

**Detroit River International Crossing Study
Local Advisory Council
February 22, 2006
7:00 p.m.
Southwestern High School**

Purpose: To update the Local Advisory Council on DRIC analysis, especially plaza options and preliminary Practical Alternatives.

Attendance: See attached

Discussion:

Introductions

Mohammed Alghurabi welcomed the LAC and asked everyone in attendance to identify himself or herself.

Barbara McCallahan, a representative of Senator Debbie Stabenow, stated the Senator had received letters indicating two matters were of utmost concern to her constituents: that the new bridge have public oversight; and, that the project be accompanied by a viable economic development program to benefit the community.

Meeting Conduct

Mohammed Alghurabi reviewed the meeting conduct procedure and the agenda.

January 25 LAC Meeting Notes

Mohammed Alghurabi asked for comments on the notes of the January 25 LAC meeting; there were none.

Public Comments

Question: A gentleman pointed at some graphics and asked for an interpretation.

Response: It was indicated those graphics will be explained in the coming presentation.

Preliminary Practical Alternatives

Joe Corradino used a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate how public input affected plaza analysis. Likewise, he explained the community Vision Statements generated through a series of workshops; one with a bridge and one without a bridge. The focus is now on a 310-acre area within which to contain the plaza to serve either an X-10 or X-11 Crossing. At this point, it appears all 310 acres are needed to provide flexibility in plaza design for the two crossings. Nevertheless, it was noted the community identified a core area that was virtually contiguous with Illustrative Alternative C-4 for Crossing X-11.

Bruce Campbell explained plaza options beginning with Crossing X-10. He listed the input used to develop the plazas: 2035 Plaza Traffic; the GSA Land Port-of-Entry Design Manual; and, preliminary processing times for traffic flow. Taken together, these establish several alternative plazas. Bruce Campbell explained how each plaza is to function. He noted the MDOT Team is exploring abandonment of the railroad that cuts through Delray. It was also noted that each of the plazas will likely cause closure of one I-75 interchange. The most likely one is at Livernois/Dragoon.

A 3-D image of Option 2 was shown to demonstrate its size with respect to the surrounding land uses. Also shown was a 3-D image of a suspension bridge in the X-11 corridor to illustrate the spacing of a new bridge from the existing Ambassador Bridge and the relationship to shoreline uses (shipping) and the potential navigation channel in the area. Bruce Campbell indicated that bridge piers in the water are being considered, because reducing the length of the main bridge span by placing piers in the river could substantially reduce the project cost. Many issues remain to be assessed of this possibility in environmental considerations on river habitat.

LAC Comments and Questions

Question: How many homes and businesses will the plaza will take?

Response: We have numbers for the 310-acre plaza analysis zone which were presented at an earlier public meeting. Data are not yet available for the individual plaza options.

Comment: One concern of the community is access to Fort Wayne.

Response: Local access to Fort Wayne will be examined in conjunction with analysis of truck activity in the area. There are meetings with the community on this very subject. Nonetheless, Fort Wayne is being considered as a Welcome Center. The possible docking of the Boblo boat in the vicinity of Fort Wayne is also being considered to further enhance tourism.

Question: With Plaza Option 4 you show a split inbound/outbound access approach. Why not do that for X-11 as well?

Response: Various I-75 interchange options are being considered in conjunction with different plaza options to measure which works best. What is being shown tonight is one set of reasonable combinations.

Question: In terms of the plaza concepts, what are primary and secondary inspections?

Response: Primary inspection is where you first speak to a Customs official. If there is any difficulty, you are directed to the secondary inspection, which might take as much as 40 minutes.

Question: How far is Southwestern High School away from these Plazas? Shouldn't that be a consideration, particularly as it relates to air pollution?

Response: The distance varies depending on the Plaza option; in some cases it's immediately across the street. The impact on the school will be considered in the environmental analysis.

Question: Can you explain the data in the cost table?

Response: The bridge at X-11 is shorter than X-10, so the X-11 crossing will be less expensive. If piers are in the water, the cost would be reduced further. Piers in the water must be carefully engineered for impacts. Construction in water is costly and there are environmental impacts, so, in the end, piers in the water may or may not be preferable even if it lowers the project's cost.

Question: Under Plaza Option 4, you carry a ramp a long distance across West Delray. Why not go directly to the Livernois/Dragoon area? Access near Springwells would be especially intrusive to the Delray neighborhood.

Response: These are all valid points and will be considered in the analysis. But, that evaluation is just beginning, so decisions are yet to be made.

Comment: Plaza Option 4 is intrusive and the southwest Detroit area has a history of impacts from intrusive freeways. That option would seal off part of Delray.

Comment: I-75 bisected this Delray neighborhood. We should be smarter this time around in terms of the access to the bridge/plaza.

Question: You have said cost was not a sole determining factor.

Response: Cost is not the sole determining factor, but it is a factor. When the MDOT Team consulted with the Coast Guard about the necessary navigation envelope, it was determined that it would be possible to put a pier in the water, particularly because it could save hundreds of millions of dollars. We now know that piers could go into the water so we must analyze the impacts of those piers, including the cost component.

Public Comments and Questions

Question: I have three questions. 1) will the effects on Dearborn, Schaefer and Outer Drive be studied for Plaza Option 4? 2) will the plaza be built without a new bridge? 3) can you explain to us about the Ambassador Bridge Gateway Plaza?

Response: First, there will be a study on the effects on Dearborn, Schaefer and Outer Drive. Second, if there is no new bridge, there will be no new plaza in Delray. Third there are separate meetings for the Ambassador Bridge Gateway project. Twinning of the Ambassador Bridge has been dropped from further analysis in the DRIC Study.

Comment: A citizen of Sandwichtown, Canada explained her position that X-10 is a better river crossing route and that Crossing X-11 would be damaging to the old Sandwichtown area. She enumerated a number of important historic features of that area and expressed concern that a new bridge would be intrusive and would contribute to poor air quality to Sandwichtown.

Response: MDOT has worked within the framework of the Border Transportation Partnerships; to respect the issues discussed. An example is dropping the Ambassador Bridge twinning as an alternative. That proposal placed very high in the U.S. evaluation and not very high in the Canadian evaluation.

Air Quality Presentation

Joe Corradino presented interim air quality analysis guidance published by the Federal Highway Administration on the February 3, 2006, showing a forecast of a substantial drop in mobile source air toxics, including diesel particulate matter, from the increased regulation of vehicles (especially diesel vehicles), and from a reduction of sulfur diesel in fuel. Meanwhile, studies are underway to look at health effects of air quality. But it is stated by FHWA in its February 3rd inter_____ guidance that conclusions are years away and that a quantitative study of health implications cannot be done at a project level.

LAC Comments and Questions

Comment: There are reports about the high potential for health effects from mobile sources that are near people where there are increases in traffic.

Response: The EIS will report on effects that are consistent with that guidance.

Comment: If the guidance was done by EPA in conjunction with the truck industry, I would expect the kind of results of which you just spoke. I would like a copy of the report.

Response: That will be provided. The EPA is undertaking a study that includes collecting air quality data at facilities near roadways. But, quoting from the EPA paper on that study, "... a growing number of epidemiological studies have identified an increased occurrence of adverse health effects for populations living near major roadways. However, the biological mechanism(s) leading to adverse effects have not been identified".

Comment: Based on information in an article in The Economist, people after 9/11 returned too soon to New York City, they got the "all clear" from EPA. The EPA has poor credibility in protecting the public.

Upcoming Meetings

The next LAC meeting will be March 22, 2006 and will be a joint U.S./Canadian meeting, in Canada, at a location yet to be announced.

Public meetings are planned for March 29th from 10:30 to 1:30 p.m. at the Delray Recreation Center and from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Southwestern High School.

Next Monday, February 27th there will be a Master Planning meeting at the Delray Recreation Center. Fliers are being distributed door-to-door announcing that meeting.

On February 28, 2006, there will be a joint meeting of the City Council of Detroit and the Windsor City Council hosted by the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce at One Woodward Avenue from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Other

It is important to remind everyone that there's a borehole drilling program that will be conducted to determine the presence of brine wells along the bridge crossing corridors. It is scheduled to start in mid-March. Information will be provided to the community through pamphlet distribution. You should understand that crews will be present 24 hours a day and 7 days a week while a hole is drilled. There are about a dozen family units within 200-feet of the boring locations. There will be noise from the drilling rigs and diesel fumes. The rotten-egg odor may be detected from time to time. There will be a health and safety management plan in place. It may be necessary to lay roads to bring the equipment in, and water trucks may be necessary for the drilling operation, if enough water is not available from local fire hydrants. The fluid used to drill the holes will be taken to landfills, to meet Michigan Department Environmental Quality regulations. We are working on a program to minimize the nuisance effects.

It was also noted that the Public Information Office is open at the Delray Recreation Center, although there is yet no phone at that location. The office is open every other afternoon, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. You can contact Harvey Santana on his cell phone at 313-580-1411.

Public Comments

Comment: What is the cost of the study and who is paying?

Response: To date the budget is approximately \$21 million dollars and the split is 80 percent Federal and 20 percent State.

Comment: My fear is the bridge will be built without economic development.

Response: An early test of what to expect will be the community benefits requested by residents of Southwest Detroit on the neighboring DIFT Project. The DIFT Project is ahead of the DRIC Project schedule-wise and will offer an early indication of MDOT's position on what can happen in Delray.

Mr. Mathis of Citizens with Challenges announced that there was an upcoming meeting on the grant for a non-motorized path from Outer Drive to the Rouge River. The meeting will be held February 28, 2006 at Boyton Middle School.

The meeting ended at approximately 8:15 p.m.

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