

15.0 RECOMMENDED PLAN

15.1 Final Alternatives Comparison

Of the three spot improvements considered in Level 3, Alternatives 2B and 2C are recommended as reasonable projects to pursue either as independent projects or as part of a larger, longer term package of improvements. These spot improvements meet the key project goals for the near term (especially the goals of traffic flow and safety). This recommendation is substantiated by the technical analysis, agrees with the public input on the project, and is supported by sound professional judgment. The only questions remaining for these alternatives are implementation questions related to the specific scope and phasing.

In the longer term, Alternative 3 is recommended as the most appropriate and cost-effective alternative at present. Alternative 3 can meet the stated project goals more cost effectively than either Alternative 6A or 9.

In summary, Alternative 3 addresses all seven of the project goals in some manner. It improves safety on the existing highway; it improves truck operations through town; it directly addresses the level of service issues in town; it preserves downtown business, while still providing some new development opportunities; it improves the highway geometry; it limits property/community/and environmental impacts; and it facilitates connections through town to other regional highways. Furthermore, Alternative 3 serves the most users (10,900 in the design year); has the lowest cost of the three-long term alternatives; could be phased over time; and had moderate public support. Alternative 3 is also compatible with the philosophy of maintaining the existing highway system.

In contrast, while Alternative 6A meets some of the project goals, it has some substantial drawbacks. Two of the biggest drawbacks are the number of users, 1,200 vehicles per day in 2030 (a diversion of only 900 vehicles from the existing highway), and the limited travel-time savings (one minute per vehicle). These projected benefits are not considered sufficient to warrant a capital investment of over \$10 million. However, the corridor itself is feasible and has a number of advantages, especially in the area of constructability. Therefore, if traffic volumes on US 51 were to increase substantially, it would be reasonable to re-evaluate this conclusion.

Similarly, Alternative 9 also has substantial drawbacks. While it has a somewhat higher traffic volume and preserves visibility for some existing development, the volume and travel time benefits are still not large enough. The 2,400 vehicles per day and one-minute travel-time savings are considered insufficient to warrant the \$10+ million capital investment and the higher maintenance costs of two new railroad bridges.

15.2 Recommended Plan

Alternative 3 (including Alternatives 2B and 2C in the near term) is the recommended alternative for improving US 51 in Clinton. Of the proposed concepts, Alternative 3 is selected for implementation because it best addresses the following key project goals.

➤ **Enhance vehicle and pedestrian safety on US 51 in the study area.**

Alternative 3 enhances vehicular safety for all 10,900 vehicles in the design year through improved geometrics, turn lanes, signal upgrades, improved sight distance, partial control access, wider lanes, and wider shoulders. The spot improvements 2A and 2B specifically target pedestrian safety on US 51 by improving sight distance at US 51 and Cresap Street, and improving pedestrian circulation around the courthouse. Furthermore, the reconstruction of US 51 through town will provide an upgraded sidewalk system.

➤ **Mitigate the negative impacts of heavy truck traffic on US 51, while maintaining an efficient through route for trucks and other vehicles.**

Alternative 3 improves the existing highway for better truck circulation and safety for all truck traffic. These improvements include wider lanes through town and increased turning radii for trucks at select intersections that are currently insufficient with regard to truck turning movements. (The bypasses do remove a substantial portion of the truck traffic from town, but they leave most of the rest of the traffic on the old highway.)

➤ **Maintain appropriate traffic controls and traffic flow conditions.**

Alternative 3 directly addresses the need for appropriate traffic controls and traffic flow conditions on US 51 in town. Without these improvements, the two key intersections will operate poorly by the design year of 2010/2020. Therefore, only Alternatives 3, 2B, and 2C address this goal.

➤ **Preserve downtown business, while enhancing overall economic development opportunities.**

Alternative 3 preserves downtown business opportunities better than the other possible alternatives. Whether it enhances overall economic development opportunities is a more open question. One could argue that improving the existing highway (including adding left turn lane access south of town) could spur more development activity in the established US 51 business corridor. Alternatively, an argument could be made that opening new land to development is key to new local economic activity. However, based on the recent University of Kentucky research regarding bypasses, it is not clear that any of the proposed alternatives will have a significant positive impact on economic development in the study area. Instead it may simply cause some businesses to decline and

other new businesses to open with little or no net gain to the area's economy. Furthermore, it appears based on recent business developments in the area that macro economic changes may overshadow any transportation system changes that would be made.

➤ **Improve highway geometry and drainage.**

Alternative 3 address this goal as it specifically calls for reconstructing US 51 to improve highway geometry and drainage.

➤ **Avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate property takings on US 51 as well as other community and environmental impacts.**

This goal was put forward specifically by many local citizens and has been included even though it is understood to be part of the normal KYTC planning and design process. All alternatives were developed in accordance with this goal. However, Alternative 3 meets this goal well because it has little impact on the environment and requires the least amount of new property. Also, no homes or businesses are expected to be relocated.

➤ **Facilitate improved regional connections to the Purchase Parkway and other existing regional highways as well as to the possible future I-66 corridor (should it be implemented).**

For this goal, Alternative 3 simply improves the existing regional through connections by improving and reinforcing US 51 as the major north-south spine in the area.

15.3 Difference of Opinion Regarding the Preferred Alternative

During the selection process for the preferred alternative, there was a difference in opinion among project team members. Some project team members supported Alternative 6A because it would provide a practical high-speed bypass around Clinton with minimal property impacts and good topography. They also highlighted some of its other benefits such as moving heavy truck traffic out of town, reducing travel times for through traffic, providing new connections between US 51 and KY 58 (East), and opening new land for potential economic development.

Other members supported the recommendation of Alternative 3 because it best addressed the key project goals in the most cost effective manner and in so doing would serve the largest number of people. They emphasized the high traffic volume that would benefit from the improvements and the lower, phased capital cost of Alternative 3 compared to Alternative 6A. These project team members concluded that the high construction cost of Alternative 6A was not warranted based on the low volumes and travel-time savings. They also pointed out that implementation of Alternative 6A would still require improvements to US 51 in town and that while

bypasses may cause economic activities to relocate, they do not necessarily lead to economic growth. For these reasons, Alternative 3 was selected as the preferred alternative for the study.