

11.0 PROJECT PRIORITIZATION AND FUNDING

11.1 Short-Term Improvement Project Implementation / Prioritization

The traffic operational enhancements associated with the short-term improvements, combined with projected benefits from delay savings, are such that the I-210 Steering Committee and LDOTD agree that all project components of the short-term improvement program should be advanced to the next level of implementation. This would entail incorporating the projects within the *Lake Charles Urbanized Area Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)* and then advancing the projects to preliminary and final design, right-of-way acquisition (where necessary), followed by construction. Some of the short-term projects are currently included in the TIP.

The TIP consists of a list of projects programmed for federal funding that represent the transportation priorities of the region. State and local funding sources are also identified within the TIP. The TIP is a requirement of the federal metropolitan transportation planning process, as noted in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and its earlier predecessors (TEA-21 and ISTEA). In order for the projects to be programmed into the TIP, the short-term improvements must be presented to the Lake Charles Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Committee and adopted into the TIP. Prior to formal adoption into the TIP, funding sources must be identified and then programmed for said projects.

11.2 Potential Funding for Short-Term Improvements

The transportation benefits associated with the I-210 short-term improvements merit funding. A review of the current TIP indicates that several funding sources are utilized to fund TIP projects. The identified revenue sources included within the TIP are listed below:

- Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ)
- Demonstration Project (DEMO)
- Surface Transportation Program for urbanized areas with populations less than 200,000 (STP<200K)
- STPFLEX
- Federal Bridge Replacement (FBR)
- National Highway System (NHS)
- Interstate Maintenance (IM)
- LDOTD
- Local

Table 11.1 presents the funding sources that have been identified for some of the short-term improvement projects. As shown within the table, according to data provided by LDOTD, a certain level of funding is available, or has already been earmarked for a few of the projects. It has also been noted by LDOTD that approximately \$3 million may be reprogrammed and available to construct many of the remaining short-term projects. It appears that the \$3 million may come from a prior earmark for State Project No. 193-06-B as indicated in the TIP for fiscal year 08. This project consisted of westbound on-ramp modifications / a buttonhook ramp at LA 14. As part of the Stage 0 feasibility study, the estimated construction cost of this project was determined to be approximately \$4 million however, the ramp modification did not substantially address all of the deficiencies at the I-210 / LA 14 interchange. Therefore, the project was deemed unfeasible and has been omitted from further consideration.

**Table 11.1
Funding Sources for Short-Term Improvements**

Location	Project Description	Project ID	Total Estimated Cost (2007 \$)	Funding Source	Funding Earmark
Exit 4 Nelson	Widen westbound off-ramp and right-turn lane	4.1S	\$300,000		
	I-210 westbound auxiliary lane between Hollyhill Road and Nelson Road (2,100 feet)	4.2S	\$900,000	Part of S.P. 450-30-0074, Preservation project. State funded using surplus funds.	
	Close median on Nelson Road near Wal-Mart and southbound left-turn lane improvements	4.3S	\$100,000		
	Left-turn lane on eastbound Prien Lake Road	4.3S	\$345,000		
	Exit 4 Total Estimated Cost		\$1,645,000		
Exit 5 Lake	Right-turn lane on southbound Lake Street	5.1S	\$335,000		
	Left-turn lane on eastbound off-ramp	5.2S	\$300,000		
	Reconfigure intersection control at eastbound on-ramp terminal	5.3S	\$5,000		
	Exit 5 Total		\$640,000		
Exit 6A	Ryan Street/Prien Lake Road Improvements	6A.1S	\$6,450,000	S.P. 195-04-0021 & S.P. 195-04-0027 & Urban System Project CMAQ ¹	\$5,150,000 ¹
	Left-turn lane on westbound off-ramp	6A.2S	\$320,000		
	Reconfigure intersection control at eastbound off-ramp terminal	6A.3S	\$10,000		

Table 11.1
Funding Sources for Short-Term Improvements

Location	Project Description	Project ID	Total Estimated Cost (2007 \$)	Funding Source	Funding Earmark
	Reconfigure intersection control at eastbound on-ramp terminal	6A.4S	\$5,000		
	Exit 6 Total		\$6,785,000		
Exit 6B	Left-turn lane on westbound off-ramp	6B.1S	\$300,000		
	College Street westbound approach improvements at Kirkman Street	6B.2S	\$220,000		
	Reconfigure intersection control at eastbound off-ramp terminal	6B.3S	\$10,000		
	Reconfigure intersection control at eastbound on-ramp terminal	6B.4S	\$5,000		
	Exit 6B Total		\$535,000		
Exit 8 LA 14	Right-turn lane onto southbound LA 14 and Prien Lake Road	8.1S	\$375,000	In Stage 0; No funding identified	
	Reconfigure intersection control and add left-turn lane at westbound on-ramp terminal	8.2S	\$290,000		
	Exclusive right-turn lane on eastbound Prien Lake Road and LA 14	8.3S	\$330,000	In Stage 0; No funding identified	
	Reconfigure intersection control at westbound off-ramp terminal	8.4S	\$5,000		
	Proposed overhead directional sign on eastbound off-ramp	8.5S	\$40,000		
	Eastbound on-ramp connection from E. Prien Lake	8.6S	\$920,000	S.P. 193-06-0032 Capacity Project with DEMO funds ²	\$2,581,517 ^{1,2}
	Exit 8 Total		\$2,120,000		

Notes:

1. Funding source and earmark included in the 2007 TIP
2. Data provided by LDOTD

11.3 Long-Term Improvement Project Implementation / Prioritization

During the October 2007 final I-210 Steering Committee meeting, it was determined that Exit 3 / Prien Lake Road, Exit 4 / Nelson Road, and Exit 8 / LA 14 were the highest priority interchanges within the I-210 Corridor. At the same time, consensus was reached that certain long-term projects offered little to no benefit to improve operations along the I-210 Corridor and should therefore be omitted from further consideration. The estimated costs and annual benefits associated with the Prien Lake Road relocation project (Relocated LA 1138-2 Alternative 2, 5-lane) were described in **Section 10**. The LDOTD supports the findings of this study that the Prien Lake Road relocation project (Scenario 1C) provides little benefit to the Nelson Road / I-210 interchange with an added cost of approximately \$16 million. LDOTD recommends that any funding that has been earmarked for the project should be reallocated for other long-term improvements. LDOTD's position regarding further action on this project was requested in order to complete the *Relocated Route LA 1138-2 Environmental Assessment*. LDOTD Environmental staff further recommend completing the EA with the preferred alternatives being improving existing Prien Lake Road or the No-Build Alternative.

Stage 0 Environmental Checklists were completed for each of the nine interchanges along the Interstate 210 Corridor. The checklists are included in **Appendix I**. The checklists are used as an aid in the preliminary identification of potential impacts to the human, natural, and physical environment. To summarize the checklists, Exit 3 / Prien Lake Road presents the most potential impacts because of LaFleur Park, that is located at 2937 Kiwanis Drive. Recreational facilities at LaFleur Park consist of a public boat launch located on the north side of I-210 and a public beach located on the south side of I-210. The proposed long-term improvements at this interchange may also require residential relocations. Potential environmental impacts at this, and other I-210 interchanges, would be further evaluated as part of future project implementation phases through LDOTD's Project Development Process – Stage 1 Environmental Process.

11.4 Potential Funding for Long-Term Improvements

According to AASHTO, the federal highway program funding mechanism, the Highway Trust Fund, will face a funding crisis beginning in fiscal year 2009. To avert any funding cut backs, a federal fuel tax increase or other revenue generating options would need to be instituted. If additional revenue is not secured either at the federal or state level within the next few years, funding for capacity related projects may be difficult or may not be available at all. If the latter is the case, innovative financing tools need to be considered.

A potential viable option to fund the long-term improvements is through tax increment financing (TIF). Tax increment financing uses additional property taxes to pay for infrastructure improvements through the establishment of special taxing districts. Tax increment financing establishes a base-year tax level for a district. Any taxes generated above the base-year amount through increases in property values are earmarked for use within the same district for improvement projects or services.¹

¹ Transportation Invest in our Future, Revue Sources to Fund Transportation Needs; AASHTO, April 2007.

The majority of states, including Louisiana, have established laws and eligibility requirements of tax increment financing. Such legislation for Louisiana establishes the requirements for:

- the creation of a tax increment development corporation,
- establishment of a tax increment development area,
- preparation of a tax increment development plan,
- establishing a tax increment trust fund.

The creation of a TIF development district along I-210 and beyond its right-of-way limits near Exit 3 and Exit 4 should be considered. The incremental tax revenue that could be generated from increased property values and new development including casino related taxes could be substantial.

As noted in **Section 11.3** above, the LDOTD supports the study findings that the Prien Lake Road Relocation project does not contribute to improved traffic operations at the I-210 / Nelson Road interchange and that funding that has been earmarked for the project should be reallocated for other long-term improvements. According to the *Lake Charles Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan – 2020*, approximately \$4.3 million was earmarked for this project using DEMO funds.