



625 Texas Street, Suite 200 | Shreveport, LA 71101  
318.841.5950 | F 318.841.5952 | www.nlcog.org

January 14, 2013

Honorable Representative Roy A. Burrell  
District 2  
Louisiana House of Representatives  
820 Jordan Street, Suite 315  
Shreveport, Louisiana 71101

Ref: Response to Your Letter Regarding the I-49 Inner City Connector Community  
Input Meetings  
Stage 1 Environmental Impact Statement (State Project No. H.003915)

Honorable Representative Burrell,

The Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments (NLCOG) is in receipt of your letter dated January 9, 2013. We appreciate your input on this project and have developed the following response to your concerns.

**Concern:**

**The public process has been contaminated by special interest groups including the Shreveport Housing Authority and Loop It, LLC.**

**Response:**

The NLCOG is bound by federal law to follow the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. This process requires considerable effort be expended to ensure the public has ample opportunity to participate in the development of any highway improvement project. The Community Input Meetings were structured to obtain maximum input from the potentially affected community. Both special interest groups mentioned either have property or members living in one or more of the proposed rights-of-way of the build alternatives. Their attendance at the meetings was expected and encouraged.

**Concern:**

**The blatant actions of the opposition (to confuse the public) could unduly bias the final outcome as to the build or no build decision.**

**Response:**

We acknowledge that during the first meeting, attendees became confused after being handed materials from the Loop It organization. To prevent this confusion from continuing, the project team in conjunction with federal officials developed guidance on measures to implement on the second and third meetings if needed.

It should be noted that for each of the three meetings, 12 to 15 members of the project team were present to guide attendees through the series of exhibits, to explain the proposed project, and to answer any questions.

At the second meeting (Mount Canaan) when it became obvious that the group of residents wanted to formally distribute information, accommodations were made by providing them adequate table space adjacent to the meeting room, where they could still interact with meeting participants. During the third meeting, Loop It participants were requested to relocate away from the exhibit area. The public process strives to provide equal participation; we cannot bar people from attending that do not support the project. The project team was active in assisting the public in understanding that the meeting was hosted by NLCOG and not the Loop It organization.

Relative to the potential bias, three methods of public input were provided at all three of the Community Input Meetings: choice cards, written comment forms, and a court reporter to take verbal comments. The choice cards were not ballots, only an expression of preference. Public preference is one of many factors in determining the preferred alternative, be it to build or not to build.

**Concern:**

**After the project team requested the opposition to cease and desist, we (the project team) acknowledged to you that they would not leave the public meeting and voting area.**

**Response:**

We did request members of the Loop It organization to take their discussions to the corner of the room during the first and third meetings, and to move to the table provided during the second meeting. No members of the project team requested Loop It members to leave the meetings, only to relocate away from the exhibit viewing area and to distribute their materials outside the meeting space to minimize confusion.

**Concern:**

**At what point will the public be given more information about the potential ICIC project (actual economic impact information) where they can make a more informed decision whether to build or not?**

**Response:**

General economic impact information will be provided in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which will be released to the public prior to the final Public Hearing on the project. At that time, the public will be able to review economic impact data typical for this type of project. The EIS does not include a full economic impact analysis specific to the construction of the I-49 Inner City Connector.

**Concern:**

**A meeting with NLCOG, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Providence, and Franklin along with Senator Greg Tarver is requested to discuss our assessment of the disruption of the process, potential damages and remedies.**

**Response:**

NLCOG, along with the mentioned members of the project team and the Federal Highway Administration will meet with yourself and Senator Tarver. We will be in contact with your office to establish some potential dates.

We extend our thanks to you for participating and for your comments in regard to the second round of Community Input Meetings. We look forward to your continued participation and assistance in ensuring a successful process.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. K. Rogers". The signature is stylized with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Executive Director