

DOTD Expedites Emergency Opening of John James Audubon Bridge

New Roads, La. – Due to the rising Mississippi River causing the closure of the New Roads/St. Francisville ferry, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) has opened the [John James Audubon Bridge](#). This emergency opening will accommodate traffic that has lost river-crossing access when the ferry closed. The ferry, which carried approximately 720 vehicles per day according to 2009-2010 DOTD statistics, is permanently closed with the opening of the Audubon Bridge.

“High water closing the ferry would have obviously caused an inconvenience for commuters, so using the new Audubon Bridge is a logical alternative,” said DOTD Secretary Sherri H. LeBas, P.E. “Since this is an emergency situation, we’ve talked to the contractor and determined that it’s 100% safe to allow traffic on the bridge at this time. However, there’s still construction work remaining on the bridge. Drivers should be aware that future road and bridge impacts may be necessary to complete the construction that remains on the project.”

The Mississippi River is now at the 53 foot mark at the Red River Landing gauge, which is when, based on the state’s protocols, the St. Francisville ferry service closes. The newly opened bridge allows commuters to experience uninterrupted access across the river.

The John James Audubon Bridge is the longest cable-stayed bridge in the Western Hemisphere and connects Pointe Coupee and West Feliciana parishes. Construction on the \$409 million bridge began in May 2006. The new bridge over the Mississippi River includes almost 12 miles of new roadways leading up to the bridge, and connecting U.S. 61 to La. 1. While the structure is itself a significant engineering achievement, it is also the first Design-Build project undertaken by the Department of Transportation and Development.

The new bridge will greatly improve freight and commerce efficiency for major industries including the timber industry and local major businesses like the Big Cajun II plant right next to the bridge in New Roads. The company will benefit from the new access by providing a more direct route to the plant, improving access for approximately 300 employees and the 6,400 tractor trailers that travel to and from the plant each year. Without the bridge, travelers and freight haulers add 25-30 miles to their trip. Reduced freight travel time cuts down on costs that would otherwise be directly passed on to consumers, and reduces fuel emissions.

The bridge project is part of the [Louisiana TIMED Program](#) and is being constructed by Audubon Bridge Constructors (ABC), a joint venture of Flatiron Corporation, Granite Construction, and Parsons Transportation Group. The TIMED Program is the single largest transportation program in Louisiana history. The Program is designed

to enhance economic development in Louisiana through an investment in transportation projects and is funded by a dedicated \$0.04 per gallon gasoline and motor fuels tax. It was created by Act 16 of the 1989 Louisiana Legislature and was approved by a vote of the people.

The bridge gets its name from John James Audubon (1785-1851), one of the world's most renowned naturalist artists, who dedicated his life to painting all of the birds in America. Audubon painted 32 of his famous works in his *Birds of America* series while residing at Oakley Plantation in St. Francisville as a tutor to Eliza Pirrie in 1821.

The [Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development \(DOTD\)](#) is committed to delivering transportation and public works systems that enhance the quality of life. In addition to more than 16,600 miles of roadway, including over 890 miles of interstate, DOTD supports the development of the state's aviation, marine and rail infrastructures. Through this work, we are able to facilitate economic development, create job opportunities, improve vital evacuation routes, and make critical freight corridors safer and more efficient.

For more information, please visit www.dotd.la.gov, email dotdcs@la.gov, or call DOTD's Customer Service Center at (225) 379-1232 or 1-877-4LADOTD (1-877-452-3683). Business hours are 7:30 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Motorists can access up-to-date travel information by dialing 511 or by visiting www.511la.org. Out of-state travelers can call 1-888-ROAD-511 (1-888-762-3511).

###