



LOUISIANA GOOD ROADS & TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION, INC.

GOOD ROADS ALERT

www.louisianagoodroads.org

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Good Roads is getting the word out about inadequate funding

The Louisiana Good Roads and Transportation Association is spreading the word that transportation needs more funding.

In an April 20 news release, President Ken Perret announced that Louisiana's ranking on www.mainstreet.com as having the worst roads in the country was a direct result of a lack of investment in our transportation system. The story was picked up in Baton Rouge and Shreveport and repeated many times through the internet and through blogs.

Perret made a similar announcement in January, when he said Baton Rouge's listing as the most congested mid-sized city in the country amounted to a congestion tax that citizens had to pay through lost time, wasted fuel and decreased productivity. Both releases can be viewed at www.louisianagoodroads.org under "News & Events."

Other outreach activities include an April presentation to the WAFB-TV (Channel 9) editorial board, a May 3 presentation to the Citizens for Highways and Infrastructure in Louisiana and the Center for Planning Excellence on May 9.

DOTD increases speed limit to 75 on parts of I-49

DOTD announced on April 14 that the speed limit on rural portions of I-49 in Avoyelles, Natchitoches and Rapides parishes will be raised from 70 mph to 75 mph.

Recently, the DOTD traffic engineering office in Alexandria launched a traffic study to help determine what the safest and most efficient posted speed limit should be on the rural portions of I-49. After reviewing the results of a traffic study, the DOTD determined that 85% of all drivers traveling on this section of I-49 are traveling at or below 75 mph. The new speed limit was scheduled to go into effect by April 28.

DOTD says national studies and practices have shown that setting the speed limit at the 85th percentile can help to reduce crashes along the roadway. Speed limits set higher than the 85th percentile are not considered reasonable and safe, and speed limits set below the 85th percentile do not move traffic efficiently. In addition, speed limits set below the 85th percentile cannot be enforced effectively and are not voluntarily observed by motorists.

The new speed limit will be in effect on the entire sections of I-49 in Avoyelles and Natchitoches parishes. In Rapides Parish, the new speed limit will be in effect from the Natchitoches Parish line to 3 miles north of U.S. 71, and from 1 mile south of U.S. 71 to the Evangeline Parish line. The highway features on these sections of roadway can safely accommodate higher speeds.

To ensure the safety of motorists, DOTD personnel will install automated speed and count stations along the roadway to monitor speeds and crashes along this section of I-49. DOTD will reexamine the speed limit increase if at any time data supports a new study.

Obama: Don't sacrifice infrastructure for deficit

President Obama told a Virginia audience that he has no plans to cut transportation programs as a way to deal with the growing federal budget deficit.

"We're not going to allow our roads and bridges to grow more and more congested while places like China are building new roads and new airports and thousands of miles of high-speed rail," the president said April 19 at the a community college in Annandale, Va.

Obama's comments came less than two weeks after he agreed to cuts that eliminated the High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail grants program, fueling speculation the president may be willing to make other transportation cuts just as committees are beginning to write a new six-year transportation bill.

"We've got to make sure that America is built to compete," Obama said. We've got to have the best roads. "We've got to have the quickest trains. We have to have the fastest broadband networks. That is who we are."

TN DOT looks to increase funds through advertising

The Department of Transportation in Tennessee may have found a novel way to deal with budget cuts-advertising.

Two bills in the Tennessee legislature would allow the department to sell advertising space on its HELP trucks and sell 15-second commercials on its 511 telephone system. The HELP trucks are similar to Louisiana's Motorist Assistance Patrol vehicles, which give basic services to stranded or wrecked vehicles to restore traffic flow. The 511 system, which Louisiana also has, allows cell phone users to get traffic condition updates by calling 511.

According to news reports out of Nashville, legislative staffers expect the advertising space on the HELP trucks to produce about \$324,000 a year, and the 511 telephone commercials should bring in another \$400,000 annually. All of the money would go to the state's highway construction fund. The proposals, which passed the House and Senate and await a decision from Bill Haslam, exclude advertising for alcohol, tobacco, political campaigns or "adult-oriented services."

Minnesota DOT testing pay-per-mile technology

Falling gas revenues and the prospect of a \$50 billion backlog over the next 20 years are prompting the Minnesota Department of Transportation to test drive gadgets that will tax drivers based on how many miles they travel instead of how much gas they buy.

Minnesota officials expect the gas tax to show modest growth over the next few years but not enough to keep up with construction and maintenance needs. So, DOT officials are trying out new equipment that will keep track of how many miles a vehicle has traveled to base a fee on that, instead of a tax on gas.

The special gear, which would go into the vehicles of 500 urban and rural volunteers, uses GPS technology to track how many miles a vehicle has traveled. Some concerns include the extra cost of collecting the tax (5 cents per \$1 in gas taxes versus 20 cents per \$1 in miles taxes) and privacy worries of drivers, who may not want the government to have information about when and where they drive.

Oregon has already conducted a similar study and would like to charge drivers of electric and plug-in hybrids up to 1.43 cents for each they drive, beginning with 2014 model-year cars. Iowa, Nevada and Texas also are studying miles-based taxes.



A view from between the I-12 east and westbound travel lanes at 4-H Club Road in Livingston Parish

News from DOTD

Although work continues across the state to improve Louisiana's roadways, much progress has been made in recent years. Since the Jindal Administration took office, the state has invested \$3.6 billion in roads, prioritized projects along major corridors and reduced the backlog of highway projects by \$1.2 billion.

The Geaux Wider Interstate Widening Program is a multi-year construction initiative to increase capacity, improve safety and enhance mobility along 16 miles of Interstates 10 and 12 in East

Baton Rouge and Livingston parishes. These projects, totaling more than \$293 million, will help to relieve congestion and enhance economic development opportunities. This road widening also involves widening or replacing 24 bridges and installing 16 ramp meters along I-12 from Baton Rouge to Livingston Parish to improve travel times and increase safety. Further improvements to this corridor provide even more incentives for businesses to locate to Louisiana. Work on the widening began in January 2009, and completion is expected by 2013.

Geaux Wider includes five simultaneous construction activities that all impact one another. In an effort to keep the public informed on this vital investment, DOTD has maintained constant communications with commuters, stakeholders and media with multiple sites to provide up-to-date information. In the most recent month recorded, more than 62,000 people have viewed the Geaux Wider website or Facebook page; five public meetings/events have been held; several presentations have been given to various groups; and dozens of media interviews have been conducted in support of the project's communications efforts. To receive more information about the state's capacity projects in and around the Baton Rouge area, visit the sites below.

Facebook – www.facebook.com/geauxwider1

Twitter – www.twitter.com/geauxwider

Web: www.GeauxWider.com

E-mail: Sign up at www.GeauxWider.com/Informed

Flickr photo pages: www.flickr.com/photos/geauxwider/

In the 2010 legislative session, Governor Jindal and legislature appropriated \$38 million toward the continued widening of I-12 from Juban Road to Walker/La. 447. Additionally, the state is conducting a feasibility study to review the potential to widen the interstate from the 10/12 split to the Mississippi River Bridge.

Jindal wants to finish I-49

Gov. Bobby Jindal wants the Legislature to include \$73 million in the capital outlay budget to finance the completion of Interstate 49 to Arkansas.

The governor made the announcement on May 2 in Shreveport. "We have now bid a total of nine contract for construction on I-49 North projects, valued at a total of \$460 million," the governor said. "A total of 31 of 36.25 miles of I-49 North are fully funded and under construction or will be under construction this year."

If the money for the remainder of I-49 North is passed in the capital outlay budget, the interstate should be completed by 2016.