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Gov. Edwards Announces $10 million for Southern University Infrastructure Project

BATON ROUGE — Today, Gov. John Bel Edwards announced $10 million in funds dedicated for a project to alleviate severe erosion along the canals that run through Southern University Baton Rouge campus to the Mississippi River. The erosion, exacerbated by failed drainage structures, is impacting critical infrastructure and utilities on campus resulting in safety concerns and challenges to the day to day operation of the university. In June, the governor toured damages on campus caused by the erosion including a temporary bridge and a partially collapsed road.

“This issue has been a priority not just for the university but also for the state of Louisiana as we have worked to provide funding and temporary fixes over the years; however, this ongoing problem merits a permanent solution, which is why I pledged a $10 million dollar investment as part of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to address the long-term threat posed by this erosion,” said Gov. Edwards. “If we want to equip our young people with the best opportunities that higher education can afford, we must keep our centers of learning accessible and in optimal condition as a base level investment in their futures.”

$7.5 million of the $10 million investment is made up of Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) dollars. The full $10 million investment includes partnership between the Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), the Board of Regents, Southern University and the city of Baton Rouge. DOTD will manage this project for Southern University.

"DOTD is happy to provide its expertise in engineering and project management to address this problem," said Shawn Wilson, Secretary of DOTD. " The real value of this effort rests in the collaboration of all the different stakeholders."

HMGP is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and is available statewide following a declared disaster to protect life and property from future risk. The governor has the authority to allocate the funds for eligible mitigation activities. To be eligible, a project must be cost-beneficial (the benefits over the life of the project must exceed the cost of the project) and provide a long-term solution. Specifically these funds are used to reduce future flood losses through activities such as elevating floodprone structures, improving drainage or providing greater flood protection.

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