DRAFT Presentation to Joint Transportation Committees - May 18, 2006

Thank You. My name is James Steele and I am the MICHIGAN DIVISION Administrator for Federal Highway Administration. I have attended the previous hearings and have heard statements attributed to the Federal Highway Administration that I feel need to be clarified or put into context:

1. At the last hearing it was stated that FHWA had approved and environmentally cleared the twinning proposal of the Ambassador Bridge. This is not correct.

The environmental assessment for the Ambassador Gateway project analyzed the environmental impacts from making connections from the Interstate to the Ambassador Bridge, analyzed impacts which would result from reconstruction of I-75/96 in the vicinity of the Bridge, analyzed the foot print from an expanded international plaza (the current one is too small), and analyzed reconnecting the neighborhoods that were split when the Interstate was built. In analyzing the environmental impacts, the FHWA in conjunction with the MDOT and the Detroit International Bridge Company (DIBC) developed several concepts for making this direct connection to the bridge before selecting a preferred one. The DIBC developed the plans for the expanded plaza and is responsible for acquiring the needed right-of-way and for construction. They did not develop any plans that we were aware of for a second bridge. All this work was done in a public forum with a formal public hearing held. It concluded with the FHWA issuing a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in October 1997.

FHWA and MDOT also developed some goals that we wanted to accomplish. One of these goals was to get trucks off the City streets as much as possible and another was to reconnect the neighborhoods severed by I-75 and I-96. It was also our goal to **accommodate** any future second span of the Ambassador Bridge. The environmental analysis did **not** analyze a second span at the Ambassador Bridge. We did this to minimize reconstruction of work that would be constructed under the Gateway project if and when a second bridge was built by the DIBC. When the DIBC was asked when the second bridge would be built and what their time table was, they were non-committal.

In summary the FHWA Ambassador Gateway environmental document did not provide any environmental clearance, authorization for, or approval of any second bridge.

2. It was stated that a November 4, 2005 letter from the State Department indicated that the DRIC alternatives were not approved. That letter was in response to a request from the FHWA to all of the federal cooperating agencies to concur on the elimination of some alternatives for further study. Because of the Presidential Permit process the State Department was responding that it could not do that because of its need to not predetermine the Presidential Permit Process. It also stated that the Ambassador Bridge would not require a Presidential Permit since it was granted license to build and operate by earlier federal legislation. In plain terms this is a determination that the Ambassador Bridge twinning proposal does not require a Presidential permit. This is consistent with previous determinations by the State Department for the Blue Water Bridge twinning and the proposed twinning of the Peace Bridge in New York.

3. I would like to reiterate that the DRIC project is not an MDOT project. It is an International project being developed cooperatively by the federal governments of Canada and the United States and their respective state and provincial governments. Decisions are not being made unilaterally but in consultation with all four governmental representatives. Each is aware of the

special needs of their government and sensitive to the needs of their partners. Unfortunately our respective shore lines have not developed consistently. Where we have abandoned industrial sites they have residential neighborhoods. Where we have residential neighborhoods they have open fields. Together, we must evaluate all of these factors and find a solution that does not place undue burden on any one side but does satisfy the common good.

Thank You.