

2024 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 352

BY REPRESENTATIVES WRIGHT, BERAULT, AND GLORIOSO

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Department of Transportation and Development to study the benefits of opening the U.S. 90 West Pearl River Bridge, provide a estimate of the amount of maritime traffic traveling through the West Pearl River Bridge, and compare the advantages and disadvantages of a fixed versus movable bridge to deter potential barriers.

WHEREAS, the West Pearl River Bridge possesses significance as one of four bridges constructed to carry US-90 and Old Spanish Trail over the Pearl River in St. Tammany Parish in the early 1930s; and

WHEREAS, the bridge is an essential part of the Rigolets to Pearlington highway shortcut connecting New Orleans to the Mississippi Gulf Coast; and

WHEREAS, the West Pearl River bridge at the Louisiana- Mississippi state line has been closed for over a year; and

WHEREAS, closure of the bridge has removed the east-west corridor as an alternative and now traffic is clogged on I-10; and

WHEREAS, the closure of the West Pearl Bridge has placed a strain on businesses and daily commuters that depend on the route as an alternative due to traffic congestion on I-10; and

WHEREAS, the expected 2028 completion date for the West Pearl River bridge is a disservice to citizens especially during hurricane seasons; and

WHEREAS, having access to the West Pearl River Bridge and I-10 during hurricane season reduced the risk of being trapped if one route was inaccessible and helped with traffic congestion allowing for timely arrivals to safe destinations; and

WHEREAS, access to the West Pearl River Bridge allows for first responders to have quicker access to help citizens rather than taking a longer route which could likely result in a negative impact on the health outcomes of the residents; and

WHEREAS, not only has the closure of the bridge caused an impact on motorists but also has placed barriers on maritime traffic, as well as our state's economy; and

WHEREAS, the maritime industry in Louisiana has a sizeable economic impact on the state and nation; and

WHEREAS, the height restriction on the West Pearl River Bridge has limited maritime traffic; and

WHEREAS, it is in the state's best interest to continuously track the amount of maritime traffic coming through West Pearl Bridge to determine the operational efficiency; and

WHEREAS, knowing that safety is the main priority and ensuring the bridge is suitable for travel, an additional four years to repair the bridge will do more harm especially during peak hurricane seasons as potential evacuees will no longer be able to rely on the bridge as an evacuation route; and

WHEREAS, another option may be determining whether a fixed or movable bridge is more advantageous to the needs of the local residents and the maritime industry alike; and

WHEREAS, deciding between a fixed and movable bridge is not easy, as it depends on variety of factors such as its width, depth, flow, and tidal range; the characteristics of the bridge, such as its length, width, height, load, and design; the characteristics of the traffic, such as its volume, speed, direction, and mode; and

WHEREAS, ultimately the goal is to expedite the reopening of the West Pearl River Bridge by possibly reconstructing it to a fixed or movable bridge so the residents that are accustomed to traversing the bridge can return to some semblance of normalcy and barriers to maritime traffic can be removed to return the river to commerce.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Transportation and Development to study the benefits of opening the U.S. 90 West Pearl River Bridge, provide a estimate of the amount of maritime traffic traveling through the West Pear River Bridge, and compare the advantages and disadvantages of a fixed versus movable bridge.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Transportation and Development shall submit a report detailing its findings to the House Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works by January 1, 2025.

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

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES