

Rails to Resilience: Evaluating New Orleans and Baton Rouge Rail Terminals and Transit Links

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Tran-SET
University of New Orleans

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\$150,000

Evaluating the multimodal linkages to and opportunities for proposed terminal sites for a potential future passenger rail connection between Baton Rouge and New Orleans

This study aims to evaluate the multimodal linkages to and opportunities for proposed terminal sites for a potential future passenger rail connection between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Louisiana. A broad coalition of stakeholders support the development of this connection, and several feasibility studies and station area plans have been developed in anticipation of possible future funding for implementation. This study will support an improved understanding of the dynamics of likely ridership through the following key activities: (1) a comprehensive evaluation of existing transportation networks connecting proposed rail terminal sites, (2) distribution of a survey aimed at understanding the potential for passenger rail ridership and the needs of likely users, (3) identification of transit priorities and opportunities to maximize connectivity of intercity rail to employment destinations, (4) development of ridership projections and estimates of economic impacts of eventual project implementation of under varying scenarios, and (5) synthesis of recommendations for stakeholders involved in transportation planning within the Baton Rouge-New Orleans super region as pertains to the proposed passenger rail corridor.

Problem Statement

This study aims to evaluate the multimodal linkages to and opportunities for proposed terminal sites for a potential future passenger rail connection between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Louisiana. A broad coalition of stakeholders, including local and regional governmental entities, economic development organizations, and advocates support the development of this connection, and several feasibility studies and station area plans have been developed in anticipation of possible future funding for implementation.

However, the effectiveness of the proposed project as a means to expand employment opportunity for Louisiana residents and promote

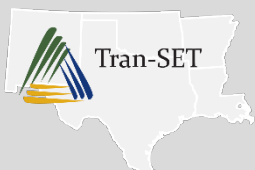
economic growth within rail corridor communities, to mitigate traffic congestion and support corresponding environmental benefits, and to provide efficient access to goods, services, and destinations is contingent upon the convenient provision of multimodal transportation facilities and services connecting the proposed intercity rail service to the surrounding communities.

Station area proposals or plans, at various levels of detail, have been developed in each of the communities potentially served by the proposed rail link. However, the connections of these terminals, relative to local transit networks and the origins and destinations of potential passengers have not been comprehensively evaluated to determine whether they would adequately meet the needs of users and support ridership projections necessary for the service to succeed.

This study is intended to address the gap in our understanding of how the proposed rail terminals relate to their immediate and regional context by evaluating multimodal connectivity and accessibility at the proposed terminals in New Orleans and Baton Rouge and identify recommendations for maximizing ridership of the proposed rail service, if developed, by promoting convenient, efficient connections from intercity rail terminals to key destinations and communities which could achieve the promise of reducing traffic congestion, reducing environmental impacts of vehicles, and promote connections to economic opportunity within the Southeast Louisiana mega-region.

Objectives

The objective of this study is to conduct an evaluation of the connections between proposed and potential rail terminals in New Orleans and Baton Rouge and the existing public transportation systems to which this service would connect Louisiana residents to economic centers within the region.



Intended Implementation of Research

Workforce Development: In order to advance the development of passenger rail in the New Orleans-Baton Rouge corridor, the implementation phase of this project shall include development of a memo documenting next steps and opportunities for funding to implement the findings (pertaining to station location and station area land use, transit service and operations, etc). This shall include coordinating with professional groups/associations (e.g. APA, ASCE) in 1) New Orleans and 2) Baton Rouge to produce an event focused on the findings, which should include representatives of transit agencies, MPOs, economic development organizations, the Rail Compact, and others with a direct or indirect interest in project outcomes

Education and Outreach Activities: The project team will incorporate the project's methods/findings into course modules for inclusion in the UNO Masters of Science in Transportation curriculum (e.g. TRNS 6300 Applied Techniques for Transportation Professionals). An on-campus "lunch and learn" event will be held for undergraduate and graduate students (also open to the public), with the proposed service and study findings as a focus.

The study will be submitted to one or more professional gatherings (e.g. American Planning Association Louisiana Chapter Annual Meeting, Louisiana Transportation Conference, WTS Louisiana, etc) for consideration for presentation and knowledge transfer to reach relevant professional audiences. University students will be involved directly in the project distributing surveys, assisting in project briefings, presentation materials, etc.

Additional opportunities to be sought through partner institutions and organizations working with K-12 students to provide an educational module about the project purpose and methods, rail/transit planning and operational considerations, etc

Anticipated Impacts/Benefits of Implementation

This project will seek to directly inform and add value to future transit, passenger rail, and multimodal planning processes conducted by transit agencies, state and local agencies and commissions, other stakeholders, advancing the implementation of transportation

projects that effectively connect residents of the New Orleans and Baton Rouge super region to jobs, services, and other destinations and supporting a maximized return on federal, state, and local investment in transit infrastructure and service.

Web Links

- [TranSET's website](https://transet.lsu.edu/research-in-progress/)
(<https://transet.lsu.edu/research-in-progress/>)
- [TRB's Research in Progress \(RIP\) database](https://rip.trb.org/View/1644422)
(<https://rip.trb.org/View/1644422>)

Tran-SET

Tran-SET is Region 6's University Transportation Center. It is a collaborative partnership between 11 institutions (see below) across 5 states (AR, LA, NM, OK, and TX). Tran-SET is led by Louisiana State University. It was established in late November 2016 "to address the accelerated deterioration of transportation infrastructure through the development, evaluation, and implementation of cutting-edge technologies, novel materials, and innovative construction management processes".

Learn More

For more information about Tran-SET, please visit [our website](#), LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube pages. Also, please feel free to contact Mr. Christopher Melson (Tran-SET Program Manager) directly at transet@lsu.edu.

