

1.1 Summary of May 2005 DEIS Involvement

Introduction

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LaDOTD), the Arkansas Highway Transportation Department (AHTD) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are proposing to build a four-lane highway between Shreveport, Louisiana and El Dorado Arkansas. The project will be part of the National I-69 Corridor and is identified as Section of Independent Utility No. 14 (SIU No. 14).

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being prepared for this project. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was distributed for public and agency comment in March 2005. The DEIS was published in the Federal Register on April 8, 2005. The DEIS presented two alternatives with several options for construction and the no build alternative. The official comment period ended on May 30, 2005.

During the winter and spring of 2005, the project team worked to incorporate public and agency comments from the summer 2004 Alignment Study into refined alternatives for the DEIS. In refining these alternatives, federally required standards for interstate highway design were followed. Where possible, residential and commercial structures, oil and gas wells, and sensitive environmental areas were avoided.

The refined alternatives presented in the DEIS addressed three major concerns: the Scenic Stream crossing of Bayou Dorcheat in Louisiana; the crossing of Cornie Bayou in Arkansas; and residential impacts particularly in Louisiana. The resulting two Alternatives were identified as Alternative 4 and Alternative 5. Options to the Alternatives were identified as Options 1, 2, and 3. Alternative 4, located within original Corridor 2a utilized an existing pipeline and railroad crossing of Bayou Dorcheat. Alternative 5, located within Corridor 1d, utilized an existing pipeline crossing of Bayou Dorcheat. Option 1 provided for an alternate crossing of Bayou Dorcheat near LA 160, which was recommended by Louisiana Scenic Stream Coordinator. Option 2 provided for an alternate crossing of Cornie Bayou along an existing utility corridor, which was recommended by US Fish and Wildlife Agency. Option 3 provided for an alternate alignment that minimized the impact to existing residential and commercial development near LA 3008 and LA 2. Detailed views and evaluations of these two alternatives were presented in the DEIS and were presented to the public for comment at public hearings in May 2005.

Public hearings, elected official's meetings and an agency meeting were held in May 2005 to solicit input and comments on these alternatives. This memorandum summarizes the activities conducted and the information received throughout the comment period. Refer to the table of contents for locations of the materials contained in this *DEIS Presentation and Comment Summary*.

SECTION 1.1 Summary of May 2005 DEIS Involvement

The DEIS summarized potential environmental impacts of the project alternatives but did not offer a final decision or Preferred Alternative (PA) for I-69 SIU No. 14. The DEIS states that all alternatives, based on quantitative and qualitative evaluations summarized in the document, have relative benefits with comparable costs and meet the purpose and need for the project. The DEIS also states that resource agency preference and public comments that are related to effects (as opposed to preference only) will be important considerations in the determination of a Preferred Alternative (PA). Following review of comments, LaDOTD, AHTD, and FHWA will choose a PA and develop a Final EIS that will describe the required mitigation measures to be taken to offset adverse effects of the Preferred Alternative. Following a comment period, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be developed by the FHWA that explains which alternative is selected. This ROD will also contain responses to issues expressed in comments on the Final EIS.

Public Hearing Schedule

A series of Public Hearings were held by the LaDOTD, the AHTD, and the FHWA during the week of May 10, 2005. Public officials were provided the opportunity to attend a presentation in the afternoon prior to the public hearings which were held in the evenings. The elected officials' presentation and the public hearing schedule are identified in the table below.

Time, Date, and Audience	Location
Tuesday, May 10, 2005 2:00 - 4:00 PM Elected Officials 4:00 - 7:00 PM Public Hearing	Best Western King's Inn Hotel Conference Center 1920 Junction City Road El Dorado, Arkansas
Wednesday, May 11, 2005 2:00 - 4:00 PM Elected Officials 4:00 - 7:00 PM Public Hearing	Claiborne Parish Fair Barn 1563 Fairgrounds Drive Haynesville, Louisiana
Thursday, May 12, 2005 2:00 - 4:00 PM Elected Officials 4:00 - 7:00 PM Public Hearing	Minden Recreational Complex 1001 Recreational Drive Minden, Louisiana

Outreach and Notification

Several strategies were utilized to inform the public and elected officials of the May public hearings. Outreach efforts consisted of the following:

Newspaper Meeting Announcements: Arrangements were made to place the official public hearing notice in the official journals in Bossier, Claiborne, and Webster Parishes in Louisiana and Columbia and Union Counties in Arkansas as well as additional newspapers. Copies of the announcements and an ad schedule are in **Section 1.2**.

Project News Cards: Prior to the hearings approximately 3,500 news cards were distributed to property owners, individuals and organizations whose names are on the project mailing list.

SECTION 1.1 Summary of May 2005 DEIS Involvement

Flyers: Approximately 250 flyers were distributed to key locations and individuals prior to the hearings. These included: 1) Mayors offices; 2) Chambers of Commerce; 3) Police Juries; and 4) Designated Community Information Coordinators.

Press Release: LaDOTD provided a Press Release announcing the public hearings. This release was issued to all area newspapers listed in the ad schedule in **Section 1.2**.

Radio Announcements: Some study area radio stations provided public service announcements to their audience regarding the upcoming public hearings utilizing the information in the press release and announcements that were published in the newspapers.

Elected Officials Notification: Approximately 225 letters were issued to elected officials in the study area, including Senators and Representatives, to announce the public hearings and the designated time for their preview of information that was to be publicly presented.

Public Hearing Format

The hearings followed an open house format with information stations set up to allow the public to proceed at their own leisure.

These information stations included:

- an introductory video that explained the alternatives development process and introduced Alternatives 4 and 5 and their options;
- a large map display that illustrated these alternatives and options;
- several graphics that highlighted particular issues;
- charts that summarized of effects of the alternatives;
- property maps with complete listing of ownership information for the public to identify property in relation to the alternatives;
- a geographical information system station with graphical representation of various socio-economic and environmental layers such as property boundaries, structure locations, political boundaries, wetlands, etc.;
- a verbal and written comment station for the public to record their official comments; and
- a display of all reference materials to date for the project as well as all news articles related to the project.

Public Hearing Attendance

A total of 367 individuals signed-in as attendees for the hearings: however, it is estimated that as many as 400 individuals attended. Elected officials, project team members and the general public were included in this total.

SECTION 1.1 Summary of May 2005 DEIS Involvement

Attendance totals for the Hearings were as follows:

- El Dorado, AR Hearing - 78
- Haynesville, LA Hearing - 128
- Minden, LA - 161