

**DRAFT**  
**Detroit River International Crossing Study**  
**Local Advisory Council**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**October 29, 2008, 6:00 p.m.**  
**Southwestern High School**

**Purpose:** To review the progress of the Detroit International Crossing Study.

**Attendance:** See attached.

**Discussion:**

Mohammed Alghurabi reviewed the meeting conduct procedures and the agenda. He asked the LAC members if they had any agenda items to add. They did not. He asked if there were any public comments at that time. There were none. He asked if anyone had any corrections to the September 24, 2008, meeting notes. There were none.

**Update of Gateway**

Victor Judnic of MDOT explained the key features of the Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project now being constructed, including: the temporary closure of I-96 was now complete, closure of I-75 will extend into 2009, and, a key feature of the project is a noise wall on the north side of I-75 between West Grand and Clark. Victor noted that many meetings had been held with agencies, those in the neighborhood, and stakeholder groups. He indicated that the project would generate approximately 350 construction jobs, plus another 60 jobs for engineers and technical people. For every dollar spent on the project, there is a \$6 ripple in terms of dollars in the larger community. Victor volunteered to stay after the meeting to answer questions.

Mr. Rosen noted that the vertical wavy lines in a concrete canyon as shown on a slide on the Gateway Project were not desirable. He stated that, on I-96, there are horizontal bands that are more compatible with the features of the construction. He continued that there are rules of design and, even if the Gateway Project cannot be changed, there should be principals to be aware of for future projects.

Mr. Rosen also expressed concern about trucks coming off the ramp into the Luna Bakery and offered that an extra-tall barrier wall, placed on the outside of the ramp, could prevent such incidents. Mr. Rosen continued that graffiti is evident on the walls that have just been built.

Vic Judnic responded that, once construction is complete, the graffiti will be removed and an anti-graffiti coating will be added. Then, traffic on the freeway will discourage further graffiti.

Ms. Emma Czek, Southwest Detroit Business Association, asked about the structure being built at the Gateway Project on the north side of Fort Street. Vic Judnic responded that it is a bridge ramp to serve the new plaza that is under development to carry traffic to the existing bridge.

Ms. Czek continued: Would there be benefits paid for lost business? The response was no. Will there be job guarantees for local citizens? Vic Judnic replied that the upcoming contracts on the Gateway Project are small enough that local contractors should be competitive in the bidding.

John Nagy thanked Mr. Judnic for dealing with some improperly disposed landfill. He asked about the ramp being built by Fort Street. Mr. Judnic said it is on private property, it is a part of the plaza upgrade for a private project. John Nagy asked if he could have an assurance that no public dollars were involved. Victor Judnic said that was the case. He said the ramp, in its current position, could be a lead-off ramp to a second bridge span but, again, that was a private action with no public dollars.

Mr. Nagy noted that the Michigan Supreme Court had agreed that the Detroit International Bridge Company is an instrumentality of the federal government; he supports public ownership and oversight of the bridge; and that the DIBC was improperly allowing corrosive materials to cross the Ambassador Bridge.

Alexander Burke had a question about his property being impacted by MDOT's projects in the area. He was referred to Guy Corradino to examine a computer-based data file of property that could be acquired by the Detroit River International Crossing Project.

Emma Benson asked about the Gateway Project schedule. Victor Judnic said it could be completed in the fall of 2009.

### **CSS Presentation**

Joe Corradino used a video "virtual tour" of the DRIC area to show the individual elements of the project and how they could look in the future. He paused at each of thirteen views of the area to explain the

characteristics of the graphics, these being the same graphics that were posted on each side of the Southwestern High School cafeteria and included in a package of handout materials.

### **CSS Presentation Questions from LAC**

Mrs. Leonard asked about how far the buffer area around the plaza extended. Joe Corradino responded that it will span the distance from the wall surrounding the secured area on the plaza to the curb line of Jefferson Avenue to the south, Campbell Street to the east, Post Street to the west, and the rail line to the north. The buffer is approximately 100 feet wide.

John Nagy suggested that ivy be used on the wall along Jefferson Avenue.

Mohammed Alghurabi stated that the CSS effort would continue beyond the environmental phase of the DRIC project.

A gentleman inquired about the fact that all the prints referred to in the “virtual tour” were just concepts. Mohammed Alghurabi responded that the footprint of the project, including the location of the bridge, is not a concept. On the other hand, the planning for the area surrounding the project was conceptual.

### **Status of FEIS**

Mohammed Alghurabi explained that the FEIS will address the Preferred Alternative. Signing of the FEIS is expected in early December. He said that after that, the document would be available for comment for at least 30 days. Then a Record of Decision could be signed. The signed ROD is expected in January 2009. He then asked if the LAC had any questions with respect to the status of the FEIS. There were none.

John Nagy asked about the drilling that was underway. Joe Corradino explained that it was for the analysis of the interchange area.

### **Public Comments**

A meeting participant said that she was told that MDOT would reach conclusions about the DRIC in 2007. Mohammed Alghurabi said, while that was the original expectation, an extra year was required to test for the presence of brinewells.

In response to a question about property acquisition, Mohammed Alghurabi stated acquisition would take about 18 months. It would start when funding was in place.

Mary Ann Cuderman lightheartedly noted that, based on what she had seen in the “virtual tour”, she hoped to move to Delray. She then asked two questions. First, would the project be bicycle friendly? Mohammed Alghurabi responded that, while the bridge’s design allows use by bicyclists and pedestrians, the final decision will be made by U.S. and Canadian Customs agencies. The second question was: will the area under the bridge be secured with, for example, a chain-link fence. Mohammed Alghurabi responded that roads under the bridge would be open but other areas will be secured by fencing. The specifics will be determined in the next phase of the project.

Theresa Zajak asked which roads would be open and which closed over I-75. Joe Corradino said that Dagoon, Junction and Waterman Streets would be closed. Springwells, Green, Livernois and Clark would remain open. All the roadway bridges will have sidewalks on both sides. Five pedestrian bridges would cross I-75.

It was noted by a participant that the lights along Jefferson Avenue shown in the “virtual tour” were too high to relate to pedestrians. The response was that other lighting would be at the pedestrian level and that the Homeland Security would require a full illumination of the area between Jefferson and the wall.

A question was posed about the status of the project in Canada. Mohammed Alghurabi said that public open houses are expected to be held on November 12 and 13. After that, there will be an agency review process. Meanwhile, property is being purchased in Canada where there is a willing seller.

Lisa Goldstein explained that a Community Benefits Coalition (CBC) had been created with about 200 members. She offered an update of the work of the group in seeking benefits for the community which will be included in a legally-binding agreement. She noted that, while the group had collaborated with MDOT, there are outstanding issues that need attention. These include: access to social services, improvement of the air quality in the area, a health impact study, regulation of area truck fleets, an air filtration system for Southwestern High School, and indoor recreational facilities at the school. She noted that the Detroit Public School System agreed to these latter requests.

John Nagy read a statement about housing that is attached to these notes.

Scott Brines of the CBC read a statement covering truck routes and alternative energy. His statement is attached to these notes.

Mary Loubriel of the CBC read a statement about jobs and the economy. She noted that Delray had a very high unemployment rate and that job training was needed, given that the DRIC would eliminate 700-900 jobs. She stressed that not enough was done on Gateway to assure that local people got jobs. This statement is attached at the end of these notes.

Deborah Williams of the CBC read a statement covering governance, long-term funding, and a time extension for community involvement. This statement is attached at the end of these notes.

Mohammed Alghurabi noted that the FEIS section on governance will state that the bridge will be publicly owned.

Mr. Rosen had several new questions. First, would the crosswalks associated with the pedestrian bridges have push button lights to stop traffic? Mohammed Alghurabi responded that those details would have to be worked out with the city at the time of implementation, not now. Mr. Rosen's second question dealt with the height of the cable-stay bridge. Mohammed Alghurabi said it was about 800 feet but the exact details have not yet been worked out. Mr. Rosen said that Mr. Judnic had told him that the cable-stay bridge is fait accompli. Mohammed Alghurabi said that was not so.

An individual expressed the view that the bikeway improvements along Jefferson Avenue should extend south into River Rouge. She went on to say that the statements in the evening's presentation about housing were "just words" and stressed something more concrete is needed. Mohammed Alghurabi explained that, as a transportation agency, MDOT can provide compensation for property it acquires but it cannot build housing. For this reason, they have consulted with other agencies and tried to engage them in planning with respect to housing. Representative Tobocman has been a leader in that effort.

The same commenter said she thought that Jefferson should be kept open. Mohammed Alghurabi said it would remain open. She added that all the businesses in the area are small but struggling and needed all the help they can get.

Jennifer Marron said that there was drilling going on in front of her house and that the fire hydrant had been turned off and wanted to know what was going on. Joe Corradino responded that all the drilling that was occurring at this stage would be complete within two weeks and that if she could tell MDOT where she lived, the action with respect to the hydrant and equipment being parked in front of her house would be followed up on. (Later investigation of the issue determined the drilling was not for the DRIC project.)

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 19, 7:00 p.m. at Southwestern High School.

# Attachment

## Community Statements

**10/29/08 Comments from Lisa Goldstein, SDEV, CBC Coalition Board Member**

The Community Benefits Coalition is continuing to discuss the issues that are important to residents and businesses within this project area. We have met with MDOT several times over the past six months and have received support from MDOT for the community's vision for the redevelopment of Delray.

There are many important issues that we are still working on.

This project creates a significant environmental justice impact in a community with a population that is 69% minority and one of the poorest in the city, with many who do not own cars and many who are elderly. Access to services and basic mobility will be severely impacted by this project.

Air quality is another area of significant impact to environmental justice. MDOT's findings rely upon the assumption that overall air quality will improve, but environmental experts disagree. Air quality monitors in the area including on this school continue to exceed standards for particulate matter that is damaging to heart and lungs. Diesel emissions from trucks partially contribute to particulate matter. If this project moves forward, we need to have baseline health studies and health studies after the project is in place to ensure that residents' health is not adversely impacted.

It is important that Southwestern High School be protected with a new filtration system and that an indoor recreation facility be constructed to protect students now and into the future as DPS has requested.

**John Nagy – Community Benefits Coalition**

**Housing**

This project would displace around 800-1000 residents. There must be aggressive efforts made to relocate hundreds of housing units that are favorable to area residents. This would include affordable homes that are designed to be sustainable and green (or energy efficient) to attract remaining families.

Realistic fair market values must be assessed to give residents a fighting chance and sufficient funds to secure comparable housing wherever they may choose. Housing values have remained disproportionately low valued in Delray as compared to other communities resulting from the Ambassador Bridge and other factors. We need to see steps to avoiding a repeat of devaluing practices.

Delray's current housing is under many physical stresses of heavy pollution and truck traffic and adding more of these effects with a new bridge has the potential to isolate the neighborhood further.

Bacon, Morrell and Campbell for example will be subjected to isolation and quality of life issues which may contribute to abandonment and disinvestment. Residents are already challenged with making necessary upgrades on their homes to deal with more pollution, vibrations and noise caused by heavy traffic.

### **Scott Brines - CBC**

#### **Truck Routes**

Current plans will encourage more trucks to use residential streets. Truck traffic is already at maximum capacity on area streets mixing with residential areas and deterring local businesses from gaining economic viability.

We are seeking studies to gain understanding into the current truck movements and with cooperation from businesses and residents to find new, more efficient truck routes that accommodate and consider local traffic without disruption to the neighborhoods.

Our goal is to protect the community and create a better quality of life with promotion of economic development and a safe environment. Creating this development takes efforts to isolate trucks from the remaining neighborhoods with designated routes.

#### **Alternative Energy**

The influx of traffic and pollution will increase the cumulative air quality challenges this community faces. Alternative Energy sources on the bridge, plaza and throughout the community are necessary to offset any increases in harmful emissions concentrations.

Using our natural resources to power the bridge and spill into the community would not only save taxpayers money but solidify this community in a new sustainable future, one that takes a giant leap forward to recognize the need for environmental justice and efficient operations.

Such a bridge would not only generate its own power but would project a greater outlook for the region, the State of Michigan, our Canadian neighbors, and the hosting communities. Generating an international interest, creating jobs in innovative design and protecting the welfare of our future residents are key to economic prosperity.

This region deserves a superstructure that can deliver justice as well as supporting our local and regional economies.

**Mary Loubriel – Community Benefits Coalition and long time resident of Delray**

**Jobs and Economic Development**

This community as it stands is on top of the areas of unemployment, poverty, and residents who do not have transportation, and who face challenges as racial minorities.

We need economic diversity which reaches out to this community with adequate jobs and training opportunities.

The community will lose several businesses and about 700-900 jobs in the local area, making this neighborhood less stable. We need assurance of trainable positions that will favor local residents as there was not enough done in the way of local hiring in the Gateway Project.

We need to be assured that better ways will be identified to secure local jobs – in the construction phase, for existing employers in the neighborhood, and for future jobs created. This is essential for the survival of Delray.

**Debra Williams, Community Benefits Coalition**

**Governance and Longterm Funding**

The community has been in support of this bridge – with benefits. We are looking forward to benefits being concrete and legally enforceable. We believe that positive things can result from this project locating in our area, but the project does bring many concerns.

To address concerns in the long term, the community is seeking a role in bridge governance, like in an advisory committee, to insure that decisions related to this public project continue to be positive for the community.

Similarly, we are seeking long term funding into a community fund to address future impacts of the project. This could be paid with a portion of tolls or revenues.

**Time Extension, Community Involvement**

Regarding the comment period on the FEIS:

The Coalition feels a time extension is necessary for the community to respond to the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

In the short 30 days allowed, the community cannot adequately process the long and technical reports that will have serious implications for each and every resident.

The DEIS period had to be extended to 60 days, and this Final report is even more important.

The FEIS is expected in December, and the community is further disadvantaged by this period coinciding with the holiday season.

### **Closing**

In closing, we are looking forward to seeing MDOT's final mitigations and hope that the community's concerns will be fully and fairly addressed as this project moves toward approval.

We thank you for listening to our concerns and we look forward to a sustainable neighborhood coexisting with a new public bridge.