

RECORD OF DECISION

NORTH SPOKANE FREEWAY

DECISION

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) concurs with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) in the selection of the Market/Greene alternative (Alternative 6) with the North Option and the I-90/Collector-Distributor (C/D) System. The elements of the selected alternative (Market/Greene alternative, North Option and C/D System) are described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Section 4 (f) Evaluation FHWA-WA-EIS-95-4-F which was approved on April 3, 1997. A brief description is provided below under **Alternatives Advanced and Evaluated in the Environmental Impact Statement**. The selected alternative is comprised of the preferred alternatives and options identified in the FEIS for each of the project sections. It is also the environmentally preferred alternative and will incorporate all practical measures to minimize environmental harm.

The selection was based on an evaluation of information found in the FEIS and the discipline studies for the project, the recommendations of the Project Interdisciplinary Team, the recommendations of the Citizen Advisory Committee, the overall transportation needs of the corridor, and interagency and public inputs.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

A total of nine alternatives were initially considered, including the No-Build and a Transportation System Management alternative. Five of the alternatives were rejected because they did not sufficiently satisfy the need or purpose of the project. One other alternative was rejected because it was not considered reasonable. The No-Build and two other alternatives were advanced and fully evaluated in the environmental impact statement (EIS).

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the project and the specific objectives against which the alternatives were measured are as follows:

Purpose: To improve the efficiency and the people-and freight-carrying capacity on and between city streets, county roads, and major northside transportation routes, particularly US 2 and US 395.

Objectives:

- As much as practicable, reduce congestion projected for Design Year 2020 in the overall transportation system.

- Improve System linkage between major northside arterials and State routes, resulting in reduced travel times.
- Support or facilitate the implementation of multimodal use concepts, such as a high capacity transportation corridor.
- Accommodate or improve facilities for intermodal transfers such as park-and-ride lots and rail/truck freight movement.
- Provide for safe movement of people and freight by controlling access and points of conflict along the facility.
- Improve energy efficiency in the moving of people and freight.

In addition, the facility would have to conform to the State Implementation Plan (SIP) for CO and PM10, and be consistent with regional planning to meet the provisions of the Washington Growth Management Act, as implemented in Spokane County.

Alternatives Considered and Rejected

The five alternatives rejected because they did not sufficiently meet the needs and purpose of the project were the following:

Alternative 2 - Transportation System Management (TSM). This alternative encompassed Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and operational systems strategies and would be expected to accomplish the project purpose and meet the need by reducing travel demand rather than increasing capacity. TDM includes; Commute Trip Reduction, pedestrian and bicycle modes, transit, and similar strategies intended to reduce trips, accommodate trips in fewer vehicles and spread out demand peaks over more hours and days. Operational management strategies considered for this project focused on signal timing and interconnect. Although this alternative was rejected, several TSM/TDM strategies will be implemented in conjunction with the selected alternative. These strategies are discussed later in this Decision.

Alternative 3 - Mass Transit. This alternative would include facilities and services such as high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes/roadway, busways, rapid transit (light or heavy rail), and commuter rail.

HOV lanes/roadway are roadway lanes designated for exclusive use by vehicles of high occupancy (usually buses, vanpools, and carpools). They can be constructed in various configurations ranging from an exclusive separated facility to designation of a roadway lane for HOV use for at least a portion of the day.

Busways involve development similar to the HOV lanes/roadway identified above.

The focus is also on high occupancy vehicle use.

Alternative 4 - Improvements to Existing Facilities. Improvements to existing facilities would include development of new two-way left-turn lanes, major intersection modifications (such as right-turn lanes), and widening of roadways to accommodate new lanes. All these improvements would be used to create more system capacity and serve as an alternative solution to building a complete new facility.

The capacity increases provided by this alternative are assumed to accommodate the projected demand, with no provisions for expansion or modification to accommodate multimodal or HCT systems.

Constructing improvements to existing arterials would be very costly, both monetarily and in terms of neighborhood and business disruptions. Considering the need for an additional 12 lanes, right of way needs alone are substantial. Public and political acceptance of such a solution is not likely.

Alternative 8 - Bypass/Beltway. The conceptual proposal for a bypass/beltway provided by Spokane County was considered as an alternative. The proposal identifies a two to four lane non-limited access facility with a posted speed limit from 35 to 45 mph. A majority of this alternative would utilize existing roadways.

As a non-limited access route, zoning would govern access demand along the route. This influences the number and type of approaches to the bypass/beltway. Agriculturally zoned land would be expected to have relatively few approaches with lower usage. Conversely, the possibilities for commercially zoned property generating multiple approaches with potentially high usage, are very good. Intersections of minor arterials and residential streets would typically be controlled with stop signs. Intersections with principal arterials would most likely be signalized.

The **Bypass/Beltway** would provide additional capacity for trips that do not include the city center or north side of the city of Spokane. Some trips that would utilize I-90 to access north/south arterials such as Maple/Ash, Division and Market Streets would divert to the bypass.

The **Bypass/Beltway**, as proposed, is a significant transportation project. Considering SRTC modeling, the bypass would carry moderate traffic and provide modest congestion relief to a few major arterials in northwest Spokane. However, the proposed roadway creates new congested intersections at State Route 291 and Indian Trail Road and increases congestion on State Route 2 at Hayford Road.

Alternative 9 -- Facility of a Lesser Scope. No actual alternative of a lesser scope was evaluated. The analysis made for Alternative 4 (**Improvement to Existing Facilities**) showed that 12 or more lanes would be needed to handle the anticipated

north/south volumes of traffic.

A lesser facility does not meet the goals of the region because it would end up serving only local through traffic. Since the average trip length in Spokane is approximately 7.5 miles and a lesser facility would provide slower travel speeds than a full access controlled freeway, internal commute trips would not likely divert from their current routes to use the lesser facility.

In addition, the EIS review did not show that a lesser facility was a feasible alternative. The preferred alternative includes 4 to 8 new travel lanes with full access control. A lesser facility would result in greater congestion than the preferred alternative by the design year of 2020.

The FEIS provides a thorough discussion of the reasons why these alternatives were discarded. The following is a summary of the discussion that generally applies to all the rejected alternatives, except for the **Facility with Lesser Scope**, which was rejected based mainly on capacity and congestion considerations:

- These alternatives, in general, have limitations that would not allow for a reasonable reduction in anticipated trips for design year 2020 or for accommodating anticipated demand, and therefore would not reduce congestion to a reasonable level.
- They do not substantially improve system linkage between major north side arterials and State routes. Under these alternatives vehicles moving north and south will still be traveling on the local signalized arterials under stop-and-go conditions.
- Because they would not generally result in substantial reduction in demand or congestion, or in higher and more uniform speeds, they would not result in substantial emissions reduction. Table 2-8 outlines the projections for several key north/south and east/west arterials in the study area. Based on the EPA MOBILE5 emission rate program, Carbon Monoxide emission rates will be 2.5 to 3 times greater at low arterial speeds than at freeway speeds.
- They do not satisfactorily meet the objective of accommodating or improving intermodal transfers in such areas as car to bus (park and ride lots) and rail/truck freight movement.
- They do not generally and measurably reduce the points of potential conflicts, and are therefore not expected to improve safety substantially.
- They do not generally improve energy efficiency in the movement of people and freight.

The alternative that was rejected because it was not considered reasonable was **Alternative 5, Hamilton/Perry**. The Hamilton/Perry alignment begins at the existing Liberty Park interchange (commonly known as the Hamilton Street interchange) on new ramps parallel to the James Keefe

Bridge, and follows the Spokane River on the south. In the vicinity of Mission Avenue, the roadway swings north and crosses the river. Once across the river, the alignment curves to the west and lies just east of Gonzaga Prep High School, where it heads north along the west side of Perry Street. North of Francis Avenue, it continues north past Lincoln Road, Magnesium Road, and Hawthorne Road. Just north of Hawthorne Road, the alignment curves to the west and meets US 2. Just west of US 2, it curves to the north and crosses US 395 south of Hastings Road. The alignment then proceeds north until approximately the south end of the new bridge over the Little Spokane River. The alternative would be a full access controlled highway.

The Hamilton/Perry alternative was not considered reasonable because it would cause significantly higher disruption to the community. For example, it would require the acquisition of 636 homes as compared to 248 for the Market/Greene and 231 for the Havana alternative.

Documents and written comments received from the July 1991 Agency Scoping and Public Open House meetings strongly opposed this alternative. The following documents received were:

- A letter from the Mayor of Spokane
- A City Planning Commission Resolution
- Comments from the Logan Neighborhood Group
- Comments from Gonzaga Prep High School

The alternative was also inconsistent with recommendations from past studies, city plans, and neighborhood plans, including:

- 1988 "North Spokane Transportation Plan: Long-Term Transportation Improvements"
- City Comprehensive Plan, Arterial Street Plan
- The Hillyard Neighborhood Specific Plan
- The Chief Garry Neighborhood Specific Plan
- The Logan Neighborhood Specific Plan

Alternatives Advanced and Evaluated in the Environmental Impact Statement

Alternative 1 - No-Build

Under the no-build action, a new North Spokane Freeway (NSF) would not be constructed. The existing area arterial system would be modified through construction of several minor capacity improvement and safety improvement projects, along with normal roadway maintenance.

This alternative was not selected because it failed to meet any of the key objectives that define the purpose and need for this action. The primary goal of improving transportation safety and mobility through the city of Spokane and Spokane County between Interstate 90 and