

**Gateway  
Communities  
Development  
Collaborative**

*C/o Southwest Detroit  
Business Association  
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**Member Organizations**

*Bagley Housing Association*

*Bridging Communities, Inc.*

*Greater Corktown  
Development Corporation*

*Mexicantown Community  
Development Corporation*

*Michigan Avenue Business  
Association*

*Neighborhood Centers, Inc.*

*Southwest Detroit Business  
Association*

*Southwest Detroit  
Environmental Vision*

*Southwest Solutions / Southwest  
Housing Corporation*

February 13, 2006

The Honorable Phil LaJoy  
State Representative – 21<sup>st</sup> District  
Chair, Transportation Committee  
State Capitol  
Lansing, MI 48913

Dear Chairman LaJoy:

We are writing in response to your January 19, 2006 correspondence to Gloria Jeff, Director of the Michigan Department of Transportation regarding the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) study. As representatives of community organizations and residents of southwest Detroit, the proposed site of a new international border crossing if one is to be constructed, we are pleased to learn of your interest in this matter and would like to share our perspective with you on the DRIC study. Our experience is unique to this matter in that we have years of experience working and living in a border community hosting the transportation infrastructure that supports the busiest international trade corridor in the country. **We support the DRIC study in that it provides the strongest opportunity in decades to fill a leadership void on international border crossing planning and policy-making.**

Southwest Detroit, like most other communities, has not actively courted expanded and new transportation infrastructure. We recognize that the transportation network in southwest Detroit facilitates \$100 billion in annual trade between the U.S. and Canada, and is critical to the economies of both nations. Yet, it has significantly challenged local economic development and quality of life: the system is not well coordinated or managed; trucks travel on residential and neighborhood commercial roadways; incompatible and conflicting land uses are widespread; and air quality is compromised. New security requirements further complicate the challenges. The absence of a coherent strategy that coordinates and leverages transportation infrastructure investment with local economic development - *and the leadership to move such an agenda forward* - has thwarted the development of southwest Detroit. **Once again, the DRIC study provides the strongest opportunity in decades to fill the leadership void and change the paradigm on transportation investment policy.**

The Gateway Communities Development Collaborative is a collaborative of nonprofit, community-based development corporations. Collectively, Gateway members have generated some \$80 million in real estate development in this revitalizing urban area since 1995. The Delray Community Council is comprised of Delray residents whose vision is the preservation and redevelopment of Delray, one of the oldest

neighborhoods in the city. Our members strongly support the DRIC study and are committed to continued participation in the process. We support the DRIC study because it involves the appropriate Canadian and U.S. agencies and departments, and the public, in an open and participatory process regarding capacity, safety, and efficiency at the Detroit Windsor border. On the U.S. side, MDOT has been fulfilling their role with a new inclusiveness and respect for public participation. Requested information is made available, additional meetings have been scheduled to accommodate seniors, and a collaborative and comprehensive planning process will shortly begin that considers community development and land use objectives outside of the footprint of any proposed bridge plaza. While there is much more work to accomplish, we are beginning to develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to transportation infrastructure investment. This is all a substantial improvement over prior planning activities at the border – most of which have not involved the public's participation and have been narrowly focused on promoting private business interests at the border.

We respectfully request notification and involvement in any legislative hearings that may be scheduled on the DRIC study. As always, we are available for further discussion.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kathleen H. Wendler  
Gateway Communities Development Collaborative



John M. Nagy, Chair  
Delray Community Council

cc: Gloria Jeff, Director, MDOT  
Representative Shelley GoodmanTaub  
Senator Jud Gilbert  
Senator Shirley Johnson  
Representative Steve Tobocman  
Senator Hansen Clarke  
Senator Samuel Buzz Thomas