

I-12 To Bush Corridor Study

State Project No. 700-52-0124 (TIMED)

PROJECT UPDATE

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) has initiated Phase III of the I-12 to Bush Corridor Study. This is the third of a three-phase environmental planning effort that involves the identification and evaluation of alternatives.

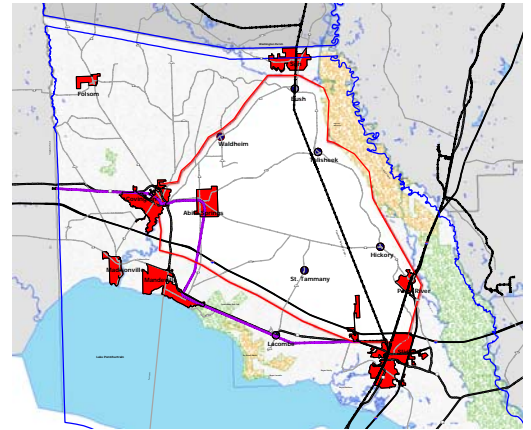
It is again emphasized that there are no preconceived alignments or roadway types under consideration in this phase of the work. Numerous alignments (approximately 64) were considered under the overall project and these included the widening of existing roadways, or the construction of a new roadway, or a combination thereof. In addition, the “No-Build” alternative (i.e. no construction of a roadway) is an alternative that will be considered alongside any “Build” alternatives in the selection of a Preferred Alternative.

Previous phases of this project had resulted in the identification of a set of alternatives that were evaluated against the methodology approved by the US Army Corps of Engineers. These included alternatives identified by agencies, elected officials and Parish residents. An extensive public participation process has allowed for public input and comments at each critical stage of the planning process. Page 3 provides a brief overview of the alternatives evaluation process and map of final alternatives.

PROJECT AREA

The project area is an approximate triangular shaped area within St. Tammany Parish, encompassing about 244 square miles, roughly bounded by LA 21, US 190, I-12, US 11 and LA 41.

The project area includes the incorporated areas of Abita Springs, Pearl River and portions of the cities of Slidell and Covington, as well as unincorporated places such as Bush, Hickory, Talisheek and Waldheim. The majority of the project area is pine forest and farmland crossed by numerous small streams and rivers. The undeveloped portions of the project area include several wetlands, primarily in the form of bottomlands and pine savannahs. (Please refer to map insert).



PROJECT TEAM

The project team consists of DOTD and consultant firms responsible for specific portions of the project.

DOTD

Road Design Section: overall project management and coordination, road and bridge issues

Environmental Section: environmental processes as defined by National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and Department guidelines

CONSULTANT TEAM

Burk-Kleinpeter, Inc.: prime consultant responsible for project coordination, conceptual engineering, public meetings and document preparation

DBSysgraph, Inc.: mapping and GIS

Earth Search, Inc.: cultural resources

Lambert Engineers, LLC.: air quality and highway noise

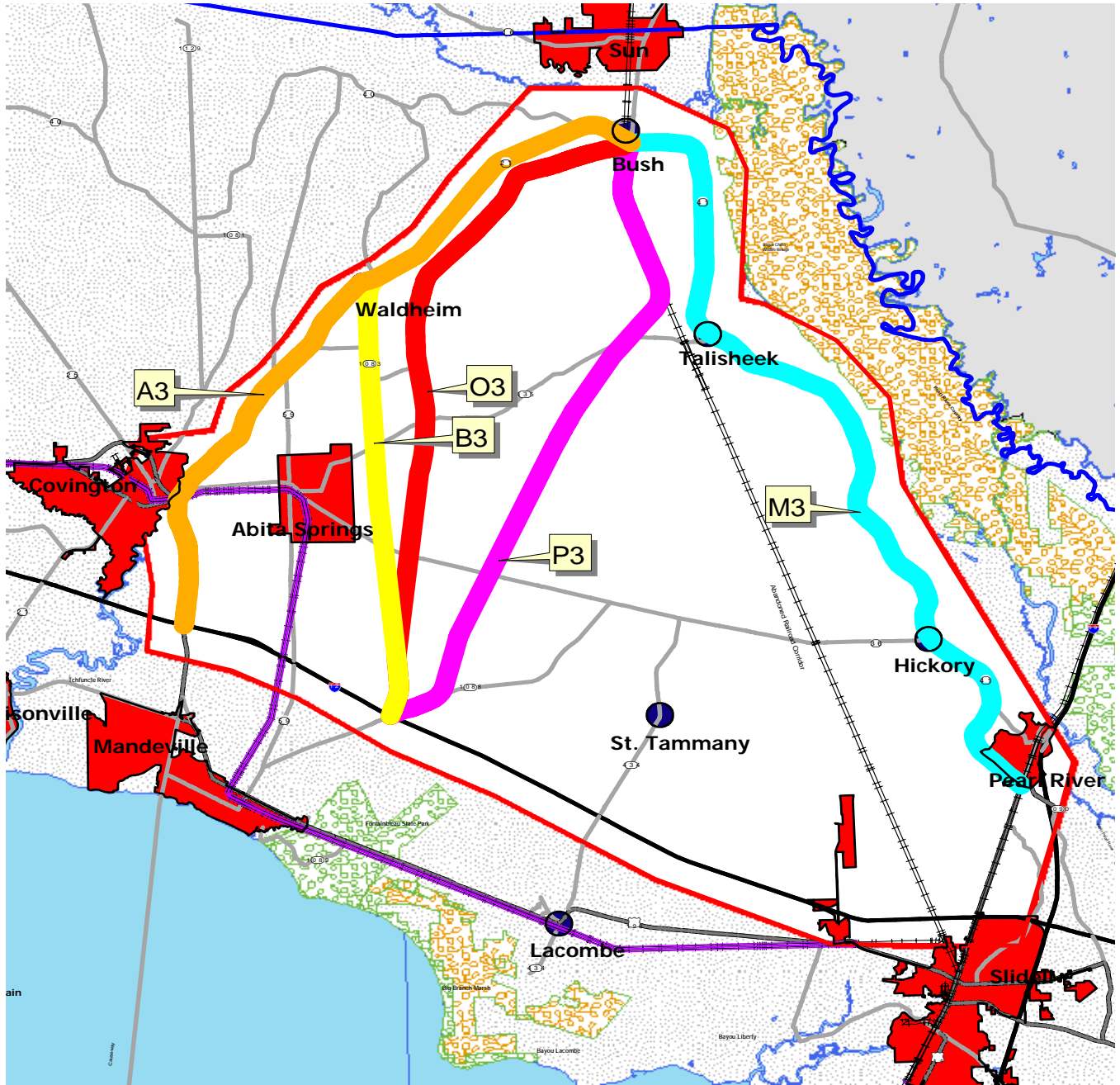
Neel-Schaffer, Inc.: wetlands, threatened and endangered species

TAMPLAN, LLC: public participation coordination






The Hawthorne Agency: web-site development and maintenance

University of New Orleans Center for Economic Development: economic impacts

FINAL SET OF BUILD ALTERNATIVES



DESCRIPTION OF FINAL SET OF BUILD ALTERNATIVES

-  **Alternative A3:** widen LA 21 to US 190
-  **Alternative B3:** widen LA 21 to Waldheim, then south to I-12, connecting at LA 435 and LA 36
-  **Alternative M3:** widen LA 41 and US 11 and continuing on to I-12
-  **Alternative O3:** new road parallel to (south of) LA 21 to Waldheim, then south to I-12 at LA 1088
-  **Alternative P3:** new road from Bush on an abandoned railroad corridor to north of Talisheek, then south-west to I-12 along LA 1088

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the current status of this project?

DOTD and its consultant team have started on Phase III of the I-12 to Bush Corridor Study. The project will identify the low impact alternative(s) that satisfy the transportation needs. Phase I developed the baseline information for the project. Phase II identified and evaluated alternatives. Phase III will identify and develop the Preferred Alternative.

What are the project phases?

The three phases can be generally described as follows:

Phase I: Preliminary Corridor Study

This was the planning effort that led to the development of the project Purpose and Need Statement, as well as general environmental, land use and transportation database. This information was presented at the public meetings held in June 2002.

Phase II: Alignment Study

This dealt with identifying alternate alignments, evaluating those alternatives and selecting those that best address the project's Purpose and Need while avoiding and/or minimizing adverse environmental impacts.

Phase III: Environmental Documentation and Conceptual Engineering

Once the Preferred Alternative(s) has been identified, an Environmental Assessment (EA) and/or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared, along with Conceptual Engineering drawings and cost estimates.

How long will each of these Phases take?

Phase I started in January 2002 and was completed in August 2002. Phase II started in May 2003 and was completed in October 2004, while Phase III has a 15 month project period, towards the end of which all data and supporting documentation has to be turned over to the US Army Corps of Engineers for its determination on the need for an EA or an EIS. Phase III is scheduled to be completed in July 2006. These timelines are only approximations and may be influenced by factors beyond the control of DOTD or its consultants.

How were the alternatives selected?

Project stakeholders, the public, elected officials, environmental groups and State and Federal agencies were given the opportunity to identify alternatives that they thought best addressed current transportation needs. Over 64 alternatives were identified through the public participation process. Of these, alternatives that were obviously fatally flawed (cutting through the middle of a developed area, for example) were removed from the evaluation process. Next, all common alternatives were collapsed into one designated alternative. This process reduced the overall set to 43 and then 14. The project team added its own set of three technically derived alternatives to these 14. This set of 17 alternatives was evaluated against project variables agreed upon by the main agencies (US Army Corps of Engineers, US Environmental Protection Agency, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and LA Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries). The analysis resulted in a final set of five build alternatives (see map on Page 2 and Description below). These five alternatives will be further evaluated in greater detail and compared to the No Build Alternative. The alternative(s) that best suits the project's stated Purpose and Need, while avoiding or minimizing adverse impacts will then be tagged as the "Preferred Alternative".

How will the public be involved?

Public meetings have not been scheduled for Phase III of the project. During its review process, should the US Army Corps of Engineers deem it necessary, it will schedule a Public Hearing. Project updates will be provided via the website (www.i12tobush.com) and through project newsletters such as this one. Once a Preferred Alternative has been identified, the Corps will issue a Public Notice to that effect.

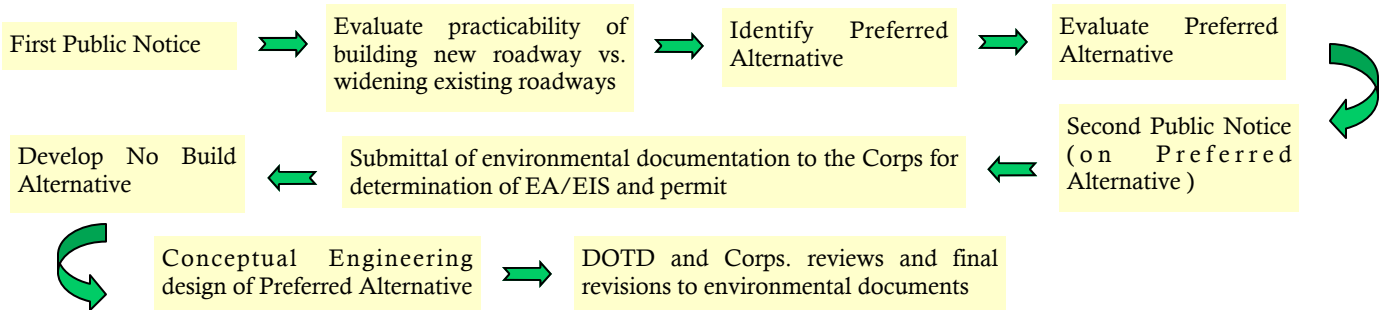
What should I do if I would like to submit written comments?

Written statements or comments are welcome and may be submitted to Mr. Ed Wedge PE, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, PO Box 94245, Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9245.

If I have any more questions, whom should I contact?

Any questions may be directed to either Paul Waidhas or Anna Coe at Burk-Kleinpeter, Inc., (504) 486-5901.

SUMMARY FLOWCHART OF MAJOR WORK ITEMS IN PHASE III





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and Development
PO Box 94245
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Newsletter Prepared by **BURK-KLEINPETER, INC.**

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Spring 2005

PROJECT SPONSOR

The Sponsor for this project is the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. No Federal funding is involved.

Did you know that the I-12 to Bush Corridor Study project has its own web-site?



Please visit the project web-site at:

www.i12tobush.com

Check the project web-site:

- For project schedule
- for updates on the I-12 to Bush Corridor Study
- to submit comments on the project
- to contact the DOTD project manager
- to contact the project team
- to add yourself to the project mailing list