

**Detroit River International Crossing Study**  
**December 7, 2005**  
**Public Meeting Notes**  
**Southwestern High School, Detroit**  
**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 7, 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 information 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 Detroit City Council President Kenneth Cockrel, Detroit Councilwoman JoAnn Watson, and State Representative Steve Tobocman.

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 also be recorded on a computer at the back of the room.

## Presentation

Joe Corradino reviewed the handout materials to ensure 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, printed 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

**Comment:** The outcome of the Illustrative Alternatives analysis was flawed because the Governor’s announcement was premature. The community was promised the decision would come later. Politics played a role. The concern in Delray is for quality of life. Thanks to the Detroit City Council members for coming and expressing the views of that body. If there is to be a crossing, there must be stringent requirements.

**Comment:** I am a proponent of a private Downriver bridge at Pennsylvania Road. My plan would take the Atofina Chemical Company plant, at which an accident caused the evacuation of the nearby area several years ago. Joe Corradino (MDOT consultant) tells me there are wetlands on the site of my proposed plaza, but they are mud puddles. The study is more concerned about toads than people. My proposal affects no people. People want to go the shortest distance, which I am providing with an alignment in Canada down County Road 8. Sixty-five percent of the trucks want to go south toward

Toledo. Now MDOT says it is 50 percent. My plan then goes down Fort Street, an MDOT road, to I-75, eight miles. My plan would eliminate 1000 trucks a day.

**Comment:** The City Council supports the will of the citizens in opposing a new bridge in Delray. It is unclear why this is a must-do for the state. Southwest Detroit is a population growth center. If this bridge happens, growth would be stymied. Why not do nothing? MDOT is invited to address the Detroit City Council.

**Response:** Thank you for the invitation; MDOT will be happy to address the Council. The No Action alternative is still an option.

**Comment:** Politicians do care. The passing of the November 18, 2005 resolution shows the Detroit City Council cares. Three public hearings in the area have been held. The cumulative impacts of projects in Southwest Detroit must be considered. The Mayor has been requested to do a joint land use/infrastructure study.

**Response:** MDOT has the Detroit City Council's resolution and is taking it very seriously.

**Comment:** Delray is not the best place, but the cheapest place.

**Question:** The Summary Report says that 300 homes would be taken for Plaza C-4. Is that correct?

**Response:** Depending on the layout of the interchange with I-75, homes could be taken north of I-75, which are included in the number you cite.

**Question:** It has been said that this project is not about money, but we keep hearing about cost.

**Response:** Cost-effectiveness has always been in the evaluation process. It comes down to impacts and cost-effectiveness.

**Comment:** We want to maintain the quality of life in Delray; we want stores. We cannot understand all there is to know on this study in an hour and a half.

**Response:** Please come to our community workshops to learn more. Information is also on the Web site. Erasing the plazas in the Delray area at this point in the analysis means MDOT is serious about meeting with community representatives and learning more. Plaza locations will be established over the next three months. Come to the workshops.

**Comment:** I agree with Mr. Flynn that it doesn't make any sense to have the crossing in Delray if the traffic wants to go south. What would the buyout policy be?

**Response:** One purpose of the coming workshops is to discuss impacts and relocation.

**Comment:** Southwest Detroit bears a disproportionate burden of trucks. Bringing a new bridge will have an impact on people's lives. You can't put a price on sentimental value. Many people in Delray cannot afford to leave. Mexicantown and Springwells are seeing advances. Our community is being destroyed. Remember the human element. We have to live with the after-effects.

**Question:** As a resident of Southwest Detroit, I am asking about disproportionate impacts. The Canadians threw out Huron Church Road due to adverse effects. Why can't Delray be thrown out on the same basis?

**Response:** Delray impacts are by no means insignificant. Along Huron Church Road and around the proposed Canadian plaza in historic Sandwich, the impacts are very high and unacceptable to the Canadians. The impacts of C-3 and C-4 are not as high, relatively speaking, as Huron Church Road and its plaza.

**Comment:** It is my understanding the Ambassador Bridge has applied for a permit to construct a second span. What is the status?

**Response:** I believe the company has applied for permits required by the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Corps of Engineers, and, possibly, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. There is no authority in the DRIC Study to delay the permitting processes in the U.S.

**Question:** What was the outreach program for this meeting?

**Response:** The Local Advisory Council delivered the message to their constituencies through door-to-door delivery of flyers. Southwestern High School students helped also. There have been targeted radio ads and ads placed in local newspapers, including the Latino paper and Arabic paper. We have made direct mailings to those who come to meetings or otherwise get onto our mailing list.

**Comment:** I continue to encourage direct mailings.

**Comment:** On Plaza C-2, if the cost of the rolling mill is the impediment, it should be put back in for a public debate.

**Response:** Even with the \$½ billion cost, the crossing alternative labeled C-2/Schaefer that proposes a plaza site on the north end of the U.S. Steel property is cost-effective – see page S-48 in the Summary. So, while cost is one issue, finding a place to put the mill is another, and doing these things in a timely manner so that jobs are kept is yet another.

**Comments:** MDOT is spending way too much money on this study and the DIFT project, which is not being coordinated with the new river crossing study. It's just a big business subsidy, while the auto manufacturers are laying people off. I'm disappointed the announcement on the elimination of alternatives came early. I-375 was done for GM. Eminent domain will be used to take land for a new bridge. The Ambassador Bridge owner is letting the Central Depot fall down. The Bridge should be run more efficiently. I voted against casinos several times. The money should go for housing and education.

**Responses:** The Governor's announcement did not come early. The technical evaluation information was available by the end of September. So, the Governor simply announced what was already established in the analysis, that the Belle Isle and Downriver options scored poorly and could not be advanced as Practical Alternatives.

**Comment:** I will fight you until 2035. The new City plan calls for homes, not businesses, in West Delray. Trucks and highways have destroyed our community. A new bridge will too. Let the suburbs have it.

**Question:** I attend Holy Cross Church in Delray. It is an historic site. Can it just be taken or moved?

**Response:** If there is no prudent and feasible alternative, an historic property can be acquired. In that case, it might be possible to move the church.

**Comment:** What are the people going to do?

**Response:** Keep up your properties. The appraisals cover any improvements you make to your property. Beware of persons coming through the neighborhood saying you need to sell. Call MDOT or an LAC member or your political representative if that happens. If relocations were to occur, MDOT would make every effort to have people stay in the Delray area, if that is what they want to do. Supplemental money is available to ensure that relocated persons are placed in safe and decent housing. Call MDOT at any time.

**Comment:** I am keeping an open mind for the time being, and will listen, if an economic case can be made for a new river crossing. You have to make your case, now that the auto industry and traffic are down. There might be better engineering of I-75 interchanges, but be careful in what gets closed; closing some exits could be devastating to the neighborhoods. You need to advertise the meetings more on the north side of I-75. People would come out if they knew there were effects up there.

**Comment:** Take note that there is a lot of opposition to a plaza/crossing in Delray. Some people don't have email. There should be translations, and information in other languages.

**Response:** Translators are present, as announced at the beginning of the meeting. Comment forms are in Arabic and Spanish, and any documents requested will be translated. Meeting announcements are made in the Latino Press and the Arab American News.

**Questions:** How did you reconcile evaluation factors, like taking the steel mill versus health effects? Will the area of continued analysis be covered in the air quality analysis? What is the relationship of this project to the DIFT?

**Responses:** Plazas C-1 and C-2 on the U.S. Steel property were unique situations and were dropped because they were not practical places to build a river crossing system. We did not do a health risk assessment in the strict technical sense. We will do a regional air quality analysis of the Practical Alternatives and we will do a localized carbon monoxide analysis called a "hot spot" analysis. Also, pollution on key roadway links around the project will be analyzed for pollutants created by the traffic using a new border crossing. This will be related, if possible, to nearby industry and other projects to determine cumulative effects. Other projects will include the I-94 improvements and the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal Project.

**Question:** The steel mill was just one example. What about Downriver?

**Response:** Table A-1 shows results of the evaluation of the Downriver Plaza/Crossing/Alignment combinations in terms of unweighted scores. When the scores were weighted and cost was part of a cost-effectiveness analysis, the focus of the continued work narrowed to the central area.

**Comments:** Truckers want to bypass cities. So, it is not logical to have them go through downtown. There are five-mile backups on I-75 that are 95 percent semis. My husband suffered from diesel exhaust in Germany. We can smell the idling diesel trucks from a warehouse all the way down the block. Idling under cold conditions is the worst and must be studied.

**Comment:** Downtown Detroit is trying to develop its Riverfront and this would take that away.

**Comment:** History in Detroit is at risk. Holy Cross Church cannot practically be moved.

**Comments:** Thanks to those present for coming and thanks to Southwestern High School and to the Detroit City Council. Air quality is poor and historic impacts are high in Delray. The auto industry being down can change traffic. MDOT is working on expanding the Ambassador Bridge Plaza. There can be a positive story here through land use leadership. There are several important activities in the legislature: 1) HB 4868 calls for public ownership of a new bridge; 2) HB 4867 calls for residents to be on a Border Commission; 3) work is advancing on a state-level Environmental Justice law; 4) work is advancing at the community level on a Community Benefits Agreement related to traffic, project boundaries, greenways, local hiring and other issues; and, 5) an expanded condemnation law is under consideration. Other things that need to happen on the DRIC project are: a) a smaller, reconstituted Local Advisory Council; b) better information about eminent domain; and, c) continued support from the MDOT local district office. Finally, if a new border crossing or expansion is proposed in Southwest Detroit, these conditions must accompany it: 1) public ownership; 2) a public border commission; 3) a state environmental justice executive order; 4) creation of a community benefits agreement; and, 5) public meetings on condemnation.

**Comment:** As a 35-year resident of Delray, this is home. Heritage is in the homes. Moving is not an option. People are moving in to fix things up. You need to seriously consider No Action. You don't talk much about that.

**Comment:** There are many ethnic groups in the area. I wasn't contacted about the meeting. Hazmat is a problem and fire service is poor. Property values are going down. I figure I need \$1/2 million to get to the end of my life. With my paid-off house, the true replacement cost to me for what I have is \$1/4 million.

**Comment:** I am a Delray resident of 53 years, and the fifth generation in the area. There used to be street festivals and businesses. Who took that away? I-75! Then the wastewater treatment plant! The neighborhood has always been multiethnic and integrated. I live on Social Security. How can I relocate and pay taxes? Many others are the same. Remember the human element.

**Comment:** I am a resident of Delray for 23 years. There is drug dealing, needles, and violence. No one is thinking of the kids. There is pollution and chemicals. I want to move. The City of Detroit should do something like subsidizing rent. No one keeps their property up.

**Comment:** I am in my last year at Southwestern High School. I can't walk in the neighborhood. I want out. We can't open our windows. Other kids look down on the neighborhood. There is nothing left in Delray. I have friends with asthma. The school committees try to clean up. Maybe the new bridge would be better.

**Question:** Does MDOT take race into account and, if so, how?

**Response:** Yes, by conducting an Environmental Justice analysis that looks at a project's effects on minorities and low-income persons. Title VI of the federal law against discrimination covers other ethnic groups.

**Question:** Was that information given at the Downriver meetings?

**Response:** Yes.

**Comment:** There are more than six churches that are listed for Plaza C-3.

**Response:** Please help us identify them.