Transportation Safety and Access: A Case Study of the St. Claude Bridge in New Orleans

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Using University-Community Partnerships to Improve Transportation Safety and Access

by

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Presented at the 2013 DRU Conference
New Orleans         March 20, 2013
1. The Community-University Concept
2. The UNO Master’s in Urban and Regional Planning Practicum
3. Results of the St. Claude Bridge Project
4. Building Momentum
5. Conclusions
Community-University Concept

- Encourages researchers and community members to cooperatively construct solutions appropriate to specific contexts and situations.
- Brings the resources of universities together with the most pressing issues communities now face.
- Benefits both campus and community.
- Community engagement works best when it is linked to the university’s core mission of knowledge building.

Source: Silka and Renault; Caragianes, 2006: 171-173, 180
UNO MURP Practicum

- Serves as the capstone course of the Urban and Regional Planning Master’s degree.
- Requires graduate students to produce professional work for a local client.
- An opportunity to engage with communities on issues that are important to them.
- A memorable experience for our students.
- Topics have included economic development, environmental hazards, affordable housing, recreation planning, transportation, zoning and land use, and historic preservation.
Connect the 9 Bridging St. Claude for All Users
Final report and slides delivered to the community in hard copy and electronically, also posted online at: transportation.uno.edu/publications
Public notice from the New Orleans City Council Transportation Committee announcing the presentation by UNO students and two community representatives.

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
APRIL 24, 2012
PUBLIC NOTICE

The Transportation Committee will hold its regular scheduled meeting on Tuesday, April 24, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. in the City Council Chamber on the first floor of City Hall. The items offered for the Transportation Committee consideration is presented subject to the chairperson's approval. City Council Transportation Committee meetings are generally accessible to persons with disabilities. People in need of certain accommodations such as sign language interpreter may be provided service with 24 hours prior notice by calling (504) 658-1095 / Voice or (504) 658-4020 / TTY.

Agenda item(s) are as follows:

Dr. Earthea Nance and University of New Orleans Students to present their project "Connect the 9" on transportation alternatives for improved bike and pedestrian access across the St. Claude Bridge. The project is on behalf of the St. Claude Bridge Safety and Access Committee which is working in conjunction with the 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development (CSED). (The presentation will be approximately 30 minutes.)

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact me at 504-658-1030 or Rekitta A. Peters at 504-658-1115/office or 504-201-6965/cell.

CITY COUNCIL TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
COUNCILMEMBER KRISTIN GILES/SON FALMER, CHAIRPERSON
COUNCILMEMBER SUSAN G. GUIDRY
COUNCILMEMBER CYNTHIA HEDGE MORRELL
COUNCILMEMBER STACY HEAD, ALTERNATE
POSTED: April 23, 2012
June 18, 2012

Mr. Gary LaGrange
President & CEO, Port of New Orleans
P.O. Box 60046
New Orleans, LA 70160

Dear Mr. LaGrange,

We are writing to express our concern regarding the conditions of the St. Claude Avenue Bridge which spans the Industrial Canal connecting the Upper and Lower 9th Wards. A study “Connect the 9: Bridging St. Claude for All Users” initiated by the Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development (CSED) and led by Dr. Earthea Nance with students of the University of New Orleans’ Masters of Planning and Urban Studies Program points out the egregious conditions of the bridge – specifically the bicycle lane and accompanying pedestrian walkway. Tulane Prevention Resource Center has posted the study online which you may download at http://goo.gl/3p9nh.

Though remediation of the pedestrian stairwell helped to temporarily improve the safety conditions after a toddler fell in December 2008 (as reported in the Times-Picayune, Martina Carr, “Toddler Falls through railing on St. Claude Bridge in 9th Ward”), the report indicates that bridge conditions are still dangerous and more attention is needed.

The Port of New Orleans and those Co’d were identified as responsible parties for aspects of the upkeep and maintenance of the bridge. We would like everyone to come together to discuss how to fix this. The report includes both short and long-term recommendations for improving bridge safety.

We appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson
Council President

Stacy Head
Council Vice President

Susan G. Guidry
Councilmember District “A”

Diana Berg
Councilmember District “B”

Kristin Gideon Palmer
Councilmember District “C”

Cynthia Hedge-Marvull
Councilmember District “D”

Jon D. Johnson
Councilmember District “E”
Conclusions

1. Success was associated with adherence to the community-university concept, which requires full-fledged partnership among equals and continued engagement.
2. The student’s report brought great momentum to the community’s efforts.
3. Faculty continue to be engaged with this community even though the students have graduated.
Thank You

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