

New International Trade Crossing Project
(formerly known as the Detroit River International Crossing Project)
Local Advisory Council/Local Agency Group Meeting
Notes
January 26, 2011, 7:00 p.m.
Southwestern High School

Purpose: To review the progress of the New International Trade Crossing Project.

Attendance: See attached.

Discussion:

Introduction/Agenda

Mohammed Alghurabi asked those in attendance to introduce themselves. He reviewed the meeting conduct procedures and agenda.

Mr. Alghurabi noted that the Gateway Update would be tabled for this meeting.

Public Comments

John Bendzick noted that the Metro Times had an article on the judicial review of the Gateway project in its 1/19 – 1/25 edition by Curt Guyette.

Richard Rosen noted that there had been three weeks of intense media coverage on the bridge project and asked about MDOT's position with respect to the Ambassador Bridge. Mohammed stated that MDOT built the Gateway project as a direct connection to the Ambassador Bridge. Mr. Rosen further inquired about the \$550 million "loan" from Canada. Mr. Alghurabi clarified that the \$550 million is a pledge, not an obligation, to be repaid from tolls. Mr. Rosen further expressed his opinion that the Ambassador Bridge seems disingenuous when they say MDOT is out to get them in that they built the Gateway to their benefit. He is of the opinion that MDOT should not support a 2nd span at Ambassador. Mr. Alghurabi responded that MDOT's position, on the record as part of the USCG permit process, is that a replacement bridge is acceptable.

Tom Dombrowski made a comment regarding the Gateway legal actions. He noted that no matter what occurs with the bait shop, 23rd Street does not belong to the Ambassador Bridge Company.

John Bendzick noted that MDOT Director Kirk Steudle was reappointed. Mr. Bendzick noted that he met with the 15th Congressional district representative to discuss the project on January 13th.

Notes of LAC/LAG Meeting of October 27, 2010

No comments on notes of November 17, 2010.

SWCBC Update

Scott Baines asked a question regarding the State of the Union address – high speed rail was mentioned. Will the NITC (formerly known as DRIC) consider the use of high speed rail? Mohammed Alghurabi noted that rail/public transit was examined during the EIS and was not found to meet the purpose and need of the project.

Mr. Baines stated that there was a SWCBC meeting the previous evening, and they are still positive about things and will soon have a call-in day for legislators.

Rep. Rashida Tlaib noted that CBC led a tour of the area for legislators but noted that support for the NITC (formerly known as DRIC) was only contingent on investment in the community. There is a package of bills being introduced, similar to the benefits for the Blue Water Bridge project in Port Huron. They are looking into creating a NITC (formerly known as DRIC) investment district. Rep. Tlaib stated that she felt it was time for a representative from the Governor's office to begin attending the LAC meetings. She went on to note that the City of Detroit owns 60 to 70 percent of the land in the area and the city should use that to take a position to benefit the community.

NITC (formerly known as DRIC) Status

Mohammed noted that MDOT has been supporting the due diligence work with the Governor's office since the election. The Governor's office, as noted in the State of the State address, will be taking the lead and MDOT will be supporting.

Sen. Hoon-Yung Hopgood (D – Romulus) spoke regarding the project. The Senator moved into the Senate from the House in January. He is concerned with the vibrancy of southeast Michigan. He introduced Senate Bill 66 to allow a public-private partnership (P3) to build the DIRC project. He is happy to see the support of the Governor. There is an opportunity to engage and inform new members. There is strong support on each side of the aisle in the Senate. The FHWA match that the Governor announced changes the equation as it impacts other districts. Many of the new Senators came from the House and have some familiarity with the project. However, in the House most representatives are new.

Rep. Tlaib then spoke. She noted that a House Bill on the project has been introduced. However, it is just a P3 bill and not an accountability bill. Community Benefits will set the tone for future mega-projects and their impacts on local communities. People need to testify regarding the impacts on their community. Politicians will listen to Michigan residents more than other politicians. There will be one-on-ones next week as well as a breakfast for new legislators.

Rep. Harvey Santana then added that he is convinced that if something positive for the community doesn't happen with the project, then there won't be a community as evidenced by the continuing decline. The support of the community is definitely needed.

Detroit Works Update – John Baron, City of Detroit

Mr. Baron noted that handouts of the schedule of upcoming community meetings were available. These meetings will be reactions and responses to information that the planning teams have developed. There will be 10 meetings with the same presentation at each. The Southwest meeting will be on Vernor. In February/March there will be 10 additional topic meetings, then 10 more neighborhood meetings at a later date. See www.detroitworksproject.com for additional information.

Rep. Tlaib asked what the community could do to keep the momentum building with the NITC (formerly known as DRIC) going. Mr. Baron noted that attending the meetings and reiterating the communities' issues is important. They already have some of the items such as housing and truck traffic on the to-do list.

Other LAC/LAG Business

Mrs. Delores Leonard noted that in October candidate Snyder was opposed to “government” ownership of the bridge. Why the change?

Mr. Alghurabi noted that most people think the NITC (formerly known as DRIC) project is “government”. But in fact the project is a Public-Private Partnership. The private sector will have a substantial and pivotal role in the project. They will bring the capital, dollars, and expertise to build the project.

Sen. Hopgood added that, although he is speculating, the Governor recognized the need for a second crossing and saw this was the best way. When the extraneous (media driven) issues are pulled away, it is a pretty clear choice.

John Bendzick noted that the State of the State was not a surprise given the reappointment of Director Steudle. One thing missing from the recent debate was the impact of the Highway 403 closure due to a snowstorm. Also, a new bridge will bring new commerce which this area needs. The Governor is a businessman looking at jobs.

Rep. Tlaib asked for an answer on the closing of Junction Street at the next LAC meeting due to its negative impacts on CHASS.

Additional Public Comments

Q. Marc Hesse - noted that the financial impact of the project is around \$5 billion.

R. Mohammed Alghurabi responded that in the report to the legislature in May 2010 (p. 21), there was \$1.3 billion in project costs for Michigan. The \$550 million from Canada will leverage \$2.2 billion (80/20 match) in additional transportation funding. The total is approximately \$3.5 billion.

Mr. Hesse noted that toll credits for the \$1.3 billion could also be leveraged adding to the total investment. CBC should try to capture the toll credits for use in the community.

Q. Emma Brenson asked how long will the process continue and how long will it take to move. Will they have 30 days to move?

R. Mohammed Alghurabi stated that it takes more than 30 days to purchase a property. It takes at least six months to begin purchasing properties from the point where the legislation is passed. MDOT does not know when the legislation will be passed.

Q. Richard Rosen stated that the reason he previously stated that the \$550 million from Canada was a “loan” was because that is what the media is reporting. He was upset at being corrected and not being able to make his overall point.

R. Mr. Alghurabi apologized for interrupting his point and noted that the media is incorrect, and there will be no liability for the state.

Q. Mary Perkin inquired as to why only half of Harrington Street is being taken?

R. Mr. Alghurabi stated that there was not a necessity established during the environmental process to take the other half of Harrington Street. However, the remaining properties can be looked at during final design and the property acquisition phase.

Q. Edison Mark (?) inquired about the health impact on kids attending Southwestern High School and if there was a health impact study and if filtration could be installed for the school.

R. Mr. Alghurabi stated that this issue was examined in detail in the EIS. He directed Mr. Mark to discuss the issue further with Ms. Ayers after the meetings. No health impact study was performed because there are no established protocols available due to insufficient scientific evidence to study health effects. The EIS also looked at mitigation measures. Ms. Ayers noted that MDOT had applied for and received a grant to retrofit diesel engines on fleets in the immediate area.

Q. John Nagy noted that his most important issue is with trucks in the community. He also noted that there will be isolated houses between Campbell and Junction. It is inhumane to leave them isolated. That area could be used for “clean industry.”

R. Mr. Alghurabi responded that the truck issue must be dealt with in cooperation with the City of Detroit since the streets belong to the City. Mr. Paul Sander stated that in order to comply with the laws and regulations there has to be an established necessity in order to take property. However, the State can look at extraordinary circumstances on a case by case basis.

Next LAC/LAG Meeting

The next LAC/LAG meeting will be on February 23, 2011 at Southwestern High School. With that, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.