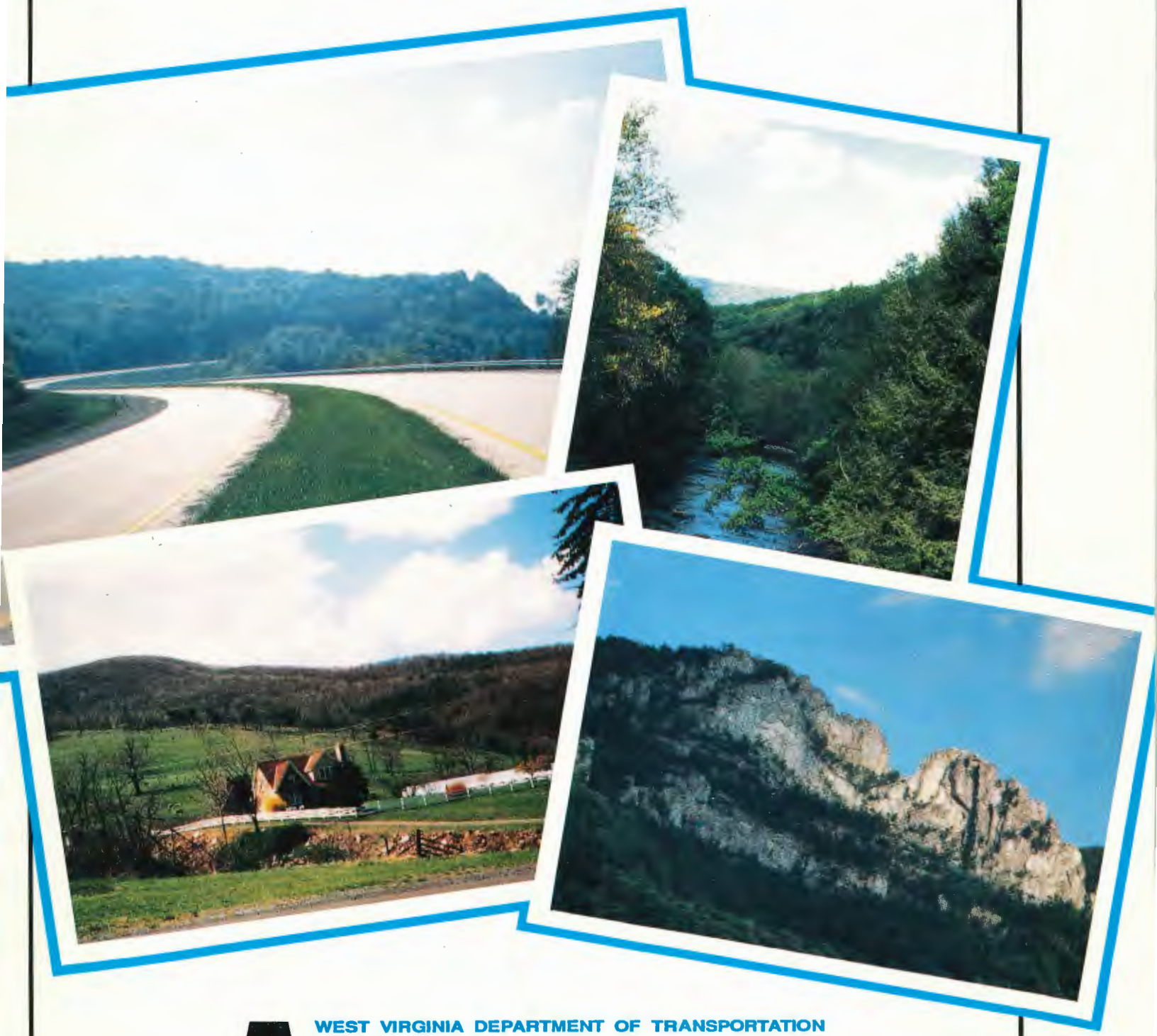
DECISION DOCUMENT
CORRIDOR SELECTION SDEIS



WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

APPALACHIAN CORRIDOR H

Elkins to Interstate 81

State Project: X142-H38.99 C-2
Federal Project: APD-484 (59)

U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Highway
Administration**

Region 3
West Virginia Division

Suite 300
550 Eagan Street
Charleston, West Virginia 25301

July 26, 1993

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Supplemental Draft EIS/Sec. 4(f)
Corridor H, Elkins/I-81 in Va.
FHWA-WV-EIS-92-01-SD(step 1)

Mr. Fred VanKirk, Commissioner
State Highway Engineer
West Virginia Division of Highways
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Dear Mr. VanKirk:

We have completed our review of the April 24, 1993 Decision Document for the subject project, and its June 16, 1993 revisions. We have also reviewed the comments from cooperating and other resource agencies, as well as the State's responses to those comments. Additionally, we reviewed the May 20, 1993 Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board resolution.

We find that the social, economic and environmental information presented in the document and other items reviewed properly establish the basis for identifying the corridor for the next project development stage.

Accordingly, you are hereby authorized to proceed with development of the Step 2 Supplemental Draft EIS. This next step will be developed consistent with the commitments for further project development in Section VI of the Decision Document.

Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Dave Leighow at (304) 347-5329.

Sincerely yours,

Dave Leighow

for Billy R. Higginbotham
Division Administrator

FHWA-WV-EIS-92-01-SD
State Project: X142-H-38.99 C-2
Federal Project: APD-484 (59)

APPALACHIAN CORRIDOR H
Elkins, West Virginia to Interstate 81, Virginia

Corridor Selection Decision Document

Submitted Pursuant to : 42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c), 23 U.S.C. 128(a), 49 U.S.C. 303(c), and 16 U.S.C. 470(f) 80 Stat. 931, Public Law 89-670

U. S. Department of Transportation - Federal Highway Administration
and
West Virginia Department of Transportation - Division of Highways

Cooperating Agencies:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Park Service, U.S. Soil Conservation Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Council on the Environment

The following persons may be contacted for additional information concerning this document:

Mr. Ben Hark
WVDOT - Division of Highways
State Capitol Complex
Building Five, Room A-830
Charleston, WV 25305
(304) 558-3236

Mr. Billy R. Higginbotham
FHWA Division Administrator
550 Eagan Street, Suite 300
Charleston, WV 25301

(304) 558-3093

This project consists of a proposal to construct an approximately 110 to 130 mile highway; completing Corridor H of the Appalachian Development Highway System in northeastern West Virginia to Interstate 81 in Virginia. The proposed Corridor H facility would provide a four-lane highway with partial control of access on new and existing location between the towns of Elkins, West Virginia and Strasburg, Virginia. This Decision Document selects corridor Scheme Option D5 for further study in the Alignment Selection SDEIS for this project.

Comments on this Decision Document are due by **MAY 28, 1993** and should be sent to:

Mr. Randolph T. Epperly, Jr.
Director, Roadway Design Division
WVDOT - Division of Highways
State Capitol Complex, Building Five
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

ABSTRACT

Appalachian Corridor H is one of the economic growth highways designated by Congress to serve the Appalachian Region. In 1981, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was prepared and circulated for public review and comment. Following three years of various studies, field reviews and public input, the project was put on hold and a Final EIS (FEIS) was not prepared. In June of 1990, the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) resumed the project by initiating a written reevaluation of the DEIS. The reevaluation determined that changes in legislation, procedures, and project surroundings warranted the preparation of a Supplement to the 1981 DEIS. In August of 1990, the WVDOT and the FHWA agreed that all of the original schemes in the 1981 DEIS would be equally evaluated based on 2,000 foot-wide corridors and that a preferred corridor would not be identified until after the Corridor Selection SDEIS had been completed and subsequent public meetings and hearings had been held.

The Corridor Selection SDEIS was approved by the FHWA on October 21, 1992. Following the approval of the SDEIS, the WVDOT eliminated all Scheme B and C Options from further consideration due to involvement with Canaan Valley State Park. Public meetings and hearings were held throughout the project area in December, 1992, and January and February, 1993. The official project and SDEIS comment period expired on February 20, 1993.

Based on information in the Corridor Selection Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement and associated Technical Reports, comments during the public involvement process, and comments and coordination with cooperating and other resource agencies, the West Virginia Department of Transportation has chosen ***Scheme Option D5*** *as the selected corridor for future development of Appalachian Corridor H from Elkins, West Virginia, to Interstate 81 in Virginia. The development of a specific alignment for a limited access, four-lane highway within the selected corridor can meet the project purpose and need while avoiding known Section 4(f) land, and avoiding or minimizing impacts to identified environmental, social and economic resources.*

Construction of Appalachian Corridor H between Elkins, West Virginia, and Interstate 81 in Virginia cannot begin until an Alignment Selection SDEIS, a Final EIS, and a Record of Decision are prepared and approved by the Federal Highway Administration.

APPALACHIAN CORRIDOR H
DECISION DOCUMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

This is the Decision Document of the *October 21, 1992, Corridor Selection Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (SDEIS) prepared for the construction of Appalachian Corridor H from Elkins, West Virginia, to Interstate 81 in Virginia. This document has been prepared in accordance with a two-step study process explained in the Corridor Selection SDEIS on pages S-4 through S-7, and summarized in the Executive Summary of the SDEIS on page 4. The Appalachian Corridor H study process grew from discussions and agreements with the Cooperating Agencies and other resource agencies at project coordination meetings held in Charleston, West Virginia, on May 5 and 6, 1992, and on September 23 and 24, 1992. Authority for this two-step process is found in the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) *Regulations For Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act*, and the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) regulations on *Environmental Impact and Related Procedures* (Federal Register, Vol. 52, No. 167; August 28, 1987, Section 777.111).

The West Virginia Department of Transportation, the FHWA, and the Cooperating Agencies identified this Decision Document as the logical transition from Corridor Selection (Step 1), to Alignment Selection (Step 2). An illustration of the study process is shown in Exhibit 1. The shaded box represents the Decision Document and its relationship to the Corridor Selection SDEIS, the future Alignment Selection SDEIS, Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), and Record of Decision (ROD). The Alignment SDEIS, the FEIS and the ROD must be prepared and approved by the FHWA before any federal funds can be expended for the construction of Appalachian Corridor H between Elkins and Interstate 81. These remaining activities are discussed in Section VI.

The Corridor Selection SDEIS was prepared in compliance with FHWA Technical Advisory 6640.8A and other relevant statutes and orders. Other documents prepared for this project and related to the Corridor Selection SDEIS include the Executive Summary, the SDEIS Appendix, the Natural Resources Technical Report Books I and II, the Traffic and Transportation Technical Report, the Historic and Archaeological Resources Technical Report, the Floodplains Technical Report and the Transportation Needs Study. Information on how to review or obtain these documents is available by contacting the WVDOT in Charleston, West Virginia, or the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) offices in Edinburg, Virginia.

FACT SHEET

Appalachian Corridor H, Elkins to I-81
Alignment Selection Study

MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Q: Would Corridor H be on the Interstate Highway System?
   A: No. If the Build Alternative is selected, Corridor H would be a four-lane divided highway with intersections (called at-grade connections).

2. Q: Would Corridor H have interchanges, such as cloverleafs?
   A: Yes. If traffic levels are high enough, interchanges would be provided. There would be a limited number of interchanges; mostly at-grade connections would be provided.

3. Q: Would a 2,000 foot width of property have to be purchased to construct Corridor H?
   A: No. The width would vary, but on the average, 300 feet would be required. This width will allow for maintenance, including cut and fill slopes.

4. Q: Would the Improved Roadway Alternative require a narrower width of property to be acquired?
   A: Yes. The width required for the Improved Roadway Alternative would average 150 feet.

5. Q: What does partial control of access mean?
   A: Partial control of access is used to describe a road that has at-grade connections. These are normally spaced at a maximum of 2 per side per mile.

6. Q: What is the Improved Roadway Alternative?
   A: The Improved Roadway Alternative is a two-lane road that follows as many existing roads as possible, with a design speed of 50 mph. It would improve sharp curves and steep hills and provide lanes for passing trucks.

7. Q: Why doesn't the Improved Roadway Alternative follow existing roads throughout the project?
   A: In order to improve the road to allow a consistent traveling speed, about 60 miles had to be re-built in another location. This was usually because the Improved Roadway Alternative had to be longer in order to be less steep.

8. Q: Is the money available to build a four-lane Corridor H?
   A: Yes, through Appalachian Development Highway System Funding.

9. Q: Can the same money be used for the Improved Roadway Alternative?
   A: No, because it does not meet the design requirements set up for the Appalachian Development Highway System. Money for this alternative would have to come from the states' normal highway funds.

10. Q: How will you get on and off the Improved Roadway Alternative?
    A: All existing connections would be maintained all along the Improved Roadway Alternative.

11. Q: Can West Virginia afford to maintain another four-lane highway?
    A: Yes. There is adequate money to maintain a new four-lane Corridor H.

FACT SHEET

Appalachian Corridor H, Elkins to I-81
Alignment Selection Study

MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

12. Q: Why does the Improved Roadway Alternative go through Greenland Gap and towns, like Parsons?
    A: The design of the Improved Roadway Alternative required the maximum use of existing roads.

13. Q: Would the Improved Roadway Alternative take more houses?
    A: Yes, the Improved Roadway Alternative could take twice as many houses along the existing roads as would the four-lane.

14. Q: Has West Virginia picked an alternative?
    A: No, this will most likely be identified at the next round of public meetings this summer.

15. Q: Do West Virginia and Virginia have to pick the same alternative?
    A: No. However, the states will continue to coordinate during the decision-making process in order to best serve the public.

16. Q: Will both states be considering scenic or parkway features if the highway is built?
    A: Yes.

17. Q: How much would the Improved Roadway Alternative cost in comparison to the four-lane alternative?
    A: Preliminary cost figures for the 120 miles of the various alternatives indicate that the Improved Roadway Alternative could cost half as much as a new four-lane highway.

18. Q: Are the alternatives final?
    A: No, the alternatives could be adjusted based on public input or new information until the draft EIS is approved.

19. Q: Would existing roads that would intersect with the four-lane Corridor H be improved?
    A: The need for such improvements would be evaluated by the states. Money for these improvements would come from the states' normal highway funds.

20. Q: How much notice is usually given before property is acquired?
    A: Normally, the time from first contact with a property owner till the time they need to vacate is nine months. After an official offer is made, the owner has 90 days to vacate.

21. Q: How many houses will be taken based on the preliminary alignments?
    A: Displacements of houses vary depending on the line evaluated and may change with future revisions:

West Virginia		Virginia	
Four lane	70	Four-lane	14
Two-lane	150	Two-lane	12

(This document was produced by the West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways.) February 10, 1994

CORRIDOR H
ELKINS to I-81

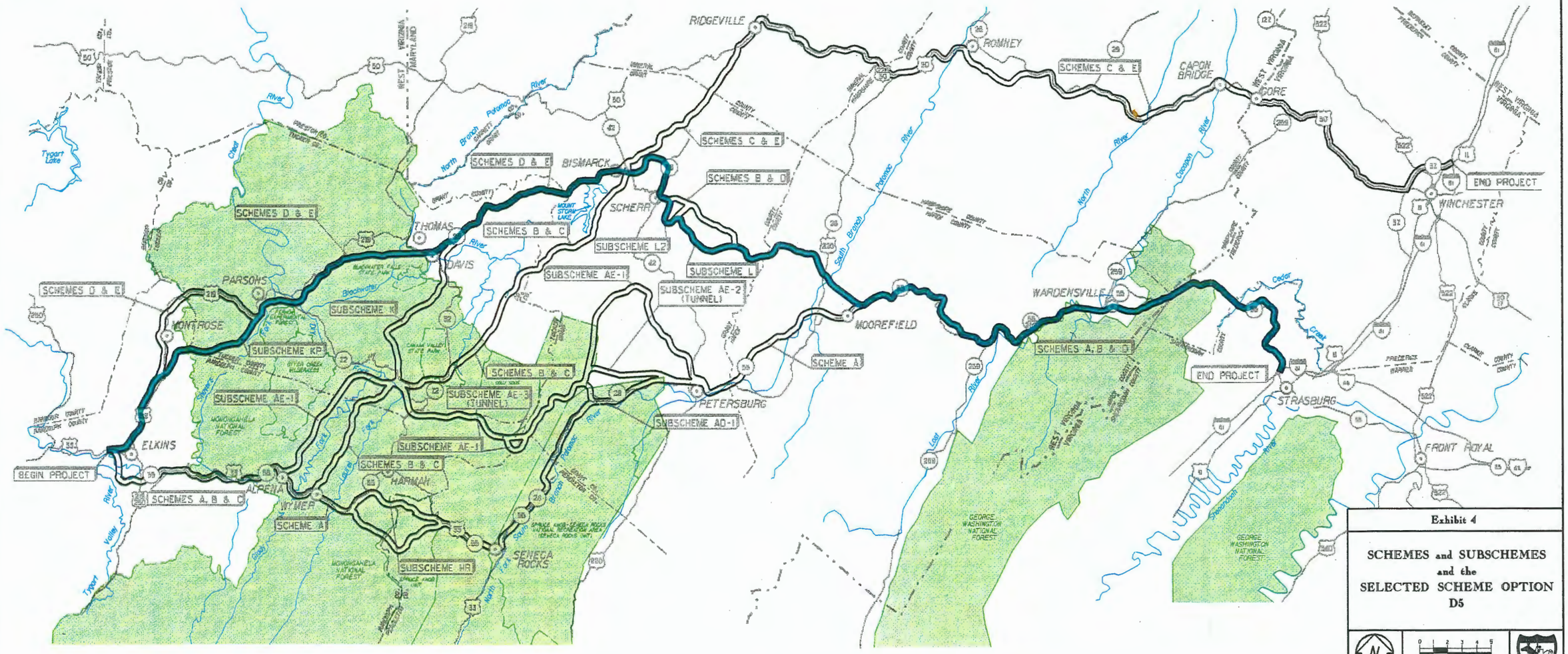


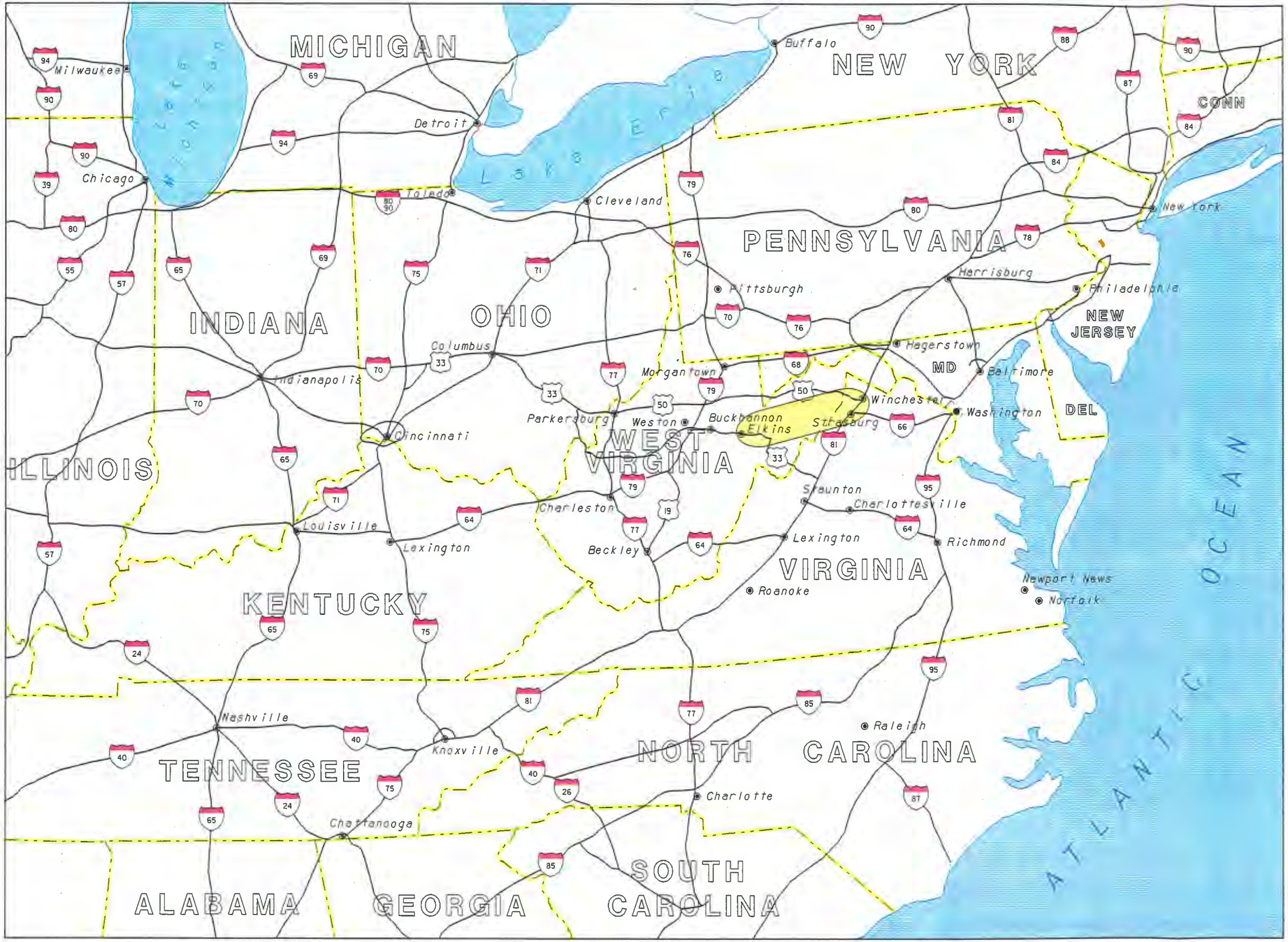
Exhibit 4

SCHEMES and SUBSCHEMES and the SELECTED SCHEME OPTION D5

West Virginia

CORRIDOR H

ELKINS to I-81



LEGEND

- INTERSTATE HIGHWAY
- U.S. ROUTE
- STUDY REGION

Exhibit 2

REGIONAL SYSTEM LINKAGE

N

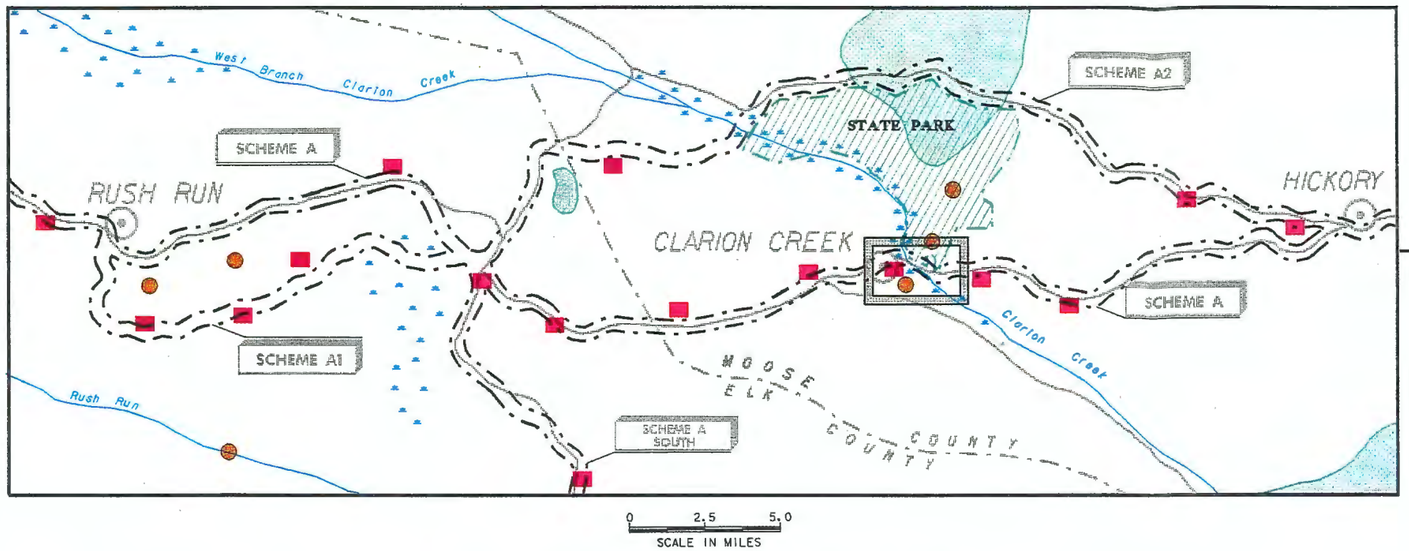
0 75

Scale in Miles

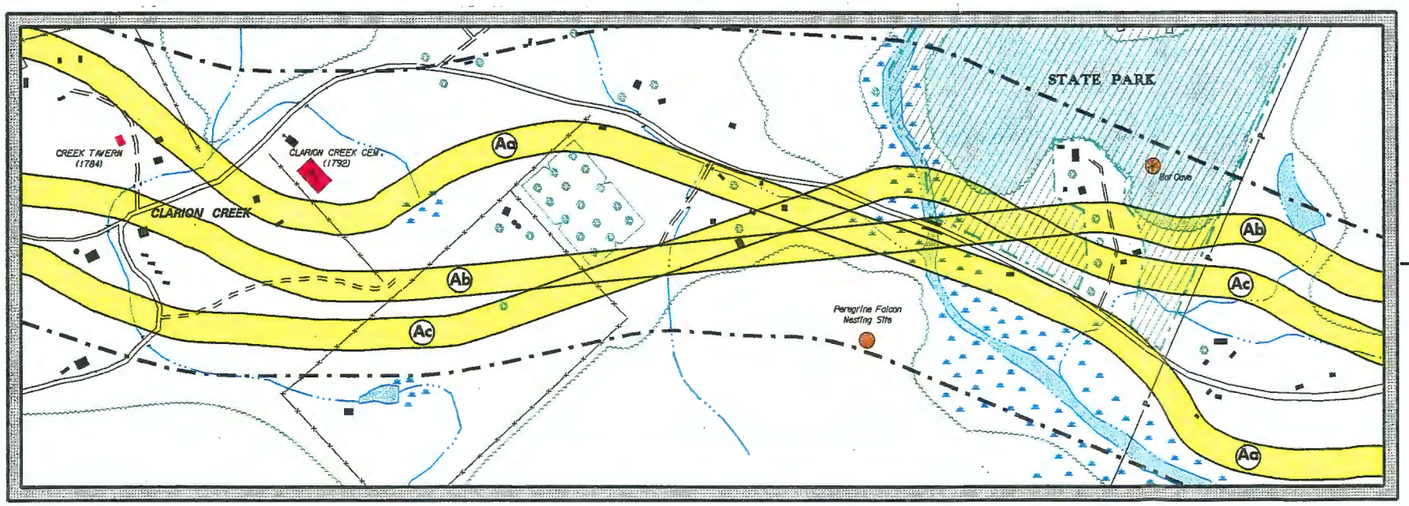
ESGSYS.DGN 091092

CORRIDOR H STUDY PROCESS

Corridor Selection (Step 1)



Alignment Selection (Step 2)



LEGEND

- 2000' Corridor Boundary
- Ac Alternative Alignments
- Wetlands
- Historic/Archaeological Resources
- Section 4f Resources
- Special Botanical Areas
- Threatened/Endangered Species
- Orchard

Approach

A. 2000' Wide Corridors
B. Resource Inventory within each Corridor
C. Broad Corridor Comparisons of Resources
D. Preferred Corridor Selection

A. 200'-250' Wide Alignments
B. Site Specific Resource Analyses (HEP, WET 2.0, STAMINA)
C. Alignment Impact Comparisons
D. Preferred Alignment Selection

Documents

SDEIS 1

Corridor Selection Decision Document

SDEIS 2

FEIS

Record of Decision (ROD)

Exhibit 1

West Virginia

CORRIDOR H

Elkins to I-81

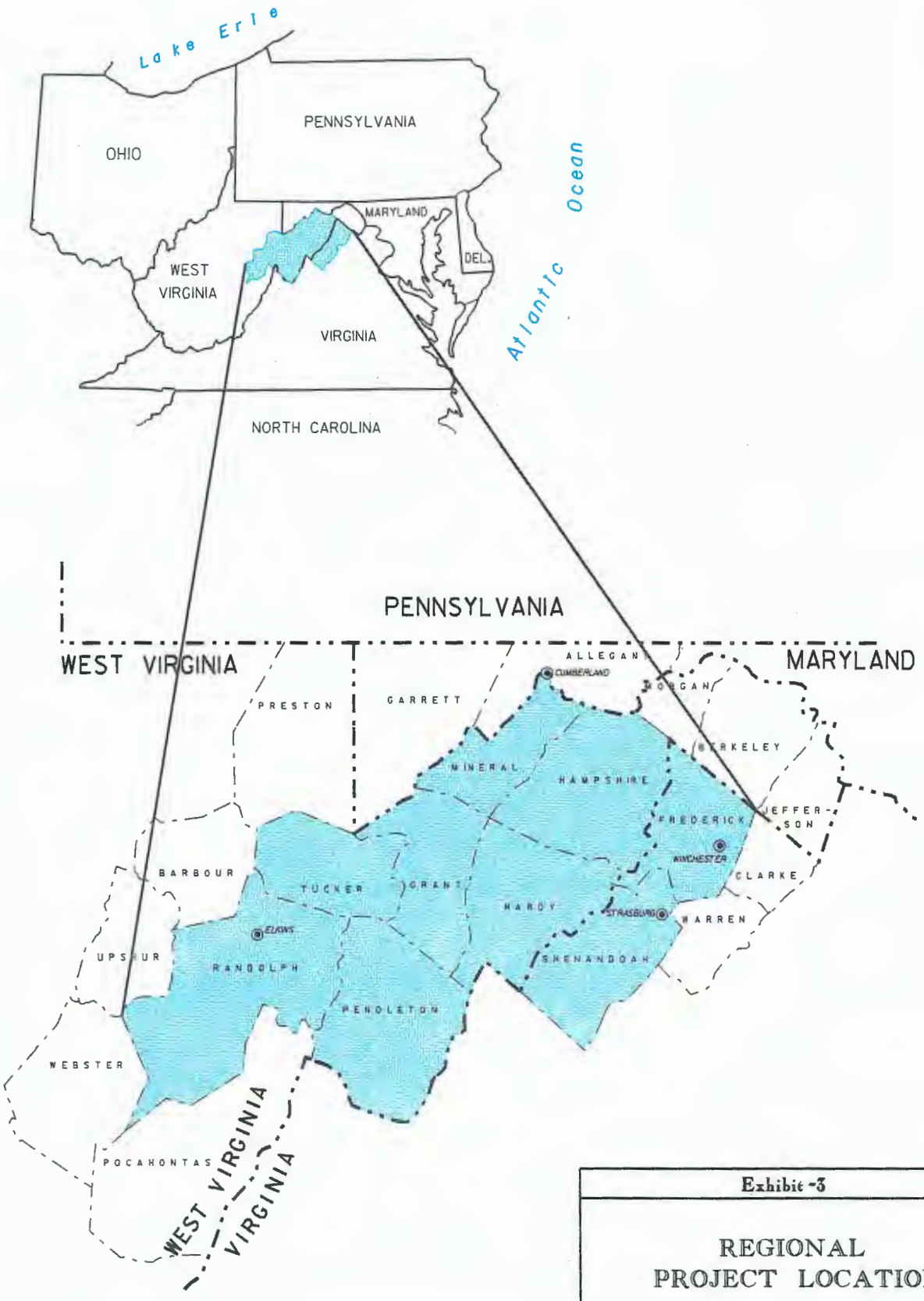


Exhibit -3

REGIONAL PROJECT LOCATION

N

Not to Scale

LON. 06N 091092

TABLE 1
SCHEMATIC: DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHEME OPTIONS

ERNATIVES
Alternative
ernative

BUILD ALTERNATIVE (1)	
SCHEMES	**SUBSCHEMES**
A	HR, AE-1, AE-2, AE-3, AD-1
B	K, L, L2
C	K
D	KP, L, L2
E	KP

dor Schemes, SubSchemes, and Scheme Options are 2,000' wide.

SCHEME OPTIONS	*Descriptions*
A1	Scheme A
A2	Scheme A via SubScheme AE-1
A3	Scheme A via SubScheme AE-1, AE-2
A4	Scheme A via SubScheme AE-1, AD-1
A5	Scheme A via SubScheme AE-1, AE-3,
A6	Scheme A via SubScheme AE-1, AE-3,
A7	Scheme A via SubScheme AE-1, AE-3,
A8	Scheme A via SubScheme HR
B1	Scheme B
B2	Scheme B via SubScheme L2
B3	Scheme B via SubScheme L2, L
B4	Scheme B via SubScheme K
B5	Scheme B via SubScheme K, L2
B6	Scheme B via SubScheme K, L2, L
C1	Scheme C
C2	Scheme C via SubScheme K
D1	Scheme D
D2	Scheme D via SubScheme L2
D3	Scheme D via SubScheme L2, L
D4	Scheme D via SubScheme KP, L2
D5	Scheme D via SubScheme KP, L2, L
D6	Scheme D via SubScheme KP
E1	Scheme E
E2	Scheme E via SubScheme KP

SECTION II: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The Corridor Selection SDEIS was approved by FHWA on October 21, 1992, and filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on November 12, 1992. That same week, the SDEIS was mailed to all the parties listed in Section VI of the SDEIS. The following week, the Executive Summary was mailed to everyone on the project mailing list that had been maintained by the WVDOT since the inception of the reevaluation effort in 1990. Altogether, the WVDOT has distributed over 4,000 Executive Summaries, 1,000 SDEISs and 100 sets of Technical Reports.

During December 1992, and January and February 1993, WVDOT and VDOT held a combination of eleven public meetings and hearings in the project area in West Virginia and Virginia. Table 2 below summarizes the dates, locations, attendance and format of these meetings.

TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

Date	Location	Attendance (Approx.)	Format
December 8, 1992	Romney, WV	250	Informational Meeting
December 9, 1992	Moorefield, WV	350	Informational Meeting
December 15, 1992	Canaan Valley State Park	250	Informational Meeting
December 16, 1992	Elkins, WV	300	Informational Meeting
January 4, 1993	Moorefield, WV	450	Public Hearing
January 5, 1993	Romney, WV	200	Public Hearing
January 6, 1993	Keyser, WV	300	Informational Meeting
January 11, 1993	Canaan Valley State Park	200	Public Hearing
January 12, 1993	Elkins, WV	350	Public Hearing
February 9, 1993	Middletown, VA	120	Meeting and Hearing
February 10, 1993	Winchester, VA	200	Meeting and Hearing
		Total 2,970	

SECTION III: SDEIS COMMENTS

In accordance with FHWA's Technical Advisory, the Corridor Selection SDEIS was made available to the public and circulated for comments to all public officials, private interest groups, and members of the public known to have an interest in the proposed action or the SDEIS. Also, the SDEIS was circulated for comments to all federal, state, and local agencies expected to have jurisdiction, responsibility, interest, or expertise in the proposed action; and to state and federal land management entities that may be affected by the proposed action of any of the alternative Scheme Options. As indicated previously, the required 45-day comment period was extended to an approximately 110-day comment period.

In accordance with FHWA's *Environmental Impact and Related Procedures*, (Section-by-Section Analysis of Section 771.111(g) and Section 771.125(a)(1)) all of the specific Corridor Selection SDEIS comments, as well as comments from the next phase Alignment Selection SDEIS, from agencies and the public, will be addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

A. AGENCY SDEIS COMMENTS

Twelve agencies filed written comments on the SDEIS. The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated that all Options under Schemes A, B, or C were unacceptable. The WVDEP further suggested that "...the corridors under consideration be narrowed to Scheme D and E within which a more detailed evaluation be conducted through the use of the GIS database." (The GIS database has been utilized further to refine potential impacts within Schemes D and E, and the results of that analysis are discussed in Section V of this document.)

The Department of the Interior (DOI) expressed concerns about the potential relocation and channelization of the Lost River (Schemes A, B and D) and Shavers Fork (SubScheme KP), as well as possible impacts to a known population of running buffalo clover (SubScheme KP). The WVDOT has determined that design engineers can avoid relocation and channelization of the Lost River and Shavers Fork and that necessary crossings would be perpendicular. The small population of running buffalo clover located near the junction of Schemes D and E, and SubScheme KP can be avoided. The DOI recommended the selection of Scheme Option E1.

B. PUBLIC SDEIS COMMENTS

Thirty letters from private citizens, private interest groups, businesses and quasi-public agencies offered specific comments on the Corridor Selection SDEIS. Generally, questions were raised concerning the need for additional levels of detailed study regarding cumulative and secondary impacts; surface or groundwater quality impacts; economic growth impacts; and the impacts of an improved roadway alternative.

Of the 30 SDEIS comment letters, six were opposed to any of the Options under Schemes A, B and C. Two public SDEIS comment letters supported Scheme A, and three supported Scheme D. Eight supported the improved roadway alternative or other transportation options such as rail or mass transit. Four of the public SDEIS comment letters favored the No-Build option. The remaining letters did not state a Scheme Option preference.

SECTION IV: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

The WVDOT and the VDOT have received over 6,700 letters or signatures on petitions from private citizens, local governments, special interest groups, public officials, businesses and other concerned parties since the circulation of the SDEIS in early November 1992. Each letter has been acknowledged by the WVDOT and the party's name has been placed on the Corridor H mailing list to receive future documents and project information. Included in the above totals are the following Virginia figures: approximately 190 written comments, 60 verbal statements and 260 petition signatures. In addition to written comments, concerns raised verbally during the public meetings have been noted and made a part of the project record.

The form and content of the comment letters varied but could be categorized as follows:

- Preference for the "Southern" Alternative (Options under Scheme A, or the eastern portion of Scheme D)[1]
- Preference for the "Northern" Alternative (Options under Scheme E, or the western portion of Scheme D)[1]
- Preference for the No-Build Alternative
- General inquiries requesting information or extension of the comment period
- Questions or comments concerning the SDEIS (summarized in Section III of this document)

1. Scheme D could be considered a northern route from Elkins to Bismarck, and a southern route between Moorefield and Interstate 81.

Of the 6,700 letters and signatures, approximately 72% were categorized for the Build Alternative, and 28% for the No-Build Alternative. The No-Build percentage reflects only those letters specifically stating opposition to the construction of Corridor H. Of those clearly in favor of the project, 54% support the construction of Corridor H along a northern route, 46% support construction along a southern route. It is difficult to breakdown the northern and southern positions as they relate to Scheme D, because very few letters refer to it specifically by name. Of the 34 letters that specifically mention Scheme D, 33 support it and one business stated concerns to construction of this Scheme. Some letters and comments favor the construction of Corridor H along any route. Of the Virginia respondents, 87% oppose the construction of Corridor H, 9% favor construction and 4% support the improvement of existing roads. The majority (85%) of the citizens responding to the project in Virginia were Virginia residents.

- Lower maintenance costs would result if southern alternatives were selected over northern options due to less severe weather conditions.
- Scheme A was the preferred scheme in 1981 DEIS.
- Existing 6.6 mile segment and 5.5 miles of right-of-way acquired from Bowden to Alpena could be utilized if Scheme A was selected.
- Scheme A is located more centrally between Interstates 64 and 68.
- Southern alternative would provide more direct route to I-81.
- Southern alternative would provide better access to health care facilities.

Scheme A was commonly referred to as the "southern" route. Most of the Go South citizens favored the use of the original Scheme A (now designated Scheme Option A1) as the corridor that would provide the most opportunity to meet all of the transportation needs in the project area and to realize the greatest economic growth. Of the 1,800 letters and form letters specifically mentioning Scheme A, 87% supported it while 13% opposed it.

Some members of the organized Go South group also supported Scheme Options A2, A3, A5 and A6 as prudent and feasible alternatives to the use of Section 4(f) property located within the NRA.

As indicated, Scheme D is coincident to all Scheme A Options from Moorefield to I-81, but Scheme D would not utilize the existing four-lane section between Canfield and Bowden.

B. PREFERENCE FOR "NORTHERN" ALTERNATIVES

Those in support of construction of a northern alternative, representing 54% of those who favor the Build Alternative, cited the following major reasons for their position:

- The northern alternatives are the least costly of all Scheme options.
- The northern alternatives reach more areas identified for growth as compared to southern options.
- There is reduced potential along northern alternatives for environmental impact to streams, wildlife, and Threatened and Endangered Species as compared to Scheme A options.
- Lesser involvement with National Forests exists along northern alternatives.
- Scheme E would utilize existing four-lane section of Route 50 in Virginia.

1. SUPPORT FOR THE NO-BUILD ALTERNATIVE

Those clearly in support of the No-Build Alternative represent approximately 28% of the citizens who expressed an opinion regarding the construction of Corridor H, and cited the following general reasons for their position:

- All Scheme Options are environmentally damaging.
- There is no need for the project.
- The construction is too costly.
- The project will cause an increase in crime and pollution.
- The project will result in loss of character of the area.

The citizens of Virginia and West Virginia attending the Strasburg public hearing voiced nearly unanimous opposition to the construction of Corridor H. Their objections were primarily based on the opinion that any advantages of Corridor H would be outweighed by the disruption to homes, businesses and the environment.

Like those Virginia and West Virginia residents who attended the Strasburg hearing, those who attended the Winchester public hearing spoke almost unanimously in favor of the No-Build Alternative.

2. SUPPORT FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING ROADWAYS

Those opposed to the Build Alternative, but expressing support for some improved roadway alternative, cited these reasons for their position:

- The 20% state matching funds could be better spent by providing improvements such as localized widening, realignments and provision of passing lanes to improve safety.
- Improvements mentioned above would cost less than the 20% state matching funds.
- The Build Alternative would be environmentally damaging.
- The Build Alternative would change the character of the area.

The improvement of local roads as a method of reducing potential environmental impacts was the subject of considerable discussion throughout the public involvement process.

SECTION V: CORRIDOR DECISION

FHWA guidelines require the analysis of the following seven factors in establishing project need: legislation; social demand and economic development; system linkage; capacity and level of service; regional planning demands; safety considerations; and roadway deficiencies. The Transportation Needs Study for Corridor H analyzed these seven factors and determined that a transportation need existed in the project area. The legislation establishing Corridor H recognized the need to provide a transportation system to support economic development. The Needs Study evaluated several different methods to meet the project need and determined that building a new highway (the Build Alternative) was the only alternative that met the transportation needs of the region. The SDEIS evaluated 24 different Build Alternatives, along with the No-Build Alternative. All Build Alternatives meet the overall project purpose and need. The decision process for selecting a preferred corridor revolved around three questions:

A. TRANSPORTATION NEEDS - *From an operational point of view, which Scheme Option best meets the identified transportation-related needs in the study area?*

B. ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES - *Considering the important sensitive environmental resources identified in the Corridor Selection SDEIS, which Scheme Option best meets the transportation needs in the study area while avoiding or minimizing adverse environmental and social impacts, and providing positive economic benefits?*

C. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT - *Considering the input from the public involvement process, which Scheme Option best meets the transportation needs in the study area in an environmentally responsible manner, and appropriately responds to the expressed desires of the public most affected by the construction of Corridor H?*

The facts developed in addressing each of these issues are summarized below.

As this table indicates, the shortest distance between Elkins and I-81 is along the existing Elkins to Strasburg route. Additionally, for every primary factor listed, these roads collectively exhibit more deficiencies than those currently existing between Elkins and Winchester. In comparing the existing Elkins to Strasburg route (via US 33 and State Route 55) with the existing Elkins to Winchester route (via US 219, State Route 93, and US 50), US 33 and State Route 55 between Elkins and Strasburg represent the greatest need for improvement and are characterized by the:

- Existing poorest grades (vertical alignment)
- Existing worst curves (horizontal alignment)
- Existing slowest overall travel speeds
- Existing poorest overall Level of Service
- Existing highest overall accident rate

From an operational viewpoint alone, Scheme Option A1, the most direct economical route from Elkins to I-81 at Strasburg, best satisfies all of the transportation-related needs in the project area. Scheme Option A1, the preferred option in the 1981 DEIS, would provide an improved transportation network that would best make use of the existing roads in the project area, including the existing 6.6-mile section of 4-lane highway between Canfield and Bowden. The area to the west of the 4-lane section, between Elkins and Canfield, would experience the combined highest traffic volumes and worst Level of Service of any single existing segment in the project area if the No-Build Alternative was selected (13,700 vehicles per day at LOS F). Scheme Option A1 could also utilize the 5.5 miles of right-of-way between Bowden and Alpena purchased nearly twenty years ago by the West Virginia Division of Highways.

Scheme Option A1 also meets the legislative, social and economic, and regional planning needs in the project area. Therefore, Scheme Option A1 best meets all the needs based on the seven factors discussed previously and analyzed in the Transportation Needs Study.

The No-Build Alternative would not address the overall regional need for transportation improvements in the project area, and, as stated in the Corridor Selection SDEIS, would not meet the purpose and need of the project.

The regulations further provide that the information contained in the Corridor Selection SDEIS may be used to make a determination as to whether prudent and feasible locations or alternatives exist to avoid the use of the Section 4(f) land. Such planning at this stage is normally limited to ensuring that opportunities to first avoid, then minimize, harm at subsequent stages in the development process, have not been precluded by decisions made at the corridor selection stage.

While Scheme Option A1 best meets the transportation needs in the project area, significant lengths of this Scheme Option, as well as Scheme Options A4, A7, and A8, are entirely within and bordered by the NRA. The selection of any of these Options would preclude the possibility of developing an avoidance alternative and opportunities to minimize harm to Section 4(f) land during the development of the Alignment Selection SDEIS.

There are four Scheme A Options that could avoid the NRA; Scheme Options A2, A3, A5 and A6. Any of these would generally provide the same transportation improvements as Scheme Option A1 without increasing the likelihood of additional adverse environmental impacts. In fact, these Options potentially affect fewer residences, fewer known potential historic sites, less total wetland acreage, less exceptional resource value wetland acreage, and fewer streams than Scheme Option A1. However, the construction costs of these options range from $539,000,000 (A2) to $655,000,000 (A6) *more than* Scheme Option A1. Additionally, Scheme Options A2, A3, A5, and A6 could impact MP 6.2 areas that are potentially Section 4(f) properties.

2. PRUDENT AND FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVES

This Decision Document contains an analysis of prudent and feasible alternatives to the use of the NRA property, and provides supporting information to demonstrate whether or not there are any unique problems or unusual factors involved in the use of those alternatives. Unique problems or unusual factors are considered to be cost, social, economic, and environmental impacts, or community disruption of extraordinary magnitude (23 CFR 771.135 (a) (2)).

a. Prudent and Feasible Scheme Options

The six Scheme D Options and the two Scheme E Options are considered to be prudent and feasible alternatives to the use of the Section 4(f) property within the NRA, and cost anywhere from $590,000,000 to $693,000,000 *less than* the least expensive Scheme A Option, A2, which avoids the NRA.

prudent and feasible alternatives to a single Scheme Option that neither precludes opportunities to avoid known Section 4(f) property, nor creates any unique problems regarding cost, social, economic, or environmental impacts, or significant community disruption. Therefore, alternative alignments within the selected corridor can be developed to avoid Section (4) land.

c. Narrowing the Scheme D Options

There are two primary environmental issues affecting the Scheme D Options; the town of Montrose, West Virginia, and the Greenland Gap, a National Natural Landmark.

Montrose is a small community (Population 140) located north of Elkins, and just south of Parsons, West Virginia. The entire community is located within the 2,000 foot-wide corridor of Scheme Options D1, D2 and D3, and has strongly supported the use of SubScheme KP, should a northern route be chosen. Although alternative alignments could be developed along Scheme Options D1, D2, and D3, that would completely avoid disruption to Montrose, there are other Scheme D Options that completely avoid the town of Montrose.

Scheme Options D4, D5 and D6 utilize SubScheme KP, an alternative developed specifically to avoid Montrose. While avoiding Montrose, Scheme Option D6 would require construction through the Greenland Gap, an area of unique geological features in the study area, and a registered National Natural Landmark. Scheme Options D4 and D5 use SubSchemes that were specifically developed to avoid the Greenland Gap.

Scheme Options D4 and D5 essentially follow the same alignment except in the area just southeast of Scherr. In this area, Scheme Option D4 uses SubScheme L2 to avoid Greenland Gap. Scheme Option D5 in this area uses SubScheme L2 to avoid Greenland Gap and also uses SubScheme L to avoid Falls Gap and the unincorporated community of Falls, West Virginia. Following SubScheme L avoids the potential displacement of 20 residential or commercial structures and avoids two high quality streams. Therefore, of the two remaining Scheme D Options, D5 is less environmentally and socially damaging.

Based on the desire to avoid disrupting the communities of Montrose and Falls, West Virginia, and the unique geologic formations of Greenland Gap and Falls Gap, Scheme Option D5 was selected as the most viable Scheme D Option.

TABLE 4
D5 VS. E2, EAST OF BISMARCK
A COMPARISON OF SENSITIVE NATURAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESOURCE INVOLVEMENTS*
(within the 2,000 foot-wide corridor)

	SCHEME OPTION	
Natural Resource Involvement:	**D5**	**E2**
Wetlands (Acres)[1]		
Palustrine Forested	17	36
Palustrine Scrub Shrub	5	6
Palustrine Emergent	46	37
Palustrine Open Water	38	41
Total	106	120
High Impact Potential for all Wetland Types (Acres)[2]	3	30
National Resource Waters[3]	13	3
High Quality Streams[3]	16	25
Total Floodplains (Acres)[4]	908	1,590
Section 4(f) Land:		
Historic Sites[5]	36	86
Impacts to Section 4(f) Land	0	0
Social Resource Involvements:		
Potential Residential, Commercial, Facility and Service Displacements[6]	370	1,081
Economic Resource Benefits:		
Industrial Parks[7]	5	2
Best Access to Virginia Inland Port	Yes	No

* A similar table illustrating actual impacts of the alternative alignments will be presented in the Alignment SDEIS.

1. SDEIS Natural Resources Technical Report, Book I, Appendix C-1, Table C1-1 through Table C1-5.
2. SDEIS Natural Resources Technical Report, Book I, Appendix C-1, Table C1-10.
3. SDEIS Natural Resources Technical Report, Book I, Appendix B-1, Table B1-2.
4. These figures represent all floodplain involvements, including 100-year floodplain.
5. Includes all known Archaeological and Historical Sites that are either listed, eligible or potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Data derived from the SDEIS, Section III, R97, Exhibit III-12, p. 173.
6. Potential number of involvements represents a subset of those data presented for the same category in SDEIS, p. S-15.
7. SDEIS, Section III, Table III-19, p. III-58.

of naturally reproducing trout: Edwards Run located in Scheme Option E2; and Elk Lick Run, Trout Run, and Duck Run located in Scheme Option D5. Elk Lick Run extends longitudinally within Scheme Option D5 and can be avoided during the development of highway alignments. However, Edwards Run in Scheme Option E2 and Trout Run and Duck Run in Scheme Option D5 cross the entire width of each corridor and cannot be avoided.

The Lost River, located within Scheme Option D5, is a National Resource Water due to its location within the George Washington National Forest. This river is important due to its unusual flow characteristics. The Lost River parallels the Scheme Option D5 corridor for approximately six miles. The WVDOT has determined, based on additional information provided by recent aerial photography and field reviews, that relocation or channelization of the Lost River can be avoided and that necessary crossings can be perpendicular.

b. Section 4(f) Properties

Within Scheme Option D5, 36 properties may potentially qualify as Section 4(f) land; all are known historic sites. Nine do qualify because they are properties currently eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The remaining 27 are potentially eligible for listing. There are not any known sites or districts within Scheme Option D5 that are currently listed on the Register.

There are 86 properties within Scheme Option E2 that may qualify as Section 4(f) land. These are also all known historic sites. Of the 86, four are currently listed on the National Register, and are Section 4(f) properties. The remaining 82 are potentially eligible for listing, and depending on a final determination, could be Section 4(f) properties.

All of the known historic sites, whether listed on, eligible for listing, or potentially eligible for listing, are included in the Geographic Information System used for the development of the Corridor Selection SDEIS. Based on the topographic characteristics of both Scheme Option D5 and E2, it is possible to develop alternative alignments in either Scheme Option that would avoid the use of these known and potential Section 4(f) properties. These historic sites are the only known or potential Section 4(f) lands within Scheme Option D5 and E2. There are not any known publicly owned parks or recreation areas, or wildlife and waterfowl refuges located within Scheme Options D5 or E2.

Moorefield Industrial Park, the new Hardy County Industrial Park, and the Grant County Industrial Park located in Petersburg, less than 20 miles from Scheme Option D5. These five parks have 500 acres available to support development as do the two industrial parks located along Scheme Option E2, east of Bismarck: Hampshire County Industrial Park in Romney and the Mineral County Industrial Park in Keyser, containing 170 combined acres available.

Additionally, Scheme Option D5 would provide the best access to the Virginia Inland Port, located in Front Royal, Virginia. The Virginia Inland Port (VIP) is a truck-rail intermodal facility whose success relies on incoming motor carriers. Truck traffic from northeastern West Virginia is a small but growing part of the VIP business. The Needs Study indicates that a beneficial relationship could be developed between the Corridor H study area in West Virginia and the Inland Port. Increased access to the Inland Port would be provided by the construction of Corridor H with a Strasburg terminus. This access would open up a customer market for raw natural resources such as timber, coal, and limestone that would be delivered by the 50 motor carriers based in the study area to this port facility. Additionally, the largest frozen food customer of the Inland Port is Wampler-Longacre Chicken, Inc. This company's current plans include a $42 million expansion of their Moorefield, West Virginia facility, which is expected to create 850 direct jobs and over 500 additional secondary jobs. Increases in additional personal income generated by these jobs is estimated at $28 million.

In consideration of potential natural, social, and economic resource impacts, both positive and negative, Scheme Option D5 is the least environmentally damaging of the remaining prudent and feasible alternatives that meets most of the project's transportation-related needs. Additionally, alternative alignments developed within Scheme Option D5 present the most apparent opportunities to avoid all known Section 4(f) land without creating any unique cost, social, economic, or environmental problems.

C. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

As discussed in Section IV, over 6,700 letters or petition signatures have been received from the public regarding the construction of Corridor H. Of those, 72% favor the construction of the road, and 28% favor the No-Build Alternative or the improvement of local roads as an option to the construction of a four-lane highway.

7. Scheme Option D5 accomplishes all of the above, while being next to the least expensive of all the Scheme Options ($1,000,000 more than Scheme Option D3).

8. Scheme Option D5 does not require channelization or relocation of the Lost River.

9. Scheme Option D5 can avoid impacts to Shavers Fork, a known population of running buffalo clover, and the town of Montrose.

Sufficient information is contained in the Corridor Selection SDEIS, the Technical Reports, agency comments, and comments generated through the public involvement process, to select Scheme Option D5 as the corridor to be advanced to the Alignment Selection SDEIS stage, as called for in the two-step study process. The selected corridor can avoid all known Section 4(f) land. During the Alignment Selection SDEIS, specific environmental impact analyses will be conducted and compared to the No-Build Alternative. Should the identified environmental impacts of all the alternative alignments outweigh the advantages of constructing Corridor H, the No-Build Alternative can be selected as the preferred alternative in the Alignment Selection SDEIS.

E. REMAINING TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

Section V.A. Transportation Needs, identified the existing routes from Elkins to I-81 at Strasburg, Virginia, as those most in need of improvement. Scheme Option A1 was further identified as the alternative that best met the transportation needs in the study area; however, it was not selected for reasons previously stated. While the remaining Scheme Options will meet the transportation needs throughout the entire study area, certain localized transportation needs, identified during the development of the Corridor Selection SDEIS, still need to be addressed. The three most specific localized remaining transportation needs are located:

- Along US 33 to the east of Elkins
- Along State Route 55 between Petersburg and Moorefield
- Along US 50 between Ridgeville and the Virginia State Line

West Virginia DOT expects to develop these projects separately from Corridor H, though they may be developed simultaneously with the alignment study. The following discussion describes existing conditions on these sections of US 33, Route 55, and US 50.

SECTION VI: FURTHER PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The two-step study process for the development of Corridor H is shown in Exhibit 1. Specific activities and a general schedule of the project are shown in Exhibit 5, page 40. Exhibit 5 illustrates the completed activities as shaded boxes, with the unshaded activities yet to occur.

With the approval of the selected Scheme Option, the WVDOT will initiate the second step, or the Alignment Selection SDEIS. The Alignment Selection SDEIS will begin with the development of highway alignments at a scale of 1" = 200', based on the resource inventory developed and maintained for the Corridor Selection SDEIS. All resources within the selected corridor will be transferred from the GIS database onto current mapping prepared from 1992 aerial photography. This initial resource inventory will be used to develop alignments that avoid Section 4(f) land, avoid or minimize impacts to other known sensitive social and environmental resources, and to any resources identified through the photointerpretation of the 1992 aerial photography.

Because of the increased level of detail required for the Alignment Selection SDEIS, field evaluations and studies will be conducted throughout the remainder of 1993 and early 1994 to assess specifically the potential impact of various alignments. In some instances, it may become necessary to develop a specific alternative alignment outside, but in the general vicinity, of the selected corridor for the express purpose of avoiding important sensitive resources, or meeting acceptable, safe design criteria. This situation would occur in response to additional information that would only become available during the Alignment Selection SDEIS stage.

During the development of alternative alignments within Scheme Option D5, the WVDOT intends to:

- Avoid all known Section 4(f) land
- Avoid channelization or relocation of Shavers Fork, Lost River, Trout Run, Cedar Creek, and Duck Run
- Avoid all known populations of Threatened or Endangered species
- Avoid, or minimize and mitigate, impacts to wetlands
- Avoid or minimize impacts to established neighborhoods

As shown in Exhibit 5, after completion of the Alignment Selection SDEIS, additional public meetings and hearings will be held to discuss the specific potential impacts of alternative alignments developed within the selected corridor. These meetings and hearings are expected to occur in the Spring or Summer of 1994. Upon completion of the Alignment Selection SDEIS and the public involvement process, a Final EIS will be prepared addressing all of the comments on both the Corridor Selection and Alignment Selection SDEISs.

The Final EIS must be approved by the FHWA and a Record of Decision issued before the WVDOT or VDOT can proceed with the construction of Appalachian Corridor H.

Should a preferred alignment be selected in the Alignment Selection phase, right-of-way acquisition could occur in late 1994 and early 1995, followed by construction starting in late 1995. The first construction section could be complete by 1997. It is likely that simultaneous construction of various sections will take place. Appalachian Corridor H could be completed by the year 2001.

SECTION VII: DECISION DOCUMENT COORDINATION

On March 11, an agency coordination meeting was held in Charleston, West Virginia to provide an opportunity for the regulatory agencies to comment on the draft Decision Document. On April 23,1993 the revised Corridor Selection Decision Document was circulated to the regulatory agencies for formal review and comment. Five written comments were received prior to the established cut-off date of May 28, 1993, and three shortly thereafter. These comments and the resolution of the Commonwealth Transportation Board are summarized below with responses where necessary.

1. United States Environmental Protection Agency

EPA supports the decision to move forward with the Alignment Selection SDEIS. In the event that an alignment cannot be located within Scheme Option D5 which sufficiently addresses environmental and social concerns, alternative alignments in other northern corridors should be evaluated.

2. Monongahela National Forest

This agency is in full agreement with the information presented in the Decision Document, and supports the advancement of the project to the Alignment Selection SDEIS.

3. Corps of Engineers

The Corps supports the process that was used to select a corridor for future development in the Alignment Selection SDEIS.

4. Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Environmental Quality

This agency recognizes that Scheme Option D5 represents the corridor with the fewest overall impacts. However, this agency stated that a comparison of impacts in Virginia was difficult, because the Corridor Selection SDEIS includes total impacts for both West Virginia and Virginia. The agency also suggested that the Alignment Selection SDEIS include a

6. West Virginia Department of Natural Resources

The WVDNR concurs with the continuation of the project development process and the preparation of the Alignment Selection SDEIS. This agency reiterated the concern that the No-Build Alternative be maintained throughout the next phase of study.

7. West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection

The WVDEP, Office of Water Resources, agrees with the selected Scheme Option. They stated concern that impacts to National Resource Waters be limited and temporary in nature and that all alternatives that avoid and minimize impacts to National Resource Waters, wetlands, high quality streams and floodplains be evaluated. The DEP expects re-evaluation of other corridors should the adverse impacts be significantly greater than anticipated.

8. Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

The Advisory Council expressed concern that the premature selection of a preferred alignment would hamper the consideration of feasible alternatives, and restrict the Council's opportunity to offer meaningful comment.

Response - The WVDOT and the Council discussed the Council's comments in a telephone conversation on June 3, 1993. The Council was assured that an alignment would not be selected until after the completion of the Alignment Selection SDEIS. Further, the Council was assured that all applicable provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act would be followed, and the Council would be invited to comment on the project and participate in all agency coordination meetings throughout the development of the Alignment Selection SDEIS. The Alignment Selection SDEIS will include an evaluation of improving local roads as an alternative.

The Advisory Council was also assured that the public would be kept fully informed throughout the development of the Alignment Selection SDEIS. This will be accomplished through the use of the WVDOT's extensive Corridor H mailing list, and through informal public meetings and formal public hearings.