

Press Release

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Senators Basham and Anderson Herald U.S. Department of Transportation's Approval to Move Forward on Detroit River International Crossing

Project Will Create Much Needed Construction Jobs, Increase International Commerce

LANSING-Senators Ray Basham and Glenn S. Anderson spoke out in strong support today of the announcement that plans to build a second border crossing between Michigan and Ontario have received approval from the U.S. Department of Transportation to move forward on the project. As Senators from Wayne County and members of various transportation committees, Basham and Anderson have been significant proponents of this proposal.

The "Record of Decision" (ROD), signed yesterday by U.S. officials, represents the Detroit River International Crossing's (DRIC) final environmental clearance to gain project approval, following four years of consultations, public hearings, traffic analyses, and environmental studies. Michigan may now begin right-of-way acquisition and construction planning for the bridge.

"While the debate on DRIC has dragged on for far too long in Lansing, this action by the U.S. Department of Transportation shows that there are no environmental concerns with this project," said Sen. Basham, the Minority Vice Chair on the Senate Transportation Committee and a longtime advocate of the DRIC project. "And in moving forward, we can now focus on the economic concerns of the state, creating jobs and increasing commerce. At a time when so many headlines around the state are negative, this is great news and a prime example of how closely our infrastructure and our economy are related."

The United States and Canada share the largest bilateral trade relationship in the world and states in the Great Lakes region account for more than half of this trade-supporting 7.1 million U.S. jobs. Michigan accounts for more than half of the total U.S. trade with Canada. International trade and commerce supports more than 221,500 Michigan jobs; almost 60 percent of Michigan goods are exported to Canada. Activity on the new crossing on the Michigan side of the border will create 10,000 construction jobs and more than 30,000 indirect jobs during the construction period.

"Michigan's opportunities for international trade and commerce with Canada have been stuck in traffic long enough," said Sen. Anderson, a member of the Michigan

Transportation Funding Task Force. "Opening up another avenue for personal and professional transportation between our state and our neighbor to the north will result in construction jobs now, and increase the flow of economic activity for years to come."

If completed, the project-including a plaza where tolls and U.S. border inspection activities will occur, and an interchange connecting it to I-75-would span nearly seven miles. Under current estimates, construction on the new crossing is expected to begin in 2010 and it should be open to traffic in 2013.

Environmental review for the U.S. side of the project, which concluded with yesterday's ROD signing, began March 24, 2003, with the publication of a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. A similar review of environmental impacts on the river's Canadian side conducted earlier this year by Ontario and Transport Canada is nearing completion. The process to complete DRIC's federal environmental documentation lasted less than four years and included more than 100 meetings and public hearings.

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