

Responses to pertinent comments made at the IHNC Lock public meeting held at Holy Cross School on January 27, 1997.

Senator Johnson

Page 22, Lines 5 - 22. Impacts of the project are not commensurate with the suggested amount of mitigation.

Senator Dean

Page 32, Lines 4 - 14. A low-rise bridge was chosen as the replacement bridge at St. Claude Avenue as a result of meetings with adjacent residents who were concerned with visual impacts and externalities associated with elevated roadways through residential neighborhoods. In addition, displacement of residents and businesses was a major concern that is avoided by retaining a low-rise bridge at St. Claude Avenue.

Representative Copelin

Comments noted.

Representative Warner

Page 51, Line 13 - Page 53, Line 2. While we agree that a new vehicular bridge, mid-rise or high-rise, is needed at Florida Avenue for better traffic flow and improved hurricane evacuation over the Industrial Canal, we do not have the authority under the lock replacement project to include any work at that location. The State of Louisiana has been planning for a new bridge at that location for a number of years. It is assumed that a new bridge there is in the without project condition.

Representative Odinet

Page 53, Line 16 - Page 54, Line 7. While it is agreed that a new vehicular bridge, mid-rise or high-rise, is needed at Florida Ave. for better traffic flow and improved hurricane evacuation over the Industrial Canal, the Corps does not have the authority under the lock replacement project to include any work at that location. The State of Louisiana has been planning for a new bridge at that location for a number of years. It is assumed that a new bridge there is in the without project condition.

Mr. Johnson (representing Representative Naomi Farve)

Comments noted.

Representative Morrell

Comments noted.

Councilwoman Hazeur-Distance

Comments noted.

Mr. Brown

Comments have been considered in the reformulated community impact mitigation plan.

Ms. Blaise

Comments noted.

Mr. Wells

Comments noted.

Ms. Penny Thompson

Page 76, Lines 16-23. The difference in impacts between a shallow-draft lock and a deep-draft lock are minor, relative to the overall impacts of either plan. Construction time, right-of-ways required, noise generated, sizes of bridges, emissions from construction equipment, levee/floodwall realignments, and effects on cultural resources and recreational opportunities would be the same. There would be some additional dredging required for the deep-draft plan, but this construction item would not cause additional impacts to the nearby communities. The major difference between the shallow and deep-draft lock plans, that would be noticeable by local residents, would be the periodic presence of large ships moving through the lock and canal with the deep-draft lock in place. The ships would likely carry similar types of products as the barges currently using the lock. An additional impact would be the vehicular delays caused by bridge openings for each ship that transits the canal.

Page 76, Lines 24 thru Page 77, Line 15. The plans for bridge improvements at Florida Avenue are somewhat complicated. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) has declared the existing Florida Avenue Bridge a hazard to navigation. The USCG has issued an Order to Alter to the Port of New Orleans for replacement of the bridge. The replacement bridge will provide greater horizontal clearance than the existing bridge, but will provide for the same level of rail and vehicular traffic - two rail lines and two traffic lanes. The bridge would improve vehicular traffic by providing a more reliable crossing. The USCG is handling the bridge replacement under their categorical exclusion authority, therefore no Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact or Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared.

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LDOTD) and the City of New Orleans have been planning for a new bridge across the IHNC at Florida Avenue for many years. A preliminary draft environmental assessment was prepared by the LDOTD in 1994, but was not released to the public. Since then, modifications to the design of the planned bridge have been proposed. As of now, we understand that some state funds are available for construction of a new bridge, but not enough for completion of the project. In the draft version of our report, the tentatively selected plan relied upon a new Florida Avenue bridge to pass detoured traffic across the IHNC during periods when the St. Claude Avenue and Claiborne Avenue crossings were out of service. The recommended plan in the final report includes a temporary bridge at St. Claude Avenue. In addition, a more detailed investigation of the replacement bridge at Claiborne has reduced the outage for vehicular traffic to a few weeks.

These bridges eliminate the reliance on a new bridge at Florida Avenue to handle detoured traffic.

Page 77, Line 16 thru Page 78, Line 8. An intensive effort was made over a number of years to identify all potential historic properties to be impacted by this project. A small library of reports was produced by professional cultural resource firms including historical research, architectural studies, visual and aesthetic studies, and archeological investigations. These reports were coordinated with the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). A representative of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the SHPO visited the area and discussed the project with the Corps of Engineers and neighborhood groups. A memorandum of agreement will be executed at the appropriate time. Social impacts of construction of the new lock on the neighborhoods were addressed in social impact studies.

Both the IHNC Lock and the St. Claude Bridge are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Mitigation for their destruction will be recordation to the standards of the Historic American Engineering Record. This is a standard mitigation method that is used frequently throughout the United States.

Page 78, Line 9 - 22. Estimations of volatile organic compound emissions from construction equipment have been added to the EIS and Environmental Appendix. The emissions have been determined to be below the threshold which would require a determination of conformity with the State Implementation Plan.

Page 79, Line 12. The wall that was envisioned in the draft report is necessary to protect residents from riverine flooding, given the constraints of not relocating any residents. While the final design will not be decided until the detailed engineering and design phase, the Corps plan has changed to include a "fold-down" floodwall that wouldn't obscure the view during most of the year. It would have to be raised when the gauge at Carrollton reaches 15 feet. This is estimated to occur about 23 days each year on average. Such a design would maintain the flood protection required for the Mississippi River.

Page 79, Lines 12-19. Revisions to the plan as a result of comments received during the review period include a temporary bridge at St. Claude Avenue. As a result, we do not expect a loss in efficiency. In other words, traffic will continue to flow over the canal during construction of the project. Response times will not be significantly impacted.

Page 79, Line 19 thru Page 80, Line 8. The Corps is planning to recommend that monies for mitigation be appropriated up front and that mitigation be accomplished from the very beginning of the project. Preconstruction mitigation is a very real possibility. The reality is that actual implementation of mitigation will be governed by appropriations from Congress. During the NWG process we attempted to develop a conceptual framework for the plan. We will continue to develop the plan. The details with community participation will be developed once funding is approved for the construction of the project.

Page 80, Lines 23 - 25. The location for the proposed lock at the IHNC site was selected because it is the best from both an economic and environmental standpoint, not because of political clout.

Brother Walsh

Page 84, Lines 8-13. As a result of these comments and similar comments from some of the businesses, the plans have been revised to provide for a temporary bridge at St. Claude Avenue which will provide uninterrupted traffic across the canal for Holy Cross students. Innovative

construction methods that result in shorter vehicular outages at Claiborne Avenue will significantly minimize the disruptions there.

Page 85, Line 3 thru Page 86, Line 7. The floodwall is required to provide the protection necessary to prevent the Lower Ninth Ward from river flooding. A "fold-down" floodwall has been incorporated into the revised plan to minimize the visual obstruction for all but one month out of the year, on average. The Corps will evaluate alternative methods of protection for that area in the engineering and design phase of the project.

Mr. Armingeon

Reviewers should be directed to the January 27, 1997 letter from the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation for responses:

Mr. Gonzales

Comments noted.

Mr. Gegenheimer

See response on p 9 (Mr. Hanzo). The Corps is addressing some of the more critical areas of erosion along the MRGO under different authorities. The lock project is a separable element of the MRGO authority.

Mr. Holmes

Page 96, Lines 11-16. The limits of the dredged material disposal site along the MRGO have been refined. No dredged material would be deposited in St. Bernard Parish.

Page 96, Line 19 thru Page 97, Line 6. The reason a low-level bridge is being proposed at St. Claude is because of the concerns by the Holy Cross and Bywater neighborhoods. They insisted that they would only accept a low-level bridge that accommodates the current level of traffic. They wanted to preserve the neighborhood character and not induce more traffic along the St. Claude Avenue where there are numerous school zones not far from the canal and in close proximity to the bridge.

Page 97, Lines 7-22. Although it is only a very small portion of the waterborne traffic, ship traffic is expected to increase in the future, even with the existing lock. Additional deep draft traffic induced by the new lock amounts to one additional ship every three days on an average annual basis.

Mr. Larsen

Comments noted.

Mr. Savoie

Page 108, Lines 3-5. The area proposed for dredged material disposal is on the south bank of the MRGO, inside of the hurricane protection levee system. The limits of the disposal site has been refined and it is all within Orleans Parish.

Page 108, Line 20 thru Page 109, Line 6. The purpose of deepening the lock to 36 feet is to allow access to ships expected to utilize Port facilities. However, the overriding justification for replacing the existing lock is to accommodate existing and future shallow draft traffic.

Mr. Kinsler

Comments noted.

Mr. Cooper

Page 112, Lines 13-14. Notices of the public meeting were mailed out as soon as arrangements were confirmed for the subject public meeting. Actual receipt of the notices is beyond the control of this agency.

Page 112, Line 15. The notices were mailed out on January 9 and January 10, 1997.

Page 112, Line 15-16. Approximately 850 notices were mailed out. In addition news releases were sent to all of the local media (radio, television and the print media).

Page 112, Lines 16-18. Some notices were sent out with the right date listed but the wrong day of the week identified. A news article with the right information appeared in the local newspaper shortly after the error was brought to our attention.

Page 112, Lines 20-24. All churches (approximately 100) in the zip code 70117 were sent notices. However the notices may not have reached them in time for publication in their bulletins as some bulletins are preprinted a couple of weeks ahead of time.

Page 112, Line 24 thru Page 113, Line 3. Notices were sent to elected officials in the area, representatives of organizations, members of the neighborhood working group, the navigation working group, and numerous organizations including environmental organizations, libraries, and universities.

Page 113, Lines 8-10. The public meeting was scheduled at a time when key personnel were available, and a facility large enough to accommodate the expected crowd was available. The review period was extended until February 24 initially and later until March 3, 1997.

Page 113, Lines 10-14. The meeting held on the 22nd of January was originally scheduled for the "Huddle" at Holy Cross School. It was changed at the last minute by Holy Cross School because of a conflict with one of their fund-raising activities. The school did have someone helping direct people to the new meeting location in another building.

Page 113, Lines 17-19. The Times Picayune was sent copies of the news releases in conjunction with the meeting. The Corps does not control the timing of publication of news items in the Times Picayune.

Page 113, Lines 19-20. News releases were furnished to the local newspapers, television and radio stations.

Page 113, Lines 21-23. Transplanting of trees is addressed in Table 1 (page EIS-10), Section 5.3.20.1 (page EIS-83), Section 5.3.20.4.1. (page EIS-84), and section 5.3.20.4.2. (page EIS-85) of the draft report. The trees are addressed in the same sections, but not necessarily on the same pages in the final EIS.

Page 113, Lines 21 thru Page 114, Line 4. The mitigation plan recognizes that the trees along the existing lock are considered to be visually part of the community green/open space. The report recognizes that the Bywater Neighborhood Association made the recommendation that the trees be saved if at all possible. The only way of doing that would be to attempt to transplant them. According to local arborists, they indicate that they can save some of the trees.

Page 114, Lines 4-5. There are two reasons why the trees are dying. First, there was a ruptured water line under two of the trees that caused them to die and second many of the trees are infested with Formosan termites. Upon site investigation by one of the district's landscape architects and the New Orleans Park and Parkways personnel in 1996, it was noticed. They recommended that the infested trees be treated by a licensed pest control company with a pesticide.

Page 114, Lines 6-10. The Corps conducted an inventory and assessment of the trees in August 1995. It included mapping the location, documenting the circumference, diameter, and condition at that time. The trees were fertilized and pruned in 1996.

Page 114, Lines 11-15. Yes, our landscape architect did contact the Disney horticultural department in 1994. At that time they indicated that they have saved large trees with mixed success. Trees over 24" in diameter have not been moved with full success. The trees over 24" have suffered and not fully recovered. They suggested calling a local tree company in the New Orleans area. The New Orleans District then contacted a local tree company (Bayou Tree Service, Inc.).

Page 114, Lines 15-17. A formal report was not prepared. Telephone inquiries with appropriate local tree experts were made.

Page 114, Lines 18-24. The Coast Guard currently employs 300 persons. Most of their employees patronize the on-site cafeteria and other government-sponsored services. Because of this, the impact of their relocation would be minimal to nearby merchants. In addition, the Coast Guard is looking at other sites along the canal, and may relocate close to their current location.

Page 114, Line 24 - Page 115, Line 3. The SPCA was not specifically notified of the public meeting. The project should not significantly impact the SPCA.

Page 115, Lines 4-11. It is possible that the apprenticeship programs will benefit from the lock project in that the demand for trained personnel will increase. Monies have been included in the mitigation plan for training, and Mr. Gauder's facility is one of several facilities that could benefit from the program.

Page 115, Lines 11-15. The Bywater station of the US Post Office delivered many of the notices for the public meeting.

Page 115, Lines 15-17. This project is not expected to adversely impact their operations. Likewise, mail service should not be adversely impacted.

Page 115, Lines 18-21. Mr. Williams was sent a notice of availability of the report and a copy of the report was furnished to his office in response to a request from his office.

Page 115, Line 21 thru Page 116, Line 2. No, Mr. Williams has not been asked to provide professional advice concerning property values.

Page 116, Line 8-20. The final report does not include that statement.

Page 116, Line 23 thru Page 117, Line 2. Mass transit is beyond the scope of the authority of the Corps and the project. The provision of rail on the bridge would allow the RTA to eventually accomplish their long range plan of providing a streetcar line down to the Parish line. The Corps is providing a capability for this to happen at some point in time in the future.

Mr. Watson

Page 122, Lines 8-14. Concern for business and residential disruptions due to bridge closures prompted more detailed investigation into bridge replacement options. A temporary bridge has been added for St. Claude Avenue that will prevent the outage described in the draft report. Inclusion of innovative construction methods at the Claiborne Avenue bridge has lowered costs and minimized vehicular outages to a few weeks.

Mr. King

We have recognized the perception of local residents that real estate values have been negatively impacted and have considered that in formulating the final mitigation plan.

Mr. Doucette

Page 124, Lines 20 thru Page 125, Line 3. The implementation of the training programs have not yet been determined, but contact has been made with community colleges, vo-tech schools, and other training programs. The actual program would be established after the project is approved and funded. Criteria for selection would also be determined at that time. People who already have the required skills would not require additional training. Control of the jobs will lie with the Corps as the agency responsible for constructing the project.

Ms. Grille

Comments noted.

Mr. Bruch

The IHNC site was determined to be (etc. The location for the proposed lock at the IHNC site was selected because it is the best from both an economic and environmental standpoint, not because of political clout.

Mr. Koeferl

Page 131, Line 20 thru Page 132, Line 13. The video did not have any specific names of people from the community identified in it. There was a slide in the presentation following the video with people from the community listed as participants in the neighborhood working group. The listing of names on a slide in no way was intended to mean an endorsement of the project but was intended to illustrate that local citizens did participate in the formulation of the mitigation plan.

Page 135, Lines 18-23. Many social costs are very difficult to quantify in any widely accepted format. However, the mitigation plan acknowledges their existence and attempts to redress the damages.

Ms. Dashiell

Page 137, Line 22 thru Page 138, Line 3. Concerning the Florida Avenue Vehicular Bridge being proposed by the State and/or City, the bridge is not an essential element required for construction of the lock project. The draft report included the Florida Avenue bridge as part of the detour route because money had been appropriated for its construction by the Louisiana Legislature and active planning and design has taken place

Construction of the replacement railroad bridge at Florida Avenue is scheduled to begin in the summer of 1996.

Page 138, Lines 18-24. Compensation to RTA was included in the draft plan. Due to revisions in the bridge replacement scheme, vehicular outages have been largely eliminated. For this reason, the current mitigation plan no longer includes remuneration to RTA. The cost for debris removal included in the mitigation was the additional cost to remove material by barge in lieu of trucking which would be cheaper.

Page 139, Lines 1-10. The flood protection system of which the levee is a part will require modification in order to provide the required protection. Because of the congestion in the area and our desire to protect the lives and property of the residents, it will be necessary to include flood walls as part of the protection system. A fold-down floodwall has been incorporated into the project for areas along the Industrial Canal that currently have only levees.

Other comments noted.

Mr. Hanzo

Page 143, Lines 2-6. The Corps is addressing some of the more critical areas of erosion along the MRGO under different authorities. The lock project is a separable element of the MRGO authority.

Mr. Svenson

Comments noted.

Mr. Henry Ponstein

Page 151, Lines 10 thru Page 152, Line 10. There is not enough area available to construct a new lock adjacent to the existing lock without relocating a significant number of residents. A tunnel under the canal is conceptually sound but the reality is that to construct a tunnel there would be a tremendous number of people impacted by the large excavation that would be required. If it were possible to put a lock adjacent to the existing lock, the Claiborne Avenue bridge would still need to be realigned with the new lock.

The existing lock is a deep draft lock and was constructed with an historical view of eventually having a connecting channel to the Gulf. Historical studies since the early settlement of New Orleans bear this out. This is well documented in the historical records.

Ms. Georgianna Gray

Comments noted.

Ms. Marietta Williams

Page 155, Line 9 - Page 156, Line 21.

Page 157, Line 24 thru Page 158, Line 11. The Mississippi River and tributaries project which includes the channel and flood control levees provide adequate protection for the New Orleans area. It is accurate to compare our situation to being like a sitting at the bottom of a cup. Most of New Orleans would flood without the levees that protect the area from both riverine flooding and tidal flooding during hurricanes.

Page 158, Lines 12-25. The dollar amount identified for mitigation has already been approved by Congress in the WRDA 1996. The distribution of dollars is not based on this much for Orleans and that much for St. Bernard but is for the area impacted whether it be in Orleans or St. Bernard.

Ms. Morris

Page 166, Lines 6-14. The plans for bridge replacement have been revised to minimize outages for vehicular traffic. In addition, a business assistance program will be funded to offer advice and assistance in overcoming disruptive conditions due to project construction.

Mr. Reimer

Page 168, Lines 4-23. We agree that traffic would also be impacted on streets adjacent to St. Claude Avenue. However, the revised plan includes a temporary bridge at St. Claude Avenue that should lessen the impact on traffic. The only time there could be a slight impact is when the bridge is restricted to two lanes of traffic when the new bridge is being connected to the existing approaches. That should only be for a couple of months.

Ms. Sumner

Comments noted.

Mr. Brink

Page 172, Lines 8-21. Obviously, businesses would have been impacted by closure of the St. Claude bridge. However, with the revised plan that includes a temporary bridge at St. Claude, there should be no significant impact as traffic will continue to move during the construction of the project. This change has been made as a result of comments voiced at the public meeting.

Mr. Lewis

We have recognized the perception of local residents that real estate values have been negatively impacted and have considered that in formulating the final mitigation plan.

Ms. Mwendo

Page 180, Line 7 - Page 181, Line 4. Tolls on waterways would have to be specifically authorized by Congress. At present, there are no tolls on Federal waterways. At present there are user fees for the inland waterway system. These fees are in the form of a fuel tax for vessels. Those fees go into the Inland Waterway Trust Fund and that is overseen by the Inland Waterways Users Board. The Users Board makes recommendations on how those monies are to be spent. The funds are used to construct new facilities or replace existing facilities on the inland waterway system of the nation.

Mr. Bean

Page 182, Line 21 thru Page 183, Line 24. There is no relocation of residents required for implementing this project.

Mr. Spencer

Comments noted.

Ms. Graf

Comments noted. It should be pointed out that the Industrial Canal and lock were not constructed by the Corps of Engineers.

Ms. Stanley

Comments noted.

Mr. Chandler

Comments noted.

Ms. Cruz

Page 199, Line 16 - Page 200, Line 9. The plan has been revised to include a temporary bridge at St. Claude Avenue. Both the temporary and permanent new bridges at St. Claude will include provisions for pedestrian and bicycle access across the bridge.

Ms. Rice

Page 201, Lines 14-20. The plan has been revised to include a temporary bridge at St. Claude Avenue. Both the temporary and permanent new bridges at St. Claude will include provisions for pedestrian and bicycle access across the bridge.

Ms. Graf

Comments noted.

Senator Johnson

Comments noted.

Senator Dean

Comments noted.