



3. SAFETEA-LU SECTION 1923

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) was established by Congress in 2000 to enhance economic development and improve the quality of life for residents of this region. The DRA encompasses 252 counties and parishes in Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. Led by federal co-chairman Mr. Pete Johnson, who is appointed by the president and the governors of the eight states, the DRA fosters partnerships throughout the region as it attempts to improve the Delta economy. In DRA's enabling statute, Congress provided the Authority with four specific investment priorities, one of which is to help improve the transportation infrastructure in the region.

On August 10, 2005, President George W. Bush signed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). SAFETEA-LU authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period 2005-2009. The following outlines the SAFETEA-LU Section 1923 law:

(a) AGREEMENT. – Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall enter into an agreement with the Delta Regional Authority (in this section referred to as the ‘DRA’) to conduct a comprehensive study of transportation assets and needs for all modes of transportation (including passenger and freight transportation) in the 8 States comprising the Delta region (Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee).

(b) CONSULTATION. – Under the agreement, the DRA, in conducting the study, shall consult with the department, state transportation departments, local planning and development districts, local and regional governments, and metropolitan planning organizations.

(c) REPORT. – Under the agreement, the DRA, not later than 2 years after the date of entry into the agreement, shall submit to the Secretary and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate a final report on the results of the study, together with such recommendations as the DRA considers to be appropriate.

(d) PLAN. – Under the agreement, the DRA, upon completion of the report, shall establish a regional strategic plan to implement the recommendations of the report.

(e) FUNDING. –

(1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS. – There is authorized to be appropriated out of the Highway Trust Fund (other than the Mass Transit Account), to carry out this section \$500,000 for each of the fiscal years 2005 and 2006.



(2) CONTRACT AUTHORITY. – Funds authorized by this section shall be available for obligation in the same manner and to the same extent as if such funds were apportioned under chapter 1 of title 23, United States Code; except that such funds shall remain available until expended and shall not be transferable.

In section 1923 of SAFETEA-LU, Congress charged the DRA with preparing two documents:

The first being a report of the region’s multimodal assets and needs, plus the Authority’s recommendations thereon this report will identify assets, needs and recommendations for highway and bridges, intelligent transportation systems, freight rail, passenger rail, ports, locks and airports throughout the DRA region. And to complete this report, the following three phases were developed:

- **Phase A - Inventory Multimodal Transportation Assets.** Produce a comprehensive report of multimodal transportation assets (aviation, passenger rail, freight rail, highways, ports, locks, and Intelligent Transportation Systems), that are available within the DRA region.
- **Phase B - Identify Multimodal Transportation Needs.** Produce a report identifying multimodal transportation needs within DRA region.
- **Phase C - Address Needs.** Address the needs of the DRA region by identifying potential processes and improvements (recommendations) to help satisfy the multimodal transportation needs.

And then the second report, the multimodal strategic plan, Phase D would be based upon work completed in Phases A, B, and C.