

Detroit River International Crossing Study
Canadian Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why have you decided to focus on this area of analysis?

After appropriate study and analysis, the Border Transportation Partnership has reviewed the possible alternatives and identified this particular area of analysis as offering the most reasonable alternatives on both sides of the border. In the analysis conducted to date, alternatives in this area provided a good balance between providing a high degree of transportation service and mobility, with fewer associated community impacts, in comparison to other alternatives.

Q. Why have the other options been eliminated from further study?

The Partnership's purpose is to improve the movement of people and goods across the Canada-United States border in the Windsor-Detroit gateway. Based on the technical data and analysis, other alternatives were identified to either have high negative impacts on existing communities or serious limitations in terms of practicality. Specifically:

- The capacity provided by the Detroit River Tunnel Partnership (DRTP) two-lane truckway proposal was determined to be inadequate to serve the long-term travel demand.
- A six-lane freeway following the DRTP's Rail corridor in Canada, to a new river crossing, would have caused major community impacts in significant urban areas on the Canadian side of the border.
- Alternative crossings in the Ojibway Industrial Park area of Windsor were determined not practical because the proposed U.S. plaza site in River Rouge would have resulted in significant time delays to the project.
- Twinning the existing Ambassador Bridge was determined not practical based on the community and neighbourhood impacts of the proposed plaza and portions of the access road in Canada. The Partnership will continue to explore the U.S. customs plaza area of the Ambassador Bridge to connect to a potential customs plaza on the Canadian side in the remaining area of continued analysis.

Q. What is the basis for these decisions?

The technical teams of the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) Study have evaluated the 15 Illustrative Alternatives and agree that the eliminated crossings have the least potential to be implemented with minimal impacts and in a timely way. As such, they are not being carried forward for further review.

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More information will be made available as the Partnership moves ahead with Public Information Open Houses in the Windsor area, scheduled for the week of November 28, and at the Public Meetings in the US, scheduled for the week of December 5. All stakeholders will have the opportunity to review the information and provide input.

Q. Why didn't you announce all the options being eliminated at the same time?

At the time of the initial announcement in early October, the technical teams of the Partnership were in the process of completing the technical assessment. While the technical review supported the elimination of the southern routes and eastern routes at that time, the Partnership had to complete further study on the other options.

Q. So, what happens next?

The study team will engage the U.S. and Canadian communities/stakeholders to assist in defining the set of Practical Alternatives. That work will start in late November 2005 when the Canadian technical teams will hold Public Information Open Houses in Windsor, and the U.S. technical teams will hold public meetings in early December. The Practical Alternatives are scheduled to be defined by March 2006.

Q. Now that you're looking at fewer options, will this speed up the process?

The study schedule was developed to have the list of Practical Alternatives announced in November 2005, with the final list determined by March 2006. That schedule still holds.

Q. How many alternatives will be examined within the area of analysis?

There is no requirement for a specific number of alternatives. The Partnership will carry forward options that are deemed to be practical to implement, and present them for further review and consultation.

The technical teams will be conducting more in-depth technical, environmental, and engineering analysis, as well as gathering input from the public and stakeholders to identify the locations for the plazas and bridge landings on both sides of the border within the identified area.

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Q. When will a final decision be made on a new crossing?

The location of the new crossing will be known by mid-2007. The EA report will be finalized and submitted to the Minister of Environment by the end of 2007.

Q. Who makes the final decision?

In Canada, the studies are being carried out under the requirements of the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. The EA Report requires approval by the Ontario Minister of the Environment. This approval will be coordinated with the federal process. In the United States, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is prepared under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and requires approval by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Q. How much has been spent so far on this study? How much more will be spent?

In Canada to date, we have spent \$3 million on this planning study. We have budgeted to spend another \$8 million on the planning phase of this important project.

Q. Why was Ambassador Bridge Twinning dropped at this time?

Twinning the existing Ambassador Bridge was determined not practical based on the community and neighbourhood impacts of the proposed plaza and portions of the access road in Canada. The Partnership will continue to explore the U.S. customs plaza area of the Ambassador Bridge to connect to a potential customs plaza on the Canadian side in the remaining area of continued analysis.

Q. Will new border crossings be privately or publicly owned?

Public oversight, and protecting the public interest is paramount to the Border Transportation Partnership. The priority is to make sure the Detroit River border crossings are secure, efficient and well managed. Work is ongoing on both sides of the border to examine potential governance, public oversight, and ownership models for our border crossings. The options being considered include government ownership, various forms of collaboration with the private sector, and/or the creation of an authority.

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Q. What upgrades to the road networks will be considered to lead to the crossing?

There will be a freeway connection from Highway 401 to the new plaza and crossing. The freeway connection will be developed in more detail during the analysis and evaluation of the practical alternatives. The study team will balance the Partnership's goal of having a freeway to connection to the new border crossing with local traffic requirements.

Q. Does that mean that you will be building a new roadway parallel to Huron Church Road and Talbot Road or expanding the existing roadway?

No decisions have been made yet on the location or alignment of the proposed access route. The freeway connection will be developed in more detail during the analysis and evaluation of the practical alternatives.

Q. What about all the businesses and houses along the Huron Church Road/Talbot Road corridor?

No decisions have been made yet on the location or alignment of the proposed access route. The freeway connection will be developed in more detail during the analysis and evaluation of the practical alternatives. Once the preferred crossing has been identified, specific impacts will be identified and appropriate mitigation measures will be developed.

Q. What will you do to protect historic communities and homes once you've identified the preferred crossing?

Given the nature and extent of land uses and development along the Detroit River in both Canada and the U.S., it will not be possible to develop new border crossing capacity – including a new river crossing, plaza and connecting roads -- that entirely avoids impacts on local communities. The goal of the Partnership is to balance the transportation needs while avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating community and environmental impacts to the greatest extent possible.

Once the preferred crossing has been identified, specific impacts will be identified and appropriate mitigation measures will be developed.

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- Q. Why do you keep ignoring the Schwartz Report and the options supported by the City of Windsor? What about the “central crossing” that was identified as the preferred option?**

The Schwartz Report was taken into consideration during the development of the Illustrative Alternatives. The river crossing alternatives in the industrial area of west Windsor identified in today’s announcement, include the new crossing proposed by Schwartz. One of the plaza options being carried forward includes the property in the Brighton Beach area, identified in the Schwartz Report.

The route of the Huron Church Road Truck bypass, as proposed in the Schwartz Report, was considered as one of the alternative routes for a freeway connection to a new river crossing. Through the environmental analysis and evaluation process, the DRIC study team concluded that this route was not the best way to a new crossing in West Windsor because it would have adverse community and neighbourhood impacts and detrimental effects on significant natural areas, including the Tall Grass Prairie Heritage and the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve.

- Q. You’ve removed options that were largely in rural areas in favour of options that go through the centre of Windsor. Don’t you have any consideration for people who live here?**

Potential impacts in rural and urban areas were studied with equal diligence. No area has been singled out because of its demographics. But, the areas remaining in analysis on both sides of the Detroit River present the best opportunity for balancing the transportation requirements of a new and efficient river crossing with the associated impacts.

The goal of the Partnership is to meet the purpose of the project, which is to provide new border crossing capacity to meet increased long term travel demand; improve system connectivity to enhance the continuous flow of people and goods; improve operations and processing capabilities at the border; and provide reasonable and secure crossing options, while avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating community and environmental impacts to the greatest extent possible.

A centrally located crossing serves both the local and long distance traffic more effectively as approximately half of the truck traffic crossing the river has business in either Windsor or Detroit, and 90% of the car traffic is local in nature.

Once the preferred crossing has been identified, specific impacts will be identified and appropriate mitigation measures will be developed.

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- Q. The Sandwich community already carries the burden of border traffic, shouldn't you try to find alternatives that can spread the traffic out in the area?**

The area identified on the Canadian side of the border is primarily located in the industrial area of West Windsor, away from the heart of the Sandwich community. Community and stakeholder input will be sought as part of the next stage of the process. As further technical analysis is done, and a preferred crossing has been identified, it will be possible to define specific impacts and develop appropriate measures to protect remaining features, and address the loss of features that must be removed.

- Q. Will you consider tunnelling so we don't have to have trucks driving through our neighbourhoods?**

The access road in Canada will be a freeway, extending from Highway 401 to the new plaza and river crossing, so long-haul trucks will not be using city streets. Many options will be considered for reduction of impacts on adjacent properties. Construction of noise barriers, depressed roadway cross-sections or tunnels can be considered for the access road, although tunneling across the river is not deemed to be practical.

- Q. Will there be compensation for people's property where affected?**

Yes. The governments have policies governing property acquisition.

- Q. What opportunities are there for us to challenge potential route locations? How can we be heard?**

Public Information Open Houses will take place as scheduled in the Windsor area the week of November 28. At the meetings, the assessment of the Illustrative Alternatives and the short list of Practical Alternatives that will be carried forward for further study will be presented for public review and comment.

- Q. The owners of the Ambassador Bridge have stated that they will continue with their plans to twin the bridge, regardless of the bi-national process. Can they do that?**

Twinning of the Ambassador Bridge by the bridge's owner will require approvals from government agencies in Canada and the United States. Specifically, in

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Canada, compliance is required with the Navigable Waters Protection Act.. Approvals will be required under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. In the U.S. the Rivers and Harbours Act of 1899 and the General Bridge Act of 1946 will apply.

Q. What is your position on the proposal by the owners of the Ambassador Bridge to take over management of the tunnel?

The Government of Canada has not yet received a proposal from the Ambassador Bridge on this matter. However, in our view, such a proposal would not address both countries' need for redundancy. Specifically, if any emergency, security threat or even traffic problem were to disrupt the operations of that port of entry, our ability to adjust, assign staff to and take advantage of a second port entry would be curtailed.

Recognizing the important role that the Windsor-Detroit Tunnel plays in the day-to-day lives of so many Canadians and Americans, the Border Transportation Partnership would have serious concerns with any plan that could disrupt two-way visits across our shared border.

The Ambassador Bridge Company's proposal does not alter the Border Transportation Partnership's commitment for new border crossing capacity for the Windsor-Detroit Gateway, as identified through the Detroit River International Crossing study.

Q. Why did it take you so long to remove the DRTP from the list? People in Windsor have been opposed to this proposal all along.

Public consultation was an integral part of this study process and the views of the community were taken into consideration. To ensure that all alternatives were fairly evaluated and that our process complied with all legislative requirements, it was important for us to conduct a thorough technical analysis of all possible alternatives, including the DRTP.

Q. The DRTP recently released a poll that shows 61% of residents surveyed preferred use of the DRTP corridor over expansion of Highway 3/Huron Church Road/Talbot Road. How do you respond to that?

We believe that the technical analysis completed by the Partnership supports the removal of this option, and that this is consistent with input that we have received from Windsor communities.

There will continue to be opportunities for public consultation as the study progresses.