

Good evening! My name is Robert Mendoza and I serve as the Director of Public Works. I want to thank you all for joining us to discuss the State of our City's streets. As this City and our Department continue to recover from the greatest man-made and natural disaster in our nation's history, I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made and share our future outlook for improving our City's bicycle, pedestrian and motor vehicle infrastructure.

During this event you will hear more information about projects that will improve our infrastructure damaged during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; the efforts immediately following the storms; the restarting of our operational programs and capital programs; and new initiatives and opportunities we've seized upon. Through new partnerships with federal, state and other local agencies, we are rebuilding our communities one sidewalk, one roadway and one bridge at a time.

As we all know, in August 2005, this city was devastated by Hurricane Katrina and, just a few weeks later, by Hurricane Rita. Our City was inundated with approximately 60 billion gallons of water that remained on our City streets for 21 days, creating immediate damage to some of our most critical infrastructure and weakening and stressing almost all of it as we worked through our recovery and rebuilding.

When I started in early 2006, my first task was to assess not only the condition of our physical infrastructure, but also the condition of my department's staff and the resources I would have available.

Another important initial task was to review departmental goals and objectives prior to the storms, so I could put the department's work and plans into context. What I quickly realized was that these storms presented an incredible challenge and also an incredible opportunity to break from our old patterns.

One document that helped guide many of my early decisions was the New Century New Orleans Transportation Plan, the predecessor to the city's current master plan being developed. This document best summarized the department's programs and how those programs fit into the future vision of the city.

Essentially starting from the ground up, the transportation plan guided my decisions on what programs and projects to restore and nurture, and what to discard.

World class infrastructure doesn't come by chance, but only by establishing goals and having the discipline to follow a plan to achieve those goals.

By developing more collaborative programs and projects with other like-minded agencies, we are now starting to find innovative ways to do more with less and maximize the resource that public rights-of-way represent.

The Regional Planning Commission has been instrumental in helping us develop stronger relationships with other federal, state and local organizations.

For the past four years, we have worked diligently to restore our City's 1,600 miles of roadway, 55,000 streetlights, 70,000 traffic and street signs, 460 traffic signals, 8.7 million feet of drain lines and 125,000 catch basins and manholes. This infrastructure is the backbone of a modern working city.

Through use of federal, state and city funding, we are making our public rights-of-way safer and more viable for our residents, commuters and visitors.

One of the key partnerships formed was our collaboration with FEMA. While I have had my past criticisms, I must also say that their help has been critical to our recovery and rebuilding. This relationship and our relationships with other community organizations was key to evaluating the damages to our infrastructure.

We have literally assessed all of our infrastructure by looking at each and every drainage line, traffic signal, traffic sign, streetlight, sidewalk, roadway, and bridge.

The first issue facing our residents as they returned to their homes was the threat of flooding again because drain lines and catch basins remained clogged with debris. Immediately following the storms we worked with FEMA to develop a set of drain line cleaning projects. As a result, we were able to make an immediate pass through our drain lines and clean 4.3 million feet of drain lines, 26,000 manholes and 47,000 catch basins.

A second cleaning phase started in July 2007, and an additional two million feet and 15,000 catch basins and manholes were cleaned. In total, \$40 million was spent to restore the City's underground drainage system.

In addition to cleaning the drain line system, we also had to rebuild and restore over 6,000 catch basins and manholes damaged by debris removal operations. And, I think many of you would now agree, we learned that the recovery operation in many ways was as devastating as the storms. The catch basin restoration project started in the fall of 2007 was completed last month and cost nearly \$7 million.

We're now concentrating our efforts on a \$6.2 million project to repair collapsed and inoperable drain lines throughout the City. We uncovered many of these collapsed lines during our FEMA funded

subsurface drainage cleaning, which shows how each step in the recovery facilitates the next step.

Lastly with regards to drainage, crews will soon be assessing the condition of our surface drainage system. The surface drainage system provides drainage via open ditches and culverts, and plays a critical role in flood protection for nearly 400 miles of city streets.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita damaged all 460 of the City's traffic signals. Traffic signals allow for safe, organized and efficient use of the major streets and boulevards for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. Their restoration was critical to reconnecting all our recovering communities from the farthest reaches of Lake Catherine in New Orleans East and English Turn in Algiers to the northern neighborhoods of Lakeview and Gentilly, and every point in between.

Of the 460 traffic signals that were damaged, nearly 200 needed complete replacement including new wiring, foundations, poles and signal heads. This two-year project cost nearly \$20 million and represented nearly a decades worth of work.

While traffic signals connect neighborhoods to each other, traffic and street signs provide access into those neighborhoods. We all know and remember how difficult it was to locate our own streets and homes right after the storm. As residents, volunteers, contractors, first responders and service providers from across our city and the United States came into our communities, it was imperative to the recovery efforts that we could travel safely and find our destination.

In particular, I remember walking the streets of the Lower Ninth Ward and realizing how difficult recovery efforts would be without street and traffic signs. With nearly all structures destroyed, using any other type of landmark was impossible. Completed last year, nearly 30,000 traffic and street signs have now been restored at a cost of nearly \$3 million.

Our most challenging recovery efforts have come in restoring our street lighting system. As residents and businesses returned to the City, street lighting was important to make people feel safer and help them navigate the city streets at night. Also, restoring lighting throughout the city was a visual indicator that the city was returning.

Having spent over \$3 million so far to restore 10,000 light poles, fixtures and, in many cases, the underground wiring systems that powers the street lights, we continue these efforts to this day and expect to return to normal levels of maintenance by the end of the year.

In July 2007, we began evaluating the flood water and debris removal damage to our roadways and sidewalks with FEMA. We walked all of the City streets with representatives from FEMA, GOHSEP, the Young Leadership Council and other community leaders.

Ultimately, this effort led to FEMA's initial approval of over 17,000 individual patching repair sites on over 6,000 neighborhood blocks. The initial cost estimate for this project was \$22 million.

In October 2007, we completed initial patching repairs in the Gentilly and West End neighborhoods, areas that were close to levee breaches.

To date we have completed approximately 5,000 sites in areas such as Pontchartrain PARK; Read Boulevard East; Hollygrove; Broadmoor and Algiers Point.

We are continuing to work closely with FEMA to identify additional damage sites.

The repair of the remaining approved sites began in June 2008 and will continue through 2010. The most recent estimates value the cost of these repairs at around \$50 million. As citizens and our own crews identify more damaged sites, we are relying upon FEMA to approve more locations for repair.

In addition to our paved roadway network, we also needed to address damage caused to our unpaved right-of-way network. In 2008, with cooperation from FEMA, we developed a project that allowed us to repair the 23 gravel alleyways in the Lakeview neighborhood.

Nearly 18 and a half miles of unpaved gravel alleyways were given a new gravel top and leveled to facilitate drainage.

These important alleyways serve as the entrance for residents to their homes, allow for trash pick-up and provide utility access. With only four alleys and a half mile left, we expect to complete this project within the next few days.

As schools and school districts continued to develop their future plans, we turned our attention to the safety of our children as they go to and from their schools. The majority of our school zone flashing beacon system was heavily damaged as storm waters devastated our electrical system and winds blew down the communication backbone that activated the signals.

In September 2008, we started a FEMA-reimbursable program to restore our school zone flashing beacon system. These new beacons will use solar panels to power new LED lights, which reduces the city's energy consumption, and our annual maintenance and operational costs. To date, approximately 160 beacons have been replaced and this project is scheduled to be complete by July.

In 2008, another important recovery program funded by the Federal Highway Administration and administered by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development commenced called the South Louisiana Submerged Roads program. This \$90 million program will aid in the restoration of approximately 45 federal-aid route roadway segments in New Orleans. You will hear more about this program later in the evening.

The storms caused major infrastructure challenges and while we were dealing with the impact of these challenges and managing the recovery, we also focused our attention on restoring standard programs and operations.

Just prior to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, voters approved \$160 million in roadway infrastructure projects. As a result, efforts before the storm were heavily focused on completing previous voter approved roadway projects and completing the new \$160 million program as quickly as possible.

Recognizing the need to put more money back into the economy and the need to have a capital program in place when we moved into the rebuilding phase of our recovery, our first task was to complete projects that had begun just prior to Katrina.

By 2007, we completed reconstruction projects on Gayoso, Upperline, Clematis, Comet, River Oaks, Ramsey, Baronne and First streets as well as Earhart Boulevard Phases Two and Three and the Canal Street improvement Project, which you will hear more about later. In total, these projects represented \$40 million in infrastructure improvements. All of these projects reaffirmed our commitment to fulfilling the past promises made to the voters by this administration.

Restarting existing construction project was only an initial step. the next critical step was restarting our design process for capital projects. By November of 2007 we were able to host the first

groundbreaking on Kabel Drive from MacArthur Boulevard to General DeGaulle Drive in Algiers.

Other projects would soon follow, including the reconstruction of Robert E. Lee Boulevard, MacArthur Boulevard, French Market Place, the roadways surrounding the new Preserve development in Mid-City and Oak Street.

We were able to perform multiple mill and overlay repairs to rehabilitate various neighborhood roadways throughout the Irish Channel, St. Mary and West Riverside neighborhoods. Patterson Road in Algiers was also recently completed and will be an important roadway connecting to the new federal city project. These types of rehabilitation projects generally cost only 15% compared to full reconstruction and demonstrate taxpayer cost savings that are available if we maintain and manage our roadway network.

The Department has turned its attention to restoring neighborhood roadways within heavily damaged communities. In New Orleans East for example, these efforts included the reconstruction of Adele, Fulton, Cardenas and Papania streets started in 2007 and Redwood and Sandalwood streets started in 2008. These reconstruction projects included the complete replacement of roadway base, pavement and sidewalks. In partnering with the Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans, we were also able to provide New Orleans East residents with new sewer and water systems and storm drain lines. Projects such as these play an important role as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization.

I'd like to take a moment to particularly point out the support we've received from the state through the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. Immediately following the storms many people, both inside the metro area and throughout the state, questioned investing in New Orleans.

Thankfully, LaDOTD administrators here in New Orleans and in Baton Rouge understood the important role that infrastructure investments would play in the recovery.

In September 2007, the State began the reconstruction of Broad Street in order to revive one of the City's major thoroughfares. Coordination projects such as these have also been performed on Carrollton Avenue, the I-510 and, most recently, Tulane Avenue.

One key project the state completed was the resurfacing of St. Claude from the St. Bernard Parish Line to Elysian Fields. This project was not only important as a recovery route for Orleans Parish and St. Bernard Parish, but also provided the city with its first separate and dedicated bike lanes within a roadway right-of-way.

The Federal Highway Administration has also been key in funding programs to rehabilitate our deficient bridges. Administered by the state, construction on the Michoud Boulevard Bridge over Maxent Canal began in November 2007 and was completed earlier this month.

We also recently accepted the lowest bid for construction of the Park Island Bridge over Bayou St. John, and will be bidding the Harrison Avenue Bridge over Bayou St. John in December.

Other bridges on Desaix Boulevard, Filmore Avenue, Martin Drive, and most significantly, the Wisner Boulevard Bridge over the I-610 will be reconstructed shortly thereafter. These projects represent a comprehensive program to restore every deficient bridge owned by the city and upgrade them with better pedestrian and cyclist access.

As more money flowed into the City for our recovery, we began investing in the revitalization of neighborhoods and commercial corridors by providing more pedestrian and bike friendly transportation routes.

Our goal will be to reach approximately 120 miles of improved Pedestrian and bike access we will connect this City from the Lake to the River and link commercial corridors and recreational facilities throughout.

The Canal Street Improvement project marked the first post-Katrina revitalization program on one of the City's most historical and commercial corridors. The \$13 million streetscape enhancement project spurred the redevelopment of Canal Street. This project offered a new Canal Street, which has had a tremendous impact on the Mayor's efforts to attract new businesses to our City.

I would like to thank the Downtown Development District and the Canal street Development Corporation for partnering with us to improve the Canal Street corridor.

Currently, we are reconstructing another historical and vital commercial corridor in City Council District A. The reconstruction of Oak Street may seem like just another roadway project; however, when completed, the street will feature new and wider sidewalks, cobblestones in the roadway crosswalks and a smooth, new asphalt roadway. As this project continues, we are happy to be working with the Oak Street Business Association and thank them for their patience. We hope this project will continue to spur the redevelopment of this very important commercial corridor.

As we continue the design process for multiple streetscape enhancement projects in the Gentilly, New Orleans East, Lower Ninth Ward, Uptown and Lakeview neighborhoods, we are spurring economic development in our important neighborhood commercial

corridors and encouraging more businesses to invest in our communities.

These 22 streetscape enhancement projects, worth over \$20 million in Community Development Block Grants, will vary in scope. Based on schematic design visions developed to date, communities should expect to see improvements to pedestrian lighting, creation of spaces for public art, addition of new trees and improved pedestrian infrastructure.

Over the past six months, we have worked closely with the citizens and the Office of Recovery and Development Administration in coordination with MWH to understand what each community would like in their commercial corridor. We anticipate that many of these projects will enter construction beginning in 2010.

In the coming year, we will start multiple major projects spanning across the City. Lakeview residents will enjoy a new, smoother ride on Fleur de Lis Boulevard, Harrison Avenue, Pontchartrain Boulevard, Veterans Boulevard and Canal Boulevard, to name a few.

Citizens in the Gentilly area will see improvements to Elysian Fields Avenue, S. Bernard Avenue, Paris Avenue, Filmore Avenue, Mirabeau Avenue, Robert E. Lee Boulevard, Press Drive and other roadways.

Multiple roadways in New Orleans East, including Downman Road, the Almonaster Extension, Old Gentilly Road and others will be rehabilitated.

The reconstruction of MacArthur Boulevard and the start of Woodland Drive in Algiers continue our efforts to bring all the Westbank thoroughfares into top condition. Soon additional projects such as Holiday Drive and Berkley Drive will also take place and, most

significantly, the much needed funding for the General DeGaulle drive DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENT will soon be available to THE LaDOTD.

The Ninth Ward will see improvements to various roadways, including Poland Avenue, Gordon Street, Flood Street, Douglass Street and N. Galvez Street.

The Uptown area will see the beginning of the long-awaited reconstruction of Earhart Boulevard at Carrollton Avenue. Additional projects in Uptown, Downtown, and Mid-City assure that every part of the city will see roadway improvements.

Currently, there are 292 Department of Public Works projects that have either been completed or are in various stages of design and planning. The value of these improvements is now estimated to be approximately \$580 million and continues to grow.

As we continue to recover, we have also pursued innovative technologies to preserve our roadways. In early 2007, we introduced a lift pavement program conducted by Uretek USA to help control pavement settlement that occurs under and around roadways and bridges.

We tested this program on various major roadways in Algiers. Currently, we are evaluating the effectiveness of this program and the longevity of the repairs and hope to expand this cost effective solution as part of our maintenance program.

While rebuilding our operations, we looked for programs that provided efficiency and innovation. We introduced the Pothole Killer in January 2007. This machine, developed to repair smaller potholes throughout the City, replaced a traditional four man potholing crew and allowed the Department to redeploy our resources to other areas.

The Pothole Killers allow us to be more proactive in repairing smaller potholes before they become any larger and potentially lead to full rehabilitation or reconstruction projects earlier than desired.

In 2007, we repaired over 77,000 potholes an increase of almost 50,000 from 2006. In 2008, we repaired over 87,000 potholes and are on track to repair over 100,000 in 2009.

Since the launch of this program, we have added three Pothole Killers to our fleet to address minor patching needs in all five City Council Districts.

This year we also expect to start a comprehensive drainage master plan for our streets and develop a new GIS based asset management system that will guide future projects and facilitate transparency in our capital program.

While infrastructure will always be a top priority in the department, we have not neglected any of our operating divisions.

Throughout these recovery years, we've strived to develop initiatives that incorporate new technologies and enhance customer service.

In 2008, we introduced several new initiatives. The SmartBoot program increases our customer service with motorists receiving immobilization devices.

The Mobile License Plate Recognition program expands our parking enforcement area beyond the Central Business District and French Quarter.

The Pay-by-Phone parking meters provide a new convenient option for Magazine Street and Riverbend area parking.

And, the Photo Safety Camera program has reduced red-light running by 85% and speeding by 88% at various intersections throughout the City.

My desire is to bring the citizens of New Orleans better roadways and more pedestrian and bike friendly infrastructure.

We have all lived with below average transportation infrastructure for decades and this is our opportunity to change the course of how and when we choose to repair and improve our roadways.

Through the partnerships mentioned tonight, I know we are headed in the right direction.

In closing, I would like to thank Mayor C. Ray Nagin for his hard work and commitment to improving New Orleans infrastructure. His support of these projects and initiatives will improve the quality of life of New Orleans residents.

I'd like to thank the entire City Council for supporting improvements to our roadways and for providing the legislation necessary to move these projects forward.

I need to thank the staff in the Department of Public Works, who like many city workers are often under-appreciated. It is through their dedication and hard work that these projects will be accomplished.

All of these projects would not be possible without the help of multiple agencies and organizations throughout various levels of government.

Thank you to the Regional Planning Commission, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Federal Highway Administration, FEMA, United States Housing & Urban Development Department and the Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans.

Our construction and engineering consultant community is also to be thanked for providing their professional skills to deliver completed projects for the citizens of the City of New Orleans.

Finally, I need to thank the citizens of New Orleans for being patient with us as we improve the safety and condition of our infrastructure. Your desire to rebuild this City has been my number one motivator. Thank you!