

# COMMUNITY LEADERS *of* NORTH LOUISIANA

The Honorable John Bel Edwards  
Governor  
State of Louisiana  
P.O. Box 94004  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Wes Bollinger  
Louisiana Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration  
5304 Flanders Drive, Suite A  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

The Honorable Shawn Wilson  
Secretary  
Louisiana Dept. of Transportation & Development  
1201 Capitol Access Road  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Kent Rogers  
Executive Director  
NLCOG  
625 Texas Street, Suite 200  
Shreveport, LA 71101

Rich Major  
Interim CEO  
Providence Engineering  
1201 Main Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Sirs:

This letter is being sent to express our concerns with the continued delays in the environmental review process for the I-49 Inner-City Connector (ICC) project in Shreveport, and to request your immediate assistance in ensuring the task is completed quickly and correctly.

Though it has long been understood that the ICC is vital to the sustainability and advancement of Northwest Louisiana and the surrounding region, it is even more important today. As our state begins the long and difficult process of rebuilding its economy following the COVID-19 pandemic, we must prioritize key infrastructure projects that will stimulate economic growth and put our people back to work. Completing the ICC will result in an estimated \$800 million in annual impact in Louisiana and thousands of new jobs.

As you know, the environmental review process for the I-49 project is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). While this is a federal statute, the leaders of each state typically assume the responsibility of satisfying its requirements, namely preparing a project's environmental impact statement (EIS). Without an EIS it is not possible to obtain a final Record of Decision (ROD) by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which is necessary to complete a project's construction.

Although Louisiana has routinely completed an EIS in a timely manner for many other federal/state projects in the past, the ICC has been a frustrating exception. While the community leaders and elected officials signed on to this letter have worked tirelessly for years to advance the ICC, the countless delays and missed deadlines with the EIS have created a roadblock.

By any objective measure, the ICC EIS has been an outlier. More than three years ago, in April 2017, it was estimated and publicly reported that a ROD would be issued by December 2017 or January 2018. Of course, it was not, and many subsequent deadlines for completion have also been missed.

On May 18, 2020, we received word from DOTD that the environmental work for this project would continue through the rest of this year *and virtually all next year*. Initially forecasting a December 2017 completion date and missing that mark by *four years* is entirely unacceptable.

When compared to other, even larger projects around the country, the ICC EIS has been an abject failure. From 2010-2017, the national average of the time it took a FHWA project to produce a draft EIS was approximately 4.5 years. Since the ICC EIS formally began in 2012 (when the FHWA issued a notice of intent to prepare it), we are now *more than eight years* into the project without even a draft EIS in hand.

Since the ICC has already taken *twice* as long as the national average, we simply cannot afford or tolerate any further delays. The people of Northwest Louisiana deserve better and are desperate for your assistance. The completion of I-49 is key to our region's revival and growth so that we can fulfill our unlimited potential and reverse our economic slump and crisis of outmigration.

***Please help us by confirming in a reply that you will do everything in your power to complete the environmental review as quickly as possible while maintaining the integrity of the process.***

We also respectfully request your attendance at a public meeting in Northwest Louisiana as soon as that can be arranged so that this important matter can be discussed with all stakeholders.

We stand ready to assist you in any way that we can.

Sincerely,



Mike Johnson  
Member of Congress



John Kennedy  
U.S. Senator

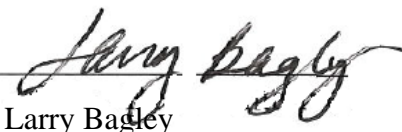


Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
U.S. Senator

See attached addition from Senator



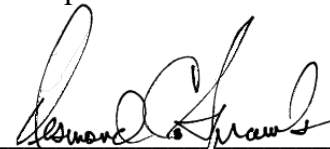
Barrow Peacock  
State Senator (District 37)



Larry Bagley  
State Representative (District 7)



Larry English, Co-Chair  
Shreveport Economic Recovery Task Force



Desi Sprawls, Co-Chair  
Shreveport Economic Recovery Task Force



Linda Biernacki, Chair  
Transportation Infrastructure Committee  
Shreveport Economic Recovery Task Force



Daron West, Co-Chair  
Transportation Infrastructure Committee  
Shreveport Economic Recovery Task Force



Scott Martinez, Executive Director  
NLEP (North LA Economic Partnership)



Greg Tarver  
Senator (District 39)

*Robert Mills*



Robert Mills  
State Senator (District 36)

*Sam Jenkins*



Sam Jenkins  
State Representative (District 2)

*Roy Burrell*



Roy Burrell  
Caddo Commissioner (District 5)



Adrian Perkins, Mayor  
City of Shreveport

*Lo Walker*



Lo Walker, Mayor  
City of Bossier City

*Taylor Jamison*

Taylor Jamison Chair, Shreveport-Bossier  
African American Chamber

*Rev. Linus Mayes*

Linus Mayes, Reverend

*AG*

Greg Lott, President  
Committee of 100, Northwest Louisiana

*John George*

John George  
Biomedical Research Foundation

*Michael Olivier*

Michael Olivier, Committee of 100  
State of Louisiana

*Tim Magner*

Tim Magner, President  
Shreveport Chamber of Commerce

*Lisa Johnson*

Lisa Johnson, President  
Bossier Chamber of Commerce

*Sue Nicholson*

Sue Nicholson, President & CEO  
Monroe Chamber of Commerce

*Patrick W. Harrison*

Patrick Harrison, Immediate Past President  
Shreveport Chamber of Commerce

*Patricia W. Murphy*

Pat Murphy, President  
BOMA (Business Owners & Managers Association)



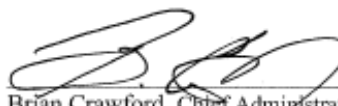
Eric Nelson, Neltec Industries & President  
Manufacturers Managers Council NWLA



Taylor Jamison  
Strategic Action Council of Shreveport



Dr. Thomas Steen Trawick, Chief Executive Officer  
Christus Schumpert Health Systems



Brian Crawford, Chief Administrative Officer  
Willis Knighton Medical Center



Jimmy Gosslee, Partner  
Coldwell Banker Gosslee Realtor



Kristen Brown, President/CEO  
Brown Builders



Fred Kent with Kent, LLC  
Fern Avenue Medical Dental, LLC  
Lucky Land Company, LLC



Ross Barrett, Loggins Labs, LLC  
BVM Capital, LLC

Additional Company/Organization Supporters:

Joseph Fuller, Jr., Alexandria City Council at Large  
Malcolm Larvadain, Alexandria City Council District 1  
Jules Green, President- Alexandria City Council District 3  
Clifford Moller, Executive Director-Greater Alexandria Economic Development Authority  
Martin W. Johnson, President-Central Louisiana Business League  
Attorney Kelvin Sanders, Alexandria  
Fifty (50) Member Shreveport Economic Recovery Task Force

Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, Joe Haggarty  
Atco Investment Company  
Black Pearl Investments  
Clifford Moller  
C. W. Lane Company, Inc.  
Eagle Distributing  
Eden Gardens Neighborhood Association  
EGH Operating, LLC  
Elm Grove Holding, LLC  
Executive Director-Greater Alexandria Economic  
Development Authority  
Fire Tech Systems, Inc.  
Gordon Inc.  
Gray Eagle Properties  
Grigsby Petroleum, Inc.  
Hand Construction  
Heard, McElroy and Vestal, LLC.  
Heritage Energy Company  
HTM Personal Concierge, LLC  
Lakeside Area Neighborhood Association  
Louisiana Coalition to Fix Our Roads (LCFOR)  
Louisiana Motor Transport Association  
McElroy Metal  
Majestic Tent & Event

McNew Architecture, APAC  
Metro Aviation  
Mooretown Neighborhood Association  
Music Mountain Water Company  
North Shreveport Business Association  
Oschner LSU Health Shreveport, Chuck Daigle  
Progressive Bank  
Red River Chevrolet  
Roberts Property Management, Inc.  
Sci-Port Discovery Center  
Sealy & Company  
Sistrunk, Adam  
Skriwanos Engineering, Stephen F. Skriwanos  
Somdale Associates, Chris Elberson  
Sound Fighter Systems, LLC  
Specialist Hospital Shreveport, LLC  
Storer Services, Craig Storer, President  
SWEPCO – Malcolm Smoak, President & COO  
The Central LA Regional Chamber of Commerce  
Vintage Title of Louisiana, Inc. by P. Carter Rogers  
Weiland Construction  
Wholesale Pump & Supply, Inc.  
William M. Comegys, III  
Willis-Knighton Cardiology

Without an EIS it is not possible to obtain a final Record of Decision (ROD) by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which is necessary to complete the project's construction.

By any objective measure, the ICC EIS has been an outlier. More than three years ago, in April 2017, it was estimated and publicly reported that a ROD would be issued by December 2017 or January 2018. Of course, it was not, and many subsequent deadlines for completion have also been missed. On August 30, 2019, we were informed in a project update document from Providence Engineering that "the project [would] not likely be completed as previously estimated in 2020..." However, we remained hopeful that, at worst, the NEPA process would conclude in the early months of 2021.

To our dismay, we recently received word from DOTD that the environmental work for this project would continue through the rest of this year *and virtually all of next year*. We recognize the difficulties of this process, but initially forecasting a December 2017 completion date and missing that mark by *four years* is entirely unacceptable.

When compared to other, even larger projects around the country, the ICC EIS has been an abject failure. From 2010-2017, the national average of the time it took a FHWA project to produce a draft EIS was approximately 4.5 years. Since the ICC EIS formally began in 2012 (when the FHWA issued a notice of intent to prepare it), we are now *more than eight years* into the project without even a draft EIS in hand.

Since the ICC has already taken *twice* as long as the national average, we simply cannot afford or tolerate any further delays. The people of Northwest Louisiana deserve better and are desperate for your assistance. The completion of I-49 is key to our region's revival and growth so that we can fulfill our unlimited potential and reverse our economic slump and crisis of outmigration. Large investors have expressed interest in the opportunities for public/private partnerships associated with the ICC, and the time to move is *now*.

***Please help us by confirming in a reply that you will do everything in your power to complete the environmental review as quickly as possible while maintaining the integrity of the process.***  
We stand ready to assist you in any way that we can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David R. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.