

CAG Report for Somerset Northern Bypass

Project Item Number: 8-59

County and Route: Pulaski, New Route

Project Description: Somerset Northern Bypass is a 4-lane, limited access highway that will alleviate congestion in and around Somerset. The bypass extends from the Louie B. Nunn Parkway west of Somerset and heads north bypassing Somerset. It then intersects with KY 80 east of Somerset in the Barnesburg community.

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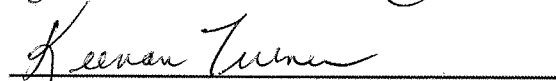
Approximate dates: October 17, 2002

Comments (number of people reached, effectiveness of the technique, what you would do differently, etc.): This has been helpful place to find all the information about the decisions that the CAG made.


SOMERSET NORTHERN BYPASS CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL

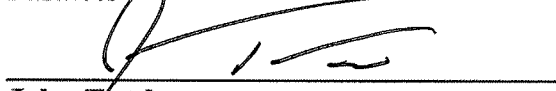
We, the members of the Somerset Northern Bypass Citizens Advisory Council submit this report on our findings and recommendations regarding the proposed northern bypass of Somerset, Kentucky, to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet this 17th day of October 2002.



Allen Crawford
Agriculture

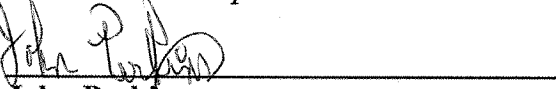

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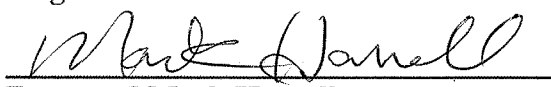

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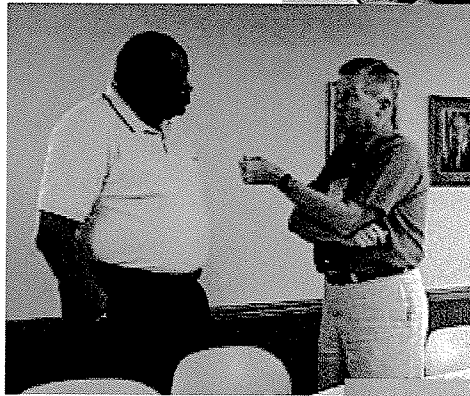

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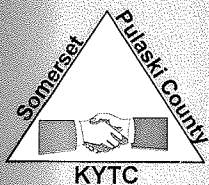

Reverend Mark Harrell
Neighborhoods
Advisory Council Vice-Chairman

* These individuals represent the minority opinion.

Somerset Northern Bypass Citizens Advisory Council



Report to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet



October 17, 2002

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The Council, through a majority decision, recommends that the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) adopt the North Alternate as its preferred alternate and present it as such at the project's Public Hearing and in its environmental report to the Federal Highway Administration for their approval.

Some members of the Council, representing the environmental interest area, think that the Crossover and South Alternates are better than the North Alternate and would prefer the KY 80 Upgrade Alternate (if it were still an option) or the No-Build Alternative to any of the build alternates remaining under consideration.

The Council recommends that the KYTC take a progressive, proactive approach to the mitigation of the negative impacts of the new highway; that the design and construction of the facility should be conducted with proper consideration and assessment of environmental matters; and that a citizens advisory group be involved in the design and construction phase.

Further, the Council requests that the KYTC expedite the design and construction of this project, allowing the residents of Somerset and Pulaski County to go forward with decisions about their lives.

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SUMMARY OF COUNCIL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Majority Opinion

Most of the Somerset Northern Bypass Citizens Advisory Council members recommend that the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) build the North Alternate.

The Council supports this recommendation with the following observations. The North Alternate:

- takes the fewest homes and causes the least disruption to neighborhoods;
- provides the most opportunity for business and economic development;
- provides the most space for the planned and controlled, sustainable growth of Somerset and Pulaski County;
- provides a highway that will minimize the impact of increasing traffic volumes and congestion and enhance traffic safety in Somerset and Pulaski County;
- provides for good local access and connectivity to other major roadways and would serve as an important link in the I-66 corridor, if constructed; and
- has the greatest overall negative impacts on the natural environment and farmland, creating the need to develop appropriate ways to mitigate those effects.

Minority Opinion

Members representing the minority opinion respect and appreciate the hard work and dedication to the project displayed by the KYTC, its consultants (JDQ) and other Council members. However, they feel the choice of the North Alternate as the preferred alternate is misguided and based more on personal bias than on the objective

assessment scores of the supporting Work Groups.

Some members representing environmental interests think the Crossover Alternate or the South Alternate are better than the North Alternate, and would prefer the KY 80 Upgrade Alternate (if it were still an option) or the No-Build Alternative to any of the build alternates remaining under consideration.

It is their feeling that the community should make a proactive choice on behalf of the environment that sets a standard and example for other projects and future generations. They formally request that mitigation measures outlined in this report be the minimum applied during this project and urge the KYTC to consider all consequences before proceeding to a final decision.

Mitigation

The entire Council recommends that the KYTC take a progressive and proactive approach to the mitigation of the negative impacts of the new highway and to the protection of the ecosystems and scenic beauty of the region.

Council suggestions include:

- designing and constructing attractive highway features such as rock cuts, retaining walls and bridges, in an aesthetically pleasing way;
- providing environmentally friendly sound barriers, where needed;
- planting trees and other vegetation to protect and enhance the scenic resources and ecosystems of the region;
- providing special signing for local tourism destinations;

- minimizing the splitting of farms and providing for adequate access for farming operations in the design of the highway;
- minimizing degradation to the human and natural environments by diverting water run-off from the roadway away from cave systems, sinkholes, streams and other conduits to cave systems and aquifers;
- locating replacement wetlands (developed to replace wetland acreage taken for construction) within the project corridor;
- exploring the feasibility of constructing elevated road beds in sensitive areas, including wildlife crossings, wetland areas and stream crossings;
- developing an emergency spill plan for responding to spills from vehicles;
- exploring the feasibility of minimizing the width of right of way through neighborhoods and where sensitive geologic features exist;
- ensuring that local values are incorporated into proposed mitigation measures by using a citizens group to work with the KYTC during the design and construction phases of this project; and
- lessening the impacts on people's lives by proceeding quickly to the design and construction of the proposed improvement.

Public Involvement Process

The public involvement process for this project study was streamlined and well-integrated with the technical impact studies and engineering design work. It afforded all interested groups the opportunity to voice

their concerns and identify common interests and goals. The time spent in such a process is extremely valuable in developing a community vision for transportation and land use.

In addition, the process focused on listening carefully to one another, and fostered an environment well suited for dealing with change. Failure to provide a means for public dialogue could have led to frustration among citizens about the identification of community needs, existing resources and how to meet those needs.

The Advisory Council recognizes the value of the public involvement process in developing majority and minority opinions for its recommendation to build the North Alternate. The Council also recognizes that the KYTC went well beyond the requirements of law and policy in providing public input to the Somerset Northern Bypass engineering and environmental impact studies.

According to Lee Florea, a member who represents the minority opinion, "This effort by the KYTC should be incorporated into future highway projects."

Recognitions

"The Advisory Council would like to commend the employees of the KYTC and Johnson, Depp and Quisenberry Consulting Engineers (JDQ) for their professionalism in supporting the Council throughout this process. Their presentation of technical information, their patience in working with the various interest groups and their facilitation of discussion has been outstanding.

The atmosphere of the work sessions was open. Council members could raise any issue concerning the Northern Bypass Project. The Council appreciates the many hours of support provided by these individuals. Many thanks." [Ken Bean, Chairman]

ADVISORY COUNCIL BACKGROUND

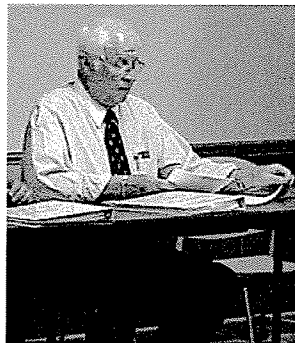
Formation

The intent of the Somerset Northern Bypass project study was to investigate new highway bypass alignments and an upgrade of existing KY 80, all designed to interstate standards. (See **Alternate Alignments Map - Exhibit 1**)

A high priority for the District 8 Office of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) was to provide an effective means for the public to comment on these alignments.

Toward this end the KYTC suggested the formation of the Somerset Northern Bypass Citizens Advisory Council and asked for volunteers to serve as members. From the large number of volunteers, the KYTC originally selected 19 to represent six interest areas or Work Groups including Agriculture, Business, Economic Development and Tourism, Environment, Government and Neighborhoods. Because two members resigned during the tenure of the Council, final membership was 17 individuals. The Advisory Council convened its first public meeting in December 2001.

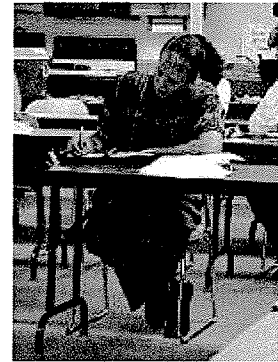
The Council formally developed rules and elected officers (chairman and vice-chairman) and identified constituents among the



public, interested organizations and stakeholders. Each Work Group developed a mailing list of constituents with whom they could communicate about the project

and gain input on potential impacts. Work Groups added names and addresses to their constituency mailing lists throughout the study.

The Advisory Council and Work Group structure allowed for the KYTC to provide a format for dialogue at the grassroots level, guided by volunteers who were familiar with local issues and who could



communicate directly with citizens and convey concerns back to the KYTC. Council members continuously discussed the impacts of project alternatives with local residents and elected officials throughout the study.

The Council structure provided a representative body for general interest groups, such as KICK 66 and the Somerset/Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce, to discuss both common and divergent needs. The Council's structure also has allowed the group to develop majority/minority opinions by fostering an understanding of individual concerns as well as the tradeoffs necessary to provide for common community needs for improved transportation.

Overall, the Council served as a coordinating body and a forum for comparing, synthesizing and prioritizing public concerns, building consensus regionally, and developing recommendations to the KYTC regarding highway location and impacts.

Advisory Council Mission

The following is the Mission Statement agreed upon by the Advisory Council.

"The Somerset Northern Bypass Citizens Advisory Council will make recommendations to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) concerning the location, effects, and mitigation of a proposed northern bypass of Somerset and its attendant alternatives. The Council will develop criteria to evaluate project alternatives, and submit their findings and recommendations in a report to the KYTC."

While it has been the Council's mission to assess impacts, report findings and make recommendations concerning the project alternatives, the Council was not responsible for the development of alternate alignments or the final decision about which alternative is selected. It is the responsibility of the KYTC, not the Advisory Council, to recommend a preferred alternative to the Federal Highway Administration.

Activities

All Advisory Council working sessions and formal meetings were open to the public throughout the study. Working sessions consisted of procedural matters and developing and implementing a methodology for gauging impacts. Formal meetings involved the initial formation of the Council and the presentation of its findings and recommendations to the KYTC and the public.

Press releases were issued announcing each meeting. News reporters attended meetings and reported to the community on the progress of the Work Groups and Council and on issues identified in the study.

Individual Advisory Council members often were interviewed directly by the media.

Openness with the media helped to assure that the Council's viewpoints and concerns were portrayed objectively to the community. Project managers, engineers and environmental and public involvement specialists from the KYTC and project consultants also were interviewed on project design and public concerns. Upon the request of the Council, the KYTC's public involvement consultant prepared minutes for each meeting so that no individual Council member would have to refrain from participating in discussions.

During their tenure, Council members reviewed and commented on the KYTC's proposed Purpose and Need Statement for the project's environmental impact report. The Council's input to this report and many other documents and issues was part of the KYTC's ongoing scoping process.

Assumptions and Procedures

Advisory Council members developed consensus on how meetings would be conducted



as well as certain study assumptions and operating procedures, including:

- a majority of members would constitute a quorum;
- an emphasis would be placed on developing informed recommendations;

- the Council would provide a forum for both majority and minority views;
- Council members would be residents of the region or knowledgeable about the region;
- Work Groups would be formed to represent specific interest areas;
- all meetings would be announced to the news media and the public;
- the KYTC and Council members would develop a list of constituents for each Work Group so that members could interface with them on the study;
- Council members would withhold final recommendations on the need for and location of a new four-lane highway until major impacts were identified; and
- the Council would adopt a set of ground rules for conducting meetings. (**See meeting ground rules - Appendix A.**)

ALTERNATES STUDIED

Council members initially studied four, fully access-controlled alternates developed by the KYTC: (1) a North Bypass Alternate, (2) a South Bypass Alternate, (3) a Crossover Alternate, which utilized portions of both the North and South Alternates, and (4) an upgrade of existing KY 80 through Somerset. (**See Alternate Alignments Map - Exhibit 1**)

During the Council's final analysis of alternates, the KY 80 Upgrade Alternate through Somerset was eliminated from further consideration by the KYTC because it did not adequately address the purpose and need for the project. Thus, final

evaluation was applied to the following build alternates:

- the North Alternate,
- the South Alternate, and
- the Crossover Alternate.

MEETINGS SCHEDULE

In addition to Council meetings, the KYTC held three large Public Information Meetings during the study to inform the general public about major milestones. The first Public Information Meeting on November 27, 2001, focused on defining the project study corridor and study timetable. The second Public Information Meeting on May 14, 2002, focused on the purpose and need for the study, preliminary alternate alignments, and the preliminary results of ongoing environmental studies. The third Public Information Meeting on August 22, 2002, focused on the three alternates remaining under consideration and their costs and impacts. A final public hearing was tentatively scheduled for May 2003.

Advisory Council meetings and working sessions were held throughout the study



period. The Council was given information on alternate alignments and study findings to review prior to each Public Information Meeting. Members also worked continually on refining their own impact criteria and developing a quantitative and qualitative scale for ranking the alternates regarding the severity of impacts.

Advisory Council meetings were held as follows:

Formal Meetings

- December 13, 2001 – Organization, orientation and project study corridor delineation
- October 17, 2002 – Council's report to the KYTC and the public.

Working Sessions

- February 5, 2002 – Developed methods and means of public input, core criteria selection
- March 12, 2002 – Purpose and need discussion
- April 23, 2002 – Criteria mailing results, environmental studies, preliminary alternates
- July 9, 2002 – Alignments and base studies report, impact criteria measures
- August 8, 2002 – Presentation of draft Work Group reports for Council review
- September 10, 2002 – Discussion of Advisory Council findings and recommendations, finalize report

INITIAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS

At the beginning of the study, Council members agreed that it was the KYTC's responsibility to address traffic volumes, accident data, and other studies that would show whether a new fully access-controlled highway was needed in the region and to develop the project's statement of purpose and need.

Advisory Council members were to evaluate the impacts of highway alternates developed by the KYTC and provide recommendations to the KYTC from a local perspective.

The following is a brief overview of core impact concerns raised by Council members at their initial meetings.

Agriculture Work Group

- loss of prime farmland
- added travel required for farm operations
- splitting of farms
- disruption of local road networks and access to fields, markets and suppliers
- displacement of farm homes and farm structures

Business Work Group

- loss of jobs
- access to existing businesses
- site opportunities for business relocations and future development
- future expansion of Somerset

Economic Development/Tourism Work Group

- convenient access to developable industrial sites with rail access
- good connectivity to KY 461 and KY 914
- commercially developable land near interchanges
- access to tourism destinations
- facilitation of commercial/industrial development in northern Pulaski County

Environment Work Group

- impact on water quality (surface/groundwater)
- impacts on ecosystems (woodland, prairie, wetland, karst)
- fragmentation of habitat
- noise impacts on local residents and wildlife
- scenic quality of proposed interchanges and loss of green space

Government Work Group

- compatibility with school redistricting plans
- placement of alternate far enough north to be a true bypass
- potential for expansion and growth of Somerset
- convenient access to the existing road system for buses, emergency service vehicles, and other local traffic
- development of the tax base near bypass interchanges

Neighborhoods Work Group

- displacement of households
- community cohesion (splitting neighborhoods, community facilities and schools)
- quality of life (open space, noise, air and light pollution)
- long-term development of residential areas and community services
- bypass access for neighborhoods

These core issues were further refined by the Work Groups and then mailed to the Work Group constituencies to determine if there were additional impacts that should be added, and to rate their relative importance in order to provide final, weighted impact criteria.

WORK GROUP SURVEYS AND STUDIES

Each Work Group conducted its own individual discussions and informal surveys of the members of its constituency group. The Agriculture Work Group's discussions with local farmers, the KYTC and a local land appraiser helped identify the impacts various alternates would have on property values of agricultural lands.

The Business Work Group discussions with local business operators, chamber of

commerce and economic development officials helped to identify impacts for existing businesses at various alternate locations and to examine how business and service operations could grow in the region.

The Economic Development and Tourism Work Group investigation into economic development and tourism needs in the region helped to assure that a northern bypass would allow for expansion, including light industry in the new industrial and technology parks, and to foster growth of the tourism industry.

The Environment Work Group supplemented the technical studies of habitat, threatened and endangered species and wetlands and pollution levels by bringing data on caves and karst topography to the Council's attention. Mapping of underground features assisted the KYTC in locating sensitive environmental areas and mitigating impacts of alternates.

The Government Work Group interfaced with local government officials and advised the KYTC on how alternates could impact government services. They also examined the impact of each alternate on the ability to provide emergency services in the region as well the impacts of each alternate on existing and future land-use plans.



The Neighborhoods Work Group met with numerous property owners in neighborhoods and subdivisions along each of the alternate locations to determine impacts on property owners, community cohesion and open-space values. They assisted the KYTC in identifying households taken and neighborhoods split by individual alternates.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The Council approved the use of an impact evaluation matrix developed by the consultant for assessing the impacts of each alternate. The matrix approach used the KYTC technical study data or other value scale measures to quantify important impacts. (See **explanation of impact evaluation matrix - Appendix B.**)

The number of criteria for each Work Group was to remain small to ensure that major factors were represented in the analysis rather than diluting the importance of each criteria by selecting too many. (See **Work Group Reports for criteria listings and weightings - Appendices C-H.**)

In most cases, each Work Group was able to select specific data from the KYTC's technical studies to provide measures for their criteria. For values-driven criteria, the Work Groups developed measurements or a values scale to reflect their concerns. The Council also asked the KYTC to measure criteria in specific ways during technical studies to reflect their specific interests.

For instance, the Neighborhoods Work Group asked that households affected be measured not just along the right-of-way (ROW) for each alternate, but within one-half mile of the ROW lines. As mentioned earlier, the Environment Work Group provided new data on caves in the region,

and the Agriculture Work Group devised a way to measure the impacts a bypass would have on property values of farmland adjacent to the new highway.

Each alternate in a Work Group's matrix received an alternate preference score (APS). The alternate with the lowest APS for each Work Group had the least impact on the region for that interest area; i.e., agriculture, business, economic development/tourism, environment, government or neighborhoods.

WORK GROUP IMPACT CRITERIA

Each Work Group developed its own weighted impact criteria for assessing impacts in accord with the Council-directed methodology. (See **Work Group Reports - Appendices C-H.**)

Criteria were developed and weighted by each Work Group constituency through two mailings. In the first mailing, constituents were asked to identify other criteria not listed by the Advisory Council members. In the second mailing, they were asked to select their three most important criteria. Criteria receiving less than 10 percent of the total selection were dropped. This resulted in four to six final criteria for each Work Group.

WORK GROUP ALTERNATE PREFERENCE SCORES

Alternate preference scores (See **Work Group reports - Appendices C-H**) were used to represent the level of overall negative impacts. The larger the score, the greater the impacts. Therefore, the lowest score would represent the preferred alternate for that particular Work Group.

Each Work Group presented a written and verbal report of its findings to the Council at a working session, including its matrix rating of the alternates. A rationale for each Work Group's assessment of impacts was given so that the Council could consider each Work Group report on its own merits prior to developing an overall Council recommendation.

The following is a summary of each Work Group's findings:

Agriculture Work Group

South Alternate (Score: 28.1)
Crossover Alternate (Score: 28.8)
North Alternate (Score: 43.1)

The Crossover Alternate and the South Alternate have the least impact on agriculture overall with the North Alternate having the greatest impacts. The farther an alternate is from the city, the more farmland would be taken out of production.

In addition, there is a greater negative impact on agricultural land property values farther from town since there is more farmland there to be impacted. There are fewer farms split and existing farm homes and structures taken by the alternates closer to the city.

The Agriculture Work Group assessment shows the South Alternate to have the least negative impacts overall.

Business Work Group

North Alternate (Score: 28.5)
Crossover Alternate (Score: 33.3)
South Alternate (Score: 38.2)

The North Alternate clearly allows for the greatest future expansion of Somerset, the Work Group's main interest. The South Alternate has some advantages for maintaining proximity to existing

businesses, but this is offset by the space afforded for business relocation by the North Alternate. In addition, there would be less disruption to existing businesses during construction of the North Alternate.

The Business Work Group assessment shows the North Alternate to have the least negative impacts overall.

Economic Development/Tourism Work Group

North Alternate (Score: 32.0)
Crossover Alternate (Score: 33.9)
South Alternate (Score: 34.1)

The North Alternate gives the best access to KY 461 and the new Valley Oak Industrial Park and Technology Center, high priorities for the Work Group, while the South Alternate gives the best connectivity to KY 914 and the Crossover Alternate gives the best connectivity to old Route 27. However, traffic flow projections are best for the North and the Crossover Alternates for the intersecting roadways. For Tourism, the alternates closer to town may give the best overall access to tourism destinations.

The Economic Development/Tourism Work Group assessment shows the North Alternate to have the least negative impacts overall.

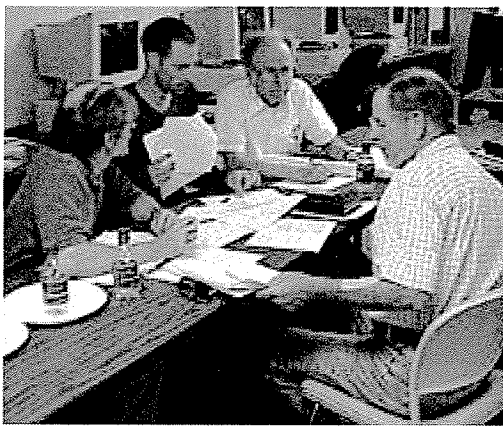
Environment Work Group

Crossover Alternate (Score: 26.9)
South Alternate (Score: 31.5)
North Alternate (Score: 41.7)

The Crossover Alternate has the least impacts on cave systems and sinkholes and plant and animal life and habitat, while the South Alternate has the least impacts on ecosystems. For air and water quality and noise impacts, the Crossover Alternate has

the least impacts, and the North Alternate has the most impacts.

Three sources of data were compared to determine impacts, 1) the KYTC's bypass technical study data, 2) Council member Lee Florea's own field work data and 3) a combination of these. Each source yielded about the same results: that the Crossover Alternate has the least adverse impact on the environment of any of the build alternates.



However, at the time the KY 80 Upgrade Alternate was dismissed from further consideration by the KYTC, some Environment Work Group representatives said it would have been their preferred build alternate because it is already the most-developed alignment and, therefore, would disturb the natural environment the least. Also, while the Environment Work Group overall did not support a build alternative in the project study, representatives did select from among the remaining alternates in terms of which is least destructive to the environment if a bypass is to be constructed.

Government Work Group

North Alternate (Score: 31.7)
Crossover Alternate (Score: 32.3)
South Alternate (Score: 36.0)

The North Alternate best meets the criterion for being a true bypass, although for emergency services the alternates closer to town are more advantageous.

The North Alternate is somewhat troublesome to emergency service providers. In the event of an accident on the North Alternate, a Somerset ambulance would respond, but it could not be accompanied by a Somerset fire truck. This is due, in part, to the fact that Somerset fire trucks cannot go farther than five miles from the Somerset fire station and the North Alternate is more than five miles out. Additional consideration by local governments is needed on how to deal with this issue.

The North Alternate allows for the potential "smart growth" of Somerset and expansion of the tax base with more than two-and-one-half times the developable land within the bypass compared to other alternates. It also provides the best access with the least congestion for small communities north of the city.

The Government Work Group assessment shows the North Alternate to have the least negative impacts overall.

Neighborhoods Work Group

North Alternate (Score: 29.7)
South Alternate (Score: 33.8)
Crossover Alternate (Score: 36.5)

The North Alternate displaces the fewest households, affects the fewest households within one-half mile of the right-of-way (ROW) lines and has the least negative impacts on quality of life measures, such as air, noise and light pollution and open space. It also splits the fewest neighborhoods. The North Alternate also would have slightly less impact on churches and cemeteries as compared to other alternates.

The Neighborhoods Work Group assessment shows the North Alternate to have the least negative impacts overall.

ADVISORY COUNCIL ANALYSES

Premises for Recommendations

The Council's recommendations were based on the following premises:

- Council members would step out of their roles as individual Work Group or special interest representatives and into a role of citizens representing the community and region as a whole;
- Council members would determine whether they felt the KYTC had made a convincing case regarding the need for a four-lane bypass of Somerset;
- Council members would determine whether they felt the KYTC had acted appropriately in dismissing the KY 80 Upgrade Alternate;
- Council members would formulate a community vision of the best transportation and land-use outcome for the future of Somerset and Pulaski County;
- Council members would identify major issues from their study of alternates and special interest group needs;
- Council members would determine which bypass alternate best fits their community vision;
- Council members would determine which interest areas would bear the greatest negative impacts of building a new highway;

- Council members would determine how mitigation measures could limit negative impacts; and
- Council members would assure that both majority and minority opinions were provided to the KYTC.



The Council met in a working session on Tuesday, September 10, 2002, to discuss and develop its report to the KYTC.

Reaching Agreement

While Council members agreed that they were in a position to work toward consensus concerning this project, they felt that describing their majority/minority opinions was a more realistic goal for their report to the KYTC.

Council members also recognized that in reaching a majority opinion, not all Council members could retain their first alternate preference and that mitigation was needed to lessen the impacts in certain issue areas, especially those identified in minority views and by those Council members choosing an alternate not favored by their Work Groups.

Community Vision

Council members developed their vision for the future of Somerset and Pulaski County as it relates to this project. Components of this vision, articulated by the Council, include:

- the assurance of safe travel, unimpeded by congestion, as population and traffic volumes continue to grow;
- a commitment by local governments to planned, controlled growth;
- a continuing focus on economic development to provide a healthy, sustainable business and industrial economy and to provide jobs for future generations;
- a commitment to providing an upgraded transportation infrastructure that will meet growing population needs;
- a dedication to preserving quality of life values such as retaining open space and community cohesion, and limiting the disruption of existing neighborhoods;
- a commitment to preserving ecosystems and limiting noise, light, air and water pollution; and
- a serviceable connection to other major roadways in the area, including I-66 if it is constructed.

Other Impacts and Major Issues

Council members said that it is vital to select an alternate that provides enough space for the growing residential population and business



community in Somerset, so that a new highway does not become surrounded too quickly by development and become ineffectual as a true bypass, as has been the situation with KY 80.

Council members also determined that local government and economic development decisions need to be made to assure that the downtown business district of Somerset remains vital and attractive. "We must place the bypass to maintain our quality of life and to avoid having another KY 80 surrounded by growth. At the same time, we must preserve our city center," states Council member Carrie Altmaier.

In addition, Council members agreed the beauty of the region must be maintained to attract visitors and enhance the tourism industry.

Build/No-Build Alternatives

Most Council members agreed that KYTC statistics and their own personal experience showed that a new four-lane bypass of Somerset is needed.

The Council cited the area's high population growth rate as well as the continual growth in the business, economic-development and tourism sectors, which depend on broadening the region's transportation infrastructure.

One Council member representing the neighborhoods interest area did not necessarily agree that the KYTC had shown a need for a highway, based on "a world in which families would be talked to about cutting down the need for everyone to have a car."

Some members of the Environment Work Group said they preferred the No-Build

Alternative and believe that the need for taking more land to build a new four-lane highway is not warranted.

KY 80 Upgrade Dismissal

Most Council members also agreed that the KYTC's decision to drop the KY 80 Upgrade Alternate from consideration was appropriate. The KYTC studies had shown that the Upgrade alternate would not relieve traffic congestion on KY 80 and connecting roadways and would operate at an inadequate level of service for future traffic volumes.

Another consideration was that the area along KY 80 has become built up with residential and commercial development, which also would suffer considerable disruption if KY 80 were upgraded to a fully access-controlled highway.

However, there was some sentiment among Council members representing environmental interests that the KY 80 Upgrade was the best build alternate, because -- as the already most-developed alternate -- it would have the fewest impacts on the environment. When that alternate was dismissed by the KYTC, these members were left to choose from among the other build alternates.

Preferred Alternate

Based on Work Group and other public input, the Council's community vision and other major impacts and issues, **a large majority of the Advisory Council agreed to recommend the North Alternate as its preferred alternate.**

While the North Alternate caused the most negative impacts to farmers and agricultural land, both members of the Agriculture Work

Group supported it. According to Keenan Turner, "If we don't use the North Alternate, we'll have to use more land in the future to build another bypass as the community grows."

Allen Crawford, while not completely happy with the choice of the North Alternate, supported it stating "My heart wasn't with the North Alternate for my own selfish reasons -- part of my farm will be taken -- but the North Alternate is best for the community."

There were others who, while they may have preferred another alternate, supported the North Alternate. J.P. Wiles, Mayor of Somerset, stated "I originally wanted the highway closer in, to tie in at Sugar Hill for better access to KY 914, but so many people came to me wanting the North Alternate, that's the one I support."

Reverend Mark Harrell pointed out, "If it ever is to become part of I-66, the bypass is in the right spot with the North Alternate."

Darrell Beshears, Pulaski County Judge Executive stated "I don't know for sure that we will grow out to the North Alternate, but we must base our decisions on what our history of growth has shown us."

Steve Dunn also supported the North Alternate even though it was not a good alternate for him personally. "I live in Pleasant Hills. The North and Crossover Alternates would take my house. But I'm not bigger than Pulaski County. My heart is with the people. The North Alternate is best for the community."

Mitigation

The Council recommended that the KYTC take a progressive and proactive approach to

the mitigation of the negative impacts of the new highway and to the protection of the ecosystems and scenic beauty of the region. According to council member Lee Florea, "The environment must be maintained for us to survive. Tourism ties into the environment. We must balance what we need with what we have."

Minimizing degradation to the human and natural environment could be achieved by considering the following needs during the design and construction of the proposed northern bypass.

- All water run-off from the roadway should be diverted away from cave entrances, sinkholes, streams, and other conduits to cave systems and aquifers.
- Wetlands that will be developed to replace wetland acreage taken for the construction of the bypass should be located within the project corridor. These newly developed wetlands should be designed to:
 - Intercept all highway and bridge water run-off;
 - handle the flow from a 50-year storm; and
 - enhance benthic diversity.

These measures, when added to best management practices followed during construction, such as silt traps and vegetative filters, will help protect the Lake Cumberland watershed.

Benefits provided by these measures include: reducing the amount of solids and other roadway run-off that can have negative effects on aquatic life; providing additional protection from hazardous substance spills

by encouraging benthic and other microbial activity that supports biodegradation; and maintaining wetland habitat.

Other suggested mitigation measures included:

- designing and constructing attractive highway features such as rock cuts, retaining walls and bridges, in an aesthetically pleasing way;
- providing environmentally friendly sound barriers where needed.
- planting trees and other vegetation to protect and enhance the scenic resources and ecosystems of the region;
- providing special signing for local tourism destinations;
- minimizing the splitting of farms and providing for adequate access for farming operations in the design of the highway; and
- exploring the feasibility of constructing elevated road beds in sensitive areas, including wildlife crossings, wetland areas and stream crossings;
- developing an emergency spill plan for responding to spills from vehicles; and
- exploring the feasibility of minimizing the width of right of way through neighborhoods and where sensitive geologic features exist.

The Advisory Council also believes that to best ensure that local values are incorporated into the proposed mitigation measures, a citizens group should work with the KYTC on the design and construction of the highway.

Negative impacts on people's lives, such as making decisions on how and when to relocate homes and farming operations, can be mitigated somewhat, if the KYTC proceeds quickly to the design and construction of the proposed improvement.

Other Suggestions

In addition to these mitigation measures, intended for KYTC consideration, Council members thought the following should be taken into consideration by the responsible parties.

The KYTC should consider performing an appropriate geophysical survey to identify major karst features such as faults and oil fields; designing a monitoring plan to gauge the cumulative effects the roadway run off would have on aquifers in the area; and performing a survey to identify the biodiversity in the project corridor.

The way in which the land between the existing city limits of Somerset and the North Alternate is developed is crucial to carrying out the community vision. While the North Alternate would allow for more development, it also would allow for more parks and green spaces.

As new business corridors develop, extending from the Somerset city limits to the North Alternate, a conscious effort should be made to attract business operators to the city center to avoid its demise.

To assure the safety of area residents and visitors to Somerset and Pulaski County, local governments should work to ensure that adequate emergency services can be provided along and in close proximity to the North Alternate.