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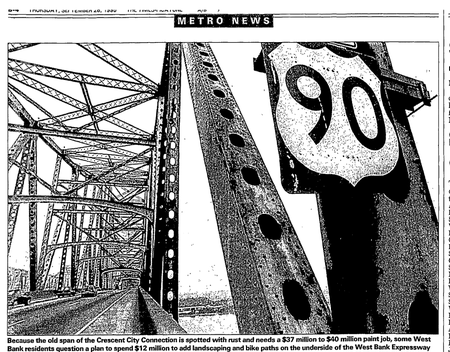

Because the old span of the Crescent City Connection is spotted with rust and needs a $37 million to $40 million paint job, some West Bank residents question a plan to spend $12 million to add landscaping and bike paths on the underside of the West Bank Expressway and on Gen. de Gaulle and Shirley drives in Algiers.
STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN POAG

Plan for bridge tolls debated

Beautification project criticized

By KATY READ
West Bank bureau

Some people say it's a great idea: Use Crescent City Connection tolls to landscape the West Bank, beautifying areas that, at the moment, few would call beautiful.

Others say it's a terrible idea. They don't like paying bridge tolls, especially if the money's going for trees and bushes.

No one seems to know exactly whose idea it was in the first place.

The project, as planned by engineers in the Crescent City Connection division of the Department of Transportation and Development, would take $12 million from bridge tolls to place trees and shrubs, a bike and pedestrian path, benches and lampposts along the underside of the West Bank Expressway and on Gen. de Gaulle and Shirley drives in Algiers.

Bridge officials say the project was ordered by the Legislature. Lawmakers last year extended the tolls to 1999, and called for part of the money — beyond what's needed for bridge operations and a handful of traffic projects — to be used for landscaping the expressway, de Gaulle and Shirley. Bridge tolls, which generate $17 million to $19 million a year, had been set to expire in 1994.

"I guess what it comes down to is, this is what the law says," said Alan LeVasseur, director of the Crescent City Connection. "Apparently, they (legislators) felt this is something that would enhance the quality of life on the West Bank."

But some West Bank lawmakers say they never imagined the landscaping, mentioned only briefly and without detail in the legislation, would turn into a 14-mile, $12 million project.

"Landscaping can mean a lot of different things," said Rep. Steve Theriot, D-Marrero, who voted for the toll extension and the improvement projects. "I don't think anyone envisioned all that."

Theriot said that, although he hasn't seen the engineers' proposal, it sounds more expensive than what he had in mind. Theriot is chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, where the legislation originated. His main concern, he said, was getting the grass under the elevated expressway mowed more often.

Rep. Steve Windhorst, R-Terrytown, who voted against extending the tolls, says he never realized they'd be used to landscape a 14-mile area. He pledged to act next year to trim the project.

"I think there are far more concrete projects, literally concrete, that need to be undertaken before that," Windhorst said.

For example, he said, the older, westbound span of the bridge will require a new coat of paint within the next few years. According to the latest estimates, that job will cost $37 million to $40 million, most of that to remove, in accordance with strict federal guidelines, the lead-based paint that's rusting and chipping from the metal. No money has been allocated for that project.

In addition, Windhorst said, there are plenty of road improvements that should take priority over landscaping.

Not all West Bank lawmakers object to the landscaping. Sen. Chris Ullo, D-Marrero, said he has seen the engineers' plans and likes them.

"I think it's going to really enhance the whole area, to the point where it's going to take us out of a blight situation to a beautification situation," he said. "It's the best improvement that has come along since the overhead expressway has been built."

At least some landscaping on either end of the bridge is mandated, LeVasseur said, by the original federal permit issued to build the new span. The permit was based on a 1978 Environmental Impact Study, which included a design for planting trees and shrubs to lessen the bridge's impact on surrounding neighborhoods. LeVasseur estimated that the more modest plan would cost $4 million to $5 million.

That's enough, Windhorst said.

"We've got a number of problems, and bushes ain't at the top of the list," Windhorst said. "I think most people feel that any beautification, beyond what we are mandated to do, is a waste of money and should take a back seat to many other things we ought to be doing."

What most West Bank residents think about the project isn't clear. Responses at three public meetings in August ranged from enthusiastic to skeptical to critical.

"We are very much in favor of anything to do with landscaping," said Maria Vallejo, coordinator of Citizens for a Clean and Beautiful Westbank of Jefferson Parish. "It's going to be a really great thing for the West Bank."

But critics object to the toll extension, saying bridge operations and other local road projects should come out of the state's transportation budget.

"If you'd take the tolls off that bridge, Algiers would develop economically," said Walter J. Schneider of Algiers.

Others say they can live with the tolls but agree with Windhorst that landscaping isn't the best use for the money.

"We set aside money for the frills, and just think the good fairy will come along and provide the money for the necessities," said Sharon Shirey, also of Algiers. "Goodness knows, I love flowers and all of that. But you paint the bridge first, and then you get on with the nice things, the frills."

> *Apparently, they (legislators) felt this is something that would enhance the quality of life on the West Bank.*
>
> **ALAN LeVASSEUR**
> **director of the Crescent City Connection**

Still others object to particular features of the project. At a meeting of Algiers civic leaders, most called the $600,000 bike-and-pedestrian path planned along de Gaulle a waste. Residents wouldn't feel safe biking or walking in the middle of the heavily trafficked street, they said. Members of a few local biking and recreation clubs spoke in support of the path.

Public opinion should become more clear in coming months, LeVasseur said, as the plans are submitted to public officials in Orleans and Jefferson parishes, Gretna and Westwego.

"We're not going to force this project on anybody," he said. "It's a long way from a done deal."

But people may decide the project is worth paying for, said Randy Paisant, assistant executive director of the Crescent City Connection. Bridge tolls are a way West Bank residents can tax themselves to get better services and a more attractive environment than the transportation department provides statewide, he said.

"If you want to be maintained at a higher level, somebody's going to pay for it," Paisant said. "It's a quality of life thing on the West Bank. Are we satisfied with the quality of life here, or not?"

Story attributed quote wrongly

In Wednesday's story about a ground-breaking for a new pumping station in Harvey, The Times-Picayune incorrectly attributed a statement to Fred Hall, president of the Woodmere Civic Association. He made no reference to the May 8 flood.

CONTINUED

Duke: Visits Russia to help free missionary

From B-1

Still, "I trust the Lord that He's guiding men to do the right thing," she said. "And if he wants to use Mr. Zhirinovsky as the instrument of Charles' release, that's fine."

Tauzin's office said it cautioned Songe that Duke's approach to Zhirinovsky could complicate efforts to free him. And Tauzin aide Ken Johnson, who said he talked to Songe on Wednesday, quoted the missionary as saying Duke had called and offered the telephone number of a Zhirinovsky aide, but said Songe refused the offer.

A fiery ultranationalist, Zhirinovsky promotes a vision of a Slavic, Orthodox Christian Russia with its imperial borders restored — even to the reaspture of Alaska. He often threatens to have his enemies deported or shot, and is famous for brawling in the halls of Parliament.

Duke said he and Zhirinovsky have a lot in common.

"We're nationalists," he said. "And Zhirinovsky is very protective of what you might call the white race.

"Zhirinovsky once called me his favorite American politician," Duke said. "I don't know if it's a compliment or not."

CONTINUED

Sting: Cops hit street dealers

From B-1

Mainly crack cocaine was seized.

Pennington also said the officers on the investigative team had received special training from the Air National Guard's Meridian Naval Air Training Academy and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

"I think it's important to illustrate that we're working with the federal government. The New Orleans Police Department can't do it alone," he said.

Suspects in undercover drug deal bust listed

The following New Orleans residents were booked with distribution of narcotics:
Anthony Adams, 42
Daniel Allen, 27
Stanley Anderson, 30
Victor Armstrong, 24
Edward Barbarin, 58
Carl Battiste, 35
David Beaulieu, 22
Sokota Bullock, 22
Quincy Butler, 29
Stella Campbell, 50
Nikita Casimier, 33
Dennis Comacho, 30
Wilfred Davis, 40
Samuel Ellis, 23
Stephen Ellis, 33
William Farnbaugh, 24
Lawrence Fleury, 18
Frederick Fontenette, 31
Alvin Francis, 35
Percy Franklin Jr., 22
Barry Gilbert, 30
Joe Gray, 21
Fredick Green, 17
Calvin Harris, 18
Johnathan Humphrey, 38
Latoya James, 21
Terrance Johnson, 29
Lawrence Laday, 30
Isiah Lawrence, 36
Glenn Lewis, 40
Julie Lookadoo, 30
Victor McGill, 24
Floyrell McElven, 19
Eric Mills, 18
Aleatea Morris, 31
Fritz Myers, 42
Ernest Ostley, 34
Steve Pellegrin, 21
Ladonna Porter, 21
Gwenn Rogers, 21
Gerard Scandrews, 23
Leroy Smith, 41
Carlos Smith, 31
Tieson Stewart, 19
Derrick Taylor, 22
James Taylor, 28
Terence Toomer, 20
Donya Wallace, 19
Achanta Weber, 18
The following New Orleans residents were charged with distribution of crack cocaine:
Taiwan Branch, 18
Paul Bright, 18
Claude Chenesu, 23
Glenn Copelin, 19
Stanley Covington, 32
Wilbert Emery, 19
Cedric Farrell, 21
Gary Fincher, 19
Benjamin Fleming, 22
Glan Garetta, 26
Terrence Gibson, 29
Dolton Holmes, 39
Wilbert Johnson, 46
Leola Mays, 39
Tyron Peters, 19
Randy Pratt, 19
Others booked were:
Angel Cain, 21, distribution of marijuana
Vince Conseaux, 32, possession of paraphernalia
Gillard Courtney, 19, distribution of marijuana
Stacy Devries, 24, possession of paraphernalia
Albert Hills, 18, aggravated assault on a police officer
Alywinn Howell, 20, distribution of narcotics and criminal damage to property
Larry Jordan, 18, distribution of narcotics and possession of a firearm
Lonzy McGlothorn, 28, distribution of crack and marijuana
Maria Torres, 38, obtaining drugs without a prescription
Three juveniles — two 16-year-olds and a 15-year-old — also were charged.
Police didn't identify a 16-year-old juvenile
A 14-year-old juvenile was charged with distribution of crack cocaine.

DEATHS

ELWOOD CHRISTOPHER BARNES SR.

Elwood Christopher Barnes Sr., a bod carrier, died Tuesday of cancer at Lakeland Medical Center. He was 66. Mr. Barnes was a lifelong resident of New Orleans. He was a parishioner of Corpus Christi Catholic Church. Survivors include three brothers, Joseph, William and Winfield Barnes; five sisters, Lois Stone of Los Angeles, Joyce Bernard, Phillis Williams, Leslie Picot and Christine Santa Marina; and two grandchildren. Visitation will be Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon at Boisniere-Arceneaux-Labat Funeral Home, 1703 N. Claiborne Ave., followed by a Mass at 12:30 p.m. at St. Peter Claver Catholic Church, 1923 St. Philip St. Burial will be in St. Louis Cemetery No. 3.

RANDOLPH BROWN SR.

Randolph Brown Sr., a pipe specialist with the New Orleans Sewerage & Water Board, died Friday at Charity Hospital of injuries suffered in a car accident. He was 50. Mr. Brown was a lifelong resident of New Orleans. He was a graduate of Walter L. Cohen High School and an Army veteran. Survivors include a son, Randolph Brown Jr.; two daughters, Danielle and Amy Brown; his mother, Allie Mae Brown; two brothers, Cleavon Sr. and Harry Brown Sr.; a sister, Dolores Thornton; and a grandchild. A funeral will be held today at 11 a.m. at Greater Liberty Baptist Church, 1230 Desire St. Visitation will begin at 9:30 a.m. Burial will be in Providence Memorial Park. D.W. Rhodes Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

JEROME W. FOSTER JR.

Jerome W. Foster Jr., a retired longshoreman, died Sunday at Touro Infirmary. He was 78. Mr. Foster was born and grew up in Magnolia, Miss., and lived in New Orleans for many years. He was an Army veteran of World War II. Survivors include his wife, Hazel Foster; three sons, Jerome W. Foster III and Lionel and George Ochichor; three daughters, Regina M. Scott of Detroit, Sandra J. Foster and Brenda Kapsoir; two sisters, Johnnye Foster Banks of Chicago and Mildred Foster Grice of Albuquerque, N.M.; and four grandchildren. A funeral will be held Saturday at 9 a.m. at D.W. Rhodes Funeral Home, 3933 Washington Ave. Visitation will begin at 8 a.m. Burial will be in Providence Memorial Park.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Jefferson Parish Department of Juvenile Services hereby solicits Statements of Qualifications from NIDA Certified Pathology Laboratories interested in performing test for drug and alcohol urinalysis on juvenile offenders ordered to remain drug free to insure public safety. As a minimum, the scope of services will include a chain of custody process and a brief training of staff on how to appropriately label and collect specimens; providing and delivery of collection containers; daily pickup of specimens; and, providing test results to the department within 24 hours.

For further information, contact Director Walter S. Maestri, Ph.D., Department of Juvenile Services (504) 364-3750 or 838-1070.

A Professional Services Questionnaire must accompany the statements. Please obtain the latest questionnaire form (dtd. 4/4/ 90) by calling the Parish Clerk's Office at (504) 364-2626. Interested firms must submit (14) copies each of their statements and questionnaire to the Jefferson Parish Council c/o Mrs. Terrie Rodrigue, Parish Clerk, 200 Derbigny Street, Suite 406, Gretna, Louisiana 70053 no later than 4:30 on Friday, October 20, 1995. No statements will be accepted after the deadline.
(Res. #80467)

/s/Terrie T. Rodrigue
Parish Clerk

/s/Robert B. Evans, Jr.
Chairman
Jefferson Parish Council

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Parish of Jefferson is hereby soliciting Statements of Qualifications from firms interested in providing professional engineering services to the Department of Public Works for the District 5 Beautification Program Projects.
The following criteria, listed in order of importance, will be used to evaluate the statements, professional training and experience, nature, quantity, and value of Parish work previously and currently being performed; capacity for timely completion of the project; size of the firm; status of current litigation with the Parish, if any; and current professional accomplishments. The firms interested in providing this service must be familiar with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 and required approvals of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development.
A Professional Services Questionnaire must accompany the statements. Please obtain the latest questionnaire form (dtd. 4/ 4/90) by calling the Parish Clerk's Office at (504) 364-2626. Interested firms must submit (14) copies each of their statements and questionnaire to the Jefferson Parish Council c/o Mrs. Terrie Rodrigue, Parish Clerk, 200 Derbigny Street, Suite 406, Gretna, Louisiana 70053 no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday, October 20, 1995.
No statements will be accepted after the deadline.
Res. No. 80410

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