

DRAFT
Detroit River International Crossing Study
Joint Local Advisory Council/Local Agency Group Meeting
Notes
November 28, 2005, 7:00 p.m.
Southwestern High School

Purpose: To review the Illustrative Alternatives evaluation results.

Attendance: See attached.

Discussion:

Introductions

Mohammed Alghurabi welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for introductions of the LAC. Following introductions, he reviewed the meeting conduct procedures and the agenda. There were no suggested changes to the agenda.

Public Comments

Mohammed Alghurabi asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

Illustrative Alternatives Evaluation Results

Joe Corradino reviewed the handout materials to ensure that each LAC member and the observers of the LAC activity had the complete information packet. This information included the Illustrative Alternatives Evaluation Summary Report (Volume 1); the detailed analysis of Illustrative Alternatives (Volume 2); a CD at the back of Volume 2 with the three volumes of Geographical Information System information for each crossing, plaza and connecting route; 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 also 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 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 with the help of 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 change 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 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.

Q: Pages 15 through 20 of the PowerPoint handout are not readable and should be provided in larger print.

R: Everything in the PowerPoint handout is included in Volume 1, the summary report, in much larger print.

Q: Now that the plazas have been erased in the “continued analysis area,” what are the chances they will be revisited?

R: One or more plazas will be developed, through the workshops, in and around the area of Plaza C-3, Plaza C-4, and Plaza II-4. This is the area upriver from the Zug Island to the foot of the Ambassador Bridge.

Q: In defining the Practical Alternatives, will the historic structures, including the churches in the area, be given consideration?

R: Yes. A full historic inventory is underway of every structure in the area. Historic properties are protected by federal law. An alternative can only use a historic property if there is no reasonable and prudent alternative.

C: Do not turn a “blind eye” to the human element in the “continued analysis area.” Senior citizens are expressing concerns everyday about their future.

R: The MDOT Technical Team is committed to working with all members of the study area in order to gain an understanding of what they believe is important to their neighborhood and how to protect their quality of life.

Q: Please explain the ranking results included on page S-25 of the Summary Report.

R: The information provided on page S-25 is a piece of the detailed analysis by each evaluation factor for each component—plaza, crossing, connecting route-- of the Illustrative Alternatives. The latter information is included in Appendix A of the Summary Report. Those data in Appendix A were then weighted by using the values of seven factors presented on Table S-3 of the Summary Report. Those weights were established by the citizens (almost 900 participated) and separately by 19 members of the

MDOT Technical Team (10 members of the consultant team and nine members of MDOT).

Q: Table 2-1 of Volume 2, two senior service centers have been missed.

R: What you are referring to may be classified differently by us. We will look into this issue. (A later check indicated the database does include the two senior service facilities. They are not listed on Table 2-1 as they are not under C-3 plaza.)

Q: Are you planning to place a plaza in South Schaefer? Will South Schaefer be turned into a freeway?

R: Neither a plaza nor a freeway will be located in the South Schaefer area. The arrow on the graphic does not mean a freeway nor a new road will be built to better connect I-75 and I-94. That can be done by improving signing, signalization, access management and other similar techniques.

Q: Where will the workshops be held?

R: Locations are still being determined. Any assistance/suggestions that the LAC can provide will be appreciated. Nonetheless, all workshops will be held in the Delray/Southwest Detroit area and different facilities will be used to rotate the meetings.

Q: Now that the study area has been narrowed, will the LAC membership be limited to those from the area?

R: No one will be asked to leave the LAC. But, anyone who represents a group is welcomed to apply for a seat on the LAC.

Q: The Planning/Needs and Feasibility Study included recommendations other than physical facilities to address border traffic in a holistic manner. What is the status of action on those items?

R: It is difficult to respond to those items at this time. Perhaps, they can be discussed later.

Q: Should the reference to Appendix A of Volume 1 really be Attachment A?

R: Yes.

Q: The alternatives are not ranked from 1 to 37. .

R: A ranking from 1 to 37 will be provided the LAC.

C: It appears from the study areas on each side of the river that bridge landings could be far apart.

R: That is correct. A “diagonal” crossing will be examined in this case.

C: Please explain the weighting/scoring process.

R: The information in Attachment 1 of Volume 1 – Summary Report shows the unweighted scores developed by the consultant for each river crossing, plaza and connecting route by each of the seven evaluation factors. Once these were established, the weights shown on Table S-3 were applied to develop the results shown on Table S-10. The alternative crossing systems ranking from 1 to 37 is also shown on Table S-10. Then cost was introduced to the evaluation process, to measure the value returned for the dollar invested. This is called cost-effectiveness. It is calculated by dividing the weighted performance scores on Table S-10 by the total cost of each crossing system. The results are shown on Table S-12. The weighted evaluation results and the cost-effectiveness results were used to define the “continued analysis area”.

Q: Will you be targeting “people places” for plazas?

R: No. All plazas studied to date have been “erased” and public input will be used to decide where the new plazas will be located.

Q: Will the locations be narrowed by the first of the year?

R: The schedule calls for the official announcement of the “narrowed” list of alternatives to be made at the end of March 2006. The workshops leading up to that will continue through early February.

Q: Are you aware that the City of Detroit Planning Commission is working to revise the City’s Master Plan?

R: Yes. It is hoped that the Planning Commission will be engaged in the workshops so a specific master plan can be developed just for the Delray area.

Concluding Comment by MDOT Team: It is expected that a project office will be located in the Delray area. Any suggestions for its location by an LAC member are invited. The office will likely be open Monday mornings, Wednesday afternoons and Friday mornings. (Following the meeting, it was determined that the project office would be located in the new Delray Community Center). Also, it was noted that MDOT will be seeking permission from property owners to enter their property to determine the presence of wetlands, historic, archaeology and hazardous materials. LAC members in Delray were asked to help secure permission to enter those properties so data can be collected.

Discussion of Environmental Justice

Joe Corradino referred to page 9 in Volume 2 for a summary of the Federal Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice. He noted that the Executive Order indicates a federally-funded project cannot have a disproportionate impact on minority and/or low-income people. He noted that there are minority and low-income population groups throughout the Detroit Metro area. A number of areas, such as River Rouge and the community around Belle Isle, are locations with significant EJ populations. Those areas have been excluded from further analysis in the DRIC Study.

Additionally, it was stated that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1962 indicates that there will be no discrimination against any peoples. Therefore, the list of population groups covered by the DRIC Study based on the Environmental Justice Executive Order has been expanded to include groups that represent at least two percent of the population of the SEMCOG region, such as the Irish, French, Italian, and Arab populations, to name a few.

Q: The local Hungarian population is not listed as one of those groups covered by the project.

R: It is likely that the Hungarian population in the region does not meet the minimum threshold of two percent of the total population of the region. (A further check indicates that the Hungarian population is 1.3 percent of the SEMCOG region's population.)

C: The Sierra Club will submit a position paper on Environmental Justice.

C: *It is impossible to address mitigation for health impacts of EJ groups if you do not conduct a health risk assessment.*

R: Health impacts will be addressed, although not in the manner of a “health risk assessment,” as technically defined.

C: *Please describe how that will be done.*

R: It is likely data will be assembled from reliable sources on health effects of the community and combined with the quantity of pollutants that are likely to be generated by the new border crossing to assess whether health impacts are disproportionately affecting the Environmental Justice populations.

C: *While the region will realize the benefits of the project, the local population will disproportionately bear the impact.*

R: The assumption in the comment is that the overall impacts will be adverse. That is not necessarily the case. Further, if adverse impacts are evident, they will be minimized to the extent possible and those remaining will then be mitigated.

C: *How will the evaluation process proceed from here forward?*

R: The scoring process used in the evaluation of Illustrative Alternatives will not be repeated in the DEIS. Instead, the impacts will be measured and reported in the standard format of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. That analysis will also include the review of cumulative and secondary impacts. In the latter area, a community inventory will be conducted beginning in January and there will be several public meetings in May and July to inventory the fabric of the community (churches, schools, clubs, social service functions/facilities, senior housing etc.).

Q: How will those interviews be conducted beginning in January?

R: There is a standard form that we will be using to gather that information. The LAC should advise the MDOT Team of any group or individual who should be interviewed.

Q: Will an economic impact analysis be conducted for this focused analysis area or the City of Detroit.

R: An economic impact analysis was done at a broad regional level in the Border Crossing Feasibility Study. It is being updated for the current work. However, that analysis will not be done for the focused analysis area or for the City of Detroit. The results of that previous economic impact study is on the Web site.

Discussion of Upcoming Schedule Milestone Events

Mohammed Alghurabi discussed the upcoming public meetings of December 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th and the various methods by which they were being communicated – mailers, door-to-door distribution of flyers, and paid radio advertisements.

Other

Mohammed Alghurabi asked if there were any other issues that the LAC wished to introduce.

There were none.

Public Comment

Q: Have there been any specific conversations with Homeland Security on the location of the Detroit wastewater treatment plant, power plants, and the like, that may affect the location of plazas and crossings?

R: Yes. Meetings have been and will continue to be held with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to gather information such as the commenter suggested. It is known

from previous discussions that the risk to a facility from terrorist threats are virtually impossible to eliminate, as typified by the recent bombings in the London subway system where stations very far apart were attacked almost simultaneously.

Q: There is still blasting going on underneath the focused analysis area. Are you aware of that?

R: The MDOT Technical Team is aware of the blasting in the “room-and-pillar” mining in the vicinity of the Delray area. Those mines are well-documented and the potential placement of a plaza over such areas will be analyzed. But, information is needed on the location of brine wells, which are not as well-documented as the room-and-pillar mining areas. Therefore, extensive drilling will take place to better define the brine well caverns.

C: I represent all the taxpayers on both sides of the border and have been denied a seat on the Local Advisory Council. I want a seat on the LAC. I am the proponent of the Downriver crossing that would use Pennsylvania Road and my proposal would not affect a single business or home. Do you dispute that point?

R: The commenter is a member of the Crossing Owners, Operators and Proponents Group, which meets every three to six months. Additionally, the contention that a Downriver crossing using Pennsylvania Road, and a similar facility on the Canadian side of the border, will not affect a single home or business is just not correct. For example, the commenter had proposed using the rail line owned by Norfolk Southern to connect his proposed plaza with the interstate highway system. Use of the railroad right-of-way would require that either the railroad or the highway connecting the plaza to the freeway system be elevated. The elevation of a six-lane freeway or the railroad lines would have an effect on adjoining properties as well as Norfolk Southern’s operations. This would create an impact on homes and businesses. Additional impacts would be felt in Canada.

C: *A lot of “behind the scenes” work is being done that is not open to the public. In order to open that up, the public should be more involved than once-a-month in these LAC meetings. A weekly progress report would be appropriate. Additionally, how did the 2030 (2035) projections come about? I know when Canada Customs personnel walked off work, I-75 traffic was backed-up up for five miles. This disrupted people from going to work on time. Finally, what happened to the Downriver alternatives and the DRTP Jobs Tunnel proposal? I do not think another bridge is needed just for shipping by trucks. The study should focus on increasing shipping by water instead of building a new bridge.*

R: The Downriver alternatives do not carry enough traffic to satisfy the 2035 regional mobility needs of the project. The DRTP proposal also does not meet the regional mobility needs of the project. Finally, shipping other than by truck has been considered and it does not lessen the need for a new border crossing in the next 30 years.

Mohammed Alghurabi then noted that information will not be provided on a weekly basis as there is the need for careful review by the project’s Working Group and Steering Committee of study products. Nonetheless, study information is presented to the LAC as soon as it is reviewed and approved by the Working Group and the Steering Committee.

Q: *Who wanted this bridge? Who hired MDOT? Where is the bridge connection going to start and end? Where are you going to put a plaza? How did the Downriver community persuade you to remove the crossing from their neighborhood? We need to know where you plan to put a plaza in the Schaefer corridor.*

R: Many of the questions that have been asked were answered during the earlier part of the meeting. This includes the fact that there is no plaza or route in the Schaefer area.

MDOT has jurisdiction over the border crossings on the U.S. side. They, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, as well as Canadian representatives from the Ministry of Transport in Ontario and Transport Canada, decided in 2000 that the study of a new border crossing was needed. A Feasibility Study conducted between then and 2004 indicated that there was a need for a new border crossing. The background information to further answer the commenter's questions can be found on the project's Web site.

Q: Was the City of Detroit notified in 2002 of this need? Was the Governor of Michigan aware of the plans to build a new crossing?

R: The City of Detroit and the Governor had information in 2002 that the project was ongoing and that a need for a new crossing had been established.

Q: Was cost-effectiveness the deciding factor in establishing the focused analysis area?

R: Cost-effectiveness was used in the analysis. Additionally, weighted effectiveness without consideration of cost, as presented on Table S-10 of the Summary Report, also was used to arrive at the conclusion that the area upriver of Zug Island to the foot of the Ambassador Bridge is the appropriate location for continued analysis.

C: More local people should be allowed to sit at the table to ask questions about this process? We have concerns that have merit and need to be addressed. It has been stated that there is a need for a bridge but that is questionable. How much will this community have to endure once a new bridge is built?

R: The Local Advisory Council is open to new members who wish to participate.

Q: How can economic impacts not be studied in relation to the local community, given that the bridge will be paid for through taxes?

R: The economic impact analysis is a broad regional approach and not directed to any specific subarea. Additionally, it is expected that issues on financing have yet to be decided. Nonetheless, it is also expected that the facility will have tolls.

Q: Has the McLouth steel facility been considered for a plaza?

R: That site was considered and eliminated from analysis for a number of reasons.

C: Local residents are totally opposed to a new bridge in the Delray area. Are you going to rerun your computer models because of the recent announcement of General Motors closing plants that is going to affect traffic projections? How did you arrive at your conclusions about home values, because no one came to my house and asked me any questions?

R: Traffic projections are based on long-term trends, not the frequent ups and downs of individual businesses. Nevertheless, the recent announcement by General Motors of its decision to close plants and reduce jobs in the U.S. and Canada was accompanied by an announcement by Chrysler that it would invest \$700 million in Ontario to improve its automobile production. These kinds of forces are reflected in the background data that were used in the traffic projection model.

With respect to the valuation of residential properties, no interviews were conducted at this phase of the analysis; they will be in the next phase. Nonetheless, the process that was used to date involved analyzing tax information available from Wayne County with various adjustments to determine market value. Added to that was the cost of relocation as well as the cost to demolish any structures and remediate any contamination.

C: *The City of Detroit officials were not engaged in this process until the community of Delray got them involved. If there is no plaza in the West Delray area, does that mean there can't be an alternative in that area?*

R: The workshops that were discussed earlier will help decide the locations of plazas and crossings. Exactly how those plazas will be connected to the freeway system is not known until the workshops are conducted and the alternatives defined.

C: *I have a map of brine wells in the Delray area that I am willing to provide you.*

R: Thank you.

C: *A point was made at a previous LAC meeting that the Delray community has to take responsibility for itself. The Delray community has and will continue to be responsible. The Downriver sites that were eliminated were never seriously considered. The announcement on their elimination was offensive to other communities, like Delray.*

Q: *As we review the materials that have been made available tonight and questions arise, whom shall we call?*

R: Call Mohammed Alghurabi at 517.373.7674.

With that comment, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.