

The Detroit River International Crossing Study Update



Project Purpose and Process Requirements:

The governments of Canada, the United States, Ontario and Michigan are moving forward in a Border Transportation Partnership to implement a long-range transportation strategy addressing the various challenges of the Windsor-Detroit Gateway. The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is leading the Canadian work program in coordination with Transport Canada.

Keeping in mind the international and national significance of this crossing and that cross-border truck traffic is projected to increase by 128% over the next 15 years, the Partnership is working to achieve an end-to-end solution – river crossing, inspection plazas, and access roads - that will provide for the safe, efficient and secure movement of people and goods across the international border in the Detroit River area, supporting local and national economies.

The Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) study is being carried out in accordance with the process requirements of the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act, and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. The Canadian study is being coordinated with a similar study by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), which is being conducted to meet the requirements of the United States National Environmental Policy Act. The goal is to find the solution that provides the best balance of transportation benefits with environmental (including community) impacts.

Important Project Milestones to Date:

February 2001	The Border Transportation Partnership was formed consisting of Transport Canada, the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, and the Michigan Department of Transportation.
January 2004	A Planning Need and Feasibility Study, initiated in March 2002, outlined a 30-year strategy for the border.
September 2004	The Ontario Minister of Environment approved the Environmental Assessment (EA) Terms of Reference for the DRIC study.
January 2005	The DRIC EA process began with the detailed study of the Windsor-Detroit Gateway and the identification of area features, opportunities and constraints.
June 2005	A long list of illustrative alternatives, including 15 river crossings and associated access roads and plazas, was presented for public comment.
November 2005	The area of Continued Analysis was presented for public consideration, as the area in which practical alternatives would be developed.

The Announcement of the Practical Alternatives on March 28, 2006:

The development of the practical alternatives announced on March 28, 2006 for the access road, plaza and crossing involved analysis of information collected through focussed workshop discussions with members of the public, consultation with government agencies and further data collection. The analysis recommended that the access road consist of a new six-lane freeway extending Highway 401 along the current Highway 3, Huron Church Road and E.C. Row corridors to the new plaza and crossing location.

- **Access Road Options** include building a tunnel for the freeway, building the freeway at-grade, or building the freeway below grade. With all options, service roads would provide access to the local road network.
- **Inspection plaza options** under consideration include one in the area of Brighton Beach, one immediately south of E.C. Row Expressway and east of Ojibway Parkway, and one at the waterfront between Prospect Avenue and Broadway Boulevard.
- **River crossing options** include one in the area of Brighton Beach, one immediately south of Prospect Avenue and one near Sterling Fuels marine fuelling station. The practical alternatives are shown on the accompanying map.

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The practical alternatives will be examined on the basis of their ability to balance transportation benefits with environmental (including community) impacts. Key considerations identified through consultation to date include local and emergency access needs, proximity to residential, commercial and natural areas, air quality and noise. The study team is considering the comments provided by all stakeholders, including the public. This information will assist the members of the study team, as they continue their work. The team is on schedule to identify a single preferred river crossing, inspection plaza and access road by mid-2007.

Technical Investigations:

Over the summer and fall of 2006, Windsor area residents can expect to see technicians, engineers and archaeologists in the field conducting technical work that is part of the EA process. Currently, biologists are examining aquatic and terrestrial habitats to identify important habitat areas, species present (including any identified species at risk) and potential effects of the practical alternatives. Archaeological survey work will be commencing in the near future involving test pitting with shovels at regular intervals to identify possible resources in areas that may be impacted by the options. Interviews will be conducted with homeowners and business operators.

Investigation of soils and drainage conditions, geometric design, construction staging, and traffic management, will be developed, together with preliminary cost estimates. Near the proposed river crossing locations, geotechnical boreholes will be established and seismic work will be undertaken to determine the extent of historic underground salt mines.

The study team will share the results of these technical investigations in December 2006.

Evaluation Process:

The practical alternatives will be evaluated using the seven evaluation factors used earlier in the study - changes in air quality, protecting neighbourhood and community characteristics, consistency with planned and existing land use, protecting cultural resources, protecting the natural environment, improving regional mobility and cost. It is important to note that cost is only one of the factors to be considered. The evaluation will take into account the more detailed information available on these options, based on the technical investigations currently underway. The study team is working with the community to find the solution that provides the best balance of transportation benefits with environmental (including community) impacts.

Ongoing Community Consultation:

The DRIC study team has been listening to the concerns and suggestions of the community. The community and stakeholders are being actively engaged in the study, and study activities continue to be coordinated with our U.S. partners.

Between January 2005 and May 2006, the Canadian study team has participated in more than 100 community consultation events, including meetings with municipal councils, Public Information Open Houses and associated Workshops, public meetings, Community Consultation Group and community group meetings, meetings with Advisory Groups, and other Study Area/Interest groups.

For the Open Houses in March 2006, over 5000 notices were hand delivered to residents and businesses within the Area of Continued Analysis.

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Next Steps:

Summer/Fall 2006	Ongoing technical and field work in areas such as seismic studies; noise assessment/modelling; air quality assessments; archaeological studies and mitigation studies.
December 2006	The results of the social, economic, environmental and engineering assessments will be presented to the public for feedback at Public Information Open Houses.
Mid-2007	The preferred crossing location, plaza locations and access roads in Canada and the U.S. will be identified. Community consultation will continue.
Summer 2007	Engineering and mitigation measures will be finalized.
End of 2007	The final EA Report will be submitted to Ontario's Minister of the Environment for formal review and approval under the Environmental Assessment Act, and presented to responsible federal authorities under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. In the United States, study documentation will be provided for approval under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Contact us:

Visit the DRIC website at www.partnershipborderstudy.com, for information on the DRIC study, including reports, work plans, the Environmental Assessment Terms of Reference, maps and public meeting notices. Be sure to ask to have your name added to our mailing list so you will receive the latest news and information.

We can be reached on our toll-free number at 1-800-900-2649. You may also contact the following individuals or visit our storefront office in Windsor at the address noted below. We are happy to answer your questions, listen to your concerns and receive your feedback.

Canadian Contact Information

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