



LOUISIANA GOOD ROADS & TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION, INC.

GOOD ROADS ALERT

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Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 3713
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
Phone: 225/408-8279
Fax: 225/344-0458

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Wray & Pierce, LLP



"Rep. Bill Cassidy, left, visits with LGRTA President Ken Perret during the June Board of Directors meeting."

I-12 FROM O'NEAL TO JUBAN COMPLETED

DOTD announced the I-12 widening project between O'Neal Lane in Baton Rouge and Juban Road in Denham Springs has been completed. The \$146.2 million project, which was kicked off in 2009, widens I-12 to six lanes and replaces the Amite River Bridges. The project is part of the department's Geaux Wider Program, a multi-year, \$315 million initiative that began in 2009 with a focus on increasing capacity and enhancing safety for Interstates 10 and 12 in East Baton Rouge and Livingston parishes. Since it began, the I-10 widening project from Siegen Lane to Highland Road has been added, as presumably will be a planned project to add lanes to I-10 from Highland Road to Hwy. 73 in Ascension Parish. The current Geaux Wider program includes five widening projects along a combined total of nearly 20 miles of Interstates 10 and 12 in East Baton Rouge and Livingston parishes, in addition to the installation of 16 ramp meters along I-12. DOTD called the completion of the I-12 segment to Juban Road "an important milestone for the Geaux Wider Program."

DOTD ANNOUNCES 2012 HURRICANE PREPS

DOTD says it is ready for hurricane season. Before the 2012 season began, DOTD personnel conducted statewide hurricane readiness and response exercises, and met to review and discuss evacuation and contraflow operations. Contraflow - the reversing of lanes on the interstate to facilitate evacuation - is only mapped out for the New Orleans area. Contraflow plans for the Lafayette and Lake Charles area were dropped after interstate improvements made them unnecessary, according to DOTD. During contraflow operations, DOTD district personnel assemble needed materials, including barricades, cones, variable message board signs and any other signage required to implement a contraflow evacuation. Additionally, DOTD managers remain in frequent contact with parish emergency operation directors throughout the impacted regions, assessing local needs and immediately responding with buses.

For more information on hurricane preparedness and to receive the latest hurricane evacuation guide, please visit www.getagameplan.org. During any severe weather event, DOTD works in conjunction with law enforcement and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security to issue information to the public regarding road

closures and alternate routes. Citizens can access this information on real-time traffic and road conditions by using the 511 Traveler Information System simply by dialing 511 from their telephone and saying the route or region about which they are seeking information. Out-of-state travelers can call 1-888-ROAD-511 (1-888-762-3511). Travelers can also access this information by visiting the 511 Traveler Information Web site at www.511la.org. Motorists can also obtain information regarding road closures by contacting DOTD's Customer Service Center at 1-877-4LA-DOTD (1-877-452-3683). The center is open 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

TEXAS BRIDGES VULNERABLE TO STORMS

Researchers from Rice University say 17 bridges in the Galveston area are susceptible to damage from a severe hurricane. If a storm with 30 percent stronger winds than Ike hit the area, those bridges would have a 75 percent or greater chance of failing. The Rice team evaluated 53 area bridges after Hurricane Ike struck in 2008 and studied data from the Texas Department of Transportation and HNTB, which worked on the state's recovery effort.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING WOES ARE NATIONWIDE

Louisiana isn't the only state struggling to do more with less road and bridge money. Dwindling transportation funds from gas tax revenues and dim prospects for a comprehensive federal solution are hitting every state, but there is no consensus on how to address the problem. The National Conference of State Legislators says there is a "cumulative nationwide shortfall" between revenues and needs of about \$1 trillion through 2015." That's \$1,000,000,000,000. "Unless there are innovations and new money, roads, bridges and mass transportation systems will fall further into decline and disrepair," according to the NCSL. Options that states are exploring include tolls, bonds, state infrastructure banks and public-private partnerships. NCSL says other trends are popping up across the country, including use of state general funds to supplement transportation revenue (except in Louisiana, where transportation funds are being used to supplement the general fund), focus on saving money through efficient project completion and improved overall system performance and local government-funded transportation projects.

In Maryland, Gov. Martin O'Malley's proposal to raise the gasoline tax, which had not been adjusted for 20 years, never got out of a legislative committee. The governor then tried to increase transportation funds by raising the sales tax by one penny, but that proposal also died from lack of support.

In Georgia, voters will head to the polls in July to decide the fate of the Transportation Investment Act, a regional approach that would raise sales taxes by one cent, with the money dedicated to a specific list of projects. Although the entire state is voting, the issue will be decided in 12 regions throughout the state. The most active campaigning is occurring in Atlanta, where transportation professionals say the region is at a "tipping point" because of congestion.

Arkansas voters will decide in November whether

to increase the sales tax a half-cent to raise transportation funding.

In Wyoming, a legislative “super committee” has been tasked with creating ways to help fund that state’s highway maintenance and construction. Committee members are set to look at all sources of income, including sales and fuels taxes and a ton-mile tax. The transportation committee was also assigned a separate study of toll roads. Transportation officials in Minnesota and Oregon already are looking at taxing drivers for how many miles they travel rather than how much gasoline they buy. Other states, including Washington and Nevada, are preparing similar VMT (vehicle miles travelled) projects.

Oregon first did a pilot program six years ago, and motorists’ major objection was to in-vehicle boxes used to track miles driven, says James Whitty of the Oregon Department of Transportation. “They didn’t like the government boxes. They didn’t like the GPS mandate,” he says. Now, Oregon is recruiting volunteers for another program that will examine other ways of reporting mileage, including in-vehicle technology similar to that used to locate charging stations for owners of electric vehicles.

In Minnesota, 500 volunteers in urban rural communities have been testing a system using software installed on smart phones. MinnDOT will provide a report on their research when the pilot is complete in December. Still other states have come up with another revenue-maker - stick it to the out-of-towners with higher tolls. The E-ZPass electronic toll reading system used by 24 tolling agencies in 14 states in the Northeast and Midwest can tell where drivers bought their passes and apply varying prices. Drivers using the full length of the New Jersey Turnpike during off-peak hours, for example, pay \$10.40 if they bought their E-ZPass from the turnpike’s operators. If they bought their E-ZPass somewhere else, or if they’re paying cash, have to pay \$13.85. Rhode Island residents with an E-ZPass can cross the Claiborne Pell Newport Bridge, which spans part of the Narragansett Bay, for 83 cents, but out-of-state passenger car drivers with E-ZPass and cash customers pay \$4. If you’re a New Yorker crossing one of the toll bridges or tunnels, you’ll pay \$4.80. But if you bought your transponder somewhere else or if you’re paying cash, it will cost you \$6.50.

MINNESOTA GETS GREEN LIGHT TO SUE BRIDGE DESIGNER

The U.S. Supreme Court refused to block the state of Minnesota from suing the designer of the I-35W Bridge that collapsed in 2007, killing 13 people and injuring 145. The high court declined to hear an appeal by Jacobs Engineering Group Inc., linked to the 1960s design of the bridge that collapsed into the Mississippi River in 2007. National transportation safety officials said the bridge’s design contributed to the collapse because the gusset plates were too thin to hold together the bridge’s steel beams. Jacobs’ attorneys argued claims should be stopped because too many years had passed and, under state law, they were no longer liable after 1982. Though a state law limits liability to 15 years for such projects, the Legislature passed a provision after the collapse allowing the state to collect money related to the bridge. Attorneys for the state argued those laws don’t apply under certain circumstances such as the bridge collapse, which it characterized as a “catastrophe of historic proportions.” The state should get money from any party that “caused or contributed to the catastrophe,” it argued. The suit seeks funds to recover its costs for the nearly \$37 million the state paid to victims from

a special compensation fund. The state received \$5 million in a settlement from consulting engineering firm URS Corp., and \$1 million from construction company Progressive Contractors Inc., which was doing work on the bridge at the time of the collapse. URS and Progressive paid out more in settlements with victims, including more than \$50 million from URS.

WALMART AND COLORADO DOT TEAM UP

Walmart, the Colorado Department of Transportation and the Colorado Motor Carrier Association have teamed up to provide real-time traffic and weather information at truck stops. The team is installing monitors at truck stops throughout the state to provide current weather, traffic, travel times and other information via streaming video from CDOT highway cameras. By providing real-time information to truck drivers, families and other travelers can make better decisions relating to route and trip planning. This information will allow drivers to be better prepared for conditions and enhance safety. As part of this effort, Walmart donated (20) 42” HDTVs, private truck stops are providing the space while CDOT is providing and installing the software for the streaming video.

RESEARCH SHOWS MULCH/COMPOST COMBO REDUCES RUNOFF

Researchers from the LSU AgCenter say a three-year study shows that a combination of wood mulch and compost on highway construction sites can significantly reduce the amount of rain runoff and accompanying erosion. The three-year study showed that using the mulch/compost mixture significantly reduced sediments in surface water, said LSU AgCenter soil scientist David Weindorf. “Combating soil erosion on highway rights-of-way requires novel, multidisciplinary approaches that evaluate the issue from vegetative, soil and engineering standpoints,” Weindorf said. In the study, Weindorf blended wood mulch from trees that were removed from the right of way with compost and applied it to embankments along highway construction sites. “Compost is more degraded than mulch,” Weindorf said. “Finished compost is stable and provides a rooting medium and nutrient source for vegetation. The mulch, which is larger, locks together and provides an ‘armor’ to hold the mulch and underlying soil in place. The combination also holds soil moisture.” The research program addressed several questions, including how thick a layer of material would be needed for best results and how effective the approach would be on various soils and slopes, said Greg Waldron, project manager at DEQ. “We want to be able to provide a cover for soil so it won’t end up in stormwater runoff,” Waldron said. Weindorf worked with Waldron to establish the research sites and monitor the results at several test sites along Interstate 49 in Rapides Parish and Louisiana Highway 61 in West Feliciana Parish. The researchers put out plots at eight sites and collected the water that ran off after rainfall. Because rainfall totals weren’t consistent from one plot to another, the researchers used simulated rainfall in the third year to have results that could be compared among the various sites. “We found that 4 inches of mulch/compost was more effective than 2 inches,” Waldron said. “We believe 3 inches is optimum.” DEQ is working with DOTD to develop a standard for use in highway construction, Waldron said. “We want to protect surface water with a byproduct of highway construction.” “We were looking for improvements between the bare plots and treated areas,” Weindorf said. “We had fantastic success. The mulch/compost material stayed in place perfectly.”