

**OUACHITA LOOP MAJOR INVESTMENT STUDY
INITIAL PUBLIC MEETING**

Held on February 17, 1998, in the City Council Chambers, West Monroe City Hall, West Monroe, Louisiana, commencing at 7:00 p.m. CST.

APPEARANCES:

Mr. Coan Bueche	LA DOTD
Mr. Blaise Carriere	HNTB
Mr. David Creed	OCOG
Mr. Virgil Page	FHWA
Mr. Warren Myers	HNTB

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REPORTED BY: Betty P. Toms, CCR #88032

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1 Mr. Bueche: When you're ready to start, we're
2 ready, so maybe somebody can invite those folks out in the
3 hall to come in. I guess our court recorder over here is
4 ready to go. My name is Coan Bueche. I'm chief of the
5 planning division for the Department of Transportation and
6 Development. I see at least one member of the legislature
7 here, and I'm not going to try to introduce elected people.
8 I would like to ask anyone who holds a public office to
9 stand and let us see you.

10 (Audience complies)

11 Mr. Bueche: Oh, good. I apologize for not
12 knowing the names, but I've embarrassed myself too many
13 times to try to do that. But I do have the names of some
14 people who are here working with us. I'd like first
15 to introduce Virgil Page from the Federal Highway
16 Administration. And then from the Department we have our
17 district administrator, Bill Forest, back here, or your
18 district administrator, being 05. From our environmental
19 section we have two guys here, Jim Yates and Max Sage. And
20 we had people from our road design section here earlier,
21 but I don't see them any more, so we'll give them a failing
22 grade. From OCOG, Doug Mitchell. Any of your other people
23 here that you care to introduce?

1 Mr. Mitchell: I don't believe so.

2 Mr. Bueche: That takes care of introductions

1 then. Let me give you a little background and then some of
2 the other guys will give you more background. But the
3 National Highway System Designation Act of 1995 gave the
4 Department the option of moving some money from another,
5 what we call a demonstration project for the state over in
6 the Shreveport area. There was 29.6 million dollars in
7 that project. And we were given the option to move some
8 from that project to certain other projects, one of which
9 was the study of this Ouachita Loop section. So we were
10 able to move that money, and the Department put up the
11 nonfederal match required in order to do the study that
12 local government had lobbied Congress for.

13 This is not the first study of the Loop, and I don't
14 need to tell you that. I mean you people have brought the
15 subject up. It's at least 30 years old. It has a history
16 attached to the handout. So what we're going to do tonight
17 is go over a little bit of what the required process is for
18 this kind of study, talk a little bit about the study area,
19 the history of the project, the purpose and the need for
20 such a project, and then we're going to discuss any other
21 concerns that you may have. And you will have an
22 opportunity to -- Your comments will be part of the record,
23 and it will be taken into consideration during the course

1 of the study, and that's why we're having a transcript of
2 the meeting prepared.

1 I'd like at this time to ask Mr. Blaise Carriere, who
2 is with Howard, Needles, Tammen and Bergendoff, our
3 consultants, to introduce his team members to talk to you a
4 little bit about the project.

5 Mr. Carriere: Thank you, Coan. Good evening. My
6 name is Blaise Carriere, and I'm with the firm of HNTB
7 Corporation. We have offices in Baton Rouge and -- It's
8 our Baton Rouge office together with some of the other
9 support offices of the firm. Our company does provide
10 architectural and engineering services throughout the
11 United States. With me tonight is Warren Myers, also of
12 our office, who is the project manager specifically for
13 this project. Our consulting team has several other
14 important sub-groups or sub-consultants working with us in
15 order to do all of the things that need to be done to
16 conduct this major investment study.

17 Locally, the firm of Lazenby & Associates, and I saw
18 Jerry around here somewhere earlier. And Paul Fryer. Both
19 Paul and Jerry. They're about somewhere, and I think you
20 all know probably them personally. But Lazenby &
21 Associates, again, is doing some of the local detail work
22 as it relates to gathering data information and making sure
23 we make the right turn at the right location as we try to

1 go forward with the study.

2 Also assisting us in the development of this project

1 are two other firms, both represented tonight by their
2 principals, Sharon Leader of Leader & Associates, and Karen
3 Fernandez of Fernandez Plans. They are both involved in
4 the production of the information that we now have on the
5 Internet, for all of those that are interested in computer,
6 keeping up with what's going on as it relates to progress,
7 and also doing a great deal of the local contact work to
8 make sure that we are picking up appropriate information
9 from appropriate agencies at all levels of government--
10 federal, state, and local--and agencies that would be
11 affected by a project of this nature sometime in the
12 future.

13 So that's the group of people that we have assembled to
14 work on this particular project. In your announcement
15 package, and in some of the newspaper articles making
16 notice of this, there was a little website address. Karen
17 has her laptop here that does have all of the information
18 that is currently available, and it was updated as of
19 February the 2nd. And there's a whole bunch of alphabet
20 soup that those of you all who are familiar with contacting
21 the Internet and websites that you could go to. We're
22 essentially on the Department of Transportation's website,
23 and it's a separate subsection that deals specifically with

1 the Ouachita Loop. And you can go in there and query a
2 number of different areas of what is going on in looking at

1 those questions at your leisure in your home. Or you can
2 give this to your kids and tell them to go to school
3 tomorrow and punch all those numbers in, and it would be an
4 interesting part of their civics class and whatever the
5 kids are doing. And for those of you that don't have a
6 propensity to do these numbers, get a kid to show you how
7 to do it, because it's fun. There's a lot of interesting
8 things in there. And it includes text, drawings, and all
9 of the information that you see here is now available
10 electronically like that. Not only is this project in
11 there, but some other projects that the Department has
12 underway from a planning standpoint. You can look up
13 information with regard to them. You can look up all sorts
14 of things that Mr. Forest is doing up here. From the
15 construction-letting schedule, he's got what kind of
16 contract. There's just beaucoup information out there as
17 it relates to what different governmental services are in
18 fact doing in Monroe and throughout the state. You're not
19 limited to Louisiana; in fact, it's connected even to other
20 states.

21 What we want to do tonight is introduce to you this
22 process of what we're going through, why we're doing it.
23 Most always the reason or the excuse given is because "the

1 feds made us do it" sort of thing. Well, all of that
2 really goes back to our congress and legislature and the

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1 reactions that the public has of building major things in
2 the past and how we're going to do them in the future. A
3 number of significant milestone acts got passed from the
4 time the interstate program began in the '50s to now almost
5 essentially being complete here in building that 40-some-
6 odd-thousand miles of highway.

7 Most significant in that was something called the
8 National Environmental Policy Act, the NEPA Act, and that
9 occurred somewhere around 1969. In 1991 or '2, somewhere
10 in there, the last version of the major federal program
11 dealing with transportation was an act or a bill called the
12 Intermobile Surface and Transportation Efficiency Act,
13 ISTEA, which is pronounced ice tea. You've maybe heard of
14 that. It actually expired on September 30th of last year,
15 and Congress is right now going through the process--you
16 know Congress has just reconvened--of re-authorizing what
17 will be the next future transportation program. So it's a
18 very timely subject. And the feds deal in program sort of
19 things that deal with the money that eventually may--I
20 stress that word may--become available for implementing
21 what we're going to talk about tonight.

22 If you didn't pick up one of these little agenda things
23 outside, you don't have to rush out there and get one. But

1 all of what I'm going to address on these boards up are
2 contained in this little handout so that you can go back at

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1 your leisure and look at it, digest it. And what we would
2 like to do tonight, again, is have you ask questions at
3 appropriate times. This is an informal, in a sense,
4 meeting. We want to make sure that we clearly explain what
5 it is we think we're doing so that you have a good
6 understanding of that. The only ground rule, I guess, is
7 that--our court reporter, again, is trying to take notes of
8 this so we can go back and digest your comments--is that
9 you would identify yourself as to "I'm Jane Doe" or "Tom
10 Jones, and I would like to ask a question," or whatever.
11 So if you would, just identify yourself so that we can keep
12 track of who did ask what. And there is a sign-in sheet
13 out front, again.

14 What we're also trying to do is build a distribution
15 list for newsletters that are part of this program. And if
16 you did check out the Internet site, you'd note that there
17 is a comment section in there. You can directly enter a
18 comment, name, whatever, and get responses that way. It's
19 not a Big Brother attempt, so don't take it that way, but
20 it's the only way that we can kind of communicate back and
21 forth with you.

22 Let's talk about the planning process a little bit and
23 what it's all about. As Coan mentioned, this is not

1 something new we're doing for the first time. This
2 comprehensive planning has been going on for many years.

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1 You all have been in the forefront of that through OCOG,
2 which is a regional planning endeavor. They have a
3 professional staff and a group of people who have been
4 working at developing the transportation plan, among other
5 things that OCOG is responsible for looking at. We're
6 talking about long-range planning in this instance because
7 we're talking about a major addition to the transportation
8 system infrastructure of the Monroe area.

9 This little diagram shows you some of the iteration
10 that goes on. We're talking about regional planning
11 studies. That's what we're doing. It spins off into what
12 we call the corridor studies, over here (indicating). We
13 do some detail work there that kicks back into the plan.
14 Eventually it comes out then as an adopted element of some
15 sort of a plan. The inference here is that it's iterative;
16 you just don't do it once. Sometimes you get it right the
17 first time, sometimes you don't. So it can go back and
18 forth. When that plan comes out, it pops into another box
19 down here that we typically call--and all these are in
20 little diagrams, so it's kind of nice to have seats so that
21 you can see these things up front here--but the T-I-P. And
22 we're going to talk a lot tonight, again in this alphabet
23 soup stuff. TIP is the Transportation Improvement Program.

1 That is typically adopted as an annual element of those
2 things that are going to be done, both by your metropolitan

1 planning organization -- It forms a part of the state's
2 overall program, and they stick an S in front of it and the
3 TIP becomes a STIP, an S-T-I-P. Those elements then are
4 what guides a project through the process to the
5 legislature for funding and ultimately for construction.
6 So we try to do some planning, we try to get it right, we
7 try to put it in the program, and then hopefully you go out
8 and build it somewhere along the line.

9 Typically those sorts of things nowadays, given all
10 that goes on from where we are now to beginning the
11 construction, is on a magnitude of six to seven years.
12 That's just realistically what it takes. I wish I could
13 tell you it could go quicker or faster, but it doesn't.
14 That's a nominal normal average, and most probably a few
15 have gone quicker than that. But that's where we are. So
16 if you want to get a reserved seat for ribbon-cutting on
17 any segment of this right now, go mark your calendar seven
18 years out or something like that. But that's kind of the
19 realities of where we are in looking at something like
20 this.

21 The next thing is how this process works and all the
22 elements of it. And one of the things that you'll notice
23 is that very seldom do you see the old triangular kinds of

1 symbols that you used to see in charts and the like where
2 you laid bricks at the foundation and you finally got to

1 the top of the mountain and you were done. This one, we
2 keep going around in circles. That's not really true. But
3 the process seems to work like that to some extent. And I
4 go back to those two key elements which are in the center:
5 the transportation plan. And there is a plan in place. It
6 was recently updated here in Monroe in 1996 as it relates
7 to transportation.

8 Out of that plan, there is currently a three-year. And
9 every other year as one year winds up, they kind of work
10 through the middle year and then re-adopt another three-
11 year plan, the TIP, the transportation plan, which is
12 implementation portion of the program. When you look at
13 the elements that feed into that, though -- And you can
14 start at any place, and what we're going to do is where we
15 are tonight: public involvement. That's a critical part
16 of what it takes to make all of these things happen as it
17 relates to the process. So public involvement is a very
18 important part. It touches the other elements, but it
19 feeds into the plan itself: the planning factors, those
20 things that we're going to consider.

21 Typically, again, we're dealing with transportation,
22 but other issues that you're going to see on some of these
23 other boards relate to the socio-economic impacts of what

1 takes place as well as the environmental consequences of
2 what takes place. So when we talk about planning factors,

1 we're generally talking about things like transportation
2 factors, socio-economic factors, and environmental factors.
3 And then coupled with all that is the dollars and cents to
4 do it, the financial aspects of it.

5 We have something here called a Managements Systems
6 Input. And, again, that's simply to make sure that we're
7 getting all of the input from the various agencies, not
8 just the state and federal transportation agencies, but
9 Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Environmental
10 Quality, DEQ, and EPA and people like that, air quality as
11 well as water and other important aspects of the
12 environment.

13 Major investment studies, which is what we're doing.
14 When the transportation plan was developed back in 1996,
15 that update, one of the components said that it was worthy
16 to look at some sort of a loop configuration, which we're
17 going to explain in a little more detail, around the
18 northern half of Monroe. And I have some impacts on how
19 the rest of the transportation system would perform. Well,
20 when local individuals became involved and tried to push
21 that idea on, they said: Don't restrain this work by
22 simply looking at a northern half. Let's at least make
23 sure we look at the whole thing and that those parts that

1 cannot carry their share of the load will on their own
2 accord drop out. Let's not preclude something from being

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1 studied and evaluated.

2 So the concept in this major investment study was to
3 look at the entire loop. And the purpose of the major
4 investment study is to say at the plan level: We think we
5 ought to do this, but it is a major significant investment
6 of public dollars. Before we go jump off and do it, let's
7 make sure we're getting the appropriate bang for the buck.
8 Is there not maybe some other alternative, some other way
9 of accomplishing these goals of improving transportation,
10 enhancing socio-economic factors and also environmental
11 factors that would produce a better result at a lesser
12 taxpayer cost?

13 So those are the kinds of issues that major investment
14 studies address. Things like air quality and conformity.
15 I happen to live in Baton Rouge. We are in what is called
16 a nonattainment area. Every time we add six more vehicles
17 to the traffic stream, they say that something is coming
18 out the tailpipe, unless you control that some sort of way,
19 we can't do it. Air quality issues are very significant to
20 what happens in our part. You all are not in a
21 nonattainment area, but we don't want to put you in one.
22 So one of the things that you've got to look at is air
23 quality as it results to increased travel, tailpipe

1 emissions, and how that contributes to the overall quality
2 of the environment.

1 Last is the big part, the financial plan. Where does
2 the money come from? "Show me the money" kind of thing.
3 So that's a very, very important part. And in projects
4 like this, it's usually going to result in some
5 combination, perhaps even some local dollars, perhaps some
6 state dollars, and more than likely some federal dollars.
7 But they're all out of your pocket; that's where they come
8 from. And in alternatives like this, one of those things
9 that's becoming more and more prevalent, as it leaves an
10 element to be studied, major contributions at the local
11 level these days implies the potential of a toll in
12 addition to how you do pay all the other normal taxes, if
13 there is a funding element that it takes to make up the
14 thing.

15 So that's the range of the kinds of elements that go on
16 in this process, and we're going to touch on all of those
17 in the next roughly 12 months that's left in this study
18 right now, to see how those factors come out as they are
19 applied to the loop.

20 Anybody got any questions about any of that? I'm
21 humming along here pretty good. If there's anything that
22 I've said that you don't understand or you'd like some
23 further explanation, Coan can give you that.

1 Here's another one of all these circles of how things
2 go around and how the pieces relate. And, again, this is

1 in your little handout sheet, and I'm not going to go spend
2 an awful lot of time on this. But this is, again, the
3 transportation planning process. And there's a number of
4 elements that fall under that that relate to important
5 things. Land use, first of all. There's a great deal of
6 debate that goes on in the area of land use. And what do
7 we really mean by that? First of all, you know, there's
8 not going to be any more of it. The Dear Lord only made
9 this one size earth, so that's all we've got. But what we
10 do with it and how we use it is a very difficult issue,
11 again, as it relates to our country. We think property
12 rights are very, very important. When government begins to
13 step in and say what you can or cannot do on a piece of
14 land that you own, some folks think that that might be a
15 little unmerited. But by the same token, if you have a
16 nice piece of property that you live on, you just don't
17 want anybody to happen to come along and put a dump
18 or a waste site facility nextdoor to you. You want
19 government--at least most people seem to want government at
20 that time--to help you make sure that those things that you
21 don't think and the majority of you all as citizens don't
22 think ought to be next to you. So land use, and some sort
23 of a land-use plan, which again is the type of thing that

1 OCOG does, is an important first step. There are some
2 perceptions of if you build it, they will come. So you

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1 build a road and watch what happens grow up around it.
2 That's one scenario that can happen. Alternatively, if you
3 try to direct how you believe a community should grow, you
4 need to provide the infrastructure then to support what you
5 as a community want to see happen: where does the sewer,
6 the water, the highway, and the schools, and the churches
7 all go in an organized way? So these land-use implications
8 are very significant in this process of what goes on.

9 The other aspects of things that happen--the use of
10 energy, the freight component, movement of goods and
11 services--they're all part of that transportation picture.
12 The plan itself then evolves as a result of looking at
13 those factors, their interaction. They develop into the
14 TIP and the STIP that I mentioned earlier. We get to
15 implementation, we look at performance, and again go around
16 and evaluate those before making a decision to do a
17 particular project.

18 Let's talk about the long-range financial plan effect
19 and the efforts of an MIS. One of the things that has
20 become, again, an interesting term that you will hear used:
21 is this financially constrained? What that means is that
22 the checkbook is not unlimited, that it isn't something
23 that we simply go to Washington and we go home with a

1 bucket of money, or you go down to Baton rouge and you come
2 back to Monroe with a bucket of money. It's whatever the

1 resources are that we are now investing, and from a
2 transportation standpoint there are primarily two
3 significant levels of how we do provide the dollars to do
4 it. At the federal level, every time you squeeze the
5 handle a portion of the fuel cost goes into the Federal
6 Transportation Trust Fund. If memory serves me right, it's
7 something like 18.3 cents or so, is the amount of pennies
8 that go to the feds as it relates to transportation cost
9 every time you do a gallon of fuel. And in the state of
10 Louisiana, we do an additional 20 cents. So 38.3 cents or
11 so is the tax on a gallon of fuel.

12 To give you a little idea of what those numbers
13 produce: a penny at the state level is in the order of
14 magnitude of almost 25 million dollars annually.
15 Twenty-five million annually from a penny in Louisiana.

16 Jimmy, I think that's a fairly decent figure. Correct
17 me if I'm wrong, but I think that's probably what it is.

18 At the national level, the federal level, a penny is
19 over a billion dollars annually. A billion. So you see
20 those pennies really roll around when you get to doing it.
21 Now, those, again, go into the Transportation Trust Fund,
22 but Congress allocates those back in an appropriation
23 manner that the state and local units then use to build and

1 construct the system.

2 But that's the constraints. We know those numbers. So

1 as you go down and see Santa Claus in December and make out
2 your wish list--you know, Mom and Pop back there checking
3 real carefully, too--to see do I have the resources, then,
4 to do these sort of things? And in the planning process,
5 they're asking us to now look at all of those things that
6 are sent in, at least total them up and see if the number
7 scares you--is it too big?--and if it doesn't, you know,
8 how do they rank up, one versus the other? Fortunately or
9 unfortunately in the business that I'm in, I get to visit a
10 lot of good communities and work on planning projects and
11 design projects as well. And I think there's something
12 like three loops or so that are under consideration right
13 now: one here in Monroe, one in Baton Rouge, and somewhere
14 down in New Orleans. I guess they're thinking still of
15 some sort of a circumferential route down there. And then
16 you can look at others when we go visit, say, Lafayette.
17 And they say, "Well, how come there ain't one in Lake
18 Charles? They're studying one up there in Monroe. How
19 come we don't have one?" So it's a little catchy. It's a
20 fever that catches hold of folks. And what this process
21 says, then, is that as we look at all those, you have to
22 recognize those financial constraints. So by doing these
23 MIS's, what we're hopefully doing is to give you specific

1 information as it relates to the level that you're asking
2 your elected officials to go down and see if you can't

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1 capture the dollars; and by the same token, the decision-
2 makers, to look at what the alternatives and the
3 consequences are and the return that you get when you spend
4 those dollars. It provides information about alternatives
5 that we could look at. In some urban areas or some
6 transportation solutions, public transit may be an
7 alternative. In some corridors where there's a high volume
8 movement, a lot of people who save a lot with their
9 vehicles, some sort of a parking ride operation could
10 address transportation needs. Or you could set aside a
11 specific lane where there are multi-lane roads during peak
12 hours in a direction for what's called an HOV, high
13 occupancy lane, that those with two or three or more people
14 in the vehicle then have the privilege of using that lane
15 and the single-occupant persons cannot. So those are all
16 sorts of alternatives that you look at to try to make a
17 decision of what's the best way to spend dollars, and
18 that's what MIS's major investment studies do.

19 Warren says I ran out over here, I'm supposed to go
20 over here. Financial Analysis and this so-called
21 Constrained Plan. There are two kind of situations that
22 arise when you begin to look at what we're doing.
23 Constrained plan: that assumes an investment for a

1 corridor or a set-aside of funding. Where we've already
2 decided we really want to do this and in our programming we

1 said we'd allocate X-number of dollars to do that, then the
2 MIS will go through and confirm that we've got the right
3 kind of cost, we've got the right kind of solution. If
4 that's true, then there's generally not a whole lot of
5 additional work that you have to do to confirm the project,
6 just clear it environmentally, do the plans, advertise
7 bids, and build it. And that's an ideal situation. But if
8 you don't have that as a starting point -- Suppose we
9 haven't quite yet determined the money, we don't have a
10 place-holder--one of these neat words that we say, setting
11 aside something--you need to then go look at it and
12 consider how are we going to do this project and what new
13 avenues of funding are we going to use because all of the
14 others have already been spoken for. That's what this
15 second one is about, and that's where some other--either
16 increase the fuel tax, do it as a toll road, or hope that
17 you win the Powerball or something--is the method. And
18 that's not a good method, that one. But those are the
19 kinds of realistic situations that you have to look at if
20 we're going to actually ever do something, build something.

21 MIS's are required, and these are certain general
22 guidelines that the Federal Highway Administration and the
23 Federal Transit Administration have said should apply in

1 making a decision whether you do this or not. One is,
2 they're required in major metropolitan areas. And there

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1 are nine metropolitan areas, I guess, in Louisiana that
2 fall in this category. So as projects of significance are
3 moved forward, we have to do a major investment study:
4 where the need to consider a major transportation
5 investment has been identified, where specifically in this
6 case we're reshaping, in a way, transportation in Monroe.
7 Right now, I-20 is very east-west, 165 is very north-south.
8 There is a little 15 that kind of comes in a little
9 diagonal. But those two dominant features of 20 and 165,
10 coupled with the Ouachita River, have a great deal of say
11 about trip-making and the fact that there are only three
12 crossings of the river all within a one-mile kind of span.
13 So if you're over here and you want to come here, you've
14 got to come down and then across. If you're here and want
15 to go to the southeast, you've got to come down and across.
16 Same thing from the other side. So we've got this neat
17 little bottom of the funnel sort of a situation that fairly
18 well determines or predestines how you're going to travel
19 east and west across the Ouachita.

20 By introducing a concept of a loop, were that to occur,
21 now instead of maybe coming in, you go radially out, down,
22 and around or radially up and over in that. So some trip-
23 making that is impacting the core area of the city may be

- 1 moved out to the circumferential edges as you go around it.
- 2 When doing that, factors that you have to consider--and

1 some of these elements have come up in a steering committee
2 group that we have working with us--is, does that simply
3 then cause businesses and interests that are in the core
4 area to relocate out to the outer area which is then not
5 necessarily a net positive to the community as a whole that
6 you do create a donut. We've got a hole in the middle now.
7 You've got to look at those factors. So the object really
8 is to strengthen and preserve the integrity of existing
9 neighborhoods and communities and at the same time, meet
10 goals for expansion, growth, and economic development.
11 You've got to make them both work, unless you make a
12 specific decision as, we're going to change something in a
13 particular way. But those are the way those factors
14 interact. And a project like this is going to have those
15 sorts of impacts and consequences. It opens up a whole
16 another array of how you would be able to travel. And then
17 there's always the matter of you don't do this and it
18 doesn't happen overnight. How does the time implementation
19 of that take place, over how many years, and what impact
20 does have on growth in neighborhood at locations?

21 Federal funds are potentially involved. That's the
22 other thing where MIS's are required. Let's talk about the
23 agencies, the roles, and the people who are involved in

1 this particular project. You know, who is involved? OCOG,
2 the DOTD, Environmental Resource permitting agencies at all

1 levels, federal, state, and local--EPA, DEQ, Corps of
2 Engineers, Coast Guard, if you're going to cross the
3 Ouachita twice in this implication. The Ouachita is still
4 navigable. Local officials. You've got three different
5 cities involved plus parish government, so local officials
6 are going to be very involved in this process to make the
7 decision. The FHWA is the Federal Highway Administration,
8 part of the Federal Department of Transportation, and the
9 FTA is the Federal Transit Administration. They are
10 involved in saying is transit a viable option that would
11 address this transportation situation. And there are other
12 affected agencies, and that's anybody and everybody that
13 could have some permitting or regulatory involvement in
14 what we're doing. So those are the agencies and the people
15 who are involved with it. And, again, you can call on or
16 use them as resources for you; for instance, Fish &
17 Wildlife Warren is going to talk about. There are a number
18 of designated wildlife management areas that surround the
19 Monroe area, and when you begin to think about it, this to
20 some extent is a defining moment as to whether or not a
21 growth goes out there. Some of these corridor
22 opportunities may not exist in the future. So if we're
23 thinking long range now, you have to set those aside

1 because the next step is you'd have to go well beyond to
2 get out and around wildlife management areas where we

1 wouldn't be able to satisfy EPA and other agency
2 requirements for going through those.

3 Some of the typical goals that a project like this
4 would address: Does it improve mobility, does it have some
5 economic development protection, does it preserve and
6 protect the environment, air quality, livability/
7 sustainable communities? And that, again, was what happens
8 in the core area of a city as you do a loop type of a
9 project.

10 This chart here, again, goes through that flow and
11 process from a corridor subarea. Now we've done the
12 long-range plans and we're into the major transportation
13 plan piece and looking at an MIS on a subarea. These are
14 the steps that we're going through. We've initiated the
15 project, we're developing initial sets of alternatives,
16 we're going to go through some sort of screening, we're
17 going to have analysis and refinement, we're going to
18 select those things that we think are the so-called
19 preferred alternatives, go back and look at that and
20 iterate and fix that as need be to produce a project
21 output. One of the outputs in all of this is always the
22 so-called no-construct or no-build alternative, that simply
23 doing those things of improving existing infrastructure is

1 sufficient to meet the travel demands and achieve some of
2 the other socio-economic goals that have been set forth.

1 That, then, is the process of what goes on. How do you
2 get an answer? This is a sample of a score sheet, in a
3 sense, of what we're going to try to do. You notice that
4 there are some major topic headings at the top. One is
5 transportation. One other group is the socio-economic and
6 environmental. One is funding. And then you put all those
7 together and have some sort of evaluation of what comes
8 out. Under transportation you can look at some
9 sub-categories. You can say what is the demand for travel?
10 And we're going to look at a series of different
11 alternatives, some different alignments, at least. And
12 this band that you see on here is approximately one mile
13 wide.

14 What we have been doing in the last several months is
15 going out and, with different data--acquisition means
16 aerial photography, studies and reports of others--trying
17 to identify all of the constraints that would exist within
18 that roughly one-mile corridor so that we don't go bump
19 into something right off the bat. We want to find out
20 those things that you ought not even think about. And
21 that's part of what this process is about here. Too often
22 we read about a comment or something in the newspaper,
23 "Well, I went to their public hearing the other night and

1 some turkey showed a line going right through the middle of
2 our subdivision." We don't want to do that. What we do

1 want to do is identify all of those things that do exist,
2 and then after we've got all of that information, we want
3 to see is it even possible to wiggle a line through all of
4 what you ought not run into. And if we can't do that, then
5 are we going to make the line bigger or wider or are we
6 going to say it ain't possible, the window has closed?
7 Now, if you do want to go through there, then there are
8 some consequences. We would have this many dislocations of
9 residents, businesses. We'd have these kinds of impacts as
10 it relates to wetlands and habitat area. So those are the
11 sorts of things that we then begin to tabulate. And in
12 order to do it, not only do you take it, you have to then
13 go to the next step: how are you going to mitigate for
14 that? We did some wetlands taking. How are you going to
15 get back to guarding some more wetlands over here for the
16 birds to enjoy their view? That process has to go on. So
17 what we're trying to do right now, again, is: this
18 corridor has been established; we're presenting that to you
19 tonight so that as you look as this, we want you to come
20 and say, "You know, I don't think you'd ever get through
21 there, cap. You need to think about thus, this, and so."
22 And we want to know those things today. There may be, for
23 instance, a family that's been here for a number of years,

1 been out in what is considered a rural environment and has
2 a little private cemetery somewhere out there. We don't

1 want to go through that. So those are the sorts of things
2 that you all know about that we would never find out about.
3 That's the scenario of what we're looking at in the
4 corridor.

5 Now, what happens within that corridor? You all have a
6 good mental picture, and you know how an interstate type
7 facility operates. It's controlled access; you can only
8 get on and off at interchanges; it's high speed. You know,
9 that might be the high end of the kind of facility this
10 would be, but that's not what we're telling you it is
11 going to be. We're going to look at several different
12 alternative roadway types, and even a different segment of
13 this might be a different type, depending upon the ultimate
14 demands in that particular corridor. It could be a four-
15 lane undivided; it might be a five-lane section with a
16 center turning lane. And it could even be only a two-lane
17 section simply circumferentially going around, and as
18 growth happens, could be widened to four lanes to handle
19 whatever the demands are. It might be that you ought not
20 do it at all. So we've got a whole series, then, of
21 alternatives to try to fit within that corridor that can
22 vary throughout the length of the corridor.

23 One of the interesting things the write-up that the

1 congressional act that set up the money did is said it
2 needs to connect I-20 to I-20. You say, "Wait a minute."

1 I-20 is not disconnected." But one of the things it does
2 have to do is it needs to start here and somehow or another
3 get over there, which means it's going to go up and around
4 or all the way around or down and around. But it didn't
5 leave us, we think, the latitude of saying we ought to go
6 from here to 165 and quit. If we did that, we've got
7 address that why did that occur. So that the limits of
8 this were from I-20 to I-20, and that's how we are looking
9 at that. But that was some specific language that in the
10 wisdom of Congress, when they described the project, that
11 set the ground rules.

12 Mr. Bentz: Anything short of that a bypass?

13 Mr. Carriere: Say that again. He said a magic
14 word.

15 Mr. Bentz: Isn't anything short of I-20 to I-20
16 considered a bypass?

17 Mr. Carriere: We need a name. Tell me your name.

18 Mr. Bentz: Bobby Bentz.

19 Mr. Carriere: He said a very interesting word.

20 That's why I wanted to listen to -- He used the word
21 bypass. And the other word that you'll hear described
22 tonight, you'll notice is on the drawings; we say a loop.
23 In our judgment, there is a very distinct difference in

1 those two words, bypass and loop. A loop more often than
2 not does indicate some closure, or at least a half of it

1 would be, and it is typically a facility that is used more
2 by you, by those people that live, work, and play in this
3 area, than somebody going from Jackson, Mississippi, to
4 Dallas. A bypass is the other side of that where I want to
5 avoid something by bypassing it. More often than not, if
6 you really go back and look, bypasses are about the only
7 bypasses in most urban areas. If you drove today from
8 Monroe to Dallas and went through Shreveport, I bet you
9 nine times out of ten you don't go around 220; you go right
10 through the middle. Now, 220 is a bypass, the way it was
11 written and described. But it ain't. It isn't. I
12 shouldn't use my bad English.

13 But there is a very distinct difference in those two
14 terms, and it has a lot to do, then, with the kind of
15 trip-making that we see taking place, because the loop
16 itself is going to be redistributing trip-making that
17 you all are doing. It's not going to be me going from
18 Vicksburg, like I say, to Shreveport very often that's
19 going to be on this. It's going to be more than likely you
20 all in the local trips that do that. So what we are
21 talking about here, for the most part, is a loop. Now, if
22 someone thinks that that's a kind of neat route and wants
23 to bypass Monroe by doing that, that can be accounted for,

1 but we're not really thinking of external trip-making
2 that's going to be accommodated by a facility like this.

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1 "It's not them, it's us" sort of thing that's going to be
2 using this.

3 It was an excellent question, and I wanted to make sure
4 I heard what you said the first time, because I do want you
5 to kind of put those words in the back of what -- when we
6 talk about these things.

7 Anyone else?

8 Mr. Wyrick: I have a question.

9 Mr. Carriere: Yes, sir. Can you give me a name,
10 please?

11 Mr. Wyrick: Bill Wyrick, W-y-r-i-c-k. I had a
12 question on the -- The Principles of Federal Infrastructure
13 Investment specifically talked about benefits and cost
14 analysis. And I'm a little confused and a little cloudy as
15 to how broadly that's defined and whether the NEPA
16 principles are used to define a broad sense of benefits and
17 cost analysis or whether it's narrowly defined, and then
18 sort of correlated that question with the three different
19 loop configurations that you mentioned--north, south, or
20 all the way around--being characterized in terms of
21 benefits and cost analysis in their studies.

22 Mr. Carriere: First of all, the concept of
23 benefits and cost. Cost is the easy part. You can usually

- 1 go out and estimate what it might cost to build something.
- 2 Its benefits are the difficult. In the past, traditionally

1 benefits were measured for transportation projects on
2 benefits to the user of the highway facility in terms of
3 minutes of travel time saved, which then translates into
4 dollars, in that that's time that could be productively
5 spent working as opposed to traveling, and you computed the
6 user benefits of the highway to the highway user. In the
7 freight movement business, again, how quickly the delivery
8 got there.

9 In studies of this level, and what we are talking about
10 here, are total economic benefits. How to measure those is
11 not easy. And what we try to do is look at some fairly
12 traditional indicators of the level of economic activity in
13 an area. Usually a person, as an example, when you go to
14 the doctor's office they stick a thermometer in there and
15 if it's 98, they're happy; if they measure you and they
16 weigh you and they say you're pretty good height for your
17 weight -- I got a little shorter the last time when I went,
18 for whatever reason. But those indicators, we have some
19 feel for how people ought to be measured. Well, there's
20 similarly some sort of things like that for metropolitan
21 areas in terms of sales tax collected, building permits
22 issued. There are a number of different factors that local
23 units of government have, and chambers of commerce are full

1 of those kind of numbers. What we try to do is look at
2 what is the level of that sort of activity now, what would

1 it project out to be based on historical trends; and then
2 if you inject something like this, can you somehow or
3 another predict whether that line is going to get better,
4 stay the same, or maybe even go down. So the economic
5 benefits then become the difference between the normal
6 projection line and what the project might do. Now, that's
7 total benefits, then. And if you're talking about a
8 benefit cost ratio, is that more or greater than one? Then
9 you'd say it's a worthwhile project. Those are very, very
10 difficult to quantify. So at this stage what we're trying
11 to do is at least make sure it's either positive, stays the
12 same, or negative. And that's most probably the best that
13 we're going to do. Did it get better?, which is an
14 indication then we're on the right track. But, you know,
15 don't go out and bet the homestead it's going to be 10
16 times better versus three times better, because I'm not
17 good enough to tell you what that kind of level is going to
18 be for what we're doing at this level. But did it stay the
19 same, had no impact? I think we can make that judgment in
20 the same way as did it get worse. And that's some of what
21 you're going to see in this funding category as it relates
22 to doing those sorts of things.

23 We also make some rather gross judgments like that in

1 the environmental factors. Did we make the air quality get
2 better, stay the same, or get worse? So it's a

1 plus/zero/minus analysis that goes on. Same thing for
2 noise. And that's about the best that you can do in trying
3 to make these decisions at the broad scale planning level.
4 That was a --

5 Mr. Wyrick: Do I take it then as a no, that
6 because of that level of uncertainty or lack of ability to
7 be precise, it wouldn't be broken up in terms of the
8 different alternatives on the I-20-to-I-20 connector would
9 not be applied to that? Is that --

10 Mr. Carriere: Major segments could. And I think
11 we will go at least into the four quadrants to look at it
12 on a quadrant type basis. And then you'll notice --

13 Mr. Wyrick: I think you said it couldn't be
14 considered on a quadrant basis because of something like --

15 Mr. Carriere: No. We will do that. The charge
16 is, don't start and already throw something out. But I
17 think we would analyze. And while we're doing it, it's no
18 more difficult to get it into pieces, aggregate them, and
19 then disaggregate them if somebody wants to see what that
20 represents. And then so that it's not an all-or-nothing
21 study, there is value then in the segments that might have
22 some of these positive indicators from which you can go
23 further then. And then Congress, in its wisdom simply of

1 setting up those limits, I think made us "think broad, but
2 that doesn't say we can't finish small" sort of thing. And

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1 I'm not implying that we want do that; I'm just saying that
2 that's, I thought, the flexibility. I thought it was wise
3 to keep it on a broad scale.

4 Okay, Warren, am I track here? Where is my guy? Where
5 am I? Am I in the right spot here, Mr. Bueche?

6 Mr. Bueche: I think you've covered the whole
7 agenda, the entire --

8 Mr. Carriere: You've got to hear from Mr. Bueche
9 specifically about the transportation stuff. And Virgil is
10 going to tell you about the federal perspective on MIS's.
11 And David is even going to tell you about the planning
12 process in there. I'm going to take a break and let them
13 do that. Lastly, I do want to go through scheduling and
14 where we are. And we're supposed to start with David.
15 Where's David? I saw him around -- There he is. No, it
16 isn't. Where is he? There he is. David is going to tell
17 you about those things that go on here locally through OCOG
18 and their role in this process.

19 Mr. Creed: I don't know how Blaise thinks he left
20 anything for anybody else to say. Coan and Virgil, I'll
21 pick whatever little bit is left, and then it's up to you.
22 I would say this about some specifics, but he has covered
23 the process, he's covered the TIP. He's covered it all,

1 the MIS and the long-range planning. But to get to some
2 specifics that you can identify with, the transportation

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1 decisions that are made locally by the MPO, Metropolitan
2 Planning Organization, which is the Ouachita Council of
3 Governments, are made based on a budget that, oh, usually
4 runs in the range of about a million or a million and a
5 half dollars per year. So that organization places
6 projects into the TIP, Transportation Improving Program,
7 which will fit the budgets that are financially constrained
8 over a three- to five-year period. Some projects that you
9 can identify with: the last one that was completed was
10 Bell-McMillan, the next one up is Kansas Lane. Those are
11 badly needed projects that are funded through the Urban
12 Systems money. In order to fund this through the Urban
13 Systems money would take I guess probably at least a
14 hundred times the amount of the annual Urban Systems
15 budget. So you can't put that one in there in any -- I
16 mean, you know, just -- I don't even have to explain that.
17 By the time you finished it, you wouldn't even have the
18 money to do it in segments. So the loop has been placed by
19 the Ouachita Council of Governments into its long-range
20 plan, and our local leaders have been pursuing money to pay
21 for a loop. And in that regard they have persuaded
22 Congress to come up with the money to do the loop study.
23 And before you can proceed with that kind of spending,

1 which he's already told you, you have to do what they call
2 an MIS, a Major Investment Strategy. So the MIS is now

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1 underway, and it required public participation, and that's
2 what you guys are all here for. I would point out also
3 that OCOG consists of six people on the board, and that is
4 two from Monroe, which is Mayor Pierce and Lyle Miller, and
5 two from West Monroe, which is Mayor Norris and Sonny
6 Bennett, and two jurors, which is Ben Marshall and King
7 Dawson. Those are the six men who serve on OCOG, and also
8 they function with technical stuff as a transportation
9 policy committee along with the guys from DOTD and the
10 Federal Highway. So that's how projects get placed onto
11 the TIP, which another word that might be used would be
12 like shorter-range projects. This one is one that is in
13 the long-range plans, and it of course is a big one, and it
14 is one that the government wants to look at carefully
15 before the feds spend that kind of money. So they're
16 involved in this public participation process, and we have
17 a steering committee. I think he's gone into the process
18 more than enough, but I think that these things can sort of
19 let you see the picture of the urban system monies and the
20 smaller projects and then what it takes to get this big one
21 off the ground.

22 So I'll let you guys try to see if there's something
23 left, Coan.

1 Mr. Bueche: It makes it easy for me because there
2 isn't anything left. I'd like to just kind of summarize,

1 though, and put it in some capsule, what it is we have to
2 do in the transportation planning in urbanized areas and
3 what it is we have to do if this project is ever going to
4 be a reality.

5 More than 30 years ago now, Congress required urban
6 areas of 50,000 or more to have comprehensive
7 transportation plans and to have a metropolitan planning
8 organization. The big product of the metropolitan planning
9 organization is to engage local leadership and to produce a
10 long-range plan. For some time now it has had to be at
11 least 20 years out into the future. So the Transportation
12 Improvement Program that we talk about, the TIP, is the
13 near-end tip of that fiscally-constrained long-range plan.
14 It's the near-end of your 20 years.

15 Until 1991, in the fall of 1991 when the Intermobile
16 Surface Transportation Efficiency Act was passed, those
17 comprehensive plans could include anything that you could
18 imagine. For the first time in the history of
19 transportation and planning for highways in this country,
20 the 1991 ISTEA bill required you to forecast your money and
21 to tie your plans to those forecasts of funds. It
22 essentially asked you this question: We know what your
23 plan shows, but what are you really going to do with the

- 1 money, because you can't build that plan? What can you
- 2 build, what should you build with some reasonable forecast

1 of -- or a forecast of what you can reasonably expect to
2 receive in the way of funds? So we've tried to do that.
3 We think we have an idea of what the Federal Transportation
4 Trust Fund will provide. We think we have an idea of what
5 the Louisiana Transportation Trust Fund will provide. And
6 with the help of local governments through OCOG, we think
7 we have an idea of what local governments can provide. We
8 put all of that together, and that's the fiscal constraint
9 of the plan.

10 So a couple of years ago this area produced, from 1996,
11 a transportation plan update for the first time in the
12 history that's fiscally constraining. It includes this
13 idea, towards the rear of the plan, in an area called
14 unfunded needs. So in a manner of speaking, this project
15 idea, this loop concept, is not in your fiscally
16 constrained plan, it's in that section of your plan that
17 comes behind the fiscal constraint. So if it's ever going
18 to be in the plan, we have to look at -- Well, first we
19 have to come to some consensus on what is the problem that
20 this project would intend to solve. We have to come to a
21 consensus locally at the state level and with the Federal
22 Highway Administration that that problem is worth solving.
23 Then we have to come to some consensus on what we think the

1 alternative solutions to that problem might be, and then a
2 consensus on what a preferred one is, one that we could

1 then carry through the NEPA process and put in the fiscally
2 constraint planning. And tonight, we're in the early
3 stages--we have been for six months and will for another
4 year--the early stages of looking at what would the impact
5 of this project be on the area: what would the cost be,
6 not only the construction and real estate cost, but what
7 cost to the environment, all of those costs that we're able
8 to quantify; what would the benefits be not just to the
9 users, but to the economy of the area; what other benefits
10 might accrue, so that you could compare the cost of the
11 benefits. Now, we may not do this in this early MIS, but
12 eventually we would look at those things, I think.

13 So we probably have covered everything several times
14 about the process. So if we're at the point where we want
15 to move on to Warren's, well --

16 Mr. Carriere: Virgil has his thing from the
17 federal perspective.

18 Mr. Bueche: Right. Put Virgil on the hot seat
19 now. Virgil Page.

20 Mr. Carriere: He has the checkbook, really.

21 Mr. Page: I really don't have that much to add.
22 I think everything as far as the MIS has pretty much been
23 talked about. There is one key point, of course, in the

1 MIS that is different from the way we used to do business
2 prior to 1991 when the federal legislation was passed. And

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1 as David and Coan talked about, that key is the financial
2 feasibility of the project. Prior to that, you could have
3 an unconstrained plan and everybody's project was in there,
4 and of course the public began to loose faith in the
5 planning process and the plans. So that was an attempt to
6 put some more credibility back into the process so that if
7 a project made it onto the plan, the public could at least
8 have a reasonable expectation that the funds were there to
9 build it. One of the key elements of the MIS requirement
10 is that before you can even complete the NEPA process which
11 Blaise talked about, before we develop a -- We can begin
12 the NEPA process and we can come up with a draft
13 environmental document, but before we can complete it the
14 project has to be put into the plan. And in order to be
15 put into the plan, the funds have to be identified, you
16 know, to build the plan. So the funding aspect of the MIS
17 becomes a critical one in identifying funds. And, frankly,
18 you know, I'm not going to stand here and suggest the
19 federal government is going to give you whatever it's going
20 to cost to build. A hundred million may be a very
21 conservative figure, you know, depending on what we're
22 talking about. If we're talking about a controlled access
23 facility out there, that's probably a very low-ball

1 estimate. You've probably heard Secretary Denton in some
2 of his presentations around the state talk about the fact

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1 that the state can't even maintain the roads that they have
2 now, that they're falling behind. You've probably heard
3 about the Time Program, how there's not enough money to
4 complete the Time Program. So the practicality of there
5 being state and federal funds -- And when I talk about
6 state funds, I'm really also talking about those federal
7 funds that flow to the state and comes back to you through
8 the Urban System funds, you know, as David mentioned.
9 Probably the only additional federal funds that might be
10 available would be those that your legislative delegation
11 might could obtain through a, quote, demonstration project.
12 And, you know, I'm not going to really get into a
13 discussion of likelihood of being able to secure that kind
14 of money.

15 It's a significant amount of money. So one of the
16 things you have to look at, if you're really serious about
17 building this thing and the community supports it, is
18 getting local funding for the project, too, whether that's
19 through increased sales tax or property taxes or whether
20 you want to approach the legislature and see whether they
21 might pass some laws that will allow you to impose a local
22 option gas tax. All those things have to be pulled
23 together. But if this thing is going to become a reality,

1 or even a portion of it, funding is a critical issue, and I
2 don't think local community can sit back and just expect

1 the states and the feds are going to come up here and pour
2 this kind of money into a project of this magnitude. The
3 money just isn't there.

4 So those are some hard questions and issues that are
5 going to have to be addressed and your local, you know,
6 decision-makers are going to have make decisions about.
7 You know, given the amount of money they have or can
8 generate, where do they want to invest that money? And
9 that's part of what this process is all about.

10 That's about all I have to add.

11 Mr. Carriere: Does anyone have any questions of
12 either the state or the federal folks? (Pause) I'm going
13 to ask Warren Myers to give us a quick location rundown on
14 the project and its setting.

15 Mr. Myers: I know probably why most of you are
16 here tonight is because you want to know where this is in
17 relation to where you are. Blaise has talked about some of
18 the elements of the corridor that we've laid out, that it's
19 essentially a mile wide. And we had one out front. I think
20 most of you got to look at it closely and can identify, but
21 I'll quickly cover. If you start on this side, on the
22 eastern side, if we start right at that interchange with
23 I-20 and Milhaven Road, the corridor is essentially

1 centered on that going to the north; it then curves around
2 going to the west. Fink's Hideaway Road is the northern

1 edge of the study area at that point.

2 It then comes to this area; there's a Russell-Sage
3 Wildlife Management Area in the Chauvin tract that is
4 fairly new. When we initially set up the corridor, we
5 didn't know that was there. So we went to the Wildlife &
6 Fisheries, and they told us yeah, there's a new wildlife
7 management area there. So in this area you'll see that we
8 had to broaden the band to enable us to go around that.
9 There's a federal law that says you can't go through fish
10 and wildlife preserves, parks, historical sites unless
11 there's no alternative to going around it. If there was a
12 very long linear type area and we couldn't demonstrate that
13 we couldn't go around it, then we might be able to go
14 through it. But there's a federal law that says we can't.
15 So we had to broaden the band there to allow us to go
16 either to the north or south of that area.

17 It then crosses the Ouachita River just south
18 essentially of where Bayou D'Arbonne comes in. It crosses
19 White's Ferry Road and then starts bending back to the
20 southwest to a point where it becomes centered essentially
21 on the Cheniere-Drew Road so as to take advantage of that
22 Cheniere-Drew Road interchange with I-20.

23 It then essentially follows Cheniere-Drew a little

1 piece down, begins curving back to the east in this area
2 south of Cheniere Lake. Caples Road is the northern edge

1 of the band. It then comes back across the Ouachita in the
2 area of Buckhorn Bend Loop, passes south of Richwood before
3 it starts coming back up. This little kink here looks a
4 little funny, but what happened is just south of that
5 interchange on Milhaven Road with I-20, we have the
6 Russell-Sage Wildlife Management Area and a large landfill
7 right there. So we had to kink around to get around those.

8 And that's essentially the study area that we're
9 involved in now. We have been and we still are in the
10 process of identifying--if you looked at the map out front,
11 or this one--churches, schools, subdivisions, cemeteries,
12 all those things that we talked about that are things that
13 we don't want to hit.

14 The next step, once we identify all those things, is to
15 see how we can get through there. We try to determine what
16 type of road are we looking at. We have a model that
17 projects what the traffic will be in those areas. Do you
18 need a two-lane road there? Do you need a four-lane road?
19 I don't think anybody has ever envisioned it being a
20 controlled-access interstate type road. We've never heard
21 from West Monroe or Monroe or Ouachita Parish say that they
22 think that's the type of road. We just don't think the
23 traffic is going to be of those large numbers where you're

1 looking at that. So you're probably looking -- OCOG asked
2 us to look, and one of the alternatives is: Can you

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1 improve Fink's Hideaway Road? Can you widen it and make it
2 part of the loop?

3 There's a number of advantages to those types of
4 things. It becomes less expensive and there's less harm to
5 the environment if you're able to make use of the existing
6 roads that you have by improving them. You can even take a
7 two-lane road, an existing two-lane road that may be a
8 little substandard, make it wider and put wider shoulders
9 on it and straighten it out in some of the curves, and use
10 that as part of the loop.

11 So we'll be looking at all those things and also at new
12 locations in some places. Certainly there are a lot of
13 areas where there are no roads going the way that the loop
14 wants to go, and we will be trying to miss that. Part of
15 what we'll look at is -- This is not a project where we're
16 trying to wipe out people's homes. I can assure you that
17 in drawing these things, we try to miss as much as we can.
18 And as the alternatives are evaluated, that's one of the
19 factors that's looked at: how many people are you
20 affecting. If one takes fewer than another one, generally
21 it's usually a preferred alternative.

22 Mr. Carriere: Anybody have any questions of
23 Warren and where we are, the physical location?

1 Mr. Bentz: Yeah. The Fink's Hideaway Road that
2 you were talking about, a possible widening of it, making

1 it a part of the loop, what is the design criteria for the
2 speed limit on a loop?

3 Mr. Myers: We haven't determined that. It may be
4 that when we look at this part that it should be a two-lane
5 road that would carry. We're not looking, I don't think,
6 at a 70-mile-an-hour highway going through there.

7 Mr. Bentz: No. But most loops, are they not
8 designed at 55 or 60 miles an hour speed, minimum speed?

9 Mr. Carriere: Not necessarily. And, again, what
10 we are talking about is something that would be in the
11 classification of an arterial. And there are three kind of
12 words, I guess, in our vocabulary as we try to describe
13 roadways: arterials, collectors, and locals. Arterial has
14 one special class within itself, and the interstate or the
15 freeway is a super arterial, so to speak. So sometimes
16 people will describe roadway systems in those four terms:
17 freeways, arterials, collectors, and locals.

18 What we are talking about is something of an arterial
19 nature that would loop the area. But an arterial in an
20 urban area can be 45-mile-an-hour or less, depending upon
21 development from a design standpoint. Most people, even
22 though you have a number that you design for, the way
23 people drive roads is what makes them comfortable. If you

1 believe all these good things we do at times, and you go
2 out and do a speed study, traffic study, what we literally

1 do is hide behind the bushes and clock how fast you're
2 going. And you'll find that 85 percent of the people
3 travel at some magic number. That's usually what then the
4 speed limit is set at. Because if they need revenue, you
5 can go out and give 15 percent of the people a ticket.

6 Mr. Bentz: Well, the reason I ask that
7 question --

8 Mr. Carriere: But that's kind of, again, the
9 process that happens. And in this instance, again, we're
10 looking at urban area. So you could be somewhere in the
11 order of magnitude of 45 versus, the upper end, it might be
12 in the 55-60. But that's not a preset sort of number.

13 Mr. Bueche: In the interest of keeping the record
14 straight, the assumption is that 85 percent of the people
15 will do what's reasonable and not that we're looking for
16 revenue (indiscernible).

17 Mr. Carriere: You can't be too serious
18 (indiscernible) stuff all the time.

19 Mr. Bentz: The reason I ask the question is,
20 Fink's Hideaway Road services a school, River Oaks School.
21 You can't have very fast speed limit in front of a school.
22 I'll give you an example of a section of road that's just
23 recently been built, that many people opposed, and which I

1 didn't at the time and still don't. It was Forsythe
2 Extension. It's set up for a 45-mile-an-hour speed zone.

1 And I live right there where the new part goes into
2 (indiscernible). And I'll eat your hat if you can find
3 anybody that does under 60.

4 Mr. Carriere: That's because they actually feel
5 comfortable. You've got to be careful, I guess if you want
6 to (indiscernible).

7 Mr. Bentz: But if you've got a thoroughfare
8 coming in front of the school, you've got a school there
9 you've got to consider.

10 Mr. Carriere: Very true. Very true. And that's
11 important from a design geometric standpoint. Again,
12 people literally use -- The comfort level that they feel
13 that they can do is how most people travel. When you go
14 back and do all these studies in that, it just works that
15 way. And I don't why. But when you're on, you know,
16 narrow lanes, speed goes down. Get on the interstate and
17 they put a shoulder out there, you know, you feel
18 comfortable, so you go faster. You've got the windows
19 rolled up and the air-conditioner on nowadays. You don't
20 even hear things any more. So those factors are very
21 important.

22 And then again in setting an arterial, that school
23 site, maybe one of the things we want to do is find a new

1 location that doesn't end up where the school is crossing
2 on the arterial. You know, you can handle things like

1 that, at least in design, that you want to allow yourself
2 enough latitude like that. By the same token, if the
3 school happens to be -- In many of the communities
4 throughout the state where a school is in a rural setting,
5 leaving the highway to get to the school property becomes
6 important: deceleration lanes, turn lanes in the middle.
7 Those sorts of things are all design features that can be
8 incorporated.

9 But, again, there's not some specific kind of a road
10 that we're trying to fit into this situation. We're trying
11 to find the appropriate solution for what the growth and
12 the development, if such is going to happen in Monroe, is
13 going to be. Important parts of this, now, -- And the next
14 time as we work with the steering committee, we're trying
15 to bring back those quantifiable things: How much growth
16 is projected here? Where is it going to occur? How does
17 the transportation system support that? Does it help it,
18 stimulate it, hurt it? Those are the issues.

19 The next thing I want to get into, though, is the
20 schedule. And that is an eye test in that little handout
21 we gave you; the print is kind of small. But if you look
22 in there, again, you can look at the tabs and there are
23 eight total paths that we're undertaking. We're in the

1 actual eighth month of the process. If you go down and
2 look at Tasks 2 and 3, Public Involvement is Number 3. The

1 little dot at the bottom of that is that public meeting
2 that's happening tonight. You'll notice the little
3 dotted-looking football things in there. Through our
4 consultants of Leader and Fernandez and ourselves, we're
5 available to come speak to groups or help in making some
6 special presentations, if need be, where we've got some
7 difficult issues that need to be worked out. So the
8 program is set up to do that.

9 You'll notice that there is a steering committee. We
10 mentioned that earlier. With how many all told folks?
11 About 30?

12 Mr. Myers: About 80.

13 Mr. Carriere: On the steering --

14 Mr. Myers: Eighty.

15 Mr. Carriere: Eighty?

16 Myers: Eighty names on it.

17 Mr. Carriere: Eighty people, all told, on a
18 steering committee. We've met twice with them in trying,
19 again, to get that sounding board circle going back and
20 forth in the information flow. And those will continue on
21 through the process. So we've hopefully got our ears up
22 and listening a little bit. The Dear Lord gave me two ears
23 and only one mouth, so you ought to listen more than you

1 talk. And I have trouble with that here, don't I?

2 But this is the schedule thing. You can see those

1 things that we're doing now. We've been assembling data,
2 under Task 3, we're looking at mobility issues, we're
3 trying to define travel demands and the like, and then
4 we're going to get into the land use and those factors that
5 are associated in Task 8, looking at iteratively now how
6 would different situations address transportation
7 requirements. And then in Task 7 we're going to get into
8 those economic and environmental factors analysis. And
9 then lastly, try to produce a report. Our target for
10 completion is the end of this year, December of '98. That's
11 what the schedule has laid out as we go through right now.

12 The other thing that we have, and it's a little handout
13 there, and I'm not going to go through all this because
14 everybody can read that at their leisure. But, the
15 important thing of the history of the project. We found
16 documentation dating back to 1968, some of the first
17 studies and discussions concerning loop roadways in the
18 Monroe area, leading up to where we began in July, late
19 June of this past year of 1997, with this project. And
20 that's all, again in your handout sheet.

21 So that's the project, the history, the data gathering,
22 and the like. The next thing is that Warren Myers is going
23 to go through and we're going to try to describe to you two

- 1 kind of beginning cornerstones of this process: the
- 2 purpose and need for the project. If it doesn't address

1 some demonstrated sort of a demand, what's the problem, so
2 to speak? Then the purpose of this project is to solve
3 that problem and it meets these needs. That's the process
4 that we're going to try to go through.

5 Mr. Myers: Before I get on that, one other thing
6 I wanted to point out is where this northern part of the
7 study area crosses the Ouachita is the area that the three
8 political entities--West Monroe, Monroe, and Ouachita
9 Parish--have agreed as a compromise area for a bridge to
10 cross. And I know y'all are familiar with the controversy
11 over where a third bridge could go. And this is the area
12 that those three entities have agreed upon as a compromise
13 area for that. Somebody sent me an article the other day,
14 and apparently a gentleman had written in the paper that he
15 thought that there was still a downtown site under
16 consideration.

17 Talking about purpose and need, purpose and need is a
18 requirement for projects of this type, and we're starting
19 early in the process trying to identify the purpose and
20 need. The federal agencies that are involved when we
21 get into later stages of the study, especially the
22 environmental impact statement, they want to be sure that
23 the project has a purpose and is serving a need, that it's

1 not, you know, a driveway into some politician's house that
2 we're providing. So basically we've defined some things

1 that have worked on other projects and generally fit this
2 project, and this will be an ongoing thing trying to define
3 purpose and need.

4 The steering committee met today, and there were a lot
5 of good points made that our initial shot at purpose and
6 need needs to be refined and made more specific in some
7 areas that they felt it was far too general. But for our
8 first shot, we were saying that the purpose of this
9 facility was to provide a transportation facility around
10 the Monroe-West Monroe urbanized area that connects I-20 on
11 the east and west. And that comes from the legislation
12 that set up the money for this. It essentially dictated
13 that this study look at a connector that connects I-20 to
14 I-20. Coan made the statement he didn't know that it was
15 disconnected. But that was the way the legislation read
16 that provided that money. It moves people and goods more
17 efficiently, promotes orderly land use development,
18 improves public safety, and provides a framework upon which
19 the future transportation system can be developed. And
20 like I said, that that's just an initial shot at what we
21 think the purpose of this project is.

22 The need goes into a whole litany of things:
23 transportation demand and capacity, safety, legislative

1 directive that's been handed down, economic development,
2 planned growth and social demands, system linkage,

1 condition of the existing facilities, inclusion in the
2 transportation plan, and corridor preservation. Corridor
3 preservation is -- Once we've identified something as to
4 where this project should be, then the local governments
5 can hopefully take some steps to at least advise people
6 that, you know, there is a facility plan in that area and
7 try to discourage them from building in there so we can
8 preserve that. There are some zoning things that can occur
9 also and generally try to save that. Because as mentioned
10 before, if you look, Ouachita Parish has got these large
11 wildlife management areas that essentially are surrounded
12 in this area. Like I mentioned, too, there's a federal law
13 that you can't go through those with projects like this as
14 long as there's an opportunity to go around. So we almost
15 feel that a loop of this nature has to occur in this area
16 at this time or you may lose the opportunity to have a loop
17 at this point close enough in to give you some benefits at
18 this time. The next step would be you would have to go
19 beyond those wildlife management areas, and it would really
20 be far out and probably not too many people would use it.

21 Mr. Carriere: Well, we almost did it. We were
22 shooting for trying to be at 8:15 to go through that, and
23 we're at 8:20. So we're kind of close to schedule. What

1 we would like to do now is again throw this open for
2 discussion, questions, comments that you might have. And,

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1 again, our court reporter person will record those so that
2 we can take due note of that. Going back to the schedule
3 again, there is a section, Public Meeting, that will occur
4 in Month 15. I will transfer it in numbers. Let's see,
5 Month 15 should be about September or so of this year when
6 we will have a full gathering of anybody interested from
7 the community to attend again. The steering committee
8 meetings will be going on as you see in those other little
9 dots.

10 So, does anyone have a question, comment, whatever?
11 Yes, sir. Identify yourself, if you would, please, sir.

12 Mr. Grimes: Danny Grimes. I was wondering what
13 the status of the proposal that was made about going across
14 Cheniere Lake.

15 Mr. Carriere: The cutting a corner?

16 Mr. Grimes: Right.

17 Mr. Carriere: David, do you want to handle that?,
18 because it went through the OCOG things. He's outside.

19 Mr. Bentz: The question you refer to, that it
20 won't cost more and it won't cost less?

21 Mr. Grimes: No. The question I'm referring to is
22 where is it going across Cheniere Lake and what's going to
23 be the impact on it whenever they decide the federal

1 government is going to be involved.

2 Mr. Bentz: It's going around. It's going around

1 the lake.

2 Mr. Carriere: In discussions at OCOG, and that's
3 why I wanted David to answer that, because he's more -- of
4 all the meeting steps that took place. We meet essentially
5 monthly with David and Coan and Warren to go through the
6 different things that have taken place. A proposal was
7 made to cut the corner here rather than skirt Cheniere Lake
8 to go through this area: could we look at such an
9 alternative as that? The reason it wasn't in there
10 initially is that, again, going across the lake, the
11 environmental consequences of that we thought automatically
12 shifted it up. And in setting up the work program, we
13 avoided touching Cheniere Lake simply because of its status
14 as a recreational lake and an environmental resource.
15 That's not to say that some sort of an elevated structure
16 that has the minimal amount of impact--something like that
17 goes across the Atchafalaya; I-10 crosses the Atchafalaya;
18 parts of I-10 crosses into St. Charles Parish on elevated
19 structure through the LaBrauch wetlands--could not possibly
20 be used there. In order to go back now and reconnoiter
21 those things at that location would have required a
22 reshifting of the work plan to do that. That matter was
23 brought back to OCOG, the body of the six people that David

1 mentioned earlier, and in reconsidering whether or not we
2 should alter the work plan or not, it's my understanding

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1 that OCOG tabled the matter, that it did not choose to
2 either add this in or to change the work program. So it
3 rose to a hearing, was tabled and set aside. That's what's
4 happened to it as far as I understand to be their -- And
5 David Creed can --

6 Mr. Marshall: Well, I can address that. As of
7 last night, the police jury amended--who was the only
8 holdout on that. It's been a learning process, believe me,
9 as to what the factors are that goes into this. But we
10 amended our part of that. We were the hangup there. We
11 amended our plan to coincide with what the engineers wanted
12 to do originally. And so OCOG is now going to proceed just
13 as we had originally planned to do.

14 Mr. Carriere: So we're holding this corridor
15 line?

16 Mr. Marshall: We're holding that corridor on the
17 outside.

18 Mr. Grimes: So Cheniere Lake is out then. Right?

19 Mr. Carriere: We were not crossing --

20 Mr. Marshall: We won't be crossing Cheniere Lake.

21 Mr. Carriere: We would not cross it. (Pause)

22 Yes, sir.

23 Mr. Mintz: Just a statement, please.

1 Mr. Carriere: Certainly.

2 Mr. Mintz: I'm representing Citizens Against

1 Forsythe Bridge. It's not a controversy here. Our group
2 represents thousands of citizens. My name is Steve Mintz,
3 and I live in Monroe. Citizens Against Forsythe Bridge is
4 thrilled with this Ouachita Loop Project. Thirdly, the
5 large majority of our planning members in consensus feel
6 that if this needs to be done in segments, we support the
7 northern bridge segment first. Thank you.

8 Mr. Carriere: Anyone else? (Pause) Yes, sir.

9 Mr. Maroney: I'm John Maroney. I'm in the
10 process of doing some outside drainage work for the City of
11 Monroe. In '91 we had a major flood in Ouachita Parish.
12 Part of it was the result of the fact that LaFourche backed
13 itself out all the way into the City of Monroe. Is there
14 any way that in planning of this particular loop you're
15 talking about the segment from I-20 on the eastern side
16 southwest across that whole area through there be a raised
17 section with pump stations placed at Young's Bayou, Bennett
18 Bayou. And Long Chita is somewhere in that area. Raccoon
19 Bayou. And in doing that, we can combine the state funding
20 for the state-wide flood control programs, get the pump
21 stations funded with what we've got to have, one that this
22 project has been proposed to the Corps of Engineers already
23 one time before after the '91 flood. But one of the things

1 is the fact that the levee system through there would be a
2 major expense to what we're doing. With the highway coming

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1 through there, it would be an ideal time to get the highway
2 to be built up, because you're going to have to raise it up
3 to a certain elevation to keep it from flooding that area
4 anyway, because most of that whole corridor in '91 was
5 under water. So we're asking that the possibility for us
6 and the police jury together to maybe get that whole
7 corridor in through there. That way we can keep water --
8 In the '91 flood, water backed all the way up to Forsythe
9 in the City of Monroe, which is way up there. And this
10 would help control the flooding of the entire south side of
11 Monroe. It'll eliminate the flooding with a combination of
12 pump stations. We'd like for y'all, if possible, to help
13 incorporate that into y'all's plans.

14 Mr. Bentz: You're talking about earthen
15 embankment rather than elevated highway system?

16 Mr. Maroney: Right.

17 Mr. Carriere: Well, in all likelihood, the
18 majority of this would be considered as a roadway built on
19 grade on the ground itself. The ultimate design feature of
20 that would be consistent with drainage. The concept that
21 you're proposing is not something that we would necessarily
22 explore and try to develop that as a part. But if there is
23 any governmental agencies, be it a local levee board or the

1 planning bodies of the parish or of the city that has that
2 niche as part of the long-range drainage protection or

1 flood protection program, the combining of the embankment
2 of the road to satisfy the drainage requirements could
3 possibly occur. Typically, though, the approach for the
4 roadway design is such that even when we do put in an
5 embankment, whatever the water flow is, be it north to
6 south or south to north, if it was backwater flooding, the
7 idea from the highway designer standpoint is don't upset
8 whatever is going on right now. The highway is to try to
9 be unintrusive. But if you did as another part of the
10 plan, as part of the drainage plan, which is beyond the
11 scope and responsibility of the Department of
12 Transportation and the highway function, we're not opposed
13 to the idea of what you're expressing, incorporating both.
14 It's a joint use facility in that regard.

15 Mr. Maroney: Right. That's all I'm saying.

16 Mr. Carriere: That's possible. And I don't think
17 anything that we would necessarily do would be addressing
18 precluding what you're proposing to happen, but nor would
19 we necessarily be jumping on as an advocate and say we
20 ought to do that. Now, because of what you've said
21 tonight, somewhere in there that idea and concept is going
22 to get mentioned. And whoever is the appropriate local
23 body that that would be adopted--that's the long-range plan

1 as it relates to drainage, these two should be combined--we
2 would look to that authority to comment on that in the

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1 inclusion of this program.

2 That was a complicated long-winded answer, but that's
3 the way I think it's supposed to happen. (Pause) Yes,
4 sir.

5 Mr. Morris: Yes. I'm Tom Morris. I live out off
6 Jonesboro Road, outside the loop proposal. There's been
7 concern in our community lately about railroad safety.
8 Will all railroad crossings be upgraded to overpasses or
9 underpasses? And the one underpass I know of, will it be
10 improved and made a little wider, out on the Cheniere-Drew
11 Road?

12 Mr. Bentz: You're talking about federal
13 regulations.

14 Mr. Carriere: Railroad crossings is essentially
15 the question: what happens when we cross one? If there
16 happens to be already the public privilege, in a sense, to
17 cross the railroad track at grade, in all likelihood at the
18 initial steps of development we would continue to maintain
19 an at-grade type crossing unless there is some history of
20 vehicular-train conflict, accidents, and whatever that
21 would warrant going through a grade-separated level. If
22 part of this new loop crossed a track where we don't have
23 the privilege, in a sense, of crossing the railroad

1 right-of-way, we have to then negotiate to get across that
2 with the railroad company. They drive a very, very hard

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1 bargain of allowing another at-grade crossing. So the
2 likelihood is if we don't have a place to go across, in
3 order to get across it will be a grade separation; it
4 becomes a cost of the project. Railroads, you know, own
5 typically those rights-of-way. Although they're a hundred
6 feet wide, they're tough to go around.

7 And in that regard if there's an at-grade there, we
8 would more than likely take advantage of that. If we don't
9 have one, we can end up with a grade separation. But even
10 the at-grades in today's implementation era would be bells,
11 lights, and whistles, the safest possible at-grade crossing
12 that we would have in a situation like that.

13 Mr. Myers: Is there a history of wrecks at that
14 location?

15 Mr. Morris: Well, there's been a history of
16 wrecks in our parish lately at a lot of our crossings.

17 Mr. Carriere: There is a significant move between
18 both the railroad and most communities to go back and
19 reexamine the number of at-grade crossings that we have to
20 try to reduce some of them, to actually eliminate some.
21 But it's going to be at an inconvenience. You have fewer
22 places to cross, but it's overall perhaps in the public's
23 best interest to do that. (Pause) Yes, sir, Bobby?

1 Mr. Bentz: Bobby Bentz again. By the way, I've
2 worked off a lot of set of plans that Bergendoff and

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1 Needles have drawn. I'm a contractor here locally.

2 Mr. Carriere: That's good. We like to know that.

3 Mr. Bentz: Are you familiar with this document?

4 Mr. Carriere: Yeah. We did it, I think.

5 Mr. Bentz: The ink is still wet. According to
6 this document, --

7 Mr. Carriere: This was some of what we did
8 earlier today, which is for the steering committee.

9 Mr. Bentz: According to this document, by the
10 year 2020 you're showing that the west side of the loop,
11 north would be 25,000?

12 Mr. Carriere: Right around this area.

13 Mr. Bentz: And 10,000?

14 Mr. Carriere: Right.

15 Mr. Bentz: Try to explain this to me.

16 Mr. Carriere: All right. What Bobby has is when
17 we were going over it with the steering committee today,
18 this was our work agenda and program to go through as we're
19 looking at it. There is a series of numbers in here that
20 said what level of traffic utilization might occur on a
21 segment of this route within that loop. These numbers were
22 produced in that transportation planning process that was
23 done in 1996. So this is not our work product, and I don't

1 mean to disown it in that regard, but rather to set the
2 context in which the numbers came about. If you went down

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1 to the OCOG planning office right now and said, "What does
2 it look like this facility might draw in the way of traffic
3 assignment?" these were the numbers that we found were
4 produced in the 1996 plan.

5 There were several locations along here. The first one
6 is the so-called west side. This is described as being
7 west and just north of I-20, which would be in this general
8 area. Given what the future growth factors that have been
9 included in the computer model that was run at that time by
10 that planning group and OCOG, it was estimated that trip-
11 making on a loop route, if there were one in here, would be
12 in the order of magnitude of 25,000 vehicles per day in
13 that general area. South of I-20, in that general area
14 again, would be in the order of magnitude of 10,000
15 vehicles per day. On the north side west of US 165 would
16 be a traffic volume in the order of magnitude of about
17 9,000 vehicles per day. On the east side, about 14,000
18 vehicles per day in this. And we don't know whether
19 they're talking about the whole lane, where along that
20 route; these were just numbers that were in a planning
21 document that we looked at to get some feel for where these
22 were to, again, present it to our steering committee today:
23 what kind of numbers are we talking about?

1 The next set was on the east side just north of I-20.
2 This was in the order of magnitude of 9,000 vehicles per

1 day; on the south side, about four. And then coming down
2 here on the west side near 165 again, about 6,000 per day
3 and 3,000 on this side.

4 So those are the order of magnitude of volumes of
5 traffic that were projected by the model back in 1996.

6 Mr. Bentz: Are these --

7 Mr. Carriere: We're going to look at those
8 numbers again ourselves. We have obtained a model from
9 OCOG, and we're going through right now and looking at what
10 produces that trip-making, that sort of thing.

11 Mr. Bentz: Are these numbers generated off of
12 actual ADT's?

13 Mr. Carriere: No. The way they come about is,
14 there are several planning factors: the population, the
15 number of households, the number of retail jobs that are in
16 a particular area, the total number of jobs that are in the
17 area, school trips. Those are all used in a mathematical
18 formula that projects trip-making, first of all. It goes
19 into saying, given all those factors, how many trips will
20 be produced. Then we look at all of the other end of the
21 trip, the trip end, for trip attractions. And the first
22 thing they have to do is a balancing goes on. And this is,
23 again, a hypothetical thing that once you've done it, the

1 first thing you try to do is reproduce a given year. So
2 you do all this number crunching, you run it through, and

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1 then you do a comparison to what's out there today. And if
2 your mathematical numbers agree with what's out there
3 today, say "Hey, I'm pretty good. I can make this thing
4 happen," and it reproduces what's going on in the real
5 world. Now if you project what the future of those
6 numbers--population, households, retail jobs, home and
7 employment--is, here's what the trip-making in the future
8 might be. And then if I had a network that's different
9 from today, how would they be assigned?

10 And there are two factors to that that are important,
11 what we call the gravity model. A trip from here to there
12 is based upon the square of how far you go. If I go from
13 here to there and it's two miles away, two times two is
14 four, so I make that trip based on that fraction of four.
15 If it's three miles a way, it's three times three is nine.
16 There's a big difference in the attractiveness then of the
17 trip that's only two miles away versus three miles away,
18 and that's how the model then, this mathematical model,
19 produces these numbers. One, we can make it produce in
20 today's world, and we try to use it to look at the future
21 world.

22 One other example, and that's beyond what we did, but
23 he asked the question and I think y'all need to hear the

1 answer. An example I use is like a bowling alley. When we
2 all leave here tonight, we're going to go bowling. If you

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1 calculate how many people want to go bowling, that's the
2 trip productions. If we go out and count the bowling
3 alleys, that's the trip attraction. If 40 of us are going
4 to go bowling tonight and there's 50 bowling lanes, then we
5 use the number 40 as the trip productions and attractions.
6 There are going to be 10 empty lanes. You don't use the 50
7 for trip-making.

8 So it's that kind of correlation that goes together,
9 and we crunch all those numbers, and that's what makes
10 engineer folks happy to do those things. But it does give
11 us a way to come back and then show to you as best we can
12 with our crystal ball as to what the consequences of a
13 particular action or segment to the network might or might
14 not be. That's how we get them.

15 Mr. Bentz: The reason I ask that question is, I
16 think a lot of people in here feel like a loop is just like
17 a four-lane road for the future for us. We've heard some
18 two-lane costs. To give you an example, there was a lady
19 that wrote a letter to the editor about two weeks ago about
20 the Jonesboro Road section. She said there must be 5,000
21 cars a day that come up the Jonesboro Road section. At the
22 Cheniere Lake area, and I got these numbers from DOT, from
23 Mr. Donnie Culver, these are authentic numbers. Actual

1 numbers come off of your reading, is that right?

2 (No audible response)

1 Mr. Bentz: There's no estimate and there's
2 guessing. In 1995, there wasn't 5,000 cars a day that came
3 up Highway 34, it was 9,840.

4 Mr. Carriere: Where? Now, tell me what two
5 numbers we're comparing.

6 Mr. Bentz: Highway 34, the actual ADT. ADT is
7 average daily travel counts. Okay?

8 Mr. Carrier: Yeah. Now, you're comparing that
9 number to what number?

10 Mr. Bentz: I'm just showing the average daily --
11 Do you want to pass these (indicating documents) over
12 there, sir? The average daily -- What I'm trying to do is
13 show the traffic count into Monroe in this conception of a
14 loop. At White's Ferry Road coming down from the north,
15 the traffic count is 11,620 vehicles a day. At the Drew
16 School area out on Highway 15, the traffic count is 5,730 a
17 day, and that's one of the lowest ones I have. At US 165
18 between Loop Road and Highway 80 in the
19 Northeast University area--and I think we have a real
20 problem developing at Northeast; we cannot service it
21 traffic-wise--the traffic count there is 32,350 vehicles
22 every 24 hours. A lot of us know that because we're bogged
23 up in that traffic. But many of you may not know how many

1 vehicles this is. This is 32,350. From US 165 at 80 where
2 Northeast is back to Interstate 20, there's 45,000 vehicles

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1 every 24 hours. At US 80 at Lincoln Road, right in that
2 area where Ray's Pege is--a lot of people know where that
3 is--it's 17,510. Just below the Highway 15 interchange at
4 US 165, this would be where Winnsboro Road and US 165
5 interchange, 21,630 vehicles a day. I was unable to get
6 one from Don English to totally compile this information
7 for me in front of the university at Highway 80. I would
8 be really curious what that traffic count is. I wonder if
9 our numbering system will go high enough to count it.

10 Let's talk about the interstate bridge just a minute.
11 And I'm not attacking this, because we trying
12 to (indiscernible).

13 Mr. Carriere: No. And what I would say to you,
14 all of those numbers, if you go look at what David and Doug
15 have on the computer today, their model will reflect those
16 numbers.

17 Mr. Bentz: The numbers that I saw here are 20
18 years from now.

19 Mr. Carriere: That's correct. But none of those
20 routes that those numbers were reflected upon even exist
21 today, and when you go back and look, what you're going to
22 see is some of the roads that Bobby is mentioning right now
23 would be affected by adding in a new segment. And as I

1 pointed out to you earlier, the nature of the Ouachita
2 River and the fact that there are only these three

1 crossings dictates very heavily what happens from east to
2 west. Every trip that wants to cross that river, in any
3 east-west fashion, has to come to that neck of the funnel
4 so that the route that -- He described a number of those,
5 80 and 15 and the like. You know, they just naturally come
6 that way.

7 Now what's going to happen if we introduce this other
8 link, you've now got a choice. Instead of having to come
9 in and go across, some of that may actually go out, up, and
10 over. And what was reflected in that page that he asked to
11 read you those numbers were if those links were in there,
12 what sort of a number might we expect in the year 2015?
13 You might go back and see on some of those sections of 165,
14 because two things are happening, more trip-making is
15 occurring because there are more people here, but they now
16 have another way of doing it, so there is a shifting around
17 of what goes on. And that's, again, a great deal of what
18 we hope you can get to see the details of as we do move
19 forward. Every number that he has in there is a ground
20 count, and I'll tell you that's not the real world. But
21 what we can tell you, hopefully, is that the basis under
22 which the model that we're projecting the future would've
23 reflected today's conditions.

1 Mr. Bentz: Do you think that that reflection in
2 that model 20 years from now is a reflection of what we

1 actually have now, or do you think it may be conservative?

2 Mr. Carriere: It's representative. I don't think
3 it's plus-minus. It's representative.

4 Mr. Bentz: Okay. I have two more locations, and
5 I want to mention these because everyone in here has a
6 vested interest in this. We've been listening to a loop in
7 Monroe since Jack Howard in 1964. That's been 34 years
8 ago. It's time for a loop.

9 Unidentified Female Member of Audience: Bobby,
10 what about Fink's Hideaway coming into 165?

11 Mr. Bentz: I didn't get that one, ma'am, and --

12 Ms. (unidentified): That's the main one.

13 Mr. Bentz: I need to get that. I have two more.
14 One of them is a real heated issue: Forsythe Avenue. Boy,
15 that one has been beat to death. Between 18th Street and
16 19th Street, the traffic count is 21,230 vehicles per
17 24-hour period. But I want to get -- I saved the last one
18 because it's the most important, and I think it involves
19 all of us. We have a bridge on the Interstate 20 bridge
20 that I understand that the design of that bridge is no
21 longer used because of the incline curve in that bridge.
22 It's not what they call a desirable design in this day and
23 time. Built 30 years ago. Now, I can't prove that. I've

1 been told that by some engineers. That bridge today,
2 recorded in 1996, had 64,830 vehicles per day for a 24-hour

1 period. I lost a child on the interstate last year, and it
2 wasn't on this bridge. This bridge is heavily, heavily
3 overloaded. We're talking about, roughly, -- You're
4 talking about seven years before you begin construction;
5 did I understand that?

6 Mr. Carriere: That's an optimistic date.

7 Mr. Bentz: Time is very optimistic, because if
8 you come through here, I think you've got about 12 years of
9 nothing but dealing with the Corps of Engineers on permits.
10 I'm so tired of dealing with the Corps of Engineers.

11 Ms. Burton, me and you have been down this road. The Corps
12 of Engineers is real similar to Saddam Hussein. They are a
13 despotism controlled by a very handful of people that work.

14 Unidentified Female Member of Audience: We've got
15 to get started sometime, though.

16 Mr. Bentz: If you don't think they're not a
17 despotism, they've got plans for you here for the next
18 hundred years, and you have flooded four times since 1956.
19 I was born in 1946; that makes me 410 years old because the
20 hundred-year flood level is 71. Now, something is bad
21 wrong with the Corps of Engineers, and yet they tell us
22 when we come up here to build this leg of this, "Well,
23 you're going to go through here and we've got ferns and

1 lizards." So what? Who the hell cares. We've got 64,000
2 cars going across the I-20 bridge and people getting

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1 killed. It's time to send the Corps of Engineers and the
2 U.S. Wildlife and Fisheries--correct me if I'm wrong--back
3 to the marshland because this act in Congress, was it not
4 designed to save the marshland?

5 Mr. Carriere: NEPA was. NEPA says you must
6 address those issues.

7 Mr. Bentz: We're a long way from a stone crab
8 right here. But I'm going to tell you what we're going to
9 do. The Corps of Engineers came in here and they raised
10 the river and they made it navigable. Then after they did,
11 Ms. Burton and I and everybody in here that got flooded, we
12 worked in that flood. Joe, you know. They came up here in
13 Chauvin -- John Maroney? They came up in Chauvin and they
14 said, "You need a 450 cubic foot pump." Six months later
15 they said, "No, you need a 250 cubic foot pump." People,
16 we're going to flood again. Y'all know that? We're gong
17 to have another flood in here, folks. We have come real
18 close to it, and the water is uncontrollable. So, yes, I
19 think you need to go with Mr. Maroney's plan and examine
20 doing an earthen embankment up here as well because Monroe
21 cannot do anything. We are in a hole because they raised
22 the river so that Angus could send stuff down the river
23 where the barges break and kill everything in it. Okay?

1 That's the truth. If you build an earthen loop around this
2 town, not only will you open it up for us to get to and

1 from town and help the university, you will also dry us
2 out.

3 Mr. Maroney: Good job, Bobby.

4 (Applause)

5 Mr. Carriere: You said something that was
6 significant, the loss of a child, and I'm sorry for that.

7 The bridge, just so that the context of that interstate
8 structure -- is basically four-lane. There are some
9 six-lanes where ramps come on and off as you go across. It
10 would be classified today as functionally deficient in that
11 it does not have any interior shoulder or exterior
12 shoulder, which we would build if we were building the same
13 pavement with today. So that bridge at the time it was
14 designed met all of the standards. It still complies in
15 the vintage of what it was constructed to be. And most of
16 the interstate -- There's a good deal of that throughout
17 the area that is now considered to be functionally
18 deficient, but it performs and does what it's supposed to
19 do. It is appropriately signed and regulated in that
20 regard. And there are a couple of interesting things about
21 that. When you're coming east to west, I think it's the
22 Second Street exit off--maybe it's the Seventh Street as
23 you come off--it almost looks like the right side is on the

1 left side and you go off to the right. So there's some
2 vertical curvature in there. But the posted numbers and

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1 speed and all are as consistent as you can make those
2 public adhering then to those regulations. But if you
3 over-drive the situation, some difficult things could
4 occur.

5 The numbers, again on a structure like that, of
6 60-some-odd-thousand on a four-lane controlled-access is
7 approaching the upper limits of what -- We grade highways.
8 You get A, B, C, D, E, or F in its performance. And at
9 that level, particularly during peak hours, that section of
10 road in all likelihood would grade out somewhere around as
11 a D or an F in being able to carry the traffic demands on
12 it. And again it goes back to the fact that in the choice
13 of looking at all of these bridge crossings, that one is
14 the highest speed, the most dependable, and the one that
15 attracts the trips. Louisville goes off then as second.
16 DeSiard (phonetic) or DeSiard (phonetic) -- It's an A not
17 an R; huh?

18 Unidentified Member of Audience: DeSiard.

19 Mr. Carriere: DeSiard is under utilized because
20 it is also functionally deficient in terms of the width of
21 the lanes. There is a third bridge, but hardly anybody
22 goes on it. To say hello, you can wave to the person
23 coming the other way because you can see him eyeball to

1 eyeball when you're going across. So, you know, the
2 facilities, again, it's a lot of water in flooding; they

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1 seek their own level. You all know what's the best way to
2 travel in a trip to do something like that.

3 And I guess the numbers -- If anything, Bobby, I feel
4 like you've said some things that we're anticipating will
5 occur. You're going to see a shifting of travel patterns
6 as you put new lines and segments into the network. And
7 what you're asking me is to tell me what do these numbers
8 look in 2015 so I can compare them to some of these. I
9 think we're going to be able to do that and, for one, maybe
10 all of them go up to some extent because you've got to
11 absorb the growth in that.

12 Mr. Bentz: I just feel like they're low.

13 Mr. Carriere: You know, the numbers are
14 interesting too. At one time we were accused of
15 overstating the thing, and then when they get utilized,
16 they say, "Well, y'all sure blew that number; it's
17 understated." So what we're trying to do is a realistic
18 middle ground posture as it relates to those. And, again,
19 those numbers, if anyone wishes to go back and look and see
20 how they're processed, Doug is an expert on the trans-plan
21 stage at the office. He'll crank his computer up and let
22 you examine any link that's in there. (Pause) Yes, sir?

23 Mr. Watkins: My name is Ed Watkins. I'm a

1 citizen of West Monroe. I didn't hear anything in your
2 mathematical model which described growth. We have some

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1 fast-changing demographics in Ouachita Parish. There's a
2 real acceleration in the growth of West Ouachita Parish.
3 I'd just like to make sure that the DOT considers that in
4 developing that model and determining how the roads are
5 designed.

6 Mr. Carriere: Growth and all of those factors--
7 what's the projected population in the year 2015, what's
8 the projected number of households--not only do we want to
9 know the gross number, but we want to know your best
10 estimate of: where will they be, what will be the
11 distribution of those, is there more residential
12 development here than there, is there more industrial
13 development? So it's not only a case of how much, but
14 where. And then we do have -- or a projection has been
15 made of that. That's not a charge for us to go out and
16 make that projection, but rather to utilize that
17 information which has already been developed for that
18 lookout to 2020 sort of thing. And then those factors go
19 into those two equations that produce the trip attractions
20 and the trip-making. We're trying to estimate. Are they
21 going to build six more bowling alleys out there in the
22 future to go along with the six more bowlers that we're
23 going to have come on.

1 So it's that sort of a process. And, yes, sir, that
2 growth component of all of those factors is included. I

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1 might add, though, that Louisiana has experienced some very
2 interesting roller-coaster numbers as it relates to growth.
3 And one of the things that we do rely upon are people who
4 are expert in that field. I'm not so sure that -- I think
5 Northeast is the official place of estimating population
6 for the whole state of Louisiana.

7 Unidentified Female Member of Audience: Tech.
8 Louisiana Tech.

9 Mr. Carriere: It's Tech that does it?

10 Ms. (unidentified): Uh-huh. Louisiana Tech.

11 Mr. Carriere: For some reason I thought it was a
12 faculty member at Northeast that did that.

13 But those numbers, then, are extremely important in
14 trying to guesstimate, project, whatever, the future is
15 going to be. But I know our local paper at home carried
16 some articles the other day. Although Louisiana is
17 experiencing I think a very positive economy right now,
18 we're not growing as fast as other segments of the country
19 are growing right now. We might be doing it statewide, at
20 a three- to four-percent rate, when nationally that's
21 seven. So we're falling behind almost by a factor of two.

22 Mr. Bentz: We never recovered from the oil.

23 Mr. Carriere: You know, if you lived in

1 Lafayette -- We happen to be doing another project in
2 Lafayette. Those folks are still reaching up to touch

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1 bottom. And it is, you know, positive there. But they
2 were devastated during that period of the late '70s and
3 early '80s by a downturn, and all of those categories are
4 coming back. Baton Rouge happens to be a very strong area,
5 and it's mainly because we've got government, universities,
6 and petrochemical. We're a little more recession-proof
7 than other major cities. Shreveport is experiencing some
8 interesting things, dynamics of all those Texans and
9 Arkansans coming over there to lose their money. But, you
10 know, those factors, you can't guess them and we're not
11 trying to do your peaks. We're trying to hit the best
12 anticipated average.

13 Any other questions? It's nearly 9 and I don't want to
14 keep you so your mama says I had you out too late.

15 Unidentified Member of Audience: How many miles
16 is the total loop --

17 Mr. Carriere: I'm sorry?

18 Unidentified Member of Audience: How many miles
19 is the total loop?

20 Mr. Carriere: What is it, Warren, 33-something?
21 Where's Warren?

22 Mr. Myers: Almost 40.

23 Mr. Carriere: Almost 40.

1 Mr. Keys: I've got a question here.

2 Mr. Carriere: Yes, sir.

1 Mr. Keys: My name is Danny Keys. In regard to
2 the purpose and need on the -- I believe we called it the
3 improved public safety. How would the -- We've been
4 answered about the railroad tracks. But the stop signs and
5 redlights, how will that configure there?

6 Mr. Carriere: Let me talk about safety just a
7 quick minute. Think about US 165 and I-20. They are two
8 different types of facilities in terms of I-20 is control
9 of access but a higher speed and more rapid decision-
10 making. If you look at the number of vehicles that use
11 that and the number of accidents that occur, we calculate
12 accident rate in vehicle miles traveled: what's then the
13 frequency of an accident given the total vehicle miles
14 traveled? And we would do the same thing on 165. But 165
15 is not control of access. There's a lot of driveway
16 access, there's a lot of at-grade crossings or at-grade
17 intersections, traffic signals, and the like. Just off the
18 top of my head, I can't tell you which one is actually
19 safer than the other, but you can go back and look at those
20 numbers as it relates to the kind of accident rate that
21 happens on a freeway versus the kind of accident rate that
22 happens on an arterial, which 165 is. And in making the
23 decision as to the safety aspects of the kind of road that

1 we're proposing then, if it is similar to 165, we might
2 then be expecting that level of experience. And for the

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1 sake of discussion, suppose it was higher than what
2 happened on 20. Then we know that that's a negative mark
3 when we're considering that kind of a facility versus the
4 freeway. But it's also cheaper. So where does money and
5 safety and those issues come together? But that's how you
6 include the safety component in your analysis. You're
7 going to look at the type of road and the type of exposure
8 that then exposes the public to in the utilization of that
9 road. Does that make any sense to you?

10 Mr. Keys: Yes.

11 Mr. Carriere: If anyone is interested in seeing
12 some of how this Internet connection works, Karen can show
13 you that. We appreciate your coming out tonight.

14 What, we got a door prize?

15 Mr. Myers: If anybody here didn't speak and you
16 still want to make a comment, or even those who have
17 spoken, we're going to put these sheets out on the front
18 table, and you can write down your comments. It's self-
19 addressed back to Coan. All you have to do is fold it and
20 put a stamp on it and it will come back in to Coan. So we
21 put these on the front desk. If you want to make a written
22 comment and send it in, they're available and you can pick
23 them up on your way out.

1 Mr. Carriere: And if there's some facet of this
2 that -- a group that you belong to or thought we need to do

1 a little more interesting or a little more follow-up with,
2 again, through David, through Coan, and through ourselves,
3 contact us and we'll be happy to try to make sure you get
4 the information. Again we appreciate your coming tonight,
5 and if there's anything that we can do to be of assistance,
6 call on us. Thank you again.

7 Mr. Myers: Thank you.

(The public hearing was concluded at 9:00 p.m. CST)

Date

Betty P. Toms, CCR #88032