



STATE OF MICHIGAN

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
LANSING

GLORIA J. JEFF
DIRECTOR

August 25, 2005

The Honorable John D. Dingell
United States House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building Room 2328
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Dingell:

Thank you for your letter of August 23, 2005 regarding the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) study. We appreciate your interest and encourage your involvement throughout the study.

I'm pleased to provide the following responses to the questions you raised as a result of your constituents' concerns.

1. Who is making the study? What will the study do? How is the study being conducted? What role will the public have in this study?

The Border Transportation Partnership is conducting the study and includes the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Transport Canada (TC), and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO).

The study is a bi-national effort to complete the environmental study processes for the U.S., Michigan, Canadian, and Ontario governments. It will identify transportation solutions that support the region, state, provincial, and national economies while addressing civil and national defense and homeland security needs of the busiest trade corridor between the U.S. and Canada.

The study is being conducted according to the guidance of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and with MDOT standard environmental review procedures.

The public has been extensively involved and will continue to provide the opportunity for public involvement consistent with the NEPA process. The public involvement process is open, accessible, and continuous. Many opportunities exist for public input, including scheduled public meetings and a public hearing; monthly Local Advisory Council meetings comprised of citizens and local/state elected officials; and context sensitive

The Honorable John D. Dingell

Page 2

August 25, 2005

design meetings. A toll-free hotline has been established and can be reached at 1-800-900-2649, as well as a public website which can be found at www.partnershipborderstudy.com. Public input is considered by all decision-makers throughout the process.

2. What permits will have to be obtained from the Army Corps of Engineers regarding this study? From what entities shall those permits be obtained?

This study requires no permits. Before construction can begin, potentially 15 federal/state agencies may require permits. Following the project approval and design, permits will be needed for construction, though the type of permits required is dependent upon which alternative is selected.

3. What has to be done with regard to NEPA? Is there a timeline for that process? If so please explain in detail? Will the public have an opportunity to be heard?

NEPA requires U.S. partners to examine all prudent and feasible alternatives. The elimination of any alternative must be completely documented. The draft environmental impact statement (EIS) discloses the benefits and impacts of the remaining alternatives and any proposed mitigation measures to inform the decision-making process. A formal public hearing and comment period will follow the release of the draft EIS. Based on public input and the draft EIS, a recommended alternative will be identified. The normal timeframe to complete an EIS for a road-type project is usually more than four years. This study will produce an approved final EIS in three years, or by the end of 2007.

4. What are the current sites that are being considered for potential crossings? Besides the illustrative alternatives, are there any other sites being considered?

There are 19 possible routes, with nine routes in the Downriver area. We are and will continue to evaluate any alternatives proposed by the public.

5. Please provide a detailed timeline of all activities that will take place in the decision-making process that will result in site selection for a crossing, including who makes what decision at each point in the process.

For a detailed project schedule, please visit our project website at www.partnershipborderstudy.com. Some key milestones in the project timeline include:

- Elimination of many long-list alternatives by the end of November 2005.
- Completion of the draft EIS by the end of November 2006.
- Public hearing in January 2007.
- Determination of the preferred alternative by the end of June 2007.

The Honorable John D. Dingell

Page 3

August 25, 2005

- Completion of the final EIS by the end of December 2007.

This is an international project. Any decision made on the facility type and location must be agreed to by all of the partners at the federal/state and federal/provincial levels of government represented in the Border Transportation Partnership.

6. At what points during the process will the public be able to formally participate and make their thoughts known? Since the June 2005 public hearings, will there be other public hearings held? If so, when? What will be the purpose of those hearings?

Please refer to our response to question #1 above. At the June 2005 meetings introducing the illustrative alternatives, some challenges were highlighted in the Southern Corridor and included: intensely developed land use in the U.S. and rural land use in Canada; the Detroit River is approximately three miles wide; piers would likely be necessary in the Detroit River due to the width of the crossing; the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge; natural environmental impacts; a further distance to western freeway connections; airport flight paths in relation to tower height; and other community impacts.

In addition to the public meetings held in June 2005, a set of formal public hearings will be held in January 2007 following the release of the draft EIS. The purpose of the public hearings is to receive public comment on the findings of the draft EIS.

7. Is there a final date set for selection of a crossing route? If so, when is that date?

Yes, the end of June 2007.

8. Which project partners make what decisions regarding the project? What is the role of the Federal Highway Administration? What is the role of the Michigan Department of Transportation? What is the role of Transport Canada? What is the role of the Ontario Ministry of Transportation?

The four agencies represented in the Border Transportation Partnership equally share decision-making responsibilities. As an international project, all four agencies must agree on the location and type of the facility.

9. How is the Michigan Department of Transportation working with federal and local governments with regard to this project?

MDOT is a partner with FHWA in the Border Partnership. Additionally, the following federal agencies are cooperating in the preparation of the EIS and have signed

The Honorable John D. Dingell
Page 4
August 25, 2005

an agreement to collaborate on this study, which is the first of its kind on an MDOT project:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services
- U.S. General Services Administration
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- U.S. Department of State

Additionally, in February I briefed the Michigan Legislature on the study. MDOT has established a Local Advisory Council that meets on a monthly basis and consists of local community group representatives and elected officials. In addition, MDOT has established a Local Agency Group consisting of technical representatives (engineers, planners, etc.) of local governments to discuss the course and progress of the project.

Thank you for allowing me to provide you and your constituents an overview of the DRIC study process and the opportunities available for public participation. MDOT will continue working hard to achieve our common goal of an open and inclusive study process.

If you have any questions, please contact either me or Susan Mortel, Director, Bureau of Transportation Planning, at (517) 373-0343.

Sincerely,



Gloria J. Jeff
Director