



I-270 / US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study



Welcome to the I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study Project newsletter. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), through the State Highway Administration (SHA) and the Mass Transit Administration (MTA), is conducting this multi-modal study to identify transportation system solutions for the I-270/US 15 Corridor.

The SHA and MTA would like to thank everyone who attended the Alternates Workshops/Public Hearings in March for both your input and participation, especially the new participants. The mailing list for this project has been updated to accommodate everyone who mailed back comment cards and postcards, as well as any address change notifications. In addition, we expanded the mailing list to include all residents and businesses surrounding the project study area. In this third issue of the I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study Newsletter, the Study Team would like to discuss the continued development and refinement of the Combination Alternates, and to review upcoming steps in this study.

Background

Although most of you are familiar with the history of this project, the Study Team, consisting of various Federal, State and local governmental agencies, would like to take this opportunity to update the new participants and summarize for everyone the project's recent progress. The Study Team includes representatives from SHA, MTA, MDOT, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC), the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), Montgomery and Frederick Counties, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and the Cities of Rockville, Gaithersburg and Frederick.

This project was initiated as a joint study between SHA and MTA in June, 1994 to investigate options that would relieve congestion and improve safety conditions along the I-270/US 15 Corridor. Traffic congestion will increase due to existing and projected growth within the Corridor. Extending from the Shady Grove Metro Station (Montgomery County) to Biggs Ford Road (Frederick County), the I-270 / US 15 Corridor provides a critical link for local and long distance trips between the Washington, DC metropolitan area, central and western Maryland, and beyond. Known as the "Technology Corridor," this area is home to many high-tech industries and research facilities as well as shopping, cultural, and recreational activities. The I-270/US 15 Corridor is a major commuting route for thousands of workers each day.

Study Goals

In order to more effectively evaluate the proposed transportation strategies and alternates, the Study Team developed Goals, Objectives and Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs). The Study Team highlighted five goals to achieve when developing and evaluating the transportation strategies throughout the study.

Support Orderly Economic Growth To support the orderly economic development of the I-270/US 15 Corridor consistent with the existing local government land use plans and Maryland's Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act.

Enhance Mobility To provide enhanced traveler mobility throughout the I-270/US 15 Corridor by optimizing travel choices by destination, mode, and route; minimizing delay; and improving the safety and overall efficiency of the transportation system.

Improve Goods Movement To facilitate the movement of goods within and through the I-270/US 15 Corridor and to improve the delivery services in support of the regional and local economies.

Preserve/Protect/Enhance the Environment To deliver transportation services in a manner which preserves, protects and enhances the quality of life and natural environment of the I-270 / US 15 Corridor.

Optimize Public Investment To provide a transportation system along the I-270/US 15 Corridor that makes optimal use of existing transportation infrastructure while making cost effective investments in facilities and services which support other project goals.

The Goals, Objectives and MOEs were used to analyze each of the initial transportation strategies to evaluate how they would resolve the Corridor's transportation challenges. After the Study Team determined that no single strategy would solve the transportation challenges, the Goals, Objectives and MOEs were utilized in the preliminary assessment of Combination Alternates.



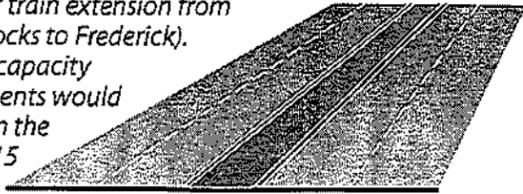
Smart Growth

While the term "Smart Growth" is a relatively new term, the Study Team is working with the appropriate agencies and staff to better understand this new State of Maryland legislation. The Smart Growth legislation promotes growth in, and connections between, locally designated growth areas. It also protects rural areas by discouraging continued sprawl development. All of the Alternates under consideration will be developed in accordance with both the spirit and intent of the Smart Growth legislation and will be evaluated to determine how they support the Smart Growth initiative. The Study Team will update the public on our progress throughout the detailed evaluation of the Alternates.

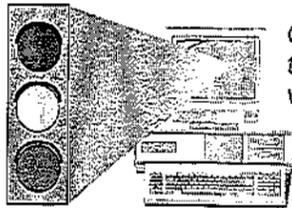
Transportation Strategies

The transportation strategies outlined below have been evaluated by the Study Team and were combined into the Combination Alternates.

Baseline (No-Build) Consists of elements adopted from the Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (i.e. MARC commuter train extension from Point of Rocks to Frederick). No major capacity improvements would be made in the I-270 / US 15 Corridor. Only routine maintenance and spot improvements are included.

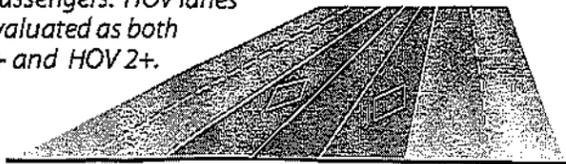


Transportation System Management / Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM)



Consists of ridesharing, telecommuting, ramp metering, vanpooling, additional park and ride lots, parking management strategies, alternative work hours, extended bus service and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technology.

High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Consists of designating an additional lane in each direction for vehicles with two or more passengers. HOV lanes were evaluated as both HOV 3+ and HOV 2+.

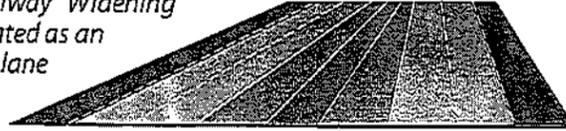


Transitway Consists of light rail transit (LRT) or a busway along a separate transitway alignment with stations and parking facilities. Following the counties' Corridor Cities Transitway alignment, which generally parallels I-270 from Shady Grove to Frederick, the transitway was fully evaluated as LRT to Frederick, LRT to Clarksburg, and a Busway to Clarksburg.



In addition, sensitivity tests were conducted to examine the transitway as either LRT or a Busway to Metropolitan Grove.

Highway Widening Consists of widening the existing highway to either the inside, outside, or both in order to add general use lanes. Highway Widening was evaluated as an additional lane in each direction as well as in combination with an HOV lane in each direction.



Public Meeting Summary

There have been several public meetings since the initiation of this project, beginning in 1995. The meeting types included both workshops and hearings.

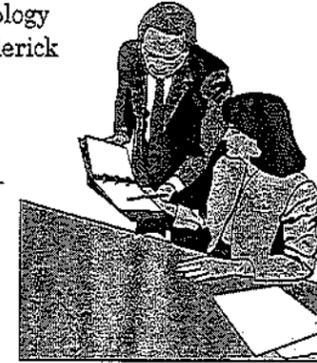
The first meeting was the Public Initiation Meeting, held in May of 1995. The purpose of this meeting was to familiarize the public with the process and the objectives for the project, as well as to obtain input regarding the various aspects of the study. Information was provided on the environment, regional growth, travel forecasting, land use, and transportation strategies such as HOV lanes, general use lanes and transit. A presentation, similar to the one given at this public meeting, was given to the MWCOG Transportation Planning Board on March 15, 1995, as part of the Major Investment Study (MIS) requirement to initiate the project with the Metropolitan Planning Organization. MWCOG concurred on the scope of this project in April of 1995.

The next meetings were the Public Alternates Workshops, held in December of 1995 and January of 1996. The purpose of these meetings was to share with the public the progress of the study and to gain feedback on the initial results of the transportation strategies analyses (HOV and general use lanes, the Corridor Cities Transitway alignment, extended feeder and express bus services, TSM/TDM strategies, etc.).



The analyses showed that no single strategy alone would satisfy the transportation needs within the Corridor, but a combination of strategies are necessary to solve the corridor's transportation challenges.

The most recent meetings were the Alternates Workshops / Public Hearings, held in March of 1997, at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School in Montgomery County and at Urbana High School in Frederick County. The purpose of these meetings was to share the progress of the study with the public and to gain feedback on the additional results of the transportation strategies analyses. The analyses resulted in the investigation of additional strategies, such as extended Collector-Distributor (C-D) lanes, premium bus service, proposed new interchanges, and the new alignments of Technology Boulevard and MD 75 in Frederick County. These meetings also gave the public the opportunity to provide private verbal or written testimony for inclusion in the official "Public Transcript" concerning the combination alternates and, specifically, the recommendation to preserve or protect right-of-way for the Corridor Cities Transitway alignment from the Shady Grove Metro Station to Frederick. This public transcript is now available in local libraries within the study area. Approximately 250 citizens attended the two meetings.



At each meeting, the public provided excellent written and verbal input for the Study Team to consider and use in the refinement of the transportation strategies and alternates. In addition, Study Team representatives were available to answer questions and concerns. The following list highlights some of the more common comments received both formally and informally from this Spring's public meetings:

- Support extending Metro to the Lakeforest Mall, to Germantown, or to Frederick.
- Believe that the Multi-Modal approach is realistic and are generally supportive of additional HOV and General Use Lanes to Frederick, the expansion of MARC (as part of the Baseline), and the extension of either LRT or a busway to Germantown.
- Support HOV lanes, preferably HOV 2+.
- Question the need for HOV lanes.
- Support express bus service between Frederick and Washington DC, notably with hourly bus service between Frederick City and Shady Grove from 5:00 a.m. until 12:00 a.m.
- Concerned about right-of-way constraints for transitway and highway improvements between MD 355 and I-270 (particularly near Comus Road) and for highway improvements on US 15 throughout the City of Frederick.
- Support additional telecommuting, ridesharing, and park and ride facilities.

Alternates Under Consideration

The Baseline and Combination Alternates shared at the public meeting include the following:

Baseline (No Build) Alternate Consist of the elements adopted from the Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (i.e., MARC Commuter train extension from Point of Rocks to Frederick). No major highway capacity improvements would be made in the I-270 / US 15 Corridor. Only routine maintenance and spot improvements are included.



Combination Alternate A

- TSM/TDM Strategies
- Corridor Cities Transitway (from the Shady Grove Metro Station to either Metropolitan Grove or Germantown)
- Express Bus service on HOV lanes
- Extended Feeder Bus Service to Local Transit Centers along I-270
- HOV lanes (from MD 121 to I-70)
- General Use Lanes (from MD 121 to Biggs Ford Road)
- Collector-Distributor (C-D) lanes (from MD 124 to Father Hurley Boulevard)
- US 15 Auxiliary Lanes (from Jefferson Street to MD 26)
- New/Improved Interchanges (Biggs Ford Road, Trading Lane, MD 85, MD 75, MD 109, Newcut Road, Watkins Mill Road)
- New Roadway Alignments (Technology Boulevard and MD 75 extended)

Combination Alternate B

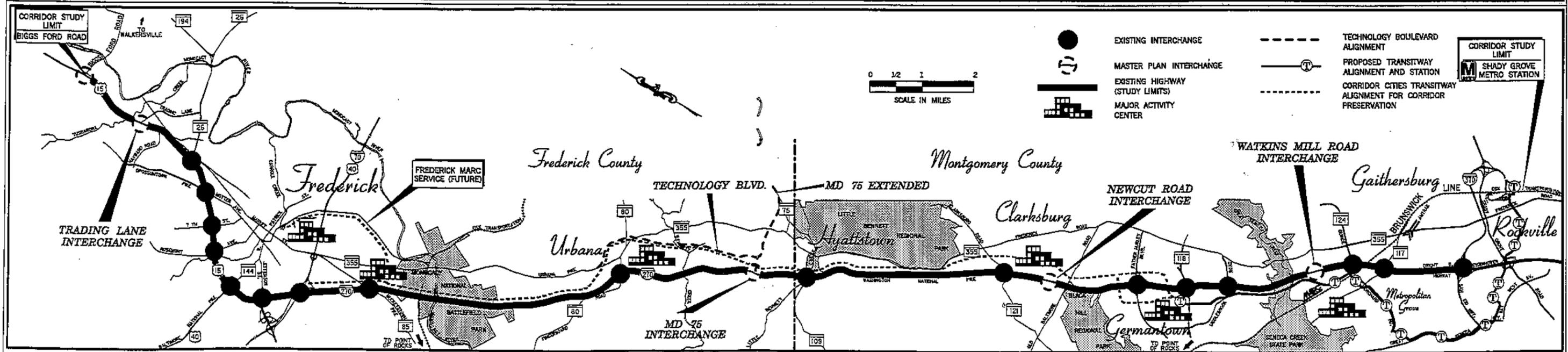
- TSM/TDM Strategies
- Premium (express) Bus Service (from the Shady Grove Metro Station to Frederick)
- Extended Feeder Bus Service to Local Transit Centers along I-270
- HOV lanes (from MD 121 to I-70)
- General Use Lanes (from MD 121 to Biggs Ford Road)
- Collector-Distributor (C-D) lanes (from MD 124 to Father Hurley Boulevard)
- US 15 Auxiliary Lanes (from Jefferson Street to MD 26)
- New/Improved Interchanges (Biggs Ford Road, Trading Lane, MD 85, MD 75, MD 109, Newcut Road, Watkins Mill Road)
- New Roadway Alignments (Technology Boulevard and MD 75 extended)





I-270 /US 15 MULTI - MODAL CORRIDOR STUDY DRAFT COMBINATION ALTERNATES

BASELINE (NO-BUILD)	BASELINE MODIFIED (NO-BUILD)	TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES	COMBINATION A	COMBINATION B
<p>Consists of the elements adopted from the Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (i.e. MARC commuter train extension from Point of Rocks to Frederick). No major capacity improvements would be made in the I-270/US 15 Corridor. Only routine maintenance and spot improvements are included.</p>	<p>Consists of the elements adopted from the Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan with the exception of the southbound segment of I-270 between I-370 and MD 121. This Baseline Alternate would retain the same number of existing lanes within this segment; however, all of these lanes in the southbound direction would be general use lanes as they are currently implemented. No major capacity improvements would be made in the I-270/US 15 Corridor. Only routine maintenance and spot improvements are included.</p>	TSM/TDM	Focuses on relatively low-cost, easy to implement Transportation System Management (TSM) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies. Consists of bus service modifications (new routes and/or increased service), additional park and ride spaces, ridesharing measures such as carpooling and vanpooling, as well as the implementation of alternative work hours, provisions for telecommuting, parking management strategies, ramp metering and the implementation of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technology.	
		TRANSIT	Consists of the Corridor Cities Transitway (busway or light rail transit) alignment from the Shady Grove Metro Station to Metropolitan Grove (with the possibility of analyzing a Germantown terminus) with stations at Shady Grove, Gaither Road East, Gaither Road West, Washingtonian, Decoverly, Muddy Branch, Quince Orchard, N.L.S.T. and Metropolitan Grove for light rail transit and at Shady Grove, Washingtonian and Metropolitan Grove for a busway (an HOV/express bus only slip-ramp to Metropolitan Grove via Watkins Mill Road would be provided). Express bus service would be provided along the Corridor Cities Transitway (if a busway) and along the I-270 HOV lanes in addition to an extended feeder bus system.	Consists of "Premium" express bus service on HOV lanes from the Shady Grove Metro Station to I-70 (this includes slip-ramps for exclusive bus/HOV access from the HOV lanes to the intermodal stations located at the major activity centers in Gaithersburg (Watkins Mill Road), Germantown (MD 118), Clarksburg (MD 121), Urbana (MD 75) and Frederick (MD 85)). Express bus service would be provided along the I-270 HOV lanes in addition to an extended feeder bus system.
		HOV LANES	Consists of one High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction starting from the HOV lanes currently implemented at MD 121 (NB)/I-370 (SB) and continuing to I-70, also includes possible HOV-only access points. The Staged Option would evaluate, for travel demand purposes, the southbound segment of I-270 between I-370 and MD 121. This Staged Option would evaluate widening for an additional lane to create four general use lanes plus one HOV lane between I-370 and MD 118 and three general use lanes plus one HOV lane between MD 118 and MD 121.	
		HIGHWAY WIDENING	Consists of an additional lane in the northbound direction from MD 118 to MD 121 to replace the existing HOV lane, which would become a general use lane, and an additional general use lane in each direction from MD 121 to I-70 (outside), from I-70 to MD 26 (inside), and from MD 26 to Biggs Ford Road (outside). In addition, the acceleration/deceleration lanes on US 15 from Jefferson Street to MD 26 would be connected into a continuous auxiliary lane.	
		C-D LANES	Consists of extending the Collector-Distributor (C-D) lanes by one of the following: Option 1: Continuous C-D lanes from I-370 (SB)/MD 124 (NB) to Father Hurley Boulevard; Option 2: Continuous C-D lanes from south of Middlebrook Road to Father Hurley Boulevard with no C-D lanes from I-370 (SB)/MD 124 (NB) to Middlebrook Road; or Option 3: No C-D lanes extended north from I-370 (SB)/MD 124 (NB).	
		INTERCHANGES	Consists of providing improved interchanges at MD 109 and MD 85 and new interchanges at Trading Lane and Biggs Ford Road, with the following additional interchange options: Option 4: Watkins Mill Road extended, Option 5: Newcut Road extended, Option 6: MD 75 extended which would divert from its existing alignment near Lewisdale Road and extend across MD 355 to a proposed interchange with I-270 north of the Frederick/Montgomery County line. In addition, improved interchanges need to be investigated at MD 26; Motter Avenue; 7th Street; Rosemont Avenue; MD 144/Patrick Street; Jefferson Street; MD 80; MD 121 (Combination B only); MD 118 (Combination B only); Middlebrook Road; MD 124; MD 117; and I-370. These improvements would include widening the structures to accommodate the proposed widening of both I-270 and US 15, as well as realigning the ramps to accommodate the auxiliary lanes on US 15, the outside widening on I-270, and the improved acceleration/deceleration lanes.	
		STRUCTURES	Consists of providing improved structures at the following locations: Tuscarora Creek (north of Trading Lane); I-70; CSX RR Crossing (north of Monocacy River); Monocacy River (south of MD 85); Baker Valley Road; Park Mills Road; Little Bennett Creek; Bennett Creek (south of MD 80); Doctor Perry Road; Comus Road; West Old Baltimore Road; Great Seneca Creek/Game Preserve Road; RR Bridge over I-270 (south of MD 124); and Muddy Branch Road. These structures would be widened/reconstructed to accommodate the proposed improvements to both I-270 and US 15.	
		ALIGNMENTS	Consists of providing the following option for a new roadway alignment: Option 7: Technology Boulevard (a parallel roadway system concept adjacent to I-270 from proposed MD 75 extended to MD 80 in Urbana to serve existing and planned development in Frederick County).	



Refinements To The Combination Alternates

Following the Alternates Workshops /Public Hearings, the Study Team refined the Combination Alternates based on the following items:

- The southbound I-270 HOV lane from I-370 to MD 121 will not be a part of the Baseline (CLRP) Alternate. Instead, a staged option will be evaluated that consists of widening for an additional lane southbound to create the following: four general use lanes plus one additional HOV lane between I-370 and MD 118; three general use lanes plus one HOV lane between MD 118 and MD 121.
- The Transitway Alignment northern terminus will be Metropolitan Grove; however, additional analyses will be evaluated to consider points further north if appropriate.
- The proposed MD 75 extended, Newcut Road extended and Watkins Mill Road extended interchanges, as well as the proposed Technology Boulevard alignment, were designated as options to Combination Alternates A and B.
- Three Collector-Distributor (C-D) lane options were developed:
 - Option 1: Continuous C-D lanes from I-370(SB)/MD 124 (NB) to Father Hurley Boulevard
 - Option 2: Continuous C-D lanes from south of Middlebrook Road to Father Hurley Boulevard with no C-D lanes from I-370 (SB)/MD 124 (NB) to Middlebrook Road
 - Option 3: No extension of existing C-D lanes north from I-370 (SB)/MD 124 (NB)
- Modifications and improvements to existing interchanges and structures which may be impacted by the proposed widening on I-270 were more clearly defined.
- Public comments were reviewed and incorporated into the Combination Alternates when feasible.
- Hiker/biker trails were added as a transportation strategy and will be more clearly defined during Alternates Retained for Detailed Study.



The Combination Alternates are described and illustrated on the map in this newsletter.

Long Range Plan Recommendations

The Study Team is currently recommending that the Corridor Cities Transitway alignment from the Shady Grove Metro Station to Frederick should be considered for future local/regional assessment. In order to preserve this alignment as a Transportation

Corridor, right-of-way preservation would be activated once this Major Investment Study (MIS) recommendation is included in the region's VISION or Long Range Plan.

Detailed Travel Demand Modeling

The Study Team will be completing detailed travel demand modeling during the next several months for the Baseline and Combination Alternates prior to initiating any detailed engineering or environmental analyses for the transitway. This would include detailed travel demand forecasts for the Baseline Modified Alternate, Combination Alternates A and B and three stand alone transit options. These three stand alone transit options include:

1. Light Rail Transit to Frederick along the Eastern (CSX) Alignment;
2. Light Rail Transit to Frederick along the Western Corridor Cities Transitway Alignment;
3. Busway to Frederick along the Western Corridor Cities Transitway Alignment.

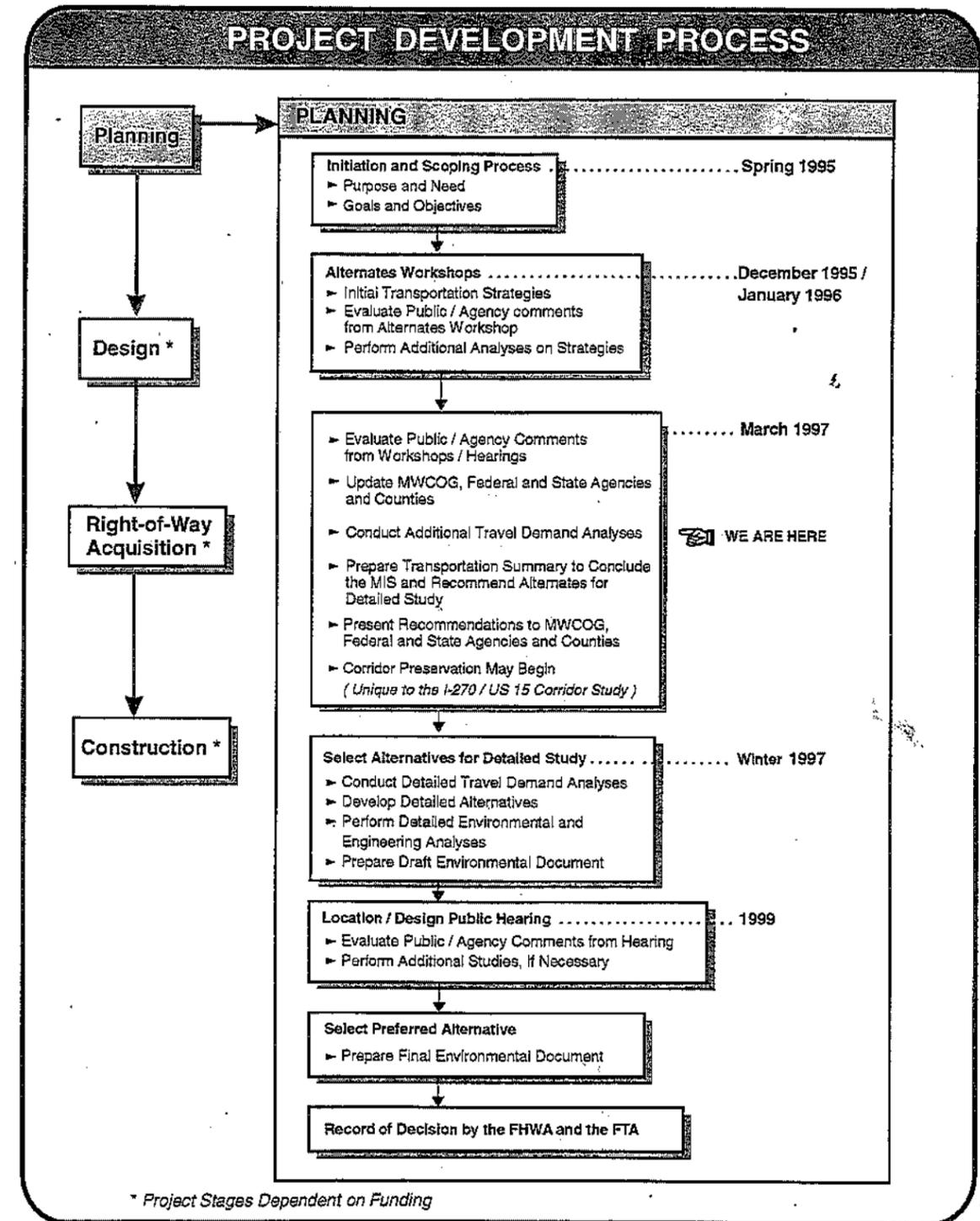
Each of the Combination Alternates and the stand alone transit options will be evaluated with all of the TSM/TDM Strategies.

Public Input

In addition to the larger public meetings, the Study Team has participated in other public activities over the past two years. A Focus Group of 15 to 20 leaders of community organizations, businesses, and interest groups from the project area has been working with the Study Team. The purpose of these Focus Group meetings is to update the group on the progress of this study, to answer questions regarding the transportation strategies and the Combination Alternates, and to receive their input on the study activities. The Study Team also produces these periodic newsletters that are sent to members of the mailing list. Postcards, comment cards, and brochures have also been distributed as a means of updating the public on the project status. In addition, the Study Team has distributed posters at local businesses and community organizations, participated in radio and television interviews, contributed to newspaper articles, distributed advertisements and issued press releases.

The Study Team is always available to give presentations to civic and business organizations. If interested, please feel free to call one of the project managers listed on the back of this newsletter.

Remaining Project Planning Steps



Thank You

The Study Team thanks you for your continued interest and participation in the I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study. As always, if you know someone who would like to be added to the

mailing list, or if you do not wish to receive these periodic mailings, please contact either of the project managers outlined on the back of this newsletter.

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