

**NON-FLOOD PROTECTION ASSET MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
MINUTES OF THE BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY APRIL 29, 2014 – 4:30 P.M.**

A special meeting of the Blue Ribbon Committee of the Non-Flood Asset Protection Management Authority was held on Tuesday, April 29, 2014 at 4:30 p.m., in the Lake Vista Community Center, 2nd Floor, 6500 Spanish Fort Blvd., New Orleans, Louisiana after due legal notice of the meeting was sent to each Board member, the news media, and a copy of the call was posted.

Chairman Stack called the meeting to order at 4:36 p.m. and led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The roll was called which constituted a quorum.

PRESENT:

Chairman Michael Stack
Commissioner Darrel Saizan
Commissioner Greg Ernst
Commissioner Pearl Cantrelle
Peter Bennett
Dawn Hebert
Walter Baudier

FURTHERMORE PRESENT:

Commissioner Rodger Wheaton

STAFF:

Louis Capo - Executive Director
Sharon Martiny - Non-Flood

ALSO PRESENT:

Gerard Metzger – Legal Counsel
Octave Rainy – Resident, Lake Willow
Ann Duffy – Lake Oaks
Bonny Schumaker – Flightline First
Brayton Matthews – Flightline First
Louise Kirchberg – Resident
Andre Baugh – Resident
Tiffany Pitre – Resident
John Davis - Resident

OPENING COMMENTS

Chairman Stack thanked Ms. Hebert, Mr. Bennett and Mr. Baudier for their participation on the Blue Ribbon Committee. The goal of this Committee is to find both short and long-term solutions for Lakeshore Drive to operate in a safe and efficient manner.

ADOPT AGENDA

Commissioner Ernst offered a motion to adopt the Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Cantrelle and unanimously adopted.

NEW BUSINESS

- 1) **Discussion regarding traffic controls along with safety measures for recreational use along the entire length of Lakeshore Drive**

As the DOTD District Engineer Administrator for many years Commissioner Stack has been involved in many projects around the City of New Orleans and has worked closely with neighborhood groups, public groups, Bike Easy and RPC. There is potential funding available for these projects, but the funding

requires a match and it is a fairly lengthy process. The objective is to secure federal funding through DOTD in conjunction with the Regional Planning Commission. The Committee has 60 days to make recommendations regarding the safe operation and traffic plans regarding Lakeshore Drive.

Walther Baudier, Design Engineering, designed the entire 5.2 miles of Lakeshore Drive and the seawall erosion control project and has worked on Lakeshore Drive over 20 years. The design of Lakeshore Drive follows a 1986 traffic control report which was prepared to help reduce accident rates and make Lakeshore Drive safe for both vehicular and pedestrian use.

The Lakefront, created by the Levee District in 1926, consists of 1,750 acres; 30% of which was required to remain open for recreation, parks, parkways, marinas and airports. The seawall, built in 1931, has settled over the years, which has caused issues with overtopping and erosion between the seawall and Lakeshore Drive. SLFPA-E embarked on a program to cease and protect levees from erosion currently occurring along Lakeshore Drive. Larger drain lines were used and drains were raised from the bottom of Lake Pontchartrain to provide adequate drainage in the event of future overtopping. Seawalls are the front line of protection for the City of New Orleans.

The erosion control project has designated Reaches which will be completed in sections. Reach 1B extends from Landry's Seafood to Orleans Canal and is expected to be complete by early June. Reach 2 is currently under design and will be bid in approximately four months. Reaches 4 and 5 extend from Franklin Avenue to the Seabrook Bridge and a Notice to Proceed was issued. Reach 3A extends from London Avenue Canal to Pontchartrain Beach. Reach 2A extends from Orleans Canal and continues east approximately 400 feet. Other sections include the area between Rail Street and Bayou St. John and the end piece by Reaches 4 and 5. The erosion control project will proceed through 2016. Utility crossings have been repositioned, but have not yet been connected. SLFPA-E has funded the cost to repair lights along Reach 1B and have authorized a work order to repair lights between Orleans Canal and Rail Street. SLFPA-E will also fund light repairs for Reaches 3, 4 and 5.

The Flood Authority agreed to fund striping between Orleans Canal and Landry's Seafood, Orleans Canal and Rail Street, London Avenue Canal and Elysian Fields and the area between Franklin Avenue and the Industrial Canal. Striping was included in Reaches 1B, 4, and 5 and will be included in other Reaches. Since the traffic pattern on Lakeshore Drive has changed, the striping pattern along Lakeshore Drive is unknown at this time. The parking lots will be restriped and funded by the Flood Authority. Crosswalks located between West End to Bayou St. John and Bayou St. John to the Industrial Canal have no flashing lights or stoppage of traffic. The crosswalk located near Shelter No. 1 has flashing lights. Crosswalks on Lakeshore Drive have faded and are in need of restriping. Reach 1B is a flood control project that contains a pedestrian plaza, lighting and bollards.

Shelters along Lakeshore Drive serve the purpose of sheltering from the sunlight, but the doors are welded shut to prevent vandalism. Shelter No. 3 is to be located near Franklin Avenue and will be rebuilt with funding from the Corps of Engineers. The Shelter, which cost is approximately \$1.6 million, was designed to withstand various forms of pedestrian traffic.

As a result of the traffic study in 1986, the parking plan along Lakeshore Drive was changed. Previously, there was no separation curve between the roadway and the parking area. The size of the parking bays was increased to allow traffic to back out without accidents. There were a number of accidents that occurred along Lakeshore Drive in the study.

Mr. Baudier advised that angle parking on Lakeshore Drive was based on one-way weekend traffic and to gain additional parking places so more people could use Lakeshore Drive. Angle parking caused many accidents and between 1982 and 1985 alone there were 700 accidents on Lakeshore Drive. According to the traffic study, the majority of the 700 accidents on Lakeshore Drive occurred predominately on the West End on a Sunday afternoon according to the 1986 traffic study. The primary conclusion for those accidents was due to parking. Most accidents occurred in May, with 36.7% occurring on a Sunday between noon and 6:00 p.m. Drivers ranged in age from 20-29 years old. Vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle traffic is mixed along Lakeshore Drive, which is a safety concern. Another safety concern is adequate signage, both of which items can be improved.

On recent Sundays beginning near West End and extending to the Mardi Gras Fountain every parking lot was filled, including parking bays. Vehicles were backed into the angled parked spaces and the parking bays and parking area behind Shelter No. 1 were filled.

Commissioner Stack advised that installing pedestrian signals can cause an increase in accidents. Additional signals diminish the efficiency of the roadway for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. A pedestrian signal should not be installed for a one day per week for a six to eight hour window and continue to be operated in the same manner all week. The crossing could be marked so it does not inhibit traffic. Ms. Hebert noted that people stay within the parking lot during the weekend, which is a loitering issue.

Chairman Stack noted that residents of the apartment complex on West End are making an illegal left-hand turn to enter the tenant parking garage under the building. The Authority will be held liable in the event of an accident. A break in the double yellow lines could be made, but that would depend on traffic volume. Lakeshore Drive is eligible for federal aid, but must have certain situations and standards to qualify. If something is put into place and does not conform to standards, the Authority will be held liable and is a concern.

Peter Bennett, Bike Easy, informed that the Bike Easy Proposal was prepared to provide a designated space on the roadway for various types of pedestrian recreation taking into consideration two-way traffic seven days per week along Lakeshore Drive. Existing roadway dimensions and widths were used throughout the corridor. The two traffic circles, areas with houses on both sides of Lakeshore Drive, the bridge over Bayou St. John and the two transitions at either end will require additional engineering. A traffic flow diagram was prepared. To solve the issue with angle parking, the recreational area was placed behind the angular parking. The design uses reverse angle as a safety measure, but regular angular parking could be used. Chairman Stack advised that to qualify for certain funding nationally accepted standards must be met, and reverse angle parking may not meet those standards. Different options could be used to reach the same conclusion.

Mr. Bennett advised that the Bike Easy Proposal uses the existing footprint of Lakeshore Drive with the recreational lane located in the existing parking bays. Additional engineering is needed for the Bayou St. John Bridge to make determinations regarding what type of traffic will be allowed on the bridge. The Elysian Fields roundabout traffic circle could include vehicles traveling in both directions or both directions of traffic could be sent to the south side. Vehicles could proceed across and the intersections would become a four-way stop thereby deconstructing the traffic circle without changing the curbs. Restriping funds provided by the Flood Authority could be used as a match for other funding opportunities. The Local Road Safety Program from the Louisiana Transportation Research Center has \$5 million currently available, with ten projects allocated for a maximum of \$500,000 each project. This requires a match in which existing striping funds could be used. Improvement for safety

could be demonstrated by the 1986 crash data. The fact that there is an issue with people turning left across a double yellow line may be the impetus to apply for and win funding. The FHWA Recreation Trail Program had \$100,000. It is not possible to meet the deadline, but that money may come back mid-year. Chairman Stack advised that DOTD Transportation Alternatives Program may provide funding also.

Commissioner Wheaton advised the Committee that several people in Karen Parsons' group, the Regional Planning Commission (RPC), felt that Ms. Parson's participation on this Committee may be a conflict of interest. Ms. Parsons advised that RPC would assist in any way possible. Chairman Stack noted that DOTD had a good working relationship with the Regional Planning Commission who has expressed an interest to assist. The Committee knows what is available in funding, but a determination must be made on how to approach this long and short term.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Octave Rainy – Resident, New Orleans East

Mr. Rainy suggested putting a bike path on the Lake side of the road which is currently under construction as there is 30-40 feet between the wall and the road. This would address safety concerns as it would be off of the street. There is a sidewalk on the levee side of the street and joggers or walkers are protected from the traffic. Most bikers cycle in the morning from 7:00 – 9:00 a.m. Bikers and motorists could share lanes early in the morning or in the middle of the day. A pedestrian should never be in the street as many things can go wrong. Pedestrians should be totally segregated to avoid contact with vehicular traffic.

Louise Kirchberg – Resident

Ms. Kirchberg advised that one big issue with opening Lakeshore Drive is the traffic that backs up. In the event of an emergency a fire truck would be unable to get through the bumper-to-bumper traffic. After Lakeshore Drive was converted to one-way traffic everything shut down and families with picnics once again appeared. One-way traffic has worked well the way it is with the only issue being that vehicles coming from the East cannot turn around and must proceed to the end. The residents are okay with that, but that is one of the problems. This has been going on for 20 years and I am not aware of any problems. Ms. Hebert advised that the method did not work for citizens living in New Orleans East as those residents had to take detours in order to drive from the East to the west side. Citizens have been taking a detour for 30 years in order to travel on Lakeshore Drive. People have no place to go in the City and will come to the Lake. Easter Sunday many people enjoyed Lakeshore Drive. Lakeshore Drive is something that everyone in the City should enjoy.

Chairman Stack noted that Lakeshore Drive is not being operated in the same manner as when this plan was originally implemented. The Board recently approved opening different locations along Lakeshore Drive and had a piecemeal approach which proved to be confusing. Due to limited funding the barricades, barrels and signs previously put out for safety measures have not been available making the situation more unsafe to everyone. Ms. Kirchberg noted that the Levee Board advised that it cost \$100,000 annually to clean Lakeshore Drive each Monday. Chairman Stack advised that costs to maintain Lakeshore Drive was no reason for the Authority to keep the thoroughfare closed. This Committee's goal is to bring people back to the Lakefront.

Ann Duffy – Resident, Lake Oaks

Ms. Duffy advised that some type of enforcement is needed. If several tickets are issued, the problem would be taken care of. Chairman Stack advised that enforcement would be considered as part of the recommendations. A pedestrian

operated cross walk by the fountain, which is the most populated area, could be considered a long-term recommendation also. Lights or signs may not qualify for funding from the City, but the Local Road Safety Program may provide funding as Lakeshore Drive is a federal aid roadway. Short term recommendations are needed for the issue regarding the restriping in Reach 1B currently under contract. Bike Easy's Proposal for one lane in each direction with a dedicated bike lane can be recommended, but there are concerns with particulars in the Proposal.

Chairman Stack requested DEI determine what funding is available and advise how to best use the money set aside to stripe in the safest most efficient manner. DEI could make recommendations as to what type of traffic is on Lakeshore Drive, if it is acceptable to eliminate one lane, if a bike lane can be striped and in what sections the bike lanes can be striped. If that is accomplished, the Committee has accommodated recreational use in that particular section. A dedicated bike lane with two lanes down the middle is a less expensive approach along with angle parking in the proper directions. Painted striping can be used in lieu of thermoplastic to save on costs. Continued investigation into possible funding sources such as the Road Safety Program will continue and whatever can be done to maximize funding available will be utilized as the Non-Flood Authority has no money to put towards the project. The object of this Committee is to maximize what can be reopened to the public.

Commissioner Cantrelle noted that the number of cars today on Lakeshore Drive will exceed the number of cars during the 1986 traffic study. There are also younger drivers who operate vehicles. The younger kids are using the parking lots for tailgating and car shows. These parking lots are in place to accommodate the restaurant patrons. My concern is closing off two lanes for recreational purposes because if traffic is increased and traffic flow is decreased the problem will mushroom. Chairman Stack advised that the parking lots are not for people loiter in. Enforcement could make tailgating and car shows less enjoyable. Once one or two tickets are issued there may not be much of a problem. Kids today have more alternatives than kids had 20 years ago.

Mr. Baudier noted that angle parking was designed for access coming in from the west, but vehicles are backing in. This creates people driving against traffic and back into the space from the opposite direction. If the angle parking comes from the east vehicles will make a u-turn on Lakeshore Drive back into the parking spaces. With two-way traffic if a vehicle is coming from the east the vehicle will have to make a left turn on Lakeshore Drive to get into the parking bays. That is what would be designed from an engineering standpoint, but people do not obey traffic laws. Chairman Stack noted the left turns are a safety issue as well as an enforcement issue. Enforcement must be stepped up. Commissioner Cantrelle noted that enforcement begins with education of the public. People must understand that when a pedestrian is in a crosswalk, you have to stop. More education would require less enforcement. Without education additional enforcement will be required, which the City does not have.

Chairman Stack advised that the number of lanes that could be used for recreation use would depend on the volume of traffic actually measured. The local Safety Transfer Funds may pay for traffic count. One lane of traffic during a peak hour is approximately 1,800 vehicles, but it is doubtful that there are 1,800 vehicles on Lakeshore Drive. All projects require some sort of traffic study that can be funded through different programs. The Authority will not qualify for federal funding to eliminate a lane without supporting data. Mr. Bennett agreed that traffic counts from the 1980's until present are not high enough to justify four lanes, which is City-wide. When a lane is reduced, traffic does not grind to a halt it distributes throughout the system. Lakeshore Drive does not have strong destinations that generate traffic so this is not a highway situation. Commissioner Wheaton suggested the Non-Flood Authority work with the Flood

Authority on a long term proposal to have the Flood Authority's assistance with the 20% match to get the striping completed.

Commissioner Wheaton suggested the Committee determine if there could be a limited traffic study performed using some of the funding dedicated to striping throughout Lakeshore Drive. It may be possible to do a limited traffic study within that funding to ensure striping is done in a current and safe manner. Mr. Baudier advised that the Flood Authority agreed the striping pattern could be changed from the initial plan. The Flood Authority agreed to restripe Lakeshore Drive because the striping was damaged due to roadway cleaning in the aftermath of debris being washed onto the road as a result of overtopping. The Flood Authority also agreed to restripe the parking bays as debris in parking bays required those bays to be cleaned. The Flood Authority may not have an issue with altering the striping plane provided that there is no significant difference in the cost.

Commissioner Ernst noted that a formal engineering proposal may be needed that institutes the Bike East Proposal. Chairman Stack suggested preparing several long-term proposals that incorporate different ideas, which would be the project development process. This Committee should proceed to seek funding and develop a project to accommodate bikes and pedestrians. DEI could then review several different alternatives and costs.

Mr. Baudier stated that DEI would prepare a plan with a designated bike lane and contact Gerry Gillen of the Flood Authority to determine whether existing striping plans could be changed. Decisions need to be made regarding if the bike path will be strictly on the north, south or both sides of the roadway. There is approximately 50 feet to work with along with a two foot median in the middle. The two foot median in the middle should not be decreased.

Mr. Baudier informed the Committee that 25 existing issues concerning Lakeshore Drive have been identified which include bikers, vehicles, pedestrians, personnel and people attracted to Lakeshore Drive. The completed plazas will increase pedestrians on Lakeshore Drive, which will in turn increase traffic interplay between pedestrians, vehicles and bicycles. Shelter No. 3 will provide relief in that area for people that currently have no shelter. Bollards were installed along the roadway to separate vehicles and pedestrians, will provide a safety measure and will eliminate vehicles from driving onto the plaza. The bollards are a key point now that there is two-way traffic on Lakeshore Drive. Additional crossings will be installed near the plazas to provide pedestrians a safe manner in which to cross from the north to the south side of Lakeshore Drive.

The Shelter No. 1 and surrounding area recently drew approximately 600 people, but there is only one public port-o-let as shelters are currently unavailable. There are a total of four port-o-lets along the entire 5.2 miles of Lakeshore Drive. Pedestrians will resort to going to the Lake or across the levee in lieu of a restroom. The new restaurants will create a problem for pedestrians as the crosswalks do not have flashing lights, nor are the crosswalks pedestrian activated. There was a prior incident in which a woman was killed crossing the street near the restaurants. The Levee Board was sued as there were no flashing lights at the pedestrian crossing. DEI recommends that pedestrian crosswalks have flashing lights to ensure safety.

Mr. Baudier noted that there are casual bikers and more professional bikers that go 25 mph. Both types of bikers will be using the same lane. Mr. Bennett advised that the Bike Easy design is 8 feet by 8 feet plus additional room for a buffer. This is about the width of two cars and much wider than the usual two-way bike way. The buffer is either seven or eleven feet. If the area is striped, this would give the cyclist 10-12 feet which is a lot of space. The professional

biking area does not require marking as casual bikers know which lane to use the same way as slow moving vehicles would stay to the right.

Mr. Baudier advised that lights along Lakeshore Drive will be turned on in approximately 30-60 days and suggested that the Committee consider during what hours Lakeshore Drive would operate. Chairman Stack noted that Lakeshore Drive is a public road and should be operated 24 hours per day and seven days per week.

Chairman Stack noted that the Committee received many recommendations and very useful information and suggested this be reviewed by Committee members to start developing those recommendations at the next meeting. Any recommendations or thoughts should be sent via e-mail to Mr. Capo who will in turn distribute those e-mails amongst the Committee.

Chairman Stack informed the Committee that he will soon be replaced on the Board due to retirement and stated he would continue to assist the Committee. Mr. Metzger advised that Chairman Stack could remain on the Blue Ribbon Committee after he was replaced on the Board.

Chairman Stack announced the next meeting could tentatively be scheduled for Thursday, May 8, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING

Chairman Stack announced the next Blue Ribbon Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 8, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Stack offered a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Ernst and unanimously adopted.

The meeting adjourned at 6:33 p.m.