

# Public Meeting Summary

## Individual Environmental Report 13 Hero Canal Levee and Eastern Tie In, Plaquemines Parish Thurs., Jan. 8, 2009

<b>Location</b>	St. Paul Benevolent Association Hall 128 E. St. Peter St. Belle Chasse, LA 70037
<b>Time</b>	Open House 6 p.m. Presentation 7 p.m.-9 p.m.
<b>Attendees</b>	Approx. 39
<b>Format</b>	Open House Presentation Discussion
<b>Handouts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Borrow Handout 1.7.09</li> <li>• HSDRRS Status Maps</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitator</b>	Rene Poche, public affairs

Rose Jackson, Vice President Oakville Community Group

Good evening, I am Rose Jackson Vice President of the Oakville Community Group. I am happy to see all the people who turned out this afternoon and it is my pleasure to turn things over to the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Rene Poche, public affairs



Good evening and thank your for coming out to tonight's meeting. I am Rene Poche the facilitator of tonight's meeting. Before we get started, there are a few ground rules and people to introduce. First, please hold all questions until the presenter finishes the presentation because your questions may be answered during the presentation. After the presentation there will be a discussion session and I'll have a few more ground rules. There

are a few people I would like to recognize, Blair Rittiner from Plaquemines Parish and James McMenis, from the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. From the Corps we have:

Ted Carr	Project manager Westbank and Vicinity
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Julie Vignes	Senior project manager
Soheila Holley	Senior project manager borrow
Reuben Mabry	Risk and Reliability
Gib Owen	Senior environmental manager
El Pilie	Engineering division

The Corps has held over 100 meetings in the past 18 to 20 months. It is important for us to get your feedback tonight and everything will be recorded for the Individual Environmental Report 13 document.

Julie Vignes, senior project manager



I am Julie Vignes, a senior project manager at the Corps. We are here to explain the proposed action to reduce risk to communities in Plaquemines Parish. Specifically tonight we are discussing Individual Environmental Report 13 that describes the action for the Hero Levee and the area we call the Eastern Tie-In [which connects to the Mississippi River levee in] Oakville.



The National Environmental Policy Act is a federal law required of all federal actions. Often it is referred to as NEPA. It tells the federal government it must seek public involvement to help in determining decisions of what to construct. Community concerns, the human and natural environmental impacts are taken into consideration. NEPA governs the process and [project impacts and benefits are included in an environmental] documents, in this case it is in IER 13. Now I would like to introduce Ted Carr to

explain the details of this portion of the project and the alternatives considered in the proposed action.

Ted Carr, project manager

Thank you for coming to tonight's meeting.



by an int



I would like to orient you to where we are on the map, which is intended to provide an overview of the project area. I am not intended to provide a complete or verbatim account of the project details.

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is here [pointing]. Oakville is located in the yellow box. Other landmarks on the map are the Algiers Canal [pointing] and the Harvey Canal [pointing]. Let's transition into the yellow box and discuss the two specific projects tonight.

The two projects we would like to discuss are the Hero Canal levee [pointing] and the Hero to Oakville levee [pointing]. The Hero to Oakville levee is often referred to as the Eastern Tie-In, it connects to the Mississippi River levee. Both projects comprise Individual Environmental Report 13 that will be available for public review in early spring.



The Hero Canal levee runs along the Hero Canal and ties into the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway West Closure Complex, which is managed by Tim Connell.

The levee is currently in place at elevation 6 or 8 feet. We are designing it to elevation 14 feet. The plan is to add to the protected side as we expand to elevation 14 feet.

This video illustrates the alignments and the proposed alignment.

[Note – there were technical difficulties the night of the meeting, but the video is posted at [www.mvn.usace.army.mil](http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil) and <<[http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps2/videos/easttiein/easttiein\\_video.asp](http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps2/videos/easttiein/easttiein_video.asp)>> ]



Seven different alignments were identified for study and discussed in the past. The different colors illustrate the different alignments. How did we go from 7 different alignments to one? Two alignments were eliminated because they did not meet the federal mandate and protect the community of Oakville. Those were alignments 4 and 7. Then two additional alignments did not provide additional risk reduction and impacted more of the environment, represented by the yellow line. This alignment [pointing] was eliminated because it took homes. Alignment 5 was suitable for this alignment. The alignments left were alignments 1 (orange), 3 (light blue) and 5 (dark blue). The three alignments remaining were evaluated. Risk, reliability, timing, constructability, cost, and impacts to human and natural environments were examined in narrowing down the recommended plan. Next, leadership at the Corps accepted the recommended plan and it became the proposed action, which was alignment 1. This is the process completed and how we got to this point.

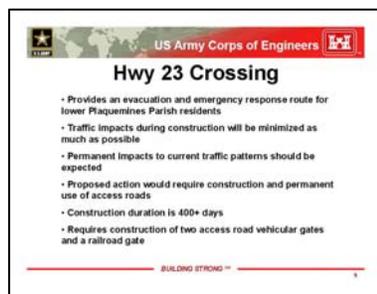
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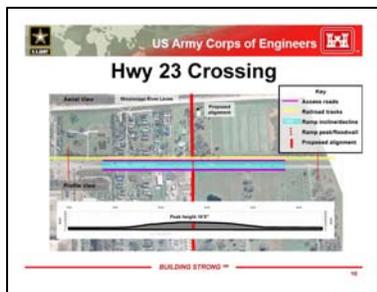


Alignment 1 starts at the Hero Canal [pointing] with a closure structure that will close during a storm event to block surge. The type of closure has not been identified yet, it could be a miter, barge or sector gate. A stop log gate is another closure option being examined. These items are being studied but a decision has not been made. There are businesses behind the gate that have a vested interest in the opening of the gate. The gate size could be either a 56 or 75-foot opening. Conversations are ongoing with

the business owners impacted and will be considered in the process of making a decision. From the canal closure there would be a levee alignment until it transitions into a T-wall. The reason for the transition is because we have to cross Hwy 23 and build a bridge over the T-wall. On the other side of Hwy 23 the alignment will transition back into a levee connecting to the Mississippi River levees.

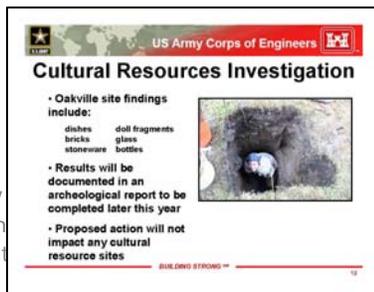


The reason why a ramp to a bridge is being considered is because Hwy 23 is an evacuation route that has to be open during a storm event. Traffic impacts during construction will be minimized. Permanent impacts to traffic patterns should be expected in accessing homes and businesses. Due to space limitations the access roads will be one way. The construction duration is 400 days. The access roads will be closed with vehicular gates during a storm event. Railroad gates would be needed also.



The blue area [pointing] is the ramp structure and bridge. The red line [pointing] is the T-wall under the bridge at elevation 14 feet. The top of the bridge is proposed to be at elevation 16.5 feet. The structure will impact the whole community. The purple lines [pointing] are the one way access roads. This [pointing] access road will be accessed if coming from Belle Chasse traveling south

one way. The other access road will be one way traveling north. The yellow line [pointing] is the railroad. With the design, if you lived here [pointing] you would have to pass your home make a U-turn and come back. This is a tight fit and many people have put their heads together to get to this point. There have been conversations between the Corps, DOTD and Plaquemines Parish about the structure. This image [pointing] diagrams what the blue part will look like going over the T-wall and down.



Moving away from the features of the structure, there is a cultural resource investigation happening in the community. Alignment 5

is intended to provide an overview of the structure and to provide a complete or verbatim account of the structure.

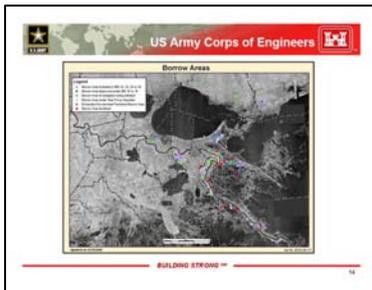
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would have gone through the community and required an investigation of the area. All the alignments went through the river site to tie into the Mississippi River levee. Oakville has a history dated to the 1800s. A shovel test provided information allowing us to investigate more. The phase 2 investigation studied two sites: near the river and Oakville. The river site had been disturbed and does not provide the same insight as the Oakville site.

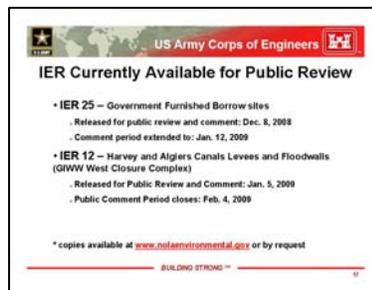
During phase 2 of the cultural investigation a dig was conducted. The area dug was undisturbed and able to tell the history of Oakville. Researchers found dishes, brick, stoneware and other items dating to the 1800s that were apart of the community. Money nor Lafitte's treasure were not found. Currently we are preparing a report on the archeological findings to be reviewed by proper organizations.



Another project in Plaquemines Parish is the non-federal levees. I cannot say a lot about this project tonight but there is an upcoming presentation at Woodland Plantation on Jan. 28.



These map depict all the borrow areas we are have investigated for use. There are a number of opportunities for resources. This [pointing] is the Oakville area. There are a few sites identified in Plaquemines Parish and we are in the process of investigating them. The areas in green are the approved sites and the dark green sites are still under investigation.



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There are a few upcoming events. IER 25 public meeting will be held on Jan. 12, 2009 and Soheila Holley will be presenting. As mentioned before the Plaquemines Parish Non-Federal Levees public meeting will be at Woodland Plantation on Jan. 28, 2009. The IER's currently out for review are: IER 25 Government Furnished Borrow sites that will close on Jan. 12 and IER 12 Harvey and Algiers Canals Levees and Floodwalls which closes Feb. 4, 2009. Copies of these IER's are available at [www.nolaenvironmental.gov](http://www.nolaenvironmental.gov) or by request.



There are many opportunities for public input either through public meetings, [www.nolaenvironmental.gov](http://www.nolaenvironmental.gov) or by contacting Gib Owen. The [www.nolaenvironmental.gov](http://www.nolaenvironmental.gov) Web site and the new Corps Web site are a great resource on getting updates on current projects.

Rene Poche, public affairs

The Corps Web site was just redesigned to be user friendly. Tonight we are here to listen to your comments and provide answers to questions. When you come to the microphone please state your name and limit your questions to 3-minutes. Please wait until everyone has had a chance to speak before coming up again to ask more questions.

**Question 1.** Gerald Newman: How long are the access roads? Is it about a mile?

**Response 1.** Ted Carr: The rough scale on the design is about 900 feet on each side making the structure around 2,500 feet or a half mile. Remember these red lines [pointing] will be guard rails and an off ramp would guide you toward the access road.

**Question 2.** Danny Trosclair: To what extent has the state been involved with the approval of the T-wall and proposed crossing of the railroad?

**Response 2a.** Ted Carr: This is a proposed plan and I have been talking with the DOTD as of yesterday.

**Response 2b.** James McMenis, LA DOTD: The design has not been finished yet and there are options still on the table.

**Response 2c.** Julie Vignes: Initially we considered floodgates, a ramp or a bridge. Based on initial coordination with different entities in the state we are proposing the bridge. As the plan for

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the bridge develops and is examined closer, we will take advantage of additional engineering of the bridge. Then we will look at the floodgate and the bridge option again.

**Question 3.** Mark Magee: With an overpass they should be able to U-turn under the bridge instead of going down half a mile to turn around. A majority of the people here do not know how to U-turn. This area has a tendency to fog and I foresee a potential for accidents. Another issue is the pedestrians, children cross the road constantly. If there is an overpass, will there be a tunnel or cross bridge for them? Keep in mind the amount of traffic heading southbound and the pedestrians.

**Response 3a.** James McMenis: To clarify, the DOTD will work with the Corps on the design and whatever alignment chosen will provide safety to traffic in the area.

**Response 3b.** Ted Carr: We examined making two turnarounds but it raised the bridge from 16.5 to 28 feet. One reason for not raising the bridge is because of the commercial traffic not just vehicular traffic. Trucks will attempt to make the turn and on the Causeway at Jefferson Hwy they have a problem with semi's getting stuck under the bridge. The intent is to minimize the profile of the bridge because if they are raised the ramps will be longer. We are starting at an elevation 5 and can not dig down because it would create more problems. We are only raising it about 11-feet.

**Question 4.** Rose Jackson: Does the Corps know five school buses come through this area carrying our babies? I can not see these busses making U-turns, especially in the fog, and endangering our babies. A handicap bus comes through the area also. Children cross the highway to visit their friends or go to the playground. This bridge would divide the community. Another solution needs to be found because this one is inadequate.

**Response 4.** Ted Carr: Your comments have been heard and we are having conversations with DOTD. This is a great concern that needs to be discussed. You are correct about the school bus and pedestrian traffic. There could be a path underneath the bridge but the design is still under consideration.

**Question 5.** Benny Rousselle: Can you tell me the difference between the 100-year protection levee and the levee behind Jesuit Bend?

**Response 5.** Julie Vignes: This project is authorized to the 100-year elevation of 14 feet and the levee you are speaking about is authorized to elevation 12 feet.

**Comment 6.** Benny Rousselle: In that case, you should consider a gate instead of a bridge. By putting a bridge in this area you are separating the community. Extra money is being spent that does not need to be. I think a further rear alignment needs to be examined.

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**Comment 7.** Dewell Walker, Buras: The information and knowledge I have is a little more than what you have there. One thing that will stop a hurricane would be a beach from Grand Isle to Mississippi. Chandler Island was a beach designed by God and repelled the hurricane toward Mobile. What you are doing here is not going to stop anything. I know you have spent a lot of time on this but the knowledge is in the detail. Research and knowledge is the key. Sand is the answer because it acts as a buffer against storms.

**Response 7.** Rene Poche: A couple of points: this hurricane storm damage risk reduction system is not the only project ongoing. There are ongoing studies of the coast to restore the coastal line for defense against storms. This is a storm damage risk reduction system, it is not a protection system and there will be some overtopping but there will be protection here. Can anything be designed to protect 100 percent, the answer is no. Listen to your government officials about evacuation. The system, coastal restoration and other projects are involved.

**Question 8.** Marjorie Laclere: The elevation on the levee is 14 feet going to the curve of the Intracoastal Waterway, how far north does the elevation 14 [levee] go?

**Response 8.** Julie Vignes: At this point [pointing] it would connect to a gated structure and a pump station. In distance, that's about 5,000 feet south of where the gate crosses the Intracoastal Waterway and it will tie into this gate.

**Question 9.** Marjorie Laclere: When it ties in what does it drop down to?

**Response 9.** Julie Vignes: The levee ties into a floodwall structure then into a gate. The floodwalls will be at 14 feet tying into a 16-foot gate. The levee transitions into the floodwalls at 14-feet. The Algiers Canal is not going to be raised to the 100-year level of protection. The primary storm surge protection now is the Hero levee and a gated structure across the canal to block the storm surge from entering the Algiers Canal. This allows us to have 8.5-feet at the Algiers Canal then it goes down. Those canals will only store water from the pump stations. Hurricane storm surge will be prevented from entering into the canal by the GIWW West Closure Complex.

**Question 10.** Marjorie Laclere: During a storm surge event the Lapalco and Algiers floodgates, how will they close?

**Response 10.** Julie Vignes: A plan will be worked out with locals on the timing.

**Question 11.** Marjorie Laclere: Will it be closed last or first?

**Response 11.** Julie Vignes: Once this is constructed and operable, the gate at Lapalco is no longer the hurricane protection.

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**Question 12.** Marjorie Laclere: Why did they not build that first?

**Response 12.** Julie Vignes: The project was authorized in the 1980's and additional authority was given in the 1990's. At the time the elevations were authorized at a lesser level. During that time it was not chosen at the best alternative. Now Congress has authorized us to build more protection and to do this we have to raise it to elevation 14. The impact to raise this [pointing] to 14 is more difficult than raising this here.

**Question 13.** Marjorie Laclere: Are you going to end up backing up to Jesuit Bend?

**Response 13a.** Gib Owen: Donaldsonville to the Gulf has an alternative looking at going further south. At this point it is just a study alternative.

**Response 13b.** Julie Vignes: The Westbank project was authorized in the 1980s, it was getting an annual amount of money appropriated and was going to take 20-25 years to construct. After the 2005 hurricanes Congress reacted by giving authority and fully funding the project to get it done.

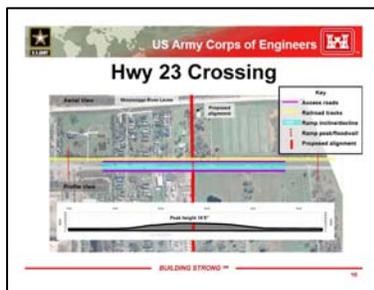
**Question 14.** Marjorie Laclere: The timeline is still 2011?

**Response 14.** Julie Vignes: Yes. The goal of the Corps is to certify the risk reduction system so the residents behind it can work with the flood insurance program.

**Comment 15.** P.J. Hahn, Director of Coastal Zone Management, Plaquemines Parish: I apologize on behalf of Billy Nungesser for not attending but he is on vacation. Carroll Pons, Blair and I will address any issues or questions. Thank you for having us here.

**Question 16.** Carroll Pons, Plaquemines Parish council: What is the elevation of the Algiers lock?

**Response 16.** Julie Vignes: I do not know the exact number but it is about the same as the Mississippi River levees, about 20-24 feet.



**Question 17.** Kenny Stewart: Can you explain the red line on the right and left? Will there be barriers across the highway? How will I be able to access the driveway to my sandpit? Will I have to make a U-turn to get to the property?

**Response 17.** Ted Carr: Traveling from the north they would be able to come through here but to go back north they would have to turn right and go down to make a U-turn.

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**Question 18.** Kenny Stewart: Has anyone taken into consideration the amount of trucks traveling through the area?

**Response 18.** Ted Carr: This is a preliminary design and there is work to be done with the DOTD and Plaquemines Parish.

**Question 19.** Kenny Stewart: There will be about 200-400 18-wheelers through there a day. I was not aware of the traffic complications. Thank you.

**Response 19.** Maj. Kurgan: This is why we are here to take your comments.

**Question 20.** Kenny Stewart: Please explain the reasons for selecting the proposed alignment and eliminating the others? Explain the environmental and other factors involved in the selection process.

**Response 20.** Ted Carr: There are five criteria. Each alignment was evaluated by measuring risk and reliability, time, constructability, cost, impact to natural environment, and impact to human environmental.

**Question 21.** Kenny Stewart: Out of the five criteria you read off there is one alignment where the main criteria is impacted. Explain how the other four impact the area differently.

**Response 21a.** Ted Carr: There is cost, additional impact to the environment and time involved in the decision. If we construct this levee in this area it is more difficult than a lift on the Hero Canal.

**Response 21b.** Gib Owen: Risk and reliability depending on how long the levee is and the terms. These are the factors built into the decision.

**Question 22.** Kenny Stewart: The comment period for the answers begins after tonight?

**Response 22.** Ted Carr: No, this is an information sharing meeting and not a public review period.

**Question 23.** Kenny Stewart: When is the time to address this alignment?

**Response 23.** Maj. Kurgan: You can address it now or later when the document comes out. The earlier we get the information then we can add it into our decision process.

**Question 24.** Kenny Stewart: This is the chosen alignment?

**Response 24.** Maj. Kurgan: This is the proposed action because we do not always have the right answers. If it were the selected alternative it would mean we are done and moving out. In this case, the team is giving the proposed action and we are here to get your input on this alignment.

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We come here to get your input and learn about any impacts we have not yet considered. We do not want to build something that would cause accidents and death. Your input goes into making the decision.

**Question 25.** Kenny Stewart: How long is this action proposed?

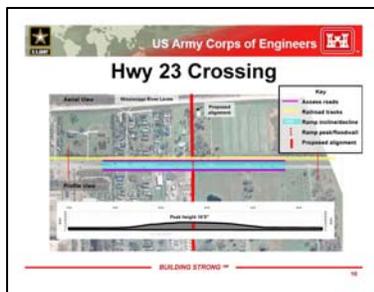
**Response 25.** Maj. Kurgan. In March it will be available for a 30 day comment period. Another public meeting will be held during the comment period. The documents are posted on the Internet and we can send a hard copy upon request. After the comment period all the comments are addressed. The team then will give the proposed action to Colonel Alvin Lee who will review everything and sign the decision record.

**Question 26.** Kenny Stewart: Is Plaquemines Parish still in charge of giving the right of way?

**Response 26.** Julie Vignes: The state of Louisiana, through the Coastal Protection Restoration Authority, works with us to get the right of way. The official answer is the state of Louisiana.

**Question 27.** J.D. Futer: I have a concern with the bridge affecting businesses. By putting an overpass you destroy Oakville because the businesses depend on the revenue from the highway. Taking away the livelihood of the businesses would kill the community you are trying to protect.

**Response 27.** Rene Poche: This is why we are here tonight to get your concerns.



**Question 28.** Dorothy Randolph: The red line is Highway 23. The line is going to run toward the levee?

**Response 28.** Ted Carr. The red line goes all the way to the Mississippi River. This is the footprint of the levee. The levee would transition under the bridge.

**Question 29.** Dorothy Randolph: Oakville would die at the overpass. Are you going to cut across the property also?

**Response 29.** Ted Carr: The intent is not to cut across peoples' property. In conversations with the parish and DOTD this issue is still being reviewed and your concerns would be taken into consideration.

**Question 30.** Linda Braun: The red line is the wall?

**Response 30.** Ted Carr: A T-wall transitions over the railroad into a levee.

**Question 31.** Linda Braun: Where will the overpass be?

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**Response 31.** Ted Carr: The overpass is in line with the levee. This is the representation to scale of the impact of the access to transitions.

**Question 32.** Linda Braun: In reality where would it be?

**Response 32.** Ted Carr: This is Captain Larry's Seafood Restaurant right here. This is where the ramp begins to grade up and this is what would be required of the design. Then when you come out you have to take a right and go down to the U-turn.

**Question 33.** Linda Braun: This would be four lines?

**Response 33.** Ted Carr: There are access roads in purple. If you were traveling south from Belle Chasse you would take this access road to Captain Larry's.

**Question 34.** Dorothy Randolph: This would be considered a private road?

**Response 34a.** Ted Carr: This would be a public street and all the side streets will stay. If you live here you would get on this access road to go up. Coming from Belle Chasse to your home you would come down Hwy 23 and make a U-turn.

**Response 34b.** Rene Poche: Remember this is all proposed and not final that is why we are here, to get your concerns and get a suitable solution. This is not the final plan.

**Question 35.** Dorothy Randolph: I am concerned with the business. By building an overpass everything will be gone because we depend on the traffic for the businesses in the area.

**Response 35.** Rene Poche: All comments taken down are being considered as we move toward a decision.

**Question 36.** Lawrence Pourcian: If I am driving and it is difficult to get off the overpass then I would just pass right by. They are correct when they said the community would die. Why not upgrade the levees currently out there. You would be better off buying their homes compared to building this bridge.

**Response 36.** Rene Poche: Your comments are noted. Everyone is saying the same thing and we hear you. Again this is the preliminary plan and not the final solution

**Question 37.** Dewell Walker: The Corps has a patent on the levees and can be destroyed with a water hose. That is what a hurricane is a big water hose. Also, the design of the levee is crooked and yet billions of dollars are being spent on levees. How long is the levee right there you are building? What is the total cost?

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**Response 37.** Ted Carr: The whole thing is about 4.5 miles with no set cost because we are still in the design phase.

**Comment 38.** Dewell Walker: If you build the levee down in lower Plaquemines Parish you would not need the one here. We need to put our money and concerns on the beach. We need to think about these beaches and quite with these small projects. We live in the great state of Louisiana and do not want to go through this again.

**Response 38.** Rene Poche: This is not to put fear into anyone but this is a reality. Tell me something absolute in life? Coastal Restoration and the current projects can help to reduce risk but we can not say we can provide 100 percent of your protection. Listen to your public officials when they tell you to evacuate the area and leave when a storm is approaching.

**Question 39.** Danny Trosclair: I suggest you strongly consider a flood gate to eliminate 100 percent of what we are talking about here tonight. It would be a lower cost than the ramp being proposed. The time frame would be reduced by putting a floodgate and we could work together to make the impacts less for businesses, community, safety and traffic. Traffic needs to be considered in this location. Do you have a projected start date? Do you have a projected time for bidding? What is the projected time frame for construction?

**Response 39.** Ted Carr: There are some caveats. Work needs to be done to get real estate and right of way. We are looking to have design plans in the August timeframe. After this time, the real estate can begin. To make the 2011 timeframe these projects are moving quick but does not mean we are not going to have the required work done to get to where we want to be.

**Question 40.** Danny Trosclair: I know the Plaquemines Parish Non-Federal Levee project is a few years behind and you are shooting to make the 2011 deadline. Is there any consideration for the Non-Federal Levee to be federalized in a couple of years?

**Response 40.** Julie Vignes: The Corps is authorized to build a system to be certified. If we do not get this system built and authorized it would inhibit the people from getting affordable insurance. The urgency behind the 2011 deadline is for insurance reasons. Congress appropriated money to improve the system but it is not going to be equal to be certified for risk reduction.

**Question 41.** Danny Trosclair: Seems like a lot of money to spend going to build something across the highway when it could go south, all the way down.

**Response 41.** Julie Vignes: There is another team working on the Non-Federal Levee system. The issue is certification of the system. Things are still on the table but a lot of people were against flood gates. The DOTD will look at traffic and liability on this large high speed highway. There are adverse impacts to putting a floodgate. As we get more input and look at the impacts

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of the bridge more people are looking at a floodgate. We're working with local officials in a formal matter but it is still being considered.

Rene Poche, public affairs

I implore you to visit the Web sites included in your packet and work with your government officials. Thank you for coming out tonight. Your input is important. Everything from this meeting will be looked at and we will have another meeting in the future.

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