

Roads Planned on Land of Alleged Mafia Chief

WASHINGTON, July 5 (AP)—The Government is planning to build a superhighway through a soggy bayou land owned by Carlos Marcello, a reputed Mafia leader, and pay his business empire about \$170,000.

The Justice Department has started an investigation of the routing of the Interstate 410 bypass through the five miles of marshes held in the name of two companies Marcello controls.

Although the route has not been announced publicly, the six-lane expressway looping south of New Orleans has already been mapped by highway officials to run across the Marcello marshes.

The Federal government is paying 90 per cent of the \$170,000 earmarked to buy the 300-foot-wide right-of-way through a stretch almost entirely controlled by Marcello.

Marcello, 60 years old has long been identified in Congressional testimony as the undisputed leader of the Mafia in the New Orleans and Gulf Coast area. He is currently waging a court battle against starting a two-year Federal prison term for striking an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

He also was indicted last month for illegal presence in this country after being deported in 1961.

Inquiry Confirmed

A Federal highway official in Louisiana conceded that the I-140 beltway would go through Marcello's holdings but said that it was a logical route.

"If Judas Priest himself owned some of that land, we wouldn't have any choice except to set a fair price and negotiate with him," the official said.

A source in the Justice Department confirmed lawyers were pushing an inquiry to determine whether any undue influence had been involved in the routing of the superhighway. In New Orleans, where the investigation is centered, Federal lawyers declined to comment on any details.

The I-410 bypass route was disclosed last month at a private highway briefing for area officials. Bright red lines on official maps at Louisiana state highway headquarters mark its path through the Marcello marshes.

2 Concerns May Get \$170,000 for Marshes in Louisiana—Federal Inquiry Begun

A public hearing on formal approval of the route is planned for this fall, probably in September.

The Marcello segment is part of a 48-mile bypass swinging around New Orleans and costing \$369-million, with the biggest part of the money marked for building two new bridges across the Mississippi River above and below the city.

Construction 5 Years Off

The I-410 beltway was added to the interstate system in late 1968 when the Johnson Administration, in its dying days, allotted billions of dollars for new superhighways. The Federal Highway Administration pays 90 per cent of the cost of interstate routes.

Construction of the New Orleans bypass is not expected before 1975. Purchase of land for the highway should begin next year if the route is approved formally.

Marcello and his associates have owned the bayou land for nearly two decades. It lies across the Mississippi River from New Orleans, about five miles southwest of the downtown area, in suburban Jefferson Parish.

Churchill Farms, Inc., owns 4,164 acres of this land, and Bayou Verret Land Company, Inc., owns 1,368, according to parish tax assessor records.

Marcello's control of the two companies was disclosed in a hearing on his fight against a Government tax claim. Marcello testified that he owned stock in each company. His attorney went a step further, saying, "Of course, he was the dominant stockholder and officer of Churchill Farms, Inc. and Bayou Verett Land Company."

The Federal tax judge agreed



Associated Press
HIGHWAY LAND OWNER: Carlos Marcello, reputed Mafia head in New Orleans.

in a ruling this March that "Marcello owned, directly or indirectly, a substantial stock interest in Churchill Farms."

One red line on the Louisiana Highways Department's I-410 map traces a possible spur road from the U.S. 90 West Bank Expressway in nearby Westwego to a linkup with the beltway in section 21 of the Marcello land. No interchange was shown here in the original plans submitted to the Federal Government.

Officials Select Route

Unlike other segments of the bypass being tentatively selected by private companies under Government contract, the route from Boutte, La., to below Marrero, La., running

through Marcello's marshes, is being chosen by state officials inside the Louisiana Highways Department.

In Washington, the Federal Highway Administration's route location chief, Rex I. Wells, said that he had been interviewed by a Justice Department attorney, but replied that the Marcello property was the logical place to route the bypass.

"We're not crossing his property because it belongs to him and we're not steering clear of it because he owns it," he said.

He said that a large lake at the southern edge of Marcello's marshes and the developed areas to the north along the Mississippi River hemmed in the available routes and forced the highway through the Marcello land.

The prime proponent of the beltway has been Representative Hale Boggs, the House whip, whose home district embraces Jefferson Parish.