



**I-375 COMMUNITY
CONVERSATION #1
SUMMARY**
May 17, 2017

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	2
2	Community Conversation.....	2
3	Notifications.....	2
4	Materials.....	3
5	Comments.....	3
5.1	Multi- Modal.....	3
5.2	Traffic and Congestion	3
5.3	Pedestrian	3
5.4	Connectivity.....	4
5.5	Development	4
5.6	Safety	4
5.7	Protect Neighborhoods	4
5.8	History	4
6	Conclusion and Next Steps.....	5

1 Introduction

The I-375 Improvement Project will address the need for updates to the timeworn infrastructure, including the roadway and bridges. The corridor has been the subject of multiple studies in the past including early 2000's and again in 2014. The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to clear identified improvements in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In the initial phase of the EA, MDOT hosted a Community Conversation to reintroduce the project to the community, explain the EA process, and reopen the dialogue for the future of I-375.

2 Community Conversation

A Community Conversation was held on May 17, 2017 at Eastern Market in Shed 5. The location was selected to accommodate those who live and work in the corridor, as well as other invested stakeholders in the project. The sign-in sheets recorded a total of 84 attendees.

Table 1: Meeting Logistics

Date/Location	Location	Time	Attendance
May 17, 2017	Eastern Market, Shed 5 2934 Russell Street Detroit, MI 48207	5:00 PM – 7:30 PM	84

3 Notifications

A press release was issued on May 2, 2017 notifying the public of the Community Conversation. MDOT also reached out to the community through the two project advisory committees, asking every member to reach out to their communities to share the invite.



4 Materials

The public was first welcomed at a registration table where they were asked to sign-in. They were then invited to speak with staff and review roll plots that were laid out detailing each alternative. The meeting was organized around a presentation given by MDOT and the City of Detroit, with two roundtable breakout discussions. The first roundtable discussion engaged the group on “Why Here? Why Now? And Purpose and Need”, and the second roundtable discussion focused on the review of the Illustrative Alternatives. The Shed was outfitted with 19 round tables for attendees, with a project facilitator at each table to moderate the breakout conversations and record comments.

Each seat was set with an informational placemat and kicker card with project contact information. The placemats contained a project description, area map, timeline, and comment section. The placemats were collected at the end of the meeting and recorded as comments for the EA. Also at the tables was a reference book containing the NEPA process, the project’s Purpose and Need, and each of the existing Illustrative Alternatives accompanied by a description. Lastly, an existing transit map of the area was included at each table.

5 Comments

At the meeting attendees were encouraged to submit comments in a variety of ways. Comments were collected on MDOT comment forms spread throughout the meeting space, on the placemats set up at each seat, and at the tables as facilitators scribed comments during the roundtable discussions. All of the comments were compiled into a database for inclusion in the EA process.



5.1 Multi- Modal

Multi-modal access was mentioned frequently at the meeting. Stakeholders expressed concern with the accessibility of pedestrians, vehicles and bicycles. Comments reflected the desire to have more bicycle and pedestrian friendly access to the corridor, as well as more non-motorized options. Stakeholders were receptive of more bike lanes, improved conditions for all modes, and better interactions between the different modes of travel.

5.2 Traffic and Congestion

Traffic was the most popular themes mentioned in comments. Comments cited the need to mitigate traffic, especially if the freeway is brought to grade. Concerns mentioned were the impact to the other local roads, congestion at the Lafayette exit due to Greektown and special events, the negative impacts to traffic from the I-75/I-375 Interchange, and the increase in traffic as downtown Detroit continues to grow. It was also expressed that none of the alternatives would be adequate to address the traffic problems that are happening currently. Recommendations included incorporating Mack Avenue into the study, widening the Mack Avenue exit, and slowing traffic.

5.3 Pedestrian

Comments about pedestrians focused around safety, access, and amenities. Feedback reflected that users feel the facility is not user-friendly or a walkable space, specifically going east or west across I-375. The walking conditions were referred to as “poor”, “dangerous”, and a “death walk”. Many of the commenters noted that they cross I-375 on foot and would like to see pedestrian access improved, including improvements to sidewalks, signals, and separation from vehicular traffic.



5.4 Connectivity

Stakeholder commented that they interact with I-375 in a variety of ways. They use it to travel to and from downtown Detroit, cross it to get to and from Lafayette Park and surrounding neighborhoods, access to events, restaurants, education, and church. Comments expressed the desire of the community to both preserve the existing access and to improve connectivity. One area that received support for additional connectivity, is access to the Riverfront. Comments came in on both sides to bridge the division created by the freeway, with some wishing to preserve the connectivity to downtown from the north for commuters and others wishing to repair the gap between downtown and the neighborhoods to the east.

5.5 Development

Concern was expressed over what kind of development would result from any alterations to the I-375 corridor. Comments called for the new development to match the existing character of the surrounding land uses, specifically the residential uses, and to create a sense of place. The question was also raised as to how

the developable land is procured and what the process is to determine its future use. Stakeholders also questioned the possibility of developing parking with the available land. It was noted that there is potential to create opportunities for minority businesses.

5.6 Safety

Safety concerns surrounded the experience of all users on I-375, calling it confusing and dangerous. Frequently mentioned was the safety needs of bicyclists and pedestrian on the corridor and the need to improve crossings, crumbling sidewalks, and adding bike lanes. Also mentioned were the unsafe merging, weaving, and backups that lead to accidents on the freeway. Some comments recommended putting people first over cars, and shifting the focus away from a car-centric space.

5.7 Protect Neighborhoods

With I-375 as a divider between downtown and the neighborhoods to the east, many comments came in requesting that, regardless of the outcome, the character of the neighborhoods be preserved. The neighborhoods surrounding Lafayette were specifically mentioned. Comments requested the need to protect the integrity and stability of the neighborhoods by providing a buffer, and by preventing an increase in noise.



5.8 History

In both the oral and written comments, it was expressed that the project should include a memorialization to acknowledge the history of the corridor and its placement through the historic Paradise Valley and Black Bottom neighborhoods. Requests were made to repair the division made by the corridor and the possibility of renaming the road Hastings Street if it does become a boulevard. Also, Lafayette Park residents want to retain quality of life as a historically significant neighborhood.

6 Conclusion and Next Steps

The Community Conversation presented updated project information, requested feedback on next steps, and facilitated an open dialogue between stakeholders, MDOT and the City of Detroit. Almost all the feedback acknowledged the need to improve I-375, regardless of the selected alternative. Comments came in to support all the alternatives, requests to improve traffic and congestion, and improve access for all modes.

Following the I-375 Community Conversation, the team will continue to analyze the feedback received and engage the community. The project has two advisory committees, that meet monthly to provide feedback on the project and relay that information to their respective organizations. In addition to stakeholder engagement the team will begin the technical analysis, including screening the alternatives down from six Illustrative Alternatives to two Practical Alternatives. The Project will return at that point to present new information to stakeholders at another community conversation.