



For Immediate Release, Thursday, January 20, 2005  
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## **PARISH PRESIDENT AND COUNCIL UNVEIL 10-YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**

Mandeville, LA, Thursday, January 20, 2005 - Last year St. Tammany parish officials faced many challenges. First, the state eliminated many new state road projects in St. Tammany. Next, legislation parish officials drafted to challenge the way the state allocated funds for road projects was tabled in committee. Then, state and federal agencies handed down regulations prohibiting septic tanks and individual treatment plants in urban areas starting in 2008. Finally, flooding concerns, in part, lead to moratoriums that are stifling residential and commercial development. These mounting infrastructure obstacles sent Parish President Kevin Davis and the St. Tammany Parish Council to the drawing board to plan for the future of St. Tammany. Today, they unveiled an innovative, 10-year infrastructure plan that will showcase their efforts to:

- reduce traffic congestion,
- make traveling throughout St. Tammany easier and quicker,
- increase safety for St. Tammany's families,
- aid economic development efforts that bring jobs to St. Tammany,
- reduce flooding,
- reduce pollution in all parish waterways,
- meet federal Environmental Protection Agency regulations regarding regional sewer service; and
- support and enhance St. Tammany's quality of life.

St. Tammany's explosive growth is the reason for this plan. St. Tammany was Louisiana's "best kept secret" until the 1970s. During that decade, population escalated by nearly 75 percent. Our population has exceeded 30 percent in the past two decades and is expected to continue to rise through 2010.

"This never-ending growth rate puts great demands on everything from roads to schools to drainage to sewage," said Parish President Kevin Davis. "We developed this blueprint to move us ahead of our growth needs instead of playing catch-up."

The four components of the infrastructure plan are:

1. Transportation Improvements and Road Maintenance
2. Wastewater Treatment Master Plan and Implementation
3. Drainage Improvements and Maintenance
4. Quality of Life Improvements

“I want to emphasize, we must maintain and increase our current level of road maintenance as well as improve local roads. Our local roads program will not be affected,” said Parish President Kevin Davis. “However, we need new and better feeder roads to connect these local roads.”

The first component focuses on parish road projects. With the goal of easing traffic congestion, alternate roadways, such as new service roads and connector roads, will help divert traffic. The plan also calls for widening and extending roadways and improving interchanges. With the cost at a staggering \$609,000 to pave one mile of new two-lane asphalt road, it’s no doubt that road construction, paving and maintenance represent about 42 percent of the parish’s annual budget.

Each year, the parish:

- maintains 1,411 miles of roads,
- overlays 23 miles of roads with asphalt; and
- upgrades and reconstructs 25 miles of gravel and aging asphalt roads.

According to Davis , “Our number one priority is to sustain our current local road infrastructure.”

The wastewater treatment component of this plan addresses the parish’s construction of five, large, regional wastewater treatment plants to eliminate the thousands of sewage discharge points. The impetus for the wastewater treatment master plan revolves around Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Environmental Quality regulations that will prohibit septic tanks and individual treatment plants for new homes and businesses in areas that census figures designate as “urban” by March 2008. Officials expect all of southern St. Tammany to be classified as “urban” by 2010.

“In unincorporated St. Tammany, approximately 35,000 homes and businesses utilize individual sewage treatment systems,” added Council Chairman Steve Stefancik. “In southern St. Tammany alone,

more than 34,000 people do not have central sewage. The result is improperly treated wastewater contaminating our streams and bayous, all of which ultimately flow into Lake Pontchartrain .”

To alleviate flooding, the drainage component addresses building new, and improving existing, detention ponds and making improvements to existing channels.

“Nearly 7,300 flood claims have been reported in 12 key areas throughout the parish,” commented Davis . “Implementing these regional drainage projects will help protect families and property from the devastation of flood waters.”

Stefancik said, “These drainage and road projects need to be completed to prevent future growth from causing additional drainage and traffic problems.”

The final component of this plan is supporting and enhancing our quality of life. Even though the quality of lives will be enhanced with the first three components, the parish has and will continue to:

- protect life and property,
- respond to the needs of St. Tammany’s citizens,
- invest in St. Tammany’s culture, recreation and tourism; and
- support business development

Examples of these projects include the one-of-a-kind Maritime Training Institute Complex, expansion of the St. Tammany Regional Airport, Tammany Trace Amphitheater, Lake Road Environmental Interpretive Trail, and St. Tammany Parish Arts Center.

Equally innovative, parish officials have found a way to fund this plan with existing revenue sources and grants. The road component will cost roughly \$68 million each year, while the wastewater treatment and drainage components are expected to cost about \$25 million and \$23.7 million, respectively. The quality of life component is expected to cost about \$1 million per year.

Road improvements will be funded primarily with federal and state funds, existing impact fees and existing sales taxes. Wastewater treatment improvements will be funded with federal funds, franchise fees and private investment. Drainage improvements will be funded primarily by Southeast Louisiana Urban Flood Control Program, drainage districts, existing impact fees, and federal and state funds. Quality of life projects will be funded with federal and state funds and private fund raising.

“It’s an ambitious plan, but one we feel that must be achieved,” said Stefancik.

Davis concluded, “St. Tammany Parish must have a plan that balances growth with infrastructure

needs to sustain our communities. With this plan, we are moving forward.”