

PROPOSED BRIDGE TO CANADA TO ADD THOUSANDS OF JOBS



American and Canadian leaders are to make public, plans for a new bridge linking Detroit and Windsor. The region is one the nation's busiest border crossings that has evoked considerable debate and discussion. Gov. Rick Snyder and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper are expected to make a formal announcement of the decision to construct the new public bridge on Friday. The bridge is expected to cost just under \$1 billion and be built through a public-private partnership. However, the bridge in its wake will require road connections and modifications to roads that are in its vicinity as well as customs and security plazas on both sides. This is expected to cost many more billions, far outpacing the 1 billion the main structure is going to cost. The entire project is likely to cost several billion dollars beyond that, documents show, to create connections and modifications to nearby roadways and customs plazas in both countries. Gov. Snyder has assuaged objecting legislators that no Michigan funds will be needed to construct the bridge. Moreover, Canada is accepting to bear \$550 million as its share of construction. Toll collections will eventually pay for the bridge and all stakeholders stand to recover their investments. A new study by the Center for Automotive Research said the project will create thousands of new jobs and billions in economic benefits. It is estimated that the new public bridge project would create about 6,000 construction jobs for each of the first two years of construction and 5,100 jobs for each of the final two years of construction. The bridge estimated to take four years to construct would also help create or retain 6,600 for each of the four years of its construction. Nearly 1,400 permanent jobs would be created from the operation of the new bridge, the report shows. It would also positively impact the economy. The study by Center for Automotive Research (CAR) projected that the states GDP, the total output of the state's products and services — would increase \$2.2 billion because of the project. Moreover, it would add considerably to currently falling personal income in the state, which would rise by \$4 billion, and state and local tax revenue would increase by \$400 million due to the project, the study found. Kim Hill, director of Sustainability and Economic Development Strategies at CAR and the study's lead author said, "Initially the construction of the bridge itself will serve as an economic stimulus, providing jobs and state revenues. Once construction is completed and bridge operations have begun, the regions additional freight shipping capability could attract private-sector investment, augmenting the gross regional product and creating more employment opportunities." Business and labor leaders were enthusiastic of the project and said that it would not merely enhance trade between America and Canada, but facilitate it with the entire world. Lisa Canada, political and legislative director of International Union of Operating Engineers said that the solid infrastructure provided by the new link would provide "years of good work and good paying jobs." She was so eager to see the project get underway, that when asked what she thought would be the right to start work, she said, "We'd like it to begin today. We've been working on this for years." The new public bridge is proposed to be built two miles south of where the current Ambassador Bridge is located. The Ambassador Bridge is owned by the Moroun family through their Detroit International Bridge Company. They have challenged the construction of a new bridge for years, feeling that it will eat into their toll profits. The bridge built 80 years ago carries millions of commercial and other vehicles, laden with goods, between the two countries each year.

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