

To: [dylan.c.hendrix@usace.army.mil](mailto:dylan.c.hendrix@usace.army.mil) Army Corps of Engineers  
mobilebaykeeper.org  
From: Sarah Caldwell  
Re: Public Notice Number Sam-2017-00752-Sbc  
Date: May 6, 2020

My name is Sarah Caldwell and I am a member of a group of Baldwin County property owners who are opposed to a Transportation Corridor in Baldwin County to connect the property north of the Intracoastal Canal to the City of Orange Beach with a proposed Wolf Bay Bridge.

Need. There is no need for this transportation corridor to benefit the residents of Orange Beach. The primary beneficiaries are for land developers and economic expansion and not for the general public of Orange Beach.

The City's expressed need for such a bridge has a varied history going back to late 80s. At that time there was a push for an additional evacuation route. This need for an evacuation route was obviated by the completion of the Foley Beach Express Bridge only 2 miles to the west. Next, the City maintained that the Wolf Bay Bridge would solve traffic problems related to Hwy 161 and Canal Road. Opposition by local citizens concluded that this solution would only add to the congestion. (Many citizens have offered that the solution to the volume of traffic is to extend the Foley Beach Express with a roadway with a direct route to the beach with the Cross Island Expressway.) And now the Mayor and Council have stated that the true motivation is for economic growth of Orange Beach by growing to land northward of Intracoastal. This benefits developers for condo and commercial development in annexed properties and in the surrounding communities of Elberta and Josephine on the Northern Shore.

Cost/Revenue. Cost/benefit analysis would indicate that the benefits do not outweigh the costs, and that the beneficiaries are primarily developers.

According to City officials the estimated of cost for the Wolf Bay Bridge is \$50m. This cannot be anywhere close to accurate when there is another bridge project proposed by ALDOT to cross the Intracoastal Waterway one mile west of the existing Foley Beach Express Bridge. The ALDOT Bridge with an estimated cost of \$87m will have only a span of 2000 ft. This is one third the span of the proposed Wolf Bay Bridge that would be 1.2 miles across the Canal or 3 times the length of the Express Bridge. In addition, the proposed location puts its span at the widest point on the Intracoastal. There are County and State additional costs to reach to and improve 95 and extend roadways to I-10 and I-65. A toll to defray costs will be needed. The long term costs for maintenance and safety will commit the finances of City of Orange Beach forever. Preferential incentives to landowners for development using the "Improvement Districts Law" will reduce revenue going into coffers of Orange Beach.

The City proposes that the increased lodging tax would support the construction and the recurring costs of maintenance and safety. In this fragile economy the citizens do not want to commit to a burden over the long term. We have lived through economic disaster to our tourist revenue by hurricanes, BP oil spill, and we are now experiencing the effects of Coronavirus. Bookings for rentals have gone from projected record high occupancy rates in 2020 to almost none.

Public & Agency Approval. This proposed project is too large and important to be “smoked through” with an “inside voice” of the City Council of Orange Beach. A wider constituency of stakeholders includes county, state, and federal voices. We need to gain public knowledge and approval in concept before any more expenditure of public monies on preliminary studies and speculation land acquisition. There should be oversight from higher levels to insure transparency and public support and to insure all stakeholders are in agreement. The Orange Beach Mayor and City Council cannot be the sole authority concerning impacts and cost/benefits. The nature of this project demands a regional as well as a state solution. When will Baldwin County, the State, and US Department of Commerce be brought into the loop? The citizens of Elberta, Josephine, and properties north of the Canal want a say in this project due to the impacts of this Transportation Corridor and bridge construction that will create a problem traffic flow and have potential to forever change the culture and natural beauty of the Northern Shore.

In October 2018 there was an informational event held in Orange Beach. There were no presentations or public discussion/questions. Literature was available for viewing. The community had seven days to provide written comments. Analysis of the written comments from the published report shows that 54 were negative out of 78 or 69% negative. Main concerns of residents are traffic on roads not designed for such use, disruption of quality of life, and destroying the aspects of communities that were main reason for living here (“Paving Paradise”). The comments also express that residents “do not want to travel to North Shore.” Many comments were about why is “need” for bridge to provide access for fire and police. They questioned the expense of services for the undeveloped areas of the North Shore; i.e., if we don’t develop, we don’t need services. Other negative comments were focused on the financial burden for something that is benefitting only developers. Instead, funds should be used for residents such as parks, roads, schools, Cross Island Parkway and other options to reduce traffic on Canal and 161. Quality of life is important to many with concerns for noise, light, and general disruption of the peaceful Bay and the enjoyment of those activities for OB families. And finally, there are real concerns for navigation safety.

Navigational Safety. The Canal traffic is approximately 15,000 barges per year. What happens when this interstate traffic flow is impacted, such as in an event of a barge loaded with dangerous chemicals striking the bridge, erupting and contaminating the community? The question of navigation safety along the Intracoastal Waterway is of paramount concern to the Federal government as it is vital to interstate commerce and homeland security.

See Facebook: [No Wolf Bay Bridge](#) for additional comments.

**Notes** This type of construction requires at least a 300 ft span opening and will probably need to be wider for the safety of commercial traffic. The proposed location is at a vulnerable and sometimes treacherous turn in the channel. A cost estimate generated several years ago forecasted the cost at \$250m. In addition there will be costs of land to the north including all the infrastructure and services costs that Orange Beach has to provide.

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