

FHWA-LA-EIS-01-01-F  
STATE PROJECT NO. 700-29-0112  
FEDERAL AID PROJECT NO. HP-NH-TO21(002)



**LOUISIANA 1 IMPROVEMENTS  
GOLDEN MEADOW TO PORT FOURCHON  
REVISED RECORD OF DECISION  
MAY 2004**

**RECORD OF DECISION  
JANUARY 2003**

**U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION**

## **Record of Decision (Revised May 2004)**

**Louisiana 1 Improvements  
Golden Meadow to Port Fourchon  
State Project No. 700-29-0112  
F.A.P. No. HP-NH-TO21(002)  
May 24, 2004**

*(SUMMARY: The Record of Decision signed in January 2003 is being revised to include updated minor refinements (planned, designed or under consideration) in the project, along with the decision to utilize innovative funding, in addition to traditional sources, to accelerate the construction of Phase I.)*

Since the Record of Decision (ROD) was approved on January 29, 2003, for the subject project there have been ongoing minor changes/refinements in design: namely the alignment shift in and south of Leeville; relocation of the north and south connector roads at Leeville; and the current consideration of a shift to the alignment, from the north of Leeville to Golden Meadow, to reduce conflicts with pipeline infrastructure.

These changes/refinements and considered changes have been undertaken in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, U. S. Coast Guard, and the National Marine Fisheries Service. These changes/refinements have been made through a continued collaborative decision-making process that included a thorough consideration of all identified social, economic and environmental factors with continued extensive resource and permitting agency coordination and public involvement.

In addition, the firm decision has been made to utilize innovative financing including the use of tolls to help accelerate the construction of Phase I of the overall approved project. As identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), all funding methods available to the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD), including bonds and tolls/ user fees were to be considered, along with implementing the project in phases as funding became available.

The FEIS identified that funding allocations would determine the sequence and scheduling of the construction stages, and offered examples of possible sequencing. Phase I has been identified as the construction of a two lane roadway from just north of Leeville, including the crossing of Bayou Lafourche at Leeville, to the junction of LA 1 and LA 3090. This phase will also include the connector roads to existing LA 1 (to be located north and south of Leeville). As additional funding is identified and obtained, additional phases will be implemented.

Replacement of the existing LA 1 bridge crossing of Bayou Lafourche at Leeville (included in Phase I) was identified in the FEIS as a critical component of the project. Vehicular delays due to routine bridge openings and boat crash incidents with the bridge

contributed to this identification. The results of recent bridge scour investigations on the existing LA 1 structure over Bayou Lafourche at Leeville have shown ongoing severe scour problems that only emphasize the importance of project acceleration including this component.

The shift in the alignment on Phase I, south of Leeville to LA 3090 at Fourchon (ranging from approximately 300 to 350 feet east of the original line), was done to improve the geometric connection of the facility with LA 3090 at the south end of the project. The shift also resulted in the avoidance of a ship graveyard and lowered the amount of vegetated wetlands affected. The shift in alignment in Leeville along with the adjustment of the connectors reduced community impacts in the area, by reducing relocations, avoiding cemetery impacts and improving access to the community. The adjustment to the connections also reduced cost as well as placing them closer to Leeville. As previously stated, under consideration is also the possibility of minor shifts in the alignment, just north of Leeville to Golden Meadow, to reduce potential conflicts with underground pipelines.

Documentation of the innovative funding decision is the major consideration resulting in this REVISED ROD. In order to accelerate the construction of the Leeville bridge and improve the roadway south of Leeville, innovative funding has been identified through the use of a TIFIA loan and Louisiana Transportation Authority (LTA) revenue bonds. Implementation of tolls has been established as the main payback mechanism for both the TIFIA loan and bond issue. The economic impact of the implementation of tolls had not been previously evaluated.

A toll study was conducted to determine the amount of tolls that would be needed to repay a TIFIA loan and bond issue. URS Corporation conducted the investment grade toll study "Traffic and Earnings Report for the Proposed Leeville Bridge Toll Facility," dated May 2004. LDOTD conducted an evaluation of the economic impact of the implementation of tolls to the residents, workers, businesses and visitors south of the toll facility. The results of the study are included in a report titled "Economic Review & Evaluation – LA 1 Tolling," dated May 2004. It has been concluded that there will be minor to moderate impact to the economy of the area as a result of the toll structure.

Formal public involvement on the issues of tolling consisted of two public meetings (May 5, 2004, in Larose, Louisiana- north of the proposed tolled access and May 6, 2004, in Grand Isle, Louisiana- which would be reachable only through the proposed tolled facility.) Full public support and acceptance was expressed in the May 5, 2004, meeting in Larose for both the project and for tolling to fund the project. Full support was expressed in the May 6, 2004, meeting in Grand Isle for the need and urgency for the project. There was however, mixed support expressed on the tolling of residents south of the bridge. A minor modification of the resident toll rate structure was made in response to the public comments.

A summary of the public input and responses is included.

Included by reference are the following documents:

*Traffic and Earnings Report for the Proposed Leeville bridge Toll Facility*  
URS Corporation, May 2004

*Economic Review & Evaluation – LA 1 Tolling*  
LADOTD, May 2004

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

### **PUBLIC MEETING INPUT FOR LA 1 TOLL STUDY LA 1 IMPROVEMENTS LAFOURCHE PARISH**

**Larose Civic Center  
Larose, Louisiana (Lafourche Parish)  
6:30 PM  
May 5, 2004**

All speakers (approx. 30) voiced support for the project. It was acknowledged that tolls were the only way to get the project started in the near future. No objections to the toll structure were voiced. There was concern that this project continue to proceed as quickly as possible.

Representatives of the Congressional delegation voiced support for the project, and noted that additional federal funding sources were continuing to be explored.

Items mentioned in support of the tolled facility included:

- It would cut traffic delays from bridge opening for navigation & for malfunctions,
- Provision of better access for emergency situations (including medical),
- Improved hurricane evacuation,
- Maintains a critical link,
- Supports economic growth of the Port and Grand Isle with a more reliable facility,
- Tolls are the way to fund the early construction of the facility,
- Jobs and Economy dependent on good facility,
- Provides a safer facility for travelers,
- Willingness to pay tolls,
- Tolls are common in other parts of the country.

Comments are noted.

**Grand Isle Community Center  
Grand Isle, Louisiana (Jefferson Parish)  
6:30 PM  
May 6, 2004**

Approx. 26 people made comments or had questions.

There was a strong consensus voiced for support for the project. There was support for the toll structure, there was also concern that residents would have no choice but to pay the toll to reach their homes. There was some concern that the toll would be an additional cost passed on to residents and visitors making purchases or doing business in Grand Isle. Reasons cited in support for the project included:

- Improved safety,
- Maintains a critical link,

Economic growth,  
It would cut traffic delays from bridge opening for navigation & for malfunctions,  
Predictable travel times,  
Provision of better access for emergency situations (including medical),  
Improved hurricane evacuation.

Comments are noted.

*Many supported tolls to start the project and were willing to pay tolls, as businesses in Lafourche and as residents of Lafourche parish including Leeville, and also as residents of Grand Isle, in order to get the project built now. It was stated that we can't wait for this road.*

Comments noted.

*Some expressed objection to any payment of the tolls for residents of Grand Isle.*

Tolls will pay a portion of the construction costs, in addition to other state and federal sources. Tolls are a user fee method of paying for capital improvements. Tolls have been used elsewhere on improvements that provide the only access to an area. Louisiana has an example of a community, Monkey Island, which can be reached only by paying a ferry toll. Fairness calls for all users to contribute to the cost of the improvement. There is a need to improve accessibility to the coastal area quickly, due to the condition of existing infrastructure; tolls would provide a controlled responsible financial mechanism now, instead of waiting for possible other sources of funding. The toll rate structure has given consideration to residents, commuters, and frequent users and has a sliding scale reflecting higher rates for heavier load usage of the facility. Based on the concerns expressed, the rate structure has been further modified to cap the \$0.50 round trip rate through time for residents south of Leeville instead of implementing the initially proposed incremental increases to \$1.00 in the year 2030.

***Specific comments included:***

*It was noted that it will take tolls or taxes to build this road...money doesn't fall from sky. The US government should fund this project because of strategic importance to the nation, but if they will not, we will do it. Project has full support.*

Comment noted.

*Commenters noted that project is important for community. Project is a first for Louisiana and can serve as a model of the way to build projects. This is a wonderful project that speaks of foresight and the vision of the people. This project is a progressive step for all of us. It is the wave of the future.*

Comments noted.

*It was stated that this project is about jobs and the quality of life.*

Comment noted.

*It was stated that Lafourche's economy is almost totally dependent on the building of this road. The people of Lafourche decided to tax themselves to create the Greater Lafourche Port Commission and thus Port Fourchon, the people decided to tax themselves to build a world class levee system. The people of Lafourche Parish have had vision for a long time, this project is the latest action of that vision. Lafourche's economy (and the programs it feeds) includes our schools, our recreational programs, our Council on Aging, our police department. Everything in Lafourche is heavily dependent on upon the success of this toll road happening.*

Comment noted.

*Many specifically stated their full support for the tolled facility.*

Comments noted.

*The Parish benefits, the State benefits, the Federal government benefits from this project. Sometimes you have to pay for something. The Leeville Bridge is crucial and needs to be addressed.*

Comment noted. The replacement of the Leeville Bridge is included in Phase I.

*One commenter stated that this is very important project, but does impact him directly since he works at Port Fourchon. He asked if something can be done for frequent user.*

A reduced fee schedule will be available for a frequent user utilizing a transponder.

*One commenter noted that every day the Gulf is getting closer and closer. The road is subject to erosion and being washed away. The project is to secure access to the port. What is the cost if we lose access to Fourchon and Grand Isle?*

Comments noted. LADOTD has put this project on a fast track to accelerate construction. Tolls are part of the financing formula that will allow construction to happen in the near future.

*It would be great to leave Grand Isle and know that you can come back home. Commenter offers congratulation to all involved in project, all who have supported it. When economy is rough, it is hard to make payrolls, it's hard to pay tolls, but we are down the bayou, "Let's show them what we're made of."*

Comments noted.

*Commenter noted that he will be directly impacted by tolls since he works in Fourchon. He stated that money means nothing compared to lives lost. It will get better after this project. Another commenter stated that his company has about 100 employees. They make 5 to 10 trips a week to Grand Isle, to Fourchon to earn income, to service clients. Their people are at risk using the current roadway. Many in room have horrible tales to tell of friends they have lost on LA 1. "Feels like our people are threatened if we don't improve this roadway and make our business more efficient, make our business safer and make our people more safe." If tolls are necessary to make this happen commenters support tolls.*

Comments noted.

*One commenter offered that for incident responders when the road goes out, the problem of failure, of not being able to help someone south of that bridge is a big deal.*

Comment noted. The new roadway is intended to provide a reliable facility.

*One commenter stated that we will build this bridge, we will build this road. Tolls are an opportunity for this construction.*

Comment noted.



*Improvements to LA 1 are not just a Lafourche Parish issue, it is much broader. From a commercial and recreational standpoint a much broader area is affected.*

Comment noted.

*A representative of the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) pointed out that NOAA has been an early investor of more than a million dollars of NOAA grant money in this program for the planning, design, and engineering for this new bridge and roadway. This is an investment in the future. It is meaningful because of the national importance, the national significance of this project. It is an honor for NOAA to be part of this effort.*

Comments noted.

*Several commenters stated that this is long overdue. Every time we have hurricane, every time we have high tides, we don't have safe passage to work. Every time we have high water, we have a foot of water on LA 1.*

Comments noted.

*Work on the existing roadway, including recent overlay work has broken the waterlines due to the soils. An elevated roadway is a good idea. This project is tremendously important. I realize there will be tolls on the bridge. Next we need to try to preserve our coast.*

Comments noted.

*It is necessary for hurricane evacuation. During Hurricane Isidore, Fourth of July weekend, the Leeville bridge broke for 6 hours. If Isidore had come here it would have been the right equation for loss of life. For Tropical Storm Bill, just a tropical storm, we gave a voluntary evacuation to alert people, in Grand Isle they were going to meet at 10:00 to talk about giving that evacuation. The water went over the bridge at Leeville at 9:30. There is no play for anyone south of Leeville. We must support this road.*

Comment noted.

*It was noted that we can save Grand Isle- that we can save Port Fourchon. Tthe soils in these locations are good, but we will not be able to save the marsh. We need to build a bridge.*

Comment noted.

*One commenter desired a voucher or free ride for residents of Grand Isle. Another commenter offered that private/public organizations might consider a subsidy program for Grand Isle residents and stated that their business organization would be willing to work with this.*

Tolls will pay for only about 80% of Phase I. Fairness calls for all users to contribute to the cost of the improvement. Substantial reduced rates have already been built into the rate structure for residents. If assistance in paying the toll is needed, alternative methods of reimbursement for those in need can be explored through local public assistance programs.

*One commenter offered that that the amount of the tolls paid by residents would be so small that Jefferson Parish should put this amount up instead of residents paying tolls.*

Comment noted. The Town of Grand Isle can approach their elected officials in Jefferson Parish concerning this option.

*One commenter stated that tolls were not being considered for other improvements in the State, including improvements to US 90 from Lafayette to I-310 (Future I-49), and that the State should be paying for this road.*

DOTD has completed studies evaluating the tolling of US 90 (Future I-49) to pay for the proposed improvements. It has been determined that tolling would pay approximately half the costs of the improvements needed on this particular roadway. Additional funding through an increase in taxes would be needed to make up the difference. It is expected that a realistic funding package for US 90 (Future I-49) would include tolling, in addition to other funding sources. Louisiana does not have sufficient funds to pay for all the transportation needs in the state. In order to make the improvements that are needed in Louisiana, innovative funding, which includes tolls, is being looked at for all major projects, including I-49 improvements, in both north and south Louisiana.

*One commenter stated that residents and visitors to the Island would be paying increased costs on purchases and to do business due to the cost of the toll.*

Yes, there will be an additional, but very minor cost increase, passed on to residents and visitors purchasing goods or doing business on Grand Isle.

*One commenter stated that this project would improve the quality of life for all those living below the bridge including those living on the island. It was stated that it would allow people to return home sooner after a storm than they can do so now. It will shorten the time spent in storm evacuation shelters because the road is impassable.*

Comment noted.

*One commenter desired additional information regarding how the transponder toll collection process will work. There was a concern that a deposit fee for a transponder or a requirement for a minimum amount in a toll account (say \$50.00) would be a burden on those on fixed incomes and that some might be forced to pay the cash fee since they would not be able to come up with the larger sum at one time.*

DOTD is considering providing transponders without cost to permanent residents south of the Leeville Bridge. Details, including whether or not there would be a deposit, have not been worked out. The toll account system currently in operation by the Crescent City Connection (CCC) (which under DOTD would provide the day to day operation of the tolled facility for the Louisiana Transportation Authority) allows the deposit of as little as \$5.00 at one time.

*One commenter expressed concern that the Phase I Leeville Bridge would be a narrow roadway facility similar to the bridge at Larose. Another commenter inquired about what would be the situation on the elevated facility in regards to winds. Will it be similar to or better than Causeway? Wind speeds are higher here.*

Since we know that the two lane roadway will have to service two-way traffic until the additional two lanes can be built, it has been designed to be wider to provide a shoulder. The Causeway does not have shoulders to help vehicles get on the side of the road in case of an accident. The proposed LA 1 facility will have shoulders. There is a section of interstate between Laplace and Kenner that remains open during 35 mile per hour winds. We do not expect wind speeds to be a factor during normal operations, although vehicles should not be on the roadway in actual hurricane conditions.

*One commenter inquired as to application of tolls to everyone, including elected officials.*

Yes, tolls apply to everyone with certain exceptions as provided for under RS 40:1392. (See Exhibit 3 below.) In addition, certain reasonable exceptions are being considered, such as emergency medical vehicles. These reasonable exceptions would be worked out as part of the covenant of the bond indenture. The Causeway currently exempts state police, local law enforcement personnel and fire department personnel in the performance of their duties, as well as the emergency passage of ambulance or rescue vehicles. A similar provision may be considered for this facility.

*One commenter wanted the toll to be fair and just.*

Comment noted. See previous responses.

*One commenter wanted to be sure that the location of the new bridge avoids existing problems at this crossing.*

The new bridge location and design at Leeville provides for a wider channel crossing and is outside the problem channel and scour area.

*One commenter stated that Grand Isle is viewed as disappearing and that the bridge is a great idea. It is a way for people to get to see Grand Isle and what is here.*

Comment noted.

*There was a consensus that an improved, safer roadway, not subject to flooding, from Fourchon to Grand Isle was needed in addition to the improvements under consideration from Golden Meadow to Fourchon. It was noted that portions go under water before the rest of the roadway in storm events. One commenter noted that there is a deep borrow pit adjacent to the roadway that is a safety concern. Another commenter noted that he was originally vehemently against the toll, however there is a burning need to do something, and at this point he is in favor of the toll. He stated that instead of wasting time fighting this, this is the time to also see about problems between Fourchon and Grand Isle where there is flooding.*

Comments noted. The scope of the approved project was to provide access from Golden Meadow to LA 3090 at Fourchon. This is an immediate need and includes the critical link for the region, the bridge over Bayou Lafourche at Leeville. An improved raised roadway from Fourchon to Grand Isle would be a separate action that would need to go through the process of being worked independently into the Statewide Transportation Plan. This

section of LA 1 from Fourchon to Grand Isle was recently overlaid. Replacement of the existing bridge over Caminada Bay is currently scheduled for letting in 2007. The DOTD will however, evaluate the feasibility of additional work on this section of LA 1 from Fourchon to Grand Isle, including the need and costs of raising the roadway.

*One commenter stated that he would rather deal with 8 miles of bad road from Fourchon to Grand Isle, than 17 miles of bad roads when having to leave for a hurricane.*

Comment noted.

*Some of those commenting desired traffic movements at LA 3090 and future LA 1 to favor the Grand Isle movement. One commenter inquired if we had studied a flyover interchange at this location. There was concern that RV's, motor homes, and vehicles pulling large boats be able to make the turn towards Grand Isle easily. There was also concern on the seriousness of what would happen when a hurricane is coming and same is trying to leave Grand Isle.*

A flyover interchange structure was examined. Such a structure would add an additional 5 to 6 million dollars to the project. An at-grade intersection is currently being designed which will give preference to the heavier southbound traffic movement which is west into the port. Traffic movement towards Grand Isle will turn left (east) through the LA 3090 north bound traffic. The actual traffic control measures to be utilized are under evaluation.

*Another commenter asked how many toll booths would there be? Will there be enough to get through without backing up traffic?*

There will be three toll booths in Phase I. Two of the three will be electronic, so those who have transponders will be able to go through. We are designing for normal traffic operations, but normal traffic operations in the future—the year 2028. There may be a slight backing up during peak events, such as the Tarpon Rodeo.

*One commenter stated favor for both the toll and the bridge, explaining that progress is not free. He is happiest with the proposed project in terms of emergency access, having backed up on the existing bridge to go put people in a helicopter at Chevron or on a johnboat to cross over so that Lafourche Parish could pick up emergency patients.*

Comment noted.

*The same commenter stated the company he worked for at Fourchon missed a delivery deadline because the bridge was shut for three hours. The money that this cost his company could pay tolls for 20 years.*

Comment noted.

*One commenter stated that if a road benefits Fourchon, it benefits Grand Isle. It was stated that people coming here to visit for recreational purposes, who have to wait on the other side of the bridge for 2 or 3 hours, would be willing to pay a toll to get here. The belief was expressed that it wouldn't benefit the economy to have people waiting, that people would go to Mississippi instead of waiting.*

Comments noted. There are numerous openings of the existing bridge that delay vehicular traffic. The new project would provide a fixed high span bridge that would not open for marine traffic.

*One commenter noted that paying a toll was a "no-brainer". This is an opportunity to get a new road now. It was stated that a \$0.50 toll in 2004 was "free". It was pointed out that the Caminada Bay Bridge into Grand Isle is still to be replaced.*

Comments noted. Plan preparation for the Caminada Bay Bridge replacement is approximately 25% complete and the project is expected to be let in 2007.

*There was a request for an economic study on impacts of toll by the City of Grand Isle and the Port of Grand Isle.*

A report titled "Economic Review and Evaluation: LA 1 Tolling" has been prepared by the LDOTD. The implementation of tolls will have a relatively minor affect on residents, visitors, commuters, businesses and the economy as a whole. The relatively minor increase in cost of transportation will be balanced with a safer, more reliable transportation facility. Copies of the report will be provided to the City of Grand Isle and the Port of Grand Isle.

*There was a question concerning payback of loan and bonds if traffic declines and toll collection is not sufficient.*

Reserves will be in place to deal with declines. DOTD is also working out an agreement with the Department of Economic Development to restore the reserve (should it be utilized) before the user is tapped again for a toll increase.

*There was a question on what will be the effect on toll rates if interest rates go up (or is it a fixed interest loan)?*

The revenue bonds will be at a fixed rate.

*One commenter asked if there is a set limit on toll amount or on the amount of tolls collected.*

Once the loan is paid back and the bonds are retired, tolls will not be necessary to pay for the loan or bonds, but operating and maintenance costs will continue and these will be subject to inflation. In addition, Phase I is only part of the entire project, which is to eventually provide a four-lane facility from Golden Meadow to Fourchon.

*It was asked if we had considered moving the toll booth up to Golden Meadow, north of the flood gates.*

When Phase II is built, a toll booth plaza would be built at Golden Meadow in addition to the one built at Leeville as part of Phase I.

*Will there be a new board or commission established to collect the tolls?*

No, DOTD already has a toll operation, the Crescent City Connection, and we would utilize this existing operation and its expertise, to collect tolls for this project.

*A question was asked concerning who would maintain LA 1 from LA 3090 to Grand Isle. Another commenter asked what would happen with old LA 1?*

LDOTD maintains and will continue to maintain existing LA 1 from LA 3090 to Grand Isle. Negotiations are underway between DOTD and Lafourche Parish for Lafourche Parish to assume the maintenance responsibilities of existing LA 1 from LA 3090 north to Leeville after Phase I is opened to traffic. This section from LA 3090 north to Leeville (and on to Golden Meadow when Phase II is built) will become a parish road. The existing LA 1 bridge over Bayou Lafourche at Leeville will be removed upon completion of Phase I.

*A business owner expressed concern about access to his restaurant on the north side of Bayou Lafourche at Leeville.*

The plans for the intersection with existing LA 1 north of Leeville will be shown to the restaurant owner. The restaurant is viewed as a destination that will continue to attract customers.

*One commenter asked when would we know for sure that this project would go forward? Would there be a bond election?*

Once the toll rate is established, we will finish the application for the TIFIA loan and negotiate the terms. We will then proceed with negotiating the LTA revenue bond sales. There is no election necessary for the bond sale because only the revenue from the project will be committed for the repayment. The financing package is expected to be complete this summer or early fall to take advantage of the current low rates before rates are expected to increase.

*The toll schedule is for Phase I. Are there additional tolls planned for Phase II and Phase III? How will the rest of the project be financed?*

The proposed toll rate structure is to be used to pay back the LTA revenue bonds and TIFIA loan that will be utilized to fund Phase I. Phase I (which consists of Phase 1a and Phase 1b) provides two lanes of structure from just north of Leeville, south across Bayou Lafourche on to the intersection of LA 1 & LA 3090. Connections north and south of Leeville to existing LA 1, along with the toll plaza just north of Leeville are also included. Efforts are underway to find funding sources for Phase II which would be the construction of two lanes from just north of Leeville, on north to Golden Meadow. Another effort will be needed to find funding for Phase III, which will be the construction of another two lanes parallel to the new facility from LA 3090 at Port Fourchon north to Golden Meadow, providing a total of four lanes. The proposed tolls are only for Phase I.

*One commenter stated that the positives outweigh the negatives. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. It is difficult to invest in areas that might be inaccessible by road. This road is important to future development.*

Comment noted.



*One commenter stated that we need to continue hurricane evacuation from this project north to US 90 (Future I-49).*

Comment noted. DOTD has completed a feasibility study on improvements from Larose to US 90 and is beginning work on an Environmental Impact Statement for work from US 90 north to LA 3127. Funding for work beyond these actions has not yet been identified.

*If this project falls through, is there a back up plan to replace the Leeville Bridge over Bayou Lafourche?*

DOTD believes that this is an achievable plan. Were this plan not to be implemented, we would evaluate what, if any, options are available at that time.

## **Written Comments from Public**

*The Grand Isle Port Commission wrote that they felt this was a worthy project for all of south Louisiana and generally supported the project, but did have concerns. They wanted to know what would be the economic impact of such a project on the people, businesses and community of Grand Isle. It was stated that Grand Isle is the only community directly impacted by this project. Has an economic study been performed and could they get a copy? Will the toll rates be guaranteed to citizens of Grand Isle or are they subject to rise if interest rates and expenses increase and vehicle traffic declines. Will the Grand Isle port commission be provided with free toll tags for all of its publicly owned vehicles?*

The negative economic impact on the people, businesses and community of Grand Isle will be moderate to negligible. An economic evaluation has been completed and will be provided to the Town of Grand Isle and to the Grand Isle Port Commission. As a result of public input, the decision has been made to make the toll for permanent residents of Grand Isle \$0.50 flat through time, with no increase. Some exemption of certain publicly owned vehicles is provided for in law and an evaluation will be made to determine if there are additional exemptions that might be warranted. It is unlikely however that the Grand Isle Port Commission vehicles would fall into a classification that would warrant exemption from the toll.

*Written support of the project and paying the toll was received from property owner on Grand Isle.*

Comment noted.

*There were two written requests to extend the project from Fourchon to Grand Isle. There was the feeling that Grand Isle was being excluded from improvements being made all the way to Grand Isle.*

Comment noted. LA 1 between Fourchon and Leeville has recently been overlaid. In addition, the Caminada Bay bridge replacement is scheduled for letting in 2007. The DOTD will however, evaluate the feasibility of additional work on this section of LA 1 from Fourchon to Grand Isle, including the need and costs of raising the roadway.

*One letter stated that it was a very good meeting- well conducted and thorough in all aspects.*

Comment noted.

*One writer stated that this project was necessary for growth, without it the economy would suffer. The writer felt the toll was a bit more than expected but that it would be worth it. The writer works for a local boat company with a fleet that will use this roadway and they will pay the toll knowing it is necessary for the growth of their business. They requested the project be pushed as soon as possible.*

Comments noted. The project is being fast tracked on an accelerated schedule.

*One writer was totally opposed to tolling without toll-free access also being provided to Grand Isle or from Grand Isle to areas beyond Leeville. It was stated that a driver's license allows you to go everywhere free, even if free access is not necessarily convenient. It was stated that the idea of isolating a township by tolls is in itself bizarre, but that the potential abuse of this practice to exclude 'undesirable' drivers and traffic, would lead to a fracture of the highway system and create ill feelings all around. The writer asked that the proposal to toll be rejected.*

Comments noted. There are communities and towns in the USA, including Louisiana, where vehicular access is only by a tolled facility, whether bridge or ferry.

*One writer expressed full support for the roadway and for tolling the roadway. It was stated that it is time for us to start paying for what we want and need, and to stop looking for someone to finance everything.*

Comment noted.

*The Lafourche Parish School Board wrote that they were in support of the of proposed elevated toll roadway from Golden Meadow to Fourchon. Daily approximately 35 students are transported from south of the Leon Theriot floodgates, south of Golden Meadow to south of Port Fourchon in Lafourche Parish to five different public schools. A total of five buses provide services to these students for school transportation. It was stated that the current roadway has had unsafe conditions. School buses have been delayed with children aboard when there have been mechanical problems with the bridge. In addition, “the Port is very progressive with unlimited capabilities... Lafourche Parish School Board derives a great deal of ad valorem and taxes from businesses and activities that surround Port Fourchon and the surrounding area.”*

Comments noted.

## Conclusion and Approval

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approves the minor design changes/refinements that have taken place since the Record of Decision (ROD) was approved on January 29, 2003, for the subject project, in agreement with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD), and in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, U. S. Coast Guard, and the National Marine Fisheries Service. These changes/refinements have been made through a continued collaborative decision-making process that included a thorough consideration of all identified social, economic and environmental factors with continued extensive resource and permitting agency coordination. These refinements have been presented to the public for public input.

Most importantly, the NEPA process and ROD reflects that LADOTD will finance the project using innovative financing, including the use of tolls to help accelerate the construction of Phase I of the overall approved project. As identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), all funding methods available to the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD), including bonds and tolls/user fees were to be considered, along with implementing the project in phases as funding became available.

This approval follows a decision-making process that included thorough consideration of all identified social, economic and environmental factors with public input and involvement.

May 24, 2004

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Date

Original Signed By

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William A. Sussmann  
Louisiana Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration

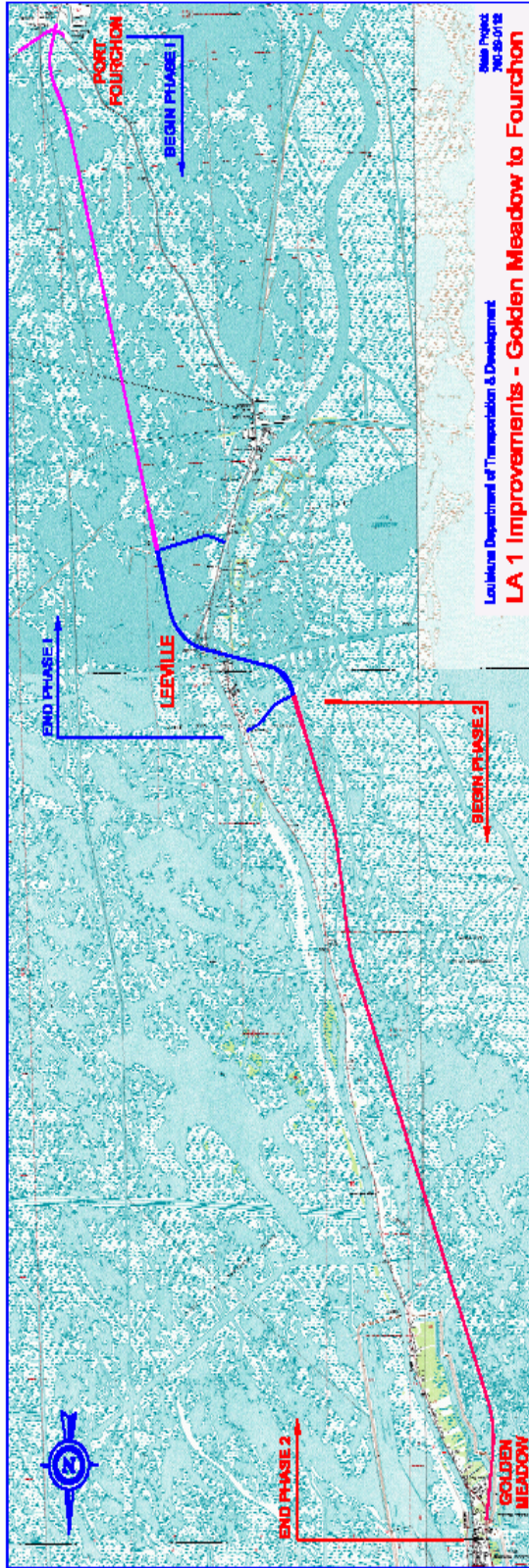
**Exhibit 1. Toll Schedule Modified Per Receipt of Comments from Public Meetings**

**Proposed Toll Schedule for Phase I LA 1 Improvements**

Vehicle Class	Total Toll per Vehicle				
	2008	2013	2018	2023	2028
2-axle/4-tire vehicles					
Transponder/resident toll <sup>(A)</sup>	\$0.50	\$0.50	\$0.50	\$0.50	\$0.50
Transponder/commuter toll <sup>(B)</sup>	1.50	1.80	2.25	2.70	3.00
Cash toll	2.50	3.00	3.75	4.50	5.00
2-axle/6-tire vehicles	3.75	4.50	5.50	6.50	7.50
3-axle vehicles					
2-axle/4-tire with 1-axle trailer	3.75	4.50	5.50	6.50	7.50
Trucks and buses	5.00	6.25	7.50	8.75	10.00
4-axle vehicles					
2-axle/4-tire with 2-axle trailer	5.00	6.25	7.50	8.75	10.00
Trucks	7.50	9.25	11.25	13.00	15.00
5-axle vehicles	10.00	12.50	15.00	17.50	20.00
6+ axle vehicles (maximum toll)	12.00	15.00	18.00	21.00	24.00

(A) For Lafourche Parish and Jefferson Parish residents whose permanent residence is south of the Leeville bridge.

(B) Based on Lake Pontchartrain Causeway frequency-discount program: 60-day period within which the motorist of a two-axle/four-tire vehicle must make 20 southbound trips through the toll plaza for the discount to be fully effective.



**Exhibit 2. Construction Phases ( Phase III is the addition of a two-lane parallel structure from Golden Meadow to LA 3090 at Fourchon.)**

**Exhibit 3. Louisiana Revised Statute 40:1392 regarding free passage on toll bridges and ferries.**

**RS 40:1392**

**1392. Free and unhampered passage on bridges and ferries**

A. State police, in uniform or in civilian clothes, with state police equipment, have free and unhampered passage, at all times, on and over toll-bridges and ferries in this state.

B. All law enforcement personnel, with law enforcement agency equipment, who are employed within this state shall have unhampered passage at all times on and over toll-bridges and ferries in this state, regardless of whether the personnel are in uniform or in civilian clothes. Procedures currently in effect for Louisiana state police to sign a register when granted an exemption from tolls, shall also apply to all other law enforcement personnel in the state.

C.(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of Subsections A and B of this Section, the right of free passage on and over the Crescent City Connection Bridge at New Orleans for state police and law enforcement personnel shall be exercised only by means of automatic vehicular identification toll tags.

(2)(a) Upon the written request of the superintendent of state police or the head of a law enforcement agency and payment of the deposit required by Subparagraph (b) of this Paragraph, the Crescent City Connection Division of the Department of Transportation and Development shall issue the number of automatic vehicular identification toll tags requested for use in connection with the exemption granted by this Section.

(b) Each state policeman and law enforcement personnel shall be charged a deposit of twenty-five dollars for the issuance of his tag. The deposit shall be refunded to such state policeman and law enforcement personnel upon the return of the tag to the division.

(3) The use of the automatic vehicular identification toll tags provided shall be limited to bridge crossings made by state police with state police equipment and by designated law enforcement personnel with law enforcement agency equipment. The appropriate law enforcement agency shall be responsible for any crossing made using the automatic vehicular identification toll tag outside the scope of the exemption granted by this Section.

D. The Department of Transportation and Development shall adopt rules and regulations in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act for the administration of the provisions of this Section on those toll bridges and ferries under their jurisdiction.

Acts 1991, No. 867, §1; Acts 2001, No. 1021, §2, eff. June 27, 2001.