

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

AND

**LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND
DEVELOPMENT**

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

FOR

**STATE PROJECT NO. H.011295
F.A.P. NO. H011295
LA 73 (GOVT ST) EAST BLVD – LOBDELL AVE
ROUTE: LA 73
EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH**



JULY 2016

REVIEWED AND RECOMMENDED FOR
APPROVAL *R. Mahoney*
DATE 9-8-16

APPROVED
Joshua Smith
GARY M. SMITH
PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM LEADER
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
DATE 9/8/2016

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SUMMARY OF MITIGATION, PERMITS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

Mitigation

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) will implement the following mitigation measures to ensure that adverse environmental impacts associated with the project are avoided or minimized to the extent practicable.

- The contractor will be required to adhere to the provisions established by the *Louisiana Standard Specifications for Roads and Bridges*, 2006 edition concerning erosion control, as well as other federal, state, and local permits that may be required.

Permits

It is anticipated that DOTD would acquire the following permits prior to commencement of construction activities:

- Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (LPDES), Stormwater Permit

Commitments

In the event of inadvertent discovery of cultural materials such as human remains, pottery, and/or other archaeological or culturally significant artifacts during construction, activity in proximity to the location must cease and appropriate authorities, including the Alabama Coushatta Tribe of Texas shall be notified immediately. Per request, **the project manager will include this stipulation on the construction plans to insure contractors are aware of the commitment.**

DOTD will seek partnerships with private investors and businesses to provide servitudes to use for bus turnout alternatives along the Government Street corridor. DOTD and the City/Parish will coordinate the potential bus turnouts until Government Street is transferred to the City/Parish. Thereupon, the responsibility of coordination, management of the partnerships, and management of the bus turnouts would be solely the responsibility of the City/Parish.

Following the implementation of the project, Capitol Area Transit System (CATS) will reevaluate the number of stops on Government Street, because walkability would be improved.

DOTD will coordinate with the City/Parish regarding traffic management around the schools along the Government Street corridor to manage car pool lines and their impact on traffic. DOTD has also requested that the City/Parish work with the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board to improve school zones and crosswalks on city streets.

After implementation of the project, pedestrian patterns will be analyzed to determine if or where additional crosswalks would be most beneficial.

The City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge Government (City/Parish) will continue to develop and revise the bike plan and crossings on adjacent and connecting routes to complement the Government Street improvements for bikes and pedestrians. Following the implementation of this project, the City/Parish can analyze bicycle traffic and determine if additional facilities such as Copenhagen turn boxes are necessary on the corridor.

The DOTD project team will notify homeowners/business owners of changes to landscaping/parking prior to final design. Landscaping will be selected to minimize maintenance requirements.

DOTD commits to educational outreach for roundabout use and safety. A roundabout brochure will be available at locations near the new roundabout, on the DOTD website, and the DOTD Facebook page before the roundabout is open to traffic. The roundabout will be striped and signed during all phases of construction. DOTD will also cooperate with the Capital Area Regional Safety Coalition and neighborhood associations for educational outreach.

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) stated that all precautions should be observed to control nonpoint source pollution from construction activities. LDEQ has stormwater general permits for construction areas equal to or greater than 1 acre.

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION CHECKLIST

STATE PROJECT NO.: H.011295
 NAME: LA 73 (GOVT ST) EAST BLVD – LOBDELL AVE
 ROUTE: LA 73
 PARISH: EAST BATON ROUGE

1. General Information

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conceptual Layout | <input type="checkbox"/> Line and Grade | <input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary Plans |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Plan-in-Hand | <input type="checkbox"/> Advance Check Prints |

2. Class of Action

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Impact Statement (E.I.S.) | <input type="checkbox"/> State Funded Only (EE/EF/ER) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Assessment (E.A.) | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Categorical Exclusion (CE) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Programmatic CE (as defined in FHWA letter of agreement dated 03/15/95) | |

3. Project Description

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) and the City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge Government (City/Parish) propose the Louisiana State Highway (LA) 73 (Government Street) project which consists of rehabilitating the existing pavement and implementing a “road diet” to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian friendly concepts. The road diet would reduce the number of travel lanes on Government Street in two sections (Eddie Robinson Sr. Drive to Moore Street [2.05 miles] and Esplanade to Lobdell Avenue [1.08 mile]) from four lanes (two lanes in each direction) to three lanes (one travel lane in each direction with a center two-way-left-turn-lane) (see Figure 2). An approximate 1.06 mile section between St. Tammany Street and Jefferson Highway will maintain four traffic lanes to support the existing turning movements at signalized intersections along this project section (see Figure 3). Approximately 4.2 miles of the Government Street corridor from East Boulevard (30.443714, -91.18071) in Downtown Baton Rouge continuing eastward to the Lobdell Avenue intersection (30.445397, -91.111033) near Independence Park is included in this project. A roundabout would replace the signalized intersection at Government Street, Lobdell Avenue, and Independence Park Boulevard. The turning geometry at the Government Street and Jefferson Highway intersection would also be improved.

4. Public Involvement

- Views were solicited. **December 18, 2014 (See Appendix A of CE)**
- Views were not solicited.
- Public Involvement events held. (List events and dates in Section 11.)
- A public hearing/opportunity for requesting a public hearing required. (List dates in Section 11.)
- A public hearing/opportunity for requesting a public hearing not required.

5. Real Estate

- | | NO | YES | N/A |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a. Will additional right-of-way be required? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ |
| Is right of way required from a burial/cemetery site? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Is right-of-way required from a Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) property? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Is required right-of-way prime farmland ? (Use form AD 1006, if needed) ... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Will any relocation of residences or businesses occur? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Are construction or drainage servitudes required? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6. Section 4(f) and Section 6(f)

	NO	YES	N/A
a. Will historic sites or publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife or waterfowl refuges (Section 4f) be affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Are properties acquired or improved with L&WC funds affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Cultural Section 106

	NO	YES	N/A
a. Are any known historic properties adjacent or impacted by the project? (If so, list below).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ²
b. Are any known archaeological sites adjacent or impacted by the project? (If so, list site # below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ²
c. Would the project affect property owned by or held in trust for a federally recognized tribal government ?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Natural & Physical Environment

	NO	YES	N/A
a. Are wetlands affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Are other waters of the U.S. affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Are Endangered/Threatened Species/Habitat affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Is project within 100-Year Floodplain ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ³
e. Is project in Coastal Zone Management Area?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Is project in a Coastal Barrier Resources area?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Is project on a Sole Source Aquifer ?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Is project impacting a navigable waterway ?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Are any State or Federal Scenic Rivers/Streams impacted?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Is a noise analysis warranted (Type I project)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Is an air quality study warranted?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Is project in a non-attainment area?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Is project in an approved Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. Are construction air, noise, & water impacts major?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. Will the project affect or be affected by a hazardous waste site , leaking underground storage tank, oil/gas well, or other potentially contaminated site?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Social Impacts

	NO	YES	N/A
a. Will project change land use in the area?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Are any churches and schools impacted by or adjacent to the project? (If so, list below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
c. Has Title VI been considered?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Will any specific groups be adversely affected? (i.e., <i>minorities, low-income, elderly, disabled, etc.</i>)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Are any hospitals, medical facilities, fire police facilities impacted by or adjacent to the project? (If so, list below).....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Will Transportation patterns change?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Is Community cohesion affected by the project?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Are short-term social/economic impacts due to construction considered major?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Do conditions warrant special construction times ? (i.e., <i>school in session, congestion, tourist season, harvest</i>)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Were Context Sensitive Solutions considered? (If so explain below).....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Were bike and pedestrian accommodations considered? (explain below).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

		NO	YES	N/A
I.	Will the roadway/bridge be closed? (If yes, answer questions below).....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Will a detour bridge be provided?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Will a detour road be provided?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Will a detour route be signed?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Permits (Check all permits that may be required)

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corps Nationwide | <input type="checkbox"/> CUP/Consistency Determination | <input type="checkbox"/> LA Scenic Stream |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corps Section 404/10 | <input type="checkbox"/> USCG Bridge | <input type="checkbox"/> DEQ WQC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Levee | <input type="checkbox"/> USCG Navigational Lights | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LPDES Stormwater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain below) | | |

11. Other (Use this space to explain or expand answers to questions above.)

Section 4 – One public meeting was held for this project. The meeting occurred on December 17, 2015. The official transcript for the meeting is included in Appendix B.

¹Section 5(a) – Refer to Right-of-Way Section (page 6) and Appendices A and C of CE.

²Section 7(a,b) – Refer to Cultural Resources Section (page 7) and Appendices A and C of CE.

³Section 8(d) – Refer to Floodplain Section (Page 8).

⁴Section 9(b) – There are numerous schools and churches located along the project corridor. Access to these facilities will be maintained throughout the construction phase of the project. No impacts to these facilities are expected. Refer to the Socioeconomic Section (page 10) of CE.

Preparer: Maria Bernard Reid
 Title: Environmental Impact Manager 1
 DOTD Environmental Section
 Date: August 1, 2016

Attachments

- S.O.V. and Responses (see Appendix A)
- Wetlands Finding
- Project Description Sheet
- Conceptual Stage Relocation Plan
- Noise Analysis
- Air Analysis
- Exhibits and/or Maps (see Appendix D)
- 4(f) Evaluation
- Form AD 1006 (Farmlands)
- 106 Documentation (see Appendix C)
- Other: Public Meeting Transcripts (see Appendix B)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge Government (City/Parish) propose improvements to Louisiana State Highway LA 73 (LA 73) known locally as Government Street (Figure 1). The project would consist of rehabilitating the existing pavement (patching the existing concrete, cold planing the existing asphaltic concrete, and overlaying the road surface with asphaltic concrete) and reducing the number of travel lanes on a large section of Government Street from four lanes (two lanes in each direction) to three lanes (one travel lane in each direction with a center two-way-left-turn-lane) and incorporating bicycle and pedestrian friendly concepts (Figure 2). The bicycle path would incorporate proposed and existing bicycle lanes and sharrows (road used by jointly by bicycle, motorized vehicles and other modes of transportation). A roundabout would replace the signalized intersection at Government Street, Lobdell Avenue, and Independence Park Boulevard. The turning geometry at the Government Street and Jefferson Highway intersection would also be improved. The existing sidewalk in several areas along Government Street is not handicapped accessible. The proposed project would improve the sidewalks to comply with the American Disabilities Act by adding handicapped ramps at intersections and driveway crossings and meeting width requirements.

The section of Government Street from East Boulevard to Jefferson Highway is a designated state highway (LA 73). The section of Government Street from Jefferson Highway to Lobdell Avenue is a City/Parish maintained roadway. Approximately 4.2 miles of the Government Street corridor from East Boulevard (30.443714, -91.18071) continuing eastward to the Lobdell Avenue intersection (30.445397, -91.111033) near Independence Park is included in this project (See Figure 1).

During construction, one lane in each direction would remain open at all times. Lane closures would only be allowed at night and/or on weekends. Upon completion of these improvements, the ownership of Government Street (LA 73) will be transferred to the City/Parish.

Government Street currently has four 11-foot travel lanes with curb and sidewalks outside of the pavement. The right-of-way (ROW) width varies within the project limits from 50 to 75 feet, but the ROW is typically 60 feet wide (leaving only 8 feet outside the road pavement on each side of the ROW). Sidewalk widths are substandard in many areas and numerous intersections do not have handicap-accessible crossings with ramps. There are a large number of residential and commercial driveways on Government Street.

The proposed project would provide a 3-lane roadway (two 11-foot wide travel lanes with a 12-foot wide center two-way left turn lane) with five foot wide bike lanes on each side through most of the project corridor. Median islands are proposed throughout the corridor to define or limit left turns or to offer pedestrian crossing refuge. Throughout the project area, the design goal has been to minimize parking or backing out into the ROW or directly onto Government Street.

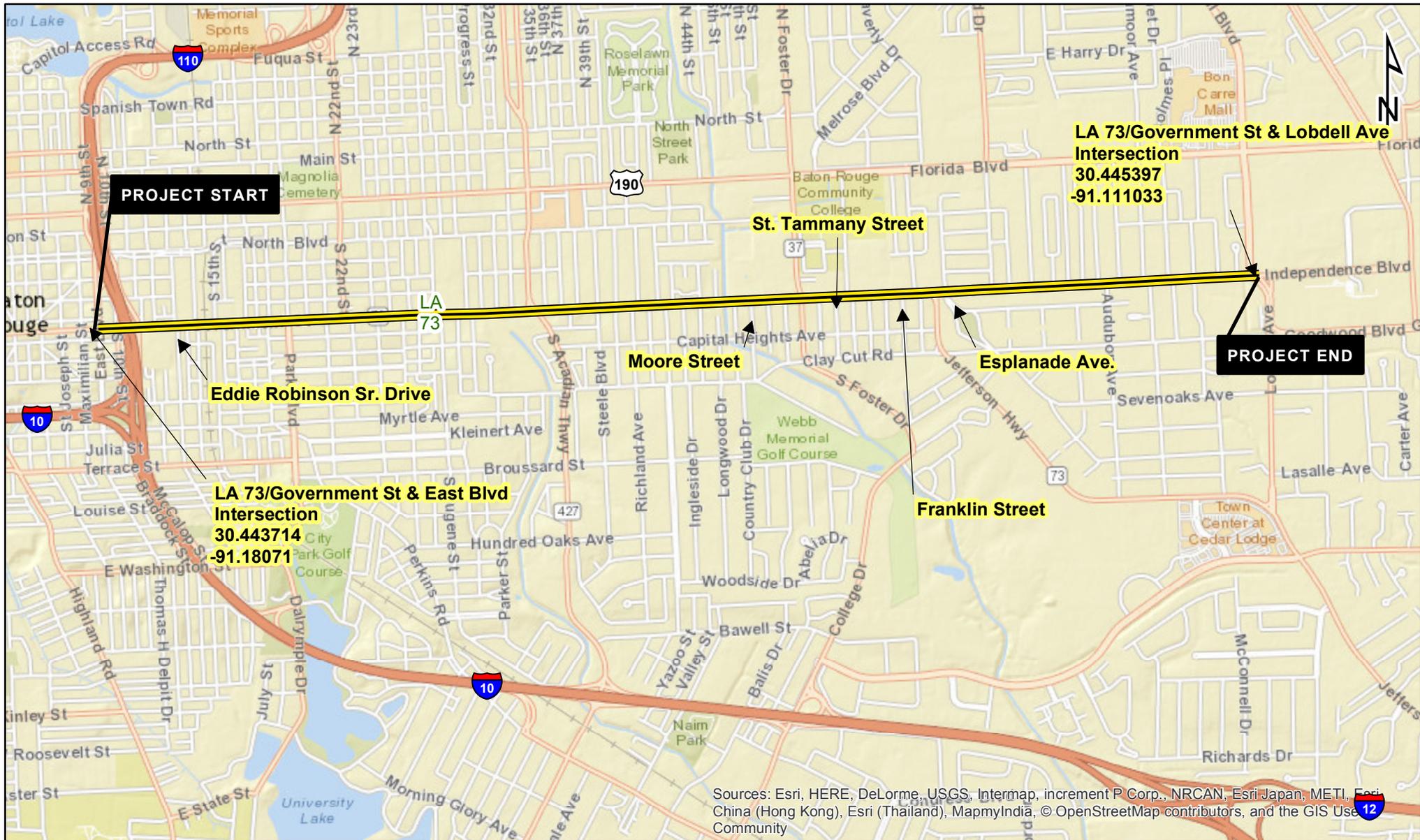
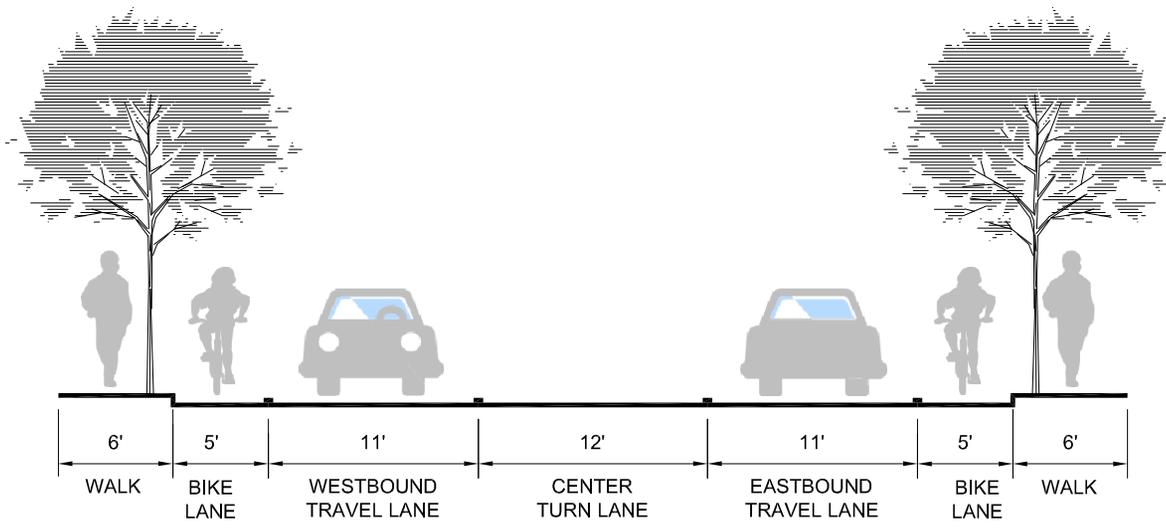


FIGURE 1. PROJECT LOCATION MAP

STATE PROJECT NO. H.011295
 F.A.P. NO. H011295
 LA 73 (GOVT ST): EAST BLVD - LOBDELL AVE
 EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH





PROPOSED 3-LANE WITH BIKE LANES
 LA 73 (GOVERNMENT STREET):
 EDDIE ROBINSON SR. DR. TO MOORE ST.
 AND ESPLANADE AVE. TO LOBDELL AVE.

<p>FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION</p> 	<p>LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT</p>  <p>LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & DEVELOPMENT</p>
<p>(LA 73) GOVERNMENT STREET PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION</p>	
<p>FIGURE 2</p>	

The reduction in the number of lanes will reduce the number of conflict points for vehicles, enhance safety for pedestrians (crossing a fewer number of lanes) and provide better access for the many side streets and driveways. Another benefit of the reduction to three lanes is there would be room to incorporate the Complete Streets policy which provides street space for multimodal improvements such as bike lanes.

The lane reduction would be conducted approximately from East Boulevard to Moore Street (See Figure 2). Traffic analysis has shown the highest traffic counts (approximately 25,000 vehicles per day) on the 11-block section of Government Street from Moore Street to Jefferson Highway. Traffic analyses has also shown that reducing the number of lanes would not provide a traffic benefit. However, a modified cross-section is proposed. Currently, the intersection of Foster Drive (southbound) has two left turn lanes which require two through lanes to accept vehicles turning eastbound onto Government Street (Figure 3). The two eastbound through lanes on Government Street must remain. At Jefferson Highway, the right eastbound lane on Government Street would become a dedicated right turn lane onto Jefferson Highway. Bike lanes would extend from East Boulevard eastward to Moore Street, south along a proposed sharrow to existing bicycle lanes along Capital Heights with an option to take the existing Rapides Street sharrow south to Claycut Road. From there cyclists have the choice to ride the existing sharrow of Claycut Road east across Jefferson Highway to the Goodwood Boulevard sharrow and travel further east to Lobdell Avenue. Or cyclists can take existing sharrows north along Winn Avenue and Esplanade Avenue, next to proposed sharrows north along the east side of Sevenoaks Park back to Government Street, then west to Lobdell Avenue. Riders heading westward may also take Sevenoaks Avenue on the west side of Seven Oaks Park, south to Goodwood, then take the reverse route toward East Boulevard. For the existing and proposed sharrows not located on Government Street, the proposed work would consist of signage and possibly pavement markings. A single lane roundabout is proposed for the intersection at Government Street, Lobdell Avenue and Independence Park Boulevard.

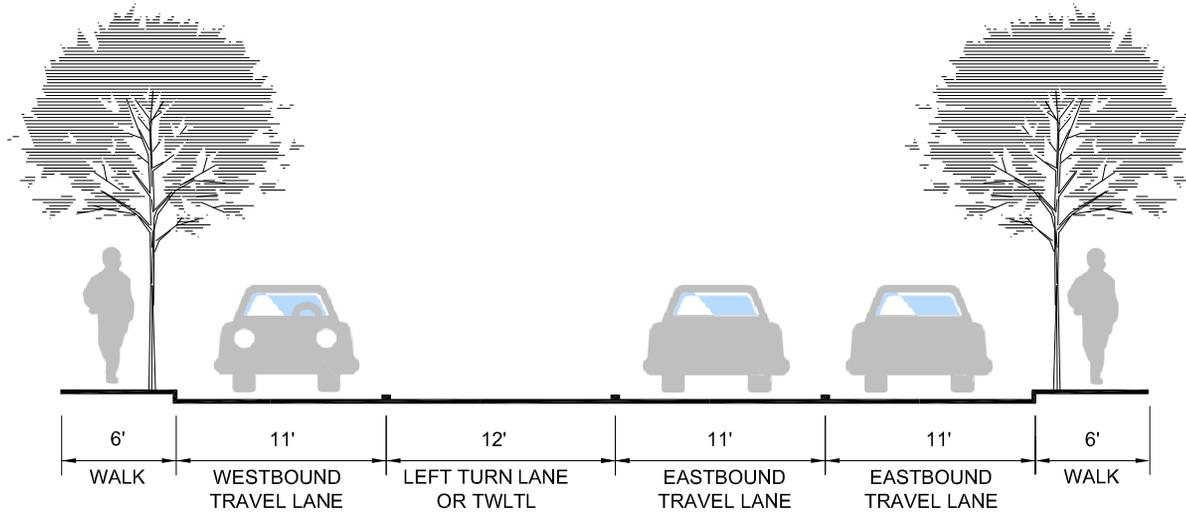
PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of and need for this project is to:

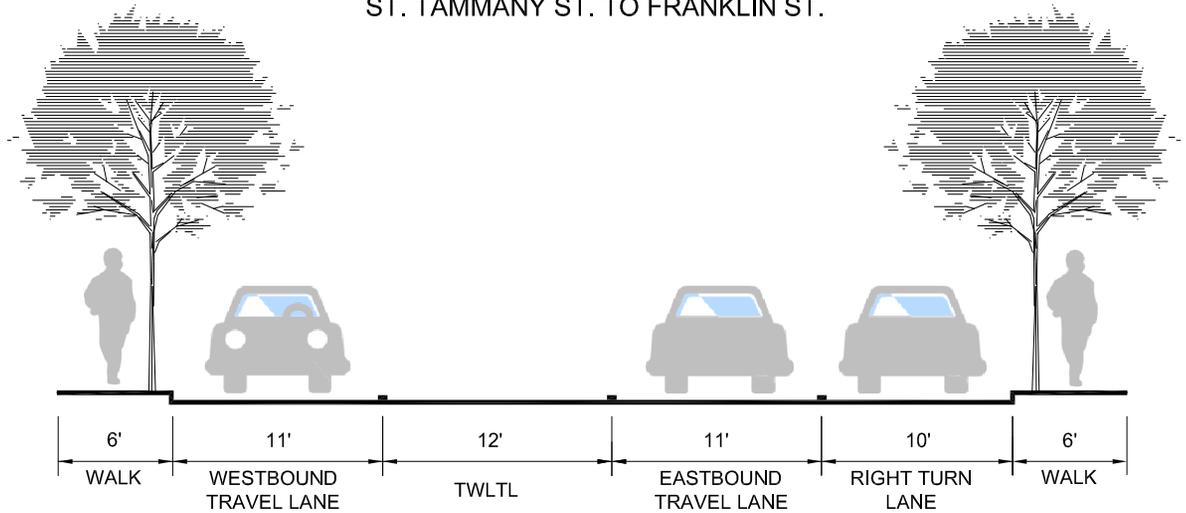
- improve the condition of the pavement on Government Street;
- provide safe and diverse multimodal transportation options; and
- contribute to the livability and the economic revitalization of the corridor.

ALTERNATIVES

There are two alternatives for this project—the proposed Build Alternative and the No-Build Alternative. The Build Alternative would rehabilitate the existing pavement, reduce the number of travel lanes on a large section of Government Street from four lanes (two lanes in each direction) to three lanes (one travel lane in each direction with a center two-way-left-turn-lane), incorporate bicycle and pedestrian friendly concepts, and construct a single lane roundabout at the intersection of Government Street and Lobdell Avenue. The section of Government Street between Franklin Street and Jefferson Highway would allow for two eastbound lanes, a two-way left turn lane, and one west bound lane. The No-Build Alternative would not change the existing layout of Government Street.



PROPOSED 3-LANE NEAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE DR. WITH LEFT TURN LANE
 LA 73 (GOVERNMENT STREET):
 ST. TAMMANY ST. TO FRANKLIN ST.



PROPOSED 3-LANE NEAR JEFFERSON HWY. RIGHT TURN LANE
 LA 73 (GOVERNMENT STREET):
 FRANKLIN ST. TO JEFFERSON HIGHWAY

 <p>FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION</p>	 <p>LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT</p>
<p>(LA 73) GOVERNMENT STREET PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION</p>	

FIGURE 3

ALTERNATIVES PROPOSED BUT ELIMINATED FROM CONSIDERATION

At the time of the solicitation of views in December 2014, there were alternative typical section treatments proposed for the project corridor. The project limits, right-of-way width, sidewalk improvements, pavement improvements, and road diet travel lane widths remain the same throughout all proposed alternatives. Alternative treatments within the curbs vary according to land use along the project corridor.

Alternatives for Government Street I-110 to Steele Boulevard:

This section of Government Street begins at East Boulevard just west of I-110 and continues east of S. Acadian Thruway to the intersection of Steele Boulevard. Existing land use in this section consists of small commercial developments and office space, some vacant lots and abandoned buildings, two schools, large shopping centers, and residences and/or side streets to residential subdivisions. Figure 4 shows the proposed use of typical section of the 3-lane road diet, off set to allow for an 8-foot wide on-street parking lane on one side of the roadway.

Alternatives for Government Street from Steele Boulevard to Moore Street

This section of Government Street begins just east of Acadian Thruway at Steele Boulevard and continues east to the intersection of Moore Street (located just west of S. Foster Drive). Existing land use consists primarily of commercial developments including retail, grocery stores, office buildings, a post office, and restaurants fronting Government Street. There are a few residences in this section and one apartment complex.

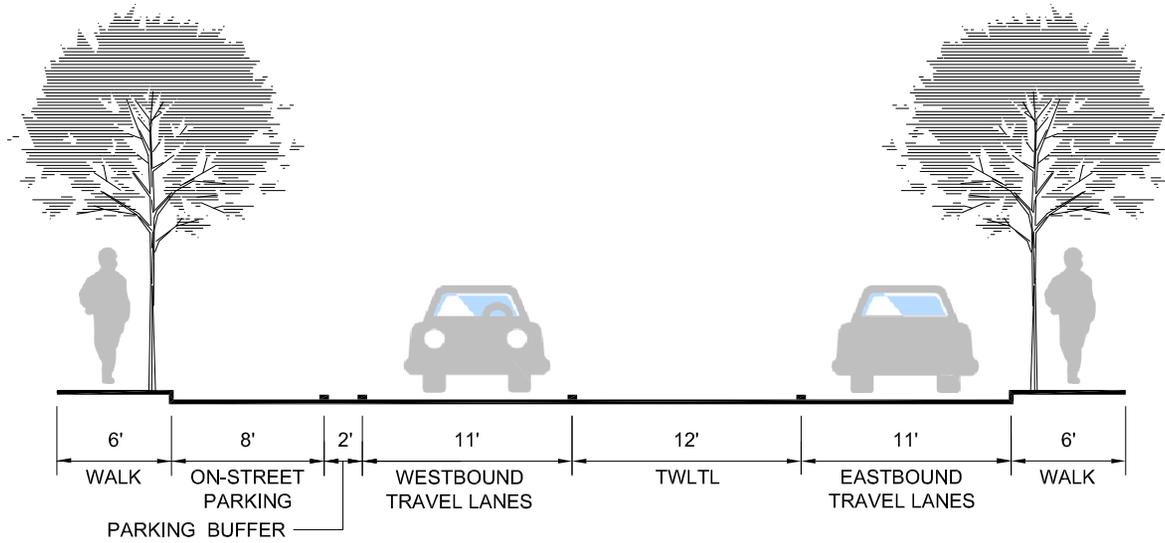
Option 1 would provide on-street parking on one side of Government Street (Figure 5). Alternative sections to Option 1 could provide bus turnouts at select locations along Government Street as shown on Figure 6. Option 1A uses the entire existing 44-foot roadway width to introduce 10-foot wide bus turnouts at select locations. Buses would pull out of the travel lane into a widened area for loading and unloading. Option 1A deletes the two-way left turn lane for the length of the bus turnout and lane transitions. Option 1B requires the roadway to be widened for the length of the bus turnout and lane transitions. An 8-foot wide raised median is introduced in Option 1B in the place of the two-way left turn lane. This section requires the two travel lane widths to be decreased to 10 feet and provides only the minimum 4-foot wide sidewalk at the bus turnouts. Beyond the limits of the bus turnouts, on-street parking or streetscape enhancements could be provided within the excess pavement produced by the road diet.

Reasons for Elimination of Alternatives

Before the Public Meeting held in December 2015, the alternatives that provided on-street parking and bus turnouts within the curbs of Government Street were eliminated from consideration due to the following reasons:

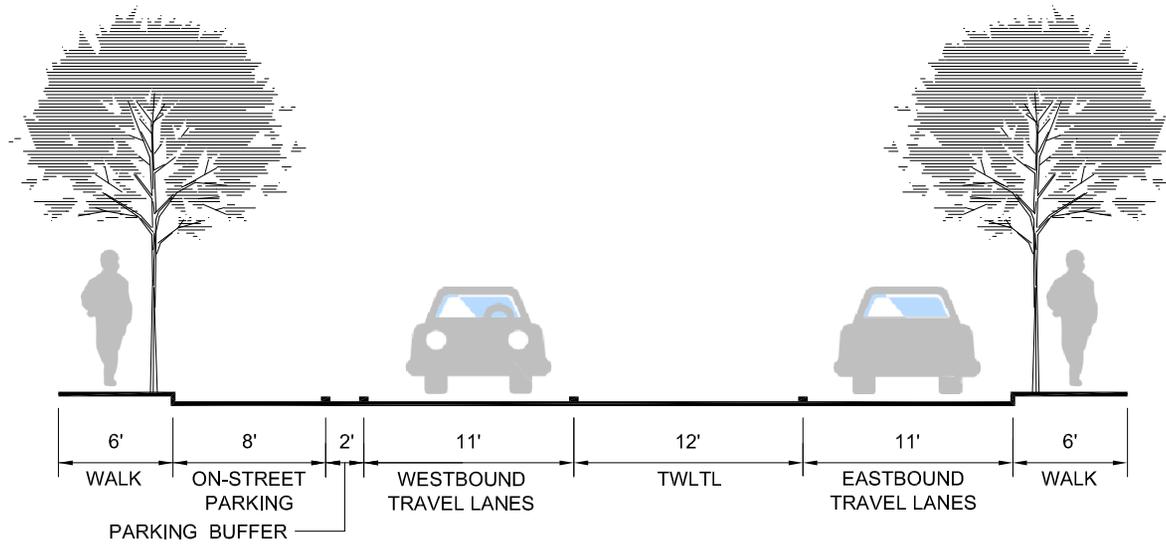
- Both on-street parking and bus turnouts require long areas of barrier curb with no driveways or side streets entering Government Street. Government Street has numerous minor side street intersections and very few blocks without several driveways entering the travel lanes. Only 3 locations along the project corridor were identified as potential bus turnouts. In order to find additional safe locations

- for bus turnouts within the existing right-of-way, driveway access to businesses would have to be removed.
- On-street parking and/or bus turnouts, the required 3 road diet travel lanes, and bicycle lanes would not fit within the width of the existing curbs of Government Street. The limited space available within the right-of-way forced the Project Team to choose between bicycle lanes, on-street parking, or bus turnouts. The Project Team identified that bicycle connectivity for the Government Street corridor was more compatible with the Complete Streets Policy and with the FutureBR plan.



ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED BUT ELEMENATED
PROPOSED 3-LANE WITH ON-STREET PARKING
 LA 73 (GOVERNMENT STREET)

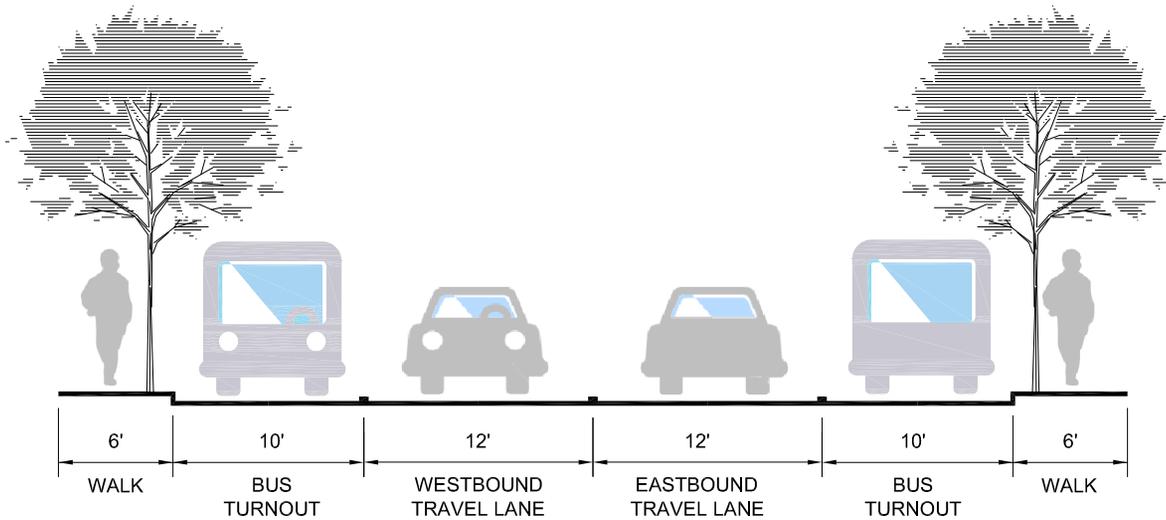
<p>FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION</p> 	<p>LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT</p>  <p>LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & DEVELOPMENT</p>
<p>(LA 73) GOVERNMENT STREET PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION ALTERNATIVES I-110 TO STEELE BLVD.</p>	
<p>FIGURE 4</p>	



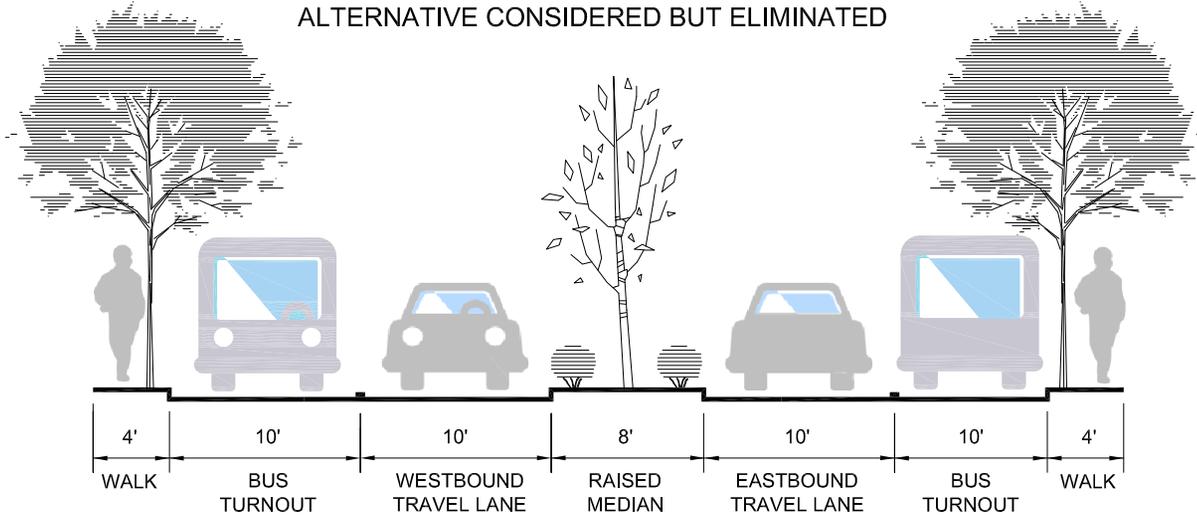
NOTE:
SEE FIGURE 6 FOR AN
ALTERNATIVE TO OPTION 1
TO PROVIDE BUS
TURNOUTS AT SELECT
LOCATIONS.

OPTION 1:
PROPOSED 3-LANE WITH ON-STREET PARKING
LA 73 (GOVERNMENT STREET)
ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED
BUT ELIMINATED

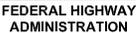
<p>FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION</p> 	<p>LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT</p>  <p>LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & DEVELOPMENT</p>
<p>(LA 73) GOVERNMENT STREET PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION ALTERNATIVES STEELE BLVD. TO MOORE ST.</p>	
<p>FIGURE 5</p>	



OPTION 1A:
PROPOSED 3-LANE WITH BUS TURNOUTS
 LA 73 (GOVERNMENT STREET)
 ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED



OPTION 1B:
PROPOSED 3-LANE WITH BUS TURNOUTS & MEDIAN
 LA 73 (GOVERNMENT STREET)
 ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED

 	  
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(LA 73) GOVERNMENT STREET
 PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTION ALTERNATIVES STEELE BLVD. TO MOORE ST.

FIGURE 6

IMPACTS

Right-of-Way

The project would be restricted to the current ROW and would not require any additional ROW with the exception of the northeast quadrant of the proposed roundabout at Government Street, Lobdell Avenue and Independence Drive; the required ROW in the northeast quadrant is currently owned by the City/Parish. It would require approximately 0.52 acre of additional ROW. Within the 0.52 acre of required ROW is an out of use fire/emergency medical service station, which would be demolished.

Wetland Reserve Program

This project is not located within a wetland reserve program area.

Prime Farmland

Abita silt loam soils are considered Prime Farmland soils. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), through its solicitation of views (SOV) response dated January 5, 2015, stated that the proposed construction area is within an urban area and therefore is exempt from the rules and regulations of the Farmland Protection Policy Act, Subtitle I of Title XV, Section 1539-1549.

Section 4(f)/Section 6(f) Properties

Section 4(f) Properties

DOTD must comply with the Department of Transportation Act (DOT Act) of 1966 (23 CFR 774), which includes a special provision Section 4(f). Section 4(f) stipulates that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other Department of Transportation agencies cannot approve the use of land from publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historical sites. There are no parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historical sites within or adjacent to the project area.

Section 6(f) Properties

Section 6(f) refers to parks that receive funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act ([LWCFA] 916 U.S.C. 4601-4 to 4601-11). Properties acquired or developed under this act cannot be converted to uses other than public outdoor recreation areas without the approval of the Secretary of the Interior. Two LWCFA-assisted properties (Goodwood Park and Independence Park) are adjacent to the project area; however, no Section 6(f) properties would be impacted by this project.

The Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism, Office of State Parks, Director of Outdoor Recreation (Mr. Cleve Hardman) through his SOV response dated January 5, 2015, stated that as a primary goal of this project is enhancement of access for alternative modes of transportation (to include dedicated bike lanes), there is no finding of conflict with this project in connection with the existing recreational inventory in proximity to the development. The project would enhance accessibility to existing LWCFA-assisted park facilities Goodwood Park and Independence Park.

Section 106 and Cultural Resources

Cultural Resources

DOTD staff consulted the GIS databases maintained by the Louisiana Divisions of Historic Preservation and Archaeology on February 3, 2016 to determine if any historic properties, including archaeological sites or standing structures eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) were located within or adjacent to the APEs. No previously recorded archaeological sites were located within the APE, one is directly adjacent; 16EBR208, Baton Rouge City Square 24, is adjacent to the north side of Government Street just west of Park Boulevard/19th Street. The site does not appear in the Louisiana Division of Archaeology Site NRHP Eligibility Database. While the site is directly adjacent to the APE, the project in this area will be restricted to the current ROW and will not affect the site. The APE lies within three National Register Historic Districts (NRHD): Beauregard Town, Roseland Terrace and Drehr Place.

Many of the commercial buildings abut the sidewalk along Government Street, while the residential structures are typically buffered by either a front or side yard. Changes to the side walk and roadway would not physically affect any of the buildings. As there is already a major roadway with sidewalks present, the proposed work would not significantly visually affect the adjacent buildings. Similarly, the proposed bicycle lanes and sharrows would not physically nor visually affect any historic properties.

At the east end of the APE, within the approximately 0.52 acre of required ROW for the proposed roundabout at Government Street, Lobdell Avenue and Independence Park Boulevard is the out of use Independence Park Fire Station and Drew McKinnis Memorial EMS building, owned by the City of Baton Rouge. The original fire station building was constructed sometime between 1952 and 1962. In the 1990s it was significantly enlarged to include the EMS component and remodeled so much so that there is no original exterior historic fabric apparent. The building is not eligible for the NRHP.

In addition to the desktop review, the APE and indirect APE were visually inspected to identify historic components within and adjacent to the APE, such as buildings, abandoned trolley rail lines or other historic street and traffic related components. No historic street features or trolley rail lines were apparent within the APE. No subsurface archaeological investigation was conducted.

The one area of approximately 0.52 acre of required ROW, at the location of the proposed roundabout on the eastern end of the APE at Government Street, Lobdell Avenue, and Independence Park Boulevard has been greatly altered by construction of the fire/EMS station, driveway and rear parking areas and underground utilities. It is highly unlikely that any subsurface archaeological remains are present.

DOTD, in conjunction with the FHWA, believe that no historic properties will be adversely affected by the proposed project.

On March 4, 2016, Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred that this project would not adversely affect historic properties (see Appendix C).

The Choctaw National of Oklahoma, through its SOV response dated January 23, 2015, requested the Cultural Resources Survey and all pertinent information for the project area. On May 2, 2016, the March 4, 2015 concurrence letter from Louisiana SHPO and DOTD's findings letter were sent to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

In the event of inadvertent discovery of cultural materials such as human remains, pottery, and/or other archaeological or culturally significant artifacts during construction, activity in proximity to the location must cease and appropriate authorities, including the Alabama Coushatta Tribe of Texas shall be notified immediately (per SOV response January 23, 2015).

Natural Environment

Wetlands and Other Waters of the U.S.

The Department of the Army, New Orleans District, Corps of Engineers, through its SOV response dated February 19, 2015, stated that there are no anticipated adverse impacts to any Corps of Engineers projects resultant of this project. The Corps reviewed the project area and determined that a Department of the Army permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act would not be required.

DOTD biologists determined that a field survey for wetlands was not necessary, because the project area is in an urban setting and completely drained through sub-surface drainage.

Threatened/Endangered Species

Upon completion of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Louisiana Ecological Services Office ESA Technical Assistance Form on May 2, 2016, USFWS provided the following statements regarding the project: the proposed project is not an activity that would affect a federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat. No further ESA coordination with the USFWS is necessary for the proposed action, unless there are changes in the scope or location of the proposed project or the project has not been initiated one year from the date of this letter.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), Habitat Section of the Coastal & Nongame Resources Division, through its SOV response dated January 23, 2015, stated that no impacts to rare, threatened, or endangered species or critical habitats are anticipated for the proposed project. No state or federal parks, wildlife refuges, scenic streams, or wildlife management areas are known at the project site.

Floodplain

A small portion of the proposed project is within a designated floodplain associated with Ward's Creek. DOTD does not believe that the activities proposed in the project would impact the potential for the floodplain to convey water. However, in order to assure compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program and to ensure that appropriate permits are obtained.

In addition, during the improvements and construction, there must be allowance for the adequate flow of water and assurance that there will be no back up of water. There must be no instance of the creation of flooding where there was no flooding prior to construction.

Coastal Zone Management Area

The project is not located within the Louisiana Coastal Zone Management Area.

Coastal Barrier Resources Area

The project is not located within a Coastal Barrier Resources Area.

Sole Source Aquifer

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, through its SOV response dated January 7, 2015, concluded that the project is located on the Southern Hills aquifer system which has been designated a sole source aquifer. Based on the project information provided in the SOV, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has determined that the project should not have an adverse effect on the quality of the ground water underlying the project site.

Navigability

The project is not located near a navigable waterway.

Scenic Streams

There are no scenic streams located within the proposed project area.

Physical Environment

Noise

The current Louisiana Highway Traffic Noise Policy requires a noise analysis be conducted for a Type I project that involves the addition of through-traffic lanes (additional capacity) or the physical alteration of an existing highway where there is a substantial horizontal or vertical alteration. A project that reduces the distance between the traffic noise source and the closest receptor by half (50 percent) when compared to the existing condition would be a substantial horizontal alteration. The proposed does not add capacity or alter the horizontal or vertical alignment of LA 73/Government Street. A noise analysis is not warranted.

Air

The proposed project is being processed as a Categorical Exclusion. Capacity will not be added to the current roadway within a non-urbanized area; therefore, an air analysis is not required.

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), through its SOV response dated January 20, 2015, stated that they have no objections based on the information provided. East Baton Rouge Parish is classified as in nonattainment with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The project is included in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). An Air Conformity Analysis was prepared to demonstrate that the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Area 2037 Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (2013-2017) conform to the State Implementation Plan (SIP). The Air Conformity Analysis was approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in July of 2013.

Oil, Gas, and Water Wells

The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR), Strategic Online Natural Resources Information System (SONRIS) was queried for oil, gas, and water wells within the project area. SONRIS indicates that no oil, gas or injection wells are located within 0.25 mile of the project area.

The Capital Area Ground Water Conservation District, through its SOV response dated January 5, 2015, identified that there are numerous shallow wells along the project ROW. LDNR SONRIS identified 81 domestic and commercial water wells within 0.25 mile of the project area. The proposed project would not impact the quality or quantity of groundwater available within the southeastern Louisiana aquifer.

Water

LDEQ, through its SOV response dated January 20, 2015, stated that all precautions should be observed to control nonpoint source pollution from construction activities. LDEQ has stormwater general permits for construction areas equal to or greater than 1 acre. The project area is larger than 1 acre; therefore, a stormwater permit will be required.

Phase I Environmental Site Assessment

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was not conducted for this project, due to the small size of required right-of-way parcel.

Construction Impacts

Short-term impacts, such as construction noise, possible traffic delays, and temporary increase in air pollution are expected. However, pursuant to Section 107.14 of the *Louisiana Standard Specifications for Roads and Bridges* entitled “Environmental Protection,” the contractor shall comply with federal, state, and local laws and regulations controlling pollution of the environment, including air, water, and noise.

Socio-Economic

Executive Order 12898 directs Federal agencies to take the appropriate and necessary steps to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse effects of Federal projects on the health or environment of minority and low-income populations to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law. The immediate area surrounding the project site is densely populated. The area is mostly residential with commercial properties, schools, and churches along Government Street.

U.S. Census data for East Baton Rouge Parish census tracts 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 53 estimate 38.4 percent of the population in 2015 identify as being of a minority race. The percent of the population living below the poverty level varies greatly over the corridor and by census tract from a low of 1.85 percent to a high of 58.7 percent. The range of incomes and diversity of races over project corridor reduces the probability that the proposed project would cause disproportionately adverse impacts on individuals on any one particular group. Generalized adverse or beneficial impacts would be shared among all area residents and users of Government Street. Therefore, no further environmental justice analysis is required.

There is no information to suggest that any person's civil rights will be violated, as set forth in the U.S. Department of Transportation regulations relating to Title V of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Access opportunities for handicapped or non-literate individuals are not expected to be adversely impacted due to the proposed project. For pedestrians and persons who do not drive in the area, the proposed project improves access opportunities throughout the corridor.

There are numerous schools and churches along Government Street and in adjacent neighborhoods: the Dufrocq School (Government and 19th Street), Baton Rouge Magnet High (Government and Eugene), Catholic High School (Claycut and Hearthstone, with parking along Government), Bernard Terrace Elementary (Edison and Hatcher), and Our Lady of Mercy Church and School (Government and Marquette). Carpool lines routinely block lanes of traffic and intersections. The road diet project on Government Street would provide only one lane for through traffic on Government Street. The City-Parish, the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board, and the private schools would need to re-route carpool lines for drop-off and pick-up in order to maintain safe driving conditions on Government Street.

COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

Early in the planning stage, SOV data were sent to all appropriate federal, state, and local agencies and officials on December 18, 2014 in order to identify possible adverse social, economic, or environmental effects of the proposed highway location and/or design. No adverse or negative comments were received. Copies of the SOV letter, project description, map, mailing list, and all responses are included in Appendix A. Other SOV responses received included the Capital Region Planning Commission voicing support of the project, as did the City/Parish Office of the Planning Commission writing that the project is consistent with the Goals, Objective, and Action Items of FutureBR that address connectivity and capacity.

Business owners along the corridor who may be impacted by access changes or potentially lose parking due to right-of-way enforcement were contacted and invited to an informational meeting on December 2, 2015. The DOTD project team presented the project concept, the changes included in the proposed action, and how the business owners could comment on the project. The business owners submitted seven comments. The comments are included in Appendix B.

An open house-style public meeting was held for this project on December 17, 2015. Project information including proposed layout, general information about road diets, anticipated right-of-way acquisition, and general information about roundabouts were provided to the public. Public meetings provide opportunities for the public to discuss the project in an open house format with members of the DOTD project planning team and to give feedback to DOTD through official comments submitted at the public meeting or by mail. Two hundred seven comments were received at the public meeting. Approximately 67 percent were favorable of the proposed road diet. However, many people were concerned about added traffic on adjacent streets, the lack of bus pullouts in the designs, and if the road diet would work for Government Street. The official transcript of the public meeting held for this project are included in Appendix B.

On June 9, 2016, after the end of the public comment period, the DOTD project team received letters from the Mid City Merchants and the Mid City Redevelopment Alliance proposing a pocket park at the intersection of Government Street and South Eugene Street. The pocket park is proposed as the “Mid City Plaza” and would be designed to replace the existing right-turn lane and expand the existing island at the intersection north of Government Street. The proposal correspondence is included in Appendix C. The DOTD project team requested comments from the City-Parish on the Mid City Plaza proposal. The City-Parish was not in favor of including the Mid City Plaza as part of this project for the following reasons: the park as proposed would not allow adequate room for a right turn lane at the intersection; for the previous signal upgrade project, the location of poles was difficult due to the tree and utility conflicts in the island; and additional studies would be required. For these reasons, DOTD determined that the Mid City Plaza as proposed would not be included in the proposed action of this project.

Appendix A

Solicitation of Views

Appendix B

Public Meeting Transcript

Appendix C

Additional Agency Coordination:

Cultural Resources

Mid City Plaza

Appendix D

Conceptual Design Drawings