



NEWS RELEASE

LOUISIANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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House Appropriations Committee talks budget issues with DOTD

BATON ROUGE – The House Appropriations Committee focused today on streets and highways.

Deputy Secretary Department of Transportation and Development Dr. Eric Kalivoda faced questions regarding the payment of debts on bonds and the distribution of their funds.

According to Kalivoda, the majority of the department funds goes toward maintenance and operation of roads.

Committee members, especially Rep. Patrick Connick, R-Marrero, and Rep. Jack Montoucet, D-Crowley, challenged that, stating the maintenance in their areas does not substantiate that claim. Connick was especially concerned about the money allocated toward trash pick-up and grass cutting services, and the lack of work done to improve roads in his parish.

Connick said, “We are spending money on designs we can’t use and contracts that don’t work, and you say we don’t have money to do the things we need. The public sees there is no attempt to do the right thing. Don’t come here saying we need more money when in house things aren’t as good as they need to be.”

Members were also concerned with a dramatic increase in the amount of funds DOTD is allocating to state police. The division shows \$74 million for public safety; this is a \$28.1 million increase.

“We all appreciate public safety,” said chairman of the committee Rep. James Fannin, D-Jonesboro, “but you come to me constantly looking for money to fund highways, and this is money that would normally be spent on our highways.” Fannin also questioned a \$28 million request for projected bond payments.

“Why didn’t you budget for this last year?” Fannin said.

Committee members are using multiple meetings to probe state agencies' spending to insure state funds are going to the right places. The Appropriations Committee will meet again tomorrow, March 20, at 9 AM, in committee room 5, and will hear from the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, Sheriffs Housing of State Inmates, and State Supplemental Pay.

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