

**CRC Infrastructure Sub-Committee**  
**Project Identification Template and Instructions**  
**The Baldwin Beach Express**

**Project Identification Template**

**I. What – Project Information/Basic Facts**

1. Project Scope Construct a multi-lane hurricane evacuation route beginning at SR 182 in Gulf Shores to I-65 near Bay Minette (see attached map). The project is broken into six phases that are currently in various levels of completion.
  - 1.1. Phase 1 – Construct a four lane limited access roadway from I-10 to I-65. This project will be broken into four sub-phases for construction purposes. It is intended to toll this roadway to generate revenue for maintenance, construction and to provide Baldwin County with revenue for infrastructure projects.
  - 1.2. Phase 2 – Construct an interchange with I-10 for the Baldwin Beach Express.
  - 1.3. Phase 3 – Construct a four-lane divided roadway from US 90 to the interchange with I-10.
  - 1.4. Phase 4 – Construct a four-lane divided roadway from CR 32 to US 90.
  - 1.5. Phase 5 – Improve the current Foley Beach Express from SR 180 to CR 32.
  - 1.6. Phase 6 – Construct a four-lane divided roadway from SR 182 to SR 180.
  
2. Project duration or schedule by phase and status of any work in progress The current status of each project is listed below.
  - 2.1. Conceptual and Feasibility Planning, Engineering, Construction See list below.
    - 2.1.1. Phase 1 (from I-10 to I-65) – Conceptual plans are complete and an Environmental Assessment has been submitted to the Corps of Engineers for approval. It is expected that the construction permit will be issued by the end of 2010. A toll revenue study was underway to determine the financial possibilities of tolling the facility, but was stopped due to the downturn in tourism from the oil spill. It is anticipated that the project could be under construction within a year, or by the time necessary for the purchase of ROW. Phase 1 construction would take up to three years to complete.
    - 2.1.2. Phase 2 (Interchange at I-10) – Construction plans are 95 percent complete and a majority of the ROW has been purchased. The project construction could be initiated within six months of funding with a construction timeline of two years for completion.
    - 2.1.3. Phase 3 (from US Hwy 90 to CR 64) – This project is currently under construction and completion is anticipated by the end of 2011.
    - 2.1.4. Phase 4 (from CR 32 to Hwy 90) –Environmental clearance and ROW has been obtained. This project is ready for construction, and with the attainment of funding, would take two years to complete.
    - 2.1.5. Phase 5 (Improvements to existing FBE) – Construction for this project is complete, however, minimal safety improvements such as paved shoulders, will be required to achieve the fully

functional hurricane evacuation route. The maintenance construction could be initiated upon receipt of project funding and construction could be completed in one year.

2.1.6. Phase 6 (SR 182 to SR 180) – To date, conceptual alignments have been studied but environmental studies have yet to begin. The project would require approximately two years of environmental and planning analysis prior to the start of construction. This phase would require a two-year construction timeline.

3. Estimated Cost (plus or minus 30%) An estimated cost for each phase is provided below.

3.1. Phase 1 - \$150 million.

3.2. Phase 2 - \$25 million.

3.3. Phase 3 - \$0

3.4. Phase 4 - \$40 million.

3.5. Phase 5 - \$19 million.

3.6. Phase 6 - \$60 million.

3.7. Indicate level of confidence in accuracy of these estimates Phases 1-4 have been in plan development, leading to a high level of estimate accuracy. Phase 5 also maintains a high confidence level, while confidence is lower for the Phase 6 estimate.

## **II. Why – Project Description relative to Impact and Criteria**

1. Identify what need, threat or opportunity that this project, study, or recommendation will address This project will provide an essential evacuation route for south Baldwin County residents and tourists during the threat of a hurricane. An independent study found that the construction of this route will reduce evacuation time from 41 hours to 28 hours, giving 50,000 more people the ability to efficiently and safely evacuate from an impending Category 5 hurricane. The project will also provide a quicker and safer alternative to SR 59 for tourists to access the Gulf Coast beaches. During peak months, traffic delays on SR 59 are excessive and this new roadway will relieve that congestion. Better access to the beach communities will attract more tourists, whose economic impacts will help restore an economy still suffering from the oil spill. The project's construction will generate hundreds of jobs, providing an economic stimulus to the local construction industry weakened by the national recession. The route will also provide for long-term job creation as new industry is established along such a major tourist corridor.

2. How does this project or recommendation address and impact the recommended evaluation criteria:

2.1.1. Coastal Recovery Local construction and material businesses will immediately reap the benefits from the project's construction while the project's establishment will allow for restoration and continual growth of coastal tourism as well as stable conditions for commercial and industrial opportunities.

2.1.2. Resiliency Transportation is critical to any disaster response and recovery. Sufficient infrastructure is necessary to transport emergency personnel and supplies to the area and for residents to return to their homes. Not only will the construction of the Baldwin Beach Express provide an additional route for emergency response to the County's coastal communities, it will also provide a much-needed secondary corridor to the beach in the event that SR 59 is damaged. The probability of a hurricane is very high and this route's ability to evacuate 50,000 additional people is an absolute necessity.

2.1.3. Transformational Baldwin County has been studying the possibility of providing a hurricane evacuation route in this corridor for years. This project will increase tourism opportunities, reduce trucking and transportation costs and provide peace of mind for residents during hurricane evacuation. Not only will this project improve the evacuation process, but it will also restore and sustain the beach tourism industry since enhanced access to the community from I-65 will attract a larger tourist population.

2.1.4. Regionalism The route will benefit regional tourism by reducing the travel time necessary to access the coastal communities. The greatest benefit will be seen by the entire region during a hurricane event since the route will significantly reduce evacuation time and significantly improve the access provided for recovery services. The entire region will also benefit from the time and money saved on transportation costs. The roadway will also provide a secondary route to Mobile and the Port facilities with direct access along I-10 to bypassing the congested areas of I-65 in Mobile.

2.1.5. Economic Diversification Reduced travel times will provide additional tourism and business opportunities for the coastal communities. The roadway will support industrial development in the corridor by providing additional access and locations for those developments. **Phase 1 is required to support the Mega-Site development in Bay Minette, which will create 3,000 to 5,000 jobs.** This direct access to the beach will provide an essential link to the proposed Gulf Coast Convention Center, which will attract year-round convention tourists and create a sustainable revenue stream for the region.

3. Project Economics The project construction will have an immediate economic benefit supplying critical jobs to the local construction and supply industries. The long-term benefits of reduced travel times and improved access will enhance tourism, support established industry and attract new industry development. The project is a fundamental element to the development of the Mega-Site.

4. Identify Direct Project benefits to Coastal Alabama, including avoided costs, consequence of “No Build” alternative. If the Beach Express was not constructed, there could potentially be 50,000 people left without the time or opportunity to evacuate during the threat of a Category 5 hurricane. Disaster response and recovery efforts will also be seriously hindered. Without the route, travel times during the peak beach seasons would increase due to the limited capacity of SR 59 to move traffic, which would cause a negative perception of the beach destinations. Without the roadway, there would be less opportunity for new business establishment and it would be difficult for the area’s small businesses and government to recover lost revenue related to the oil spill. There may also be a lost opportunity to complete the Mega-Site since the route is a major component for its development.

4.1. Impact on employment, job training and development, both short term and permanent Short term employment will be dramatically benefitted immediately due to the construction of the Baldwin Beach Express. The additional hurricane evacuation and transportation capacity will benefit the entire coastal community and make it more attractive to businesses. The route also has the potential to significantly increase the number of jobs in the region by contributing to the certification of the Mega-Site which will promote 3,000 to 5,000 permanent jobs.

4.2. Oil spill mitigation outside of claims process The oil spill has severely delayed the project by suspending the project traffic studies and causing a substantial decrease in the amount of traffic in the corridor.

5. Identify Indirect benefits and costs: The Beach Express will directly benefit the Gulf Coast Convention Center and is required for the certification of the Mega-Site. The new route will also enhance established industry, provide more opportunities for new industry, and boost a suffering tourism industry.

5.1. Collateral Benefits to the objectives of Healthy Environment, Healthy Economy and Healthy Society (subjective responses allowed) Improved transportation and infrastructure can improve air quality and reduce noise in the residential areas along SR 59. It can also reduce carbon emissions by decreasing traffic congestion. The improved access will also increase efficiency and reduce costs for freight distribution in the corridor. Construction of the new roadway will also increase the opportunities to attract new industry and will provide necessary access for the Mega-Site and the Convention Center.

5.2. Collateral Costs or impacts to the objectives of Healthy Environment, Healthy Economy and Healthy Society (subjective responses allowed) Costs associated with this project will be the unavoidable residential relocations along the route, which are anticipated to be less than ten. Other costs of the project will be an increase in traffic activity in rural areas.

5.3. Connectivity and Linkage to other projects or initiatives: Does this project complement or compete with other projects? What other projects would be precluded if this project is funded? This project will directly benefit the Gulf Coast Convention Center and is required for the development and certification of the Mega-Site in Bay Minette.

### III. Who/How - General Information

1. Name and contact information for Entity, Collaboration or Person submitting project or recommendation nomination. **Hon. Frank Burt, Chairman Baldwin County Commission, 312 Court House Square, Bay Minette, Alabama 36507, 251-937-0264. Cal Markert, Baldwin County Engineer, PO Box 220 Silverhill, Alabama 36576.**

1.1. *Entities and communities sharing a common threat or need are encouraged to collaborate for a joint/combined project submittal to raise the profile of the issue and solution to be addressed. Also please indicate the level of community support or resistance and hurdles to collaboration.*

**This project has the support of the entire Baldwin County Commission, the overwhelming support of the community as evidenced by an 85% approval from the public involvement meeting for Phase 1, the overwhelming support of all local municipalities and strong backing from the business community. The County has support letters on file from every municipality in the County available upon request.**

2. Identify Sponsoring Entity for oversight and accountability if different from above.

2.1. Existing or to be created? Baldwin County Commission would be the ownership and development entity.

- 2.1.1. If to be created, what parties or interests must be involved and what level of effort is required to do so? The Baldwin County Highway Department and Commission are very familiar with the project development process.
  - 2.2. Describe governance, organizational capacity, availability of skills, experience of sponsoring entity to implement the Project The Baldwin County Highway Department and Commission have already been given assistance from the Alabama Department of Transportation and private consulting engineers. Sufficient capacity, skills and experience are already in place to implement the project, funding is the primary obstacle to completing this project.
  - 2.3. Project complexity: Hurdles and barriers to project implementation, completion and sustainability. Identify regulatory issues. Phases 1 thru 5 are well underway and no barriers to project implementation currently exist. The COE permit for I-10 to I-65 has been applied for and an environmental impact statement will be required for Phase 6.
3. Identify any known or anticipated administrative, regulatory, or legislative action that would be required at either the local, state, or federal governmental level. Phase 6 will require an environmental impact statement from the Corps of Engineers. No other actions will be required.
4. Requested funding from Coastal Recovery Fund (CRF) \$294 million. The \$150 million to implement Phase 1 of the project is imperative for project completion and the development of the Mega-Site.
5. Identified potential funding sources other than the CRF The County has identified State and local highway funds as potential sources, as well as toll funding for Phase 1 through private investments. The County has not considered Federal funds due to the long delays of spending such money.
  - 5.1. Leverage or multiplier on CRF investment: matching funds, public or private A percentage of the Phase I cost (\$150 Million) may be bonded and paid back by toll revenues.
  - 5.2. Public Private Opportunities, user fees, Federal funds, private foundation grants, bonding capacity, etc. Public and private opportunities are possible for Phase 1 and could be paid back by toll revenues for Phase I only. Phases 2 through 5 are designed and being constructed using federal funds; however, additional funds are needed to complete construction. Phase 6 is in the early stages of design and funding is needed for design and construction. Federal funds were used to implement other phases and are not a likely source for future funding due to the current financial situation in transportation funding.
6. Forecast of ongoing maintenance or operating costs and source of funding if not self sustaining The initial financial calculations imply that it is feasible that the maintenance and operating costs of the facility will be paid for by the toll assessed. Baldwin County's highway budget could also be used to supplement maintenance costs.