



LOUISIANA STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY – Adopted
on May 28, 2014 at the Policy Committee Meeting #3

April 24, 2014 • 12:00PM

State Capitol, House Committee Room 2 • Baton Rouge, LA

Present:

Senator Mike Walsworth, Louisiana Senate

Senator Dale Erdey, Louisiana Senate (representing Senator Alario)

Representative Karen St. Germain, LA House of Representatives

Ms. Sherri H. LeBas, PE, Secretary, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (Chair)

Mr. Stephen Moret, Secretary, Louisiana Department of Economic Development

Absent:

Senator John A. Alario, President of the Senate, Louisiana Senate

Senator Robert Adley, Louisiana State Senate

Representative Charles E. "Chuck" Kleckley, Speaker of the House, LA House of Representatives

Representative Stephen E. Pugh, Louisiana House of Representatives

Mr. Robert T. Scott, President, Public Affairs Research Council

Other Attendees:

Dr. Eric Kalivoda, PE, Deputy Secretary, Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD)

Mr. Dennis Decker, PE, Assistant Secretary, Office of Multimodal Planning, DOTD

Ms. Robin Romeo, PE, Transportation Planning Administrator, DOTD

Mr. Dan Broussard, PE, Transportation Planning Section, DOTD

Mr. Don Vary, Consultant, CDM Smith

Mr. Riley Berthelot, Parish President, West Baton Rouge Parish

Mr. Kevin Durbin, Planning Director, West Baton Rouge Parish

MEETING AGENDA:

- Welcome and Introductions
- Final Review of Vision, Goals, Objectives, Performance Measures; adoption by Policy Committee requested
- Presentation of Draft Plan recommended by the Executive Advisory Council
 - Policy Recommendations
 - Megaprojects
 - Funding Scenario Budget Summary
- Discussion of Draft Plan Elements
- Public Comments
- Next Meeting Date
- Final Comments, Adjourn



MEETING SUMMARY

Secretary Sherri LeBas welcomed the group and led a round of introductions.

Final Review of Vision, Goals, Objectives, Performance Measures

Secretary LeBas reminded the committee members of the presentation of the Vision, Goals, Objectives and Performance Measures at the first policy committee meeting in March 2014. She recognized that there was not a quorum present to vote to accept them.

Presentation of Draft Plan Recommended by Executive Advisory Council

Dr. Kalivoda presented to the committee the plan's purpose, its schedule for completion, its decision-making structure and the role of the committee. Dr. Kalivoda then described the policy recommendations, the funding scenario budgets and the draft plan elements, while Mr. Decker led the discussion of the megaprojects. Dr. Kalivoda explained that the committee would vote for approval on the recommendations, megaprojects and funding scenario budgets at the third and final policy committee meeting. A summary of the megaproject discussion follows:

- Senator Erdey asked about the economic benefits of allocating \$25 million annually to deepen waterways and channels. Dr. Kalivoda noted that the consultant team could look into this once the committee has voted on this recommendation. Mr. Decker noted that the Port Priority program funds projects that can demonstrate a 5:1 benefit-cost ratio. Representative St. Germain reinforced the importance of supporting Louisiana's waterways system.
- Secretary LeBas asked for more information about a proposed allocation of \$300 million for channel deepening. Mr. Decker responded that the money would be used only for deepening to authorized dimensions (50 feet) and that none of the money would be used for port or channel operations.
- Senator Erdey noted that there is a moratorium on building new highways in the state and asked about two megaprojects that are new roads on new rights of way. Mr. Decker responded that the two projects in question are left over from the TIMED program and can be grandfathered in. Secretary LeBas noted that there is a third project, which improves local roads around Alexandria to higher-speed standards, as well.
- Secretary LeBas asked for clarification on what the notation of "other funding sources" means. Mr. Decker responded that there are several potential sources that the term covers – including capital outlay and tolls – that could fit that definition.
- Senator Erdey asked about an upgrade of existing four-lane facilities around Baton Rouge to Interstate standards, collectively known as Baton Rouge Urban Mobility Plan (BUMP). Dr. Kalivoda expressed the need for a bypass around Baton Rouge to divert through traffic out of the heart of Baton Rouge. Mr. Decker noted that the BUMP appears as a Priority C megaproject.
- Representative St. Germain expressed concern over the use of the word "loop" in describing the project to redirect I-10 through traffic away from Baton Rouge. Dr. Kalivoda agreed to use a different description. She also asked about a megaproject to improve LA 3127 and noted that the road in question was a pleasure to drive on currently. Dr. Kalivoda described the project as a widening to 4 lanes in the vicinity of the intersection of LA 3127 with LA 20 in conjunction with a new roadway linking Thibodaux with Interstate 10 via the Gramercy-Wallace Bridge.

- Secretary LeBas asked about the sources of funding for Scenarios A and B. Dr. Kalivoda explained that Scenario A (which funds Priority A megaprojects) would be funded through the vehicle sales tax and that Scenario B (which funds Priority A and B megaprojects) would be funded from both the vehicle sales tax and a federal gas tax increase.
- Representative St. Germain referred to several roadway improvement proposals that she has been studying. One is a set of Baton Rouge improvements that appears to have support from both East and West Baton Rouge constituents. A second is a bill to accelerate the transfer of vehicle sales tax proceeds to the Department in three years instead of six, and a third is to introduce enabling legislation for alternative finance mechanisms, such as infrastructure banks.
- Senator Erdey inquired about the status of the “real” West Bank Expressway; A proposal to construct a new Interstate-type facility parallel to LA 1 from I-10 to a point south, with a new Mississippi River Bridge and connections to the Sunshine Bridge. Dr. Kalivoda noted that the project, as presented, would be very expensive and for that reason has been assigned a priority of D. Dr. Kalivoda further noted that, although several of the Priority C and D projects are good projects, the project rankings reflect the limitations on funding even under the most optimistic scenario.
- Senator Walsworth expressed concern over the multiple demands for dredging funds and asked about what other states are doing to meet dredging needs. Dr. Kalivoda referred the committee to their packet of information and pointed to the recommendation for Capital Outlay funds to be used for deepening navigation channels (no funds are shown for maintenance dredging, however). He also referred to the Port Priority Program. Dr. Kalivoda explained that the state’s contribution for channel and port deepening is meant to leverage federal funds.
- Senator Walsworth also inquired about the status of federal transportation appropriations. Dr. Kalivoda responded that, at this time, Congress does not intend to use general fund revenues to cover deficits in the Highway Trust Fund, as Congress has done in past years. Dr. Kalivoda also explained that several donee states operate systems that have a high proportion of through traffic, in the context of explaining why some states such as Louisiana are donor (receiving less federal trust fund revenue than generated) states and why some are donee (receiving more federal trust fund revenue than generated) states.
- Senator Erdey asked about implementing tolls to move some of the megaprojects forward. Dr. Kalivoda noted that the Department’s position is to use toll roads for new capacity roads only (federal dollars can support the tolled lanes for new capacity only). He also voiced support for public private partnerships and tolling to build new roads, but added that in most or all cases, tolling levels would not be sufficient to cover the entire cost of construction and operations of new roads. Senator Erdey, referring again to the West Bank Expressway, stated that tolling would affect travelers from out of state.
- Senator Walsworth asked about the I-69 project and whether Texas and Arkansas intend to construct an alignment that would bypass Louisiana. Dr. Kalivoda assured Senator Walsworth that this was not the case. He further noted the importance of the participation of all three states to construct the portions of the interstate that would be their responsibility.

Dr. Kalivoda then described the funding scenarios and he returned to the goals and objectives. Senator Walsworth requested that the DOTD add an objective in support of continuing the Road Transfer Program under Goal Area 4. With assurances that this modification would be made, the Committee moved to adopt



the goals, objectives and performance measures. Representative St. Germain moved to adopt them, and Senator Walsworth seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Senator Walsworth moved to adopt the meeting minutes from the March 13, 2014 Policy Committee meeting and Representative St. Germain seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

A summary of the public comments and discussion follows:

- Parish President Berthelot spoke about the importance of the LA 1 Connector project in West Baton Rouge Parish. He urged the Policy Committee to raise its ranking from Priority C to Priority A or B. He then asked how large projects such as I-49 North have been funded.
- Secretary LeBas noted the variety of funding sources used beyond the state's Transportation Trust Fund to complete large roadway expansion projects in the past. These sources include federal earmarks, surplus funds, unclaimed property, capital outlay dollars and federal recovery dollars from the state and partner MPOs. She further noted the significant amount of public input received during the annual road show and that over 100 megaproject presentations were made to the Regional Planning Officials Advisory Council.
- Senator Walsworth referred to the recurring congestion issue near the I-10 interchange at Washington Street. Secretary LeBas noted that there is a study underway to address the weaving from traffic southbound on I-110 to the exit. She also noted that the Department is looking at ways to use surface streets as reliever routes when incidents close or restrict the I-10 mainline. Mr. Kevin Durbin, West Baton Rouge Parish Planning Director, was on hand to emphasize the importance of making improvements to this section of the interstate and added that the Port of Baton Rouge's expansion and continued development would add to the congestion on I-10.
- Before adjourning, the Committee set the third and final meeting for May 28th at 8 am.

ADJOURNMENT

Secretary LeBas adjourned the meeting.