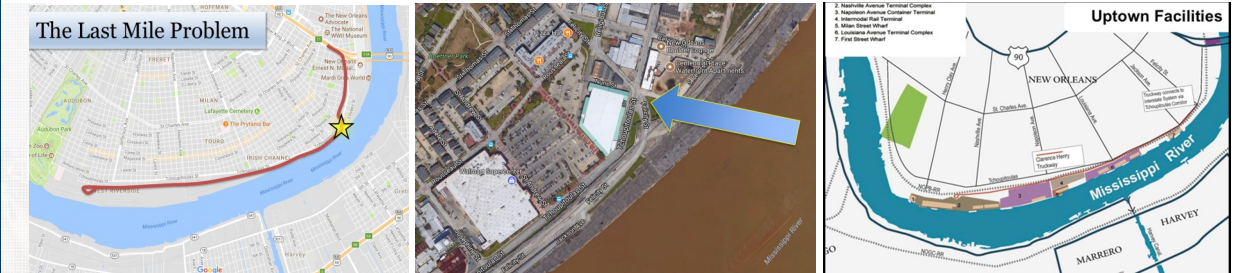




THE LAST MILE: ACCESS TO FACILITIES AT THE PORT OF NEW ORLEANS

“The redevelopment of Convention Center Boulevard ...is untenable for the current and future needs of the Port.”



The Port of New Orleans, like every other major commercial port in the United States, is having severe problems with congested freight transportation access, particularly for the trucking mode. This congestion is occurring in the final phase of access to the Port known in the industry as “the last mile.” Two factors make this last mile access especially difficult for the Port of New Orleans. First, its access is limited to a one way in/out cul-de-sac known as the Clarence Henry Truckway which runs parallel to Tchoupitoulas Street and serves the Uptown wharves. Constructed as a compromise solution to take freight traffic off the residential arterials of the streets of New Orleans, this limited access way is no longer equal to the freight traffic demands of the Port and projected increases will greatly exacerbate the situation. Second, the New Orleans Convention Center and other developers are planning additional hotel construction, significant traffic flow changes to Convention Center Boulevard, and the development of a \$1.2 million mixed use trade district; all of which are immediately adjacent to the Port’s access way. The redevelopment of Convention Center Boulevard, although now indefinitely on hold, is especially untenable for the current and future needs of the Port. Barring some form of riverfront roadway, a nonissue by 1969 given the defeat of the proposed elevated Riverfront Expressway, increased freight trucking puts pressure on French Quarter streets and thereby was subsequently banned from this historic neighborhood. This led to a freight overflow on Louisiana Avenue and other arterials serving other historic neighborhoods adjoining the Port, which culminated in the Clarence Henry Truckway. Opening an access to the Port upriver from its existing access/egress way (at Felicity and Religious streets) via an extension of Leake Avenue was defeated due to local politics in the late 1960s – early 1970s. The closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) post- Katrina led to significant relocations of port activities to the Uptown wharves. Consequently, the Clarence Henry Truckway is now the only access to the Port’s major freight terminals. Post 9/11 concerns led to the consolidation of most freight activity behind the Tchoupitoulas floodwall. Today, many residents of the city are not aware of the activities of the Port of New Orleans.

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THE UNIVERSITY of
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Within a range of possible solutions... UNOTI recommends a 3 part solution...

- 1) Expand the Port's intermodal capacity**
- 2) Shift the bulk of its activities to off-peak hours**
- 3) Redesign traffic management patterns near the Port's main access/egress way at Felicitey and Tchoupitoulas.**

There are a range of possible solutions to the Port's freight transportation dilemma. A dedicated flyover ramp from I-10 at Annunciation to the Port's main entrance is theoretically feasible, but too costly (approximately \$650M). Revisiting the Leake Avenue extension is more cost-effective, but politically fraught with both known and unknown consequences. Ultimately, students affiliated with UNO's Transportation Institute made a three-part recommendation: expanding the Port's intermodal capacity, shifting the bulk of its activities to off-peak hours, and redesigning traffic management patterns near the Port's main access/egress way at Felicitey and Tchoupitoulas. Our core recommendation of intermodal expansion involves shifting much of the freight burden from trucks to the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad (NOPBR) and moving it to a projected France Road Terminal expansion adjacent to the Inner Harbor Navigational Canal (INHC), or "Industrial Canal." This will be a challenge. Although the Port is in the process of acquiring the NOPBR, which should facilitate this intermodal shift, the necessary expansion of the lock at the INHC for the required increase in container-on-barge freight traffic is being blocked by the protests of nearby residents, in a similar fashion to the defeat of the Riverfront Expressway in the late 1960's and an upriver Port access at Leake Avenue. Barring the expansion of the lock to facilitate its intermodal capacity, the Port will continue to be hemmed in by encroaching development and the adjoining historic neighborhoods. Operational alternatives may be the only short-term viable solution.

