
DIGEST

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Leger

HB No. 516

Abstract: Expands the authority of the Ernest N. Morial-New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority, including authorization of a Phase V expansion project.

Present law (uncodified) creates the Ernest N. Morial-New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority (authority). The purpose of the authority is to acquire, construct, reconstruct, extend, improve, maintain, and operate projects within the city of New Orleans in order to promote the economic growth and development of the city and its neighboring parishes. Proposed law retains present law.

Present law defines "project" as any convention, exhibition, or tourist facility, other than lodging facilities, and the necessary furnishings, machinery, equipment, and items incidental thereto. Proposed law specifically removes the limitation relative to lodging facilities and allows for site improvements and infrastructure relative to the authorized projects.

Present law authorizes the authority to enter into contracts to acquire, construct, improve, or operate projects relative to restaurants, retail outlets, offices, parking, entertainment, and similar activities. Proposed law further authorizes such contracts relative to hotels.

Present law exempts the authority from state law on the letting of public contracts for the making of any public works or for the purchase of any materials or supplies as it relates to any lease or sublease for allied services such as restaurants, retail outlets, offices, and entertainment. Proposed law further extends such exemption to hotel services.

Present law authorizes the authority to incur debt and issue bonds. Proposed law retains this authorization. However, present law specifically precludes the authority from utilizing nontraditional tax-free bonds from any source when such use would benefit any properties being developed by a private entity; proposed law eliminates this prohibition.

Present law authorizes "expansion projects" for the Earnest N. Morial-New Orleans Exhibition Hall (convention center), including Phase III and IV. Proposed law authorizes a Phase V expansion which will allow a joint venture between the authority and a private entity for a tourism development plan to enhance the convention center and install basic infrastructure to facilitate private development on property owned by the authority, the public component of which is divided into the following four stages:

- (1) Stage 1-Public infrastructure improvements on Convention Center Blvd., from Poydras

St. to Orange St., including utility and traffic improvements, and a park and pedestrian mall; public infrastructure improvements by Henderson St., Tchoupitoulas St., Orange St., and the Mississippi River flood wall to extend Convention Center Blvd. from Henderson St. to Orange St., including a traffic circle, public utility infrastructure to support private development, and soil remediation; and the relocation of existing power lines along Convention Center Blvd. and the incorporation of a "people mover" system along Convention Center Blvd., from Poydras St. to Orange St. Such projects shall neither impair nor reduce current vehicular traffic capacity in that area, particularly with respect to any improvements in the vicinity of Convention Center Blvd. and Poydras and Orange Streets.

- (2) Stage 2-Development of a riverfront festival park along the river at existing wharfs, providing access to the river through the development of approximately five acres for recreational, hospitality, commercial, and residential use; and development of Riverfront Festival Park infrastructure, including public utilities, lighting, and landscaping.
- (3) Stage 3-Integration of the convention center with its surrounding urban areas through the renovation of the south end of the existing convention center by creating a new south entrance; incorporation of a new kitchen and restaurant facility at the south end of the Convention Center; development of an executive conference center to be integrated as part of a new, privately developed hotel; and relocation of existing convention center functions currently at the south end of the facility to accommodate a new entrance. Such projects shall neither impair nor otherwise adversely affect vehicular access to the facilities of the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans which are or may be accessed in the future via Henderson Street.
- (4) Stage 4-Renovation, restoration, construction, or demolition of the New Orleans World Trade Center buildings and site preparation for the development of a riverfront festival park. Activity associated with the modification or demolition of the World Trade Center and the development and operation of the park will be conducted in a fashion which ensures no interference with or adverse effect upon the main line trackage of the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad.

Proposed law provides that without reference to any other provision of the Constitution or of laws of Louisiana, the authority is authorized from time to time, with the approval of the State Bond Commission, to issue its negotiable revenue bonds in one or more series for the purpose of providing funds to finance the Phase V expansion project, in accordance with present law.

Proposed law further provides that proposed law shall not impair outstanding bonded debt obligations of the authority, and that to any extent that any provision of proposed law is inconsistent with present law, proposed law shall prevail.

Proposed law further provides that provisions of proposed law shall not affect, alter, or diminish any rights or powers of the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans with respect to any property it owns, operates, or administers.

Effective upon signature of governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial veto.

(Amends §§4(intro. para.), 4D, 4G, 4M, 20A, and 23 of Act No. 305 of the 1978 R.S., as amended; Adds §20F of Act No. 305 of the 1978 R.S., as amended)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Ways and Means to the original bill.

1. Added provision prohibiting Stage One projects from reduction or impairment of current vehicular traffic capacity.
2. Added provision prohibiting Stage Three projects from diminishment or impairment of vehicular access to facilities of the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans via Henderson Street.
3. Added provision that Stage Four may include renovation, restoration, or construction of the World Trade Center site.
4. Added provisions that Stage Four activities may include development of "other buildings and structures".
5. Added provisions prohibiting Stage Four activities from interfering with the main line trackage of the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad.
6. Added provisions that proposed law shall not affect or diminish any rights or powers of the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans.