C’est Levee? Reinventing Our Levees

Levee Top Trails in Southeast Louisiana

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2008 National Trails Symposium
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Agenda

- History, Planning and Development
- Construction
- Post-Katrina
- Future Growth
- Regional Connections
A Little History…

- Great Mississippi Flood of 1927
- Flood Control Act of 1928
  - Mississippi River and Tributaries Project
  - USACE constructs flood control
- Levee districts
  - Maintenance and operation
Mississippi River and Tributaries Project

- **Eastbank**
  - 190+ miles
  - Baton Rouge to Pointe à la Hache

- **Westbank**
  - 290+ miles
  - Simmesport to Venice

- **Public right-of-way**
  - Continuous linear green space
  - Maintenance paths seen as potential recreational facility
Early Planning

• First proposals: parish initiatives
  – Jefferson Parish Bicycle Path Plan, 1975
  – New Orleans Bikeways, 1976
  – Both plans included levee top paths

• Regional System
  – Metropolitan Bicycle Path Plan, 1977
  – Proposed a 3-parish network of 388 miles
  – Included 43 miles on Mississippi River levees
1977 Metro New Orleans Bike Plan
Barriers

- Funding
- Multiple Jurisdictions
  - Parishes
  - Levee districts
  - State of Louisiana
  - US Army Corps of Engineers
- Legal Issues
  - Authority to construct
- Access Issues
  - Port of New Orleans
  - Avondale Shipyards
- Property Rights
Overcoming Barriers

- **Funding**
  - Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA)
  - Transportation Enhancements
  - $12m+ in 8 parishes in Mississippi River Levee Trails

- **Multiple Jurisdictions**
  - RPC became facilitator
  - USACE: Planning Assistance to States
Overcoming Barriers

- **Legal Issues**
  - LA Legislature: Servitude to levee districts
  - Corps: No Congressional authority or funding

- **Access Issues**
  - Move off the levee crown
  - Bridges

- **Property Rights**
  - Less of a problem in urban areas
Construction

- Early-mid 90s
  - Jefferson and Orleans
- TE Funding
  - Parishes and levee districts provide local match (20%)
- Design
  - Corps contributes to planning and design
- NORBAC
  - Citizen involvement
10 Years of Growth

- By 2005
  - 43.5 miles built
  - 83.1 miles planned
- On-street facilities through New Orleans urban area
- Ferry system connects Eastbank and Westbank
Post-Katrina

- Challenges
  - Unresolved issues
  - New issues
- Opportunities
  - Expanded system
  - Surge in public interest
Post-Katrina Challenges

- Unresolved Issues
  - Funding
  - Jurisdictions
  - Legal Issues
  - Access Issues
  - Property Rights

- New Issues
  - Storm damage
  - Levee lifts
  - USACE timelines
Levee Lifts

- Levee Construction
  - Repairing Katrina damage
  - Raising levees to authorized height
  - Correcting structural problems
  - Raise levees to Cat-5 protection

- Largest challenge facing the levee trails

- Corps resisted replacing trail sections they remove
  - Not authorized or funded by Congress
New Partnerships

- DOTD, USACE, and RPC
- Corps will replace trail in Orleans and Jefferson
- Future trail segments in conjunction with Corps projects
  - DOTD provides gap funding
- Adjusted construction timelines
- Asphalt all weather access roads for maintenance and inspection
  - Possible solution for Lakefront
Post-Katrina Opportunities

• Extensive community planning: bike/ped a common theme
• Quality of life
• Economic development
• Public support
• Political support
Future Plans

- **Eastbank**
  - Baton Rouge to New Orleans
  - Feasibility study beginning soon
- **Westbank**
  - Talk of similar feasibility study
- **Construction**
  - Projects funded in Jefferson, St. Bernard, St. Charles and St. John Parishes
- **Planning**
  - Plaquemines and St. Charles
- **Regional connections**
  - New Orleans on-street routes
  - Jefferson: River to Lake
  - Ferry network
Regional Planning Commission
Greater New Orleans Pedestrian & Bicycle Program

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