

Chapter 2

Communication and Public Involvement

Public Agencies

The process for communication with public agencies and officials was initiated with separate meetings on April 13, 1994 with Mayor Hazel Beard, City of Shreveport and Mrs. Judy Durham, Administrator for Caddo Parish Commission. Richard Savoie, P.E., LaDOTD Project Coordinator and Chris Demopoulos, P.E., principal of Demopoulos and Ferguson, Inc., Corridor Study consultants, outlined the purpose and goals of the study, the study area and schedule of work. The City and Parish were advised that LaDOTD and the consultants are available during the study to respond to the City and Parish on any questions or concerns about the Corridor Study process.

On April 21, 1994, a presentation was made by Richard Savoie and Chris Demopoulos at an evening meeting of all Mayors of towns and villages in North Caddo Parish. Scope, purpose, and area of the study was outlined. The Mayors received a copy of the map outlining the study area and of the tentative study schedule.

A presentation similar to that given to the North Caddo Parish Mayors was made to the Transportation Committee, Shreveport Chamber of Commerce on April 22, 1994.

Letters with a copy of study area and tentative project schedule were mailed to all area State Legislators, Parish Commissioners, Shreveport Councilmen, Caddo Parish School Board members and other elected or appointed officials advising that LaDOTD and the consultants may be contacted if additional, continuing information was desired.

Technical Advisory Committee

An integral part of communication between the consultant and public agencies was the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The consultants requested cooperation of the City and Parish to encourage specified technical representatives to participate in TAC meetings during the study program.

The TAC was comprised of the following:

Mr. Kent Rogers, Executive Director, MPO, Northwest Louisiana Council of Government
Mr. Tom Dark, Director of Public Works, City of Shreveport
Mr. Charles Kirkland, Director of Metropolitan Planning Commission
Mr. Ron Norwood, P.E., City Engineer
Mr. Gary Neatherly, Director of Public Works, Caddo Parish
Mr. Anthony Kohl, P.E., Parish Engineer
Mr. Bruce Easterly, P.E., Engineer in Charge of District 4, LaDOTD, was invited to attend and participate.

The first TAC meeting was on May 18, 1994, this meeting was held prior to the first series of Public Information Meetings. Purpose of the meeting was to inform and up-date the advisory members of the pending Public Information Meeting dates, the general information to be presented and to discuss and answer questions about the study's scope and purpose.

A second TAC meeting was held November 16, 1994. Consultants presented a map of study area showing alignments of Alternatives B,C and E and discussed the location of each alternative and tentative interchange locations. After a review and discussion of the Alternatives, a copy of the study area map was given to each member and requested that written comments be sent to the consultants for their consideration.

At a June 14, 1995 meeting, the TAC was presented an up-date of Alternatives B,C & E including project cost estimates of the alternative alignments. These alternatives are a part of the Preliminary Report material to be presented at the Workshops and Public Information Meetings scheduled for June 27 and 28, 1995. TAC members discussed specific locations of interest within the study area. TAC members were encouraged to attend one of the two Workshops and Public Information Meetings.

Workshops and Public Information Meetings

The Workshops and Public Information Meetings were structured to include a two hour workshop period (4:00 to 6:00pm) before the scheduled Public Information Meeting starting at 6:00pm. The purpose of the Workshop period was to provide the opportunity for the public to review and examine exhibits showing environmental and social related data collected to date, discuss the exhibits and their concerns with consultant's and/or LaDOTD staff, and submit comments in a written or oral form. The workshop

period allowed those who could not attend the Public Information Meetings to participate in the information process in an informal atmosphere rather than the structured program of the public meeting.

Time and place of the Workshops and Public Information Meetings were advertised in the Shreveport Times and the Caddo Citizen. Letters were sent to members of the TAC and to public officials inviting their attendance to these meetings.

First Series of Workshop and Public Information Meetings

The first meeting was on August 22, 1994 meeting was in Gilliam at the Village Hall. Each person attending the Workshop and Public Information Meeting were asked to sign in showing name and address; some attended the Workshop and returned later for the Public Information Meeting.

After the Workshop period, the Public Information Meeting began with introductory remarks by LaDOTD outlining the purpose of the study, source of funding, and explanation of the ISTEA legislation impact upon the North-South Expressway Study. Consultants followed with an outline of the proposed study schedule, and status of study schedule, which to date had been primarily data collection of physical and environmental concerns. Traffic consultants gave a description of their work in obtaining traffic counts and other data which provided the base to complete a comprehensive traffic analysis. A fifteen minute break period allowed time for the public to review exhibits; consultant and LaDOTD staff were available to interact with the public during their review of the exhibits. After the break period, the meeting was open to questions and comments from the public, and response by the design team and/or LaDOTD.

Sixty-eight (68) individuals attended either the Workshop or the Public Information Meeting; fourteen (14) returned their Comment Forms to us.

The second and final meeting of this series of Workshop and Public Information Meetings was held on August 23, 1994 Workshop and Public Information Meeting was at the Auditorium of the Shreveport-Bossier Technical Institute located on North Market Street, Shreveport, Louisiana. Format of this meeting was similar to the Gilliam meeting the previous evening. Twenty-nine (29) individuals signed the attendance form; only one (1) Comment Form was returned.

Second Series of Workshops and Public Information Meetings

The second and final series of Workshops and Public Information Meetings were held on June 27, 1995, at the Hosston Elementary School, Hosston, Louisiana, and on June 28, 1995, at the Shreveport-Bossier Technical Institute, Shreveport, Louisiana.

These Workshops and Public Information Meetings followed the same format as the first series of meetings beginning with the Workshop periods from 4:00 to 6:00pm. Mr. Vincent Russo, LaDOTD Environmental Section, opened the Public Information Meetings at 6:00pm and presented general information concerning the background of the proposed highway from Shreveport to the Arkansas State line. Chris Demopulos, representing the study's lead firm, Demopulos and Ferguson, Inc., introduced the study team consultants of Wilbur Smith Associates, Traffic Consultants, and Geo-Marine, Inc. Environmental Consultants. Demopulos presented the physical location of Alternatives B,C and E and the project cost estimates for each alternative. Chris Ingram, Geo-Marine Inc., outlined the general findings related to environmental concerns and "Butch" Babineaux, Wilbur Smith Associates presented the findings of the traffic analysis. Mr. Russo then recessed the meeting for a period to allow the public to review the Exhibits. Members of the Study Team and staff members of the LaDOTD were available to answer questions from individuals who needed clarification of information presented. After a twenty minute break, the meeting was called to order. No citizen made a formal statement, but responses were made to questions from the floor by Mr. Russo.

Fifty-five (55) citizens signed in at the meeting in Hosston; eleven (11) Citizens Comment Forms were received from those who attended the meeting; one Bossier Citizen who did not attend the Workshop or Public Information Meeting submitted his comments by letter. Forty (40) citizens signed in at the Shreveport meeting. Two Shreveport citizens who did not attend the Workshop or Public Information Meeting submitted their comments by letter. Two citizens at the Shreveport meeting came forth to make a formal statement. Other citizens with questions were received from the floor; a response to these questions were given by Mr. Russo.

Replies on Comment Forms received from Hosston and Shreveport citizens indicate support for Alignments C and E (7 to 4); see written comments. Citizens agree that either Alignment B or E as being beneficial to their community.

See Appendix for a copy of Citizen Comment Forms and letters.

Coordination with Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department

Coordination of this study process with the Environmental Impact Statement (EIA) being conducted by the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department was essential to assure successful determination of highway location at the Louisiana-Arkansas State line.

The consultants' study team including representatives from Wilbur Smith Associates and Richard Savoie, LaDOTD, met with representatives of the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department and their consultants in Little Rock, Arkansas on May 13, 1994. The purpose of the meeting was to formally open dialogue between the consulting firms working with Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department and LaDOTD as well as between the two state Department of Transportation and Development staffs. Mr. Kent Rogers, Executive Director of MPO agency, Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments, also attended this meeting.

Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department and their consultants, Carter and Burgess, Inc., gave a presentation on their project scope and schedule and a report on the status of the EIS between Texarkana and the Louisiana State Line; the EIS schedule had an anticipated completion date of late November-early December, 1994. Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department program included design of two five mile highway sections starting in Texarkana to commence shortly after the EIS with the first five mile section beginning in Texarkana to be under construction in January, 1996 and the second five mile section to be under construction in January, 1997.

LaDOTD and Demopulos and Ferguson, Inc. presented the scope of the study, the study area and the tentative schedule of the North-South Freeway Corridor between I-220 and the Arkansas State Line. Due to the respective schedule of the two studies, there was general acknowledgement between the parties attending that the North-South Freeway alignment will necessarily conform to the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department roadway location at the state line unless there were environmental concerns in Louisiana which could not be mitigated. Cooperation between Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department and LaDOTD shall assure agreement of roadway location at the state line.

Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department noted that workshops in their study area will be conducted to inform the public on progress of their EIS planning. LaDOTD will be advised of these schedules so that Demopulos and Ferguson, Inc. and LaDOTD may attend and observe status of the EIS and public response.

Demopulos and Ferguson, Inc. attended one of the first series of workshops in Doddridge, Arkansas, and another workshop in Fouke, Arkansas during the second series of workshops.

Demopulos and Ferguson, Inc., Richard Savoie and Kent Rogers attended the October, 1994 Workshop in Texarkana, Arkansas which was the last workshop prior to Final Environmental Impact Study (FEIS) presentation to the public scheduled for late November, 1994. The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department advised LaDOTD by letter dated January 30, 1995, that a "technically preferred alignment" at the Arkansas-Louisiana State line was route E (Alternative E). A FEIS was being prepared, however, a date for completion of the FEIS was not projected.