

July 20, 2016

STATE PROJECT NO. H.004273.5
FEDERAL AID PROJECT NO. H004273
I-49 CONNECTOR
LAFAYETTE REGIONAL AIRPORT TO I-10/I-49/US 167 INTERCHANGE
LAFAYETTE PARISH

SUBJECT: Solicitation of Views

In the planning stages of a transportation facility, views from federal, state and local agencies, organizations, and individuals are solicited. The special expertise of these groups can assist the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) with the identification of possible adverse economic, social, or environmental effects or concerns. On behalf of the DOTD, the consultant team, Lafayette Connector Partners (LCP), requests your assistance in this regard.

Attached is a Vicinity Map showing the general location of the project, along with a preliminary project description, to assist in your review.

It is requested that you review the attached information and furnish us with your views and comments by August 20, 2016. Replies should be addressed to Louis Costa at Lafayette Connector Partners, P.O. Box 3136, Lafayette, LA 70502. Please reference the captioned project in your reply.

Sincerely,
Lafayette Connector Partners



Louis Costa
Environmental Task Manager
Attachments

PRELIMINARY PROJECT DATA

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) proposes to construct the Lafayette Connector, which is one component of Interstate 49 (I-49), to connect I-49 from I-10 in Lafayette, LA to I-10 in New Orleans, LA.

In 2000, DOTD, in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Lafayette Connector and a Final EIS in 2002. In 2003, FHWA issued a Record of Decision (ROD) for the selected alternative, RR-4 Elevated with MPO Subalternative and Subalternative H.

This approved alternative generally extends along the Evangeline Thruway corridor, with a portion on new alignment, from the Lafayette Regional Airport to the I-10/I-49//US 167 Interchange, a distance of approximately 5.5 miles.

In the central area of Lafayette, the Evangeline Thruway is routed along a one-way couplet and has three 10-foot lanes with no shoulders in each direction; to the south of Pinhook Road and to the north of the railroad spur crossing, the Thruway has three 12-foot lanes in each direction with shoulders and a median.

The Purpose and Need for the project includes:

- System linkage,
- Relieve congestion in Evangeline Thruway Corridor,
- Implement long-standing plans for freeway in the Evangeline Thruway Corridor,
- Meet intent of federal enabling legislation,
- Provide beneficial intermodal connections,
- Improve safety,
- Provide for hurricane evacuation, and
- Improve regional mobility.

In 2015, DOTD initiated the conceptual design phase to advance the project into design. This phase was anticipated to include a Reevaluation of the EIS and ROD to determine whether there have been changes to the scope of the project or project area since the ROD and to follow-up on the 21 commitments in the ROD.

In consideration of input from the community, Potential Refinement Concepts to the Selected Alternative are now being assessed. FHWA and DOTD have agreed that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), in lieu of a Reevaluation, will be appropriate for assessing and documenting these possible changes along the approved alignment. A Notice of Intent to prepare an SEIS was published in the Federal Register on June 21, 2016.

Potential Refinement Concepts include:

- The Selected Alternative identified in the 2002 FEIS and the 2003 ROD, and
- Eighteen (18) potential Refinement Concepts that have been identified for modification of the Selected Alternative in the central area of Lafayette, generally between Pinhook Road in the south and the railroad spur crossing in the north.

Other modifications to the Selected Alternative, designated Potential Design Modifications Based on Input also are being assessed. These modifications are located in various areas of the corridor and do not necessarily apply to a specific Refinement Concept.

On the project website, lafayetteconnector.com, under Project Library, sketches of the Potential Refinement Concepts are in the Tier 1 Refinement Concept and Evaluation Framework tab, and a list of the Potential Design Modifications Based on Input is in the Potential Design Modification Based on Input tab.

It is anticipated that the number of concepts will be narrowed down to a smaller number for more detailed study through a tiering process, and that one of the concepts will be incorporated into the Selected Alternative.

Level 1, the Selected Alternative Right-of-Way and Level 2, the area within 500 feet of the Right-of-Way within the Area of Influence, developed as part of the Corridor Preservation and Management Plan in 2002, are shown on the enclosed Vicinity Map.

The 2002 Selected Alternative will require additional right-of-way and associated residential and business relocations. The Potential Refinement Concepts and Potential Design Modifications may require different quantities of additional right-of-way and associated relocations.

In addition to the study of the Potential Refinement Concepts and the Potential Design Modifications, the SEIS will include updated information on the effects of the Selected Alternative.

One of these updates will be a Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act process to identify and assess effects on historic properties in the project area that are, or may be eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places, including the recently listed Freetown-Port Rico Historic District.

The SEIS process is anticipated to include at least one Public Meeting, distribution of a Draft SEIS, a Public Hearing, distribution of a Final SEIS, and a Supplemental Record of Decision.

VICINITY MAP

