

I-12 To Bush Corridor Study

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

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) is conducting a preliminary corridor study of the I-12 to Bush area to evaluate the feasibility of improving north-south roadway connections within St. Tammany Parish.

Earlier studies to provide additional north-south routes within St. Tammany Parish yielded inconclusive results. However, since construction funds were never allocated for a new roadway and public opposition was strong, the projects were shelved until the 1989 Transportation Infrastructure Model for Economic Development (TIMED) legislation was passed. The TIMED program provided a funding source for the proposed project and a new alignment was decided upon. The Tammany Highlands Development Company agreed to donate the necessary right-of-way and fund the design and engineering of an interchange at I-12/LA 1088, along with the expansion of the segment between I-12 and LA 36 to a four-lane highway, if DOTD agreed to undertake the construction of these projects.

Setbacks associated with that effort, including the Tammany Highlands Development Company going out of business and concerns forwarded by the Federal Highway Administration, resulted in the creation of two separate projects: one dealing with the design and construction of the I-12/LA 1088 interchange and the second evaluating improved north-south access within St. Tammany Parish.

This second potential roadway between I-12 and the unincorporated area of Bush is the focus of the current DOTD sponsored project. This corridor study is part of a three-phase effort. It is emphasized that there are no preconceived alignments currently under study in this first phase of work. Numerous alignments are possible under the overall project and these may include the widening of existing roadways, or the construction of a new roadway, or a combination thereof.

PROJECT AREA

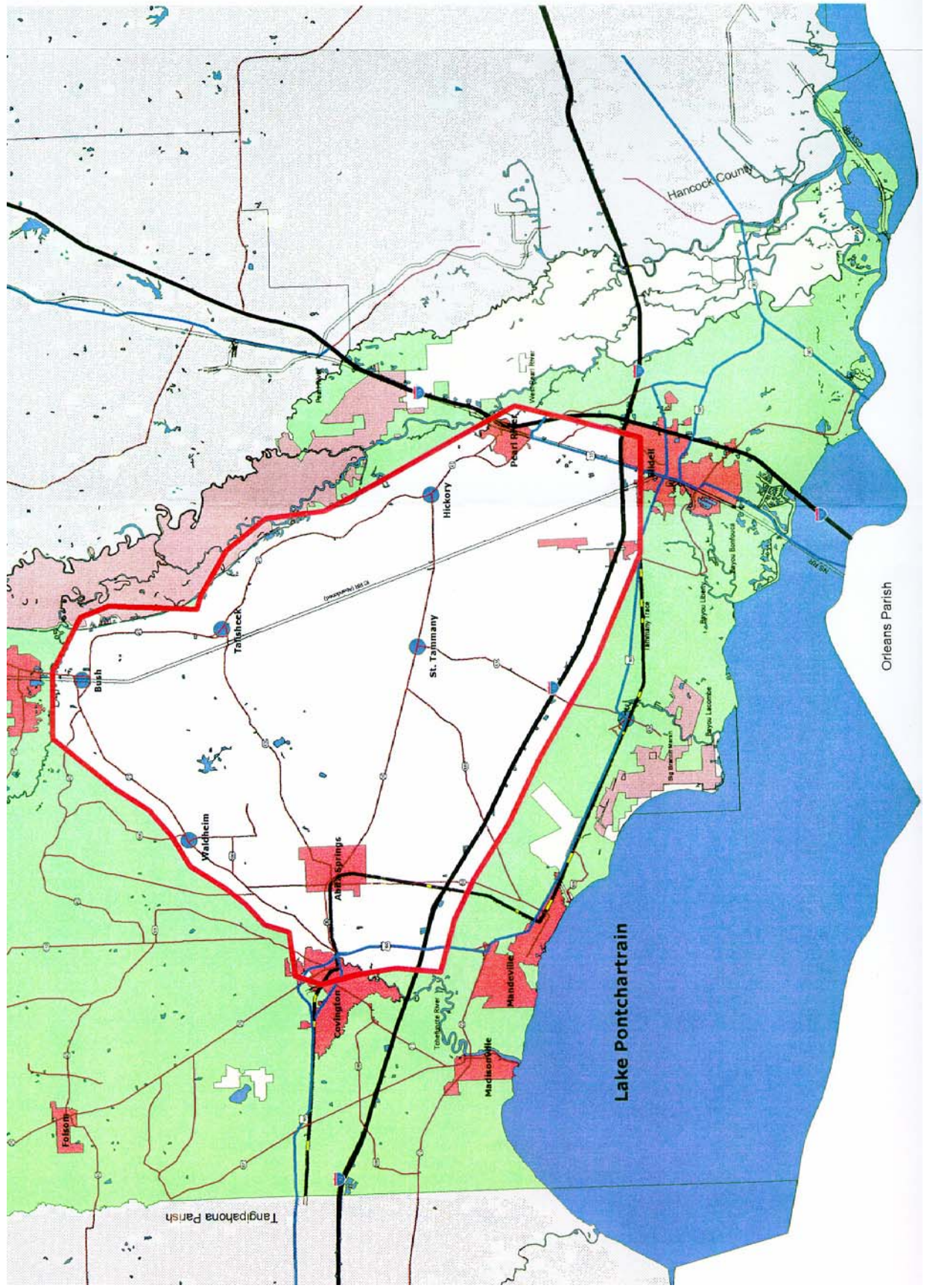
The project area is located totally within St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana. It is an approximate triangular shaped area encompassing about 244 square miles, roughly bounded by LA 21, US 190, I-12, US 11 and LA 41.

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 SPONSOR

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

PROJECT AREA MAP



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Hasn't this project been done before?

There have been previous efforts which evaluated the need for a new highway between I-12 and Bush. However, these projects did not follow the federal environmental process. The current project is starting without any preconceived notions of possible roadway alignments and will follow the environmental process that is required by federal agencies. The goal of this three phase process is to identify the low impact alternatives that satisfies the transportation need.

What are the 3 phases of the project?

The 3 phases can be generally described as follows:

Phase I: Preliminary Corridor Study

This is the ongoing effort that will lead to the development of the project Purpose and Need Statement. As part of this effort, the project team is in the process of developing general environmental, land use and transportation baseline information and accompanying maps. This information will be presented at the public meetings scheduled for this Phase.

Phase II: Alignment Study

This phase will deal 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 Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Once the preferred alternative(s) has been identified, an EA or EIS will be prepared.

How long would each of these Phases take?

Phase I started in January 2002 and should be completed in July 2002. Phase II is expected to take 6-9 months, while the need for an EA or EIS will determine the duration of Phase III. These timelines are only approximations and may be influenced by factors beyond the control of DOTD or their consultants.

What does the Corridor Study involve?

The preliminary Corridor Study will provide the background research necessary to develop the Statement of Purpose and Need. It focuses on characterizing the general existing conditions, travel demand, and basic demographic and economic patterns which might drive the need for a roadway. This effort also involves the development of summary technical reports, accompanying base maps and aerial photography, which will be presented at the stakeholder meeting and the three public meetings that have been scheduled as part of this project. In addition, the project team has been meeting with elected and appointed officials within the project area in order to acquaint them with the project and to address any issues these officials may have.

How will the public be involved?

There will be three public meetings where area residents and other interested individuals will have an opportunity to become better acquainted with the project. The same materials will be presented at each of the three meetings, which are being spread out over the project area in order to allow everyone the opportunity to attend on the date and at a place convenient to them. The public meetings will allow the public to review initial environmental efforts and offer input and comments.

What should I do if I cannot attend any of the public meetings but 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.

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 departmental guidelines

CONSULTANT FIRMS

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

DBSysgraph, Inc.: mapping and GIS

Earth Search, Inc.: cultural resources

Groome and Associates, Inc.: air quality and highway noise

Southland Consulting Services, LLC: wetlands, critical habitats

University of New Orleans Center for Economic Development: economic impacts

Zervigon International, Ltd: meeting facilitation, consensus building



State Project No. 700-52-0124 (TIMED)
Newsletter Prepared by BURK-KLEINPETER, INC.

I-12 to Bush Corridor Study
Summer 2002

PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE
State Project No. 700-52-0124 (TIMED)
I-12 to Bush Corridor Study
St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) has initiated a preliminary corridor study of the I-12 to Bush corridor to evaluate the feasibility of improving north-south roadway connections within St. Tammany Parish. The project area is located within St. Tammany Parish and is roughly bounded by LA 21, US 190, I-12, US 11 and LA 41.

The DOTD invites all interested parties and their representatives to attend the public meetings scheduled for this project. The purpose of the meetings is to allow the public to become acquainted with the project and provide comments and input. Three community meetings have been scheduled to allow you the opportunity to attend on the date, time and place most convenient for your schedule:

Date: June 25, 2002
Time: 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Location: Fifth Ward Junior High School
81418 Highway 21, Bush, LA 70431

Date: June 26, 2002
Time: 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Location: Pearl River Junior High School
39395 Pine Street, Pearl River, LA 70452

Date: June 27, 2002
Time: 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Location: St. Tammany Parish Council Chambers
21490 Koop Drive, Mandeville, LA

The same materials will be presented at each of the three meetings. All written statements or comments may be submitted at the meeting, or may be mailed to the following address, postmarked within ten (10) calendar days following each of the meetings:

Louisiana Department of Transportation
Environmental Section
PO Box 94245
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9245

If you require special assistance due to a disability in order to participate in a Public Meeting, please contact the DOTD Environmental Section by mail at the address above or by telephone at (225) 248-4190, at least five (5) working days prior to each Public Meeting.