New Orleans Rail Gateway Program EIS
Jefferson and Orleans Parishes
State Project No. H.005168

Community Meeting
January 23, 2014

Dean Goodell
Office: (225)379-3031
Dean.Goodell@LA.GOV
New Orleans Rail Gateway

- 4th largest US Rail Gateway
- 6 of 7 Class 1 Railroads
- Rail yards and intermodal facilities
- Port of New Orleans
- Needs major improvement
Why are Improvements Needed?

- Antiquated control systems and switches slow travel times through the Gateway
- Eliminate system choke points that inhibit rail operations
- Almonaster Bridge requires frequent unscheduled maintenance
- Current freight demand routinely impacts highway traffic

Cumulative delays on average per day:
- 112.4 hours of delays for all Vehicles
- 12.1 hours of delays for all Trucks

Future freight demand will impact regional economic competitiveness
What do we want to Achieve (Goals)?

- Reduce highway vehicle delay at at-grade crossings
- Improve highway vehicle and pedestrian safety
- Improve emergency evacuation conditions
- Improve overall environmental quality
- Correct rail and roadway operational deficiencies
- Promote regional economic competitiveness
NEPA – EIS Study Process

- NEPAs primary objectives
  - Consider project’s environmental impact
  - Inform and involve the public

- Final Decision
  - Record of Decision (ROD)
  - Completion of Study
Route Alternatives

- EIS requires evaluating a broad range of alternatives
- No-Build – baseline for comparison
Route Alternatives

- EIS requires evaluating a broad range of alternatives
  - No-Build – baseline for comparison
  - Back Belt
Route Alternatives

- EIS requires evaluating a broad range of alternatives
  - No-Build – baseline for comparison
  - Back Belt
  - Middle Belt
Route Alternatives

- EIS requires evaluating a broad range of alternatives
  - No-Build – baseline for comparison
  - Back Belt
  - Middle Belt
Route Alternatives

- EIS requires evaluating a broad range of alternatives
  - No-Build – baseline for comparison
  - Back Belt
  - Middle Belt
  - Front Belt
Route Alternatives

- EIS requires evaluating a broad range of alternatives
  - No-Build – baseline for comparison
  - Back Belt
  - Middle Belt
  - Front Belt
  - Couplet
Front Belt and Couplet Alternatives

- Feasibility Study determined unfeasible
- Limited engineering opportunities
- Uncontrolled pedestrian access
- Shut down during major events
- Fatal Flaws - Eliminated from further study
Project Matrix

“Program of Projects”

- Close, improve or grade-separate crossings
- Add, remove or reconfigure trackage
- Upgrade structures & improve drainage
- Eliminate flood gates and I-10 & Airline “Dips”
- Improve signal systems
- Incorporate Positive Train Control (PTC) & Centralized Traffic Control (CTC)
## Projects – Western Section

### Western Section - Both Alternatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Achieving the Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate At-Grade Crossings</td>
<td>• Reduce traffic delays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Live Oak Boulevard</td>
<td>• Improve safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Willswood Lane</td>
<td>• Remove truck traffic from residential areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• George Street</td>
<td>• Reduce delays/stoppages on Huey P Long Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avondale Garden Road</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avondale Yard Improvements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Projects – Eastern Section

### Eastern Section – Both Alternatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Achieving the Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate At-Grade Crossings</td>
<td>• Improve safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gentilly Highway West</td>
<td>• Reduce traffic delays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Read Boulevard</td>
<td>• Promote future development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I-510 Frontage Road</td>
<td>• Improve traffic reliability at the Almonaster Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Michoud Boulevard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gentilly Highway East</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Industrial Parkway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Replace Almonaster Bridge (separate project)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Central Section – Back Belt Alternative

Projects

- Elevate Back Belt
- Evaluate At-Grade Crossings
  - Shrewsbury Road
  - Labarre Road
  - Atherton Drive
  - Hollywood Drive
- Construct Third Mainline Track

Achieving the Goals

- Reduce traffic delays
- Improve safety
- Reduce staging delays
- Improve evacuation conditions
### Central Section – Middle Belt Alternative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Achieving the Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Construct New Mainline Track</td>
<td>• Reroute rail traffic to more industrial area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improve Monticello Canal</td>
<td>• Reduce traffic delays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Remove Back Belt</td>
<td>• Improve safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Raise I-10 and Airline Drive</td>
<td>• Improve evacuation conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improve drainage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Reroute rail traffic to more industrial area
- Reduce traffic delays
- Improve safety
- Improve evacuation conditions
- Improve drainage
Projects – Central Section

Central Section - Both Alternatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Achieving the Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate At-Grade Crossings</td>
<td>• Improve traffic flow at Central Ave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Central Avenue</td>
<td>• Reduce traffic delays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Jefferson Highway</td>
<td>• Improve safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Louisa Street</td>
<td>• Combine grade crossings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• France Road</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Improve traffic flow at Central Ave
- Reduce traffic delays
- Improve safety
- Combine grade crossings
Mitigation

- Mitigate “direct” adverse effects of the Build Alternatives
  - Displacements
  - Noise
  - Vibration
  - Air Quality
  - Access
Right of Way Acquisition

- Right of Way Acquisition and Relocation Assistance
  - Must comply with Federal and State requirements
  - Uniform Relocation Act (as amended May 2007)
  - DOTD Acquisition of Right of Way and Relocation Assistance
- Contact DOTD Real Estate Office
  - District 02 Real Estate Office
    - (504) 465-3468
Enhancements

- Mitigate “indirect” adverse effects of the Build Alternatives
- Communities benefit from improvements
- Solicit input
  - Identify community needs
  - Collaboratively find solutions
- Neighborhoods are better than before
## Next Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternatives Development &amp; Reviews</td>
<td>Summer 2013-Winter 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Studies</td>
<td>Fall 2013-Spring 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Planning Meetings/Charrettes</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternatives Outreach Meetings</td>
<td>Summer 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stay Involved!

- Visit the Program Website

- Have Questions?
  - Call Information Line:  (504) 488-6196
  - Mail: P.O. Box 56845, New Orleans, LA 70156-6845
  - Email: NORG@mbakercorp.com

- Attend Future Meetings
  - Announced through mailings, notices, advertisements, and press releases
Written Question #1

- If the existing Back Belt can be upgraded to accommodate all the capacity and safety concerns, why is that not the current leading alternative?
  - The 2007 Infrastructure Feasibility Analysis concluded that both the Back and Middle Belt alternatives would benefit the Region.
  - The Back and Middle Belt alternatives being studied in the EIS are, at this time, both considered feasible and equal. A leading or preferred alternative won’t be identified until the alternatives are evaluated against the stated Program Purpose (goals); the operational, cost and environmental impacts determined; and stakeholder comments reviewed.
Written Question #2

- Given the alarming frequency of train derailments – even on modern, well-maintained, straight tracks – can the proposed Middle Belt (with an S-turn on the west and 8-degree curve on the east) ever qualify as “safe” for transporting hazardous materials through residential areas?
  
  - The railroad improvements are being developed in accordance with the standards established by the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association (AREMA) and federal, state and carrier requirements.

  - The geometry meets or exceeds the expected freight operating speed of 20 mph through the curve (Amtrak operates at about 30 mph).
Written Question #3

- What is the current (and expected future) percentage of trains moving through New Orleans which neither originate nor terminate here?
  - *Through train traffic is approximately 60 – 70%.*

- And why doesn’t this traffic use other, less-populated east-west routes instead?
  - *Schedule and cost.*
  - *New Orleans is part of the main southern rail corridor connecting Houston and Atlanta.*
  - *Alternative routes are much less direct.*
  - *Vicksburg already carries a lot of rail traffic to/from the Shreveport - Dallas/Fort Worth markets.*
  - *Memphis is close to capacity and is even more indirect than Vicksburg for Houston traffic.*
  - *There is a Mississippi River crossing in Baton Rouge, but it has no direct access to the East.*
Written Question #4

- Who are the principal parties advocating for the Middle Belt Alternative?
  - Jefferson Parish is one. There may be others not known to the Program Team.

- What are their chief concerns?
  - Question is best asked to those parties.

- Can these be addressed through some other means?
  - Question is best asked to those parties.
Written Question #5

- Who will have final say on which Alternative is chosen, and when?
  - *Ultimately the FRA will make the final decision after completion of the studies and EIS, discussions with DOTD, RPC, City of New Orleans, Jefferson Parish and the railroads and carefully reviewing all comments received. FRAs decision will be documented in the Record of Decision at the completion of the study.*

- Does the City of New Orleans or any other official/entity have authority to reject the Middle Belt project outright, such that it cannot be constructed?
  - *The NORG Program is a complex undertaking involving the USDOT, DOTD, RPC, City of New Orleans, Jefferson Parish and the owning railroads.*
  - *Negotiations will be required if the Program is to move forward.*
  - *Unsuccessful negotiations with any of the above parties can derail the Program.*
Written Question #6

- Because the rail industry has delayed implementation of Positive Train Control (PTC) and other NTSB-mandated safety upgrades for decades, shouldn’t expansion into urban corridors also be curtailed or postponed?
  - *This discussion is beyond the scope of this study.*
Since Federal environmental justice guidelines (Title VI, NEPA) preclude disparate impact or inequitable burdens on minority and low-income communities, how strongly does this weigh against the Middle Belt project?

- **EJ is one of many factors that will be evaluated.**
- **USDOT Environmental Justice Order 5610.2(a) provides guidance on addressing disproportionately high and adverse effects, including mitigation measures and consideration of alternatives that would avoid or reduce the disproportionately high and adverse effects.**
- **These measures may include pollution prevention, and health and safety measures; measures to maintain community cohesion and economic vitality; and mitigation and compensatory measures.**
- **This process includes procedures to provide meaningful opportunities for public involvement by low-income and minority populations, including community input in identifying potential mitigation measures.**
Written Question #8

- Could we see a comprehensive list or map of the properties, structures and businesses most likely subject to expropriation, removal or modification during Middle Belt construction, with an explanation of how fair compensation is determined for residences which may be displaced?

  - Rail and roadway improvements are still being developed. Drawings showing the Alternatives and private property impacts will be available for review at the Alternatives Outreach Meetings, anticipated to be held this Summer 2014.

  - A DOTD Real Estate Section representative will be available at the Alternatives Outreach Meetings and Public Hearings to answer Real Estate questions.
Written Question #9

- Who is paying for the New Orleans Rail Gateway Study to be done?
  
  *The current study is being funded by USDOT, DOTD and the freight railroads.*

- What monies would cover the cost of implementing any eventual Alternative(s)?
  
  *Improvements will be implemented using both railroad and public funds. Neither the funding sources nor the amounts have been identified at this time.*
Written Question #10

- What is the timeline for completion of the EIS and final selection or decision?
  - We hope to complete the study and receive a FRA Record of Decision in Summer 2015.

- Will your next public meeting take place after or before a final decision or have any impact on that final decision?
  - Community Planning Meetings, Charrettes, Alternatives Outreach Meetings and Public Hearings will be held before a final decision is made.

- What will be the purpose of that meeting?
  - The meetings will be to present the alternatives development efforts and solicit public comment and input.

- How will future meetings be advertised?
  - Meetings will be announced through mailings, notices, advertisements and press releases.
Additional Questions
New Orleans Rail Gateway Program EIS
Jefferson and Orleans Parishes
State Project No. H.005168

Community Meeting
January 23, 2014

Dean Goodell
Office: (225)379-3031
Dean.Goodell@LA.GOV