

**Detroit River International Crossing Study  
Local Advisory Council/Local Agency Group Meeting  
Notes  
October 28, 2009, 7:00 p.m.  
Southwestern High School**

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

**Attendance:** See attached.

**Discussion:**

**Introductions**

Following the welcome by Mohammed Alghurabi, each person in attendance introduced themselves.

**Meeting Conduct Procedures**

Mohammed Alghurabi explained the procedures for the evening's meeting---the public will have time at the start and finish of the meeting to ask questions/make comments. The LAC/LAG members will conduct their business uninterrupted in the core of the meeting.

**Agenda Review**

Mohammed Alghurabi reviewed the agenda. He asked if there were any changes. None were offered.

**Public Comments**

A Delray resident indicated that she had read the notes of the September 30<sup>th</sup> LAC/LAG meeting and took exception to the comment that people in the Empowerment Zone do not pay property taxes. She indicated that she had always paid property taxes. John Nagy, a member of the LAC, indicated that the Renaissance Zone is the appropriate designation within which people do not have to pay property taxes provided that they had registered at the correct time.

## **Meeting Notes**

Mohammed Alghurabi asked if there were any changes, additions or deletions to the September 30<sup>th</sup> meeting notes of the LAC/LAG. There were none.

## **CBC Report**

Mohammed Alghurabi noted that MDOT meets regularly with the Community Benefits Coalition to review various issues that affect the Delray community. The topics of discussion cover a broad range including air quality, truck traffic, property acquisitions and the like. He noted that MDOT will continue to work through these issues with the CBC as the DRIC is implemented. He then asked Tom Cervenak to comment on housing development issues in Delray. Tom reported that the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) had provided what is known as “Home” funds that, when combined with MDOT relocation funds, can support building about 25 new houses in Delray. These will be for those who are dislocated by the DRIC project who wish to stay in the community. Additionally, MSHDA has hired a consulting firm known as Capital Access to prepare a stabilization/revitalization plan for Delray. The area that is being focused on as Phase 1 of that plan is bounded by Westend/Holy Cross, Melville and Thaddeus. Additionally, \$75,000 has been made available through Detroit’s Planning and Development Department to be used to help people rehab their properties.

## **DRIC Monthly Progress Review**

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that this item was to summarize what work had been conducted on the DRIC since the last meeting with the LAC/LAG. He noted that Senate Bill 254/Section 384 which includes language that instructs MDOT to conduct the following activities by May 1, 2010 and report to the legislature: investment grade traffic and revenue study; and, proposal from the private sector to demonstrate their interest in funding the DRIC. The intent of the legislature per Senate Bill 254 is to reach a go/no go vote on the DRIC by June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mohammed Alghurabi also indicated that in the last month MDOT has been interacting with the federal government on the stimulus grant that has been proposed for the DRIC project. A final decision is months away.

Additionally, work on some preliminary engineering has been initiated to advance the project. Requests for proposals were received and evaluated to develop a design guide which would deal with the “look and fit” of the project as it moves forward. All contracts for design had been authorized. The design guide project had not yet reached that stage.

### **I-75/Gateway Project Presentation**

Mohammed Alghurabi introduced Victor Judnic, the MDOT construction manager for the I-75/Gateway Project. Victor made a presentation of the status of the project as well as near-term future activities. When it was completed, he entertained questions and comments from those in attendance.

*Q: If the northbound exit at Springwells Avenue were closed as an interim measure to until issues are resolved with the Ambassador Bridge for completion of key ramps taking trucks from the bridge to I-75, would the traffic signal system at Springwells be fixed.*

R: Closing the Springwells northbound exit as an interim solution is highly doubtful. Additionally, repair of the signals will likely await implementation of the DRIC which will rebuild the Springwells interchange.

*Q: Why did you say there is a possibility that the northbound exit to Springwells could be closed? That intersection is a huge problem and closing the ramp will lead to even bigger problems.*

R: The presentation was intended to be comprehensive. The possible closing of the northbound access at the Springwells interchange was examined as part of a solution to the traffic problems caused by the Ambassador Bridge not completing its section of the Gateway Project. Nonetheless, MDOT’s analysis indicates closing the northbound exit of the Springwells interchange with I-75 is not very likely.

*Q: How long will trucks continue to be routed down Jefferson and Dearborn?*

R: The use of Jefferson and Dearborn to route trucks back to I-75 is in response to the fact that the Ambassador Bridge has not completed its section of the Gateway Project. So, in order to address the truck issues in the area, particularly through surrounding

neighborhoods, it was decided by MDOT as an interim solution to route trucks from Fort Street down Clark to Jefferson and then back to Dearborn and I-75. Jefferson and Dearborn are highly industrialized, and the current solution is to use those streets and have fewer impacts on the neighborhoods. This approach will be monitored for the next few weeks. It may be revised as the project moves forward.

*Q: Continuing to use Dearborn Street and the interchange as part of a detour because of the lack of action of the Ambassador Bridge isn't appreciated by the community. The area surrounding Dearborn Street is residential.*

R: The comment is appreciated. When examining the specific lane uses, MDOT found that Jefferson and Dearborn are abutted on each side largely by industrial properties.

*C: Truckers go where they want. They don't respect the communities.*

R: MDOT will, in this interim period while it awaits the Ambassador Bridge's completion of its portion of the Gateway Project, appropriately sign the truck route that is finally determined and monitor it.

*C: We have been asking for a dedicated truck route for years and urge MDOT to give that serious consideration. Use of Dearborn Avenue is at cross purposes with the neighborhoods' objectives to eliminate trucks.*

*C: There needs to be large signs placed throughout the area that say, "No Trucks." The violators should be fined for using areas which are so marked. MDOT paid for the Cultural Center at the exit of the Ambassador Bridge. Why can't a dedicated truck route be developed by MDOT to help the community?*

R: MDOT will continue to work with the community on the matter of a dedicated truck route. Nonetheless, MDOT did not pay for what is defined as the Cultural Center at the Ambassador Bridge. That was paid for by private and foundation money. MDOT does lease space in the area for a Welcome Center and the I-75/Gateway MDOT project office is in the facility.

*Q:* *On the west side service drive in the vicinity of West Grand Boulevard, the retaining wall is concrete on the neighborhood side. Why isn't it a brick wall as in other sections?*

*R:* MDOT had a very concentrated Context Sensitive Solutions effort for the Gateway Project. Consistent with that, it developed a concrete wall. It is coated so that it looks consistent throughout. However, MDOT cannot do brick retaining walls in all cases.

*Q:* *Will the community have input into the landscaping that is yet to come.*

*R:* Yes.

*Q:* *Can we get trucks out of our neighborhood to Rosa Parks and away from the schools.*

*R:* Rosa Parks is used as an alternative route for some trucks. But, all trucks, including those going south, cannot be placed on Rosa Parks. There is only so much that the Corktown community can take in terms of additional truck traffic.

*C:* *The rerouting of trucks is the core issue of the Community Benefits Coalition. A solution must be found for both the I-75 interim problem and the DRIC that will benefit the community.*

*R:* The use of Jefferson and Dearborn, as was discussed earlier, is an interim solution that is affected by the failure of the Ambassador Bridge to complete its portions of the I-75/Gateway Project. Once that situation is corrected, the trucks will not be routed down Jefferson and Dearborn from the Ambassador Bridge.

*C:* *I hope that these "interim solutions" that affect the Delray community don't happen with the DRIC.*

*Q:* *Why are incentives being paid to contractors when the project isn't completed?*

*R:* MDOT paid incentives to the contractors to complete various sections of the project. For example, opening up I-75 to traffic was a key element of the overall Gateway Project. If the original schedule was shortened to do that, incentives were available and paid. Incentives are important from a larger, overall economic benefit to the entire region.

*Q: I am a member of a church on Dearborn Street. How are you going to fix the ramps?*

R: MDOT is now preparing plans to repair the bottom half of the off-ramp as well as the on-ramp to I-75 at Dearborn.

*C: The Dearborn ramps are terrible. If a pathway were available for only trucks, this kind of condition would not be repeated.*

*Q: Will our air get better with these projects. Will our taxes go up?*

R: The Gateway and DRIC projects will not be financed by an increase in your local taxes. Additionally, we believe that both the Gateway Project and the DRIC will improve air quality in the Delray/Southwest Detroit area. This will be done also as a result of EPA regulations on diesel engines.

With that, the questions and comments on the I-75/Gateway Project concluded.

### **Other LAC/LAG Business**

Mohammed Alghurabi asked if there were any other business that the LAC/LAG members wished to address. John Nagy, in response to the previously mentioned issue of air pollution, indicated that the conditions in Delray are affected by odors from a nearby compost facility and the wastewater treatment plant. If the community does not complain about these matters to the appropriate sources, nothing will be done. If those who are concerned about air quality wish to do something, they should call the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality at 313-456-4700. If calls are not made, the odor issue will not be resolved.

There was no other business brought to the floor by LAC/LAG members.

### **Additional Public Comments**

Mohammed Alghurabi asked if there were additional public comments. The answer was no.

### **Next LAC/LAG Meeting**

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that the next LAC/LAG meeting was being moved to November 18<sup>th</sup> to avoid the Wednesday immediately before Thanksgiving. Additionally, he noted that, as typical of the DRIC, there would be no LAC/LAG meeting in December.