

Slaughter Meets with Higgins, DHS to Discuss Future of Shared Border Management

Sees Potential to Begin Environmental Impact Statement by End of Year

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today joined Congressman Brian Higgins (D-NY-27) and Jim Patton, of the Department of Homeland Security, to discuss the future of the Shared Border Management pilot program at the Peace Bridge.

"I'm encouraged that DHS is close to finalizing the requirements necessary to move the plaza to Fort Erie," Rep. Slaughter said. "These specifications are necessary in order to facilitate travel and international commerce in Western New York," she added.

DHS has not given Peace Bridge specifics for building the plaza. Until it does, Peace Bridge can't do an environmental impact statement, which is required by law before construction can begin; we are almost to the point where peace bridge can start their draft environmental impact statement

Ron thinks they can start the statement by the end of the year; we need to push them tomorrow to get something in writing to the peace bridge; DEIS.

Second meeting at 3 is person at DHS who runs nexus program; John Wagner;

BACKGROUND

Shared Border Management Pilot program will move DHS customs and screening processes to Canada. This will move these off the bridge itself to lessen traffic and congestion on the bridge without negatively impacting security precautions. The Peace Bridge authority must complete an environmental impact statement for the plaza, but DHS hasn't given them specifics for the plaza first.

On December 17, 2004, the governments of Canada and the United States announced their mutual commitment to moving forward with a land pre-clearance pilot at the PBA to which would advance border security and help ease congestion for travelers. The announcement was hailed locally as a major breakthrough, one that would create the best possible project in a short time frame with few negative local impacts.

However, since December, the process for moving forward with the plaza design has been at a complete standstill. PBA needs the pre-clearance requirements from both countries to design a U.S. Department of Homeland Security facility in Fort Erie, Canada. Only after PBA knows the requirements outlined by this clearance can they proceed with the environmental impact statement needed before construction is undertaken.

Mr. Patton and PBA met last Monday for seven hours to discuss these lingering issues. Mr. Ron Reinas, general manager of Peace Bridge, came away from the meeting very encouraged that Mr. Patton was moving forward in getting the PBA everything it needs to start the environmental process by the end of the year. Mr. Patton was in Ottawa yesterday speaking with the Canadian government about its remaining issues.