

Last minute attempt fails to get DRIC bill out of Michigan Senate committee

By [Bill Shea](#)

A local state lawmaker's self-described Hail Mary attempt to get the enabling legislation for a new Detroit River crossing out of a Senate committee and onto the floor for a full vote failed today.

Sen. Ray Basham, D-Taylor, tried using a procedural maneuver to get HB 4961 out of the Senate Transportation Committee, where it has sat after a series of debates and testimony over the summer.

The House passed the bill in May.

However, Senate Minority Floor Leader Buzz Thomas, D-Detroit, asked that the motion be postponed for the day, Lansing-based **Gongwer News Service** reported this morning. A reason for the delay wasn't immediately given.

The lame-duck legislative session likely will end Thursday.

The bill would permit the **Michigan Department of Transportation** to enter into public-private partnerships, which is the preferred avenue to build the \$5.3 billion **Detroit River International Crossing** project.

The DRIC span would link Ontario's Highway 401 to Michigan's I-75 between Windsor's Brighton Beach area and Detroit's industrial Delray neighborhood.

MDOT is one of the partner agencies behind DRIC.

The project is opposed by Ambassador Bridge owner Manuel Moroun as unneeded and unfair competition because of a decline in border traffic to pre-1999 levels and questionable studies done by MDOT to justify the crossing.

DRIC proponents say the bridge is needed to create jobs, bolsters U.S.-Canada trade, and for redundancy in case the other border crossings are closed for any reason.

Michigan lawmakers, primarily Republicans, oppose DRIC and instead favor Moroun's privately financed \$1 billion plan to build a new, bigger Ambassador Bridge span — a plan opposed by Canada because it doesn't want commercial truck traffic in downtown Windsor.

Outgoing Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop, R-Rochester, said last month that the DRIC bill would be postponed until the new legislature and new governor take office next year.

DRIC supporters say a Canadian offer to cover up to \$500 million of Michigan's DRIC capital costs means the project wouldn't cost the state anything.

Critics note that no details have been made public on the offer and dispute that the bridge wouldn't have any taxpayer costs.