The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development this year will begin awarding hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts in highway projects for the Lafayette area. Work will begin in late 2016 to widen Interstate 10 to three lanes from Lafayette to the Atchafalaya Basin; and U.S. 90 will continue its transition to interstate status with work on interchanges and overpasses along U.S. 90 in Lafayette and southeast to St. Mary Parish. Bill Oliver, DOTD District 3 chief in Lafayette, said last week.

The U.S. 90 projects are part of a patchwork approach—funding them as money becomes available—to transition the federal highway to interstate standards needed for Interstate 49 South. Not included in the immediate future is the biggest-ticket item for I-49 South: the connector, possibly elevated and costing upwards of $1 billion, that will run from I-10 in north Lafayette to the Kaliste Saloom Road intersection.

Oliver said funding for the connector has not been identified yet, though there are an array of options that officials are looking at.

Oliver said the Highway De-
DOTD PLANNED PROJECTS IN THE LAFAYETTE AREA

INTERSTATE 10 PROJECTS
A Widening from I-49 to La. 328
- Estimated cost: $100 million - $125 million
- Estimated bid date: July 2016
- Estimated construction start: Late 2016
B Widening from La. 347 to Atchafalaya Basin Bridge
- Estimated cost: $20 million - $30 million
- Estimated bid date: September 2016
- Estimated construction start: Late 2016
C Widening from La. 328 to La. 347
- Estimated cost: $100 million - $125 million
- Estimated bid date: 2018/2019
- Estimated construction start: 2019

U.S. 90 PROJECTS
1 Ongoing widening and overpass work at Albertson Pkwy in Broussard
- Estimated cost: $57 million
- Estimated project completion: Summer 2017
2 Interchange at La. 318 in St. Mary Parish
- Estimated cost: $59 million
- Estimated project start: Underway
3 Interchange at Verot School Road
- Estimated cost: No estimate yet
- Estimated project start: Under design
4 Interchange at Ambassador Caffery
- Estimated cost: $100 million - $125 million
- Estimated project start: Under design
5 J-turns in Patterson, Bayou Vista and Berwick
- Estimated cost: $4.5 million
- Estimated project start: September

Source: Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

HIGHWAY
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department's focus is now on the Lafayette area after years of spending money on big-ticket projects in Shreveport, New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

"Now it's our turn," DOTD spokeswoman Deidre Druilhet said.

DOTD will seek bids in July and September to widen sections of I-10 from I-49 to the Atchafalaya Basin.

Oliver said DOTD has separated the project into three parts: 6.5 miles from I-49 to La. 328 in Breaux Bridge, which will be bid in July for work in late 2016; a 2.7-mile section from La. 347 to the Basin bridge that will be bid in September; and the middle section from La. 328 to La. 347, which will be bid in 2018 or 2019.

The cost of the widening project will range from $220 million to $280 million. Oliver said contractors are required to keep two lanes open during construction to prevent major disruptions in traffic flow on busy I-10.

The projects on DOTD's "definite-to-do-list" also include ongoing and planned U.S. 90 work, including interchanges where U.S. 90 intersects Verot School Road, Ambassador Caffery Parkway and La. 85 in St. Mary Parish.

Contractor James Construction Group has work underway to widen U.S. 90 from two lanes to three from Albertson Parkway in Broussard to just north of Ambassador Caffery Parkway, a 1.6-mile section. The $57 million project also is upgrading one overpass and building a new one at Albertson Parkway. The work is scheduled for completion in summer 2017.

After the Albertson Parkway project is completed, the state wants to begin another project that will take a few years to complete: a $100 million to $125 million interchange at Ambassador Caffery Parkway. Oliver said the money for the project is not in the bank yet, but the state is buying land nearby for right-of-ways.

Nearer Lafayette, planners are designing the interchange at U.S. 90 and Verot School Road. Oliver said the plan is to build an elevated interchange with U.S. 90 traffic flowing underneath. Funding for the plan, or even how much it might cost, are under review.

In St. Mary Parish, work is just starting on a $59 million interchange at U.S. 90 and La. 318.

Also planned in St. Mary Parish are J-turns in Bayou Vista and Berwick at intersections where traffic lights stall the flow of traffic.

J-turns are U-turns with traffic lights and lanes in the median to hold vehicles waiting to make turns. The road design was named that because it results in an upside-down "J" shape. To go left, drivers must drive past the intersection, use the J-turn and go back through the intersection to their destination, DOTD officials have said.

J-turns also will be installed in Patterson where crossover intersections at Red Cypress Road and Cotton Road pose the greatest danger to motorists, Oliver said.

Bids will be sent out in June with construction beginning in September. The work is estimated at $4.5 million.

"The whole concept is to create an unhindered flow of traffic," Druilhet said.

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