NATCHEZ — A project designed to relieve traffic congestion and enhance safety at a vital interchange in Natchez was honored recently during two national awards programs.

The Liberty Road Bridge and Interchange in Natchez, a project coordinated by the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT), ABMB Engineers Inc., of Jackson and Baton Rouge, La., and Grace and Hebert Architects of Baton Rouge received Honorable Mention at the recently-held Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Excellence in Highway Design Awards Program. Only 12 projects from the more than 100 entries throughout the United States received Honorable Mention honors during the FHWA Program.

The Liberty Road Bridge project started as a vision of MDOT executive director Larry L. "Butch" Brown in 2000. In addition to relieving traffic congestion, Brown wanted to provide an aesthetically pleasing gateway from the historic Natchez Trace Parkway into the City of Natchez. This concept was embraced by Commissioner Wayne Brown, Southern District Transportation Commissioner. MDOT contracted with ABMB to design and build the new interchange.

As MDOT's consultant, ABMB worked directly with MDOT leaders as well as with several other agencies, including Grace and Hebert Architects, APEX Engineering of Centerville, Weatherford-McDade, Ltd., in Jackson and Tanner Construction Inc., of Laurel. Through their oversight, this project was completed on time and on budget, exceeding the expectations of local officials and stakeholders.

At the winter meeting of the American Council of Engineering Companies, MDOT and ABMB were presented with the ACEC 2009 Engineering Excellence Honor Award for the design and construction of the Liberty Road Bridge and Interchange.

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