

**Detroit River International Crossing Study**  
**Workshop No. 5**  
**Southwestern High School**  
**February 8, 2006, 6:30 p.m.**

**Purpose:** To conclude the series of workshops (5) begun on December 14, 2005 with a review of the preliminary connections of proposed plaza connections to the river crossings and I-75.

**Attendees:** See attached.

**Discussion:**

**Introduction**

Mohammed Alghurabi opened the meeting with introductions. Joe Corradino then explained that the meeting would cover the updated vision statements; data gathering related to the plazas; master planning; and, engineering work that had been done on proposed plazas and preliminary connections to the river crossing and to I-75.

**Vision Statements**

Joe Corradino reviewed the final revised vision statements with and without a new bridge.

**Plaza Data**

Tables with data comparing Illustrative Alternative plazas C-3 and C-4 with the 310-acre plaza area were presented. The latter data represent the starting point for DEIS analysis. Thus, the final impact totals will be less than those presented as the plaza area will be smaller than 310 acres, i.e., closer to 150 acres.

**Master Planning**

Jeff Mason of Hamilton Anderson provided a status report on master planning efforts. The study area is the 1,500 acres between Zug Island and the foot of the Ambassador Bridge. Master planning will be developed for two conditions: with and without a new bridge. Three meetings have been held to date with representatives of the City of Detroit. The first two meetings provided the City with information related to the project's objectives and schedule. The most recent meeting began to explore the City's plans for the area. There will be a workshop February 27<sup>th</sup> at the Delray Recreation Center to begin the public involvement process. The first meeting will focus on goals and objectives. At the end of March, at the next round of DRIC public meetings, master planning concepts will be presented to the public.

Several individuals asked questions (Q)/made comments (C).

*Q. Has the City been receptive to the planning efforts?*

R. Yes, they are excited about the opportunity to have support in planning for the area.

- Q. *Is the "no new" bridge option still under consideration?*
- R. Yes, master plans will be developed for conditions with a new bridge and without a new bridge. The National Environmental Policy Act requires that No Action be considered through the planning and evaluation of alternatives.

- Q. *Will there be truck traffic on Outer Drive? (This question was repeated later.)*
- R. The planning for a second bridge must consider all the places trucks might try to go. Some may try to go between I-75 to I-94 using Southfield, Outer Drive, and/or Schaefer Road. Those roads will not be rebuilt or expanded, but may get improvements - like driveway controls and electronic messaging – to smooth traffic flow.

Note: During a discussion of this issue, it was made known that a flyer has been circulating indicating the bridge alternatives would use an Outer Drive or Schaefer Road connection to I-94. These options were dropped from the study in December. All the remaining alternatives would have a bridge east or west of Fort Wayne and a plaza in Delray.

- Q. *I live on Livernois Avenue on the north side of I-75. When I try to go home (northbound on I-75 then north of Dragon), the trucks are backed up on I-75 so I cannot get off. Can't you fix that?*
- R. A traffic plan is being prepared that will cover the whole area. In the near term, a separate project, called the Gateway Project, will reconfigure the ramps that lead to and from the Ambassador Bridge and should address the situation discussed by the commenter.

- Q. *Does funding exist for the bridge?*
- R. Funding is available to study the options and prepare the Environmental Impact Statement and early preliminary engineering report. Funding does not now exist to build a new river crossing.

- Q. You are expanding the Ambassador Bridge plaza now, and then there will be a new plaza for the new bridge. Is the existing plaza expansion being taken into consideration?
- R. Yes, the new bridge will have its own plaza and it will not be connected to the Ambassador Bridge plaza.

### **Preliminary Plaza Layouts**

Regine Beauboeuf explained the work that had been done on preliminary plaza layouts and connections to a new river crossing and I-75. The 310 acres being considered will be reduced in the end to about 150 acres. In laying out the potential plazas the effort has been to minimize impacts to the community. With respect to connections to I-75, Springwells is the limit of influence to the west and Clark the limit to the east.

Ms. Beauboeuf next explained the characteristics of Options 1, 1A, 2, 3, and 4. Then, the following questions (Q) and comments (C) were addressed:

*Q. In laying out the plazas and roads, are you considering the locations of schools?*

R. Yes. One of the objectives of the master planning work is to consider all the elements of the community and how these fit with the transportation needs.

*Q. Who will repair all the roads?*

R. If there are non-state roads that will play a significant role in serving the new crossing, there may be a situation where it/they will become state roads. Then, the State will maintain them. Otherwise, the roads' owners will be responsible for their maintenance.

*Q. What about greenways and trees?*

R. The acreage need of the plazas includes land for buffers and landscaping. Linking/creating greenways will be part of the master planning effort. The objective is to support and not contradict greenway efforts by others.

*Q. Will you be making Fort Wayne better?*

R. Concepts for Fort Wayne are expected to emerge from the planning workshops. There has been one meeting with the officials of Fort Wayne at which the master plan was provided and a tour of the facilities conducted. One concept coming out of the recent DRIC public workshops is to have Fort Wayne serve as a Welcome Center. If that were to occur, some funding would be available.

*Q. If homes are isolated by the project would they be acquired? For example, if most of the homes on a street, or in an area, were acquired and only a few remained, would offers be made on those houses too?*

R. Under some circumstances where "islands" of homes are created, MDOT will make offers on such properties, so residents are not isolated. This is considered on a case-by-case basis, once the plan has been developed.

*Q. Could the plaza be more than 150 acres?*

R. Yes, if a need surfaces during the planning process. But, the concepts presented tonight are between 150 and 170 acres.

*Q. Is it possible to establish a long-term funding program for property rehabilitation for residents in Delray?*

R. That subject is being explored. One avenue will be creating a program to rehabilitate structures in a historic district.

- C. *We need to be more positive overall in our language and approach to the Delray neighborhood. I am directing these remarks to the residents as well as the study participants. We need a more positive approach if we, as a neighborhood, are going to improve.*
- C. *We have all kinds of problems related to health and truck traffic and flooding on Schaefer. This is being made worse by intermodal traffic. And, it seems you are duplicating what is going on at the Ambassador Bridge.*
- R. We recognize that truck traffic is an issue throughout southwest Detroit and surrounding communities. But, the 1,500 intermodal in the area on a daily basis are a small portion of the thousands of heavy trucks in the area each day. Nonetheless, truck traffic will be addressed in the master planning and DEIS developments. There is a need for a new crossing and it will be planned for the area between Zug Island and the foot of the Ambassador Bridge but be separate from the Ambassador Bridge.
- Q. *I am concerned about the real estate value of the homes left behind. Will there be any compensation for them?*
- R. Compensation is given to those who experience direct impacts. There is no compensation for indirect impacts. It is the purpose of all federally-sponsored projects to avoid impacts; where they cannot be avoided, to minimize; and, then to mitigate those negative impacts that remain.
- Q. *If the railroad through Delray were moved or closed, would that be throughout Delray?*
- R. We are still in the exploratory stages on that issue. At this time, we believe the primary users of rail are Zug Island and U.S. Steel. It may be possible to reroute trains through a new connector rail line to serve them. If that happens, it might be possible to eliminate rail in much of Delray.
- Q. *What will happen to the containers stored at the Delray terminal?*
- R. The intermodal activity there (i.e., the containers) is expected to shift to the Livernois-Junction yard, if the DIFT project proceeds. But, Delray terminal is expected to have a continued rail function.
- Q. *Is there a guesstimate on when the project may start?*
- R. Right-of-way acquisition may start in 2007 and construction is scheduled to begin as soon as 2010.
- Q. *Where are the Canadians in their process?*
- R. Joel Foster of the Ministry of Transport Ontario responded that the Canadian team was in the process of holding public meetings on plazas similar to the US. Meetings are still being held with stakeholders and options are still open. The community of Sandwich is pressing for a southern alignment/plaza location.

*Q. Is it true that there are no objections to a new bridge on the part of the residents of Southwest Detroit?*

R. We cannot speak for the citizens. Our job is to do analysis and master planning from which decisions will flow.

*Q. If the citizens do not support the project, will that be reported? Doesn't the decision to build a new bridge require consensus?*

R. All views will be presented. There is seldom a large project like this that does not encounter opposition. The comments of individuals, groups, agencies, political representatives and other stakeholders will all be taken into account in the Final Environmental Impact Statement by the end of 2007. A decision will then be made in early 2008. It will not require unanimous support.

*Q. Is it correct there are no funds yet identified for construction?*

R. That is correct.

Representative Steve Tobocman was then recognized.

Joe Corradino closed the meeting with announcements of upcoming meeting dates:

- Local Advisory Committee – February 22, 2006 at Southwestern High School
- Public Master Planning Workshop – February 27, 2006 at Delray Community Center
- Public Meetings – March 29 (10:30 AM to 1:00 PM and 5:00 PM to 8:30 PM) at Southwestern High School

Ms. Leonard made an announcement. She noted that four community groups had been trying to set a meeting with Gloria Jeff, Director of MDOT. Ms. Jeff has been ill and is not able to attend. So, the meeting has been postponed to a date uncertain. Ms. Leonard suggested that everyone write down questions for Director Jeff. Ms. Leonard will continue to pursue setting another date for a meeting at which they could be addressed.

The meeting concluded about 8:30 PM.