

I-375 Corridor  
Draft Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Questionnaire  
Written by Kelby Wallace, MDOT

1. Background:

- A. Who is the sponsor of the PEL study? (state DOT, Local Agency, Other)

***MDOT and the city of Detroit. Under the leadership of the Detroit Downtown Development Authority (DDA) the study was a partnership with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy (DRFC).***

- B. What is the name of the PEL study document and other identifying project information (e.g. sub-account or STIP numbers, long-range plan, or transportation improvement program years)?

***The name of the study is the I-375 Alternatives Study. The study is not included on the STIP/TIP or SEMCOG's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) at this time. The I-375 corridor project was previously in the SEMCOG RTP, but was moved to the illustrative list due to funding constraints. Future project phases would need to be added to the RTP. The I-375 Alternatives Study does not include federal funding. In 2000 an Environmental Assessment document, the I-375 East Riverfront Area Access Improvement study was completed and approved by the FHWA. The recommended alternative for this study did not advance to the construction phase and was removed from the SEMCOG RTP. Since that time, changes in land use have occurred, the riverfront has begun to re-develop with a pedestrian focus, and future visions for the downtown and East Riverfront have changed.***

- C. Who was included on the study team (Name and title of agency representatives, consultants, etc.)?

***The study team was led by:***

***Will Tamminga, Detroit DDA***

***Karen Slaughter-DuPerry, DRFC***

***Ron Brundidge, City of Detroit***

***Sunny Jacobs, City of Detroit***

***Carmine Palambo, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)***

***Phil Lynwood, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)***

***Jeff Forster, FHWA***

***Kelby Wallace, MDOT***

***Scott Shogan, Parsons Brinkerhoff Inc.***

- D. Provide a description of the existing transportation facility within the corridor, including project limits, modes, functional classification, number of lanes, shoulder width, access control and type of surrounding environment (urban vs. rural, residential vs. commercial, etc.)

***The existing I-375 freeway is a north/south depressed urban freeway that connects I-75 to Jefferson Avenue in Detroit. The I-375 roadway is three thru lanes plus one merge/weave lane in both directions from I-75 to Lafayette Street and narrows down to three lanes in both directions from Lafayette to Larned Street. From Larned to Jefferson Avenue the roadway narrows down to two lanes in both directions.***

*The existing I-375 is a limited access, interstate facility with 12 foot lanes, and generally consists of 10 foot shoulders.*

*The surrounding environment consists of a dense urban setting in downtown Detroit. Generally, the existing land use consists of the central business district and entertainment districts west of I-375 and the Lafayette Park neighborhood to the east of I-375. Existing I-375 doesn't provide any direct access to the riverfront area.*

- E. Provide a brief chronology of the planning activities (PEL study) including the year(s) the studies were completed.

*The I-375 Alternative Study began in January 2014 and was completed in January 2016.*

- F. Are there recent, current, or near future planning studies or projects in the vicinity? What is the relationship of this project to those studies/projects?

*There are multiple transportation and land use studies that have been completed in the vicinity of the project recently. These studies, completed by various public and private agencies, all have components which are similar to the goals stated in the 2040 SEMCOG RTP, specifically; Economic Prosperity, Desirable Communities, Fiscally Sustainable Public Services, Reliable & Quality Infrastructure, Healthy & Attractive Environmental Assets, and Access to Services, Jobs, Markets & Amenities. These include:*

*7.2 SQ MI February 2013 Downtown Detroit Partnerships- Demographics, Housing, Employment*

*Greater Downtown Transit Oriented Design Strategy – Density*

*Detroit Future Cities Plan*

*Cobo Center Strategic Planning Analysis*

*GM Renaissance Center Master Plan Studies*

*M-1 Rail Business Plan*

*Eastern Market District-Economic Development Study & Master Plan*

*I-375 at Madison Street Interchange Feasibility Study*

*Traffic Study: I-375 Off Ramp – Greektown Casino Hotel*

*Traffic Impact Analysis for Proposed Bicycle Lane Installation Along the East Jefferson Corridor in Detroit Michigan – East Jefferson Corridor Collaborative*

*Active Studies:*

*Brewster Douglas Site Re-development*

*Gratiot Bus Rapid Transit*

*East Riverfront land use study*

*The goal of the PEL study was to incorporate the applicable components of adopted planning documents that support the future vision of the city of Detroit.*

## 2. Methodology used:

- A. What was the scope of the PEL study and the reason for completing it?

*The study is the culmination of multiple interests coming together at the same time. I-375 is in need of future reconstruction due to the age of facilities. In addition, the freeway serves as an important connection to Downtown Detroit, the East Riverfront, Eastern Market, Detroit-Windsor Tunnel and significant enterprises located on Jefferson Avenue. The composition of downtown Detroit is changing; new residents*

*and businesses are populating downtown, significant developments are expected, and transportation and circulation needs are changing as a result. Given these factors, MDOT and other project partners are interested in reviewing alternatives that will best address the future transportation needs of the I-375 corridor.*

B. Did you use NEPA-like language? Why or why not?

*Yes. Major milestones of the study including identifying a Purpose & Need and Development of Illustrative Alternatives.*

C. What were the actual terms used and how did you define them? (Provide examples or list)

*Purpose & Need and Illustrative Alternatives,*

D. How do you see these terms being used in NEPA documents?

*The I-375 Alternatives Study would be referenced, where appropriate, during the NEPA phase and direct references would be made to these terms. Please see response to question 5C for details.*

E. What were the key steps and coordination points in the PEL decision-making process?

Who were the decision-makers and who else participated in those key steps? For example, for the corridor vision, the decision was made by state DOT and the local agency, with buy-in from FHWA, the USACE, and USFWS and other resource/regulatory agencies.

*The key steps in the PEL decision making process were the development of the Purpose and Need and the development of the Illustrative Alternatives. Each of these steps was subject to a review process by the technical committee, three stakeholder advisory committee meetings (see attached roster) and vetted with the public at two public meetings. The key decision makers for the study were the technical team listed above. Additionally, the study included only a high level review of NEPA environmental factors, not a detailed review, which will need to be done during the NEPA phase. The Purpose & Need statement intends to address;*

- *Pavement and bridge condition in a cost-effective manner*
- *Safety for all roadway users*
- *Consider connectivity improvements for vehicular and non-motorized users*
- *Enable potential economic development which support official land use plans*

*These items are reflected in the SEMCOG 2040 RTP, as described in section 1.F. above.*

*Prior to moving the project to future phases, it will need to be added to the RTP, which is required to be fiscally constrained. This may require other changes to the RTP.*

F. How should the PEL information be presented in NEPA?

*The community outreach, Purpose & Need, traffic modeling and Illustrative Alternative analysis should be treated as though they met the NEPA requirements, as this study followed the same process for these three items as required by NEPA.*

3. Agency coordination:

A. Provide a synopsis of coordination with Federal, tribal, state and local environmental, regulatory and resource agencies. Describe their level of participation and how you coordinated with them.

***During the I-375 PEL study, coordination with the subject regulatory agencies included some early coordination letters requesting comments on the corridor. Tribal coordination did not occur. Further coordination will be required during the NEPA phase.***

- B. What transportation agencies (e.g. for adjacent jurisdictions) did you coordinate with or were involved during the PEL study?

***Agencies that were coordinated with include: MDOT, city of Detroit, SEMCOG, Wayne County, FHWA, DDOT, RTA and SMART.***

- C. What steps will need to be taken with each agency during NEPA scoping?

***Further analysis of social, environmental and economic factors will need to be completed during the NEPA phase. Also need to coordinate on areas of jurisdiction or technical expertise.***

4. Public coordination:

- A. Provide a synopsis of your coordination efforts with the public and stakeholders.

***The I-375 Alternatives Study included significant public outreach. This included a stakeholder advisory committee made up of approximately 56 community leaders, business owners, agency representatives, neighborhood representatives and civic leaders. Additionally, two public open house meetings were held near the project area. The two public meetings drew over 150 people at each meeting and the public meetings received extensive local media coverage.***

***Summary of public outreach meetings:***

- ***Advisory committee meeting 4.29.13***
- ***Advisory committee meeting 8.29.13***
- ***Advisory committee meeting 2.10.14***
- ***Public meeting 2.13.14***
- ***Advisory committee meeting 6.11.14***
- ***Public meeting 6.12.14***
- ***Advisory committee meeting 1.25.16***

***A project website has been maintained during the duration of the study at [www.I375detroit.com](http://www.I375detroit.com) and a project email of [i375detroit@degc.org](mailto:i375detroit@degc.org) has been used for soliciting comments. This website has provided updates on the study and contains important project documentation, including public meeting material and public meeting comments. MDOT has developed a project website at [www.michigan.gov/I375study](http://www.michigan.gov/I375study) to maintain access to the study documents for the public.***

5. Purpose and Need for the PEL study:

- A. What was the scope of the PEL study and the reason for completing it?

***The study is the culmination of multiple interests coming together at the same time. I-375 is in need of future reconstruction due to the age of facilities. In addition, the freeway serves as an important connection to Downtown Detroit, the East Riverfront, Eastern Market, Detroit –Windsor Tunnel and significant enterprises located on Jefferson Avenue. The composition of downtown Detroit is changing; new residents and businesses are populating downtown, significant developments are expected, and transportation and circulation needs are changing as a result. Given these factors,***

***MDOT and other project partners are interested in reviewing alternatives that will best address the future transportation needs of I-375.***

- B. Provide the purpose and need statement, or the corridor vision and transportation goals and objectives to realize that vision.

***Project Purpose:***

***The purpose is to identify a transportation improvement alternative that will:***

- Address the deterioration of the bridges and roadway with an appropriate solution which considers long-term life-cycle costs.***
- Address existing and future transportation needs and roadway safety for all users.***
- Consider connectivity improvements to surrounding areas for both vehicular and non-motorized users, and also consider connections to existing and planned transit services.***
- Enable potential economic development opportunities along the corridor which support official land use plans and long-term development objectives.***

***Project Need***

***The proposed project will address the following:***

- Deteriorated bridges crossing I-375, which are over 50 years old, and deteriorated pavement conditions.***
- Outdated existing geometric conditions, such as ramp widths and sharp curvature at the south end of the corridor, along with insufficient weave/merge areas, which result in elevated crash rates and increased congestion.***
- Lack of a direct connection for vehicles and pedestrians to the developing East Riverfront from the I-375 corridor.***
- Poor connectivity and confusing access to downtown destinations through the I-75/I-375 interchange and Gratiot Avenue Connector.***
- Operational congestion and safety issues along the Jefferson Avenue corridor west of I-375 due to high volumes and inefficient left turning movements.***
- Poor environment in I-375 and Jefferson Avenue corridors for transit and non-motorized travel, including long pedestrian crossing distances, lack of bike facilities, and poor connectivity to existing transit services.***

***Project Goals:***

- Enhance the transportation network and preserve safety.***
  - Meet the transportation needs for future demands.***
  - Improve transit connectivity and enhance non-motorized opportunities.***
  - Provide cost effective long term roadway infrastructure solution.***

- *Improve public safety.*
- *Support or enhance community quality of life.*
  - *Provide vibrant entrance into downtown Detroit.*
  - *Engage community for vision of alternative concepts for I-375 corridor.*
  - *Identify opportunities for aesthetic treatments that support the community character.*
  - *Improve connectivity to the Riverfront, Greektown, Stadiums, and Eastern Market.*
  - *Improve image and attractiveness of corridor.*
- *Enhance economic opportunities.*
  - *Consider alternatives that will enhance the development potential.*
  - *Explore innovative funding opportunities.*
  - *Support local community land use plans.*
- *Preserve environmental resources.*
  - *Minimize impacts to natural features.*
  - *Minimize impacts to community landmarks and historic resources.*
  - *Improve storm water quality.*
  - *Minimize air and noise impacts on adjacent neighborhoods.*

C. What steps will need to be taken during the NEPA process to make this a project-level purpose and need statement?

***The Purpose & Need was developed to function as a project-level statement during the PEL study and should require little or no refinement.***

6. Range of alternatives: Planning teams need to be cautious during the alternative screen process; alternative screening should focus on purpose and need/corridor vision, fatal flaw analysis, and possibly mode selection. This may help minimize problems during discussions with resource agencies. Alternatives that have fatal flaws or do not meet the purpose and need/corridor vision will not be considered reasonable alternatives, even if they reduce impacts to a particular resource. Detail the range of alternatives considered, screening criteria, and screening process, including:

A. What types of alternatives were looked at? (Provide a one or two sentence summary and reference document.)

***Six alternatives were presented as Illustrative Alternatives. Alternative #1 is considered the baseline alternative with no changes to the existing footprint. Alternatives #2 thru #6 present different options to meet the P&N. See the final I-375 Report for details.***

B. How did you select the screening criteria and screening process? ***Alternatives were not screened as part of this PEL.***

C. For alternative(s) that were screened out, briefly summarize the reasons for eliminating the alternative(s). (During the initial screenings, this generally will focus on fatal flaws.)  
*N/A*

D. Which alternatives should be brought forward into NEPA and why? ***All six alternatives will be brought forward into NEPA.***

E. Did the public, stakeholders, and agencies have an opportunity to comment during this process? ***The six alternatives were presented to the stakeholders and the public during meetings held on June 11<sup>th</sup> and June 12<sup>th</sup>. The schedule of public and stakeholder***

*meetings is listed above in 4A. Comments were received from the public during the February 12<sup>th</sup> and June 12<sup>th</sup> meetings. Comments from the stakeholders and public are summarized in the final I-375 Report. Comments were also solicited thru the project website; [www.I375detroit.com](http://www.I375detroit.com) and email address; [i375detroit@degc.org](mailto:i375detroit@degc.org)*

F. Were there unresolved issues with the public, stakeholders, and/or agencies? **Yes. Issues remain with all six alternatives that will need to be resolved during the NEPA phase.**

7. Planning assumptions and analytical methods:

A. What is the forecast year used in the PEL study? **2040**

B. What method was used for forecasting traffic volumes? **SEMCOG's 2040 traffic model was used.**

C. Are the planning assumptions and the corridor vision/purpose and need statement consistent with each other and with the long-range transportation plan? Are the assumptions still valid? **Yes**

D. What were the future year policy and/or data assumptions used in the transportation planning process related to land use, economic development, transportation costs, and network expansion? **2040**

8. Environmental resources (wetlands, cultural, etc.) reviewed. For each resource or group of resources reviewed, provide the following:

A. In the PEL study, at what level of detail was the resource reviewed and what was the method of review? **A cursory review of environmental resources in the project area was completed as part of the study. Additionally, early coordination letters were sent to resource agencies that had potential impacts. Response letters were received from HUD, MDEQ and MDNR indicating further coordination is needed during NEPA.**

B. Is this resource present in the area and what is the existing environmental condition for this resource? **N/A**

C. What are the issues that need to be considered during NEPA, including potential resource impacts and potential mitigation requirements (if known)? **N/A**

D. How will the planning data provided need to be supplemented during NEPA? **N/A**

9. List environmental resources you are aware of that were not reviewed in the PEL study and why. Indicate whether or not they will need to be reviewed in NEPA and explain why. **Air and noise impacts will need to be reviewed in NEPA, in addition to other impacts.**

10. Were cumulative impacts considered in the PEL study? If yes, provide the information or reference where the analysis can be found. **No. This will also be addressed during NEPA.**

11. Describe any mitigation strategies discussed at the planning level that should be analyzed during NEPA. **Preliminary discussions were held with Christ Church as parking impacts may occur to their property from some of the illustrative alternatives considered. Context Sensitive Solution commitments should finalized during NEPA.**

12. What needs to be done during NEPA to make information from the PEL study available to the agencies and the public? Are there PEL study products which can be used or provided to agencies or the public during the NEPA scoping process? **Information from this PEL study will be available on MDOT's website at [www.michigan.gov/I375study](http://www.michigan.gov/I375study)**

13. Are there any other issues a future project team should be aware of? **Yes, these are outlined in the final I-375 report. The Advisory committee should be engaged during NEPA.**

A. Examples: Controversy, utility problems, access or ROW issues, encroachments into ROW, problematic land owners and/or groups, contact information for stakeholders, special or unique resources in the area, etc.

## Wallace, Kelby (MDOT)

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**From:** patrick.marchman@dot.gov  
**Sent:** Monday, February 22, 2016 2:46 PM  
**To:** Wallace, Kelby (MDOT)  
**Cc:** Jeff.Forster@dot.gov  
**Subject:** RE: I-375 Alternatives Study

Good afternoon –

FHWA concurs with the attached PEL checklist. Thanks very much.

- Patrick

**Patrick Marchman, AICP**  
517-702-1820  
[Patrick.marchman@dot.gov](mailto:Patrick.marchman@dot.gov)

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**From:** Wallace, Kelby (MDOT) [mailto:WallaceK@michigan.gov]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 18, 2016 1:27 PM  
**To:** Forster, Jeff (FHWA); Bourgeau, Alex; sunjac@detroitmi.gov; 'watamminga@degc.org'; Shogan, Scott (Shogan@pbworld.com) (Shogan@pbworld.com); Karen Slaughter-Duperry  
**Cc:** Ayers, Geralyn (MDOT); Marchman, Patrick (FHWA); 'brundidger@detroitmi.gov'; palombo@semcog.org  
**Subject:** RE: I-375 Alternatives Study

I-375 Alternatives Study Technical Committee,

We held the final I-375 advisory committee meeting on January 25, 2016 during which we explained that this current study will end with all six illustrative alternatives remaining for further study. The final presentation is available on MDOT's website at: [www.michigan.gov/I375study](http://www.michigan.gov/I375study)

As part of wrapping up this study, MDOT would like to finalize the Planning & Environmental Linkages (PEL) checklist, which will document the work completed under this study to be utilized in the future environmental study on the I-375 corridor which will follow the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The main activities outlined in the attached document that would be carried forward are the Traffic Report, Purpose & Need, Community Outreach and the six Illustrative Alternatives.

At this time MDOT is requesting your agency's concurrence on the attached PEL checklist. If possible, please reply by email or contact me with any questions by February 26<sup>th</sup>.

Thanks and contact me with any questions.

Kelby Wallace, PE  
MDOT – Design Programs Manager

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**From:** Wallace, Kelby (MDOT)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 25, 2015 3:05 PM  
**To:** 'Patrick.marchman@dot.gov' <[Patrick.marchman@dot.gov](mailto:Patrick.marchman@dot.gov)>; Forster, Jeff ([jeff.forster@dot.gov](mailto:jeff.forster@dot.gov)) <[jeff.forster@dot.gov](mailto:jeff.forster@dot.gov)>; 'Bourgeau, Alex' <[bourgeau@semcog.org](mailto:bourgeau@semcog.org)>; 'palombo@semcog.org' <[palombo@semcog.org](mailto:palombo@semcog.org)>; 'sunjac@detroitmi.gov' <[sunjac@detroitmi.gov](mailto:sunjac@detroitmi.gov)>; [brundidger@detroitmi.gov](mailto:brundidger@detroitmi.gov)  
**Cc:** 'watamminga@degc.org' <[watamminga@degc.org](mailto:watamminga@degc.org)>; 'Karen Slaughter-Duperry' <[Karen.S.Duperry@DetroitRiverFront.org](mailto:Karen.S.Duperry@DetroitRiverFront.org)>; Shogan, Scott ([Shogan@pbworld.com](mailto:Shogan@pbworld.com)) ([Shogan@pbworld.com](mailto:Shogan@pbworld.com)) <[Shogan@pbworld.com](mailto:Shogan@pbworld.com)>; Ayers, GERALYN (MDOT) <[AYERSG@michigan.gov](mailto:AYERSG@michigan.gov)>; Morosi, Robert (MDOT) <[MorosiR@michigan.gov](mailto:MorosiR@michigan.gov)>  
**Subject:** I-375 Alternatives Study

I apologize for the lack of information on this project, although little has occurred since we last communicated.

After coordination between MDOT, the city of Detroit and DRFC, it was decided to conclude this I-375 Alternatives study with all six illustrative alternatives remaining for further study. Results completed under this study are envisioned to be used during a future analysis required under the National Environmental Policy Act.

One of the reasons for moving in this direction is that several other planning initiatives are underway and will impact the I-375 corridor, such as the East Jefferson/Riverfront study by the DRFC, Eastern Market's long range plan, Brewster Douglass development, and M-3 (Gratiot Avenue) as a Bus Rapid Transit Route and its connection to I-375.

We intend to hold a final advisory committee meeting on January 25, 2016 at 9 am in order to share this information. A separate invitation will be sent to you for that meeting.

I ask that you hold this information internally until we are able to inform the entire advisory committee on January 25th.

Thanks and please contact me with any questions.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Kelby Wallace, PE  
MDOT – Design Programs Manager

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**To:** Wallace, Kelby (MDOT); Forster, Jeff (jeff.forster@dot.gov); sunjac@detroitmi.gov; 'watamminga@degc.org'; Shogan, Scott (Shogan@pbworld.com) (Shogan@pbworld.com); Karen Slaughter-Duperry  
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**Subject:** RE: I-375 Alternatives Study

Kelby,

Carmine and I took a read and it looks good to us.

Nice job to you and Scott on a tough project!

Alex

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**Sent:** Thursday, February 18, 2016 1:26 PM  
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**Cc:** 'watamminga@degc.org' <[watamminga@degc.org](mailto:watamminga@degc.org)>; 'Karen Slaughter-Duperry' <[Karen.S.Duperry@DetroitRiverFront.org](mailto:Karen.S.Duperry@DetroitRiverFront.org)>; Shogan, Scott ([Shogan@pbworld.com](mailto:Shogan@pbworld.com)) ([Shogan@pbworld.com](mailto:Shogan@pbworld.com)) <[Shogan@pbworld.com](mailto:Shogan@pbworld.com)>; Ayers, GERALYN (MDOT) <[AYERSG@michigan.gov](mailto:AYERSG@michigan.gov)>; Morosi, Robert (MDOT) <[MorosiR@michigan.gov](mailto:MorosiR@michigan.gov)>  
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