

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 41

BY SENATORS CONNICK, ABRAHAM, BARROW, BOUDREAUX, BOUIE, CARTER, CLOUD, FOIL, HENSGENS, MCMATH, FRED MILLS, ROBERT MILLS, MIZELL, PEACOCK, POPE, PRICE, REESE, STINE, TALBOT AND WOMACK AND REPRESENTATIVE CORMIER

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, the DOTD entered into an initial comprehensive agreement with Plenary Infrastructure Belle Chasse LLC on December 20, 2019, for the Belle Chasse bridge and tunnel replacement project; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES