

Detroit River International Crossing Study

Local Advisory Council/Local Agency Group Meeting – 7:00 p.m.

June 27, 2007 – Southwestern High School

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

Attendance: See attachment.

Discussion:

Introductions

Mohammed Alghurabi opened the meeting with introductions.

Meeting Conduct Procedures

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that the meeting was to be conducted so that the observers could comment at the beginning and end of the meeting. The Local Advisory Council and Local Agency Group members would conduct their business uninterrupted in the core of the meeting.

Agenda Review

Mohammed Alghurabi reviewed the agenda and asked if there were any comments or revisions to the agenda. There were none.

Public Comments

C. Tom Cervenak commented that he believes that the DRIC has been an open and transparent process. He commented further that he has never been involved in any process as open as the DRIC. He noted that MDOT has been inclusive of the community's input and has gone beyond what they need to do to gather community input. He concluded by saying notices are being received by the people.

C. Victor Ablā: "What have you done to fix the mailing list?"

R. Joe Corradino indicated that he did not understand the question in a broad sense but, as it relates to Victor Ablā specifically, he noted that Victor Ablā is being sent the mailings. The address that he records has consistently been the same, and he has been consistently mailed at that address. Further, Victor Ablā is recorded in his handwriting as attending meetings that MDOT has sponsored as far back as 2001. He has attended public meetings on the DRIC well over a year ago and the last one held in March.

- C. Victor Abla asked what else was being done to involve the people north of I-75.
- R. Joe Corradino indicated that there are people in the room tonight who have gone door-to-door distributing flyers on the north side of I-75 and they had personally delivered packets of flyers announcing public meetings to 21 area churches, including the Military Avenue Church.
- C. Victor Abla asked, “What else have you done since the study area boundary goes to I-94, and I don’t believe those people know anything about these meetings? Why do you keep charging community leaders with doing your job of outreach?”
- R. Joe Corradino responded that the mailings throughout the study area to which Victor Abla refers go about 10,000 addresses.
- C. Victor Abla indicated that there are about 100,000 people in the study area, and each of them should be mailed.
- R. Joe Corradino responded that the study area does include 100,000 people, and not all get mail.
- C. Ed Mack indicated that he travels throughout the community and believes that there is complete saturation of DRIC materials at various locations like the neighborhood city hall and the library. He noted that at the Bowen Branch library there is a large table with all the documents published to date.
- C. Michelle Garrity indicated that she signed in over a month ago and still has not gotten any mailers. She submitted the series of questions which is attached. She criticized the type of drawings being used to inform the public and the fact that a Welcome Center was proposed by the DRIC Study for Fort Wayne. She indicated the DRIC Study team doesn’t even know soccer is played at Fort Wayne.
- R. Mohammed Alghurabi responded that the questions submitted in writing will be addressed in writing. Joe Corradino noted that, specifically, the drawings that had been used to describe the developments in the community are not limited to a Welcome Center at Fort Wayne and, further, that consultation with Fort Wayne leadership has indicated that they are supportive of the concept of a Welcome Center.
- C. Tim Felska indicated that he has lived in the neighborhood for two years. He stated that there are many poor people that create a tightly knit community in the area. He noted that, as he looks at the plans for the project, he is drawn to the fact that the downriver area is a place with more space and more money. He stated that the constitution says that “all men are equal before the law.” He indicated that the DRIC study is acting to the contrary He wondered what had happened to the concept of placing a border

crossing in Grosse Ile along North Townline Road or other comparable areas. He noted that he was a veteran of the U.S. Navy, served as a submariner, and is a paramedic who dedicates himself to helping people.

- R. Joe Corradino thanked Mr. Felska for his service to our country. He noted that there are volumes of reports on the Web site indicating why areas like Grosse Ile had been eliminated from the Border Crossing Study. He indicated that the pastor of his church, Dr. Brown, had received copies of those reports, and Mr. Felska could either obtain copies there or through the DRIC Web site.

- C. A person indicated that she had been at a meeting some time ago and was told that no houses were going to be taken for the border crossing. It was determined that the person was speaking about the Ambassador Bridge enhancement project and not the DRIC study.

- C. Emily Brown indicated that she went to the last public meeting and that it was difficult to understand what is going on. She asked if there would be another public meeting?

- R. Mohammed Alghurabi responded that there would be, and adequate public notice would be provided. Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that there will also be meetings to which the residents of the community will be invited to discuss their relocation issues. He noted that those meetings are not general public meetings. They would be held on July 31, August 1, and August 2, from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Delray Recreation Center.

- C. Emily Brown stated that now she knows that there will be another public meeting, she and others are prepared to getting the word out themselves to ensure that the meeting is well attended by people north of I-75. She also asked about the environmental study process, and when the study of the air pollution was concluded.

- R. Joe Corradino responded that the DRIC air quality study has not yet been completed.

- C. Michelle Garrity asked, “Can anyone come to those meetings on July 31-August 2?”

- R. Mohammed Alghurabi responded “yes,” but noted that they were specifically designed to discuss one-on-one with residents in the area that may be affected by the project their specific relocation needs.

With that, the first public comment period ended.

LAC/LAG Meeting Notes

- C. Delores Leonard commented that she understood and appreciated the passion and concern expressed by members of the Military Avenue Church. She further indicated that she became involved in the DRIC project in the summer of 2005 having read about it in the newspaper. She stated that she learned that as member of a recognized group she could have a seat on the Local Advisory Council. She stressed, as a member of the LAC, she takes her responsibility very seriously. She asked Mohammed Alghurabi if it were possible for representatives of various church organizations to be participants on the LAC.
- R. Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that a person who wishes to participate on the LAC could find information on the Web site on how to apply. He noted that the requirements were not stringent, but individuals should represent an organized and recognized group.
- C. Delores Leonard then reiterated that she takes her responsibility very seriously and that she communicates with many others that live in their area defined by zip code 48217. She noted that in the minutes of the May 30th LAC meeting, there was a comment made, “These parties [MDOT] have held meetings without the broader participation of Southwest Detroit, chiefly inviting community members who stand to gain monetarily and may move out of the community, while not seeking to inform those who will bear the long term brunt of this project – namely those who live across I-75 from the bridge.” Mrs. Leonard noted that she takes exception to that statement as she does not stand to gain monetarily. She is a part of the DRIC process for the betterment of her community.

June 20, 2007, Public Meeting

Joe Corradino offered to show the PowerPoint of the June 20th meeting to the LAC, but recognized that virtually everyone had attended that meeting and, therefore, asked if showing the PowerPoint again were appropriate. The LAC declined to review the PowerPoint again.

Joe Corradino then discussed the outreach efforts that had been taken to notify the public of the June 20th meeting as included in the public meeting notes that were part of the package of information distributed at the LAC meeting. He indicated that one individual at the meeting had objected to deleting Alternative 4, which is a split interchange leading from the plaza to I-75 with long sweeping ramps that go across the north side of the Delray area to the Dearborn interchange. Joe Corradino displayed a slide to better describe that interchange. He indicated that for reasons that include community impacts, relatively poor engineering efficiency, and cost, that interchange had been recommended for deletion from further study. He indicated that in response to the comment made at the June 20th public meeting to not delete it, that a review had been undertaken and that the consultant team still maintains that Alternative 4 not be carried forward for implementation.

Tom Cervenak said that Alternative 4 would have a significant impact on the Produce Terminal and affect the interchange at the Rouge River Bridge as well as the railroad facilities in and around the western part of Delray. He noted that he was glad to see that alternative go.

Property Owners Meeting

Joe Corradino indicated that at the end of the first week of July, direct mailings would be sent to owners and tenants of the residential units that could potentially be acquired for the DRIC process. They would be invited to meetings on July 31, August 1, and August 2 at the Delray Recreation Center to meet one-on-one with the MDOT Real Estate team. No property will be acquired, but the relocation needs of the residents, owners, and tenants, as well as interviews with the MDOT Real Estate people with respect to the relocation process, was the purpose of conducting the meetings. Joe Corradino noted that each invitation would be sent by registered mail with a return receipt requested. Follow-up will then be made by visiting those units where it appears the residents are not being informed of the meeting. Additionally, special efforts are being to contact tenants on two apartment buildings that contain a combined 100 units to provide information about the relocation meetings. He asked the members of the LAC to assist, to the extent possible, in spreading the word about the meetings.

He concluded by indicating that individual businesses and churches are being contacted on a one-to-one basis by the MDOT Real Estate people separate from the relocation meetings of July 31, August 1 and 2.

Status of the Deep Drilling Program

Joe Corradino indicated that on the U.S. side, all of the cross well (MRI of the rock structure) is done. Currently, additional field work is being done using gravity detection equipment. It is expected that this work will be done shortly. He noted the schedule calls for a peer group of twelve individuals from the United States and Canada to review the data before a final position is reached on the possible effects of brine wells.

- C. Tom Cervenak stated that salt mine blasting happens on a regular basis creating vibrations “like a small earthquake” at the same time every day. He noted that, while it did not have any impact on the Delray Recreation Center, he wondered if there could be potential effects on a new crossing.
- R. Joe Corradino indicated that the blasting would not affect the new structure. The blasting was taking place closer to structures like the Rouge River Bridge, on which there was no negative effect.

- C. Len Kozachuk of the Canadian URS Team indicated that he concurred with Joe Corradino's opinion. He also stated that the drilling on the Canadian side had completed seven of twelve holes and that the remaining work would be done by mid-July.

Other LAC/LAG Business

- C. Delores Leonard then returned to the relocation meetings of July 31, August 1, and August 2 and asked how the homeowners will be notified.
- R. Joe Corradino indicated that the notices will be sent by registered mail, using addresses from the tax records. The MDOT/DRIC team would then follow up by visiting as many residential units as possible in the study area to apprise those people of the meetings.
- C. Delores Leonard asked if renters have an opportunity to come to the meeting, and what information will they receive?
- R. Joe Corradino said that the outreach effort will involve renters. Joe Corradino asked Sherry Piacenti if she could comment on the renters' options in the relocation process of the DRIC. Sherry Piacenti indicated that there are different regulations specifically focused on renters.

Joe Corradino stressed that DRIC Study members have met with the owners of two apartment buildings in the area, one with 32 units and the other with 68 units, to inform them that their tenants should be advised of the upcoming relocation meetings. Efforts will continue to get relocation workshop notices to each of the tenants of those two buildings.

Public Comments

- C. The pastor of the First Latin American Baptist Church indicated that he did not receive any mailings of any DRIC meetings. He noted that his is a bi-lingual ministry and he has a list of concerns because all of the alternatives would acquire his church. As a ministry for the less-than-privileged, the church has a limited budget. The congregation is about 50 to 60 members and, if the church is forced to move, they cannot do so without incurring debt. He stressed that the value of the church may not be enough to purchase a new church and avoid debt. Because they are a church, they do not pay taxes; therefore, MDOT may not be using a mailing list that includes them. He asked what are his options if the church is acquired?
- R. Joe Corradino indicated that Harvey Santana, who was at the meeting, had dropped off batches of mailers to each public meeting at the First Latin American Baptist Church. Additionally, he asked Sherry

Piacenti to meet with the pastor before the meeting ended to further discuss the relocation issues that affect the church.

Mohammed Alghurabi stressed that the MDOT relocation people were conducting one-on-one meetings with the each church representative and business owner. While his church may not have been contacted yet, it will be.

- C. The pastor of the First Latin American Baptist Church then indicated, on behalf of his church and without any known options at this time, the church stands in opposition to the DRIC until further notice.

- C. Pastor Brown indicated that Mrs. Leonard's quote from the May 30 LAC meeting notes were of his words. He apologized that his comments were misunderstood. He noted that his comments dealt with MDOT, not the LAC. He stressed that at the first meeting he attended, there were no scaled maps in the room even though they were provided to him later. All he saw at the first meeting he attended was artwork. He indicated that he does not believe homeowners want to leave the area, that he is not moving, nor does he want to move. He stressed that in no way were his remarks on May 30th insinuating that the LAC is "paid off." Just that he sees negligence on the part of MDOT that he did not get a letter even though his church was clearly indicated as a potential property to be acquired on DRIC drawings. He stressed that he was upset that his life work was going to be taken away from him.

- R. Joe Corradino indicated that the pastor was shifting his comments about integrity from the LAC to the members of the MDOT team. He objected, as Mrs. Leonard did, to such an implication. He stressed that Victor Abla, who is in the church's leadership, was at a number of MDOT. Victor Abla is wrong, as an officer of the church, to have signed the letter stating that the church members have not received information.

Joe Corradino further noted that contentions that the pastor has made are without a basis; specifically, that the maps that have been shown are "artwork" and that members of his church were unaware of the project. He indicated the latter claim was particularly interesting in light of the fact that the Military Avenue Church's Web site clearly indicates that the church was aware of the project for years.

- C. Victor Abla indicated that he did not understand why his name keeps coming up as the person with respect to communications with the church.

- R. Joe Corradino indicated that he is an officer of the church, signed the letter criticizing the DRIC process for the lack of communication and for "the lack of detailed drawings" while, in fact, he, Victor Abla, has

attended meetings at which detailed drawings have been produced, and Victor Abla has repeatedly attended DRIC meetings for which he is mailed a notice.

- C. Corki Benson indicated that she first encountered the border crossing issue in 1999 when she saw designs for a bridge and freeway for her area. Today, those plans have been eliminated. Nonetheless, she stressed that she was still involved in the DRIC process. She indicated that she has not decided whether she will support a new bridge, but is still engaged in the process. She stressed that the LAC members work hard at what they do. She indicated that the DRIC process has been fair. She takes exception with people who feel that they have not been invited into the process. She indicated that she urged Delray residents at the very outset to become more engaged in the DRIC and they have. Furthermore, like the Delray community, anyone who disagrees with the project, as members of her community as well as Delray did early in the process, still have ample opportunity to get involved.

- C. Mary Ann Cuderman indicated that she has been involved in the DRIC since 2002 and has followed the process diligently. She indicated she was pleased that members of the Military Avenue Church are now involved. She indicated that there are so many issues that need to be addressed that the community should move forward in a cooperative way to learn about the project.

- C. Robert Benson indicated that he, too, became involved along with Corki Benson in 1999 when a gentleman named Don Flynn was proposing to build a bridge in the downriver area. One thing that he urged everyone to remember is that this is a study that's not going to be finished until 2008 and, therefore, there is plenty of time to still be involved. He noted that some people at the meeting tonight have come late to the process. The LAC, at one point, was set up with local municipalities in mind but later broadened to include community groups.

- C. Karen Kavanaugh stated that when she worked at the Southwest Detroit Business Association, her organization and others spent several years on a project known as the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal Study and was active in the outreach of that study, as well as the Detroit River International Crossing Study. She indicated that her group then and now is actively involved in getting the word out about the MDOT study processes, including the DRIC. She stressed that in late 2006, the MDOT/DRIC team publicly indicated that there would be impacts on the north side of I-75 and the community there needed to be made aware of that. Therefore, the DRIC team stepped up efforts to inform the people north of I-75 including holding the December public meeting. The MDOT team asked that the LAC try to get others on board and, in turn, those from Hubbard Farm and other areas were contacted to become

more involved. Karen Kavanaugh stressed that each member of the community shares the burden of the responsibility for outreach.

- C. John Nagy indicated that he has lived in Delray for 50 years. When the DRIC project first came to Delray, only a few people showed up at a meeting. He took it upon himself to inform the community of all the latest developments and the upcoming meetings. He made sure MDOT had a mailing list for Delray, and he himself went house-to-house, wrote addresses down, and submitted them to MDOT. As a result, the Delray community has been actively engaged. He also noted that if he were to go to a public meeting, such as one conducted by the Detroit City Council, he would be given two minutes to make a statement. That is not the case at the DRIC meetings. He stressed that it is unfair to characterize the MDOT/DRIC team as a “villain.” The DRIC process always let an individual say what needs to be said. He noted that the MDOT/DRIC team has been more than open with the community. He urged those at the meeting, who now know about the project, to continue to participate and get others out to the meetings.

Next LAC/LAG Meeting

Mohammed Alghurabi asked the members about where the next meeting should be held in light of the fact that Southwestern High School is not air conditioned. After some discussion, it was decided to return, as the LAC did in the summer of 2006, to the Dearborn Doubletree.

Note: Subsequent to the meeting, it was determined that the Doubletree had no available rooms during the entire week of July 23rd and, subsequently, the next LAC meeting of July 25th would be held at the Delray Recreation Center.

June 27th, 2007

Mohammed Alghurabi
425 West Ottawa Street
P.O. Box 30050
Lansing, Michigan, U.S. 48909

I am writing this letter to MDOT in order to express the many concerns that I have regarding the construction of a new, publicly owned bridge within the Delray neighborhood of Southwest Detroit.

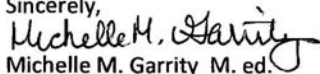
- First and foremost, most residents of Southwest Detroit have not been informed about the ongoing process the DRIC has been conducting to create this bridge. At the May 28th, 2007 LAC meeting, I signed in with my address, yet still received nothing in the mail about MDOT's public meetings. Last Wednesday, June 20th, a segment aired on WDIV-TV channel 4's newscast regarding the possible demolition of Military Avenue Church. After this segment, several people from our community asked me what was going on in the neighborhood, because they knew nothing about the construction of a bridge, or the effects it would have on the entire Southwest Detroit community.
- If the community had been informed properly, many in the entire Southwest Detroit area besides the Delray area would have had the opportunity to comment. MDOT does not seem to be aware that every Saturday hundreds of kids from our community come out to Ft. Wayne to play soccer on the open fields by the river. The Think Detroit Police Athletic League has used this property for a number of years. According to MDOT drawings, MDOT intends to put a welcome center on this land. Why not improve and maintain the soccer fields so that the residents of this community can benefit? When I asked this question to one of the MDOT officials, he was completely unaware that this soccer program was even going on in this community.
- MDOT has indicated plans for the acquisition of properties which include residential buildings, businesses, and churches. As mentioned before, roughly 30% of the residents of Delray live at or below the poverty line. According to the 2000 Census, over 50% of residents in this area of Southwest Detroit rent their homes. What are MDOT's plans to make certain that these residents (many of which are living at or below the poverty line) are not thrown onto the streets with a few hundred, or even thousand dollars to try to survive? Also, it has been brought to my attention that even though MDOT will be paying residents above the state equalized value for their houses, when they are forced to relocate, they will be unable to afford the taxes on the house with the new purchase price. Although MDOT indicated at the previous meeting that

there would be a tax abatement for five years, what will those residents do after the five years has passed?

- At the meetings that I have attended, MDOT has lined the walls with artist's renderings for this gateway concept and others which include the area of development around Southwestern High School; yet when questioned your officials say that it will take a partnership among many units of government including the city of Detroit and the private sector to accomplish redevelopment. What guarantees are there in place for the City of Detroit government to properly maintain the proposed parks in this area? There is a park on the corner of Military Avenue and Regular which received a makeover less than 10 years ago. As I walked through this park on June 23, 2007, many of the weeds/grass reached my shoulders and the playground equipment was so broken that I would never consider allowing any child the opportunity to climb upon it. This is the reality of what happens when things are left to the government of the city of Detroit to maintain. Please do not show us an image that cannot be created or maintained by our municipal government.
- According to MDOT plans, you will close the Livernois/Dragoon interchange at I-75 and all local truck/car traffic will be routed along the service drive to either Clark or Springwells. This means that trucks and other traffic will have to travel deeper within our community in order to get to their destination. This means more noise, more pollution, and worse roads. Residents near I-75 that live between the Springwells and Clark area will be forced to deal with backed up traffic and the exhaust coming from cars and trucks. The Clark interchange is already backed up on a daily basis due to the existing truck traffic. MDOT will increase congestion by closing the Livernois interchange.

The impact of these bridge alternatives goes far beyond the immediate residents that are proposed to be displaced within the Delray Community. MDOT will severely damage one of the few economically viable areas of the city of Detroit in which there is growth and business. Schools will suffer when their enrollment is lowered, because MDOT has wiped out an entire portion of our Southwest Detroit community. The negative effects on the area's environment will be greatly increased due to augmented truck traffic and its associated pollution. It is possible that MDOT has been communicating effectively with many of the residents that will be displaced by these alternatives. I do maintain, however, that MDOT has not let those of us that will be left behind in the surrounding areas to deal with the after effects become aware of this process that will so greatly impact our entire community of Southwest Detroit.

Sincerely,



Michelle M. Garrity M. ed.

Southwest Detroit Resident

6th Grade Earhart Middle School Teacher

Military Avenue Church Member