



**OFFICE OF
BAY COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

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County Executive

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January 22, 2018

RE: Independence Bridge

The Independence Bridge, while City owned, is a regional bridge that serves more than just Bay City residents. It serves as a vital access point to the I-75 corridor to City, County and out-of-county residents. It also provides access to and helps support a vibrant business district that contributes substantial tax dollars to the County. These tax dollars provide government and support services to ALL residents of Bay County.

I remain interested in helping find a solution to Bay City's bridge dilemma. However, any solution that involves county-wide tax payer dollars, whether in the form of an extra-voted millage, bonds, or some other tax funding, must be reasonable. I believe that a County-wide taxpayer funded "Zilwaukee style" bridge in Bay City is not reasonable, as it would place too large a financial burden on County residents.

While I could possibly support a more modest county-wide millage or bond proposal for a bridge similar in size and design to the current existing Independence Bridge, the City must first explore all other possible funding sources before asking Bay County residents to once again fund the construction costs of a new bridge. A meeting between City and County leaders is a good first step in tackling this problem. I am hopeful the City will next reach out to our elected State and Federal representatives to explore other funding options at the State and Federal levels. This includes the possibility of having MDOT declare the span of roadway between M-15 and I-75, which includes the Independence Bridge, a state roadway.

Finally, the City should retain qualified bond counsel to research and provide an exhaustive list of tax funding methods legally allowable for such a project. It is only after ALL interested parties are invited to, and all available funding sources are laid on the table that a comprehensive strategy can be proposed and presented to our citizens for their valuable input. I look forward to working with our local, state and federal elected representatives, as well as local business organizations and residents as we address this challenge.

Sincerely,

James A. Barcia
Bay County Executive