

OPINION



< PRODUCED BY >



News Sports Weather Traffic Features Entertainment Classifieds WBRZ-TV The Advocate Obituaries

Mar 4, 2006

Louisiana Headlines

- Assumption Parish sheriff's deputy to be buried Monday
- Southeastern Louisiana 89, Lamar 79
- Texas-Arlington 71, McNeese State 62

National Headlines

- Army to launch probe into Tillman death
- Bush, Musharraf renew anti-terror alliance
- AP: Many defendants' cases kept secret
- A top U.S. general praises Iraqi troops
- Thousands of Israeli Arabs protest attack

Our Views: Ascension plan worth attention

Opinion page staff
Published: Mar 4, 2006

Ascension Parish has grown dramatically during the past decade, and it seems that the growth, like all progress, has come with a price. Ascension's roads are jammed with extra traffic — a situation aggravated, of course, by the influx of evacuees from Hurricane Katrina. Who is going to pay the cost of that population growth? Ascension Parish President Ronnie Hughes is proposing a half-cent, parishwide sales tax for road improvements.

Though Hughes is still sketching out the details of his proposal, it envisions parish spending on some roads that are state highways.

Not everyone is wild about that prospect, though Hughes, like Mayor-President Kip Holden in Baton Rouge, has pointed out that waiting on road improvement money from financially strapped state government could take years.

That's a bitter prospect for motorists already impatient with the snail's pace of area traffic.

Hughes also wants to include Ascension's municipalities, not just the unincorporated areas, in his proposed tax. He said such inclusion would acknowledge that many Ascension roads cross multiple jurisdictions.

The parish's tax, two-thirds of a half-cent road tax, generated \$45 million in the past 10 years. Hughes said that won't keep up with the parish's \$700 million in unmet transportation needs during the next 20 years.

The proposed sales tax also would be part of a transportation plan that includes a development impact fee for road improvements linked to new growth and for design costs and right-of-way purchases. It's aimed at recouping some of the costs associated with new subdivisions in Ascension. The impact fee needs council approval only and could not be used for road needs generated by past growth.

Last year, Holden got the approval of East Baton Rouge Parish voters to extend an existing half-cent sales tax for roads for 23 years and to bond some of the proceeds in order to expedite road projects.

Holden's success suggests that other area voters also might give the nod to road tax proposals if they believe the plans will alleviate congestion.

While we are not ready to endorse Hughes' tax proposal until we get more details, we believe it's helpful that the plan embraces transportation planning across jurisdictional boundaries. A good transportation policy also should acknowledge the way that new development affects the traffic grid.

We also are heartened to know that the Baton Rouge Area Chamber is studying Hughes' proposal. That involvement underscores the reality that transportation policies in East Baton Rouge, Ascension, Livingston and other surrounding parishes affect each other. Whatever transportation plan eventually emerges from Hughes' proposal, we hope it will dovetail well with traffic plans ongoing in Baton Rouge.

Such cooperation can only help the many commuters who call Ascension home, yet make the daily drive to Baton Rouge.



Most Emailed

- [New bridge moves step closer](#)
- [Researchers look at role of waves](#)
- [Calcium not always good](#)
- [Assumption deputy killed trying to help apprehend suspect](#)
- [What to say, what not to say](#)

Hot Topics



[Population shifts in Louisiana](#)

[2006 New Car Preview](#)

[More Hot Topics](#)

Advocate Info

- [Subscribe](#)
- [Posters](#)
- [Reprints](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Opinions](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Employment](#)
- [Contact Info](#)

Copyright © 1992-2006, 2theadvocate.com, WBRZ, Louisiana Broadcasting LLC and The Advocate, Capital City Press LLC, All Rights Reserved. [Click here](#) to send comments or questions about 2theadvocate.com.