



For immediate release

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Redevelopment Authority Seeks Consultants for Rail Stations

Planners will recommend sites, design stations for proposed New Orleans, Baton Rouge passenger rail

The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority today asked consultants to bid on a \$450,000 project to choose sites for passenger multi-modal rail stations in downtown and near health care providers off Essen Lane and Bluebonnet Boulevard, and to design stations for those two locations.

The stations would serve proposed inter-city passenger service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, starting in downtown Baton Rouge with stops at the Baton Rouge Health District, Gonzales, LaPlace, the New Orleans airport and terminating next to the Superdome. Daily train service between the two destinations is championed by Gov. John Bel Edwards and all governments along the route.

Trains would roll on existing, upgraded rails that are already transporting cargo across the region. Studies have shown that about \$300 million in rail improvements would let trains roll daily between the two cities. Track improvements, especially a major overhaul of the Bonnet Carre Spillway, would speed passenger transport by rail, ultimately decreasing transportation costs.

Passenger rail would boost the super region, an area of more than 2 million people that is growing in jobs. It would also shift traffic from I-10, improving traffic flow on the highways while offering a more reliable alternative by rail.

East Baton Rouge city-parish government charged the RDA with finding, hiring and managing the consultants. The RDA today issued a request for proposal to do the work. Project funding comes from the Federal Railroad Administration with matching funds from the City-Parish.

The chosen consultants are required to gather ideas and input from the community, perform site analysis, offer alternative sites and station design concepts, and they are to identify funding for building the stations that would also incorporate other forms of travel, making it easy for travelers to shift to bikeshare, carshare, or buses.

The application deadline is September 22; the RDA would pick a firm in late October, and the firm would have 12 months to complete its analysis and design.

The RDA was created to reclaim blighted neighborhoods in East Baton Rouge Parish. The two most visible projects of the quasi-public agency are Ardendale, a 200-acre development anchored by education institutions, including the Baton Rouge Community College's McKay Automotive Training Center. Located between North Ardenwood and North Lobdell, Ardendale will include housing and retail. The newest East Baton Rouge Parish School System high school, the EBR Career and Technical Education Center, is under construction at the mixed-use project.

The other notable RDA development is Electric Depot, which is being constructed by Weinstein Nelson Development. They are converting the former 6 acre Entergy site on Government Street into a mix of apartments, entertainment, restaurants, music venue and vintage bowling lanes. Electric Depot is expected to accelerate the revival of Mid City.

The RFP can be downloaded at www.ebrra.org