

How safe and efficient is the local transportation system?
 What improvements should be made to the system to best serve the community?

Plaquemines Parish MASTER PLAN

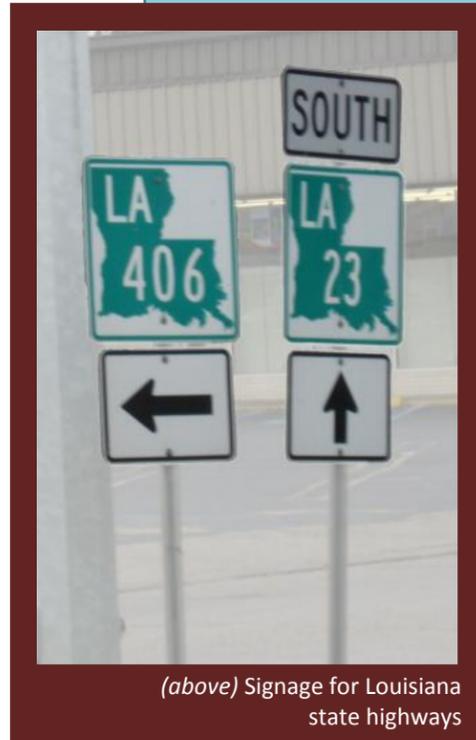


President Billy Nungesser

PURPOSE STATEMENT: *The Plaquemines Parish transportation system is diverse. It includes highways and local automobile traffic, rail, aviation, ports, and ferries. The transportation element of the Master Plan will serve to address needs related to daily commutes and hurricane evacuation, in providing dependable, reliable transportation infrastructure to promote economic needs and desirable growth patterns.*

Big Decisions & Questions

- What do you believe are the most important transportation issues that should be included in the Plaquemines Parish Master Plan? Why are these issues important to you?
- What aspects of the roadway system do you like and dislike? Are there any improvements that are most needed? Are there any dangerous sections of roadways that need to be addressed?
- Multimodal transportation planning refers to decision making that considers various modes (walking, cycling, automobile, public transit, etc.) and connections among modes so each can fill its optimal role in the overall system. Are there any opportunities for multimodal transportation that are not being utilized? Is there any type of transit service that would be beneficial? What about bicycle and pedestrian facilities (bike trails, sidewalks, etc.)?
- School buses and freight traffic associated with local businesses could cause significant roadway delays and congestion. How well are schools and businesses served by the existing transportation network?
- Given the strong emphasis on environmental sustainability at the national level, what are some sustainable transportation solutions you would like considered? How has transportation influenced the natural environment?
- What transportation investments are necessary to improve disaster responsiveness (response, evacuation, and recovery)?



(above) Signage for Louisiana state highways

In the next five years, more than \$60 million is planned to be invested in transportation improvements for the Parish. These projects range from major roadway improvements to new bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Related Big Issues

- What will be the land use and economic impacts of planned transportation improvements, particularly programmed road and bridge improvements in the Belle Chasse area?
- How to best pay for the improvement, maintenance, and operation costs of the ferries.
- How to best accommodate and balance the conflicting transportation needs of different Parish interests (e.g., freight and commuter trips that require capacity improvements vs. tourism promotion that require improved bicycle and pedestrian access).

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The existing transportation network in the parish offers many prospects for systemwide benefits. The parish is served by four major highways, an active freight rail line with up to three trains per day, over 20 airport/civilian aviation/heliport facilities, 20 port terminals and facilities, and two ferry crossings over the Mississippi River. As such, system maintenance, increasing capacity, and access are key considerations in the transportation plan.

- Belle Chasse Highway is the most traveled roadway in the parish with up to 32,000 vehicles per day.
- The Belle Chasse Bridge opens an average of ten times daily for seven minutes at a time for marine traffic. Often times, the bridge openings result in extensive congestion and delay for northbound travelers on Belle Chasse Highway.
- Ferry crossings provide much-needed east-west mobility for not only Plaquemines Parish residents but also commuters from St. Bernard Parish. The ferry at Belle Chasse hauls 50,000 vehicles per month, and the ferry at Pointe a la Hache, 5,000 vehicles per month. The current vessel fleet is underpowered given the strong river currents.



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LINKING OUR COMMUNITIES & RESOURCES

PLANNED INVESTMENTS

More than \$60 million in transportation infrastructure investments are currently programmed for Plaquemines Parish. Top priorities include:

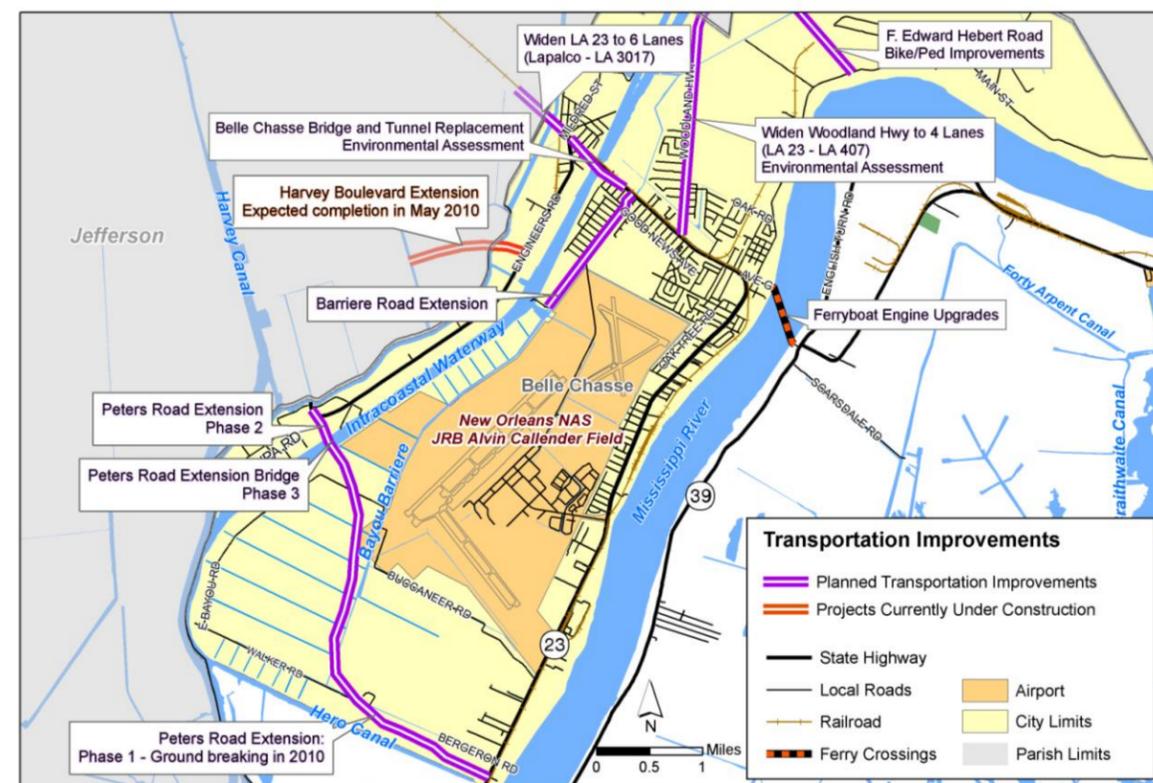
- Extend Peters Road in Jefferson Parish south to Belle Chasse Highway in Plaquemines Parish, including a bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway which will provide a bypass around the congested Belle Chasse area, improve access to the Naval Base, and provide a critical link between rail and port facilities. Groundbreaking is scheduled for 2010.
- Widen Belle Chasse Highway to four lanes between Happy Jack and Port Sulphur - A feasibility study is currently underway for this project, which would relieve congestion on this important roadway.
- Replace Belle Chasse Bridge and Tunnel - An Environmental Assessment will be conducted to evaluate the impacts associated with an upgraded bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway.
- Elevate Belle Chasse Highway near Myrtle Grove to prevent flooding during high tide and large rainfall events.
- Widen and raise Tidewater Road to help offset seasonal street flooding during high tide and other high water events. Construction of Phase 2, from Coast Guard Road to Marina Road, is expected to begin in September.



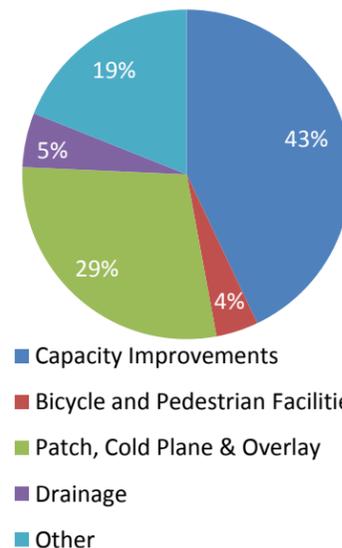
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(left) The railroad is an important transportation resource for economic development.
(above) Leaving Plaquemines Parish via the Belle Chasse Bridge



\$ 60 Million of Transportation Improvements (FY '10 - '13) Funding Breakdown



Source: Regional Planning Commission .Transportation Improvement Projects (FY 2010 - 2013).

Big Ideas

- The two ferry locations could be consolidated to a single, more modernized location just south of Jesuit Bend to provide a “straight shot” across the river. Long-range options include privatization and a high-speed ferry system.
- The lower Mississippi River is too narrow to accommodate two –way traffic of newer, larger vessels. As a result, the Baptiste Collette Navigation Channel is being developed to act as an alternative route. The channel will be dredged to 22 ft deep by 185 ft wide to accommodate increased marine traffic.
- Shifts in global shipping markets that will result in greater usage of the Mississippi River are expected to give Plaquemines Parish comparative advantages as an international container port in the 21st century. However, current rail and highway access could limit economic growth in the parish. Therefore it will be critical to coordinate and support intermodal connections among water, rail, and highway transportation to realize this potential. The following improvements would allow for better intermodal connections:
 - Extension of the railroad south to Venice as part of the construction of a new port
 - Relocation of the rail line as part of the Peters Bypass to allow for the much-needed widening of Belle Chasse Highway
 - Improvements to levees to protect Plaquemines new port.
- A general aviation airport at the Lake Hermitage site was recommended by a recent feasibility study. This site offers for opportunities for development, minimal airspace restrictions, and highway access.