

NEW ORLEANS
RAIL GATEWAY PROGRAM
AN ECONOMIC ENGINE FOR OUR COMMUNITY

New Orleans Rail Gateway Program EIS

Jefferson and Orleans Parishes
State Project No. H.005168

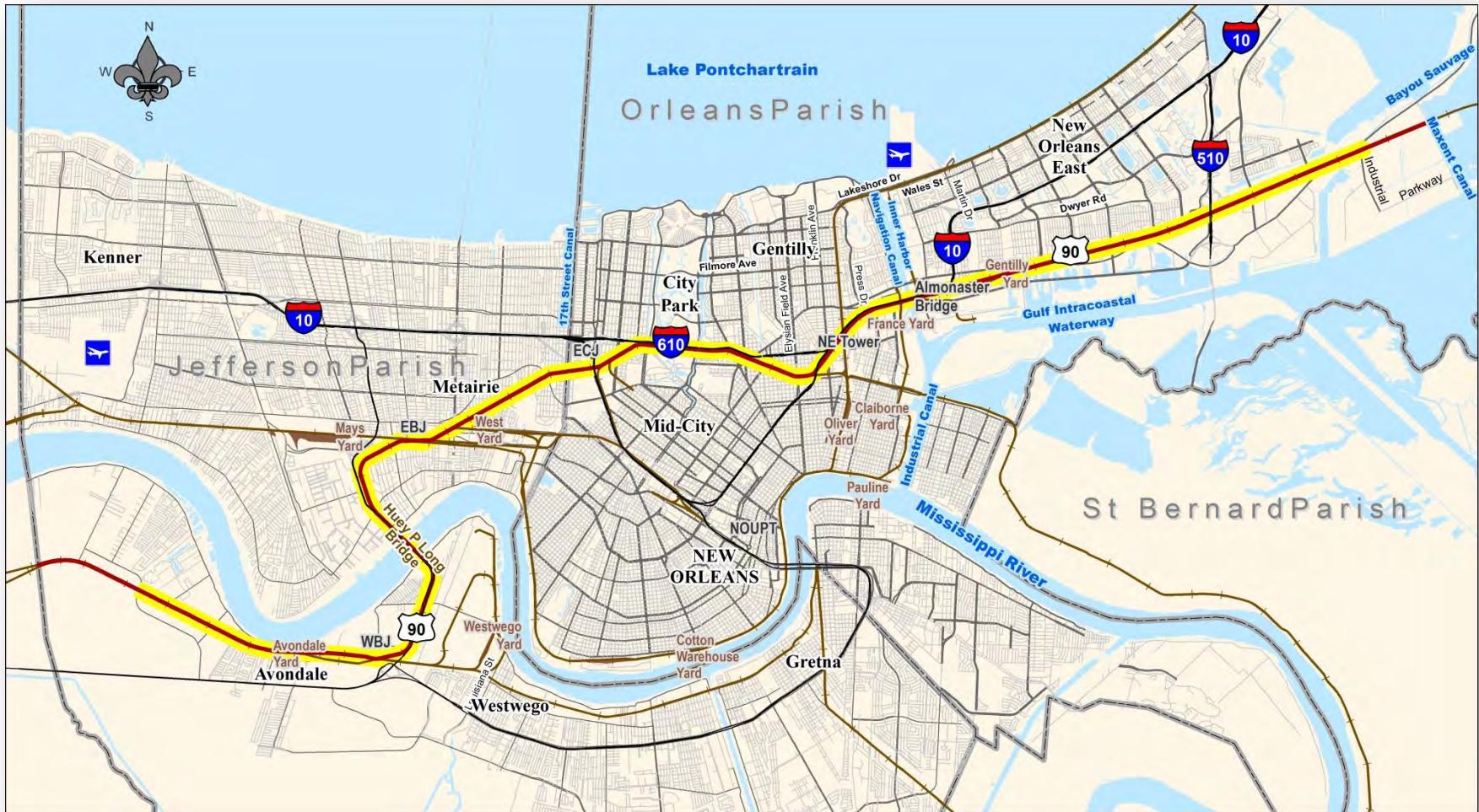
Community Meeting

January 23, 2014

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New Orleans Rail Gateway



- 4th largest US Rail Gateway
- 6 of 7 Class 1 Railroads
- Rail yards and intermodal facilities
- Port of New Orleans
- Needs major improvement

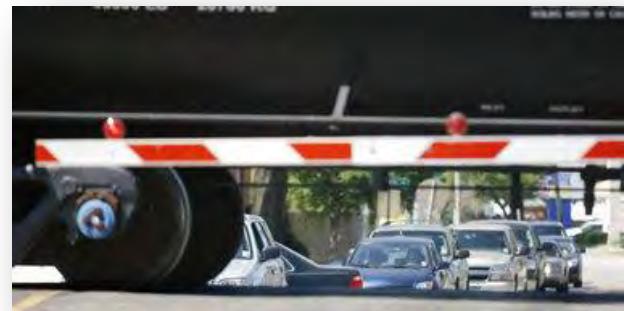
Why are Improvements Needed?



- **Antiquated control systems and switches slow travel times through the Gateway**
- **Eliminate system choke points that inhibit rail operations**
- **Almonaster Bridge requires frequent unscheduled maintenance**
- **Current freight demand routinely impacts highway traffic**

Cumulative delays on average per day:

- **112.4 hours of delays for all Vehicles**
- **12.1 hours of delays for all Trucks**



- **Future freight demand will impact regional economic competitiveness**

NORG Program Study Partners



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION & DEVELOPMENT



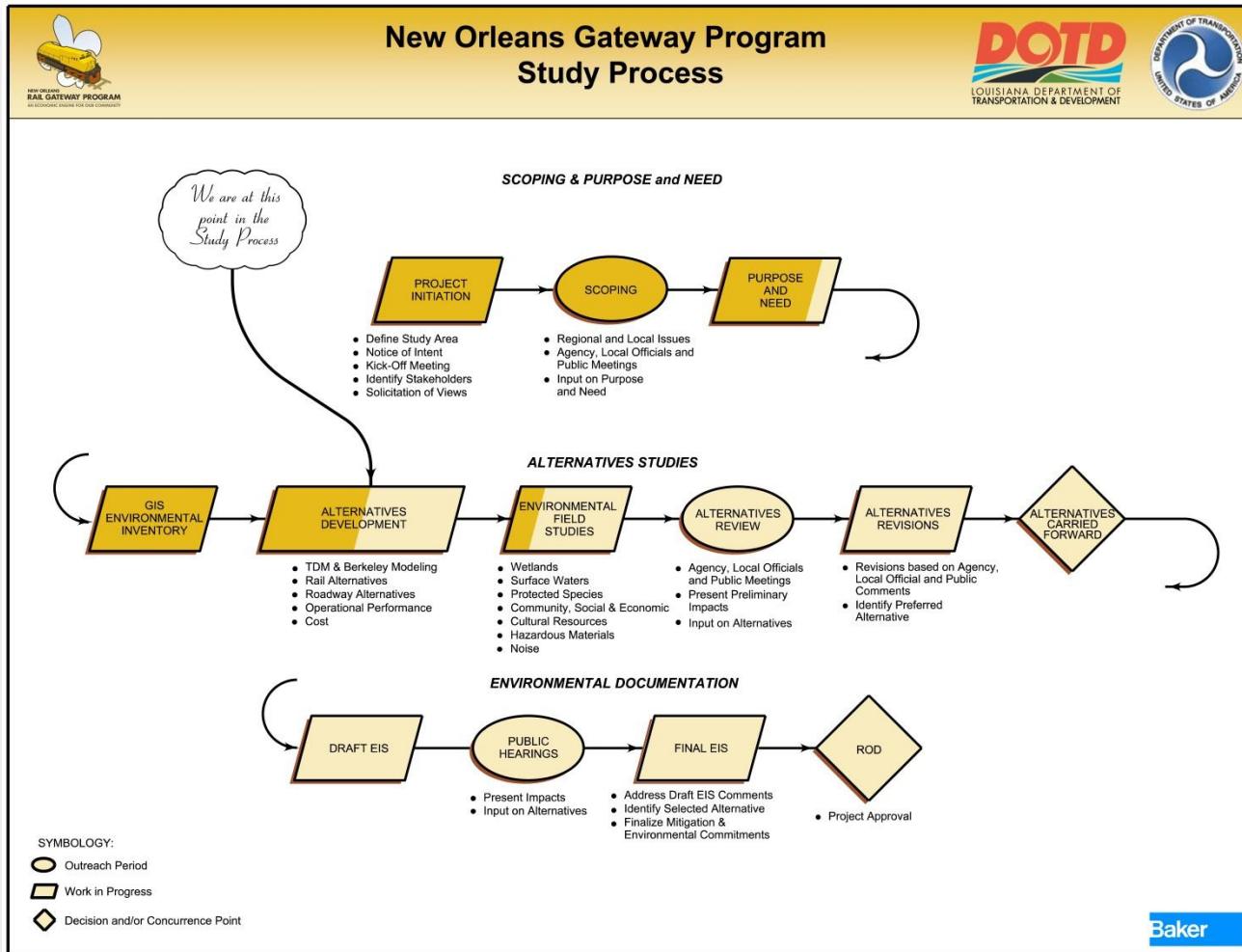
What do we want to Achieve (Goals)?



- Reduce highway vehicle delay at at-grade crossings
- Improve highway vehicle and pedestrian safety
- Improve emergency evacuation conditions
- Improve overall environmental quality
- Correct rail and roadway operational deficiencies
- Promote regional economic competitiveness



NEPA – EIS Study Process

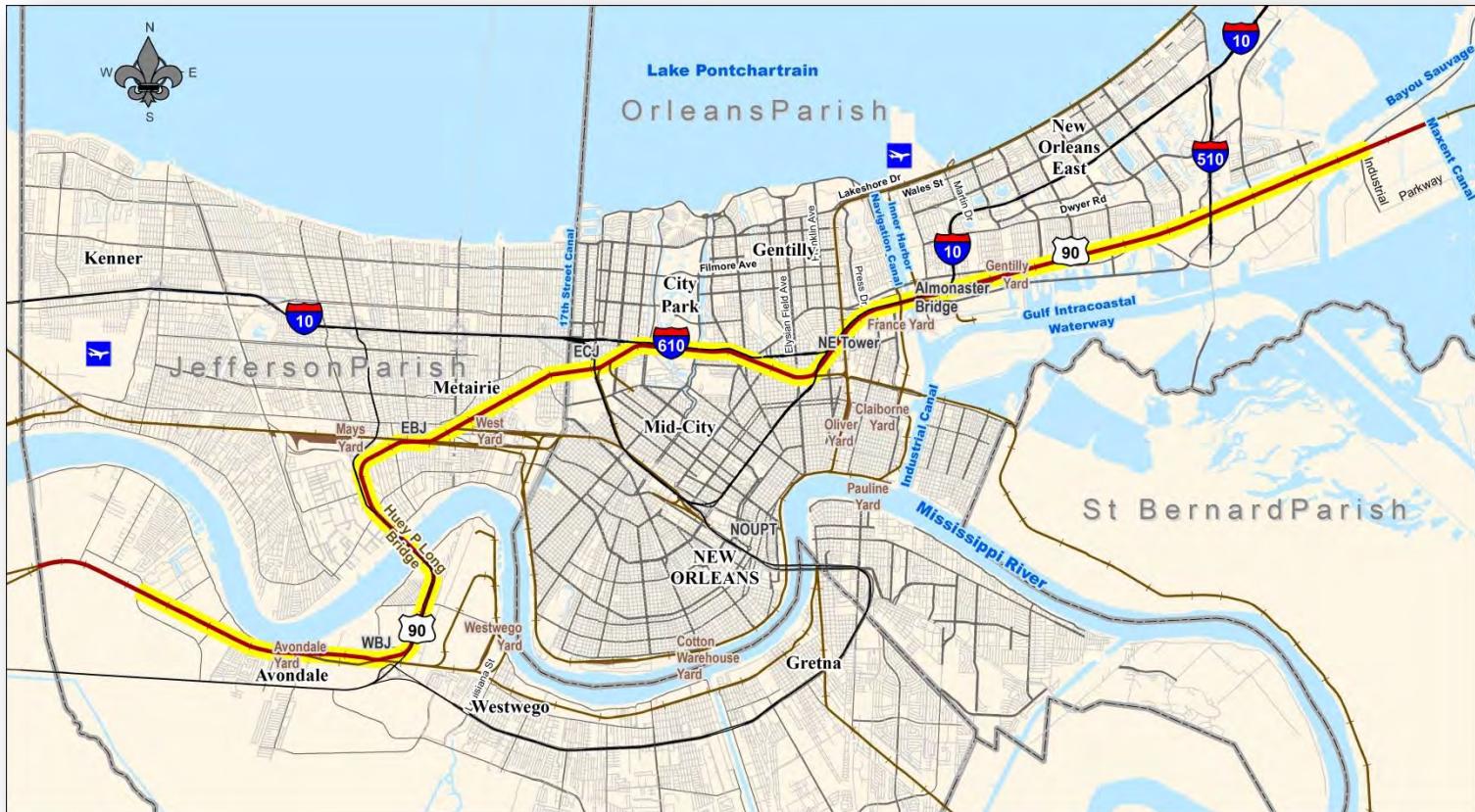


- NEPA's primary objectives
 - Consider project's environmental impact
 - Inform and involve the public
 - Final Decision
 - Record of Decision (ROD)
 - Completion of Study

Route Alternatives



- EIS requires evaluating a broad range of alternatives
- ➡ □ No-Build – baseline for comparison



Route Alternatives



- EIS requires evaluating a broad range of alternatives
 - No-Build – baseline for comparison
 - Back Belt



Route Alternatives



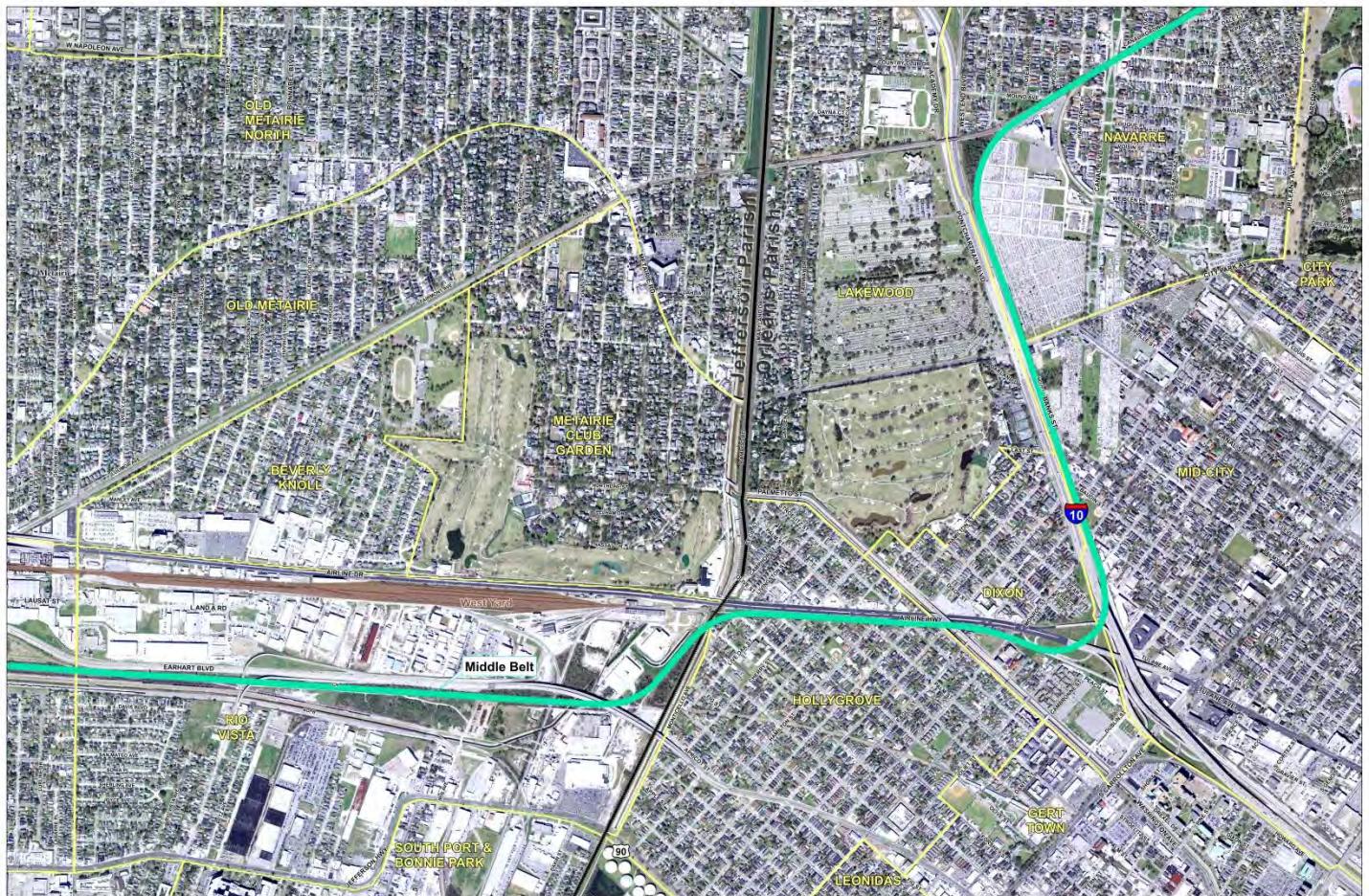
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 - ▪ Middle Belt



Route Alternatives



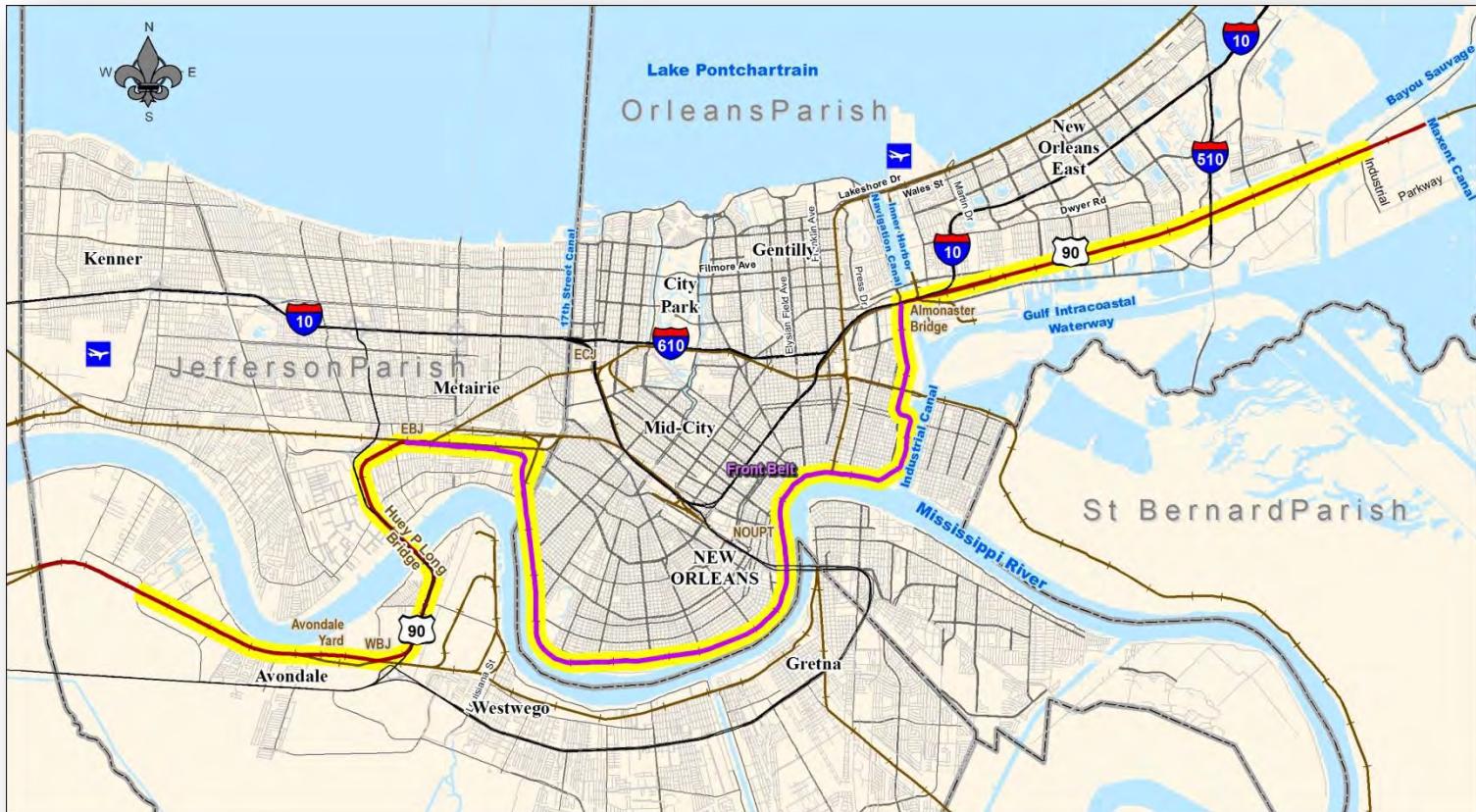
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Route Alternatives



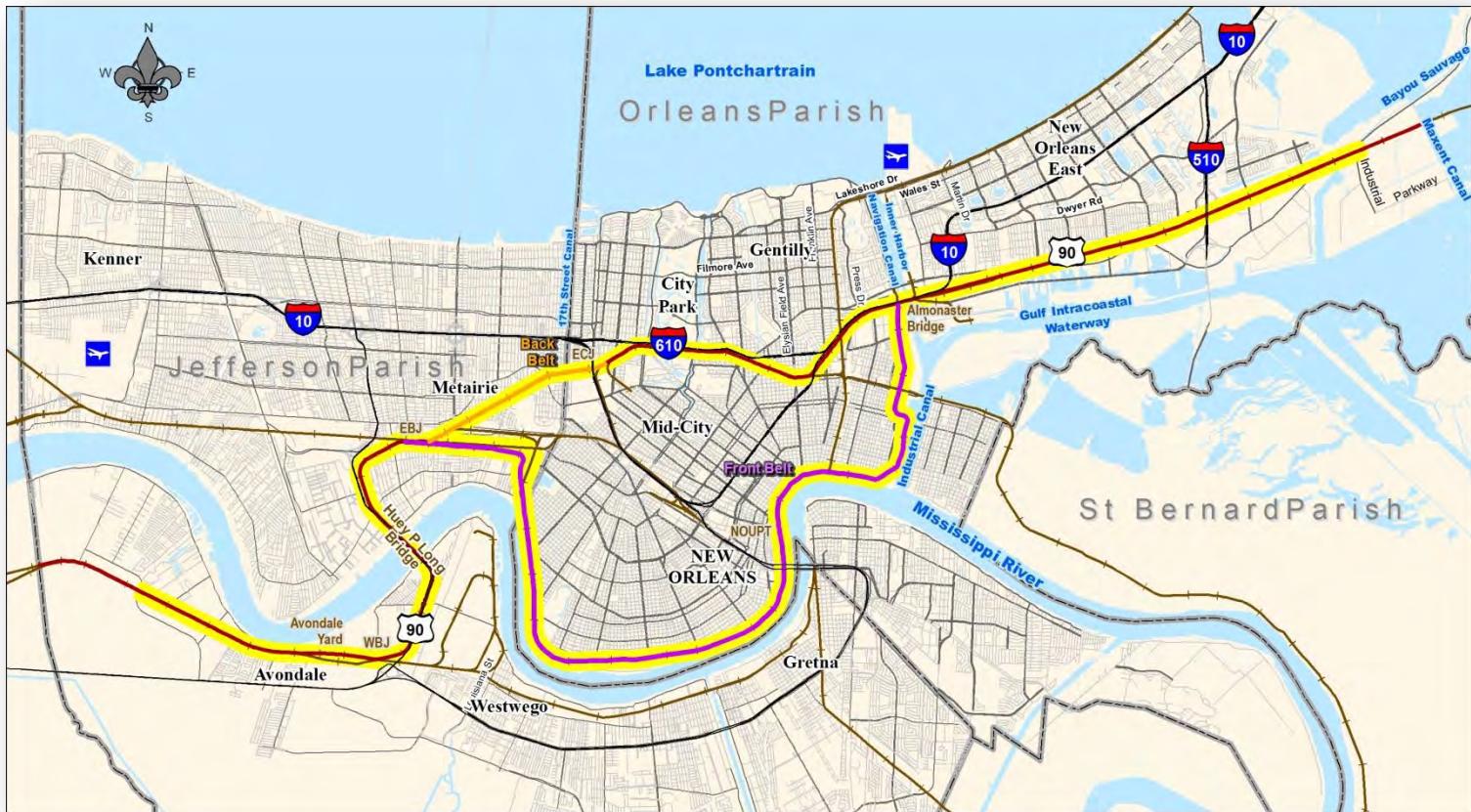
- EIS requires evaluating a broad range of alternatives
 - No-Build – baseline for comparison
 - Back Belt
 - Middle Belt
 - Front Belt
-



Route Alternatives



- EIS requires evaluating a broad range of alternatives
 - No-Build – baseline for comparison
 - Back Belt
 - Middle Belt
 - Front Belt
 - Couplet
-



Front Belt and Couplet Alternatives

▪ Front Belt and Couplet Alternatives

- Feasibility Study determined unfeasible
- Limited engineering opportunities
- Uncontrolled pedestrian access
- Shut down during major events
- Fatal Flaws - Eliminated from further study



Project Matrix



- “Program of Projects”
 - Close, improve or grade-separate crossings
 - Add, remove or reconfigure trackage
 - Upgrade structures & improve drainage
 - Eliminate flood gates and I-10 & Airline “Dips”
 - Improve signal systems
 - Incorporate Positive Train Control (PTC) & Centralized Traffic Control (CTC)



Projects – Western Section



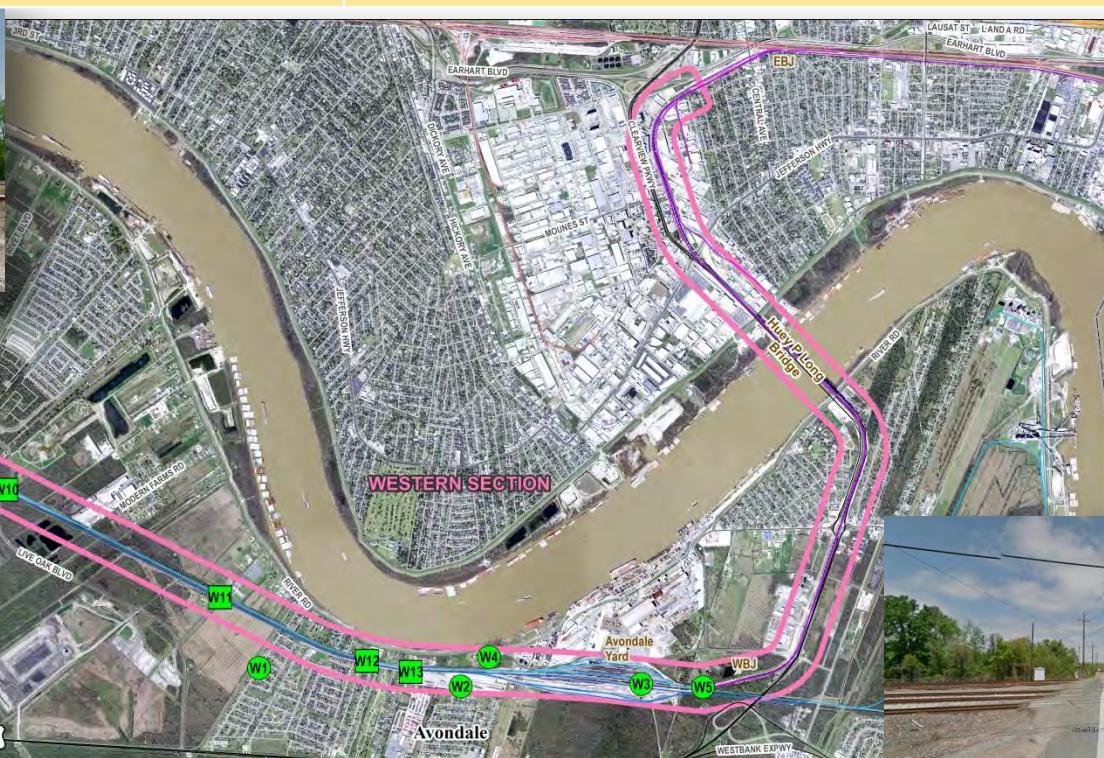
Western Section - Both Alternatives

Projects

- Evaluate At-Grade Crossings
 - Live Oak Boulevard
 - Willswood Lane
 - George Street
 - Avondale Garden Road
- Avondale Yard Improvements

Achieving the Goals

- Reduce traffic delays
- Improve safety
- Remove truck traffic from residential areas
- Reduce delays/stoppages on Huey P Long Bridge



Projects – Eastern Section



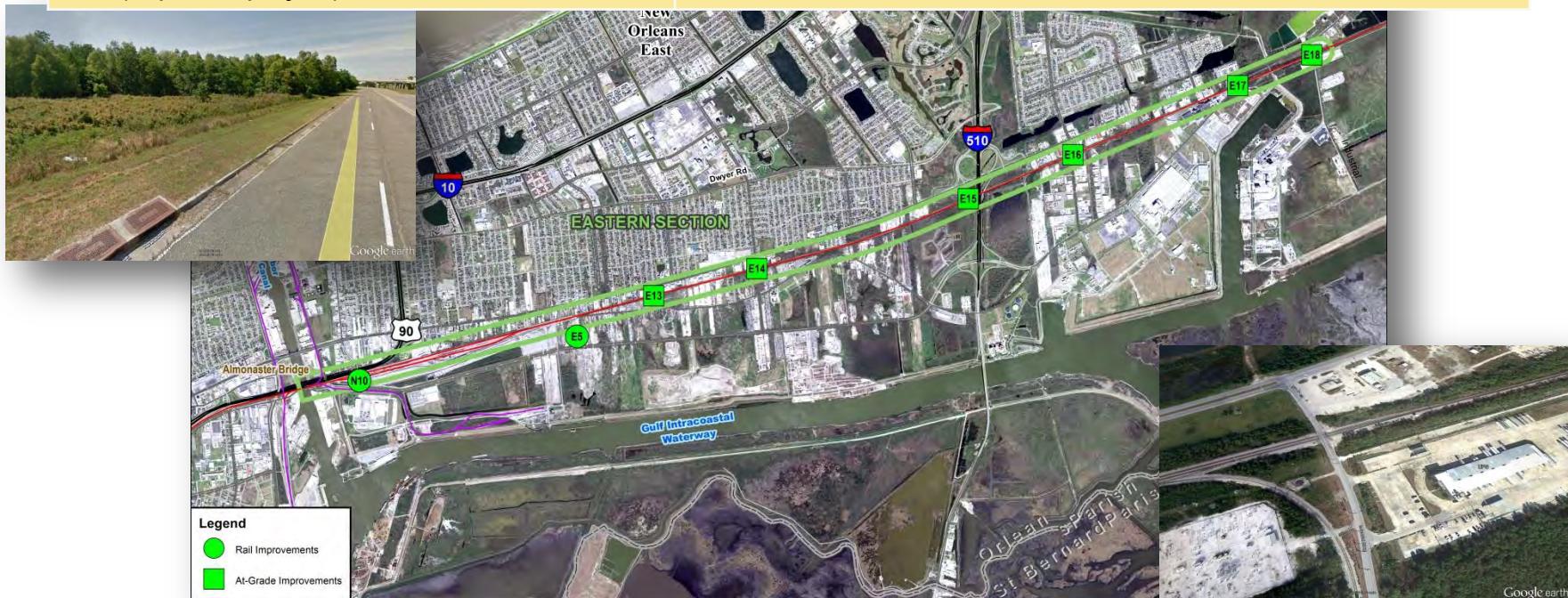
Eastern Section – Both Alternatives

Projects

- Evaluate At-Grade Crossings
 - Gentilly Highway West
 - Read Boulevard
 - I-510 Frontage Road
 - Michoud Boulevard
 - Gentilly Highway East
 - Industrial Parkway
- Replace Almonaster Bridge (separate project)

Achieving the Goals

- Improve safety
- Reduce traffic delays
- Promote future development
- Improve traffic reliability at the Almonaster Bridge



Projects – Central Section

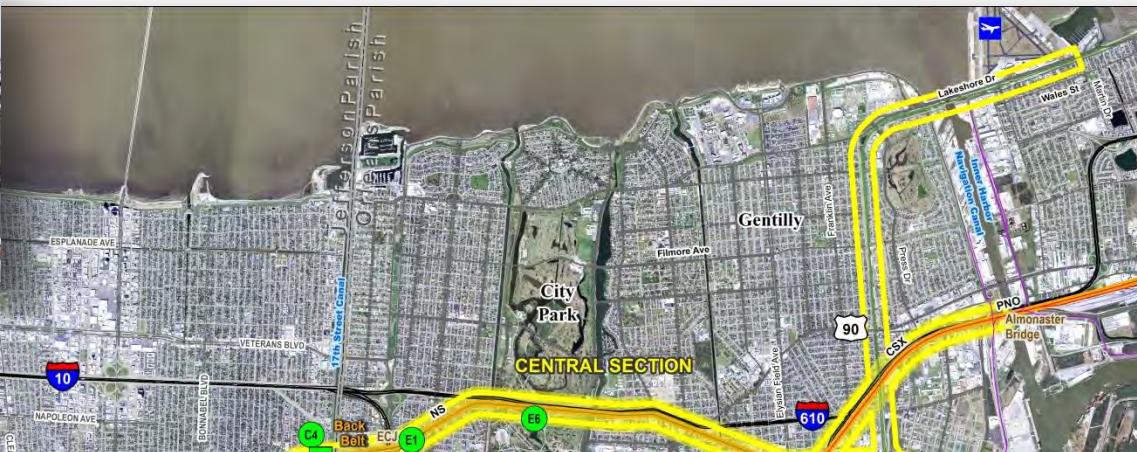
Central Section – Back Belt Alternative

Projects

- Elevate Back Belt
- Evaluate At-Grade Crossings
 - Shrewsbury Road
 - Labarre Road
 - Atherton Drive
 - Hollywood Drive
- Construct Third Mainline Track
- Farnham Place
- W Oakridge Park
- Metairie Road
- Carrollton Avenue

Achieving the Goals

- Reduce traffic delays
- Improve safety
- Reduce staging delays
- Improve evacuation conditions



Projects – Central Section



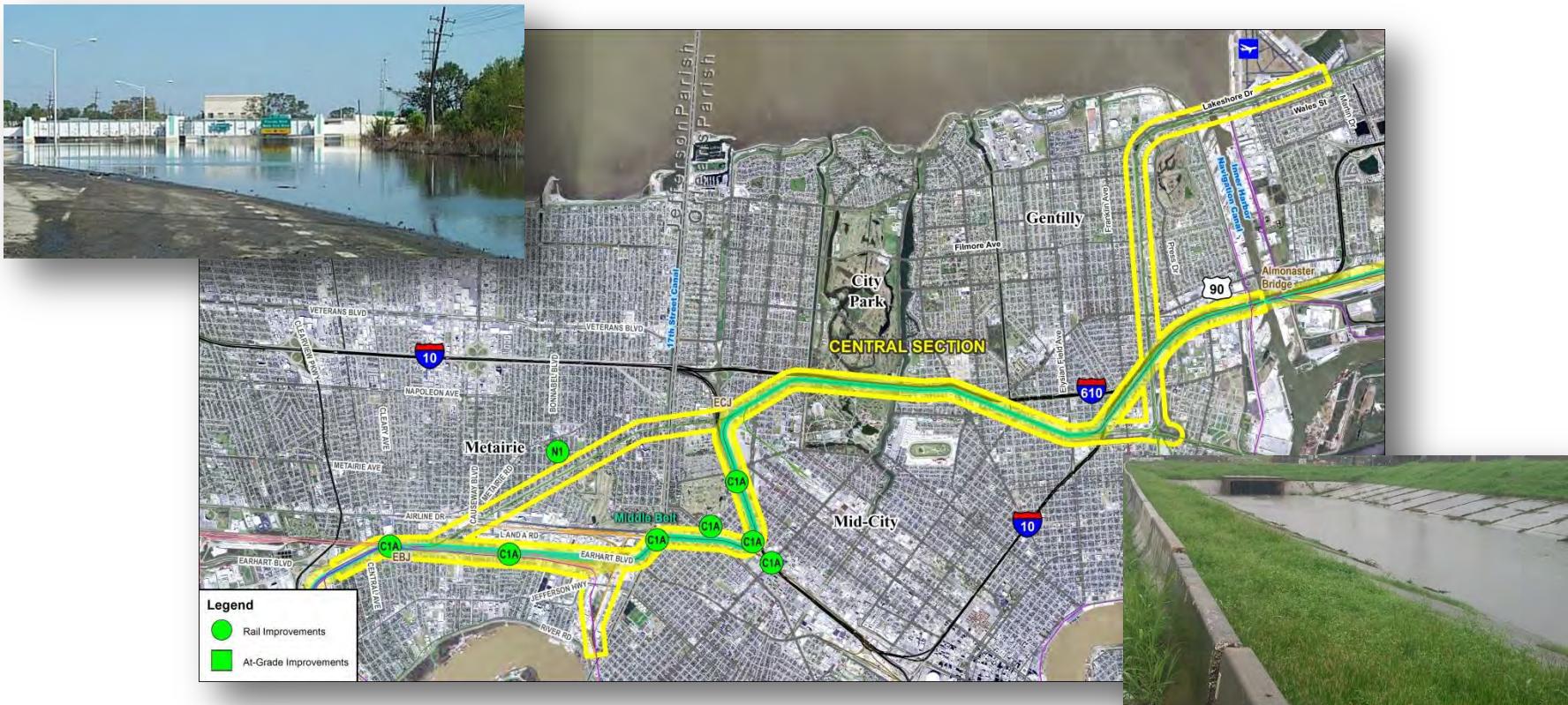
Central Section – Middle Belt Alternative

Projects

- Construct New Mainline Track
- Improve Monticello Canal
- Remove Back Belt
- Raise I-10 and Airline Drive

Achieving the Goals

- Reroute rail traffic to more industrial area
- Reduce traffic delays
- Improve safety
- Improve evacuation conditions
- Improve drainage



Projects – Central Section



Central Section - Both Alternatives

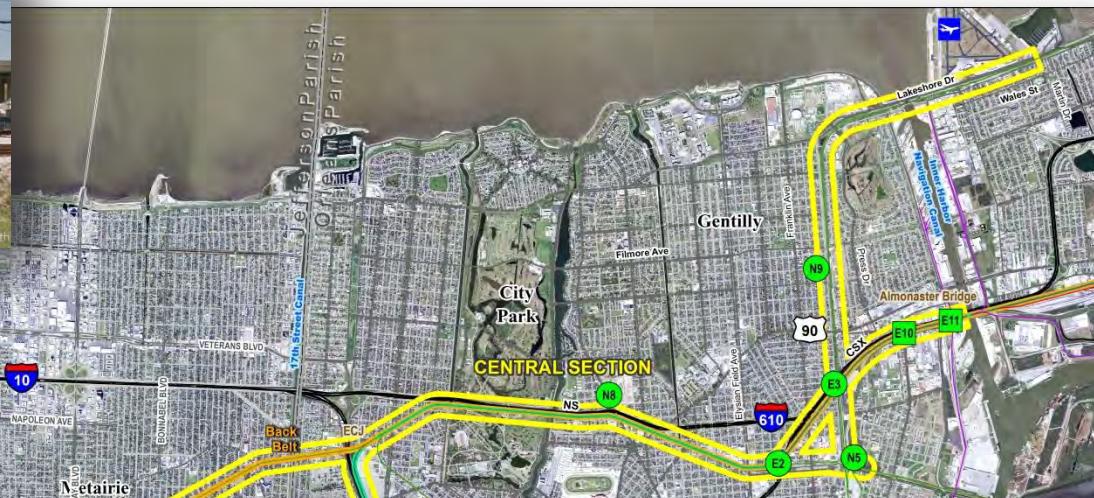
Projects

Evaluate At-Grade Crossings

- Central Avenue
- Jefferson Highway
- Louisa Street
- France Road

Achieving the Goals

- Improve traffic flow at Central Ave
- Reduce traffic delays
- Improve safety
- Combine grade crossings



Legend

- Rail Improvements
- At-Grade Improvements

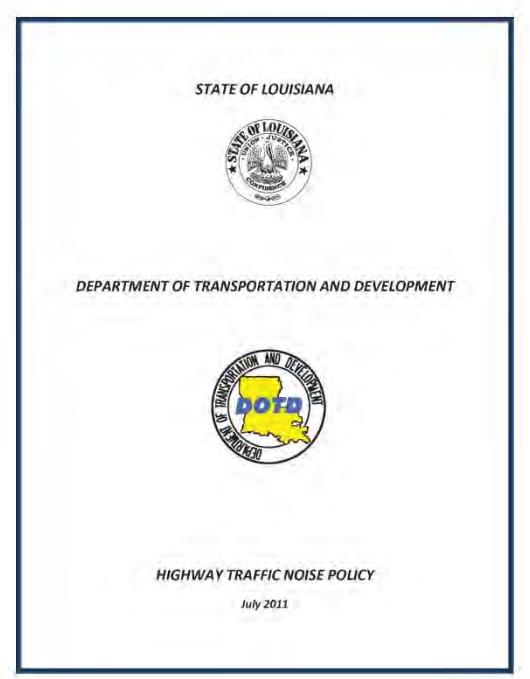
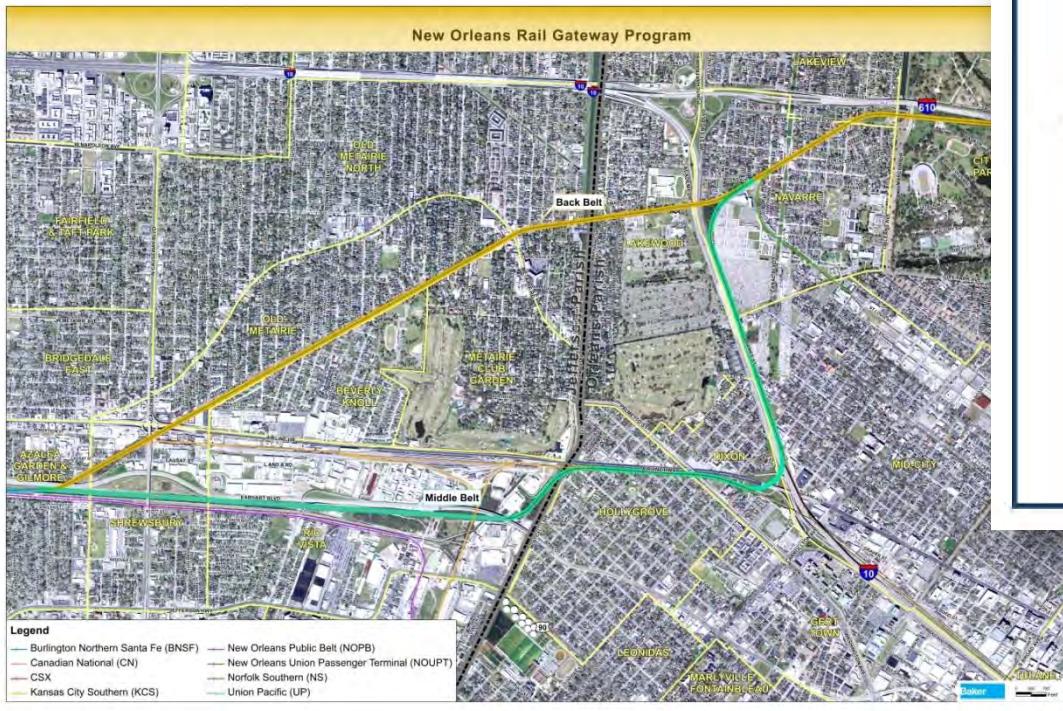


Google earth

Mitigation



- Mitigate “direct” adverse effects of the Build Alternatives
 - Displacements
 - Noise
 - Vibration
 - Air Quality
 - Access



Right of Way Acquisition



- **Right of Way Acquisition and Relocation Assistance**
 - Must comply with Federal and State requirements
 - Uniform Relocation Act (as amended May 2007)
 - DOTD Acquisition of Right of Way and Relocation Assistance
 - Contact DOTD Real Estate Office
 - District 02 Real Estate Office
(504) 465-3468

ACQUISITION OF RIGHT OF WAY
AND
RELOCATION ASSISTANCE

Enhancements



- **Mitigate “indirect” adverse effects of the Build Alternatives**
- **Communities benefit from improvements**
- **Solicit input**
 - Identify community needs
 - Collaboratively find solutions
- **Neighborhoods are better than before**



Next Steps



Milestone	Target Date
Alternatives Development & Reviews	Summer 2013-Winter 2014
Field Studies	Fall 2013-Spring 2014
Community Planning Meetings/Charrettes	Spring 2014
Alternatives Outreach Meetings	Summer 2014



- Visit the Program Website

- http://www.dotd.la.gov/administration/public_info/projects/norg/

▪ Have Questions?

- Call Information Line: **(504) 488-6196**
 - Mail: P.O. Box 56845, New Orleans, LA 70156-6845
 - Email: **NORG@mbakercorp.com**

▪ **Attend Future Meetings**

- Announced through mailings, notices, advertisements, and press releases

Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
 **Transportation Development** 

[Search DOTD](#)

LOTTA 2012 **BBB** 

New Orleans Rail Gateway Program

Program Details
 State Project ID: July 2012
 Last Update: June 2014


NEW ORLEANS RAIL GATEWAY PROGRAM

Program Newsletters: THE RIGHT TRACK

Volume 1, Number 1 - June 2012 1 mb 6/13/2012

Public Meeting Materials

- [Staging Meeting Summary](#) 11 mb 4/18/2012
- [Staging Meeting Presentation](#) 2 mb 3/10/2012
- [Staging Meeting Presentation \(Requires Flash Player\)](#) 10 mb 2/10/2012
- [Staging Meeting Comment Form](#) 211 kb 3/10/2012
- [Staging Overview](#) 2 mb 4/18/2012
- [Study Area Map](#) 4 mb 4/18/2012
- [Project Report](#) 2 mb 3/10/2012
- [Environmental Inventory Sheet 1 of 3](#) 4 mb 2/10/2012
- [Environmental Inventory Sheet 2 of 3](#) 5 mb 2/10/2012
- [Environmental Inventory Sheet 3 of 3](#) 2 mb 2/10/2012

Program Documents

- [Federal Register Notice of Intent](#) 165 kb 5/13/2012

Previous Studies

- [2015 Analysis of Alternatives in Mitigating Conflicts](#)
- [1999 Oil Pipeline Relocation](#)
- [1996 Comprehensive Study of Problems in Old Heliotea Corridor](#)
- [2002 New Orleans Rail Gateway Regional Rail Operations Analysis](#)
- [2004 New Orleans Rail Gateway Infrastructure Plan](#)
- [2007 New Orleans Rail Gateway Infrastructure Feasibility Analysis](#)
- [2009 New Orleans Rail Gateway Strategic Plan](#)

Written Question #1



- If the existing Back Belt can be upgraded to accommodate all the capacity and safety concerns, why is that not the current leading alternative?
 - *The 2007 Infrastructure Feasibility Analysis concluded that both the Back and Middle Belt alternatives would benefit the Region.*
 - *The Back and Middle Belt alternatives being studied in the EIS are, at this time, both considered feasible and equal. A leading or preferred alternative won't be identified until the alternatives are evaluated against the stated Program Purpose (goals); the operational, cost and environmental impacts determined; and stakeholder comments reviewed.*

Written Question #2



- Given the alarming frequency of train derailments – even on modern, well-maintained, straight tracks – can the proposed Middle Belt (with an S-turn on the west and 8-degree curve on the east) ever qualify as “safe” for transporting hazardous materials through residential areas?
 - *The railroad improvements are being developed in accordance with the standards established by the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association (AREMA) and federal, state and carrier requirements.*
 - *The geometry meets or exceeds the expected freight operating speed of 20 mph through the curve (Amtrak operates at about 30 mph).*

Written Question #3

- What is the current (and expected future) percentage of trains moving through New Orleans which neither originate nor terminate here?
 - *Through train traffic is approximately 60 – 70%.*
- And why doesn't this traffic use other, less-populated east-west routes instead?
 - *Schedule and cost.*
 - *New Orleans is part of the main southern rail corridor connecting Houston and Atlanta.*
 - *Alternative routes are much less direct.*
 - *Vicksburg already carries a lot of rail traffic to/from the Shreveport - Dallas/Fort Worth markets.*
 - *Memphis is close to capacity and is even more indirect than Vicksburg for Houston traffic.*
 - *There is a Mississippi River crossing in Baton Rouge, but it has no direct access to the East.*

Written Question #4

- Who are the principal parties advocating for the Middle Belt Alternative?
 - *Jefferson Parish is one. There may be others not known to the Program Team.*
- What are their chief concerns?
 - *Question is best asked to those parties.*
- Can these be addressed through some other means?
 - *Question is best asked to those parties.*

Written Question #5



- Who will have final say on which Alternative is chosen, and when?
 - *Ultimately the FRA will make the final decision after completion of the studies and EIS, discussions with DOTD, RPC, City of New Orleans, Jefferson Parish and the railroads and carefully reviewing all comments received. FRAs decision will be documented in the Record of Decision at the completion of the study.*
- Does the City of New Orleans or any other official/entity have authority to reject the Middle Belt project outright, such that it cannot be constructed?
 - *The NORG Program is a complex undertaking involving the USDOT, DOTD, RPC, City of New Orleans, Jefferson Parish and the owning railroads.*
 - *Negotiations will be required if the Program is to move forward.*
 - *Unsuccessful negotiations with any of the above parties can derail the Program.*

Written Question #6



- Because the rail industry has delayed implementation of Positive Train Control (PTC) and other NTSB-mandated safety upgrades for decades, shouldn't expansion into urban corridors also be curtailed or postponed?
 - *This discussion is beyond the scope of this study.*

Written Question #7

- Since Federal environmental justice guidelines (Title VI, NEPA) preclude disparate impact or inequitable burdens on minority and low-income communities, how strongly does this weigh against the Middle Belt project?
 - *EJ is one of many factors that will be evaluated.*
 - *USDOT Environmental Justice Order 5610.2(a) provides guidance on addressing disproportionately high and adverse effects, including mitigation measures and consideration of alternatives that would avoid or reduce the disproportionately high and adverse effects.*
 - *These measures may include pollution prevention, and health and safety measures; measures to maintain community cohesion and economic vitality; and mitigation and compensatory measures.*
 - *This process includes procedures to provide meaningful opportunities for public involvement by low-income and minority populations, including community input in identifying potential mitigation measures.*

Written Question #8



- Could we see a comprehensive list or map of the properties, structures and businesses most likely subject to expropriation, removal or modification during Middle Belt construction, with an explanation of how fair compensation is determined for residences which may be displaced?
 - *Rail and roadway improvements are still being developed. Drawings showing the Alternatives and private property impacts will be available for review at the Alternatives Outreach Meetings, anticipated to be held this Summer 2014.*
 - *A DOTD Real Estate Section representative will be available at the Alternatives Outreach Meetings and Public Hearings to answer Real Estate questions.*

Written Question #9



- Who is paying for the New Orleans Rail Gateway Study to be done?
 - *The current study is being funded by USDOT, DOTD and the freight railroads.*
- What monies would cover the cost of implementing any eventual Alternative(s)?
 - *Improvements will be implemented using both railroad and public funds. Neither the funding sources nor the amounts have been identified at this time.*

Written Question #10



- What is the timeline for completion of the EIS and final selection or decision?
 - *We hope to complete the study and receive a FRA Record of Decision in Summer 2015.*
- Will your next public meeting take place after or before a final decision or have any impact on that final decision?
 - *Community Planning Meetings, Charrettes, Alternatives Outreach Meetings and Public Hearings will be held before a final decision is made.*
- What will be the purpose of that meeting?
 - *The meetings will be to present the alternatives development efforts and solicit public comment and input.*
- How will future meetings be advertised?
 - *Meetings will be announced through mailings, notices, advertisements and press releases.*

Additional Questions





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