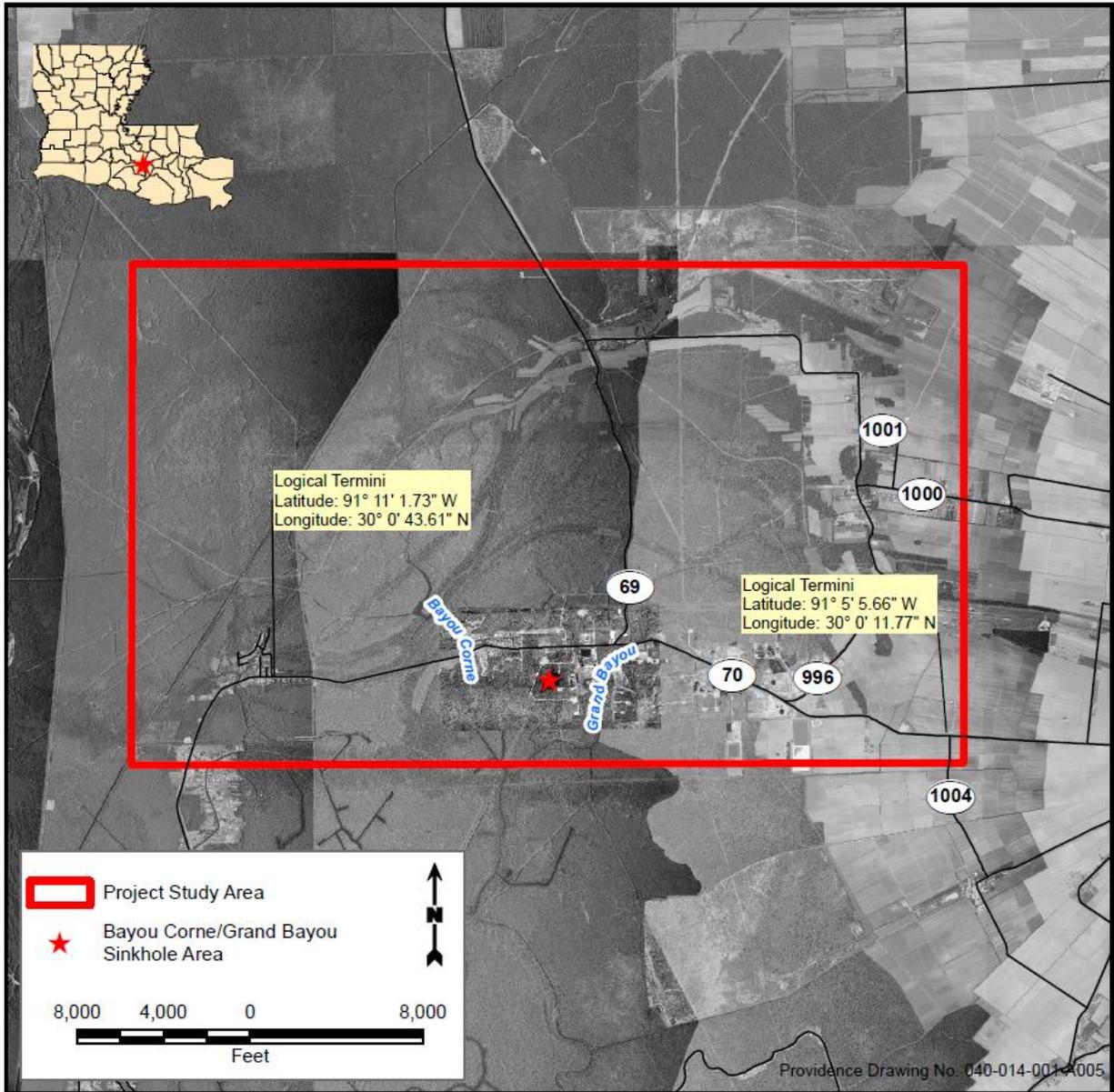


1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 Description of the Proposed Project

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) is proposing a permanent bypass of Louisiana Highway 70 (LA 70) in the vicinity of Louisiana Highway 69 (LA 69) in Assumption Parish. The proposed project is to construct a permanent bypass in the event of imminent threat to the integrity of the existing LA 70 or the proposed LA 70 Detour Route. A permanent bypass would ensure system linkage and access in the event of a permanent closure along LA 70 in the project area. For analysis purposes, this Environmental Assessment (EA) assumes the LA 70 Detour Route is already in place. **Figure 1** demonstrates the approved logical termini and location of the project study area, which begins near Rue De Kajun and terminates at Louisiana Highway 1004 (LA 1004) where it intersects with LA 70.

**FIGURE 1
STUDY AREA MAP**



Base map provided by CB&I on 4/15/14.

1.2 Project Background

On August 3, 2012, a sinkhole was discovered south of LA 70 on the western edge of the Napoleonville Salt Dome. On the same day, Governor Bobby Jindal declared a statewide emergency as a result of subsidence and subsurface instability in the project area, and a mandatory evacuation for residents in the area was issued. With the exception of residents east of Grand Bayou, the mandatory evacuation is still in effect. According to the latest available data (April 2014 Survey), the sinkhole

and surrounding subsidence area is approximately 55.2 acres. The northern containment berm is located approximately 700 feet south of LA 70.

Due to concerns for the safety of the roadway, the DOTD initiated an active monitoring program for LA 70 in the vicinity of the sinkhole in September 2012, including daily visual roadway inspections, weekly bridge inspections, and monthly Global Positioning System (GPS) surveys of LA 70 and three area bridges: Bayou Corne, Grand Bayou, and Bayou Choupique. By May of 2014, the DOTD had committed to automated continuous monitoring of LA 70 and the three aforementioned area bridges for movement and subsidence. To date, monitoring data has not indicated a threat to the integrity of LA 70 (DOTD). However, in order to be proactive, the DOTD has developed two projects (the LA 70 Detour Route and the LA 70 Bypass) in the event conditions change. The LA 70 Detour Route EA evaluated the construction of a temporary emergency detour route, and the EA was completed in January 2015. This EA evaluates the LA 70 Bypass, which is a permanent bypass for LA 70 in the event the integrity of the existing LA 70 or the proposed detour route is compromised.

The LA 70 Bypass Stage 0 Feasibility Study and Environmental Inventory (Bypass Feasibility Study) for the proposed project was completed in November 2013 (see **Attachment 1**). The bypass project was authorized to move forward into the environmental phase, with the class of action defined as an EA.

1.3 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed bypass is to:

- Provide system linkage in the event of a closure along LA 70 associated with mining activities at the Napoleonville Salt Dome
- Protect human welfare by providing a safe, efficient route that allows travelers and first responders to continue east/west movement through the project area