IHNC Lock Replacement Project: Recommended Plan

2025 FAQ

IS THE INNER HARBOR NAVIGATION CANAL BEING EXPANDED?

The IHNC Lock Replacement **does not expand** the canal. All construction activities—including the new lock and the temporary bypass channel around it—**remain within the existing federally authorized right-of-way. There is no permanent widening or deepening** of the IHNC as part of this project. While three residences would require relocation, the owners would be compensated. Other adverse impacts within the affected neighborhoods would be temporary. (Chapter 3 and Appendix B Annex 11 - IHNC Lock - 2025 Plates)

WILL VIBRATIONS FROM CONSTRUCTION AND PILE DRIVING DAMAGE HOMES?

Construction contracts will include **vibration monitoring** and **structural pre-assessments** to protect nearby buildings during pile driving. The Corps **uses low-impact equipment** and best practices to reduce vibration risk in urban settings. No damage to structures as a result of vibrations caused by pile driving is anticipated. (Chapter 6)

WHY NOT MOVE THE LOCK TO VIOLET?

The Violet site was thoroughly evaluated but eliminated because it would have caused significant wetland impacts—approximately 335 acres of marsh would be permanently destroyed and over 9,300 acres of marsh would be negatively impacted—violating CWA guidelines. It also required a breach in the Mississippi River levee, expensive high-rise bridges, and significant new infrastructure at the recently completed Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) gate at Bayou Dupre. By contrast, the IHNC site stays within existing federal right-of-way and avoids those environmental and logistical hurdles. (Chapter 3.3.4)

WON'T THIS LARGE PROJECT DISCOURAGE INVESTMENT IN HOUSING/BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT NEARBY?

Construction can be disruptive—but the Corps seeks to reduce the burden on nearby neighborhoods and small businesses. The Community Impact Mitigation Plan includes tools to help stabilize the community during construction and make it easier for businesses and homeowners to invest with confidence. Replacing the aging St. Claude Bridge with a more reliable and accessible crossing will also improve connections between neighborhoods and support long-term revitalization. (Appendix E Draft Community Impact Mitigation Plan 2025)

IS THERE ANY ECONOMIC BENEFIT TO CITIZENS OF NEW ORLEANS?

The project isn't just about the navigation industry—it's also about people. New Orleans residents benefit through construction jobs, local spending, and programs that help protect homes and small businesses in the project area. These efforts—part of the Community Impact Mitigation Plan—are focused on keeping neighborhoods strong, helping residents stay in place, and making sure small businesses can weather construction and thrive long-term. (Appendix E Draft Community Impact Mitigation Plan 2025)

WILL DYNAMITE OR EXPLOSIVES BE USED TO DEMOLISH THE LOCK OR FLOODWALLS?

No dynamite or explosives will be used. The project will follow all best industry practices and safety standards—meaning lower-impact, mechanical demolition methods would be used such as cutting and breaking.

ARE A LARGE NUMBER OF HOMES BEING DEMOLISHED?

The St. Claude Avenue Bridge replacement affects **only three residential structures**, which require **relocation or demolition**. Owners, who were notified of this in 2019, will be **compensated** under Public Law 91-646, Title II Relocation Assistance. The **lock replacement** and associated Flood Risk Reduction Features **do not require the demolition of any homes or businesses**. (Chapter 4.5)

IS THE SEDIMENT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CANAL HAZARDOUS OR TOXIC?

- Sediment from the IHNC and the new bypass channel has been thoroughly tested for pollutants and toxicity. The results show the material is safe to dredge and dispose of using standard methods. The sediment dredging and disposal plan poses no risk to people or the environment (Chapters 2 and 6).
- Canal bottom soils and sediments that require excavation for project construction have been thoroughly evaluated under regulations and procedures developed under requirements of the Clean Water Act and may be divided into two categories: 1) Suitable for open water discharge; and 2) Unsuitable for open water discharge.
  - Suitable for Open Water Discharge - Approximately 614,000 cubic yards of dredged material be discharged into the Mississippi River. Discharged sediments would not violate or exceed regulatory water quality criteria or drinking water standards and would mix with the river's normal suspended and bedload sediments and be carried downstream.
  - Unsuitable for Open Water Discharge - Approximately 105,000 cubic yards of dredged material would be excavated with an environmental bucket dredge to minimize on-site loss of material and turbidity and would be hauled to and permanently disposed in a permitted solid waste landfill.

WILL CONSTRUCTION NOISE BE UNBEARABLE?

Construction will create noise—especially from things like pile driving and demolition—but it won't be constant or unregulated. Most loud work will happen between 7 AM and 7 PM, and the contractor will use noise-reducing equipment and follow strict rules to limit disruptions. The Corps and/or its contractors will monitor noise levels throughout the project and may use temporary noise barriers near schools, homes, and other sensitive areas. The latest construction and pile-driving technologies will be used, including silent pile pushers wherever possible, to reduce the impact on nearby residents. You'll also be notified ahead of especially noisy work, so there are no surprises. (Chapter 6 and Appendix E Draft Community Impact Mitigation Plan 2025)

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WON'T A BIGGER LOCK MEAN THAT BRIDGE OPENINGS WILL BE LONGER, MAKING TRAFFIC WORSE?

The amount of time the bridges are open won't get longer—but you might notice some changes in when and how often they open. The good news is that the **Florida and St. Claude bridges will likely open less often**, because the new lock can move more barges through more efficiently. At Claiborne Avenue, you might see **some seasonal increases** in openings, especially during periods of higher river levels. And don't worry— **the current curfews stay in place: No bridge openings are allowed from 6:30–8:30 AM or 3:30–5:45 PM on weekdays**, to keep rush-hour traffic moving. (Chapter 6 and Appendix E Draft Transportation Mitigation Program 2025)

WILL THE RISK OF FLOODING INCREASE BY BRINGING THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER FURTHER INLAND?

It's true the new lock will connect to the Mississippi River a few blocks farther inland, but all floodwalls and levees will be extended and modernized to maintain the same level of storm surge and riverine risk reduction. Replacing the 102-year-old existing structure with a modern, reinforced system improves reliability and strengthens the system that helps reduce risk from storms and high water.

WILL TRAFFIC BE UNBEARABLE?

- While there will be some unavoidable disruption, multiple layers of mitigation have been designed to ensure traffic remains manageable throughout the project. Importantly, **construction near the St. Claude Avenue Bridge will not span the entire 14-year project duration**—most major work in this area is anticipated between **Years 10 and 14**. During that time, the existing bridge will **remain open to traffic for the majority of construction**, with **at least one lane in each direction maintained**, depending on the type and timing of construction activities. Pedestrian access across the canal will also be maintained. The Florida Avenue and Claiborne Avenue bridges will not be modified, and Florida Avenue operations are expected to remain unchanged. **Full closures at St. Claude are expected to be limited and will be scheduled to minimize disruption**, with a preference for nights and weekends whenever feasible. These will be **announced in advance and coordinated** with emergency services, RTA, and local and state transportation agencies.
- Temporary traffic control plans (TCPs) will be deployed during construction, including detour signage and real-time digital message boards placed throughout the affected area (e.g., St. Claude, North Claiborne, North Robertson, and Florida Ave) to keep drivers informed about detours and congestion. **After construction, permanent message boards will display real-time bridge opening information to help commuters choose the fastest route across the canal.**
- In addition, a full Transportation Mitigation Program was developed under Congressional authority (WRDA 2007, Section 5083). **That plan includes a comprehensive suite of real-time monitoring systems and intelligent transportation technology.**
- The TMP also includes longer-term improvements like resurfacing affected roadways, implementing traffic calming measures after construction, and potentially enhancing public transit access in collaboration with the RTA. These efforts are aimed at not only offsetting construction impacts but leaving the transportation network better off than before. (Chapter 6 and Appendix E Draft Transportation Mitigation Program 2025)

WILL THE ST. CLAUDE AVENUE BRIDGE BE CLOSED TO TRAFFIC FOR YEARS ON END?

The **St. Claude Avenue Bridge will remain open** to vehicle and pedestrian traffic during most of construction. Temporary closures may occur for safety during specific activities, but **long-term closure is not expected.** (Chapter 6, Traffic Congestion: Replacement Bridge)

WILL THERE BE MASSIVE DISRUPTION TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES FOR 14 YEARS?

While the full construction timeline spans approximately 14 years, it's important to understand that this doesn't mean the entire community will be impacted in the same way for that entire period. The work is carefully phased and geographically distributed, meaning different areas will experience different types of activity at different times. For example, the new St. Claude Avenue Bridge isn't scheduled to begin construction until roughly Year 10 and will take about three years to complete. Floodwall and levee work is concentrated in Years 2 through 7, while the new lock itself is expected to be built between 2034 and 2041. Additionally, some impacts—such as short-term lane closures or temporary increases in construction noise—will be coordinated to occur at night or on weekends to minimize disruption. The Corps and its partners will also work closely with local stakeholders to reduce impacts wherever possible, and mitigation programs are in place to support residents and businesses during these periods. (Chapter 4)

HAS THE ALABO STREET GRAIN TRAIN TRAFFIC BEEN CONSIDERED IN THE TRAFFIC STUDY?

- The recent announcement by the Port of New Orleans regarding revitalization of Norfolk Southern's rail lines to support the new Sunrise Foods "grain train" **came after the IHNC Lock traffic study was completed**, so it was not included in the current analysis.
- **The Corps is committed to conducting additional traffic modeling** during the project's design phase. At that stage, we'll have more detailed information about construction sequencing for the new St. Claude Bridge and will be better positioned to assess real-world traffic impacts, including rail and freight interactions. We'll continue to coordinate with the Port and other agencies to ensure the most current information is used in planning and mitigation. (Appendix E Draft Transportation Mitigation Program 2025)

HAS THE LIT TERMINAL CONSTRUCTION BEEN CONSIDERED IN THE TRAFFIC STUDY?

Yes—the Louisiana International Terminal (LIT) was considered in the IHNC Lock traffic analysis. The Corps consulted with the Regional Planning Commission (RPC), which provided long-range traffic growth projections that include future developments like the LIT. According to the RPC's modeling, the LIT is **not expected to generate significant additional vehicle traffic through the IHNC corridor**, especially in comparison to current daily volumes. As a result, its impact on local roadway congestion around St. Claude, Florida, and Claiborne was considered negligible and did not warrant specific traffic mitigation beyond what's already planned. The Corps will continue coordinating with the Port of New Orleans and RPC as both projects move forward to ensure regional traffic planning stays aligned. (Chapter 6.1.1)