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Meeting notes from:

**The Eighteenth Meeting of the
Detroit River International Crossing
*Community Consultation Group***

Meeting Date/Location:

November 20th, 2008
Macedonian Community Centre — LaSalle, Ontario

Facilitator: Glenn Pothier, President, GLPi

Meeting Purpose

This eighteenth meeting of the Community Consultation Group (CCG) was focused on providing information about and discussing the final study recommendations — including the technically and environmentally preferred access route and plaza/crossing locations (and refinements made in response to public and stakeholder input). In addition, the meeting was used to:

- Describe Study conclusions and mitigation strategies in a number of areas: air quality, human health risk assessment, noise and vibration, protection of community and neighbourhood characteristics, economic impacts, archaeology and built heritage resources, natural heritage, urban design and aesthetics, and landscaping.
- Provide an overview of selected governance issues.
- Update members on the status of various project components and U.S. study progress.
- Provide an overview of next steps in the project, including the upcoming Public Information Open Houses (PIOHs) and the environmental assessment approvals process.
- Allow for public/CCG member comments and questions about issues of their choosing.

Summary of Meeting Highlights

Opening Remarks

- Glenn Pothier, the independent meeting facilitator, called the group to order, welcomed all participants and observers, introduced project team members, and provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

Review of the July 16th, 2008 CCG Meeting Summary

- Glenn Pothier noted that the summary of the July 16/08 CCG meeting had been previously distributed to all CCG members. He then asked for feedback regarding any substantive errors or omissions. Though none were identified, there were two questions of clarification:

Question: Regarding the bullet point on page four that says: “Broadway will be kept open and Sandwich Street will be maintained” — what does this mean?

Response: To clarify, this means that Sandwich Street will be realigned to connect with Broadway and that both streets will remain open.

Question: Will the Plaza at the new bridge location be subject to the same security requirements and regulations as the Plaza at the Ambassador Bridge?

Response: Yes. Both plazas are under the jurisdiction of the CBSA [Canada Border Services Agency] and would be subject to the same security regulations.

Public Comment

- Glenn Pothier reminded the group that in the interest of openness, transparency and accountability, any member of the public can attend a CCG meeting as an observer. He then asked if any comments/questions were forthcoming from observers at this time. None were raised.

Overview of Final Study Recommendations

- Following some brief introductory remarks by Glenn Pothier, various members of the Project Team contributed to a joint presentation covering: the technically and environmentally preferred access route, crossing and plaza location (including important design refinements made since the last round of PIOHs); the benefits and impacts of the project; Study conclusions and potential mitigation strategies; and a host of topic specific areas including air quality, noise, community and neighbourhood character, the natural environment and so forth. More specifically, Murray Thompson (Project Manager, URS Canada) began the presentation and:
 - Reminded the group of the Study purpose;
 - Provided an overview of the technically and environmentally preferred alternative (TEPA) — including the associated key features, characteristics and benefits;
 - Described recent events, including key announcements, consultation activities and report preparation;
 - Described the refinement to the Spring Garden area TEPA — most notably the integration of the Windsor-Essex Parkway into the E.C. Row corridor — and the related community benefits of this;
 - Described refinements to the Cousineau/Hearthwood and Highway 3 portions of the TEPA — including the re-orientation of Howard Avenue and the potential for a modern round-about — and the associated community benefits;
 - Reviewed mitigation strategies for helping protect community and neighbourhood characteristics; and
 - Described economic impacts and outlined issues concerning archaeology and built heritage.
- As part of the continued presentation, Sandy Willis (SENES):
 - Described the key Study conclusions concerning air quality, most notably that the potential impacts from the Windsor-Essex Parkway will be minimal and limited to areas in close proximity to the road; and

- Described the key Study conclusions concerning human health risk assessment, most notably that the recommended plan does not result in an increased health risk over the ‘no build’ scenario.
- As part of the continued presentation, Fred Bernard (SENES):
 - Described key Study conclusions concerning noise and vibration, most notably that mitigation measures will limit noise impacts to less than 5dB;
 - Described different noise mitigation techniques and strategies;
 - Provided an overview of the potential locations of noise attenuation treatments that could be used along the access route; and
 - Provided an overview of a number of activities to mitigate noise impacts during the construction phase.
- As part of the continued presentation, Grant Kaufmann (LGL):
 - Provided an overview of legislated requirements regarding natural heritage;
 - Described key Study conclusions and mitigation strategies concerning natural heritage as related to:
 - The bridge crossing;
 - The inspections plaza;
 - The Windsor-Essex Parkway;
 - Wildlife and vegetation;
 - Fisheries; and
 - Species at risk.
- As part of the continued presentation, Murray Thompson (URS Canada):
 - Provided an overview of the urban design/aesthetics and landscaping plans to be completed in the future — and the key components/benefits of each of these; and
 - Described next steps, including the PIOHs scheduled for Nov. 24th and 25th, the completion and submission of the Ontario Environmental Assessment Report by December 31st, 2008, and the EA review process that follows thereafter.
- As part of the continued presentation, Dave Wake (MTO):
 - Provided an overview of some governance-related considerations, most notably emphasizing the commitment to public ownership of the new access route (by the Ontario Government), the plaza (by the Government of Canada) and the Canadian portion of the international bridge (by the Government of Canada) — while being open to public-private partnerships for the design-build and operation of the bridge facility.
- Of note, a copy of the full presentation (the highlights of which are described above) has been placed on the project website.

- Following the complete presentation, CCG members offered a number of comments and questions:

Question: If no piers are to be placed in the Detroit River, does this suggest that one bridge type — cable-stay or suspension — is more likely to be built?

Response: There would be no piers placed in the water regardless of bridge type. The absence of piers in the water does not rule out either a cable-stay or suspension bridge design.

Question: Does Canada and the U.S. share the same approach to handling water on the bridge — will the U.S. follow the Canadian lead and use storm water management and deck drains?

Response: We can speak to what will be done on the Canadian side and confirm that storm water management and deck drains will be a part of the Canadian design. We understand that the issue of collecting storm water runoff on the American portion of the bridge will be included in detailed design on the U.S. side.

Comment: Though there may be two sides to the bridge, there is only one Detroit River. It doesn't make a lot of sense to apply more stringent storm water management and water runoff collection techniques on the Canadian side of the bridge and not on the American side.

Response: [Comment noted.]

Comment: I disagree with what I heard earlier — I haven't seen any fish in the Wolfe Drain in the past 15 years.

Response: Some are definitely there — our fieldwork surveys have found fish in the Wolfe Drain.

Question: How would the spilling of hazardous materials be handled on the plaza site — what barriers or approaches would be used for containment?

Response: Those details are not available this evening. Mechanisms for dealing with hazardous spills — and strategies for containing them — will be developed during the detailed design phase. The overarching principle is that any spill be contained on site.

Question: Will there be noise barriers placed at Eastborne and Howard?

Response: [Note: Those with site-specific questions were respectfully invited to review more detailed maps one-on-one with a project team member.]

Question: What will the noise barriers look like, where will they be located, and what are the maximum/minimum distances that they will be placed from houses?

Response: Potential concepts of barrier treatments will be available for review at the upcoming PIOHs. The specific look of the barriers will be part of what is worked-out during the detailed design phase and in consultation with the community. They may be berms or walls, or a combination of the two depending on location and land availability. For the barriers, there are various colours, materials and designs to consider. They will be aesthetically pleasing and could include features such as clear sections to let light through. In terms of placement, the noise barriers could be put on the fence line or further away from property lines and closer to the highway — there is no pre-set minimum or maximum distance. Placement decisions need to consider a variety of factors such as location, elevation (of the noise source and adjacent properties), the amount of property available and so forth. Ideally, the noise barrier is placed as close as possible to the source of the noise.

Question: What will the greenspace look like?

Response: Again, this will be part of the detailed design work. Notwithstanding that this is still forthcoming — and that there will be opportunities for public input as part of this process — we expect that the greenspace will include a combination of naturalized areas, more formal landscaping and passive recreation opportunities. Recent context sensitive solutions meetings suggest that the public is not overly supportive of intensive, active recreational areas. However, some may be possible in certain locations.

Comment/Question: There seems to be a disconnect concerning the timelines for construction — your process suggests that construction would not happen until 2010, yet some provincial elected representatives have been reportedly saying that construction would begin in 2009. Why is there a discrepancy?

Response: MTO hopes to be in a position to do some construction as soon as approvals are granted, which, hopefully would be in 2009. This could include utility relocation or preliminary work in areas where property is owned by the province. At the earliest, this would happen in the latter part of 2009.

Comment: I have a feeling that this project is a done deal and that you will get the desired approvals.

Response: [Comment noted.]

Question/Comment: How do we ensure that the below-grade portions of the freeway are not flooded following rainstorms? This seems to happen frequently in other jurisdictions.

Response: Drainage design will take into account protecting for a 100-year storm. The approach will include upgrading the Wolfe Drain to further minimize the possibility of sheet runoff flowing onto the highway. Moreover, there will be road edge treatments and fully redundant pumping systems.

Question: Is water runoff from the highway treated?

Response: It is in the sense that it flows or is pumped into storm water management ponds for passive cleaning. The ponds help filter the water and control runoff.

Question/Comment: How do we make sure there isn't construction 24 hours a day? Will you consult with the public? We don't want another Walker Road — the construction there was not handled well.

Response: We will follow best practices and do our best to minimize the noise and disruptive effects of construction — and there would be further consultation in areas where intensive construction is required. Still, there may be some requirement — given the scale and complexity of the undertaking — for some around-the-clock work to take place. It may be necessary to consider temporarily putting some residents up in hotels for short durations.

Comment: For the record, I want to note that I do not accept the basis for the air quality analysis conclusions — it is built on the assumption of legislation leading to cleaner diesel fuels and the corresponding upgrading/replacement of the diesel truck fleet.

Response: [Comment noted.]

Question: Will Matchette and Malden Road remain open?

Response: Yes, they will.

Comment/Question: It was mentioned that mitigation is required in cases where the noise impact is 5dB or higher. Is there a single, constant noise level baseline or does it vary from place-to-place?

Response: For analysis purposes, the Windsor-Essex Parkway is divided into segments. Noise level modeling is done for each segment — and the baseline varies by segment and is an estimate of the future no-build option.

Question: What if a noise baseline is already at a harmful threshold?

Response: There are no situations of this type anywhere along the Parkway. The baselines vary by segment or area and noise evaluations are based on incremental impacts. Again, the results show that noise mitigation is required only in selected areas. To the benefit of the community, MTO has committed to putting in more noise barriers than are technically required.

Question: What is the width of the buffer area and size of the berms around the plaza?

Response: [Note: This CCG member and others were respectfully invited to review more detailed plans available at the upcoming PIOHs.]

Question: What are the names of the rare snakes within the area of the recommended alternative?

Response: The Eastern Fox snake and Butler Garter snake.

Question: What impact will the project have on the Essex Terminal Railway?

Response: There will be no operational impact. A bridge will span the Essex Terminal Railway and there will be no impact to the right-of-way.

Question: Following the construction of the Windsor-Essex Parkway, what is the Huron Church corridor going to look like — to which bridge will it take you?

Response: Ramps will be provided to get onto Huron Church Road and the traveler would have the choice of using either the new bridge or the Ambassador Bridge. The Windsor-Essex Parkway will be a six-lane facility, with three lanes in each direction.

Comment: The draft EA report legend referring to noise barriers could be improved.

Response: [Comment noted.]

Question: With the no-build option, what is the highest decibel level in the corridor today?

Response: Based on 2006 traffic data it is approximately 60dB. The levels are projected to be higher in 2035.

Update on U.S. DRIC Study Progress

- Dave Wake (MTO) provided an update on the companion U.S. Study progress. More specifically, he noted that:
 - The U.S. team is working to complete their Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) before the end of this year — and that it will be published on the project website;
 - The draft Environmental Impact Statement had been released for comment earlier this year;
 - There continues to be good collaboration and productive working relationships between the Canadian and U.S. teams;
 - Mohammed Alghurabi (Michigan Department of Transportation) sends his regards to the CCG; and
 - The efforts of the U.S. team, like those of the team on this side of the border, are drawing to a close on this phase of work.

Next Steps

- Given that Murray Thompson (URS Canada) had earlier provided a detailed overview of the process for moving forward and the upcoming PIOHs, there was no further discussion of next steps — other than to note that the next CCG meeting is likely to take place in the January-March, 2009-time period. As per usual practice, a notice will be sent to CCG members when a date has been set.

Open Forum/Public Comment

- Glenn Pothier asked whether the Study Team had any further business to add to the meeting agenda. No issues were raised.
- Glenn Pothier then asked whether CCG members had any further business to add to the meeting agenda. No issues were raised.
- Glenn Pothier then made the ‘second round’ call for any comments/questions from meeting observers. None were forthcoming.

Closing Remarks

- Glenn Pothier thanked the group for their attendance and participation.
- The meeting was formally adjourned (having run from approximately 6:35 to 8:40 p.m.).

Attendance (names listed in no particular order):

CCG Members and Public Observers:

Jim Broderick
Terry Kennedy
Mary Ann Cuderman
Ray Bezaire
Robert Benson
Denise Ausman
Paul Ausman
Louann Sharp
Lucy Malizia
Pierre Quenneville
Alice DiCaro
Ed Oleksiuk
Alan McKinnon
Les Chaif
Giovanni Miceli
Mario Iatonna
Ozzie Ala
Maria Ala

Partnership:

Dave Wake, Roger Ward, Joel Foster, Kevin Devos, Mike Harrison — Ontario Ministry of Transportation

Consultant Team:

Murray Thompson — URS Canada
Grant Kaufmann — LGL
Gwen Brice, Sandy Willis, Fred Bernard — SENES