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OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE  
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** GOVERNOR  
**FROM:** RILEY  
**SUBJECT:** I-59: 10/1/02 MEETING WITH MDOT  
**DATE** 10/1/02  
**CC:** FILE

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**Background:**

- We reviewed draft plan for months.
- Our position that Mississippi is committed to helping Louisiana as much as possible without adversely impacting efforts to evacuate our Mississippi coastal residents.
- However, we had to address issues such as impact on local communities, need to get ambulances and other emergency response vehicles on and off in the event of an accident, the impact on other state agencies' resources.
- We held meetings in each of the counties along the I-59 corridor and on the Gulf Coast. Local officials expressed the following concerns:
  1. In every case, the potential financial burden placed on local governments was an issue. Who will reimburse local governments? What if a major hurricane hits New Orleans and evacuees remain in Mississippi for an extended amount of time? In addition, Mississippi will not receive any federal funds to cover expenses if the storm does not hit Mississippi and we do not receive a federal declaration of disaster.
  2. The shortage of local resources (law enforcement, fire services and emergency management agency) will be compounded by I-59 reverse laning. Where will additional resources to support local governments come from if state agencies (DPS, MEMA, DOT) are supporting I-59 reverse laning?
  3. Shortage of shelter space and personnel to staff the shelters will be compounded by I-59 reverse laning. New Orleans typically evacuates 72 hours in advance of a storm, while the Mississippi Gulf Coast does not evacuate until approximately 24-36 hours in advance. Thus, Louisiana evacuees reach shelters first. In addition, many of our schools serve as shelters and such schools would still be open and in operation 72 hours in advance.

Mr. Latham has packets of the resolutions passed by local boards, as well as letters to the editors and stories that have run in the local papers

**Recent events:**

- Mr. Latham informed MDOT last Monday evening (9/23) that we would not be implementing contra flow
- Governor's office issued statement

*We will do whatever we can to accommodate the citizens of Louisiana in the case of an evacuation, but we also have a responsibility to the citizens of Mississippi. We will not put the lives of Mississippians at risk, and by law we must provide our communities with the resources they need to meet their needs at the local levels.*

- Commission passed resolution on Tuesday (9/24) authoring MDOT to “implement any and all strategies and procedures – including contraflow – that may be necessary to facilitate the safe and continuous movement of traffic from the Louisiana state line into MS.” (Channel 16 report that night.)
- Received reports during Isidore that MDOT going to implement contraflow regardless of Governor's decision

**Legal Authority of Governor:**

Statutes provides the Governor and MEMA with emergency management powers. Governor has the authority to require the assistance of all state agencies, including the authority to suspend any agency rules and regulations that hinder emergency management activities. MDOT's reverse laning would hinder such activities because it would not be coordinated with shelter, emergency response and general law enforcement activities.

Section 33-15-11 (1972) provides for the emergency management powers of the Governor. The Governor may

33-15-11 (a) ... may assume direct operations over all or any part of the emergency management functions of this state.

33-15-11 (b)(7) To utilize the services and facilities of existing officers and agencies of the state and the political subdivisions thereof; and all such officers and agencies shall cooperate with and extend their services and facilities to the Governor as he may request.

33-15-11 (c)(1) To suspend the provisions of any regulatory statute prescribing the procedures for conduct of state business, or the orders, rules or regulations of any state agency, if strict compliance with the provisions of any statute, order, rule or regulation would in any way prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action in coping with a disaster or emergency.

Section 33-15-14 (1) provides that MEMA is responsible for maintaining a comprehensive statewide program of emergency management. The agency is responsible for coordination with efforts of the federal government with other departments and agencies of state government....

**Discussion**