

Comments on Golder EA study

With all due respects to Golder Associates in its work to identify impacts, I do have some questions about gaps in the Spencer Interchange EA study and the timing of its release.

The term baseline characterization was used to describe terrestrial, aquatic and surface water management. Baseline characterization suggests that there is a method of comparing the before construction to the after construction ecosystems impacts. As was pointed out in the EA, there was no quantitative measurements taken during the 3 days of field investigations. In terms of Spencer's Pond, for instance, there were no aquatic collections or suggestions of abundance, no water quality measurements, no mention of sound impacts on resident or migratory birds etc. In other words, if oily runoff from the interchange contaminates Spencer's Pond, there are no "baseline" measurements to define the impacts on water quality for instance.

There was no mention of the karst formation or cave feature as a sensitive ecosystem. No inventory was done within the cave to identify any species at risk and no suggestion was made of the distance the interchange corridor is from the karst formation or cave feature. There were no mention of cultural significance or archaeological attributes of the cave that could be impacted by the construction.

Field visits were conducted during summer months. Not the best time to assess sensitivities. Most drastic hydrological changes occur in the fall and winter months where water levels go from 0 to 4 metres depth. Much of the biological activities in the pond occur in the March-June months where amphibian reproduction and aquatic insect activities are most vigorous.

Little or no mention of biological connectivity between aquatic geologic and terrestrial environments. Salamanders hatch from eggs in the water and then they move to the forest. Red-legged frogs hatch in the pond and then move to the forest to forage. Pacific Tree Frogs winter in the rotting logs and forest area. As a result of these and other associations, impacts will be experienced in the pond due to loss of forest habitat.

Why was the EA not released for public viewing until November of this year, just one month before the first trees fall if the date on the publication was December 2006?

The study did identify red and blue listed species in the project area suggesting that this corridor has numerous sensitive features. Is the city dealing with the environmental permitting issues reported in the EA? In the open house, the defined route (not proposed) had no mention of environment monitoring that would suggest some kind of accountability.

Rob Bowen
Nov 26, 2007