



TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO

Advocating Environmentally, Socially & Economically Sustainable Transportation
Box 6418, Station "A" Toronto, ON, M5W 1X3

DRIC: ROAD-BASED INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE ERA OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Introduction by Natalie Litwin
Transport Action Ontario
March 27, 2010

I HAVE BEEN ASKED BY THE MEDIA AND YOU MAY ALSO BE WONDERING WHY WE ARE CONVENING A PUBLIC MEETING IN TORONTO ON AN ISSUE IN THE DETROIT/WINDSOR AREA. OUR REASON: THE DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL CROSSING PROJECT IS A NORTH AMERICAN ISSUE. IT IS THE BUSIEST CROSSING ON THE CONTINENT CARRYING 28% OF BORDER TRADE BETWEEN CANADA AND THE U.S. FURTHERMORE, THIS INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN REPRESENTS A HUGE PUBLIC COST FOR CANADIAN TAXPAYERS.

OUR COST ESTIMATE BASED ON DRIC DOCUMENTS IS \$4.2 BILLION. THE WINDSOR STAR ESTIMATE IS \$5.0 BILLION. THE WINDSOR/ESSEX PARKWAY, ONE COMPONENT OF THE PROJECT, WILL COST \$1.6 BILLION, THE MOST EXPENSIVE HIGHWAY PER KILOMETRE IN ONTARIO. IT LOOKS LIKE A BOONDOGGLE, BUT A LITTLE KNOWN ONE.

THE DRIC PROJECT IMPOSES A HUGE ENVIRONMENTAL COST AS WELL, AS THE SPEAKERS WILL DESCRIBE.

PERHAPS THE MOST PUZZLING ASPECT OF THE PROJECT IS WHY THEY ARE DOING IT AT ALL WHEN TRAFFIC NUMBERS AND WAIT TIMES ARE DECLINING.

WHAT'S WORSE, THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT WANTS TO START BUILDING THE \$1.6 BILLION PARKWAY THIS YEAR, EVEN THOUGH MICHIGAN HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE U.S. HALF OF THE BRIDGE WILL NOT BEGIN UNTIL 2021. SINCE ONTARIO CANNOT BUILD HALF A BRIDGE, AND WHO KNOWS WHAT CAN HAPPEN IN 11 YEARS, THE BRIDGE MAY NEVER BE BUILT, SO THE TAXPAYERS OF ONTARIO COULD BE FUNDING A HIGHWAY TO NOWHERE!*

WE HAVE INVITED A PANEL OF SPEAKERS WHO ALL OPPOSE THE DRIC

PLAN. WE MAKE NO APOLOGY FOR NOT INVITING THE PLAN'S SUPPORTERS. THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE OR NO PUBLIC DEBATE ABOUT THE MERITS OF THE PLAN AND WE ARE HERE TO GIVE VOICE TO THE OTHER SIDE. THE COMPANY THAT OWNS THE AMBASSADOR BRIDGE IS HERE BECAUSE IT IS A MAJOR SERVICE FACILITY THAT OPPOSES DRIC BUT FOR REASONS DIFFERENT FROM OURS. WE ARE AT ARM'S LENGTH FROM THE DETROIT INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE COMPANY.

SOME BACKGROUND: FOUR PARTNERS: TRANSPORT CANADA, THE U.S. FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION, THE ONTARIO MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION AND THE MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION WERE ASKED TO PROVIDE A SAFE AND EFFICIENT MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND GOODS BETWEEN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO AND SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN.

AFTER A COMPLICATED PROCESS THAT STARTED IN CANADA IN 2005, THE PROPONENTS SELECTED A "TECHNICALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE": A BRIDGE, ONE INSPECTION PLAZA AT EACH SIDE OF THE BORDER, AND THE WINDSOR/ESSEX PARKWAY THAT CONNECTS HIGHWAY 401 TO A NEW BORDER CROSSING.

BECAUSE OF THE SPLIT IN JURISDICTIONS, THREE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS WERE CONDUCTED. ONE IN THE U.S. CALLED AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS). IN A RECORD OF DECISION ON JANUARY 14, 2009 THE RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES CLEARED THE WAY FOR BUILDING THE BRIDGE, AN INSPECTION PLAZA AND RELATED HIGHWAY INTERCHANGES IN DETROIT. THE ONTARIO CABINET APPROVED THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PARKWAY, ON AUGUST 21, 2009. OUR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT APPROVED A SCREENING REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL PORTION, WHICH CONSISTS OF THE BRIDGE AND AN INSPECTION PLAZA ON DECEMBER 3, 2009.

TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO HAS ANALYZED THE DRIC PLAN AND FOUND IT WANTING. WE CONCLUDED THAT IT IS BUSINESS-AS-USUAL INFRASTRUCTURE WITH NO REGARD FOR TODAY'S AND TOMORROW'S ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL REALITIES.

- IT PREDICTS TRAFFIC DEMAND TO THE YEAR 2035 AND PROVIDES A ROAD-BASED SOLUTION.
- IT FORECASTS A 57% GROWTH FOR CARS, AND 128% GROWTH FOR TRUCKS.
- IT DISREGARDS OIL DEPLETION AND CLIMATE CHANGE.
- IT BRIEFLY TOUCHES ON ALTERNATIVES TO THIS ROAD-BASED UNDERTAKING AND DISMISSES THEM.
- IT HAS DECIDED THAT SPENDING UP TO \$5 BILLION OF CANADIAN AND U.S. TAXPAYERS' MONEY IS SUPERIOR TO ALLOWING THE

PRIVATELY-OWNED AMBASSADOR BRIDGE COMPANY TO BUILD A REPLACEMENT BRIDGE AT ITS OWN EXPENSE.

- IT PLANS TO ADD A THIRD BRIDGE TO THE EXISTING AMBASSADOR BRIDGE AT WINDSOR/DETROIT AND BLUE WATER BRIDGE AT SARNIA THUS DIVIDING DECLINING TRAFFIC NUMBERS AMONG THREE BRIDGES INSTEAD OF TWO. AND IN ADDITION TO A TRUCK FERRY, A RAIL TUNNEL AND A VEHICLE TUNNEL.

THIS IS OUR BROAD POSITION. I WILL NOW TURN YOU OVER TO OUR MODERATOR AND PANELISTS.

*Update, July 14, 2010. SEMCOG the Michigan government agency responsible for regional transportation planning in Southeastern Michigan, on June 7 changed construction dates for the bridge from 2021-2025 to 2016-2020. See www.RTP 4429. Since construction of the Windsor-Essex Parkway is slated to begin in 2011, assuming at least 3 years for construction the new gap in dates is now 6 years. Projected construction dates could change again.

The Michigan bill to permit the project to proceed passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 56 to 51. The House Speaker stated that the gift of \$550 million from Canada's federal Transport Minister John Baird, to jumpstart the Michigan portion of DRIC made a difference in the vote. The bill is slated for debate in the state Senate probably in mid-August.