

# PROJECT HISTORY

## PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED:

- To upgrade and increase the efficiency of traffic movement between the Port and I-10 by creating a more direct route
- To alleviate congestion on US 49 in Gulfport
- To remove truck traffic from local roads and increase the efficiency of freight travel
- To provide better intermodal connections and access to the Port of Gulfport
- To provide better access to the Gulfport central business district
- To respond to a mandate from the Mississippi Legislature
- To provide a tool for economic development
- To improve the safety of the traveling public

[Click to view Purpose and Need details](#)

## LOCATION:

As directed by the state legislature, the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) is constructing a **Central Harrison County Connector Highway** from the State Port at Gulfport to I-10 at Canal Road. While currently designated as State Route 601, the project is also referred to as the **Canal Road – Port Connector**. If the project is included in the interstate system, it would be designated as I-310. The alignment generally follows 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue, curves to the West at 28<sup>th</sup> Street, follows Castille Street, and curves to the North paralleling Canal Road to the East.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW:

In order to best serve the community's transportation needs, MDOT began the process with a new highway study to identify the purpose and need for the project. This research included reviewing current traffic demands, projecting future traffic growth and determining how existing transportation infrastructure will be impacted. MDOT consulted stakeholders and identified constraints. The purpose and need for the project was continually revisited during project development to insure that the most appropriate highway facility is built. The following timeline has been put together to show the major factors influencing project development.



1994

- October 26, 1994:

MDOT held a meeting at the Mississippi State Port Authority office with representatives from the City of Gulfport, Harrison County and MDOT. Key points in the meeting:

- Harrison County took the lead in project development.
- The Port Authority wanted a limited access road.
- The City of Gulfport and the Harrison County Development Commission supported the project.

1995

- April 12, 1995:

The Port Authority requested that the route be placed on the National Highway System.

“The Harrison County Board of Supervisors supports the construction of a limited access transportation corridor in Gulfport, Mississippi.”

Harrison County Board of Supervisors  
[Resolution](#) supporting the Central Harrison County Corridor  
July 17, 1998

# PROJECT HISTORY

For Additional information, click on the blue text to link to the entire document.



## 1996

- During regular session of the Mississippi Legislature: House Bill 1269 charged MDOT with constructing the Canal Road-Port Connector.
- MDOT began the environmental/location study for the Canal Road-Port Connector.

## 1996—2002

- As part of the environmental/location study for the Canal Road - Port Connector, MDOT conducted more than 17 public involvement [meetings](#) between December 1996 and January 2002. In addition, MDOT representatives spoke to more than 20 civic and community groups about the project. The City of Gulfport, MSPA, and Harrison County were kept abreast of progress, and those entities provided input to aide in the study. MDOT also gathered input from local community leaders, business leaders, church leaders and the general public. As many as 15 different alternatives were narrowed down to four concepts.

## 2002

- February 26, 2002:  
MDOT held a public hearing at Isaiah Fredericks Community Center. The four concepts were presented. (One no-build and three build concepts) Business owners raised concerns that they would lose access along existing Canal Road near I-10.
- March 2002:  
MDOT began studies of different interchange concepts for I-10 to address the concerns of business owners.
- April 2002:  
In the 2002 Regular Session, the Mississippi Legislature passed and Governor Ronnie Musgrove signed [Senate Bill 2058](#). The “needs based” highway program for the 21st Century, better known as Vision 21, mandated that the Canal Road - Port Connector from US 90 to I-10 be constructed to interstate standards (Controlled access design).

“The Mississippi State Port Authority Board of Commissioners approved Resolution #98-26 memorializing support for a limited access highway connector from I-10 to the Port of Gulfport.”

Anthony Taormina  
Executive Director, State Port Authority  
[Letter to MDOT](#)  
September, 1998

# PROJECT HISTORY

For Additional information, click on the blue text to link to the entire document.



## 2003

- January 16, 2003:  
MDOT held a second public hearing at Isaiah Fredericks Community Center.
- April 16, 2003:  
Federal Highway Administration issued a Finding of No Significant Impact ([FONSI](#)) for preferred Alternative L-1, determining "no significant impacts on the quality of the environment."

## 2004

- Advertisement, selection, and negotiations for consultant contracts for survey and design of the project.

## 2005

- Survey and design work began. MDOT's Right of Way Division began researching property deeds and conducting appraisals.
- October 19, 2005:  
MDOT's [H.E.L.P.](#) (Highway Enhancement through Local Partnerships) Program was used to secure 102 million dollars in funding through the Harrison County Board of Supervisors for engineering and design work and to acquire right of way.

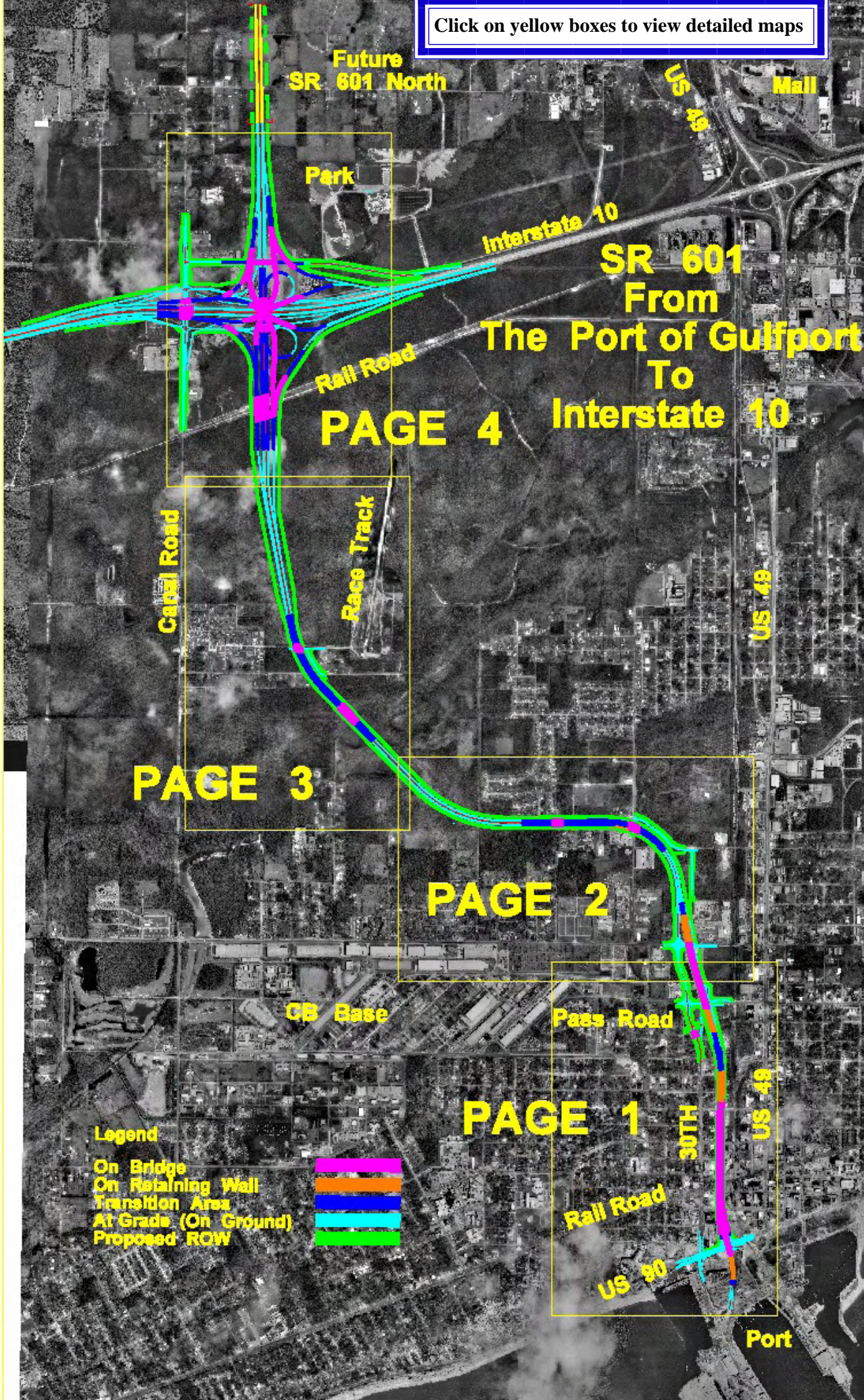
## 2006

- Survey and design work continues.
- March 2006:  
Right of way acquisition phase began.

"I think the (elevated road) is the less intrusive of the routes. I think it gives us the best capability of bridging both US 90 and the railroad."

Ken Combs,  
Gulfport Mayor  
[February 27, 2002](#)

Click on yellow boxes to view detailed maps



Future  
SR 601 North

Mall

US 46

Park

Interstate 10

SR 601  
From

The Port of Gulfport

To

Interstate 10

PAGE 4

Carroll Road

Race Track

US 49

PAGE 3

PAGE 2

CB Base

Pass Road

PAGE 1

HLUC

US 49

Legend

- On Bridge
- On Retaining Wall
- Transition Area
- At Grade (On Ground)
- Proposed ROW

Rail Road

US 90

Port

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## HOW WILL THE PROPOSED HIGHWAY BENEFIT GULF COAST RESIDENTS?

This project will take truck traffic off of the city street network and US 49. Local roads and existing highways will be less congested, hence increasing mobility for the overall transportation system. The new roadway will provide direct access to US 90 and the downtown business district from I-10. Residents will gain another vitally needed evacuation route.

## DID MDOT SEEK INPUT FROM RESIDENTS AND LOCAL PUBLIC OFFICIALS?

Yes, the public officials from City of Gulfport, Harrison County, the Port Authority at Gulfport and Mississippi Legislators were consulted throughout the environmental studies on location, design, and access issues. Input received in the form of letters from the City of Gulfport dated [April 4, 1997](#) and [June 11, 1998](#) as well as a letter from the engineering firm representing the Port Authority dated [January 26, 2000](#) was used in the development of the project. Numerous [meetings](#) with community leaders and local citizens were also utilized in determining how the project was developed to coexist with the community's values.

## HAS THE COMMUNITY SHOWN SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT?

During the course of discussions at public involvement meetings, a consensus of support was built as the project developed. The Harrison County Board of Supervisors passed a [resolution](#) in support of the project on 7/17/1998 and the State Port of Gulfport passed a [resolution](#) in support of the project on 9/16/1998. Articles on [7/25/1999](#) and [2/27/2002](#) indicate that there is support for the project as proposed. Local lawmakers sponsored [legislation](#) in 2002 that required MDOT to construct an interstate facility from the Port of Gulfport to I-10.

## IS THE HIGHWAY GOING TO BE BUILT ON AN ELEVATED STRUCTURE?

Yes, some of the roadway will be elevated. Where the highway interchanges with US 90, Pass Road, 28<sup>th</sup> Street and Canal Road the new road will go over the existing surface street. Overpasses will also be provided at 13<sup>th</sup> Street, the CSX Railroad, 17<sup>th</sup> Street, 19<sup>th</sup> Street, 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Racetrack Road. Where possible, the roadway will be constructed at ground level. Commitments have been made to include aesthetic elements such as sidewalks, landscaping, and incorporating artwork into the structure.

## WILL THE HIGHWAY DIVIDE THE CITY?

No, a fully controlled access road does not divide a community if overpasses are provided. The elevated sections of the highway allow for connectivity of local streets. This provides continued full movement of the local traffic. A ground level highway would require the closing of city streets or the installation of numerous traffic control devices. As requested by the city in a letter dated [June 11, 1998](#), it was decided to use an elevated section of roadway.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **DO ELEVATED ROADWAYS HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON ADJACENT PROPERTIES?**

Elevated roadways do not necessarily change the nature of adjacent properties. I-110 is elevated throughout Biloxi, and the land use adjacent to it has only experienced limited change. The area under I-110 has served for multiple uses including recreational park, walking trail, parking, farmer's market, and a sheltered location for postal delivery after Katrina. The [Louisiana Boardwalk](#) and the Horseshoe Casino adjacent to US 79 (Texas Street) and I-20 respectively in Bossier City - Shreveport, Louisiana for example, take advantage of access to a high mobility facility by developing plazas and retail adjacent to the elevated roadways.

## **IS THIS THE BEST POSSIBLE ROUTE?**

This route evolved from the numerous meetings held during the environmental process. Many different alignments and variations of this alignment were studied. While all interests cannot possibly be addressed, this location was determined to have the least impact on the community, and serves regional transportation needs.

## **HAS HURRICANE KATRINA CHANGED THE NEED FOR THE PROJECT AS PROPOSED?**

No, in fact the need for the route is even greater now. Although Hurricane Katrina caused considerable damage to the infrastructure along the coast, the [purpose and need](#) for the project remains unchanged. Property interests along the route remain the same. The Port of Gulfport remains a viable point of import and export. An alternate north south route is still needed to relieve congestion on US 49 and other surface streets. The need for a more efficient evacuation is certainly more evident.

## **WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?**

The project has been divided into three sections for design and construction. Consulting engineering firms are currently working on the survey and design. Right of Way limits have been determined, and the acquisition process has begun.

For more information, please contact the MDOT External Affairs Division at (601) 359-7017.  
Also, check the MDOT web site at [www.goMDOT.com](http://www.goMDOT.com) for traffic alerts and other helpful information.