

Legislative Committee Meeting

Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) Study

Dear Legislators

Greetings, we have been instructed to submit testimony regarding the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) Study

Please allow me to introduce myself my name is Rhonda Anderson and I work as the Environmental Justice Organizer for the Sierra Club's National Environmental Justice Program in Detroit. The Sierra Club's E J Program has been in operation over five (5) years and has E J Organizers in eight (8) locations across the US. Sierra Club is the oldest and one of the leading environmental organizations in the US. Of the leading environmental organization Sierra Club leads when it comes to addressing Environmental Justice in the US. Sierra Club has over 700,000 members nationwide and about 19,000 in the state of Michigan.

I will not take much of your time I too am very busy. The issue of the DRIC Study and the possibility of a new international crossing in Detroit is a very serious matter and we hope to be able to gain consideration as to the impact that an additional crossing in Detroit will have on the health and quality of life of residents in the selected site. The site for the crossing is in a community I'm quite familiar with I grew up there. My concerns are as follows:

1. To this date there has not been any factual information supporting the need for a new crossing. What we have heard are mere projections. We believe most of the present congestion can be corrected by simply adding additional toll booths to the present plaza.
2. There has been mention of the crossing creating jobs. We have not been told what types of jobs these will be, who will hold the jobs.
3. The community selected for this new crossing is already inundated with heavy industry i.e. Ford Rouge Plant, Rouge Steel, Great Lake Steel, Marathon Ashland Oil Refinery, Zug Island, Detroit Wastewater Facility, Detroit Salt Mine, Honey Well, Magni Industries Inc., Rayco Plating Inc., Owens Corning Trumbull, Sunoco Logistics Terminal, these are just a few of the industries. I describe this area as "Detroit's Cancer Alley", similar to the original Cancer Alley in New Orleans. In the seventy-mile stretch between Baton Rouge and New Orleans known as "Cancer Alley" there are ninety-three oil refineries and chemical plants emitting toxins into the air and water. Detroit's Cancer Alley does not have ninety-three oil refineries, but it does have heavy concentration of industry in an even smaller area. Needless to say that the emissions from these facilities are in the hundred of thousands of tons per year of some of the most toxic material around. While most of these facilities are meeting the air quality guidelines, the combined amounts of toxins in my estimations as well as those of many scientists

are causing dangerous health problems and premature deaths of many of the residents in this area.

4. Environmental Racism can be defined as the intentional siting of hazardous waste sites (Detroit Waste Water Treatment Facility, Detroit's Municipal Incinerator), landfills, incinerators, and polluting industries in communities inhabited mainly by African-American, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asians, migrant farm workers, and the working poor. Environmental Justice is the solution to this practice. Race is the most significant variable associated with the location of hazardous facilities. Although socioeconomic status is also an important variable in the location of these sites, race is the most significant even after controlling for urban and regional differences.

The proximity of the site for the crossing to Southwestern High School meets the definition of Environmental Racism. With the possible three (3) sites each will have a distance of (0) to the location of the high school.

5. A report released in January by PIRGIM ranked Detroit 6th nationwide for the worst fine particle, or "soot", pollution among large metro areas in 2004. Power plants and diesel engines are the largest sources of fine particle pollution. Fine particles have been linked to a wide variety of serious health impacts, from upper and lower respiratory ailments, such as asthma to heart attacks and strokes, including crib death in children.

The social economic cost of pollution in Detroit has not been calculated nor addressed. An Environmental Justice and Health impact study should be conducted to properly address the impact of a crossing in this community.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

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