

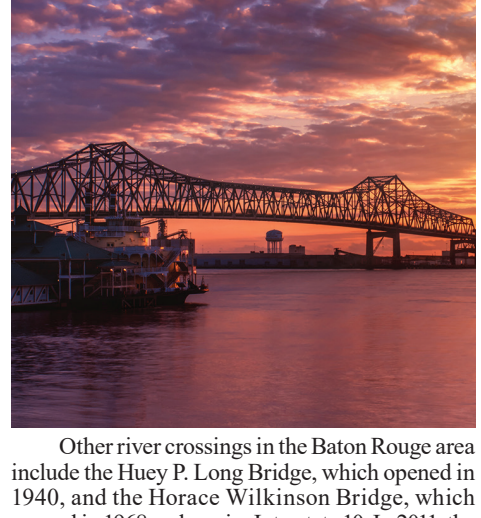
# Bridging the Mississippi in Baton Rouge

By Jared Brey

There could soon be a new way to cross the Mississippi River. After years of discussion, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) is pushing ahead with a plan to build a new bridge across the river near the state capital of Baton Rouge. Planners and advocates say it could help alleviate congestion in the city, redirect some local traffic off of Interstate 10 and provide “redundancy” in the regional transportation network that’s important during road closures or disasters. Carrying out a project of that scale requires careful planning and lots of time and money. The state created a taxing district to help finance the bridge in 2018, and has set aside \$300 million to pay for it so far. But the overall cost of the project is likely to reach at least \$3 billion. And infrastructure projects of all types are seeing increased labor and material costs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It’s never been easy to

build a bridge, but new challenges, as well as new federal funding opportunities, make it even more important to get the logistics right, planners say. “You’re making a generational decision,” says J. H. Campbell, chair of the Capital Area Road and Bridge District. “A bridge is going to be there for generations.”

**Why It’s Needed**  
Residents and leaders in Baton Rouge have been talking about building a new bridge over the Mississippi River since the 1990s, says Paul Vaught, an engineer with the Louisiana DOTD who’s working on the project. The department says the project is needed to relieve congestion in the Baton Rouge area and to accelerate growth on both sides of the river. Baton Rouge has a limited number of through streets, and many people use the existing I-10 bridge for short local trips. Local traffic accounts for around eighty percent of trips on the existing bridge, according to a study by Atlas Technical Consultants, which the state hired to help select a location for the new bridge in 2020.



Other river crossings in the Baton Rouge area include the Huey P. Long Bridge, which opened in 1940, and the Horace Wilkinson Bridge, which opened in 1968 and carries Interstate 10. In 2011, the Louisiana DOTD opened the John James Audubon

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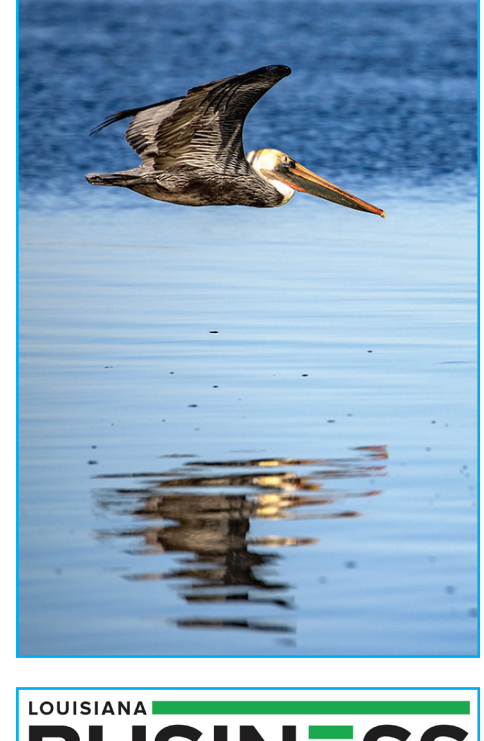
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Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration  
Contact: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/welcome-to-wosb-webinar-tickets-482397041537>  
Fee: Free; registration required

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Wednesday, February 21, 2024, 9:30 am–10:30 am CDT Online  
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration  
Contact: SBA Illinois District Office, 312-353-4528, [illinois.do@sba.gov](mailto:illinois.do@sba.gov)  
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Thursday, March 28, 2024, 12:00 pm–3:00 pm CDT Online  
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Contact: George Tapia, 610-382-3086, [george.tapia@sba.gov](mailto:george.tapia@sba.gov)  
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