

# Regional Planning Commission

Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard and St. Tammany Parishes

Summer 2008



## In This Issue

- 2 Rebuilding Sustainably
- 3 Church Sings Praises
- 3 Southern Rapid Rail Transit Comm.
- 4 Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety Program
- 4 RPC Hosts US EDA Conference
- 5 Tips for Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety
- 5 Encouraging Bicycle Commuters
- 6 Where in the World is Lynn Dupont?

## New Orleans Receives First Bike Lane *Region Moves Forward to Become more Bicycle Friendly*

The city of New Orleans celebrated the opening of its first bike lane on May 20, 2008. A partnership between the RPC, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LaDOTD) and New Orleans Department of Public Works worked together to incorporate bike lanes and pedestrian improvements into a LaDOTD maintenance project along St. Claude Avenue. The bike lanes run along a 3-mile stretch of St. Claude, from Elysian Fields Avenue to the St. Bernard Parish line. A shared lane treatment is used across the St. Claude Avenue Bridge due to size restrictions.



*St. Claude Avenue bike lane ribbon cutting ceremony. From the left are: Tim Eskew, Metro Bicycle Coalition; Robert Mendoza, New Orleans, Public Works Director; Dan Jatres, RPC; James Carter, New Orleans City Council member; Jennifer Ruley, Steps to a Healthier New Orleans; Steve Strength, LaDOTD; Scott Boyle, LaDOTD; Karen Parsons, RPC; Stephanie Pedro, RPC*

There have been numerous developments over the past several months in the continuing effort to expand the New Orleans area bicycle network. Some of the other latest developments throughout the region include:

### **Robert E. Lee Route**

This 1.8 mile shared lane facility was completed in February 2008 along Robert E. Lee Boulevard between West End and Wisner boulevards. This is the second shared lane facility in New Orleans, following the August 2005 debut of the Marconi Route. Shared lane facilities utilize a wide outside travel lane and the shared route marking which depicts a bicycle and two chevrons. This pavement marking indicates to motorists that bicycles will be riding along the route while the chevrons reinforce the proper direction of travel for bicyclists. In addition to the pavement markings, "Robert E. Lee Route" signs line the route to help guide bicyclists and motorists. Through City Park, the on-street facility is joined by a separated mixed use path for bicyclists and pedestrians. In the future, both the shared lane and shared-use path will connect to the Wisner Boulevard Path at the intersection of Robert E. Lee and Wisner boulevards.

*continued on page 2*

### Wisner Boulevard Path

Construction has begun on this separated shared-use path that will run between Wisner Boulevard and Bayou St. John from Robert E. Lee to Zachary Taylor Drive, then wind through City Park down Lelong Avenue, and then along the west side of Bayou St. John.

### Orleans/Jefferson Parish Line Route

The Jefferson Parish Council and Jefferson Chamber of Commerce are working with the Regional Planning Commission to implement a bicycle route that will roughly follow the Orleans/Jefferson Parish line as proposed in the RPC's New Orleans Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. This project aims to serve as a demonstration project for future bi-

cycle routes in Jefferson Parish as well as a renewed partnership between Jefferson and Orleans parishes to develop bicycle connections between the parishes.

### Levee Top Paths

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the LaDOTD have come to an agreement to replace the levee top paths following planned levee work along the Mississippi River levees in Orleans and Jefferson parishes. Discussions are ongoing in regards to the Jefferson Lakefront Levee Path as well as other segments of the Mississippi River levees.

### Mississippi River Trail

State Senator Bill Cassidy and MRT, Inc. have begun to assemble a coalition to

help expand the levee top path system in Louisiana by constructing new segments on both the east and west banks of the river. The ultimate goal will be to have continuous paths along both banks between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.



## RPC and MWH Co-host Workshop focused on Reducing the Region's Carbon Footprint

On June 12, 2008, RPC and MWH Global Inc. co-hosted a workshop entitled: Rebuilding Our Region Sustainably: High Time for Low Carbon. The workshop focused on incorporating sustainable building practices as we continue to rebuild southeast Louisiana. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Better understand building practices and technologies that can reduce current and future energy consumption and green house gas emissions;
- Share and learn from successful experiences and past challenges in order to better implement sustainable strategies; and
- Build an enduring and collaborative network to keep the momentum going and rebrand the New Orleans metropolitan region as a sustainable community.

Presentations from an international panel of speakers covered a variety of topics including:

- Reducing vehicle miles traveled to increase transportation efficiency and reduce carbon emissions;
- Current projects to rebuild our wetlands using wastewater treatment plant effluent;
- Global Green's efforts to integrate energy efficient technologies in local schools, which in addition to reducing energy costs has also been documented to enhance student learning;
- Activities of the US Business Council for Sustainable Development;
- New developments in computer models to predict and plan for flooding events; and

- How carbon emissions can be limited using a cap and trade system.

New Orleans City Councilmember Shelley Midura and Jefferson Parish President Aaron Broussard addressed the audience in support of rebuilding sustainably. Both noted projects currently underway in their jurisdictions that put these principles into practice. Councilmember Midura spoke of the City Council's upcoming resolution to assert their commitment to energy efficiency through the Consensus Energy Smart Plan. President Broussard noted that the post-storm renovations of the Yenni Building (Jefferson Parish's east bank office building) included a variety of energy efficient measures, earning it designation as an Energy Star labeled building.

continued on page 3

Hunter Lovins, President and founder of Natural Capitalism Solutions, and Andy Mangan, Executive Director of the U.S. Business Council for Sustainable Development gave the keynote addresses. Each discussed how incorporating environmental practices into business and government can both stimulate economic development and enhance a community's quality of life. The workshop concluded with a working session where attendees developed action steps to implement the ideas discussed during the workshop.

In an effort to practice what we preach, the workshop included a variety of greening efforts, such as:

- Minimization of individually package foods and beverages by using bulk serving portions when available, for example providing pitchers of water instead of bottled water;
- Use of locally grown or organic foods as available;
- Providing containers to recycle paper, plastic and metal;
- Distribution of conference proceedings via website instead of CDs via mail;
- Reduction of paper printed for workshop attendees by providing additional workshop information via website;
- Donation of two cypress trees with funding to maintain the trees for one year in New Orleans City Park to offset the carbon generated from attendees' participation at the conference; and
- Utilizing remote conference call technologies for a guest speaker from the State of New York to reduce emissions related to travel.

## Church Sings Praises Environmental Cleanup Paves Way for Expansion

Under the Regional Planning Commission's (RPC's) Brownfield Redevelopment Program, Progressive Church in Marrero, Louisiana received financial assistance to remediate a site for expansion of the church. A Phase I environmental site assessment (ESA) was conducted at the Progressive Church site, which invoked the need for a Phase II ESA. During the Phase II, soil and groundwater samples were collected at the site and tested positive for asbestos. The sampling was conducted in accordance with a work plan approved by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality

(LDEQ) through their Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP), and included measures to mitigate the potential disturbance of asbestos-containing materials due to the work being done at the site.

Based on the results of the sampling, a Remedial Action Work Plan (RAP) was developed to address the asbestos in soil located on the northern portion of the site and a limited area of hydrocarbon and lead contamination. On October 2, 2007, LDEQ approved the RAP. Cleanup activities began on January 15, 2008,

and were completed in March. Over 12,875 tons of soil were removed. Progressive Church received a \$200,000 cleanup grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields Program and utilized a \$300,000 loan from the RPC's Brownfield Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund program to help finance the cleanup.

The Brownfield Redevelopment Program assists with the revitalization of land affected by hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. For additional information about the Brownfields Program contact its coordinator Rebecca Otte at [rotte@norpc.org](mailto:rotte@norpc.org).



Current view of Progressive Church site, Marrero, Louisiana



Rendering of the Church's expansion

## Round II - Enforcement for Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety Program a Success

After a successful pilot program in October 2007, a second round of the "Enforcement for Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety" training program was held on March 5-6, 2008 at the Kenner Police Headquarters. Officers from several local police agencies, including Kenner, Mandeville and New Orleans, attended as well as representatives from the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission.

Enforcement for Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety is a two-day course developed in conjunction with Louisiana law enforcement officers to help police agencies better address issues concerning pedestrian and bicycle safety on Louisiana's roads. The training reviews laws that pertain to pedestrian, bicyclists and motorists and the interactions between them; common crash types and leading causes of crashes; enforcement techniques; and crash reporting. The course work is a mix of lecture, discussion, and field work.

In conjunction with the training, the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission designated March 9-16, 2008 as a targeted enforcement period for pedestrian and bicycle issues. Officers who participate in the training program and work in a jurisdiction that is part of the Highway Safety Commission targeted enforcement program were eligible for overtime duty. As this program matures, the goal will be to expand the funding available for overtime pay as well as to expand the number of eligible police agencies.

To complement the training and targeted enforcement week, the RPC Pedestrian & Bicycle Program has re-launched a radio ad campaign on about a dozen local radio stations. Additionally, WWL TV, WRNO 99.5 FM and the *Times-Picayune* provided media coverage of the training. Following the media campaign, a post-campaign survey was conducted

to document changes in the knowledge and awareness of the public to the ad and its content.

In the future, we hope to offer this training program on a regular basis in the New Orleans metropolitan area as well as make the materials available to other agencies across Louisiana. Additionally, discussions with the Highway Safety Commission and Federal Highway Administration continue to explore the possibility of incorporating material from this program into other training offered by these agencies as well as incorporation into the Police Officer's Standard Training (POST) utilized at Louisiana police academies.

For additional information, contact Dan Jatres at [djatres@norpc.org](mailto:djatres@norpc.org).

## RPC Hosts U.S. EDA Regional Conference

The New Orleans Regional Planning Commission, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), and actors throughout the field of economic development convened in New Orleans, in April for the U.S. EDA Austin and Atlanta regional conference. The EDA is an agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce that provides assistance to economically-distressed communities. This year's conference, Sustaining American Prosperity: the 21st Century Challenge, focused on innovative ways to sustain and improve economic growth in the American South in the face of globalization, technological shifts, and geopolitical uncertainty. Economic development practitioners, academics, entrepreneurs and elected officials heard

from national, regional and local experts in both the public and private sectors.

Tom DeFrank, bureau chief of the New York Daily News headlined the conference. DeFrank was *Newsweek's* Senior White House correspondent for a quarter century. In addition to DeFrank, the conference touted a robust speaker line-up. Nationally lauded individuals such as Dr. Philip Singerman, an innovator in facilitating public and private partnerships to stimulate economic development and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, and Dr. Steve Murdock, Director of the U.S. Census Bureau, addressed conference attendees. The conference's workshops focused on a range

of topics including the state of America's physical infrastructure and its impact on economic development, the trends and realities of tomorrow's economic drivers, and the changing American workplace.

The conference drew nearly 400 attendees from 13 states throughout the South. Speaker Powerpoints are on the RPC's website at: [www.norpc.org](http://www.norpc.org), and audio files are available on CD by contacting Kara Renne at [kmrenne@norpc.org](mailto:kmrenne@norpc.org).

# Encouraging Bicycle Commuters

With rising gas prices more people are looking for alternatives to driving. Fortunately, the RPC is developing a Create-A-Commuter program to assist brand new and seasoned riders get the skills they need to bicycle to work or school. This instruction will be among several new programs under the recent three year renewal of the RPC Pedestrian and Bicycle Program funded by the Louisiana Highway Safety Department. The program will teach cyclists the basics of bicycle maintenance, rules of the road, how to pack, what to wear and safety tips. RPC encourages employers to provide secure bicycle parking and shower facilities for your commuting employees. The Regional Planning Commission's Pedestrian and Bicycle Program is targeted at all roadway users with a goal of reducing bicycle and pedestrian fatalities in the region by 10%.

For more information contact Dan Jattres at [djattres@norpc.org](mailto:djattres@norpc.org).

The Regional Planning Commission meets the second Tuesday of each month at 12:30 pm at its offices, 1340 Poydras Street, Suite 2100, New Orleans. Agendas for the meetings are placed on RPC's website, [www.norpc.org](http://www.norpc.org) one week prior to the meeting.

## TIPS FOR BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

More than half of the state's bicycle crashes occur in the greater New Orleans area.

	Statewide	New Orleans area
Pedestrians killed in 2005	108	25
Pedestrians injured in 2005	1,183	511
Bicyclists killed in 2005	22	9
Bicyclists injured in 2005	677	232

### SAFETY TIPS FOR PEDESTRIANS

- Look both ways before crossing, even when given the right of way.
- Follow traffic control signals at intersections.
- Do not cross into the path of a vehicle that is too close to safely yield.
- Yield to vehicles on the road when crossing at points other than a marked crosswalk or unmarked crosswalk at an intersection.

### SAFETY TIPS FOR BICYCLISTS

- Always ride on the right side of the road with the flow of traffic.
- Follow all signs and traffic signals and yield to pedestrians.
- Make left turns from the left lane (just like automobiles).
- At night, a white light is required in the front and a red reflector in the rear.
- Helmet usage is always encouraged (and required for all children younger than 12).

### SAFETY TIPS FOR MOTORISTS

- Remain alert near obstacles such as trees and parked cars that may obstruct your view.
- Watch for and yield to bicyclists when making right or left turns.
- Provide plenty of space when passing bicyclists (at least 3 feet).
- When opening your car door into traffic, look first for bicyclists.
- Be cautious of bicyclists moving legally into the center of the lane because of road hazards or into the left lane because of a left turn.

This chart was published in the March 6, 2008 edition of the *Times-Picayune* based upon information from the Regional Planning Commission.

## Where in the World is Lynn Dupont?

This past year and a half have been most productive for bringing geospatial projects and funding to Louisiana. RPC Senior Planner, Lynn Dupont, who specializes in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) has found herself off the beaten track explaining our region's issues and needs from a geospatial perspective. The following is a year (and a half) in review of the activities Dupont has participated in to enhance the region's GIS capacity.

1. In January of 2007 she was involved in the Army Corps of Engineers Stakeholders Workshops on the Permanent Pump Stations and was integral in drafting the mission statement that pledged to "share information, develop ideas and work together as equal Partners to develop a flood protection program.... And to promote public creditability through open, honest, forthright and timely communication between members and the public..." Perhaps many of you have participated in the open public meetings in your neighborhoods concerning the pump stations.
2. Also in January she began adjunct teaching at the University of New Orleans in the Geography department for a wonderful group of upcoming GIS professionals.
3. In March of 2007 Lynn and Stephanie Pedro, a GIS analyst attended an ArcGIS instructional on building geomodels. The goal is to implement regionwide GIS models in conservation and land use planning to complement the transportation model.
4. In April of 2007 Lynn attended ArcServer round table discussions in Baton Rouge complements of ESRI and LaDEQ and also the South Central Users Groups for ESRI software in New Orleans.
5. In May of 2007 she was on the review team for proposals within the Governor's Office of Homeland Security to review map sharing software platforms for emergency responders. The team has contracted with Google for a Virtual Louisiana platform shared by password with all government responder groups.
6. Also in May of 2007 Lynn was asked to speak at the National Digital Orthophoto Program (NDOP) meeting at the invitation of NSGIC (National States Geographic Information Council) in Tallahassee, Florida. At this event, the Louisiana GIS Council chair presented to federal agencies (USGS, USDA, FEMA, NGA, and others) the Louisiana program in imagery and elevation data used in mapping, and Lynn presented the high resolution imagery program in Louisiana managed



through the Regional Planning Commission in cooperation with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security.

7. Also in May of 2007 Lynn presented at the Louisiana remote sensing and geographic information systems workshop in Lafayette for the pre-conference imagery workshop, conference panel on imagery, and the conference panel on post-Katrina/Rita geospatial issues in Recovery and Response.
8. In July of 2007 Lynn was asked to present at the USGS Louisiana Data Mining workshop in Lafayette where federal, state and regional partners gather to discuss the availability of data and issues gaining access.
9. In August and September of 2007 Lynn hosted the U.S. Census Bureau to converse with our parishes the needs requirements of our unique rebuilding situation and its possible effects on the 2010 Census.
10. In October of 2007 Lynn hosted the visiting committee from USGS central mapping division for a tour of the devastated and recovering areas of the region. All parish/city GIS managers were invited to meet and discuss issues with the USGS on their visit. Also Lynn received the APA distinguished leadership award for her work on the high resolution digital orthophoto project with USGS, the Corps, NGA, GOHSEP and local governments.

11. In November of 2007 Lynn was asked to speak at the ESRI Homeland Security GIS Summit in Denver Colorado on collaborative efforts in GIS. She would tell you more but it is top secret.
12. In November of 2007 Lynn was asked to staff a booth at the Louisiana GeoExpo at the Claiborne Building in Baton Rouge for GIS Day to explain our region's involvement in GIS.
13. In January of 2008 Lynn made several trips to Hammond to share geospatial data and proposed data sets with our north shore partners who are not quite in our region, but very close and need to know what we are doing. Also the University of New Orleans called her back yet again to teach another GIS class.
14. In February, 2008 Lynn attended the National Smart Growth Conference in Washington D.C. with Kara Renne where GIS 'greenprinting' through the Trust for Public Land was highlighted – a project on the boards at the RPC to help promote appropriate land conservation through GIS models and maps.
15. In March of 2008 Lynn was asked to present the keynote address in Kansas City at the Mid-America GIS Homeland Security Workshop explaining our trials, tribulations and successes, but most importantly our partnerships in GIS data development.

Every month Lynn represents the concerns and needs of local government at the Louisiana GIS Council where she has represented the planning districts for many years. This network of federal, state and local agencies has provided partnerships for needed data development and sharing over the years and has been beneficial across the state.

If you are wondering why she hasn't answered all her phone messages, please be patient, she is working for you in ways you never see trying to bring funding, data, and good data standards to help us in our planning needs.

## Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission

The Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission is planning a Passenger Rail Summit in Meridian, Mississippi this Fall for state legislators, transportation officials, rail advocacy organizations, and freight and passenger railroads. The summit will introduce decision-makers to critical rail issues and stimulate discussion about the future of passenger rail in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi. Congress is currently considering legislation to establish a cost-share program similar to highway and aviation funding that would support capital investment in passenger rail projects. (S 294 and HB 6003) Historic Meridian is served by the Amtrak Crescent and was selected to demonstrate the power of passenger rail to invigorate downtown reinvestment. For more information contact Karen Parsons at [kparsons@norpc.org](mailto:kparsons@norpc.org).

**The RPC** is a 26-member board of local elected officials and citizen members of the greater New Orleans metropolitan area. The RPC provides an open forum where elected officials and community leaders of the five member parishes (Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard and St. Tammany) come together, in partnership, to discuss how regionalism can promote the general welfare and prosperity of the entire region.

**Officers:** John F. Young, Jr.      C. Ray Nagin      Billy Nungesser      Kevin Davis      Craig Taffaro  
*Chairman*      *1st Vice Chairman*      *2nd Vice Chairman*      *Secretary*      *Treasurer*

<b>Jefferson Parish</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Plaquemines Parish</b>	<b>St. Bernard Parish</b>	<b>St. Tammany Parish</b>
Aaron F. Broussard <i>Parish President</i>	C. Ray Nagin <i>Mayor, City of New Orleans</i>	Billy Nungesser <i>Parish President</i>	Craig Taffaro <i>Parish President</i>	Kevin Davis <i>Parish President</i>
John F. Young, Jr. <i>Councilmember-at-Large</i>	Arnie Fielkow <i>Councilmember-at Large</i>	Jay Friedman <i>Council Chairman</i>	Frank Auderer, Jr. <i>Councilmember at Large</i>	Steve Stefancik <i>Councilmember</i>
Paul Johnston <i>Mayor, City of Harahan</i>	Jacquelyn B. Clarkson <i>Councilmember-at Large</i>	Keith Hinkley <i>Councilmember</i>	Ray Lauga, Jr. <i>Councilmember</i>	Marty Gould <i>Councilmember</i>
Lee Giorgio Phillip Truxillo	Sandra Diggs-Miller E. Ean McNaughton	Dale Benoit James Hufft	Charles Ponstein David Munn	Richard P. Kelley Francis X. Gomila

**La. Dept. of Transportation and Development:** William Ankner, *Secretary*

**Transportation Policy Committee:**

Brad A. Adams <i>La. Airport Authority</i>	Pat Galloway <i>Port of New Orleans</i>	Robert Lambert <i>Greater N.O. Expwy. Comm.</i>	Cesar Burgos <i>Regional Transit Authority</i>	William Hubbard <i>St. John Parish President</i>
James Bridger <i>N.O. Public Belt Railroad</i>	Cathy Gautreaux <i>La. Motor Transport Assoc.</i>	V.J. St. Pierre, Jr. <i>St. Charles Parish President</i>	Ryan Brown <i>Jeff., Dept. of Transit Adm.</i>	Ben O. Morris <i>Mayor, City of Slidell</i>
Eddie Price <i>Mayor, City of Mandeville</i>	Sean Hunter <i>Louis Armstrong N.O. International Airport</i>			

**Executive Director:** Walter R. Brooks



**Regional Planning Commission**  
 1340 Poydras Street  
 Suite 2100  
 New Orleans, Louisiana 70112