

**RECORD OF DECISION  
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION – LOUISIANA DIVISION**

**NORTH-SOUTH EXPRESSWAY  
INTERSTATE 220 – ARKANSAS STATE LINE  
CADDO PARISH, LOUISIANA**

FHWA LA-EIS-99-01-F  
STATE PROJECT NUMBER 700-09-0117  
FEDERAL AID PROJECT No. DPS-NHS-0021(003)

**1 DECISION**

This Record of Decision (ROD) approves the selection of the Selected Alignment for the North-South Expressway between Interstate 220 and the Arkansas state line, as described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) issued January 3, 2001. The Final EIS studied the proposed construction of a four-lane, divided, fully controlled access highway on new location, approximately 56 kilometers (35 miles) in length from Interstate 220 in Shreveport, Louisiana and the Arkansas state line, entirely within Caddo Parish. The selection of the Selected Alignment is conditioned upon compliance with the agreements reached as itemized below and described in the Final EIS (Page S-11). This decision is based on analyses contained in the Draft EIS issued in June 1999, the Final EIS, the comments of federal and state agencies and members of the public and elected officials, and other information in the record in this matter.

**1.1 SELECTION OF THE ALIGNMENT FOR CONSTRUCTION**

The Selected Alignment approved in this ROD was developed from parts of each of three unique alignments developed for the entire length of the project. Each alignment was divided into three sections, as shown in the Final EIS, Exhibit S-2. The particular line selected in each section was based on engineering and environmental factors, and is fully described in the Final EIS.

The decision represents a balance of impacts, in which certain factors were weighed against others in reaching a decision.

In Section 1, the Selected Alignment avoids the proposed Paul Lynch Park property, a Section 4(f) resource, has the least wetland impacts and would impact the fewest number of businesses in this area. In Section 2, the Selected Alignment minimizes residential, wetland and floodplain impacts in this area. In Section 3, the Selected Alignment has the least wetland impacts and attempts to follow property boundaries to reduce landowner impacts. As shown in Table S-1 of the Final EIS, the Selected Alignment has the least involvement with wetlands and with the exception of archaeological high probability areas, involves neither the greatest nor the least impact in most other impact categories evaluated. The Selected Alignment represents a

balance of impacts compared to the anticipated benefits of the project. The Selected Alignment best meets the project purpose and need, represents a balance of environmental impacts through minimization, and is considered the environmentally preferred alternative.

Some unavoidable adverse environmental effects will be associated with the Selected Alignment. There will be 37 houses, 5 mobile homes, 1 business and 3 churches displaced; approximately 54.5 hectares (137.0 acres) of wetlands and 217.5 hectares (537.7 acres) of floodplain encroached upon, 4 potential hazardous waste sites will be impacted and 114 receptors throughout the project will experience noise impacts.

However, the Selected Alignment will generate significant benefits including the improvement in level of service of the existing routes, provide traffic relief on existing north-south routes, decrease response times for emergency service providers, improve access to medical and other social services, enhance potential for economic growth and development, improve traffic safety and complete an important link in the interstate system to serve commercial and recreational travel needs between the Gulf of Mexico and points north of Kansas City, Missouri.

## **1.2 SELECTION OF A CONSTRUCTION ALTERNATIVE OVER THE NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

Construction of the selected highway alignment will cause some unavoidable, adverse impacts; however, it is the alternative that best satisfies the identified transportation needs of the project area. The No-Action alternative provides a benchmark for environmental analysis but does not meet the project purpose and need and at the Final EIS, has been dropped from further consideration as a viable alternative. Therefore, the Selected Alignment is the "environmentally preferred alternative" for purposes of 40 CFR 1502.2(b) because it best meets the project purpose and need and balances impacts overall.

## **2 CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

The study of alternatives for this project followed a multi-step approach in which corridors were first compared against readily available environmental information. This corridor study was then followed by a detailed alignment study within a corridor agreed upon by the public and federal and state agencies. Additionally, a Southern Terminus Study was completed for the northern Shreveport urbanized area.

### **2.1 CORRIDOR STUDY**

The Corridor Study evaluated three primary continuous corridors on new location (600 meters or 2,000 feet in width) and seven links on new location. The corridor advanced to the detailed alignment study is a refined combination of the new location corridors and links and is documented in Section 2.3.8 of the Final EIS. The Preferred Corridor

provides the best opportunity to minimize impacts during the alignment study and is consistent with local transportation plans and development objectives.

## **2.2 ALIGNMENT STUDY**

The alignment study considered three continuous alignments within the Preferred Corridor. These alignments were developed using industry standard highway design software and computer mapping prepare for the study area. As a result, the widths of the alignments vary with the limits of cut and fill slopes as each alignment crosses ridges and valleys. Prior to alignment development, environmentally sensitive areas were mapped in a Geographic Information System (GIS) so that environmental issues could be considered concurrent with engineering design issues.

Additional studies were conducted at the project's southern terminus to evaluate a concept outlined in the Shreveport Metropolitan Planning Commission's (MPC) North Shreveport Regional Development Plan that would connect the southern portion of the project to I-220 at the U.S. 71 / North Market Street interchange. Two additional alignments were considered one on new location and one on existing location to evaluate reconstruction of the existing route. The existing location alignment was eliminated from further consideration due to potentially relocating residential and business impacts, loss of property access, impacts to community facilities and potentially high cost of utility relocations.

As described above, impacts were evaluated in three sections, so that the three original alignments and a fourth alignment developed in response to the MPC plan could be compared along the route.

## **3 MEASURES TO MINIMIZE HARM**

The development of alternatives, both corridors and alignments, considered environmental factors. After showing that a resource could not be avoided, minimization of impacts was considered throughout the project. Specifically, avoiding densely populated areas evident in project mapping and during field studies minimized the number of residential relocations. Based on the Final EIS, there is no practicable alternative that will further minimize residential impacts. Wetland impacts were minimized by avoiding individual wetlands entirely and by project design modifications. This was made possible by incorporation of existing wetland mapping into the project GIS, consideration of soil type and performing wetland delineations. The identification of the Selected Alignment considered wetland impact minimization as presented in the alternatives analysis found in Table 4-10 of the Final EIS.

Impacts to the proposed Paul Lynch Park property, a Section 4(f) resource, were avoided and impacts to the adjacent Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) area were minimized by selecting the alignment adjacent to park along a relatively undeveloped portion of the MLK area. The Selected Alignment would not constitute "constructive use" of this resource as defined in Section 4(f) 49 U.S.C. 303.

## **4 SECTION 106 COMPLIANCE**

Consensus on the completion of the cultural resources survey efforts for this project has been reached between the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). During the EIS preparation, a Phase I survey was conducted to identify potentially eligible archaeology sites. Additional studies will be conducted including 1) Phase I survey of those portions of the project where right-of-entry could not be obtained; 2) Phase II testing of one archaeological site (16CD294), which is considered potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places; and 3) selected deep testing in certain archaeological high probability areas. All findings will be submitted to the SHPO for evaluation and concurrence and further agreements entered into between the DOTD, FHWA, and the SHPO should the findings warrant such action. The documentation is contained in Appendix B of the Final EIS. When possible, avoidance will be the preferred treatment of adversely effected sites. All archaeological sites that warrant preservation in place will be avoided provided that sufficient and feasible alternatives for highway construction can be identified. The need for preparation of a Section 4(f) evaluation on Section 106 sites is not anticipated.

## **5 DESIGN PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Following issuance of the ROD, the DOTD will hold Design Public Hearings to receive public comments on the final design of the highway. Due to the long-term nature of project design and construction, these design public hearings may occur over a period of several years.

## **6 SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES**

### **6.1 WETLAND ENCROACHMENT**

Wetland encroachment resulting from the project will be mitigated for within the project area. Approximately 54.5 hectares (137.0 acres) of wetlands are impacted and are planned to be mitigated for in one or more sites along the project. These sites will be identified during the project final design and right-of-way acquisition process. Mitigation may include wetland creation and wetland banking. Final mitigation ratios, based on a wetland functions and values assessment, and requirements will be determined after issuance of this ROD, per current U.S. Army Corps of Engineers policy.

### **6.2 NOISE IMPACTS**

Over the 56 kilometer (35 mile) length of the project, the Selected Alignment results in 114 noise receptor impacts, which are primarily single family residences. A noise abatement analysis was conducted to determine which noise impact areas met the current DOTD criteria for noise abatement. This analysis determined that there are no practical noise abatement measures that would eliminate or reduce the expected highway traffic noise at identified areas. Generally, they are either unreasonable on a

cost basis, do not benefit enough receptors, or they would restrict access to local roads and/or driveways. Final analyses for noise abatement will be made during the project final design stage and will be based on additional noise analysis and the involvement of those directly impacted as specified in the current DOTD noise policy.

## 7 COMMENTS ON THE FINAL EIS

Following circulation of the Final EIS, FHWA received one letter from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6, indicating that the Final EIS adequately responded to comments offered on the Draft EIS and that there were no additional comments.

May 4, 2001  
Date

  
Federal Highway Administration

