

Testimony
Michigan House of Representatives
Transportation Appropriation Subcommittee
June 26, 2008

Good morning. My name is Joe Corradino. I am part of the consulting team working for the Michigan Department of Transportation on the Environmental Impact Statement for the Detroit River International Crossing.

I would like to take a few minutes to address the technical issues raised by representatives of the Ambassador Bridge in previous testimony to your Subcommittee as they relate to the work of the team which I represent. My testimony will focus on four issues:

- Potential relocations;
- Use of a "false" Canadian plaza in the DRIC analysis;
- Traffic; and,
- The access road on the Canadian side of the border.

Potential Relocations

On the issue of relocations, the Ambassador Bridge testified at the May 19th hearing of this body that it has invested \$500 million in property acquisitions on both the U.S. and Canadian sides of the river. At the same time, the Ambassador Bridge has stated repeatedly that there are no homes and no businesses needed for its project, even after spending a half billion dollars. As a matter of background, the DRIC Draft Environmental Impact Statement indicates the project will likely cause the relocation in the U.S. of 324 to 414 residential units (including 100 apartments in two buildings) and between 41 and 56 businesses to build the interchange, plaza and crossing. To provide an apples-to-apples comparison, the Ambassador Bridge proposal must include impacts for the Gateway Plaza, connections to the interstate as well as a proposed second span. The Ambassador Bridge representatives indicated in their June 12th testimony they would provide an accounting of such impacts. Perhaps they have. I have not seen it. But, I know it is not zero businesses and zero homes as I worked on the Gateway project for MDOT. So, to be blunt and honest, as the Ambassador Bridge representatives say, it is wrong to claim that no businesses nor homes have been or will be taken for their project. For the sake of comparison, if we're only talking about bridges, then the DRIC bridge would relocate no homes nor businesses.

"False" Plaza

The Ambassador Bridge claims in its May 19th and June 12th testimony that its second span failed in the DRIC analysis because it included a "false" plaza on the Canadian side. The Ambassador Bridge further testified that the Canadian Border Services Agency *"...asked for 25 to 30 acres and the DRIC study converted it to 100."* The fact is that there was never a "false" plaza in the DRIC analysis. The fact is that the Canadian Border Services Agency said in 2005 during the DRIC study that *"...120 acres (is needed) for a port of entry at the Ambassador Bridge."* In January 2008, CBSA told the Ambassador Bridge that *"...clearly the option proposed (for the plaza) does not meet the operational requirements for a functional port of*

entry to serve the Ambassador Bridge in the long-term. This initial iteration attempts to force-fit the installations and results in a plaza that is overcrowded and dysfunctional.” CBSA repeated this point in a letter to the Ambassador Bridge last week in which it stated “... *it is becoming clear that our long-term needs cannot be addressed without expanding the plaza, most probably to the south and to the west in the future.*” This will cause the taking of homes and businesses which the Ambassador Bridge fails to recognize. CBSA has urged the Ambassador Bridge to engage professional help in its planning. To quote CBSA “...*the bottom line is more planning is needed to address the current and long-term management needs of the bridge*”.

This "plaza" issue overlaps, but is only a part of the processing of the environmental assessment in Canada for the proposed second span of the Ambassador Bridge and accompanying plaza. That process is led by Transport Canada and the Windsor Port Authority, not the Canadian Border Services Agency. The Ambassador Bridge has testified, and I quote, “...*our final (environmental document) lays in their hands and they are processing it and we hope to see that completed shortly, along with our U.S. environmental process that is in the hands of the Coast Guard.*” To the contrary, in a letter from Minister of Transport Cannon to this Committee's Chairperson, dated May 16th, it was made clear that “...*the review of the (Ambassador Bridge Enhancement Project) EIS is not progressing given that the (Bridge Company) has not yet revised the documentation to meet the requirements of the guidelines.*” The guidelines do not focus exclusively on the size of the plaza, which the Ambassador Bridge has asserted. Following the guidelines involves broader issues, including traffic forecasting models, assumptions and results; property acquisition; and, community impacts at the plaza, as well as along and on both sides of Huron Church Road. This need for information is as current as Wednesday, June 25th, from Transport Canada. This follows a meeting with the Ambassador Bridge on June 20th. Repeated contentions that anything less is needed are just not correct.

Traffic Forecast

The testimony by the Ambassador Bridge on traffic-related matters is confusing, particularly as it relates to what is their forecast. Specifically, when asked by this Subcommittee about the Ambassador Bridge's “...*flat forecast for the next 42 years,*” Bridge representatives responded that this is “...*not exactly the way it is.*” Yet, in their testimony to you on May 19th, the Ambassador Bridge used a chart which showed its forecast of no growth for the next 40+ years. They offered that same forecast on a number of occasions including to the Canadian Border Services Agency. In a letter to the Ambassador Bridge dated June 17th, 2008, just last week, CBSA reiterated that, in spite of various communications, the Ambassador Bridge “... *did not share the methodology, assumptions or modeling approaches underpinning their forecasts*” nor did they “...*reconcile any significant differences between the (Ambassador Bridge) forecast (of no growth) and those of the highway jurisdictions in Canada and the U.S.*”

Another confusing statement of the Ambassador Bridge was made when asked why it uses the DRIC forecasts, particularly as it relates to the Anderson report, which was a basis of their request for tax-payer supported Private Activity Bonds. The Ambassador Bridge acknowledged at your June 12th hearing, in response to your question, that the Anderson report, prepared for the Bridge Company, includes the numbers “*that were generated by DRIC*” but claims the Anderson report acknowledged “...*that they are not reliable.*” Then Mr. Blashfield of the

Ambassador Bridge quoted from the Anderson report as follows "*...these figures (the DRIC project) are widely stated (in the Anderson report) but generally treated with caution by DIBC which expressed to the Anderson Economic Group that the DRIC study figures may overstate future traffic growth.*" Anderson says nothing about the DRIC forecast "not being reliable" as the Ambassador Bridge testified.

Nonetheless, one has to ask: What would have happened if the Anderson report used the "no-growth-for-40 years" forecast. Would the Michigan Strategic Fund have passed its inducement resolution for taxpayer-supported Private Activity Bonds?

Finally, on the issue of traffic forecasts versus reality, the Ambassador Bridge testified that the DRIC work was wrong. In fact the Ambassador Bridge is wrong. The DRIC model forecasts 3.6 million trucks in 2005; actual data indicate 3.5 million trucks crossed the Ambassador Bridge that year. That is a difference of less than one-half of one percent. In 2006, the DRIC model was within 2.5 percent of the actual truck data. And, in 2007, the DRIC model forecast truck traffic within 5.4 percent of the actual traffic.

Access Road

One final contention by the Ambassador Bridge about the DRIC that must be corrected is the claim that "*..the DRIC project fixes 10 to 11 of those signals (on Huron Church Road) to within two kilometers of (the Ambassador) bridge.*" For the record, the DRIC recommends no improvements to Huron Church Road. If anything happens on Huron Church Road as a result of the DRIC, it is to get trucks off of it so it operates better. But, no physical changes are to be made to Huron Church Road by the DRIC.

Summary

In Summary, it is clear to those associated with the Detroit River International Crossing Study that the Ambassador Bridge representatives have repeatedly criticized the study's results while using them for their own purposes. And, they have made claims about the DRIC work which are just plain wrong. Our question is the one you asked of them at your June 12th hearing: How can the Big Three, the Federal Highway Administration, Transport Canada, MDOT, and the Peace Bridge Authority, among others, be wrong but the Ambassador Bridge representatives, who disagree, be right? Especially, when nothing is offered to substantiate their claims.