

Detroit River International Crossing Study
December 5, 2005
Public Meeting Notes
River Rouge High School
5:00 to 8:30 PM

These notes are of the formal presentation portion (6:30 to 8:30 p.m.) of the DRIC public meeting held December 5, 2005. The list of speakers who made oral comments at the meeting follow these notes. The last section of the documentation covers the written comments submitted at each meeting plus oral comments presented to the MDOT Technical Team during the informal part of the meeting, which lasted from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m.

The complete list of meeting locations is:

- Monday, December 5, 2005 – River Rouge High School in River Rouge
- Tuesday, December 6, 2005 – Old HQ Headquarters in Southgate
- Wednesday, December 7, 2005 – Southwestern High School in Detroit
- Thursday, December 8, 2005 – Butzel Family Center in Detroit

Each meeting followed the same format: Introduction, Presentation, Public Questions/Comments/Responses.

Introduction

Bob Parsons, MDOT's Public Meetings Officer, opened the presentation at 6:30 PM and welcomed the attendees. He introduced Spanish and Arabic translators who welcomed those in attendance in those languages and offered their services, as needed.

He then recognized River Rouge Mayor Michael Bowdler, State Representative Steve Tobocman, State Representative Ed Clemente, River Rouge Councilpersons Patty Campbell and Tony Laginess, Councilman Kevin Rourke of Allen Park, and Ingrid Johnson of the River Rouge Board of Education.

He explained there would be a presentation by MDOT consultant, Joe Corradino, and that individuals were encouraged to fill out a Speaker Form during the presentation to be called to speak after it. He also noted forms were available for written comments and comments could be recorded on a computer at the back of the room.

Presentation

Joe Corradino reviewed the handout materials to ensure that those in attendance had the complete information packet. This information included the Illustrative Alternatives Evaluation Summary Report (Volume 1); a printed copy of the evening's PowerPoint presentation; and, a DVD of three tours of the Delray area. Joe Corradino indicated that the Canadian Team reports would be available on the project's Web site. A summary of the Canadian information was incorporated in the last sections of Volume 1 and Volume 2 of the U.S. Reports.

Joe Corradino then reviewed the Illustrative Alternatives evaluation results using a PowerPoint presentation, copies of which were distributed to those in attendance. The presentation covered a number of topics including unique circumstances which involve the following:

- The elimination of the Detroit River Tunnel Partnership Jobs Tunnel proposal;
- The elimination of tunnels as a crossing;
- The review of Plazas C-1 and C-2 on U.S. Steel property and their elimination; and,
- The review of Fighting Island and its elimination as a component of the crossing system.

Joe Corradino then summarized the results of the evaluation process including the unweighted evaluation of each of the three system crossing components (river crossing, plaza and connecting roadway) by seven evaluation factors (Protect Community/Neighborhood Characteristics, Maintain Consistency with Local Planning, Protect Cultural Resources, Protect the Natural Environment, Improve Regional Mobility, Maintain Air Quality, Assess How Project Can Be Built [Constructability]). He also reviewed the application of citizens and MDOT Technical Team weights to the unweighted scores to develop weighted results for each crossing system. Finally, he discussed the application of the cost-effectiveness procedure and results. The end product of the evaluation is that Plaza C-4 connected to Crossing X-11 was considered a candidate for further analysis based on U.S. and Canadian results. The second span of the Ambassador Bridge, its plaza and connection to I-75 was also considered a candidate for further analysis by the U.S. results. However, because the Border Partnership's position from the outset of the study is that no one country would bear the brunt of impacts for a crossing system, the second span of the Ambassador Bridge was eliminated from the continuing analysis. Its

impacts in Canada (plaza and connecting route) are too great. Nonetheless, the U.S. plaza and the potential connection to I-75 are still part of the continuing analysis.

Joe Corradino then indicated that the connection of Plaza C-3 in West Delray to Crossing X-10 was considered a Practical Alternative. The Canadians also agree with this result. All other alternatives were recommended for elimination. These results then led to defining the “continued analysis area” upriver from Zug Island to the foot of the Ambassador Bridge from the Detroit River to the northern edge of I-75. But, all Illustrative Alternative plazas and crossings in this area have been erased. Establishing new crossings and plazas in the “continued analysis area” would be done in cooperation with the community through a series of workshops.

Joe Corradino then used a graphic to illustrate that there would be two workshops in December (the 14th and the 21st), two workshops in January (the 4th and the 18th), and one workshop in February (the 9th) (since changed to February 8th) to help establish the list of Practical Alternatives. Those workshops would lead to a decision by the early part of March by the Border Partnership of the final Practical Alternatives. The public would then be apprised formally of the Practical Alternatives at a set of meetings at the end of March.

Following the presentation, a number of questions and comments were addressed.

Questions, Comments and Responses

Question: Will the effects of the project on local master plans be considered?

Response: It is hoped the city of Detroit planning staff can be engaged in the study to address master plan needs.

Question: How can local contractors and firms begin to line up for work?

Response: Work for local contractors associated with construction is a few years away. Nonetheless, MDOT has procedures to advertise and reach out to the construction community to make them fully aware of upcoming projects.

Question: I have heard mention of Fort Wayne as a possible housing relocation site. Is that true?

Response: That location, and other locations within/near the Delray neighborhood will be examined for relocation housing opportunities.

Question: What will the effects be of a new bridge in Buffalo, New York?

Response: The market sheds of Detroit and Buffalo, New York, are different, so the effects of the expanded crossing in Buffalo/Fort Erie on the Detroit-Windsor area will be negligible.

Question: I understood earlier in the meeting that the rail tunnel's conversion to truck use will no longer be studied. Is that true?

Response: Yes, MDOT will no longer consider the DRTP-Jobs Tunnel as a long-term solution. As a private entity, the Detroit River Tunnel Partnership is expected to proceed with its own plans regardless of DRIC Study results.

Question: Who would own the bridge?

Response: There would be public oversight. Details on how that applies are under study and more information will be provided in 2006.

Question: The traffic volumes over the Ambassador Bridge have fallen since 2000. What about the projection that capacity will be exceeded?

Response: Automobiles volumes are down relative to year 2000 levels, but trucks are back to 2000 levels. In considering traffic, one must remember that each truck counts as three autos in the capacity analysis. So, the combination of trucks and cars converted to "auto equivalents" indicates the volume of peak hour/peak direction vehicles crossing the Ambassador Bridge in 2004 is 97 percent of what is was in 2000. Truck traffic is expected to continue to grow at a faster rate than autos, so trucks will

continue to take up more of the roadway capacity. Therefore, the bridge's capacity is expected to be exceeded by 2035.

Question: Has thought been given to having the new bridge carry trucks only?

Response: At this time, the new bridge and the Ambassador Bridge are both expected to carry a mix of traffic.

Question: Have you studied the effects on local industry, like the Marathon oil tank farms? What about shipping on the Detroit River?

Response: The locations of industries have been studied to assess whether they represent special constraints on siting a plaza or river crossing, i.e. what, if any, heavy industry is a compatible neighbor? Regarding shipping, bridge clearance of the Detroit River has been incorporated in the work.

Question: What about the ferry across the Detroit River?

Response: Today, the ferry carries 100 or fewer trucks a day. Even if it were to carry 1,000 trucks per day, a new river crossing is needed.

Question: What about an increase in crime with a new bridge?

Response: MDOT is working with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and, specifically, Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), in the design of facilities to address security.

Question: River Rouge, Ecorse and Lincoln Park all need jobs. Is there any security that people from these communities can get jobs? Is there a way for business owners to get involved?

Response: A definitive response is not possible at this point, as construction will not begin until 2010.

Question: Communities in Wayne County get revenues from the county based on their property tax base. What will be the effects on communities in this regard?

Response: MDOT will focus on relocating those displaced by the project within Wayne County. Exactly where is not known. So, changes in tax bases are not now known.

Comment: The project should budget costs to cover the loss of revenues to local communities.

Question: HOME is a federal housing program that has siting criteria for use of funds. Will this project affect potential use of such funds?

Response: The study team will research that program with respect to the DRIC project.

Comment: I am opposed to the project. All the neighborhoods will suffer. It's premature to talk about jobs.

Comment: GM and Ford have implied they are in bad financial shape. How does that affect the traffic forecasts?

Response: The project's forecasts consider both high and low growth scenarios. The study has analyzed the ups and downs in the auto industry. Unlike GM, Chrysler has announced an expansion of investment in Ontario. So, it is the study's conclusion that a new bridge is needed by 2035.

Comment: The neighborhoods are going to suffer.

Response: The Illustrative Alternatives evaluation led the team to the Delray area. There is recognition that the needs of the people must be incorporated into the continued analysis. The first step in that process is a set of five community workshops to be held from mid-December to early February to understand those needs.

Question: The Downriver options are out, right?

Response: Yes.

Question: Cost was an issue, right?

Response: Cost was just one issue. This included the cost of buying property, plus the cost of any cleanup, like asbestos; the cost of construction, and a contingency on all costs.

Question: Why wouldn't more vehicles use the Downriver crossings if three lanes were being provided?

Response: There is not enough traffic that wants to go that way regardless of the number of lanes (capacity) provided.

Question: How would you get traffic from the Ambassador Bridge or a new bridge to Outer Drive or Schaefer?

Response: It would be routed over I-75. And, if either crossing were shut down, the study will look to remedy that temporary problem by using Intelligent Transportation and Traffic Management solutions on routes that connect I-94 and I-75, such as Southfield, Outer and Schaeffer.

Question: How will the plaza and crossing be paid for?

Response: That has yet to be worked out in detail, but a principle means would be to charge tolls. Funding from sources other than tolls would come from state and federal transportation revenues.

Question: What is the earliest construction start date? There are problems on I-75 today. Is anyone working on that?

Response: Construction for the proposed new crossing is scheduled from 2010 to and including 2013. Meanwhile, the Gateway Project is to be constructed beginning in 2006. It will improve connections

between I-75 and the Ambassador Bridge. On an immediate basis, the Department of Homeland Security has been charged with improving throughput by 25 percent through increased efficiency and use of available infrastructure at the Detroit-Windsor border crossings.

Question: Can you tell us the most likely area within Delray where a plaza may go?

Response: We will know that in about two months based on community input.

Question: Why is there no twinning of the Ambassador Bridge?

Response: The impacts of a plaza and along Huron Church Road were unacceptable in Canada. So, consistent with the agreement of the Border Partnership, if impacts are too great in either country, the end-to-end alternative is dropped. Nonetheless, MDOT will continue to study gaining access to an expanded Ambassador Bridge plaza.

Question: What are the parameters for establishing fair market value? Does asbestos lower the value of my house?

Response: The estimate of fair market value is what a willing buyer would pay. Independent appraisers are hired by MDOT to establish that value. The cost related to asbestos removal is included in the analysis to fully account for the expense needed to ready an area of construction, not to affect the value of a residential property.

Question: There's going to be an effect on property values for 2 to 3 miles around. And there will be effects due to construction. Will we be paid for that?

Response: MDOT does not compensate for these kinds of impacts.

Comment: We are talking about emotional involvement here. Beyond the real estate, it's emotional attachment.

Response: There is no compensation for emotional attachment.

Question: I just don't see why you can't improve the Ambassador Bridge, or market a new Downriver bridge?

Response: The Ambassador Bridge does not provide the long-term solution. It has limited capacity; that's why its owners have proposed to build a second span. The Downriver bridge alternatives will not carry enough traffic to serve the transportation needs.

Question: How will the Detroit City Council resolution be taken into consideration?

Response: MDOT is studying it and taking it very seriously. The resolution did not totally reject a new bridge, but established that certain conditions have to be met. Meanwhile, the No Action Alternative is being carried forward, along with the action alternatives.

Comment: If you build it, they will come. Plus, the population is shifting to the south, away from the proposed bridge location. Right now incidents back up I-75 south to Outer Drive, but the capacity analysis deals only with a single cut-off point.

Response: The projected cross border volumes are based on the socioeconomic database in 2035 developed through SEMCOG. That forecasting process reviews Census data and potential job and population shifts. All DRIC projections have been and will continue to be examined by a host of experts. If they are wrong, you will hear about it.

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