

Screening Process Summary

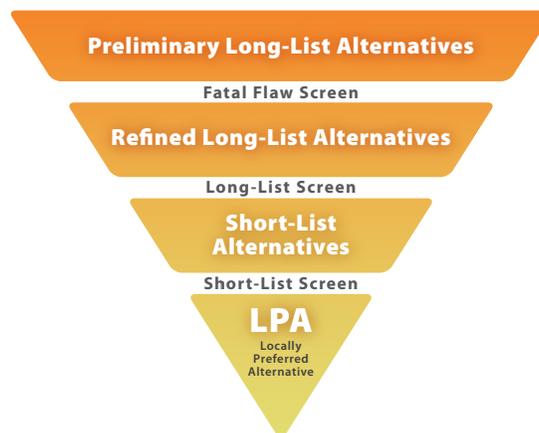
Study Background

Nassau County is preparing an Alternatives Analysis (AA) to address transportation problems in the area known as the Nassau Hub. The purpose of the Study is to improve mobility to, from and within the Hub Study Area by improving transit services and providing travel options other than automobiles. The Nassau Hub Primary Study Area occupies an approximate 11.7 square-mile area in the heart of Nassau County, and is home to many notable County features. Also, thousands of residents, employees, students and others live, work and go to key attraction points within the area.

Federal funding for new transit initiatives and transit projects is through the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) New Starts/Small Starts program, which requires that a standard planning process be followed. An important early step is the preparation of an AA that documents existing and future transportation problems, evaluates a range of potential alternatives to address those problems, and selects a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). During the AA process, the public and other stakeholders are given opportunities to review the analyses and provide comments and other input (e.g., visit the Study website at www.nassauhub.com).

Screening Process Overview

The AA's three-phase screening evaluation process has been designed to highlight the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the alternatives and to identify alternatives that should be recommended for further evaluation in subsequent stages of the Study. Using screening criteria tied to the Study's purpose and need and goals and objectives, alternatives will be evaluated in each screening phase based on their ability to meet one or more of a goal's objectives. The figure below illustrates the screening evaluation process and milestones.



The three screening phases are:

- 1. Fatal Flaw Screening**

The Fatal Flaw Screening phase is used to eliminate those Preliminary Long-List Alternatives that are fatally flawed or infeasible due to any obvious inability to satisfy the stated goals and objectives. The screening is based primarily on qualitative information and is crafted to evaluate the various alignment alternatives in terms of their basic attributes. The screening criteria are focused specifically on neighborhood character and travel patterns.

2. Long-List Alternatives Screening

The purpose of the second phase of the screening process is to broadly analyze the remaining Refined Long-List Alternatives for their ability to address the Study goals and, on that basis, identify the Short-List Alternatives. This phase of screening identifies the alternatives that provide the highest potential level of mobility and accessibility improvements while minimizing engineering risks and adverse economic and environmental impacts. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative criteria, each of the alternatives receives a rating of “high,” “medium” or “low” based upon its ability to meet each of the more rigorous screening criteria defined for the Study goals and objectives.

3. Short-List Alternatives Screening

The first step of the Short-List Screening is a largely qualitative exercise in which the various transit mode technologies being considered are evaluated in terms of their basic attributes. A set of technology-related evaluation measures and a qualitative rating system of “meets measure,” “somewhat meets measure” and “does not meet measure” is used to screen the transit mode technologies.

The final step of the screening process combines the remaining transit mode technologies and the Short-List Alternative alignments that advanced through the Long-List Screening phase. This step includes qualitative, quantitative, and trade-off evaluations that are directly tied to the Study goals and objectives. It provides more detail than the previous screening phases, using additional engineering, operational, environmental, ridership and cost data developed for each Short-List Alternative.

Next Steps

Detailed analyses of the Short-List Alternatives provide the information to evaluate how well each alternative performs for each evaluation measure and, therefore, how well it satisfies the associated criterion. Then, a trade-off analysis focuses on the key differences among the alternatives across all of the Short-List Screening evaluation measures and highlights the key costs and benefits of each alternative.

The Short-List Alternatives are also compared to the No-Build Alternative and a Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative. The No-Build Alternative defines future conditions in the Study Area absent long-term transit improvements in the Hub such as are represented by the Short-List Alternatives. The TSM Alternative represents an approach to addressing the defined transportation problems with relatively limited, low-cost transportation system enhancements, compared to the Short-List Alternatives.

Opportunities for review and input by the public, and the Stakeholder and Technical Advisory Committees are provided during the screening process. The screening process concludes with recommendation of a LPA to be advanced through an environmental review process pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), along with the No-Build Alternative and a TSM Alternative.

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