

Evaluation of Studied Alternatives and Determination of Practical Alternatives

The purpose of the Bi-national Border Partnership is to locate a new international crossing in the Detroit/Windsor area. The Partnership has studied the illustrative alternatives in five basic corridors that were identified in the Planning and Feasibility study completed earlier by the Partnership. The intent behind developing a new crossing is to provide a 30-year free flow freeway-to-freeway connection, which requires that all connecting links meet freeway standards. Currently, the Partnership is in the midst of environmental studies to determine the practical corridors for detailed study.

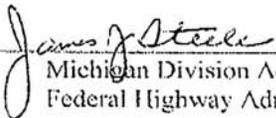
The Partnership adopted a common set of environmental evaluation criteria. These criteria were agreed to by the Steering Committee of the Partnership at its meeting on May 27, 2005, and included seven general areas: Protect Community/Neighborhood Characteristics, Maintain Consistency with Local Planning, Protect Cultural Resources, Protect the Natural Environment, Improve Regional Mobility, Maintain Air Quality, and Constructability. These criteria were used to evaluate the studied alternatives on both sides of the border. One alternative, the twinning of the Ambassador Bridge (X-12), ranked high on the U.S. side due to its minimal direct environmental impacts and its high regional mobility ranking. On the Canadian side, this alternative ranked very low and the Canadian Partners have stated their intent not to continue study of their portion of this alternative.

I have reviewed the evaluation data from both the U.S. and Canadian evaluations of X-12. My review of the U.S. evaluation has found it to be reasonable and I find the recommendation to continue study of this alternative to be consistent with the stated purpose and need. On the Canadian side, I found the analysis to be consistent with the agreed evaluation criteria and that the analysis has correctly identified significant community disruption and environmental impacts in both the development of an expanded plaza and the rebuilding of the connecting roadway system to meet the requirement of a freeway connecting roadway. Therefore, I concur that the Canadian evaluation is accurate and agree with the Canadian decision to not pursue further study of this alternative.

In evaluating each alternative, the Partnership agreed that there are five separate components to evaluate: namely, the US highway connection, the U.S. plaza, the bridge or tunnel crossing, the Canadian plaza, and the Canadian highway connection. The U.S. evaluation of the twinning alternative (crossing X- 12) found that 2½ of its components met the purpose and need. The Canadian evaluation found that two of these components (specifically the highway connection and plaza) were unacceptable. I have found the Canadian evaluation to be reasonable and consistent with the evaluation criteria and the purpose and need. It is also reasonable to accept the Canadian evaluation and find that two of the five components of this alternative have severe community disruption and environmental impacts. Moreover, I have considered that the Canadian partners have firmly stated their objections to alternative X-12 and their unwillingness to consider this alternative further. Therefore, I conclude that the twinning alternative, X-12, is not a practical alternative for further study on the U.S. side.

I have also reviewed the U.S. evaluation of the various crossing alternatives contained in the draft U.S. evaluation report. I find the evaluation to be consistent with the Partnership criteria. I also agree that the alternatives recommended in the U.S. evaluation to be dropped from further study either do not adequately meet the purpose and need or have anticipated significant environmental impacts. These alternatives, X- 13 through X-15 and X-1 through X-9, should not be considered for further study.

It should be noted that the range of alternatives remaining lie within the area upstream of Zug Island to just south of the Ambassador Bridge and bounded by I-75 as the places where further analysis will be conducted to specify where the practical alternatives for bridges, plazas, and highway route connectors should be placed. Alternatives developed here will provide an acceptable level of regional mobility and should not result in severe community disruption or adverse environmental impacts in the U.S. Thus, limiting the consideration of alternatives to this area meets project purpose and need and is reasonable based on the agreed upon evaluation criteria.

Signed by:  Date: November 10, 2005
Michigan Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration