CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Louisiana's Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) began an effort in mid-2000 to update the State's transportation plan. Louisiana is a model for how each transportation mode plays a vital role in moving both passengers and freight, and the DOTD hoped to build upon recent studies that articulated this point.

Louisiana's water ports, some of the largest in the country, are critical for the movement of raw materials and finished products in support of the agricultural, mining, and industrial base of the State and other areas of the United States, particularly the Midwest. The State's aviation sector provides vital air service for business travel and tourism, and for the movement of time-sensitive, high-value cargo. Public transportation in Louisiana is imperative in workforce development and the State faces an increasing segment of the population that is becoming transit-dependent. Further, the DOTD has recognized the importance of providing choices in transportation modes to as much of the population as practicable. The State's railroads are key players in moving freight and to some extent passengers. The interaction between modes is critical to the efficiencies needed to move the State's economy forward. The highway mode continues to be the cornerstone mode with which all others interact. In addition to providing door-to-door service, trucking provides the connectivity with ports, rail, and aviation. The highway system directly impacts the entire population due to its implications for personal mobility, the standard of living, and economic security. Highways are crucial to both tourism and to commerce, and their condition directly impacts the economy.

Finally, Louisiana needs to foster growth in the economy and in overall population. A safe, efficient, and well-maintained transportation system can be a catalyst for economic growth, while a poor system can be an impediment.

PLANNING CONTEXT

Customer Involvement

The Work Plan for updating Louisiana's Statewide Transportation Plan recognized the importance of building upon the body of work that had already been accomplished. The 1996 Transportation Plan was widely considered to be a strong document, and the DOTD's widespread public involvement process was regarded as the starting point for the Plan update. The Department leaned heavily on a group of Advisory Councils, each responsible for a particular mode. The Councils are, in effect, independent bodies charged with formulating recommendations for inclusion in the Plan. Each met separately but also had the opportunity on several occasions to listen to what the other Councils were considering. Each Council named its own chair, and it is this chairperson that advanced the Advisory Council's recommendations to the Intermodal Advisory Council (IAC).

The IAC is the receptor of recommendations from the other Councils, and was charged with accepting, revising, rejecting, and prioritizing a wide variety of inputs. The IAC worked directly with the DOTD staff and consultant team to assemble a recommended plan that is fiscally constrained, addresses the State's transportation deficiencies in an effective manner, helps achieve the proper modal balance, and satisfies the transportation system goals and objectives adopted by the LIIEP Commission.

The Louisiana Investment in Infrastructure for Economic Prosperity (LIIEP) Commission is charged with overseeing the plan development and serves as the final decision-maker in the

planning process. It is comprised of 13 individuals from a wide range of experience and backgrounds, helping ensure a balanced view that considers every possible perspective.

The DOTD also incorporated additional efforts to reach its customers and stakeholders. The agency conducted two large Statewide Conferences, one to kick off the study and one to present the draft Plan. A comprehensive website was established and updated regularly. In addition, several newsletters were mass mailed, along with the aforementioned Advisory Council interaction. Further, the DOTD conducted nine regional public meetings to present the draft Plan and provided copies of the document to every library in the state for public review and comment.

The DOTD's public involvement process is extensive and sincere. The Department went to great lengths to listen and consider all points of view regarding what transportation policies, programs and projects should be enacted in Louisiana.

Technical Analysis

Louisiana's DOTD wanted the update of the Statewide Transportation Plan to be technically grounded. That is, the basis of prioritizing investments and projects for inclusion in the Plan should be as "technical" as possible. A technical analysis will quantify miles of rough roads, number of deficient bridges, miles of congested roadways, number of aged transit vehicles, over-capacity runways, rail line obstacles, etc. Once there is a sound technical basis for considering a project, other factors can be introduced into the prioritization process (like geographic balance, equity, local support, etc.). There is nothing wrong with sound political support for a project, but the technical analysis should "drive" the process.

To that end, the DOTD directed the consultant team to be performance oriented in its approach. Output from the DOTD's pavement and bridge management systems are important components of developing the investment strategies.

The Department also contracted to develop a Statewide Travel Demand Forecasting Model, which is a computerized model that simulates traffic movements, both now and in the future. The Louisiana Model is for highways only, but covers all major roadways (arterials) for both autos and trucks. The model is "populated" with current traffic counts, then it simulates future movements based on population growth, economic activity and traffic generators. The model can show which roadway segments become congested and when — this is obviously a significant tool in prioritizing complex, high-cost congestion relief projects.

The Model output became the primary indicator of priority for Louisiana's "Mega" highway projects — those high cost capacity enhancement relief projects that are of major interest.

Financial Scenarios

Another important aspect of transportation planning is to array priorities in line with the revenues that can reasonably be expected. In that way, the capital program does not become over-subscribed and, subsequently, irrelevant. All states face the issue of overprogramming – it's okay to identify some additional projects that the DOT would undertake with additional money or if some projects become delayed (many often do), but this must be a manageable number. Many states are unable to control their overprogramming because of political pressure to add projects that they cannot afford. When this occurs, the Plan and capital program become irrelevant, as they cannot realistically be delivered. People's expectations rise ("well, the project is in the Plan"), only to be dashed when reality sets in.

The DOTD used sound fiscal constraint as the foundation of this Plan update. Four scenarios were developed, with allocations from programmatic categories identified for each. However,

two of the four scenarios involve generating additional transportation revenues, and the DOTD has made it clear that it cannot proceed to implement these scenarios unless additional revenues are made available.

The four scenarios advanced in this Plan:

- **Scenario 1A (Baseline)** – no additional revenues, but all current funding stays in place at existing levels. Some growth is assumed in each of the revenue types, which differentiates this scenario from a "Status quo" scenario that would assume no growth. However, no adjustments for inflation are assumed to occur during the 30-year planning period.
- **Scenario 1B (Baseline with Adjustment)** – this scenario is exactly the same as 1A except that inflation adjustments are made in the revenue stream in year 11 and again in year 21 of the 30-year planning period. This assumes the Louisiana Legislature, Congress, or both will take some unspecified action in the future to stabilize the buying power of the transportation program, as has happened historically. The Plan assumptions at year 11 and 21 restore lost buying power due to assumed inflation, resulting in about $2.9 billion (Base 2002 dollars) in additional revenues over 1A.
- **Scenario 2 ($250 million Increase)** – Scenario 2 assumes $250 million in new revenues in year 1 from state sources. The revenues in this scenario are also adjusted for inflation in years 11 and 21 (restore buying power), resulting in about $5 billion additional 2002 dollars for highways over Scenario 1B, and $1.6 billion (Base 2002 dollars) for non-highway modes.
- **Scenario 3 ($150 million Increase)** – Scenario 3 adds $150 million in federal highway aid to Scenario 2 revenues, which is also adjusted for inflation. This generates $3.4 billion in increased revenues over Scenario 2. An increase of approximately $90 million in federal transit aid is also included under this scenario.

Thus, the clear identification of these four scenarios and the programmatic implications of each are the cornerstone of this Plan. Each scenario is fiscally constrained, with specific program elements identified.

Multimodal Scope

Louisiana wanted this transportation plan to be truly multimodal. With the Advisory Councils leading the way, each mode was offered the opportunity to become a player at the financial table, depending upon the costs and potential benefits of each initiative. As the reader will see later in this document, the recommended plan increases support for aviation, public transit, rail/highway crossings, ports, light rail, railroads, as well as highways. The issue of providing modal choices and efficiency was paramount.

In order to position the State to seize upon future federal funding opportunities, the DOTD also specified that new, stand-alone Freight Rail and Aviation Plans be prepared as input to the overall plan. These modes had not had new inventories conducted for some time, so it made sense to incorporate this effort.

Consideration of Both Passengers and Freight

Transportation planning efforts have traditionally focused on the movement of people. While tourism, business trips and personal travel are of the utmost importance, freight transportation is critical as well.

Louisiana has been a participant in several visionary transportation planning projects over the past few years. As part of the Southeastern Alliance engaged in the *Latin American Trade and Transportation Study*, Louisiana confirmed the importance of freight transportation to economic growth. The LATTS study also warned that states which do not accommodate increased trade will lose economic opportunity. This principle applies to domestic freight movement also.

The recommendations of this Plan are truly multimodal in nature and are reflective of the way DOTD intends to do business over the next several decades.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION

As mentioned under the Customer Involvement section, the coordination and development of this Plan update was undertaken in close cooperation with the eight transportation advisory councils. The advisory councils are comprised of 20-30 individuals each, with many representatives from the private sector:

- Aviation
- Freight Railroad
- Intelligent Transportation Systems
- Ports & Waterways
- Regional Planning Officials (highways)
- Surface Passenger (transit, passenger rail, intercity bus)
- Trucking
- Intermodal

Each Council conducted sessions during the development of the Plan to identify issues important, but not limited to, its core area of transportation. Each Council began its deliberations with an examination of the Plan's goals and objectives, followed by an examination of issues. These issues ranged from statewide policy declarations ("support passenger rail") to DOTD initiatives ("hire staff for Rail Division") to capital recommendations. Each Council advanced its recommendations to the Intermodal Advisory Council. The Intermodal Council was charged with receiving the recommendations, hearing testimony from the various Councils, and then formulating a draft Plan. Once the Intermodal Advisory Council finalized the draft Plan, it was presented to the LIIEP Commission on December 10, 2002 for consideration. The final Plan reflects input from the Commission, as well as consideration of input from statewide information meetings and a formal public review and comment process.

The Statewide Transportation Plan is built from the input of those that know the system best. The Plan, as it evolved through this process, became a vision of the Advisory Councils that shaped it.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANS

Louisiana: Vision 2020 is the State's long-term economic development strategy. Adopted in March 1999, *Vision 2020* establishes specific benchmarks designed to develop Louisiana into a "vibrant, balanced economy; a fully engaged, well-educated workforce; and a quality of life that places it among the top ten states in the nation to live, work, visit and do business." The plan is based upon three primary goals:

- Learning Enterprise – providing learning opportunities for the pursuit of knowledge;
- Culture of Innovation – developing a diverse and thriving set of technology-driven industries;
- Top Ten State – elevating Louisiana's standard of living for all citizens.

Each goal has an identified set of objectives. Transportation is an important component of both Goals 2 and 3. Objective 2.3 states "To improve and sustain Louisiana's physical infrastructure, including highways, waterways, ports, and rail." The objective contains 22 separate benchmarks for infrastructure quality and extent, ranging from implementation of the TIMED Program to pavement/bridge condition, parishes with a public transportation system, rail/highway crossings with active warning devices, airport performance, and water port performance.

Objective 2.4, development of the State's information and telecommunications infrastructure, has three benchmarks related to transportation. Objective 3.3 ("to have safe homes, schools, and streets …") lists three safety-related benchmarks for transportation.

Even Goal 1 has implications for public transportation by providing access to education and job training and enabling all citizens to fully participate in the workforce.

The transportation objectives and benchmarks identified in *Vision 2020* are readily apparent as one reviews this document. The DOTD was ever mindful of the objectives established in *Vision 2020*, and the Plan's scenarios are crafted to implement these important benchmarks.