



## CONNECTING NEIGHBORS

MDOT I-75 Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project

# WELCOME

December 2007/January 2008

Issue 3

Happy New Year! This is the third issue of Connecting Neighbors, a bi-monthly newsletter designed to give you information about the MDOT Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project. Have you ever driven through a construction zone and wondered what we really get for our tax dollars besides smooth pavement? Read this issue to learn about the economic impact that the \$230 million Gateway Project will have on Michigan's economy. Also, sign up to get your Gateway Connections detour brochure and learn what's happening on the construction front.

### Driving Michigan's Economy MDOT's Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project will Have Local and International Impact

power to strengthen Michigan's economy. In fact, the Gateway Project will have substantial positive economic impacts on the region. As a key element of MDOT's Five Year Transportation Program, it will contribute to generating billions in Gross State Domestic Product and real personal income.

Once the Gateway Project is complete, opportunities for growth and development are expected to multiply. For example, one outcome of the Gateway Project will be more direct access to the new Detroit Mexicantown International Welcome Center. Owing to this transportation improvement, Southwest Detroit can expect an increase in tourist traffic. This, in turn, offers opportunities for existing businesses and restaurants to grow and opens the door for new enterprises in the immediate community and well beyond.

It has been noted time and again that investments in transportation infrastructure yield real dividends, and not just within the project area. For example, the expansion of I-696 benefits communities far outside the project's perimeter. If the Gateway Project generates similar outcomes, communities throughout Southeast Michigan will benefit.

But what of the international impact of MDOT's Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project on the U.S.-Canadian border? Richard E. Blouse Jr., Detroit Regional Chamber president and CEO, calls the path of entry that is Gateway's focus a critical point for the entire continent.

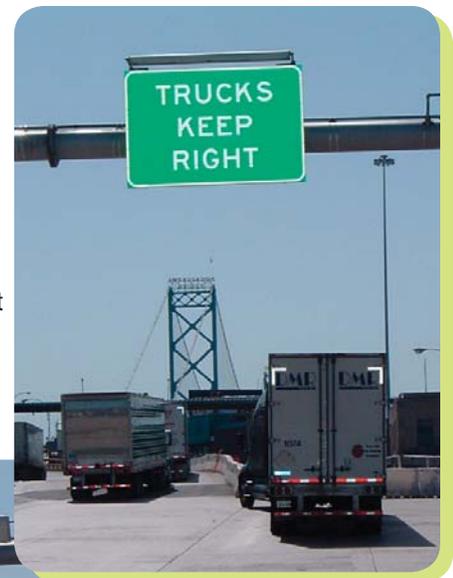
"The Detroit-Windsor border is key to the region's economy, as well as all of North America's economy," says Blouse. "The Gateway Project helps us preserve and improve this global economic asset."

Accumulated data underscores the critical importance of the Detroit-Windsor crossing to both our local, and the international economy:

- The Detroit-Windsor border is the busiest trade corridor in the world.
- Over \$1.1 billion in goods cross between the United States and Canada each day.
- Canada-United States trade supports \$7.1 million United States jobs and 221,500 Michigan jobs.
- More than 40 percent of U.S. trade with Canada occurs at crossings in Detroit and Port Huron.

*(continued on page 4)*

MDOT is about to spend \$230 million dollars to build the Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project. At first glance, it seems that what we'll get for the money is reconstructed freeways and a new interchange to increase access between I-75, I-96 and the Ambassador Bridge; a "signature" pedestrian bridge connecting East and West Mexicantown and a redesigned Ambassador Bridge Plaza. But look again. What we're really getting is a \$230 million investment with the



## Think F.A.S.T.

### There's a Program for Trucks, too

The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative will also have an impact on professional transport. With this in mind, commercial road warriors should consider the Free and Secure Trade program (FAST). FAST is the equivalent of the NEXUS program, designed especially for the commercial transport industry.

"It's a secure card, that can be used at any time," Chief Ron Smith, head of public affairs for the Detroit field office of the U.S. Border Patrol. "Even if a commercial driver's in the car lane and not participating in the program at the time, it's helpful because his background has already been reviewed and approved."

FAST participants may include importers, carriers and drivers who have shown a history of complying with relevant legislation and regulations, acceptable records and audit trails. Goals of FAST are:

- Dedicating lanes for FAST clearances
- Reducing the rate of border examinations in vehicles.
- Verifying trade compliance away from the border.
- Streamlining accounting and payment processes for all goods imported by approved importers (in Canada only).

For more information about FAST, applicants to the program may call 1-800-842-7647.

## Skip the Lines, Go Nexus

### Program Can Make Crossing the Border a Snap



Looking for a faster, more efficient way to move across the border between the U.S. and Canada? Try the NEXUS program. Travelers with NEXUS cards can enter and leave Canadian borders without presenting multiple forms of identification or being screened or quizzed by border officers.

For the past five years, both drivers and boaters have enjoyed the conveniences offered by the program. Drivers use designated vehicle lanes at border passage checkpoints including the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel and the Ambassador Bridge. Boaters can call Customs and Border Patrol hours before arriving at the border and avoid having to dock and wait for clearance. But federal legislation expected to take effect early next year has made NEXUS even more appealing.

"The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative goes into effect in 2008, and that's when everybody is going to need to have a passport with NEXUS as a second option for those who cross the border frequently," says Ron Smith, chief of public affairs at the U.S. Border Patrol's Detroit field office. "This next year, not only will we have people applying to become part of the program, but we'll have people renewing their NEXUS status."

Not only Canada, but Mexico, Bermuda and 17 regions of the Caribbean are all impacted by the requirement, a result of strengthened border security measures by the Department of Homeland Security. In January 2007, persons traveling by air between the United States and the designated western territories were required to show a passport or other citizenship proof on entering the United States. The exact date when the new travel requirements begin will be announced at least 60 days ahead of time.

NEXUS users who've already enrolled in the program have been enjoying its benefits, Smith says. "Those people who are eligible for it love it, but not everyone's eligible," he adds.

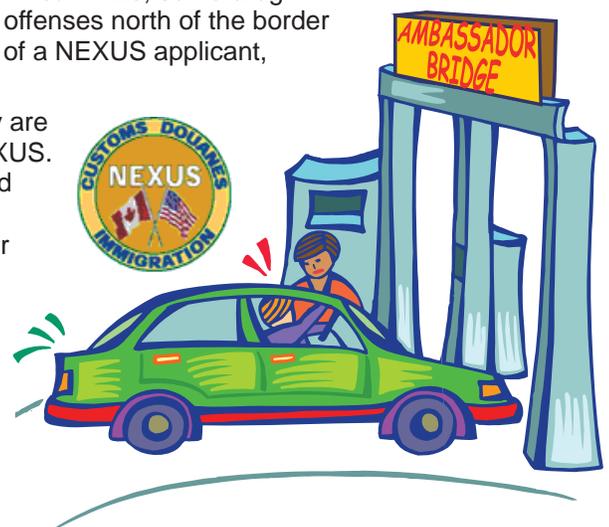
At \$50 (\$90 Canadian), applying for the NEXUS program is less expensive than the \$97 it costs for a passport, but it's only usable in the West. "It's for low-risk travelers who are approved on both sides of the border," Smith explains.

"Low-risk," however, is a relative term.

For example, an offense considered relatively minor in the United States, such as a driving under the influence conviction as an irresponsible teenager, might be regarded as grounds for rejecting one's application in Canada. Meanwhile, some drug convictions regarded as relatively minor offenses north of the border would likely result in America's rejection of a NEXUS applicant, Smith says.

Employment history and address history are also considered when you apply for NEXUS. You can apply online at the Customs and Border Patrol site, [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov), using the "travel" link. Other locations that offer the application include the Detroit Tunnel Web site [www.dwtunnel.com](http://www.dwtunnel.com), advertising what it calls a "fast, convenient way for frequent border travelers" to use the "Nexpressway."

For more information, call 1-866-NEXUS-26.





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## WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?



## Preliminary Construction Begins to Wind Down ...

Preliminary construction, started in July 2007, is moving toward completion. For informational fliers detailing the locations of these projects visit the Mexicantown Community Development Corporation office, 2835 Bagley Street, Suite 200 or e-mail [MDOTgateway@loviogeorgeinc.com](mailto:MDOTgateway@loviogeorgeinc.com).

## Major Construction Will Be Ramping Up ...

Starting on or about Monday, February 25, 2008, MDOT will close the I-75 freeway from Rosa Parks Boulevard to Clark Street to start major project construction. Access to Mexicantown and the Ambassador Bridge will be maintained throughout the project. **A helpful hint:** It's easier to stake out alternate routes before construction starts. Use the time between now and February 25 to scope out and test-drive a safe, efficient detour that works for you!

## Get Your Gateway Connections Now!

We know no one believes us when we say it but ... MDOT's engineers and traffic management staff do everything possible to ease mobility during construction. This time, MDOT has prepared two brochures – one for cars/non-commercial travelers and another for trucks/commercial vehicles. Both outline recommended detour routes to help you make connections around Gateway Project closures. To get a copy of the Gateway Connections map, fill out and follow the instructions on the order form printed below.

### REQUEST FORM



### CONNECTING NEIGHBORS

MDOT I-75 Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project

### MDOT METRO REGION OFFICE

c/o lovio|george|inc  
681 W. Forest  
Detroit, MI 48201

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like \_\_\_\_\_ driver brochures to distribute.

I would like \_\_\_\_\_ trucking brochures to distribute.

Does your company/organization have an electronic newsletter or intranet site? YES NO

Would you like an electronic version of the brochure? YES NO

I AM UNABLE TO PICK UP; PLEASE DELIVER TO:

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact at Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Please return this form via:

**MAIL:** MDOT Metro Region Office c/o lovio|george|inc · 681 W. Forest · Detroit, MI 48201

**FAX:** 248-569-3103, attention Brenda V. Peek

**EMAIL:** [MDOTgateway@loviogeorgeinc.com](mailto:MDOTgateway@loviogeorgeinc.com)

“ We are making wise investments in our communities and our transportation systems that will make Michigan competitive for years to come,” Granholm said. “The Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project is the front porch to commerce and trade in Michigan, creating jobs through the busiest border crossing in North America. I am proud to say that this project will transform the local community and stimulate investment in our central city and beyond. ”



- Americans export about \$135 billion worth of goods to Ontario every year (to put this in perspective, America sells \$55 billion worth of goods annually to all of China).
- More than \$115 billion in international trade utilized the Ambassador Bridge in 2006.
- Detroit handles at least 43 percent more trade than the second busiest crossing in Laredo, Texas.
- Michigan topped all states for value of merchandise trade with Canada in 2006; goods transported between Michigan and Canada totaled \$73 billion, nearly double the value of goods moved between Illinois, the second ranked state, and Canada.
- More than \$21 billion of transportation equipment produced in Michigan was exported from the state in 2006.

By improving access at this internationally important juncture, the Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project stands to make Michigan more competitive and to have other long-term impacts. Among them: decreased job loss, increased productivity and a boost to the billions of dollars in trade and commerce conducted between the United States and Canada.

With major construction beginning in February 2008 and expected to be complete in December 2009, the global implications for the project are vast. But Governor Jennifer M. Granholm notes that the major benefits to the community are the focus of this project.

“Even during tough economic times, we are making wise investments in our communities and our transportation systems that will make Michigan competitive for years to come,” she said. “The Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project is the front porch to commerce and trade in Michigan, creating jobs through the busiest border crossing in North America. I am proud to say that this project will transform the local community and stimulate investment in our central city and beyond.

Prepared by: MDOT Graphics \OfficeOfCommunications\gatewayBridge\December2007Newsletter\gateway brdg issue 3 newstr.indd • 5000 copies printed @ \$0.32 each for a total cost of \$1600.

PRRST STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
LANSING, MI  
PERMIT NO. 1200

MDOT Region Office  
18101 West Nine Mile Rd.  
Southfield, MI 48075

