

News

From along the Parkway

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Dr. William Ankner named DOTD Secretary.

Editors Note: Thank you to the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development's Communication Director, Mark Lambert, for allowing us the following:

Governor Bobby Jindal has named Dr. William D. Ankner as DOTD's new Secretary. Dr. Ankner comes to Louisiana from Missouri where he was responsible for creating and running the Missouri Transportation Institute and was a principal in his own consulting firm. Dr. Ankner served seven years, from 1996-2003, as CEO of the Rhode Island Department of Transportation and has held senior management positions in the Delaware DOT, New Jersey DOT and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Most recently he served as a panelist to the US Controller General's Transportation Finance Focus Group and as a participant with the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission's Blue Ribbon Panel of Transportation Experts.

Shortly after his appointment was announced, Dr. Ankner answered some questions from Communications Director Mark Lambert about his transportation philosophy, management style and expectations as he and his wife, Joan, prepare to move from Dixon, Mo., to Baton Rouge.

Q: Your thoughts on being designated Secretary of Louisiana DOTD?

A: I'm very grateful to the Governor for this opportunity to take a leadership position in his administration. My goal is to build on the successes that Secretary Bradberry and the DOTD staff have achieved for the people and businesses of Louisiana. The DOTD's transportation system will be facing significant challenges to maintain and expand its transportation investments. My concerns are to position DOTD to deal with shrinking federal highway funds; to provide a competitive transportation system which will enhance the economic vitality of our state in the face of global competition; to create a safer highway

system; to engage the people and businesses of Louisiana in defining our transportation system; to be good environmental stewards and to provide a transparent transportation decision-making structure and process.

Q: Assuming that Louisiana is not in a unique situation in terms of financial restraints, an aging infrastructure and growing capacity needs, what type of approach do you take to transportation priorities?

A: My initial focus is to continue preserving our existing infrastructure. If we don't maintain what we have, then concerns about congestion will only increase significantly as bridges require weight restrictions or closure, highways become pothole minefields and traffic has to slow down or be detoured to avoid failing infrastructure.

We need to build an integrated transportation system that uses all transportation modes, including transit, to effectively and efficiently improve the mobility of people and goods in a safe and environmentally accepted manner.

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ZTPA President joins Jindal staff.

Toye Taylor has joined newly inaugurated Governor Bobby Jindal's staff. He will serve as Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Taylor is President of the Association and has served in that capacity for several terms. He is the former Washington Parish President and did not seek re-election this past Fall.



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John James Audubon...an update on the bridge.

Construction on the John James Audubon Bridge continues to show progress, some of which can be viewed from the project web cam at www.audubonbridge.com. Pile driving on several of the smaller bridges continues throughout the project. At the main bridge crossing, crews continue with construction of the work platform and are also installing bridge shafts, which is the beginning process for the main span bridge.



The work trestles, when complete, will allow crews to work on the main span bridge regardless of the river conditions.

On another note, South Carolinians have received news of our record breaking bridge! Local reporters have called and inquired about hearing that the Audubon Bridge will be longer than their current record holder, the Copper River Bridge. They have been informed that in just a few short years, Louisiana will in fact be home to the longest cable stay bridge in North America, outdoing the South Carolina structure by about 30 feet.



Crews work in the Mississippi River on the main span bridge shafts

Dr. Ankner interview.

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For congestion we need to be looking at, "Where are the hotspots, where are the problems?" If we add capacity to I-10, can the road system around it handle that extra capacity? It does you no good to expand the interstates if the exit roads can't handle the extra traffic. No one drives only on the interstates, but that's the way we tend to look at things, as though the trip begins and ends on the interstate.

Q: You're known as an advocate of transit. Can you talk about your transit philosophy?

A: Transportation is a system not simply a mode of travel, like highways. The answer to our congestion problems is not always to build more highways. Often we can't build our way out of congestion. We have to be more strategic, and one element we need to consider is transit. Buses are the traditional way to have transit, and probably the most economical. We need to think about traffic and opportunities and benefits. Commuter rail is expensive, but if the market exists, we should be looking to develop this alternative to highway congestion.

Q: So, I take it you're a big fan of

ITS (Intelligent Transportation Systems)

A: I'm a huge fan of ITS. I helped put it in the legislation in ISTEA (federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991). Other states are looking at this as well and are developing ITS systems.

One of the ways states are dealing with congestion problems is through non barrier toll roads, and they're using HOV (high-occupancy vehicle) lanes and HOT (high-occupancy toll) lanes. In California, people are willing to pay \$8 a trip to save 40 minutes to get home faster and save money on the babysitter. The HOT lanes guarantee that you save a certain amount of time. But one of the great benefits of this is, if you take a commuter bus, you use it for free.

We have to take several approaches to congestion, and ITS can help. I don't think there's anything more annoying to people than lurching from one traffic light to another. You can get better mobility and safety if people know that if they go 35 miles per hour, they're going to get a green light. Technology can help us manage this. We need to manage traffic by

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Commission, Association hold 4th Quarter meetings.

Ginger Sawyer, LABI Political Director, addresses group.

On December 12, the Zachary Taylor Parkway Commission and the Zachary Taylor Parkway Association held their joint quarterly meetings. In addition to regular business, the groups heard from Ginger Sawyer, Vice President of Political Action, with the



Ginger Sawyer of LABI addresses members of the ZTPC and ZTPA.

Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABI).

Sawyer discussed term limits with the group and reviewed the outcomes of the Fall's elections.

"The Senate is still full of familiar faces," said Sawyer. "We had many members of the House move over to the Senate. The real impact will be felt with the House. We'll have an adjustment period in educating the new legislators, but we'll also have to work with committee leaders who don't have the same years of experience with our issues as we're used to. This, quite frankly can be both good and bad. You need to start today in educating as many

members of the legislature as possible as to what your issues may be."

Sawyer also described the changing demographics and party make-up in both chambers and discussed how those will create some new challenges for everyone.

"I think we expected to see a lot of what we have in these results, but at the same time there's still the unexpected to look forward to in how coalitions develop on our issues," she said.

She completed her presentation with a chamber by chamber analysis of how the elections will affect each body and talked about what perceptions and realities she had seen with term limits.

"I was in the room for all the debates when term limits were adopted by the legislature. This idea that people keep throwing around that term limits is to keep people from running for the other chamber is just false. There was great discussion about that during the committee meetings, and nobody ever suggested that once you serve and are term limited you wouldn't be able or shouldn't be able to run for another office," said Sawyer.

Sawyer did tell the group that a challenge for everyone will be to make sure we educate lawmakers ourselves rather than leaving it up to legislative staff.

Bowen named Executive Director.

Following an extensive search, Maria Woodyear Bowen has been named Executive Director of both the Zachary Taylor Parkway Commission and the Zachary Taylor Parkway Association.



"The search committee felt strongly that we needed an Executive Director with extensive experience lobbying the legislature," said Curtis Jelks, ZTPC Chairman. "Maria brings that

to the table as well as the family roots she has in Parkway's parishes. We were very lucky to have as many quality people interested in serving as we did. It was a difficult decision, but we feel we made the right choice."

Bowen's background includes having lobbied for the Louisiana Retailers Association, The Louisiana Chemical Association and Associated Builders and Contractors.

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Please renew your membership today!

We welcome new members. If you or a friend is interested in joining, please contact our office by phone: (225) 389-1212.

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ZACHARY TAYLOR P A R K W A Y

News...from along the Parkway

Dr. Ankner interview.

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using information systems, by looking at other transportation options and by looking at the system that supports the interstates.

Q: Tell me about your management philosophy.

A: Having studied some of the greatest minds in the world and recognizing they don't agree, I'm not sure there's always a right answer. I believe in a good and robust dialogue as to what is the best decision for the Department, at this time, with this set of conditions. Input from various people is critical. However, I don't think everybody has to agree with the final decision. We must make decisions within time constraints and with limited information. Consequently I look to the Department, as a whole, to help make the best decisions. I look for staff to challenge me on decisions they have concerns about, and inform me when they think I'm "off the reservation," but I also expect that once a final decision is made, the Department will support the decision and advance it. If there are strong public or legislative controversies to a decision I made, it is my responsibility to justify this decision publicly and not place staff in the position of being a dartboard.

No Secretary of Transportation or their executive staff alone can be effective in providing for the transportation needs of the state. This is a team effort of the DOTD. The Department's maintenance and construction personnel are our ambassadors to the community and to tourists. The public sees them much more than they see executive management or me. Hopefully, they recognize their value in advancing the Department; I certainly do.

I am a great believer in training, particularly in today's world with its constant introduction of new technologies, materials and methodologies. It is critical for DOTD personnel to understand how these factors affect their work: "what are the best practices going on elsewhere, and would it make sense for deployment in our state and in this department?"

I believe I have a high degree of sensitivity to ethics, and I expect my department to act ethically, courteously and with transparency.

Q: There is always pressure to turn public works functions over to the private sector with the thought that such functions can be accomplished more efficiently by businesses. What are your thoughts on this?

A: When I went to Rhode Island, the department was perceived so poorly that when I met with the Speaker of the House,

he said he had plans to abolish the DOT, walked to his desk, picked up a stack of papers, looked at me and said, "And here's the legislation to do it." But, we got through that. However, the event underscored that transportation departments have to realize that we are not irreplaceable.

I understand that Louisiana's public and legislature had a similar, but not as dramatic view of the DOTD. I think John (Bradberry) and others have done a lot to turn that attitude around in Louisiana. With the public's support we can best determine what we do well and should retain, and what others could do better and cheaper than the public sector. Our goal should not be to preserve "turf" for the sake of "turf," but to provide the best quality transportation system that we can afford for the people and businesses of Louisiana. A blend of public and private will be necessary to deliver that transportation system.

Q: Do you have any closing remarks?

A: Yes, I know from my years of experience in three state DOTs that there are many good and hardworking people in DOTs who only want the opportunity to do the best they can. From everything I've read and heard, the Louisiana DOTD is no different. I'm looking forward to working with all of you and being part of the Louisiana DOTD team.

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself this way. I will be joining the Department in early February. My delay is to meet the Governor's understandable request that I be "client free" when I join the Department. I will be client free. I hope to get the chance to meet you all within the first few months of my arrival.

We've Moved!

Please note our new information:

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*Zachary Taylor Parkway Commission
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