



## CHAPTER 3

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

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The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) has strived to include public input at every opportunity during development of the Statewide Transportation Plan. There were several mechanisms by which DOTD sought and received this input:

- The Louisiana Investment in Infrastructure for Economic Prosperity (LIIEP) Commission
- Eight Advisory Councils
- Two Statewide Transportation Conferences
- Project Website
- Newsletters
- Nine Regional Public Meetings
- DOTD's Formal Public Involvement Process

#### **LIIEP COMMISSION**

On June 15, 2001, Louisiana Governor M.J. "Mike" Foster signed Act 437, creating the Louisiana Investment in Infrastructure for Economic Prosperity (LIIEP) Commission.

The LIIEP Commission, as called for in the enacting legislation, is composed of 13 members as follows:

- The governor or his designee
- An assistant chief of staff, appointed by the governor, from the Office of the Governor
- The secretary of the DOTD or his designee (Chair)
- The commissioner of the division of administration or his designee
- The secretary of the Department of Economic Development or his designee
- The president of the Louisiana senate or his designee
- The speaker of the Louisiana House of Representatives or his designee
- The chairman of the Senate Transportation, Highways and Public Works Committee or his designee
- The chairman of the House Transportation, Highways and Public Works Committee or his designee
- The chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee or his designee
- The chairman of the House Commerce Committee or his designee
- Two commissioners, appointed by the governor, selected from the state at large who are representatives of Louisiana business

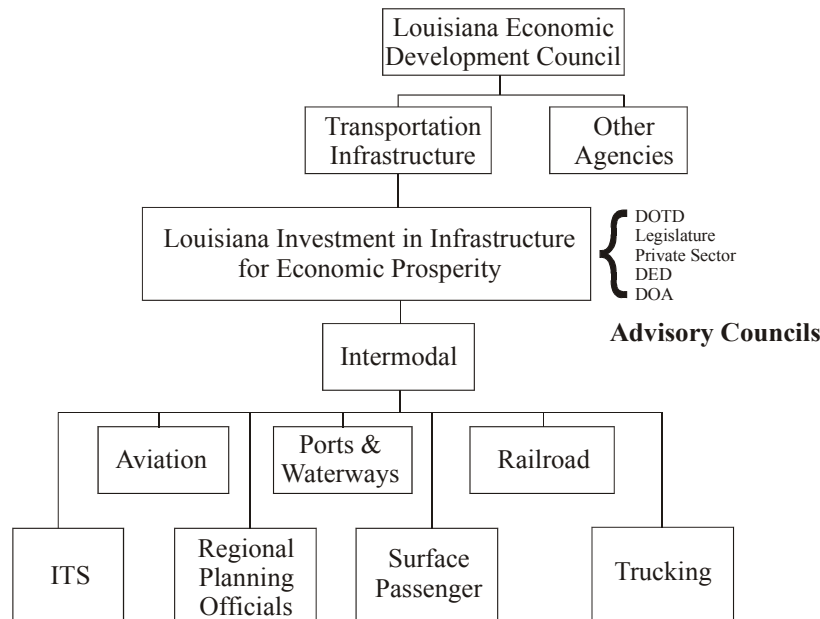
The role of the Commission is outlined below:

- Serve as Policy Committee for the update of the Statewide Transportation Plan.
- Serve as the advocate for funding for transportation infrastructure and services critical to economic growth in Louisiana.
- Oversee and guide implementation of the Plan.

### ADVISORY COUNCILS

As previously described, the Advisory Councils are independent bodies charged with formulating recommendations for inclusion in the Plan. Each met separately, but also had the opportunity on several occasions to listen to what the other Councils were considering. Each Council named its own chair, and it was this chairperson that advanced the Advisory Council’s recommendations within the Intermodal Advisory Council (IAC).

The IAC acted as the clearinghouse for recommendations from the other Advisory Councils, and was charged with accepting, revising, rejecting, and prioritizing a wide variety of inputs used in formulating these recommendations. The IAC worked directly with the DOTD and consultant team to assemble the recommended plan, which was then presented to the LIIEP Commission (**Figure 3.1**)



**Figure 3.1**  
**Relationship of Modal Councils in Updating the LSTP**

With the exception of the Intermodal and Regional Planning Officials Advisory Councils, each Advisory Council met three times during the course of developing the draft Statewide Transportation Plan. The meetings were held during the following times:

April 17-18, 2001

Late February – Early April, 2002

October, 2002

The fourth IAC meeting was held November 14, 2002

### **The Regional Planning Officials (RPO) Advisory Council**

The RPO Advisory Council was the main conduit for input regarding the highway component of the Statewide Transportation Plan. As its name implies, the group is made up of planning officials from Louisiana's nine DOTD Districts, nine metropolitan planning areas, and eight rural planning areas, as well as representatives from the Department of Economic Development and the World Trade Center.

A main function of the RPO MAC was to provide an opportunity for advocates of 51 "Megaprojects" to present to the Council reasons why their major roadway improvements should be included in the Plan. Project sponsors were requested to provide and present specific information regarding their proposed project, including its description, purpose, benefits, cost, importance to the state, potential funding sources and other related information. The presentations from project sponsors took place from late February to early April 2002.

During the last of these meetings, on April 3, the Consultant Team distributed and presented exhibits summarizing the megaprojects, as well as the evaluation criteria and process to be used in assessing their impacts and justification for inclusion in the updated Plan. The results of the April 3 meeting served as the foundation of the evaluation process that DOTD staff and the consultant team implemented to determine those projects that would provide the most benefit to the State in accordance with the adopted Goals and Objectives.

### **The Intermodal Advisory Council**

The third and fourth meetings of the Intermodal Advisory Council, held on October 23 and November 14, 2002 served as the primary mechanisms whereby recommendations from the seven other Advisory Councils were considered for incorporation into the draft Statewide Transportation Plan, and for presentation to the LIIEP Commission. During the meetings, chairs from each Advisory Council presented the recommendations formulated through previous deliberations of their Advisory Council, where they were commented on and further refined by the IAC.

At the conclusion of the November 14 meeting, consensus was reached on the overall set of recommendations to be included in the initial draft of the Plan. These recommendations were presented to the LIIEP Commission on December 10, 2002.

### **Other Advisory Council Participation**

In addition to generating recommendations for consideration by the IAC, several Councils, including Aviation, Freight Rail, Ports & Waterways and Surface Passenger Transportation, used the Council meetings to participate in the development of the separate, individual plans created for these modes as part of the statewide Plan update.



While separate plans were not created for the ITS and Trucking modes, these Advisory Councils similarly used their meetings to discuss issues related to each mode. Over the course of the three meetings, these discussions evolved into recommendations that were included, where appropriate, in the initial draft of the Statewide Transportation Plan.

## **STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCES**

As with the update of the Plan, public input was essential in developing the original Louisiana Statewide Intermodal Transportation Plan (SITP, published in 1996). The SITP was built on a strong foundation of public involvement and consensus-building. For the update, DOTD wanted an equal amount of attention to be paid to the solicitation and incorporation of the public's views as was done for the SITP.

With this mandate in hand, DOTD, in collaboration with the Consultant Team, held the first Statewide Transportation Conference in New Orleans, from July 31 to August 1, 2000, to kick-off the update to the STIP.

The conference was attended by more than 175 persons representing each transportation mode, state and local governments, educators, elected officials, state agencies, shippers, operators, the business community and other interest groups. DOTD arranged for presentations and comments from a host of speakers, providing a sound basis for discussing the future of transportation in Louisiana.

Conference attendees enthusiastically weighed in on how, where, why and by how much the DOTD could improve transportation. The DOTD secretary, Dr. Kam K. Movassaghi, presided over the conference, delivered his personal comments on the state of transportation in Louisiana, attended breakout sessions and made himself available to answer questions offered during the conference.

A second Statewide Transportation Conference was held January 9 – 10, 2003, in Baton Rouge to formally present the initial draft of the Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan. The 1 ½- day gathering consisted of presentations by experts on each modal aspect of the Plan, a briefing by Carla Berroyer, Wilbur Smith Associates, on the possible implications of federal transportation legislation reauthorization for Louisiana transportation interests, a ½-day "open house" where conference attendees had the opportunity to ask questions directly of DOTD officials and staff, as well as the consultant team, and a ½-day comment forum where conference attendees were able to make formal public comment regarding their thoughts on the draft Plan.

## **OTHER PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Several other techniques for engaging the public were employed in the planning process:

### **Project Website**

In the fall of 2000, a project website, fully documenting the development of the Statewide Transportation Plan was established at [www.lastateplan.org](http://www.lastateplan.org). The website provides a "one-stop shop" to information related to the Plan, including links to event details, as well as key documents and contacts.

## **Newsletters**

Periodically over the course of development, a series of newsletters were published that provided the general public details of how the update of the Statewide Transportation Plan was progressing. The newsletters provided information regarding Advisory Council meetings, development of the statewide travel demand forecasting model, and various other aspects of developing the Plan. The newsletters are included in Appendix B.

## **Regional Public Meetings**

In July 2000, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LDOTD) initiated an update to the state's long-range multi-modal transportation plan. The Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan (LSTP) includes the policies, programs and projects that are needed to improve existing and future transportation conditions throughout Louisiana, as well as strengthen the state's economy and improve the quality of life for its citizens. The LSTP addresses the movement of people and freight across all modes of transportation.

The LSTP included an extensive public outreach program including two Statewide Conferences, establishment and meetings with the Louisiana Investment in Infrastructure and Economic Prosperity (LIIEP) Commission and Advisory Councils for each transportation mode, newsletters, and a project website, and the regional public meetings summarized in this document.

### *Purpose of Meetings*

The regional public meetings were part of LDOTD's extensive outreach program to present the preliminary results of the LSTP and to provide all local and regional governmental agencies and stakeholders throughout the state an opportunity to comment on the transportation needs in their respective areas. The regional public meetings were conducted in each of the state's nine metropolitan areas during the month of February 2003.

### *Public Meeting Format*

Preliminary findings and recommendations of the LSTP were presented. The presentation, as well as a meeting hand-out, included an overview and background of the LSTP and its preliminary findings and recommendations for each mode of transportation.

Following the presentation, meeting attendees were given an opportunity to state their comments regarding the Plan results. Display boards of key project findings and recommendations were available for review by meeting attendees and facilitated one-on-one discussions with the Study Team.

### *Public Meeting Locations*

The regional public meetings were conducted in the following locations:



Tuesday, February 11, 2003  
Clifton Chenier Center  
Lafayette, Louisiana

Wednesday, February 12, 2003  
Pineville City Hall  
Pineville, Louisiana

Thursday, February 13, 2003  
St. Tammany Council Chambers  
Mandeville, Louisiana

Tuesday, February 18, 2003  
East Bank Jefferson Parish Library  
Metairie, Louisiana

Wednesday, February 19, 2003  
Lake Charles Civic Center  
Lake Charles, Louisiana

Thursday, February 20  
DOTD Maintenance Unit Office  
Gray, Louisiana

Tuesday, February 25, 2003  
Bluebonnet Library  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Wednesday, February 26, 2003  
Monroe City Hall  
Monroe, Louisiana

Thursday, February 27, 2003  
Shreveport Fire Fighter's Museum  
Shreveport, Louisiana

The regional public meetings were advertised in the Official Parish Journals for the areas in which the meetings were held. Local governments also advertised the meetings through their standard meeting notification procedures.

Attendees at the regional public meetings were informed that copies of the Draft Plan Report were located at all public libraries across the state as well as each DOTD District Office.

#### *Public Meeting Attendance*

A total of 343 attended the nine regional meetings. Meeting attendees included elected officials, LDOTD staff, representatives of local and regional governments, chambers of commerce and local organizations, citizens, and other transportation stakeholders. The number of meeting attendees by location follows:

Lafayette – 40 persons  
Pineville/Alexandria – 32 persons  
Mandeville – 26 persons  
Metairie/New Orleans – 22 persons  
Lake Charles – 30 persons  
Gray/Houma – 40 persons  
Baton Rouge – 78 persons  
Monroe – 27 persons  
Shreveport – 48 persons

### **Formal Public Comment**

Formal procedures for incorporating public involvement within statewide transportation planning activities were adopted by DOTD and the nine metropolitan planning organizations in March 1995<sup>1</sup>. The procedures call for a draft statewide plan to be published, with copies being made available directly to the following agencies:

- Federal Highway Administration Division offices
- Federal Transit Administration, Region office
- Federal Aviation Administration
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- US Environmental Protection Agency, Regional office
- US Department of Commerce
- US Army Corps of Engineers Districts
- US Coast Guard Districts
- LA Department of Environmental Quality, Air Quality Division
- LA Department of Economic Development
- LA State Planning Office
- Each Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Each Urban Transit System Operator
- Each Parish Police Jury

Additionally, copies of the draft are to be made available at each DOTD District Office, and at the main and branch libraries in each parish, as well as the state libraries.

Notices of the availability of the document are to be published twice in the official Parish journal in each parish and the Baton Rouge Advocate as display advertisements with the location where the document could be reviewed, a brief description of the document, the deadline for comments and the address where comments may be sent for consideration. The period for public review and comment is no less than 45 days.

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<sup>1</sup> *Statewide Transportation Planning Public Involvement Procedures*, March 1995.



All written and oral comments to the initial draft Statewide Transportation Plan received during the nine regional meetings and formal public review period were carefully considered by DOTD, in collaboration with the Intermodal Advisory Committee and the consultant team, for incorporation into the final draft of the Statewide Transportation Plan.

A summary of comments received relating to the Draft Statewide Transportation Plan can be found in **Appendix C**.

Upon revision and/or establishment of the document as the official Statewide Transportation Plan, the document is to be distributed and notices of availability were published as described above; however, notices were published once and gave the location where the document may be reviewed, as well as a brief description of the document.

Major revisions to the official Statewide Transportation Plan are to be published and made available to the public as described above. Minor revisions to the official Statewide Transportation Plan are to be published and available to the public as described above, except that the public review and comment period was no less than 15 days.