

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Delta Regional Authority was established by Congress in 2000 to enhance economic development and improve the quality of life for residents of this region. The DRA encompasses 240 counties and parishes in Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee.

Led by a federal co-chairman, 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. The DRA is a federal-state partnership created to provide a unified voice for the Delta region on a variety of important issues.

At a planning retreat in February 2005, the DRA board voted to make transportation one of the agency's three major policy development areas along with rural health and information technology. Shortly after that retreat, the DRA contracted with Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) to assist the authority with transportation planning and economic activities throughout the region.

During the development of the DRA Highway Transportation Plan, the work team coordinated all planning efforts with the eight-state Departments of Transportation (SDOT). Based on this coordination, the work team developed the following:

- Delta Development Highway System (DDHS) Designation Criteria,
- DDHS Design Standards,
- DDHS Corridors,
- DDHS Priorities,
- DDHS Planning-level Cost Estimates,
- DDHS Project Descriptions, and
- DDHS Economic Impact.

Once the draft DDHS was completed, the work team presented the system to federal, state and local agencies and citizens. These local meetings were conducted throughout the DRA region in the following cities:

- Selma, Alabama,
- Cape Girardeau, Missouri,
- Monroe, Louisiana,
- Jackson, Mississippi, and
- Memphis, Tennessee.

Based on comments received at each local meeting, the DDHS was revised based on approval from each SDOT. To date, the DDHS totals 3,843 miles of roadways throughout the region and the estimated cost to complete planned improvement projects on these roads totals \$18.5 billion. Of the 3,843 miles, approximately 1,025 miles (27%) are already multi-laned (provide four or more travel lanes) leaving a total of 2,818 miles of 2-lane roads, as shown in **Table ES1**.

Once completed, the DDHS will provide many positive impacts to the region that will improve economic activities and the quality of life for residents of the region. It is estimated that when fully completed, the DDHS will have an economic impact on the region of over 130,000 additional full-time equivalent jobs annually and nearly \$3.5 billion in additional income annually. Of these total impacts, \$1.1 billion in income is attributable to increased travel efficiencies and the remaining \$2.4 billion is attributable to regional economic development or increased business attraction and retention.

**Table ES1 – DDHS, NHS and Square Miles by State (DRA Region only)**

State	Total DDHS Miles	Percent of DDHS	Total DDHS 4-lanes	Total DDHS 2-lanes	Percent of DDHS	Total NHS Miles	Percent of NHS Mileage	Total Square Miles	Percent of DDHS Area
Alabama	383	9.97%	124	259	9.20%	809	9.28%	17,124	11.60%
Arkansas	704	18.32%	114	590	20.93%	1,760	20.21%	29,897	20.26%
Illinois	174	4.53%	48	126	4.46%	393	4.51%	6,200	4.20%
Kentucky	230	5.98%	165	65	2.31%	501	5.75%	7,888	5.34%
Louisiana	591	15.38%	107	484	17.19%	1,855	21.30%	29,659	20.10%
Mississippi	753	19.59%	197	556	19.73%	1,509	17.32%	26,247	17.78%
Missouri	566	14.73%	220	346	12.28%	984	11.30%	19,663	13.32%
Tennessee	442	11.50%	50	392	13.91%	899	10.33%	10,908	7.39%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,843</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>1,025</b>	<b>2,818</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,709</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>147,585</b>	<b>100%</b>