FEDERAL HGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

FOR

STATE PROJECT NO. H.007970 FEDERAL AID PROJECT NO. H007970
CITY-PARISH PROJECT NO. 12-CS-HC-0043
LA 426 (OLD HAMMOND HIGHWAY)
BOULEVARD DePROVINCE TO
MILLERVILLE ROAD (PHASE 2)
EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH, LOUISIANA

The FHWA has determined that Alternative 3 will have no significant impact on the human environment. This FONSI is based on the Environmental Assessment (EA) which has been independently evaluated by the FHWA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the need, environmental issues, and impacts of the proposed project and appropriate mitigation measures. It provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an EIS is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the attached EA.

No substantive public/agency comments were received during the EA supplemental process. Minor changes were made to the typical section with a revised typical section consisting of four (4) 11-foot travel lanes with a 2-foot curb and gutter with a 6-foot furniture zone. A 10-foot pedestrian/bike path is directly adjacent to said section and slopes to the natural ground at a 4:1 slope. These changes are to the infrastructure and not to the overall footprint of the corridor and therefore no changes to the impacts. No other environmental commitments will be required due to these changes or other permits required other than as stated in the EA supplement. No Section 4(f) impacts will occur, and a Section 4(f) evaluation is not required.

Date:_____

LYNN M. HEISLER
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Project Delivery Team Leader Federal
Highway Administration Louisiana Division

Environmental Assessment Supplement

State Project No. H.007970
City-Parish Project No. 12-CS-HC-0043
Old Hammond Highway Segment 1
Route LA 426
Boulevard De Province to Millerville Road (Phase 2)
East Baton Rouge Parish

City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge
December 4, 2020

Executive Summary

This document summarizes the potential environmental impacts resulting from the proposed widening of Old Hammond Highway (LA 426) from an existing two-lane roadway to a four-lane divided curb and gutter roadway with a raised median, sidewalks, and subsurface drainage. This project is identified as State Project No. H.007970 (Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development) and City-Parish Project No. 12-CS-HC-0043 (Department of Public Works). Old Hammond Highway between Boulevard de Province and Millerville Road is a highly traveled corridor in a densely populated area of Baton Rouge.

In 1997 and 1998, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) performed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for Old Hammond Highway from Airline Highway to Millerville Road (S. P. No. 700-17-0110 & 817-09-0028). The 1998 EA divided the project into two phases. The first phase was Airline Highway to Boulevard De Province, and the second phase was Boulevard De Province to Millerville Road. In June 1998, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the entire corridor. DOTD constructed the first phase from Airline Highway to Boulevard De Province, but the second phase was not completed due to funding. The section of Old Hammond Highway is surrounded by recently improved roadways, with Old Hammond Highway from Airline Highway to Boulevard De Province on the west and the intersection at Millerville Road to the east. These improvements provided additional capacity. The City of Baton Rouge/East Baton Rouge Parish and DOTD have determined a need to increase capacity along LA 426 between Boulevard De Province and Millerville Road (Phase 2). On December 9, 2014 a meeting was held with DOTD, FHWA, Green Light Plan (GLP) program managers, and the consulting firms to discuss the relevance and validity of the 1998 EA. DOTD and FHWA determined that since revisions have been made to DOTD Engineering and Design Standards, a new document titled “EA Supplement” would be generated for the 1998 EA for the Old Hammond Highway Phase 2 project.

The logical termini are still defined from Airline Highway (N30°26'25", W91°05') to Millerville Road (N30°27'02", W91°01'36"). This proposed project calls for upgrading Old Hammond Highway between Boulevard De Province and Millerville Road in East Baton Rouge Parish, which is approximately 150 feet west of Boulevard De Province to 800 feet west of the intersection of Old Hammond Highway and Millerville Road. These termini are the beginning and ending points of the proposed construction and study area. This project includes studies of intersections along Old Hammond Highway, including the major intersection of Old Hammond Highway and South Flannery Road, and bridge improvements.

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide roadway continuity with two through lanes in each direction and to improve roadway safety and traffic operations. The need for the project is to address existing capacity deficiencies, to accommodate future traffic growth, and to address roadway and intersection improvements needed for operational safety.

Traffic operations were assessed using Level of Service analysis. Levels of Service (LOS) represents a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the traffic operation of a given intersection. Levels of Service range from LOS A, a condition of little or no delay, to LOS F, a condition of capacity breakdown represented by heavy delay and congestion. The capacity analysis indicated

that several intersection approaches currently operate with a LOS E or F in the AM or PM peak hours of travel. Traffic volumes on Old Hammond Highway are expected to increase approximately one percent (%) per year to the design year, representing an approximately 28 percent increase by 2040. In the design year 2040 "No-Build" conditions, i.e., if no improvements are implemented, traffic operations are expected to further deteriorate.

When the 1998 Environmental Assessment was completed, the preferred alternative was Alternative A, which was a five-lane section following the existing centerline of Old Hammond Highway. The five-lane roadway section consisted of four travel lanes and a single continuous turn lane. That alternative has been dropped from further consideration because DOTD's Engineering Directives and Standards Manual (EDSM) IV.2.1.4 now requires any multi-lane roadway to be constructed with a median, which excludes a continuous center turn lane. In addition, that alternative does not comply with DOTD's Access Management Policy and it does not comply with DOTD's Complete Streets Policy.

Alternatives considered include the following:

- No-Build alternative – A No-Build Alternative is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the purpose of comparison and consideration in cases where adverse impacts to the environment may outweigh the benefits of addressing the purpose and need. The effects of taking no action are compared with the effects of permitting the proposed action.

- Build Alternative 1 (Signalized Intersection) – Four-lane divided highway (12-foot inside lanes with 15-foot outside shared lanes) with raised 16-foot-wide medians and designated turn lanes. The alternative includes a signalized intersection at South Flannery Road with additional turn lanes. A seven-foot-wide sidewalk would be constructed along both sides of the roadway for pedestrians; curb and gutter drainage would be provided; and a 15-foot outside shared lane would accommodate cyclists.

  Alternative 1 has the lowest estimated property cost for right-of-way (ROW) expansion; no owner occupied residences will be displaced; commercial property is not impacted by this option; and the alternative does not interfere with local service station or local "staple" commercial property. However, Alternative 1 was the least desirable in the traffic study; it requires numerous bulb-outs to accommodate the Restricted Crossing U-turn (RCUT) intersection configuration needed to maintain the alternative and construction duration is expected to take the longest.

- Build Alternative 2 (Double Roundabouts) – Four-lane divided highway (12-foot inside lanes with 15-foot outside shared lanes) with raised 16-foot-wide medians and designated turn lanes. The alternative includes a roundabout at the South Flannery Road intersection and a roundabout at the Boulevard De Province intersection. A seven-foot-wide sidewalk would be constructed along both sides of the roadway for pedestrians; curb and gutter drainage would be provided; and a 15-foot outside shared lane would accommodate cyclists.

  Alternative 2 is the most effective alternative per traffic analysis; while it is impactful of commercial properties, the majority of the impact is parking spaces and the alternative does not interfere with local service station or local "staple" commercial property. However, Alternative 2 has the highest estimated property cost for ROW expansion; public meeting

comments expressed distaste in excessive roundabouts; and Alternative 2 has the largest negative impact on commercial properties in the area.

- Build Alternative 3 (Hybrid) – Four-lane divided highway (12-foot inside lanes with 15-foot outside shared lanes) with raised 16-foot-wide medians and designated turn lanes. The alternative includes a roundabout at the South Flannery Road intersection. A seven-foot-wide sidewalk would be constructed along both sides of the roadway for pedestrians; curb and gutter drainage would be provided; and a 15-foot outside shared lane would accommodate cyclists.

  Alternative 3 is only $20,000 greater than the lowest estimated property cost for ROW expansion; it does not interfere with local service station or local “staple” commercial property; and commercial property is not impacted by this option. However, with this alternative, the Boulevard de Province intersection will not operate at optimum capacity.

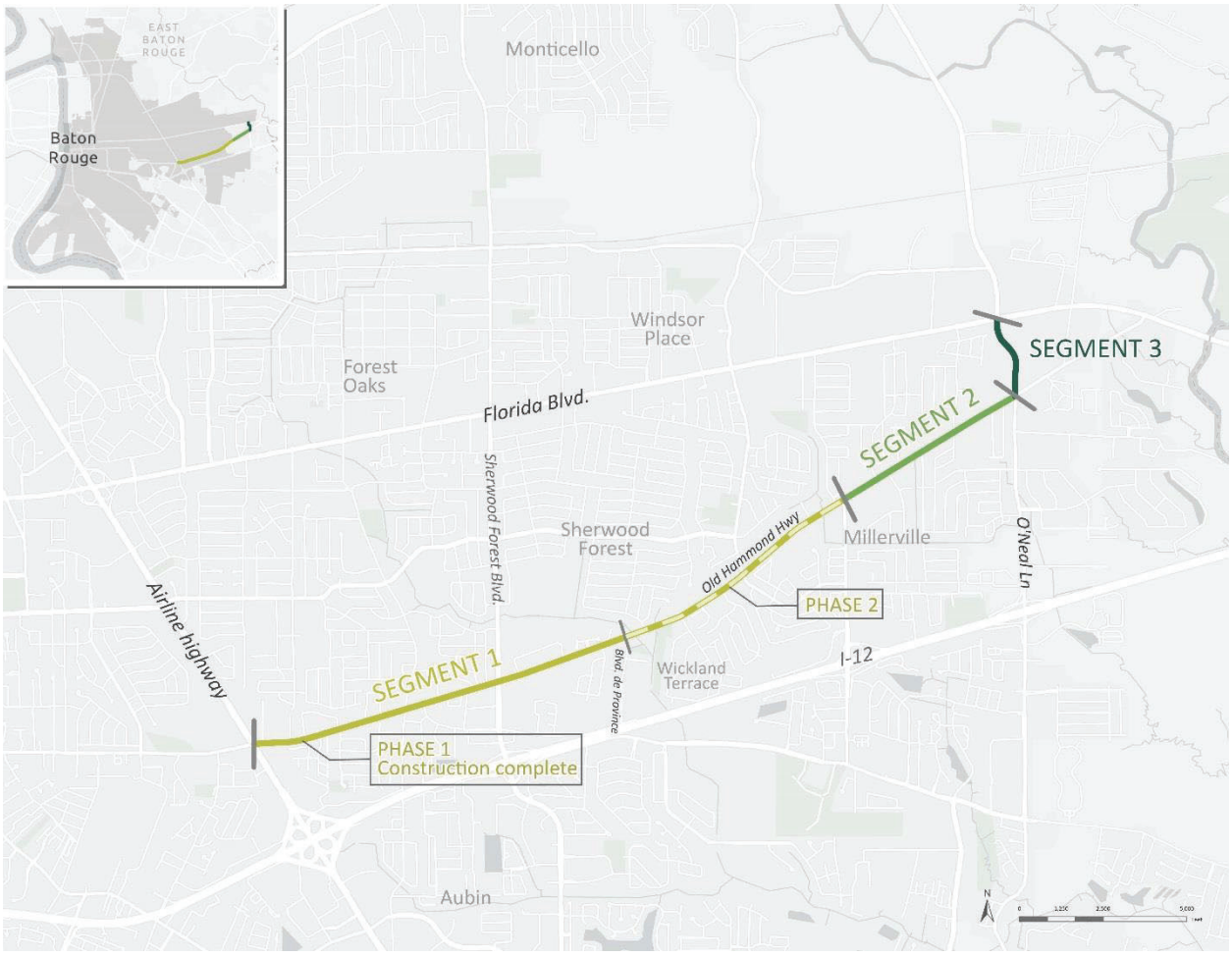
The No-Build alternative would not provide an acceptable Level of Service. All of the build alternatives are consistent with the project purpose and need and provide acceptable Level of Service. However, based on the findings of this EA and pertinent input from the public and Cooperating Agencies, **Alternative 3**, the Hybrid, has the least adverse impacts and thus was the selected and recommended alternative for this project.

Generally, the environmental evaluation factors show similar impacts among the three build alternatives. There should be minimal variability among the quantity of potential affected wetlands and other waters, air and noise impacts, and land use impacts. All of the build alternatives received a "low/medium" rating for potential contamination impact due to their close proximity to facilities with previous reported spills and/or clean-ups. All three Build alternatives require no further action at this time (NFA-ATT) with the stipulation that the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) be notified before any materials are removed from the site.

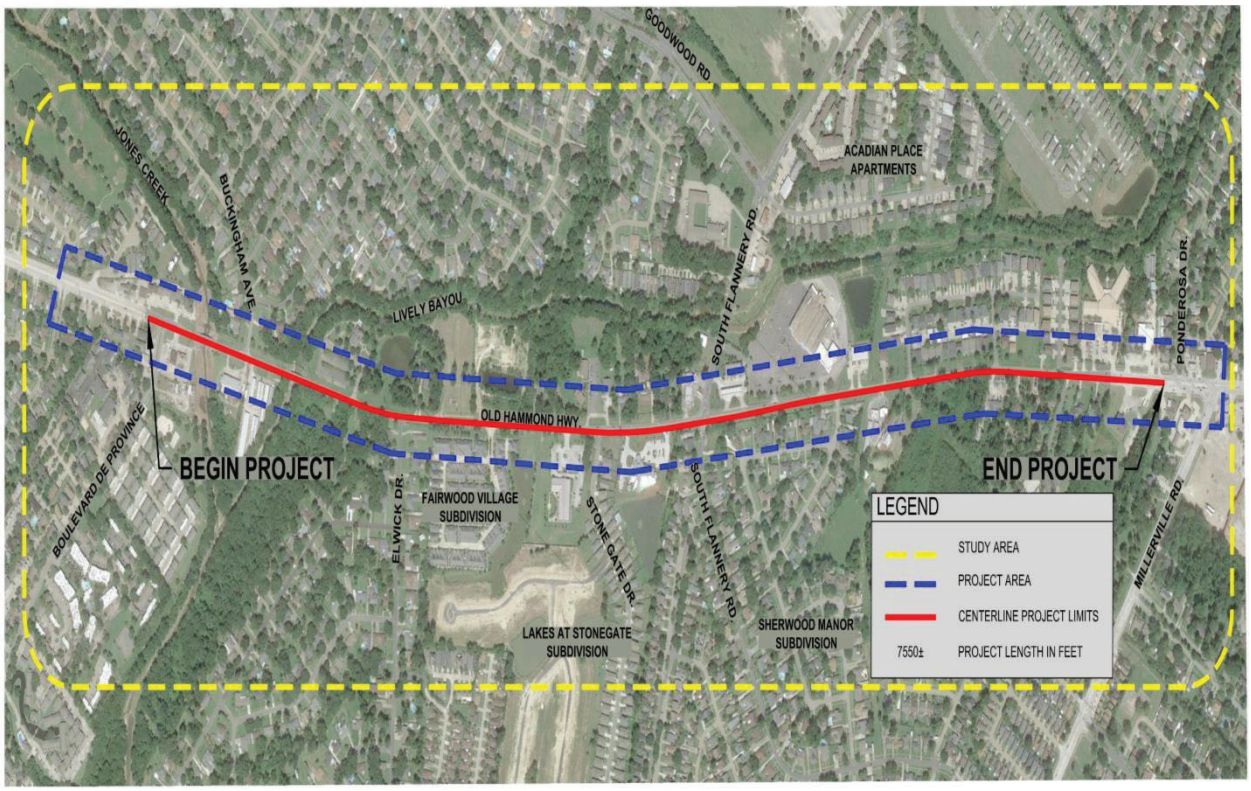
Funding for the construction of the Old Hammond Highway Segment 1, Route LA 426, Boulevard de Province to Millerville Road (Phase 2) improvements is not allocated at this time, and the letting date is to be determined. However, all ongoing studies are being prepared under the supervision of FHWA using NEPA guidelines which may allow for the use of federal funds should they become available.

A Notice of Availability and Opportunity for Public Hearing was advertised in the Baton Rouge Advocate on September 24, 2020 and October 2, 2020. It was posted on the MOVEBR website with a link to the posted Advocate notice, and announced on the local television stations. An informational letter about the project and public meeting was mailed to stakeholders and elected officials. There were no request nor comments that was received from the public. The following link was provided for the Louisiana DOTD website.

http://wwwsp.dotd.la.gov/Inside_LaDOTD/Divisions/Engineering/Environmental/Documents/H.007970%20Old%20Hammond%20Highway%20Blvd%20De%20Province%20to%20Millerville%20Rd/H007970%20Final%20Draft%20EA%20REV091520_Reduced%20Size.pdf



LA 426 IMPROVEMENTS: PROJECT LIMITS IN PHASES FOR ENTIRE CORRIDOR



LA 426: BOULEVARD DePROVINCE TO MILLERVILLE ROAD (PHASE 2) PROJECT LIMITS