

**Detroit River International Crossing Study
Joint LAC/LAG Meeting
February 27, 2008 7:00 PM
Southwestern High School**

Purpose: To review the progress of the Detroit River International Crossing Study.

Attendance: See attached.

Discussion:

Introductions

Mohammed Alghurabi opened the meeting with introductions.

Meeting Conduct Procedures

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that the meeting will be conducted so that the observers could comment both at the beginning and at the end of the meeting. The Local Advisory Council and Local Agency Group will conduct their business uninterrupted in the core of the meeting. The observers would also be able to comment on the DEIS after the members of the LAC/LAG commented.

Agenda Review

Mohammed Alghurabi asked if there were any changes to the meeting agenda. None were suggested.

LAC/LAG January Meeting Notes

Mohammed Alghurabi advised Mrs. Leonard that in response to an earlier question on her part, Joe Corradino had spoken to the Principal of Southwestern High School in December about the project and its relationship to the school. Meanwhile Mohammed Alghurabi had discussed another question related to the school board with Mrs. Leonard. He promised to continue to try to be responsive to any questions she might have.

Presentation of DEIS

Mohammed Alghurabi said the DEIS is now available in depositories. The public hearings will be advertised in newspapers. The DEIS and Technical Reports are at 22 locations. A DVD with the DEIS will be mailed to those who requested.

Joe Corradino presented a PowerPoint slide presentation on the contents on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. He indicated the presentation would be like that at the public hearings to be held

March 18 and 19, 2008, the first at Southwestern High School, the second LA SED on Vernor in Southwest Detroit. In each case, there will be a public open house beginning at 5:00 p.m., then a presentation at 6:30 p.m. with a public comment period thereafter. Two court reporters will be available to take comments privately. The comment period on the DEIS will officially begin February 29, 2008, when a Notice of Availability (NOA) is published in the *Federal Register*. The comment period extends 60 days from the point of publication in the *Federal Register* until April 29, 2008.

Joe Corradino explained that the DEIS covers nine Build Alternatives and the No Build condition. He said the border is critical to the economies of the U.S. and Canada and, especially, Michigan. The project is needed to keep Michigan competitive.

Presently one can cross the border using 1) the truck ferry which normally carries a very low volume of trucks with hazardous materials across the border; 2) two existing freight-only railroad tunnels, with a third proposed to handle double-stack containers; 3) the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel; and, 4) the Ambassador Bridge, which is the primary trade route. The Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) analyzes a new crossing that will connect I-75 in the United States with Highway 401 in Canada.

The study is being sponsored by the federal agencies in the United States and Canada and the state and provincial departments of transportation as well.

Another project underway is to provide a replacement span for the Ambassador Bridge, which is privately owned and controlled.

Finally, there is a project under construction sponsored by the Michigan Department of Transportation in conjunction with the Ambassador Bridge called the Gateway Project. It will directly connect the bridge plaza to I-75.

The DRIC started in 2000 with a feasibility study. Formal scoping was done for the environmental process in August 2005 at Cobo Hall. Tonight's discussion is on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. There is no preference among alternatives at this point.

The purpose of the project is the safe, efficient and secure movements of people and goods across the border to support the economies of Michigan, Ontario, Canada and the U.S.; and, to support the mobility

needs of national and civil defense to protect the homeland. The need for the project involves capacity, system connectivity, processing capability at the plazas and redundancy.

Travel forecasts indicate that by the year 2035 auto traffic will increase 57 percent and truck traffic 128 percent compared to 2005. These forecasts take into consideration the fact that auto traffic is down due to economic conditions and the continuing effects of the events of 9/11. Truck traffic has rebounded since 9/11 with a record year set in 2006 in terms of numbers of trucks crossing the border. 2007 was down a little bit from 2006, but still is the second highest year on record for truck crossings at the border.

The DRIC traffic forecast is a range showing both high and low growth assumptions. Even with the slow growth, capacity is expected to be exceeded in the period 2030 to 2035.

In Canada it is important to understand that Huron Church Road has intersections. Within five to ten years about one dozen intersections will be at gridlock.

Initially, alternatives were considered from Wyandotte to Belle Isle. The focused study area was determined to be Zug Island to the Ambassador Bridge and the feasibility analysis found tunnels could not practically be built.

Joe Corradino explained the final crossing corridors lie west and east of Fort Wayne (X-10 and X-11, respectively). He said the planned plaza was in the neighborhood of 150 acres and that the interchange connecting to I-75 would require the removal of the present interchange at Livernois and Dragoon.

Joe Corradino showed examples of suspension and cable-stayed bridges. He noted that in Corridor X-10A a cable-stay bridge is not a candidate due to the length of that span.

Alternative #2 was shown to provide an example of the effects of an interchange. Joe Corradino noted the flyovers that would be required to gain access to I-75 would affect both sides of I-75. He pointed out interchanges at Springwells and Clark Streets that could be affected. He said there would be a new railroad track curve built to allow trains direct access to Zug Island and eliminate the need for trains to pull through the Delray area. He showed a Gateway Boulevard that would maintain north-south access through Delray as the plaza occupied a large space within the neighborhood. All the impacts of these facilities are covered in the technical reports. Likewise, the impacts of doing nothing are also presented.

Possible relocations were discussed. Joe Corradino noted that under the No Build condition it is anticipated that housing in Delray would continue to be lost. With the Build Alternatives, 324 to 414 dwelling units (with 100 in apartments) and 41 to 56 businesses would be relocated. All of the businesses have been interviewed to determine whether they would like to stay in the area.

Of those to be affected by the project, many are low income. Environmental Justice and Title VI issues have been addressed. As a background for analysis the Springwells, Vernor-Junction, and Delray communities have been combined into the “study area”.

With respect to jobs, the DEIS analysis has found that without a new river crossing the opportunity to gain 25,000 jobs would be lost in the year 2030 alone. Nevertheless, a new bridge link will improve highway accessibility such that 3,350 new jobs should be drawn to the SEMCOG region from outside Michigan. DRIC construction expenditures will create 10,400 direct jobs and 27,000 indirect jobs over the course of the project.

The Gateway Project, now underway, will ease traffic in the area as trucks and autos have better opportunity to move from the freeway system directly to the Ambassador Bridge. With the DRIC project, two to three streets across I-75 would be closed, together with three or four pedestrian crossings. Air quality is expected to improve due primarily to EPA regulation of fuel and vehicles, but also because the new bridge traffic will be split traffic between two primary bridge crossings.

Noise levels are above 70 dBA today along the north side of I-75. Without the project, there would be no change. With the project, MDOT will look for opportunities to place walls and provide noise abatement. It is anticipated there be noise walls in some places.

With respect to parks, Rademacher Park and Rademacher Center will be removed by the DRIC, together with one small playlot. Seven churches will be relocated. St. Paul AME Church may be special for historic reasons.

There would be new lighting with a new DRIC bridge. Likewise, there could be new lighting if a second replacement span of the Ambassador Bridge were put in place. At this point, the judgment is a new bridge would not have visual impacts on Fort Wayne.

A drilling program found that there are no risks associated with the bridge foundations or approaches in the United States but in Canada there is a bridge approach area where there is no clear definition of acceptable risk. This area is in the vicinity of a sinkhole that developed in Canada in the 1950s.

In summary, there will be substantial relocations with the project but it will bring more jobs and improved air quality. No wetlands or threatened/endangered species are involved. Work will be ongoing for community enhancements. The cost of the project will range from \$1.3 to \$1.5 billion (which is inclusive of the U.S. half of the bridge cost, with the other half being borne by Canada).

Joe Corradino concluded his presentation by asking for questions.

LAC/LAG Comments/Questions

Tom Cervenak: Will Jefferson remain open?

Response: Yes, except, possibly, during construction.

John Nagy: With Alternative #2, are Livernois and Dragoon still open?

Response: Yes, the roads are open across I-75, but the interchange ramps will be closed. This varies by alternative.

John Nagy: How many parcels are in Delray?

Response: We believe approximately 3,000, but we're not sure how many occupied dwelling units remain.

John Nagy: By my count there are between 600 and 700.

John Nagy: Last weekend I went to Toledo and drove over the new bridge there. My opinion is that while it's attractive from a distance, it's ugly to drive over.

Mrs. Leonard: Would Alternative #2 close Waterman?

Response: Yes. In other cases, Waterman would remain.

Mrs. Leonard: With respect to flyovers, will there be an impact on Southwestern High School?

Response: No.

Mrs. Leonard: When I-75 experiences backups, trucks get diverted to the service drives. In that case there are fumes in the community.

Response: There could be more trucks on service drives under some circumstances but our analysis does not find any air quality impacts to the community.

Question: Will noise walls block community access.

Response: The walls will be positioned so that this doesn't happen.

Tom Cervenak: What about access to Fort Wayne?

Response: This varies by plaza but there will be ramps out of the plaza area to a local street to allow access to Fort Wayne. There had been discussion of a project welcome center at Fort Wayne. Our analysis finds that can't be done because of its historic status of the Fort. We are looking at other ways to invest in Fort Wayne.

Police Officer: Will Fort Street be closed?

Response: No, except, possibly, during construction.

John Bendzick: After the public hearing, what will be the process to come up with a final site?

Response: After the close of comments, the Partnership will work together, the U.S. and the Canadians, to come up with a final end-to-end solution.

John Bendzick: But right now there are nine Practical Alternatives. What will happen next?

Response: There will be selection of a Preferred Alternative by the Partnership. Len Kozachuk of URS Canada explained once the U.S. public hearing process is complete, the Partnership members will meet to determine the Preferred Alternative. He explained that in Canada there is a unique situation because there is a five-mile access road connecting the plaza to Highway 401, their freeway. These options are still under review at this point.

Question: I saw your listing of the newspapers for ads for the public meeting. Will there be radio ads and can you still add another newspaper to your list?

Response: A press release on the hearings will be provided to the electronic media. Regarding the additional newspaper, if you have a suggestion, it will be considered.

Question: Whatever happened to the idea of having one joint plaza rather than one on each side of the border?

Response: The desire of each country is to have its own plaza. While having a joint plaza was an idea considered by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, they have since abandoned pursuing that option. Therefore, such a joint plaza was not considered a Practical Alternative to be addressed in the Draft EIS.

Comment: This kind of process does occur in the airports.

Response: Duly noted.

Public Comments/Questions

Question: Does the Springwells intersection reconstruction affect All Saints Catholic Church?

Response: No.

Question: Would it affect the Produce Terminal?

Response: No.

Question: I'm the owner of the Clark Station on the northwest corner of Clark and I-75. Will the project affect me?

Response: There will be effects. The primary effect in the short term is the Gateway Project which will redirect all the truck traffic that now gains access to I-75 at Clark to direct ramps to the freeway from the Ambassador Bridge. Therefore, that traffic would go away once the Gateway Project is complete.

Question: What about noise walls in that area?

Response: We can meet with you one-on-one how noise walls might affect you.

Question: What is the probability of implementing the project?

Response: Approval is expected by the end of the year. Then there will be a property acquisition phase beginning in 2009 and construction would begin in 2010. The project is to conclude and be opened to traffic in 2013.

Comment: I have an issue with the way traffic is being handled for the Gateway Project.

Response: Let us meet with you afterwards and we will connect you with the right people to make your comment.

Question: Does MDOT have a position on the twinning of the Ambassador Bridge, or does Canada?

Response: The proposed second span of the Ambassador Bridge is independent of the DRIC.

Question: Can the housing development in Delray be incorporated as part of the DRIC project or will it be separate with separate financing, which would be more difficult?

Response: The DEIS contains potential community enhancement program considerations. The FEIS will be more definitive, including on housing.

Question: If the Livernois/Dragoon interchange is cut out, won't that reduce access to Fort Wayne?

Response: The plaza cuts access to Fort Wayne. The issue is how to provide access around the plaza and to Fort Wayne. This will involve signage and providing a way to get there like the Gateway Boulevard.

Question: Before you had big posters in the room showing condos. Would those be inside the border of the plaza or outside?

Response: Outside. That was an example of what could happen in the area with housing. We would not take any homes to accomplish this kind of land use change. It is merely an example.

Comment: There's going to be a billion dollars spent for this project. If you listen to my idea I could save you all that money.

Question: Why not put the alignment further south down around Wyandotte? Why is that not in the study background?

Response: It is. We looked from Grosse Ile to Belle Isle for a new river crossing. The analysis of those options lead to selecting the area n between Zug Island and the Ambassador Bridge as the location of a new bridge.

Question: Where can I get more information on the IBI chart on the second page of the handout that shows traffic forecasts?

Response: IBI is a group of Canadian consultants that performed some of the traffic forecasting. The report is available on the Web site. More recent reports have been developed that dovetail with that analysis.

Question: What about the jobs figures on page 3 induced by the new bridge?

Response: An economic forecast is on the Web site. That report was authored by HLB. An analysis of "Induced Demand:" was also conducted and is included in a Technical Report also available on the Web and in the depositories.

Question: Did you analyze the effects of dirt and all the dust that's in the air?

Response: Yes. Particulates were analyzed in terms of the hot-spot analysis consistent with federal guidelines.

Question: I'm a truck driver and I get off at Livernois and Dragoon to go north. In the future, say under Alternative #2, do I need to get off at Clark to go to Dragoon?

Response: Yes. Livernois/Dragoon as a truck route is being discouraged. Traffic will come in and out via Springwells and Clark. Our concept is that truck traffic should go to I-94 and come south on Livernois, which is a truck route.

Police Officer: Has anyone looked at impacts to emergency response times to the area north of I-75?

Response: We have conducted tours with the shift commanders at the Fort Street safety plaza. We will re-contact them with respect to serving the community north of I-75.