APPENDIX K
PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL LINKAGES QUESTIONNAIRE
H.015428

d) Provide a description of the existing transportation facility within the corridor, including project limits, modes, functional classification, number of lanes, shoulder width, access control and type of surrounding environment (urban vs. rural, residential vs. commercial, etc.)

St. Bernard Parish's transportation network is a combination of interstate highways, state routes, local arterials, bridges, ferry services, bus transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure, as well as rail connections. These elements provide essential connectivity within the parish and to surrounding regions.

INTERSTATE AND STATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

Interstate Connectivity: I-10 and I-510 provide direct access to St. Bernard Parish, linking it to New Orleans and the broader regional transportation network. I-510 serves as a major connector, linking to Paris Road (LA 47), a critical north-south route into the parish. The transition from the I-510 Interstate designation to the LA 47 local state route takes place on the north side of the Intracoastal Waterway Canal Bridge (Green Bridge) near the Entergy Michoud Power Plant.

State Routes:

- *LA 39 (Judge Perez Drive)*: A principal east-west corridor serving the parish, facilitating local and regional traffic movements.
- *LA-46 (St. Bernard Highway)*: Runs parallel to LA 39, providing another major corridor for travel along the Mississippi River.
- *LA 47 (Paris Road)*: A key north-south route connecting the parish to I-510 and serving as a primary freight corridor.

These roadways are on the National Highway System (NHS) and as such are subject to performance standards for operations and maintenance per 23 USC 150.

MAJOR ARTERIALS AND BRIDGES

The parish's arterial network consists of key local roads that connect neighborhoods and commercial areas to state highways.

Several significant bridges provide access across waterways, including:

- *Violet Canal Bridge*: Provides an important connection for lower St. Bernard communities.
- *Bayou Bienvenue Bridge*: on Paris Rd. (LA 47)
- *Paris Road Bridge (Green Bridge)*: Critical for north-south connectivity, linking the parish to I-510.
- Claiborne Avenue Bridge: Facilitate access to neighboring regions.

FERRY SERVICE

There is one ferry service located within the project study area operated by the Regional Transit Authority. The Lower Algiers-Chalmette Ferry is for pedestrians and vehicles. This ferry operates between Plaquemines Parish and St. Bernard Parish and runs Sunday through Thursday. The ferry arrives/departs near Paris Road in Chalmette on the St. Bernard Parish

side, and near Winston St. in Lower Algiers on the west bank of the Mississippi River in Orleans Parish.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

St. Bernard Parish's public transportation is managed by the St. Bernard Urban Rapid Transit (SBURT) providing local transit connections within the parish. SBURT operates a primary route between Arabi and Poydras, in St. Bernard Parish, Monday through Friday, with no service on weekends or holidays. Deviations from the primary route are available to specific locations including St. Bernard Hospital, Trist Middle School, J.F. Gauthier School, St. Bernard State Park, and Fanz Trailer Park. All parish buses are equipped with bicycle racks to support multimodal transport.

In emergencies, SBURT provides evacuation assistance to residents without transportation. However, the SBURT route does not connect the most southeast portions of St. Bernard Parish, beyond the community of Kenilworth.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

St. Bernard Parish is only 1 of 3 parishes in Louisiana with an adopted Complete Streets Policy. The most recent St. Bernard Bikeway and Pedestrian Plan Update (2024), identifies 47 miles of sidewalks that need to be installed or improved and 56 pedestrian crossing improvement projects to enhance pedestrian connectivity and safety.

The parish has a 183-mile bikeway network, that links St. Bernard communities together and to neighboring parishes. This includes several multi-use trails, such as the 14-mile Mississippi River Trail, 26-mile 40 Arpent Trail, and others connecting neighborhoods and employment centers.

RAIL NETWORK

The Norfolk Southern Railroad (NSRR) operates the Chalmette Branch Rail Line which extends from the Norfolk Southern (NS) Oliver Railyard near downtown New Orleans to Braithwaite, Louisiana. There are numerous existing industrial users serviced by the NSRR along the Chalmette Branch as well as the planned Louisiana International Terminal (LIT).

In a meeting with Norfolk Southern Railroad (NSRR) on April 1, 2024, NSRR stated that trains operate 24/7 across approximately 100 at-grade crossings, most of which are private crossings along the Chalmette Branch Line. According to NSRR, approximately 10 train movements per day occur between the Oliver Yard and various industrial clients along the Chalmette Branch Line. Due to the numerous at-grade crossings, the operating speed of freight trains in this area is typically 5-10 miles per hour.

While there are approximately 100 at-grade crossings, there are three intersections in particular that are of concern relative to vehicular delay including:

1. Judge Perez Drive (LA39)
2. St. Bernard Highway (LA46)
3. Paris Road

Please also reference Section 5.2 Existing Transportation Facilities of the PEL Study

e) Provide a brief chronology of the planning activities (PEL study) including the year(s) the studies were completed.

MEETING DATE	HIGH-LEVEL MILESTONES
October 2, 2023	Project Leadership Team Kickoff Meeting to review project goals, objectives, and timeline.
October 23, 2023	Discuss approach to project branding, website, survey, and press release development, as well as the outreach efforts in November re: Project Launch, including live website, published Outreach Plan, live "Mark the Map" Survey; and final press release shared with Parish, Stakeholders and Community groups able to sign up online to be kept informed of project updates.
November 20, 2023	• Review plans for Project Launch, including preparation of analysis of survey responses, questions received to-date; and • Assess opportunities to boost engagement via RPC, Parish, and Port communication channels, up-coming events; and • Review status of Task 2 - Review of Plans/Data and Task 3 - Data Collection.
January 22, 2024	• Review online and social media Project Launch effect and questions received to-date; and • Assess opportunities to boost engagement via RPC, Parish, and Port communication channels, up-coming events; and • Plan meeting approach / logistics for **Public Meeting No. 1** (4/11/2023), based on findings and comments to-date; and • Determine schedule of **Stakeholder Interviews/Briefing Sessions** held prior to Public Meeting No. 1.
March 18, 2024	• Updated analysis of survey responses, questions received to-date; and • Assess opportunities to boost engagement via RPC, Parish, and Port communication channels, up-coming festivals/events; and • Review outcomes of Task 4 (complete as of 3/14/24); and • Review and discuss conceptual plans in development.
April 11, 2024	• Public Meeting No. 1 at Corrinne Baptist Church
May 20, 2024	• Review outcomes of **Public Meeting No. 1** (4/11/2024), including outcomes of meeting exercise, updated analysis of survey responses, and questions received to-date; and • Incorporate special considerations and community feedback into final conceptual plan recommendations; and • Submission of traffic analysis submittals, Chapter 1 and Appendix B; and • Initiation of Existing Conditions Analysis; and • Development of Long-Term Alternatives; and • Assess progress on Task 5 – Conceptual Plan Development.
June 24, 2024	• Submission of Existing Safety Analysis; and • Submission of Existing and No Build Analysis; and • Initiating 2030 and 2050 Build Analysis; and

	• Continued development of Long-Term alternatives; and • Submission of Draft Environmental Review of Project Area; and • Plan for **Public Meeting No. 2** to review and explain how community feedback was incorporated into final transportation improvement recommendations.
January 16, 2025	• Assess opportunities to boost engagement for Public Meeting No. 2 via RPC, Parish, and Port communication channels; and • Review alternative analysis, discuss public meeting No. 2 materials, including interactive exercise; and • Finalize schedule to complete Report.
February 4, 2025	• Public Meeting No. 2
April 2025	• Submission of final Stage 0 Report

Please also reference Appendix A: Public Outreach Plan, Section 7 for a sequencing of events.

f) Are there recent, current, or near future planning studies or projects in the vicinity? What is the relationship of this project to those studies/projects?

St. Bernard Parish Comprehensive Plan, Port Nola LIT Traffic Studies, The St Bernard Parish Bikeway & Pedestrian Plan Update (Soll Planning & Alta Planning + Design, June 2017)

Please also reference Appendix I: PEL Stage 0 Preliminary Scope and Budget Checklist, Section A

METHODOLOGY USED

a) What was the scope of the PEL study and the reason for completing it?

The Regional Planning Commission (RPC), in coordination with the Port of New Orleans (Port NOLA) and St. Bernard Parish, is currently conducting a "Stage 0" Feasibility Study to evaluate impacts and assess potential improvements to the surface transportation network in St. Bernard Parish relating primarily to the implementation of the proposed Louisiana International Terminal (LIT) project, in Violet, Louisiana, as well as other downriver developments to be identified and reviewed. The RPC is requesting proposals from qualified firms to provide professional transportation planning services in support of this study.

Please reference Attachment 1- Lower St. Bernard Roadway Network and Resilience Study Scope of Work.

b) Did you use NEPA-like language? Why or why not?

The PEL process and the manner in which this phase of work relates to a NEPA process was discussed among the many project agency representatives and major stakeholders. In the public meetings and in public-facing content, participants were notified all data and

comments may be used in a future NEPA evaluation. This was decided in order to make the planning process more understandable for local participants and to be transparent about the gravity of the work being done as part of this feasibility effort.

c) What were the actual terms used and how did you define them? (Provide examples or list)

Elevated Highway Alternative – proposed alternative for the LA 47/LA 39-connector road.

Existing Infrastructure Improvement Alternative - proposed alternative for improvements to existing intersections.

Wetland Impacts – Wetlands affected by the allotted 200-ft buffer zone for each elevated highway alignment.

d) How do you see these terms being used in NEPA documents?

Elevated Highway Alternative – proposed alternative for the LA 47/LA 39-connector road to be considered for further evaluation during NEPA.

Existing Infrastructure Improvement Alternative - proposed alternative for improvements to existing intersections to be considered for further evaluation during NEPA.

Wetland Impacts – Wetlands delineated by the USACE during official coordination for jurisdictional wetland determination.

e) What were the key steps and coordination points in the PEL decision-making process? Who were the decision-makers and who else participated in those key steps? For example, for the corridor vision, the decision was made by state DOT and the local agency, with buy-in from FHWA, the USACE, and USFWS and other resource/regulatory agencies.

The project requirements were determined by reviewing both existing and projected data (traffic, land use, and development), examining various transportation plans and previous reports, and engaging in discussions with the project leadership team, client, and relevant stakeholders. Please see Appendix A: Public Outreach Plan for specific details.

f) How should the PEL information be presented in NEPA?

To ensure a comprehensive and streamlined planning process, this study was developed using the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) approach, which involved a comprehensive list of stakeholders and allowed for early consideration of environmental, community, and economic factors in transportation decision-making. The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LA DOTD) may adopt or incorporate by reference any portions of this study that sufficiently meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). 23 CFR 450.318 was selected as the guiding federal regulation to ensure compliance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) planning requirements and to facilitate a smooth transition from feasibility analysis to project implementation. This study included consideration of several alternatives and future scenarios, making the process more intuitive by simply discussing it as a planning study rather than a PEL study.

AGENCY COORDINATION

a) Provide a synopsis of coordination with Federal, tribal, state and local environmental, regulatory and resource agencies. Describe their level of participation and how you coordinated with them.

A Project Leadership Team was established to oversee the study and ensure coordination among key stakeholders. This team includes representatives from the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission, St. Bernard Parish, Port of New Orleans, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Federal Highway Administration, and the project consultant team. The team conducted monthly progress/update meetings to discuss project developments, address concerns, and guide decision-making throughout the feasibility study process. The members of this team can be found in Appendix A: Final Stakeholder and Public Outreach Plan. The following resource and government agencies were made aware of the stage 0 study and given opportunity provide input, comments, and concerns: DENR, USACE, SELA Flood Protection Authority, Coast Guard, St. Bernard Parish Government, St. Bernard Tourist Commission, FHWA, SHPO, LDWF, DOTD.

Please reference Appendix A: Public Outreach Plan for the outreach effort with governmental agencies.

b) What transportation agencies (e.g. for adjacent jurisdictions) did you coordinate with or were involved during the PEL study?

DOTD, FHWA, Port NOLA. A project stakeholder meeting for community groups was held by the project team (dates and attendees can be found in Appendix A of Stage 0 report). Stakeholder meetings for economic development and private sector groups was held by the project team (dates and full list of attendees can be found in Appendix A of Stage 0 report). Stakeholder meeting for resource and governmental agencies was held by project team (dates and full list of attendees can be found in appendix A). Letters requesting comments and input were mailed to all Federally Recognized Tribal Governments (full list can be found in Appendix A of Stage 0 Report)

c) What steps will need to be taken with each agency during NEPA scoping?

During the later NEPA phase, a project team and several agencies will take additional steps to progress the project. Listed below are some of the more significant steps remaining for that phase.

DOTD – Lead State Agency for NEPA Phase:

- Procure a new team to support the project through a federal approval.
- Traffic and Safety Analysis (oversight of consultant's work)
- Roadway and structure designs
- Right of Way Coordination
- Utility Relocation surveys and coordination
- Review and approval of key NEPA documents.
- Incorporation of different phases in appropriate plans and STIP

FHWA – Federal Lead agency for environmental review and NEPA Compliance

- Identify additional sponsors or cooperating agencies.

- Review and approval of key NEPA documents.

USACE – Coordination for required permitting (CWA S.: 404, 408)
DEQ – State agency Coordination regarding potentially contaminated properties.
DENR – Coordination for applicable coastal zone permits.
SHPO – Coordination for applicable consultations and required permits for compliance with Section 106 and Section 4(f)
USFWS – Evaluation for potential impacts on endangered species and critical habitats

PUBLIC COORDINATION:

a) Provide a synopsis of your coordination efforts with the public and stakeholders.

The Project Team conducted outreach and engagement to comply with Project parameters and support a potential future NEPA process. The Project Team reduced barriers to participation and supported more equitable representation in this Study's planning process by:

- Following Title 49 CFR 21.5 – Discrimination Prohibited
- Consistently notifying the public that information collected in support of this study may be used in a future NEPA process.
- Requesting (via public records request) stakeholder and resident contact information from Port NOLA project planning efforts to leverage existing, extensive ongoing community engagement – and to keep those involved in the process informed of RPC Study events and findings.
- Hosting Public Meetings at locations accessible to persons with a disability, bus riders, and bicyclists, that are convenient to neighborhoods with a concentration of minority and low-income persons.
- Providing translators/interpreters for meetings, if requested, and ensuring take-a-way materials are developed at an 8th grade or below reading level for the broadest accessibility.
- Providing translators/interpreters for meetings, if requested, and ensuring take-a-way materials are developed at an 8th grade or below reading level for the broadest accessibility.
- Providing both in-person and online engagement opportunities.
- Including a statement at the bottom of all meeting notices in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese indicating that an interpreter, materials in alternate formats, or other accommodations will be made available if requested, at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.
- Providing information, including meeting notices and press releases, to news media, including the St Bernard Voice, the St. Bernard Parish CivicEngage platform, the PortNOLA newsletter and news releases, and the St. Bernard Government Access Channel.

Communication methods employed by the Project Team, and described in more detail within Appendix A of the report, and included:

- Parish, RPC, and Port NOLA website
- Emails (e.g., e-blasts to mailing list)
- Virtual or in-person meetings
- Stakeholder Meetings
- Community Workshops
- Parish, RPC, and Port NOLA social media accounts
- Interactive "Mark the Map" Online Comment Portal & In Person Mapping Activities
- Community Survey (paper and online)
- Community Event / Tabling
- Comprehensive outreach efforts are described in detail within the Appendix A, which details all work completed (and associated outcomes) in support of Study findings.

Comprehensive outreach efforts are described in detail within the Appendix A, which details all work completed (and associated outcomes) in support of Study findings.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PEL STUDY:

a) What was the scope of the PEL study and the reason for completing it?

The Regional Planning Commission (RPC), in coordination with the Port of New Orleans (Port NOLA) and St. Bernard Parish, is currently conducting a "Stage 0" Feasibility Study to evaluate impacts and assess potential improvements to the surface transportation network in St. Bernard Parish relating primarily to the implementation of the proposed Louisiana International Terminal (LIT) project, in Violet, Louisiana, as well as other downriver developments to be identified and reviewed. The RPC is requesting proposals from qualified firms to provide professional transportation planning services in support of this study.

Please reference Attachment 1- Lower St. Bernard Roadway Network and Resilience Study Scope of Work.

b) Provide the purpose and need statement, or the corridor vision and transportation goals and objectives to realize that vision.

Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement
The purpose of the project is to identify needed transportation infrastructure improvements and roadway network improvements in the lower St. Bernard Parish area resulting from the proposed development and expansion over time of the Louisiana International Terminal project in Violet, LA, specifically between the I-510/ LA 47 corridor and lower St. Bernard Parish. This includes assessments of LA 46 and LA 39, the National Highway System Routes that service the area. Transportation infrastructure improvements identified aim to accommodate the efficient movement of forecast traffic needs resulting from the anticipated addition of heavy truck traffic and ancillary value-added economic activities and land use changes while minimizing negative community impacts.

The needs of the project include the following:
System Linkage to improve connectivity between the I-10/I-510 and Lower St. Bernard Parish to accommodate proposed economic development and growth.
Intermodal Relationships provide improved and efficient access to existing and planned intermodal port and rail facilities within the lower St. Bernard Region.
Economic Development accommodate future economic development associated with the LIT intermodal port facility and other land use changes within the lower St. Bernard Region.
Capacity Improvements provide capacity necessary to address the existing and projected future traffic growth within the transportation network of the lower St. Bernard Region.
Hurricane Evacuation to provide improved and resilient evacuation routes for residents in Lower St. Bernard Parish and the East Bank of Plaquemines Parish.
Additional Goal: An additional goal of the purpose and need is to reduce impacts of commercial truck traffic associated with the proposed LIT facility on existing state routes, within the project area**.** The reduction in commercial truck traffic on existing infrastructure will enhance freight efficiency, minimize congestion, and lessen the degradation of infrastructure.

Please also reference PEL Stage 0 Final Report Section 3, Executive Summary, and Appendix I: PEL Stage 0 Preliminary Scope and Budget Checklist, Section B

c) What steps will need to be taken during the NEPA process to make this a project-level purpose and need statement?

The Purpose and Need statement was developed as a Preliminary Purpose and Need that can be refined to make it a project-level purpose and need.

RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES:

d) What types of alternatives were looked at? (Provide a one or two sentence summary and reference document.)

As part of this Stage 0 Feasibility Study, a wide range of potential improvements to the surface transportation network in Lower St. Bernard Parish were evaluated to address anticipated growth and freight demands associated with the proposed Louisiana International Terminal (LIT) in Violet, LA. A central component of this effort involved evaluating the feasibility of a new elevated highway that could provide a direct connection between the interstate system and the vicinity of the LIT site. The alternatives development and screening process was designed to identify and refine only those alternatives that are consistent with the project's preliminary Purpose and Need and are appropriate for further environmental and engineering review. These initial concepts were informed by the project's Purpose and Need, land use forecasts, regional planning data, and input from stakeholders and the public.

Improvements to existing intersections were developed to mitigate the operational deficiencies identified in the No Build Conditions capacity analysis results (Section 5.3.6), using a tiered approach based on the LADOTD Traffic Engineering Process and Report (TEPR).

Please reference PEL Study Final Report Section 7 for a detailed alternatives analysis for the elevated highway and Section 8 for a detailed alternatives analysis for existing infrastructure improvements identified through a traffic study.

e) How did you select the screening criteria and screening process?

The elevated highway alternatives evaluation process began with the development of 32 conceptual elevated highway alignments. These initial concepts were informed by the project's Purpose and Need, land use forecasts, regional planning data, and input from stakeholders and the public. The alternatives were then screened through a rigorous, three-round evaluation framework designed to progressively narrow the range of options based on feasibility, environmental impacts, social considerations, and overall performance.

Round 1 utilized a "pass/fail" screening approach focused on threshold criteria such as consistency with the project Purpose and Need, location within the defined study area, constructability, and the potential for unmitigable environmental impacts—including protected species habitat and Section 4(f) resources. Alternatives failing to meet any of these baseline criteria were removed from further consideration.

Round 2 applied a scoring system to the 12 alternatives that passed the first round. This round focused on performance related to land use integration (e.g., potential for future expansion to the LIT site), impacts to vulnerable communities (per 49 CFR 21.55), wetlands footprint, and the number of required navigable waterway crossings. Only alternatives scoring 8 or higher out of 12 were advanced to the third round.

Round 3 provided a more refined evaluation of the seven remaining alternatives, using additional metrics such as potential for traffic diversion from congested corridors, benefits to local communities, public preference, compatibility with future rail expansion, and relative construction cost. This phase identified the top three alternatives—Alternatives 12, 22, and 25—as the most promising based on their overall performance and alignment with regional transportation, environmental, and community objectives.

Each screening round included geospatial mapping of alternative alignments and a documented screening matrix. The alternative layout maps show the geographical representations of the elevated highway alternative alignments in relation to the parish boundary, major landmarks, state and local roadways, waterways, and other intermodal transportation within the project study area. This structured, multi-phase approach ensures that the alternatives recommended for advancement are conceptually feasible, responsive to stakeholder needs, and capable of supporting further project development in compliance with NEPA and other federal and state requirements.

The alternatives for improvements to existing intersections followed a tiered approach based on the LADOTD Traffic Engineering Process and Report (TEPR).

f) For alternative(s) that were screened out, briefly summarize the reasons for eliminating the alternative(s). (During the initial screenings, this generally will focus on fatal flaws.)

Round 1 utilized a "pass/fail" screening approach. Alternatives failing to meet any criteria of the purpose and need, fell outside the study area, or had potential impacts to critical habitats, or deemed to not be feasibly constructed were eliminated from Round 1.

Round 2 applied a scoring system to evaluate the 12 alternatives that advanced from Round 1. Alternatives were eliminated if they scored poorly in key areas such as integration with future land use (e.g., potential for future expansion to the LIT site), disproportionate impacts to vulnerable communities (as defined under 49 CFR 21.55), greater relative impacts to wetlands, or a higher number of required navigable waterway crossings. Only those alternatives that achieved a score of 8 or higher out of 12 were advanced to Round 3.

Round 3 involved a more detailed evaluation of the seven remaining alternatives using refined criteria, including potential to divert traffic from congested corridors, benefits to local communities, public preference, compatibility with future rail expansion, and relative construction cost. Alternatives were eliminated in this phase due to lower performance across these metrics—particularly limited traffic benefits, higher costs, or misalignment with long-term regional goals. This round ultimately identified Alternatives 12, 22, and 25 as the most viable, based on their strong overall performance and alignment with regional transportation, environmental, and community objectives. Section 7 of the Final Report should also be referenced for the screening matrices and how each alternative performed for each round.

g) Which alternatives should be brought forward into NEPA and why?

The final 3 elevated highway alternatives referenced in Section 7 of the Stage 0 Final Report should be brought forth into NEPA for further evaluation:

- Following the third round of screening, Alternatives 12, 22, and 25 were identified as the most viable options based on their performance across the evaluation criteria. These alternatives demonstrated the following: the most reduction in vehicles on Paris rd. between St. Bernard Highway and the 40 Arpent Canal, the most positive enhancements for local communities, and received the most favorable community feedback. These top 3 alternatives also provide future rail compatibility.

The following intersection improvements should be brought forward into NEPA:

- Construction of a Full Displaced Left Turn – Paris Rd @ E Judge Perez
- Construction of a Roundabout – E St. Bernard Hwy @ Palmisano
- Construction of 2 signalized U-turns and add two-phased signals to prohibit east and west bound left turns – E Judge Perez @ Palmisano
- Signal Timing adjustment in the PM to optimize operations – E. St. Bernard Hwy @ Paris Rd.
- Adding traffic signals to intersection – E St. Bernard Hwy @ Colonial Blvd.

Consideration for the reconstruction of LA 39 & LA 47 should be brought forward into NEPA.

Consideration for the following rail improvements should be brought forward into NEPA:

- Grade separation at the Judge Perez Dr intersection with Norfolk Southern Railroad Chalmette Branch Line.
- Grade separation at the St. Bernard Highway intersection with Norfolk Southern Railroad Chalmette Branch Line.

- Elevated Rail alignment that potentially extends from the Port Nola Facility through the marsh paralleling 40 Arpent and eventually connecting back into the existing Norfolk Southern railroad line.

Consideration for the following Bicycle & Pedestrian Improvements should be brought forward into NEPA in regards to proposed existing intersection improvements and the proposed elevated highway alternatives to ensure the proposed bicycle and pedestrian improvements can be accommodated with the proposed infrastructure improvements:

- A review of pedestrian and bike crash history from 2012-2014 revealed that these types of crashes were concentrated along the major corridors of Paris Rd (LA 47), Judge Perez Dr (LA 39), and St Bernard Hwy (LA 46) and improvements along these corridors should be a high priority.

- The public input process revealed a significant need for bikeway and pedestrian improvements that involve crossing and travel along the three main state highways in the urbanized area – LA 47, LA 39, and LA 46. These roadways can function as barriers to non-motorized travel and discourage trips that involve them.

- A buffered bicycle lane (conventional bicycle lane paired with a designated buffer space via pavement markings to separate the bicyclists from motor vehicles) is recommended on LA 47 between 40 Arpent Trail and LA 46.

- A separated bicycle lane (protected bicycle lane, includes a vertical element to separate the bicyclists from motor vehicles) is recommended on LA 39 between LA 47 and Jacob Dr (between Campagna Dr and Archbishop Hannan Blvd).

- A shoulder bikeway is recommended on LA 39 between Jacob Dr and Bayou Rd (south of the proposed Port).

- A bicycle lane is recommended on LA 46 between LA 47 and Palmisano Blvd and between Trailhead at Violet Canal and St Bernard Pkwy.

- A shoulder bikeway is recommended on LA 47 between Palmisano Blvd and Trailhead at Violet Canal.

- Several bicycle lanes that will connect with LA 46, LA 47, and LA 39 are recommended on local roadways.

- New sidewalks are recommended along LA 47 from Forty Arpent Canal to E St Bernard Hwy, along LA 39 from Paris Rd to Violet Canal, and along LA 46 from Paris Rd to Poydras junction.

- A bicycle / pedestrian bridge over Paris Rd (LA 47) is recommended at 40 Arpent Canal.

  Multiple at-grade pedestrian crossing opportunities are recommended at LA 46, LA 47, and LA 39, including the installation of pedestrian signals, ADA curb ramps, high-visibility crosswalks, and tighter corner radii.

h) Did the public, stakeholders, and agencies have an opportunity to comment during this process?

Yes, there were 2 public meetings held, 3 stakeholder meetings (Resource agencies, Private industry/economic development, and local community groups). The project leadership team met monthly and was comprised of the sponsor agencies, local, state, and federal agencies.

i) Were there unresolved issues with the public, stakeholders, and/or agencies?

Key public concerns raised:

- Traffic congestion and freight movement impacts to roadway deterioration.
- Environmental effects, particularly wetlands and water resources
- Disruptions to local businesses and communities
- Pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements
- Tolling concerns

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS AND ANALYTICAL METHODS

a) What is the forecast year used in the PEL study?

2030 and 2050.

b) What method was used for forecasting traffic volumes?

Estimated growth rate percentages based on volume outputs from RPC's TransCAD model and applied these percentages to the collected turning movement count volumes to forecast 2030 and 2050 volumes without the construction of the Port. Growth rate percentages were estimated based on volume outputs from an updated version of RPC's TransCAD model (that includes attributes related to the Port) and applied these percentages to the collected turning movement count volumes to forecast 2030 and 2050 volumes with the construction of the Port. Note: Port Trucks were added to the road network by hand based on discussions with Port NOLA staff regarding anticipated Port truck volumes and their associated routes.

c) Are the planning assumptions and the corridor vision/purpose and need statement consistent with each other and with the long-range transportation plan? Are the assumptions still valid?

Yes.

d) What were the future year policy and/or data assumptions used in the transportation planning process related to land use, economic development, transportation costs, and network expansion?

As a part of developing an updated travel demand model for the Lower St. Bernard Transportation Network Feasibility Study, the existing forecasted socioeconomic data prepared by the Regional Planning Commission was analyzed, along with the land use and zoning data provided by the RPC. The current forecasted SE data is projected out to the year 2050, relying on Parish Permits, future land use and zoning projections, and an annual average of 2% population growth in St. Bernard Parish.

The existing socioeconomic data was then modified to incorporate the economic impacts of the Louisiana International Terminal being developed by the Port of New Orleans, while also considering any future developments that may result from the LIT construction and operations.

In order to understand the economic impacts of the Louisiana International Terminal, the Port of New Orleans hired Lewis Terrell and Associates to perform an economic analysis of the Louisiana International Terminal Complex. The final report was released to the Feasibility Study project team for reference in projecting the number of jobs that would be created by the Louisiana International Terminal, and how those jobs would impact the population, housing, and average income in the ports jurisdictional area of St. Bernard, Jefferson, and Orleans Parishes.

Growth rate percentages based on volume outputs from RPC's TransCAD model were estimated to the collect turning movement count volumes to forecast 2030 and 2050 volumes without the construction of the Port.

Growth rate percentages were estimated based on volume outputs from an updated version of RPC's TransCAD model (that includes attributes related to the Port) and applied these percentages to the collected turning movement count volumes to forecast 2030 and 2050 volumes with the construction of the Port. Note: Port Trucks were added to the road network by hand based on discussions with Port NOLA staff regarding anticipated Port truck volumes and their associated routes.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES (WETLANDS, CULTURAL, ETC.) REVIEWED. FOR EACH RESOURCE OR GROUP OF RESOURCES REVIEWED, PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING

a) In the PEL study, at what level of detail was the resource reviewed and what was the method of review?

The Stage 0 Feasibility Study identified key environmental resources in the project area and potential regulatory challenges. To advance the project through NEPA, supplemental studies including wetland delineations, species surveys, cultural assessments, and contamination investigations will be necessary. Please see Appendix J of the Stage 0 Final Report for full detailed report on Environmental Considerations.

The following environmental resources were evaluated in the Lower St. Bernard Transportation Network Feasibility Study:

- Wetlands – desktop assessment using USFWS National Wetlands Inventory (NWI)
- Cultural Resources – Preliminary desktop review and report write up (Appendix E)
- Hydric Soils and Prime Farmland - desktop review using USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey
- Threatened and Endangered Species – Desktop review of USFWS IPaC and LWDF Rare Species and Natural Communities list
- Essential Fish Habitat – Desktop review of NOAA Essential Fish Habitat Mapper
- Water Resources (Surface Waters, Natural and Scenic Rivers, Aquifers, Water Wells, Floodplains, and Levees) - Desktop review of LDEQ Water Quality Integrated Report, USGS Watershed Boundary Dataset, and FEMA MFHL
- Unique and Environmentally Sensitive Areas – Desktop review of LDWF and DENR SONRIS to identify Wildlife Management Areas, Conservation Areas, and Federal Lands
- Noise and Air Quality – Desktop review of EPA Green Book for air quality nonattainment status and anticipated construction noise impacts.
- Hazardous and Solid Waste Concerns – Desktop review of EPA SEMS and LDEQ underground storage tank database.
- Pipelines – Desktop review of DENR SONRIS database.

b) Is this resource present in the area and what is the existing environmental condition for this resource?

Many of these resources are present in the project study area, and more detailed analysis will need to be conducted during the NEPA Phase.

c) What are the issues that need to be considered during NEPA, including potential resource impacts and potential mitigation requirements (if known)?

During the NEPA process the following issues and data gaps may need to be addressed and/or further analyzed:

- Wetlands & Permitting: Jurisdictional wetland delineation and USACE consultation will be required. Mitigation plans for unavoidable impacts will need to be developed.
- Cultural Resources – Coordination with SHPO for possible phase 1 surveys that may be required.
- Formal consultation with USFWS for threatened and endangered species
- Essential Fish Habitat assessment for potential mitigation for shading effects of elevated roadways.

- Hydraulic modeling and stormwater management planning
- Traffic emissions and noise studies to determine impacts.
- Possible Phase 1 ESA for potential hazardous sites.

d) How will the planning data provided need to be supplemented during NEPA?

Completing a robust analysis with full cooperation from the DOTD and FHWA was intended to minimize any rework and optimize the usability of the content developed during the PEL phase. During the NEPA phase, planning assumptions may need to be revisited if any of the following occur:

There will need to be updates later based on the following:

1. Changes to the Port of New Orleans plans, if any, for the Port Terminal.
2. Major changes to US regulations or US import/export policies.

LIST ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES YOU ARE AWARE OF THAT WERE NOT REVIEWED IN THE PEL STUDY AND WHY. INDICATE WHETHER OR NOT THEY WILL NEED TO BE REVIEWED IN NEPA AND EXPLAIN WHY.

During the Stage 1 NEPA phase, environmental resources will have to be analyzed in more detail than was used in the Stage 0 Planning phase. These aspects could not be included in the PEL study without the preferred alternative selection.

The following evaluations will be needed in NEPA:

- *Detailed archaeological surveys*
- *Full wetland delineation and mitigation plan*
- *Hydrologic modeling for floodplain assessment*
- *Noise and vibration impact analysis*

WERE CUMULATIVE IMPACTS CONSIDERED IN THE PEL STUDY?

Cumulative impacts were not formally considered in this PEL Study. The design and project details necessary to adequately assess cumulative impacts of proposed alternatives were not available at the PEL-level of analysis and will be appropriately studied during the NEPA process.

However, the indirect and cumulative impacts were discussed with agencies and the public due to the purpose of the project. The transportation improvements studied during this phase are being considered to manage the traffic of a new large container port terminal. The construction of the port is assumed to influence industrial and commercial growth in the area immediately surrounding it.

DESCRIBE ANY MITIGATION STRATEGIES DISCUSSED AT THE PLANNING LEVEL THAT SHOULD BE ANALYZED DURING NEPA.

Mitigation strategies were utilized through the alternatives screening process. For the elevated highways, the screening analysis considered impacts to protected species habitat, section 4(f) resources in round 1. In round 2, alternative alignments with the highest impacts to wetlands and vulnerable communities were ranked lower than alternatives with less impacts or needs for mitigation. Also considered in round 2 were the number of navigable waterways(defined by USGS) that would need to be crossed. Alternatives that would require more waterway crossings were ranked lower than those that would not require any waterway crossings.

The completion of the current phase marks a significant milestone in the process, as the selected alternatives will later undergo comprehensive environmental and regulatory assessments to ensure they meet state and federal transportation planning requirements. Future studies will further refine project details, assess mitigation measures, and engage stakeholders to facilitate a sustainable and effective transportation solution for the region. Potential mitigation measures include:

- **Wetland Mitigation**: Compensatory wetland restoration and conservation easements.
- **Noise Abatement**: Installation of sound barriers and operational restrictions.
- **Traffic Management**: Intersection and signal timing improvements.
- **Wildlife Protection**: Habitat conservation and species relocation strategies.
- **Community Enhancements**: Bicycle and pedestrian safety upgrades.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE DURING NEPA TO MAKE INFORMATION FROM THE PEL STUDY AVAILABLE TO THE AGENCIES AND THE PUBLIC?

The traffic, environmental, cost and other data analyzed and developed in this study will serve as a starting point for NEPA analysis. The deliverables from this study will be available and housed at the respective sponsors, the MPO, the DOTD, and FHWA. The later NEPA document(s) will be informed by a full spectrum of planning decisions derived from the PEL process. The reports and all supporting PEL decision documents will be incorporated into the NEPA process by reference and become part of the administrative record and history of the decision-making process. Further, the PEL Study Report, including associated technical reports, will be integrated into the NEPA process, and made available to the public, agency team members, stakeholders, and agencies. The Report will also be available on the NORPC website, with links to it on the DOTD website. We do intend that these PEL study products will be used by agencies and reviewed by the public during the NEPA scoping process.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER ISSUES A FUTURE PROJECT TEAM SHOULD BE AWARE OF?

Key public concerns raised:

- Traffic congestion and freight movement impacts to road deterioration.
- Environmental effects, particularly wetlands and water resources
- Disruptions to local businesses and communities
- Pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements
- Tolling feasibilty

Each alternative presents trade-offs between land acquisition, utility relocation costs, and the complexity of ROW negotiations:

Alternative 12 is the most favorable in terms of minimal landowner impact, reducing potential delays in the Right of Way Acquisition phase, and scored the highest in Round 3.

Alternative 22 had the highest Round 2 score and ranked high in community feedback but requires the most parcel acquisitions and utility relocations.

Alternative 25 has the lowest ROW acquisition and wetland impact and is the most cost-effective but ranks lower in community impacts and road network improvements.

The final selection should balance cost efficiency with feasibility in ROW acquisition, utility relocations, and environmental and community considerations to minimize delays and financial risk.