

11.0 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The alternatives evaluation procedure used in this study is a three-step process. The purpose of the three-step process is to refine the list of alternatives from all possible alternatives to a short list of promising alternatives and then finally to a recommended alternative or set of alternatives. The evaluation uses increasingly detailed analysis methods to complete the screening and to refine the alternatives remaining after each round of analysis. The goal is to study and further develop feasible alternatives that best meet the project's goals, while not spending extensive effort on those that are unworkable or do not meet the project's goals.

Initially, a few pertinent and important details are identified about a broad array of possible alternatives. As the analysis progresses, the range and depth of information increases and the number of alternatives being studied decreases as shown in Figure 23.

Figure 23: Three-Level Evaluation Procedure

During Level 1, much of the analysis is based on qualitative or comparative information. The principal goals at this level are to determine if an alternative is feasible (physically, financially, environmentally, and socio-politically) and generally how it compares to the other alternatives.

During the next two levels, the amount of quantitative data and analysis increases substantially (i.e. traffic forecasts, cost estimates, potential numbers of impacted wetlands, etc.) allowing for more detailed and definitive comparisons. The goal of the final Level 3 analysis is to determine a recommended project(s).

Appendix F describes in more detail the evaluation procedures for each level of analysis. This includes a detailed discussion of the evaluation criteria used for each evaluation level. The following three report sections present a summary of each of the three analysis levels.

