



Interstate 10 (I-10), a major transcontinental Interstate Highway in the Southern United States, runs across the southern part of Louisiana for 274.42 miles (441.64 km). It passes through Lake Charles, Lafayette, and Baton Rouge before dipping south of Lake Pontchartrain to serve the New Orleans metropolitan area before leaving the state.

In August 2005, the I-10 Twin Span Bridge was severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina, rendering it unusable. Initially, the bridge was repaired through a \$30.9 million contract with Boh Brothers Construction Company. However, Louisiana has since replaced the bridge with two higher elevation spans in 2009 and 2010.

History

By the beginning of planning for the Interstate Highway System in 1939 (then called the Interregional Highway System), the Houston-New Orleans-Mobile corridor was part of the system. Preliminary plans took it along U.S. 90 all the way through Louisiana, serving Lake Charles and Lafayette but not Baton Rouge. By c. 1943, it had been shifted to the north west of New Orleans, using the Louisiana Highway 12 (LA 12), U.S. 190 and US 61 corridors, and serving Baton Rouge but not Lake Charles or Lafayette. The 1947 plan shifted it to roughly the current alignment, including the long stretch of new corridor across the Atchafalaya Swamp. The corridor was assigned the Interstate 10 designation in mid-1957.

Prior to the gaining of federal funding for the Interstate System in the late 1950s, a toll road, the Acadian Thruway, had been proposed between Lafayette and a point near Gramercy on Airline Highway (US 61). This would have provided a shorter route than I-10, bypassing Baton Rouge to the south. The Gramercy Bridge was later built along its planned alignment, with LA 3125 connecting to Gramercy, but no road extends west from the bridge across the Atchafalaya Swamp to Lafayette.

Construction of the Interstate Highway System in Louisiana began in 1957. Early I-10 contracts were done under the route designation LA 3027. Much of the early construction on the I-10 corridor was concentrated on relieving traffic problems in urban centers. Several such projects were already underway and were incorporated into the route of I-10 during construction, such as the Pontchartrain Expressway in New Orleans. In addition, the two major bridges on the route in Calcasieu Parish between the Texas state line and Lake Charles were built for U.S. 90 in the early 1950s and retrofitted for I-10 traffic. Sections of I-10 through rural areas and/or those sections already served adequately by existing highways, such as Airline Highway (US 61) between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, were constructed later in the program. By the spring of 1975, the entire route of I-10 had been opened across Louisiana except for a problem 5.5 mile section between Gonzales and Sorrento that was not completed for another three years.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the I-10 Twin Span Bridge, a portion of I-10 between New Orleans and Slidell, spanning the eastern end of Lake Pontchartrain, was severely damaged, causing a break in I-10 at that point. Unlike the Escambia Bay Bridge (east of Pensacola, Florida and damaged by Hurricane Ivan) which is a major artery, I-12 is available to bypass New Orleans. Taking I-12 to the Lake Ponchartrain Causeway allowed entry and exit to and from the Greater New Orleans area from the East. On October 14, 2005 at 3:00 PM, the eastbound span was reopened to two way traffic. On January 6, 2006 at 6:00 AM, both lanes of the westbound span were reopened to traffic using temporary metal trusses and road panels to replace damaged sections. This restored all four lanes of the I-10 Twin Span for normal traffic with a 45 mph (70 km/h) speed limit for the westbound lanes and 60 mph (100 km/h) for the eastbound lanes. Oversized and overweight traffic was prohibited until a new permanent six-lane span replaced the two temporarily repaired spans. The eastbound span opened to traffic on July 9, 2009, and the westbound span opened on April 7, 2010, with the old bridge being permanently closed. The approaches to the westbound lanes were completed with a ribbon cutting ceremony on September 8, 2011 and the opening of all 6 lanes the next morning. The old Twin Span will be demolished in the near future. In 2014, the Louisiana State Legislature officially named the Twin Span as the Frank Davis "Naturally N'Awlins" Memorial Bridge.

A \$68.9 million, three-year construction project was completed between Causeway Boulevard and the 17th Street Canal in Metairie, Louisiana. It added new lanes in both directions and improve the exit and entrance ramps at Causeway and Bonabel Blvd.

In 2012, the state completed a widening project between Causeway and Clearview Pkwy and between the I-10/I-610 split and Airline Highway (US 61). In 2015, the additional lanes were extended in Metairie, from Clearview Pkwy west to Veterans Blvd.

I-10 was widened to three lanes in each direction from the I-10/I-12 split to Highland Road (Exit 166) from late 2008 to Spring 2013.