

Alexandria/I-49 Welcome Center

Decreasing Visitation

- Highest annual visitation to the center was in 2008 with 97,350 visitors signing the guest book.
- Since 2008, visitation to the center has decreased 67 percent, falling from 97,350 to 32,326 in 2017.
- Since opening in 2005, visitation to the center has decreased 61.7 percent.
- The Alexandria/I-49 Welcome Center accounts for 6.6 percent of all visitors to all welcome centers in the state since 2005.
- Only Welcome Ctr. not located near the state border (outside of NO French Qtr. location)

Access to Information

- A study by Roger Brooks International shows:
 - 90% of Americans have immediate access to the Internet (even more in Europe and Canada)
 - 94% use the internet to decide where to travel, live, and work
- The increasing popularity of mobile devices to access information and trending use of social media reviews in trip planning are contributing factors in fewer visitors stopping and grabbing informational brochures as they travel on long trips.
- As the use of technology increases to access information and GPS navigation normally available in brochures at welcome centers, state money used to print maps and brochures can be repurposed to attract tourists in other ways.

Construction & Costs

- Construction took place in three phases at a cost of \$1.23 million.
 - Funded through
 - \$830,000 in capital outlay from the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism (DCRT)
 - \$400,000 in federal highway enhancement funds through the Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development (DOTD)
- Final completion in summer 2005.
- DOTD owns the building housing the welcome center
 - Under terms of the agreement signed with DOTD in 1998, after 60 days of non-use by DCRT, possession of the building reverts to DOTD.

- A decision on the future use of the building and site has not been determined.
- Site is located on DOTD property adjacent to Interstate 49. Site is not on a DOTD developed rest area.
 - Louisiana Office of Tourism is responsible for upkeep of the entire site – approximately 8 acres.
 - DCRT contracts for security at the site; 16 hours/day, 7 days/week.
- Annual cost to operate the site is approximately \$270,000/year for the following:
 - Operating costs
 - Maintenance, other costs
 - Staff expenditures & salaries
 - 3 full-time positions and 5 part-time positions

Above figure does not include cost for:

- Term pay for employees
 - Caretaker
- LOT is working to locate positions within the Office of State Parks in an effort to keep staff members employed within DCRT.
- The Alexandria Welcome Center has the highest overhead of any center, including places like Slidell and Greenwood, due to security costs at this location.