



## **RECORD OF DECISION**

KANSAS LANE CONNECTOR  
MONROE, LOUISIANA  
FHWA-LA-EIS-03-01-F  
STATE PROJECT NO. 700-37-0110  
FEDERAL AID PROJECT NO.  
HP-T021(018)

APRIL 2005

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|            |   |           |
|------------|---|-----------|
| <b>1.0</b> | <b>Decision</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>2.0</b> | <b>Alternatives Considered</b>                                | <b>2</b>  |
| 2.1        | Alternatives History and Description                          | 2         |
| 2.2        | Build Alternative Analysis                                    | 3         |
| 2.3        | Selection of the Preferred Alternative for Construction       | 6         |
| 2.4        | Selection of a Build Alternative vs. the No-Build Alternative | 7         |
| <b>3.0</b> | <b>Measures to Minimize Harm</b>                              | <b>8</b>  |
| 3.1        | Relocations   | 8         |
| 3.2        | Community Cohesion  | 9         |
| 3.3        | Archaeological and Historic Resources                         | 9         |
| 3.4        | Waters of the U.S. and Wetlands                               | 10        |
| 3.5        | Utilities   | 10        |
| 3.6        | Hazardous Materials and Underground Storage Tanks             | 11        |
| 3.7        | Biotic Resources  | 12        |
| 3.8        | Visual Impacts  | 13        |
| 3.9        | Floodplains   | 13        |
| 3.10       | Construction Impacts  | 14        |
| 3.11       | Air Quality   | 14        |
| <b>4.0</b> | <b>Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Properties</b>               | <b>15</b> |
| <b>5.0</b> | <b>Monitoring or Enforcement Programs</b>                     | <b>15</b> |
| <b>6.0</b> | <b>Design Issues</b>  | <b>15</b> |
| 6.1        | Construction of Elevated Span over Wetland Area               | 15        |
| 6.2        | Construction of Rail Grade Separation                         | 17        |
| <b>7.0</b> | <b>Comments on Final Environmental Impact Statement</b>       | <b>17</b> |
| <b>8.0</b> | <b>Record of Decision Approval</b>                            | <b>17</b> |

### Attachment

A Comments on FEIS

**RECORD OF DECISION  
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION – LOUISIANA DIVISION  
KANSAS LANE CONNECTOR  
MONROE, LOUISIANA  
STATE PROJECT NUMBER 700-37-0110  
FEDERAL AID PROJECT NUMBER HP-T021(018)**

**1.0 Decision**

This Record of Decision (ROD) approves the Preferred Alternative for the Kansas Lane Connector located in the City of Monroe in Ouachita Parish in northeastern Louisiana. As described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), issued on February 8, 2005, the proposed project would be an approximately 2.6-mile long extension of Kansas Lane on new location, with partial control of access, between Desiard Street and U.S. 165.

The proposed Kansas Lane Connector is an essential element in a five-section project connecting the northern and eastern sides of Monroe with Interstate 20 (I-20). The other four sections of the five-section project have been constructed. The Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-first Century (TEA-21) provided \$4.5 million for the improvements in the Kansas Lane Corridor. The fiscal year (FY) 2001 Federal Transportation Appropriations Bill allocated another \$5.5 million for improvements within the corridor. In addition, the Louisiana legislature committed another \$2.5 million to the project in the FY 2001 Capital Outlay Bill.

This decision is based on the analyses presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) issued on August 5, 2003, the FEIS, as well as comments submitted by federal and state agencies, local officials, and the general public. Of the five Build Alternatives evaluated in the FEIS, the Preferred (Northern) Alternative was selected because it was the least damaging, most practicable alternative that minimized impacts to the social, economic, and natural environment.

At the request of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LDOTD), two additional meetings were held following the issuance of the *Preferred Alternative Report* to announce the Preferred Alternative recommendation to local officials. The first of these meetings was held at the Ouachita Council of Governments (OCOG) office. The meeting was attended by 20 people, 4 of whom were elected officials. The meeting presentation consisted of an overview of the EIS planning process, project milestones, schedule, the Preferred Alternative selection process, conceptual design, and budget issues. Following the August 24, 2004, meeting at OCOG, the OCOG Executive Director requested that the Preferred Alternative recommendation be presented at a special meeting of the OCOG Transportation Policy Committee. This meeting, which was open to the public, was held on September 9, 2004, at the Monroe City Hall. At this meeting, OCOG Transportation Committee members unanimously voted to support the Preferred Alternative recommendation.

## **2.0 Alternatives Considered**

### **2.1 Alternatives History and Description**

Originally, ten Preliminary Build Alternatives were developed within the study area. Based on input from the public and local, state, and federal agencies and officials, as well as an evaluation of potential environmental impacts, seven of the ten Preliminary Build Alternatives were eliminated from further study. Minor modifications were made to the remaining three Preliminary Alternatives which were studied in detail in the DEIS. The three alternatives studied in detail in the DEIS, approved on August 5, 2003, were labeled as the Northern Alternative, which followed the general path of Preliminary Alternative 2; the Central Alternative, which followed the general path of Preliminary Alternative 3; and the Southern Alternative, which followed the general path of Preliminary Alternative 7.

In addition to the Northern, Central, and Southern Alternatives described and evaluated in the DEIS, a combination of the Southern and Central Alternatives (Southern+Central Alternative), as suggested by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), was evaluated as was a combination of the Central and Northern Alternatives (Central+Northern Alternative), which was suggested by local officials. The two combination alternatives were suggested while the DEIS was being circulated. The Southern+Central Alternative was suggested by the agencies as an alternative that would minimize impacts to wetlands, and the Central+Northern alignment was suggested by local officials who believed that this alternative would have the least impact on the community. Impacts resulting from the two new alternatives were evaluated in the FEIS.

In addition to the three Build Alternatives, other alternatives included for evaluation in the DEIS included the No-Build Alternative, the Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative, and the Mass Transit Alternative. The No-Build Alternative is inconsistent with the transportation goals outlined in the Transportation Plan, which provides recommendations on meeting the area's long-range transportation needs based on projected future traffic conditions. Furthermore, the No Build Alternative would not alleviate the current or projected north-south transportation challenges faced within the study area. TSM strategies could be effective if incorporated with the Kansas Lane Connector and with land use policies that meet community goals, but TSM strategies alone would not solve the capacity problems existing along U.S. 165 and U.S. 80. The Mass Transit Alternative would not be independently sufficient to accommodate the existing or future transportation demand within the study area.

Detailed information on the project description, project purpose and need, alternatives, affected environment, environmental consequences, and comments and coordination were provided in the DEIS and FEIS. The FEIS contained both the original elements of the DEIS and relevant revisions due to the addition of the two new Build Alternatives, cooperating agency comments, more detailed roadway design efforts, more accurate cost estimates for construction and right-of-way acquisition, more detailed environmental analyses, and Preferred Alternative selection.

During the development of the DEIS and FEIS, coordination with local, state, and federal agencies occurred. Both documents were circulated for review and made available for review by

the public. Information provided in the DEIS was presented during the Public Hearing. Comments on the DEIS submitted by state and federal agencies, local officials, and the general public have been adequately addressed in the FEIS and are presented in this ROD.

## 2.2 Build Alternative Analysis

A comparative impact matrix was developed (presented in the FEIS Executive Summary) and the advantages and disadvantages of each Build Alternative were evaluated. After the Public Hearing, held on October 16, 2003, impacts to land use, prime farmland, socioeconomics, aesthetic and visual quality, physical resources, natural resources, cultural resources, hazardous materials, and utility crossings were given additional consideration. Both qualitative and quantitative criteria were evaluated for each of the five Build Alternatives. For the qualitative criteria, the categories were no impacts, minimal impacts, moderate impacts, and severe impacts. Quantitative criteria were a combination of measurements from aerial photography, mapped resources, and field data. The comparative impact matrix table and the advantages and disadvantages of each Build Alternative were evaluated. The advantages and disadvantages of each Build Alternative are presented below.

| Northern Alternative  |   |
|---|---|
| Advantages  | Disadvantages   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lowest right of way (ROW) acquisition cost (\$2,480,000)</li> <li>▪ Fewest single-family home relocations (8)</li> <li>▪ Fewest total residential relocations (32)</li> <li>▪ Fewest disruptions to existing utilities</li> <li>▪ No impacts to cemetery</li> <li>▪ No impact to archaeological sites</li> <li>▪ Minimal impacts to community cohesion</li> <li>▪ Smallest amount of developed land taken</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Requires greatest volume of fill (159,000 cubic yards)</li> <li>▪ Impacts most protected species potential habitat (32.4 acres)</li> <li>▪ Impacts the greatest acreage of undeveloped land (24.5 acres)</li> <li>▪ Impacts the most floodplain acreage (28.3 acres)</li> <li>▪ Moderate impacts to plant species, terrestrial wildlife, water quality, wetland vegetation, and hydrology</li> </ul> |

| <b>Central Alternative</b>  |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Advantages</b>   | <b>Disadvantages</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimal impacts to plant species, terrestrial wildlife, water quality, wetland vegetation, and hydrology</li> <li>▪ Utilizes the smallest amount of undeveloped land</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Greatest overall cost (\$18,380,000)</li> <li>▪ Along with Central+Northern Alternative, largest bridge expanse over Bayou Desiard (1,100 feet)</li> <li>▪ Indirect impacts to church</li> <li>▪ Impacts cemetery</li> <li>▪ Along with Southern+Central Alternative, may impact the most gas wells</li> <li>▪ Impacts NRHP-eligible archaeological site</li> <li>▪ Along with Southern+Central Alternative, may impact the most potential hazardous waste sites</li> <li>▪ Heaviest public opposition - nearly 200 individuals expressed opposition including St. Matthews Congregation</li> </ul> |
| <b>Southern Alternative</b>   |  |
| <b>Advantages</b>   | <b>Disadvantages</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lowest overall cost (\$16,028,000)</li> <li>▪ Along with Southern+Central Alternative, shortest elevated bridge expanse across Bayou Desiard</li> <li>▪ Along with Central+Northern Alternative, fewest gas mains crossed</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Severe impacts to community cohesion south of Bayou Desiard</li> <li>▪ Impacts most wetland acreage (16.4 acres)</li> <li>▪ Impacts cemetery</li> <li>▪ Impacts NRHP-eligible archaeological site</li> <li>▪ Moderate impacts to plant species, terrestrial wildlife, water quality, wetland vegetation, and hydrology</li> <li>▪ ULM opposes - could prohibit growth of campus</li> </ul>  |

| <b>Central+Northern Alternative</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Advantages</b>   | <b>Disadvantages</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Second fewest single-family homes impacted (13) and total residential relocations (43)</li> <li>▪ Supported by Representative Kay Kellogg-Katz, Monroe Chamber of Commerce, Ouachita Council of Governments, and Mayor Mayo.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Second largest total cost</li> <li>▪ Along with Central Alternative, largest bridge expanse across Bayou Desiard</li> <li>▪ Impacts cemetery</li> <li>▪ Impacts NRHP-eligible archaeological site</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Southern+Central Alternative</b>   |  |
| <b>Advantages</b>   | <b>Disadvantages</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Along with Southern Alternative, least elevated expanse over Bayou Desiard (500 feet)</li> <li>▪ Lowest volume of required fill (86,000 cubic yards)</li> <li>▪ Least impact to floodplain acreage (19.6 acres)</li> <li>▪ Fewest wetland acreage impacts (9.6 acres)</li> <li>▪ Along with Southern Alternative, least impact to Bayou Desiard</li> <li>▪ Minimal impacts to plant species, terrestrial wildlife, water quality, wetland vegetation, and hydrology</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Greatest ROW acquisition costs (\$4,474,000)</li> <li>▪ Severe community cohesion impacts</li> <li>▪ Most single-family residential relocations (18)</li> <li>▪ Most total residential relocations (58)</li> <li>▪ One church directly taken</li> <li>▪ Three fraternity houses taken</li> <li>▪ Impacts the greatest number of utilities including electrical, sewer, and water mains</li> <li>▪ Along with Central Alternative, impacts the greatest number of hazardous waste sites</li> <li>▪ Impacts the greatest number of noise receivers (22)</li> <li>▪ ULM opposes - could prohibit expansion of campus</li> <li>▪ Impacts cemetery</li> <li>▪ Impacts NRHP-eligible archaeological site</li> </ul> |

### 2.3 Selection of the Preferred Alternative for Construction

The Southern+Central Alternative was supported by the USACE and the USFWS; however, this alternative was not recommended for the following reasons:

- The University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM) does not support the alternative because it may prohibit expansion of the university
- Severe community cohesion impacts
- Most single-family residential relocations (18)
- Most total residential relocations (58)
- Impacts the greatest number of noise receivers (22)
- One church taken
- Impacts a cemetery
- Impacts a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-eligible archaeological site located at a cemetery south of Bayou Desiard
- Three fraternity houses taken
- Impacts the greatest number of utilities
- Impacts the greatest number of hazardous waste sites
- Highest ROW acquisition costs (\$4,474,000)

ULM submitted a written comment stating that the university will not support the Southern Alternative because it could possibly inhibit expansion of the university. Additionally, it was not expected that ULM would support the alternative recommended by the cooperating agencies (Southern+Central) because this alternative would likely result in more direct impacts to the university.

The Central+Northern Alternative was suggested by local officials; however, it was not recommended for the following reasons:

- Has 13 single-family residential relocations vs. 8 on the Northern Alternative
- Has 43 total residential relocations vs. 32 on the Northern Alternative
- Impacts a cemetery
- Impacts an NRHP-eligible archaeological site located at a cemetery south of Bayou Desiard



- Has the most impact on Bayou Desiard

Overall, the Northern Alternative is the least damaging alternative and was recommended as the Preferred Alternative. The Northern Alternative was recommended for the following reasons:

- Only alternative with minimal impacts to community cohesion (other alternatives had moderate to severe impacts on community cohesion)
- Fewest single-family home relocations (8)
- Fewest total residential relocations (32)
- Fewest disruptions to existing utilities
- Only alternative that will not impact a portion of an NRHP-eligible archaeological site located at a cemetery south of Bayou Desiard
- Lowest ROW acquisition cost (\$2,480,000)
- Second lowest total cost (\$16,349,000)
- Minor difference in wetland impacts (15.2 acres vs. 9.6 acres for the least impact, which is the Southern+Central Alternative)

#### **2.4 Selection of a Build Alternative vs. the No-Build Alternative**

The least environmentally damaging alternative with respect to the aquatic ecosystem, or the biological and physical environment, as defined in the USACE Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines for dredge and fill permits is the combination Southern+Central Alternative. This alternative was recommended by the USACE and the USFWS, cooperating agencies, as the alignment that would minimize impacts to wetlands, floodplains, plant species, terrestrial wildlife, water quality and hydrology. Additionally, along with the Southern Alternative, the Southern+Central Alternative would have the shortest elevated expanse over Bayou Desiard. However, for the reasons listed in Section 2.3, the Southern+Central Alternative was not selected as the Preferred Alternative. The Southern+Central Alternative had the greatest impacts on the human environment in that it involved more relocations than any of the other alternatives. Relocations included 58 residences, a church, and three fraternity houses resulting in the highest ROW acquisition costs (\$4,474,000). Additionally, the Southern+Central Alternative had severe community cohesion impacts on the residential area south of Bayou Desiard and it impacted the most noise receivers. The Southern+Central Alternative also impacted an archaeological site south of Bayou Desiard and was opposed by ULM because it would impede future expansion plans.

Impacts to both the human and natural environment were evaluated during the decision-making process. Comments and concerns from area citizens, local officials, and cooperating agencies were also considered. Overall, the Northern Alternative, which is the Preferred Alternative, has the fewest social, economic, and community impacts while providing a safe, efficient, and cost-effective option. These social and human considerations were significant factors in the decision-

making process and these factors outweighed the potential impacts to the biological and physical environment. Wetland impacts between the Preferred Alternative and the least environmentally damaging alternative, the Southern+Central Alternative, were relatively minor at a difference of 5.6 acres. Therefore, in considering the total environment, which includes social, economic, and environmental or ecological effects as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Northern Alternative was selected as the Preferred Alternative. Impacts to wetlands will be mitigated through on-site restoration and possibly off-site mitigation measures as determined by the USACE. Other impacts to biotic resources will be minimized or mitigated as specified in Section 3.0.

Although some unavoidable impacts will occur from the construction of the Preferred Alternative over the No Build Alternative, the Preferred Alternative is the least damaging alternative. The No Build Alternative was considered in the analysis because it provides a baseline condition for comparing the impacts of the study alternatives. Additionally, the No Build Alternative is the projected future condition that would exist if the proposed project were not constructed.

Under the No Build Alternative, the current congested conditions in the study area would increase and projected traffic volumes would result in a lower level of service in the future (FEIS Section 2.2). In addition to increased congestion along these routes, the No Build Alternative is inconsistent with the transportation goals outlined in the Transportation Plan, which provides recommendations on meeting the area's long-range transportation needs based on projected future traffic conditions. Although the No Build Alternative would avoid impacts associated with constructing a new roadway or improving an existing roadway, it would not address the current or projected north-south transportation challenges within the study area.

### **3.0 Measures to Minimize Harm**

Both human and natural environmental factors were considered during the alternatives development process. During the alternatives development process, efforts were made to avoid impacts to the human and natural environments. However, when impacts could not be avoided, efforts were made to minimize impacts. The following describe the key measures used to minimize harm to the human and natural environment. Additional environmental commitments in conjunction with the Kansas Lane Connector project are described in the Executive Summary and Chapter 4 of the FEIS.

#### **3.1 Relocations**

Based on the FEIS, there is no practicable alternative that would further minimize the number of residential relocations from those in the Preferred Alternative. Following the Public Hearing held on October 16, 2003, a field survey was conducted to better determine relocation impacts along the Build Alternative routes. Results of the field survey indicated that the Southern+Central Alternative (suggested by cooperating agencies) has considerably more relocation impacts than the other alternatives due to the design that would be required to connect the Southern Alternative to the Central Alternative. The Southern+Central Alternative would displace 55 residences, 3 ULM fraternity houses, and 1 church, God's House, which occupies the former location of the First Southern Methodist Church located at 3709 Bon Aire Drive on the north side of the ULM campus. The Central+Northern Alternative, recommended by local officials, resulted in a total of

43 residential relocations. The Southern, Central, and Central+Northern Alternatives will relocate 51, 44, and 43 residences, respectively. The Preferred Alternative will displace the fewest (32) residences. None of the alternatives are expected to impact any businesses or community facilities.

Commitments:

- Studies will be conducted to finalize ROW limits; and
- LDOTD will acquire right-of-way for the project in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended.

**3.2 Community Cohesion**

The Preferred Alternative will have minimal impacts to the existing neighborhoods because it only skirts the eastern edge of the Ingleside neighborhood and uses portions of Bon Aire Drive, an existing roadway, when it goes through the Cypress Point neighborhood. The Central, Southern, Central+Northern, and Southern+Central Alternatives would form a physical and psychological barrier within the Ingleside and Fennell Street neighborhoods that currently does not exist. With the exception of the Preferred Alternative, all of the other practicable alternatives had moderate to severe impacts on the neighborhoods located south of Bayou Desiard.

Commitments:

- During the final roadway design, LDOTD will work with existing neighborhoods in the vicinity of the Kansas Lane Connector to better integrate the design of the roadway with the surrounding neighborhoods; and
- During the final roadway design, LDOTD will make efforts to maintain access to individual properties.

**3.3 Archaeological and Historic Resources**

With the exception of the Preferred Alternative, all of the Build Alternatives may impact an archaeological cemetery, Site 16OU352, which is considered eligible for NRHP, pending further testing. The Southern and Southern+Central Alternatives would be seen from the *Ingleside Plantation House*, a property found to be eligible for NRHP. However, visual and vibration impacts on the *Ingleside Plantation House* resulting from the construction of these alternatives were evaluated and the impacts were found to have No Adverse Effect on the *Ingleside Plantation House*. The Preferred Alternative would also have no impact on the *Ingleside Plantation House*.

Commitment:

- Because the Northern Alternative was selected as the Preferred Alternative, the archaeological cemetery will not be impacted. Therefore, further testing is not necessary.

### **3.4 Waters of the U.S. and Wetlands**

Due to the spatial distribution patterns of the wetland communities, as well as a thorough consideration of other environmental concerns including topography, residential structures, and communities, a practicable alignment that avoids all wetlands is not possible within the Build Alternatives. However, throughout the development of all alignments, wetland impacts were minimized to the greatest extent possible. The amount of wetlands that would be impacted by the Build Alternatives ranges from 9.6 acres for the Southern+Central Alternative to 16.4 acres for the Southern Alternative. The Preferred Alternative would impact approximately 15.2 acres of wetlands. Although impacts to waters of the U.S. would be avoided and minimized through route location and construction practices, some impacts would be unavoidable. Thus, some form of mitigation will be required.

#### Minimization/Mitigation:

- LDOTD will design the project with partial control of access. Access will not be allowed through designated regulated wetlands;
- On occasion, on-site restoration of degraded wetland habitat or creation of manmade wetland habitat within the ROW may be appropriate. However, off-site mitigation measures may also be proposed. A final determination regarding compensatory mitigation requirements rests with the USACE. Forested and herbaceous wetland impacts would be replaced at a ratio of at least 1:1. Final mitigation ratios and requirements will be determined in conjunction with the Section 404 Permit process.

#### Commitments:

- Wetlands outside the construction limits will not be used for construction support activities (borrow sites, waste sites, storage, parking, access, etc.) unless the contractor obtains 404 permits from the USACE;
- Clearing of wetland vegetation will be limited to the minimum required for job completion; and
- LDOTD will conduct further discussions with the USACE prior to finalizing the limited access locations and avoidance issues upon the completion of final wetland delineation studies and issuance of an approved jurisdictional determination.

### **3.5 Utilities**

All of the Build Alternatives evaluated will impact electrical powerlines, natural gas service lines, potable water mains, and sewer lines. Of all of the Build Alternatives evaluated, the Preferred Alternative has the fewest disruptions to existing utilities.

#### Commitments:

- LDOTD will work with Entergy to coordinate the relocation of electrical transmission lines. LDOTD will conduct any necessary relocation of electrical transmission lines in a timely and orderly fashion, so that any disruptions in service are minimized and safety is not compromised;
- LDOTD will work with Atmos Energy Louisiana to coordinate the relocation of natural gas lines. LDOTD will conduct any necessary relocation of natural gas lines in a timely and orderly fashion, so that any disruptions in service are minimized and safety is not compromised; and
- LDOTD will coordinate the relocation of water and sewer lines with the City of Monroe Public Works Department or individual property owners as appropriate. LDOTD will make every effort to minimize the inconvenience caused by any unavoidable service interruptions.

### **3.6 Hazardous Materials and Underground Storage Tanks**

All of the Build Alternatives could be impacted near the northern terminus by undiscovered environmental impacts resulting from current and historical industrial activities. Numerous Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) and Historical Recognized Environmental Conditions (HRECs) were revealed during the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) conducted in the area near the northern terminus.

All of the Build Alternatives could potentially be impacted by a former gas station located on the northwestern corner of U.S. 80 and Kansas Lane. Additionally, one underground storage tank (UST), a Texaco Station (formerly known as Expressway #692), located at the intersection of Old Sterlington Road and Bon Aire Drive, could impact the Central and Southern+Central Alternatives. All of the Build Alternatives will be impacted by a small sewer treatment pond, reported to be operational, north of the building currently occupied by Premier Products.

#### Commitments:

- LDOTD will collect soil and groundwater samples at a minimum of five locations along the center of the Preferred Alternative between the intersection of the Forsythe Avenue Extension and U.S. 165 and the intersection of the Kansas Lane Connector and Old Sterlington Road.
- Efforts will be made during the final design phase of the Preferred Alternative to avoid impacts to areas undergoing excavation. In addition, caution will be taken when conducting construction and excavation activities in the wetland area and in areas north of Ouachita Fertilizer due to the potential presence of unmarked high- and low-pressure gas lines. LDOTD will require the contractor take precautions when conducting construction and excavation activities in the wetland area as well as the area north of Ouachita Fertilizer to avoid disturbing unmarked high- and low-pressure gas lines within the area;
- Several active and inactive gas wells and pits not identified or registered with the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) may also be located in this area. LDOTD will require a survey for wells within and adjacent to the proposed ROW prior to beginning construction;

- It is not anticipated that the former Creative Coatings site will impact the Preferred Alternative. However, LDOTD will conduct a Phase II investigation at the former Creative Coatings site if any oil or odors are observed during construction activities; and
- LDOTD will conduct asbestos and lead-based paint and piping surveys for any structures demolished in the Ingleside neighborhood, including the Mary Lea Apartments, prior to construction of the project. If the presence of asbestos-containing material and lead paint is determined, the materials will be properly classified and shipped to an appropriate waste disposal facility.

### **3.7 Biotic Resources**

The primary impact on the vegetation communities from the proposed project would be the direct loss of vegetation due to clearing within the proposed ROW. The Preferred Alternative will impact 32.4 acres of wooded areas and 6.2 acres of grassland. The Central Alternative will impact 15.9 acres of wooded areas and 9.7 acres of grassland. The Southern Alternative would impact 29.8 acres of wooded areas and 3 acres of grassland. The Central+Northern Alternative would impact 27.2 acres of wooded area and 6.5 acres of grassland. The Southern+Central Alternative would affect 15.1 acres of woodland and 6.5 acres of grassland.

All of the alternatives are expected to fragment and reduce wildlife habitat. Impacts to terrestrial wildlife from construction-related activities would be less for the Central and Southern+Central Alternatives than for the Preferred, Southern, and Central+Northern Alternatives. Mobile wildlife populations will experience permanent displacement, while slow-moving, burrowing, and subterranean species may experience some loss of life.

Potential impacts to aquatic ecosystems resulting from construction activities could result from physical habitat loss or modification; degrading of water quality; increased erosion, runoff, sedimentation, and turbidity; mechanical disruption of aquatic habitat; and spillage of petroleum and other chemical products. However, most impacts would be short term.

#### Commitments:

- Upon completion of construction of the project, LDOTD will require the contractor to stabilize exposed soils by revegetating such areas;
- LDOTD will implement measures to minimize impacts to migratory bird habitat to avoid any harm to migratory birds;
- LDOTD will conduct a follow-up consultation with the USFWS Louisiana Field Office prior to making any expenditures for construction to ensure that no federally listed threatened, endangered, or candidate species occur within the proposed highway corridor;
- During the final roadway design, LDOTD will make efforts to minimize impacts to fish and aquatic animal passages by spanning Bayou Desiard and using bottomless culverts where practical; and

- LDOTD will require the contractor to implement mitigation measures to prevent or minimize erosion and sedimentation.

### **3.8 Visual Impacts**

The area surrounding the five Build Alternatives consists mainly of residential areas, ULM, some commercial development, and wetlands. All five Build Alternatives would diminish the visual quality for residents living along Bayou Desiard. In addition, the Central, Central+Northern, Southern, and Southern+Central Alternatives would have visual impacts on the residents of the Ingleside and Fennell Street neighborhoods because these neighborhoods would be bisected. The visual and aesthetic quality for Ingleside and Fennell Street residents living adjacent to the roadway would be substantially degraded with the construction of these four Alternatives. The Preferred Alternative would have a minimal impact to residents located in the neighborhoods located south of Bayou Desiard. The construction of the other Build Alternatives would introduce a physical barrier that currently does not exist within these neighborhoods.

#### Commitments:

- Integrate landscaping into the project design to promote visual continuity of the roadway and to assist in blending it into the natural landscape as much as possible.
- Minimize the loss of vegetation, particularly during construction when equipment access, storage, and staging are required.
- Consider accommodating bicycles and pedestrians in the roadway design to minimize visual impacts, focus on the scenic quality of the area, and better integrate the roadway into the nearby neighborhoods.

### **3.9 Floodplains**

All of the Build Alternatives would cross 100-year floodplain areas. Figure 4-6 shows where each Build Alternative crosses the 100-year floodplain in the study area. Table 4-6 shows the amount of acreage that will be impacted by the Build Alternatives. The Southern+Central Alternative will have the least impact to floodplains, crossing approximately 19.6 acres. The Preferred Alternative will have the greatest impact to floodplains, crossing approximately 28.3 acres. The Southern Alternative would cross 27.5 acres. The Central+Northern Alternative would impact 27.6 acres of floodplain, while the Central Alternative would impact 21.7 acres of floodplain.

#### Commitment:

- LDOTD will develop hydraulic design practices for the construction of the project in accordance with current LDOTD and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) design policies and standards. LDOTD will design the project to ensure that encroachment on the floodplains would not increase the base-flood elevation to a level that would violate applicable flood regulations and that the project will permit conveyance of the 100-year flood of the roadway without causing significant damage to the roadway, stream, or other property.

### 3.10 Construction Impacts

The impacts for construction activities for each of the five Build Alternatives would be similar. Construction impacts typically include air quality impacts resulting from dust and emissions from heavy equipment, temporary increases in noise, and loss of vegetation resources due to clearing within the ROW. Impacts on traffic flow may also occur but are expected to be minimal given that portions of the project will be constructed on new location. Unavoidable impacts to traffic flow, however, can be expected during construction at intersection locations. Construction impacts would not occur under the No Build Alternative.

#### Commitments:

- LDOTD will require that all construction equipment comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations as they apply to the employees' safety and in accordance with LDOTD Standard Specifications. LDOTD will include provisions in the plans and specifications that would require the contractor to make every reasonable effort to minimize construction noise. LDOTD will require that construction equipment used during the construction phase be properly muffled and all motor panels be shut during operation. In order to minimize the potential for impacts of construction noise on the local residents, LDOTD will require the contractor operate, whenever possible, between the hours of 7 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- LDOTD will require that the contractor implement a traffic control plan to ensure uninterrupted traffic flow during construction.

### 3.11 Air Quality

National Ambient Air Quality Standards for the 1-hour and 8-hour carbon monoxide levels are not expected to be exceeded by the Kansas Lane Connector through the design year 2030. Short-term air quality impacts associated with construction of the proposed roadway may include pollutant emissions from construction equipment; dust resulting from clearing, demolition, excavation, and grading; and particulate matter emitted from off-site asphalt plants.

Temporary degradation of air quality in the immediate vicinity of construction activities will be primarily because of fugitive dust from earth-moving operations and emissions from heavy construction equipment. Air quality may also be affected by burning of cleared debris. Increased vehicular emissions, such as carbon monoxide, will be minimal. Diesel emissions from heavy equipment are expected to have an insignificant impact due to the low number of sources.

#### Commitment:

- LDOTD will require that the contractor comply with all relevant federal, state, and local laws and regulations in order to minimize potential air quality impacts, such as particulate matter. In addition, LDOTD will incorporate dust control measures into the final design and construction specifications. LDOTD will require that all construction equipment comply with OSHA regulations for employee safety and in accordance with LDOTD Standard Specifications.



#### **4.0 Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Properties**

The ULM ballfields are considered a potential Section 4(f) resource because the City of Monroe softball leagues utilize the fields for organized softball events. The ULM ballfields are also considered a potential Section 6(f) resource because a portion of the funding to construct the fields was provided by Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Act. None of the ULM ballfield property will be used by the project and no portion of the property funded by Section 6(f) is required for ROW for the Preferred Alternative; therefore, neither 4(f) nor 6(f) apply.

#### **5.0 Monitoring or Enforcement Programs**

LDOTD and FHWA will enforce all pertinent specifications and contract provisions in accordance with the intent of the FEIS and the welfare of the public.

#### **6.0 Design Issues**

The following unresolved issues will need to be considered in project design and prior to beginning construction on the project.

##### **6.1 Construction of Elevated Span over Wetland Area**

The Preferred Alternative recommendation is based on a conceptual design that would include control of access throughout the wetland areas. **Controlled access along the roadway would discourage secondary development in the higher quality wetland areas. A detailed conceptual design description and map showing the full and limited control of access locations are included in Chapter 2 of the FEIS. The Preferred Alternative recommendation is based on a conceptual design that would consist of a five-lane limited access roadway in developed areas near the northern and southern terminus. A four-lane full control of access roadway would be constructed throughout the wetland areas. Limited access on the four-lane segment would extend for an approximately 2,000-foot section on the south side of the road about 500 feet north of Bon Aire Drive (north of Bayou Desiard) to about 1,500 feet northeast of the ULM ballfield. This limited access location would allow access to residences in the area. Another limited access section is planned for an approximately 1,100-foot section on the west side of the roadway near ULM. This limited access location would allow access to the west side of the ULM campus.**

A site visit was conducted on August 18, 2004, with LDOTD, USFWS, USACE, and FHWA personnel in an effort to determine the quality of the forested areas and existing hydrology of the area near the Preferred Alternative. During the site visit, the FHWA, the USACE, and the consultant agreed that the area was not a high-quality wetland and that the hydrology could be maintained with the use of box culverts. Following the site visit, correspondence was received from the USACE dated September 7, 2004, giving concurrence to the Preferred Alternative with the understanding that further delineation studies would be conducted prior to finalizing the limited access locations and avoidance issues. Correspondence dated August 25, 2004, from the USFWS indicated that the USFWS would concur with the Preferred Alternative if the area over the wetlands was elevated in order to minimize impacts to area hydrology. The USFWS also requests that the access control described in the preceding paragraph be adopted as "an integral feature on the Preferred Alignment".

A construction cost comparison between an elevated structure and at-grade roadway was made for the approximately 2,000-foot section of the Preferred Alternative that crosses wetlands just north of the ULM ballfield. The following table shows a comparison between construction costs for an at-grade roadway versus an elevated structure for this roadway section in question.

**Cost Comparison Between Elevated Structure and At-Grade Roadway Across the Wetland Area North of the ULM Ballfield for the Preferred Alternative.**

| <b>Construction Method</b> | <b>Unit</b> | <b>Unit Price</b>     | <b>Length of Crossing</b> | <b>Total</b>  |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Elevated Structure         | Linear Foot | \$3,500               | 1,953                     | \$ 6,835,500  |
| At-Grade Roadway           | Linear Foot | \$1,140               | 1,953                     | \$ 2,226,420  |
|                            |             | Cost Differential     |                           | \$ 4,609,080  |
|                            |             | Budgeted Project Cost |                           | \$ 16,000,000 |
|                            |             | Budget Increase       |                           | 28.81%        |

Source: Denmon Engineering Company, Inc.

The comparison resulted in a substantial cost difference between constructing the span at grade versus elevated. Construction of the elevated span consisted of approximately 28 percent of the entire project cost and would exceed the current project budget.

Due to the high construction costs of an elevated roadway, construction of the Preferred Alternative through the wetland area north of the ULM ballfield will be on embankment unless further wetland delineation studies conducted during the permitting process reveal the presence of high-quality wetlands. Hydrology of the area can be maintained with the use of box culverts built into the embankment.

In correspondence dated August 25, 2004, the USFWS recommended a modification of the "Segment R" alignment as an alternative to the construction of an elevated span across the wetland area north of the ULM ballfield. This recommendation was evaluated; however, it was determined that this configuration would not meet the purpose and need of the project due to the fact that a minimum 45 mile per hour speed limit could not be achieved with the suggested design.

## 6.2 Construction of Rail Grade Separation

LDOTD will evaluate the construction of a rail grade separation at the Arkansas-Louisiana-Mississippi Railroad crossing and will consider purchasing the necessary ROW in advance should increased rail and automobile traffic warrant a grade separation in the future. The cost difference between building an at-grade crossing versus an elevated structure at this location represents a difference of approximately \$1.5 million. The difference between building the railroad overpass represents an increase in the overall project budget of approximately 10 percent. LDOTD is considering purchasing the necessary ROW in anticipation of construction of a rail grade separation in the future when increased rail and automobile traffic warrant a grade separation.

## 7.0 Comments on Final Environmental Impact Statement


One comment, dated March 31, 2005, was received from an agency following circulation of the FEIS. This comment was received from the USACE and is included as Attachment A. The USACE requested that further discussions on limited access and avoidance issues be conducted once the final delineation studies have been completed and an approved jurisdictional determination has been made. In the minimization/mitigation measures contained in Section 3.4 (Waters of the U.S. and Wetlands), it is stated that the project will be designed with partial control of access and that access will not be allowed through designated regulated wetlands. Additionally, one of the commitments stated in Section 3.4 is that LDOTD will conduct further discussions upon completion of final wetland delineation studies and issuance of an approved jurisdictional determination. All tasks and commitments listed in the FEIS and the ROD will be included in the City-Parish/State Agreement that will be implemented following the approval of this ROD.

No comments from the general public were received following the circulation of the FEIS.

## 8.0 Record of Decision Approval

Based on the analysis and evaluation contained in the proposed project's Final Environmental Impact Statement; after careful consideration of all the identified social, economic, and environmental factors and input received from other agencies, organizations, and the public; and the factors and project commitments and mitigation measures outlined above, it is the decision of the FHWA to approve the selection of the Northern Alternative as the Selected Alternative for the Kansas Lane Connector project.

5/9/05  
Date

  
William A. Sussmann  
Louisiana Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration

**ATTACHMENT A**

Comments on FEIS



## DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

VICKSBURG DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
4155 CLAY STREET  
VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI 39183-3435

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

March 31, 2005

Operations Division  
Regulatory

SUBJECT: Comments on the Final Environmental Impact Study,  
Kansas Lane Connector, Monroe, Louisiana, State Project No.  
700-37-0110, Federal Aid Project No. HP T021 (018)

Mr. Vincent G. Russo, Jr.  
Environmental Engineer Administrator  
Louisiana Department of Transportation  
and Development  
Post Office Box 94245  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9245

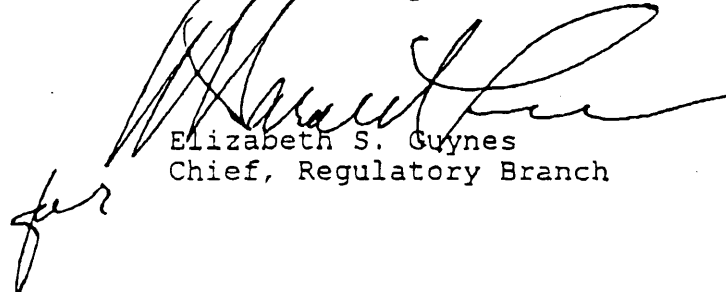
Dear Mr. Russo:

I am responding to your letter of February 14, 2005 concerning the subject project. You asked for comments concerning the Final Environmental Statement (FEIS). We offer the following comments.

Further discussions on limited access and avoidance issues for the Kansas Lane Connector remain once the final wetland delineation studies have been completed and an approved jurisdictional determination has been issued by this office.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. A. Susan Jarvis of this office, telephone (601) 631-5146, fax (601) 631-5459 or e-mail address: [regulatory@mvk02.usace.army.mil](mailto:regulatory@mvk02.usace.army.mil). In any future correspondence, please refer to the identification No. MVK-2000-1263.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth S. Guynes".

Elizabeth S. Guynes  
Chief, Regulatory Branch