

Detroit River International Crossing Study
Local Advisory Council/Local Agency Group Meeting
Notes
February 24, 2010, 7:00 p.m.
Southwestern High School

Purpose: To review the progress of the Detroit River International Crossing Project.

Attendance: See attached.

Discussion:

Introductions/Agenda

Mohammed Alghurabi asked those in attendance to introduce themselves beginning with the LAC/LAG members and then the observers. He noted the absence of Mrs. Leonard and indicated that she had contacted him beforehand to express her regrets that she could not attend. Mohammed Alghurabi said he wanted to add one item to the agenda—the US Census.

Census Jobs

Mohammed Alghurabi introduced Raquel Casrenada-Lopez. She stated the U.S. Census needs workers from Southwest Detroit. She explained the qualifications and how she could be contacted. She handed out flyers with that information. The announcement was also made in Spanish.

Public Comments

Tom Cervenak asked if there is any draft layout material of how the project would look and the context sensitive design work. Joe Corradino referred to the DRIC Web site. He said go to “Meetings” and then “Workshops” for late 2005 and 2006.

Mr. Rosen indicated that at the previous LAC meeting there was a lack of give and take on the DIFT project. He expressed frustration.

John Bendzick indicated he had presented information about the DIFT project to the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers who thought that “it will be fantastic”. He said he had also spoken to Economic Development Department in Dearborn and they said everything was a green light. Finally he stated that placing a road through the DIFT terminal would not be accepted by the roads. Joe Corradino noted that a road will not go through the middle of the terminal.

Meeting Notes

Ms. Leonard had contacted Mohammed Alghurabi asking who would maintain the green buffer between the terminal and the relocated Kronk (DIFT Project). Joe Corradino said that, if it were part of the public road, maintenance would fall to the city of Detroit. [Terry Stepanski said at a later meeting that MDOT would own the land and who would maintain it would be worked out later in the design phase.]

Steve Walker highlighted a correction on page 2. I-75 Springwells not I-94. Another needed correction was noted on page 5—“eminent” domain not “imminent” domain.

Gateway Project Update

Mohammed Alghurabi introduced Victor Judnic, Manager of the Gateway Project for MDOT.

Victor Judnic said the signals had been successfully retimed at I-94/Springwells, and traffic appeared to be flowing better. Several citizens agreed. Victor noted that the southbound Springwells to eastbound Fort Street movement will be prohibited with a further adjustment.

Victor Judnic stated there had been a court stay his ruling. The Ambassador Bridge Company asked the presiding judge (Prentis Edwards) to stay his decision. The judge declined the stay. The Ambassador Bridge then appealed the decision to the Michigan Court of Appeals. A hearing will be held on March 2 with a decision expected within 10 days. Another appeal, if filed, would carry the matter to the Michigan Supreme Court. He then entertained comments and questions.

Q: Mr. Rosen asked if there would be a sidewalk on the north side of Fort, once the trucks were redirected to I-75.

R: Victor Judnic indicated there is not enough right-of-way for a sidewalk between St. Anne and West Grand Boulevard on the north side of Fort Street. A tradeoff had to be made between an international plaza and the space it needed and related security, versus sidewalk access. Victor stressed there is a sidewalk on the south side of Fort Street.

Q: John Bendzick asked what lawyers were arguing the case.

R: Victor Judnic said the Attorney General's office is arguing the case for MDOT.

Q. John Benschick asked if Victor had a personal lawyer.

C. Victor responded that the Michigan Attorney General represents MDOT and its employees.

C: John Nagy asked if the turn restrictions at Springwells will be permanent.

R: Victor Judnic said they were temporary and related to the truck detours.

C: John Solano of the Southwest Detroit Improvement Association asked about pedestrian travel on Central Boulevard.

R: Joe Corradino said the underpass would be 80+ feet wide and would accommodate sidewalks and bike lanes in addition to vehicles.

Community Benefits Coalition Update

Tom Cervenak reported that a town hall meeting sponsored by the Southwest Detroit Community Benefits, held February 23rd, had been jam-packed. A number of elected officials attended. There was consensus on the need for a legally-enforceable community benefits agreement. Regarding development in Delray, Bridging Communities will be building 25 homes for DRIC relocatees. There will be another meeting March 23rd.

Update on the DRIC Reporting Requirements to Legislature

Mohammed Alghurabi provided an update on the DRIC by indicating that by May 1, 2010, MDOT must report on expressions of interest (RFPEOI), and provide an investment grade traffic forecast. By June 1, 2010 the Legislature is to take action regarding P3 activities. There are

three components: allowing for P3 entities, allowing tolling, and allowing MDOT to enter into a contract(s) with the Canadian government.

Joe Corradino explained that the traffic forecasts for included in the Environmental Impact Statement focused on travel during the morning, midday and afternoon peak hours. Average weekday traffic was used in the analysis application. Now, an Investment Grade Traffic and Revenue Study has been completed under separate contract to fulfill financing needs. The average weekday traffic results of the two studies agree within 10 percent.

Q: Tom Cervenak said he had seen an article about building only four lanes.

R: Joe Corradino said knowing the bridge will last 100 years or more combined with the relatively low construction costs in the current recession, experts would agree that it would be short-sighted to build only four lanes. Mohammed Alghurabi added that international truck border crossings are up based on recent reporting.

Q: John Nagy asked who will pick the P3?

R: Mohammed Alghurabi said the Border Transportation Partnership.

Q: A newspaper referred to the potential for the Ambassador Bridge Company to be the bridge operator.

R: Mohammed Alghurabi said the selection of the P3 will be based on qualifications. Joe Corradino explained it will not be a low-bid situation; it will be a best-value selection with cost as one factor.

Team II

Mohammed Alghurabi introduced John Baron of the city of Detroit. John Baron said the objective of Team II is to keep all City agencies involved in the DRIC project as it moves forward. A responsibility matrix has been created to track action items. Items are marked as “A,” “B,” or “C” to denote timing priorities and the sequencing of activities.

A recent item of activity is review of the buffering around Southwestern High School with respect to the utility corridor along the north side of the plaza. Another is review of Fort Wayne needs, such as: access roads, off-street parking, way finding signage, and a traffic management study. Team II continues to determine how much City-owned land exists in the project area.

Also, coordination was ongoing between the City's Workforce Development agency and MDOT's Road Construction Apprenticeship Readiness Program (RCAR) to get individuals in the neighborhood qualified for work on the DRIC.

Tom Cervenak asked if the truck routing issue, important to Delray, was being addressed by the Planning and Development Department. John Baron responded that was high on their list.

Other LAC/LAG Business

Mohammed Alghurabi asked that anyone who continued to have a need to be contacted by fax to let him know. Otherwise, fax contact was being eliminated.

Additional Public Comments

Q: An unidentified person asked if there were any feedback yet from members of the Legislature on the needed legislation?

R: Mohammed responded it was too early to expect that.

Q: Mr. Rosen asked for more clarification on who will pick the P3?

R: Joe Corradino elaborated by saying that, at a minimum, the new bridge would be developed by a P3. That meant design, construction and operation. It is unknown whether a P3 bid would cover the plazas. In any event, coordination with the federal General Services Administration would be necessary for the plaza. Everything will have to be built to standards. If one looks at the bridge, the lead on the public side will be MDOT and Transport Canada. The connections to I-75 will involve the Federal Highway Administration. He understood Mr. Rosen's concern about a private sector proposal to "build on the cheap" but said the Partnership is in the driver's seat through its value-based selection process. A limitation the Canadians are concerned about is the "Buy

American” clause in U.S. law affecting Stimulus projects. In this context “Buy American” means buy U.S. and does not allow for use of Canadian materials.

Q: Frank Rodriguez noted that the area along Fort Street near All Saint’s Catholic Church needs the street lights repaired.

R: John Baron said he would get Frank’s contact information so he could facilitate contact with Detroit Power and Lighting.

Q: John Nagy said there were rumors that MDOT had begun to acquire property in the neighborhood, including his own. He asked that Mohammed Alghurabi clarify the situation.

R: Mohammed Alghurabi said there had been absolutely no property acquisition by MDOT.

With that, the meeting ended at 9:00 p.m. The next meeting was announced as March 31, 2010, at 7:00 p.m. at Southwestern High School.

I:\Projects\4000\WP\Notes\LAC\LAC-LAG 2-24-10.doc