



[« Back | Print](#)

Ambassador Bridge Enhancement Passes U.S. Coast Guard Study; Awaits Canadian Approval

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The U.S. Coast Guard has prepared a preliminary Draft Finding of No Significant Impact on the Ambassador Bridge Enhancement Project the Detroit International Bridge Company (DIBC), owners of the Ambassador Bridge, announced today. The Coast Guard, as lead federal agency for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), determined that the enhancement project will not introduce any significant impacts on the natural or man-made environment within the project area. A number of federal and state agencies coordinated efforts since 2007.

"We are ready to complete our investment of approximately one billion dollars for the enhancement project and to improve cross border connectivity as soon as we receive final approvals of the Environmental Assessments from the U.S. and Canada," said Dan Stamper, president of the Ambassador Bridge. "No municipal, state, provincial or federal funds will be required, leaving those dollars available to address other community needs."

Thousands of Jobs through Private Investment

The Ambassador Bridge Enhancement Project – financed exclusively by DIBC – proposes complimenting the nearly 80-year-old existing bridge with a new second span with six lanes of traffic. Development of the second span can be commenced in 2009. The project is expected to create more than 20,000 jobs over the next two decades and nearly 4,000 jobs within the first year, according to a study by the Anderson Economic Group. To date, DIBC has invested approximately \$500 million for a new customs plaza, improved traffic connections and property at the bridge.

In addition to the Coast Guard's final approval, the Ambassador Bridge Enhancement Project for a six-lane, cable-stayed bridge has applied for Canadian approval as well. The application was submitted in 2006, but the Canadian government has not demonstrated a commitment to process the project in a timely manner.

"We are frustrated that at a time when large infrastructure projects are desperately needed to stimulate the economy and create immediate jobs, the Canadian government is holding up this project," added Stamper.

The Canadian government has also not made good on its 2002 pledge to invest \$300 million to better connect the Ambassador Bridge to Interprovincial 401 in Ontario. Based on this commitment, the U.S. is currently investing more than \$660 million to improve traffic connections to the Ambassador Bridge and other existing crossings. The Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project, a \$230 million publicly funded project creating a new interchange connecting the existing bridge to I-75, I-96 and I-94 in Detroit is already underway and will be completed next year. Additionally, the Michigan Department of Transportation has proposed more than \$430 million to improve the existing Blue Water Bridge between Port Huron, MI, and Sarnia, Ontario.

The Ambassador Bridge Enhancement Project required the Environmental Assessment by the Coast Guard because the Detroit River is a navigable waterway of the U.S. The Environmental Assessment review utilized Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) approved implementing instructions and incorporated input from agencies including: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, the International Joint Commission, Michigan Department of Transportation – Bureau of Transportation Planning, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan State Historical Preservation Office, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments and the City of Detroit – Historical Commission.

Bridge History

Built in 1929, the Ambassador Bridge stands between Detroit, MI, and Windsor, Ontario as an international symbol and link between the two countries. It handles 26 percent of the trade between the two countries and is one of the busiest international crossings in the U.S. The Ambassador Bridge is privately owned by the Detroit International Bridge Company and The Canadian Transit Company.

[« Back | Print](#)

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