

Detroit River International Crossing Study
Joint LAC/LAG Meeting
August 27, 2008, 7:00 p.m.
Dearborn Doubletree Hotel

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

Attendance: See attached.

Introductions

Mohammed Alghurabi opened the meeting and asked for introductions.

Meeting Conduct

Mohammed Alghurabi explained that public comments would be allowed at the beginning and end of the meeting.

Agenda Review

Mohammed Alghurabi reviewed the agenda for the evening's business and asked if there were any questions or additions. There were none.

Public Comments

Mary Ann Cuderman said she had several comments on the previous month's meeting to be expressed in a constructive manner: 1) She asked about the reduction in relocations; 2) She said that the steel cage-type pedestrian crossings last month were not acceptable, and the crossings needed to be safe; 3) She asked why there was to be no work on I-75 itself; 4) She expressed concern about trucks on the service drives and the conflict that would generate with pedestrian crossings; 5) She believed that the houses on the north side of I-75 should be protected from noise with a wall between the homes and the service drive; and, 6) She thought there was a missed opportunity to address air quality issues.

Joe Corradino responded to each of these as follows: 1) The work for the Preferred Alternative is reducing the number of relocations, from those originally anticipated. Crossing the service drives with a pedestrian bridge would cause more, not fewer relocations. 2) The mesh on bridges over freeways in the City of Detroit is required to provide for the safety of motorists below the bridges by preventing objects from being thrown from the bridges that might strike the cars and cause injury or death. MDOT is

addressing the look of the bridges to make them as appealing as possible. But, adding greenery to the bridges narrows the functional walking space and, also, presents a significant maintenance problem insofar as the weather and plants continuing to grow under adverse conditions. 3) With respect to I-75 and its reconstruction, Joe Corradino indicated that was not in the scope of the DRIC project because I-75 has undergone reconstruction in recent years. But, he said all the work planned for the DRIC project would be engineered in a way that later improvements to I-75 could be made consistent with modern engineering standards without removing any DRIC ramps, bridges, etc. Another consideration in the reconstruction of I-75 was the fact that major utilities are directly underneath the existing pavement, and any changes to that pavement would result in very high costs related to the utilities. 4) With respect to noise walls, Joe Corradino explained that placing the walls in between the service drive and the houses would result in more relocations, and walls needed to be on MDOT right-of-way. John Bendzick said that there was a possibility for easements on private land, and if homeowners wanted a secondary wall, there has to be consensus among the group. Joe Corradino indicated that was really not an option when the intrusion of on-going wall maintenance affects those private properties almost all of which are residential. 5) The air quality analysis of the DRIC on both sides of the border indicates that mobile sources of pollution are not the major issues—point sources, like refineries and steel plants, are. And with further federal restrictions on diesel engines and fuels, mobile source emissions will be even less of a problem.

A woman asked about truck traffic on Fort Street. She said that the existing truck volumes were making it impossible for businesses along Fort Street to function. Mohammed Alghurabi explained this was not a DRIC-related matter because the truck traffic was being generated by the temporary re-routing of traffic for the Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project. Nevertheless, indicated MDOT's Victor Rudnick, who is responsible for traffic control and maintenance will be advised of the issue. He noted that that Gateway project would be ongoing through 2009.

Frank Griffith from East Delray said that he supported the boulevard concept on Campbell Street east of the plaza.

LAC/LAG July 30th Meeting Notes

Mrs. Leonard pointed out a typographical error where "contracts" should be "contacts."

Joe Corradino noted that Mohammed Alghurabi was incorrectly identified as being at the previous meeting. He said he was embarrassed by the error he made and apologized.

Mr. Rosen offered his opinion that the Ambassador Bridge inspection reports should be done by MDOT. Mohammed Alghurabi explained that it was a private bridge and that they did their own inspections through licensed individuals. A representative of the bridge said this was true and that the independent bridge inspectors were professionals. After the bridge inspection reports are complete, FHWA and MDOT are allowed to review them. Mohammed Alghurabi said that he would mention Mr. Rosen's opinion to Director Steudle.

John Bendzick said that it was his belief that issues related to the Ambassador Bridge should not be a topic of discussion given all the issues related to the DRIC project that needed to be covered.

Simone Sagovic said that there was a typographical error with respect to the Coalition's phone number. It should be 843-6052 for meeting announcements and 842-1961 for questions.

Review of I-75 Pedestrian Crossings LAC/LAG Input

Bruce Campbell used a series of slides to update the group on the engineering related to the pedestrian crossings. He pointed out that each of the vehicular bridges would have sidewalks on either side, just as they do today, and the pedestrian bridges had been reconfigured so that, upon leaving the pedestrian ramp, there would be one crosswalk across the service drive rather than one at stairs and one at a ramp. He said that everything that was being done was a work-in-progress with additional feedback expected from the public and more engineering work remaining.

He said the service drives would be generally like they are today and, likewise, the pedestrian crossings of the service drives would be like they are today – marked with striping and signs, but not including overhead signals. A review of accident data does not indicate any history of crashes that points to a need for signalization.

Bruce Campbell next showed slides of the 14-foot new pedestrian crossing on the Lodge Freeway as an example, then a table that showed evacuation pedestrian flow rates for a 20- versus 14-foot-wide pedestrian bridge. The wider bridge offers only a small incremental improvement in evacuation times (from 5 minutes to 4 minutes) for the potential 900-student school population at Southwestern High School. However, with moving the Radamacher crossing to Waterman, the evacuation rate of 900 students by the two 14-foot-wide pedestrian crossings directly serving SWHS is 2 minutes.

Bruce Campbell stopped at that point to ask the LAC/LAG members if there were any questions or if they had any thoughts on this work. Mrs. Leonard responded by saying she liked the idea of the two crossings to serve SWHS with the Rademacher shifted over to Waterman.

Next, Bruce Campbell showed slides indicating the impacts of elevating the Beard pedestrian crossing, as an example, across the service drive. The result was the necessity of taking a home on the north side of I-75 and a residential unit and a business on the south side. He said the reason for the property acquisitions was when you go over the service drive, you have to get higher in the air than if you just went over the freeway. Being higher means the ramps from the bridge cannot be brought down to ground-level without taking additional property.

Simone Sagovic asked if it would be possible to close streets north and south of I-75 such that the pedestrian ramps came down to those side streets instead of parallel to the service drives. Bruce Campbell responded that it would be up to the City of Detroit to close the streets. They would have to agree, and adjacent property owners would lose access. Mohammed Alghurabi said he would bring the subject up with the City on the September 4th meeting, noting, the community had repeatedly asked for the least disruption to its current access.

Mrs. Leonard asked what it was that made it necessary for the pedestrian bridges to be higher. Bruce Campbell said that the pedestrian bridge had to be 17 feet over the service drives, and the service drives are at a higher elevation than the freeway.

Bruce Campbell next explained that putting greenery and other decorative features on the bridges means that the bridges would have to be wider to allow the same equivalent width for foot travel, and the bridges themselves would have to be deeper to provide the additional strength to support the additional weight of whatever was put out there. He noted these issues are arguing against crossings that are landscaped. Nonetheless, more work is to be done.

Next, there was a discussion of overhead signals at the pedestrian crossings on the service drives. Joe Corradino made it clear that it would be up to the City of Detroit, who would have jurisdiction over the service drives, to implement any signaling. The DRIC project will stripe and sign, but not signalize, the crossings.

Mrs. Leonard asked who would be attending the meeting on September 4th from the City. Mohammed Alghurabi explained who would be there and also noted the City Planning Commission would also meet on the 4th. At some later date there would be a meeting with the City Council. It was clarified that the meeting on the 4th with the City Planning Commission would be open to the public, but it is not a public hearing, and notifications by the City are not made for such meetings.

Mark Petco noted that the elevation of the crossroads perpendicular to the service drives could be raised such that the pedestrian bridges would not have to go to such a high elevation. Bruce Campbell pointed out that this could result in many impacts to the adjacent properties, as well as problems with drainage and the overall project engineering.

Mr. Rosen wanted clarification of whether there would be, for each pedestrian bridge, one crossing or two of a given service drive. Bruce Campbell said only one, that the stairs had been dropped per the City's request so that there would be only one crossing of the service drive at each end of each pedestrian bridge.

There was further discussion of signalization of the crossings, and Joe Corradino made it clear that placement of such signals is subject to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. For signals to be installed, specific warrants must be met in terms of safety and pedestrian crossing volumes and the like. That is why the slide said the City may put up such signals.

Review of Discussions with Community Benefits Coalition

Mohammed Alghurabi stated that a couple of meetings had been held with the Community Benefits Coalition (CBC) in the last month. He continued that the board members of CBC, who had been elected by those in the community, had brought forward a list of desired community benefits and that those were now under consideration. Some of these are items that MDOT can address and others are items that MDOT cannot implement but could morally support in partnership with other agencies. Meanwhile, there is standard mitigation that is a part of any MDOT project. So, the basic discussion with the CBC is items that go beyond that standard mitigation.

Simone Sagovic of the CBC explained some of the points they were pursuing. First, the objective is to revitalize Delray. This involves how truck traffic will be routed through the community and where housing should go. Air quality remains a concern. Beyond Delray, zip code 48217 is interested specifically in a meeting about truck traffic in their area. The CBC is preparing a letter to be sent Friday to the City of Detroit Council members that is going to discuss issues related to property acquisition and

identification of dangerous properties that should be secured. It also recommends the adoption by the City of a land use plan for Delray. A meeting is planned with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MISHDA). The CBC is trying to build partnerships that will endure to advance the needs of Delray.

Representative Tobocman is having a meeting September 11th at Southwestern High School from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on the subject of housing and those within the project area to be acquired.

Mohammed Alghurabi said a meeting would be set to discuss zip code 48217 truck traffic.

September CSS Public Meeting

Joe Corradino explained that, in September, there would be a meeting showing sketches of the future in Delray with the DRIC project in place. The idea was to present this information either at the next LAC/LAG meeting or at a meeting the night thereafter. After discussion, it was agreed to combine the CSS meeting with the LAC/LAG meeting at the already-scheduled date of the 24th at Southwestern High School. Joe Corradino said that the consultant was working on blending the future sketches for CSS into a video.

Continued Update of Status of FEIS

Mohammed Alghurabi explained that the preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement was complete. The public hearing has been held. The Final EIS will respond to the comments received during the comment period on the DEIS and identify the Preferred Alternative. The FEIS will be completed by the end of 2008. Joe Corradino noted that among the items that needed to be done in order to complete the FEIS was contact with Yellow Trucking, LaFarge and McCoig Aggregates as the bridge over the Detroit River would pass over these properties.

Mohammed Alghurabi said that, after the FEIS is complete, it will be made available for public comments and, subsequently, there would be a Record of Decision (ROD) finalized no sooner than a month after the signing of the FEIS.

Other LAC/LAG Business

Simone Sagovic asked about the hearing at the Michigan Senate that had been held that day. Mohammed Alghurabi explained the key points that were the subject of discussion and said that both MDOT and the

Detroit International Bridge Company had testified. In general, the topics were traffic, the need for a new bridge, and some of the concepts related to enhancements.

Mr. Rosen asked if the project could get bottled up in budget discussions. Joe Corradino responded that, in essence, no budget, no work on a new bridge. Simone Sagovic said that letters could be submitted to the senators on this topic.

Mohammed Alghurabi said that, earlier, Representative Gonzalez had held House hearings in June.

Public Comments

There were no additional comments.

Next LAC/LAG Meeting

The next meeting would return to Southwestern High School on September 24th.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.