

2022 Regular Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 41

BY SENATOR CONNICK

PUBLIC WORKS. Requests the legislative auditor to review the Belle Chasse bridge and tunnel replacement public-private partnership project.

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To urge and request the legislative auditor to review the Belle Chasse bridge and tunnel
3 public-private partnership project and if applicable, to develop recommendations for
4 future public private partnership projects based on best practices.

5 WHEREAS, the Belle Chasse bridge and tunnel public-private partnership project
6 consists of constructing a new, fixed span bridge and demolition of the existing bridge and
7 tunnel for an estimated cost of one hundred sixty-five million dollars; and

8 WHEREAS, R.S. 48:250.4 authorizes the Department of Transportation and
9 Development (DOTD), with approval of the Senate and House committees on transportation,
10 highway, and public works, to solicit proposals and enter into contracts for public-private
11 partnership (P3) projects for transportation facilities; and

12 WHEREAS, the Belle Chasse bridge and tunnel replacement project is DOTD's first
13 solicited tolled P3 project in Louisiana; and

14 WHEREAS, both the House and Senate committees meeting jointly authorized
15 DOTD to move forward with the P3 process for the Belle Chasse bridge and tunnel
16 replacement project on December 14, 2017; and

17 WHEREAS, the DOTD entered into an initial comprehensive agreement with
18 Plenary Infrastructure Belle Chasse LLC on December 20, 2019, for the Belle Chasse bridge

1 and tunnel replacement project; and

2 WHEREAS, DOTD secured approximately ninety-five million dollars in federal
3 grants, funds, and bonds for the project, leaving a balance of approximately seventy million
4 dollars brought by the private partner, who in return will charge a toll on the completed
5 bridge to realize a return on investment; and

6 WHEREAS, this project will result in a toll on the main transportation artery to
7 twenty-three thousand residents, leaving the only other route a two lane undivided road
8 without a shoulder that does not quickly lead to hospitals, major shopping centers, or cultural
9 centers; and

10 WHEREAS, serious concerns from the public have been raised over the project and
11 the P3 process, particularly the lack of competitive bidding with only single bid negotiation,
12 the lack of transparency, the total cost of the project, and the windfall for the private partner
13 realized from the toll; and

14 WHEREAS, as collaborations between the state and the private sector are likely in
15 the future, it would benefit the public to have the legislative auditor review the process that
16 resulted in the execution of the agreement with Plenary Infrastructure Belle Chasse LLC, to
17 inform the legislature and executive branch to develop best practices that protect the public,
18 while insuring quality construction projects that serve the people of Louisiana.

19 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
20 urge and request that the legislative auditor review the Belle Chasse bridge and tunnel
21 public-private partnership project and, if applicable, to make recommendations for future
22 public private partnership projects based on best practices.

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
24 state legislative auditor, the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and
25 Development.

