

Detroit River International Crossing Study
December 8, 2005
Public Meeting Notes
Butzel Family Recreation Center - Detroit
5:00 to 8:30 PM

These notes are of the formal presentation portion (6:30 to 8:30 p.m.) of the DRIC public meeting held December 8, 2005. The list of speakers who made oral comments at the meeting follow these notes. The last section of the documentation covers the written comments submitted at each meeting plus oral comments presented to the MDOT Technical Team during the information part of the meeting, which lasted from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m.

The complete list of meeting locations is:

- Monday, December 5, 2005 – River Rouge High School in River Rouge
- Tuesday, December 6, 2005 – Old HQ Headquarters in Southgate
- Wednesday, December 7, 2005 – Southwestern High School in Detroit
- Thursday, December 8, 2005 – Butzel Family Center in Detroit

Each meeting followed the same format: Introduction, Presentation, Public Questions/Comments/Responses.

Introduction

Bob Parsons, MDOT's Public Meetings Officer, opened the presentation at 6:30 PM and welcomed the attendees. He introduced Spanish and Arabic translators who welcomed those in attendance in those languages and offered their services, as needed.

He then recognized Southgate Council President John Graziano, Cindy Dingle of County Executive Ficano's office, and Paul Sander, a Southgate School Board member.

He explained there would be a presentation by MDOT consultant, Joe Corradino, and individuals were encouraged to fill out a Speaker Form during the presentation to be called to speak after it. He also noted forms were available for written comments and comments could be recorded on a computer at the back of the room.

Presentation

Joe Corradino reviewed the handout materials to ensure those in attendance had the complete information packet. This information included the Illustrative Alternatives Evaluation Summary Report (Volume 1); a printed copy of the evening's PowerPoint presentation; and, a DVD of three tours of the Delray area. Joe Corradino indicated that the Canadian Team reports would be available on the project's Web site. A summary of the Canadian information was incorporated in the last sections of Volume 1 and Volume 2 of the U.S. Reports.

Joe Corradino then reviewed the Illustrative Alternatives evaluation results using a PowerPoint presentation, printed copies of which were distributed to those in attendance. The presentation covered a number of topics including unique circumstances which involve the following:

- The elimination of the Detroit River Tunnel Partnership Jobs Tunnel proposal;
- The elimination of tunnels as a crossing;
- The review of Plazas C-1 and C-2 on U.S. Steel property and their elimination; and,
- The review of Fighting Island and its elimination as a component of the crossing system.

Joe Corradino then summarized the results of the evaluation process including the unweighted evaluation of each of the three system crossing components (river crossing, plaza and connecting roadway) by seven evaluation factors (Protect Community/Neighborhood Characteristics, Maintain Consistency with Local Planning, Protect Cultural Resources, Protect the Natural Environment, Improve Regional Mobility, Maintain Air Quality, Assess How Project Can Be Built [Constructability]). He also reviewed the application of citizens and MDOT Technical Team weights to the unweighted scores to develop weighted results for each crossing system. Finally, he discussed the application of the cost-effectiveness procedure and results. The end product of the evaluation is that Plaza C-4 connected to Crossing X-11 was considered a candidate for further analysis based on U.S. and Canadian results. The second span of the Ambassador Bridge, its plaza and connection to I-75 was also considered a candidate for further analysis by the U.S. results. However, because the Border Partnership's position from the outset of the study is that no one country would bear the brunt of impacts for a crossing system, the second span of the Ambassador Bridge was eliminated from the continuing analysis. Its impacts in Canada (plaza and connecting route) are too great. Nonetheless, the U.S. plaza and the potential connection to I-75 are still part of the continuing analysis.

Joe Corradino then indicated that the connection of Plaza C-3 in West Delray to Crossing X-10 was considered a Practical Alternative. The Canadians also agree with this result. All other alternatives were recommended for elimination. These results then led to defining the “continued analysis area” upriver from Zug Island to the foot of the Ambassador Bridge from the Detroit River to the northern edge of I-75. But, all Illustrative Alternative plazas and crossings in this area have been erased. Establishing new crossings and plazas in the “continued analysis area” would be done in cooperation with the community through a series of workshops.

Joe Corradino then used a graphic to illustrate that there would be two workshops in December (the 14th and the 21st), two workshops in January (the 4th and the 18th), and one workshop in February (the 9th) (since changed to February 8th) to help establish the list of Practical Alternatives. Those workshops would lead to a decision by the early part of March by the Border Partnership of the final Practical Alternatives. The public would then be apprised formally of the Practical Alternatives at a set of meetings at the end of March.

Following the presentation, a number of questions and comments were addressed.

Questions, Comments and Responses

Question: Why were all the plazas of different sizes and what was the effect on the evaluation?

Response: We were advised by U.S. Customs that a plaza should be a minimum of 80 acres, but we looked for larger areas where possible, because we are looking out 30+ years, plus there has been some thought about joint U.S./Canadian inspection at a very large plaza on one side of the border. To make sure we were not prejudicing the plaza evaluation, an area for Plaza C-3 smaller than 200 acres was tested. That test found the impacts of a smaller plaza, when combined with the resulting longer connecting route and bridge, offset the impacts of the larger plaza.

Question: I used to be an engineer at the sewage plant and would have thought Zug Island would make a good plaza site. Was it looked at?

Response: Yes, it was considered but Zug Island is surrounded by the navigable Rouge River. A bridge would have to be so high above the navigation channel that it is impossible to get down to a plaza on Zug Island. Also, Zug Island is affected by known brine wells that form cavities underground.

Question: What about long bridges compared to shorter bridges?

Response: Bridges in the Downriver area do not require very long spans to clear the navigation channel that are needed to cross the river in the central part of the study area, like around Delray. Even though the river is wide down south, the main span can be shorter, because only parts of the river are considered navigable for the big ships. As the span length gets very long, the cost goes way up. So, even though the Detroit River is much wider in the south – three miles – the bridge costs in the Downriver area are not three times the cost of the proposed crossings near the Ambassador Bridge, where the Detroit River is about one mile wide.

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