



## **Chapter 7. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND AGENCY COORDINATION**

### ***7.1. Agency Coordination***

#### **7.1.1. Lead, Cooperating, and Participating Agencies**

FHWA is the Lead Federal Agency, LADOTD is the Lead State Agency, and the CAEA is the Local Lead Agency. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, and the U.S. Coast Guard, 8<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District agreed to be Cooperating Agencies.

Thirty agencies were invited to be Participating Agencies due to their areas of expertise.

The purpose of involving these agencies is to keep them informed during project development and get significant input from them during the planning process.

#### **7.1.2. Agency Coordination Plan**

As part of the coordination and consultation process, an Agency Coordination Plan (ACP) was prepared and is included in Appendix E. The key objectives of the ACP activities are: 1) provide continuous information flow to agencies; 2) solicit meaningful input representing the diverse points of view; and 3) facilitate problem identification and conflict resolution through consensus-building activities. Various coordination activities took place during the project consisting of consultation, scoping, meetings, and milestone review and concurrence.

This section provides a brief discussion of agency coordination activities and meetings and includes materials provided to them.

#### **7.1.3. Solicitation of Views**

A Solicitation of Views (SOV) letter was sent on February 20, 2009 to 288 project stakeholders. These stakeholders and agencies were contacted to provide them with information regarding the process and to ensure that their input would be considered during the planning process. Responses were received from stakeholders and agencies including:

- East Baton Rouge Metro Councilwoman Alison Cascio
- Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas
- Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
- Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
- East Baton Rouge Parish Floodplain Administrator
- Environmental Protection Agency



- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and
- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Appendix E contains a copy of the SOV letter, a list of recipients, and a summary of the responses received.

#### **7.1.4. Agency Scoping**

A project Agency Scoping meeting was held on March 25, 2009. Meeting invitations were sent on February 20, 2009 to 64 agency representatives. Agencies with representatives in attendance were as follows:

- Louisiana State Police
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport
- U.S. Coast Guard
- LA CRT, Office of State Parks
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
- Ascension Parish
- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- Federal Highway Administration
- Chitimacha Tribe of Biloxi
- Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
- Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
- Louisiana Department of Cultural, Recreation and Tourism, Division of Archaeology
- East Baton Rouge Parish
- Capital Region Planning Commission, and
- Environmental Protection Agency

During the meeting agency representatives were:

- Provided a background of the project
- Shown the proposed Corridor Alternatives
- Briefed on the SOV and comments received
- Advised as to identified lead, cooperating and participating agencies

The agencies were given an opportunity to comment on the project and various remarks and comments were received. The minutes of the meeting can be found in Appendix E. The slideshow presentation is located in the project technical file. Appendix E contains a copy of the meeting invitation letter, a list of recipients, and a summary of the responses received.



### 7.1.5. Coordination Meetings

A series of agency coordination meetings have been conducted throughout the Project Tier 1 EIS process. Following is a list of meetings held and the participating agencies. Minutes for each meeting can be found in Appendix E.

- February 12, 2009, DOTD/FHWA - Tier 1 EIS Kickoff Meeting

Items discussed included project status; project Tier 1 EIS approach; Solicitation of Views; Agency Scoping Meeting; lead, cooperating and participating agencies; Public Involvement Plan; Agency Coordination Plan; and project schedule

- April 9, 2009, U.S. Coast Guard

Items discussed during this conference call included comment on the revised Mississippi River bridge crossings and suggestions for permissible alternative river crossings in West Baton Rouge Parish near the existing U.S. 190 river crossing

- April 22, 2009, DOTD/FHWA

Items discussed included review of public meetings and Agency Scoping meeting held in March 2009; unit corridor section modifications; and preferred corridor evaluation methodology

- July 8, 2009, Agency Coordination Meeting

Items discussed included status of cooperating and participating agencies; corridor modifications; Mississippi River bridge crossings; corridor elimination matrix and methodology; public and agency involvement efforts; EIS document exhibits; and project schedule.

- August 6, 2009, DOTD/FHWA

Items discussed included recent meetings with maritime organizations; corridor modifications and revisions; status of the EIS document including review of various chapters and mapping exhibits; upcoming public and agency involvement activities; and status of LADOTD participation

- August 28, 2009, DOTD/FHWA

Items discussed included LADOTD becoming a Joint Lead Agency for the project; project background information; tiered approach to EIS; preliminary interchange location information; overall project funding; Mississippi River navigation concerns; public and agency involvement activities; and project schedule

- September 22, 2009, DOTD/FHWA

Items discussed included status report on river simulation modeling exercise; public and agency involvement activities; Pre-Draft EIS production schedule; Pre-Draft EIS distribution; and public comment period



## **7.2. Public Involvement Plan**

A Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was finalized in February 2009. The PIP is intended to systematically build a broad basis of support from the public, parish and municipal stakeholders, and other interested parties.

The key objectives of the PIP activities are to:

- Provide ongoing relevant project information
- Solicit meaningful input representing the diverse points of view
- Facilitate problem identification and conflict resolution through consensus-building activities
- Incorporate public input into the decision-making process.

Based on the dynamics within the five-parish Project area and surrounding region, there are five primary target groups to be actively engaged:

- General public
- Municipal and Parish staffs
- Elected officials
- Other stakeholders (business owners, developers, environmental interests, other affected parties), and
- Federal, State and Local agencies

A copy of the PIP is included in Appendix E.

## **7.3. Public and Stakeholder Coordination**

### **7.3.1. Public Scoping/Purpose and Need Meeting**

The first round of public meetings was held February 25-28 and March 3, 2008 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. each day. Meetings locations and dates follow:

- BREC Headquarters, Baton Rouge, Louisiana - February 25, 2008,
- Gonzales Civic Center, Gonzales, Louisiana - February 26, 2008,
- North Park Recreation Center, Denham Springs, Louisiana - February 27, 2008,
- Port Allen Community Center, Port Allen, Louisiana - February 28, 2008, and
- Plaquemine Civic Center, Plaquemine, Louisiana - March 3, 2008.

These public scoping meetings were to inform the public about the project and obtain public comments on the project's purpose and need, range of alternatives considered, corridor alternatives, and identification of environmental, socioeconomic, and other concerns.



Meeting handouts, attendance records, and a summary of comments received are included in Appendix E. A summary report of these public meetings is located in the project technical file.

### **7.3.2. Public Meetings: March 2009**

A second round of public meetings was held March 19 and March 23-26, 2009. Meetings locations and dates follow:

- BREC Tennis Recreation & Fitness Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana - March 19, 2009,
- Gonzales Civic Center, Gonzales, Louisiana - March 23, 2009,
- Iberville Optional Education Center, Plaquemine, Louisiana - March 24, 2009,
- Anthony Dugas Recreation Center, Denham Springs, Louisiana - March 25, 2009, and
- West Baton Rouge Community Center, Addis, Louisiana - March 26, 2009.

Meeting handouts, attendance records and a summary of comments received are included in Appendix E. A summary report of these public meetings is located in the project technical file.

### **7.3.3. Public Meetings: January 2010**

A second round of public meetings was held January 13-14, 19-20 and 25, 2010. Meetings locations and dates follow:

- Baton Rouge Community Center, Port Allen, Louisiana – January 13, 2010,
- BREC Headquarters Building, Baton Rouge, Louisiana – January 14, 2010,
- Gonzales Civic Center, Gonzales, Louisiana – January 19, 2010,
- Plaquemine Civic Center, Plaquemine, Louisiana – January 20, 2010,
- Livingston Parish Health Unit, Livingston, Louisiana – January 25, 2010.

Meeting handouts, attendance records and a summary of comments received are included in Appendix E. A summary report of these public meetings is located in the project technical file.

### **7.3.4. Project Web Site**

The Project's web site is [www.brloop.com](http://www.brloop.com). The web site includes a project overview, corridor alternative maps, meeting notices and summaries, project reports, and contact information.

A function of the public website provided visitors an opportunity to leave name, address, contact information and their overall opinion of the proposed project. Visitors were allowed to indicate favor or opposition to the project and leave a detailed comment. Over the course of the Tier 1 Draft EIS phase of the



project, there were 571 hits on the function. Sixty-eight favored the project, 143 opposed the project, 76 left detailed comments, and 284 took no action.

The data is also detailed by parish. Ascension Parish visitors had 12 in favor, 29 opposed and 18 left comments. East Baton Rouge Parish visitors had 31 in favor, 63 opposed, and 24 left comments. Iberville Parish visitors had five in favor, zero opposed, and three left comments. Livingston Parish visitors had 13 in favor, 46 opposed and 18 left comments. West Baton Rouge Parish visitors had seven in favor, five opposed, and 13 left comments.

A summary of comments received via the website is included in Appendix E.

### **7.3.5. Newsletter**

A Baton Rouge Loop newsletter entitled “BRNEWS” was sent out in July 2009 and again in September 2009 to the CAEA; the Stakeholder Committee; the Advisory Committee; and local, state and federal elected officials; and was posted to the Project’s web site. The newsletter discussed project overview and status, corridor modifications, project history, project funding and public involvement activities.

Both newsletters are located in the project technical file.

### **7.3.6. Project Video**

A short informational video was created and used in public meetings to inform the public about the project. The video was utilized by the CAEA, the Stakeholder Committee, the Advisory Committee members in public education and outreach relative to the project.

A DVD copy of the project video is located in the project technical file.

### **7.3.7. Stakeholder Database**

A database was created at the start of the project and updated throughout. The database includes contact information for the Project Team; CAEA, Stakeholder Committee and Advisory Committee members; agency representatives; elected officials; community groups and other organizations; and members of the general public who have inquired about the project.

A copy of the stakeholder database is located in the project technical file.

## ***7.4. Stakeholder Committee, Advisory Committee, Special Purpose Meetings***

### **7.4.1. Stakeholder Committee Meetings**

The Stakeholder Committee was formed to represent civic and community stakeholders common to the five parishes as well as specific to each parish. Members were appointed by the Capital Area Expressway Authority.



- April 10, 2008

The purpose of the meeting was to update members of the committee on the project status; review the latest public and agency involvement efforts; discuss the most recent corridor refinements; and review the project schedule and transition into the Tier 1 EIS phase of the project.

- July 2, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to update members of the committee on the project status; review the latest public and agency involvement efforts; discuss the most recent corridor refinements; and review the project schedule.

Minutes for each meeting can be found in Appendix E.

#### **7.4.2. Advisory Committee**

The Advisory Committee was formed to provide technical assistance, coordinate with appropriate agencies, and provide expert advice and counsel to the Capital Area Expressway Authority. Members were appointed by the Capital Area Expressway Authority.

- April 10, 2008

The purpose of the meeting was to update members of the committee on the project status; review the latest public and agency involvement efforts; discuss the most recent corridor refinements; and review the project schedule and transition into the Tier 1 EIS phase of the project.

- July 2, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to update committee members on the project status; review the latest public and agency involvement efforts; discuss the most recent corridor refinements; and review the project schedule.

Minutes for each meeting can be found in Appendix D.

#### **7.4.3. Special Purpose Meetings**

Meetings with various interest groups have been conducted through the Tier 1 EIS phase of the project. Project meetings and presentations were conducted for the following:

- Southern University law students', Southern University Law Center, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA - April 14, 2008

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the audience with an update on the project.

- Ascension Leadership, Gonzales, LA - April 17, 2008

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the audience with an update on the project.



- West Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce, West Baton Rouge Visitors Center, Port Allen, LA - April 23, 2008

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the audience with an update on the project.

- Livingston Parish Chamber of Commerce, Denham Springs, LA - May 7, 2008

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the audience with an update on the project.

- Port Vincent community meeting - March 12, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the audience with an update on the project, corridor alternatives in and around Port Vincent, and the definition of Prime Farmland and its protected status relative to the project

- Independent Title Attorneys meeting, Baton Rouge, LA - April 14, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the audience with an update on the project.

- North Ascension Rotary Club meeting, Prairieville, LA - April 29, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the audience with an update on the project.

- U.S. Coast Guard, Maritime Pilots Association, New Orleans-Baton Rouge Steamship Association - May 7, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to learn more about Mississippi River marine navigation modeling that has been encouraged by the Coast Guard and river pilots for use on the project

- Louisiana Engineering Society, American Society of Civil Engineers joint meeting, Baton Rouge, La - May 21, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the audience with an update on the project.

- State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) - June 1, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss three historical sites in the south unit that had the potential to be considered Section 4(f) resources as well as cultural resources.

- Marine Navigation Safety Association - July 29, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the audience with an update on the project.

- Audubon Kiwanis Club meeting, Baton Rouge, LA - July 30, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the audience with an update on the project.





- Tug Operators Association, Department of Natural Resources building, Baton Rouge, LA - July 31, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the audience with an update on the project.

- Maritime Industry River Tour - August 17, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to provide maritime industry and other key project stakeholders with a field trip opportunity to witness Mississippi River navigation, and observe how new river crossings may affect barge traffic

- Lower Mississippi River Waterway Safety Advisory Committee (LOWMARSAC) meeting, New Orleans, LA - October 5-9, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the audience with an update on the project.

- LSU Ag Center - December 16, 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to brief the LSU Ag Center representatives regarding the project and solicit the Ag Centers concerns in regards to its Master Plan and the Baton Rouge Loop Project.

- Land Use Planning Workshops, Denham Springs, Gonzales, and Addis, LA – February 8 & 9, 2010.

The intent of the meetings was to allow the public and stakeholders to provide input regarding future land use planning activities related to the Baton Rouge Loop Project.

### **7.5. Public Official Outreach**

The Capital Region Legislative Caucus was briefed on the project April 17, 2008 at the Louisiana State Capitol.

Zachary Mayor Henry Martinez, Central Councilwoman Joan Lansing, and Baton Rouge Metro Councilman Scott Wilson were briefed on the project March 17, 2009.

Provided Baton Rouge Metro Councilman Scott Wilson with additional project information and details regarding the project poll question April 1, 2009.

City of Central leadership briefing April 28, 2009 regarding corridor locations.

Met with City of Central officials and representatives of the Moore Planning Group June 2, 2009 to discuss proposed routes and comprehensive plan underway.

Briefed Livingston Parish President Mike Grimmer June 22, 2009 on project and proposed corridors.