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The New Orleans Regional Planning Commission is pleased to present monthly news, events, and project updates to a region-wide audience.

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From the Director



The first quarter of 2022 has been an eventful one at RPC. RPC staff has been very busy with a number of initiatives related to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program updates for the four urbanized areas in our region, Economic Development, Brownfields, and Watershed activities, in addition to the normal day to day planning work ("3C Planning") per federal requirements for our agency.

But the most high-profile activity so far this year has been the passage and nascent enactment of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, or *BIL*. RPC

Staff has been monitoring the passage of the bill, as well as the development of regulatory changes and funding opportunities the bill provides. These changes, especially related to funding, are historic in scale and scope.

The BIL offers an unprecedented opportunity for our region to make critical investments and reinvestments in our infrastructure; not only transportation as traditionally defined, but also water/sewer, broadband, and a host of other vital, if lower profile assets. These investments are to be made mindful of equity, resilience, and respect for the natural and built environments. It is a tall order.

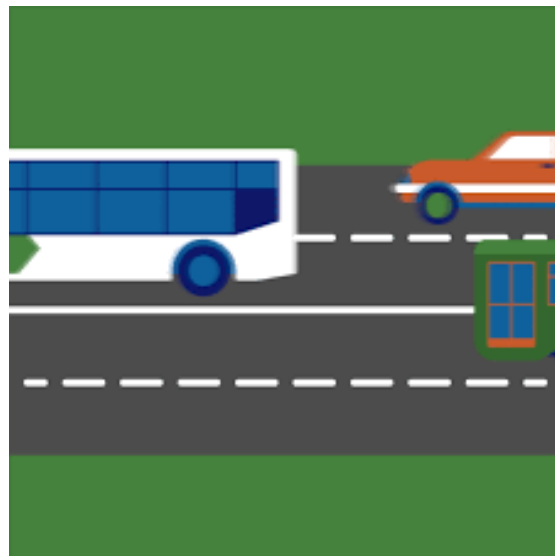
However, RPC staff has been working in these areas and in this context for many years. We will work to continue to position our region to take advantage of the once in a generation opportunity, in both policy development and funding, that this legislation presents.

We look forward to continued working with our Board members, in gratitude for their leadership and guidance; our partner agencies at the local, state and federal levels, and the residents of our region who makes us unique in America.

With Gratitude-

RPC is Updating Our Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), sometimes called a Long Range Transportation Plan, is the primary guiding document for long-term, regional transportation planning. It outlines the region's transportation priorities and goals, and the planning strategies that will be used to achieve them. Federal law requires Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to update the MTP every four to five years, and the plan should describe transportation needs for the next twenty-five to thirty years. In developing the plan, the MPO considers all transportation modes as well as projected trends in travel, land use, population, and many other variables. The MTP is coordinated with existing state and local plans, and federal guidance also requires MPOs to incorporate ten key planning factors: economic vitality; safety and security; accessibility and mobility; environmental protection; system connectivity; efficient management and operations; system preservation; resilience and reliability; and travel and tourism. In addition to these, the MPO incorporates any other priorities that are specific to its region.



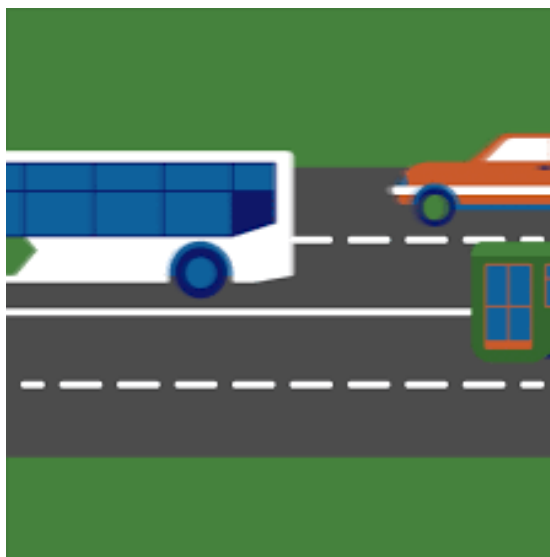
Importantly, the MTP includes a program of projects that are planned to be completed over the course of the long-term planning period. This list must be fiscally constrained – in other words, the MPO can only include projects that it can reasonably expect to fund based on past trends and anticipated future funding. Projects in the first four years of the plan are those for which funding

has already been identified, and these also constitute the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). MPO staff work closely with the state and local jurisdictions to develop the project list, and the plan describes the project selection and prioritization process.

The RPC's current MTP was created in 2018 (approved in January, 2019), and describes transportation goals and projects through 2048. Staff are currently updating the new plan, MTP 2052, with an expected completion date of August, 2022. We have already engaged many of our stakeholders to seek input on the plan, and will continue doing so over the next several months. Keep an eye on this newsletter and other communications from the RPC to stay aware of the plan's development, and to learn about opportunities to provide feedback.

New Orleans East Industrial Canal Crossing Safety and Access Stage 0 Planning Study

In the first program year of the new RPC Call for Studies process the City of New Orleans submitted a successful application to address deficiencies identified in their Moving New Orleans Bike citywide evaluation. They found a need for safer and friendlier paths for vulnerable users (people on bike or on foot) traversing the Inner Harbor Navigational Canal (IHNC). In addition, concern over 17 bike and 68 pedestrian fatalities and 58 bike and 226 pedestrian suspected serious injuries in Orleans Parish between 2015 and 2019 underscored the vulnerability of this segment of the transportation population.



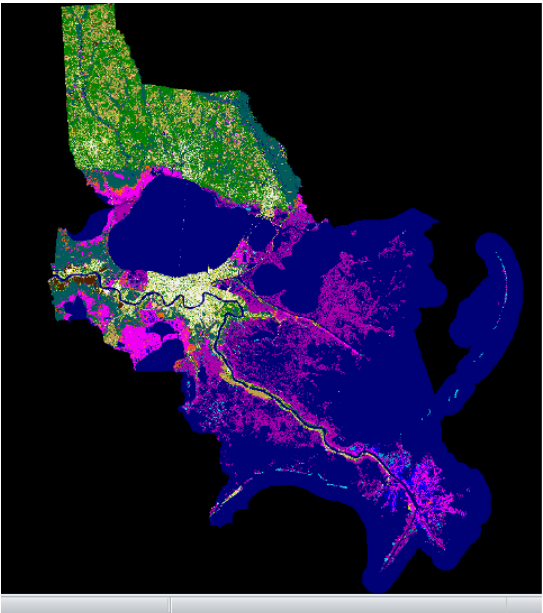
The four northernmost bridges over the IHNC are being assessed by the RPC to determine how to increase safety and provide support to the most people biking and walking to and from New Orleans East. The bridges are the Seabrook/Senator Ted Hickey (Leon C. Simon Dr) Bridge, the Danziger (Chef Menteur Hwy/US 90) Bridge, the High Rise (I-10) Bridge, and the Almonaster Bridge.

Counts of current vehicle volumes, typical speeds and the number of people actively walking or biking is collected and evaluated along with census block populations near the bridges, employment node information and car or transit use data. An inventory of current accommodations, if any (appropriate striping, signage, signalization, sidewalks, bike lanes, wheelchair friendly ramps) is also analyzed. Latent demand, the number of people who would walk or bike if better accommodations and conditions were available, is approximated.

This study will help determine what physical and operational changes can be made and the feasibility and cost of incorporating a conceptual design to retrofit one of the four bridges. Timeline for completion of this study, underway by BKI, Inc. will be June 2022.

Data in the Spotlight -NOAA Releases Highly Detailed Land Cover Data for Greater New Orleans Area

NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management, in partnership with the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission, recently released 2017 land cover for eight parishes surrounding the city. The one-meter resolution data are the most detailed available and include characteristics ranging from impervious surfaces and cultivated lands to tree canopy and wetlands. These data can be used to support local-scale planning related to a wide range of applications, including stormwater management, urban heat risk, tree equity, wetland condition, and carbon accounting. The data-rich mapping product represents the latest next-generation coastal land cover—known as C-CAP—the office has produced through artificial intelligence methods. They are available free to the public on the Digital Coast. You can access the full data set directly at <https://coast.noaa.gov/htdata/raster1/landcover/bulkdownload/hires/la/> Or you could access it through our online viewer (which allows for subsetting and custom projections, etc) at <https://coast.noaa.gov/dataviewer/#/>



Class_Name
Bare Land
Cultivated Land
Developed Open Space
Estuarine Aquatic Bed
Estuarine Emergent Wetland
Estuarine Forested Wetland
Estuarine Scrub Shrub Wetland
Grassland
Impervious Surface
Palustrine Aquatic Bed
Palustrine Emergent Wetland
Palustrine Forested Wetland
Palustrine Scrub Shrub Wetland
Pasture/Hay
Scrub/Shrub
Unconsolidated Shore
Upland Forest
Water

An Update From Brownfields

The RPC Brownfield Program has supported a number of exciting redevelopments over the years, such as the Falstaff Apartments and the TEP Center. In 2022, I am excited that *Beanlandia* will be joining the ranks of these wonderful projects. The Krewe of Red Beans needed a home for their expanding krewe, and



approached RPC Brownfields as they considered purchasing the old Giordano Furniture Warehouse (well known for their “cedar robes”) in the Bywater. RPC funded the krewe’s due diligence report in advance of the purchase and today the warehouse has officially been renamed “Beanlandia!” The Krewe of Red Beans has ambitious redevelopment plans for the

space, including a community center, live music venue, beer garden, and more. I look forward to seeing how this unfolds in the coming years.

RPC continues to assist the Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) and the City of Gretna with their brownfield programs. In Greta, we have been working with EPA on an emergency response to an industrial facility that was damaged during Hurricane Ida, posing health hazards to the surrounding neighborhood.

Late last year, we applied to the EPA for additional brownfield funding to do work in St. Bernard Parish. Our goal is to encourage development at key sites such as the Ford Plant in Arabi, the Paris Road Industrial Park, and the decommissioned wastewater treatment plant on the Chalmette Battlefield. St. Bernard Parish’s industrial history combined with the challenges faced by Katrina and the Deepwater Horizon make it an ideal candidate for brownfield funding. Finger crossed for good news from EPA regarding the grant award this Spring.



THE SAFETY TRAIN IS PULLING INTO THE STATION!

2021 Traffic Deaths

2021 continued to be a difficult year in the world of traffic safety. Preliminary Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) indicates Louisiana passed a grim milestone of over 1000 deaths on our roadways. While the task of reducing these types of deaths may seem daunting, each of us plays a role in making our roads safer. We can all strive to make good choices while getting around. A few simple decisions like buckling up, not driving distracted or



impaired, and wearing a helmet can make a huge difference.

SBIRT

Building upon past success of the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission (LHSC) funded Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) program at Southeastern Louisiana University, the RPC received additional funds to expand the program to a university on the South Shore and high schools on the North Shore. SBIRT, recognized as a proven safety countermeasure to reduce the incidence of impaired driving, has been integrated into various departments at Southeastern University. It is our hope to replicate this success as the program continues to expand to new areas and populations.

Southeast Louisiana Electric Vehicle Guide is Out



The Southeast Louisiana Clean Fuel Partnership has released [The Southeast Louisiana Electric Vehicle Readiness Guide](#). This guide provides a comprehensive introduction to electric vehicle (EV) technology and how to transition to an electrified transportation system, informed by regional housing, income, and population data. The guide outlines identified barriers for adoption and showcases best practices to help develop strategies that will promote electrification of the region's transportation systems, greater mobility access, and a cleaner environment – all of which

leads to more opportunity for prosperity in Southeast Louisiana for generations to come.

As an accompanying tool to this guide, there is an online regional [ArcGIS Mapping Viewer](#) available to help visualize and analyze pertinent regional data that will assist local decision making processes for future electric vehicle charging infrastructure implementation.

Get to Know RPC Staff: Leslie Couvillion

Leslie Couvillion is a south Louisiana native and has been with the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) since October of 2018. Her work focuses on database development, maintenance, and public data dissemination under the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) department. Leslie arrived at RPC with over 12 years of Environmental Management and GIS experience which included preservation and conservation-focused projects across the Southeastern United States.

Leslie earned her 2005 BA in Anthropology and 2011 MS in Geography from Louisiana State University and maintained her accreditation as a Geographic Information Systems Professional (GISP) since 2015. She served on the Board for the Louisiana Chapter of the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA) from 2016 through 2021 including acting as Chapter President when LaURISA was named Chapter of the Year. In her spare time she enjoys, in no particular order: plants, parks, turtles, record shops, gumbo, and historic architecture strolls.

Please reach out if you have a question about RPC data access: Lcouvillion@norpc.org

