



# Finding of No Significant Impact Report

LA 434 Corridor  
St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana  
RPC Task LA434EA (H.004981)

May 15, 2018

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION  
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

for

State Project No. H.004981  
Federal Aid Project No. H004981  
LA 434 Corridor  
Environmental Assessment  
St. Tammany Parish

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has determined the No Build Alternative (the Selected Alternative) will not have any significant impact on the human environment. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based on the Environmental Assessment (EA), which has been independently evaluated by the FHWA, and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the environmental issues and impacts of the proposed project. It provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an environmental impact statement is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the EA.

5/15/2018  
Date

  
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## Finding of No Significant Impact Report



The Regional Planning Commission, in cooperation with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and the Federal Highway Administration, proposed to widen a portion of LA 434 and replace the timber bridge over Bayou Lacombe in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana.

The project area is located north of Interstate 12, east of Watts Road (LA 41), west of LA 1088, and south of LA 36 in St. Tammany Parish, is approximately 300 feet wide, and extends south from LA 36 to the proposed junction of LA 434 and LA 3241.

### Background

The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the New Orleans urbanized area including St. Tammany Parish and the Mandeville-Covington, Slidell, and south Tangipahoa urbanized areas. The proposed project was identified as a Tier II – On System – Funded Project for fiscal year 2015 – 2024 in the *Metropolitan Transportation Plan, St. Tammany Parish Urbanized Areas, Fiscal Years 2011 – 2040* (November 2010) and was included as a financially constrained priority project in the *Transportation Improvement Program, St. Tammany Urbanized Areas, Fiscal Years 2012 – 2016* (March 2012). The project was administratively amended on August 15, 2014, pertaining to project limits.

The study of the alternatives developed in this environmental assessment (EA) and the associated environmental consequences were evaluated according to the National Environmental Policy Act, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development's (LADOTD's) Stage 1 Planning/Environmental Manual of Standard Practice, and the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents.

### Project Purpose

The purpose of the proposed project was to add roadway capacity and improve traffic operations in order to accommodate future traffic volumes for this portion of Louisiana Highway 434 (LA 434), which was constructed in 1960 and 1961. This purpose is consistent with the goals of the Transportation Improvement Plan for the St. Tammany Parish Urbanized Areas and the Transportation Infrastructure Model for Economic Development (TIMED) program for the LA 3241 project, with which this project intersects.

### Project Need

The project need was to upgrade the roadway segment to current design standards; improve capacity; support planned residential, institutional, and business growth within the

parish urban growth boundary; and replace the timber trestle bridge crossing Bayou Lacombe. More specifically, needs for the proposed project included:

- Improve capacity;
- Support planned residential, institutional, and business growth within the parish urban growth boundary;
- Relieve future congestion on area roadways;
- Replace the timber trestle bridge crossing Bayou Lacombe with a new bridge; and
- Improve area-wide mobility and system reliability.

## Project Description

The RPC, in cooperation with LADOTD and FHWA, proposed to widen a portion of LA 434 and replace the timber trestle bridge over Bayou Lacombe in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana.

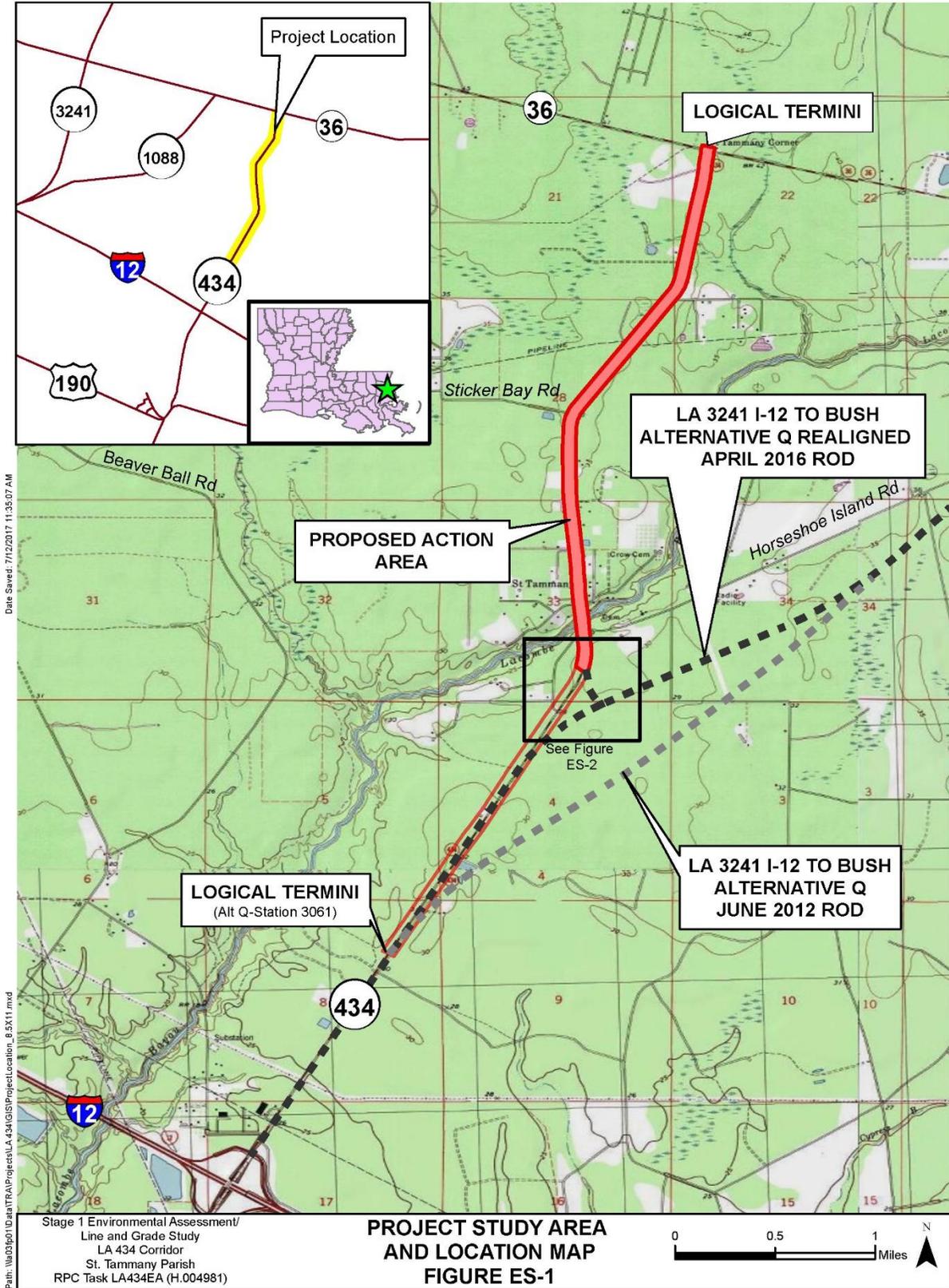
The proposed action area extended south from LA 36 along LA 434 terminating between Vortisch Road/Horseshoe Island Road and D'Antonio Road, a distance of approximately 3 miles (**Figure ES-1**), and included the proposed roadway improvements and limits of construction.

## Study Area and Logical Termini

FHWA defines logical termini for project development as (1) rational end points for a transportation improvement; and (2) rational end points for a review of the environmental impacts. The environmental impact review frequently covers a broader geographic area than the strict limits of the transportation improvements. In the past, the most common termini have been points of major traffic generation, especially intersecting roadways. This is due to the fact that, in most cases, traffic generators determine the size and type of facility being proposed.

The logical termini for the proposed action were defined as LA 434 at LA 36 and LA 434 at the junction with the proposed LA 3241 (Interstate 12 [I-12] to Bush) identified on **Figure ES-1**. The LA 434 southern terminus was originally set at the location where the LA 3241 alignment connects with LA 434 approximately 1.5 miles north of I-12 (Alternative Q, ROD June 2012, Station 3061). The LA 434 southern terminus was adjusted to the location of LA 3241 Alternative Q-Realigned ROD April 2016, Station 309) approximately 3.10 miles north of I-12. The Study Area included the logical termini and the area that may be impacted by the direct and indirect impacts of the proposed project (**Figure ES-1**).

The proposed LA 3241 (I-12 to Bush) is an LADOTD-planned project under the TIMED program (Louisiana Revised Statute 48:820.2). The TIMED program, approved by the 1989 General Session of the Louisiana State Legislature, includes the construction of LA 3241, a four-lane highway [Revised Statute 47:820.2.B(1)(e)], between Bush, Louisiana, and I-12

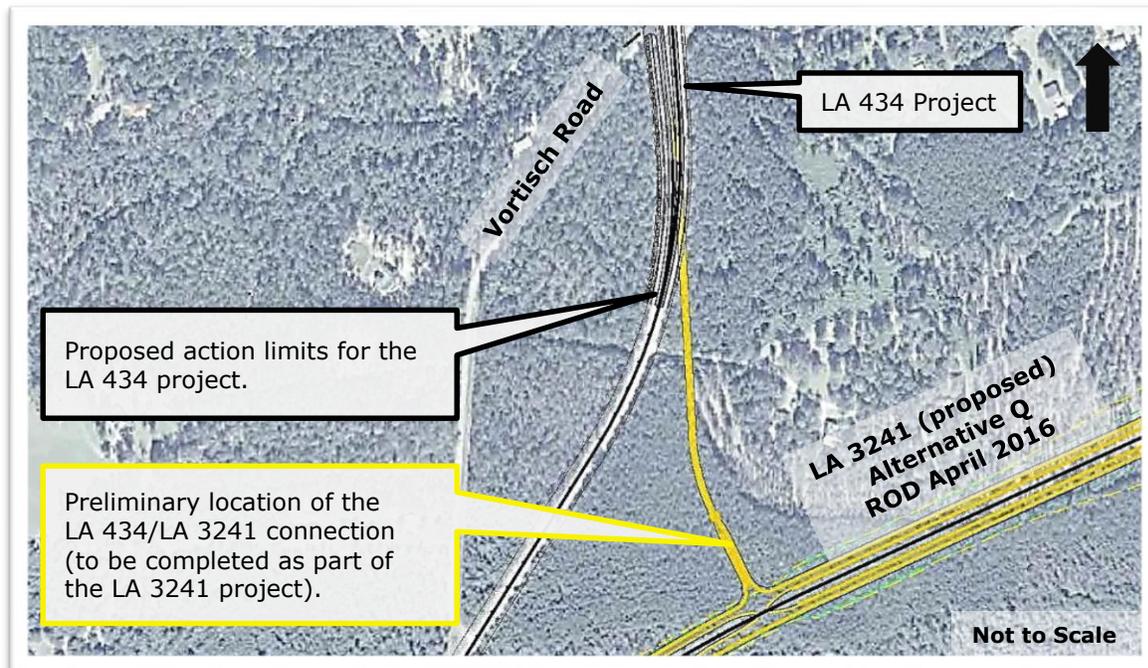


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in St. Tammany Parish. A Record of Decision (ROD) was issued in June 2012 that environmentally approved Alternative Q as the Selected Alternative from the I-12 to Bush Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The project is now funded with federal aid.

After the LA 3241 June 2012 ROD was issued, it was determined that two constructed developments, the St. Tammany Parish Coroner's office and the South Central Park and Ride, along with Tamanend, an approximate 900-acre planned unit development, were located within the path of Alternative Q. LADOTD has realigned the portion of Alternative Q that connects with LA 434 to avoid these improvements as described in the I-12 to Bush Final EIS and documented in the ROD (April 2016). The intersecting point has moved north of Station 3061 approximately 1 mile (**Figure ES-2**).



**Figure ES-2. Conceptual Location of LA 434/LA 3241 Junction**

## Alternatives Development

The Study Area was initially evaluated in a Stage 0 Feasibility Study completed for the RPC. The *Louisiana Highway 434 Corridor Study, Stage 0 Feasibility Study* (May 2010) developed a preliminary purpose and need statement, initial project concepts to address the needs, and potential alternatives. One alternative was identified in the Stage 0 study:

- Widening of LA 434 to include a four-lane boulevard and four-lane bridge crossing Bayou Lacombe.

The limits of the Stage 0 corridor study extended approximately 8.3 miles from U.S. Highway 190 to LA 36. Following completion of the I-12 to Bush EIS (LA 3241) and identification of the proposed improvements associated with this corridor, the LA 434 Study

Area was reduced. The Study Area for the LA 434 EA extended approximately 3 miles from LA 434 at its junction with the proposed LA 3241 (Project Begin) north along LA 434 to LA 36 (Project End).

To minimize impacts and reduce the amount of additional right-of-way (ROW), required alignments were located as close to the existing LA 434 roadway as design standards and construction would allow. LADOTD policies such as roadway and bridge design, intersection configuration, traffic, noise, and minimization of social and environmental impacts were also considered in the alternatives development. Proposed improvements follow the existing roadway alignment providing widening and improvements to accommodate a multi-lane highway. This resulted in two alternatives.

**Alternative 1** included widening to a four-lane divided roadway and replacement of the existing timber bridge over Bayou Lacombe with a four-lane bridge. Improvements included using the existing two lanes as northbound lanes with widening to the west for the center median, two southbound lanes, and a shared-use path. Roadway drainage will be accommodated by open ditches to the east and west of LA 434. The existing roadway ROW is 80 feet wide, and the proposed ROW width for **Alternative 1** is 150 feet.

**Alternative 2** included roadway widening to two lanes with a center turn lane and replacement of the existing timber bridge with a three-lane bridge. Improvements include utilization of the existing two lanes as the northbound and center turn lane with widening to the west for the southbound lane and a shared-use path. Roadway drainage will be accommodated by open ditches to the east and west of LA 434. The existing roadway ROW is 80 feet wide, and the proposed ROW width for **Alternative 2** is 125 feet.

An optional intersection analysis was completed for LA 434 at LA 36 for **Alternatives 1 and 2** including a signalized intersection and a roundabout. Roundabout geometry was analyzed using Sidra 6 software and developed in accordance with LADOTD's Roundabout Design standards.

### *Resource Impact Analysis*

A number of resources and issues were used to compare each alternative chosen for detailed evaluation. The resources used to compare the alternatives are compiled in the Geographic Information System for the project or detailed in a series of technical documents that were incorporated by reference into the EA. Alternatives were evaluated with respect to the environmental and engineering factors and effects are summarized in **Table ES-1**.

**Table ES-1: Alternatives Evaluation Matrix**

Evaluation Factors	Alternative 1 Four-Lane Divided		Alternative 2 Two-Lane With Center Turn Lane		No Build
	Signalized*	With Roundabout*	Signalized*	With Roundabout*	
<b>Physical Resource Impacts</b>					
Residential Parcels	67	67	67	67	0
Businesses Parcels	0	0	0	0	0
Churches	0	0	0	0	0
Public Facilities	0	0	0	0	0
Anticipated Residential Relocations**	2	2	2	2	0
Anticipated Commercial Relocations	1	1	0	0	0
Noise Receptors	NA	NA	15	15	7
Required Right-of-Way (Acres)	24	24	14	14	0
Known UST Sites	0	0	0	0	0
Water Wells	0	0	0	0	0
Oil/Gas Pipelines	1	1	1	1	0
<b>Cultural and Natural Resource Impacts</b>					
Cemeteries	0	0	0	0	0
100-Year Floodplain (acres)	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	0
Surface Waters (acres)	<1	<1	<1	<1	0
Wetland (acres)	9	9	4.8	4.8	0
Prime Farmland (acres)	0	0	0	0	0
Archaeological Sites	0	0	0	0	0
Structures >47 Years in Age	10	10	10	10	0
Historic Structures — Eligible	4	4	4	4	0
Historic Structures — Impacted	0	0	0	0	0

\*Intersection Option at LA 434/LA 36

\*\*Anticipated relocations are 67003 LA 434, Lacombe, LA, and 66555 LA 434, Lacombe, LA

NA Not analyzed

UST Underground storage tank

### **Preliminary Cost Analysis**

Preliminary cost analysis for the alternatives includes roadway construction, bridge construction, utility relocation, ROW, wetland mitigation and surveying, engineering, and construction supervision/inspection. These costs are presented in **Table ES-2**.

**Table ES-2: Alternative Cost Estimate Evaluation**

Evaluation Factors	Alternative 1 Four-Lane Divided (approx. 3 miles)		Alternative 2 Two-Lane With Center Turn Lane (approx. 3 miles)		No Build
	Signalized*	With Roundabout*	Signalized*	With Roundabout*	
(Total Length – Miles)	2.74	2.74	2.62	2.62	2.62
<b>Cost (million dollars)</b>					
Roadway Construction	7.61	7.61	5.78	5.78	0
Shared-Use Path Construction	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	0
Bridge Construction	0.42	0.42	0.28	0.28	0
Utility Relocation	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	0
Right-of-Way Acquisition	1.67	1.67	1.32	1.32	0
Wetland Mitigation	1.14	1.14	0.57	0.57	0
Surveying, Engineering, Construction Supervision & Inspection	0.43	0.49	0.34	0.39	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	12.50	12.56	9.52	9.52	0

\*Intersection Option at LA 434/LA 36

Notes:

1. Includes 20% Roadway and 10% Bridge Contingency for Estimating Purposes
2. Costs Rounded

## Preferred Alternative Presented at the Public Hearing – October 19, 2017

A comparison of the intersection delays for **Alternatives 1** and **2** demonstrated that there is little benefit from a four-lane section (**Alternative 1**) versus a two-lane section with center turn lane (**Alternative 2**). Given the increased cost of construction for the four-lane section compared to the two-lane section with center turn lane, **Alternative 2** met the required level of service (LOS), accommodated the growth in traffic along the corridor, and maintained LOS standards. As a result of the comprehensive resources evaluation, traffic studies, and coordination with public, local, state, and federal officials or agencies, sufficient information and public opinion existed at the time to identify **Alternative 2** as the **Preferred Alternative** and present it as such to the public at the October 19, 2017, Public Hearing.

Proposed improvements for this alternative included roadway widening to two lanes with a center turn lane and replacement of the existing timber bridge over Bayou Lacombe with a three-lane bridge. Improvements included utilization of the existing roadway as the northbound lane with widening to the west for the center turn lane, southbound lane, and a shared-use path. Roadway drainage was to be accommodated by open ditches to the east and west of LA 434.

The bridge, pedestrian facility, and drainage improvements would be constructed to the full roadway section if, and when, traffic conditions warrant. Improvements to provide access

management such as a curbed, dedicated left turn lane or a raised median are discussed in detail in the EA.

In summary, **Alternative 2**, which was presented as the **Preferred Alternative** to the public at the October 19, 2017 Public Hearing:

- Satisfied the stated Purpose and Need for the project;
- Accommodated growth along the corridor;
- Had the lowest anticipated residential relocations;
- Had the lowest required ROW;
- Had the lowest wetland impacts;
- Had the lowest overall cost; and
- Most efficiently balanced the expected project benefits with overall impacts.

The identification of the **Preferred Alternative** as presented at the Public Hearing addressed the stated purpose and need and satisfied, to the fullest extent possible, the objectives of NEPA. Impacts from the **Preferred Alternative** were avoided where possible and minimized to the greatest extent practicable.

Detailed information regarding traffic analysis, alternatives development, and impact evaluation is available in the EA.

### **No Build as Selected Alternative**

Following the public hearing held on October 19, 2017, the RPC, FHWA, and local sponsors reviewed the funding requirements and steps necessary for the implementation of the LA 434 project.

RPC coordination with the local sponsor identified:

1. LA 3241 improvements utilize a substantial percentage of the current 5-year funding program.
2. Local gas tax funding plans were not publicly supported.
3. There are insufficient local matching funds to implement the project.
4. There is a shortage of funds for the immediate implementation of the project to meet the FHWA funding deadline requirements.
5. A reasonable and foreseeable future local match funding plan was not identified within the FHWA funding deadline requirements.

In addition, the roadway network is being improved with adjacent projects:

1. LA 3241 improvements will support long-term regional mobility.
2. LA 3241 is currently in design and funded for right-of-way and construction.
3. There are opportunities for minor intersection operational improvements at the LA 36 or Old Keller Road/Azalea Lane.

When considering environmental impacts, the no-build alternative does not require the relocation of residences or the acquisition of right of way. Consequently, there are no effects on structures eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places with the selection of the no-build alternative. Finally, floodplains, wetlands and other waters of the U.S. are not impacted by the no-build alternative.

After considerable review, lack of local matching available funds, and committed roadway network improvements in the vicinity and parallel to LA 434, the RPC determined the best course of action is to select the **No Build Alternative** as the **Selected Alternative**.