

**Written Testimony of
Johnny B. Bradberry,
Secretary, La. Department of Transportation and Development Secretary**

Ms. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Johnny B. Bradberry. I am the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. I want to thank you for this opportunity to discuss Louisiana's pre-hurricane evacuation preparations.

DOTD's hurricane evacuation plan that was in place for Katrina in 2005 was the result of lessons learned from previous storms, vigilant preparations and planning and exceptional cooperation among governmental agencies to serve the public. In 1998, Hurricane Georges threatened the Greater New Orleans area, and hundreds of thousands of vehicles jammed an overburdened interstate system, causing gridlock along Interstates 10 and 12 throughout southern Louisiana. Roadways became virtual parking lots as traffic snaked stalled from New Orleans to Baton Rouge. One of the things that incensed drivers was seeing a near-empty half of the interstate, headed toward the New Orleans area – miles and miles of empty road that could be used to lead citizens to safety.

Although Georges dodged Louisiana, the intolerable traffic conditions spurred the state to introduce contraflow, the practice of sending vehicles along both sides of a road, thus doubling the traffic capacity. A contraflow plan for I-10 was developed and set aside to be used for the next major hurricane.

That next opportunity came with Hurricane Ivan in 2004. Although hundreds of thousands of citizens eventually were able to evacuate the New Orleans area, the traffic jams were not much better than they were six years earlier. A trip from New Orleans to Baton Rouge that normally would take 80-90 minutes took as long as 10-12 hours. Contraflow was publicly perceived as a failure because of the unacceptable delays.

The day after the Ivan evacuation, Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco ordered DOTD State Police Superintendent Col. Henry Whitehorn and me to form a task force to study the lessons learned from the Ivan evacuation and develop a new plan that could quickly and safely evacuate the New Orleans area. The task force began work that day and went to work on a new plan that included several contraflow options.

The task force met at least once a week for the next several months to dissect what went wrong during the Ivan evacuation and how a new plan could avoid those problems. Some of the conclusions included:

- A phased approach to evacuations is crucial to help manage the flow of traffic and to give citizens living in the most vulnerable areas of the state an opportunity to evacuate early without encountering significant delays from other evacuees.
- Cooperation and coordination among parish officials in calling for evacuations is essential.
- Contraflow is a useful tool in evacuations, but it is not a cure-all to avoiding traffic gridlock.
- An aggressive traffic management plan must be implemented to direct drivers without hindering their progress and to manage “choke points” that cause traffic bottlenecks and, eventually, gridlock.
- Public communication and education are crucial components to a successful evacuation. Citizens must understand how a plan works and have realistic expectations of how long it takes to evacuate an area.

To help in the development of a contraflow and traffic management plan, DOTD hired two private traffic consultants, who presented several configurations to the task force, including a contraflow plan that extended along I-10 from New Orleans through Baton

Rouge. After careful consideration and consultation with local officials, the task force decided to adopt an evacuation plan that includes these components:

- A three-phased evacuation plan that allows citizens in low-lying areas to evacuate first. This becomes known as the 50/40/30 plan because it encourages parish officials to call for the evacuation of the most vulnerable citizens 50 hours before tropical storm force winds affect Louisiana. The next most-inland areas are evacuated at the 40-hour mark, and then the metropolitan New Orleans area is evacuated at the 30-hour mark, when the governor calls for contraflow operations to begin.
- Contraflow operations on I-10, I-55 and I-59. The I-55 and I-59 contraflow operations also require the cooperation of the Mississippi Department of Transportation.
- A traffic management plan that makes maximum use of interstate and alternate routes, encourages drivers to take northern routes and greatly restricts the use of I-12 during contraflow operations to eliminate the Baton Rouge choke point.
- An aggressive public awareness/education campaign that includes multi-media presentations, printing more than 1 million maps, participation in television hurricane specials and partnering with the American Red Cross to facilitate map distribution and education efforts.

The plan was finalized in April 2005, when it was presented to the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission, which unanimously endorsed the plan. DOTD and State Police officials attended numerous community and governmental meetings to explain the plan to citizens. DOTD also conducted six citizen focus groups in the New Orleans area to solicit input and feedback on proposed maps that explained the plan and were to be distributed throughout the area. Based on reactions from the focus groups, DOTD and State Police

made numerous changes to the map until it was finalized in time for the start of hurricane season, June 1.

Meanwhile, DOTD and State Police assumed leadership roles in communicating the evacuation plan to the public. The communications plan, which was partially based on data received from the focus groups, included key messages for various forms of media and several options for citizens to learn more about the plan. The key messages included:

- Be prepared for traffic delays. It was imperative that citizens had realistic expectations of how long it would take to evacuate a metropolitan area.
- Have a personal evacuation plan that includes leaving early, before officials call for an evacuation. Focus group data indicated that citizens would not leave sooner than 24 hours before the onset of a storm. For the evacuation to be successful, state officials had to encourage more people to leave early, and to use the state evacuation plan as a guide to formulate their own evacuation plan.
- If you plan to evacuate under contraflow, get the map and read it. The message became “Know Before You Flow.” We wanted to minimize instances of drivers slowing down or even stopping on the interstate because they had not taken the time to learn the plan.

The American Red Cross, through a grant from Homeland Security, financed an initial printing of 1 million maps that ultimately were distributed throughout southern Louisiana at retail stores, libraries, fire stations, supermarkets and community centers. In July, DOTD paid for a second printing of 500,000 maps, most of which were distributed by late August.

Katrina’s potential as a threat to Louisiana had not even been realized by the National Weather Service on the morning of Friday, Aug. 26, when Emergency Operations Chief Joe Modicut first informed DOTD personnel that Katrina might affect Louisiana. At this

point, Katrina was in the extreme southeastern Gulf of Mexico, in the vicinity of the Florida Keys. DOTD immediately began making preparations by placing emergency operations personnel on stand-by status for possible activation over the weekend. Assistant Secretary for Operations Gordon Nelson informed all contractors that were performing work along evacuation routes to be prepared to immediately secure all equipment and supplies and clear all evacuation lanes.

At 1 p.m., the National Weather Service projected that Katrina would make landfall west of Panama City, Florida on Monday morning, Aug. 29. Despite the NWS's projection that Louisiana is not in Katrina's path, Governor Blanco declared a state of emergency for the southern parishes of Louisiana.

That afternoon, Modicut met with Nelson and Traffic Operations Supervisor Stephen Glascock to discuss the agency's readiness state, particularly on the district level and with respect to contraflow traffic operations. It was agreed that Modicut would monitor the storm's strength, speed and projected path.

At approximately 4 p.m., DOTD Communications Director Mark Lambert discussed the state's preparations with Mark Smith, public information officer for Louisiana Homeland Security/Office of Emergency Preparedness. Smith informed Lambert that the state plans to fully activate its Emergency Operations Center on Saturday morning. Lambert also discussed activities with Lt. Lawrence McLeary, public information officer for State Police, and sent an email to Bob Mann, the governor's communications director, to inform him of the state's preparedness activities.

At 5 p.m., DOTD participated in the first Katrina conference call at the Louisiana Emergency Operations Center. Agencies represented on this call include DOTD, State Police, National Weather Service, Department of Health and Hospitals, Department of Social Services, American Red Cross, Shelter Task Force, Louisiana National Guard and parish emergency operations centers, including Ascension, Assumption, Jefferson, Lafourche, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John, St.

Tammany, Tangipahoa and Washington parishes. At this time, Katrina's projected path had moved westward, near the Alabama-Mississippi line.

After the conference call, Nelson informed Bob Chapman of the Mississippi Department of Transportation that Louisiana will recommend that Gov. Blanco order the implementation of contraflow operations if the storm heads toward Louisiana. Under an interstate agreement between Louisiana and Mississippi, traffic lanes on I-55 and I-59 can be reversed in Louisiana through Mississippi to accommodate large numbers of drivers who are evacuating from the storm threat. The established protocol is for Louisiana officials from DOTD and State Police to confer with their Mississippi counterparts about the pending need for contraflow. Each entity passes the information up through its chain of command. When the time for implementing contraflow is eminent, the secretary of the Louisiana DOTD and the commander of State Police recommend the initiation of contraflow to the governor, who then confers with Mississippi's governor before ordering the operation to begin.

During this 5 p.m. conference call, Nelson also informed participants that DOTD had placed district personnel on alert to be ready to stage contraflow assets in the morning. These assets include road barriers, cones and variable message board signs, all of which are placed in secure locations on or near the evacuation routes so they are quickly accessible in the event of an evacuation. All agencies represented in the conference call agreed to a 7:30 a.m. Saturday conference call.

At 11 p.m., the National Weather Service reported that Katrina was projected to make landfall near the Louisiana-Mississippi line on Monday, Aug. 29.

At 6 a.m. Saturday, DOTD began staging assets and personnel in anticipation of a contraflow operation. Personnel from Headquarters' Traffic Services division and from the New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Hammond districts began placing traffic control equipment in strategic locations along major evacuation routes. Four DOTD employees join State Police to establish the Traffic Control Center within the Emergency Operations

Center and began providing information on traffic volume and its rate of flow across southern Louisiana to local, parish and state agencies, the media and the public. Modicut and three other employees arrived at the state EOC and establish the DOTD station, which will be manned 24 hours a day for seven weeks.

At 7 a.m., George Gele and members of the GIS and Planning groups activated DOTD's Emergency Operations Center at DOTD headquarters. These DOTD employees eventually will provide storm surge information, mapping services, graphical depictions of National Weather Service advisories and technical help to hundreds of local, state and federal officials throughout southeast Louisiana before, during and after Katrina makes landfall.

Gov. Blanco attended the 7:30 a.m. conference call at the state EOC and urged state and local officials to coordinate efforts and work together to execute a timely and safe evacuation. Col. Jeff Smith of the Office of Homeland Security negotiated a coordinated Phase I evacuation of portions of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Orleans and Jefferson parishes, to begin at 9 a.m. It was agreed that Phase II evacuations, which include the westbank of the Greater New Orleans area, would begin at noon. Col. Henry Whitehorn and I announced our intentions to recommend that Gov. Blanco order contraflow operations to begin concurrently with a Phase III evacuation at 4 p.m.

Nelson informed the conference call participants that DOTD was placing its Motorist Assistance Patrol (MAP) vans on 24-hour service. The MAP vans assist stranded motorists by offering a gallon of gasoline, fixing flat tires or filling radiators to get the cars back into the flow of traffic as quickly as possible to alleviate traffic backups. Nelson also reported that all movable bridges would be placed in the down position, probably by noon Sunday. Conference call participants agreed to a 10:30 a.m. conference call.

At 9 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 27, Phase I evacuation of coastal and low-lying areas began. Hurricane Katrina was to be the first test of the DOTD/State Police regional evacuation plan that had just been completed four months earlier.

By 9 a.m. Saturday, the new evacuation plan was in effect. All tolls on the Pontchartrain Causeway, Crescent City Connection and all ferries were suspended. The Traffic Control Center reported that traffic was light, but volume was picking up. DOTD personnel activated traffic control signs to accommodate evacuee traffic. Nelson informed Mississippi DOT that contraflow operations would be implemented at 4 p.m.

During the 10:30 a.m. conference call, the National Weather Service reported that Katrina had reached Category 3 status, with tropical storm force winds forecast to hit the coastal areas by late Sunday evening. DOTD informed participants that its agency personnel were prepared to implement contraflow operations that afternoon. State Police reported that traffic is heavier than usual for a Saturday.

At noon, Phase II evacuation began in the areas south of the Mississippi River. DOTD crews were stationed along evacuation routes to prepare moving materials to accommodate a contraflow operation.

During the 3:30 p.m. EOC conference call, the National Weather Service reported Katrina was a major Category 3 hurricane with sustained winds of 115 miles per hour. NWS said the National Hurricane Center predicted Katrina would reach Category 4 status by Sunday. DOTD reported that all major evacuation routes were open and that traffic signals on New Orleans area evacuation routes were on extended green cycles. State Police reported heavy traffic volume in New Orleans and that telephone call volume to the toll-free traffic line was increasing. State Police reported that southbound traffic on I-59 and I-55 has been stopped in Mississippi to accommodate contraflow.

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin and Jefferson Parish President Aaron Broussard called for eastbank evacuations in their parishes, and Gov. Blanco ordered contraflow

operations to begin at 4 p.m. State Police reported that traffic was heavy and building just prior to contraflow's implementation. Within hours, traffic was moving smoothly, according to field reports.

DOTD began notifying the public of several closures, including:

- Saturday closure of the Ostrica and Empire locks to marine traffic.
- Sunday closure of several bridges in the New Orleans area to marine traffic.
- Sunday closure of ferry service at the Lower Algiers/Chalmette, Algiers/Canal Street and Gretna/Jackson Avenue crossings.
- Sunday closure of the Belle Chasse Tunnel on La. 23.
- Sunday closure of the Harvey Tunnel on U.S. 90 Business.

By 7:30 p.m. Saturday, media reports out of New Orleans reflected that contraflow was working as intended and that traffic did not appear to be a major impediment to evacuation. During a series of interviews with television and radio media outlets, DOTD stressed that citizens should have a personal evacuation plan and route and should leave the area as soon as possible.

By 10 p.m., traffic along hurricane evacuation routes was moderate to heavy. Mayor Nagin visited each television station in New Orleans and made a personal plea for citizens to evacuate as soon as possible. DOTD reinforced Nagin's appeal through a similar series of live telephone interviews with those stations, encouraging citizens to leave the area as soon as possible. By this time, all stations in the New Orleans area were broadcasting hurricane information around the clock. The public appeals from the mayor and DOTD continued until midnight.

At 7 a.m. Sunday, the National Weather Service reports that Katrina had reached Category 5 status, with sustained winds of near 160 miles per hour.

At 8:45 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 28, DOTD's Lambert and National Guard Public Information Officer Pete Schneider boarded a Blackhawk helicopter in Baton Rouge en route to New Orleans to offer television stations in the New Orleans area an aerial view of contraflow operations. Three of the four commercial television stations sent photographers to ride the helicopter along I-10, I-55 and the Pontchartrain Causeway. Traffic was very heavy along I-10 just before the contraflow operations begin on Clearview Avenue, where cars began moving rapidly along both sides of the interstate. Another slowdown was observed just before I-10 is narrowed from three lanes to two lanes west of the Loyola Avenue exit, but traffic again picked up speed from that point, westward. Traffic was observed moving well along I-55, and the Causeway traffic was light.

At 10 a.m., the National Weather Service reported that Katrina had sustained winds of near 175 miles per hour.

After the aerial tour, Lambert conducted taped interviews with each station, informing citizens that traffic conditions were favorable for an evacuation and that people should evacuate as soon as possible to avoid the storm. These interviews take place at around 11:45 a.m.

Throughout the day, traffic grew heavier along the evacuation routes as the National Weather Service reported that Katrina was strengthening. At approximately 5 p.m., after 25 hours of interstate contraflow, DOTD and State Police suspended the contraflow operations but allowed citizens to continue evacuation. Contraflow was suspended to give DOTD personnel adequate time to retrieve and secure contraflow assets from the roadsides and to seek shelter for themselves and family members.

Heavy traffic continued along evacuation routes, but citizens reported that wait times were significantly shorter than they were in Ivan, with a trip from New Orleans to Baton

Rouge taking a maximum time of 3 hours. The evacuation of the New Orleans area continued throughout the late evening hours. The last evacuees left the New Orleans area overnight as the outer bands of Katrina's tropical storm force winds reached Louisiana's coastline.

DOTD and State Police estimate that the phased evacuations and contraflow operations helped safely evacuate more than 1.2 million people with no significant traffic delays for drivers.

At approximately 7 a.m. Monday, Katrina made landfall in Plaquemines Parish, slicing through the marshes, destroying homes, tossing boats onto roads, tearing apart levees and dumping up to 11 feet of water into residential areas. As the storm moved northeast, Jefferson, Orleans, St. Bernard and St. Tammany parishes were similarly affected. Levee breaches along canals poured several feet of water into neighborhoods in Orleans and St. Bernard parishes. Trees fell, buildings collapsed and all utilities, including 911 emergency phone services, were knocked out. Entire parishes were left with no landline, cellular phone service, computer or radio communications, making it nearly impossible to ascertain or fully appreciate the extent of damage.

As Katrina ripped through St. Bernard Parish and moved north toward Mississippi, the counter-clockwise winds shoved an enormous storm surge from the Gulf of Mexico directly into Lake Pontchartrain, from east to west. As the surge moved from the far eastern end of the lake, tremendous pressure under the I-10 twin span bridges between New Orleans and Slidell knocked hundreds of 300-ton concrete segments out of alignment. Dozens of the spans were knocked off their supports, landing partially submerged in the lake.

I ordered DOTD teams to work on resolving hurricane issues. The teams and their team leaders are:

- Signals & Signs, Stephen Glascock

- Bridge Inspection/Bridge Repair, Gill Gautreau
- FEMA/FHWA Assessment, Rhett Desselle
- DOTD Resources, Freddie Gardner
- Pump & Levee Repair Support, Ed Preau/Mike Stack
- Ferries/Movable Bridges, Vince Latino
- LOOP, Tommy Martinez
- Report Compilation, Kirt Clement
- Temporary Housing, Kirt Clement
- District 02 Personnel Temporary Assignment, John Evanco/Tom Payment

Meanwhile, at DOTD headquarters, the DOTD EOC team began the process of producing technical maps for the local, state and federal agencies that need detailed information to support rescue and recovery operations.

Despite a sense of urgency among DOTD employees, crews were forced to wait until official clearance was given to an area.

By 7 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30, DOTD crews began immediate post-storm activities to make damage assessments, clear debris from roads and repair and replace signs and signals in the Baton Rouge, Hammond and New Orleans districts. Crews from other districts throughout Louisiana were dispatched to the effected areas to help in the effort.

DOTD began assessment of the Louisiana Offshore Oil Platform and immediately contacted the Public Service Commission to help make arrangements to restore electrical power. Because LOOP handles as much as 18 percent of the nation's energy supply, getting LOOP operational again was a matter of national security.

The first official report of a levee breach at the 17th Street Canal was noted at 11 a.m. Monday to Louisiana State Police, via an officer with the New Orleans Police Department. By 1 p.m., the report was disseminated by the state Office of Emergency Preparedness, but little information was known as to the extent of the breach or flooding. Because the hurricane was in full force, there was little anyone can do to stop the immediate flooding.

DOTD has no official engineering responsibilities for the levee system. DOTD's role with the levee boards is that of a coordinator and a facilitator. We are the state agency authorized to coordinate with the Corps of Engineers on federal projects. The Corps of Engineers has ultimate responsibility over all design and approval of construction of design. However, with the floodwaters from the breach threatening severe damage, I ordered DOTD engineers to assess damage at the breaches at the 17th Street Canal and the Industrial Canal and to do whatever is necessary to stop the flooding into neighborhoods.

Crews from DOTD and the Orleans Levee District met a crew from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the 17th Street Canal site early Tuesday morning. All roads leading to the area were flooded, and the water was still rising. Water from the swollen Lake Pontchartrain was rushing through the canal and pouring through the breach into neighborhoods. DOTD District Engineer Mike Stack estimated that the breach was at least 400 feet wide "with water coming through like Niagara Falls." Stack and DOTD engineering intern Justin Guilbeau noted that the water pouring into New Orleans from the breach was nearly as high as the level of the canal, meaning the streets had about 12 feet of water.

Stack, whose home is only a few blocks from the breach, watched the water rush through the streets and lawns. “I knew I didn’t have a home anymore.”

Later that day, I flew to the 17th Street Canal location on a helicopter and saw the devastation. The water was flooding from the lake to the canal into the city. What struck me were the twin obstacles of fixing the breach: lack of communication and extreme flooding, which made transportation of equipment to and from the breach nearly impossible.

The engineers began discussing options for stopping the flow of water. At one point, someone suggests dropping sandbags from a helicopter. The Orleans Levee District had 3,000-pound sandbags in a nearby maintenance yard, and a Texas Air National Guard helicopter began making the drop. This initial plan with only one helicopter proved to be ineffective, and at the end of the day, only a dozen or so sandbags were dropped.

Communication problems plagued the repair effort. Landline, cell phone and radio service was out, and Stack and his group used a cumbersome method of calling his wife’s cell phone from one landline phone that worked in Metairie. Stack’s wife then had to call DOTD officials at the Emergency Operations Center in Baton Rouge, who then relayed messages back to Stack through his wife.

The next day, Stack suggested that DOTD build a road from the nearly complete bridge at Old Hammond Highway to the site of the breach – a distance of approximately 1,000 feet – atop the levee and reinforced to handle heavy equipment that must be moved in to make repairs. Orleans Levee District personnel were on site, but they cannot get equipment into place. West Jefferson Levee District crews used their equipment to clear roads on the Metairie side of the canal so other crews can follow “and start picking up anything they can find to make a road,” Stack said.

There was initial conflict between DOTD and the Corps of Engineers over the issue of building the road. General Robert Crear, from the Corps, and I flew to the site and jointly

made it very clear to all parties, DOTD and the Corps, that the Corps of Engineers had the lead role in fixing the breach, and that DOTD would play a supporting role to provide help and assistance.

Meanwhile, plans were developed to drive sheet piling into the canal bed to stop the flow of lake water into the breach. I directed DOTD to secure a contractor to begin the process, and Assistant Secretary Nelson contacted contractor Boh Brothers, which agreed to perform the emergency work. Later that week, the USACE formalized the contract with Boh Brothers. The combination of using the makeshift road to transport heavy materials from the bridge to the breach for repair and driving the sheet piling into the canal bed eventually stopped the flow of water into the neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, DOTD began inspecting roads and bridges across southeast Louisiana. Damage was noted to the I-10 twin spans bridge over Lake Pontchartrain, and inspectors from around Louisiana were dispatched to the New Orleans area to assess damage to the interstate, elevated sections of road and moveable bridges. Gill Gautreau and Vince Latino spearheaded this effort.

Latino also began making arrangements to move two ferries and crews into New Orleans to assist in rescue and evacuation efforts. Because some of the ferry landings were damaged, DOTD crews had to make emergency repairs on site with whatever tools were available. By Wednesday morning, DOTD crews began rescuing citizens in the St. Bernard area by moving them by ferry to safe ground at Algiers Point.

Although DOTD and other state agencies were rescuing people, getting through the effected areas was very difficult because of the enormous amount of debris on the roads. Gordon Nelson assigned Rhett Desselle to coordinate all road debris-clearing activities, and Desselle assembled a team from all DOTD districts to help. The clearing operations began on Tuesday morning, and Desselle already had established protocols and procedures with FHWA and FEMA for documenting debris cleanup on federal-aid routes and non-federal aid routes.

Because the water was still standing in many areas, particularly in New Orleans, where flooding continues from several breaches in the canals, some road assessments and debris clearing operations could not proceed. In St. Tammany Parish, however, DOTD secured contracts with companies to begin clearing the roads of wood, metal, tires, plastic, etc. Once these roads were clear, emergency relief organizations such as the American Red Cross were able to get closer to the effected areas to provide life-sustaining services.

Back at DOTD headquarters in Baton Rouge, office personnel were inundated with phone calls from the public inquiring about road and bridge closures, truck permit requirements, shelter information and how to receive emergency relief services. By using volunteer employees, DOTD set up a customer service center to answer these questions, and more. Within days of announcing the service, DOTD's customer care center was receiving hundreds of calls related to the hurricane. DOTD employees even helped facilitate two rooftop rescues.

At the Emergency Operations Center, FEMA workers were preparing to enter the effected areas in the New Orleans region for rescue operations, but their support services were not in place, yet. Specifically, the federal government had not provided adequate maps to the emergency crews, nearly all of which were comprised of personnel from other parts of the country who were not familiar with the New Orleans area. George Gele and DOTD's GIS group began producing highly detailed, custom maps for these workers, many of whom were relying on maps from the AAA. It was several days before FEMA was able to produce maps for its crews that are attempting to go into neighborhoods and rescue stranded citizens.

Steve Glascock headed up the sign and signal repair team. Crews from around the state were dispatched to the New Orleans region to begin repairing and replacing traffic signs and signals.

In the ESF-1 function adopted just seven weeks before Katrina struck, my agency, for the first time, was tasked with providing transportation assets to facilitate evacuation.

Although this new ESF protocol was viewed by most in state government as a transitional plan that had not been fully vetted, discussed or implemented, I should have charged my people with ensuring that officials on the local and/or federal levels were performing that function if we were not prepared to fully execute that duty. Governor Blanco has made it clear to me and to all cabinet secretaries that we will be fully prepared to fulfill primary and support responsibilities for the 2006 hurricane season. DOTD will partner with communities in south Louisiana, including the city of New Orleans, to ensure that buses are staged in strategic locations to evacuate citizens who have no transportation. We also are in discussions with Amtrak about using their service, if needed, for evacuation.

Another lesson learned is that it is critical for us to more closely coordinate all efforts with local and federal authorities, before and during a disaster. To that end, I have hired a new, full-time emergency coordinator for DOTD, and one of her tasks will be to strengthen relationships with relevant local and federal officials to ensure a future coordinated and appropriate response.

It is equally important that I note DOTD's accomplishments before, during and after the hurricane. Our employees performed heroic public service under the most adverse of conditions, and their deeds should be recognized. Some of the tasks DOTD accomplished include:

- successfully staging and implementing contra-flow for evacuation.
- expanding the Motorist Assistance Patrol service to a 24/7 operation that included using tow trucks under the traffic management component of the evacuation plan.
- immediately clearing roads with DOTD personnel in the New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Hammond districts after the storm passed.

- immediately inspecting moveable/fixed bridges in those districts.
- immediately inspecting and repairing signals and signs in those districts.
- coordinating and assisting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and West Jefferson Levee District in repairs of 17th Street Canal and London Ave. breaches.
- hauling more than 500 concrete barriers to I-10 @ Clearview for use in breach repairs.
- working with LOOP and the Public Service Commission to get LOOP online.
- moving two ferries initially and the three additional ferries to New Orleans to assist in evacuation.
- rescuing more than 6,000 evacuees from St. Bernard Levee to Algiers Point.
- obtaining contractors for emergency repairs to fixed and moveable bridges, i.e., Caminada Bay Bridge; Leeville; US 11; I-10 Twin Spans; Almonaster.
- obtaining debris removal contractors for affected districts.
- mobilizing FEMA and FHWA asset teams.
- obtaining contractors to repair washed out roadways and shoulders.
- obtaining contractors to repair ferries and ferry landings
- obtained a contractor to repair empire locks.
- improving the timing and traffic signal operation in Baton Rouge area

- repairing the Dynamic Message Board signs.
- operating Motorist Assistance Patrols on I-10 & I-12 for congestion relief.
- conducting a planning session to improve post-Katrina traffic conditions in Baton Rouge.
- meeting with City of New Orleans officials to determine signal replacement program.
- establish a hotline for DOTD displaced employees, providing temporary housing at DOTD Headquarters in Baton Rouge for the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission.
- establishing a Customer Service Center at DOTD headquarters with a nationwide toll-free number (1-877-4LA-DOTD) for citizens to get road information.
- opening the eastbound span of the I-10 Twin Spans bridge to two way traffic October 14, 2005, 17 days ahead of schedule.
- Opening the westbound span of the I-10 Twin Spans bridge on Jan. 6, 2006. The entire twin-spans project was completed ahead of schedule and more than \$20 million under the estimated project cost.

Additionally, DOTD had numerous accomplishments during and after Hurricane Rita ravaged the southwestern portion of Louisiana. Those accomplishments included:

- developing new operating procedures for motor carrier transportation.

- working with U.S. Department of Transportation and FEMA to pre-stage buses and perform evacuations.
- immediately clearing roads with DOTD personnel in New Orleans, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Alexandria and Hammond districts.
- immediately inspecting moveable and fixed bridges in those districts.
- obtaining additional contractors for emergency repairs to moveable bridges in the Lafayette and Lake Charles districts.
- obtaining debris removal contractors for the Lake Charles district.
- mobilizing FEMA and FHWA asset teams.
- Immediately inspecting and repairing signals and signs in the effected districts.