

**Presentation to Joint Transportation Subcommittees of Michigan Legislature
May 18, 2006**

Ron DeCook: The Michigan Department of Transportation thanks you for allowing it and its partner, the Federal Highway Administration, to present today further comment on the Detroit River International Crossing Study. We believe it important that our presentation first address several key issues made in previous presentations to set the record straight. Mohammed Alghurabi will begin. He will be followed by Jim Steele from the Federal Highway Administration. Our entire team will be available for follow-up questions and comments.

Mohammed Alghurabi: Good afternoon. My name is Mohammed Alghurabi and I am the Project Manager for MDOT of the Detroit River International Crossing Study. I will begin my comments by addressing several points made by the Detroit River Tunnel Partnership at the May 30th hearing of this body. Specifically, the DRTP representatives indicated that information on tunneling that it provided on one day was rejected the very next day. That is not correct. We met face-to-face with the DRTP river tunnel experts on October 13, 2005. Information orally discussed by DRTP was requested by the Border Crossing Partnership. It was transferred to the Partnership on November 3rd. Our team prepared a report on November 13th and a second report on November 28th.

DRTP also indicated on March 30th that our study is about “politics, not engineering.” That position is at variance with the letter of September 28, 2005, signed by Marge Byington, who spoke at the March 30th hearing, wherein she stated as follows: “You (Mohammed Alghurabi), your MDOT team and your consultants are to be congratulated for the data and engineering

focus of the (Scoping) report. Regarding the scoping document, some of the new ideas are excellent, and have not been so clearly stated in other documents.” And then the letter concludes, “Again, congratulations on an outstanding draft document.”

Finally, the DRTP made an assertion at the March 30th hearing that the public has lost confidence in the DRIC process. That is not true, as evidenced by communications from the various auto supplier groups, the Big 3 automakers, and numerous neighborhood organizations that have testified at the hearings about the transparency and the credibility of the Border Crossing process. Those acknowledgements extend to the Detroit City Council as well as to the Detroit City Planning Commission.

Now, I'd like to review a few of the issues presented at the March 30th hearings in the report by Wolfram & Ruff and in their comments on behalf of the Ambassador Bridge. First, and perhaps most interesting, in light of last week's discussion by the Ambassador Bridge, is that Wolfram & Ruff indicated that there is no near-term need for a new border crossing. Yet, the Ambassador Bridge itself is “breaking ground” on a second span, according to last week's testimony. Secondly, Wolfram & Ruff contend that the bridge is well-maintained. However, as you heard last week from Mr. Stamper, President of the Ambassador Bridge Company, the new bridge that they intend to build is needed to address operational/maintenance issues of the existing bridge. Mr. Stamper even stated the maintenance needs may require taking entire sections of the bridge out and replacing them. Clearly, if the bridge is well-maintained, none of us know it. The DRIC will leverage the tolls to finance the design and construction, not unlike the Ambassador Bridge which will utilize tolls to finance the second span.

Wolfram and Ruff stated that the DRIC forecasts are “optimistic beyond reasonable expectations.” To the contrary, the forecasts of the River Crossing Study have been vetted by experts in Canada and the U.S. The Federal Highway Administration’s resource specialist, Supin Yoder, has stated, and I quote: “Overall, the methods used for the DRIC travel demand forecasts are sound and represent the state of practices for corridor EIS studies.” She goes on to say “...the study team’s broad knowledge of corridor travel, markets and issues have increased their forecasting credibility.”

Wolfram and Ruff also indicated that their review of **monthly** traffic indicates that border crossing activity in the Detroit-Windsor Gateway is down significantly. Mr. Stamper indicated last week it was down by 30 percent. It is important to realize that, in constructing a facility such as a road or a bridge, or private facilities like a stadium or even a restaurant, monthly demand is not the issue, it’s the peak demand. You will find today that the peak hour demand on the Ambassador Bridge is at or slightly above what it was in September 2001. Therefore, the capacity of the existing bridge is still being challenged today.

One additional comment relates to the Canadian position on the pending proposal to build a second span. The Canadians met with the Ambassador Bridge representative Tuesday, May 16th. Following that meeting, I am authorized to advise you the Canadians had previously rejected the second span of the Ambassador Bridge and see no need to change that position.

In closing, I would like to again share with you letters of support from companies and organizations that have been actively involved in the DRIC study. These groups understand the economic importance of long-term border solutions in SE Michigan and the opportunities that exist for community revitalization when willing partners share in the development of this vital infrastructure. You have before you today letters from several of these groups, including: The Detroit Regional Chamber; Daimler Chrysler; The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers; The Gateway Communities Development Collaborative; John Engler and The National Association of Manufacturers; The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments; The Delray Community Council; and the City of Detroit, City Planning Commission.

These organizations through these letters offer support for the DRIC study and urge the Partnership to continue the DRIC process so that informed and open decisions can be made for appropriate border solutions.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Border Partnership.

Now I'd like to turn the presentation over to Mr. Steele for comments.

-Jim Steele will comment at this point.