

**262**   **P**    **NP**    **DM64**

Projet de reconstruction du complexe Turcot  
à Montréal, Montréal-Ouest et Westmount

**Montréal**

**6211-06-124**

**Brief for BAPE Commission Hearings on the Turcot Reconstruction Project**

*Survey of the Residents of the Village des Tanneries*

Presented by: Catherine Doucet

Presented to: BAPE Commission

on the Turcot Complex Reconstruction Project

Tuesday June 16, 2009

Montreal, Quebec

## **Brief for BAPE Commission Hearings on the Turcot Reconstruction Project**

### *Survey of the Residents of the Village des Tanneries*

In the practice of Environmental Impact Assessment, further referred to as EIA, when viewing the human environment as a 'VEC' or valued ecosystem component, as has been determined by the MTQ in its Environmental Impact Statement or EIS for the Turcot Reconstruction Project, there are six broad areas of change that need to be considered. These are demographics, cultural, economic, health and social, biophysical and institutional (Noble 2006). Performing research in the Graduate Program in Environmental Impact Assessment at Concordia University in the department of Geography, Urban Planning and Environment these principles are learned in an attempt to be able to apply them appropriately when needed to projects, programs or policies.

To assist this learning process in the Data Collection and Analysis for EIA course, methods were sought to perform an assessment of the human environment, more specifically the residents most affected and impacted by this project. A questionnaire survey was created and administered to the residents of the Village des Tanneries, a citizenry living in the closest proximity to the planned reconstruction, who constitute those who will be most affected by the lengthy reconstruction of the Turcot Interchange. This was the method chosen to assess the impacts on the human environment, one of the VEC's determined in the EIS.

This brief will present the report and conclusions of this questionnaire survey with the purpose of adding to the mounting evidence that the community at large requires more time to process and react to the impending longstanding Turcot Reconstruction Project, if the right and sound sustainable decisions are to be made in the most collaborative manner. Recommendations will also be brought forward to address correcting these inadequacies.

The report consists of four chapters. The introduction puts the survey in context with the population studied. It also sets out its mandate. The methods section explains how the questionnaire was created and administered in order to collect the data and then represent it for analysis. The results section presents the data analysis and interpretation. Finally, the conclusion section sums up the overall findings of the survey and puts forth recommendations regarding the most important and pressing issues raised.

The introductory chapter of the report presents a brief historic profile of the Village des Tanneries neighbourhood leading up to the present, where the residents face the impacts of highway upgrading. The geographic area of study and where the respondents live is clearly mapped and can be seen in the attached report.

The survey yielded demographics of a population predominantly non-student, employed renters living there under 2 years, with a strong cohort of under 35 age group. As well, there were cumulative

numbers of residents that have lived in the neighbourhood beyond 2, 3, 4 and 5 decades. Of the completed surveys, 43% were in English and 56% in French.

With the need for the rebuilding of the Turcot structure comes the plan put forth by the MTQ and the subsequent questions about how the residents will perceive the impacts of this plan and what would be the alternatives to the MTQ proposal.

Noteworthy is that there were expropriations 50 years ago when the Decarie Expressway was constructed, as well as when the Turcot was originally built in the 1960's. One cannot help but reflect on that time and a prominent quote of the day that the highway had been built with automobiles in mind, not people. Will history repeat itself with the Turcot?

The mandate of the questionnaire was to survey those most directly affected by the impacts of the reconstruction, the Village des Tanneries residents, and to find out what their perceptions of these impacts on their lives would be. Also important was to verify the effectiveness of the public consultation process. The public consultation process was undertaken but the question remains as to how effective it was as a small percentage of the population surveyed were aware of the MTQ proposal.

More specifically these were the five main objectives of the survey. The researchers wanted to know what the demographics of the neighbourhood were and whether the local residents used the Turcot. We also were interested in determining if the residents were aware of the MTQ proposal and an alternative plan put forth by architect Pierre Brisset and if they were aware what was their approval of the MTQ plan and the Brisset plan. This Brisset proposal, a transit oriented proposal, encourages reduction in traffic volume and lanes and increasing transit through a modal shift with increased public transportation, transit links, reserved bus lanes, trams and incentives for single vehicle use. We also queried residents on concepts involved in both proposals specifically to see what their approval would be even if they were not aware of either the MTQ or the Brisset proposal.

This report set out to interpret the data and draw conclusions on these main objectives. Our report clearly outlines the detailed methods from creation of the questionnaire right through ethics approval, pilot study and the administering of it both door to door and by mail. With the statistical analysis we arrive at the results of the survey.

First, analysis revealed that all surveys done face to face and by mail could be integrated together. This brought the total to 138 completed surveys to be used in the analysis.

Next, our analysis revealed the relevant variables.

- Have you heard any details about the proposal by the MTQ/Pierre Brisset regarding the reconstruction of the Turcot Interchange?
- How strongly do you agree or disagree with the MTQ/Pierre Brisset proposal?
- How often do you use the Turcot?

- Element of the proposals:
  - Is it acceptable that there are expropriations for road reconstruction in Montreal?
  - Is it acceptable that a neighbourhood is physically isolated by barriers or divided as a result of the reconstruction of the Turcot Interchange?
  - The reconstruction of the Turcot Interchange should promote a significant reduction of traffic?
  - The reconstruction of the Turcot Interchange should be use as an opportunity to implement new public transit lanes.
  - Placing most existing elevated highway of the Turcot Interchange on the ground is desirable.

These related to residents' awareness of either the MTQ plan or an alternative plan and their approval of both plans or elements of both plans, as well as their frequency of use of the Turcot.

The distance factor or how far the respondents lived from the highway, was added to a constructed correlation matrix to verify if it contributed to differences in awareness of the MTQ proposal.

Some of the more striking results were:

- Of the 42% who were aware of the MTQ proposal, 73% disapproved
- A much smaller number only 13% knew of the alternative put forth by architect Pierre Brisset, but only 5% disapproved. This proposal, a transit oriented proposal, encourages reduction in traffic volume and lanes and increasing transit through a modal shift with increased public transportation, transit links, reserved bus lanes, trams and decentives for single vehicle use.
- A majority of respondents disapprove of expropriations. (57%)
- A large majority support the implementation of transit lanes. (78%)
- 39% of the surveyed population use the Turcot less than once a month.

A very interesting finding brought forth was that a majority, 59% of respondents who live closest to the highway, less than 70 meters, were not aware of the MTQ proposal. Further analysis indicated that of those living closest to the highway who were aware of the MTQ proposal, 64% disagree with it.

Social acceptability of a project would need a much higher approval rating.

Our relevant overall findings in relation to the BAPE hearings are summarized here.

- Although the MTQ requirements under the CEA and Quebec Environmental Quality Act were met, the question remains as to how effective it was. The results of this survey would indicate that the MTQ was not effective in the dissemination of information to the public based on the low % of the population surveyed who were aware of their proposal.
- The public participation process was ineffective in terms of presenting alternatives. Our results show that there was a high approval rating for those who were aware of one alternative or elements of this alternative that promoted reduction in traffic volume and an increase in public transit options.

We conclude our report with recommendations as a result of completing our questionnaire survey, which we present now to the BAPE commission.

- Public participation must be more thorough and effective at distributing and explaining information, especially to those people most directly affected.
- Public participation should be conducted as early on as possible to give the public the opportunity to react to and process all of the information in a timely manner so that their views and opinions can be incorporated into the decision making process.
- There should be a greater alignment with Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Montreal's Transportation plan. An SEA would view Transportation policies in a much broader way. Transportation plan for the province of Quebec should be more in line with that of the City of Montreal, one which promotes a reduction of vehicles, and a promotion of more and improved public transit, tram lines, transit serving commuters from the ends of the island, car pool and bus lanes. All of this would support reaching targets of reducing GHG's and improving the air quality and therefore health of its citizens whether they use the Turcot interchange structure or not. The necessity to upgrade the Turcot provides a golden opportunity to move in the right direction to achieve this goal.
- Finally and most important, more time is needed for residents, community groups, NGO's, urban planners and environmentalists to view the MTQ plan and assess alternatives. This will lead to improved understanding of the MTQ proposal to rebuild the Turcot Interchange as well as alternatives to this MTQ proposal that must be heard.