

MINUTES

**Transportation Policy Committee
Of the
Regional Planning Commission
For
Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard and St. Tammany Parishes**

&

**Regional Planning Commission
For
Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard and St. Tammany Parishes**

March 26, 2013

Committee Members: David Peralta, Chairman, Mitch Landrieu, 1st Vice Chairman (designee: Cedric Grant), Billy Nungesser, 2nd Vice Chairman (designee: Benny Puckett), John Young, Treasurer, Chris Roberts, Vinny Mosca, Lee Giorgio, Jack Stumpf, Jacquelyn Clarkson, Stacy Head, Jeffrey Schwartz, Ronald Carrere, Keith Hinkley, Byron Marinovich, Mike Ford, Casey Hunnicutt, Charles Ponstein, Steve Stefancik, Richard Kelley, Maureen Clary, Sherri LeBas (designee: Mike Stack), Larry Rase (Designee: Carlton Dufrechou), V.J. St. Pierre, Natalie Robottom, and Ryan Brown

Attendance: 25

Consultants: Ernest Burguières, III, Legal Counsel

Staff: Walter Brooks, Jeffrey Roesel, Nicholas Silvey, Megan Leonard, et al



AGENDA

1. Presentation: Status Report on Crescent City Connection
Decorative Lighting & Bridge Sweeping
By: Rhett Desselle, P.E.
LaDOTD
2. Consideration: Funding for Decorative Lighting & Bridge
Sweeping of the Crescent City Connection
3. Consideration: Public Comment Period



Mr. Peralta led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Following the roll call, a quorum was established and the Chairman called the Special Joint Meeting of the Transportation Policy Committee and Regional Planning Commission meeting to order.

- 1. Presentation: Status Report on Crescent City Connection
Decorative Lighting & Bridge Sweeping
By: Rhett Desselle, P.E.
LaDOTD**

Mr. Brooks introduced Mr. Desselle. Mr. Desselle began his presentation and discussed the history and cost of decorative lighting, sweeping costs, transition fund and the future direction. He explained that DOTD is prohibited from paying costs associated with lighting for any roads and bridges through municipalities (48:193). He said the lighting system on the CCC was replaced in 2006 with toll monies. The electricity costs (Entergy) in 2012 were \$16,792.23. Mr. Desselle further explained the costs for lighting maintenance/repair can vary significantly. An estimated maintenance contract for one year is \$45,000. He also outlined sweeping costs and details.

- 2. Consideration: Funding for Decorative Lighting & Bridge
Sweeping of the Crescent City Connection**

Parish President Young made a motion to pass a resolution that would accept the Young Leadership Council's (YLC) offer to power decorative lighting on the bridges from March 26 through June 30, 2013; and further authorizes the use of CCC Transition Funds thereafter for an additional period not to exceed one (1) year to allow time to resolve LADOTD obligations under the 1989 Act of Donation and/or consider other offers to help pay for the annual cost of the decorative lighting system, and to solidify a more permanent solution by working with the legislature, LADOTD, and other public and private sector partners and RPC authorizes the use of CCC Transition Funds to provide for continuation of enhanced roadway sweeping services above normal LADOTD baseline for the CCC area of responsibility from Broad Street to Westwood Drive (end of elevated section).

The motion for the resolution was seconded by Mr. Mosca.

Deputy Mayor Cedric Grant read aloud to the board a letter from Mayor Landrieu as follows:

Dear Members of the Regional Planning Commission,

Regardless of your position on the tolls, we can all agree that providing basic services for the Crescent City Connection is a state obligation. These basic services including policing, ferry operations, maintenance, lighting, landscaping, street sweeping and other items.

Legally, Act 866 of 2012 ("Act 866") transferred the powers, duties, functions and responsibilities of the Mississippi River Transit Authority ("MRTA") to the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD). Notably, the responsibility was transferred to the State, not to Orleans, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard or St. Tammany Parish. As such basic services are a State obligation.

With regards to the iconic lighting I am grateful to Young Leadership Council (YLC) for their generous donation and their continued efforts to raise private dollars to fund the lighting. However, pursuant to a 1989 Act of Donation, DOTD received ownership of the decorative lights under the condition that the

State maintenance and operate the lights throughout their useful life. Thus, the decorative lighting was always and will be a State-DOTD obligation.

Before the commission today is a resolution to bless an agreement for the YLC and WGNO to provide private funding for decorative bridge lighting for the next 3 months and to use the Transition Fund the year following. If the State would commit to a permanent solution for all of the essential services on the bridge, then I would support the use of interim funding. However, without that commitment, I cannot support the use of the Transition Fund and private dollars because it is a short term fix to a serious, long-term challenge that will not be resolved until the State honors its obligations.

Throughout this process, I have been crystal clear: the City of New Orleans cannot afford to assume the costs of bridge services, which are a State responsibility. I am deeply concerned the State has not provided our region with an adequate plan to permanently fund basic services on the bridge. Without a permanent solution, this commission will be back here again next year with a depleted transitional fund, facing the same problem.

It is critically important basic services continue and that the iconic lighting on the bridge remains lit. In my view, we should stand together as region to urge the State and our representatives in Baton Rouge to secure a permanent solution for the Crescent City Connection.

*Sincerely,
Mitch Landrieu
Mayor, City of New Orleans*

Also read in for the record was a letter from St. Tammany Parish President Patricia Brister as follows:

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I apologize for not being able to attend the meeting on March 26, 2013. I would like to vote on the matter of 13-2003 regarding the Decorative Lighting and Sweeping of the Crescent city Connection Bridges. I wish to vote in favor of the joint resolution.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your help in this matter.

*Sincerely,
Patricia P. Brister
Parish President*

Lengthy discussion followed, including comments about the importance of the lighting – calling it critical, rather than decorative – and agreement that the State (DOTD) should be responsible for the ongoing costs of electricity and maintenance.

After discussion the question was called. The Chairman declared that the resolution passed by majority vote.

3. Consideration: Public Comment Period

The Chairman asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.