



**Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision**  
P.O. Box 9400  
Detroit, MI 48209

Phone: (313) 842-1961  
FAX: (313) 842-2158  
Email: [swdev@flash.net](mailto:swdev@flash.net)

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**Testimony to the Joint House and Senate Transportation Committees Regarding the DRIC**

On behalf of Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision (SDEV), I am writing in response to the notice of the Joint Transportation Committee's public hearings regarding the Detroit River International Crossing study (DRIC). My name is Alison Benjamin and I am a member of the Local Advisory Council (LAC) for the study and have attended meetings and workshops on the issue for over a year.

Southwest Detroit's strategic position in the geography of Southeast Michigan is both a blessing and a curse. The nexus of rail lines, the Detroit River, freeways and the border with Canada resulted in strong economic development in manufacturing and transportation industries in the past. Today the community is growing with new residents, new homes and small businesses. Activists, residents and nonprofit agencies are working successfully everyday to improve the quality of life in the community.

MDOT's DRIC study has proposed yet another huge transportation infrastructure project for this small neighborhood. I can safely say that no one I know really wants another border crossing in this community; however given that strategic geography I mentioned, Southwest Detroit may become the practical alternative location for a bridge crossing and plaza. Given that reality, MDOT, the LAC and residents have been working hard to make sure that the negative impacts of such a massive project are recognized and that the surrounding neighborhood will benefit from a new bridge insofar as it is possible. While the study process has generated some controversy over the past twelve months, community participation and input has been valued. The issue of public ownership and oversight of a second crossing has been acknowledged as have requests for openness on issues of eminent domain and the state's taking of property. Residents and LAC members are also very aware that Windsor neighborhoods suffer some of the same impacts from a border crossing as we do; the tough struggle to balance community needs and regional economic development is similar on both sides of the border. **The DRIC public process is the first time community residents have been able to participate effectively in a border crossing discussion before decisions are made. If this were not a public process designed by the state and federal government, we would not be at the table.**

If there is to be a second border crossing in Southwest Detroit:

1. It must be publicly owned and operated.
2. The local community must benefit economically.
3. There must be as little disruption as possible for residents who want to remain in the community.
4. There must a direct connection to the freeway for traffic entering and exiting the bridge.
5. Better protections for negative air quality impacts must be put in place.

I thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Joint Transportation Committee's hearings on the Detroit River International Crossing study.

Sincerely,

*Alison Benjamin*  
Alison Benjamin  
Program Manager  
Contaminated Sites