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## DIGEST

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HB 687 Reengrossed

2025 Regular Session

Wright

**Abstract:** Authorizes the Port of New Orleans to utilize public-private partnerships for the St. Bernard Transportation Corridor roadway project.

Proposed law authorizes the board of commissioners of the Port of New Orleans (the board) to pursue a public-private partnership to fund the design, construction, and operation of the St. Bernard Transportation Corridor roadway, intended to serve as a direct commercial traffic route for the La. International Terminal, an alternative local route, and an emergency evacuation route to enhance public safety.

Proposed law authorizes the development of a transportation facility that may include bridges, elevated roadways, and limited-access features. Additionally, specifies that the project will encompass necessary components such as roadways, drainage systems, soil erosion control, signage, right-of-way acquisition, and utility relocations to ensure the facility's successful completion and operation.

Proposed law requires the project to comply with all relevant state and federal laws, including the minimum safety guidelines outlined in present law.

Proposed law authorizes the board to enter into agreements with public and private entities for the study, design, construction, operation, maintenance, and financing of the St. Bernard Transportation Corridor roadway project. Additionally, specifies that the board is empowered to acquire necessary property for the project through donation, purchase, exchange, lease, or expropriation in accordance with expropriation laws. Further, authorizes the board to accept appropriations, donations, grants, contributions, or allocations from federal or state sources, public utilities, private entities, or individuals and enter into agreements as needed to facilitate such acceptance.

Proposed law authorizes the board to solicit proposals for a public-private partnership to design, construct, finance, operate, and maintain the St. Bernard Transportation Corridor roadway project. Further, requires that final concession agreements with the public-private partnership be approved by the Joint Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works.

Proposed law requires the board to comply with the provisions of present law and specifies it is not required to seek approval from the La. Transportation Authority. However, proposed law does require the final concession agreement with the public-private partner be appointed by the Joint Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works. Additionally, specifies that agreements made require a bond with sufficient surety and must adhere to the bond requirements set by the Dept.

of Transportation and Development (DOTD).

Proposed law requires the approval of the DOTD before including any elements in the St. Bernard Transportation Corridor roadway project that impact the state highway system. Additionally authorizes the board and the DOTD to enter into agreements for various aspects of the project, including development, construction, and maintenance. Further, specifies that the DOTD may also be requested by the board to utilize its staff and funds for conducting surveys, preparing plans, and other necessary studies and allows the board to transfer the facility to the DOTD for inclusion in the state highway system under mutually agreed terms.

Proposed law specifies that following a feasibility study by the Regional Planning Commission the board is authorized to design and regulate the St. Bernard Transportation Corridor roadway. Further, requires the board to consult with the DOTD on the final design and with St. Bernard Parish regarding potential impacts on local and state roadways, drainage, flood protection, and other infrastructure.

Proposed law authorizes user fees for the St. Bernard Transportation Corridor roadway, as provided in present law and ensures free passage for individuals legally entitled to it over toll roads and bridges in La. Specifies that the board is granted the same powers as the DOTD regarding toll collection, enforcement, and related activities. Additionally, specifies that the roadway and its property are exempt from taxation, even if a public-private partnership is involved.

Proposed law clarifies that nothing in proposed law limits or restricts the powers of the board. Additionally, specifies it is considered supplemental, granting additional powers beyond those provided by any other general or special law.

(Adds R.S. 34:51-57)

#### Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

##### The House Floor Amendments to the engrossed bill:

1. Clarify that references to the "board" mean the board of commissioners of the Port of New Orleans.
2. Require that the final concession agreement with the public-private partner be approved by the Joint Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works, instead of deeming the enactment of proposed law as prior legislative approval.