

**Detroit River International Crossing Study
Local Advisory Council Meeting
Meeting Notes
March 29, 2005
(Revised May 5, 2005)
Southgate Holiday Inn**

Purpose: To initiate activities of the DRIC Local Advisory Council (LAC).

Attendance: See attached.

Discussion:

Mohammed Alghurabi welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Detroit River International Crossing Local Advisory Council (LAC). He then asked for introductions of the LAC members followed by the meeting observers.

Following introductions, Mohammed reviewed the meeting conduct procedures and agenda indicating that there were two times during the meeting at which the public would be invited to comment. Between these points, he indicated the Local Advisory Council would conduct its business.

Public Comment

Mohammed Alghurabi asked if there were any public comments at this time in the agenda. There was none.

Purpose of Local Advisory Council

Mohammed Alghurabi stated the purpose of the Local Advisory Council is to:

- Provide an independent perspective of the Border Crossing Project.
- Review documents/reports consistent with the project schedule, and to participate in public meetings, contacts, sensitive design work, etc.
- Provide a liaison with a variety of interests regarding the project, including affected communities, residents, individual legislators, community leaders, and interest groups.
- Provide input to MDOT and the communities on key issues of the project.
- Provide feedback on the public meeting format and the content that will shape the communities' understanding of the project, as the LAC members have a better understanding of the diversity of groups in the area.

Overview of Border Crossing Study

Mohammed Alghurabi then proceeded through a PowerPoint presentation (which was subsequently e-mailed to all LAC members). Questions and comments followed the presentation.

LAC Questions and Comments

Q: Is there is an “either/or” situation for a bridge or a tunnel crossing.

R: Both crossing types (bridge and tunnel) are being studied. As data are developed, the elimination of a bridge or tunnel concept by crossing location will be presented to the LAC and then to the general public.

Q: Does the proposal to twin the Ambassador Bridge have to go through this DRIC Study?

R: The Border Crossing Study includes consideration of a new bridge that would be a companion to the existing Ambassador Bridge. Use of U.S. federal funds for such a new bridge would require environmental clearance through a study such as the Border Crossing Study.

C: Is the bridge participating in the Bi-National Study?

R: Representatives of the Ambassador Bridge Company are involved in the study. They, as well as proponents of all other border crossings, are invited by MDOT on a regular basis to participate in the study.

Q: Is there some way that the Ambassador Bridge Project could be made to conform to the Border Crossing Study process?

R: The Ambassador Bridge has begun its own study process consistent with Canadian laws/regulations for a second span. To build a crossing of the Detroit River, the proponents of any project, including the Ambassador Bridge owners, need various permits that are to be issued by such agencies as the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as well as a Presidential Permit that is issued by the U.S. State Department. On the Canadian side of the border, similar approval processes are involved. Nevertheless, actions by a private interest, such as the owners of the Ambassador Bridge Company, on matters like acquiring property in arm’s-length transactions, cannot be stopped by government.

C: East Detroit is an area of major redevelopment; therefore, this area’s constituency is very concerned about the border crossing and its impact on this redevelopment effort.

R: The Local Advisory Council and the public, through a series of meetings, will be involved in examining the information about such neighborhood impacts and benefits.

Q: Is the Schwartz Plan, as reported in the Windsor Star, to be used by the Canadians on that side of the border?

R: The Schwartz Plan, developed for the City of Windsor, is input to the Canadian Border Crossing Study process.

Q: Public dollars are being used to support the Border Crossing Study. Are those public dollars being used to advantage a private business that is proposing to build a new border crossing?

R: The Border Crossing Study is designed to protect the public interest consistent with various state and federal laws. So, all reasonable border crossing proposals, including those made by private sector interests, will be considered as part of the Border Crossing Study. The entity that will eventually build and own/operate any border crossing recommended through the Border Crossing Study is yet to be decided.

Q: Is what you're saying that government is doing the work of the private sector?

R: Any reasonable proposal by a private sector proponent to cross the Detroit River must be considered by the Border Crossing Study. This is not doing the private sector's business but protecting the public interest.

Q: Will this study look at governance of the bridge and redundancy issues?

R: Governance (i.e., who owns and operates a border crossing) is being examined in the study and a recommendation will be made at the earliest possible date. On the issue of redundancy, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is a cooperating agency on the project. So, security will be addressed. On the issue of redundancy, it is noteworthy that building a companion bridge next to the existing bridge, which is being proposed currently by the Ambassador Bridge owners in the Detroit/Windsor area, was the recommendation of the study of border crossings at the Fort Erie/Buffalo area.

Q: Will there be a health impact analysis as part of the Border Crossing Study?

R: The Federal Highway Administration and MDOT have indicated a health risk assessment would not be conducted based on current regulations.

Q: Why can't proponents of various border crossings be stopped by the work of the Border Crossing Study?

R: Each private entity that is proposing a Detroit River crossing has a right to move forward on its plans. The Border Crossing Study is incorporating those proposals into its work. Nevertheless, it is

recognized that permits must be secured from both U.S. and Canadian agencies, including a U.S. Presidential Permit, before construction of a crossing can proceed.

Q: In your field work, has anyone indicated that they are willing to accept the project?

R: There has been no effort to date by the Border Study to survey those for or against a river crossing at any location.

C: Wyandotte City Council in 2004 passed a resolution that it does not want the border crossing and its connecting roadways to affect Wyandotte.

Q: Is it appropriate to say that the Local Advisory Council is a decision-making body?

R: The Local Advisory Council is “advisory” as indicated in the statement of its purpose. The decision-making body is the Border Partnership Steering Committee made up of representatives of four governmental transportation agencies: U.S. DOT/Federal Highway Administration, Michigan Department of Transportation, Transport Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation.

Q: Is it true that there is a competition with Buffalo to build a new border crossing?

R: There is no competition from a trade/transportation standpoint.

Q: Who will pay to build a new border crossing?

R: That decision has not yet been made.

C: Wayne County and the Downriver communities, from Southfield Road through Wyandotte to the County line, have said “no” to a border crossing.

C: Southwest Detroit does not want another border crossing either as two already exist there.

Review of Public Meeting

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that there would be four public meetings held during the week of April 11th as follows:

- April 11th at the Biddle Hall in Wyandotte.
- April 12th at the River Rouge High School in River Rouge.
- April 13th at the Southwestern High School in Southwest Detroit.
- April 14th at the Martin Luther King, Jr. High School in East Detroit.

He indicated that the meeting format would be a combination of an informal public forum from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. with a formal presentation beginning at 6:30 p.m. The formal presentation would take the

form of the PowerPoint presentation made to the LAC earlier in the meeting. At this point in the meeting, both LAC members and observers were asked to review graphics to be used at public meetings. After fifteen minutes, the group reconvened

Public Comment

Mohammed Alghurabi asked if there were any public comments from those observing the meeting.

C: Jim Phillips indicated that he was advised as part of the Planning/Need & Feasibility Study that there would be no permits issued to any border crossing proponent until the Border Crossing Study is completed.

R: Border crossing proponents, like the Ambassador Bridge owners and the Detroit River Tunnel Partnership, are private sector entities and their intentions to go forward are being coordinated with the appropriate governmental agencies. The Bi-National Partnership is not blocking those efforts.

C: Don Flynn, proponent of the HPX crossing, indicated he has tried for years to work with the federal government and all indications are that his proposed crossing of the Detroit River cannot move forward until the Border Crossing Study is complete. Mr. Flynn indicated he believes that the people in Wyandotte are not afraid of his proposal while, on the other hand, the City of Wyandotte Council is. Nevertheless, he noted that the city has not taken a survey of the people. He noted that it is a fundamental right that anyone can build a bridge as long as you do not infringe on other people's rights. He stressed that his proposal is not an enemy of the community nor is he.

Next Meeting

Mohammed Alghurabi indicated that the next meeting of the Local Advisory Council would be April 27th at the Southgate Holiday Inn. He further noted that Amy Amador of Maryanne Mahaffey's office in the Detroit City Council has requested meetings of the LAC be held in Detroit as well. Mohammed indicated that he would cooperate with Amy over the next month to find a suitable location for the LAC meeting after the one on April 27th.

With that, the meeting ended at 9:00 p.m.