

**DRAFT**  
**Detroit River International Crossing Study**  
**Local Advisory Council**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**July 20, 2005, 7:00 p.m.**  
**River Rouge High School**

**Purpose:** To review the progress of the Detroit River International Crossing Study, including the evaluation of preliminary Illustrative Alternatives.

**Discussion:**

**Introductions**

Mohammed Alghurabi opened the meeting with introductions of the LAC members.

**Meeting Conduct/Agenda Review**

Mohammed Alghurabi reviewed the meeting conduct procedures and the agenda, indicating a presentation on the environmental process by MDOT's environmental specialist would be added to the agenda. He also asked if it were appropriate to change the agenda to expand the public comment period at the end of the agenda to one hour. There was no objection.

**Public Comments**

Mohammed Alghurabi asked for any comments from the public. In doing so, he first introduced Senator Basham to make some remarks.

Senator Basham said he first learned about the river crossing study in 2004 at which time he attended an MDOT meeting, together with representatives of a number of Downriver communities. The Senator indicated he is a true believer in "sunshine" on all projects and said it was important to share information on the river crossing study with Canadian Parliament and U.S. Congressional representatives, so he facilitated a meeting to do that in June 2004. In June 2005, when the study advanced to the Illustrative Alternatives phase, he sent a staff member to the public meetings at the Crystal Gardens as he was unable to attend because he was attending a public meeting on well injection. When he reviewed the meeting's tape, he saw how the Downriver people were concerned about the project. His message to the people who are concerned is, "don't sell your homes." He said that MDOT must be concerned that people are worried about this project. He encouraged everyone to participate in the process, and indicated he would like another meeting. He was hopeful that the LAC would be fully informed.

State Senator Patterson complimented Senator Basham on his presentation and indicated they would stand together in opposition to a Downriver bridge.

Margaret Garry said that southwest Detroit lives with bridge traffic on an ongoing basis. She stated that it was important that the project advance only if there were public ownership.

Rhonda Anderson, representing the Sierra Club, especially with respect to environmental justice, said she was concerned about people of color and in poverty. She asserted one plan for River Rouge would wipe

out an entire Black community. She noted there is already heavy industry in the area. She stressed everyone should understand this; everyone must work together.

Representative Kathleen Law thanked Senators Basham and Patterson for their comments. She said that she and Representative Tobocman had introduced a bill in the Michigan Legislature calling for more oversight and public ownership of any new bridge. She also indicated that it was important to remember that the first option was to do nothing. She encouraged everyone to speak out.

Tom Cervenak said the border crossing project represented a real Environmental Justice (EJ) issue. He noted that just because there was opposition by large numbers of Downriver people, that doesn't mean that the EJ areas do not bear a heavy burden. It is important to hear from the EJ areas, as well.

A Gross Ile resident, who was an observer of the LAC meeting, indicated he had never been an activist but the border crossing project has caused him to be one. He said that he has been working to get 15,000 signatures on a petition and encouraged people to sign and to spread the word. He said that his activities were sponsored by him and other private citizens, but noted they were looking for other financial support – all in opposition to any Downriver crossing.

Don Flynn noted that railroad tracks stretch from Schaefer Road in Detroit to the Monroe County line. They cross Pennsylvania Road. Although many people are opposed to a Downriver crossing, his proposal would not take a single house or business as it would go south down the railroad property from Pennsylvania Road to I-75. He asked the MDOT Team if such an alignment were being considered. Mr. Flynn continued by noting the Border Crossing Planning/Needs & Feasibility Study found that 65 percent of the trucks crossing the border have no business in Detroit or Windsor. He noted that, if there were a \$100 penalty for those trucks which go into the central area of Detroit and then go south, the transportation system would work better and, he implied, a Downriver crossing would work best.

Joe Corradino responded that he had contacted CSX railroad to get more information about the use of the railroad right-of-way to which Mr. Flynn was referring.

It is noted by a member of the LAC that the railroad tracks are those of Norfolk Southern not CSX. Joe Corradino responded that Conrail's track is also \_\_\_\_\_ and Conrail is governed, in part, by CSX, so he went through a contact that he knew at CSX to get the information quickly.

#### **Notes of the LAC Meeting of January 20, 2005**

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated not every LAC member had responded to the request for consent to release their names/addresses. Nonetheless, he indicated he would distribute the next day the names of those who had consented.

Mohammed Alghurabi also said that, at the June 20<sup>th</sup> LAC meeting, the border crossing "permit process" followed in the United States was distributed to the LAC. The Canadians are still working on their portion of this process. He would distribute it at the next meeting.

Henri LaFrance noted they had not received the meeting notes for June 20<sup>th</sup>. Others agreed. Mohammed Alghurabi responded that he would send the notes again the next day. Review of those notes would be added to the next LAC meeting agenda.

### **Meeting Notes of the Public Meetings of June 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup>**

Attention was directed to the binders that had been distributed. The meetings summary was then reviewed, including information on the number of attendees at each meeting; the number of speakers; the number of written questions/comments; and, media outlets used to announce the meetings. It was explained the balance of the binder had individual sections related to each public meeting. It was noted that as of Friday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the consultant counted about 250 e-mail messages and was responding to each. There were additional comment sheets coming in beyond those received at the public meetings. Lastly, about 200 scoring forms had been received by the consultant.

Mayor Durand commented that the reference to his name was omitted from the notes of the June 30<sup>th</sup> public meeting. The omission will be corrected.

Representative Law indicated her comments were mixed up with those of Representative Barb Farrah. Mohammed Alghurabi said that if she could mark-up any corrections, they would be made.

Kurt Kobiljak asked if material on the evaluation process had been distributed. Joe Corradino responded the evaluation methodology was distributed at the June 20<sup>th</sup> LAC, each of the June public meetings, and is posted on the Web. He also noted that evaluation factor weighting forms had been distributed at the previous LAC meeting and were now being returned. Sheri Fricke held up the booklet that had been distributed at the previous meeting.

### **Comments on Illustrative Alternatives**

The LAC members were asked if there were any comments on the Illustrative Alternatives now that they had time to digest the material and react to the public meeting input.

Kurt Kobiljak of Grosse Ile asked about the criteria to be used in the Illustrative Alternatives evaluation and the next steps. Joe Corradino said that the evaluation process was presented in the booklet distributed at an earlier LAC meeting and that information is on the Web site. Joe Corradino summarized the evaluation process and performance measures. He stressed any alternative that advances through the evaluation process must meet the project's purpose and its needs. He stated that the weighting form would be scored by: 1) the public, including the LAC who chose to participate; and, 2) Federal Highway Administration/MDOT and Consultant personnel. The results of that scoring would be made available at the beginning of September. The performance of each Illustrative Alternative will be scored by the Consultant based on the data for all the analysis categories illustrated in the evaluation paper. The performance score would then be weighted using the results of the public/LAC and FHWA/MDOT/Consultant weightings. The results would be presented first to the Partnership Working Group and then to the Steering Committee. The alternatives that make the short list will be determined by the Steering Committee.

It was noted by an LAC member that the mayors of a number of Downriver communities met with their counterparts in Canada and asked if the Canadian evaluation method was the same. Joe Corradino responded that he believed the methods are similar, but, because there are different laws/procedures in each country, there are some differences between the two approaches. For example, in Canada “cost” is an evaluation factor, whereas in the United States, cost is used in a cost-effectiveness analysis. The evaluation of routes and plazas is done separately in each country. The river crossings evaluation is split with each country doing one-half the crossings. All of this is then brought together to define a short list of end-to-end alternatives. The list will be announced at the beginning of December.

Kurt Kobiljak asked if it were correct that only 200 evaluation forms had been received. In response, it was noted that the total of 200 was as of Friday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Kurt Kobiljak noted he had distributed 2,500 evaluation forms and that the total of 200 surprised him.

A question was then asked about the make-up of the Steering Committee. Joe Corradino responded that it was Jim Steele of the Federal Highway Administration, Susan Mortel of MDOT, and representatives on the Canadian side from the Ministry of Transport Ontario (MTO) and Transport Canada (TC).

Senator Basham said he was disappointed with the notification process of the June public meetings. He then asked what would happen if scoring doesn’t match up on the U.S. and Canadian sides, and stated there should be one decision-making body. He noted he was shocked that this kind of money could be spent on such a study without better coordination. In response, it was noted the studies were similar on both sides of the border and there is almost constant collaboration. The objective is to develop information on both sides of the border in a clear and concise manner so the impacts are not masked in an end-to-end solution.

A question was asked about the existence of a Canadian group like the LAC. In response it was stated that such a group had met on July 18<sup>th</sup> in Canada. It was hoped that the two groups could get together for a joint meeting in September.

Senator Patterson asked how he and Senator Basham could be any more clear that they were against a Downriver bridge. Further, he asked where the \$16 to \$18 million for the study came from. He said he would talk within the legislature and to Congress about the flow of that funding. He further stated that he was going to look at MDOT’s budget very carefully as well as any legislation necessary to carry the project forward. Mohammed Alghurabi responded that the funding was an 80/20 federal government/state government split. Senator Patterson asked in what fiscal year was the money appropriated. Mohammed Alghurabi said he was uncertain of that detail. Senator Patterson indicated “he would make that money disappear.”

Representative Law stressed that Doing Nothing is a viable alternative. She didn’t understand the need for the crossing. Joe Corradino then used several slides to explain the need for the project based on traffic demand. He stated that the models used in the Planning/Needs & Feasibility Study had been updated based on 2004 data and a risk analysis had been performed on travel demand. He began with the slide showing the traffic of the Detroit River Crossings (combined) only. He stated the earliest point in time at which travel demand would exceed the combined capacity of the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel and the

Ambassador Bridge would be 2015. The most likely time would be 2022, and the most distant time would be 2033. The horizon/window for the project is a 30-year horizon, i.e., 2035; therefore, even under the least optimistic growth forecast, border crossing travel demand is forecast to exceed capacity prior to the horizon year. Joe Corradino also indicated that the blue line on the chart represented capacity at breakdown conditions and that under no circumstances should the crossing operate under those conditions. He concluded the data indicated a clear need for the project within the 30-year horizon.

Representative Law stated she had no confidence in the graphs and asked where the valid proof was. Joe Corradino responded that the chart was the summary of a very large report. It included a number of sensitivity analyses related to a series of factors. He went on to say that, after 9/11, 2004 car traffic is down from the year 2000, but truck traffic had increased and was back in 2004 to 2000 levels. Therefore, the peak hour river crossing traffic demand in 2004 was 97 percent of the 2000 demand. He stressed peak hour demand is the basis upon which need is established. He further noted that the need for the project extends beyond just the border crossings themselves to access roads in Canada which have fewer than 10 years of capacity available. He also noted capacity at plazas is not limited but is more flexible than the crossings and the connecting roads in meeting future demand.

It was asked if the eventual ownership of the crossing – public versus private – would affect the approval process. Mohammed Alghurabi responded that, basically, there were U.S. and Canadian federal permits that had to be issued for a project to proceed, whether it were privately or publicly owned. But, the process of getting the permits might be different for a private sector proponent. For example, MDOT has more requirements with respect to public involvement. Mohammed Alghurabi added that there were seven federal cooperating agencies participating actively in the DRIC Study. This would not likely be the case under a private proponent's process.

Senator Basham indicated that what once was sound science may no longer be so and asked about the air quality portion of the DRIC Study. He noted his involvement in a study of landfills and, for that project, an air quality monitor was funded for points east of the Levi Landfill. He asked what the air quality issues would be in the DRIC Study and what kind of monitors might be put in. Joe Corradino responded that there is an Air Quality Protocol being followed similar to the one used on an MDOT project upriver. Based on that protocol, certain procedures are being followed, including estimation of toxic air pollutants on a burden basis, not concentrations.

Senator Basham thanked the staffs of U.S. Senators Levin and Stabenow and U.S. Representatives Dingell, Conyers and Kilpatrick for coming to the meeting.

An LAC member asked what evaluation factors could be used to estimate impacts to Environmental Justice communities. Joe Corradino referred to Table 1 of the Evaluation Report and said that EJ considerations were being evaluated for all alternatives. Information is available on a Census tract basis.

An individual asked if two new crossings have been considered for redundancy. In response, it was noted that redundancy was being considered, again referring to the Evaluation Report.

Councilman Higgins of Lincoln Park stated that an alignment through his community would destroy it. He asked what study was being done of that. Joe Corradino indicated the study recognizes a number of impacts, including that U.S. Steel represents a huge portion of the tax base of Ecorse and if impacted would very negatively affect Ecorse. This type information is known to the evaluators, along with items such as houses/people potentially displaced, businesses/jobs displaced, etc.

In response to a question on how the local communities could comment on the project, Mohammed Alghurabi said they can call or e-mail. If a community wants to have a meeting, MDOT would meet.

Dennis David, Mayor of Southgate, asked that the money for the DRIC Study be given back. He wondered why the study continues when the position of the Downriver communities is against the project.

Mohammed Alghurabi asked that those present please acknowledge the agenda and notice the purpose of the current discussion was to take comments on the Illustrative Alternatives. He stated that MDOT hears “loud and clear” that the Downriver communities oppose a crossing, but there is a process that must be followed. Mohammed Alghurabi asked that the group move on to other comments.

Joe Calhoun stated that at a Southgate LAC meeting, the group was told by Joe Corradino that there would be no air quality study, but now it was being told there would be an air quality study. Joe Corradino indicated he had not ever stated there would be “no air quality study,” but what he said is: there would be no health risk assessment associated with air quality. He indicated the Federal Highway Administration and MDOT have gone on record that the science is not there to do such an analysis. Mohammed Alghurabi added that if science progresses to support a health risk assessment, it would be done.

A staff member of State Representative John Conyers was acknowledged.

Margaret Garry indicated that she, together with a representative of Corktown, would provide the information on historic resources in those communities by mid-August.

An individual asked who was doing the study in Canada? Mohammed Alghurabi said URS Canada is the consultant working with the Ministry of Transportation in Ontario and Transport Canada.

Ms. Anderson of the Sierra Club wanted to make it clear that those in the Belle Isle area do not want a bridge any more than the Downriver communities.

An LAC member stated that the Detroit River becomes wider to the south and narrower to the north; therefore, as you go Downriver, the cost of crossing the river would increase. Mohammed Alghurabi responded that was a factor of which MDOT was aware. Joe Corradino added that the feasibility study indicated many international trucks want to go south past the core of Detroit/Windsor. If a new border crossing directs them into Delray, for example, it may be that I-75 would have to be reconstructed and that cost must be balanced against the cost of a longer southern crossing.

It was asked that the graphs of need be displayed again to see the need for Customs processing as compared to the need for a bridge. The slide was shown which broke down the project need into increments of “roadway approach, plaza, crossing, plaza, roadway approach.” It was then noted that plazas are one component of the end-to-end solution. All components must be considered. The data to date show each component of the system has capacity issues in the future, and that the plaza was the most flexible in handling the demand.

Sheri Fricke suggested more “frequently-asked questions” (FAQs) be put on the Web site. She also asked for better meeting notification and better management of information. She suggested putting information in their weekly newsletter. Mohammed Alghurabi said he would take this under advisement.

Sheri Fricke also asked whether the financial burden to cities was being considered. Joe Corradino responded that loss in tax base is part of the DEIS analysis work. The commenter went on to suggest that there would be increased services that communities must provide in support of a new facility. Joe Corradino reiterated that analysis would cover property tax losses. The commenter continued that city budget information could be provided based on their analysis of increased costs.

Another commenter indicated that tax base loss is only part of the cost to the community, that services must be considered. The speaker was further concerned about the analysis of indirect impacts. Joe Corradino said that for the Illustrative Alternatives analysis, the basic physical footprint of the facility would be used to define the direct impacts of an alternative. That included 300 feet for the roadway, the acreage of the plazas, and the acreage of the interchanges. In the EIS, Indirect and Cumulative Impacts would also be considered, but not until then.

Sheri Fricke asked whether the Jobs Tunnel was being considered as an alternative. Joe Corradino responded that it is included. An LAC member asked whether a decision had been made on public or private ownership, how that decision would be made, and how the environmental study related to such considerations. Mohammed Alghurabi responded that the issue regarding governance was being dealt with at a policy level. The answer to the governance/ownership issue would be incorporated into the environmental document. He also noted most public sentiment he has heard favors public ownership.

It was asked what would be required for a private entity to go forward with its own river crossing. Mohammed Alghurabi responded the federal permitting agencies will proceed with their activities on any river crossing proposal, regardless of the DRIC study.

An LAC member asked for a formal response by the Partnership Steering Committee to the ownership issue.

### **NEPA Process**

Mohammed Alghurabi suggested that, due to the length of the second public comment period (one hour), that the added presentation on the NEPA process by Gerri Ayers of MDOT be postponed. No objection was heard.

### **Discussion of Upcoming Schedule/Milestones**

Mohammed Alghurabi said a scoping meeting for local, state and federal agencies was planned for the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, the same day as the next scheduled LAC meeting. So, the LAC meeting would be rolled into the scoping meeting. Prior to the scoping meeting, a scoping document will be sent to invitees, including LAC members. The public will be given notice of the scoping meeting, but it would not be considered a public meeting. Joe Corradino stated while the meeting date (August 31<sup>st</sup>) has been decided, it is not yet known where the meeting would be held. He also indicated that in September, a joint meeting of the LAC and its counterpart in Canada would be held. The time and place of that meeting was yet to be decided but it might include a boat trip on the Detroit River.

Henri LaFrance noted that August 31<sup>st</sup> (a Wednesday) was close to Labor Day weekend. After some discussion, it was determined to stick to the original schedule of LAC meetings of the last Wednesday of each month.

An LAC member asked what was in a scoping discussion. Mohammed Alghurabi said it would cover the project's purpose and need, evaluation criteria and work program.

### **Public Comments**

Mohammed Alghurabi then opened the floor to public comments.

- C: At every meeting, I hear NIMBY (not in my back yard) but the project will have to go somewhere and someone will lose. The biggest factor should be the consideration of homeowners and communities. Because, in the south, there are more people and more extensive communities, it would be better to put the alignment to the north where there is a shorter distance to cross the Detroit River and fewer people and fewer relocations would occur, particularly north of Outer Drive. The same would hold true with pollution impacts. It is fair to spread the impacts, but the first consideration should be the number of people exposed.
- C: Mark Drysdale of Riverview thanked Mohammed Alghurabi for his work, and then requested that the location of the December round of public meetings be provided as early as possible. He suggested Tiger Stadium or University of Michigan, indicating that he was "kidding." He said he had received many calls about where the next meeting would be held and the people in the community were trying to organize to attend that meeting. He would like to be informed of the next location prior to Labor Day.
- C: A gentleman noted that, as a partner in a Canadian trucking company, just prior to the previous two weeks, typically the high point of travel for the summer season, and despite the fact that the Ambassador Bridge was down to three lanes of traffic rather than four, traffic delays were not evident. He suggested that the problem with delays was in the Customs compound, and asked whether the study forecasts were current. He said he didn't see any new industrial plants coming to Michigan, and if anyone was looking to save money, the Jobs Tunnel should be used.
- Q: Robert Benson of Wyandotte asked to see the slide of travel demand. He wanted to make sure that the "blue line" represented gridlock, and asked what current studies support the forecasting.

- R: The particular graphic shown was of total demand at the two crossings combined. The study supporting the graphic is in final review for release shortly.
- Q: What about plazas and Customs, and when were those studies done?
- R: The study of the plazas is also part of the report about to be released.
- C: Capacity should be shown in terms of weight and revenue.
- C: A representative of a School Board in a Downriver community made the following remarks:  
Acquisition is the equivalent of “legal stealing.” Acquisition has terrible social impacts to a community. The project holds the potential to interrupt the greenway from Detroit to the Monroe County line and would require severe infrastructure restructuring. This would be the same situation in all areas. The best place for a new crossing is next to the Ambassador Bridge. The Downriver area is the most illogical area. The southernmost route would serve trucks, but use of the \$100-per-truck penalty proposed earlier (by Mr. Flynn) should not be used. The \$16.7 million study fee would be better spent on the schools who have lost revenue and had to be closed with teachers laid-off. In the newspaper, Ben Kohrman of MDOT said that the study was required to gather public opinion and that the problem could be in plaza areas. So, take the study money and fix the plazas. When people say “no,” they mean “no.” MDOT is deaf to the wishes of the people; they’re not listening. The community that is most apathetic will probably get the new crossing. All this analysis of alternatives is camouflage.
- Q: Clarence Moore of Detroit asked will the bridge generate revenue, and how much?
- R: There will be more information available on that subject later. The toll revenue generated by the bridge would depend on who owns the bridge. An earlier study found that over the next 20 years, 150,000 jobs may be lost in Ontario and Michigan if a new border crossing is not built. The tax revenue associated with those jobs would be lost if a new border crossing were not built.
- C: Mr. Nagy of Delray stated each person has his/her own perspective, whether they live in the Delray, Mexicantown, Downriver or Corktown communities. But, they are all in opposition to a crossing; they are all united.
- C: A business owner in the Downriver area indicated there were no public announcements of the current meeting. So, few were aware of it. The study is appreciated, but a new river crossing in the south area Downriver would take that area back down again.
- R: Mohammed Alghurabi clarified that, while the public is welcome to the LAC meeting, it is not a public meeting and, therefore, is not advertised as such.
- C: Jesse Nagy asked if there any representatives present from Delray? From River Rouge? From Southwest Detroit? He then stated that going through Delray would split the community and asked what benefit he as a resident of that community would see. He could not see any positives. He thinks that MDOT is simply looking for the cheapest way to go.

- Q: The president of a local Democratic club complimented the young people for coming to the meeting. He then asked about the concept of the double-decker bridge,
- R: Joe Corradino said that it was his understanding that double-decking the Ambassador Bridge is not structurally feasible. If it were, the owners of the Ambassador Bridge would have pursued that option and they have not. They are proposing a second span.
- Q: The Canadian study will involve sampling, including air quality sampling. What about the United States?
- R: Joe Corradino stated that there would not be air quality sampling in the United States done specifically for the Border Crossing Study. But, permanent air quality monitors collect data which will be available. There would be field work/sampling in terms of wildlife, archaeology, and other issues.
- Q: Did you say 150,000 jobs could be lost over 20 years?
- R: Joe Corradino responded yes for Ontario and Michigan combined.
- C: I believe that (the projected job losses) answers the question of need.
- C: I believe Don Flynn is taking advantage of these meetings and I wish he would stop.
- C: With regard to the 150,000 jobs lost, where and what kind of jobs are these? I'd like the details.
- R: Joe Corradino said the Web site contains the information in the previous Planning/Needs & Feasibility Study documentation.
- C: I believe the appropriate study was done 80 years ago, which found that the Ambassador Bridge should be located where it is. The social density is not increasing at the Ambassador Bridge but it has increased to the south. Why not build a new bridge where the social impact is least and the river crossing the shortest? It looks as if you just grabbed a map and drew a number of lines from Grassy Island south. More people value Hennepin Point. MDOT should avoid the Downriver wildlife-sensitive areas.
- C: I understand about the I-75 widening. All traffic would benefit from this and you could still use the shortest distance.
- C: Does the consultant have any criteria that finds none of the alternatives will work?
- R: Joe Corradino said he did not believe any of the alternatives would fail to meet the purpose and need. The question was the degree to which they met the purpose and need and how they could be prioritized to form a short list of the best alternatives.
- C: Cliff St. Pierre said the capacity of the bridge is in question. People need to know the actual capacity of all the facilities; the approach, the processing area, the bridge, and then the same on the other side in terms of vehicles per hour. This could be done considering the percentage of vehicles that are trucks. First the capacity needed to be estimated and then the volumes. All this

should be listed in detail with the assumptions that are made. He would send an e-mail to MDOT with these questions.

- C: Mark Drysdale of Riverview asked is the Do Nothing option really an option. Joe Corradino had just said it was not an option.
- R: Joe Corradino indicated that is not what he said. Do Nothing is always an option, particularly in light of policy and financial concerns.
- C: The people living around the existing bridge bear the brunt of pollution and shouldn't have an additional burden. It was wrong to be blackmailed by the 150,000 job loss to make people believe a new bridge was needed.

With that comment, the meeting ended at about 10:00 p.m.

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