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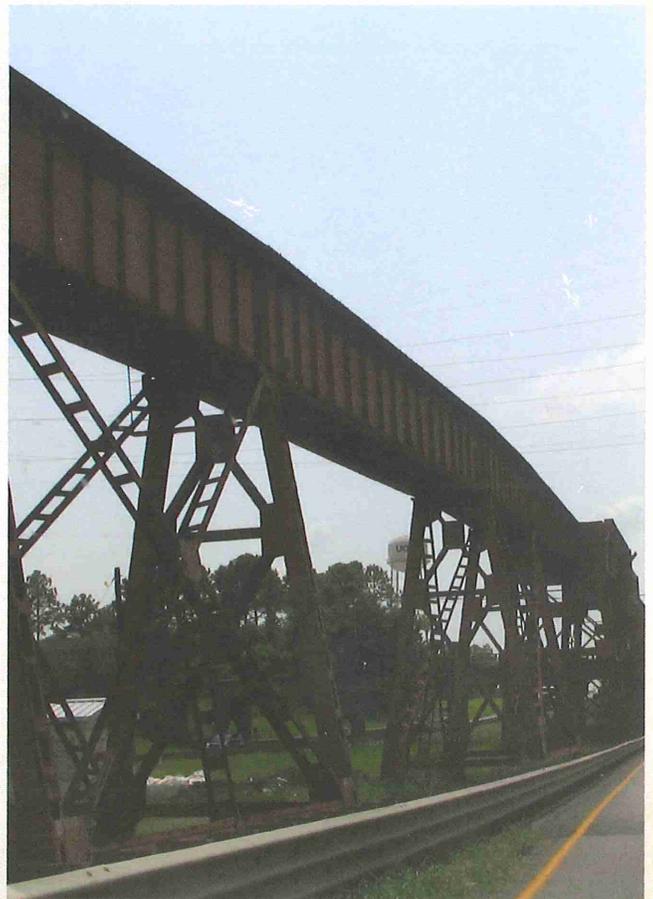
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BATON ROUGE LOOP

LAND USE PLANNING FINAL REPORT & STRATEGIC ACTIONS



MARCH, 2011





BATON ROUGE LOOP:
FINAL REPORT & STRATEGIC ACTIONS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the relationship between transportation and land use planning, along with establishing a set of best practices, will better serve the people and the environment of Baton Rouge.

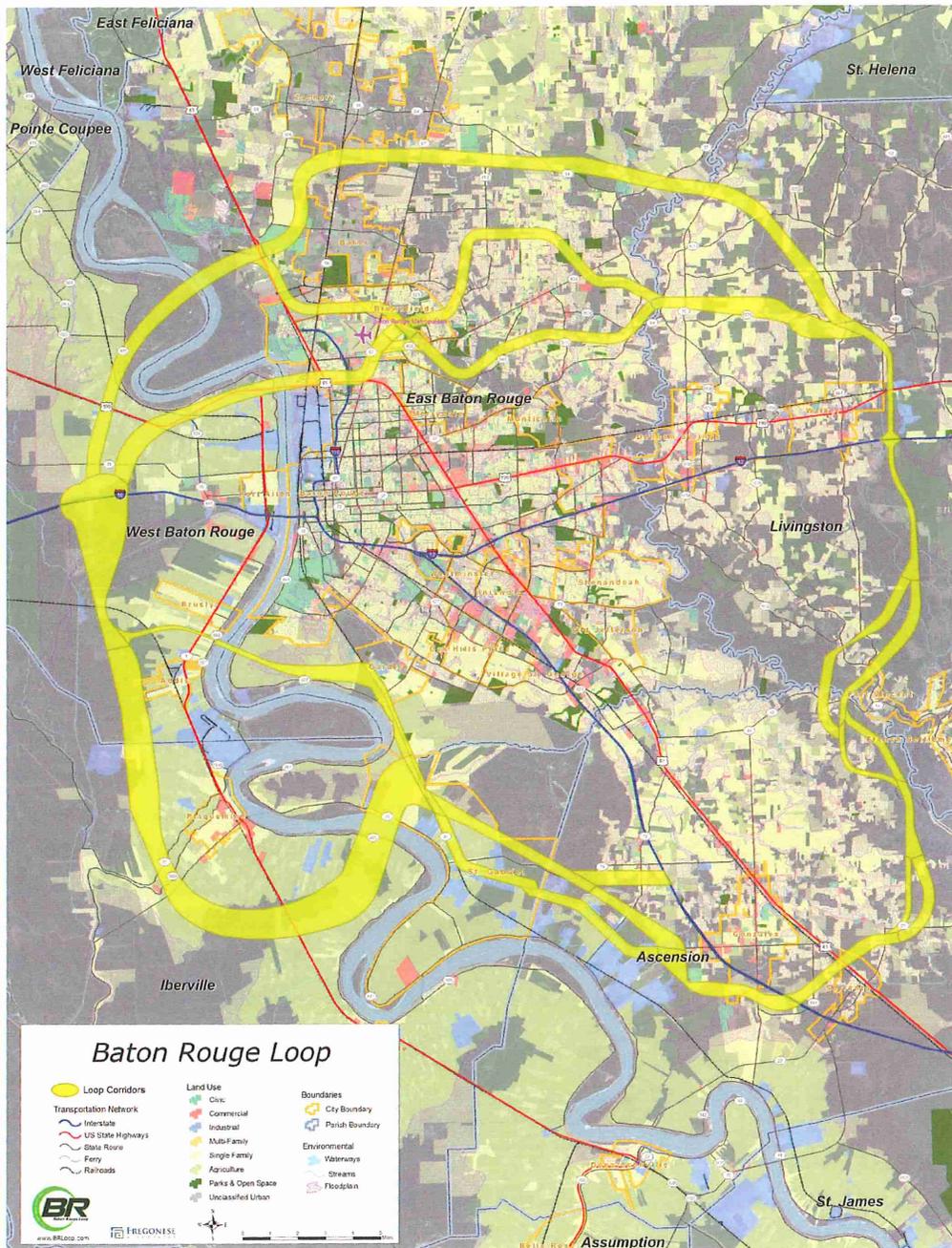
The Baton Rouge Loop Context

The Baton Rouge region is growing and the population is expected to reach one million in the next twenty years. In assessing the needs and interests of communities into the future, moving people efficiently throughout the region will be a priority.

The Baton Rouge Loop (the Loop) is proposed as a loop highway system to supplement capacity of Interstates 10 and 12. Interstate 10 runs east west along the Gulf Coast and Interstate 12 runs east from Baton Rouge to the Louisiana/ Mississippi border. The Baton Rouge Loop is proposed as an 80 to 100 mile long, controlled access toll roadway circling around the Metro Baton Rouge Area. Initially, the BR Loop would be four-lanes with the ability to add at least two additional lanes. Additionally, there is potential space in the design and right of way for bike paths and transit.

The Baton Rouge Loop will connect to the regional transportation grid at interchanges. Interchanges with major U.S. and state highways will have system-to-system directional 4-level interchanges, however the design of other interchanges may vary depending on present and planned land uses. This report addresses some of the interchange design options and the form of surrounding land uses.

The project is managed by the Capital Area Expressway Authority. The Authority consists of representatives from East Baton Rouge, Iberville, Livingston, West Baton Rouge Parishes and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. Baton Rouge Loop planning and design is intended to be coordinated with master plans being developed in Central and East Baton Rouge, among others.



Where will The Loop be located?

The project study area is located in the parishes of Ascension, East Baton Rouge, Iberville, Livingston, and West Baton Rouge. A team of transportation industry leaders worked for over a year to test and identify potential Loop corridors and financing models. After several refinements, broad corridors were selected, based on environmental, agency, community, and financial inputs, including two potential Mississippi River bridge locations. Within each broad corridor there are alternative options. Proposals include building the Loop in phases, with the first phase most likely the northern portion.



Creating plans for desired land use around highway interchanges can reduce unintended consequences for nearby neighborhoods and the environment.

Purpose of This Guide

The goal of this guide is to assist communities in designing and planning for the development that occurs around highways, particularly the BR Loop. The intent is to develop highways that are safe and efficient in moving goods and people while simultaneously supporting sustainable land use planning and preserving the quality of life in existing communities. It is intended to be used by local and regional planners, citizens, developers and highway engineers.

Highway interchanges naturally attract development. It is the intent of this guide to ensure that the development that occurs is positive for the current and future community as well as for the environment. When a new interchange is proposed or planned this guide should be used to plan for the development of surrounding land use. Interchanges can be a great asset for a community and bring economic development, however they also pose challenges for communities. Because the intent of highways and interchanges is to move people rapidly and efficiently, the fast moving traffic can act as a barrier and detriment to desired land uses in surrounding areas if not planned for.

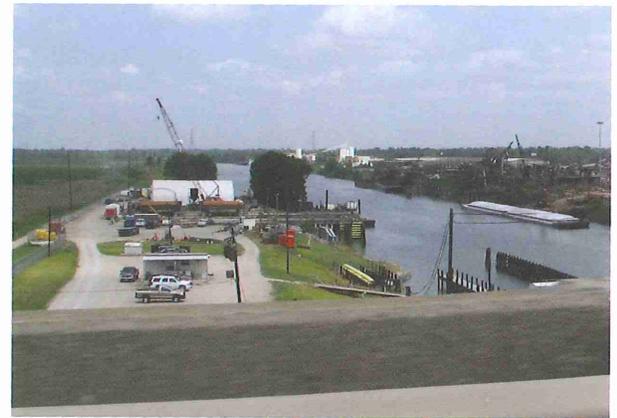
Without the proper planning, land around the interchange becomes automobile-oriented and businesses crop up without a plan governing them. The most familiar development pattern around interchanges consists of big box stores, auto-oriented restaurants, service stations and other regional-scale businesses in a strip development pattern. If this growth is uncontrolled, access within the area is reduced as traffic congestion increases. Two main problems that result from the lack of planning are an excessive number of driveways or access locations, local traffic generation, lack of walkability and a generally unattractive aesthetic. Before this occurs, it is essential to develop a plan. If the street design is not well planned, the result can actually be a reduction in land development potential around the interchange. This guide assists communities in designing effective street networks around interchanges and creating attractive gateways to their towns and cities. Different land use designs are compatible with different types of places, therefore this guide assists communities in planning a design that fits the community's vision.

Interchanges are grouped into five categories, or typologies, that represent different development conditions and contexts. Typologies 1 and 2 are appropriate in areas of existing settlement, where additional growth is likely. Typology 3 is for interchanges with an existing town/commercial center located within a short distance. Typology 4 is appropriate for exurban areas where minimal development is anticipated. Typology 5 is a special case for sensitive environmental lands and farm land.



The Concept of “Best Practices”

“Best Practices” refers to established techniques which have proven successful for other communities, cities or regions. When a regional highway is built, the highway has the potential to be integrated as a positive feature in local communities or as a divisive element which forms a physical barrier for local traffic circulation. Best practices provide tested and proven guidelines and strategies to achieve a community’s desired goals. Best practices can improve public policy and raise awareness of decision-makers by sharing knowledge, expertise and experience.



How is This Guide Organized?

This report does not address the type of interchanges constructed along the Loop, but rather provides guidance on how to best design the land around the interchanges. It discusses the challenges a highway can present for a community and strategies to mitigate those challenges. The tools, both regulatory and non-regulatory, as well as an overview of potential design guidelines are outlined in this manual.

The following sections include:

- Land Use, Transportation and Economic Connections
- Land Use and Transportation Principles
- Guiding Principles
- Testing the Concepts with the Public
- Key Design Practices
- Development Typologies
- Implementation
- Design Guidelines and Best Practices



Traffic planners and engineers will select the type of interchange most appropriate for the area and for the flow of traffic.



CHAPTER 2

LAND USE, TRANSPORTATION & ECONOMICS

Making the Connection

In addition to affecting land use patterns, the Baton Rouge region has an opportunity to influence economic development through the development of the loop. There are different ways that transportation planning can help or hinder economic development.

Transportation and land use affect each other.

Unless otherwise restricted, land uses will generally change (in the form of new development) in response to increased accessibility, and the increased development creates an increased demand for vehicle trips. This in turn feeds back to influence the performance of the transportation infrastructure.

Policies designed to increase highway capacity without pricing or coordinated land use policy can have negative land use impacts.

New highway capacity increases accessibility, which can reduce the time and cost of travel by car and truck. Over the medium- and long-term, households and businesses may choose to relocate to lower-priced land on the fringe (which has been made accessible by the new highway capacity). Those households and businesses create demand for trips, which generates an overall increase in the total miles traveled. Without coordinated land use controls, the potential effects are twofold: (1) sprawling, decentralized growth and (2) more congestion.

Policies that direct the phasing and location of the Loop can have both positive and negative impacts on land use and economic development.

The above effects can be exacerbated or harnessed by the choices made about phasing and the location of segments of the loop. The phasing of loop segments will impact which areas of the region are connected to each other and in what order. Phasing choices can be made to improve access to shipping ports, rail facilities, airports, and other major transportation facilities. Choices can also be made to improve access to undeveloped residential and commercial lands.

Integrated land use planning and transportation can reduce some of the potential negative effects of increased highway capacity.

Even with coordinated land use and transportation policies, a region may experience the impacts described above, but some of those impacts can be shaped to match the vision for long-term development of the region. Having the best of all worlds: cheap, free-flowing traffic and limited impact on land development, does not come easily. It requires coordinated policy. The Loop can be developed in conjunction with other land use strategies to ultimately create an overall benefit. Planning for the BR Loop should be done in coordination with existing parish plans.

Despite the complications of implementing a fully coordinated land use/ transportation policy, it is important to consider how phasing of the loop in conjunction with land use policy can help create benefits from, or at least be used to temper some of the potential negative effects of, sprawl and decentralized growth. Decentralization (or polycentric development) to a degree can also be efficient. That is, a connected system of sub-centers can optimize the trade-off between agglomeration economics and travel costs.



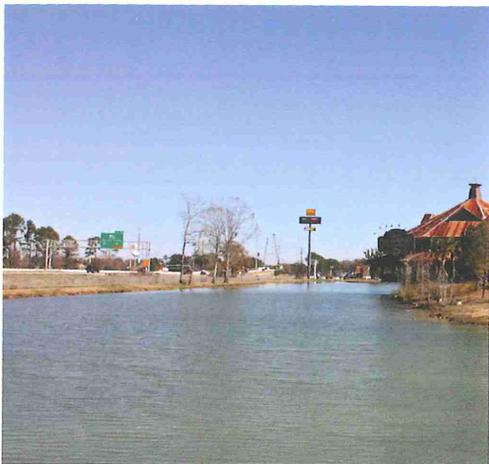
CHAPTER 3

LAND USE & TRANSPORTATION PRINCIPLES



The Interaction of Land Use and Transportation

Land use and transportation are inextricably linked and influence each other. The distribution and types of land uses and the way they are situated in connection to each other affect travel patterns and the type of transportation options available. For instance, land developed with a dense urban form and corresponding pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure can support walking, biking, automobiles and transit, whereas, a dispersed pattern of low-density development often only effectively supports automobile travel. In other words, designing land use with sound urban form in mind increases the choice of mode of travel and choice of route available. Therefore, transportation investments have a significant influence on surrounding land uses and additional travel modes can be increased and encouraged through urban design. Thoughtful planning of land uses can increase the efficiency of the transportation networks. Understanding that land use and transportation will affect each other regardless of if it is planned, gives traction to the argument for consciously creating an integrated land use and transportation plan for communities.



CASE STUDY

ODOT'S INTERCHANGE AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN (IAMP)

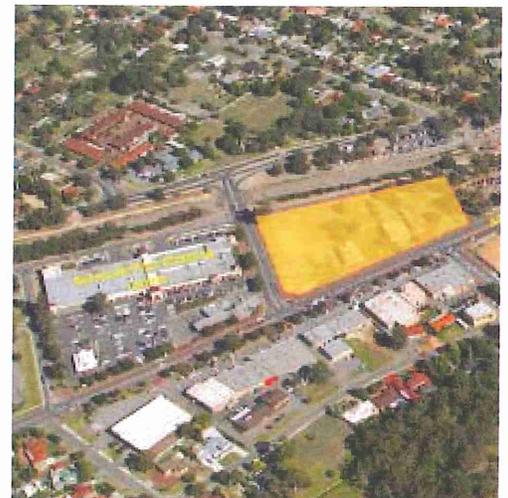
This plan is a cooperative approach to managing the design of interchanges. IAMP is an agreement between ODOT and the local government in the area of the interchange on how to manage the transportation facilities and associated land uses. The IAMP balances the transportation needs, the community's needs and land use goals. It identifies transportation improvements and land use actions and the phasing necessary to accomplish those goals.

Resources: www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP/docs/publications/iampGuidelines.pdf?ga=t



The Effect of Increased Accessibility

The new highway will connect the urban and rural parts of the Baton Rouge metro area, allowing households in the rural areas to have easier access to jobs, shopping and services throughout the metro region. The function of the highway is to provide faster and more predictable travel times. People have what is called a travel time budget – they only want to spend a certain amount of time travelling every day, in the United States usually from 55 to 75 minutes total, depending on the place and the culture (academic travel time budget research). When a new roadway is located that increases speed and decreases travel time, new destinations are available that can be reached within that travel time budget. Therefore, residents around the new roadway can travel to job and shopping opportunities that were heretofore unacceptably far, and businesses near the roadway have new access to customers and workers that were formerly too far away, as measured in travel time. This has the effect of generating new trips to the new destinations, making the areas near the facility more attractive to new housing, and making the roadway an attractive place to locate new business.





Potential Impacts to Land Use and Transportation Infrastructure

Increased Congestion on Roads and Intersections Serving the Loop

Rural roadways which were not designed for high traffic volumes may experience higher use as highway access routes. This may increase congestion over the long term on the regional transportation network if it overloads the capacity of rural roads. Additionally, the Loop will bring new development, jobs and houses to these communities and the roads may not have the capacity to support that growth. Therefore, it is important that local feeder roads are evaluated to determine necessary capacity improvements to support increased demand.

Congestion Around the Interchanges

Traffic waiting to get on the highway and off into neighborhoods will be competing for space on the local roads with local traffic, therefore, traffic has the potential to concentrate around intersections. Creating additional connections for local trips can mitigate increased congestion on the highway and on local roads by providing more options for routes.



Interruption in Connectivity

Highways can act as barriers. In developed areas they can bisect established communities, so that what was once across the street for residents now is a 15 minute drive away. Much like railroad tracks or a river, a highway decreases access and requires expensive crossings to maintain connections between neighborhoods on either side. In rural undeveloped areas a new highway would not affect established communities, however, when developing future communities it will be important to consider connections across the highway and creating communities that are not bisected by the highway.

Spur Development and Increased Access to New Areas

A new highway opens up new land to development that was not previously accessible. It is supported by economic theory and common sense that development will occur where new roads provide access. With a new highway that makes travel into the core of Baton Rouge fast and easy, people and businesses may choose to relocate in new areas close to the Loop. The Loop will increase access to jobs. People may relocate near the new highways because it provides a more efficient route to work and they can travel further distances in less time. Nearly all communities along the Loop road will be within 30 minutes of major employment centers. This land may not have land use plans in



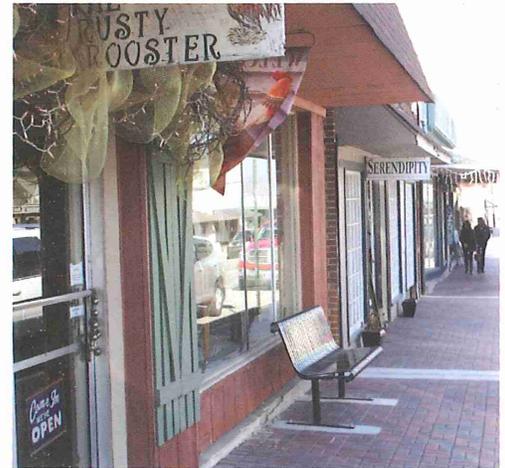
place to govern how it will be developed. Communities must decide whether they want new businesses to open near the highway or whether they want to strategically direct growth elsewhere. For instance, communities may want to concentrate growth in one area to create densities and activity to encourage walkability.

Refocus Areas of Community Growth

Old main streets and town centers, of existing Louisiana small towns, may experience new challenges competing for customers as new businesses emerge close to the highway. The new off-highway businesses are more visible to customers using the Loop and the older businesses struggle for the same visibility. Local communities that have an interest in preserving the economic vitality of their existing downtowns may want to assess how commercial development around interchanges may impact their existing businesses. Additionally this new growth could be seen as a threat to existing community character. Best practices in land use design will assist in ensuring communities maintain their unique character. The Town of Jena, Louisiana recently completed a downtown plan which successfully analyzed these pressures and resulted in a realignment of a proposed highway. The Loop has the potential to enliven downtowns as well if the interchanges are designed to direct traffic towards existing downtown centers.

Strong Land Use and Economic Pressures

The loop may result in improved opportunities for commercial and retail growth since it will allow businesses access to new markets. It will also open up a shipping route for large trucks and more efficient deliveries. The connection between land use, transportation and economy is discussed above in the Land Use, Transportation and Economics section.





CHAPTER 4

TESTING THE CONCEPTS

Gauging Citizen Attitudes and Perceptions

The consultant team conducted three focus groups in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, following four public land use workshops. The goal was to determine attitudes, concerns and beliefs about the prospect of a new transportation project - the Baton Rouge Loop – and the resulting land use impacts.

Participants were randomly selected from East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, Livingston, Ascension and Iberville Parishes. Participants were recruited by the focus group facility to match as closely as possible the parish demographics and represent a broad income range based on Census Bureau statistics. These focus groups were announced to participants as being conducted to determine views about land use planning and transportation issues facing the region. Specifically, the groups were engaged in conversations about planning options and views about a proposed Loop for areas in or near the Baton Rouge metropolitan region.

All focus groups started with a discussion of issues and concepts for building a highway. Participants were assured it didn't matter if they were for or against building a Loop, although those opinions could be expressed. Participants were told that communities who face transportation challenges have numerous things to consider that we would discuss and that their feedback would be helpful to regional planners seeking to better understand what the public expects from transportation solutions in the future.



“After 3:00 pm on a weekday I wouldn't dare try to get on the interstate and cross the bridge.”

Focus Group Results

Following are summaries of comments made in each topic area; General Impressions, The Loop, and Access and Land Use. Respondents were asked questions to guide the discussion. Examples of the questions are found in the sidebar at the right of the page.

General Impressions and Perceptions

- Respondents feel that their region is deficient in transportation access and mobility and the issue is a highly charged one
- When asked to describe the current state of roads and highways in their communities all groups were concerned about the bottleneck nature of the road structures in the region where road expansion followed development and growth but was inadequate to meet demand
- Respondents feel that there are not enough highways to handle the region's load of traffic
- Most respondents said that they would do almost anything to avoid I-10 and I-12, which translates into a strong need and desire for alternate routes
- Most considered biking dangerous because of road rage or lack of education among the motoring community and clearly felt there has been poor planning around alternative transportation options, including inadequate bus options and a culture that sees public transportation as a stigma.
- Respondents were unanimous that avoiding traffic and congestion was a top priority with saving money on gas and transportation a close second priority. Many respondents were excited in discussions about getting around without having to get on an interstate highway for every trip. There was less desire among older and family participants to want to be able to walk to work or shopping.



SPECIFIC QUESTIONS POSED TO THE FOCUS GROUPS

Do you feel that it is easy or hard to get around your community and surrounding area by car?

How would you describe the current state of roads, highways, transportation problems and opportunities in your community?

When you think of a highway, what comes to mind?

What are the pluses and minuses of highways?

Do you sense that the highways currently serving the region are adequate to keep the traffic moving and serve communities of the region?

How many of you have heard about plans to build a Loop highway around Baton Rouge?

Looking at how a planner would view land use and access if a major highway is built, what comes to mind as you see the advantages and potential risks of building a new highway that is part of your community? What would worry you most about what you have heard? What do you feel would be the biggest advantage of what you have heard?



UPCOMING LOOP WORKSHOPS
FEBRUARY 8TH & 9TH, 2010

? What should new development look and feel like?

? What kinds of interchanges should be built?

? What places do you want to be more easily connected to?

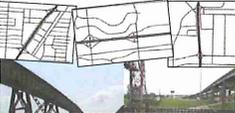
? What services do you want to be accessible from the loop?



ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS
These map-based workshops are your chance to have input into the future of the Baton Rouge Loop. Workshops are interactive, collaborative sessions where you will work with teams of 6-10 people to shape specific areas of the proposed loop. The future of the loop will be built upon your feedback, so please get involved!

WORKSHOP LOCATIONS
ALL WORKSHOPS WILL BE FROM 6:00 TO 9:00 PM

FEBRUARY 8 Denham Springs High School 1000 North Range Ave. Denham Springs, LA	FEBRUARY 9 Addis Community Center 7520 Highway 1 South Addis, LA and...
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The Loop

- The Loop has been planned for far too long, according to respondents in all groups. There was universal awareness of the Loop and near universal support for building it, with a few holdouts concerned about it being in the wrong place, a waste of money, too late to do much good or “not in my backyard” attitudes.
- Overall the groups did feel that the Loop would address some of their immediate transportation concerns, particularly easing the volume of traffic on interstates.
- The groups thought that the Loop should be part of a package, that included widening of streets, new grid construction and public transportation.
- General support for the Loop as a a toll road; users should pay
- Concern about issue of barriers and separation that the Loop might bring
- All three focus groups decided that the opportunities of a Loop outweighed the challenges

Access and Land Use

- Overall, the grid design received high marks as a logical, usable way to integrate communities that might host a highway corridor. In particular the groups wanted a mix of designs throughout the corridor based on the appropriateness for such design in local areas.
- Respondents prefer a home with a yard and parking away from commercial space, even if it means more drive time. They are concerned about the safety of the community in more densely populated zones.
- Most felt development should be in areas where it currently is located, but a specific request for green space or rural living was not expressed within the confines of the current corridor choices for a Loop.

Baton Rouge Loop Workshops

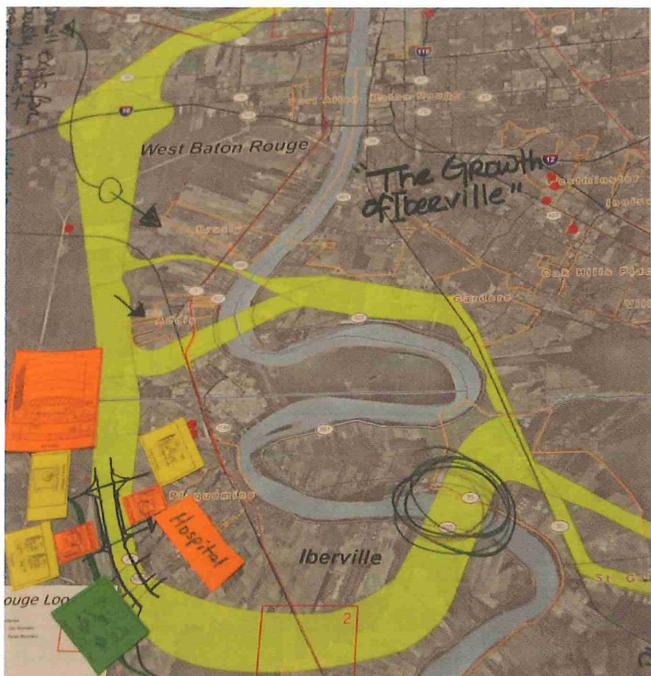
The consultant team also conducted four public workshops in communities that would be affected by the Loop. These communities were; Livingston, West Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge and Ascension. The workshops were designed to be interactive and engaging. A presentation by the consultant team showed examples of loop roads from other cities, and discussed four different types of interchange design and their typical related land uses. The presentation was intended to make people think about how interchange design can influence surrounding land use and what kind of land use workshop participants want to see built near interchanges. As they placed "chips" on the map that represented new development, participants thought about what they wanted new areas of development to feel like and what kinds of businesses, jobs and residential they wanted to see. The end product of each table of workshop participants was a map of the potential Loop corridor with the group's desired development illustrated on it. Participants predominately selected the parallel, or frontage road, and the gateway, or town center, designs. Then they placed a mix of retail, jobs, industry and residential all in clustered close together, indicating a preference for a type of development different than that of typical interchanges.

Interchange Chip Menu

<p>Conventional Design</p> <p>A conventional highway interchange is designed with major roads for efficient movement of automobiles.</p> <p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large commercial and convenience retail • Adjacent to highway walls • Isolated residential neighborhoods 			
<p>Parallel Design</p> <p>A parallel highway interchange functions as a frontage road where businesses are located on a major road facing the highway.</p> <p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhoods are close to commercial • Primarily automobile oriented 			
<p>Gateway Design</p> <p>A gateway interchange directs traffic and development to a nearby town center and connects to a robust street network.</p> <p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life development specifically near interchanges • Walkable town center with a mix of development types and uses 			

"Chip" options to place on maps

Maps completed by workshop participants





CHAPTER 5

KEY DESIGN PRACTICES

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Based on national and international best practices research and input from the focus groups, the following principles were developed to guide land use decisions along the Loop. These principles are also used in developing the best practice recommendations and design guidelines in this document.

1. **Plan for land uses and anticipate the growth in traffic**
2. **Ensure that connectivity is retained**
3. **Separate local traffic from traffic accessing the interchange**
4. **Ensure attractive distinctive development**
5. **Define high activity land uses so they don't surround the interchange.**
6. **Provide alternative and multiple routes for local traffic**
7. **Balance auto traffic with options for walking and biking**
8. **Plan for future transit**

Plan Land Use

Define areas for growth and areas of stability. Defined and established growth zones concentrate growth in one area to spur activity while simultaneously preserving rural or agricultural areas. Unplanned, dispersed growth deteriorates the rural character without providing any of the benefits of the city. Growth zones should be areas away from the interchange that will accommodate local traffic interaction.

Connectivity

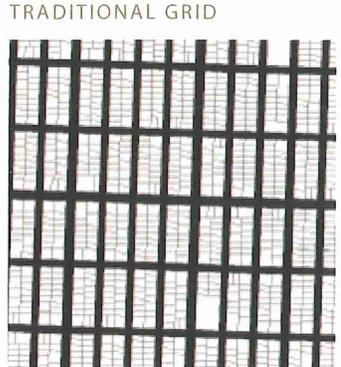
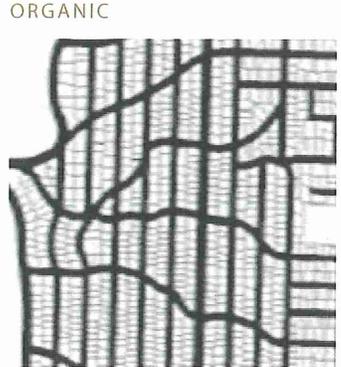
Ensure adequate connectivity around interchanges. A connected street network reduces traffic congestion by providing multiple routes to get places. Conversely, a disconnected street network increases traffic congestion by funneling traffic onto only a few access points and streets.

There are multiple ways connectivity can be achieved. A connected street network is found in different styles and configurations. The common tenant in these designs is that traffic can choose from multiple routes to reach the same destination. The streets can be straight or curved, so long as there are multiple points of connection – or intersections. To achieve connectivity between two sides of a highway requires building connections either over or under the highway. Many roads that cross a highway have on and off ramps. These streets are dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross. Adjacent roadway crossings are essential for safe neighborhood connections.

“It’s not that the highways aren’t sufficient. The feeder roads and alternative roads are insufficient, so you almost have to get on the highway to go anywhere.”

-focus group participant

CONNECTIVE STREET NETWORK DESIGNS



These are four different street patterns that all achieve connectivity. Alternatives to the traditional grid also offer the characteristic of multiple route choices to a destination.



Arterial Design

Consider the desired character for main roads crossing the Loop. Will roads have a multi-modal design or be designed primarily to carry automobile traffic efficiently? An arterial can accommodate multiple travel modes with the addition of sidewalks, street trees, landscaping and buildings which meet the street edge. As sites redevelop, new buildings should be built closer to the street edge, with parking located to the side or behind buildings. Stores should include access from sidewalks and the fronts of buildings should include transparent windows with displays which attract the attention of shoppers.



A key design issue in designing a good arterial is limiting the number of curb cuts. A typical development allows many curb cuts, or entrances into parking and shopping centers and limits access from adjacent residences. Roads can be more attractive and safe by designating and clearly defining shared access points. This preserves connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and provides more walkable main streets.

ARTERIAL DESIGNS

TRADITIONAL SHOPPING CENTER DESIGN



CONTEXT SENSITIVE DESIGN



There are fewer curb cuts used in context sensitive designs compared to traditional shopping center designs, helping to preserve connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and maintain the flow of traffic on the arterial.

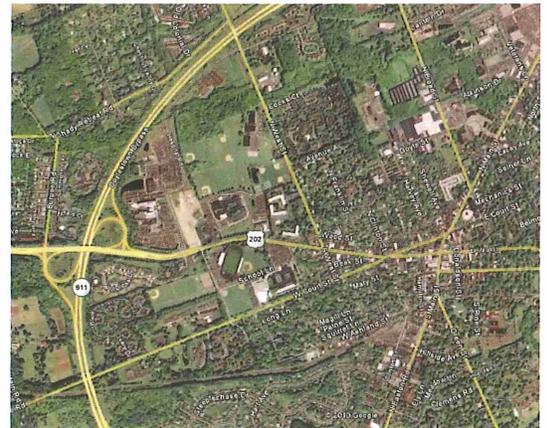
Make It Attractive

The design of buildings and signage plays the greatest role in creating attractive places. Designing an attractive building requires considering both the location and orientation of the building to the street and the design of the building façade. Throughout the country, chain stores can comply with local design guidelines and build structures that respect local architectural character. Typical highway signs create visual clutter that can be avoided by creating design guidelines that require businesses to use lower, human scale signs. Design building location and parking lots so they are attractive, support a multi-modal environment, and create a livable streetscape.



Design Away from the Interchange

Separate local traffic from interchange traffic. Rather than lining access roads with strip commercial uses, activity areas that are developed around a central area or corridor, away from the actual interchange, will alleviate traffic pressure on the interchanges and highways. In addition, distinct activity areas will create walkable districts which can reflect a community's character.



Balance Transportation Options

Activity areas should support a balance of auto, walking, biking and transit, and all these modes should be accommodated as land around interchanges is developed. A certain level of activity is necessary to make transit a financially viable option for communities. When planning new growth this should be taken into careful consideration. Even if transit service does not currently exist, communities can position themselves to be transit-ready. To become transit-ready, communities must integrate future local transit into design, and consider high capacity transit designs that use the Loop. Walking and biking facilities should also be integrated into the future transit areas.





CHAPTER 6

DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES

DESIGN VISUALIZATION OF AN
ARTERIAL REDESIGN



Choosing the Kind of Place You Want to Be

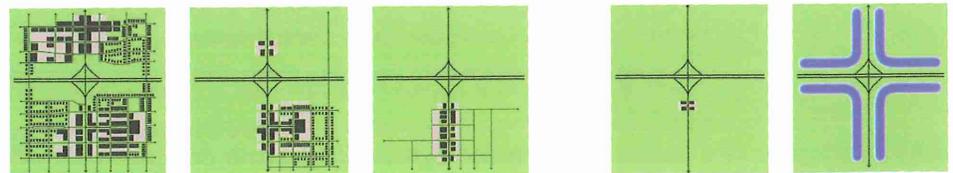
This chapter provides planning design guidelines based on the kind of community you are or plan to become. Five development typologies are used that generally encompass the various types of development found near the proposed Loop; Urban Center, New Town Center, Existing Nearby Town Center, Travelers Services and Sensitive Natural Area. The planning process should:

1. Establish which land use type best suits the development around the interchange
2. Determine the development objectives of the town or region and make a plan based on those objectives

The following pages include descriptions and illustrations of potential new growth around interchanges and how it might look using current growth trends and how it might look if it followed an alternative development approach.

The images to the right are intended to illustrate design approaches that can be replicated at various interchanges, they are not specific site plans for any one area. Plans for specific interchanges will require local planning, community input and environmental assessments.

5 DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES



TOWNS AND URBAN CENTER
DEVELOPMENT

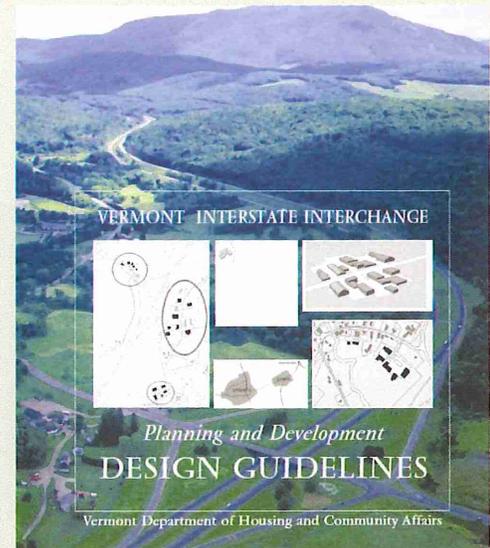
UNDEVELOPED OR
RURAL AREAS

CASE STUDY

VERMONT INTERSTATE INTERCHANGE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DESIGN GUIDELINES

Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs created a guidebook to be used by local municipalities to encourage development around interstate interchanges that maintains and enhances the economic and environmental character of Vermont's communities. The guidebook is not regulatory, but rather a resource for communities to use when planning growth around interchanges. Vermont has enacted state policies and initiatives that articulate a commitment to maintain a growth pattern of compact urban centers and villages surrounded by rural countryside. The guidebook includes conceptual scenarios for communities to use to understand the effects of alternative development approaches.

Resources: www.dhca.state.vt.us/Planning/GuidelinesFinal.pdf



Interchange Area Planning Process

1. Delineate the boundaries of the interchange plan area
2. Collect data: Land uses, local transportation system, utilities, ownership patterns, previous plans, regulations, etc.
3. Identify and map areas that are not suitable for development (i.e. wetlands, surface waters, flood plains)
4. Evaluate the current functional capacity of the transportation network within and around the interchange
5. Identify land ownership and engage land owners in the planning process
6. Establish a preferred type of place by assessing the following:
 - a. *Population:* How many residents are currently living in or around the interchange location. This will determine whether the interchange design should be for an urban center, a rural area or somewhere in between.
 - b. *Proximity to existing towns:* Consider whether there is an existing community nearby.
 - c. *Development Intensity:* What is the approved population and employment forecast? The land use should match with these forecasts and the available land supply.
7. Identify needed road and infrastructure improvements to support proposed types and densities of development, as well as associated costs and methods of financing.
8. Establish policies, guidelines, and/or zoning and design overlays for site development in the interchange area.

For each interchange area, assess the specific characteristics and develop a small area plan for the interchange area.

1. Urban or Population Center

An urban center typology applies to already urbanized or rapidly growing areas, such as downtown Baton Rouge or communities close to the central city. The types of development found near an interchange such as this include a mix of uses; residential, retail, commercial and business or industrial park development. Development likely will occur on all sides of the interchange.

Trend Development

An urban center that develops according to local trends is characterized by a few big box retail stores, fast food restaurants and gas stations with parking in front of each business. Residential areas are found on the periphery of the commercial center but are disconnected from the retail uses and do not follow a grid street pattern. In this design, virtually all trips require the use of the primary arterial or the highway which results in increased congestion. The development intensity allows for transit in the future on the one arterial that crosses the highway, however is too dispersed to effectively support transit in the present.

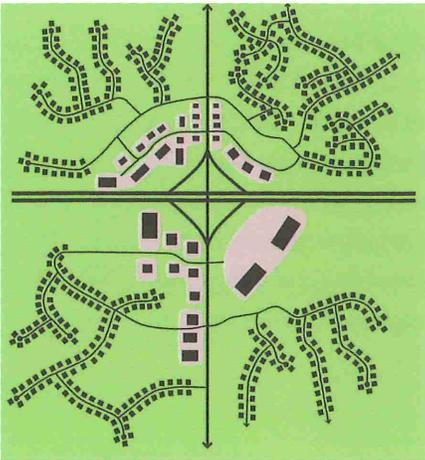
Planning the Development

The alternative design accommodates even more uses than the trend; however the configuration of the site is different. This option still accommodates big box retail but the buildings are oriented closer to the street and not separated from the street by a large parking lot. A park-once formation encourages shoppers to leave their car in one place while visiting several stores in close walking distance. The residential areas are adjacent to the commercial and industrial centers, and are comprised of a mix of single family and townhomes. An interconnected grid of streets provides more choices and decreases the total travel load on the primary arterial crossing the highway. This option illustrates two additional roadways to connect the communities on both sides of the highway. These additional roadways do not include access to the highway, they are solely to connect neighborhoods and either side of the highway. Room for future transit routes exists on the three main arterials in this design. The walkable grid makes the future transit stops and routes pedestrian oriented.



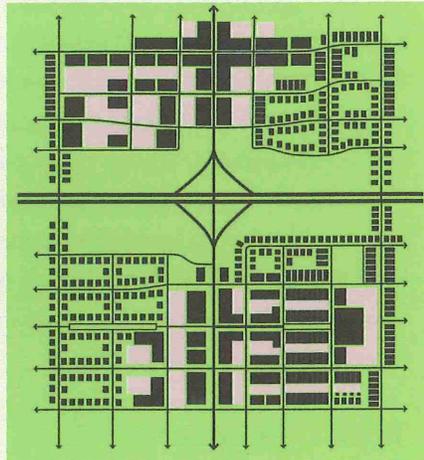
URBAN CENTER LAND USE PATTERNS

TRADITIONAL



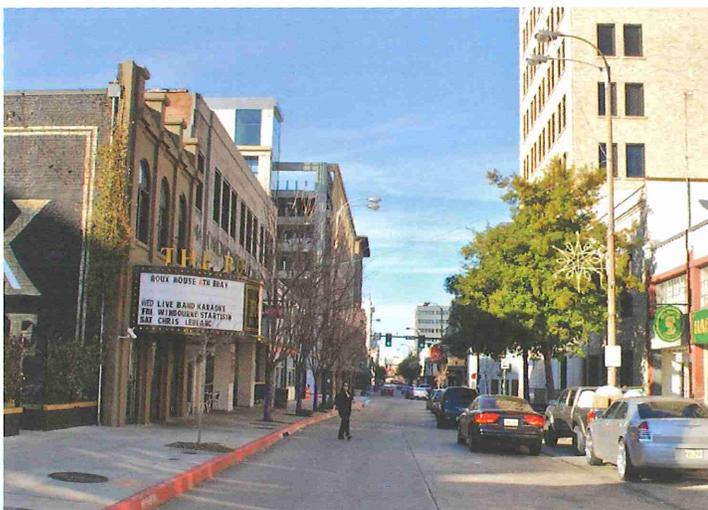
Traditional: Commercial uses radiate from the interchange and residential uses are separated and have few access points.

BEST PRACTICES



Characteristics of Alternative design:

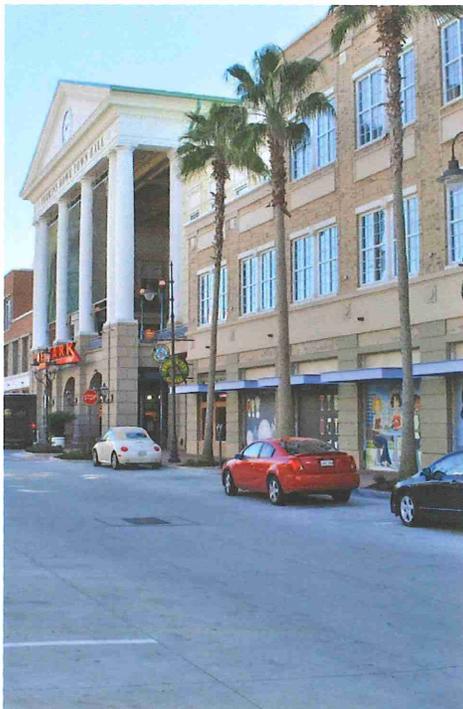
- Street connectivity
- Residential neighborhoods connected to commercial centers
- Mix of housing types
- Multiple road options for crossing the highway
- Parking designed behind or next to buildings in shared lots, in a "park-once" configuration
- Buildings face street
- Space provided for future transit



Best Practices: Commercial and residential uses are more integrated and have multiple connections between them.

2. Town Center

The new town center typology applies to areas where new shopping or residential uses are anticipated. These could be areas in which there currently is no development but growth has been moving in that direction or they may be areas where growth has begun and there is still time and potential to shape that growth in the future. The development in a new town center interchange also includes a mix of uses; residential, retail, commercial and business or industrial. River Ranch in Lafayette, Louisiana is an example of the type of new town that can grow out of and benefit from well planned interchanges and transportation systems. River Ranch is served by major roads but has a walkable town center and neighborhoods because it is not oriented around a major road or interchange. In 1998 River Ranch was created as a new town where there was not one previously. This same forethought and planning can be used in new areas served by the Loop.



Trend Development

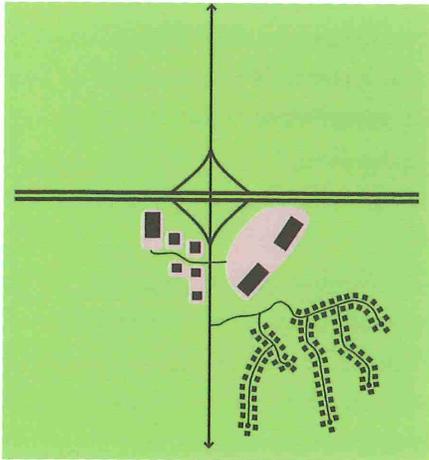
In this “trend” option the big box store is separated from the residential area. All traffic is funneled onto the main arterial. No connectivity exists between thoroughfares with all traffic funneling onto one street. The result of this development is typical strip development with large parking lots facing the street and single family neighborhoods weaving behind the commercial area. This development form is too dispersed to effectively support transit.

Planning the Development

The big box stores in the alternative design are located off of the highway and street-oriented. In this case, the residential areas are connected to the commercial areas on a local grid pattern. Therefore the main arterial does not need to be used for each trip as it does in the trend option. The building and parking lot configuration allows people to park once and visit several nearby stores on foot. There is an additional highway crossing and the interconnected network of streets will decrease the traffic pressure on the main arterial. This design creates an identifiable center to the community or a heart to the community. The two main arterials provide potential for transit routes and have the intensity of development to support transit.

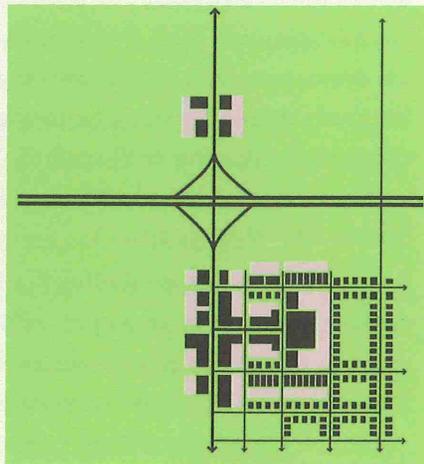
TOWN CENTER LAND USE PATTERNS

TRADITIONAL



Traditional: Commercial development is oriented to the interchange and residential is separated via one access point connecting to the main arterial.

BEST PRACTICES



Characteristics of Alternative design:

- Street connectivity
- Identifiable center to the community
- Residential access to commercial uses
- Mix of housing types
- Multiple road options for crossing the highway
- Buildings face street
- Space provided for future transit



Best Practices: The streets are well connected and oriented around a town center separated from the interchange. The street pattern provides several route choices and accommodates alternative travel choices such as walking and transit.

3. Existing, Nearby Town Center

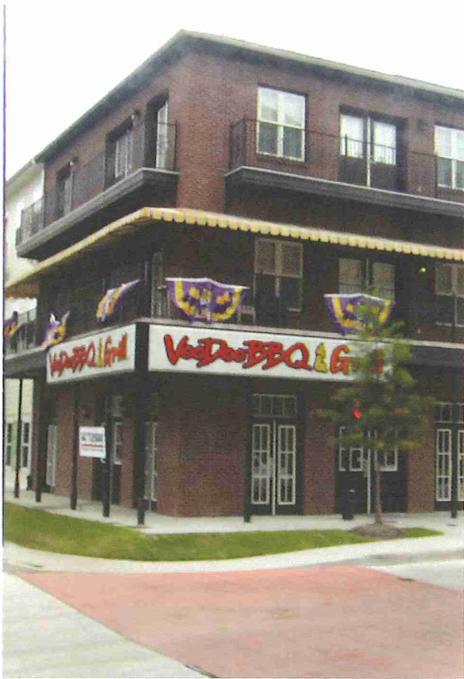
This typology applies to interchanges that are located near an existing town or center. The intent of this typology is to extend the fabric of the nearby downtown center towards the highway in an interconnected, compact pattern. With the right design, travelers exiting the highway are drawn into the existing town and know it is there. This typology illustrates smaller building footprints which compliment rather than out-compete the existing retail options.

Trend Development

In the trend option, several big box stores are located directly adjacent to the highway. These stores could be a potential threat to the existing stores in the nearby town because of their visibility from the highway. Potential customers may not know to continue on the road to the town center. New big box stores often lead to disinvestment and decline of older downtowns. This design is not transit supportive because of its lack of density and walkability.

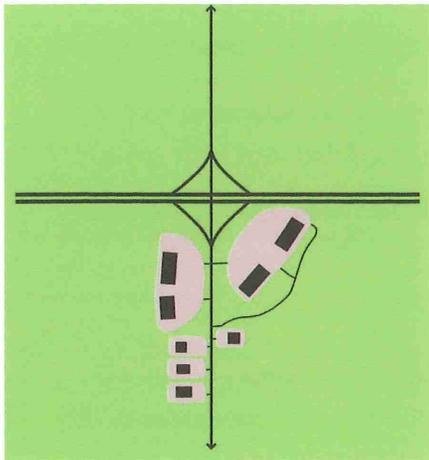
Planning the Development

This alternative option creates a main street feel that leads into the historical town center. To accomplish this a re-zoning of the land adjacent to the intersection and the implementation of a design overlay may be required. For instance, design guidelines may require buildings to be architecturally in-line with the existing community or lots to be a smaller size than typically allowed in the development regulations. Signage directs visitors to the nearby town center and streetscaping and lighting is designed to inform visitors that they have arrived in a special place. This alternative has the potential to become transit supportive if other uses fill in the street grid to increase the density and intensity of the town.



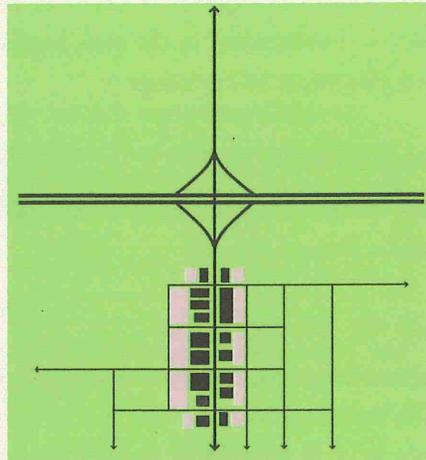
EXISTING, NEARBY TOWN CENTER LAND USE PATTERNS

TRADITIONAL



Traditional: Commercial development is oriented to the interchange and residential is separated via one access point.

BEST PRACTICES



Characteristics of alternative design:

- Street connectivity
- Emphasis on the historical town center
- Design guidelines to ensure consistency in development patterns
- Signage that blends and promotes new and historic development
- Buildings face street
- Space provided for future transit



Best Practices: Roads off the interchange draw travelers to the existing town. The existing town is able to grow and prosper without the competition of new development located around the interchange.

4. Traveler Services Only

In rural areas an exit may only offer traveler services such as a small market, gas stations and fast food restaurants. Interstate travelers throughout the country have come to rely on these services. When planning for traveler services, communities should conduct an assessment of what services are available at nearby interchanges and the need for new services.

Connectivity across the highway is less of an issue for these interchanges because of the low level of development in the area, however there are still best practices for parking and placement of buildings.

Trend Development

In the trend option each parking lot is separated from the others and the buildings are set back far from the street.

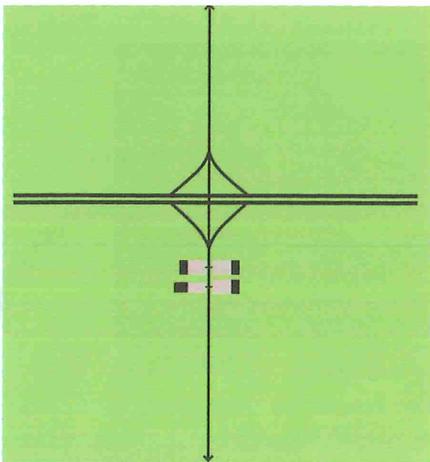
Planning the Development

In the alternative option, the traveler services are designed in a compact, walkable manner. The buildings have parking lots which are joined so they share parking. This enables users to walk between businesses rather than getting back in the car and on the road to drive between two uses on the same side of the street. The buildings are located closer to the street in this design which has the effect of slowing traffic.

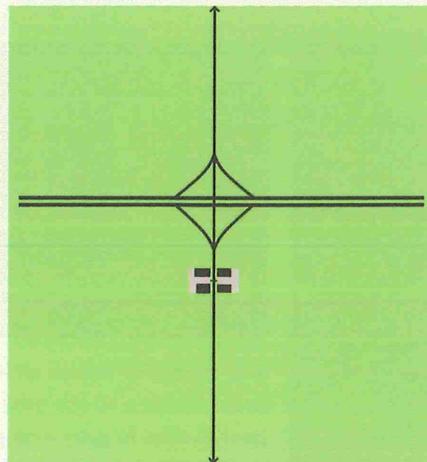


TRAVELER SERVICES ONLY LAND USE PATTERNS

TRADITIONAL



BEST PRACTICES



Characteristics of alternative design:

- Designed to be compact and walkable
- Joined by shared parking lots
- Buildings located closer to the street and face the street with the majority of the parking provided on the sides and rear of the buildings
- Space provided for future transit

5. Sensitive Natural Area

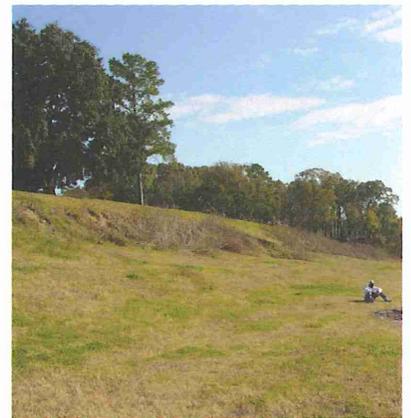
This typology is for sensitive natural areas, including agricultural areas. The reasons for locating an interchange in these areas is either to connect to another major highway, or to access a town or a natural area. It is unlikely that development would occur in an agricultural or natural area, however if it does, it is likely to be on one quadrant only.

Trend Development

Under the trends continue option, development would occur without sensitivity to the natural areas. Growth is likely to take the form of strip development along the access roads and slowly encroach on the natural areas.

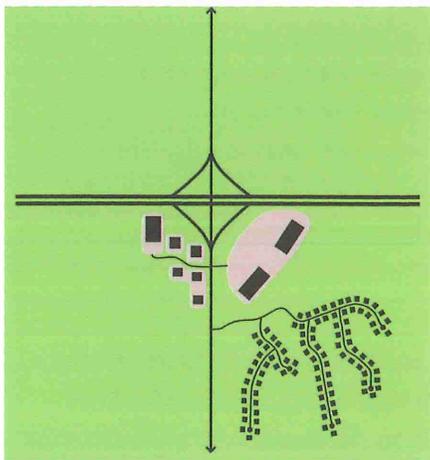
Planning the Development

In the alternative option, no development occurs in sensitive natural areas.

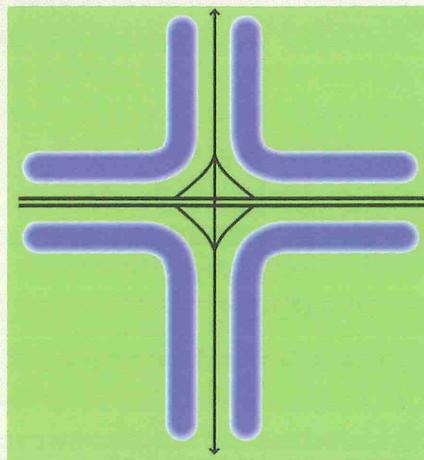


SENSITIVE NATURAL AREA LAND USE PATTERNS

TRADITIONAL



BEST PRACTICES



Characteristics of alternative design:

- Sensitive natural areas are protected and remain undeveloped
- Other adjacent, less sensitive areas may accommodate additional development as needed



CHAPTER 7

IMPLEMENTATION

It is up to the local government to formulate policies, prepare plans and adopt land use controls to ensure the highest quality and viable development for a community.

Regulatory Tools for Interchange Development

The following development standards may be adopted in part or in full to guide a community's future development. The Louisiana Land Use Toolkit provides a model development code for Louisiana. Implementation of the Land Use Toolkit would provide standards that lead to the alternative development options described in the previous section. The Land Use Toolkit can be found at: www.landusetoolkit.com.

Zoning Districts

Basic standards for development, densities, and allowable uses. These standards may include parking minimums and maximums, setbacks, lot size, frontage, and coverage requirements. Examples include mixed-use, main street commercial, residential, industrial/office/employment, and traveler services.

Overlay Districts

These districts are provided in addition to zoning districts when additional design standards are needed to guide future development. Overlay districts cover designated areas, and provide additional design standards that supplement or substitute the standards in the underlying zoning districts. Examples of Overlay Districts include, scenic overlays, gateway corridors, and historic districts.

Parking Standards

Parking standards provide requirements for the number of parking spaces as well as for the design of parking lots. These standards may also include standards for parking lot location and shared parking strategies to encourage multiple businesses to share parking resources.

The purpose of interchange area land use planning is to guide and control development in a reasonable manner that provides the most benefit for the community.

Access Management Standards

Access management standards limit the number of access points per lot and the spacing of access points, the design and operation of driveways and street connections of roadways. Typically these are based on road types and speeds.

Shared Access

Shared Access management requires parcels to share access points by providing access between parking lots so that customers do not have to go out into the major thoroughfare to access a neighboring business.

Sign Standards

Sign standards provide for location, height, sign area, design and illumination of on-premise signs. A sign ordinance may be part of a zoning ordinance or may also be developed as a separate document.

Use Standards

Use standards regulate the location of specific uses.

Subdivision Ordinances

Provide standards and processes to divide land and provide public utilities and services in an orderly manner.

Settlement Pattern Standards

Standards to encourage connective lot and road layouts. These standards assist in creating walkable, transit supportive, and traditional neighborhoods.

Master Planning

Area plans for each of the interchange areas may be conducted by local planning authorities. These could include recommendations for regulatory structures and may include standards for phasing of development.

Non-Regulatory Tools for Interchange Development

Downtown, Village Center or New Town Center Plans

A municipality may prepare and adopt a plan for the development and revitalization of downtown and village centers, or to plan for a new town center.

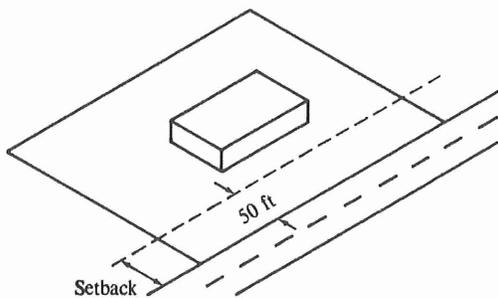
Protected Area Plans

If preservation of open space is desired, the local government may create an Open Space Plan to assess critical natural resources and to guide conservation strategies. The resulting plan would identify important parcels to protect.



DESIGN GUIDELINES & BEST PRACTICES

Although variations of the following design guidelines are necessary for each typology, these descriptions provide general guidelines for good design in any situation. Consideration of the design guidelines will be most important in the more urban typologies 1-3. The more rural, less developed typologies 4 and 5 will also benefit from considering the following guidelines by providing a good design foundation for potential future growth.



1. Building Form

Setback

When the property line is adjacent to the street, buildings should be built to the lot line as frequently as possible. Buildings may be set-back from property lines to accommodate additional sidewalk width, arcades on lower floors, outdoor seating or landscaping where applicable. When designing a quality public realm it is important that the buildings create a consistent street wall to shape public spaces and streets. Setbacks are usually considered an outward limit of how far the building can be placed from the street. When the setback is 0" it is commonly referred to as a "Build-to Line". Small setbacks or build-to lines encourage buildings to be positioned along a line closer to the street or sidewalk. The goal of build-to lines is to bring the buildings and entrances to the front of the lot. If build-to lines are encouraged or enforced the result will be a continuous, engaging street wall. Build-to lines are typically 5 to 35 feet from curbs.



CASE STUDY

LOUISIANA TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH CENTER

The Louisiana Transportation Research Center Provides local technical assistance for transportation planning in rural and small communities. Local planners, transportation and public works agencies can take advantage of the Center's resources. It is supported by Federal Highway Administration funds and has a focus on innovation at the state level.

Resources: www.ltrc.lsu.edu/



Height and Massing

Buildings on a street should have compatible heights and massing; this means similar heights, but not identical. This creates a visual consistency with buildings sharing similar characteristics, yet maintaining unique identity of individual buildings. Buildings taller than one story are encouraged. A combination of the actual measured height and the perceived size due to articulation in design defines the way the building looks on a street. The height and mass defines a building's relationship to other structures on the street. Clearly articulating different uses at lower building levels will aid in creating a sense of human scale. Using specific architectural design elements also helps create human scaled buildings. These elements include windows facing the sidewalk, porches, entrances off the sidewalk and other ground-level pedestrian amenities. On large buildings incorporating these design elements can reduce the perceived bulk of the building.



Hendersonville

Height and Massing

Orientation

Orientation refers to the directional relationship between a building and the spaces around it – such as streets, parking lots and sidewalks. Large buildings which front multiple streets should provide multiple entrances. Primary building entrances should be accentuated. Whenever possible, primary building entrances should front streets rather than parking lots.



Build To Lines

Source: Michigan Council of Governments

DESIGN GUIDELINES & BEST PRACTICES



Articulation/fenestration

This refers to the details on a building façade. Buildings should be designed to include windows, entrance features, architectural features, varied roof lines, and different materials. Building facades should have depth. Blank or featureless walls should be avoided when possible. They do not add to the character of the street or provide opportunities for interaction with the sidewalk and street. The lower floors should be differentiated architecturally.



Transparency

Transparency creates the relationship between the outside spaces and inside spaces. Actual visibility is created by including storefront windows or perceived visibility is created by adding shuttered or louvered openings that permit some degree of visibility.



Entrances

Entrances should be easily identifiable, inviting and accessible. In an effort to activate streets, primary entrances should be from the main street, and entrances from parking lots should be supplemental. In cases of shared parking lots, building entrances from several different buildings should be visible and accessible. Entrance design plays a crucial role in establishing the physical and functional relationship with the street.

CASE STUDY

WISCONSIN DOT: A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN INTERCHANGE AREAS

The Wisconsin DOT has adopted a guide to interchange land use planning with the understanding that interchanges create both opportunities and challenges for communities. The intent of the guide is to assist communities in planning primarily for the land around new interchanges and also for areas with existing interchanges. The audience of this guide is intended primarily for local governments, but can also be used by other professionals and citizens.

Resources: www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/docs/interchange-guide.pdf

The special policies and controls recommended for the interchange areas have the following broad objectives:

- Provide for the most appropriate land uses
- Insure the orderly and productive development of the area
- Protect the traffic-carrying capacity of the interchange and its connecting roads
- Provide an attractive gateway to nearby communities
- Provide for bicyclist and pedestrian circulation and overcoming barriers

2. Access and Streetscape

Access

A critical design element of a road network with a functional flow of traffic is limiting and regulating the placement of curb cuts. Though necessary for vehicle access into the interior of building sites, curb cuts should be kept to a minimum to avoid disruption of the streetscape and pedestrian flow. A strategy for minimizing the need for curb cuts is to encourage shared access among buildings and lots. Shared driveways improve the road's visual character, minimize conflicts, increase on-street parking options and improve road capacity.

Parking Location

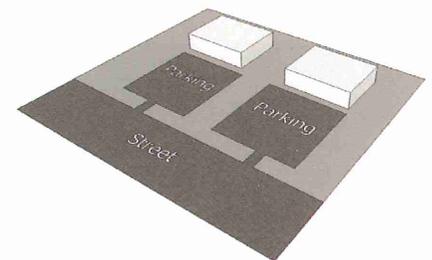
When possible parking lots should be located at the rear or side of buildings and screened from the public view. Also when the street design allows, on-street parking should be encouraged. This will slow traffic and make for a more pedestrian-oriented street environment. If the corridor is served by transit or is walkable from nearby neighborhoods parking minimums should be reduced. The development of shared parking lots is a crucial strategy in encouraging vibrant, yet auto-dependent areas. Multiple uses or buildings close to one another can share one lot, especially if the uses require parking at different times of the day. This has the advantage of decreasing the amount of parking lots in an area and providing users or customers with the option of parking once and completing multiple errands or trips on foot.

Landscaping

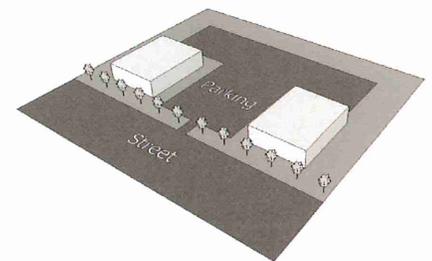
Landscaping can play many roles; preserving natural habitat, stormwater management, enhancing the aesthetics of a street, providing a transition between different portions of a site or different land uses, and screening unattractive views. Attractive landscaping should be used along walkways, streets and parking areas to buffer pedestrians from traffic. Landscaping should also be provided in setback areas.

Lighting

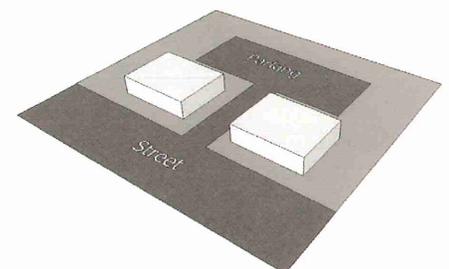
Lighting is essential for the safety of pedestrians and vehicles, however too much light can alter a community's character. The amount of lighting and design of lighting depends on the land use. Frequently used areas may require lights placed at regular intervals whereas lights at crosswalks and intersections may be sufficient in residential areas. Strategies to ensure that lighting enhances the community design include using light fixtures designed to focus the light down on a site and timers to turn lights on at dusk.



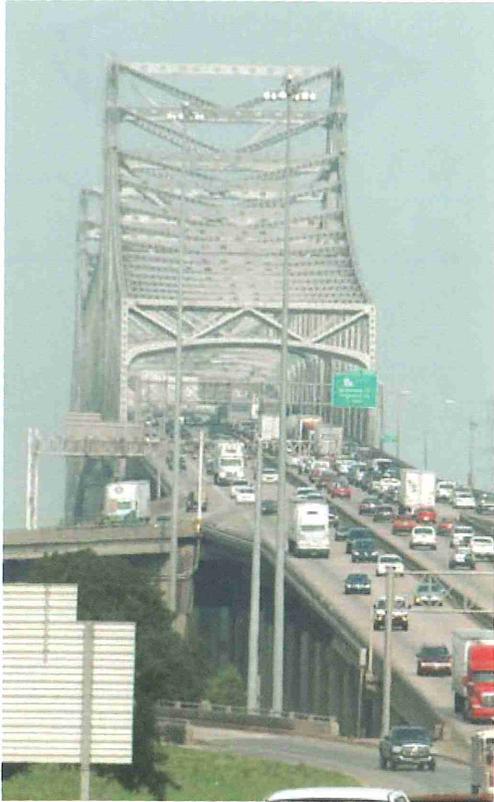
Parking is located in the front of each business.



Parking is located at the side of the buildings and is shared by multiple businesses.



Parking is located at the side of the buildings and is shared by multiple businesses.



Conclusion

In a growing and expanding region such as Baton Rouge, the Loop road can provide increased access to new markets and alleviate congestion. The potential benefits however, will be realized by communities' planning efforts and the application of the best practices described in this report.

To keep up to date on the progress of the Loop and give your input visit www.brloop.com.





Baton Rouge Transportation Corridor Planning Relative to the Baton Rouge Loop

Focus Group Discussion Topline Report
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
9/15-16/10

WORKING DRAFT – 10.01.10

Three focus groups were conducted over the span of two days in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to determine attitudes, concerns and beliefs about the prospect of a new transportation project called the Baton Rouge Loop.

Participants were selected from East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, Livingston, Ascension and Iberville Parishes. Participants were recruited by the focus group facility to match as closely as possible the parish demographics and represent a broad income range based on Census Bureau statistics.

These focus groups were announced to participants as being conducted to determine views about land use planning and transportation issues facing the region. Specifically, the groups were engaged in conversations about planning options and views about a proposed Loop for areas in or near the Baton Rouge metropolitan region.

Top of mind responses to the series of questions were encouraged along with a reminder that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions and that candid impressions and opinions were welcomed.

All focus groups started at the same place, with a discussion of issues and concepts for building a highway and putting the group at ease that it didn't matter if they were for or against building a Loop, although those opinions could be expressed. Participants were told that communities who face transportation challenges have numerous things to consider that we would discuss and that their feedback would be helpful to regional planners seeking to better understand what the public expects from transportation solutions in the future.

I. GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

1. Do you feel that it is easy or hard to get around your community and surrounding area by car?

In each of the focus groups, this question received immediate negative response. Phrases such as, "It's a nightmare," and "impossible during certain hours of the day," and "we plan our lives around traffic," were common. It is clear that respondents feel that their region is deficient in transportation access and mobility and the issue is a highly charged one.

2. How would you describe the current state of roads, highways, transportation problems and opportunities in your community?
Mixed reactions were heard to this question; in the first group, which had EBR participants, the state of the surface roads raised concern but there was a degree of awareness that road improvement work is being done. In all three groups, the interchange at Bluebonnet and I-10 was pointed out as a project that keeps traffic moving and cited for its good design. All groups were concerned with the bottleneck nature of the road structures in the region where road expansion with lanes followed development and growth and was inadequate to meet demand.
3. When you think of a highway, what comes to mind?
No group considered interstates or freeways a highway in their descriptions. For the most part highways had four lanes, but in some parishes, roads like Route 1, with a two-lane structure were considered highways as they represented the primary thoroughfare for drivers and commuters. Respondents did feel that there were not enough highways to handle the region's load of traffic.
4. What are the pluses and minuses of highways?
Traffic was always a minus, citing Airline Highway as a road to avoid. Many described the traffic jams from highways that have been poorly designed in the region. On the plus side, most respondents said that they would do almost anything to avoid I-10 and I-12, which meant their need and desire for alternate routes was strong.
5. Do you sense that the highways currently serving the region are adequate to keep the traffic moving and serve communities of the region?
Following answers to the first series of questions, it is not surprising respondents feel that the region has poor transportation resources. When discussing alternate resources such as the use of bicycles for transportation there was an audible gasp at the thought of taking one's life into one's hands by bike riding on the roads of the region. Most considered it dangerous because of road rage or lack of education among the motoring community and clearly felt there has been poor planning around alternative transportation options, including inadequate bus options and a culture that sees public transportation as a stigma.

6. I am going to read a list of what people often say may be important about planning for a community and would appreciate your comments about these ideas and how important they might be.
- *Reducing travel distances to and from work*
 - *Multiple routes to get places*
 - *Attracting new businesses*
 - *Promoting and supporting existing businesses*
 - *Protecting natural/scenic areas*
 - *Being able to park once and walk to multiple stores within a short distance*
 - *Being able to buy most everything I need in one store*
 - *Avoiding traffic/congestion*
 - *Maintaining community character /way of life*
 - *Being able to get around without getting on the highway for every trip*
 - *Living in an attractive place*
 - *Increasing property values*
 - *Being able to park directly in front of where I live or shop or work*
 - *Being able to walk to a store from where I live or work*
 - *Trees/vegetation/landscaping*
 - *Saving money on gas/transportation*

Respondents were unanimous among the three groups that avoiding traffic and congestion was a top priority. Not surprising, saving money on gas/transportation was also a priority for individuals, particularly those of West Baton Rouge Parish who said there were no options but the car and the bridge for their daily routines, which are costly and time consuming. Some in the groups didn't understand the concept of reducing traveling distances but were very animated in discussion about getting around without having to get on an interstate highway for every trip. . There was support for the help that good transportation decisions would bring to business, increasing property values and the economy and mixed reaction to the questions on aesthetics and preserving natural spaces, although living in an attractive place brought positive responses along with concern of blight across the region. There seemed less desire among older and family participants to want to be able to walk to work or shopping, with some saying that families need yards and a belief that mixed-use development is for upper income or single dwellers. There were also differences of opinion on maintaining community character, with some respondents saying progress trumps character, leading to a sense that there was not a sense that the region's communities were strong on character.

II. THE LOOP

1. How many of you have heard about plans to build a Loop highway around Baton Rouge?

The Loop has been planned for far too a long time, according to respondents in all groups. There was universal awareness of the Loop and near universal support for building it within the groups, with a few hold outs concerned about it either being in the wrong place, a waste of money, too late to do much good or NIMBY attitudes. Most blamed politics for the loop not being constructed and a high degree of cynicism was expressed about who might profit by the Loop; with a perception of that being a primary reason for its delay so that politicians could line up the winners and losers. While the groups enthusiastically supported building the Loop sooner than later, when asked if others supported it, the response was that the NIMBYs would win out and keep the Loop from being built. Overall the groups did feel that a Loop would address some of their immediate transportation concerns, particularly easing the volume of traffic on interstates and from heavy rigs that are particularly of concern. The groups thought that the Loop should be part of a package, however, that included widening of streets, new grid construction and public transportation. Additionally, awareness that the Loop might be a toll road did not seem to cause concern with the participants, many saying that those who use it, should pay for it.

2. Now, let's look at how a planner would view land use and access if a major highway is built. What comes to mind as you see the advantages and potential risks of building a new highway that is part of your community? What would worry you most about what you have heard? What do you feel would be the biggest advantage of what you have heard?

These sets of questions provided a time for the participants to begin imagining the values of having or not having a new loop highway in the region. After reviewing various opportunities and challenges that a loop might present, all three focus groups decided that the opportunities outweighed the challenges. Perhaps most concern was expressed around the issue of barriers and separation that such a project might bring. In each group, a lively discussion ensued about closed neighborhoods or those established as a grid with greater access. Respondents with children were concerned about traffic in a more open system, with older respondents raising the issue of crime that a grid system might allow. As a contradiction, creating additional access by the grid system was favored by a small majority of participants to the adding of lanes by widening and growing of major intersections.



III. ACCESS & LAND USE

- There are three issues that you should consider when planning for the use of the land and access to a new highway: Development Intensity, Arterial Design, and Connectivity.

There was curiosity when presented with the three concepts but most participants grasps the concepts by relating the description to a recognizable experience or site. Overall, the grid design received high marks as a logical, usable way to integrate communities that might host a highway corridor. In particular the groups wanted a mix of designs throughout the corridor based on the appropriateness for such design in local areas. For example, there were approximately four locations on the map where respondents felt a community center would help to organize the region into more densely designed communities with mixed use assets. In some ways, having facilities such a Perkins Rowe spread throughout the region would offer welcomed options, even though respondents questioned the affordability of such developments and whether their placement would cause a split between haves and have-nots. It is clear that respondents are wedded to a home with a yard and parking away from commercial space, even if it means more drive time. Of particular concern is the relationship of families to mixed-use properties and the safety of the community that brings in more densely populated zones. However, when it came to a corridor placement creating barriers, a grid approach was preferred, perhaps due to the worry of moving on side streets to avoid historical congestion. A few respondents in the East Baton Rouge group were hopeful that environmentally sensitive areas would be preserved, a thought not particularly shared by others who see loss of such areas as a price paid for progress and not particularly useful projects for land that might serve other purposes. The group was not very responsive when asked to cite choices for certain types of development, with the exception of the west bank participants who had a sense that the river separated them from vital services and quality of life opportunities, along with decent choices for consumer activities of all types. West Bank and Iberville Parish participants were especially supportive of another bridge crossing, citing their lack of a hospital in their parishes and the necessity to reach emergency medical services via a river bridge that is at times very congested with traffic. Most felt development should be in areas where it currently works, but a specific request for green space or rural living was not expressed within the confines of the current corridor choices for a Loop.

Overall, if you judged by the enthusiasm and interest in the discussions in all three groups, one is left to conclude that a Loop is desired immediately and that there is high skepticism that politics and local pressures will allow planning to proceed. However, upon reviewing the expression of fatigue that participants have with their mobility and access to transportation options, the conclusion is that the region is primed for this development and should proceed, as one participant pointed out to do what it takes to build this highway.