

**Detroit River International Crossing Study**  
**April 12, 2005**  
**Public Meeting Notes**

These notes are of the formal presentation made at the core of the Detroit River International Crossing and DRIC study public meetings held April 11, 12, 13 and 14, 2005. Written comments received at each meeting follow these notes. All meetings used the same format.

The meeting locations were:

- Monday, April 11, 2005 – Biddle Hall in Wyandotte
- Tuesday, April 12, 2005 – River Rouge High School in River Rouge
- Wednesday, April 13, 2005 – Southwestern High School in Detroit
- Thursday, April 14, 2005 – Martin Luther King Jr. High School in Detroit

Bob Parsons, Public Hearing Officer of the Michigan Department of Transportation, outlined the purpose and agenda for the meeting and introduced the translators. He emphasized that the Michigan Department of Transportation was interested in receiving public input and welcomed oral comments during the question/comment portion of the meeting. He also noted comment forms were available (to be returned at the meeting or mailed afterwards). The Web site ([www.partnershipborderstudy.com](http://www.partnershipborderstudy.com)) and an 800 telephone number (1-800-900-2649) were available at anytime for input to the study process.

Bob Parsons introduced Mohammed Alghurabi, DRIC Project Manager for the Michigan Department of Transportation. Mohammed thanked those in attendance and introduced Joe Corradino of The Corradino Group and Regine Beauboeuf of Parsons Transportation Group. Using a PowerPoint presentation (available on the Web site), he explained that the Bi-National Partnership guiding the study consists of four agencies, the Federal Highway Administration, the Michigan Department of Transportation, Transport Canada and the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario; the state and federal agencies that would be involved; the project schedule; and, the U.S. study process guided by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). He concluded by emphasizing the need for public input, noting that all reasonable alternatives would be examined and no decision on a border crossing. With that, he introduced Joe Corradino of The Corradino Group, the U.S. Consultant team's project manager.

Joe Corradino, continuing with the PowerPoint presentation, explained in greater detail the NEPA process. He noted that the first group of alternatives would be developed in June. Those options, known as Illustrative Alternatives, would consist of the border crossing itself, the connecting plaza for customs processing and other functions, and the roadway connecting the plaza to the interstate highway system. Illustrative Alternatives would similarly be developed on the Canadian side of the border.

At this first round of meetings, public input was being solicited to define where the alternatives should or should not go. He noted that technical studies are under way to support the evaluation of the alternatives to be developed. Those studies would allow, by the end of 2005, the elimination of some alternatives, with those remaining, known as Practical Alternatives, to undergo more detailed analysis. Early in 2006, the list of Practical Alternatives would be finalized and then be the focus of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). That draft would be completed by the end of 2006 with the hearing for public review of the DEIS scheduled for January 2007. By mid-2007, or earlier if possible, the Preferred Alternative would be identified. The Preferred Alternative would consist of a connection between a major roadway, such as an interstate highway in the United States, to a U.S. plaza and then to a border crossing (tunnel or bridge) connecting to a Canadian plaza, and appropriate roadways in Canada for an end-to-end solution. The Final Environmental Impact Statement would be available by the end of 2007.

Joe Corradino noted that complying with the NEPA process was mandatory and that the three-year schedule reflected the need for public involvement and a great deal of technical analysis. He cited the draft Purpose of and Need for the project and presented a chart that showed a narrowing process with the initial number of alternatives gradually reduced at the same time the database and technical analysis expanded.

Joe Corradino concluded his presentation with a few examples of issues influencing the study in several areas.

Bob Parsons then began the question/answer/comment portion of the meeting. He invited those present to indicate their interest in speaking by completing a form, which he would use to announce the speakers in the order in which the forms were received.

## **Comments/Questions/Responses**

**Comment:** Mayor Greg Joseph of River Rouge stated that River Rouge supports a Zug Island crossing of the Detroit River. He felt there was a potential for River Rouge to benefit economically; there would be jobs for those in his community. He indicated that a Zug Island crossing would have to be coordinated with Mayor Kilpatrick of Detroit. He concluded by saying he would oppose a bridge being built elsewhere.

**Comment:** Don Flynn, CEO of HBX Corporation, stated that 85% of the population in Michigan is located in an area from Grand Rapids to the south. He stated that 65% of the trucks crossing the river today are going south to Monroe and Toledo coming from London, Ontario, as the shortest distance between two points is a southern crossing of the river. He indicated that he will build a bridge at Pennsylvania Road connecting to County Road 8 in Canada. He stated that his interest is in the bridge only and it would “not cost taxpayers one penny.” Others would have to build the bridge approaches. He stated that he intended to buy 85 acres of land at Jefferson and Pennsylvania Road. He further stated that, if a bridge were built at Zug Island, he would bankrupt the builder of that crossing. He stressed that the U.S. Constitution supersedes every other law and that he will sue for the denial of his rights to build a bridge.

**Question:** D. Leonard, a member of the Environmental Justice Committee of the Sierra Club, asked if it were possible to become a member of the LAC.

**Response:** Mohammed Alghurabi said it is not too late to become a member or observer of the Local Advisory Council. He stated that the next LAC meeting would be April 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm at the Southgate Holiday Inn. Future meetings may be at other locations.

**Comment:** Kevin Aronson, a resident of River Rouge for thirty-five years, and a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals, indicated he will work with other Zoning Board members to promote a Zug Island crossing as it would create a new direction for River Rouge.

**Question:** Nancy Eluskie of the River Rouge Planning Commission stated that she believed the River Walk would be extended through River Rouge which would be positive for the community. She noted it was important to bring people to the community. But, she noted that all effects of a border crossing were still unknown. For example, she wondered if fishing in the Detroit River would get better or worse if there were a new bridge with piers in the Detroit River. She stated that the shoreline was very important and that I-75 was some distance from the shoreline. She hoped that the connection to the bridge could be put at the edge of the community rather than through it. She asked if, in creating a bridge project, permits were necessary from both the U.S. and Canada. Finally, she noted the presence of Detroit Edison, with its tall stacks in the vicinity of the River Rouge area.

**Response:** Mohammed Alghurabi said that permits are required in both countries.

**Question:** Kim Hunter of Detroit wanted a ballpark figure on the size of the Plaza.

**Response:** Joe Corradino responded that there would be an answer within 60 days and that the plaza size could vary by the location of the crossing.

**Comment:** Mr. Hunter continued by saying that planning for the River Walk was extensive and would it be possible for the bridge to cross it?

**Response:** Joe Corradino responded that it could be.

**Comment:** Next, Mr. Hunter indicated a concern for security issues and whether they already applied to the existing Ambassador Bridge.

**Response:** Joe Corradino responded that security was an issue for the Ambassador Bridge. He also indicated any "lessons learned" at existing border crossings would apply to any new crossing.

**Comment:** Finally, Mr. Hunter encouraged the MDOT study team to promote the project in the media and get more coverage.

**Question:** Mark Drysdale asked whether a copy of the video being taken of the meeting would be available.

**Response:** Mohammed Alghurabi believed that it could be.

**Question:** Mr. Drysdale then inquired about membership in the LAC and indicated he had called Bob Parsons about getting on the LAC, but had not gotten an adequate response. He asked if a small neighborhood group could be represented on the committee.

**Response:** Mohammed Alghurabi indicated it could be.

**Comment:** Mr. Drysdale expressed some frustration about Web site information.

**Response:** Mohammed Alghurabi explained that some of the information remained from the Purpose/Need and Feasibility Study and that new information would be provided on the current study as it becomes available. He further indicated that application to be a part of the LAC will be available on the Project's Web site.

**Question:** Juan Washington asked when he would know about adverse impacts resulting from the project.

**Response:** Joe Corradino said that information on impacts would become available over the next several months. It would cover all impact categories covered by NEPA, such as air quality, noise, water quality, and community impacts. He further cited that examples of environmental documents were available for other, comparable MDOT projects on its Web site.

**Question:** Ed McArdle, a Sierra Club member, asked if there would be a record of comments and access to such comments.

**Response:** Mohammed Alghurabi stated that notes were being taken of each meeting and these would be made available on the project's Web site.

**Question:** The speaker asked whether it was proven that a new bridge were needed. He wondered if road signing would divert traffic to the Blue Water Bridge. He also asked about the potential for the freight trains to divert/lessen truck movements.

**Response:** Mohammed Alghurabi responded by stating that the Planning/Need and Feasibility Study had determined that there was a need for a new crossing.

**Comment:** Ann Gail indicated her business in Bloomfield was shut down because of road construction. She stated that MDOT must notify people ahead of time of these meetings. She indicated her involvement in MDOT's I-375 project was affected by poor meeting notification. She also stressed that paying over \$16 million for this study is too much. She said the impact of a new border crossing on Trenton and Riverview would be unacceptable.

She asked who in Michigan and who in Canada made the decision to do this study.

**Response:** Dave Wake of the Ministry of Transportation in Ontario responded the project was a high priority in Ontario and at the federal level in Canada. He also indicated he was aware of support for the study by Governor Granholm.

**Comment:** Ann Gail then stated every population group in every area where a potential border crossing could be located would be affected. She stressed that she is impacted. She stated that environmental justice impacts are not just in the Detroit area. She requested attachments A and B of the LAC materials.

**Response:** Joe Corradino indicated those attachments would be provided.

**Question:** Ann Gail wanted to make sure that there was a follow-up with those who attended these public meetings.

**Response:** Mohammed Alghurabi indicated everyone signing up for the meetings would be on the mailing list for future meetings.

**Comment:** John Benbzick, a resident of Dearborn, noted that, due to restrictions in the Detroit area, hazmat was brought into Port Huron. This needs to be addressed by the new bridge. He stated that there seems to be a “myth” that local businesses would benefit from a plaza; he asserted this isn’t true. He also stated that any new bridge should not be built like the new I-280 span in Toledo. He believed, due to security reasons, a new plaza would require a thousand acres. He stressed that the operating entity of a new bridge or tunnel should be decided first. He suggested working with trade groups in the United States and Canada.

**Question:** Gwen Montie of Riverview indicated she was at Monday’s meeting. She asked why anybody would want this new border crossing “in their backyard.” She stated that the meeting on the previous night there had been no answer about ownership/operation of the new crossing and she appeared to be concerned about private ownership. She inquired when the next meetings would be held.

**Response:** Joe Corradino responded that the next round of public meetings would be held on June 27, 28, 29 and 30.

**Question:** Wyvetta Washington of River Rouge indicated she believed there was strong potential for a redeveloped or expanded waterfront and asked if there were a way for small businesses to be involved now on the project. She asked who she might speak to about this.

**Response:** Bob Parsons indicated he would provide information on MDOT’s commitment to use Disadvantaged Businesses on its projects.

**Comment:** Stasia Voisvumue of Allen Park indicated a concern with protecting the environment and stated the EPA was not doing a good job on wetlands.

**Question:** Doris Miller asked how the study will determine whether community integrity will be maintained.

**Response:** Joe Corradino indicated that research will be performed on community impacts including interviews with many individuals/organizations involved in maintaining community integrity.

The formal question/comment period ended about 8:35 p.m. Bob Parsons encouraged those present to ask any further questions of staff positioned at the meeting displays.

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