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August 14, 2008

The Honorable Alan I. Cropsey  
State Senator and Majority Floor Leader  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

RE: Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC)

It is my understanding that the Appropriations Committee will be holding an investigative hearing on Friday, August 15, 2008, regarding the Detroit River International Crossing which is under the direction of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Mr. Mohammed S. Alghurabi is the senior project manager for this project. Because of a prior commitment, I am unable to attend the hearing and am submitting my comments via email and by United States Postal Service.

In March 2006 I attended a joint legislative Transportation Committee hearing in Lansing. My written comments were vehemently opposed to the building of a bridge as I was not convinced a bridge was needed. After that meeting, Mr. Alghurabi shared materials with me that had been presented to the legislators. It was then I understood the necessity for a new crossing.

My comments changed from "A bridge is not necessary" to "Even though a bridge may be necessary, I am opposed to it being built and disrupting communities whether it is proposed to be built by MDOT or the Detroit Bridge Company (Ambassador Bridge)." While I am still opposed, I know a bridge will be built. It is just a matter of when, where and by whom. Therefore, it is my position that the eventual bridge crossing from the city of Detroit to the city of Windsor be publicly owned. A publicly owned bridge will come under closer scrutiny than a privately owned bridge. Also, it is my belief that disrupted communities and cities should participate equitably in profit sharing through such a venture. Further, it also is my understanding that legislation was proposed by Representative Steve Tobocman that all bridges in Michigan be publicly owned and come under legislative jurisdiction. I do not know the status of this legislation.

On a subsequent meeting in March 2006, I attended another joint legislative Transportation Committee hearing in Lansing. My written comments reflected my changed views as stated in the preceding paragraph. Also, at that meeting, city of Detroit, Deputy Mayor Anthony Adams appeared before the legislators at which time he gave testimony in support of the owners of the Detroit Bridge Company building the

proposed bridge. At that same meeting, Mr. Dan Stamper indicated no public financing would be required should the Detroit Bridge Company be permitted to build the bridge. Approximately a year ago, I read an article in one of the Detroit daily newspapers that the Detroit Bridge Company was seeking financial assistance from Michigan legislators through an economic committee.

I have been a member of the DRIC Local Advisory Council (LAC) since August 2005 serving and attending meetings as a member of the Sierra Club, National Environmental Justice Committee. In this capacity, I have voiced my opinions often and asked many questions. My role has been to focus on people who fit the true test of EJ—poor people and people of color who possibly or eventually will encounter negative impacts from such an undertaking.

Southwestern High School has been my major focus. Southwestern High School, a half block from the I75 expressway located at Fort and Waterman, will be impacted by the project. Through discussions during the monthly LAC meetings, via telephone calls, emails and private consultations with Mr. Alghurabi and/or Mr. Joseph Corridino (a consultant for MDOT), my concerns have primarily focused on the children as the plaza of several illustrative alternatives were abutting the school's football field. In June 2008 the Canadian counterparts made public their selection. Michigan also made its announcement shortly thereafter.

The MDOT team has heard my and the community's concerns. While there may not be satisfactory solutions for all to hear, at least an effort was made. The selected proposed illustrative alternative has been announced. The FEIS is not scheduled to be developed until several months from now.

My concern still remains for Southwestern High School students and faculty. There is the possibility that Waterman as a street will be closed and replaced with a cross walk over the I75 expressway. How do we evacuate these children safely and quickly should there be an incident at the plaza? There are approximately 900 students attending the school.

You may or may be aware that Southwestern High School is located in what is termed an environmental "hot spot". In previous conversations with now retired principal, Mr. Robert Hodge, I was told fumes from existing and surrounding industrial facilities enter the school on a continual basis which has been uncomfortable for many students and staff alike. There are numerous environmental studies that point out health and academic negative impacts upon children who are exposed to diesel fumes. Dr. Stuart Batterman, et al, studied the impact upon children who attend Detroit Public Schools' Maybury School near I96 close to the existing Ambassador Bridge. This study and others can be provided upon request.

From my participation in the process utilized by the MDOT staffers and consultants, I have learned much. I have observed and participated in activities and strategies at a level I am not accustomed when it comes to decision making about my community. The immediate community residents and residents from surrounding communities have walked through the needs/wants/wishes activities of the community to an almost finished product. I am accustomed to two-minute "sound-bites" in presenting my community's concerns whenever I appear before the Detroit City Council. That did not

happen ever during my participation on the LAC nor during the public comment periods of the monthly or context sensitive meetings. For that, I thank the MDOT staffers and consultants. I feel I have made lasting resource contacts. We did not start out this way; but, after both sides of the equation listened and heard what was being said, I feel my time and efforts have been productive and appreciated. Also, I have appreciated the transparency and the willing patience of the program manager and consultants whenever I have brought my concerns to them.

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