

Detroit River International Crossing Study
Local Advisory Council/Local Agency Group Meeting
Meeting Notes
September 26, 2007, 7:00 p.m.
Southwestern High School

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

Attendance: See attached.

Discussion:

Introductions

Mohammed Alghurabi opened the meeting with introductions.

Meeting Conduct Procedures

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

Agenda Review

Mohammed Alghurabi asked if there were any changes to the meeting agenda. None were suggested.

Public Comments

Q: Terri Mattison: Will benefits to the community and the impacts of a new border crossing be defined if they affect the community's quality of life?

R: Mohammed Alghurabi responded that the DRIC Environmental Impact Statement, that will be out at the end of December, will document those positives and negatives. With respect to additional benefits/enhancements, specific items cannot be defined at this time.

Q: Terri Mattison: Will the community be able to provide suggestions to the DEIS?

R: Mohammed Alghurabi said, "Yes." The EIS will be available at least 30 days before the public hearing and 30 days after. Comments received will be responded to by MDOT.

Q: Maria Finn: Can MDOT work with the local police with respect to trucks that make noise and cause damage in the neighborhoods? Trucks typically use Clark Street. However, now they are going further west to Dagoon in the area of the abandoned funeral home on Fort Street.

R: Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that local contact with the police department will be made by Harvey Santana while recognizing that day-to-day truck activity is not the focus of the Detroit River International Crossing Study.

Q: *Richard Rosen: Asked the principal of Southwestern High School if he were concerned about the pollution that could be created from the new border crossing?*

R: Principal Green indicated that was a definite concern. However, because this was the first meeting that he attended on the DRIC study, he would reserve opinions on that and other issues until later.

Q: *Community Resident: Traffic on Green Street is also a problem, particularly trucks at all hours of the day and night. The police are not enforcing the laws; they don't show up until hours after you call them.*

R: Joe Corradino reiterated that the daily activities of trucks is not the focus of the DRIC study. Nonetheless, he noted that Harvey Santana will communicate with the local police on this issue. Joe Corradino also indicated that, in the future, because of the positive impact of the Gateway Project at the Ambassador Bridge, international trucks will be channeled directly to I-75 and not wander through the neighborhoods.

Q: *Julie Ebsch: How will Michigan's current fiscal crisis affect the DRIC study?*

R: Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that the budget matters affecting the state are still to be resolved. When they are, the status of the continuing study work will be known.

C: *Community Resident: Members of the Republican Senate are trying to pass a bill that would stop the DRIC study. To what extent will that affect DRIC?*

R: Mohammed Alghurabi said he could not speak to this issue as it was still a matter of discussion in the state legislature.

C: *Community Resident: The MDOT team has presented information and has done an outstanding job. A new crossing can be an emotional project for some and understandably so. The information produced by the MDOT team in the form of its notes and other materials is good. These people are under a lot of stress and strain to provide the best information possible. I hope they have the continuing opportunity to do so.*

August Meeting Notes

Delores Leonard made a suggestion to correct on page 2 of the meeting notes. Specifically, the efforts to contact the owners/tenants of the apartment buildings should be noted. Ms. Leonard asked the zoning of the Southwestern High School before and after the DRIC crossing would be built.

Chris Gulock of the Detroit Planning Commission indicated that the current zoning is P6. Joe Corradino indicated that there would be no zoning change expected because of the presence of the DRIC.

Overall DRIC Progress

Joe Corradino indicated that there were over a dozen technical reports being completed that will support the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. All reports, including the DEIS, will be available in late December. The public hearing is then expected in late January with an announcement scheduled for sometime in April of the Preferred Alternative. Following that, the Final Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared with a target date of September 2008, and the official record of decision expected to be signed in the fall of 2008. Property acquisition could then begin, if the ROD were signed, in 2009.

Len Kozachuk indicated that the Canadian team was in a similar position. Documentation is underway and almost complete for all elements of the project. A decision on the Preferred Alternative will be made jointly in the spring of 2008. He noted that, in terms of the Canadian plaza, three alternatives that have been identified of adequate size. On the Canadian side, there is a five-mile-long access road to connect the plaza to Highway 401. A parkway concept has been proposed. Comments are still awaited from the City of Windsor. Len also noted that there is no comparable document to the U.S. Draft Environmental Impact Statement being produced by December. But, once the Preferred Alternative is approved, all documentation on the Canadian side will be completed and advanced for review which could take the process into 2009.

Q: Are you at liberty to tell us where the plazas in Canada are located?

R: Yes. If you will join me after the meeting, more specific information will be provided.

CSS Input

Joe Corradino indicated that the next forum on Context Sensitive Solutions, originally thought to occur in October, will now likely be scheduled for December. At that time, the physical elements of the crossing system (as well as the land use concepts for the Delray area) will be displayed and questions/comments entertained.

Q: Tom Cervenak asked if the boat ramp at Fort Wayne will be kept open in the land use plan.

R: Joe Corradino indicated that the planning concepts indicate that it will be kept open. However, Homeland Security has an interest in minimizing the number of public boat ramps along the Detroit River for security purposes. A meeting with Homeland Security will be held in the near future to address this issue.

C: *Tom Cervenak commented that such a boat ramp would be a significant contribution for the redevelopment of Delray.*

Status of the Deep Drilling Program

Joe Corradino indicated that all work had been completed and that a report was being prepared based on the data available. It will then be joined with information from the Canadian team so that a composite report of the geological conditions associated with brine wells can be offered to a peer group. That peer group would meet two more times including in early December and, likely, mid- to late-January 2008. Len Kozachuk reported that the Canadian team was also documenting its results and that the joint meeting with the U.S. team would likely occur in November leading to the peer group meeting in December.

Status of M-85 Project

Andy Zeigler reported on the implementation of the M-85 improvement project indicating that construction had been delayed until 2011. The number of significant issues associated with utility relocation was one of the reasons for the delay.

Q: *Terri Mattison: Is landscape treatment to be incorporated into the design?*

R: Andy Zeigler indicated that aesthetic treatments would be part of the improvement to Fort Street.

C: *Otis Mathis: The impact on his area (zip code 48217) of the Fort Street project being pushed back to 201 is there will be new faces in government by then who will once again risk the project being pushed back once more.*

Q: Delores Leonard: Can you update us on the closing of I-75.

R: Andy Zeigler indicated that I-75 would close to through traffic (international traffic would be allowed to access the Ambassador Bridge) in late February 2008 and last, probably, until the end of 2009. Ongoing meetings with various stakeholders are underway. Information is also being provided by virtue of various brochures as well as on the project website.

Other LAC/LAG Business

There was no additional business introduced by the members of the LAC/LAG.

Public Comment

Q: Richard Rosen: When I-75 is closed to all but traffic using the bridge, will that not make the conditions in the neighborhoods worse?

R: Andy Ziegler indicated that he hoped not, particularly in light of the fact that there has been an extensive effort dedicated to rerouting traffic away from the area.

Q: Josephine Smith Will the Fort Street Bridge be improved?

R: Andy Ziegler indicated that it was as part of the Fort Street project.

Q: Richard Rosen: What if brine well cavities were found as a result of the geotechnical analysis-- could piers be placed in the ground in such a way to avoid them at that depth?

R: Joe Corradino indicated that piers would not go to the depth of the brine wells which are between 1,100 and 1,500 feet below the ground surface. Typically, the piers will be located on bedrock which is in the area of 90 to 120 feet below ground. The situation is such that there will be every effort to avoid even building a foundation within the "area of influence" of a brine well cavity if one is found. Therefore, the risk of a collapse will be remote.

C: Maria Finn: The I-75 Gateway Project Team at MDOT should cooperate with the truck drivers in the Customs area so that they are fully aware of the new traffic patterns.

R: Andy Ziegler indicated that the team is in almost-daily communication with U.S. Customs and such efforts to communicate the new traffic patterns have been underway and will continue.

C: Maria Finn: Noted that when meetings for the DRIC were held in Wyandotte, Southgate and other Downriver communities, many elected officials showed up. She indicated that there was not one from Detroit at the current meeting.

Q: Maria Finn: When the Ambassador Bridge speaks of twinning its bridge, how many lanes will be provided?

R: Joe Corradino indicated that the plan that he was aware of said that there would be six lanes, three in each direction, on the new crossing.

Q: Terri Mattison: How many air monitoring units are going to be located on the DRIC plaza.

R: Joe Corradino responded that there were no current plans to locate an air quality monitor on the DRIC plaza. That may evolve as a result of further discussions with Michigan's Department of Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Nevertheless, he noted that there were two monitors recently installed (within the last 18 months) near the Ambassador Bridge and near Southwestern High School.

C: Otis Mathis: Noted that he sits on a Fort Wayne advisory committee, and there has been conversation that the DRIC process could help revitalize Fort Wayne as a tourist attraction. There is also hope that the DRIC project would not intrude physically into the Fort.

Next LAC/LAG Meeting

The next meeting was originally scheduled for October 31, 2007. (The meeting has been moved to October 24th to avoid Halloween.)