
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: GOVERNOR
FROM: RILEY
SUBJECT: GREAT RIVER BRIDGE COMPACT MEETING: MARCH 14, 2002
DATE: 3/19/2002
CC: FILE

I attended the Great River Bridge Compact meeting on your behalf last Thursday, March 14 in Little Rock. The Compact members were very appreciative of your sending a representative, as our office is one of Mississippi's 5 compact members. The majority of the meeting dealt with project updates. The Great River Bridge is to be a replacement bridge for the existing US-82 bridge at Greenville. The FHWA issued a Record of Decision (ROD) designating the Great River Bridge site approximately 20 miles north of Greenville (near Benoit), between Bolivar County, Mississippi, and Desha County, Arkansas, on May 3, 2000. The Arkansas State Highway Commission is working to establish a ROD for utilizing this same location as the I-69 Mississippi River Crossing. Public hearings on the I-69 location are to be held in June, with the final ROD expected in September.

Transportation officials gave updates on highway segments leading to the Great River Bridge under the assumption that these same routes will eventually be designated I-69. Jim Kopf of MDOT reported that MDOT has approximately 30 miles under construction contracts totaling \$72 million on Segment 10, which is the Highway 304 corridor from I-55 over to Highway 61. MDOT has selected an environmental consultant for Segment 11, which runs from Highway 304 to Highway 1 near Rosedale.

The Great River Bridge project has an estimated total cost of \$566 million, with \$157 million of this being incurred by Mississippi and \$409 million incurred by Arkansas. The project has received \$22.9 million in combined state and federal funds and has obligated \$13.5 million, for a balance of \$9.4 million. As explained in an earlier memo to you, \$7.5 million included in the USDOT 2002 appropriation will not be available, due to the Great River Bridge not meeting funding criteria. However, this is due to a conflict in the language used by Congressional staff in the appropriation bill. The FHWA is working to correct this problem and is holding the \$7.5 million for the Great River Bridge until the conflict is corrected.

The only action taken by the Compact at the meeting was to direct the transportation departments to submit a joint federal funding request in order to obtain funding to get the project up and running. Former Speaker of the Arkansas House and Compact Co-Chairman, John Lipton of the AR State Highway Commission, asked me for any comments from you. I replied that we were looking forward to the project, we were committed to what was best for Mississippi and that we were looking forward to working with our neighbors in Arkansas on the project.