Detroit River International Crossing Study
Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQs)
By Topic Area
December 2008

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Basic Background Questions

Q1: Why did you do the study?

The study was essential to identify solutions that support the national, regional and local economies while addressing civil and national defense and homeland security needs of the busiest trade corridor in North America. (See "Questions related to the need for a new crossing" section for more details)

Q2: How did the DRIC study begin?

The two federal government transportation agencies – the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Transport Canada – and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) plus the Ontario Ministry of Transportation formed a partnership in 2000. The partnership was formed following a 1998 Freight Transportation System Study by the Ministry of Transportation, Ontario looking at cross border freight activity. The purpose of the partnership is to provide for the safe, efficient and secure movement of people and goods across the U.S.-Canada border at the Detroit River in order to support the economies of Michigan, Ontario, Canada and the United States.

Q3: Who supports the DRIC study?

The following are our strong supporters:

- The President of the United States
- Brooks Patterson, Oakland County Executive
- The National Manufacturers Association, led by the former Governor of Michigan, John Engler
- A number of Michigan Legislators
- The Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce
- The City of Detroit Planning Commission
- The Delray Community Council
- The Southwest Detroit Community, and its current State Representative, Steve Tobocman
- Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers
- American Chamber of Commerce in Canada
- Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association
- Canadian Association of Importers and Exporters
- Canadian Automotive Partnership Council
- Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters
- Canadian Vehicle Manufacturer's Association
- Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance
- Gateway Communities Development Collaborative
- Michigan Manufacturers Association
- Ontario Chamber of Commerce
- Ontario Trucking Association

Q4: What area is being focused on?

Near the end of 2005, the DRIC study team identified an Area of Continued Analysis, which lies between Zug Island and the Ambassador Bridge in the U.S. That area defines a river crossing location that will meet the transportation demands of the region; provides for a corridor that will allow for the separation of international and local traffic; is most consistent with existing and

proposed land use; does not destroy natural environmental and recreational features; and, is intended to address community concerns. But, it is recognized, given the nature and extent of land uses and development along the Detroit River, it will not be possible to avoid impacts on local communities. The goal of the Partnership is to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to the greatest practical extent. (See "Questions related to environmental and community impacts" section for more details)

Q5: When will a final decision be made on a new crossing?

A decision on the location of the new crossing was made in late spring of 2008. The Final Environmental Impact Statement was signed by the Federal Highway Administration on November 21, 2008.

Q6: Who makes the final decision on the border crossing route?

In the United States, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and requires approval by the FHWA. In Canada, the studies are being carried out under the requirements of the Ontario Environmental Assessment (EA) Act and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. The EA Report requires approval by the Ontario Minister of the Environment. This approval will be coordinated with the federal process.

Q7: When will a new bridge be opened if the DRIC study process continues on its current schedule?

A new river crossing resulting from the DRIC process would likely start construction in 2010 and be open to traffic in 2015.

Questions related to the need for a new crossing

Q8: How was the need for a new river crossing between Detroit and Windsor determined?

The Planning/Needs and Feasibility Study was conducted between 2000 and 2004 to identify if an additional connection between Detroit and Windsor was needed for capacity purposes and, if so, when. That study showed a need for additional capacity within the next 20 years.

In addition, the events of September 11, 2001 and their aftermath focused attention on facilities and locations that have iconic value, military importance, or that play a critical role in the nation's economic well being. Michigan's border crossings to Canada meet all three of those criteria. In terms of transportation facilities, structures of iconic value are best protected by improving security in and around the subject facility. The transportation facilities that serve military and economic needs are best addressed by improving the flexibility and redundancy of the basic transportation networks.

When the DRIC study was formally initiated in 2004, its purpose was to address four specific needs:

- Provide new border crossing capacity to meet increased long-term demand;
- Improve system connectivity to enhance the seamless flow of people and goods;
- Improve operations and processing capability; and,
- Provide reasonable and secure crossing options in the event of incidents, maintenance, congestion, or other disruptions

Q9: How high a priority does the new crossing have in the context of other transportation priorities in Michigan and Ontario?

It is a top priority for the State of Michigan, MDOT and the Federal Highway Administration. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) has added this project to its Long Range Plan. Infrastructure improvements in the Detroit-Windsor area, including a new crossing of the Detroit River, have been identified as high priorities for Canada and Ontario as well.

Q10: Was the Gateway Project designed for the purpose of twinning the Ambassador Bridge?

The Gateway Project received approval for an improved plaza and a direct connection from it to the freeway system. The plaza now ties into the local street system. Approval of the Gateway Project did not include approval for a second span of the Ambassador Bridge, as no analysis of a second span was included in the environmental documentation.

Questions related to the Ambassador Bridge and their proposed project.

Q11: Why was a second span of the Ambassador Bridge dropped from the DRIC study process?

When a twinned Ambassador Bridge was evaluated as part of the DRIC study, the DRIC Steering Committee, composed of representatives from the four cooperating governments, concluded that the social and economic impacts of widening the existing approach road on the Canadian side of the border were unacceptable, and that continuing to concentrate all the border traffic into one corridor, with one set of plazas failed to create the redundancy necessary to address economic security concerns.

Q12: What does this mean with respect to the recent proposal by the Ambassador Bridge owners to move forward with plans for a second span to their bridge and a bigger plaza?

The DRIC and the proposed "Enhancement Project" at the Ambassador Bridge are totally separate and independent. Both projects are going through the same review on both sides of the border. Those processes will allow a decision to be made as to which project should proceed, or possibly that both projects should proceed.

Q13: If the Ambassador Bridge is successful in building a second span, would that change the DRIC's assumptions about the need for a new crossing?

At the beginning of the process it was determined that at least six (and possibly as many as 10) additional lanes were needed between Detroit and Windsor to accommodate the expected future traffic. The Ambassador Bridge Company's current proposal is to replace their four-lane bridge with a six-lane bridge. This still leaves a need for at least four additional lanes to accommodate the expected future traffic. The DRIC and Ambassador Bridge projects complement each other.

Q14: If the DRIC is stopped, does that mean that the Ambassador Bridge proposal goes forward?

The DRIC process and the process for proceeding with the proposed "Enhancement Project" at the Ambassador Bridge are separate and independent. Activities (or lack thereof) in one process have no impact on the other process.

A twinned Ambassador Bridge proposal has already been rejected by the DRIC Steering Committee as part of the DRIC study process. While the current proposal by the Ambassador

Bridge Company is different than the option studied by the DRIC team, it continues to be opposed by both the City of Windsor and residents in the area adjacent to the existing bridge and plaza. This is due to the expected impacts a new proposal may have on the area.

Q15: What are the implications if the DRIC study is stopped and another crossing is not built?

The economic consequences for Michigan and Ontario are significant – as many as 42,000 lost jobs over the next 30 years (26,000 in Michigan and 16,000 in Ontario). The outlook is even worse for the U.S. and Canada – almost 100,000 total lost jobs by 2035 if this study were stopped and a new bridge were not built. (See DRIC Economic Impact Study)

Questions related to the cost of the study or the costs of the new bridge

Q16: How much has been spent so far on this study in the U.S.? How much more will be spent?

In the U.S., $29.9 million has been spent as of December 15, 2008. The total approved budget for the U.S. study is $33.1 million. (See "Questions related to brine wells and drilling" section for more details).

Q17: What are comparable studies costing?

The Louisville Bridges EIS cost $21 million, without the substantial drilling/field work of the DRIC study.

Q18: It has been suggested that the proposed Ambassador Bridge replacement span will be cheaper to build than the proposed DRIC bridge. Is this true?

The DRIC project costs and the Ambassador Bridge project costs are similar. While we don't have accurate cost information for the Ambassador Bridge proposed second span, based on figures presented in their draft environmental document and on estimates published in the press, the estimated cost on the U.S./Michigan side of the border for the Ambassador Bridge's proposed second span ranges between $1.14 and $1.35 billion. The estimated cost on the U.S./Michigan side of the border for the proposed new DRIC project is about $1.85 billion. This cost includes right-of-way acquisition, the plaza, the interchange with I-75, the U.S./Michigan half of the bridge cost, and inflation through the end of construction in 2015. Each project's elements will be funded through a combination of public and private investments.

Q19: What is the projected U.S. cost of the proposed DRIC border crossing?

The Final Environmental Impact Statement presents a U.S. cost of $1.85 billion in year of expenditure dollars. This cost includes right-of-way acquisition, the plaza, the interchange with I-75, the U.S./Michigan half of the bridge cost, and inflation through the end of construction in 2015, the year that the crossing is scheduled to open to traffic.

Q20: How will the DRIC bridge be financed?

The DRIC bridge will be financed in much the same way as all other international bridges and tunnels. There are three major components of the facility - bridge, plaza and freeway interchange; each is financed differently.

The financing for bridge construction is secured by future toll revenues. In essence, the users of the bridge pay through tolls for the construction of the bridge, the interest costs on the

construction financing, and the day-to-day operations and maintenance of the bridge.. This is the same mechanism used by the Detroit International Bridge Company (DIBC), owners of the Ambassador Bridge

The cost of the plaza, where the various border protection services are conducted, is recouped from the General Services Administration (GSA), the property ownership and management arm of the federal government. Depending on the situation, GSA either owns the plaza property and buildings used by the various border inspection agencies (like at the International Bridge in Sault Ste. Marie), or it leases the facilities from the bridge owner/operator (like at the Blue Water Bridge and the privately owned Ambassador Bridge).

The third component, the freeway interchange, is financed as a normal highway project, with 80% of the cost coming from federal transportation funds and 20% of the cost coming from state and local transportation funds. This is the mechanism that is paying for the Gateway Project at the Ambassador Bridge.

Questions related to ownership and operation

Q21: Will new border crossings be privately or publicly-owned?

The Partnership is committed to public ownership for the new crossing. The priority is to make sure the Detroit River border crossings are secure, safe, efficient, and well-managed. Details of the final ownership model among the partners are still to be resolved. Work is ongoing on both sides of the border to examine potential governance and ownership models for a new border crossing. The options being considered include government ownership, various forms of collaboration with the private sector, and/or creation of an authority.

We are continuing to work toward reaching an agreement on the best option for management of new border crossings.

Q22: It has been said that the new crossing should be built by the private sector to save Michigan taxpayers the expense. What is your position on that?

First, the private sector may very well build the new crossing, whether it is the proposed replacement span suggested by the Detroit International Bridge Company (DIBC) or the new span proposed by the DRIC study team. But, in the case of the proposed DRIC span, the private sector will not own it. In either case – public or private ownership – it will be the users of that new bridge, paying tolls to cross the border, which will pay for the facility, not the taxpayers.

Q23: Why would you want to build a bridge at taxpayers' expense when the owner of the Ambassador Bridge would build it for free?

The contention that the DIBC project is free is incorrect. Tolls are the financing mechanism. They are paid by the bridge users, not the taxpayers.

Q24: Why should government have a role in the new border crossing?

The border crossings between Michigan and Canada are central to the economic well-being of Michigan and Ontario, as well as the United States and Canada. The economic and physical security of our state and nation are a public responsibility.

Q25: What is a Public-Private Partnership?

A Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) involves a contractual relationship between a public sector entity and a private sector partner for the provision of infrastructure or services for a specified period of time. The partnership is built on the expertise of each partner that best meets clearly-defined public needs, through the most appropriate allocation of resources, risks, and rewards.

Q26: What are the benefits of a PPP?

Benefits of a public-private partnership include:

- Appropriate sharing of risks between the government and the private sector. For instance, cost overruns and delays to projects could be shifted from the taxpayer to the private sector.
- A "whole life" approach could be used in the delivery of the project with the private sector having responsibility for the design and delivery of the project and also the long-term operations and maintenance of the new crossing.
- The partnership could bring in the private sector's expertise, efficiencies and innovation in delivering this large-scale infrastructure project.
- PPPs foster competition in the private sector to provide government and the public with the best value.

Q27: Is a PPP the same as privatization?

A PPP is not the same as privatization. With a PPP, the public sector forms a contractual partnership with the private sector. Through this contract, the government maintains an oversight and quality assurance role while the private sector is more closely involved in the actual delivery of the service or project. Moreover, government could also retain ownership of the underlying asset.

Q28: What is the private sector's role in a Public/Private Partnership?

The private sector's role depends on the type of delivery model used for the project, and may include design, procurement, financing, construction, operation and/or maintenance of the facility.

Q29: Is a public-private partnership being considered for the new river crossing between Detroit and Windsor?

Yes, together with our bi-national partners, MDOT is examining the opportunity for private sector participation in the design, construction, financing, operation and maintenance of the new crossing. However, the new river crossing will be publicly owned.

Q30: Is MDOT considering other options to a PPP?

Yes. MDOT is committed to selecting the option that provides the greatest value for taxpayers while still maintaining appropriate public oversight of the new border crossing.

Alternative options to a PPP for the new crossing will be considered if:

- Appropriate public control and ownership cannot be preserved.
- Value for money cannot be demonstrated.
- Accountability and transparency cannot be assured.
- There is lack of interest from the private sector.

Q31: Why did you not consider another way to deliver the crossing, such as a bi-national authority?

MDOT and its bi-national partners are considering various models that would enable the crossing to be operated as a single facility and we are interested in attracting significant private sector participation. A bi-national authority is one of the options being studied.

Q32: How will a PPP be different from the current arrangement with the privately-run Ambassador Bridge?

Unlike a PPP arrangement, the Ambassador Bridge, as a privately-owned and operated crossing, has no contractual relationship with any government authority. The Ambassador Bridge is, however, subject to all relevant laws and regulations that are in place. Under a P3 arrangement, there would be government ownership.

Questions related to brine wells and drilling

Q33: What are brine wells and why are they a concern?

Brine wells are a method for mining salt. Using this method involves drilling a hole into the salt bearing layer of the rock. Water is pumped down the well shaft, where it dissolves the salt and is then pumped out as brine. The water is evaporated, leaving the salt behind to be used for either human consumption (table salt, pickling brines, etc.) or for industrial purposes.

This method of salt mining is still used today in the Windsor area; however, in the Detroit area, salt miners have switched to the room and pillar method of mining.

Brine wells can become a problem if the size of the cavern created from the extraction of the salt is too large and the remaining salt and rocks no longer provide adequate support for the overbearing rock strata. Over time the unsupported rock may collapse into the cavern and this can result in the formation of sinkholes on the surface. With room and pillar mining, the size of the caverns created by the mining activity can be precisely controlled to ensure that adequate support for the overbearing rock strata is maintained to prevent the sort of collapse that can lead to the creation of sinkholes

If a sinkhole were to develop under or near the foundations of a major bridge, like a bridge that would be needed to span the Detroit River, it could be disastrous.

We have been able to document the existence of a number of former brine well sites on Zug Island and there is evidence that there may be additional undocumented former brine well sites east of the Rouge River, in the area known today as Delray. Because of this uncertainty regarding both the existence and number of former brine well sites in the Delray area, the DRIC study team decided to include a more extensive geotechnical investigation of the area than is normally included in a study of this nature.

Q34: What is the current status of the drilling program?

The geotechnical investigation has been completed. There are no risks from brine wells to the new main bridge foundations on either side of the border.

Q35: What was the cost of the drilling program?

On the U.S. side of the river, the drilling program cost approximately $11M.

Q36: What are the results of the drilling program?

A panel of 12 experts (six from the U.S. and six from Canada) carefully reviewed the data collected from the drilling program on both sides of the border, and the analysis of that data by the project study team. On February 13, 2008, the Geotechnical Advisory Group issued its specific findings in a memo, which is included in the Draft EIS and available to the public (see Appendix G of the Draft EIS). The consensus of the Advisory Group is that the consultant's conclusions for the purposes of setting the bridge alignment and foundation locations provide a reasonable level of confidence and are an appropriate basis for decision-making for this project.

Questions related to environmental and community impacts

Q37: What is the position of the U.S. community where the new border crossing would land in the United States?

The community is known as Delray and many of its citizens have been supportive of the DRIC process because they view the project as an opportunity to revitalize their community. Recently, members of the Delray community have expressed dissatisfaction with the study team's inability to identify the exact property costs and this has contributed to the difficulty in finding partners to develop new community housing as discussed in community CSS meetings. We hope to resolve this issue after the Record of Decision is issued by FHWA and we are able to begin appraising property. We continue to discuss enhancements with the community that will accompany this project.

Q38: Will a new bridge cause additional traffic which will ultimately affect the infrastructure of communities in the immediate and surrounding vicinity?

Detailed traffic analyses of the DRIC and a comparable study of the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal Study indicate traffic associated with either project will not cause traffic congestion in the Southwest Detroit community.

Also, the study includes community master planning involving the people in Delray and the adjacent areas. Part of that master planning will be to look for better ways to channel the trucks servicing the local businesses to specific truck corridors in order to reduce and better manage their use of the residential streets. (See "Questions related to traffic and traffic forecasting" section for more details)

Q39: What do you say to the people of Delray who feel threatened by this decision?

We have been and will continue to work with the people of Delray and the surrounding communities to minimize and mitigate impacts as the project moves forward. To that end, dozens of meetings have been and more will be held during the design and construction phases.

Q40: What will you do to protect historic communities and homes once you've identified the preferred crossing?

Given the nature and extent of land uses and development along the Detroit River in both the U.S. and Canada, it will not be possible to build a new or expanded river crossing system that entirely avoids impacts on local communities. The goal is to meet the purpose of the project, while avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating impacts to the extent practical.

The Preferred Alternative has been identified and specific unavoidable impacts will be minimized and mitigated, as defined in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) / Final Section 4(f) Evaluation. .

Q41: What places of worship may be potentially impacted by a proposed new border crossing?

Up to five places of worship will be potentially impacted by a new border crossing:

First Latin American
New Day Church of Deliverance
Saint Paul AME Church
Detroit Friends Meeting "Quakers"
Abundant Life Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church

Q42: Is the Delray area selected because the people there are poor and minorities?

No. Other alternatives, such as in the Belle Isle Area, Ecorse and Lincoln Park, would have affected significant concentrations of people who are poor and of minority origin and those options have been eliminated. The DRIC study will continue to focus on the location and needs of these very important population groups.

Q43: What opportunities are there for us to challenge potential route locations? How can we be heard?

Local Advisory Council meetings are held regularly; locations and times are available to the public in advance at www.partnershipborderstudy.com. These meetings are open to attendance by the public, with an opportunity for public comment at the beginning and end of each meeting. An LAC meeting was held on December 10, 2008, at Southwestern High School to present the FEIS to the Local Advisory Council. Written comments on the FEIS may be submitted through the project Web site at www.partnershipborderstudy.com, or mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to:

Robert H. Parsons, Public Involvement and Hearings Officer
425 W. Ottawa
P.O. Box 30050
Lansing, Mi 48909

E-mail: parsonsb@michigan.gov
Fax: 517-373-9255
Phone: 517-373-9534

Any comments on the FEIS must be received by January 5, 2009. Comments on the study in general may be directed to Mohammed Alghurabi at Alghurabim@michigan.gov.

Q44: The proposed air quality analysis does not include a health risk assessment. How can federal guidelines governing health impact studies be changed?

Changing these guidelines requires either federal legislation, and/or action by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Q45: What are the factors that were used in conducting the analysis?

- Changes in air quality
- Protect community and neighborhood characteristics (includes noise, business, community features)
- Maintain consistency with existing and planned land use
- Protect cultural resources
- Protect the natural environment
- Improve regional mobility
- Cost

Each factor has performance measures. The evaluation was considered in the context of the international and national significance of the Detroit River crossing in terms of the economy, security, and ability to provide continuous river crossing capacity. Alternatives considered met the stated project purpose: to provide for the safe, efficient and secure movement of people and goods across the U.S.-Canadian border in the Detroit River area to support the economies of Michigan, Ontario, Canada, and the U.S.

Q46: Why would you choose to construct a new border crossing along an area that is already burdened with a border access route that generates noise and air pollution?

The Partnership will base decisions regarding the new border crossing system on the need to provide for the safe, efficient and secure movement of people and goods across the U.S.-Canadian border, while recognizing the strong desire to separate local from international traffic, maintain acceptable local traffic movement and minimize impacts to the affected communities.

Impacts on air quality and noise conditions were studied in detail during the evaluation of alternatives. The study team evaluated the air quality impacts and noise impacts that could occur for each alternative, and recommended appropriate mitigation measures where possible. The objective was to minimize impacts, if not actually reduce the current noise and pollutant levels from cars and trucks.

Q47: Is MDOT making decisions on land use in the city of Detroit?

MDOT has said publicly and repeatedly that those decisions are the responsibility of the city of Detroit. Nonetheless, MDOT has engaged the city of Detroit's Planning Commission, Economic Development Corporation, and Planning and Development Department in many discussions about land uses that could be affected by a new river crossing.

Q48: Is the concern more about cost than community?

MDOT is working with the community to find the solution that provides the best balance of transportation benefits and environmental (including community) impacts. Cost is only one of a number of factors being studied.

Questions related to relocation and eminent domain

Q49: Will there be compensation for people's property where affected?

The rules and procedures of the U.S. Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Act, as amended, will guide all compensation matters for homeowners and businesses. It is based on the premise of fair treatment of all property owners. (Click here and here for additional information.)

Q50: Should I put money into my property if it is just going to get acquired for this project? What if I want to sell my property now?

Maintain or improve your home as if the project does not exist. If the project is approved and funded, property acquisitions could begin; however, property acquisitions are not expected to begin before 2009. Consultation with property owners and renters will continue throughout the study. (Click here and here for additional information.)

Q51: What is the basis of compensation for property that may be acquired?

Compensation is based on the fair market value of the property. Fair market value is determined by one of three methods, a market valuation, market study or an appraisal. Temporary use permits may also be required and fair market land rental rates will be established using these same methods. If the needed right-of-way is minimal, a market valuation will establish compensation.

If an appraisal is required, licensed appraisers will estimate a fair market value for your property by using three approaches - The Cost Approach, The Income Approach and the Sales Comparison Approach. Generally the appraiser will rely on the Sales Comparable Approach comparing your property with similar properties sold in your area. You or your representative will be given the opportunity to accompany the appraiser on a thorough inspection of your property. In the Income Approach the appraiser may need to analyze some of your financial information to arrive at a fair market value. Based upon these inspections and comparisons, the appraiser will provide the Department a written opinion of fair market value for your property. This appraisal is then reviewed to ensure that state and federal requirements and acceptable appraisal standards are met. You will then be contacted by a negotiator for the Department. The negotiator will explain the project, schedules, appraisal, and relocation assistance, and make an offer to purchase that portion of your property needed for the project. You will have a reasonable length of time to study the offer presented and to ask any questions. If you believe that the Department has overlooked an item of value, you may submit a written claim to reconsider value within 90 days of the offer. Supporting documentation must be submitted with this claim.

If only a portion of the property is acquired, the effect of the acquisition on the rest of the property is taken into consideration. Any property acquisition transaction is guided by a full set of federal and state laws. Upon final settlement of the purchase price, there are also provisions for payment of other reasonable expenses actually incurred. (Click here and here for additional information.)

Questions related to the public involvement process

Q52: What are you doing to inform the residents and business owners in the area of the potential impact that their property could be acquired?

We have had well over 150 meetings within the affected community to explain various aspects of the proposed project started in January 2005. Workshops were held on July 31, August 1 and August 2, 2007, in the Delray area so that every residential property owner could meet one-on-one with MDOT's Real Estate experts to discuss the relocation process. All active business owners were contacted by MDOT Real Estate staff during 2006 and 2007. In addition, we issue news releases to media outlets and post information to the project Web site about community meetings. No property will be purchased prior to the approval of the project. (See "Questions related to relocation and eminent domain" section for more details)

Q53: In what other ways has the community been involved in the DRIC study?

Again, well over 150 meetings have been held within the affected community since the project started in January of 2005. The community has been involved in defining the location of the plaza in Delray, as well as in determining the look and fit of the interchange, the plaza (where tolls are collected), and the crossing. The community has also been actively involved in reviewing all of the impact data that contributed to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement included in the FEIS, and then in identifying the Preferred Alternative. There are many other ways that the community has been and will continue to be actively engaged in the DRIC study process. The DRIC study team meets monthly with both a Local Advisory Council (LAC), made up of representatives from various community groups in the study area, and a Local Advisory Group (LAG) made up of representatives from various local government agencies in the study area.

Q54: How do you reach out to the community to make them aware of the public participation process?

We have reached out through a host of activities, including: 1) advertising in local newspapers that cover an area of a quarter of a million people; 2) providing to each public access television station, from Downriver to Detroit, a video invitation to every public meeting; 3) mailings to about 10,000 addresses in the area, including Melvindale, Allen Park, Dearborn, River Rouge, Ecorse and Southwest Detroit; 4) monthly meeting notifications by e-mail, fax, and/or phone for hundreds of project observers; 5) issuing news releases to media outlets; 6) posting reports and other information to the project Web site. Additionally, local agencies (LAG) and community groups (LAC) involved in the project advise their constituents of the DRIC public meetings.

The DRIC project team met with a number of local and county governments in the project area to advise of the public hearings on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the opportunities those communities and their constituents have to comment on the document. It held more meetings to gain input to identify the Preferred Alternative. The DRIC team also meets with other community groups and individuals on a continual basis as part of their ongoing outreach efforts.

Questions related to traffic and traffic forecasting

Q55: Is there a traffic related need for a new border crossing?

All reputable forecasting organizations believe that the need exists.

Q56: What methodology was used to make the determination?

The traffic analysis used the proven methodology accepted as "best practice" for projecting future traffic volume on a highway facility.

The first step in the process is a basic trend analysis. Traffic using the Ambassador Bridge, especially trucks, most of which have no alternative, has been growing over the past 20 years. (This trend is repeated at both Port Huron and Sault Ste. Marie.)

The next step is to examine factors that might change the trends. (For example, there was a drop in cross-border traffic after 9/11 and the growth rate since then has been smaller than it was before 9/11.) The current slump in the auto industry has also impacted truck traffic crossing the border.

Economic forecasts for the area serviced by the facility are also studied. In this case, forecasts were examined for the U.S and Canada for international trade between the two countries, the forecasts for both the State of Michigan and the Province of Ontario, and the forecasts for the Detroit and Windsor metropolitan areas.

From all this, three traffic projections are developed: one if things continue as usual, one if things get better, and one if things get worse.

Q57: Is it true that the current traffic over the Ambassador Bridge is down from pre-9/11 times?

Yes and no. Automobile traffic is down for a variety of reasons. On the other hand, truck traffic for the year ending December 31, 2006 was up eight percent from the year ending December 31, 2001 and up 0.3% from the year ending December 31, 2000. Automobile traffic in 2006 was up from the previous year for the first time since 1999. In 2007, both car and truck traffic were down slightly when compared to 2006. Traffic declines at the Ambassador Bridge in 2008 are influenced in part by the Gateway Project construction activity, the current economic difficulties of the domestic automobile industry (GM, Ford, and Chrysler), and the current recession. Trade with Canada has continued to grow throughout 2008, including trade carried by truck. While traffic generated by the domestic auto industry has declined, traffic between the U.S. and Canada related to foreign auto manufacturers with plants in our two countries is on the rise. Upon the completion of the Gateway Project and the eventual recovery of the economy, we expect to see commercial traffic at the Detroit Windsor border crossing return to the growth trends observed before and after the events of 9/11/2001.

Q58: Given this decline in overall traffic, does it still make sense to proceed with plans for a new crossing?

Yes. First, as noted above, truck traffic has increased since 2001 and in 2006 truck volumes exceeded their previous high volume mark (set in 2000). Truck volumes are significant for two reasons. First, truck traffic is a major element in U.S./Canada trade. 60.5% of all U.S./Canada trade **(**See Transportation in Canada 2006**)**, and 83% of the U.S./Canada trade that uses the Detroit/Windsor border crossings is carried by truck **(**See Detroit River International Crossing Study Travel Demand Model Update**)** Improving the truck traffic flows (through reduced congestion), minimizing the border processing times (while not sacrificing basic security needs), and improving the reliability of the trade flows (by providing convenient alternative crossing corridors) creates the opportunity for additional economic activity on both sides of the border.

The second reason truck volumes are important is related to the overall capacity of the crossing. Capacity is calculated in terms of passenger vehicle (automobile) equivalents (PCEs). Because of their size and operating characteristics, both trucks and busses are counted as more than one PCE. The Highway Capacity Manual devotes several pages to the formulas for converting trucks and busses to PCEs depending on a number of roadway characteristics. Using the Highway Capacity Manual guidelines, the DRIC study counts each truck and bus using the border crossing as 3 PCEs.

When comparing current traffic to the peak year (1999) for total traffic crossing at the Ambassador Bridge, traffic in 2006 was down 22%; however, when calculating the change in PCEs from 1999, 2006 traffic was only down 13.6%.

Passenger car traffic at all U.S. Canadian border crossing is down since 2001 as a result of a number of factors, but primarily due to the increased security and the changes in appropriate documentation of citizenship that is needed when compared to the pre-2001 period. As more Americans acquire passports or as alternative acceptable I.D.s become available (such as enhanced driver's licenses which will begin testing in April 2008) we can expect passenger car traffic to rebound to previously observed levels.

When all these factors are taken into account, and when you consider the long lead time necessary to construct additional border crossing capacity, continuing the process we have started is the prudent thing to do. In addition to traffic there are other reasons for building a new crossing (click here).

Other Questions

Q59: What are you hearing from federal officials on this project?

President Bush called for the environmental studies to be completed in 2009. Current projections call for the opening of the new crossing in 2015. The Federal Highway Administration has approved the Final Environmental Impact Statement / Final Section 4(f) Evaluation. The Department of Homeland Security officials support a new crossing separated from the Ambassador Bridge. The following were federal cooperating agencies during the development of the DRIC EIS:

Federal Highway Administration,
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. General Services Administration
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
U.S. Coast Guard
U.S. Department of State

Q60: How does the "International Bridges and Tunnels Act" in Canada affect building the proposed DRIC bridge and/or the second span of the Ambassador Bridge?

The legislation clarifies and expands the Canadian federal government's role in regulating all existing and future international bridges and tunnels. A portion of the legislation creates a process for the approval of new international bridges and tunnels (similar in nature to the Presidential Permit process in the U.S.). Other portions of the legislation allow the Canadian

government to mandate certain activities and to regulate other activities by the crossing's owners/operators at all existing and future international bridges and tunnels. Both the DRIC team and the Ambassador Bridge's owner will have to comply with the provisions of this act.

Q61: Where is the DRIC study at this time (December, 2008)?

The Final Environmental Impact Statement / Final Section 4(f) Evaluation has been signed by the Federal Highway Administration. It is available for review on the project Web site (www.partnership borderstudy.com) and at the following locations:

- MDOT Lansing Office
- MDOT Metro Region Office
- MDOT Detroit Transportation Service Center
- MDOT Taylor Transportation Service Center
- City Hall Central District, 2
- City Hall Northwestern District
- City Hall Northeastern District
- City Hall Western District
- City Hall Eastern District
- City Hall Southwestern District
- Allen Park Library
- Bowen Branch Public Library
- Campbell Branch Library
- Delray Recreation Center
- Detroit Public Library
- Ecorse Library
- Henry Ford Centennial Library
- Kemeny Recreation Center
- Melvindale Library
- River Rouge Library
- Southwestern High School Library

No sooner than 30 days after the publication of the FEIS in the Federal Register, (December 5, 2008), the FHWA will issue a Record of Decision, the next step in the U.S. environmental clearance process. The Record of Decision must be signed by the FHWA to gain approval to move forward with project implementation. All approvals will be consistent with the U.S. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act (OEAA) and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA). The Canadian environmental clearance process is also nearing completion.

Q62: What is the first step in project implementation?

The first step will be design followed by utility relocation and property acquisition, contingent on funding. Construction of the interchange along I-75, the plaza and the bridge will follow. But, construction will not begin until the Michigan legislature approves, which will require legislation and funding to be in place.

Q63: Will the public continue to have access to information on the project?

Yes, through the project Web site (www.partnershipborderstudy.com), meetings of the Local Advisory Council and by contacting Mohammed Alghurabi at alghurabim@michigan.gov.