

Detroit River International Crossing Study
Local Advisory Council
Meeting Notes
March 25, 2009, 7:00 p.m.
Southwestern High School
(Revised April 28, 2009)

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

Attendance: See attached.

Discussion:

Introductions/Agenda Review/Meeting Conduct Procedures

Mohammed Alghurabi opened the meeting and asked for introductions. Following introductions, he explained that the meeting conduct procedures allow for public comment at the beginning and the end of the meetin and the LAC to conduct its business uninterrupted in the core of the meeting. He then asked for any changes to the agenda. There were none. He then entertained public comments.

Public Comments

Tom Cervenak commented how the Community Benefits Coalition (CBC) was cooperating with other local organizations to prepare an application to be submitted to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority to secure federal funding for housing in the Delray area. The cooperating groups include: Bridging Communities, Southwest Solutions/Bagley Housing, People's Community Services, as well as the CBC. It was hoped that \$2 million would be awarded in this round of grants. Tom noted that a second round of applications would be due by July 1. The latter would be a competition at the federal level. Tom was then asked:

Q: Mrs. Leonard noted that it has been repeatedly cited at various Local Advisory Council meetings that MDOT does not do housing. How would the neighborhood stabilization funds be used?

R: Tom Cervenak explained they could be used to build housing. When this money is added to the funds received by those to be relocated by the DRIC, the purchase price of the house should be covered. Tom Cervenak indicated that it was his hope that the relocatees could have replacement housing in Delray without a mortgage.

Paul Sander of MDOT indicated that those persons whose property will be purchased by MDOT for the DRIC would not have a mortgage in the future if they do not have a mortgage now. For those that do have a mortgage on their existing property, the relocation program allows for “buying down” the mortgage on a new property to the same level as the mortgage on the existing property. Finally, Paul Sander noted that the relocation program has a “five-year buy down” of additional taxes on a property to which the relocatee moves.

Representative Tlaib noted that MDOT’s replacement housing payments are very fair. She urged MDOT to cooperate with Michigan Legal Services so that those in the community who will be relocated can discuss their issues on a case-by-case basis. Representative Tlaib noted that those who are concerned about the issue should contact her office and she will place them in contact with Michigan Legal Services. She urged MDOT to participate in that process. Mohammed Alghurabi indicated he would discuss how to follow up with Representative Tlaib after the meeting.

Q: Would some of this money be available for infrastructure in Michigan?

R: Mohammed Alghurabi responded that about \$850 million in Stimulus money is available for infrastructure is available various MDOT roads and bridges throughout the state.

Q: What happens to those relocatees who have financial difficulties/credit problems?

R: Paul Sander of MDOT indicated that MDOT will work with those individuals on a one-to-one basis to attempt to address that problem.

C: Mrs. Leonard indicated that she was fearful that, based on her experiences in the 1960s, a relocation program will be difficult for the people involved. When asked, Mrs. Leonard indicated she was reflecting on “urban renewal.”

R: Joe Corradino indicated that since urban renewal of the 1960s, the Federal Relocation Act was enacted to avoid the kinds of difficulties that urban renewal created.

Important Issues Going Forward

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that he would like to have a discussion by the LAC and then the public of the key issues of which they may be concerned as the DRIC goes forward.

Mrs. Miller stated it is essential to ensure that the DRIC relocation program be different than the urban renewal program noted earlier.

Mrs. Leonard indicated that her concerns are air quality particularly at Southwestern High School. She noted she is still insistent that health studies should be performed. She stated that she would appreciate air quality monitoring being done both in Southwestern High School and outside and that a baseline be established¹. She indicated that a meeting needs to be conducted between MDOT and the Detroit Public School/Central Administration about the DRIC. Finally, she noted that there will be a number of skilled tradespeople involved in the Border Crossing Project. She stressed, however, that oftentimes poorer people will not have the skills to participate and, so, need training and they need to get jobs¹.

Jane Mackey indicated that she was concerned about the young children in the area and protections for them.

Mary Loubriel noted that her concern was that the DRIC project would go forward but that Delray would be forgotten.

John Nagy indicated that his concerns included the following:

- Truck traffic needs to be addressed in the neighborhood. He noted that this issue is not associated with congestion, but the transportation of noxious materials that would be forced to use Dearborn and West End once the DRIC is built.
- That there would be isolated pockets in the area once the DRIC is built. He noted that he is concerned about the area at Campbell and Junction, as well as the area between Campbell and Clark.

Marlene Dudzinski stated her concern was about the human issues that the people in the area of the DRIC project will experience.

Tom Cervenak indicated his concern was that the Delray neighborhood was fragile and that the DRIC study itself had destabilized it. He noted that he never felt comfortable with MDOT's commitment to redeveloping Delray. He believes that MDOT should invest in housing. He also indicated that he was

concerned about truck traffic, as John Nagy indicated, particularly those trucks carrying noxious materials from Zug Island as well as the cement trucks that would use West End and Dearborn.

Lisa Goldstein noted that her concern was air quality. She stressed that every effort must be made to improve air quality in the area. She hoped that there would be funds made available to retrofit trucks that use the area. She requested that a baseline air quality survey be conducted for Southwestern High School and other sensitive uses. Another question is if jobs move out of the area, where would people who live in there find employment. Lastly, she was concerned that the Ambassador Bridge and the new DRIC bridge would mean additional disruption to the community.

Tiffany Draper stressed there is need to address redevelopment of the area from the standpoint of the preservation of the community, its walkability, and minimizing negative impacts so the quality of life is enhanced. She noted that improvements should be made to Fort Wayne.

Linda Wesley indicated that her concern was air quality, particularly as it relates to the health of the people in the area.

Public Comments

At that point in the meeting, public comments were solicited also with respect to key issues going forward.

Scott Brines indicated that his concerns were air quality and the need for a binding agreement with the community on mitigation and enhancement.

Sonia Moore noted that it is very likely that the Detroit Public School Administration will not participate in discussions dealing with Southwestern High School.

Adeline Carnahan and Doris Brock indicated that, while their property would not be taken, they understand what people are going through. They stressed that the area needs to be treated carefully as the DRIC project moves forward.

Santos Kent noted that he keeps hearing the same message over and over again that “the bridge is coming.” But, no action is taking place and renters and homeowners are stuck because they don’t want to leave for fear of missing out on an opportunity to have government assistance. He noted that the

community must receive more specific information about relocation including when the housing purchases would begin. Thom Schafer of MDOT responded that there is no specific date for when housing purchases would begin. However, he also noted that there is a 90-day minimum between the time when an offer is made and when an individual needs to move.

Next Meeting

Mohammed Alghurabi announced that the next meeting would be on April 29th. He also noted that there would be a forum to introduce the private sector (engineers, contractors, financiers, attorneys) to the DRIC. The forum will be on April 23rd at the Detroit Chamber of Commerce offices in downtown Detroit. He also noted that the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation is once again taking up MDOT's annual budget which often focuses on the DRIC.

With that, the meeting ended at 8:30 p.m.