

CCC bridge division gets new director - Department - Times-Picayune, The (New Orleans, LA) - November 30, 2011 - page B 01

November 30, 2011 | Times-Picayune, The (New Orleans, LA) | Allen Powell II West Bank bureau | Page B 01

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development has appointed a new executive director for the troubled **Crescent City Connection** Division.

David Tippett, an employment attorney with the department since 2008, replaces David Miller as executive director and will spearhead the agency while a state-sponsored task force considers the division's future in the face of the scheduled elimination of all tolls next year. If tolls are eliminated, officials have said, it would require large-scale budget cuts and the possible elimination of the agency.

But state legislators could decide to extend the tolls, which pay three-fourths of the agency's \$27 million budget.

Tippett acknowledged that the future of the **Crescent City Connection** is in flux and said he is operating under the belief that tolls will be eliminated. However, no decisions have been made on the fate of the agency's personnel, including the **Crescent City Connection** Police Department, which patrols the bridge and 13 miles of elevated expressway. He said those decisions will come later.

"We're still working through what the operation will look like when the tolls go away," Tippett said.

Officials have predicted that getting rid of the tolls would mean the CCC's 200 employees would be laid off, the duties of the bridge police folded into local law enforcement agencies and ferry service eliminated.

The agency has been plagued by turmoil since 2008, when a state audit of the agency raised concerns about staffing levels and spending. Alan LeVasseur, former executive director, resigned shortly after the audit was made public and his second-in-command, Randall Paisant, quit a few months later. Both men said their departures were not related to the increased scrutiny of the agency.

State Rep. **Patrick Connick** has been critical of the agency for poor management and using toll revenue to finance its operations. He also criticized the use of toll money to finance projects throughout the state while West Bank residents were promised road projects in exchange for the support of the tolls renewal in 1998.

Tippett, 57, said he will focus on providing reliable service to residents, both with ferries and the elevated expressway. The six ferries, three of which are not operational, have been derided as a drain on the agency's budget. Tippett said he plans to make certain that their operation improves.

Observing that it has been a difficult period for the CCC, he said he hopes to draw on his military and management experience to right the ship.

"It's a tumultuous time. It's my goal to continue to provide the service to the citizens of New Orleans at this time," he said.

Tippett has experience in immigration law and public utilities law and as a corporate in-house counsel. He holds degrees from Virginia Military Institute, the University of Michigan and the Louisiana State University Law Center. He lives in Baton Rouge and is a native of Columbus, Ohio.

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Allen Powell II can be reached at apowell@timespicayune.com or 504.826.3793.

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