

Detroit River International Crossing Study
Joint Local Advisory Council/Local Agency Group Meeting
Notes
September 30, 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

Mohammed Alghurabi opened the meeting by asking everyone to introduce themselves.

Meeting Conduct Procedures

Mohammed Alghurabi explained the standard procedures by which the evening's meeting would be conducted, i.e., the public will have time at the start and finish of the meeting to ask questions/make comments. The LAC/LAG members would conduct their business uninterrupted in the core of the meeting.

Agenda Review

Mohammed Alghurabi explained the agenda and that the meeting will focus on a discussion of key issues dealing with relocation, air quality, and traffic/noise/vibrations. He indicated that this list of topics was the result of the work of those who participated in the August LAC/LAG meeting. He noted that there would be "round-table" discussions of these topics over the course of an hour, with a pause every 20 minutes so people could shift from one group to another. He indicated that this was not a rework of what was in the environmental document, but an effort to ensure that the community had the most complete understanding of what is in the Final Environmental Impact Statement and the Record of Decision.

He asked for any changes to the agenda. There were none.

Public Comments

Mohammed Alghurabi asked if anyone wished to make a public comment. No one did.

Review of the LAC/LAG August 26, 2009 Meeting Notes

Mohammed Alghurabi asked for any comments on the previous meeting's notes. John Nagy indicated that his first name was wrong when cited as "Joe" Nagy on page 2. The notes have been appropriately revised.

Mrs. Delores Leonard asked how the handout materials dealing with noise wall placement were to be used at tonight's meeting. Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that they would be used as part of the round-table discussions later in the meeting.

Mitigation/Enhancements

Mohammed Alghurabi recognized Doug Proper of MDOT who had developed the procedures for this evening's meeting. Mohammed explained Doug is in charge of monitoring/compliance of the mitigation/enhancements efforts. Tonight's discussion is part of a quarterly review of those materials as committed in the Record of Decision.

Mohammed Alghurabi noted that Gerardo Evangelista of Bridging Communities is working on the development of new housing in Delray. Money from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority pool of "Home" funds will allow those displaced by the DRIC project who want to stay in the neighborhood to find new housing. Approximately 25 new units are expected to be built with these funds plus assistance that comes to those relocated by the DRIC Project. Additionally, Mr. Evangelista is pursuing funds through the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to be able to construct an additional number of houses beyond those supported by the Home funds.

Mrs. Leonard stated that she continues to have concerns for the people who will be relocated by the DRIC project. She noted that Delray property values may be about \$15,000 while they are likely to be relocated into new homes worth \$120,000. She noted people who live in Delray are in the Empowerment Zone and do not pay taxes on their property. She asked if that tax relief

follow to their new home. Jerry Lacy of MDOT indicated that there was a period of time during which taxes can be abated but not eliminated. Mrs. Leonard interpreted as that as a “grace period” for relief of property taxes. At this point, became somewhat confusing so it was decided that MDOT would place in writing the exact opportunities available for tax adjustments. Mrs. Leonard asked if the people who will be relocated will be informed of how this procedure works. Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that they would be; preliminary efforts were now underway with State Representative Rashida Tlaib to address this issue. Cooperation will also be provided by working with the Community Benefits Coalition. Mrs. Leonard concluded this discussion by indicating that it is her strong desire to ensure that people who get into new homes will be able to afford and maintain them.

Update

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that \$1.5 billion are available for additional federal stimulus funding under what is known as the TIGER grant program. He noted that MDOT has applied for \$75 million for the DRIC project, of which \$40 million is for right-of-way acquisition, and \$30 million for improvements to the Springwells interchange. The last \$5 million would be spent on implementing the project. He noted that letters supporting the application for stimulus funding were available from Representative Tlaib, the Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments, and a number of democratic state legislators. A decision of stimulus funding would not be made until February.

Mohammed Alghurabi noted that the budget for MDOT affecting the DRIC had been given preliminary approval. He indicated that the legislation called for an investment grade traffic and revenue study to be completed and included in a proposal to be made by MDOT by May 1 to the Michigan Legislature on how to approach the project with private sector participation. He noted that the intent of the legislature was to either approve or disapprove the project by June 1, 2010. Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that this was considered a positive legislative development.

Mohammed noted that the legislation also provided for \$2.5 million of state money to be used in fiscal year 2010 beginning October 1. He believes that this money could be leveraged with

federal funds creating a pool of \$12.5 million to advance the Detroit River International Crossing Project.

One aspect of the project that will be of particular interest to the Local Advisory Council and the community, in general, is the preparation of a design guide dealing with the look and fit of the project with the community.

Lastly, as a matter of update, Mohammed Alghurabi noted that a letter had been received from a number of environmental groups located in both the United States and Canada. A response has been prepared and provided to the Governor, as well the Canadian members of the Border Partnership. He volunteered that if anyone wished to have a copy of the response, they should advise him and it will be forwarded.

At this point, an observer of the meeting asked when and where the project will be built. Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that the details of the location of the plaza are available on the project Web site. Generally speaking, the project will be located in the Delray area. He noted that it will take several years to build.

Breakout Sessions

The members of the LAC and the observers then proceeded to work in breakout groups to discuss relocation, air quality, and traffic/noise and vibrations. At the end of the breakout sessions, reports were made by group participants.

Air Quality

This group discussed the efforts that had been made since the Final Environmental Impact Statement had been completed. These efforts involved the Community Benefits Coalition, SEMCOG, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency. A list of action items has been developed and steps are being taken on those items. Of particular interest is mitigation of mobile sources of air pollution using grants from programs such as Congestion Management Air Quality or other funding available through the

Environmental Protection Agency. The goal is to get projects “on the ground” not to do more studies. A key aspect of moving forward on these action items would be educating owners and operators of diesel fleets of how to retrofit their projects with federal funding. Retrofitting diesel-powered construction equipment is also an action item being acted on. It was noted that the air quality breakout session also involved a healthy discussion with members of participants from Canada of placing air quality monitors on the plaza.

Relocations

This group reviewed the general information available to potential relocatees provided by MDOT. Specific information will have to come later based on a one-on-one discussion of relocation needs. A number of those involved in the relocation breakout session also wanted to know specifics with respect to whether their property was in or out of the acquisition area. Using computer mapping, as many questions as possible of this type were answered.

Traffic/Noise and Vibrations

This discussion included comments about how vibrations would be monitored during construction, especially at Berwalt Manor. There was also a discussion on how truck traffic could be rerouted to minimize effects on the neighborhood.

Other LAC/LAG Business

Mohammed Alghurabi asked if there were any other LAC/LAG business. There was none.

Additional Pubic Comments

Mary Ann Cuderman commented that she appreciates MDOT’s open, transparent communication process. She urged all those in attendance from the MDOT team to keep listening to the residents.

Next LAC/LAG Meeting

The next LAC/LAG meeting is scheduled for October 28 at Southwestern High School beginning at 7:00 p.m.