

**Detroit River International Crossing Study  
Local Advisory Council/Local Agency Group  
Meeting Notes  
May 26, 2010, 7:00 p.m.  
Southwestern High School**

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

**Attendance:** See attached.

**Discussion:**

**Introductions/Agenda**

Mohammed Alghurabi asked those in attendance to introduce themselves. He reviewed the meeting conduct procedures and agenda: the Gateway Project; M-85 reconstruction; Southwest Detroit Community Benefits Coalition (SWCBC) activity; and, a real estate acquisition video.

**Public Comments**

Marc Hesse said he had spoken in Lansing the previous day at the legislative hearing. He asked rhetorically whether the \$500 million Canada proposes to provide for the DRIC project could be levered into billions of dollars for Southeast Michigan. He encouraged everyone present to start calling their state representatives and senators. He believed the DRIC would stimulate the economy and industry in the region. He said planned re-decking of the Ambassador Bridge would push traffic to other border crossings. He works in Southeast Michigan as a roofer and will not see any benefit directly from the construction of the DRIC, but he understands that he will put roofs on the industries that remain or expand as a result of the improved access across the border. He's seen many backups at the existing Ambassador Bridge and believes that those kinds of delays limit industry and not having a second bridge will push jobs to other locations. He then complained about the condition of the old Union Station which runs down property values. He said construction workers statewide were 60 percent unemployed and many of those who are employed are working out of state. Michigan construction workers need jobs at home.

Mr. Rosen said he was wearing a train station t-shirt, and he believed the *Detroit Free Press* might be interested in the negative image of Mr. Maroun and how that might carry negative connotations for those elected officials who have received contributions from Mr. Maroun.

### **Meeting Notes**

Mohammed Alghurabi said that a letter from Mrs. Leonard had been attached to the notes of the April LAC meeting. But, since they had been printed, he had received a newer letter from Mrs. Leonard which was also distributed. He pointed everyone's attention to that newer letter.

He asked if there were any comments on the April 28, 2010 notes. There were none.

### **Gateway Project Update**

Victor Judnic, manager of the Gateway Project for MDOT reported:

1. The ramp from southbound I-75 to Vernor and the auto/truck plaza ramp to southbound I-75 will both be open by the end of the week.
2. The Cinco de Mayo celebration was held and the pedestrian bridge is now open. Some finish work is continuing.
3. Most of the trees associated with the Gateway Project have been planted and shrubs will be planted this fall. The slopes need attention as the final turf is not yet growing. There are a lot of weeds, still.
4. The carpool lot associated with the Welcome Center will be open within a month.
5. Additional signing and striping is needed and will continue.
6. With respect to the litigation that seeks to hold the Detroit International Bridge Company (DIBC) to its construction agreements to allow truck traffic to get directly to north- and southbound I-75; the case is before Michigan's Supreme Court. A ruling is expected within a week. Earlier actions by the courts have sustained MDOT's position that DIBC uphold its construction agreements.

*C: John Bendzick said Channel 4 showed video footage of vandalism to the plaza at the end of the pedestrian bridge and asked for more information.*

R: Victor Judnic said there had been some carving in the wooden benches and some graffiti.

*Q: With all the talk of money for a new bridge, why spend dollars on the Gateway Project?*

R: Victor Judnic said that that section of I-75 had to be reconstructed and access to the existing border crossing was very poor and had to be corrected.

*Q: This is a three part question. On the Bagley Pedestrian Bridge, how bad does graffiti have to be before it's addressed? Two, how bad does it have to be before there's a graffiti coating process? And, three, what's the policy on offenders?*

R: Victor Judnic said the concrete surfaces had anti-graffiti coatings already and that the graffiti will be dealt with. MDOT is working with the police department on what actions to take.

*C: John Nagy said that it's good to see that policing is occurring with respect to the illegal left turns from Springwells to Fort. He added that MDOT was wrong not to prosecute graffiti offenders.*

R: Victor Judnic noted the graffiti was so minor that the rain washed it off. He said that the areas near the pedestrian crossing will be under camera surveillance.

*C: John Nagy advised those in attendance that, when they call their senators to support the DRIC, they should make it clear that that support means the community also wants a benefits agreement.*

*C: Mr. Rosen said that when you cross the new pedestrian bridge there are rectangular openings for recessed lighting, and he found exposed electrical cables in these areas.*

R: Victor Judnic said MDOT plans to grout those wires into place.

*C: Mr. Rosen said he had noticed hairline cracks in the concrete on the retaining walls in the area.*

R: Victor Judnic said that those "shrinkage cracks" are normal as concrete cures.

*Q: Mr. Rosen asked about the triangular “axion” at the east end.*

R: Mr. Judnic said that area is not complete and will be covered with tile.

*Q: Mr. Rosen asked who reviews the design concepts and stated that the design should not be treated lightly.*

R: Victor Judnic agreed.

*Q: Mary Ann Cuderman asked if the ramp to be opened was the one that had dirt piled on it.*

R: Victor Judnic repeated that two ramps would be opening, and said that the dirt had been gone for quite some time.

*Q: Father Motowski asked about the trucks on Fort, and whether the opening of the new ramps means that the trucks would no longer be using Fort.*

R: Victor Judnic said the new ramps serve cars and RVs only, and it’s the truck access to I-75 that’s the subject of the litigation with the DIBC. He repeated that there should be a decision on that by the Michigan Supreme Court within a week. Trucks will remain on Fort until the Gateway project is completed.

*Q: A woman asked what the Welcome Center hours are.*

R: Victor Judnic said that they are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., seven days a week. They are trying to extend hours by establishing a mini police station within the Welcome Center.

### **M-85 Reconstruction (Fort Street) Update**

Matt Chynoweth opened by saying that MDOT’s practice is to report graffiti incidents to the local law enforcement agency. Typically, the law enforcement agency asks MDOT to prepare an estimated repair cost. MDOT The law enforcement agency takes the appropriate action, depending on the estimated cost.

Matt Chynoweth said the project to reconstruct Fort Street stretches between Oakwood and Schaefer and includes the Bascule Bridge over the Rouge River. The service drives will be

constructed in the first year and a half with the overall goal for concluding construction by November 2011.

There has been coordination with other projects in the area. In particular, it was understood that Marathon Oil was expanding, but it was not known they were expecting 20 major moves of heavy equipment along Oakwood Boulevard at the same time that Fort Street is reconstructed. This called for consideration of special detours while that equipment is moved. Also, Wayne County has a separate project that also requires coordination of detours. Matt Chynoweth explained some details of these.

Additionally, Matt said MDOT understands that while the Bascule Bridge is closed, there will be an access problem for emergency services. As a consequence, MDOT is meeting with the police and fire department representatives to consider specific emergency routings under various conditions, including those when trains close local roadway crossings.

Total project cost is estimated at \$30 million. Matt Chynoweth indicated he would be back at future meetings to provide more information and answer questions.

*Q: Have you taken the northbound I-75 Dearborn exit lately?*

R: Yes, I know it's pretty rough. MDOT has been relying on its maintenance crews to fix that ramp, and we had hoped to incorporate it in the present project. It will be addressed soon.

*Q: In the design of the Fort Street Bridge over the railroads and Pleasant and Sanders, how will pedestrians and bicycles be treated?*

R: Pedestrians will be carried over the bike path. This will go up and over the four live railroad tracks so that no one is crossing those active tracks. At this point, it is unknown how the bus stops on the Fort Street overpass will be handled. It is likely they will not continue to remain on the top of the bridge. This is something that is still being worked out with the Detroit Department of Transportation.

*Q: Will there be future opportunities for resident input?*

*R: Matt Chynoweth said yes, and that he will pass that interest on to others at MDOT.*

### **Southwest Detroit Community Benefits Coalition (SWCBC) Update**

Scott Brines noted the SWCBC needs citizens to continue to contact their elected officials and express support for the DRIC and for inclusion of the SWCBC's community enhancement goals in the legislation. He said that the House had passed the Community Benefits Bill. He said he appreciated the relationship with MDOT.

Mohammed Alghurabi added that the Detroit City Council had passed its own resolution in favor of House Bill 6128. He reminded everybody that the Senate hearings would be held the following Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. in Lansing.

*C: I encourage everyone to talk to their senators. That includes those of you here from down river. Emphasize the benefits to the entire region.*

*Q: Mr. Rodriguez asked if, at the legislative hearings, there was any anti-DRIC sentiment.*

*R: Scott Brines said yes, and the SWCBC continues to need people present in Lansing to counterbalance the paid opposition.*

*C: John Bendzick noted a newspaper reported someone alleged that Canada had "too much authority in the DRIC." Mr. Bendzick said he called the paper and tried to find out who that person was, but he got no satisfactory answer.*

Mohammed Alghurabi said next Tuesday's meeting is the third meeting for the Senate Transportation Committee. There's a five-day pause after any committee action before a bill can be acted on by the full Senate. If it passes at that time, then it would go to the governor for signature. Governor Granholm has already indicated her intent to sign the bill supporting the DRIC.

*Q: What kind of benefits is the community going for?*

R: Mohammed Alghurabi suggested the speaker talk to Scott Brines of the SWCBC.

C: *John Nagy said it was instructive that he had asked a DIBC representative in Lansing why everybody in the legislature who was against the DRIC also happened to be getting contributions from DIBC. The response was that MDOT was doing the same thing.*

### **MDOT Real Estate**

Mohammed Alghurabi said that he had intended to show a video about the property acquisition and relocation process but, it would be postponed until the next meeting.

### **Other LAC/LAG Business**

John Nagy asked John Barron of the city of Detroit if the City was generally on board with the DRIC project. John Barron said it was, but the City has no money to invest. They can take part in zoning and land use changes, but they do not have dollars to put forward. He said the adopted 2009 Master Plan shows residential land use in Delray, and further adjustments may be needed. John Nagy said that the Renaissance Zone in 1997 was established to promote a shift to industrial land use. John Barron responded that the Renaissance Zone never extended west to the area in question. John Nagy said he hoped land use would not have industry in close proximity to residential uses. John Barron said he understood industry is reducing in the area and, at the same time, there was a full understanding of the need for buffering between land uses.

### **Additional Public Comments**

Q: *It was asked whether there is money for a police min-station at the Welcome Center.*

R: Mohammed Alghurabi said he did not know. John Barron added that he will try to check that out from the City's side.

C: *The same individual said her understanding was that when the proposal began, there were going to be government funds for a mini-station.*

The meeting ended at 8:45 p.m. The next meeting was announced as June 30, 2010, at 7:00 p.m. at Southwestern High School.