project area, but it will require political agreements between Orleans and Jefferson Parish since the storm water crosses parish lines intake and outfall.

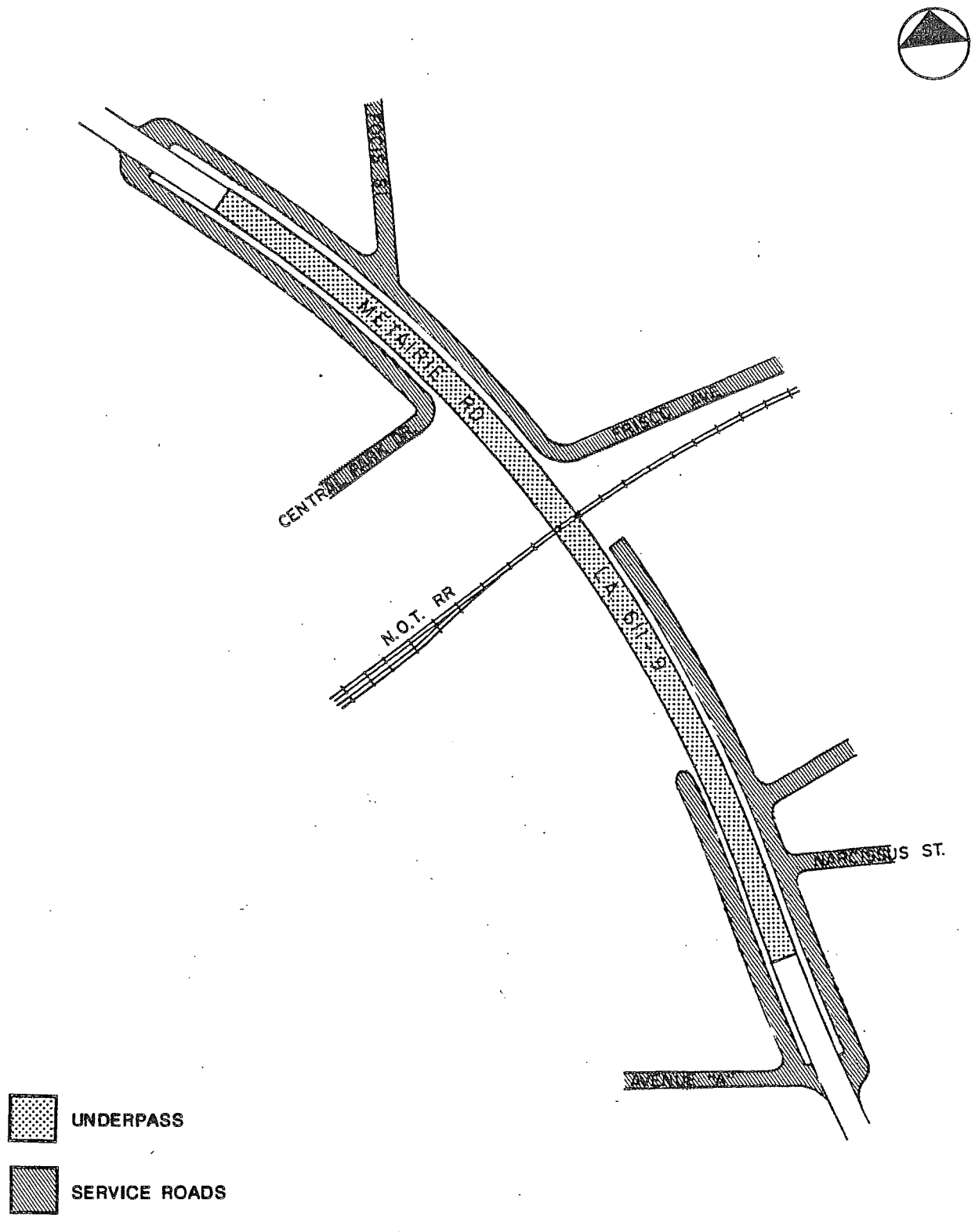

Figure 9

Alternative #13:

UNDERPASS AT METAIRIE ROAD

Construction Period: Construction would take approximately 2-1/2 years.

Cost - This project would cost a minimum of $2,000,000.

Comments: This alternative and the following Alternative #14 to construct an overpass at Metairie Road both encountered strong opposition from the community. While some concern was expressed because of business relocations and disruptions in the area of the crossing, most opposition centered on traffic flow on Metairie Road. Citizens felt that, by providing a grade separation at Metairie Road, more commuter traffic would be encouraged to use the road, further increasing traffic congestion. The citizens have a strong sense of community and felt the intrusion of additional commuter traffic in the area would negatively impact the community. The traffic analysis in the Preliminary Engineering Study for the project supports the citizens' views that elimination of this at-grade crossing would encourage more commuter traffic. For these reasons, this was not selected as a preferred alternate.

ALTERNATIVE #14: Construction of an Overpass at Metairie Road

Description: A vehicular overpass over the railroad track at Metairie Road was assessed as an alternative to alleviate both the railroad conflict as well as the horn noise nuisance in the Metairie Road east area. Preliminary plans indicate that an overpass will be approximately 1,800' long with the center of the rail corridor being the center of the overpass. Service roads were laid out at each approach to the overpass to provide access to intersecting streets and businesses. A minimum vertical clearance of 23-1/2 feet is proposed for analysis. A layout of the auto overpass proposal is depicted in Figure 10. Preliminary analysis indicates substantial acquisition of right-of-way would be necessary. In comparison with the underpass concept, two major differences are noteworthy. First, the overpass development allows for traffic to cross Metairie Road beneath the overpass. Secondly, additional parking is created beneath the overpass, creating more parking than presently exists.

Construction Period: Construction would take approximately 2-1/2 to 3 years.

Cost - This project would cost a minimum of $3,300,000 plus property acquisition costs

Comments: This alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative for the reasons discussed in the previous Alternative #14 Comments.

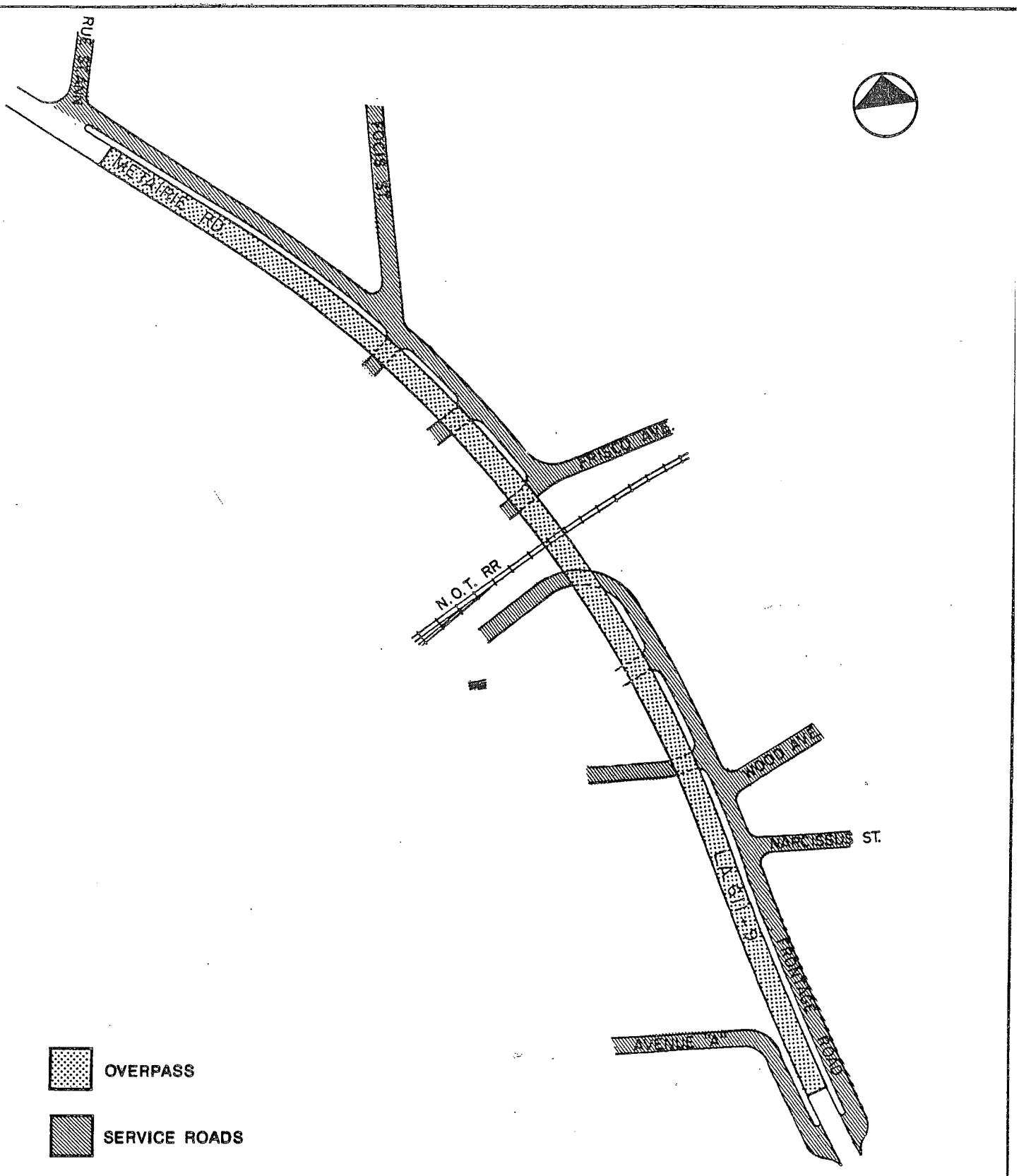

Figure 10

Alternative #14:

OVERPASS AT METAIRIE ROAD

ALTERNATIVE #15: Construction of an Underpass at Labarre Road

Description: Implementation of this alternative calls for the construction of a vehicular underpass at Labarre Road at its intersection with the railroad track. Similar to the Metairie Road underpass, the project includes service roads to provide ingress and egress for existing properties in accordance with present traffic patterns. The total length of vertical transition of the underpass extends approximately 925' with the center of the underpass being the center of the railroad right-of-way.

To accommodate traffic from Labarre to Manley in the southeastern quadrant, a service road will be required utilizing part of the Schwegmann's parking lot. On the north side of the railroad tracks, a service road east of Labarre is proposed to handle Loumor Street traffic. It is noteworthy that Loumor west of Labarre is relocated nearer the track to minimize the width of the overhead section of the underpass. The project would cost a minimum of $1,200,000.

The traffic volumes on Labarre Road of approximately 6,000 vehicles a day do not warrant the construction of a grade separation. This, in addition to the estimated construction cost of $3,300,000, eliminated this alternative from further consideration.

ALTERNATIVE #16: Construction of Overpass at Labarre Road

Analysis of this alternative includes the construction of a vehicular overpass over the tracks at the Labarre Road crossing. To conform with AASHTO standards, which refers to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, the length of overpass is such that it will extend to Airline Highway. As a result, this alternative is not a feasible alternative and is eliminated from further consideration. Additionally, traffic volumes at the crossing do not warrant a grade separation.

ALTERNATIVES #17 & #18: Construction of Underpass/Overpass at Carrollton Avenue

A grade separation at Carrollton Avenue was addressed as means to alleviate the auto/rail conflict. The length of overpass/underpass requires approximately 1,200' with service roads providing access along Carrollton. As noted in Figure 10, the service roads to properties adjacent to the overpass or underpass will cause relocation of no less than 30 homes. The level of traffic at this crossing of 3,142 vehicles per day does not warrant the construction of a grade separation. This, combined with the cost and impact to residents, far exceeds the benefits of the

alternative and, therefore, it was eliminated from further consideration.

ALTERNATIVE #19: Closing of One or More of the Smaller Crossings at Atherton, Hollywood, Cuddihy, Farnham, or Carrollton

Description: The purpose of this alternative is to substantially reduce the noise problem associated with trains in the study area since the train whistle is sounded in advance of each grade crossing.

This alternative involves constructing an access barrier at each side of the railroad tracks on one or more of the grade crossings to completely eliminate through automobile traffic. Figure 11 highlights the location of each of these crossings.

Construction Period: Construction of barriers would take about one day for each street closed.

Cost: The cost associated with constructing barriers would be approximately $1,000 per crossing.

Comments: This alternative was opposed by the community because of the divisive effect it would have on the community. The alternative would not reduce traffic delays, as it would simply shift delays to another crossing and probably increase the delays because of longer queues. This alternate would also negatively impact emergency response time by emergency personnel because these crossings are used when others are blocked. A reduction in crossings would reduce the number of alternative routes available. For these reasons, this alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #20: Redesign of Roadway Layout of Metairie Road and Labarre Road

Description: Redesigning Metairie Road would consist of a three-lane curb and gutter, thus providing for left turn lanes. Occasional turn lanes would minimize interruption in traffic flow and reduce localized congestion caused in part by auto/railroad conflicts. Widening to three lanes would not require additional right-of-way. Vehicular volume conditions do not appear to warrant similar improvement to Labarre Road.

Construction Period: A construction period of two years is anticipated with two lanes open at all times. Normal temporary construction impacts such as dust, noise, and delays can be expected.

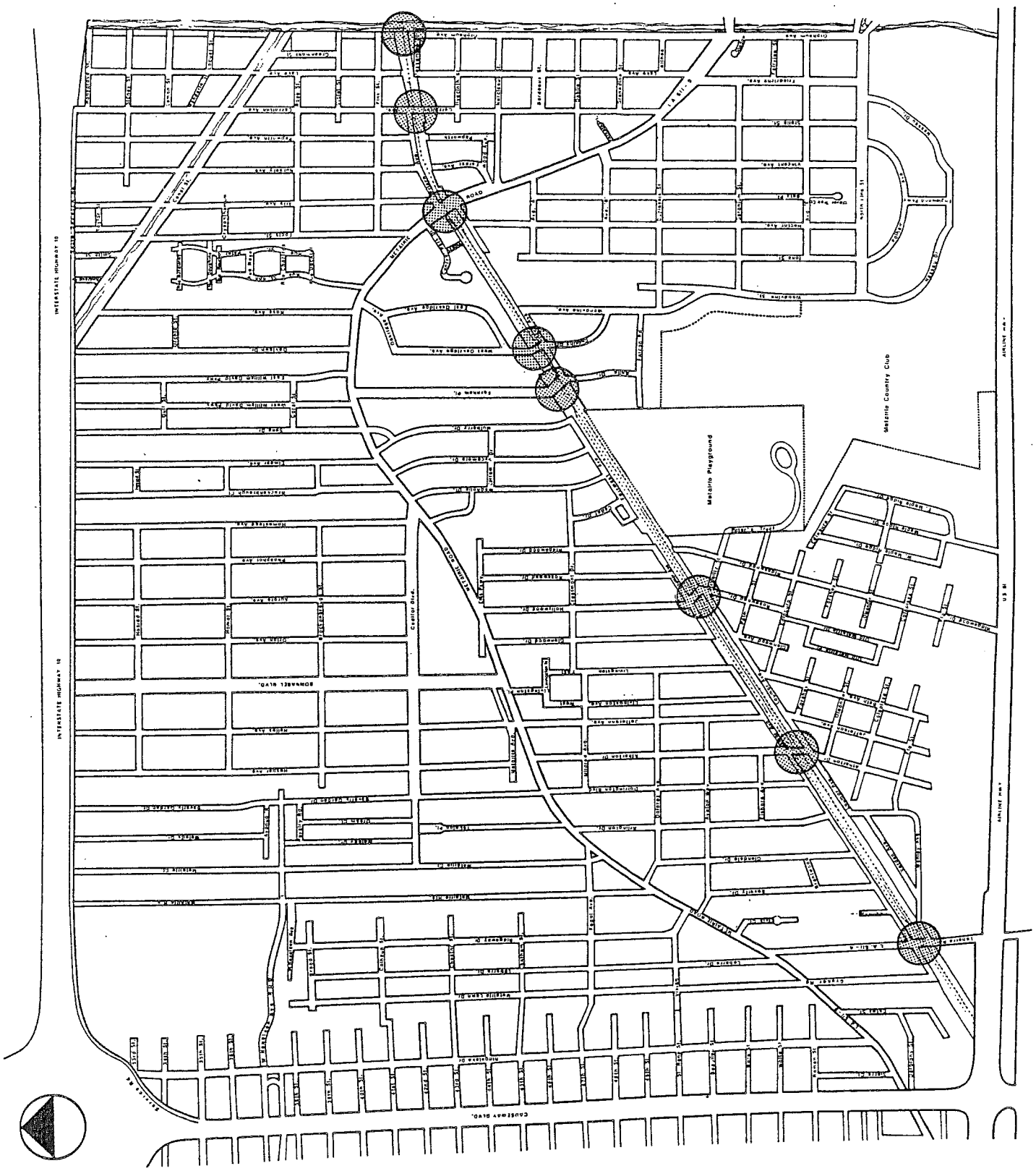

Figure 11

Alternative #19:

LOCATION OF THE GRADE CROSSINGS AT ATHERTON DRIVE, HOLLYWOOD DRIVE, CUDDIHY DRIVE, FARNHAM PLACE, AND CARROLLTON AVENUE

Cost: The cost associated with this alternative would be an estimated $4.5 million.

Comments: The rail grade crossing constitutes one of many capacity constraints identified on Metairie Road, and the addition of a turning lane should improve traffic flow along the length of Metairie Road in the study area. This alternative would reduce traffic congestion along Metairie Road, which is one of the community's concerns. For these reasons, this alternative has been selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #21: **Implementation of Transportation System Management to Improve Traffic Operation on Metairie Road**

Description: The purpose of the improvements would be to improve traffic flow conditions, particularly in terms of through traffic delay caused by left turn movements into commercial driveways and onto neighborhood streets, and to provide for coordinated traffic signal control within the Bonnabel to Focis section of Metairie Road. Traffic signal control improvements would be expected to positively impact localized congestion and delay on Metairie Road during peak and off peak periods by providing for traffic responsive operations. Actuated control of minor street approaches to signalized intersections would insure that maximum right-of-way be allocated to Metairie Road thereby minimizing delay for the primary traffic flow movement.

Center left turn treatment would create a three-lane roadway which would minimize delay to through traffic on Metairie Road, by providing for a left turn bay at each intersection and shopping center entrance/exit drive. Traffic to be positively impacted by this improvement would be both local and non-neighborhood traffic as existing delays negatively impact travel times for both.

Construction Period: Construction would take approximately eight months to one year.

Cost: The cost is estimated at $300,000-$400,000.

Comments: Improvement of traffic operations on Metairie Road is complimentary to redesign of the roadway as proposed in the preceding alternative. Transportation System Management measures applied to all streets in the area would further the community goal of reducing traffic congestion. For these reasons, this alternative was selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #22: Construction of Service Roads Parallel to the Railroad Tracks from Metairie Road to Labarre Road

Description: This alternative involves constructing two streets immediately parallel to and on each side of the railroad tracks. This would include the extension of Loumor Avenue, Fairmont Drive, and Frisco Avenue from Labarre Road to Metairie Road (Figure 12). The purpose of this alternative would be to provide an alternate route to those motorists who now travel at high speeds down neighborhood streets trying to beat a train to a particular crossing. If this alternative were implemented in conjunction with Alternative #19, the closure of grade crossings, vehicular access would be improved for those neighborhoods adjacent to the tracks between Metairie Road and Labarre Road.

Construction Period: Construction would take approximately one year.

Cost: Additional right-of-way would have to be acquired in the following locations:

North of the Tracks
Livingston to Glenwood (R.O.W. already exists)
Ridgewood to Fairmont
Mulberry to Farnham
Farnham to West Oakridge (portion of R.O.W. exists)
West Oakridge to Azalea
Azalea to Metairie Road

South of the Tracks
Rosewood to Metairie Playground
Metairie Playground
Metairie Playground to Bella (R.O.W. exists)
Country Day Playfield

Using a cost of $100/linear foot for construction, a total estimated cost of $3,393,000 can be expected for construction. This figure does not include acquisition and relocation of the eight residences and four businesses located on the necessary rights-of-way. Although it is difficult to estimate the value of those improvements, acquisition of the homes and businesses could possibly raise the total project cost by as much as $5-$10 million.

Comments: Implementation of this alternative with the closing of some of the smaller crossings would result in similar impacts incurred with Alternative 19 which examined closing the smaller crossings. Implementation without the closing of any crossings would improve traffic circulation in the area, but would not eliminate rail/highway conflicts totally. The alternative would

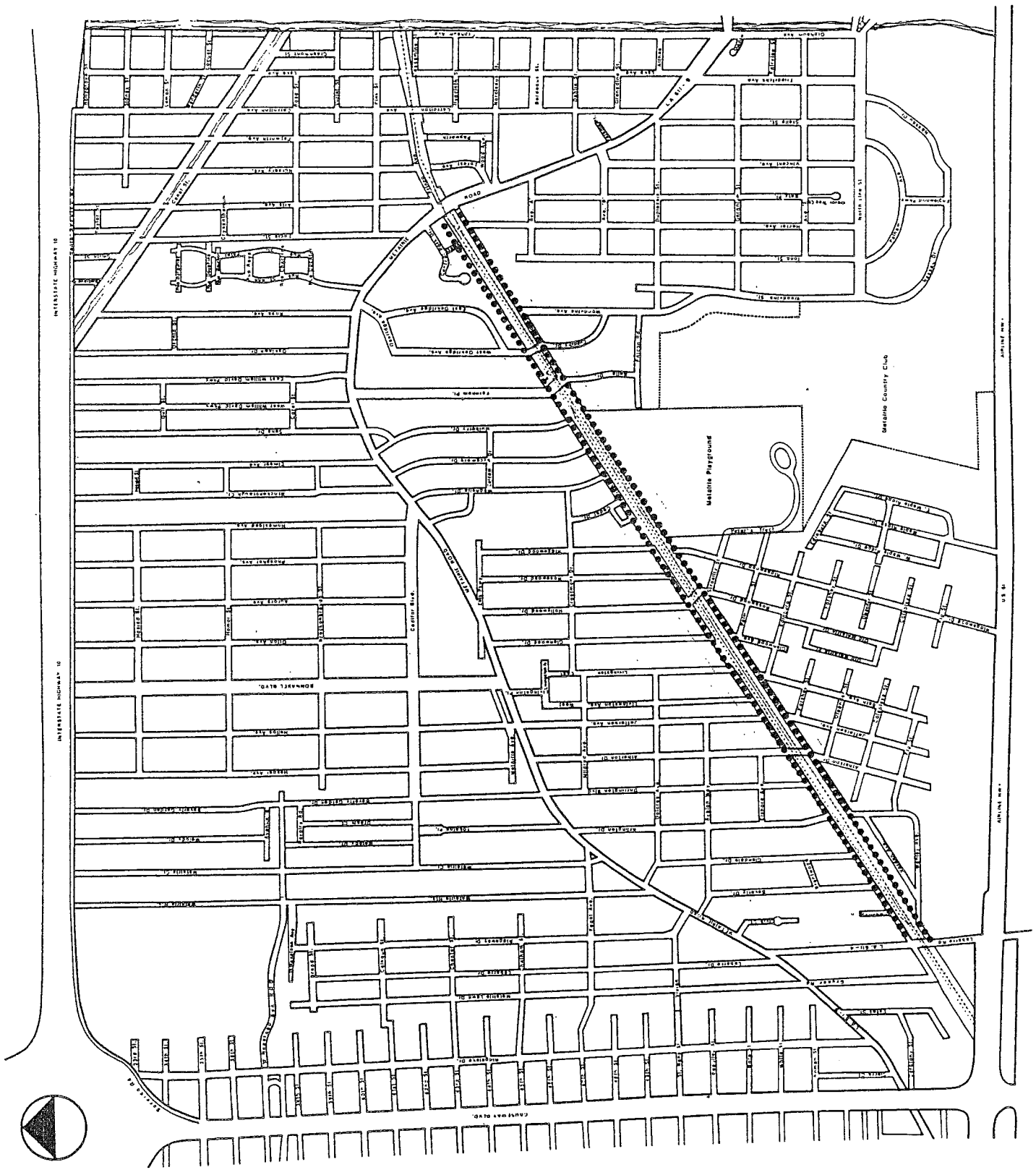

Figure 12

Alternative # 22:

LOCATION OF SERVICE ROADS PARALLELING RAILROAD TRACKS FROM METAIRIE ROAD TO LABARRE ROAD

probably introduce more "through" traffic on low volume streets, since it would provide an alternative to Metairie Road. There was some community resistance to this alternative expressed at the public meetings and public hearing. Based on the cost of implementation, disruption of the community through relocation of homes and businesses, Section 4(f) impacts, and community opposition, it was determined that the minor improvements in rail/highway conflicts do not justify selection of this alternative as a preferred alternative, and this alternative has been eliminated from further consideration.

ALTERNATIVE #23: Construction of Noise Barriers

Description: The purpose of the noise barriers is to reduce the impact of the railroad-related noise, especially horn noise on the adjacent neighborhoods. Barriers would be constructed within existing railroad right-of-way. Barriers would begin 70 feet on either side of each grade crossing to provide adequate sight distance for auto traffic. They would be constructed within 20 feet of the centerline of the railroad tracks for maximum effectiveness, and would be 20 to 25 feet in height (Figure 13).

Construction Period: The construction period is estimated at one month.

Cost: The cost would be approximately $7,000,000.

Comments: Noise barriers would address the noise problem partially, but because of openings required in the barriers at street crossings, the areas of highest noise impact would be unprotected. The cost of this alternative is also very high for the degree of mitigation provided. Alternative 24 addresses the elimination of train horns in a manner which would be more effective than this alternative. For these reasons, this alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #24: Elimination of All Train Horns

Description: This alternative involves prohibiting all trains from blowing their horns in the project area. State law establishes requirements for trains to use train horns or whistles when approaching an at-grade crossing. This law would have to be altered to make this a feasible alternative. With implementation of this alternative, a substitute method of warning pedestrians and automobile traffic must be chosen, such as the installation of additional warning devices and improved illumination of the crossings. See Appendix E for a discussion of legal issues associated with this alternative.

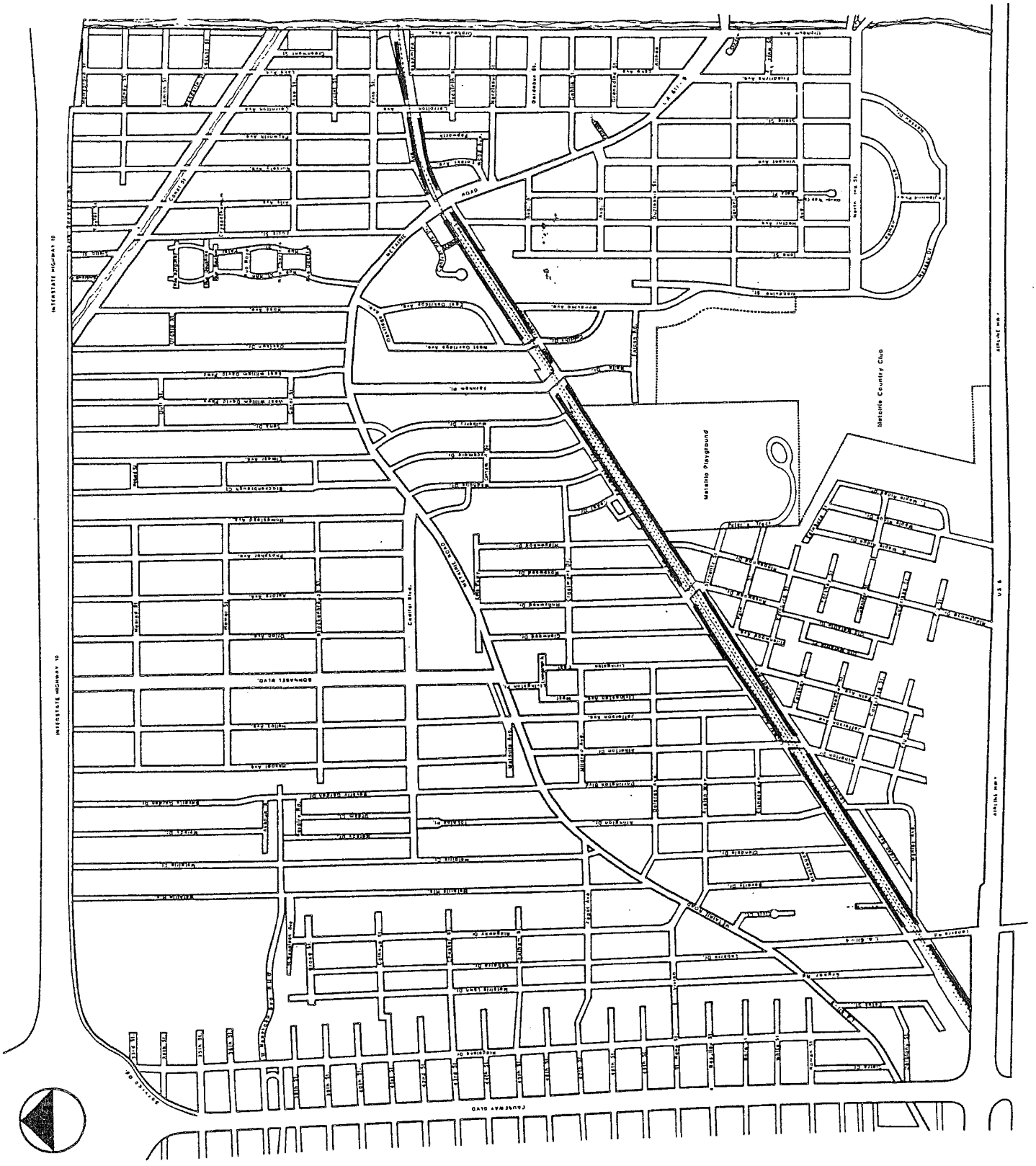

Figure 13

Alternative #23:

LOCATION OF NOISE BARRIERS

Construction Period: The installation of warning devices and street lighting would have little impact on traffic or rail operations.

Cost: These costs include an initial cost of approximately $50,000 per crossing for installation of warning devices, and a cost of close to $1,000 per fixture (two fixtures per crossing) for improved lighting. The total cost for all seven crossings would be $364,000.

Comments: Agreements have been negotiated in a number of localities around the country establishing a plan for removing the use of the train horn completely or during designated hours in sensitive corridors. While such an agreement would require legislation by the Louisiana legislature, it appears that one could be reached between state and local officials, and the railroad. This would eliminate one of the primary complaints of the residents in the area. For these reasons this alternative has been selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #25: Placement of Additional Warning Devices at Crossings

Description: All grade crossings are presently equipped with crossbuck signs, and the Metairie Road and Labarre Road crossings are equipped with flashing lights and bells as well as advance warning signs and crossbucks. Additional warning devices include flashing lights and bells for those crossings which are not equipped with these devices, and automatic gates and improved illumination (street lighting) for some or all of the grade crossings. When indicating the approach or presence of a train, the flashing light signal displays toward approaching traffic the aspect of two red lights in a horizontal line flashing alternately. A bell may be included in the assembly and operated in conjunction with the flashing lights, although the provision of bells or other audible warning devices is not mandatory. They provide warnings as to the lowering of the gate assembly. Automatic gates are used as an adjunct to flashing warning lights and consist of a drive mechanism and a fully reflectorized red and white striped gate arm with lights, and which in the down position extends across the approaching lanes of highway traffic about four feet above the top of the pavement. In its normal upright position, when no train is approaching or occupying the crossing, the gate arm should be either vertical or nearly so. Improved street lighting would improve the safety of minor crossings by providing for better illumination of crossings which may be occupied by a train which is stopped or engaged in switching activities.

Construction Period: The construction period would be minimal and would not impede rail or automobile traffic.

Cost: The cost per crossing would be approximately $52,000. See Alternative #24 for a detailed cost description.

Comments: This alternative will improve safety at the crossings and is essential if the previous alternative eliminating the train horns is to be implemented. Because the alternative will increase safety at rail/highway grade crossings, it has been selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #26: Fencing the Tracks

Description: The purpose of this alternative would be to enhance overall safety in the project area by reducing pedestrian accessibility to the railroad tracks. The fencing would be a chainlink industrial style fence with barbed wire strung across the top. It would begin 70 feet on either side of each grade crossing to provide adequate sight distance for auto traffic and would be six feet in height (Figure 14).

Construction Period: This type of fence could be constructed in approximately 3 weeks.

Cost: This fence would cost an estimated $94,500.

Comments: The intention of this alternative is to restrict pedestrian access to railroad right-of-way for safety purposes, but since the fencing is separated at each grade crossing, it would minimally achieve this goal. For this reason, this alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #27: Construction of One or More Pedestrian/Bicycle Overpasses

Description: An overpass consists of a complete system of towers, landings, stairs or ramps in conjunction with either high or low profile bridges. This alternative would improve overall safety in the project area by providing a hazard-free method of crossing the railroad tracks in addition to providing access to the other side of the tracks when the grade crossings are blocked by a train.

Construction Period: Construction would last approximately 2 months.

Cost: The total cost would be an estimated $175,000.

Comments: Pedestrian access across the tracks was not identified as a major concern of citizens. In all probability, several

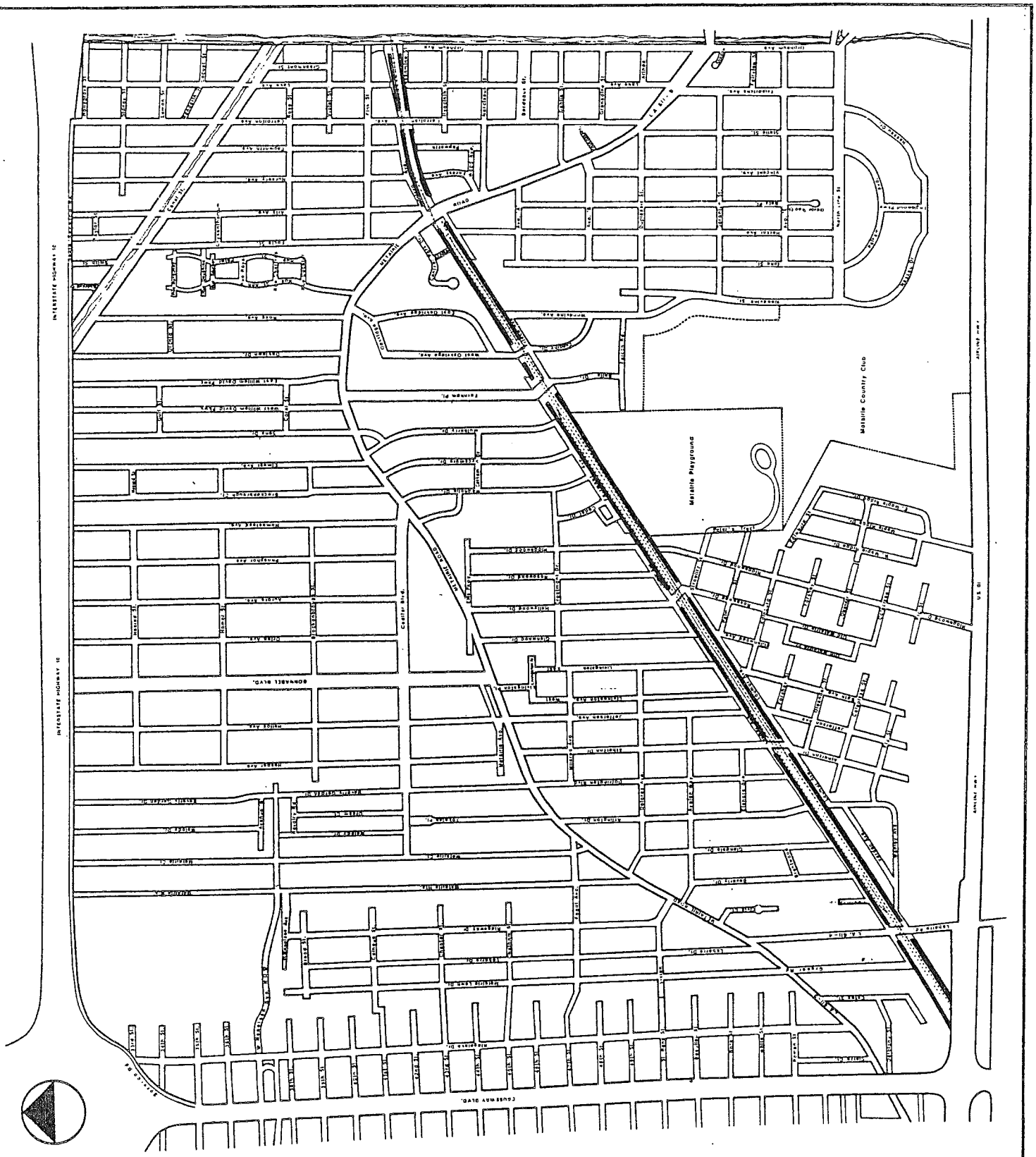

Figure 14

Alternative #26:

LOCATION OF FENCING ADJACENT TO RAILROAD TRACKS

overpasses would have to be constructed to serve the numerous areas where pedestrians can cross the tracks. The general lack of community support and cost of building the overpasses prohibit this alternative from being selected as a preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVES #28 & 29: Reopening the Pedestrian/Bicycle Underpass Located at Metairie Playground; Construction of Additional Pedestrian/ Bicycle Underpasses

The existing pedestrian underpass located at Metairie Playground was closed due to vandalism, crime, and drainage problems. Reopening the underpass would not address the problems which originally necessitated its closing and it is likely these problems would recur. Pedestrian access across the tracks was not identified as a major community concern. For these reasons, reopening the existing pedestrian underpass and constructing additional pedestrian underpasses was not given further consideration.

ALTERNATIVE #30: Restriction of Hazardous Material Rail Shipments

Description: The purpose of this alternative is to improve overall safety in the study area by prohibiting all trains using the Metairie tracks from carrying hazardous materials. This traffic would have to be rerouted over the N.O.P.B. which presents additional issues as discussed in Alternative #2. See Appendix E for a discussion of legal issues associated with this alternative.

Construction Period: The time period associated with improving the N.O.P.B. to accommodate the additional traffic is indeterminate at this time.

Cost: The cost of rerouting hazardous material cars would be incurred by the railroads, and the estimated cost of improving the N.O.P.B. tracks is $1.3 million.

Comments: Community concern with the movement of hazardous materials through this corridor has been expressed throughout the project. The legal aspects of prohibiting these movements was examined, and it was found that, to some extent, the railroads may be forced to restrict movement of hazardous materials in the project area. This has to be balanced with what burdens such legislation would impose on interstate commerce and what impact rerouting of the materials would have along the riverfront route. Basically, this alternative amounts to rerouting hazardous materials along the riverfront route, and the impacts of this have been discussed under Alternative 2. Based on these factors, this alternative has not been selected as a preferred alternative.

SECTION 4

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe environmental conditions in the study area. Descriptions are presented in the following sections of:

- Land Use;
- Natural Environment;
- Air Quality Conditions;
- Noise Conditions;
- Cultural Resources;
- Socio-Economic Conditions

Land Use

A field survey was conducted in order to identify the land uses in the study area. The results of the field survey are displayed graphically in Figure 15. Area neighborhoods are shown in Figure 15a.

Single-family residential uses comprise the majority of land use in Old Metairie. Duplexes were included in the single-family category since they are interspersed with single-family homes in some areas and did not significantly increase the housing density. There are four major areas of single-family-attached housing and multi-family buildings, namely Metairie Towers, DeLimon Place, Old Metairie Place, and Gatehouse Apartments, and some smaller multi-family buildings dispersed throughout the area.

Commercial areas are located primarily along the major arteries: Metairie Road, Airline Highway, and Causeway Boulevard. Commercial uses include retail trade and personal services, business and professional services, wholesale trade/warehousing, hotel/motel, governmental services, medical services, and parking for these uses. Light industrial uses are limited to a few parcels located on Airline Highway, and a few parcels near Metairie Road close to the railroad crossing.

There are five schools in the project area: St. Francis Xavier School, Haynes Middle School, Metairie Park Country Day, St. Catherine of Siena School, and Metairie Grammar School, and four pre-schools. Nine churches are located in Old Metairie.

A significant amount of land is devoted to recreational use in the project area. This includes the Metairie Playground and Metairie Country Club as well as the school playgrounds.

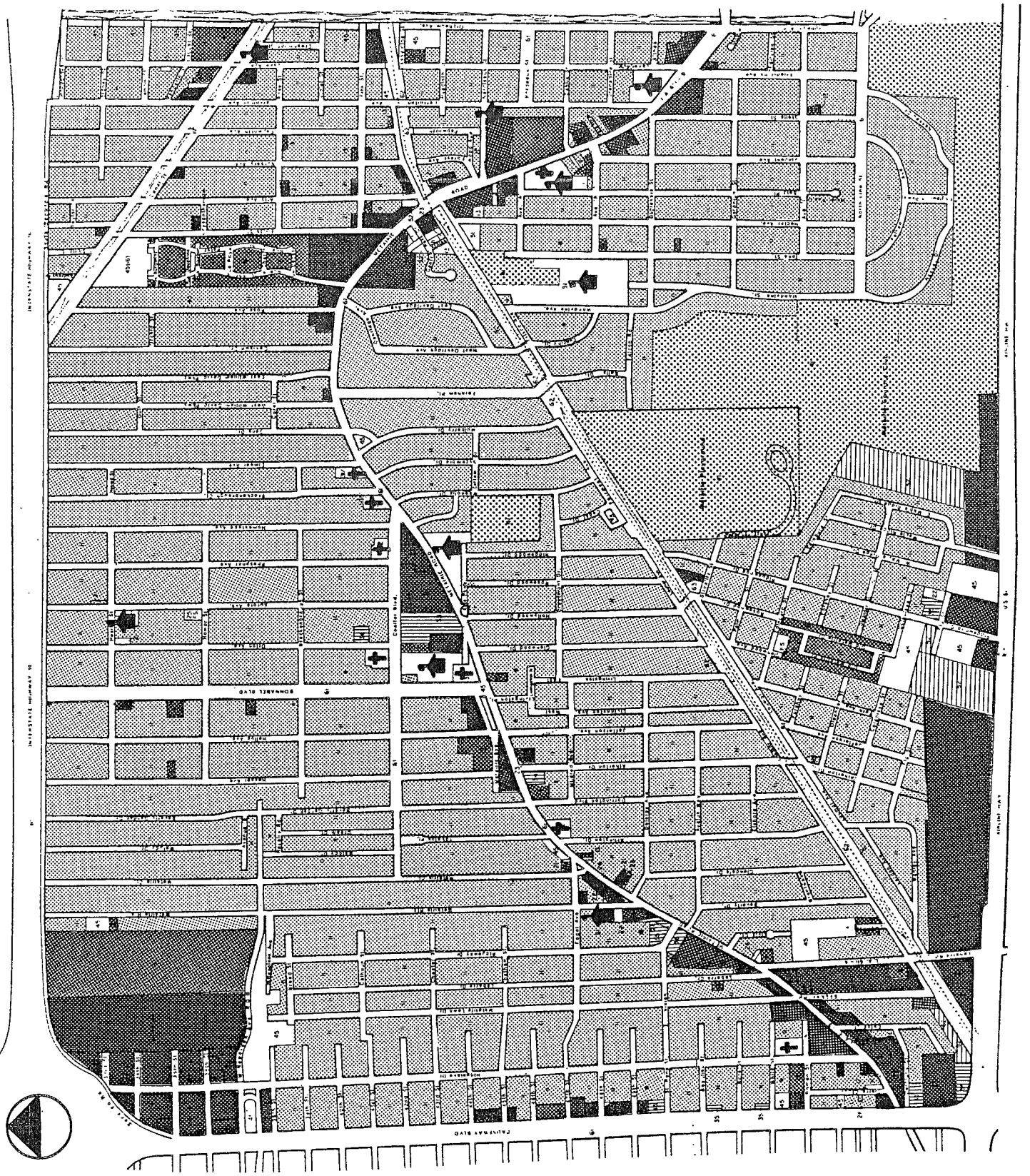

Figure 15

LAND USE

LEGEND

- single family res.
- multi family res.
- commercial
- public
- industrial
- recreational
- educational
- religious
- undeveloped

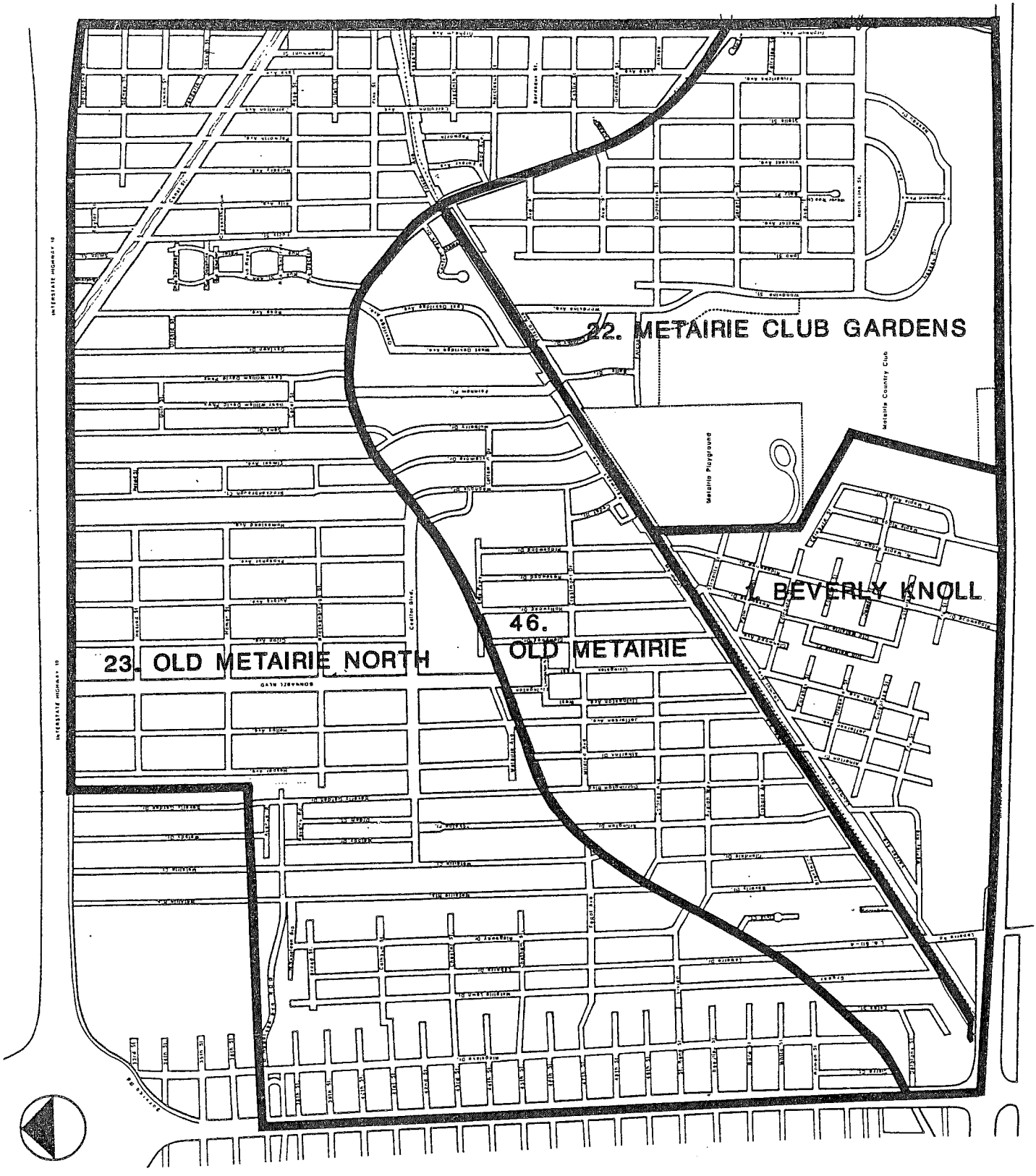

Figure 15A

STUDY AREA NEIGHBORHOODS

There is one hospital in the project area, Bonnabel Hospital, and one ambulance service. Two fire stations serve the area.

Natural Environment

As noted in the Land Use Section, the study area is a developed residential community serviced by a variety of commercial land uses. There is very little vacant land currently existing in the study area. There are no wilderness, swamp, or forested areas located in the study area. The only major concentrations of vegetation are found in the vicinity of the two large green spaces in the study area: Metairie Playground and the Metairie Country Club Golf Course. The detached nature of the majority of the housing has permitted the cultivation of a wide variety of vegetation on individual lots and along the transportation corridors in the study area.

Wildlife in the study area consists primarily of those species who have adapted to the urban setting such as squirrels, rabbits, birds, raccoons, opossum, rodents, etc. No endangered species are present, as confirmed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Air Quality

Air quality in the Metairie area is generally good, with pollutants rarely exceeding Environmental/Protection Agency primary ambient air quality standards. Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality sample data shows that ozone levels at New Orleans and Kenner sampling stations have not exceeded EPA standards since 1982 and 1984 respectively. In both cases, standards were only exceeded for one day of the year. Other contaminants measured by the Department of Environmental Quality have not exceeded annual standards at any of the sampling stations in the New Orleans area.

Noise Conditions

The purpose of the noise analysis is to determine the rail-generated noise levels to which residents are subject and to identify potential mitigation measures. Noise due to the freight rail operations, which occur irregularly throughout the 24-hour day, have been a long-standing source of complaint by residents in the vicinity of the tracks.

Rail operations that generate noise in the vicinity of the tracks include switching operations and train passbys. Sources of noise include locomotive engines, passby of rail cars, the horn sounded as a warning when a train approaches each of the seven at-grade crossings, warning bells activated when the train approaches an at-grade crossing, and the clashing of rail cars during switching operations. Switching operations in the study area are confined

to the Long Siding, which lies along the tracks in the southwest corner of the study area. Although the Southern Railway claims that the Long Siding is no longer in use, switching operations do occur in this vicinity.

A noise monitoring program was developed and carried out. The goals of the program were to establish the existing noise levels at sensitive receptors, to determine the rate of attenuation of the noise with distance, and to determine the pattern of noise increase when trains pass by. Appendix D describes this program in more detail.

Figure 16 shows the monitoring sites at and between the at-grade crossings. The specific sites were on public property or, if possible, at a residence bordering the railroad right-of-way. Since most residences had hedges, trees, fences, or other landscaping that obstructed the space between the microphone and the railroad tracks, only the Labarre Road and Dorrington Boulevard sites were located on private residential property.

Based on the facts that an increase of 3 dBA is barely perceptible to the human ear and that an increase of 10 dBA sounds twice as loud, a relative increase of 3 dBA or more will be defined as an impact. The ranking of a project-related increase in noise levels will be based on intervals of 3 dBA, as follows:

Increase	Ranking
0-3 dBA	Negligible
4-6 dBA	Minor
7-9 dBA	Moderate
10+ dBA	Severe

The L_{dn} is the day/night noise level, which represents an energy-averaged noise level during a 24-hour period with noise between 10:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M. weighted by 10 decibels. The Single Event Noise Exposure Level (SEL or SENEL) is a short-term measurement that is useful in describing the effects of the loudness and duration of an event, and can be compared to the ambient noise levels. SEL values are used in computing the Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL), which is a long-term (24-hour) measurement. Like the L_{dn}, the CNEL weights nighttime noises by 10 decibels. It differs from the L_{dn} in its weighting of evening (7:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M.) noise levels by three decibels. The CNEL is the noise descriptor that will be used to evaluate noise from railroad activities in Metairie.

A CNEL value of 65 dBA will be used as the threshhold value for determining impacts. This is based on research carried out by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of

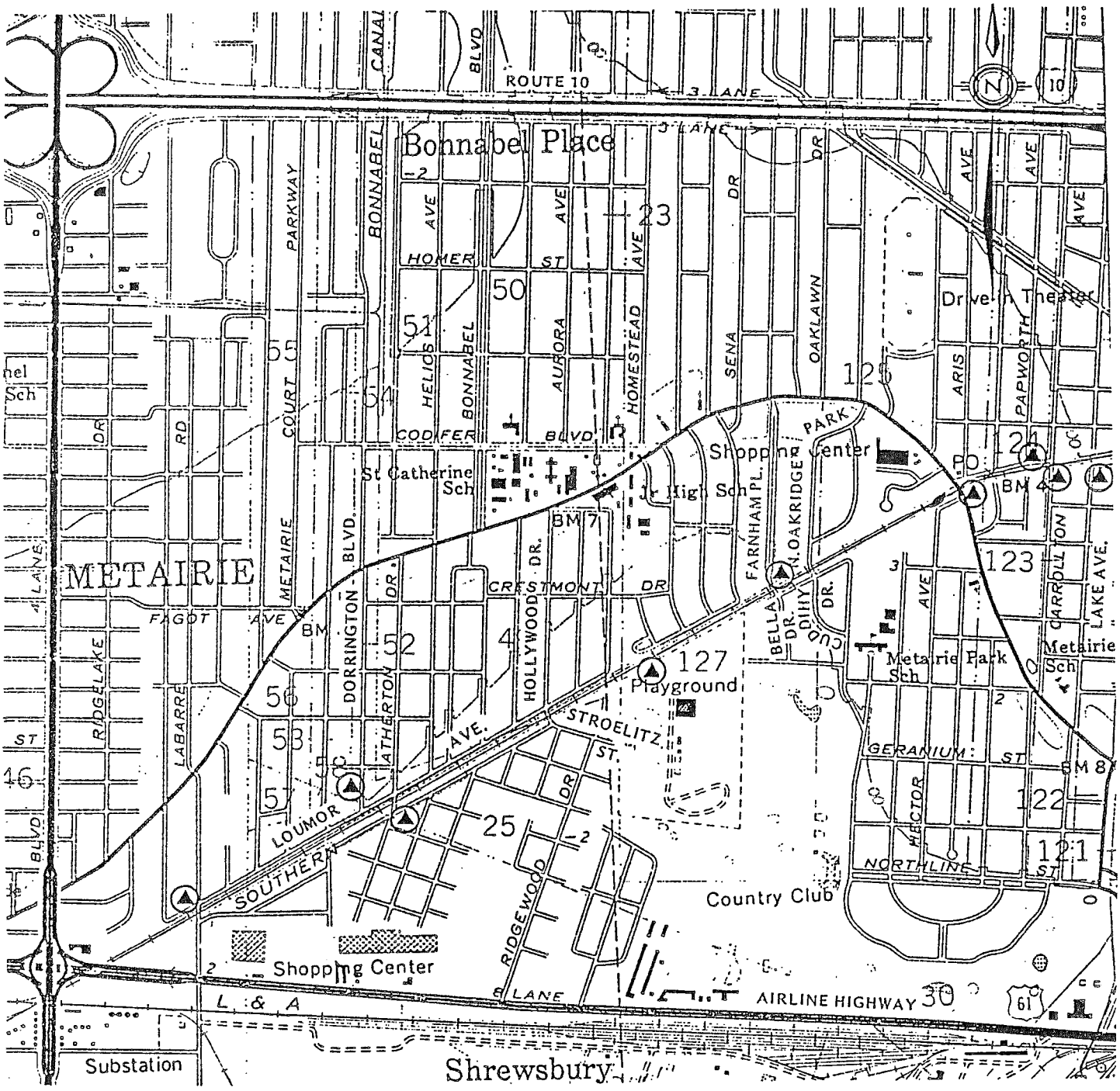

Figure 16

LOCATIONS OF MONITORED SITES

Transportation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on community responses to various noise levels. The Department of Housing and Urban Development subsequently established noise standards for construction of federally funded housing that considered an L_{dn} (or CNEL) of 65 dBA to be acceptable.

Figure 17 shows the CNEL values based on 19 trains per day with an average length of 64 cars apiece. Compared with the ambient noise levels (those that would exist without the railroad tracks), the railroad activities have a severe noise impact on the community. The CNEL reaches as high as 85 dBA in residential neighborhoods that would otherwise experience noise of 55-60 dBA.

Table 4 shows the number of residential impacts falling within each 5 dBA CNEL contour from 65 dBA to 85 dBA. For the purposes of counting impacts and comparing different abatement alternatives, the project area was divided into sections. Sections start and end midway between the at-grade crossings. As a result, Metairie Playground is split into two sections, and each section of the park is listed in the table. Bella Drive and Cuddihy Drive are not listed separately because of their close proximity to each other. Carrollton Avenue and Orpheum Avenue are also combined because Orpheum Avenue marks the end of the study area and because this portion of the study area is treated as a single unit in the evaluation of abatement measures.

As is evident from the table, 924 residential units, two schools, and a park are subjected to CNEL values ranging from 65 dBA to 85 dBA. In comparison to the ambient noise conditions, the residential and parkland impacts are classified as severe. Impacts at the Metairie Country Day School include 2.3 acres of playground. Impacts at Metairie Playground total 8.5 acres. The relatively small number of impacts in the vicinity of the Metairie Road crossing is due to the commercial and industrial land uses in this area.

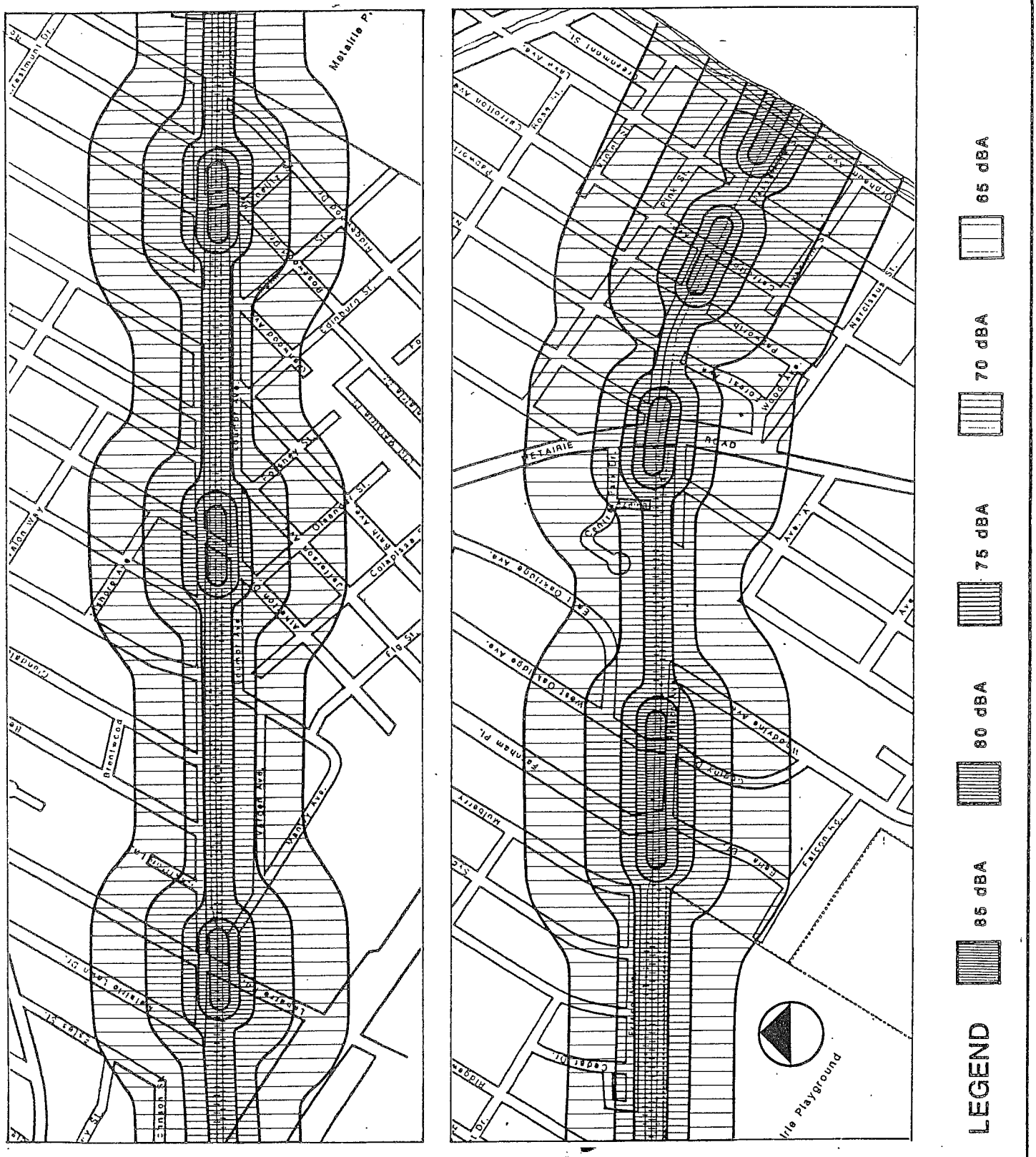

Figure 17

EXISTING CNEL NOISE VALUES

Table 4

EXISTING IMPACTS
(CNEL $\geq$ 65 dBA)

	Number of Impacts Within Each Community Noise Exposure Level					
	85	80	75	70	65	Total
Location of Residential Units:						
Labarre Road Crossing (Causeway Blvd.-Glendale Drive)	0	5	9	32	69	115
Atherton Drive Crossing (Glendale Drive-Bath Ave.)	0	2	9	52	120	183
Hollywood Drive Crossing (Bath Drive-Cedar Drive)	0	5	14	52	113	184
Bella & Cuddihy Drive Crossings (Cedar Drive-Cedar Park Drive)	0	11	17	45	85	158
Metairie Road Crossing (Cedar Park Drive-Nursery Ave.)	0	0	18	21	51	76
Carrollton & Orpheum Ave. Crossings (Nursery Ave.-Lake St.)	1	14	33	57	103	208
Total	1	37	86	259	541	924
Location of Schools:						
Metairie Country Day School (acres) (Cedar Drive-Cedar Park Drive)				.8	1.5	2.3 acres
St. Francis Xavier School (Cedar Park Drive-Nursery Ave.)					1	1 school
Location of Parks:						
Metairie Playground (Bath Drive-Cedar Drive)				1.3	2.4	3.7
Metairie Playground (Cedar Drive-Cedar Park Drive)				1.7	3.1	4.8
Total				3.0	5.5	8.5

Cultural Resources

A recent field survey of cultural resources conducted as a component of the Parish Coastal Zone Management Plan found that no archaeological sites were located in the study area. This section of Metairie contains a concentration of twentieth century homes which have not been inventoried for sites of historical significance according to Mr. Robert B. DeBlieux, Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer.

There are no properties listed on the National Register in the project study area. Outside of the project boundaries, there are two properties eligible for listing on the National Register-Longue Vue and the Metairie Cemetery. Based on the presence of these two properties, the State Historic Preservation Officer requests the opportunity to review project plans prior to implementation.

Socio-Economic Conditions

The study area is best described as a suburban residential community. As noted in the Land Use section, Metairie Road serves as a commercial spine which traverses the study area. Also, there are large commercial developments along Airline Highway at the southern boundary of the study area and at the intersection of Causeway Boulevard and Interstate 10 in the northwest corner of the study area.

According to a demographic profile prepared in October, 1984, by the Jefferson Parish Planning Department using 1980 Census Data entitled "Neighborhood Analysis Report: Jefferson Parish, Louisiana," the total population of the study area is 17,269 people. Of this total, 16.5% are age 15 or under and 20.9% are 65 years old or older. Over 74% of the residents of the study area over 25 years old have high school educations. The report separated the project area into four neighborhoods, listing median household income as $16,701, $20,734, $22,115, and $29,356, for an overall average of $22,226. Approximately 5.7% of the persons residing in the study area live below the poverty line. There are a total of 7,672 households located in the study area, of which 32.5% are occupied by renters. The homeowner vacancy rate in the study area is below 1% and the renter vacancy rate between 3 and 4%. The median value of owner occupied homes in the four neighborhoods located in the study area ranged from $44,600-170,000. Over 24% of the homes located in the study area were built prior to 1940.

Table 5 presents a comparison of basic population, income, and housing characteristics between the study area and other unincorporated areas of Jefferson Parish.

TABLE 5

DEMOGRAPHIC INDICES
(Source: Jefferson Parish Planning Department
Neighborhood Analysis Report
taken from the U.S. Census Population, 1980)

Index	Unincorporated Jefferson	Study Area
Total Population	336,089	17,269
% Persons Under 15	24.2%	16.5%
% Persons 65 and Over	7.6%	20.9%
% High School Graduates	68.4%	74.1%
Median Household Income	$19,664	$16,701-29,356
No. Persons Below Poverty	35,035	977
% Persons Below Poverty	9.3%	5.7%
Total Households	122,961	7,672
% Renter Occupied Housing Units	36.8%	32.5%
Homeowners Vacancy Rate	1.4%	0.7%
Renter Vacancy Rate	8.0%	3.4%

SECTION 5

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This chapter of the EIS is the scientific and analytical basis for the assessment of environmental effects of the alternative plans. The projected effect each alternative will have on social and economic resources, cultural resources, land use, air quality, noise, and natural environment resources has been discussed. Where no notable effects are anticipated for the alternative plans for a given resource, the resource is addressed in a general manner. The data in this analysis is the basis for the net effects tabulated in Table 1.

The discussion begins with a description of impact areas which are basically the same for all alternatives. Following this discussion, each alternative is analyzed in terms of (1) Social and Economic Impacts, (2) Noise Impacts, (3) Impacts on the Natural Environment, and (4) Land Use Impacts. Impacts in these areas vary depending on the alternative being evaluated. These areas are also ones on which public comments were focused.

The setting of the project eliminates some areas of potential impact. These include farmland, coastal barriers, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, and modifications to water bodies.

Impact areas which are general and apply to all alternatives are discussed below.

Cultural Resources:

No archeological sites are located in the study area according to a recent field survey of cultural resources conducted as a component of the Jefferson Parish Coastal Zone Management Plan. Nor are there any sites of historic significance located in the project area. This section of Metairie contains a concentration of twentieth century residences. Mr. Robert B. DeBlieux, Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer, noted in his solicitation of view comments that residences in this section had not been inventoried and that the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism be given an opportunity to review project plans prior to implementation. After reviewing the alternatives presented in the DEIS, the Department stated that plans needed to be reviewed only if any of Alternatives 6, 7, 13-18, 20, 22, 23, 26-29 are chosen. Alternative 20 is a preferred alternative and would involve the redesign of Metairie Road to a three-lane roadway. At this time there are no design plans developed for this alternative. The Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism was advised that Alternative 20 had been selected as a preferred alternative and was provided all available information

on the Alternative. By letter dated December 5, 1988, the Department stated the Alternative would have no effect on eligible or potentially eligible properties for the National Register of Historic Places.

Section 4(f) Properties:

Alternative 22, which is the construction of service roads parallel to the railroad tracks from Metairie Road to Labarre, could potentially impact Section 4(f) properties if constructed. This alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative. No other alternatives receiving consideration would impact any Section 4(f) properties. None of the preferred alternatives would impact Section 4(f) properties.

Air Quality Impacts:

Any alternative which would reduce or remove the train traffic from the study area or enhance the flow of train traffic (Alternatives #2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 30) would have obvious positive air quality impacts, as would any alternative which would facilitate the flow of automobile traffic in the study area (Alternatives #13, 14, 19, 20 and 21). No substantial additional pollutant output can be expected with the implementation of the bulk of the identified alternatives. The exception is Alternative #22, the construction of service streets parallel to the railroad tracks from Metairie Road to Labarre Road, which would place automobile traffic in an area of the neighborhood where there is no existing traffic.

None of the preferred alternatives would have any negative impacts on air quality. These alternatives would not be in conflict with the State Implementation Plan.

Water Quality Impacts

The only alternative which could potentially impact water quality is Alternative 3, which calls for the addition of a second track from Metairie Road to the east side of the 17th Street Canal. This would require the construction of a new trestle over the canal. This alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative. The Water Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey reviewed the draft document and stated that because no streamflow crossings were involved, they had no comments.

Floodplain Impacts

The project is located in an identified floodplain. The Jefferson Parish floodplain administrator has been contacted and if any of the construction alternatives are implemented local NFIP requirements will be met. The FHWA Design Standards for Highways in NFIP Mapped Floodplains will be followed.

Coastal Zone Impacts

The proposed alternatives were reviewed by the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources and found to be consistent with the approved Louisiana Coastal Resources program as required by Section 307 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended.

Impacts on Threatened or Endangered Species

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service was contacted to determine if any protected species are present in the study area. It was determined that none are present.

Solid and Hazardous Waste Sites

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Solid and Hazardous Waste, was contacted and determined that there are no apparent solid waste impacts resulting from the project. Alternative 13, which entails the construction of a vehicular underpass at Metairie Road, would require the relocation of a service station with underground storage tanks. This alternative was eliminated from further consideration.

ALTERNATIVE #1: Do Nothing

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

This alternative serves to maintain the status quo. It fails to address the existing identified problems which could be exacerbated by possible future increases in vehicular and/or rail traffic.

(2) Noise Impacts

Under the Do Nothing Alternative, future noise levels would be the same as existing noise levels, assuming that no changes in the number, length or scheduling of trains occur. The CNEL contours shown in Figure 17, page 4-4 would remain in effect.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

No effect.

(4) Land Use Impacts

Since the project area is well developed, with little space for the construction of additional housing in the vicinity of the railroad tracks, the number of residential impacts would show little variation. However, homes that are very close to the

tracks and are also adjacent to existing commercial and industrial uses may become increasingly less desirable as residences. These homes would not appreciate as quickly as other homes in the area and some transition from residential to commercial use could occur.

ALTERNATIVE #2: Relocation/Removal of Railroad Tracks

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: The present amount of rail traffic would have to be rerouted, which would result in increased costs of shipments due to the increased time and distance travelled. The N.O.P.B. Railroad, which is the only viable route (see Alternative #2, page 3-3), might be agreeable to this, but the City of New Orleans would probably object. If the rail traffic is diverted over the N.O.P.B., the condition of the N.O.P.B. may need improvement. This may include the installation of heavier rail, raising and smoothing the track, and changing the connection for the Kansas City Southern Railroad (KCS). Current railroad interchange points (tracks designated to be used for transferring railroad cars from one railroad company's train to another railroad's train) may need relocating. Since the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Missouri Pacific Railroad are the only railroads with authority to operate on the N.O.P.B., the State Constitution would need to be amended to allow other railroads currently using the Metairie tracks (Southern, Seaboard, Kansas City Southern, and Illinois Central Gulf) to use the N.O.P.B.

Auto Traffic Impacts: This alternative removes all auto delays caused by trains in the study area. However, auto traffic delay problems would be transferred to the riverfront route (26 grade crossings), and would especially impact the high volume intersections at Oak Street and Jefferson Highway.

Safety Impacts: This alternative would eliminate all auto, pedestrian, and hazardous material safety problems. However, it would transfer these problems to the riverfront route, which may be more hazardous than the status quo since the riverfront route has 26 grade crossings and the study area has seven.

Aesthetics: The unsightliness of the railroad tracks and trains would be removed and the right-of-way could be replaced with a use more compatible to the surrounding neighborhood.

Impact on Community: A considerable number of positive impacts to Metairie would occur. This alternative addresses all railroad related problems in project area, but it would transfer all these same problems to the riverfront route (N.O.P.B.).

Implementation Factors: Cooperation by all involved railroad companies would be necessary to implement this alternative as well as acceptance by the City of New Orleans and Orleans Parish. The availability of a funding source would also be necessary. Substantial legal impediments exist as discussed in Appendix E.

(2) Noise Impacts

Relocation and removal of the railroad tracks through Metairie would eliminate all of the existing impacts to 6.1 acres of schoolgrounds, 8.5 acres of parkland, and 924 residences. Noise levels would be below a CNEL of 65 dBA and would reflect the ambient noise levels shown in Appendix D, Figure D-4.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

Should the railroad tracks be removed, there would be an opportunity to enhance the natural environment by using the abandoned railroad right-of-way for a park. This would increase the vacant land in the project area and could possibly become an expansion of the present Metairie Playground.

(4) Land Use Impacts

This alternative would open up the current rail corridor to an alternate use which would be a positive impact since the project area has very little vacant land. Suggestions from the public have been received as to what use could become of this corridor, ranging from converting it to a new highway corridor (comments have been more negative than positive), creating a linear park, and selling the land for single family homes.

ALTERNATIVE #3: Construction of Double Tracks between Metairie Road and the Jefferson/Orleans Parish Line.

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: This alternative would improve the safety, convenience, and efficiency of rail operations. It would eliminate the need for trains to wait in the study area while another train clears the single track, allowing for through movements. Construction activities would disrupt rail and auto traffic. This alternative could possibly contribute to an increase in rail traffic through the study area.

Auto Traffic Impacts: A double track would eliminate the need for trains to park in study area waiting for the single track to clear, resulting in positive vehicular traffic impacts. Depending upon which type of construction alternative would be selected, travel patterns on Frisco Avenue may be altered. If the track bed

is widened and a low retaining wall constructed, traffic patterns would likely remain the same. However, if the method of constructing the second track is on a raised earthen structure, similar to the existing track treatment, traffic on Frisco would be limited to one-way because the earthwork would infringe upon the travel lane allowing room for only one lane of traffic. When two trains cross simultaneously traffic delays could possibly increase.

Safety Impacts: This alternative would remove waiting trains from the study area and reduce the possibility that children and others would be injured while playing near trains. The action of stopping and starting trains as presently occurs presents some minor derailment potential.

Aesthetics: No impact.

Impact on Community: Auto delays would be reduced by eliminating train blockage by waiting trains. Additional warning devices may need to be installed at the crossings (refer to Chapter 3, Alternative #25).

Implementation Factors: In order for implementation to occur, the community would have to agree to this alternative and the railroads would have to cooperate.

(2) Noise Impacts

Construction of a double track from Metairie Road to the Jefferson/Orleans Parish line would remove all noise impacts associated with trains idling on the second track waiting for the main line track to clear. This alternative would be expected to have a minimal effect on overall noise levels, since the number, length and scheduling of trains throughout the 24-hour period would not change as a result of implementation. However, equipment used during construction of the track would have noise impacts on nearby residences. Although the impacts would be temporary, the CNEL values could increase substantially due to the duration of the construction activities throughout the day.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

Impacts to the existing drainage patterns will be negligible and there would be no impact to the existing vegetation.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #4: Removal of Long Siding

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: There would be minimal impacts to the New Orleans Terminal Railroad (N.O.T.) since the Long Siding is infrequently used.

Auto Traffic Impacts: This alternative would eliminate traffic delays caused by activities on the Long Siding.

Safety Impacts: Overall safety would be improved because each time coupling and uncoupling or a switch in the main line occurs, there is a slightly greater chance of an accident.

Aesthetics: Not applicable.

Impact on Community: The community would have the benefit of the removal of switching noise and the elimination of traffic delays due to switching.

Implementation Factors: The two main implementation factors would be cooperation by the N.O.T. and the availability of funding.

(2) Noise Impacts

Elimination of the Long Siding would benefit residents in the vicinity of Labarre Road who experience the high noise levels of the warning horns and crossing bells at short, frequent intervals when the freight cars are being switched from one line of cars to another. This results in high short-term L_{eq} values that are particularly annoying during the night period.

The impacts of operations on the Long Siding cannot be quantified because no average values are available that reflect the extent, duration, and time of day for these activities. However, some estimates can be based on the monitored L_{eq} of 76 dBA during a late night period when the Long Siding was being used. Adding a 10 dBA weighting factor for late night noise and incorporating an attentuation rate of up to 6 dBA per distance doubling indicates that more than 100 residences are affected by the warning whistle along during these events. Therefore, the elimination of the Long Siding would be a noise abatement measure.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

The removal of the Long Siding would have no effect on the natural environment since railroad right-of-way would remain.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #5: Restriction of Train Movements During Peak Traffic Periods

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: Rail operations may be delayed and trains may have to wait in other locations.

Auto Traffic Impacts: All crossing blockage during peak commuting hours would be eliminated, thus facilitating auto traffic flow. Additional vehicular congestion may result following these restricted hours.

Safety Impacts: The auto traffic/rail hazard would decrease somewhat by eliminating conflicts during peak commuting hours.

Aesthetics: Not applicable.

Impact on Community: This alternative would facilitate the work commute, but it may increase the chance of delays following the designated restriction hours by "bunching up" trains.

Implementation Factors: The primary implementation factors would be the ability of the railroads to cooperate and the legal issues associated with forcing the railroads to implement this alternative (Appendix E).

(2) Noise Impacts

The restriction of railroad operations would be an effective means of reducing noise level impacts during peak traffic periods, but this positive effect would be negated by the resultant "bunching up" of trains prior to and immediately following the restricted hours.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

No effect.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #6: Depression of Railroad Tracks in Metairie Corridor

Based on the extremely high construction costs (exceeding 15 million dollars), engineering requirements and community impacts during construction, this alternative was eliminated from further consideration. Additional information on the alternative is provided in Section 3 Alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE #7: Elevation of Railroad Tracks (2) from the Seventeenth Street Canal to South of the Farnham Crossing

This alternative was dropped from further consideration because its primary purpose is to eliminate the grade crossing at Metairie Road. The estimated cost of this alternative is $10-12 million dollars. A highway underpass or overpass at Metairie Road could be constructed for less than four million dollars. There is some community opposition to any grade separation at Metairie Road. The high cost of this alternative is the primary reason for eliminating the alternative. Additional discussion of this alternative is provided in Section 3 Alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE #8: Removal of Second Track from Metairie Road to Labarre Road

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: Waiting trains would have to wait in other areas which may slow railroad operations. This would cause no impact to the east of the project area since there are no grade crossings on this line in Orleans Parish. To the west, trains must wait on the Huey P. Long Bridge and would block the single available lane since daily repairs regularly block the second lane on the bridge.

Auto Traffic Impacts: This alternative would eliminate all traffic delays caused by waiting trains.

Safety Impacts: By removing waiting trains from the study area, the possibility that children and others would be injured while playing near the trains is reduced. Also, the action of stopping and starting trains as presently occurs gives some minor derailment potential.

Aesthetics - not applicable.

Impact on Community: The community would benefit by knowing grade crossings cannot be blocked by waiting trains except in emergencies when a train has to stop on the main line.

Implementation Factors: Implementation factors include funding availability, railroad cooperation, and legal issues as discussed in Appendix E.

(2) Noise Impacts

Removal of the second track through the project area would remove all noise impacts associated with trains idling on the second track. Benefits to overall noise levels would be minimal, however, since train traffic would continue to operate on the single track at its present level, assuming no changes in the number, length or scheduling of trains occur.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

The removal of the second track would have no effect on the natural environment since the railroad right-of-way will remain.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #9: Enforcement of Existing Rail Ordinances
(Rail Ordinances are listed in Appendix C)

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: Compliance with the five-minute crossing blockage ordinance may result in the railroads having to run more trains with fewer cars (Sec. 28-1). Sections 28-5 and 28-6 should not involve any additional constraints on current rail operations. Section 28-9 is not enforceable since it conflicts with State law (see Appendix E).

Auto Traffic Impacts: Enforcement of Section 28-1 would reduce traffic delays to a more tolerable time period. While shorter trains may lessen the time a particular vehicle may be blocked, an additional number of trains would increase the probability of being blocked.

Safety Impacts: Section 28-1: The possibility of conflict between a train and auto or pedestrian traffic would increase if the railroads had to increase the number of trains by shortening train lengths in order to comply with this ordinance. Section 28-5: This ordinance would reduce the hazard of parked railroad cars. Section 28-6: This ordinance creates no safety impacts. Section 28-9: not enforceable.

Aesthetics: Not applicable.

Impact on Community: The community has expressed a desire to see the existing ordinances enforced, and residents continue to file complaints against the railroads for violating these ordinances.

Implementation Factors: Implementation of this alternative would require cooperation by all involved railroad companies.

(2) Noise Impacts

Section 28-1 - Strict enforcement of this ordinance might possibly increase the small number of trains if the railroads have to run more trains with fewer cars, thereby increasing noise impacts by an amount dependent on the increase in number of trains. Section 28-5: no impact. Section 28-6: Strict enforcement would eliminate all noise impacts associated with motors running in parked railroad cars. This would be a minor improvement to overall noise conditions. Section 28-9: not enforceable.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

No effect.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #10: Reduce the Number of Trains Using the Tracks

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: Fewer trains would facilitate rail movements through the study area. The rerouted train traffic would be slowed since it would have to take the riverfront route. For a discussion of the issues associated with diverting rail traffic to the N.O.P.B., please refer to Alternative #2, page 3-3.

Auto Traffic Impacts: This alternative would result in fewer delays for auto traffic, but relocation of train traffic would transfer the study area railroad/auto traffic problems to the riverfront route.

Safety Impacts: Fewer railroad cars results in increased safety with regard to hazardous materials and fewer auto and pedestrian conflicts in the study area. However, relocating train traffic to the riverfront route may pose a greater overall hazard to residents along the N.O.P.B. because of the larger population, adjacent land uses, longer route, and greater number of grade crossings on the N.O.P.B.

Aesthetics: Not applicable.

Impact on Community: Fewer trains means fewer railroad related problems for Metairie. This alternative would probably meet with opposition from Orleans Parish.

Implementation Factors: This alternative would require cooperation by all involved railroad companies, amendment of the State Constitution, and acceptance by Orleans Parish in order for implementation to occur. Additional legal issues are presented in Appendix E.

(2) Noise Impacts

Adoption of this alternative would be a very effective method of mitigating noise level impacts, particularly if more night trains were eliminated than day trains.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

No effect.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #11: Park Waiting Trains Outside of Study Area

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: This alternative would cause no impact to the east of the project area since there are no grade crossings on this line in Orleans Parish. To the west, trains must wait on the Huey P. Long Bridge and would block the single available lane since daily repairs regularly block the second lane on the bridge.

Auto Traffic Impacts: Traffic delays caused by waiting trains would be eliminated.

Safety Impacts: The elimination of waiting trains removes the possibility that children and others can be hurt playing on or under waiting cars. The action of stopping and starting trains as presently occurs presents some minor derailment potential.

Aesthetics: Not applicable.

Impact on Community: The community would no longer experience delays caused by waiting trains.

Implementation Factors: Cooperation by the railroads would be necessary in order to implement this alternative.

(2) Noise Impacts

This alternative would eliminate all noise impacts associated with waiting trains, but would not address any of the other noise impacts associated with rail operations in the project area.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

No effect.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #12: Increase Speed of Trains

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: On the main track, rail shipments would reach their destination faster. On the second track, the existing speed would have to be maintained since the turnouts cannot accommodate faster train speeds. Additional super elevation would need to be added in the curve between Metairie Road and Carrollton Avenue to accommodate the faster speeds.

Auto Traffic Impacts: Traffic delays would be shorter.

Safety Impacts: The number and severity of grade crossing accidents would likely increase, although additional warning devices at grade crossings (see discussion, Alternative #25, page 3-13) would help mitigate this adverse effect. The chance of a derailment would not increase, but should a derailment occur, there is a greater chance of a serious accident.

Aesthetics: Not applicable.

Impact on Community: Negligible.

Implementation Factors: This alternative would require the following in order for implementation to occur: cooperation by the railroads, willingness by the railroads to expend funds for capital improvements, funding for warning devices, and community acceptance of the increased safety hazards.

(2) Noise Impacts

Noise levels would be expected to increase in two ways: (1) the train horn would have to be sounded for each grade crossing almost continuously through the project area because of the increased speed, and (2) noise from passing cars would increase with the increased train speed.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

No effect.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #13: Construction of an Underpass at Metairie Road

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: This alternative would remove the rail/highway conflicts at Metairie Road. Construction could temporarily interrupt rail service.

Auto Traffic Impacts: Rail/highway conflicts at Metairie Road would be removed, eliminating delays at the crossing. Overall traffic service on Metairie Road would not be expected to be greatly improved, because this is not the only capacity constraint to traffic on Metairie Road. There are a number of commercial establishments along Metairie Road which are accessed via driveways intersecting Metairie Road. These generate numerous left turns which are a major contributor to delays along the route. Other constraints are traffic signals, bus stops, schools which generate stops for drop-offs and pick-ups, and pedestrian traffic crossing the route, particularly in commercial and school areas. These all contribute to delays experienced by traffic using Metairie Road. These constraints would have to be eliminated for substantial improvements.

Safety Impacts: The potential for an auto or pedestrian/train accident at this location would be removed.

Aesthetics: Fencing would be required to prevent access to the rail overpass.

Impact on Community: The procurement of right-of-way, both existing and new, for construction would eliminate parking spaces for several businesses in the vicinity of the underpass. The underpass would restrict access and decrease visibility for businesses in vicinity. Vehicular traffic delays caused by construction would occur. Property would be lost to right-of-way for access roads and the underpass. The community has expressed concern that a vehicular underpass at Metairie Road would flood during heavy rains and/or hurricanes.

Implementation Factors: This alternative would require funding availability and community acceptance in order for implementation to occur.

Relocation/Removal Impacts: Major impacts to existing structures would be anticipated as a result of implementing this alternative. Impacts to both auto parking and buildings will occur. Between one-half and two-thirds of the parking north of Metairie Road between Frisco and Focis Street would be lost. Businesses affected would be those fronting Metairie Road between the Metry Cafe (601 Metairie Road) and Ignolia' Jewelry (101 Focis Street). Travel patterns in this quadrant would also be altered due to the construction of a service road parallel to Metairie Road that begins at the Old Metairie Village (701 Metairie Road), parallels Metairie Road, and turns into Frisco Avenue. No building relocation would be required.

In the eastern quadrant (that formed by the intersection of Metairie Road and the track) of this vicinity on the same side of Metairie Road, similar impacts would occur. Beginning just north of the Metairie Towers (433 Metairie Road) building, at Securities Homestead (433 Metairie Road), a service road off of and parallel to Metairie Road would cause a major loss of existing parking spaces back to the track at one of the existing businesses. Although no buildings would require removal, approximately three-fourths of existing parking would be displaced.

On the southern side of Metairie Road, the length of the parallel service roads would be less than those on the north side of the roadway. The service road extending from Avenue "A" toward the track extends to Giorlando's supermarket (478 Metairie Road). Three buildings would require partial reconstruction or relocation. It is likely that part of the supermarket and the Shell Station (468 Metairie Road) would require revisions to present operations while the Taylor Furniture store (458 Metairie Road) adjacent to the Shell Station would have to be relocated. Across the track on the same side (south) of Metairie Road, a parallel service road would extend from the McDonald's/K&B shopping center (812 Metairie Road) to Central Park Drive. The Texaco Station and One Hour Martinizing shop (702 Metairie Road) would probably require relocation, as would the Metairie Apartments building (614 Metairie Road) on the corner of Central Park Drive. There are 12 apartments in the apartment building serving the general populace. Approximately 20 parking places in the shopping center would be lost to the service road.

Due to the urbanized nature of the project area, there are numerous replacement sites available for businesses. If the businesses do not relocate, there are a number of similar businesses in the community which provide the same services.

Should persons in the apartment complex be required to relocate, there are many comparable apartment complexes in the Metairie area where persons could relocate. Tenants are not expected to have special relocation needs.

(2) Noise Impacts

Impacts to twenty-seven residential units and the St. Francis Xavier School would be eliminated with the construction of an underpass at Metairie Road, assuming that no residences are acquired during the construction. The Metairie Road crossing has the smallest number of existing impacts because it is surrounded by commercial and industrial land uses. Noise levels at the remaining 49 residences would range from 65 dBA and 75 dBA, although some residents would experience reductions in noise of up to 5 dBA.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

Impacts on Drainage: Construction of the underpass would likely require pumping stormwater runoff to the Seventeenth Street Canal or redistribution into the existing drainage system. If rerouted to the canal, the most practical approach would be to route storm water parallel to the track underground along Frisco Avenue. This alternative would not negatively impact existing drainage patterns. Because of the amount of area to be drained by the underpass, the net result to the existing drainage system would be positive. However, the in-place drainage system, i.e., piping, culverts, and catch basins, would require substantial restructuring because of the placement of the existing network and construction of the underpass and service roads.

Impacts on Existing Vegetation: Two oak trees (24"-36" DBH) would require removal.

(4) Land Use Impacts

This alternative would require acquisition of an indeterminate amount of right-of-way for construction. Land use would be negatively affected since homes and businesses would have to be relocated/removed for construction of this alternative.

ALTERNATIVE #14: Construction of an Overpass at Metairie Road

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: This alternative would remove the rail/highway conflicts at Metairie Road. Construction could temporarily interrupt rail service.

Auto Traffic Impacts: Rail/highway conflicts at Metairie Road would be removed eliminating delays at the crossing. Overall traffic service on Metairie Road would not be expected to be greatly improved. There are numerous capacity constraints along Metairie Road. There are a number of commercial establishments

along Metairie Road which are accessed via driveways intersecting Metairie Road. These generate numerous left turns which are a major contributor to delays along the route. Other constraints are traffic signals, bus stops, schools which generate stops for drop-offs and pick-ups, and pedestrian traffic crossing the route, particularly in commercial and school areas. These all contribute to delays experienced by traffic using Metairie Road. These would have to be removed to provide substantial traffic improvements. Access to Metairie Road from Focis Street, Frisco Street, Central Park Street, Forest Avenue, Narcissus Street and Avenue A would have to be by way of service roads parallel to the overpass.

Safety Impacts: The potential for an auto or pedestrian/train accident at this location would be removed.

Aesthetics: Construction of an overpass would cause a major visual impact, because the elevated structure would be out of scale with the adjacent land uses.

Impact on Community: The structure would cause vehicular access and traffic flow problems for traffic accessing Metairie Road from residential streets and commercial areas. The overpass would require additional right-of-way for the structure and service roads which would cause loss of parking spaces and decreased visibility and access to businesses in the vicinity of the overpass. Parking spaces under the overpass could be created to replace spaces lost to the structure. Vehicular delays during construction would occur.

Implementation Factors: This alternative would require funding availability and community acceptance in order for implementation to occur.

Relocation/Removal Impacts: At this time it does not appear that any homes or businesses would have to be relocated, though one building is questionable. This building houses two small businesses. One is a carpet contractor and the other is an insurance office. Both appear to employ less than ten persons each. Due to the urbanized nature of the project area, there are numerous replacement sites available for businesses. If the businesses do not relocate, there are a number of similar businesses in the community which provide the same services.

Auto parking fronting business establishments on the northside of Metairie Road, however, would be displaced by construction of service roads paralleling the overpass. Additional auto parking beneath the overpass would yield a net increase in existing parking spaces available for customer and employee parking. A road extending from the Metairie Towers building to the railroad track is proposed tying in with Frisco at Hector Avenue. This service road would pass beneath the overpass. The service road

from Metairie Road to Avenue "A" across from the Securities Homestead building would negatively impact the landscaping of church properties at Avenue "A" and Metairie Road.

(2) Noise Impacts

In terms of railroad noise, an overpass at Metairie Road would have substantially the same effect as an underpass at this location. Approximately 27 residential impacts and one school would be abated, but 49 residential units would still experience severe noise level impacts. An overpass could increase the levels of highway noise. These levels would vary, depending on design details.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

Impacts on Drainage: The drainage network anticipated for the development of this alternative would tie in to the existing drainage system. While major drainage patterns would not be altered, construction activities would be a major consideration to be addressed during the design phase of the project.

Impacts on Vegetation: Depending upon the actual design, seven or eight oak trees would require removal if the alternative is developed. Two of these oak trees show considerable signs of stress presently as a result of previous construction activities. Impact to landscaping at church properties at Avenue "A" and Metairie Road would be significant.

(4) Land Use Impacts

This alternative requires substantial acquisition of right-of-way for construction. Existing land use would be negatively affected since homes and businesses would be immediately adjacent to service roads and severely impacted by construction activities.

ALTERNATIVE #15: Construction of an Underpass at Labarre Road

Traffic volumes on Labarre Road of approximately 6,000 vehicles a day do not warrant the construction of a grade separation. This, in addition to the estimated construction cost of $3,300,000, eliminated this alternative from further consideration. Additional information on this alternative is provided in Section 3 Alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE #16: Construction of Overpass at Labarre Road

Analysis of this alternative includes the construction of a vehicular overpass over the tracks at the Labarre Road crossing. To conform with AASHTO standards, which refers to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, the length of overpass is such that it will extend to Airline Highway. Low traffic volumes do not warrant construction of a grade separation. As a result, this alternative is not a feasible alternative and requires no further analysis.

ALTERNATIVES #17 & #18: Construction of Underpass/Overpass at Carrollton Avenue

The level of traffic at this crossing of 3,142 vehicles per day does not warrant the construction of a grade separation. These alternatives were eliminated from further consideration. Additional information on these alternatives is provided in Section 3 Alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE #19: Closing of One or More of the Smaller Crossings at Atherton, Hollywood, Cuddihy, Farnham, or Carrollton

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: This alternative would eliminate vehicular-train conflicts by removing vehicular traffic from the crossing.

Auto Traffic Impacts: Closing one or more crossings would alter existing travel patterns and divert vehicular traffic to the remaining open crossings. Emergency vehicle access would be impacted by eliminating, in some cases, the most direct travel path, thereby increasing response times. Although the distance between these crossings is relatively short, many times trains are blocking a crossing and the next available crossing is used. Elimination of crossings reduces the number of alternatives available to emergency personnel.

Safety Impacts: The closing of crossings would eliminate the potential for pedestrian or auto/train accidents at grade crossings.

Aesthetics: Not applicable.

Impact on Community: This alternative would impact ease of movement across the tracks. It would create an access barrier between neighborhoods and land uses on each side of the tracks.

Implementation Factors: Community acceptance and the ability of emergency services to alter their existing routes would be the major implementation factors when considering this alternative.

(2) Noise Impacts

(a) Close Atherton Drive Crossing

If the Atherton Drive at-grade crossing is closed, the CNEL values would range from 65 dBA to 70 dBA instead of 65 dBA to 80 dBA, although these impacts would still be classified as severe. CNEL values at seventy-five homes would be abated to below 65 dBA. This would be an effective abatement measure, given the low cost and the number of residential impacts that are reduced.

(b) Close Hollywood Drive Crossing

Closing the Hollywood Drive Crossing would eliminate 82 residential impacts and maximum CNEL values would be 70 dBA instead of 80 dBA, as is presently the case.

(c) Close Bella Drive Crossing

Closing of both Bella Drive and Cuddihy Drive crossings would eliminate 62 residential impacts, as well as impacts to .8 acres of Metairie Playground and 1.7 acres of the Metairie Country Day School.

(d) Close Cuddihy Drive Crossing

If the Cuddihy Drive crossing is closed, approximately 20 residences will experience CNEL values that are reduced to less than 65 dBA, and 1.7 acres of the Metairie Country Day School would also be abated to a CNEL of less than 65 dBA. No effect would occur to the existing impacts on Metairie Playground. The remaining residential impacts would have CNELs ranging from 65 dBA to 80 dBA, and would still be classified as severe.

(e) Close Carrollton Avenue Crossing

Elimination of the Carrollton Avenue crossing would eliminate 106 residences from the impact zone defined by the CNEL of 65 dBA.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

No effect.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #20: Redesign of Roadway Layout of Metairie Road and Labarre Road

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: Redesigning Metairie Road may result in increased traffic volumes and would require upgraded crossing protection.

Auto Traffic Impacts: Metairie Road: Expanded roadway capacity may result in increased volume conditions within this corridor given the east/west travel demand patterns in Jefferson Parish. Three-lane treatment of the roadway would improve overall traffic service, particularly during off-peak periods when localized congestion and delay are caused by vehicles turning left into commercial driveways and onto residential streets. Redesigning the roadway would reduce both travel time and delay.

Safety Impacts: The increased vehicular volumes would result in increased pedestrian or vehicle/train conflicts, and would require upgraded crossing protection. (See discussion, Alternative #25, page 3-13.)

Aesthetics: This alternative may result in the modification of the existing foliage, a reduction in building setbacks, and the realignment of sidewalks.

Impact on Community: Increased access and a reduction in vehicular traffic delays would positively impact the community, and reduce congestion. This alternative would potentially increase vehicular volume conditions. Changes in the neighborhood appearance would occur due to right-of-way requirements.

Implementation Factors: Implementation factors include community acceptance and probable state funding.

Relocation/Removal Impacts: The relocation of homes and businesses along the Metairie Road corridor is not anticipated because the proposed section can be incorporated within the existing right-of-way. Existing right-of-way varies from 52 to 80 feet. Approximately 14-16 businesses along Metairie Road use the state right-of-way for auto parking. As a result some loss of parking would be anticipated.

(2) Noise Impacts

This alternative would have no effect on railroad noise. Widening of a roadway does bring vehicular noise closer to adjacent land uses, however.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

Impacts on Drainage: No significant impact to existing overall drainage patterns along the Metairie Road corridor or elsewhere in the study area would be anticipated. However, construction activities may require reconstruction and/or relocation improvements to parts of the existing drainage network.

Impacts on Vegetation: Depending upon the centerline layout and design cross section of the three-lane improvements, an indeterminate number of existing trees may be removed. Post-construction landscaping would include planting trees to replace those lost.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #21: Implementation of Transportation System Management to Improve Traffic Operation on Metairie Road

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: Not applicable.

Auto Traffic Impacts: Implementation of this alternative would provide for: the upgrading of all traffic signal hardware; upgraded traffic signal controllers and activated minor street approaches to signalized intersections; interconnection of existing signals at Bonnabel and Codifer with the proposed signals at Delimon and Focis; the provision of center left turn lanes at all intersections and within the commercial/retail land use areas; renewed pavement markings and signs; the increase of the turning radius at all streets which intersect with Metairie Road; and the installation of eastbound left turn lanes at Labarre Road and Metairie Road intersections.

Safety Impacts: Traffic safety would be improved.

Aesthetics: Not applicable.

Impact on Community: Positive impacts would be felt by the community by reducing localized congestion and delay.

Implementation Factors: Implementation factors include: coordination with Jefferson Parish, funding availability, and community acceptance.

(2) Noise Impacts

No effect.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

No effect.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #22: Construction of Service Roads Parallel to the Railroad Tracks from Metairie Road to Labarre Road

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: This alternative could possibly permit the closing of some or all of the minor crossings between Metairie Road and Labarre Road.

Auto Traffic Impacts: The construction of service roads in conjunction with the closing of the minor crossings would improve traffic circulation in the areas adjacent to the tracks but trips between the two sides of the tracks would have to be routed to Metairie and Labarre Roads which currently have the available reserve capacity to accommodate any incremental increase in volumes at the major crossing locations. Closings also increase response times for emergency vehicles because of the loss of crossing alternatives when crossings are blocked.

Analysis of this alternative under a scenario which does not include elimination of smaller crossings yields an evaluation that overall neighborhood circulation would be improved by providing an alternative to Metairie Road for east/west travel.

Safety Impacts: Implementation of this alternative with closure of the minor crossings would eliminate pedestrian and vehicular/train conflicts at these locations.

Implementation without the closure of minor crossings may have an undesirable effect of providing a means to "beat the train" as drivers race from one crossing to the next in an attempt to avoid delay at a given crossing. Overall, this alternative may result in increased vehicular speeds and localized congestion associated with introducing through traffic on low volume minor streets.

Aesthetics - not applicable.

Impact on Community: Opposition may arise from property owners now living in proximity to the streets to be linked by the service roads, and also those land owners whose property may be required to link the existing streets.

Implementation of this alternative in conjunction with the closure of minor crossings would result in the interruption of existing travel patterns by directing traffic from lower volume minor streets to higher volume Metairie and Labarre Roads.

Implementation of this alternative without closing any smaller crossings would improve neighborhood circulation and provide for an alternative to Metairie Road for east/west travel within the study area.

Implementation Factors: Implementation factors include: community acceptance; agreement by Jefferson Parish; and the ability to acquire the necessary right-of-way.

Relocation/Removal Impacts: Implementation of this alternative would cause the displacement of eight residences and four businesses. Due to the heavily urbanized area the project is located in, comparable housing is available within the financial means of relocatees.

Right-of-way for this alternative would be required from Metairie Playground and Country Day Playfield, which are Section 4(f) properties. This alternative has not been selected as a preferred alternative based on the cost of implementation, Section 4(f) impacts, and community opposition.

(2) Noise Impacts

Due to the increased speed and volume of vehicular traffic, some noise increase would be experienced through the railroad corridor should this alternative be implemented. If this alternative was implemented in conjunction with the closing of the minor crossings at Atherton, Hollywood, Farnham/Bella and West Oakridge/Cuddihy, the need for the railroads to sound the warning whistle preceding these crossings would be eliminated, thus greatly reducing noise impacts in the project area.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

Impacts on Drainage: No significant impact to existing drainage patterns would be anticipated. Depending upon the type of road constructed, drainage would consist of curb and gutter streets and underground piping or open ditch. In any case, stormwater runoff would increase in volume due to the decrease in absorption of stormwater into the ground. This would not be a significant factor.

Impacts on Vegetation: The impact to vegetation would occur along the proposed roadway corridor where existing streets do not already exist. Vegetation planted by property owners would be permanently lost due to implementation of this alternative. No sensitive flora or fauna were noted in the area.

(4) Land Use Impacts

With substantially increased traffic volumes along the railroad corridor, it is likely that some change from residential to commercial land uses would occur adjacent to the roadway.

ALTERNATIVE #23: Construction of Noise Barriers

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: Not applicable.

Auto Traffic Impacts: Not applicable.

Safety Impacts: Noise barriers would restrict pedestrian access to the railroad right-of-way. Since the barriers would not be continuous, access to the tracks would not be completely protected. Once a pedestrian is between the barrier and the tracks, the only exit would be at the grade crossings.

Aesthetics: This alternative presents potentially severe aesthetic impacts.

Impact on Community: This alternative restricts pedestrian access to the tracks, forcing people to cross only at the grade crossings. The height of the barriers would block sunlight for residents closest to the tracks, and would pose potentially severe aesthetic impacts.

Implementation Factors: Implementation factors include the availability of funding and community acceptance.

(2) Noise Impacts

Construct Noise Barriers

Table 6 and Figure 18 illustrate the effects of providing noise barriers. The analysis assumes that the barriers would be as close to the source of noise as possible and would be within 20 feet of the centerline of the railroad tracks. Figure 18a illustrates the location of noise barriers. In the absence of gates, drivers must be able to see the train as they approach the tracks; thus, the barriers must stop some distance before the grade crossing. The necessary gap between the barriers will vary

Table 6

NOISE BARRIERS

(CNEL $\geq$ 65 dBA)

Location of Residential Units:	Number of Impacts Within Each Community Noise Exposure Level						Number of Impacts Abated
	85	80	75	70	65	Total	
Labarre Road Crossing (Causeway Blvd. - Glendale Dr.)	0	0	1	5	13	19	96
Atherton Drive Crossing (Glendale Drive - Bath Ave.)	0	0	0	6	10	16	167
Hollywood Drive Crossing (Bath Drive - Cedar Drive)	0	0	0	5	11	16	168
Bella & Cuddihy Drive Crossings (Cedar Drive - Cedar Park Drive)	0	0	6	13	21	40	118
Metairie Road Crossing (Cedar Park Drive - Nursery Ave.	0	0	0	0	4	4	72
Carrollton & Orpheum Ave. Crossings (Nursery Avenue - Lake Street)	0	0	5	8	13	29	179
Total	0	0	12	37	75	124	800
Location of Schools:							
Metairie Country Day School (acres) (Cedar Drive - Cedar Park Drive)	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.0
St. Francis Xavier School (acres) (Cedar Park Drive - Nursery Avenue)	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.1
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.1
Location of Parks:							
Metairie Playground (acres) (Bath Drive - Cedar Drive)	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.7
Metairie Playground (acres) (Cedar Drive - Cedar Park Drive)	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.8
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	8.5

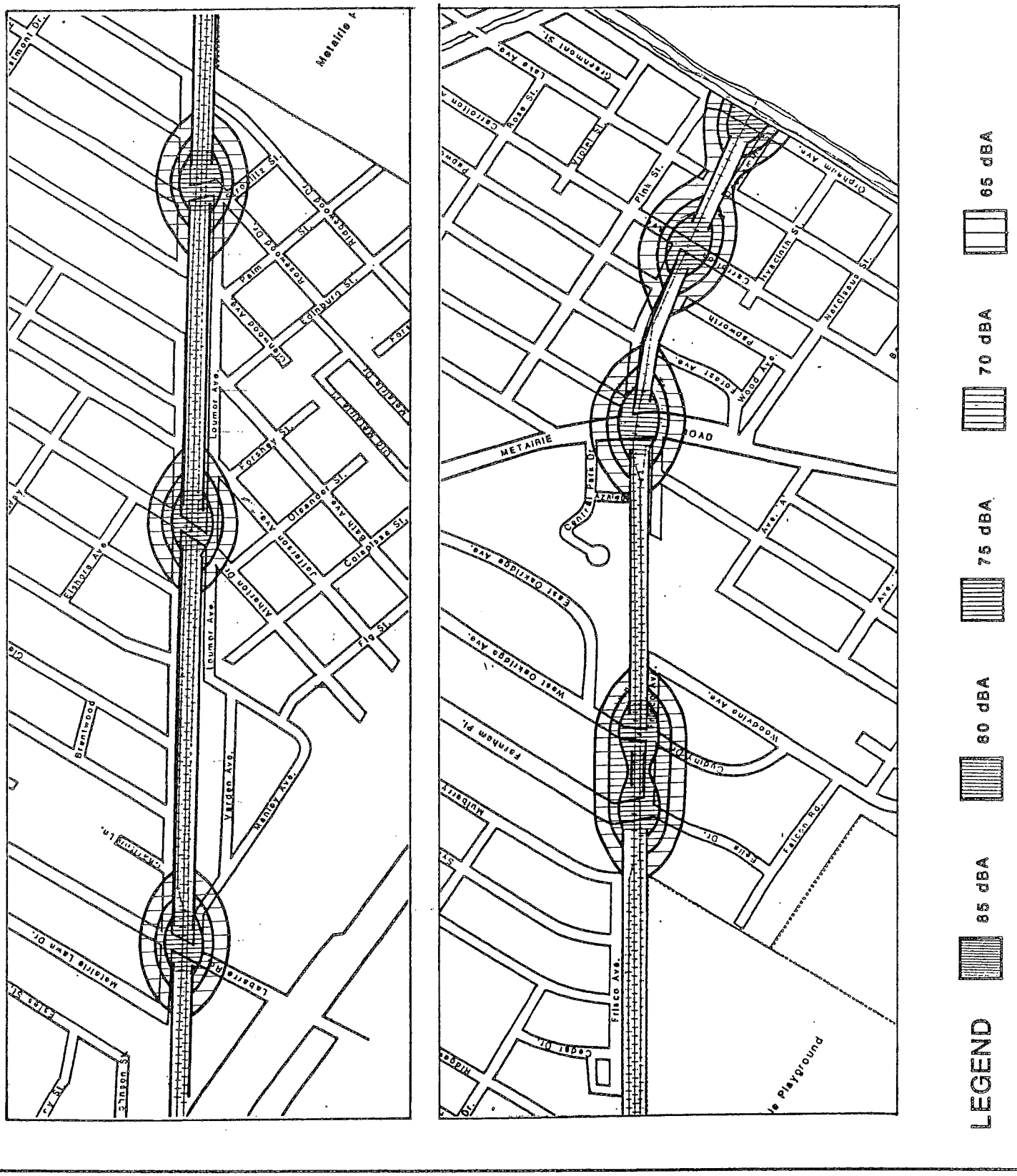

Figure 18

NOISE BARRIERS

with the speed of the automobile, the speed of the train, and the distance between the barrier and the railroad tracks. A barrier that is close to the tracks cannot come as close to the grade crossing as a barrier that is farther from the tracks. However, the farther the barrier is from the source of noise on the tracks, the higher it must be to mitigate the noise levels. Assuming that both the train and the automobiles are traveling at 25 mph or less, and that the barriers are 20 feet from the centerline of the tracks, the calculated safety distance is about 70 feet on either side of the crossing. This means that a 140-foot gap in barrier coverage would occur at each grade crossing.

The at-grade crossings, where the barrier gaps would occur, are also the areas which experience the highest noise levels due to both the warning horn and the warning bells. Consequently the barriers are most effective at points between the crossings, such as Metairie Playground. The increase in noise levels for receptors near the ends of the barriers is determined by calculating the subtended angle made by the barrier for a variety of receptor points. This must also be considered in conjunction with the barrier height, its distance from the tracks, and the elevations of the receptors. Calculations derived from Assessment of Noise Environments Around Railroad Operations indicate that noise barriers of 20 to 25 feet in height would be necessary to reduce the CNEL values. Lower barriers would provide little mitigation. Higher barriers would provide additional mitigation, but would be more difficult to install within the available right-of-way.

Given the necessary height and location of the barriers, the calculation of the subtended angles and the barrier breaks in the lines of sight, residents within approximately 375 feet of the grade crossings would experience some degree of attentuation degradation due to the barrier gaps. CNEL values would range from 65 dBA to 75 dBA. Locations along the tracks more than 375 feet from the crossings, however, should experience CNEL values of less than 65 dBA. CNEL values for Metairie Country Day School, St. Francis Xavier School, and Metairie Playground would be below 65 dBA.

The construction of noise barriers would result in mitigation of impacts to 800 residences, 6.1 acres of school grounds, and 8.5 acres of parkland. Approximately 1.75 miles of barriers, 20 to 25 feet high, would have to be constructed on each side of the track. Absorptive materials would have to be used to prevent the noise from bouncing back and forth between the barriers and degrading their effectiveness.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

Decreased sunlight may affect vegetation in the shadows of the barriers.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #24: Elimination of All Train Horns

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: Railroad operations would be minimally impacted depending on the alternative warning method chosen.

Auto Traffic Impacts: This alternative could cause slightly increased traffic delays if rail operations would be slowed.

Safety Impacts: Extreme care must be taken to ensure an alternate warning method is chosen to equal the effectiveness of a train's warning horn. This counters current State policy, although some municipalities in the U.S. have signed agreements with railroad companies to cease the blowing of horns at gate-protected crossings.

Aesthetics: If warning devices were installed as an alternative method of warning pedestrians or vehicular traffic, the aesthetic impacts would be minimal.

Impact on Community: By eliminating the primary noise source, a major source of community irritation would be removed.

Implementation Factors: Implementation factors include cooperation of the railroads and the ability to obtain state legislation to eliminate the use of the warning horn.

(2) Noise Impacts

Complete elimination of the train horns would remove the primary rail-related noise source. This alternative would substantially reduce noise impacts throughout the project area.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

No effect.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #25: Placement of Additional Warning Devices at Crossings

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: Rail operations would be positively impacted if additional warning devices were placed at the crossings because of the increased traffic safety resulting from the creation of a high visibility warning system. Ongoing maintenance would be necessary since crossing gates are frequently damaged and must be replaced, and signals must be maintained so they do not malfunction.

Auto Traffic Impacts: Warning devices improve traffic operations by improving safety.

Safety Impacts: Warning bells are a particularly suitable warning for pedestrians and bicyclists, but have less impact on drivers. Improved street lighting improves the safety of minor crossings by providing for better illumination of crossings which may be occupied by a stopped train.

Aesthetics: Not applicable.

Impact on Community: Overall safety in the project area would be improved. Warning bells would add to noise levels, somewhat. If gates malfunctioned, additional bottlenecks would be created on an already crowded roadway.

Implementation Factors: Implementation factors include: funding availability, community acceptance, and cooperation by the railroads.

(2) Noise Impacts

Clanging bells provide warning as to the lowering of gate assemblies, which will add to the noise levels somewhat. This will be particularly annoying when trains pass late at night.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

No effect.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #26: Fencing the Tracks

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: Not applicable.

Auto Traffic Impacts: Not applicable.

Safety Impacts: The intention of this alternative is to restrict pedestrian access to railroad right-of-way for safety purposes, but since the fencing is separated at each grade crossing, it would minimally achieve this goal. Once access to the tracks is obtained, a pedestrian can only exit at the grade crossings, thus it would not substantially improve pedestrian safety.

Aesthetics: Fencing would pose possible severe negative impacts on aesthetics.

Impact on Community: By restricting access to the railroad tracks, access to Metairie Park and stores on Metairie Road would also be restricted for those residents who use the railroad right-of-way to walk to these locations.

Implementation Factors: Implementation would depend on funding availability and community acceptance.

(2) Noise Impacts

No effect.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

Since construction would likely occur within the existing railroad right-of-way, there would be no effect on the natural environment.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVE #27: Construction of One or More Pedestrian/Bicycle Overpasses

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: Not applicable.

Auto Traffic Impacts: Not applicable.

Safety Impacts: This alternative improves safety by providing safe crossing for pedestrians.

Aesthetics: This alternative may have negative impacts on aesthetics due to the appearance of the overpass structure.

Impact on Community: Overpass(es) would provide safe pedestrian crossings over the tracks and reduce pedestrian delay caused by trains using the tracks.

Implementation Factors: Implementation factors include community acceptance and funding availability.

(2) Noise Impacts

No effect.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

Construction of this alternative may require removal of a minimal amount of vegetation.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

ALTERNATIVES #28 & 29: Reopening the Pedestrian/Bicycle Underpass Located at Metairie Playground; Construction of Additional Pedestrian/Bicycle Underpasses.

The existing pedestrian underpass located at Metairie Playground was closed due to vandalism, crime, and drainage problems. Reopening the underpass would not address the problems which originally necessitated its closing and it is likely these problems would recur. For these reasons, reopening the existing pedestrian underpass and constructing additional pedestrian underpasses were not given further consideration. Additional discussion of these alternatives is provided in Section 3 Alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE #30: Restriction of Hazardous Material Rail Shipments

(1) Social and Economic Impacts

Rail Impacts: Rail operations would be severely restricted. Tank cars average approximately one-third of total rail shipments through the project area according to Urban Systems survey of May 12 and 13, 1986 (not all tank cars carry hazardous materials). Hazardous material cars would have to be switched out of through trains that presently do not stop in the New Orleans area, moved

separately along the riverfront route (N.O.P.B.), the only viable route (see Alternative #2, page 3-3) then switched back into other through trains, delaying each such car at least one day as well as delaying through trains. The N.O.P.B. tracks may have to be upgraded (as discussed in Alternative #2, page 3-3).

Auto Traffic Impacts: Traffic delays may be reduced since most trains would be shorter without hazardous material cars.

Safety Impacts: Safety in the neighborhood would improve with the absence of hazardous material rail cars because the chance of a hazardous material accident would be eliminated. It should be noted that it is possible that increased rail traffic of hazardous materials, through another area, could carry a corresponding increase in accident risk for that area.

Aesthetics: Not applicable.

Impact on Community: The community would experience both psychological and safety benefits if hazardous material rail cars were eliminated.

Implementation Factors: Implementation factors include the cooperation of the railroads and acceptance of this alternative by Orleans Parish. It is important to note that this alternative may be deemed by the courts to be unlawful interference with interstate transportation (see Appendix E).

(2) Noise Impacts

This would reduce the total number of rail cars which would reduce noise impacts, somewhat. It would not address the primary noise source which is the warning horn.

(3) Impacts on Natural Environment

No effect.

(4) Land Use Impacts

No effect.

Relationship Between Local Short-Term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity

The alternatives which are preferred for reducing rail conflicts in the all Metairie area do not involve any changes in the use of the area. Metairie Road and the associated street system is projected to continue in transportation use and the rail corridor is projected to continue in rail transportation use. The area is

fully developed and implementation of these recommendations will have little or no impact on the long-term development of the study area.

Any Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources Which Would be Involved in the Proposed Action

The alternatives proposed will not change any commitments of land uses in the study area. If changes in use from transportation to another use is desired in the future, the land could be converted to the desired use.

Those alternatives which would result in construction will require the use of fossil fuels, labor and construction materials. These items are not in short supply and their use will not have an adverse affect on their continued availability.

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Regional Forester
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SECTION 8

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SECTION 9

COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

A comprehensive public involvement program has been conducted in accordance with this project. A 600-person attitudinal survey was conducted by telephone for the purpose of identifying pertinent issues. By the end of the project, six newsletters will have been published, informing the community of the project's progress. The Old Metairie Railroad Project Steering Committee was formed by the Jefferson Parish Council prior to the commencement of this project to assist in guiding the study efforts and to select a recommended plan to present to the Parish Council. Steering Committee meetings have been held approximately every two months. Two public meetings were held to discuss this project: the first was May 21, 1986, and the second October 29, 1986. The purpose of the first public meeting was to present the data collected to date and receive questions and comments from the public concerning issues which needed to be addressed. This meeting was broken up into five concurrent workshop sessions in order to maximize public participation. The purpose of the second public meeting was to present the alternatives' analysis and to receive comments and questions from the public regarding this analysis. Summaries of Public Meeting #1 and Public Meeting #2 follow. Finally, a public opinion poll was distributed in order to measure community attitudes regarding each of the identified alternatives. The results of this poll are presented following the public meeting summaries.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement was distributed to Federal, State and local agencies, and interested organizations and individuals for their review. A summary of comments received and responses to the comments follows the results of the public opinion polls. Copies of the letters received from reviewers are found in Appendix G.

On April 7, 1988, a location and design public hearing was held for the project at the Jefferson Parish Council Chambers. Oral and written comments received at and after the public hearing are summarized along with responses after the review comments on the DEIS.

PUBLIC MEETING #1

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Public meeting #1 was held on May 21, 1986, at 7:30 p.m. at the St. Francis Xavier School gym located at 215 Betz Place in Metairie. Five concurrent workshop sessions were held in order to maximize public participation at the meeting. The following is a summary of those sessions according to the various topics discussed.

Railroad

The bulk of comments, questions and suggestions raised in the workshop sessions were directed toward the railroad companies. There were many comments raised regarding the ordinance restricting a train from blocking a crossing for more than five minutes and the railroad's violation of the ordinance at all the crossings. Many residents felt that it is very difficult to prosecute the railroads, in part due to the fact that if they miss the engine, there is no way to identify the railroad company violating the ordinance.

Several comments were raised regarding the schedule kept by the railroad companies. Most seem to feel that the railroads do keep to a daily schedule and that they do not run solely on demand.

Should the railroad tracks be removed from the area, residents are concerned about what would happen to the right-of-way. Many commented that a new roadway would be an unacceptable alternative.

Discussion was held concerning a second track at Metairie Road. Many residents feel that this would also be unacceptable since they feel a second track would only increase railroad traffic.

Another railroad concern raised in most of the workshop sessions concerned the transportation of hazardous materials. Residents felt that hazardous materials shipments were diverted from the riverfront route during the World's Fair and sent through Metairie. The question was raised as to when the traffic would be put back on the riverfront route.

Traffic

Traffic concerns were mainly focused on Metairie Road. Concerns were raised regarding building an overpass or underpass at Metairie Road. Many felt that Metairie Road already carries more traffic than it can handle and that grade separation would only make the situation worse.

Other comments pertained to excessive delays at the railroad crossings. Several residents requested auto delays be recalculated with regard to queuing time rather than the time the railroads block the crossings. They feel this would give a more accurate measure of traffic delays.

Safety

Concerns related to safety were directed to children playing near the railroad, especially at Metairie Playground. Other safety concerns focused on the transportation of hazardous materials through the study area (see previous Railroad section). One workshop session discussed rail related accidents and felt the information presented by Urban Systems was inadequate in this respect. Residents feel more accidents have occurred than have been reported, and this deserves further investigation.

Noise

The rules and regulations pertaining to the train whistles were questioned by many. A number of residents commented that Jefferson Parish should enforce their ordinance regarding trains not being allowed to use their horn from 11PM - 6AM.

Vibration from the trains was raised as an issue residents feel should be studied. Concerns as to loud switching noise, obscene language used by railroad employees which can be heard in adjoining neighborhoods, and engine noise were also mentioned as objectionable sources of noise.

Legal

A representative of the Jefferson Parish District Attorney's (D.A.) Office was present to discuss legal aspects of the project. Participants were given instructions as to the proper procedures for reporting violations to the D.A.'s office and given information as to how they are prosecuted. Mr. Jim Foley of 128 Glenwood, tel. 837-4137, offered to notarize complaints about the railroad companies at no charge. Several residents commented that they feel the fines levied on the railroad companies for violating Jefferson Parish ordinances are inadequate.

Other

Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the public meeting notification. Some residents never received the newsletter announcing the meeting and some received it the day of the meeting. A number of questions were received regarding the make-up of the Steering Committee. Many residents feel that the railroads are over-represented on the committee. Some participants also feel that there are too many business representatives on the committee and not enough residents of the project area.

Several workshop sessions had discussions concerning the proposed alternatives solutions and expressed dissatisfaction that a list of alternatives was not presented at the meeting. The solutions

most often raised by the participants included: no action - preserve the neighborhood as is, re-locate the railroad tracks or at least the trains, and stricter enforcement of the ordinances by Jefferson Parish.

PUBLIC MEETING #2

SUMMARY

Public meeting #2 was held on October 29, 1986, at 7:30 p.m. at the American Legion Post 175 located at 2431 Metairie Road in Metairie. Participants at the 2nd Public Meeting presented questions and comments on a number of issues concerning the preliminary alternatives analysis. Presented below is a summary of the discussions held on several topics.

RELOCATION OF TRAIN OPERATIONS

Several people questioned why the trains could not be relocated to a less populated area, such as north of the lake or in the Airline/Pontchartrain Expy. corridor.

The consultant team indicated that relocation of the trains to these areas appeared infeasible because currently there are no rail tracks located north of the lake between Covington and Baton Rouge and the cost of building these tracks would be very high. Also, engineering, costs, legal, and highway relocation issues related to the use of the Airline/Pontchartrain Expy. corridor make this alternative appear infeasible.

A full analysis of the various relocation alternatives identified by the CONSAD report and the consultant's research will be presented in the Preliminary Engineering Study (PES) report for this project.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

A number of people expressed their concern over the presence of numerous rail cars transporting hazardous materials in the study area. Questions were raised concerning the placarding of tank cars, evacuation plans for the Old Metairie area, the parking and inspection of hazardous materials cars in residential areas, and the threat of vandalism of the tracks to the safety of tank cars.

Representatives from the Jefferson Parish Fire Dept. and the State Police Hazardous Materials Unit responded to each of these questions. Emergency phone numbers for State Police (504) 925-6595 and Jefferson Parish Hazardous Materials Officer (911 or 349-5317) were given to the audience for their use if an incident occurs or to report a violation.

NOISE

Comments were received concerning the loudness of the train horn and how every effort should be made to eliminate the horn's use if it can be done safely.

A representative from the Norfolk/Southern Railway indicated that the train horn was loud because it must effectively warn motorists of oncoming trains. The consultant team is investigating other areas of the country where communities have worked out agreements with the railroads not to sound the train horn at crossings and to determine if such an agreement can be worked out in the Metairie area.

SPEED OF TRAINS

One meeting participant noted that speeding trains in the area cause his house to shake violently. Another person stated that he believed the trains were regularly exceeding the posted 20 mph speed limit in the area.

A railroad representative indicated that the trains in the corridor do not exceed the 20 mph speed limit and that the railroads regularly conduct speed checks of these trains. The consultant conducted speed checks of the trains for a 24-hour period and none exceeded the speed limit.

PARALLEL SERVICE ROADS

At the suggestion of a meeting participant, the consultant will further investigate the construction and acquisition costs associated with the construction of through service roads parallel to the tracks from Metairie Rd. to Labarre Rd. These costs estimates will be included in the PES report.

ENFORCEMENT OF EXISTING RAIL ORDINANCES

Several meeting participants expressed dissatisfaction with the enforcement, the penalties, and the effectiveness of the existing rail ordinances.

One person suggested placing video and timing equipment at each crossing to observe crossing delays and to identify violations. The railroad representative indicated that the railroads have made every effort to comply with the 5 minute crossing law. He also stated that people should understand that this law only applies to standing trains and not trains travelling unstopped through a crossing.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Several people questioned the role of the Steering Committee and if the Committee's recommendations to the Jefferson Parish Council were binding.

The Committee Chairman, Kevin Kidd, stated that the Committee was appointed by the Council to guide the consultant's study efforts, get a feel for what the community wanted to see done, and to recommend to the Council alternative solutions that all parties would endorse. It will be up to the Council to act on the Committee's recommendations.

OTHER

Comments were also received concerning the need for additional lighting and warning gates at the crossings, the need to keep the tracks clear of waiting trains so that emergency vehicles will not be delayed, and a determination of the impact of several of the alternatives discussed on property values in the study area.

Several people endorsed the Do Nothing alternative stating that the railroad was an incovenience but the alternatives would do more harm than good. On the other hand, numerous people commented that some relief was needed to ease the noise, traffic delays, and fears of a hazardous materials incident.

The meeting discussions were recorded and a full transcript will be made available to the Steering Committee.

TOTAL

PUBLIC OPINION POLL

11/25/86	Very Favorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	No Opinion	Total
1. Do nothing	28 10 %	23 8 %	44 16 %	161 57 %	25 9 %	281 100%
2. Relocation/removal of railroad tracks	225 73 %	28 9 %	17 5 %	28 9 %	12 4 %	310 100%
3. Construction of double tracks between Metairie Road and Jefferson/Orleans line	21 8 %	16 6 %	47 17 %	164 59 %	32 11 %	280 100%
4. Removal of long siding	172 61 %	42 15 %	12 4 %	19 7 %	37 13 %	282 100%
5. Restriction of train movements during peak traffic periods	155 53 %	59 20 %	24 8 %	34 12 %	18 6 %	290 100%
6. Depression of railroad tracks in Metairie Corridor	24 8 %	16 6 %	45 16 %	147 52 %	52 18 %	284 100%
7. Elevation of railroad tracks in Metairie Corridor	18 6 %	17 6 %	31 11 %	178 63 %	38 13 %	282 100%
8. Removal of second track from Metairie Road to Labarre Road	144 50 %	41 14 %	16 6 %	41 14 %	46 16 %	288 100%
9. Enforcement of existing rail ordinances	186 65 %	56 20 %	13 5 %	14 5 %	18 6 %	287 100%
10. Reduce number of trains using tracks	179 63 %	59 21 %	10 3 %	21 7 %	17 6 %	286 100%

TOTAL

PUBLIC OPINION POLL

11/25/86	Very Favorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	No Opinion	Total
11. Park waiting trains in area outside of study area	197 69 %	45 16 %	7 2 %	16 6 %	21 7 %	286 100%
12. Increase speed of trains	23 8 %	34 12 %	69 25 %	133 47 %	22 8 %	281 100%
13. Construction of an underpass at Metairie Road	42 15 %	29 10 %	43 15 %	150 53 %	21 7 %	285 100%
14. Construction of an overpass at Metairie Road	33 12 %	28 10 %	41 14 %	162 57 %	21 7 %	285 100%
15. Construction of an underpass at Labarre Road	30 11 %	30 11 %	38 13 %	135 48 %	49 17 %	282 100%
16. Construction of an overpass at Labarre Road	24 8 %	22 8 %	36 13 %	149 52 %	54 19 %	285 100%
17. Construction of an underpass at Carrollton Ave.	23 8 %	15 5 %	32 11 %	148 52 %	65 23 %	283 100%
18. Construction of an overpass at Carrollton Ave.	16 6 %	12 4 %	38 14 %	152 54 %	63 22 %	281 100%
19. Closing of one and/or more of the smaller crossings at Atherton, Hollywood, Cuddihy, and/or Farnham.	30 11 %	16 6 %	32 11 %	179 64 %	24 9 %	281 100%
20. Redesign the roadway layout of Metairie and Labarre Roads	48 17 %	44 15 %	43 15 %	102 36 %	48 17 %	285 100%

TOTAL

PUBLIC OPINION POLL

11/25/86	Very Favorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	No Opinion	Total
21. Implementation of Transportation System Management techniques on the street system serving the study area.	81 29 %	59 21 %	21 8 %	55 20 %	63 23 %	279 100%
22. Construction of service streets parallel to the railroad tracks from Metairie Rd. to Labarre Rd.	47 17 %	53 19 %	36 13 %	115 41 %	32 11 %	283 100%
23. Construction of noise barriers.	26 9 %	30 11 %	42 15 %	143 51 %	37 13 %	278 100%
24. Elimination of all train horns	74 26 %	54 19 %	57 20 %	74 26 %	26 9 %	285 100%
25. Placement of additional warning device at crossings	83 30 %	81 29 %	45 16 %	50 18 %	22 8 %	281 100%
26. Fencing off of the tracks	18 6 %	21 7 %	47 17 %	151 54 %	44 16 %	281 100%
27. Construction of one or more pedestrian/bicycle overpasses	30 11 %	41 15 %	56 20 %	103 37 %	52 18 %	282 100%
28. Reopening the pedestrian/bicycle underpass located at Metairie Playground	44 15 %	40 14 %	42 15 %	98 35 %	60 21 %	284 100%
29. Construction of additional pedestrian/bicycle underpasses	29 10 %	35 12 %	52 18 %	96 34 %	70 25 %	282 100%
30. Restriction of hazardous materials rail shipments	222 78 %	32 11 %	3 1 %	15 5 %	12 4 %	284 100%

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT REVIEW COMMENTS

Nineteen agencies provided responses to the request for comments on the DEIS. The following is a summary of the substantive comments received and, where applicable, a response to the comments is provided. Copies of response letters are provided in Appendix G.

New Orleans City Planning Commission

Comment: The Planning Commission is opposed to Alternative 2: Relocation/removal of railroad tracks; Alternative 5: Restriction of train movements during peak traffic periods; and Alternative 10: Reduced number of trains using the tracks. The Planning Commission feels these alternatives simply shift the problem to Orleans Parish.

Response: None of these alternatives was selected as a preferred alternative for various reasons. It is acknowledged that these alternatives would shift the existing problem to other areas of the New Orleans metropolitan area and this was a factor in not selecting these as preferred alternatives.

Comment: The DEIS recommends no alternatives and the rating of Alternative 2: Relocation/removal does not consider impacts on Orleans Parish.

Response: The Final EIS contains a listing of the preferred alternatives on page 3-4. In not selecting Alternative 2 as a preferred alternative, the discussion of the alternative on page 3-6 acknowledges that there would be impacts in Orleans Parish although quantification of these impacts was not included in the scope of this study.

Norfolk Southern Corporation

Comment: Alternative 3, Construction of double tracks between Metairie Road and Jefferson/Orleans line would improve the efficiency and flexibility of train operations in the Metairie corridor. This would also alleviate the problem caused by standing trains blocking grade crossings.

Response: While construction of a double track would make rail operations more efficient in the area, this alternative was strongly opposed by the community. The community feels this would introduce more train traffic to the area, magnifying existing problems. This alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative because of the strong negative community reaction.

Comment: Construction of an underpass/overpass at Metairie Road (Alternatives 13 and 14) would eliminate blockage of the primary highway crossing in the area, which is a major concern of the public.

Response: While the public would like to improve traffic flow, most are opposed to these alternatives because they would encourage more commuter traffic to use Metairie Road. These alternatives would also impact businesses and a small apartment house in the vicinity of the crossing. The community felt these changes would be detrimental to the character of the Metairie community. Based primarily on a lack of community support, these alternatives were not selected as preferred alternatives.

Comment: Alternative 2: Relocation/removal of the tracks is not viable operationally or economically and the alternative should be dropped from further consideration.

Response: This alternative was not selected as a preferred alternative for the reasons cited on page 3-6 in the discussion of this alternative.

U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Environmental Project Review

Comment: Alternatives 22, 23 and 26 would have impacts on two recreation areas. If one of these alternatives is selected as a preferred alternative, the requirements of Section 4(f) must be complied with.

Response: None of these alternatives has been selected as a preferred alternative.

Louisiana Department of Natural Resources

Comment: The project, as proposed, is consistent with the Louisiana Coastal Resources Program.

U S. Environmental Protection Agency

Comment: Alternatives that appear to be the most effective and should have further consideration are:

1) Removal of long siding
2) Enforcement of rail ordinances
3) Parking waiting trains outside study area
4) Construction of noise barriers
5) Elimination of train horns
6) Placement of additional safety warning devices at crossings

The removal of long siding appears to be the single most effective alternative. This alternative, with the other five, would enhance project objectives of noise reduction, improved traffic flow, and community safety.

Response: All these alternatives were selected as preferred alternatives except parking waiting trains outside the study area and

construction of noise barriers. A full discussion of the reasons for selecting preferred alternatives and eliminating others is included in Section 3 Alternatives.

Comment: These comments classify the Draft EIS as lack of objection.

Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of Cultural Development

Comment: If Alternatives 6, 7, 13-18, 20, 22, 23, 26-29 are chosen, we would appreciate an opportunity to review plans, as any of these could conceivably affect cultural resources.

Response: Alternative 20, which calls for the redesign of Metairie Road to a three-lane facility, has been selected as a preferred alternative. At this time, there are no design plans for accomplishing this. Information on Alternative 20 was provided to the Office of Cultural Development and they determined that the alternative will have no effect on cultural resources.

Regional Transit Authority

Comment: The Regional Transit Authority does not object to any alternatives; however, some alternatives present minor concerns and should be given further consideration prior to their further pursuit. These are:

Alternative 2: Relocation/Removal of Railroad Tracks
Alternative 14: Construction of Overpass at Metairie Road
Alternative 20: Redesign of Roadway Layout of Metairie and Labarre Roads
Alternative 27: Construction of One or More Pedestrian/Bicycle Overpasses

The RTA also requests that it be provided the opportunity to provide technical review and input to the design of proposed improvements.

Response: The only alternative mentioned by the RTA selected as a preferred alternative is Alternative 20: Redesign of Roadway Layout of Metairie Road. This alternative only includes Metairie Road. Design plans have not been developed for such a project at this time. If the project is moved to implementation, the RTA will be involved in a review of the proposed layout to insure that public transit concerns are addressed.

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Comment: A portion of the project may be in an identified flood hazard area, and the Jefferson Parish floodplain administrator should be consulted as to local NFIP requirements.

Response: The project is located in a floodplain area and the floodplain coordinator has been consulted. No significant encroachment of the floodplain will occur.

U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Transportation Regulatory Affairs

Comment: When a preferred alternative/combination of alternatives is selected or the range of alternatives has been further narrowed, the environmental impacts should be analyzed more specifically, followed by consideration of the need for a supplemental EIS.

Response: A package of preferred alternatives for accomplishing the projects' goals is described on page 3-4. One of the preferred alternatives, the removal of long siding, has been implemented by the railroads and is complete. The remaining preferred alternatives are discussed in the Alternatives section and the Environmental Consequences section of the report.

Preliminary plans have not been developed for the alternative at this time. Estimates are that the project can be completed within the existing right-of-way, thus minimizing impacts to the neighborhood.

PUBLIC HEARING COMMENTS

The public hearing was held on April 7, 1988, at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Council Chambers of the Yenni Building located at 1221 Elmwood Park in Harahan. The following is a summary of substantive comments received at the public hearing for the project. Responses to comments have been included when relevant.

1. Comment: There were a number of comments related to the Jefferson Parish Rail Ordinances. Many of these related to violations of the ordinances and lack of enforcement of the ordinances. Specific accusations of ordinance violations included blocking of crossings longer than the allowed 5 minutes, train horns violating the horn ordinance and parked engines left running in residential areas. There were also comments concerning what the formal complaint process is and that the process for a citizen to file a complaint should be made easier.

Response: The Jefferson Parish Rail Ordinances are included in Appendix C of this report. A legal review of the ordinances is included in Appendix E. The legal review found that the ordinance prohibiting the blowing of horns was not legally binding and the ordinance prohibiting running of engines next to residences was vague and probably would not be upheld if challenged in court. The ordinance prohibiting blockings of crossings for more than 5 minutes has been tested in court and is enforceable.

The District Attorney's Office receives complaints in Jefferson Parish and has developed a form for filing complaints. Prosecution of the complaints is at the discretion of the District Attorney's Office. Enforcement of rail ordinances has been identified in this report as one of the alternatives which could reduce rail/highway conflicts.

2. Comment: Why were people not notified of the meeting through the On-Track mailing list?

Response: The On-Track mailing list is maintained by the project consultant to distribute the On-Track newsletter to the community. Responsibility for notification of the public hearing was with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD). The process used to notify persons was legal advertisements in area newspapers and mailing of notifications to persons on the DOTD mailing list for the project. The local media, including television and radio stations, were also notified by DOTD.

3. Comment: Many persons during the course of the project expressed concern about hazardous materials which were being moved over the tracks. There was also concern expressed about emergency response capabilities in the parish.

Response: One of the areas examined during the legal research for this project was whether the railroads can be legally forced to

restrict the movement of hazardous materials through the area. To some extent, this might be accomplished; however, the issue is very complicated because alternate routes would also move the materials through high density areas. A full discussion of the legal issues is included in Appendix E.

It should be pointed out that the long siding has been removed. Occasionally hazardous material cars were stored on the siding and this had been a concern of residents.

The Jefferson Parish Fire Department maintains a Fire and Emergency Services Unit which is responsible for public response to hazardous material accidents in the parish. An evaluation of the response capabilities of this unit was beyond the scope of this project.

4. Comment: Vibration from passing trains was cited as a problem by several persons at the public hearing.

Response. An analysis of vibration problems caused by passing trains was not included in the scope of this project.

5. Comment: Can blockage of Hollywood, Atherton, and Labarre Roads at the same time be stopped?

Response: There is no legal means to stop the blockages at the same time; however, enforcement of the 5-minute blockage ordinance could reduce the length of blockage time.

6. Comment: Train horns are too loud and do not need to be sounded at such a high decibel level.

Response: The state law requiring the blowing of horns does not state at what decibel level they should be sounded. Federal regulations, however, require that all train horns must produce a minimum sound level of 96 dBA at 100 feet forward of the locomotive in its direction of travel.

7. Comment: Trains are exceeding the speed limit in the area..

Response: Urban Systems monitored train speeds for a 24-hour period and found no trains exceeding the speed limit. A request to have the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Department clock train speeds with radar was denied.

8. Comment: Trains carrying hazardous materials should be routed outside of the New Orleans metropolitan area.

Response: The CONSAD Report (1985) examined the feasibility of routing rail traffic outside of the New Orleans area and determined that this would not be feasible.

9. Comment: The addition of a second track from Metairie Road to the 17th Street Canal is not acceptable to the community. The possibility of additional train traffic, noise and vibration are cited as the reasons for opposition.

Response: Doubling of the track from Metairie Road to the 17th Street Canal was not selected as a preferred alternative.

10. Comment: A grade separation at Metairie Road is opposed because it will create more commuter traffic on Metairie Road and be detrimental to the character of the neighborhood.

Response: A grade separation at Metairie Road was not selected as a preferred alternative.

11. Comment: Who makes the final decision on what will happen?

Response: The consultant for the project presented the preferred alternative package to the Project Streeting Committee. The Project Steering Committee is charged with making recommendations to the Jefferson Parish Council based on information provided in the study. For those alternatives requiring public agency action, the Council will determine which alternatives are pursued.

12. Comment: The frequency of trains in the area is higher and the trains longer.

Response: Interviews with railroad companies using the tracks indicate that the nature of operations has changed over the past ten years. Railroads feel there is less business over the tracks. This probably related to there being less cars in each movement than fewer movements. The use of run-through trains has had the opposite effect of fewer movements but longer trains. Urban Systems' survey of trains on three different days found 19, 21, and 22 trains respectively. It does not appear that train movements are appreciably different today than in 1975.

13. Comment: The second track which was built during World War II should be eliminated.

Response: Urban Systems has found no agreement requiring the elimination of this track after World War II. The legal possibilities of removing this track are examined in the legal analysis found in Appendix E.

14. Comment: Place a limit on the number of trains moving through the area each day.

Response: This question was researched in the legal analysis. It is very doubtful that this could be accomplished through legal actions. A discussion of this legal issue is included in Appendix E.

15. Comment: Residents are opposed to the closing of any of the minor crossings as this would affect circulation in the area and emergency evacuation.

Response: Closing of crossings was not selected as a preferred alternative.

16. Comment: Although most persons would like to see the railroad removed from the area, if it stays, the package of preferred alternatives should be implemented.

17. Comment: The Forest Hills Civic Association is in favor of Alternatives 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 23, 24, 25, and 30. They are adamantly opposed to 3, 13, 14, 19, 20, 22, and 26.

18. Comment: Individual is not in favor of eliminating horns and improving crossing protection because it would create a dangerous situation.

Response: This has been done in other areas of the country. At least 15 states provide some form of exception for incorporated areas from the state statutes, including California, Florida, Iowa, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Nevada, Utah, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. No information was available on the impact on safety in these other areas.

19. Comment: The railroad does not maintain the tracks in good condition.

Response: The tracks were inspected by an independent inspector and found to be in very good condition for the tonnage now using them and the authorized speed.

20. Comment: Who asked that the study be made, who paid for it, and what is the ulterior motive of the study?

Response: At the request of the Jefferson Parish Council, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, with funding from the Federal Highway Administration, commissioned a study effort to develop a comprehensive plan for easing the railroad-highway flow conflicts and noise problems associated with the presence of the railroad in the Old Metairie area. The ulterior motive of the study is to reduce highway/railroad conflicts by recommending measures which are feasible to implement.