

## **Protection of Community and Neighbourhood Characteristics: Social Impact Assessment**

Social impact assessment is being undertaken to assess the social consequences that are likely to follow from the construction and operation of the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC), including the access roads and plaza, as well as to identify ways of reducing negative effects.

### **How the Analysis was Done**

Social impacts can occur at various units of social order: individuals, businesses, families, communities, economic sectors or broader societal units such as whole cultures or nations. For the purposes of this analysis, a property was considered displaced (buyout) if any part of the property is directly impacted by the proposed right-of-way (ROW) of the access road, the service roads, plazas or crossings. A final decision on acquiring properties will be made on a property-by-property basis once the study team has identified a preferred alternative and the associated property requirements are defined.

The social impact assessment for the analysis of Practical Alternatives for the DRIC study involved an assessment of several indicators, including:

- number of households/dwellings displaced
- number of households/dwellings disrupted
- number of special populations displaced
- qualitative and quantitative assessment of social features and uses displaced
- qualitative and quantitative assessment of social features and uses disrupted
- qualitative assessment of the impact on community cohesion, character, and function.

The property limits of potentially displaced households were obtained from the local municipality and mapped using ArcGIS 9.1 Geographical Information System (GIS) software.

Residences that could be displaced by any of the Practical Alternatives under consideration were mailed a questionnaire. Follow-up contact was made to non-respondents by re-sending the questionnaires and by contacting them directly by phone. Of a total of 479 questionnaires, 294 (61%) of property owners completed the questionnaire.

Focus group meetings were used to collect information from residents that may be displaced or disrupted. Residents living within the DRIC Area of Continued Analysis were invited to a focus group meeting held October 21, 2006. A total of 78 people representing 57 households attended the focus group meetings.

Participants completed a mental mapping exercise that provided information on how participants define their neighbourhood boundaries and interact within the community, including where people shop for groceries, worship, and recreate.

### **Results to Date**

#### **Households/Dwellings Displaced**

Property requirements and the consequent displacement of households and dwellings (all forms of housing) can have a negative impact on community residents (owners and tenants). The total number of households potentially displaced was identified. For this study, the terms 'households' and 'dwellings' are used interchangeably.

Preliminary results indicate that:

- The number of households potentially displaced by the access road alternatives varies between 125 to 220, depending on the alignment and location of service roads.
- The tunnel alternative generally results in fewer household displacements than the other alternatives.

- The one-way service road alternatives (Alternatives 1A and 1B) displace fewer households than the parallel service road alternatives (Alternatives 2A and 2B).
- More households are displaced by the access road to Plaza A than with a connection to the other plazas.
- More households are displaced with the Plaza A alternative than Plaza B, B1 or C alternatives.
- More households are displaced by the access road by widening to the north (Windsor) side of Highway 3 than the south (LaSalle) side.

The completed questionnaires of potentially displaced households identified that:

- households with children under 18 represent 32% of total households
- households with adults over 65 years of age account for 26% of total households
- most dwellings are detached single family homes (79%) with 38% of residents living there for less than five years and 27% of residents living there between 11 and 30 years.

### **Households/Dwellings Disrupted**

The extent to which each alternative may have short-term (i.e. during construction) and long-term (i.e. post-construction) disruptive effects to residents adjacent to the ROW, such as: dust, noise, lighting, visual intrusion, traffic, vibration, limitations in access to properties, loss of enjoyment of property, interruption of day to day activities, and pedestrian access/safety, as well as the ability to mitigate such effects, is presently being assessed.

In general, a mental mapping exercise conducted as part of a Focus Group workshop with residents showed that:

- Residents engage in activities within their general neighbourhood vicinity.
- Residents often considered their home as the hub of their community.
- Many residents consider Highway 3 and Huron Church the physical barrier or boundary to their neighbourhood.
- Neighbourhood boundaries vary from small areas concentrated in close proximity to homes, while others are widespread over several kilometres.
- Many residents indicated they appreciate the accessibility of the transportation network (E.C.Row Expressway, Highway 401, Highway 3).
- A common shopping spot is the Zehrs in LaSalle.

Focus group participants also discussed a series of questions aimed at understanding how they feel about their community, how they use their property and how the proposed project may impact on those uses. This data is being interpreted for inclusion in the assessment of the Practical Alternatives and additional workshops are being organized to gather more community input on disruption.

### **Social Features and Uses Displaced**

Property requirements and the consequential displacement of social, recreational and cultural institutions can have a substantial negative impact on the users, employees and managers of such facilities. The measurement involved a quantitative assessment of the total number of institutional uses, wholly or partially, in the proposed ROW based on GIS mapping, field reconnaissance and key informant interviews. Interviews with facilities/institutional members provided information on programs, facility uses, service catchment areas, membership population, and access routes to the facilities.

The maximum number of institutions wholly and partially displaced along the ROW is three facilities with uses relating to religious functions, community outreach, recreation and leisure. This information will be used to compare the project alternatives.

### **Social Features and Uses Disrupted**

The extent to which each alternative may have short-term (i.e. during construction) and long-term (i.e. post-construction) disruptive effects to institutional uses adjacent to the ROW such as: dust, noise, odour, lighting, visual

intrusion, traffic, vibration, limitations in access to properties, and pedestrian access/safety, as well as the ability to mitigate such effects, is presently being assessed. Institutional/social/recreational disruption is based on the qualitative assessment of information gathered from site visits, facility interviews with employees, focus group meetings and review of secondary literature/document sources.

Site visits were made to the facilities within close proximity to the Practical Alternatives which include: parks (Broadway, Ojibway, Malden, Indian Memorial, Bellwood, Beals, Veterans, St. Clair Athletic Field and Matthew Rodzick); Victoria Memorial Cemetery; recreational facilities (Oakwood Community Centre, South Windsor Recreational Complex); schools (Oakwood Public School, Montessori Pre-School, Ste. Cecile Academy of Music, Ste. Cecile Academy, The Children's House Montessori, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Separate School); and places of worship (Heritage Park Alliance Church, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, Evangelical Slavic Mission, Oakwood Bible Chapel, St. Charbel Maronite Catholic Church). These visits noted functional uses and public access to the sites/facilities. Site visits coupled with key informant interviews gathered information on the types of uses, description of existing facilities/equipment, population/catchment areas served, and personal opinions on how the DRIC project might affect the daily activities associated with each social feature.

General findings indicate that all parks and facilities would experience varying degrees of short-term disruption due to noise, traffic congestion, dust, and limitations in road access during construction. Some facilities voiced long-term disruption concerns due to reduced access points (that may sever their service area), heavier traffic and associated child/elderly safety concerns in accessing and using certain facilities/institutions. As these results are preliminary, detailed listings of disruption impacts for each facility will be prepared and incorporated in the analysis of Practical Alternatives.

### **Effects on Community Cohesion, Character and Function**

Community cohesion is generally described as a measure of how a community is tied together. Some residents have identified that Huron Church Road and Highway 3 represents a barrier or boundary in their communities, citing high traffic volumes and limited access across and along the corridor. As well, residents are concerned that the proposed project has the potential to segment and divide existing neighbourhoods and communities. Social patterns, functions, and linkages in the community may also be disrupted, such as changes to community centre catchment areas as a result of changes in access. The Practical Alternatives also have the potential to address these issues and to upgrade or enhance connections between existing communities where there is currently a lack of social cohesion. A qualitative assessment of the impact of the undertaking on the function of existing neighbourhoods and identification of methods to reduce any such impacts is ongoing. Once completed, this information will be used in the assessment of the Practical Alternatives.

Data collection that contributes to this part of the analysis includes examination of existing and planned land uses as presented in Official Plans and other planning documents, field examination, focus group inputs, household questionnaires, comments recorded at public and stakeholder meetings, and key informant interviews.

### **Remaining Activities**

The results of the analysis to date will be used to review alternative alignments and make refinements where possible to further reduce property and community impacts. Additional information on community features and characteristics is also being collected. This information will be incorporated in the analysis prior to determining a technically and environmentally preferred alternative.