

**Gateway
Communities
Development
Collaborative**

*C/o Southwest Detroit
Business Association
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Member Organizations

Bagley Housing Association

Bridging Communities, Inc.

*Greater Corktown
Development Corporation*

*Mexicantown Community
Development Corporation*

*Michigan Avenue Business
Association*

Neighborhood Centers, Inc.

*Southwest Detroit Business
Association*

*Southwest Detroit
Environmental Vision*

Southwest Housing Solutions

May 8, 2007

Representative Steve Tobocman
Michigan House of Representatives
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Re: Request for Continued Support of the Detroit International River
Crossing (DRIC) Study Group

Dear Steve:

This letter is on behalf of the member organizations of the Gateway Communities Development Collaborative (GCDC), the Delray Community Council (Delray), the Hubbard Farms Neighborhood Association (Hubbard Farms) and People's Community Services, a human service agency that serves the Delray community (PCS). We are writing to urge Michigan legislators to provide continued support for the Detroit International River Crossing (DRIC) Study Group as it works to prepare recommendations regarding the best location for a second international border crossing between Detroit and Windsor.

GCDC is an association of nine non-profit community development organizations that are working to improve the quality of life in Southwest Detroit. All are engaged in housing, economic development or environmental work to create a community where people want to live, work, shop and play. Over the last five years, GCDC member organizations and their partners have invested nearly \$22 million in commercial and economic development projects, over \$92 million in housing development projects, and \$18.5 million in infrastructure, parks and greenway improvements. GCDC also works in partnership with other community organizations in Southwest Detroit like Delray, Hubbard Farms and PCS to be actively involved in the discussions regarding a second international border crossing.

We are all extremely concerned about the possibility of the state suspending the work of the DRIC study group in favor of a privately funded proposal by the Detroit International Bridge Company (DIBC) to build a second bridge span near the existing Ambassador Bridge. As you are aware, the DRIC study group brings together all the stakeholders of the community, and public officials on both sides the U.S. and Canadian border in a public process to make recommendations regarding the best location for a second international border crossing between Detroit and Windsor.

At the same time DIBC is proposing to build a second span because another crossing is seen as competition to their existing bridge. They have publicly stated that they will privately finance the project and many lawmakers seem to be tempted to end the DRIC process because of the state's current difficult financial position. We believe this would be a serious mistake in judgment and following are some reasons to consider for continuing the DRIC study process and not supporting DIBC's proposed second span.

First, the Department of Homeland Security has recommended a second international border crossing to create redundancy in case of a terrorist attack. The current Detroit - Windsor crossing owned by DIBC is the busiest international crossing in the U.S. and is vital to the region's economy. The DRIC study group felt DIBC's proposed six-lane bridge would not be sufficient to address security issues identified by Homeland Security (too close to existing bridge) and would not have enough lanes to meet anticipated future demand.

Secondly, any new crossing would have to connect to Windsor and Canadian officials who are participating in the DRIC study process have rejected the DIBC proposal as part of the DRIC recommendations. Federal officials in Canada have also passed sweeping new powers (bill C-3) to regulate border crossings because, in part, of their concerns about an unregulated Ambassador Bridge. The City of Windsor has advocated for its preference for a new crossing further down river, rather than expanding truck traffic into the neighborhoods as would be required by DIBC's proposal. This is documented in the Schwartz Report, as well as by the City of Detroit's recent decision to place a moratorium on demolitions near the Ambassador Bridge.

Thirdly, we believe that public ownership of a second international border crossing is essential to addressing a regional / international problem that requires cooperation at many different levels of government from two countries. We do not believe that DIBC as a private entity would be subject to public accountability to build and operate another border crossing. DIBC has fought historically against such accountability as evidenced by its recent expansion of the number of toll and customs booths without pulling permits from the City of Detroit and then fighting in the courts to be declared a federal instrumentality (Case is still under appeal).

We are concerned that the competing private needs of DIBC and the public interests could cause significant delays in the bridge building process as well as in addressing other operational problems that are likely to arise. We know this has been a problem with DIBC working with the General Services Administration on the building of added toll booths and customs inspection lanes. IN addition, DIBC wants to take on responsibility for a \$450 million bridge building project, yet it has not followed through on the acquisition of property needed for the \$35 million Gateway Expansion Project, a project authorized in 1994. This project was designed to connect the current bridge directly to the freeway system to divert trucks from local roadways. DIBC has been the sole cause in the last several months of delays in completing the Gateway project because it did not what it said it would. What is to keep them from delaying the proposed project when its business interests conflict with public interests?

Lastly, at a recent March 1, 2007 public meeting concerning DIBC's Environmental Assessment before the U.S. Coast Guard, DIBC indicated that its second span did not require public funding. Yet, it is now requesting approval for the sale of \$1 billion of private activity bonds. It's our position that if DIBC can use the government's bonding authority to raise the funding needed for the proposed project, then the state could just as easily do the same thing and maintain public control and accountability of a critical border crossing.

We hope that you will seriously consider our thoughts on this matter and that you would urge your colleagues to continue to support the DRIC study process. We also hope that you will ask them to consider public ownership of any new Detroit-Windsor border crossing as we believe this is essential for public accountability and a more secure border. We would appreciate your contacting us regarding your thoughts on these issues and whether you can support our requests.

Thank you for your time in this matter.

Sincerely,

Alison Benjamin

Alison Benjamin
Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision
GCDC Executive Committee Member

Tom Cervenak

Tom Cervenak
People's Community Services

John M. Nagy

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Delray Community Council