



Finding the Right Transportation Solution

Congestion has become a fact of life for anyone traveling along the section of US 301 that runs through the Waldorf area just south of Washington, DC. In order to make improvements to a major road like US 301, many alternatives must be considered. While it's extremely important that community members provide their input, those opinions are not the only factors the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) must take into consideration.

SHA must consider improvements to transportation efficiency and safety, limits on land availability, and funding constraints. Mandates to improve air quality and protect the environment, business and residential access, and other issues are also important parts of the decision-making process.

SHA and other government agencies also try to include the perspectives of traditionally under-represented populations, such as low-income, minority, and those who speak limited English. Their concerns and viewpoints can be quite different from those held by members of the community who are typically involved in the transportation decision-making process.

SHA Develops a Series of Alternatives

The process begins with the development of the project purpose and need along with a number of alternatives, including the No-Build Alternative, under which minor short-term improvements would occur as part of routine maintenance and safety operations. SHA and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) act as lead agencies in selecting a preferred alternative from this list, which may undergo many revisions and alterations before the final choice is made. New alternatives may also be added as the project progresses. As the preliminary alternatives are developed, insights and feedback are gathered from many environmental and resource agencies, county and city governments, community interest groups, and the public.

Evaluating the Alternatives

Next, detailed environmental and engineering studies are performed on the alternatives. These studies evaluate the alternatives based on the following criteria:

- Fulfillment of the US 301 purpose and need
- Safety
- Environmental impacts
- Public support for the project and/or a particular alternative
- Travel efficiency
- Impact on project and/or funding schedule
- Cost

As these evaluations are underway, the alternatives may be modified to better meet the evaluation criteria. In addition, alternatives may be dismissed from further study if they are determined to be unfeasible.

Selecting an Alternative

The input of all stakeholders is treated equally. SHA considers all factors relevant to the US 301 project and analyzes comments received at the public hearing before making a final recommendation to FHWA. If FHWA approves SHA's recommendation, this alternative becomes the selected alternative and moves forward into the next phase of the project.

The goal of this process is to achieve a fair and more efficient transportation solution – one that meets the purpose and need of the project and has the general support of stakeholders.



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FOCUS ON...
How an alternative is selected.

The Project Development Process

Major transportation projects – like the US 301 Waldorf Area Transportation Improvements Project – have four phases: Planning, Design, Right-of-Way Acquisition, and Construction. Currently, this project is in the planning stage of development.

This project has been funded for the Planning phase only. Once the planning process is complete and an alternative has been selected, funding may be dedicated, and the project will move into the Design phase. Environmental studies, alignment approval, engineering design, and right-of-way acquisition must be completed before construction can begin.

** Each phase is funded separately in the Consolidated Transportation Program.*



For More Information

Or to request a project team speaker to meet with your community or organization, please contact Steve Hawtof, Project Manager, at (800) 548-5026 or email shawtof@sha.state.md.us

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