

4.0 ALTERNATIVES

The purpose of this section is to identify which of the alternatives presented in the Scoping Document will be dismissed and which will be retained for further analysis in the DEIS. The initial screening was based on the information presented in the Scoping Document Chapter 6.0 Alternatives and Chapter 7.0 Social, Economic, and Environmental Impacts. These chapters include an assessment of how each alternative addresses the purpose and need of the project, as well as an overview of some of the social, economic, and environmental issues associated with each alternative. The preliminary findings were reviewed by the various federal, state, and local agencies involved in the project, as well as the public prior to finalizing any decisions on the scope of the project and proceeding with the DEIS. No change to the scope of the project as outlined in the Scoping Document has been made as a result of the scoping process.

4.1 ALTERNATIVES DISMISSED FROM FURTHER REVIEW

The following project alternatives from the Scoping Document will not be evaluated in the DEIS and will be dropped from further consideration:

DESIGN ALTERNATIVES:

Two-lane Rural Design

This design alternative does not address the primary deficiencies (safety and traffic operations) along the TH 14 roadway. The two-lane design alternative is not consistent with Mn/DOT's long-range objectives relative to mobility and safety for the corridor, does not meet the purpose and need for the project, and is *dismissed from further study*.

LOCATION ALTERNATIVES:

Segment 1:

➤ Hwy 21 Alignment

This alternative is *dismissed from further study* because of:

- Substantial impacts to farmland, wetlands/public waters, and portions of the Swan Lake WMA.
- Existing residential access along the existing Highway 21 corridor would require additional improvements including frontage roads, access relocation and/or access closures.
- Poor connectivity with CSAH 37.
- Introduces roadway related impacts to new area.
- Expanding the capacity of the roadway from two to four lanes on the existing alignment will create a substantial amount of right-of-way impacts to existing structures especially where the alignment is close to farmsteads.
- Inconsistent with community qualities.

➤ Courtland/Hilltop Alignment

This alternative is *dismissed from further study* because it:

- Requires a large amount of right-of-way acquisition in undeveloped areas.
- Inconsistent with County land use policy for agricultural land preservation.
- Has poor connectivity with CSAH 37.
- Inconsistent with community qualities.

Segment 2:

➤ Hwy 21 Alignment

This alternative is *dismissed from further study* because:

- Inconsistent with community qualities.
- The existing residential access along the existing CSAH 21 corridor would require an access management plan (frontage roads) to be in place to meet IRC access goals.
- The City of Courtland does not support this alternative because it is located too far from the City most likely resulting in negative impacts to its economic development.
- Substantial impacts to farmland, wetlands/public waters, and portions of the Swan Lake WMA.
- Route is circuitous.
- Expanding the capacity of the roadway from two to four lanes on the existing alignment will create a substantial amount of right-of-way impacts to existing structures especially where the alignment is close to buildings and farmsteads.

➤ Courtland Southern Bypass

This alternative is *dismissed from further study* because:

- Not consistent with community Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
- Inconsistent with community qualities.
- Requires the greatest amount of right-of-way acquisition in the urban area. Right-of-way impacts may eliminate existing residential/industrial development.
- Potential for bluff impacts high.
- Potential for noise impacts due to proximity to residential area.
- Divides residential housing on the south from the City's commercial/retail area.
- Requires the greatest amount of right-of-way acquisition.
- Erosion concerns due to the proximity of ridge.
- Aesthetic issues for nearby residents with river valley views.
- Potential wetland impacts.

Segment 3:

➤ Nicollet Northern Bypass

This alternative is *dismissed from further study* because:

- Potential for noise impacts to residents.
- Not consistent with community plans.
- Requires the largest amount of right-of-way acquisition in undeveloped areas.
- Economic development-moves corridor away from current commercial/retail area.
- Longer travel distance than southern bypass alternatives.
- Inconsistent with County land use policy for agricultural land preservation.
- Likely wetland impacts.
- Potential water quality concerns because of proximity to lakes and wetlands.

➤ Courtland-Nicollet Southern Bypass Connection

This alternative is *dismissed from further study* because:

- Requires a large amount of right-of-way acquisition in undeveloped areas.
- Not consistent with Nicollet County Zoning Ordinance and land use policy.
- Wetland and farmland impacts.
- Improvements would also need to be made to connect the corridor with TH 111 as required by the Constitutional Trunk Highway Routes.

➤ Hwy 25 Alignment

This alternative is *dismissed from further study* because:

- Existing residential access along the existing Highway 25 corridor would require an access management plan to be in place to meet IRC access goals.
- Right-of-way acquisition impacts to existing development along the roadway.
- Potential impacts to three cemeteries along CSAH 25.
- Increased farmland impacts.
- Potential wetland impacts.
- Additional watercourse crossings.
- Improvements would also need to be made to connect the corridor with TH 111 as required by the Constitutional Trunk Highway Routes.

Other:

➤ Hwy 68 Alignment

This alternative is *dismissed from further study* for a number of reasons, including:

- Would not address any documented TH 14 deficiencies.
- Currently, TH 68 is not the route of choice for east-west movements in the area. Traffic volumes on TH 68 are 60 to 70 percent lower than on TH 14.
- Widening of TH 68 would risk impacts to wetlands, public waters, and rare, threatened & endangered species.
- Potential impacts to the State park land at the eastern end of the corridor.
- Expansion of TH 68 is not consistent with any local land use plans. The distance of the corridor from the Cities of Nicollet and Courtland would limit their potential for commercial development and economic growth.
- TH 68 would require a large amount of cut and fill because of the geography of the area.

- Improvements would also need to be made to connect the corridor with TH 111 as required by the Constitutional Trunk Highway Routes.

4.2 ALTERNATIVES RETAINED FOR FURTHER REVIEW

The following alternatives will be carried forward in the DEIS:

No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, no changes to the transportation facilities would occur beyond already committed projects. Any improvements would be limited to regular pavement maintenance and minor transportation system management improvements. None of the safety issues or roadway design deficiencies would be addressed, and the future traffic would cause increased congestion and decreased mobility and safety for the roadway users. The No-Build Alternative will be retained and will serve as a baseline for comparison of the Build Alternatives.

Build Alternatives

Design Alternatives:

The four-lane Design Alternatives will be retained for further analysis in the DEIS because they are the most consistent with the purpose and need for the project (**Figure 1**).

- Four-Lane Urban
- Four-lane Rural

Location Alternatives:

The following location alternatives (**Figure 2**) will be retained for further analysis in the DEIS because they most closely meet the purpose and need for the project, including:

- Reduce crashes and increase capacity by expanding to four lanes.
- Consistent with local land use planning.
- Consistent with Mn/DOT Interregional Corridor plans.

Segment 1:

- Existing Alignment
- River Valley Alignment
- Hwy 14/15 Top of Bluff Alignment
- Hwy 14/15/37 Top of Bluff Alignment
- Courtland Top of Bluff Alignment

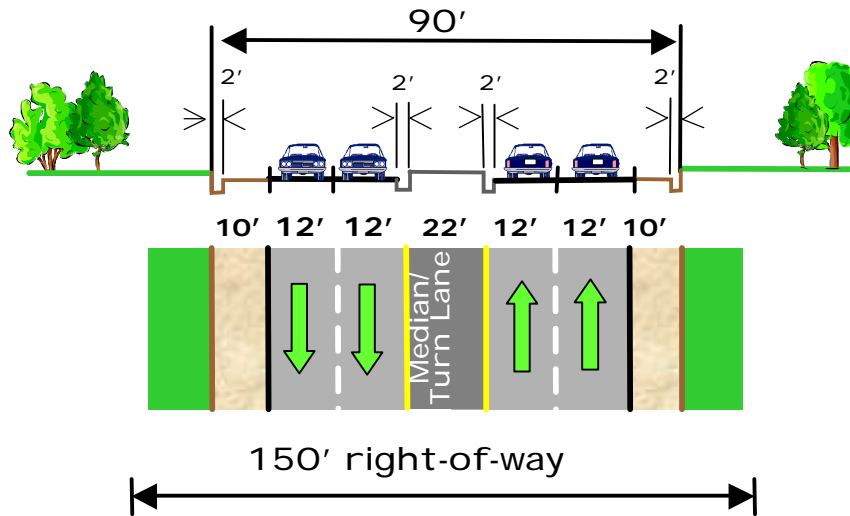
Segment 2:

- Existing Alignment
- Courtland Northern Bypass #1
- Courtland Northern Bypass #2

Segment 3:

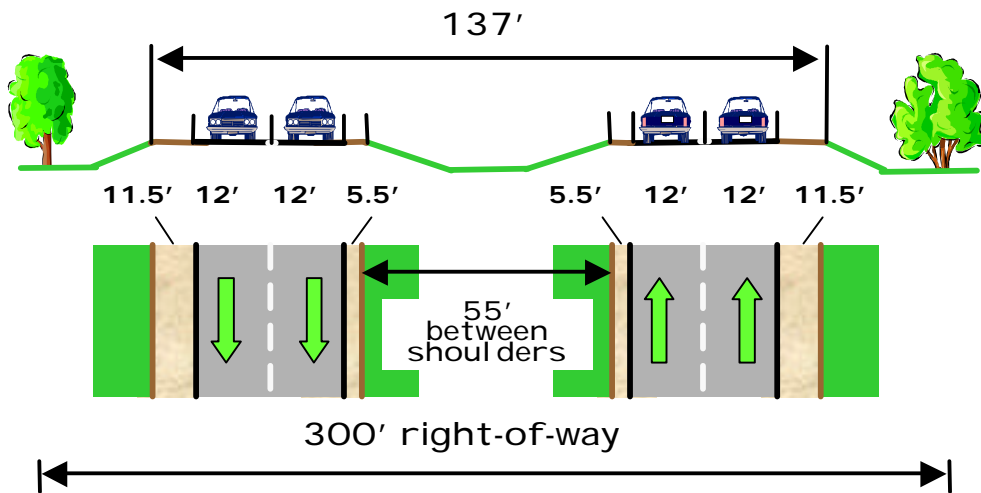
- Existing Alignment
- Nicollet Southern Bypass #1
- Nicollet Southern Bypass #2

Four-Lane Urban Roadway



Carried Forward

Four-Lane Rural Roadway



Carried Forward

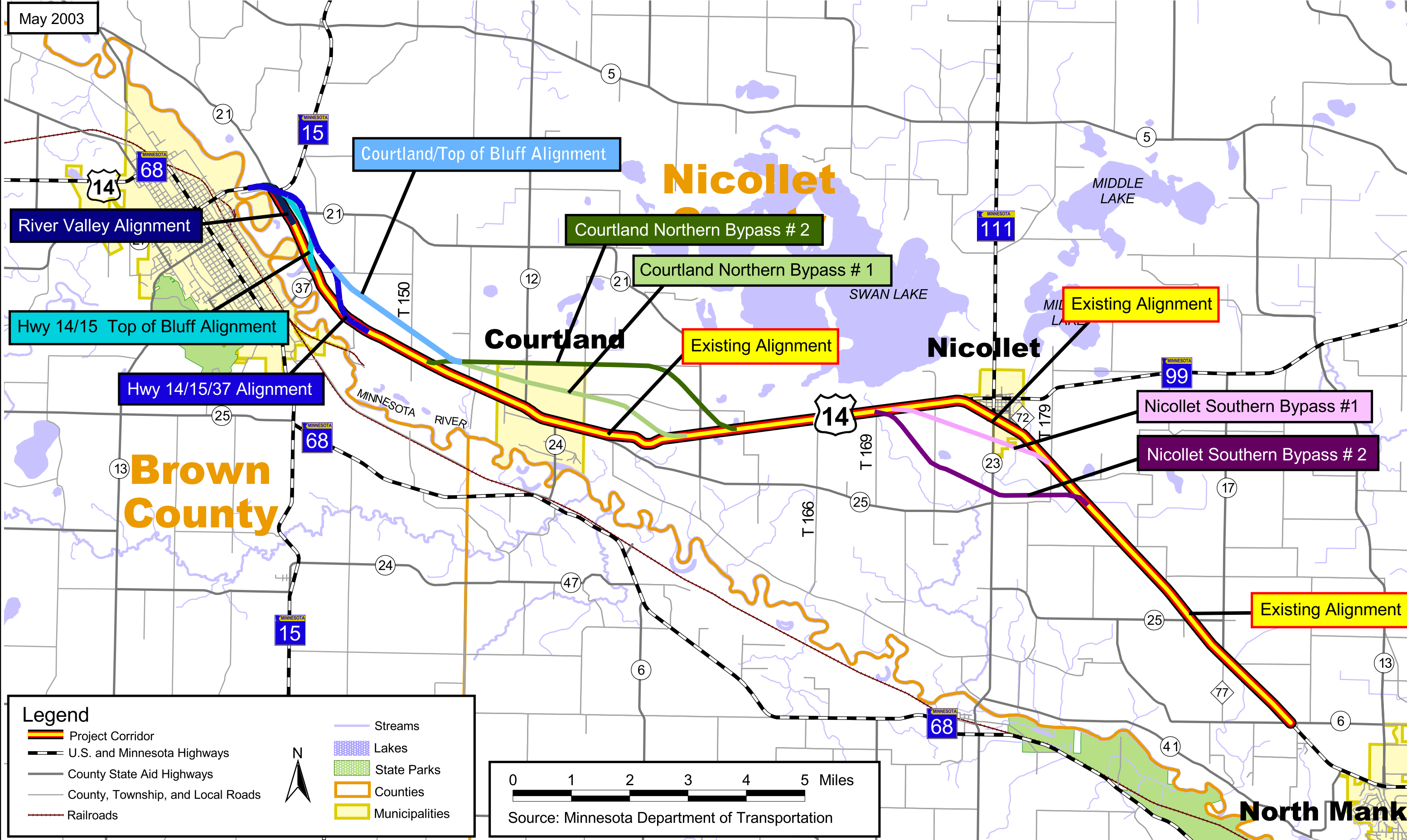


TH 14 West Interregional Corridor:
North Mankato to New Ulm

Not to scale

Figure 1
Design Alternatives Retained for
Further Analysis in the EIS

May 2003



Legend

- Project Corridor
- U.S. and Minnesota Highways
- County State Aid Highways
- County, Township, and Local Roads
- Railroads
- Streams
- Lakes
- State Parks
- Counties
- Municipalities



Source: Minnesota Department of Transportation



14 West Interregional Corridor:
North Mankato to New Ulm

Figure 2
Location Alternatives Retained for Further Review