

Detroit River International Crossing Study
Joint Local Advisory Council/Local Agency Group Meeting
Notes -Revised
June 24, 2009, 7:00 p.m.
Southwestern High School

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

Attendance: See attached.

Discussion:

Introductions

Mohammed Alghurabi opened the meeting by asking everyone to introduce themselves.

Meeting Conduct Procedures

Mohammed Alghurabi explained the procedures for the evening's meeting. The public will have time at the start and finish of the meeting to ask questions/make comments. The LAC members will conduct their business uninterrupted in the core of the meeting.

Agenda Review

Mohammed Alghurabi reviewed the agenda. He asked if there were any additions or deletions. There were none.

Public Comments

Mrs. Leonard asked for an update on the Delray truck study. Mohammed Alghurabi responded there will be a formal presentation of it at the July LAC/LAG meeting.

Lisa Goldstein announced that there will be a meeting hosted by Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision (SDEV) on June 25th from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at St. Anne's Church. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss environmental issues in Southwest Detroit and to prioritize projects that could address these issues through funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

John Bendzick inquired about the meaning of a letter recently sent by several congressmen to U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that the letter was in support of the DRIC and cosigned by several members of the Michigan congressional delegation.

John Bendzick commented that he was at a meeting recently at which Lieutenant Governor John Cherry made comments which indicated that he was well aware of projects in the 15th Congressional District.

LAC/LAG Meeting Notes

There were no comments on the notes of the May LAC/LAG meeting.

Job Training

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that MDOT has been working to advance the DRIC mitigation and enhancement items. Part of that effort is to provide job training. In that regard, MDOT has been working with Michigan Works! and the Workforce Development organization. As a result, an overview would be presented tonight by Annie Ellington and Greg Collier on an upcoming workforce development/training workshop.

Annie Ellington then presented an overview of the business of the Workforce Development organization, specifically the high priority of working with dislocated/laid off workers. In discussions with MDOT, the particular DRIC emphasis is placed on English as a Second Language (ESL) and developing a curriculum tailored for the Southwest Detroit/Delray community. The ESL curriculum is typically addressed at improving skills of trainees so that they can complete an application for a job. That is often followed by occupation-related training. Brochures about the subjects were available and distributed to those that requested them. Annie Ellington asked if those in the room knows anyone who has been dislocated/laid off from their jobs to please put them in touch with the Workforce Development organization consistent with the contact information in the brochure.

Ms. Ellington then discussed Workforce Development Week which starting June 29th. She particularly stressed that there will be a training session on June 30th, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the North Service Center at 707 W. Milwaukee to discuss new job opportunities in the “immerging” area. Greg Collier then noted that Mayor Bing, as part of the No Worker Left Behind initiative, has a scholarship program that will make up to \$10,000 available, on a case-by-case basis, to those who qualify and require training. The scholarship could cover up to two years of training.

Annie Ellington noted that there will be an orientation session on July 1 on Workforce Development initiatives to be held at Southwestern High School from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. She concluded this part of the presentation by noting that a flyer was in the package handed out to all attendees which highlighted the job training orientation session that is to be held on July 1.

Lisa Goldstein asked for an elaboration on the meetings on June 30th. Annie Ellington indicated that the 10 a.m. to noon session would be on “green jobs”. An afternoon session, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., would be on jobs in the film industry, both emerging areas for new job opportunities in Michigan.

One final comment by Annie Ellington was that the Workforce Development organization is looking to purchase a vehicle that will serve as a mobile center to bring job training to the community as compared to the community coming to job training centers.

Tom Cervenak offered the Delray Community Center as a training place. Greg Collier asked Tom Cervenak for contact information so he could get back with Tom.

Team II

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that Michigan DOT is partnering with the City of Detroit to advance various issues associated with the DRIC. He noted that the CBC will be invited to send a representative to those meetings. Additionally, he noted that Team II will now include a member of the Detroit Public School System – Priscilla Morris.

CBC on Delray Redevelopment

Tom Cervenak reported that there was still no word from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority on whether a grant would be offered to Delray to build approximately two dozen new houses. He indicated that work has also begun on a second grant, this one to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. It is likely that the Delray community will partner with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority in order to qualify for this grant.

Mohammed Alghurabi noted that MDOT was continuing to cooperate with the local community on a number of mitigation activities. He noted a meeting had taken place on Tuesday, January 16th, convened by Representative Tlaib. The meeting was largely focused on initiatives to address air quality concerns.

Mitigation Progress

Mohammed Alghurabi introduced Gerri Ayers to comment on efforts to advance the mitigation/enhance matters that are contained on what is known as the “green sheet” in the Record of Decision.

Gerri Ayers indicated that as part of the Record of Decision, a commitment had been made to brief the community on a quarterly basis on the progress being made on advancing mitigation and enhancement items. In that regard, she noted that work was continuing on air quality issues which included meetings yet that day and the week before with members of the CBC.

Gerri Ayers also noted that MDOT had worked with the community on preparing an application for housing revitalization that was discussed earlier by Tom Cervenak. Likewise, MDOT will assist, as requested, on the application for additional housing funding to be submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Gerri Ayers noted that Annie Ellington’s discussion earlier in the evening covered the efforts that are being made by MDOT to bring job training activities to the community.

Gerri Ayers commented that the relocation activities included on the “green sheet” go hand-in-hand with the redevelopment of housing in the Delray area. She noted that efforts to extend the renaissance zone and the empowerment zone will be acted upon at an appropriate time. She then discussed efforts that are being made on historic preservation/mitigation. She noted that coordination was ongoing with Eastern Michigan University to salvage materials at St. Paul’s AME Church and Kovac’s Bar which will both be removed to make way for the new DRIC plaza. In this regard, outreach has also been made with the Young Builders of Detroit.

Gerri Ayers also noted that enhancement work was to be undertaken at historic Fort Wayne. Those efforts are part of the Team II program and will be advanced as that organization begins to pick up speed.

Gerri Ayers concluded by noting that there were other items that will be given consideration as the DRIC evolves that are in the areas of visual issues, noise, infrastructure related to local roads, land use matters. More on these will be reported at the next quarterly update which will occur in the September/October period.

Update on Legislation

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that a legislative hearing had been held on June 19th on the public-private partnership legislation that had been introduced to the Michigan House of Representatives. He indicated that a second meeting would likely take place on July 23rd. That public-private partnership legislation is one of three pieces of law that needs to be written. The other two deal with tolling of the new crossing and the ability for Michigan to contract with Canada. He noted that the schedule is to achieve approval of the immediate legislation by the fall of 2009. Following that, legislation will be needed to authorize the building of the project. He indicated that the Senate Subcommittee on Transportation Appropriation had passed a bill that will require MDOT to make a proposal by March 31st, 2010 to decide if the project can be authorized.

Other LAC Business

There was no other LAC business.

Public Comments

Phyllis Hernandez, the owner of Casino Towing, indicated that she just heard about the project for the first time since 2006. She asserted that she never got any information since then and that her property was to be acquired. She asked why someone didn't contact her on this matter. Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that he would discuss that matter in detail, and did so, following the meeting. He stressed, however, that property acquisition was not eminent and, therefore, no dislocation of her business was expected in the immediate future.

Marc Hesse asked when are meetings on the legislation that is needed to advance the project. Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that he would apprise the LAC of when the upcoming meetings would occur. He noted the July 23rd date is tentative. As soon as it is confirmed, he will send out appropriate notices.

Marc Hesse stressed that people in the community need to go to the Legislature to have their voices heard. There was then some conversation about the use of Riverside Park and recent media coverage of that matter.

Simone Sagovac asked when the Presidential Permit would be required. Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that while the draft application for the permit had been submitted earlier, the formal submission had not yet been submitted. Once it is, it will take six months to a year for final approval. A date to submit the formal application has not yet been decided.

Mr. Rosen asked if there were sufficient travel lanes over the Detroit river today between the U.S. and Canada. Joe Corradino responded that in terms of the number of the lanes across the river, the answer was yes. He noted, that the DRIC indicated that somewhere between 2015 and 2030 additional lanes across the river would be required. However, he stressed that other components of the system are capacity-restrained sooner. They include Huron Church Road on the Canadian side and the plaza/customs activities on both sides. Mr. Rosen then indicated that he had an article to distribute from Metro Times.

Phyllis Hernandez of Casino Towing indicated that she was not anxious to have her business bought. She was curious whether it could be missed or incorporated into the project. Joe Corradino responded that her property was underneath the plaza and could not be “missed” nor could it be incorporated into the area where the plaza existed. However, it is required by the relocation rules, to make every reasonable effort be made to find a suitable replacement location for her business activity. MDOT’s real estate team would work in close cooperation with every business owner to ensure that their requirements would be met.

That was the final comment of the evening.

Next LAC Meeting

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that the next meeting of the LAC/LAG would be on July 29th and it would be held at the Doubletree Inn in Dearborn. The lack of air conditioning at Southwest High School made shifting locations standard practice in July and August. With that, the meeting ended at 8:30 p.m.