

3.17 Short-Term Uses versus Long-Term Productivity

What short-term uses of the environment and long-term productivity would occur?

The short-term uses associated with construction of US 51 are typical of highway construction and would be very similar among all of the alternatives. Short-term uses of the environment would generally be those associated with construction of the proposed project. Construction of the proposed project would involve the short-term use of resources such as labor and construction materials. The proposed project also would contribute to the maintenance and improvement of long-term productivity for the communities in the study area by providing improved local and regional accessibility and reduced traffic congestion on area roads. Increased travel speeds would save motorists time and lower vehicle operation costs. Long-term economic benefits resulting from the construction of the proposed project would include potential for increased tax revenues and employment in the study area associated with additional new development.

3.18 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

What irreversible and irretrievable resource commitments would occur?

Implementation of the proposed project involves a commitment of a range of natural, physical, human, and fiscal resources. Land used in the construction of a new highway facility is considered an irreversible commitment during the time period that the land is used for that facility. However, if a greater need arises for use of the land or if the highway facility is no longer needed, the land can be converted to another use. At present, there is no reason to believe such a conversion would ever be necessary or desirable.

Considerable amounts of fossil fuels, labor, and highway construction materials such as cement, aggregate, and bituminous material would be expended. Additionally, large amounts of labor and natural resources would be used in the fabrication and preparation of construction materials. These materials are generally not retrievable. However, they are not in short supply and their use would not have an adverse effect upon continued availability of these resources. Any construction would also require a substantial one-time expenditure of both state and federal funds, which are not retrievable.

The commitment of these resources is based on the concept that residents in the immediate area, state, and region would benefit by the improved quality of the transportation system. These benefits would consist of improved accessibility

and safety, savings in time, and greater availability of quality services, which are anticipated to outweigh the commitment of these resources.