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OUACHITA LOOP MAJOR INVESTMENT STUDY
CONCLUDING PUBLIC MEETING

Taken at the City of Monroe, City Hall, City Plaza,
Monroe, Louisiana beginning at 6:00 p.m. On the 5th day of
October, 1999, before Debbie Lowery, Registered Professional
Reporter and Certified Court Reporter, State of Louisiana

SPEAKERS:

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2 MR. BROUSSARD: I'd like to welcome you all here to this
3 final concluding public meeting for the Ouachita Loop
4 discussion, the MIS. This is not a public hearing. So it's
5 more informal. It's just a meeting. The purpose tonight is
6 to present the final report. The report is complete now.
7 And before we go any further, let me ask are there any
8 elected officials in the audience tonight? If so, please
9 rise and identify yourself. If not, we'll move on. To
10 present the document, the results of the study tonight is
11 Mr. Warren Myers with HNTB. The study was prepared by HNTB
12 Corporation with the help of Lazenby & Associates, Coastal
13 Environments, Incorporated and Leader, et al. So with that,
14 I'll turn it over to Mr. Myers.

15 MR. MYERS: Thank you. The first thing I might
16 point out is this study was sponsored by the Ouachita Council
17 of Government, Louisiana Department of Transportation and
18 Development and the Federal Highway Administration. They're
19 responsible for the study.

20 A major investment study is undertaken when a
21 metropolitan planning organization such as the Ouachita
22 Council of Government has a project they see that's above and
23 beyond their normal means of handling, as far as funding is
24 concerned. And they see it as a major investment in
25 transportation in the local area and they feel like they need

1 additional information and input to determine how they need
2 to proceed in the future in solving the transportation issues
3 within their area of concern. And that was how this study
4 got initiated. The Ouachita Council of Government determined
5 that they needed to take another look at the Ouachita Loop.

6 It was included in the long-range plan but it was
7 included as an unfunded need. So that's how we got started.
8 The initial thing that we did, and I think we did it at the
9 first public meeting that we had probably a year ago, I
10 guess-- if you're familiar with seeing this big orange band.
11 That was the limits of our original corridor. It's
12 essentially a mile-wide corridor that goes around the cities
13 of Monroe and West Monroe within Ouachita Parish.

14 Once we determined that that corridor was placed
15 properly, we then went about determining where within that
16 corridor we could draw lines or where a roadway would be
17 located. In doing that, we came up with two alternatives.
18 With the guidance of our steering committee and local
19 agencies, we determined that one of the alternatives should
20 follow to the maximum extent possible the existing roadways.
21 And the thought initially was that that would help reduce the
22 cost of the Loop if we could use existing highways. It would
23 help reduce the impacts because it was essentially sitting on
24 top of existing roadways.

25 To test that, we drew another alternative that

1 didn't take advantage of the existing highway. Although, on
2 the east and west end they match up because we were trying to
3 take advantage of the existing interchanges with I-20 at the
4 Millhaven/Chieniere Drew Road. So in some locations, they do
5 match up. But otherwise, they were drawn up to be
6 comparisons.

7 In going through and studying those two
8 alternatives, we did studies looking at the transportation,
9 the mobility issues involved with both of them. We looked at
10 economic issues. We looked at community issues. And we
11 looked at environmental issues. And working with three of
12 the major federal agencies; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
13 Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S.
14 Army Corps of Engineers, it was determined that alternative 1
15 should be the locally preferred alternative. And those three
16 key federal agencies gave their concurrence in that.

17 So what I'm going to present to you tonight is to
18 show you some of the things that we found out about what we
19 call alternative 1. I hope all of you signed in in the
20 back. There was a sign-in sheet. And there was an agenda
21 and a handout packet. In the handout packet, all of the
22 slides I show you are in there. So if you have trouble
23 seeing the slides, you can look in the packet and see it in
24 there.

25 This is a summary table that came out of a report

1 that shows you some of the features of alternative 1. You
2 can see that alternative 1 is essentially forty-eight miles
3 in length all the way around. And it has a cost of -- in the
4 range of \$243,000,000. There's a table in there that shows
5 you a breakdown of that two hundred forty-three million
6 (\$243,000,000). It's broken down into five segments, what
7 we've determined to be segments of independent utility. And
8 that one of the choices that the Ouachita Council of
9 Government will have is which of those segments they might
10 build first. They'll all go from major highways to major
11 highways so that they could be built in some type of sequence
12 and be usable pieces as they went through the process.

13 In looking at the cost, you'll see some pretty
14 substantial numbers. One is under the U.S. 165 North to
15 White's Ferry Road, which is that portion that crosses the
16 wetlands and Ouachita River on the north. And the reason
17 that number is so high is because the federal agencies told
18 us to go through those wetlands up there, that the highway in
19 that location would need to be elevated. So it's essentially
20 a bridge from 165 all the way to White's Ferry Road. And
21 that's why that cost for that northern piece over the
22 Ouachita was so high.

23 In comparison, you can look at the southern side of
24 the Ouachita that shows under that segment LA 34 to U.S. 165
25 South. And you can see it comes in at about twenty-two

1 million (\$22,000,000) for that southern crossing . And those
2 are some of the larger numbers in the cost.

3 The next thing that shows on there is traffic
4 service. And through the study, we did determine that
5 alternative 1 would reduce congestion within Monroe to West
6 Monroe and the parish. One of the things that we looked at
7 was the traffic. And we determined through using the model
8 that the Ouachita Council of Government has for the existing
9 transportation system we pushed that out to the year 2025.
10 And we determined that with the Loop in place, it would serve
11 to reduce congestion on all the major roads in the parish and
12 in both cities. The only place that it didn't reduce
13 congestion was on 165 from about Bayou DeSiard up to
14 Interstate 20, in that little-- that piece of 165 right there
15 was the only piece that the Loop would not help.

16 One of the other things that we looked at as shown
17 on that table it has to do with operating costs due to
18 congestion. And if you looked at that table, you can see
19 that we looked at two different scenarios that appeared in
20 the long-range transportation plan. One is what stages on
21 existing-- existing plus committed projects. Those are
22 essentially those projects that are in the plan through the
23 year 2000. And if you took the Loop and put it in place with
24 those projects, you can see that there would be a saving in
25 the range of \$35,000,000 in the year 2025. Just for that one

1 year alone there would be that type of savings.

2 If you look at Stage 3 projects which are in the
3 plan, which goes out to the year 2020 and added the Loop to
4 that, you can see that the costs -- there's still a
5 substantial saving somewhere in the range of \$14,000,000 in
6 that one year, in 2025.

7 One of the other factors that we looked at was
8 economic. We determined that the project would have a
9 positive benefit/cost ratio. Louisiana Department of
10 Transportation and Development has a model that they use to
11 determine the benefit/cost ratio of projects like this. It's
12 called the ramming model that they use. And we rammed this
13 project through the state's model. And it was determined
14 that over the life of the project, not just for the year
15 2025, but through the year 2025, that the total benefits that
16 would accrue due to this project would be in the range of
17 \$301,000,000. And if you divide that cost by the cost of the
18 project, that's how you get the benefit/cost ratio.

19 And you say, wait a minute, you're showing a cost
20 of a hundred thirty-five million (\$135,000,000) up there and
21 you just said the project cost two hundred forty-three
22 million (\$243,000,000). One of the quirks of the model that
23 the state uses is that the number that's used for the cost of
24 the project is -- if you took that lump sum amount of a
25 hundred thirty-five million (\$135,000,000) to date and put it

1 in the bank and drew seven percent interest, in the year
2 2025, you would have two hundred forty-three million
3 (\$243,000,000).

4 So they use-- in calculating the benefit/cost, they
5 use the cost of the project. They call it a discounted
6 cost. And it's discounted at the rate of seven percent a
7 year. Well, that-- I'm not trying to pull a hat trick on
8 you. That's just the way it's done. We looked at
9 relocations. With alternative 1, you could see that it was
10 shown that the project as we drew it would displace sixty
11 houses, fifty-eight mobile homes, two businesses and two
12 apartments.

13 One thing that came out-- we had a meeting in West
14 Monroe-- and the question came up people looking at the
15 maps. And there's one in here and there's one by the front
16 door that you can look at and see better. But one person was
17 very concerned that it looked like the line it was on was
18 going through his house. But you have to understand the
19 level of detail of this study is so early that if it looks
20 like the line is going through your house, chances are nine
21 out of ten that it won't. As a project of this type gets
22 further on in development and lines are moved to miss houses,
23 property owners that maybe now it shows it going right
24 through the middle of a piece of property that you own, lines
25 are usually adjusted to fall on the property line. So there

1 are a lot of things that can be and usually are done in later
2 stages of this project to help to minimize the impact.

3 The chart that's in there shows you where those
4 houses and mobile homes and businesses are located. The two
5 businesses that were shown are at the junction of Millhaven
6 and U.S. 80, is where those were. Some of the other factors
7 we looked at were wetlands. As I mentioned, that northern
8 crossing of the Ouachita in the area between U.S. 165 and
9 White's Ferry Road was the most extensive wetland area.
10 There's another area around the south end of Chieniere Brake
11 and, of course, the southern crossing of the river as well as
12 wetlands involved in that. All told, the wetland involvement
13 that we could see was in the range of eighty-four acres.

14 We looked at the endangered and threatened
15 species. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that
16 alternative 1, as we had, posed no jeopardy of threatening
17 endangered species. Up in the northeast part, there is a
18 colony of red cock-headed woodpeckers, but we're well away
19 from that colony. So it wouldn't be a problem. Four out of
20 six wetlands-- that's technical jargon for publicly owned
21 recreational areas, wildlife management areas, parks, those
22 types of publicly owned lands that are generally used for
23 some type of recreation. It was determined that we had no
24 involvement there. And that was no accident. We tried to
25 miss those.

1 Archeological and historical resources, it was
2 determined that it could be-- there was a potential
3 involvement with those resources but it was understood it
4 would be needed later on if the project is advanced to see if
5 any of those properties would be impacted. There were two
6 archeological sites, three historic structures and five
7 potential historic sites that may or may not be involved.

8 I mentioned earlier that alternative 1 was received
9 with the concurrence of the federal agencies as it related to
10 the impacts in this location. Early on in the study, we also
11 developed a purpose and need for the study. So it was kind
12 of like the guiding principals of why are we doing this and
13 why is it needed. And the agencies also concurred in the
14 purpose and need of the development for the study.

15 And if you look through that, you can see that one
16 of the factors in the purpose was to connect to I -20 on the
17 east and the west. It certainly would do that, reduce
18 congestion. We talked about that earlier. We did show that
19 alternative 1 would reduce congestion except for one small
20 segment of U.S. 165, provide for the strengthening of the
21 economy in the area.

22 There were several factors that went into that.
23 The benefit/cost ratio that I showed you is very positive.
24 Any time you get a project that has a benefit/cost ratio over
25 two, it's very good. And essentially that means for every

1 dollar that's spent, it generates \$2 in the local economy.
2 It enhances access to and around the core organized area. I
3 think that's pretty evident in that all the major streets and
4 highways and byways that go through that core area are
5 certainly touched by this project.

6 And the last one was to provide an opportunity,
7 perhaps, to have a project in place and location that may be
8 the last chance to build a loop around Monroe and West
9 Monroe. And the primary reason for that is these three large
10 natural wildlife management areas that sit right on the edge
11 of the project. That's like holy ground. You can't go
12 through that. So as the communities grow, the next time you
13 look at a loop, you're going to have to go out beyond those
14 wildlife management areas. And in most cases, it will put it
15 out of Ouachita Parish. So if you want one in place right
16 now that will service the area and be useful out through the
17 year 2025, this may be the last chance to do it.

18 Under "Need," there was some of the same factors,
19 transportation demand/capacity. The existing long-range
20 plans have shown that by the year 2020 there is going to be a
21 problem. Economic development was seen as a need. System
22 linkage, we talked about that again. This project is next to
23 all the major roadways that go through the parish. Inclusion
24 in the transportation plan, the project was included in the
25 existing long-range transportation but as an unfunded need.

1 And that goes back to the cost. Later on Mr. Don Tolar with
2 DOTD is going to talk to you about the amount of money that
3 is spent in the parish at this time.

4 And corridor preservation, we saw that there was a
5 need. We were talking about to somehow preserve the
6 right-of-way or the corridor of this project to go through so
7 that it can be built.

8 And now Mr. David Creed with -- oh, I'm sorry. I
9 didn't finish mine yet. One last thing that leads into David
10 and I kind of hit on it at the first. Major investment
11 studies are really a tool. This study didn't make the
12 decision whether the project advances or doesn't advance.
13 It's a tool that the Ouachita Council of Government would use
14 to decide how to proceed. And that's body is the local body
15 that has to make that decision. This decision is not made by
16 me or the Louisiana Department of Transportation and
17 Development or the federal highways. It's something that's
18 made at the local level by a representative from Monroe and
19 West Monroe and Ouachita Parish. And major investment
20 studies, as we've said, are designed to produce information
21 for making decisions. And that's my lead to David as to how
22 the Ouachita Council of Government produced this study.

23 MR. CREED: I could have done the last part. This
24 is the third time I've heard it in twenty-four hours. But
25 anyway, I'm David Creed. I've worked for North Delta

1 Planning and Development issues, Doug Mitchell and I and our
2 secretarial pool staff for OCOG, the Ouachita Council of
3 Government. OCOG is what they call an MPO, Metropolitan
4 Planning Organization. OCOG, or all the MPOs, are created--
5 in the State of Louisiana, they're created by state statute
6 which allows local governments to co-op, enter into
7 cooperative agreements for the public good. And the federal
8 law which provides transportation money which used to be it --
9 now it's called T-21-- requires or allows and actually
10 requires a planning process that those urbanized areas of
11 fifty thousand or greater, the local governments have to come
12 together and show that they have come together in their
13 planning process.

14 And so that's what happened with OCOG. There are
15 six local elected officials, the mayor of West Monroe and
16 Sonny Bennett who is a city councilman for the City of West
17 Monroe, the mayor of Monroe and Lyle Miller who is a
18 councilman and two police jurors, Tom Holtzclaw and King
19 Dawson. That's the six voting members or the six elected
20 officials who are on the Ouachita Council of Governments.
21 They voted to pursue this. It will next be up to them to
22 vote what direction to take. The next OCOG meeting will be
23 right here in this room at noon on-- every fourth Monday.
24 The next one will be Monday, October the 25th. And they're
25 going to meet. And I know that the paper said that I said

1 they were going to make a decision on this. And I didn't say
2 that.

3 They are going to meet. I can't promise you what
4 they will do, but it is logical that this needs to be
5 addressed relatively soon. Now, what those six people would
6 do, is up to them. They are the elected officials. And
7 they'll be making the decision. Now, what they will be
8 looking at, the options that they will be looking at will be
9 how do we pay for this. And they would be looking at federal
10 monies, state monies, local monies, tolls, private
11 concession. Those are the possibilities and combinations of
12 those are possibilities.

13 They will also be looking at whether to take it in
14 total or take it in segments. If they take it in total, of
15 course, the environmental would come first. And then more or
16 less this order, the right-of-way acquisition and then the
17 construction. And that would represent, of course, big
18 expenditures of money. Another way they can look at it is to
19 take it in segments and each segment deal with right-of-way
20 acquisition for that segment only and construction for that
21 segment only.

22 So those are just different options that -- frankly
23 these are kinds of options that I see that they're going to
24 be looking at. As of right now, the source, the funds, have
25 not been identified. And that's something that the local

1 elected officials and anyone else in the community who is
2 interested in pursuing this will have to work toward.

3 That's basically how we got where we are and my
4 idea as to where we go next. After Mr. Tolar's speech, I
5 think we'll all be available for questions. So Don, I
6 guess--

7 MR. MYERS: Okay. Mr. Don Tolar with the local
8 district engineer for the Louisiana Department of
9 Transportation is going to talk to you about the department's
10 present spending and how that compares to what we're looking
11 at for the loop.

12 MR. TOLAR: First, I'd like to note the various
13 state routes that are included as a preferred alternate of
14 the loop. LA 616 Arkansas Road, a segment of that highway is
15 in this loop. And LA 15, which is Chieniere -Drew Road is
16 also in it. And also LA 556 South of U.S. 80 and LA 594,
17 which is Millhaven Road. LA 616, Arkansas Road, that secti on
18 has been reconstructed recently. And LA 546 is in the
19 department's program for reconstruction.

20 The cost of this project is estimated at two
21 hundred forty million (\$240,000,000). To kind of get a
22 perspective on that, I'm just going to go on what the
23 department has scheduled for the maintenance of this year
24 which ends in June of 2000. This is for Ouachita Parish
25 only. We have three overlay projects for a total estimated

1 cost of three point nine million (\$3.9 million) and two
2 projects for a total cost of one point seven million (\$1.7
3 million). And the rehab of Interstate ramps at the
4 interchanges on I-20 for one million (\$1,000,000). This is a
5 total estimated cost of six point six million (\$6.6 million)
6 for this fiscal year.

7 MR. MYERS: Thank you, Don. At this point, we're
8 going to open it up for any questions that anybody would like
9 to ask. This is not a formal public hearing but we are
10 taking a transcript so we'll have a record of the report that
11 was presented and any questions. So if you have a question
12 and you don't mind, if you would give your name first so that
13 the reporter can get that.

14 Yes, sir.

15 MR. JONES: My name is Terry Jones. I guess my
16 question is the scope of this as far as my understanding is
17 this is a-- proposed to be a two-lane road?

18 MR. MYERS: Yes.

19 MR. JONES: One each way?

20 MR. MYERS: I should have hit on that issue also.
21 As part of our modeling that we did in the traffic use due to
22 the Ouachita Council of Government model for the parish, it
23 was determined that in the year 2025 that the traffic on the
24 Loop would only be enough volume to justify a two-lane road.
25 Some people, I think, envision that this was an

1 interstate-type loop, like Shreveport has and like Lake
2 Charles has. It's not that. It's going to be a two-lane
3 road. There won't be any control of access like you have on
4 the Interstate where you can only get on and off at certain
5 interchanges. And part of that-- the reasoning behind that
6 was because of the traffic volumes that were involved did not
7 justify a highway-- a four-lane highway or an interstate
8 highway.

9 MR. JONES: You know, the reason I'm asking that is
10 that, that just seems to me awfully shortsighted in that
11 you're at the mercy of the slowest car in your lane driving
12 along. And right now, that's one of the things that
13 strangles our traffic in the morning. And we've had some
14 great improvements like the Kansas Lane improvement right
15 now. Until what we're doing right now, everything funneled
16 into one lane each way. And it really strangled traffic
17 down. I just really wonder if one lane each way is going to
18 be enough. And I wonder if the study considered at least
19 making plans for expanding that corridor into two lanes each
20 way so we don't get hemmed in.

21 MR. MYERS: That's always a possibility, I guess.
22 You know, any of our roads, a number of them that we've seen
23 that have been in existence for a long time end up being four
24 lane. U.S. 165, you know, between here and Alexandria has
25 been two lanes for a long time. And it's just now being

1 expanded to a four lane. So, you know, that's always a
2 possibility.

3 But, again, based on, you know, looking at the year
4 2025, the traffic that would be, just did not justify doing
5 that that far in the future. Now, it may be by 2050 or
6 something. But beyond the range that we were looking, you
7 know, fifty years from now it may be that it needs to be four
8 lane. The other thing that comes into play here is to be
9 successful and get a project like this, you have to realize
10 that there's a lot of competition for the money. If you look
11 at statewide-- this statewide, there's a lot of competition
12 for the federal dollar.

13 So the more economical a project is and the more
14 benefit that it has, which this project has, the more
15 likelihood you are of securing that funding. If you looked
16 at or proposed to build a four-lane highway and it wouldn't
17 support the traffic that it showed, you would be
18 overbuilding, so to speak. And the cost would go up, you
19 know. And it's probably not just double. It would maybe
20 triple.

21 MR. JONES: Well, would it be feasible in this
22 study to have one lane each way but have zoning rules or
23 something so that people don't build houses and businesses
24 and hem it in so ten years after it's done we're landlocked
25 and we have to go somewhere else with this loop, we couldn't

1 later on obtain the right-of-way? You know, seems like every
2 city-- like Dallas is the loop city as far as I'm concerned.
3 And it's a great example of why we need this. You build it
4 and stuff comes around. And I just fear that we would be
5 hemmed in with one lane each way unless we have some
6 provision later on, just like what you're saying up front
7 expanding that out without tremendous cost of relocating a
8 great number of houses and business.

9 MR. MEYERS: Well, that's certainly a decision that
10 will fall back on OCOG. Like I said, this is a study that is
11 to be used as a tool by them. Your concern was also voiced
12 on the West Monroe side. That there was a little more
13 pointed. They just flat out didn't believe, you know, that
14 our traffic model projects were accurate given what they see
15 the level of development within the parish is. All I can
16 tell you is we use the most optimistic population and growth
17 factors that go into that model to get those numbers. And
18 they just didn't come out to justify it. But on the other
19 hand, you have to realize that it did show that the Loop,
20 even as a two-lane loop, did reduce congestion along those
21 restrictions. So even though it's two lane, there's a lot of
22 traffic that's going to be attracted to the loop.

23 Yes, sir.

24 MR. MCNEIL: Warren McNeil. From the -- obviously I
25 followed your point before about the limited cost and the

1 extreme high competition for those very limited dollars. It
2 would seem to make sense that the local governing entities
3 would have to at least initially select one or more segments
4 of independent utility. Has this looked -- have you looked at
5 or could you offer any recommendations to the local governing
6 bodies as to which of those segments independently would make
7 the most sense from your vantage point at this point?

8 MR. MEYERS: That information is in the materials.
9 It's not in the report. But it's in the materials that we'll
10 give to OCOG as part of the modeling effort that we did.
11 What we found out was that in the year 2025 that northern
12 crossing of the river from U.S. 165 to Millhaven had the most
13 traffic on it in the year 2025. The piece with the least
14 amount of traffic was down in the southeast corner of
15 Richwood. And the other three were pretty close to each
16 other.

17 So if you based it on where it showed the traffic
18 need was, it would be that northern piece. But like I
19 pointed out awhile ago, if you look at cost, that is also the
20 most expensive piece. So that's part of the dilemma at
21 OCOG. If they decide to build it in segments, which segment
22 do you build first? Do you build the cheapest one to get it
23 started in movement or do you build the one that provides the
24 most service? I'm not so sure that we didn't raise as many
25 question as we answered.

1 MR. CREED: Warren, I would like to say that I
2 agree with what Mr. Jones said in terms of protecting the
3 right-of-way, future need. To go one step beyond that, I
4 wish to goodness we could build bridges high enough in
5 anticipation of that. You know, once we've committed
6 two-lane bridges, well, I mean, to tell you, that's going to
7 be tough. But you've got to go by what the numbers are.

8 MR. MYERS: And the other side of that, you know,
9 two-lane roads and two-lane bridges carry a lot of traffic.
10 If you look, the crossings of the Mississippi River,
11 Vicksburg and Natchez, you know, I can remember when all we
12 had there at those major crossings at that river was two-lane
13 bridges. That has only been recently-- recent times that
14 we've had four-lane facilities for those crossings. So it's
15 a concern. And you see a lot of bridges and crossings of
16 major rivers being upgraded to four lanes.

17 At one time, I heard there was a philosophy within
18 the department that they wouldn't build anymore two-lane
19 bridges. But I'm not so sure that was anything more than
20 hearsay. A lot of it comes back to cost, how much does it
21 cost to put a facility in place that provides a good level of
22 service to the public. And that's the appropriate utility to
23 present, what the numbers show. If the money can be found
24 and if the local community wants to, certainly they can try
25 to move it forward as a four-lane facility or move it forward

1 with buying the right-of-way for a four-lane facility but
2 only building two lanes at the present time.

3 MR. MCNEIL: Do you have any idea, Warren, what
4 that extra right-of-way acquisition would be if you did
5 follow that premise?

6 MR. MYERS: We're looking at a hundred twenty feet
7 of right-of-way right now. At the other end, what, another
8 sixty feet, Paul, would probably push it out to a hundred
9 eighty or so, two hundred feet of right-of-way you would
10 need? But that wouldn't be an interstate-type facility.
11 That's a whole another ratchet up if you talk about a
12 interstate-type four-lane facility like Shreveport and Lake
13 Charles that some of those communities have. Those original
14 interstate-type loops were built as part of the original
15 interstate highway program. At the time that they came
16 through and they built I-10 and I-20, those cities were given
17 the option. If you raise your hand and say we want a loop as
18 part of that program, they built a loop and they had all that
19 money. But that money and that program is not available
20 anymore. And Monroe and West Monroe aren't the only cities
21 that don't have loops. Baton Rouge just went through a big
22 study looking at the feasibility of looking at a loop there.
23 I don't think they're going to get one.

24 MR. JONES: What was the price tag on that one?

25 MR. MYERS: The price tag on that was \$1,000,000.

1 That's what happens, though, if you don't get the facilities
2 in place early on.

3 Yes, sir.

4 MR. WILKES: I'm Charles Wilkes. A small town like
5 Natchez, Louisiana has a loop. It's not an interstate -type
6 loop but it is four lane. How do they fund -- they're a small
7 place, much smaller than we are -- how did something like that
8 get built? What's the funding on that?

9 MR. MYERS: You know I don't know how that was
10 done--

11 MR. CREED: It had to be state money.

12 MR. MYERS: It had to be state money. I don't
13 remember. It was done quite a while ago. I would manage the
14 cost of doing that at the time that they did it was pretty
15 cheap. One of the concerns -- alot of towns-- there has been
16 alot of study along U.S. 171 looking at bypassing Many and
17 Zwolle and all those towns on U.S. 171. And a lot of
18 concerns that come out in doing that is that small towns are
19 concerned that if you do something like that, that all the
20 businesses, the Burger Kings and the service stations and all
21 that are going to move out there and abandon downtown. And
22 there has been other towns like Lake Charles and Shreveport
23 that have looked to the future and said well, we think we can
24 keep the people down here where we need that type of
25 facility.

1 And there has been a lot of studies that have shown
2 just because you build something like that doesn't mean
3 people will move out there because they've got to have
4 electric and water and sewer and all those things. And if
5 you don't build all that out there, you know, they can't move
6 out there. So there's a lot of ways to control that type of
7 movement of growth.

8 Yes, sir.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The Neal and Schaefer study
10 completed, I think, in '97, they estimated that the
11 Louisville Bridge in 1997-- or actual count was twenty-seven
12 thousand nine hundred seventy cars cross it. By 2010, it
13 will be thirty thousand four hundred. Now, if you build
14 that, how much of a reduction are you going to cause on the
15 Louisville Bridge? You're saying you're going to reduce it.
16 What is it going to amount to?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Twenty-seven thousand
18 twenty-four.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Twenty-seven thousand
20 twenty-four?

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If you want to reduce it
22 from the year 2025, completing all the stages of the
23 long-range plan that he's referring to.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And how much did it reduce
25 it by?

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Three thousand.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Three thousand?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What about the Ouachita -- I
4 mean, I-20?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I-20, it's going to be
6 fifty-eight thousand five seventy-four.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Three thousand.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How many less?

9 MR. MYERS: You're talking about I-20? I-20 was
10 stage three with the loop reduced-- the loop reduced the
11 volume on I-20 by twelve thousand. Does that answer your--

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What would that figure be?
13 If you got it in front of you, what would it be 2010?

14 MR. MYERS: Oh, 2010?

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On I-20.

16 MR. MYERS: We didn't figure that or 2020. We went
17 out to 2025.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What did you figure?

19 MR. MYERS: It was twelve thousand reduction.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Reduction. You don't have a
21 figure of what it would be?

22 MR. MYERS: We showed --

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sixty what?

24 MR. MYERS: We showed stage three at I-20 was
25 seventy thousand. Stage three with the loop was fifty-eight

1 thousand.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I want to ask about
3 archeological spots that would be impacted. Would that be on
4 the western side of the river?

5 MR. MYERS: Oh, they were scattered. If you'll
6 look at the map, they're shown on there and you can find them
7 on there. They were scattered around. And like I said, the
8 extent of those sites and exactly where they are and how they
9 relate to this project, we tried to miss those if
10 impossible. And further studies would show exactly where
11 they were. And like I said, this line can be refined and
12 moved to miss those sites. And generally it is. Just like
13 if this project moves forward, you know, every attempt will
14 be made to miss houses and those other things also. So it
15 can be refined. This line is not set in stone where we've
16 shown it.

17 Yes, sir.

18 DR. OWENS: I'm Dr. Owens. I was at the meeting
19 last night also. And I don't think there's any question that
20 this is the direction this community ought to go. If we
21 don't do this now, we'll lose our golden opportunity and it
22 won't come again as you pointed out. My concern is; first,
23 those six men on that committee may not look at this the way
24 I think most of us here do. I know that there is some
25 negative reaction to this judging from what I read in the

1 newspaper. For example, Lyle Miller thinks the bridge ought
2 to be closer into town. They went through that for two years
3 and gave it up. The best location for the bridge is where
4 you have it. If you go through this fight again, we'll just
5 waste another two years.

6 Also, urban sprawl, there's concern that if you
7 build this loop, as you pointed out, businesses will move to
8 the periphery of the loop. And the inner city will suffer.
9 Monroe has grown about as much as it can. There's no
10 property here available to build houses on. You're going to
11 have to grow out. If you have don't grow out, you're going
12 to lose your population.

13 Right now traffic is so bad in Monroe that I think
14 we're losing good people who are leaving this community going
15 elsewhere who can because of the traffic problem. A report I
16 read from Northeast, we're losing people. The population of
17 Monroe is going down. I understand we're going to lose one
18 state representative. We don't need to do that. We need to
19 protect the community and we have to see it grow.

20 Also, I'm not sure that Mayor Norris wants a
21 bridge. Someone quoted to me a comment of his that he said
22 that he just as soon have no bridge and have all the people
23 stay in West Monroe. "Let them buy what they want in West
24 Monroe. They don't have to cross that bridge."

25 We have a lobbyist of the city here tonight. And

1 he's lobbying for an extension to Kansas Lane. Now, that is
2 a project that was brought up twice in the years I've lived
3 in that area. And it was abandoned twice. Now it's being
4 rejuvenated and called an intercity expressway or intercity
5 loop. If we have that intercity loop, we'll be carrying
6 traffic from Millhaven Road or Garrett exchange behind the
7 college into that Forsythe extension. And it will go up to
8 18th Street where it will stop because you cannot cross --
9 there is no bridge at Forsythe and there will not be one and
10 I'm told it's against the law to build one there. Now, if
11 that is the case, you just messed up something very bad. And
12 if you don't put in that bridge, we're not going to solve any
13 of our traffic problems.

14 Now last night you pointed out that the new bridge
15 would carry seventeen thousand cars a day. That's pretty
16 good. That's seventeen thousand cars that aren't taking one
17 of these other routes.

18 Also you pointed out that the segment of the route
19 that would go from the bridge west to White's Ferry Road and
20 east to Millhaven Road would cost \$75,000,000. That's the
21 most needed segment of this loop. And I think we ought to
22 think in terms of such a segment first. And I'd like to ask
23 Mike Neal if, as a lobbyist for the city, are you lobbying to
24 do this or are you lobbying not -- to kill it?

25 MR. NEAL: I think Dr. Owens has --

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I can't hear you. Speak
2 up.

3 MR. NEAL: I'm sorry.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

5 MR. NEAL: I think the chamber historically has
6 been very supportive. Obviously we're just now seeing the
7 study. Our board has not had a chance to obviously review
8 the study and take a position. But it was the chamber that
9 went to Washington and asked the congressional delegation for
10 the money to fund the study.

11 DR. OWENS: To fund the loop study--

12 MR. NEAL: Yes.

13 DR. OWENS: -- or fund--

14 MR. NEAL: No, fund this study that has just been
15 completed. So I think we are keenly interested in the
16 results. I think for the last twenty years both the
17 chambers-- I can certainly speak for Monroe Chamber, I think
18 also West Monroe West Ouachita Chamber -- has been supportive
19 of a loop concept. And I think we'd love to see one built.
20 The key challenge-- I agree with Warren-- is the cost,
21 \$250,000,000 is a huge amount of money. The state's annual
22 DOTD budget is approximately four hundred thousand (\$400,000)
23 or something like that per year. So, I mean, it's a huge
24 amount of money.

25 DR. OWENS: You don't need that much. You need

1 seventy-five million (\$75,000,000) just for one segment.
2 Worry about other segments later. Also -- and this is what
3 brought this to mind in the newspaper article I've read --
4 Lyle Miller said that you need to build the bridge closer
5 in. Well, that's just going to kill it. And you said we're
6 not going to be able at get the money and that would kill
7 it. Now, as a lobbyist, don't you go out and get money?
8 Isn't that your job?

9 MR. NEAL: I guess number one, I didn't realize I
10 was quoted. And number two, I wouldn't necessarily believe
11 everything I read in the newspaper.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We did give twenty -three
13 thousand out of the city's budget this year for the chamber
14 to lobby, isn't that right? \$23,000 to lobby for the City of
15 Monroe that was paid?

16 MR. NEAL: Somewhere in that neighborhood.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Somewhere in that
18 neighborhood.

19 MR. NEAL: Some large amount.

20 MR. MYERS: One thing I might point out, we -- I got
21 invited up several months ago to give a presentation to the
22 Monroe and the West Monroe Chambers of Commerce. And I'm not
23 sure, but I was told that that is the first time in history
24 that those two bodies ever met together to look at that. So
25 I don't know if that was true.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, that's not true. That's
2 not true at all.

3 MR. NEAL: He didn't say it was. That was
4 hearsay.

5 MR. MYERS: But the chambers have expressed an
6 interest.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The elevated highway between
8 165 and West Monroe, you said that the fish and game people
9 required that that be elevated?

10 MR. MYERS: Yes, sir.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is that the cost of that
12 section, Russell Sage, or is that the cost --

13 MR. MYERS: It's the cost of the wetlands.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How much difference does
15 that make building it up as opposed to doing it on the
16 ground?

17 MR. MYERS: Quite a bit.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you know what those
19 numbers are?

20 MR. MYERS: (Negative nod.)

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: A lot.

22 MR. MYERS: Tripled at least.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Tripled?

24 MR. MYERS: Tripled.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Twenty-five million

1 (\$25,000,000) if you build it on the ground. Forsythe is
2 going across a similar-type lane. How is it that you can't
3 do that-- I say that by knowing that the state is considering
4 swapping and giving up that piece of Russell Sage because it
5 does not join the big block. They have actively pursued
6 that. So if you were trying to avoid Russell Sage, they
7 don't really want it anyway.

8 MR. MYERS: It wasn't Russell Sage. The other
9 thing that comes in to play, and I'm not saying that that was
10 exactly what has happened, but when you get federal money
11 involved versus local funds or state money -- I don't know
12 what was used to extend Forsythe -- but there are different
13 rules. And you've seen it in dealing with your schools and
14 things. There's always a fight that, you know, they don't
15 want the strings attached that comes with the federal
16 dollars. And part of the involvement with the federal dollar
17 there is a higher concern for wetlands. And there are
18 stricter rules that the federal funding organizations place
19 on what you can do to wetlands. And part of that has to do
20 with wetlands.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But the funding hasn't been
22 determined on this yet.

23 MR. MYERS: No.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So if you did not use
25 federal funding, you could, in fact, build it on the ground,

1 is that correct?

2 MR. MYERS: Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. What you have
3 to realize is this project goes right through the heart of
4 those wetlands whereas Forsythe was right on the edge of the
5 development of those wetlands. It's hard to say. But I
6 would be very surprised if you could ever convince the Corps
7 of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and EPA that
8 that type of crossing over that -- through the heart of those
9 major wetlands, you know, could be built at the ground
10 level. I would be surprised.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, Interstate 49 goes
12 through some of the same wetlands and major portions down the
13 central part of the state. And I mean, sixty miles-- not
14 that long-- twenty miles through the major wetlands.

15 MR. MYERS: I was involved in that and I'm part of
16 the reason that it got that way, but I can tell you at that
17 point in time in history, the concerns and the power of the
18 regulatory agencies was not as great as it is today. You
19 look at-- you look at I-20 against the Atchafalaya Basin, you
20 probably couldn't do that today given the regulations --

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I-49 was just a few years
22 ago, right?

23 MR. MYERS: Well, not really. The initial EIS and
24 all that occurred twenty years ago. I'm just telling you,
25 I'm being frank with you.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm aware of the
2 litigation--

3 MR. MYERS: A lot of things can happen but I will
4 be very surprised.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: With mitigation, can't you
6 mitigate a lot cheaper than you can build an elevated
7 highway? There are lot of ways you can mitigate that loss of
8 right-of-way out there.

9 MR. MYERS: It's not just the loss of the land that
10 you're mitigating. Where they come from and that's part of
11 why you're saying you're crossing through the heart of it is
12 they're concerned when you build on the ground through that
13 in that type of area, you essentially have to build a levee
14 to get the roadway above the flood stage. And when you do
15 that, you block that flow of water that sustains the water so
16 you can cause all kind of problems. You can cause flooding
17 on people that haven't had flooding before. You've changed
18 the character of those wetlands. You get concerned, then,
19 with different types of species and spawning habitats and all
20 types of items that the fish and wildlife service and Corps
21 of Engineers are concerned about. So it's not just the
22 land. There's a lot of other factors that come into it and
23 how it affects the function of those wetlands and the
24 movement of that water through there. It's a very
25 complicated issue. And that's why I say, just based on what

1 I know in my twenty-two years of experience in working-- in
2 growing up under all these regulations, I would be
3 surprised.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, it's just one man's
5 opinion where you see all these green areas we've acquired,
6 major wetlands to save for public use of the future, it seems
7 to me that we're letting a small area of wetlands get undue
8 consideration when we've got major funding problems and major
9 acquisition to the wetlands right close by it.

10 MR. MYERS: So I agree. But like I said, there are
11 a lot of strings and a lot of regulations that are in place
12 right now. And it hasn't been that long that it has been
13 that way. I've grown up through the system. And it has been
14 staggering the amount of forces that the wetlands have grown
15 to be expected, when you're spending federal money.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm beating a dead horse
17 here. One more point, I-69 goes right through the White
18 River Basin in Arkansas right now. They're planning that, a
19 much more sensitive area than what this is. So I'm just
20 saying people are not going to quit building through
21 wetlands. You can't build roads anymore if you do that.

22 MR. MYERS: I'll say that I-69 doesn't go through
23 White River, Richard.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, it's considered.

25 MR. MYERS: The latest study, it's going down

1 through Mississippi and then coming across north of
2 Greenville.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Which is a major wetland
4 when you leave the levee and go to the levee --

5 MR. MYERS: The most recent study has moved it to
6 where it's the narrowest point --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Scott. I'm aware of that,
8 Scott.

9 MR. MYERS: No, it's further south than that.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What I know goes from Scott
11 to-- what's the little town in Arkansas?

12 MR. MYERS: Rosedale?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Southwest.

14 MR. MYERS: Anyway. Those are also being looked at
15 as issues with that project. And there's a lot of movement
16 that's having to take place to get it where it will be
17 acceptable.

18 Yes, sir.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When are y'all going to stop
20 talking about this thing and do something? You're talking it
21 to death.

22 MR. MYERS: When we look back at the history of the
23 Ouachita Loop, we found the first study on the Loop was done
24 in '68.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: '58.

1 MR. MYERS: '68. There might have been but we
2 didn't find any further back. So it has been around at least
3 thirty years, maybe forty, the concept. It's having to grow
4 out. Every time it has been considered, it has gotten bigger
5 and has to move further out.

6 MR. FLETCHER: This is Wilbur Fletcher. Can you
7 give us kind of a rough analysis on the numbers like ten to
8 one on cost?

9 MR. MYERS: Ten to one is the difference between
10 the bridge and driving--

11 MR. FLETCHER: Yeah.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Still, I think you're
13 loading us unfair with a cost burden when we're acquiring
14 major wetland areas to add to the public sector. That's
15 just-- funding is our major problem. Everybody agrees here
16 it's a major problem. I can't agree with you more,
17 Dr. Owen. We need to do it now.

18 MR. MYERS: You know, we do the best in giving the
19 advice that we can. And if you want to build the project and
20 build it without a lot of lawsuits and attracted problems
21 with the federal agencies involved, it's best you take the
22 course of least resistance. And if you want to build it on
23 ground level, believe me-- you know, like I said, I've been
24 in there so many years. My experience is you would be in for
25 a fight. Just like when I tell you you can't go through

1 those wildlife management areas, it would take an act of
2 Congress to do that. And, you know, I'm not saying it can't
3 happen. But I'm telling you that our advice is don't even
4 try that route.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, that's just my input.
6 We're lobbying to get Black Bayou put into the refuge right
7 now and you're saying that's going to stop the town growth to
8 have things like that. It seems to me that there should be a
9 trade off involved in acquiring something like that and
10 provide for a loop for the town. You know, that's a
11 political thing. Seems like to me you need to do some
12 homework on that.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The problem is the Corps.
14 The Corps is always-- the Corps didn't want the State Farm
15 project to happen. The Corps doesn't want anything to
16 happen. And I wholeheartedly agree with you.

17 MR. NEAL: They routinely channelize rivers
18 themselves. So we can work with anybody, anybody.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm saying you can try -- you
20 know, approach them but at first when they look at this
21 project, that's the first thing they'll look at. The letter
22 that's in our report, they put it in the letter that said,
23 "We concur that alternative 1 is the best you can do to
24 minimize impacts to the environment. But the first thing
25 we're going to tell you is, we want all wetland crossings to

1 be elevated." So they went along.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Ten to one is a heavy cost
3 for that. So again, I've heard politicians mention Russell
4 Sage and I've been involved in negotiation for that. I know
5 the state would like to get rid of that.

6 MR. MYERS: That did not influence our decision.
7 We missed Russell Sage. You're talking about the in-tract in
8 here?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.

10 MR. MYERS: Yeah. That didn't influence. We
11 dodged it because we wanted to miss it but that's not why it
12 was on there. Anymore questions?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm going to make a
14 statement to counteract what he has been saying. I worked
15 for the city for nineteen years. We fought floods that
16 purely could have been avoided if controls were built in and
17 corrected up front. Cost avoidance, if you go in and put
18 earth and levees and impede the flow-- we've been spending
19 millions to save those people up on the north end of Monroe
20 with tax dollars. If you go in and start all over again
21 putting earth and levees in again and create further drainage
22 problems, what is it going to do to all the expensive houses
23 on the north side of Monroe that want to go to West Monroe
24 and vice versa. So it might look ten to one now, but if you
25 start adding up all these floods and how many million dollars

1 the homeowners of the this city and taxpayers of the whole
2 city paid for over the last twenty or thirty years because of
3 some of that development, you will see the wisest thing to do
4 is elevate. That's my opinion from experience.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Now, one other point that
6 came up and, you know, it's something that you can look at
7 too was since this portion of the project down in this part
8 of the parish is going to be built at ground level, it's not
9 going to be elevated-- I don't know enough but someone
10 brought up there is backwater flooding that occurs and comes
11 in across this area.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's correct.

13 MR. MYERS: Now, it may be that, in fact, this
14 project will act as a levee to prevent some of that backwater
15 flood from coming into the parish. So there may be a benefit
16 that we didn't figure into all of this because we don't know
17 enough about it. But that was something that one gentlemen
18 brought up as a benefit. Anymore questions? All right. We
19 appreciate all your help.

20 MR. BROUSSARD: Let me just mention copies of the
21 total final report will be available at both the DOT district
22 office. You can go to that office and review it if you would
23 like and the OCOG office. You can see these gentlemen about
24 the exact location of it. Where these addresses are, I don't
25 know the address off the top of my head. But the report is

1 finished and you might want to say something about the web
2 page too.

3 MR. MYERS: Yeah. I should have said the report
4 will be posted on the web page. Paul Fryer in the back has a
5 handout that will give you that address. You can go to the
6 web page and print out your own copy of the report or
7 download it and save it and show it to somebody thirty years
8 from now.

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1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2

3 STATE OF LOUISIANA :

4 PARISH OF OUACHITA :

5

6

7 I, Deborah Lowery, Certified Court Reporter, do
8 hereby certify that the foregoing took place before me at the
9 place set forth herein and was reported by me in St enotypy
10 and is a true and correct record of the proceedings had in
11 said deposition.

12

13

14 I further certify that I am not employed by nor
15 related to any of the parties to this cause nor in any wise
16 interested in the event thereof. SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO
17 this the 3rd day of November, 1999.

18

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25

DEBORAH LOWERY, RPR, CCR
LA CCR #96027

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