

Guest Column to The New-Star
For the Sunday, March 31, 2019 Edition
From: Mayor James E. “Jamie” Mayo
City of Monroe, LA

\$34.5M Kansas Lane Connector Project Moving Forward

We are one step closer to the construction of the long-awaited Kansas Lane Connector Project. Monroe City Council Chairwoman Gretchen Ezernack, City Engineer Kim Golden, and officials from the Monroe Chamber of Commerce were there when I recently signed the paperwork for the city to acquire the final piece of right-of-way needed. In fact, we have completed the acquisition of 34 parcels of land from 39 different land owners.

The next step is for utility companies to start relocating utilities along the planned route. We expect that to begin very soon. We hope to be able to bid the construction project out in early 2020.

The estimated \$34.5M Kansas Lane Connector project will extend Kansas Lane from its current end at the intersection of Desiard (U.S. Hwy 80) and Kansas Lane to the Forsythe Avenue Extension at its intersection with U.S. Hwy 165. The project will construct a new bridge across Bayou Desiard near the south end of the project. The entire length of the four-lane project will be approximately 2.5 miles.

City officials have worked tirelessly on this project with support from the Monroe Chamber of Commerce and our northeast legislative delegation for the past couple of decades. We are thankful to Governor’s Kathleen Blanco, Bobby Jindal and John Bel Edwards for their important approval, securing and retaining of funds for this long-awaited project.

The Kansas Lane Connector will help provide major relief of traffic congestion along I-20 and U.S. Highway 165. This new corridor will make it much easier for residents and visitors to navigate their way through our city during peak travel hours. We are embracing our people and addressing our challenges through powerful partnerships.

Speaking of embracing our people and addressing our challenges, I could not end this column without highlighting the work of our city employees. As you may or may not know, since January of 2018, we have been participating in a variety of community benevolent acts. Each month, a different city department takes the lead on a project, with participation from employees in all department. Our employees are utilizing their own funds to help benefit others within our community. In 2018, we did 14 benevolent acts. The first quarter of 2019 has gotten off to an amazing start.

In January (led by Public Works), city employees donated their personal funds to purchase over 400 Homeless Kits to benefit the Salvation Army, Wellspring, and Monroe City Schools. In February (led by Engineering), employees purchased a huge amount of food and household items which were donated to the Ronald McDonald House. In March (led by Legal), we set a goal to collect and donate at least \$1000 to O.M.C.A.P. in support of their various assistance programs

The Ouachita Multipurpose Community Action Program provides financial assistance to those in need for reasons such as: disconnected utilities, home energy or natural gas bills, economic hardships, medication, and food commodities. The organization receives federal funding to support these efforts. However, because of the demand throughout Ouachita Parish, O.M.C.A.P. often runs out of available funding. We simply wanted to raise funds so that a few more people or families can get the help they need. I am #MonroeProud to brag on our city employees, because we collected \$1,266 and donated it to O.M.C.A.P. last week to help fund their assistance programs.

By working together, we are making a difference. Monroe is one city, with one future!