

**Hooper Road Extension (LA 408)
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
State Project No. H.005403**

**Open House Public Meeting
Project Information Handout**

OPEN HOUSE MEETING FORMAT:

- Project staff members are situated at the exhibits in the meeting room. Feel free to ask them questions as you look at the exhibits.
- A court reporter is available to take your verbal comments. Please make sure to state your name and address for the record.
- You may also make a written comment for the record via the Comment Forms – one is included at the back of your handout.
- A PowerPoint presentation will play on a constant “loop” during the meeting. Feel free to watch it at any time during your visit.

PROJECT HISTORY:

In 1997, Louisiana House Resolution #75(1) called for a feasibility study of constructing a new bridge crossing the Amite River to extend La 408 to LA 16. As listed in the resolution, the purposes of the study included rapid growth in the community (now City) of Central, LA, and the heavy traffic volumes that correspond to such growth. The resolution noted the heavy traffic volumes on the Magnolia Bridge over the Amite River, the nearest vehicular crossing to a possible extension of Hooper Road. To that end, the LADOTD completed in 2000 a feasibility study for the Hooper Road extension. That report was a preliminary evaluation of the several alternatives to aid in determining the feasibility of constructing the extension.

As the first decade of the new century progressed, it became more clear to local leaders and elected officials that the Hooper Road extension was needed, even despite the planned replacement of the existing Magnolia Bridge with a new four-lane structure. The area experienced a residential building boom, generating additional daily traffic -- most of it commuter traffic to and from Baton Rouge. Extension of Hooper Road, along with already planned widening of the road in East Baton Rouge Parish, was seen by local officials as way to create a new four-lane artery for commuters who live in Livingston Parish and work in East Baton Rouge Parish. This new east-west connection is

anticipated to relieve congestion not only on the Magnolia Bridge, but also on other east-west arteries, such as Florida Blvd (US 190) and I-12.

On October 15, 2005 the citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish voted and passed an extension to the current one-half of one percent (1/2%) sales and use tax for local street and roadway improvements. This comprehensive transportation program, known as *The Green Light Plan*, is designed to improve roadway infrastructure and citizen safety throughout East Baton Rouge Parish. 70% of the proceeds will be used for transportation improvements including the construction of new roads, widening of existing roads, intersection improvements and upgrades to traffic signalization and synchronization. The Green Light program dealt directly with the Hooper Road corridor as it calls for several projects, including the widening of Hooper Road to provide two through lanes in each direction and a raised median from approximately 750' east of Joor Road to Sullivan Road, a sewer design study to facilitate the design of the future roadway, and the widening of Sullivan Road from Hooper Road to approximately 635' north of Wax Road. The project was designed to provide an improved east-west corridor connecting I-110, Harding Boulevard, Joor Road and Sullivan Road.

While the widening of Hooper Rd. was being planned, the extension of Hooper Rd. remained very important to local residents and officials. The City of Central completed a Master Plan in 2010 which called for the extension of Hooper Road as a future transportation improvement (proposed collector road). Similarly, during a March 2011 meeting to prioritize road projects for Livingston Parish, elected officials, community leaders and residents listed the Hooper Road bridge and extension as the number 2 ranked priority for the Parish (behind the widening of I-12 overpass/one-mile extension of La. 447 South at Walker).

Stage 0 Feasibility Studies were then completed for (1) the extension of Hooper Road into Livingston Parish, and (2) the widening of the last segment of Hooper Road (Sullivan Road to Greenwell Springs Road). The projects are the last link in the series of improvements that would create a new 4-lane corridor for outlying areas to access downtown Baton Rouge directly via I-110. The two projects are not being considered together in this Environmental Assessment

PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this project is to improve traffic operations in the northeast Baton Rouge Region, particularly for commuter traffic accessing the downtown and in-town areas of Baton Rouge from the project area.

The need for this project is three-fold:

- Rapid growth occurring in the City of Central, LA, and Livingston Parish, LA has led to heavy traffic volumes that correspond to such growth. Livingston Parish was the fastest growing Parish in the state of Louisiana during the period of 2000-2010,

with a growth rate upward of about 40%. While this phenomenal rate may not be repeated, projected population growth is estimated to be about 21% between 2009 and 2032.

- Most traffic volumes consist of commuter traffic to and from Baton Rouge. The extension of Hooper Road, along with the already planned widening of that road in East Baton Rouge Parish, will create a new four-lane artery for commuters who live in the City of Central and Livingston Parish and work in East Baton Rouge Parish.
- This new east-west connection is anticipated to relieve congestion not only on the Magnolia Bridge (which is the next closest crossing of the Amite River) but also on other east-west arteries, such as Florida Blvd (US 190) and I-12.

If left unimproved, existing congestion and access problems can be expected to increase due to the continued growth. It is also important to enhance the overall transportation system to provide roadway network continuity, sufficient roadway access, mobility, and capacity improvements to meet future traffic demand. Roadway safety is also a priority.

It should also be noted that the widening and extension have public mandates, as they are present in the City of Central's *2010 Land Use Plan*.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LIMITS

Widening

The project includes a widening of Hooper Road (LA 408) for an approximate three mile stretch. Currently, LA 408 in this area has a posted speed limit of 55 mph for most of its length. It is currently an undivided two lane roadway with no paved shoulders. There is roughly 100' of available right-of-way along the roadway. The roadway is intersected at numerous locations by short, residential local streets.

Hooper Road in this area would be widened and improved from two to four lanes. Using LADOTD design criteria, it was determined to build the roadway to UA-4 (Urban Arterial) highway standards, which would maintain the existing 55 MPH speed limit. As the required cross-section for this type of roadway is 180 ft. while the current right of way is 100 ft., right-of-way will be required. The design was undertaken with the purpose of avoidance and minimization of impacts, particularly relocations.

The widened roadway will also need to meet LADOTD design standards for access and safety. As per LADOTD design criteria, a thirty foot (30') median is required between the northbound and southbound lanes. Access will be limited as per the LADOTD's Engineering Design Standards Manual (EDSM) amendment IV.2.1.4, which was put into effect in September 2008. The amendment provides definitions and criteria for design of median openings on roadways where a median did not exist prior to the current project (i.e., 2 lane to 4 lane divided or 4 lane undivided to 4 lane divided). Most notably, median openings shall be spaced at least ½ mile (2,640 ft) and shall be directional u-turns. At locations where u-turns are present, bump-outs to enable varying sizes of u-turn movements are necessary.

Extension (including Bridge)

Starting from the current terminus of Hooper Road at Greenwell Springs Road (LA 37/LA 64), an extension for Hooper Road is planned eastward. The extension would also be a UA-4, 55 mph classification, and include a new bridge across the Amite River.

There are two alignment alternatives for this extension. The two alternatives only differ at their end points on the east. Each alternative is proposed to extend from the existing intersection of Hooper Road at Greenwell Springs Road, cross the Amite River and curve north before turning east. Alternative A is proposed to terminate at LA 16 approximately 0.5 miles north of the intersection of LA 1019 and LA 16, creating a T-intersection and meeting all EDSM requirements. Alternative B is proposed to intersect with LA 16 approximately 0.25 miles north of the intersection of LA 1019 and LA 16, continue southeasterly and tie into the intersection of LA 1019 at LA 3285, creating a four-way intersection. Under both Alternatives, LA 16 would be widened to 4 lanes for some distance north of its intersection with LA 1019.

Both design concepts are described below, with descriptions beginning in the west (at the Greenwell Springs Road intersection) and ending in the east. As the two alternatives share a common section, the common section is first described, followed by the eastern terminus of Alternative A and the eastern terminus of Alternative B

Common Section

Both alternatives begin at the intersection of Hooper Road and Greenwell Springs Road. This conceptual design of the extension assumes that Hooper Road will be widened to four lanes. Two intersection options are present for the Greenwell Springs Road intersection: a traditional signalized intersection (traffic light), or a free-flow roundabout. Regardless of the intersection option selected, right-of-way will need to be acquired at the intersection.

As the land slopes down to the floodplain of the Amite River, the at-grade roadway will transition to two (2) parallel bridge structures. The bridge height is designed to handle a maximum water surface elevation of approximately 53 feet. The Hooper Road extension will remain on bridge structure as it heads east over the spoil bank floodplains and will turn to the north, following the curve of the river, then back to the east before transitioning to an at-grade roadway between the residences at the end of Boyd Ott Lane and the gravel pits on the eastern side of the river.

Heading eastward, the divided highway will cross an area of cleared land, avoiding residences before crossing Bend Road (LA 1020) with an overpass between Ben Allen Road and John Hancock Road. No access to or from the Hooper Road extension is planned at Bend Road. The divided 4-lane roadway then continues east for about 1200 feet before reaching the point where Alternatives A and B diverge.

Alternative A Terminus

From the point of divergence, Alternative A continues almost due east until the Hooper Road extension's "T" intersection with LA 16. For that intersection there are three options: a traditional signalized intersection (traffic light), a free-flow roundabout, or a grade separated, free-flow interchange.

LA 16's existing four-lane status at the intersection south of the LA 1019 intersection will be extended north to the intersection with the Hooper Road extension. It will transition back to two lanes about 1,000 ft north of the new intersection with Hooper Road.

Alternative B Terminus

From the point of divergence from the common section, Alternative B begins a curve to the southeast, crossing a cleared area and entering a wooded area. The extension continues southeasterly until the Hooper Road extension's intersection with LA 16.

The full intersection with LA 16 occurs just north of the strip shopping center on the northwest corner of LA 1019 and LA 16. For this intersection there are also three options: a traditional signalized intersection (traffic light), a free-flow roundabout, or a grade-separated, free-flow interchange.

The Hooper Road extension will continue past LA 16 southeastward as a two lane facility, connecting with the existing "T" intersection of Old LA 16/ LA 1019/3285 and Springfield Road/ LA 1019 to form a full intersection. That intersection, under any of the three scenarios for Alternative B at LA 16, would be converted to a roundabout.

LA 16's existing four-lane status at the intersection south of the LA 1019 intersection will be extended north to the intersection with the Hooper Road extension. It will transition back to two lanes about 1,000 ft north of the new intersection with Hooper Road.

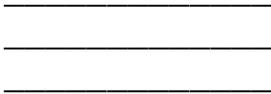
STEPS IN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1. Alternatives Analysis – Analyze and select three "Build" Alternatives from three the two alignments and intersection options under consideration. **UNDERWAY.**
2. Refinement of Engineering - Fine-tune the preferred alternative's geometry and design features, and prepare cost estimates for construction. **UNDERWAY.**
3. Impact Analysis - Examine what may be impacted if we were to build such a project (both natural environment and human environment). **UNDERWAY.**
4. Public Participation – Hold public meeting and public hearing to obtain public's input on project. **UNDERWAY.**

5. Mitigation Measures – Examine ways to mitigate any negative impacts that may result from construction of project (noise walls, wetlands mitigation, etc.) **TO BE COMPLETED.**
6. Report Preparation - Document all work, including Public Participation. **TO BE COMPLETED.**
7. Environmental Clearance – If impacts are not significant or are able to be successfully mitigated, obtain a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), which enable the project to move on to design and construction. **TO BE COMPLETED.**

FUTURE STEPS TO COMPLETE PROJECT

- OBTAIN FUNDING – As of yet, this project is NOT formally funded.
- Design Engineering and right-of-way acquisition.
- Construction of project.



Place
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Here

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Environmental Assessment Project
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