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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2018

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Mackinac Bridge Authority continues planning for 2018 Annual Bridge Walk

February 12, 2018 -- The Mackinac Bridge Authority (MBA) meets Friday to discuss logistics for the 2018 Annual Bridge Walk, including whether the walk will include transporting participants as in past years, or will begin from both ends and eliminate the need for busing, as well as other options for the event.

In November, the MBA board had requested that the communities of Mackinaw City, St. Ignace and Mackinac Island present a proposal for planning and financial support for busing, if that is to be included in this year's event. The board supported continuing to make the bridge available for the annual event, and determined it would take place on Labor Day Monday this year.

The meeting is scheduled for 8 a.m. at the Little Bear East Arena in St. Ignace on Feb. 16. The meeting also will be available to view on the Michigan Department of Transportation's LiveStream channel at <https://livestream.com/MDOT/MackinacBridgeAuthorityMeeting2-16-18>.

"For decades, the Authority has borne nearly all of the responsibility and cost for this event, and we've been honored to do so," said MBA Chairman William Gnodtke. "However, in light of the changes to the event beginning last year, and the logistical challenges they brought, it's apparent that we need increased assistance and support from the community in future years. More than ever, this is an event of these communities and beyond."

MBA staff proposed options for how to run the walk in future years, including:

- Starting the walk from both ends and having participants turning around at the midpoint, but requiring no busing;
- Starting the walk from Mackinaw City rather than St. Ignace; and
- Continuing to start the walk in St. Ignace, but revamping the bus loading and unloading locations.

The bridge asked the communities to develop plans considering those options, which are posted on the MBA website at <http://www.mackinacbridge.org/mba-staff-proposals-2018-annual-bridge-walk/>.

MBA staff had also suggested the board consider other days for the bridge walk other than the traditional Labor Day, including the Saturday or Sunday of Labor Day weekend, Memorial Day weekend, or another weekend in the spring or early summer.

One thing that will not change for future walks: at the recommendation of Michigan State Police (MSP) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the bridge will remain closed to public traffic during the event.

"The goal is to make it a safe event, economically viable, and that's where we're headed," Gnodtke said.

The Authority also is expected to resume discussion of a recommendation from the MSP Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division to take steps to protect pedestrians and bicyclists during other special events on the bridge, including the possibility of closing the bridge for those events as well. Those events would include the Memorial Bridge Run in May, the Big Mac Spring Bike Tour in June, the DALMAC, the Law Enforcement Torch Run, Bike the Mighty Mac, the Mighty Mac Bridge Race in September, and the Fall Colors Bridge Race in October.

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