

February BR Loop Meeting in Addis to address concerns

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West Baton Rouge Parish President Riley "Pee Wee" Berthelot told the parish council last Thursday that a meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m., Feb. 9 at the Addis Community Center regarding the proposed bypass loop around Baton Rouge.

The meeting will address design and land use concerns. Berthelot noted that the meeting is to give people a better idea of what the project will be about, especially concerns as to what the bridge and inter-sections will look like.

Berthelot is also meeting with state officials this week to discuss use of \$3 million in capital outlay funds for the parish, which includes funds for a connecting roadway between La. 1 and Interstate 10.

In other business, Berthelot told the council a parish animal-control ordinance would likely be introduced later this month. The council and parish administration have been working on tightening the parish's animal-control ordinance after several animal attacks within the last year.

A public hearing will be held on the proposed ordinance at the Jan. 28 parish council meeting at 6:30 p.m.



-photo by Aaron Williams

Bob Schmidt (left), an officer of NVTB, a firm involved in the BR Loop proposition, answers questions from Chip Mills (right) as they look before a large map showing the proposed Baton Rouge Loop. Mills, from Zachary, said that he had some issues with one of the sites crossing over the Mississippi River.

WBR hosts first of BR Loop meetings

Residents from WBR and surrounding parishes voice approval; concerns

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West Baton Rouge hosted the first of five Baton Rouge Loop open house meetings last week to receive public input and provide latest information leading with the project.

BR Loop officials, beginning in Port Allen, held a series of five meetings throughout the parishes involved in the project, including WBR, EBR, Ascension, and Iberville; and will be conducting the last of the series of

meetings on January 25 in Livingston Parish.

Those in attendance at the West Baton Rouge open house meeting were greeted with several stations, each providing information concerning the BR Loop project, which has dedicated \$6.5 million to research according to WBR Parish President, Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot.

In a press release, Loop officials said that this particular series of open house meetings allowed the public to review in detail and provide public input on the corridor

changes that were announced by the Capital Area Expressway Authority last fall.

The changes, displayed on large maps inside the Port Allen Community Center on the evening of the meeting, were met with mixed opinions from attendees from WBR and surrounding parishes.

The changes include the elimination of the northernmost Mississippi River crossing and the addition of another Mississippi River crossing alternative between the southern city limits of Addis and the DOW Chemical plant, with

advantages for deep draft and tow vessel navigation. In addition, the project team has recommended widening the corridor south of I-10 in West Baton Rouge Parish to allow for the consideration of fewer curves and more direct connection to the two river crossings south of Addis.

Chip Mills, 33, of Zachary said that he does not agree with certain aspects of the plan, pointing out that the loop's current northernmost Mississippi River crossing uses an already existing route.

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"I don't agree with the placement of the Northwestern quadrant of the loop," said Mills. "It doesn't make any sense to use the existing route over the Mississippi River."

Though the exact placement of the Loop continues to get narrowed down, the majority of those in attendance of the open house were positive about the idea of the project, which is a proposed 90 miles and \$40 billion from completion.

Bill Schultz, 50, of Port Allen said that he believes that the project is a necessity for the area.

"We truly need it bad with the amount of traffic congestion," said Schultz, who is on the Port Allen Planning and Zoning Commission.

He said that though his home is very near one section of the proposed Loop, he is all for it.

"I think it actually hurts the west side by not having it," he said.

Schultz, who recently visited family in Austin, Texas, said that most major cities in the United States have a loop around the city to ease traffic congestion, and Baton Rouge is long overdue for one.

"In Austin, they are working on their third loop now," he said.