

## **DRIC Study's TAC Award Win**

The Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) study team was awarded the Transportation Association of Canada's (TAC) Environmental Achievement Award on September 27, 2010.

The national award was given to Ontario and Canada for their work on the DRIC Environmental Assessment study and The Windsor-Essex Parkway. The award recognizes exemplary contributions to the protection and enhancement of the environment or particularly innovative approaches to solving an environmental problem.

This is the first time Ontario and Canada have been recognized by TAC for a joint submission and the first time Ontario has been recognized in this category. Previous winners include the Sea-to-Sky Highway in British Columbia, the Kicking Horse Canyon in Alberta, and the Red Hill Valley Expressway in Ontario.

The purpose of the DRIC study was to identify a long-term solution to border transportation issues at the Windsor-Detroit Gateway. It was the most extensive transportation environmental assessment ever undertaken in Ontario's history and involved four years of technical studies, community consultation and planning.

### **About TAC**

The Transportation Association of Canada is a national association which promotes the provision of safe, secure, efficient, effective and environmentally and financially sustainable transportation services in support of Canada's social and economic goals.

TAC dates back to 1914 and in 2001, the association developed a more focused mandate with particular emphasis on roadway infrastructure and urban area transportation issues. The association is a neutral forum for gathering or exchanging ideas, information and knowledge on technical guidelines and best practices.

### **About the Environmental Achievement Award**

The Environmental Achievement Award is one of nine awards that recognize exemplary contributions by TAC members in the different areas with respect to providing transportation services. The awards are open to all members of TAC and their respective staff. Members who have made a contribution to the protection and enhancement of the environment or who have been particularly innovative in their approach to solve an environmental problem are eligible for the award.

A Selection Panel composed of at least four members of TAC's Environment Council evaluated all submissions. The awards were evaluated on criteria that included: contribution to the protection and enhancement of the environment; degree of innovation shown in the approach used to solve or address an environmental problem or issue; financial implications associated with the initiative; and, overall applicability to transportation.

Ontario and Canada's submission demonstrated the extensive planning work that will lead to a protection of the natural environment; the study team's innovative approaches to consultation and design; and, the cost analysis that led to changes in design of the plan.

### **About the DRIC study**

The governments of Canada, the United States, Ontario and Michigan formed the Border Transportation Partnership (the Partnership) leading to the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) study. The purpose of the study is to provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods across the Canada-U.S. border in the Detroit River area to support the economies of Ontario, Michigan, Canada and the U.S.

Through extensive technical studies and public consultation, the DRIC study team identified The Windsor-Essex Parkway, a new customs plaza and international bridge in the Brighton Beach industrial area of West Windsor as the recommended plan.

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO), in coordination with Transport Canada, led the Environmental Assessment study in Canada, and retained URS Canada Inc. to assist in this undertaking. The Environmental Assessment Report, submitted in December 2008 for review and approval, was approved in 2009.

### **Approved Plan**

The Windsor-Essex Parkway provides a six-lane, below-grade freeway that will connect Highway 401 to the Canadian inspection plaza. Its many community-friendly features include 300 acres of green space, 20 kilometres of recreational trails and a series of tunnels that provide new connections for communities on either side of the transportation corridor.

The plazas will be designed to shield the host communities from cross-border traffic. For instance, the Canadian plaza will include 43 acres (17 hectares) of buffer area. The plazas will also include state-of-the-art inspection facilities to promote the flow of traffic. The final plaza designs will be determined in consultation with the Canada Border Services Agency.

The final design of the Windsor-Detroit bridge will be determined after discussions with prospective builders.