MDOT
Michigan Department of Transportation

Blue Water Bridge

Plaza Study

St. Clair County, Michigan

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation

Prepared by the Michigan Department of Transportation in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration

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Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study
St. Clair County, Michigan

Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation

Submitted Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c) and 49 U.S.C. 303

By the

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

and

Michigan Department of Transportation

Cooperating Agencies
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
U.S. General Services Administration
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Coast Guard

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Date of Approval

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This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) documents the social, economic, and environmental consequences and mitigation measures for improving the United States Inspection Plaza at the Blue Water Bridge located in St. Clair County, Michigan. This project is commonly referred to as the Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study. No-Build and Build Alternatives

are evaluated in this document. This DEIS identifies Practical Alternatives for the Study Area that include expanding the existing plaza and relocating the major functions of the plaza approximately 1.5 miles from the existing plaza, with a secured corridor connecting the existing plaza to the new portion of the plaza. The City East, City West, and Township Alternatives were evaluated in detail and will accommodate projected year 2030 plaza traffic growth; provide space for future plaza facility additions and new inspection technologies; reduce traffic backups on I-94/I-69, the Blue Water Bridge, and Highway 402 in Canada; improve safety on the Blue Water Bridge; and minimize impacts of plaza traffic on local roads. The City West Alternative has been identified as the Preferred Alternative in this document. Important issues and concerns related to the effects of the Practical Alternatives on the natural, human, and built environment include neighborhood and community cohesion, visual character, noise, air quality, and land use patterns. This DEIS fulfills the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) guidelines, and requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality, and the Federal Highway Administration.

Comments on this DEIS are due within 60 days of publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. Comments should be submitted to Mr. Bob Parsons, Public Hearings Officer, Michigan Department of Transportation, P.O. Box 30050, Lansing, Michigan 48909.

FORMAT OF THIS DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Reader Friendly Format

The Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was created in a reader friendly format. This format differs significantly from the traditional EIS format and is based partly on the Reader-Friendly Document Tool Kit published by Washington State Department of Transportation.

The reader friendly format attempts to meet the needs of professionals, decision makers and the public by engaging the reader through the use of question and answer headings, defined terms, and visuals in an easy to follow format. This format saves time and effort by reducing confusion and allowing the reader to focus on the project and its key issues. Text and graphics are placed on the same page to make the document interesting and understandable to readers. Additional technical information is available in the various technical memoranda prepared for the project. Following the National Environmental Policy Act guidelines, this document is concise, clear and to the point. It thoroughly summarizes the Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study and references supporting technical details. The example below compares traditional EIS headings and reader friendly EIS headings.

Traditional EIS	**Reader-Friendly EIS**
Purpose and Need	Why are Improvements Needed?
Design Criteria	What Design Criteria were used in Developing the Practical Alternatives?
Affected Environment	The Environment: What's There Now and Project Effects
Existing Regional Land Cover	What Are the Land Uses in the Study Area?
Land Use Planning and Zoning	Are Practical Alternatives Consistent with Local Zoning and Ordinances?
Noise Impacts	How Will the Practical Alternatives Affect Noise Levels?
Agency Coordination	How Did the Study Team Coordinate with Federal and State Agencies?

Separate Appendix E Volume

This DEIS comes with a separate volume of exhibits labeled **Appendix E**. All of the 11 inch by 17 inch exhibits for the DEIS are contained in the separate Appendix E volume including exhibits of the alternatives considered. All of these exhibits are referred to in the DEIS text and the reader is encouraged to review these exhibits while reading the DEIS.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Study Team prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to discuss and compare alternatives for improving the United States Inspection Facility at the Blue Water Bridge Plaza and the I-94/I-69 corridor in St. Clair County, Michigan. This project is commonly referred to as the Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study.

Who is the Study Team?

The people who have been working on this project including specialists from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) are referred to as the Study Team throughout this Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

What is the United States Plaza at the Blue Water Bridge?

The United States Plaza, which is owned by MDOT, is the inspection facility for vehicles entering the United States. The Blue Water Bridge is a major border crossing for cars and trucks between the United States and Canada. The Blue Water Bridge consists of two bridge spans over the St. Clair River, one for traffic to Canada and one for traffic to the United States. The bridges are jointly owned by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Canadian Blue Water Bridge Authority (BWBA). Federal agencies operating on the plaza include the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These agencies are responsible for inspecting vehicles, goods, and people entering the United States. The inspection agencies rent facilities on the United States Plaza from MDOT through the General Services Administration (GSA), which provides buildings for the federal government.

Existing United States Blue Water Bridge Plaza

MDOT collects tolls on the plaza from vehicles leaving the United States for Canada and the Michigan State Police operate a truck weigh scale on the plaza.

The existing Blue Water Bridge Plaza is approximately 18 acres including inspection facilities and parking. The existing plaza is elevated approximately 24 feet above street level to accommodate Pine Grove Avenue, which runs underneath.

Location of Blue Water Bridge Plaza

Where is the Blue Water Bridge Plaza Located?

The Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study Area is located in the City of Port Huron and Port Huron Township, in St. Clair County, Michigan. The Study Area begins at the western end of the Blue Water Bridge and ends at the I-94/I-69 interchange approximately 2.2 miles to the west. The Blue Water Bridge provides access to destinations across Michigan, 47 other states, Mexico, and Canada.

The Study Area encompasses approximately 30 blocks (195 acres) of residential, commercial, and recreational uses that surround the existing plaza and extends west along I-94/I-69. **Figure E.1**, located in the separate **Appendix E** volume, provides a map of the Study Area. The Study Area includes the Black River Bridge, the Water Street/Lapeer Connector Interchange, the existing plaza area, and a potential location for a relocated welcome center and a plaza alternative in Port Huron Township. Neighboring communities potentially affected by the Blue Water Bridge Plaza expansion are Fort Gratiot Township and Kimball Township.

What is the History of the Blue Water Bridge and Plaza?

The original Blue Water Bridge span opened in 1938. In 1992 an international task force concluded that the existing bridge was operating in excess of its capacity. Based on the results of that study, an additional bridge was constructed and opened to traffic in 1997. During this same time period, the original bridge was rehabilitated. The existing bridges currently provide six lanes, three lanes in each direction of crossing capacity.

The original Blue Water Bridge on the left was built in 1938. The second bridge was built in 1997

The United States Plaza has also undergone capacity expansion projects in the 1950s, 1980s, and 1990s. In 1999, MDOT completed a study that proposed numerous short-term improvements to improve plaza operations, such as relocating MDOT's bridge maintenance facility off-site. That study also recommended the development of a long-term plaza expansion plan. That recommendation resulted in this study that is being completed as part of this EIS decision-making process.

What Improvements are Needed on the United States Plaza?

Improvements are needed on the Blue Water Bridge Plaza (for the foreseeable future) to:

- Provide safe, efficient and secure movement of people and goods across the Canadian-U.S. border in the Port Huron area to support the economies of Michigan, Ontario, Canada, and the United States

- Support the mobility and security needs associated with national and civil defense.

The following is the list of reasons for improvements developed with the assistance of the Advisory Committee

- Improve operations and processing capability by accommodating the latest inspection technologies and procedures
- Provide flexibility to accommodate future unknown inspection technologies and procedures
- Improve security
- Provide facilities that ensure cars and trucks do not leave the plaza without being inspected
- Improve safety on the bridge, plaza, and the I-94/I-69 corridor including the elimination of traffic weaves
- Accommodate projected 2030 traffic growth and potential future facility needs
- Minimize backups on I-94/I-69 and on Highway 402 in Canada
- Reduce vehicle and pedestrian conflicts on the plaza
- Improve access to the plaza and local roadways from the freeway system
- Minimize routing of commercial traffic to local roads during maintenance operations
- Improve infrastructure conditions along the I-94/I-69 corridor including the aging Black River Bridge
- To create a more visible and accessible Welcome Center

The selected alternative must provide additional space for inspection booths, offices, docks to inspect and unload cargo, new security measures, and parking for cars and trucks

What is the Advisory Committee?

The Advisory Committee provides expertise and input on pertinent issues related to the plaza study. The Advisory Committee consists of a core group of stakeholders representing plaza inspection agencies, local and state officials, Canadian officials, private firms and key representatives from the local community.

Existing United States Plaza Looking West

needing inspection. The need for additional space and facilities is supported by several key issues including:

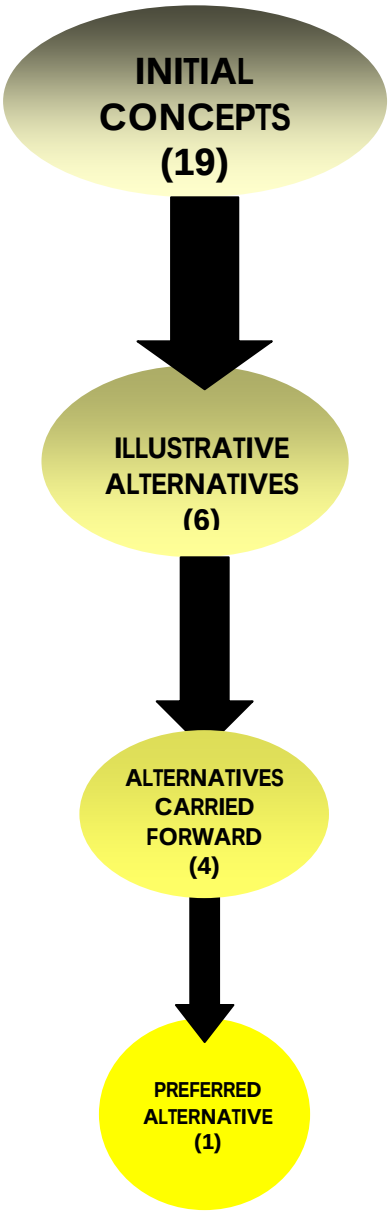
- Security issues
- The introduction of new inspection technologies, procedures, and policies
- Limited existing space to accommodate increased number of border inspection agents
- Traffic conflicts and crash history
- Access between the plaza and adjacent circulatory local roads
- Traffic growth
- Traffic backups
- Existing infrastructure conditions of the I-94/I-69 corridor
- Upgrading the International Welcome Center

Further details on the reasons for improvements are contained in **Chapter 1 Why Are Improvements Needed?**

Improvements to the two Blue Water Bridge spans over the St. Clair River are not a part of this project.

Although improvements to facilities on the Canadian side of the bridge are not part of this study, the Blue Water Bridge Authority (BWBA) is currently in the process of making improvements to their plaza facilities. These include:

- fixing the westbound mid-bridge weave,
- minimizing traffic backups on Canadian facilities,
- accommodating future traffic growth, and
- expanding the Canadian plaza facilities to address their own long-term space needs as a result of the growth in cross-border traffic.



Alternatives Development Process

What Alternatives Did the Study Team Consider for Improving the Plaza?

The alternatives development process included several steps. First, the Study Team developed initial concepts for a new plaza. These initial concepts were further developed into 19 Illustrative Alternatives Concepts. The Illustrative Alternative Concepts included:

- Expanding the existing elevated plaza in different directions
- Bringing the plaza down to street level and rerouting local roads around it
- Using electronic tracking technology to send trucks to an off-site inspection facility
- Relocating the plaza into Port Huron Township and using a secure roadway to take traffic between the Blue Water Bridge and the new plaza
- Low-cost improvements of the existing plaza
- Transit and multi-modal alternatives such as trains
- Relocating all plaza facilities to Canada

Based on engineering analysis and coordination with stakeholders, the Illustrative Alternatives Concepts were refined into six Illustrative Alternatives that were presented to the public. The six Illustrative Alternatives presented to the public included:

- Three alternatives that expanded the existing elevated plaza
- Two alternatives that brought the plaza down to street level and relocated local roads
- One alternative that relocated the plaza to Port Huron Township and used a secure roadway to take traffic between the Blue Water Bridge and the new plaza

The Blue Water Bridge

The Study Team then evaluated and modified the Illustrative Alternatives based on public and agency comments. Two of the Illustrative Alternatives were eliminated as they did not adequately address the purpose and need for improvements to the plaza. The remaining Updated Alternatives were presented for further public and agency comments. The Updated Alternatives included:

- Alternative 1, which expanded the existing elevated plaza
- Alternative 2, which brought the plaza down to street level and relocated Pine Grove Avenue to the east of the plaza and combined it with 10th Avenue
- Alternative 3, which relocated most plaza functions to a site 1.5 miles west in Port Huron Township and used a secured roadway to take traffic between the Blue Water Bridge and the new plaza

The No-Build Alternative has always been an option in case the benefits of improvements to the plaza do not outweigh the environmental impacts.

- Alternative 4, which brought the plaza down to street level and relocated Pine Grove Avenue to the west of the plaza. This alternative was added after the others based on suggestions from CBP and was reviewed at an additional public meeting

Details on the process of developing and analyzing alternatives are contained in **Section 2.1 Alternatives Development.**

What are the Alternatives Carried Forward?

The Alternatives Carried Forward are refined versions of Illustrative Alternatives that have undergone increased engineering, traffic, social, environmental, and economic analysis. These alternatives have been selected based on their ability to address the objectives of the project.

Based on further analysis, local stakeholder and public comment, the Study Team reduced the list of alternatives down to three Build Alternatives, referred to as the City East Alternative (formerly Practical Alternative 2), the City West (Preferred) Alternative (formerly Practical Alternative 4), and the Township Alternative (formerly Practical Alternative 3), along with the No-Build Alternative. Alternative 1 was dropped from further consideration as it did not adequately address the purpose and need for improvements to the plaza, especially in terms of flexibility for future improvements and technology. These final alternatives are described in detail in **Section 2.2 Alternatives Carried Forward** and are discussed throughout this Draft Environmental Impact Statement. **Appendix E** (separate volume) contains exhibits of the Alternatives Carried Forward that can be accessed for easy review while reading this DEIS. The following is a brief summary of the alternatives.

No-Build Alternative

No-Build Alternative: The No-Build Alternative would not make any changes to the existing plaza configuration or ramps. MDOT and CBP would continue to maintain the existing plaza facilities and new technology and procedures would be introduced on the existing plaza footprint as space allows. The existing welcome center will remain in its current location.

City East Alternative: The City East Alternative would require 133 acres for an expanded plaza and improvements along the I-94/I-69 corridor including the Welcome Center which includes 67 acres for the plaza. This alternative would require the relocation of Pine Grove Avenue to the east along 10th Avenue and would bring most of the plaza down to street level. Pine Grove Avenue would be re–routed to the east of

the existing plaza, between Hancock Street and Scott Avenue. Pine Grove Avenue and 10th Avenue would merge for a joint five-lane road between Scott Avenue and Elmwood Street. The City East Alternative uses the block between Hancock Street and the existing plaza, west of Pine Grove Avenue for an expanded truck inspection area. The Black River Bridge Water Street Interchange would be rebuilt and the Lapeer Connector Interchange would be expanded to include access in all directions. A new MDOT Welcome Center would be constructed north of I-94/I-69 in Port Huron Township, replacing the existing Welcome Center at Water Street.

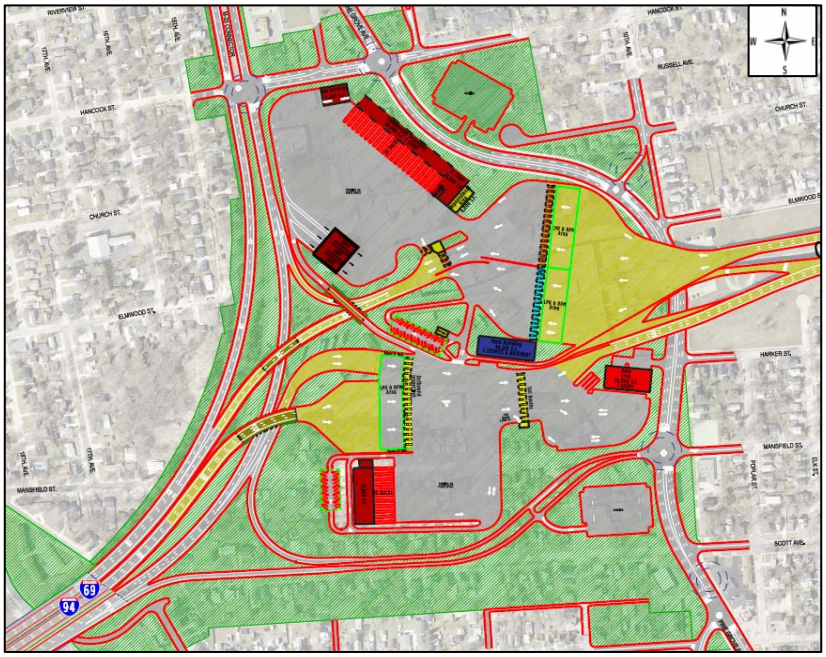
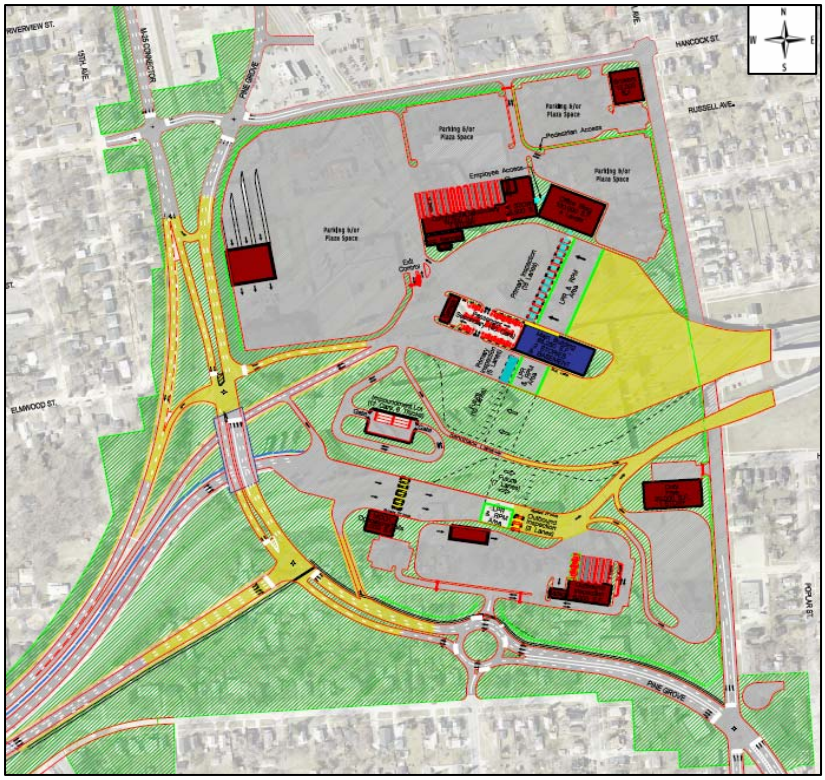


Figure 1 City East Alternative

<u>*City West (Preferred) Alternative:*</u> The City West Alternative includes 131 acres for an expanded plaza and improvements along the I-94-I-69 corridor including the Welcome Center which includes 65 acres for the plaza. The City West Alternative would require the relocation of Pine Grove Avenue to the west of the plaza. The relocated Pine Grove Avenue would wrap around the south and west sides of the new plaza. Near Hancock Street, the relocated Pine Grove Avenue would split into separate northbound and southbound lanes. The northbound lanes would turn back east and connect to existing Pine Grove Avenue at Riverview Street. The southbound lanes would follow the existing M-25

Connector. The City West Alternative would use the block bounded by 10th Avenue, Hancock Street, the M-25 Connector, and the existing plaza for expanded inspection and plaza facilities. The City West Alternative would also rebuild the Black River Bridge from a four-lane bridge to nine lanes and reconstruct the Water Street Interchange. The Lapeer Connector Interchange would be expanded to include access in all directions. A new MDOT Welcome Center would be constructed north of I-94/I-69 in Port Huron Township, replacing the existing Welcome Center at Water Street.


RIVERVIEW ST.
10TH AVE
M-25 CONNECTOR
PINE GROVE
ELMWOOD ST.
HANCOCK ST.
RUSSELL AVE.
POPLAR ST.
Parking &/or Plaza Space
Pedestrian Access
Employee Access
Exit Commerce
Primary Inspection Lanes
Truck Parking
Truck Parking
Truck Parking

existing I-94/I-69 with full access to Water Street and the Lapeer Connector. The Black River Bridge in the Township Alternative would be replaced and expanded from four lanes to ten lanes.

While the current plaza footprint would remain the same, local traffic would no longer be able to exit at the existing plaza or use Pine Grove Avenue to access the plaza. All inspections would occur at the new plaza in the Township. The Township Alternative would also include traffic related improvements such as additional lanes and turn lanes for key local roads surrounding the existing plaza

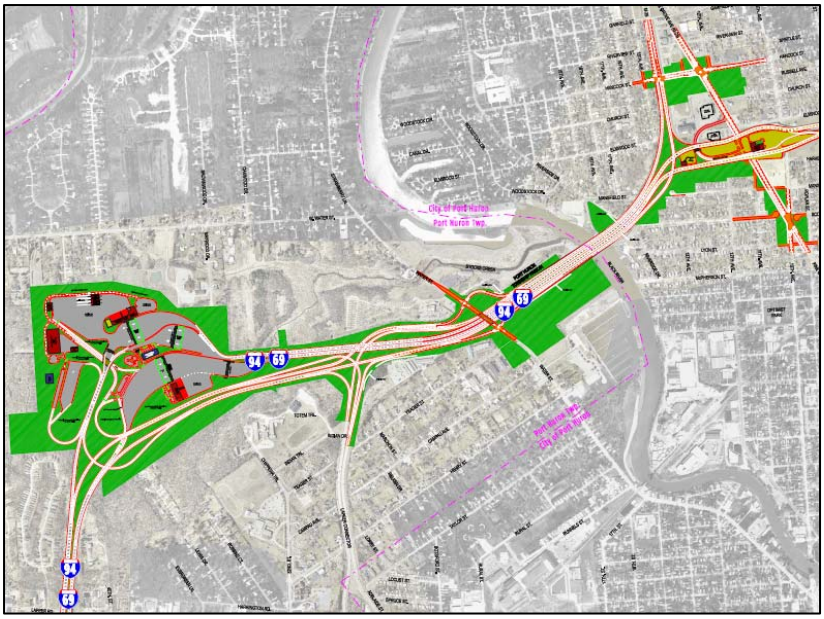


Figure 3 Township Alternative

How Has the Study Team Evaluated the Alternatives?

The Study Team evaluated the alternatives based on how well they address the reasons for improving the plaza and their social, economic, and environmental impacts. The Study Team developed a series of criteria for evaluating the alternatives in consultation with stakeholders. Details of this evaluation are contained in **Section 2.3 Evaluation of Alternatives**. The Study Team concluded that the No-Build Alternative does not address the purpose of improvements identified above. The Township Alternative also has problems in addressing key items in the purpose of improvements

Trucks queue at the plaza

including substantial flaws in providing a safe and secure border crossing and concerns with local access. Although the City East Alternative meets most of the criteria for a new plaza, there are problems with security and emergency response concerns due to the presence of the combined Pine Grove Avenue/10th Avenue running underneath the location where the plaza meets the Blue Water Bridge spans. The City West Alternative adequately meets all parts of the purpose and need for improvements.

Chapter 3 The Environment: What's There Now and Project Effects fully discusses the social, economic, and need for environmental impacts of the Alternatives Carried Forward. The following paragraphs contain a brief summary of the impacts. The **Summary of Impacts Matrix,** at the end of this chapter, summarizes some of the key impacts for each alternative.

What is the Preferred Alternative?

What is a Preferred Alternative?

A Preferred Alternative is selected from the Alternatives Carried Forward after extensive engineering, social, economic, and environmental analysis. The Preferred Alternative best addresses the purpose for improvements while minimizing effects on the natural and human environment to the extent possible.

The Study Team has identified the City West Alternative as the Preferred Alternative for the Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study. The designation as the Preferred Alternative does not mean that the City West Alternative has been formally selected as the final alternative for design and construction. Selection of the final alternative will not occur until after a Public Hearing has been held to review this DEIS, a Final EIS is published addressing comments on the DEIS and a Record of Decision is issued by the Federal Highway Administration. The designation of a Preferred Alternative means that at this time the Study team believes that the City West Alternative best addresses the reasons that plaza improvements are needed while minimizing impacts to the human and natural environment to the extent feasible. Comments on this DEIS may lead to further alternative changes, reductions in environmental impacts and/or new measures to mitigate for the impacts of the project. The Study Team's identification of the City West as the Preferred Alternative was based upon the evaluation contained in **Section 2.3 Evaluation of Alternatives** and the social, economic, and environmental effects analysis contained in **Chapter 3 The Environment: What's There Now and Project Effects**.

There were no parts of the purpose and need for improvements that the City West Alternative does not adequately address. It also has specific advantages in terms of safety, emergency access, and security for the border crossing over all of the other alternatives. The City West Alternative is also superior to the Township Alternative in terms of local access to the border crossing. In addition, the City West Alternative relocates fewer homes and has the lower tax base impacts of the two City Alternatives. Although the Township Alternative has fewer relocations and community impacts in the City of Port Huron, these do not outweigh its concerns in terms of safety and security.

How Will the Project Affect the Human Environment?

Existing Blue Water Gateway Business District

Land Use: Land uses within the Study Area include single family residential, multiple family residential, commercial, public facilities, and open space.

The No-Build Alternative would have few impacts on land use policies and decisions within the Study Area. Existing land uses would not be impacted because the plaza would maintain its current footprint and would not encroach upon the adjacent development. Commercial land uses around the Water Street Interchange would be unaffected by a No-Build Alternative unless congestion of vehicles waiting to access the plaza increases to the point that it is impossible to access the interchange from I-94/I-69 on a regular basis.

The City East Alternative would impact existing residential and commercial development in the City of Port Huron. Residential areas both north and south of the existing plaza would be impacted. The majority of the Blue Water Gateway Business Area would be replaced by the plaza expansion resulting in the displacement of existing businesses.

The City West Alternative would impact existing residential and commercial development in the City of Port Huron in a similar manner as the City East Alternative. Residential areas both north and south of the existing plaza would be impacted along with the majority of the Blue Water Gateway Business Area. Businesses may be interested in relocating as close as possible to the new plaza for either of the City East or City

West Alternatives which would potentially cause the conversion of homes immediately surrounding the plaza to business sites.

The Township Alternative would not be consistent with current and planned land use practices within the Study Area.

Homes in the Neighborhood Surrounding the Existing Plaza

Communities and Neighborhoods: The City East Alternative would substantially affect neighborhoods surrounding the existing plaza by relocating approximately 1/3 of the neighborhood south of the existing plaza and 13 homes in the neighborhood northeast of the plaza.

The City West Preferred Alternative would also affect the neighborhoods surrounding the plaza. The effect on the neighborhood south of the existing plaza would be lower for the City West Preferred Alternative due to fewer relocations. The Preferred Alternative would have a similar effect on the neighborhood northeast of the existing plaza as the City East Alternative. The City East Alternative will relocate a total of 155 residences and the City West (Preferred) Alternative will relocate a total of 129 residences. The City East and City West Preferred Alternatives would also increase the perception of the plaza as a barrier dividing the community from north to south.

The Township Alternative would remove a small neighborhood at the end of Maywood Drive in Port Huron Township and would relocate a total of 56 residences on the edges of the neighborhoods surrounding the existing plaza. The secured corridor between the Blue Water Bridge and the potential new plaza would increase the perception of a barrier between the north and south sides of Port Huron Township.

The Alternatives Carried Forward would not relocate any publicly owned community facilities. All Build Alternatives would require property from the Port Huron Area School District adjacent to the Lapeer Connector but would not affect school buildings or facilities. The City East and City West Alternatives would both relocate the First Free Methodist Church next to the existing plaza. Relocated properties are discussed in more detail in **Section 3.6 Relocations**.

Environmental Justice: Upon completing the environmental justice analysis, the Study Team determined there are no disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental impacts on minorities and/or low-income populations with any of the Alternatives Carried Forward. Impacts from any alternative would be similar for all groups regardless of demographic or socioeconomic characteristics of the community.

Businesses, Taxes, Trade, and Jobs: Continued border congestion caused by the No-Build Alternative will cost the economies of Michigan, Ontario, Canada, and the United States up to $3.9 billion by 2030. The Build Alternatives would substantially reduce these losses.

How Important is the Blue Water Bridge?

More than $100 million of goods cross the Blue Water Bridge every day.

The Build Alternatives will require some existing businesses to be displaced and will remove land from the tax base of both the City of Port Huron and Port Huron Township. The total annual tax base loss will be 1.5 percent or less of the total tax base for the communities affected depending on the alternative. The relocation of businesses could lead to the potential relocation of jobs outside of the community.

The Township Alternative would cause border crossers to bypass businesses near the existing plaza and at Water Street as no local access would be provided under this alternative. Businesses that cater to interstate traffic located at the Range Road exit on I-94 and the Wadhams Road exit on I-69 would likely see an increase in sales, as they would now be located at the first local access interchange after the border crossing.

Public Safety: The City East Alternative will provide two controlled access points for emergency service personnel. One access will occur on the north side of the plaza, and the other on the south side of the plaza. Emergency service access to the plaza from the west will be similar to the existing plaza access via I-94/I-69. Eight-foot high security fencing would be located along the perimeter.

Port Huron Fire Department

The City East Alternative would have little effect on emergency service response times to the plaza or surrounding neighborhoods. However, response time to surrounding neighborhoods could be impacted if an incident occurs on the

relocated portion of Pine Grove Avenue that would block traffic.

The City West Alternative will also provide two controlled access points for emergency service personnel on the north and south sides of the plaza. It will also have eight foot high security fencing located along the perimeter. The City West Alternative would have little or no effect on emergency service response times.

The Township Alternative substantially expands the length of the border crossing and creates three distinct areas that will need security and emergency service access. They are: (1) the existing plaza area, (2) the secure roadway between the existing plaza and the new plaza, and (3) the new plaza. The secure corridor would only be accessible from the new plaza in Port Huron Township or from the Canadian side of the Blue Water Bridge. This would create substantial challenges for providing emergency vehicle services to the corridor and the bridge.

Depending on the emergency service provider, there could be longer response times in reaching an incident on the new plaza in Port Huron Township or in the secure corridor. The City of Port Huron Fire and Police Department would have better response times to incidents on the existing plaza, and the Port Huron Township Fire Department and St. Clair County Sheriff's Office would have better response times to incidents on the new plaza located in the Township.

The emergency response provider most affected by Township Alternative is Tri-Hospital EMS, an ambulance service provider. The estimated response time doubles when responding to an incident at the new plaza located in Port Huron Township as compared to incidents on the existing plaza. However, the estimated response time of ten minutes would be within acceptable standards. Response times inside the secure corridor could be up to 13 minutes.

Relocations: All of the Build Alternatives would require the relocation of homes and businesses within the Study Area. The residential relocations for each alternative consist of single family homes and multi-family units.

The City East Alternative will require the relocation of 155 homes, 34 businesses, and one church. The City West Alternative will require the relocation of 129 homes, 30 businesses, and one church. The Township Alternative will require 56 home and 29 business relocations. MDOT will compensate homeowners that are relocated and assist with the relocation process. Replacement housing must be similar both in type and price range. No relocations will occur until it is shown that comparable housing is available.

Indirect and Cumulative Impacts: The Study Team identified potential indirect effects on land use, farmlands, traffic patterns, transboundary and wetlands. There are no significant indirect impacts on these elements from any of the Alternatives Carried Forward.

The City East and City West Alternatives may encourage redevelopment of land north of Hancock Street as new or relocated businesses seek sites to serve both border crossing and local customers. This land has been previously developed.

The Township Alternative has the potential for inducing highway oriented commercial growth at the Range Road and I-94 Interchange, and the Wadhams Road and I-69 Interchange. The Township Alternative may indirectly affect potential wetlands located near the Range Road and I-94 Interchange, by encouraging new commercial development in the area.

Wadhams Road Interchange on I-69

There are cumulative impacts for the Build Alternatives associated with past, present, and future plaza development projects. The impacts are from residential and business relocations and the effect on neighborhood stability in the vicinity of the existing plaza.

Aesthetic and Visual: The Study Team analyzed the effects of the walls, buffers, landscaping, and lighting of the Alternatives Carried Forward from the perspective of viewers of the new plaza and corridor and viewers from the old plaza/corridor. For the City East and City West Alternatives, the plaza would remain the dominant visual feature of the

area surrounding the plaza. There would be increased awareness of plaza operations as a result of the street level location. For the Township Alternative, there are greater opportunities to provide buffers between the new plaza and local residents. The Township Alternative's largest visual impact would be the secure corridor, which would stand out for drivers and residents in the area. The secure corridor would also give a tunnel-like feel to the entrance to the United States for border crossers.

Front View E.C. Williams House

Sign for Port Huron Township Park #1

What is Section 4(f)?

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 states that no transportation project should be approved which requires the "use" of any publicly owned land from a public park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site unless there is no feasible or prudent alternative to the use of such land.

Cultural Resources: There is one structure located within the Study Area that is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. It is located north of the existing plaza at 2511 10th Avenue and is known as the E.C. Williams House. The City East Alternative will require land adjacent to the E.C. Williams House property. No adverse effect to this property is expected as a result of the City East Alternative. The City West Alternative will require the relocation of this historic house to a new site. The Study Team has coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) regarding the relocation of the house. Further discussion on the relocation is contained in **Section 3.15 Cultural Resources** and in **Chapter 4 Section 4(f) and 6(f) Evaluation**. The Township Alternative will not affect the E.C. Williams House.

Study Team Archaeologists conducted field surveys of the Black River crossing and key vacant areas of the proposed plaza location site for the Township Alternative. The Archaeologists found no artifacts and concluded that there is a low probability of the project impacting archaeological resources.

Public Parks: There are three public parks located within or adjacent to the Study Area.

Port Huron Township Park #1 is an 11-acre park located next to I-94/I-69 on the northeast side of Water Street. Port Huron Township Park #2 and RV Park is a 36-acre park located on the south side of Water Street across from Port Huron Township Park #1. The Riverside Boat Ramp is a 5.7-acre site located along Riverside Drive, north of the Black River Bridge on the east side of the Black River and is adjacent to the Study Area.

Both Township Park No. 2 (the campground) and Riverside Park will not be impacted by the proposed project. Some minor property acquisition and impacts are anticipated with Township Park No. 1 for the construction of the proposed corridor improvements and interchange at Water Street under all three of the Build Alternatives.

MDOT coordinated with Port Huron Township officials and with the Township Parks and Recreation Commission regarding the potential impacts to Township Park No. 1. Meetings were held with the Township Supervisor and Parks and Recreation Commission to discuss the potential impacts to the park. The Township has concurred that the proposed project will have minimal effects on Township Park No. 1, and as a result, the potential impacts to Port Huron Township Park No. 1 have been determined by FHWA to be *de minimis* under Section 4(f). The No-Build Alternative will have no effect on Port Huron Township Park No. 1.

How Will the Project Affect the Natural Environment?

Air Quality: The project has the potential to improve air quality at a regional level, since the objective is to reduce backups and idling caused by existing delays for both in-bound U.S. and out-bound traffic at the current plaza. St. Clair County is currently classified as being in non-attainment for particulates smaller than 2.5 microns in size ($PM_{2.5}$) and the eight-hour ozone standard. At a regional level, it is expected that the improvements to the plaza will be in conformity with the State Implementation Plan (SIP) for ozone and particulates and, in conformity with the regional Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). At a microscale level, the worst-case signalized intersection in the Study Area (M-25 and Hancock Street) was modeled for Carbon Monoxide (CO) concentrations. For all alternatives including No-Build, that intersection was modeled to be within federal standards for CO concentrations.

What is Non-Attainment?

Locations that do not meet national air quality standards are designated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as "non-attainment" areas for each pollutant that does not meet the standards.

Noise: The Study Team measured existing noise levels in areas potentially affected by noise from a new plaza and used the FHWA's Traffic Noise Model to forecast future noise levels for the alternatives. The Study Team compared the forecast future noise levels to the FHWA's noise abatement criteria to

determine locations where noise mitigation, such as noise walls, may be needed.

The No-Build Alternative would have traffic noise levels that approach or exceed the noise abatement criteria at 101 residences, six businesses, and in one township park. The City East Alternative would have traffic noise levels that approach or exceed the noise abatement criteria at 73 residences, four businesses, and in Township Park No. 1. The City West Alternative would have traffic noise levels that approach or exceed the noise abatement criteria at 45 residences, four businesses and in Township Park No. 1. The Township Alternative would have traffic noise levels that approach or exceed the noise abatement criteria at 66 residences, two businesses, and at locations at two township parks.

The Study Team investigated potential mitigation for locations that exceed the noise abatement criteria. A discussion of potential noise mitigation is included in **Chapter 5 Mitigation**.

Groundwater, Drainage and Surface Water Quality: No impacts are anticipated to groundwater resources. The Study Area does not contain any Sole Source Aquifers or Critical Aquifer Protection Areas.

All Build Alternatives would increase the amount of storm water drainage within the Study Area. Storm water detention basins will be constructed to control the amount of water discharged to match the existing discharge quantities and preserve surface water quality. All storm water runoff will be directed through buffer areas prior to discharging into any of the surrounding surface water features. This will help filter any sediments or pollutants contained in the storm water runoff.

Floodplains: All of the Build Alternatives would involve construction within the 100-year floodplain. Efforts have been made to develop the alternatives to ensure that there will be no impacts to the floodplain which would cause additional flooding to properties in the surrounding area. Any impact to the 100-year floodplain will be offset by providing additional storage capacity for flood waters. To ensure that all environmental and hydraulic impacts associated with the

floodplain crossings of the project are minimized, further evaluation of crossing options will be conducted during the design phase.

Wetlands: None of the alternatives would have wetland impacts that would be considered significant.

The City East and City West Alternatives would impact approximately four acres of wetlands while the Township Alternative would impact approximately ten acres of wetland. The majority of the wetlands that would be impacted are small and are not classified as high quality wetlands.

Scrub-shrub/forested Wetland

Where wetland impacts cannot be avoided, MDOT will restore previously existing wetlands or create new wetlands to replace those that would be impacted. Current policy dictates that forested wetlands will be replaced at a ratio of 10:1, while emergent, scrub/shrub, and open water wetlands will be replaced at a ratio of 2:1.

Plants, Wildlife, and Threatened and Endangered Species: The Study Area does not offer any pristine or unique habitat for wildlife and no state or federal threatened, endangered or special concern plant or animal species were found within the Study Area. Wildlife species that exist within the Study Area are tolerant of human activities and if disturbed could find comparable habitat in areas adjacent to the Study Area.

No significant impacts to the plant and wildlife communities present within the Study Area are anticipated.

Contaminated Sites: The Study Team identified 20 potentially contaminated sites that would be impacted by the City East and City West Alternatives and ten that would be impacted by the Township Alternative. These sites included gas stations, service centers, dry cleaners, and former industrial and railroad sites. Significant impacts from potential contaminated sites are not expected.

Farmland: The Study Area includes a rural/suburban area of Port Huron Township that was once agricultural. Although farmland exists within Port Huron Township this land is not actively farmed and has been rezoned residential. The Study

Area contains no prime or unique farmlands or farmland that is of statewide or local importance per the Important Farmlands Map of St. Clair County. This project will have no significant impact on farmland.

Wild and Scenic Rivers, Coastal Zone, Coastal Barriers & Critical Dunes: There are no federal Wild or Scenic River systems in the Study Area.

The project is located within a designated Michigan Coastal Zone Management Area. This project involves the expansion of the Blue Water Bridge plaza in areas that have been disturbed and are not in any direct or indirect contact with the coastal resources. No significant impacts to the coastal zone are anticipated with any of the Alternatives Carried Forward.

The Study Area contains no federally designated coastal barriers or state designated critical dunes, as defined in Part 353, Sand Dune Protection and Management, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451.

How will the Study Team Mitigate or Reduce the Impacts to the Built and Natural Environments?

Public meeting

The Study Team will seek to eliminate, reduce, or control the negative effects of the project. This will include the development of measures to compensate for environmental damage through replacement or restoration of resources where possible. **Chapter 5 Mitigation** discusses the potential ways that MDOT and FHWA will mitigate for the social, economic, and environmental affects of the final alternative selected for design and construction. Further mitigation measures will be developed and refined after the Public Hearing on this DEIS and will be included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

How Did the Study Team Coordinate with the Public and Stakeholders?

The Study Team conducted an extensive process of public and stakeholder coordination to obtain input, identify local concerns, revise proposed alternatives, and better understand the impacts of the alternatives on the natural and built

environment. The Study Team has held six public meetings, three public workshops and over 40 local stakeholder meetings. Newspapers, a project website, a toll free phone number, an e-mail list-serve, and newsletters were also used to provide information about the study and receive public input. The Study Team used public and stakeholder comments to assist in the development and refinement of alternatives. Additionally, since March 2, 2007, the Study Team has held office hours in Port Huron on the first and third Friday of each month to address concerns and questions and provide answers on the project. Public and stakeholder comments are expected to be key parts of the selection of an alternative for design and construction.

Five federal agencies are serving as cooperating agencies for this project and assisted the Study Team in the development and analysis of the alternatives. These agencies include: Customs and Border Protection (CBP), General Services Administration (GSA), the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the United States Coast Guard (USCG). The Study Team also has worked with the Canadian Blue Water Bridge Authority, who own and operate the Canadian side of the Blue Water Bridge, and other Canadian stakeholders in the development and evaluation of the alternatives.

What is a Cooperative Agency?

An Agency that has special authority or expertise over the construction of a project. There is enhanced communication and cooperation between cooperating agencies and the agency proposing the project.

What Are the Next Steps For the Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study?

A public comment period of no less than 60 days will follow the publication of this DEIS. During the comment period, the Study Team will hold a formal Public Hearing in the Study Area. The public and stakeholders can send comments on the Alternatives Carried Forward, the identification of the Preferred Alternative, and the DEIS to the addresses listed on the first page of this document or submit them at the Public Hearing.

Following the comment period, the Study Team will use the input provided by the public, stakeholders, and agencies involved in the project to help refine the Preferred Alternative for design and construction. The Study Team will produce a FEIS that updates the Preferred Alternative, discusses

potential impacts in more detail, and allows additional time for comments. The FEIS also will discuss potential mitigation measures to avoid, minimize, or compensate for the impacts of the Preferred Alternative, in detail. The Federal Highway Administration will then issue a Record of Decision formally selecting an alternative for design and construction.

Summary of Impacts

		No-Build	City East Alternative	City West Alternative (Preferred Alternative)	Township Alternative
Potential Impacts:					
Social	Public Recreational Land Impacts	None	1	1	0
	Neighborhoods / Subdivision Impacts	0	3	3	3
	Community Facilities (Churches, Schools etc.) (#)	0	1 Church, requires property from school district	1 Church, requires property from school district	Requires property from school district
Relocations	Estimated Residential Relocations (#)	0	155	129	56
	Estimated Commercial Relocations (#)	0	34	30	29
	Existing DTE Substation	No	Yes	Yes	No
River/Stream/Drain Crossings (#)		0	2	2	3
Ecological Resources	Total Wetland Impacts (acres)	0	4.36	4.36	10.16
	Threatened and Endangered Species Impacts	0	0	0	0
Cultural Resources	Historic Buildings/Site Impacts (#)	0	0	1	0
	Archaeological Site Impacts (#)	0	0	0	0
Noise	Residences Impacted by noise levels that exceed noise abatement criteria	101	73	45	66
Potential Contaminated Site Impacts (# of Sites Impacted)		0	20	20	10
Traffic Movement	Grade Separations (#)	8	9	8	15
	New or Modified Signalized Intersections/Roundabouts (#)	0	9	8	6
	Local Road Closures, Rerouting, or Cul de Sacs (#)	0	13	11	6
Right-of-Way	CBP plaza space (including exisiting plaza re-use) (acres)	18	67	65	103
	Total new right-of-way required (acres)	0	133	131	195
Cost	Construction Cost ($2007 Millions)	$0	$237	$232	$244
	Right-of-Way Cost ($2007 Millions)	$0	$150	$158	$150
	Total Construction and Right-of-Way Cost ($2007 Millions)	$0	$387	$390	$394
	Contingencies Cost ($2007 Millions)	$0	$44	$43	$47
	Total Estimated Cost ($2007 Millions)	$0	$431	$433	$441

Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

MDOT
Michigan Department of Transportation

Based on the best information available as of 8-8-07

CHAPTER 1

WHY ARE IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED?

The Purpose of the Blue Water Bridge Plaza Project for the foreseeable future is to:

- Provide safe, efficient and secure movement of people and goods across the Canadian-U.S. border in the Port Huron area to support the economies of Michigan, Ontario, Canada and the United States.

- Support the mobility and security associated with needs of national and civil defense.

Existing United States Plaza Looking West

Several federal agencies and the Michigan State Police inspect trucks, cars, passengers, and cargo on the plaza, which is owned and operated by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). To assist in defining the reasons for the proposed improvements, MDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and two of the six cooperating agencies, the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the General Services Administration (GSA) created an Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from the United States and Canadian Plaza Agencies as well as local, state, and federal officials.

The following is the list of reasons for improvements developed with assistance from the Advisory Committee. This is called the purpose of and need for the project.

- Improve operations and processing capability by accommodating the latest inspection technologies and procedures
- Provide flexibility to accommodate future unknown inspection technologies and procedures
- Improve security
- Provide facilities that ensure cars and trucks do not leave the plaza without being inspected
- Improve safety on the bridge, plaza, and the I-94/I-69 corridor, including the elimination of the traffic weaves
- Accommodate projected 2030 traffic growth and future facility needs

- Minimize backups on Highway 402 in Canada and I-94/I-69
- Reduce vehicle and pedestrian conflicts on the plaza
- Improve access to the plaza and to the local road network
- Minimize routing of commercial traffic to local roads during maintenance operations
- Create a more visible and accessible Welcome Center
- Improve freeway infrastructure conditions along the I-94/I-69 corridor including the aging Black River Bridge

These reasons form the basis for the purpose of the study, which is detailed in the sections below.

Missaukee County
Roscommon County
Ogemaw County
Iosco County
Lake Huron
Clare County
Gladwin County
Arenac County
Saginaw Bay
Huron County
Isabella County
Midland County
Bay County
Bay City
Tuscola County
Location of the Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study Port Huron, Michigan
Saginaw
Saginaw County
Montcalm County
Gratiot County
Sanilac County
Genesee County
Lapeer County
St. Clair County
Ionia County
Clinton County
Shiawassee County
Flint
Port Huron
Sarnia
Macomb County
Eaton County
Livingston County
Oakland County
Detroit
Lansing
Ingham County
South Lyon
Howell
Brighton
Lake St. Clair
Jackson County
Jackson
Ann Arbor
Wayne County
Windsor
Washtenaw County
Ontario
Monroe County
Monroe
Hillsdale County
Lenawee County
Toledo
Lake Erie
Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study
Location Map
MDOT
Michigan Department of Transportation
Legend
Interstate Highways
Expressway
US Highways
County Boundaries
Major Lake
Urbanized Area
Urban Cluster
Michigan
Ontario
N
W
E
S
0 5 10 20
Mile

Figure 1.1

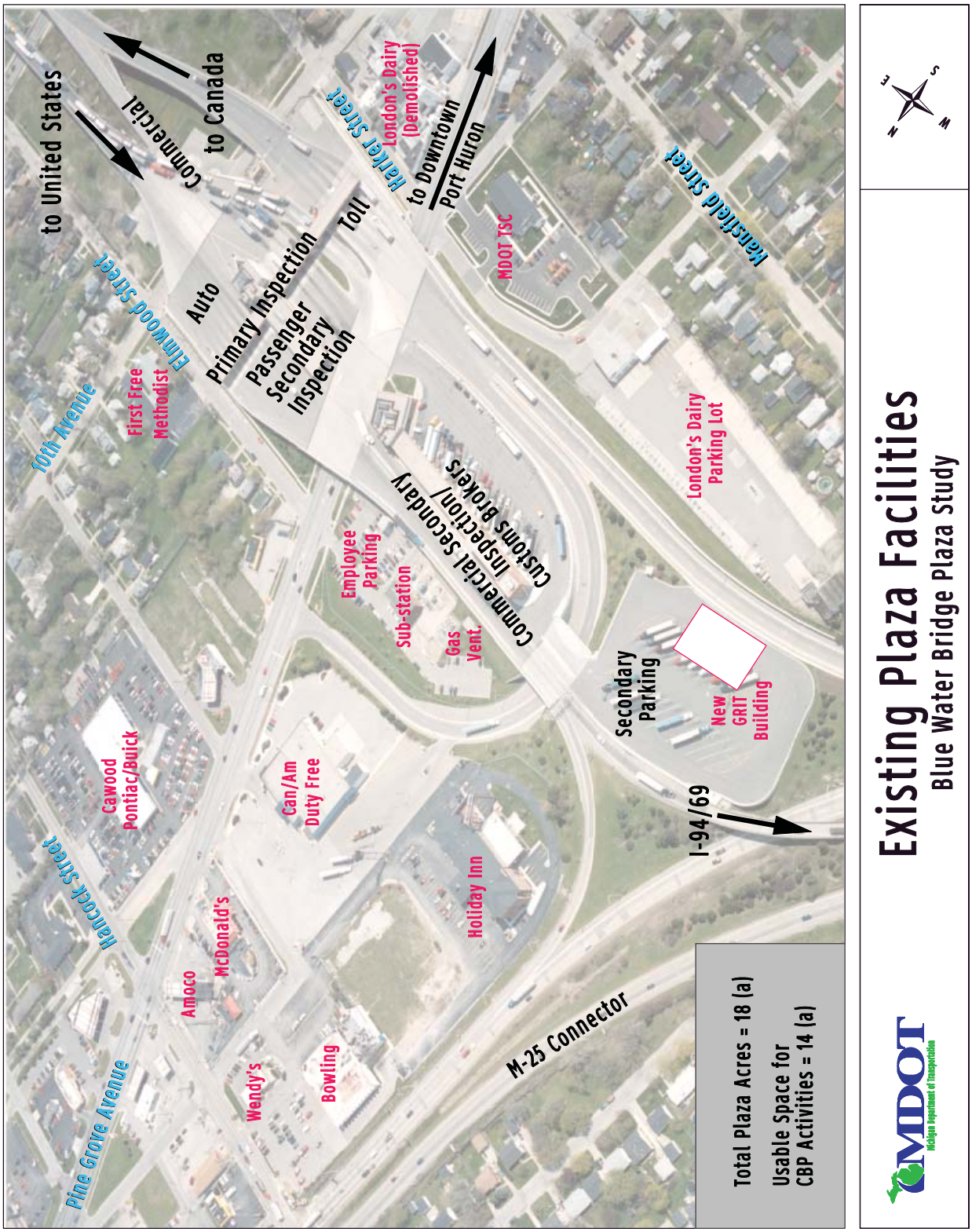

Existing Plaza Facilities
Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study
MDOT
Michigan Department of Transportation
to United States
Commercial
to Canada
Harker Street
London's Dairy (Demolished)
to Downtown Port Huron
Kansfield Street
MDOT TSC
Toll
Auto
Primary Inspection
Passenger Secondary Inspection
Elmwood Street
First Free Methodist
10th Avenue
London's Dairy Parking Lot
Commercial Secondary Inspection/ Customs Brokers
Employee Parking
Sub-station
Gas Vent
Secondary Parking
New GRIT Building
Cawood Pontiac/Buick
Can/Am Duty Free
I-94/69
Hancock Street
Holiday Inn
Amoco
McDonald's
M-25 Connector
Wendy's
Bowling
Pine Grove Avenue
Total Plaza Acres = 18 (a)
Usable Space for CBP Activities = 14 (a)

Figure 1.2

The Study Location: The Study Area begins at the western end of the twin Blue Water Bridge spans and ends at the I-94/I-69 Interchange, approximately three miles to the west. These connections will provide highway/freeway access to destinations across Michigan, 47 other states, Mexico, and Canada as illustrated in **Figures 1.1** and **Figure E.1** in the separate **Appendix E** volume.

The need for improvements to the United States Plaza and the I-94/I-69 Corridor leading up to the Blue Water Bridge is supported by several key issues including:

- Security issues
- The introduction of new inspection technologies, procedures, and policies
- Limited existing space on the plaza
- Traffic conflicts and crash history
- Access between the plaza and adjacent circulatory local roads
- Traffic growth
- Traffic backups
- Existing infrastructure conditions of the I-94/I-69 Corridor
- Upgrading the international Welcome Center

Toll Booths on the Existing Plaza

What Business is Conducted on the United States Plaza?

Federal agencies operating on the plaza include CBP, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These agencies are responsible for inspecting vehicles, goods, and people entering the United States. The inspection agencies rent facilities on the United States Plaza from MDOT through the GSA, which provides buildings for the federal government. CBP's primary mission is to secure the border while facilitating legitimate trade and travel.

MDOT collects tolls on the plaza from vehicles leaving the United States for Canada, and the Michigan State Police have a truck weigh scale on the existing plaza.

United States Department of Agriculture operates on Wdhams Road

Primary Inspection: Primary inspection is the first point of contact between CBP inspection officers and passengers, vehicles, and cargo entering the United States. Cars, buses,

and trucks that require no further questioning or inspection and have their paper work in order are allowed to exit the plaza following primary inspection.

Primary Inspection Lanes

Passenger Secondary Inspection: Passengers in cars requiring additional paperwork or questioning are sent to passenger secondary inspection for a follow-up interview conducted by CBP, USDA, or the FDA.

Commercial Secondary Inspection: Commercial shipments requiring further paperwork, processing, and/or inspection by CBP, USDA, or FDA are sent to the commercial secondary inspection facilities. At commercial secondary inspection, trucks must park and individuals must go inside for further questioning and to process paperwork. Cargo may also be inspected. If the paperwork for the cargo is incomplete, the truck driver will visit a customs broker to complete the necessary paperwork required by CBP. Customs brokers are private firms with office space in the inspection building. Animal inspections are conducted by USDA at an off-site location on Wadhams Road.

What is the History of the Blue Water Bridge and Plaza Improvements?

The original Blue Water Bridge on the left was built in 1938. The second bridge was built in 1997.

The original Blue Water Bridge was opened on October 10, 1938 and was operated by the Michigan State Bridge Commission. In 1965, operation of the bridge and plaza was transferred to MDOT, then called the Department of State Highways.

The United States Plaza at the Blue Water Bridge was first expanded in the 1950s and a ramp was added over M-25 (Pine Grove Avenue) to connect with the Port Huron bypass (now I-94/I-69), which was under construction at the time. Prior to this expansion, the entire plaza was located between Pine Grove Avenue and 10th Avenue. In 1983, MDOT completed Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements, which recommended improvements to the United States Plaza and the construction of a second bridge. In 1991, the final link of I-69 was built, completing a second freeway connection (Toronto to Chicago) via the bridge. During the 1980's and early 1990's, the plaza was expanded to include 13 primary

inspection booths for inbound traffic from Canada. Five outbound toll lanes and the secondary inspection facilities that exist on the elevated plaza today were also added as a part of the expansion.

In 1992, an international task force studying the Blue Water Bridge crossing concluded that the existing bridge did not have enough capacity for all vehicles wanting to cross, and the existing bridge needed long-term maintenance; therefore a new bridge should be constructed. An environmental document that served as a Re-evaluation Document for the 1983 FEIS and met the requirements of both the U.S. and Canadian environmental processes was completed in 1994. Construction on the second Blue Water Bridge span began in 1995 and was opened to traffic in July 1997. Each bridge has three lanes of traffic with the original bridge carrying traffic from Canada to the United States and the new bridge carrying traffic from the United States to Canada.

Elevated Plaza at Pine Grove

Rapid increases in the growth of truck traffic and international trade called for additional improvements. In 1999, MDOT completed a Toll and Plaza Operations Study to identify short-term operational improvements and to propose potential long-term plaza improvements. As a result of this study, several short-term operational improvements were made including the conversion of MDOT's maintenance facility to additional truck parking and the expansion of space for customs brokers.

Additionally, the events of September 11, 2001 have forever changed the way security measures are implemented at our nations' borders. The physical security of the border crossing itself and the border crossing facilities and processes must be protected from interruptions due to man-made or natural calamities. These may include threats of terrorism or sabotage, aging or failing infrastructure, or other natural disasters. Assuring homeland security requires the border be protected from disruptions caused by terrorist actions.

Security at the border is of critical importance. It entails 1) providing a reasonable assurance that cross-border movements and trade will not be disrupted; and, 2) providing adequate facilities for the processing and screening of people

and goods passing between Canada and the United States. Increased scrutiny of people and goods has the collateral effect of improving the security of those who live and work in the Port Huron area while increasing processing time, which reduces the effective capacity of border operations. The latter issue manifests itself in the need for expanded physical facilities for agencies responsible for border security.

The Canadian side of the Blue Water Bridge and Canadian Plaza are operated by the Blue Water Bridge Authority (BWBA).

In September 2002, MDOT began the current study.

New Inspection Technologies and Procedures Require More Space

Improvements to the United States Plaza at the Blue Water Bridge must provide enough space for new procedures and technologies required by the Department of Homeland Security to ensure the safety and security of the border. The plaza must have space for current technological and procedural requirements and have flexibility to accommodate unknown future inspection technologies and security requirements.

The space to put new or updated inspection technologies and procedures required by inspection agencies is severely limited on the existing 18 acre plaza. The following are among the new technologies and procedures either recently introduced or soon to be required at the United States Plaza.

Radiation Detection Portals

Radiation Detection Portals: Radiation Detection Portals monitor radiation levels to ensure no one brings radioactive material into the United States. Radiation Detection Portals have been installed in advance of all inspection booths at major border crossings including the Blue Water Bridge. A designated Radiation Detection Portal and containment area in secondary inspection is also required. For future primary inspection, 20 Radiation Detection Portals (with future expansion to 30) are needed and it is estimated that secondary inspection will need one Radiation Detection Portal. The existing plaza has a secondary Radiation Detection Portal but no space for a designated containment area.

GRIT: Gamma-Ray Inspection Technology is used to scan freight contained on and in trucks, cargo containers, and cars.

This equipment is now required at United States/Canada border crossings. A temporary enclosed GRIT unit has been introduced at the Blue Water Bridge and has reduced the available space for secondary inspections. A permanent building to house GRIT equipment requires more than one-half acre of land. A new plaza which processes the volume of commercial traffic of the Blue Water Bridge will have three GRIT units.

GRIT Building on Existing Plaza

Indoor Cargo Docks/Warehouse Space: Most major commercial border crossing plazas between the United States and Canada feature indoor cargo unloading docks and warehouse space. Unloading of vehicles for inspection at the Blue Water Bridge Plaza must currently be done at off-site locations. Inspection officials propose that a border crossing like the Blue Water Bridge should have at least 12 indoor unloading bays and adequate warehouse space to store cargo.

Export Control/Outbound Inspection: Outbound inspection booths and facilities will also be required to allow CBP to enforce export control regulations and to allow the inspection of certain individuals leaving the country. Currently CBP conducts random exit control interviews by flagging down outbound vehicles after they pass through the toll plaza. These inspections can cause backups on I-94/I-69 and congestion on the outbound part of the plaza.

FAST: Free and Secure Trade (FAST) is a program between the United States and Canada. FAST aims to process low risk cargo as quickly as possible. The FAST program includes reducing CBP and Canada Border Services Agency paperwork, dedicating lanes at major crossings to FAST participants, using common technology, and physically examining cargo transported by low risk individuals and companies at the lowest levels possible. The implementation of FAST at the Blue Water Bridge began in December 2002.

NEXUS: NEXUS is a program that allows pre-approved low risk travelers to enjoy a simplified border crossing process. NEXUS-pass holders can use dedicated lanes at border crossing, thereby reducing their waiting time.

Automated License Plate Readers

Automated License Plate Readers: Cameras photograph the license plates of all vehicles prior to entering the primary inspection booths. A computer matches the license plate photograph to a variety of databases and provides any relevant information to the inspection officer during the inspection process. These license plate readers have been installed at all booths on the plaza and require extra waiting space for vehicles to ensure accurate pictures are taken.

Canine Facility: CBP officials have requested permanent space for a canine inspection team facility. A canine facility has recently been retrofitted into the existing commercial secondary inspection facilities.

Future Technologies and Procedures: The new technologies and procedures described above are all current or short-term foreseeable requirements. However, inspection technology and processes are constantly evolving. There is a need for any plaza improvements to be adaptable in terms of space and layout to account for unknown changes that may be required by 2030 and beyond.

Improvements must be Flexible for the Future

Improvements to the United States Plaza must have flexibility for future, and unknown inspection needs and must be able to be built in stages. Approximately $103 million dollars in commercial goods cross the border at the Blue Water Bridge on an average day (2006, Bureau of Transportation Statistics). As the second busiest commercial border crossing between the United States and Canada, the Blue Water Bridge cannot completely shut down for plaza improvements without having a significant negative impact on trade between the two countries. The proposed project is to develop a 2030 plan of improvements, which can be implemented in phases as traffic grows, and changes in technology and procedures occur.

Improving Security

Plaza facilities at the Blue Water Bridge must fulfill CBP's primary mission which is to secure the border while facilitating legitimate trade and travel. The key security elements for CBP include:

- Interdiction and containment of hazardous materials, contraband, and unauthorized people from entering the country including terrorists and their instruments
- Vulnerabilities to terrorist attacks
- Location and distribution of inspection staff and resources
- Personal safety and security for inspection agents, plaza staff, and plaza users

The following are security related improvements needed at the Blue Water Bridge to accommodate new security requirements.

Currently there are no gates or checkpoints at the exit from the plaza. There is a need for exit control from commercial secondary inspection so CBP can ensure that vehicles sent to secondary inspection have completed the necessary paperwork and/or inspection before leaving the facilities.

For the overall security of the crossing itself, provide clear improvement by reducing the number of overpasses (the plaza is currently built over Pine Grove Avenue) that would be vulnerable to an attack from below.

Clear sightlines between primary and secondary inspection areas are essential to ensure vehicles sent to secondary inspection actually go there. The current plaza secondary inspection area entrance is adjacent to the freeway exit which makes it difficult for CBP to monitor.

The existing plaza facilities lack adequate secure parking for employees, impounded vehicles, and specific parking spaces to quarantine suspicious vehicles. Due to the limited amount of office space on the plaza, enforcement functions of CBP are forced to share space with public enrollment in border crossing programs (e.g. FAST). Due to evolving security concerns, representatives from CBP have requested more space. Emergency vehicle access to the existing plaza is limited due to the elevated situation of the plaza.

Enhancements to the overall security of the Blue Water Bridge and Plaza Facilities are also part of the purpose of the project.

Limited Existing Space on the Plaza

Over the past three years, the federal inspection agencies have been dedicating more personnel to the Canadian border, partially as a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and increased border security measures. Approximately 485 individuals including 227 federal inspection agents, 38 MDOT employees, and approximately 220 customs brokers staff, work on the United States Plaza, which is open 24-hours a day, seven days a week. The existing facilities do not have enough space to accommodate new inspection requirements and procedures, and the increased number of newly trained agents. Among the issues of concern is a lack of space in the secondary inspection area along with limited locker and desk space for new agents, lack of public counter space, and a lack of adequate secure parking.

How Much is Traffic Going to Grow on the Blue Water Bridge?

Proposed improvements must provide large enough plaza facilities to accommodate projected 2030 traffic levels in terms of inspection and toll booths, parking facilities, space for waiting traffic, and access ramps. The State of Michigan's Long Range Plan (LRP) recognizes the Blue Water Bridge as a vital part of Michigan's infrastructure and economy, thus it must accommodate current and forecasted traffic levels. Expanding the existing Blue Water Bridge was not identified as a need as part of MDOT's LRP, as both bridge spans are forecast to have adequate traffic capacity beyond 2030.

Historic Traffic Growth: The number of trucks entering the United States via the Blue Water Bridge increased by approximately 132 percent between 1990 and 2000. Outbound trucks heading for Canada via the bridge increased by 139 percent over the same ten-year time period. The September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 contributed to a decline in the growth rate of truck traffic through 2005 to ten percent, however Canada bound truck traffic grew at a quicker rate of 17.6 percent. **Table 1.1** illustrates the growth in truck traffic crossing the Blue Water Bridge between 1970 and 2005.

Table 1.1 Truck Traffic Using the Blue Water Bridge

Year	Annual Trucks		Average Daily Traffic		Annual Growth Rate*		
	West Bound into the U.S.A.	East Bound into Canada	West Bound into the U.S.A.	East Bound into Canada	Annual Growth Rate Period	West Bound into the U.S.A.	East Bound into Canada
1970	95,600	93,800	262	257	-	-	-
1980	106,600	106,700	292	292	1970 to 1980	1.1%	1.3%
1990	361,200	308,900	990	846	1980 to 1990	13.0%	11.2%
2000	837,000	739,800	2,293	2,027	1990 to 2000	8.8%	9.1%
2005	920,530	870,160	2,522	2,384	2000 to 2005	1.9%	3.3%

* Annual Compounded Rate

The rapid truck growth prior to 2001 can be attributed to several factors including completion of Highway 402 in Canada in 1982, and completion of I-69 between Port Huron and Indianapolis, Indiana in 1992. In 1989, the United States-Canada Free Trade Agreement was implemented followed in 1994 by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). These trade agreements helped create strong growth in international trade and commercial traffic between the United States and Canada. For the purposes of this study two potential options of truck growth were looked at to depict a high and a low growth option. The traffic analysis was developed based on the high growth option as discussed in the **Traffic Growth to the Year 2030** section.

Passenger vehicle crossings at the Blue Water Bridge declined 23 percent between 1990 and 2005. **Table 1.2** illustrates the trends in passenger vehicle crossings at the Blue Water Bridge since 1970. New shopping centers in Port Huron along with the strong value of the Canadian dollar led to significant growth in passenger vehicle crossings in the late 1980's and early 1990's. This growth subsided in the late 1990's due in part to the decline of cross-border shopping and the weakening value of the Canadian dollar. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks also resulted in fewer passenger vehicle crossings.

Table 1.2 Passenger Vehicles (Cars, Vans, and Light Trucks) Using the Blue Water Bridge

Year	Annual Passenger Vehicles		Average Daily Traffic		Annual Growth Rate*		
	Westbound into the U.S.A.	Eastbound into Canada	Westbound into the U.S.A.	Eastbound into Canada	Annual Growth Rate Period	Westbound into the U.S.A.	Eastbound into Canada
1970	1,124,200	1,126,000	3,080	3,085	-	-	-
1980	1,656,700	1,671,200	4,539	4,579	1970 to 1980	4.0%	4.0%
1990	2,422,900	2,417,200	6,638	6,622	1980 to 1990	3.9%	3.8%
2000	2,224,600	2,165,700	6,095	5,933	1990 to 2000	-0.9%	-1.1%
2005	1,865,150	1,849,820	5,110	5,068	2000 to 2005	-3.5%	-3.1%

* Annual Compounded Rate

Both truck and passenger vehicle crossings are expected to increase in the future. The following paragraph provides data on expected traffic growth to the year 2030.

Traffic Growth to the Year 2030: Based on long-term growth trends, truck and car crossings at the Blue Water Bridge are projected to increase between 2005 and 2030. Two separate commercial forecasts were developed based on existing and historical truck crossing data to estimate the possible future demand for cross-border traffic. The first forecast is based on growth patterns associated with a longer time period and anticipates cross-border commercial traffic to continue to grow at a rate similar to pre-9/11 levels. The annual number of trucks entering the United States at the bridge under this forecast is projected to increase by approximately 109 percent between 2005 and 2030. This represents an average annual increase of 4.4 percent per year. The number of trucks exiting to Canada is forecast to increase by approximately 100 percent between 2005 and 2030, an average annual increase of four percent per year. **Table 1.3** illustrates the truck traffic forecast for the Blue Water Bridge.

Table 1.3 Blue Water Bridge High Growth Truck Forecast

Year	Trucks		Average Daily Traffic		Annual Growth Rate***		
	Westbound into the U.S.A.	Eastbound into Canada	Westbound into the U.S.A.	Eastbound into Canada	Annual Growth Rate Period	Westbound into the U.S.A.*	Eastbound into Canada**
2005	920,530	870,160	2,522	2,384	-	-	-
2010	1,120,900	1,043,900	3,071	2,860	2005 to 2010	4.0%	3.7%
2020	1,521,700	1,521,700	4,169	3,812	2010 to 2020	3.1%	3.8%
2030	1,922,800	1,922,800	5,268	4,764	2020 to 2030	2.4%	2.4%

* Between 2005 and 2030 there is an average annual increase of 4.4% per year of trucks entering the United States at the bridge.

** Between 2005 and 2030 there is an average annual increase of 4.0% per year of trucks exiting to Canada.

*** Annual Compounded Rate

The second forecast, which represents a slowed-growth scenario, reflects the growth patterns associated with a much shorter period of time. For this lower growth estimate, the cross-border commercial patterns during the 2000-2005 time periods were used to project future commercial growth rates. In this slowed-growth projection, the annual number of trucks entering the United States at the bridge under this forecast is projected to increase by approximately 61 percent between 2005 and 2030. This represents an average annual increase of 2.4 percent per year. The number of trucks exiting to Canada is also forecast to increase by approximately 61 percent between 2005 and 2030, an average annual increase of 2.4 percent per year. **Table 1.4** illustrates the truck traffic forecast if current crossing trends were to be projected to 2030 for the Blue Water Bridge.

Under either of these commercial traffic growth trends however, the existing plaza footprint does not provide adequate capacity for CBP or MDOT to carry out its daily operations. Consequences of not providing additional space for primary and secondary inspections will result in increased border delays for the aforementioned commercial volumes.

Table 1.4 Blue Water Bridge Low Growth Truck Forecast

Year	Trucks		Average Daily Traffic		Annual Growth Rate***		
	West Bound into the U.S.A.	East Bound into Canada	West Bound into the U.S.A.	East Bound into Canada	Annual Growth Rate Period	West Bound into the U.S.A.*	East Bound into Canada**
2005	920,530	870,160	2,522	2,384	-	-	-
2010	1,033,315	974,550	2,831	2,670	2005 to 2010	2.3%	2.3%
2020	1,258,520	1,183,330	3,448	3,242	2010 to 2020	2.0%	2.0%
2030	1,484,090	1,392,110	4,066	3,814	2020 to 2030	1.7%	1.6%

* Between 2005 and 2030 there is an average annual increase of 2.4% per year of trucks entering the United States at the bridge.

** Between 2005 and 2030 there is an average annual increase of 2.4% per year of trucks exiting to Canada.

*** Annual Compounded Rate

Total passenger traffic at the Blue Water Bridge is forecast to grow by approximately 21 percent between 2005 and 2030, an average annual increase of approximately 0.8 percent. **Table 1.5** illustrates the forecast passenger vehicle traffic growth. The recent decline in passenger vehicle crossings is unlikely to continue indefinitely. Normal population growth in Ontario and Michigan along with greater acceptance of and adaptation to new border inspection procedures by travelers is likely to halt the decline in passenger vehicle crossings over the next few years. This is reflected in the passenger car forecast which continues to decline until 2010 when the forecast begins to grow again. Improvements to the plaza and the I-94/I-69 corridor are expected to be sufficient to handle proposed traffic numbers at the build-out year of 2030.

Table 1.5 Blue Water Bridge Passenger Vehicle (Cars, Vans, and Light Trucks) Forecast

Year	Passenger Vehicles		Average Daily Traffic		Annual Growth Rate***		
	Westbound into the U.S.A.	Eastbound into Canada	Westbound into the U.S.A.	Eastbound into Canada	Annual Growth Rate Period	Westbound into the U.S.A.*	Eastbound into Canada**
2005	1,866,300	1,841,600	5,110	5,068	-	-	-
2010	1,637,000	1,609,300	4,485	4,409	2005 to 2010	-2.6%	-2.7%
2020	1,951,700	1,914,800	5,347	5,246	2010 to 2020	1.8%	1.8%
2030	2,266,300	2,220,300	6,209	6,083	2020 to 2030	1.5%	1.5%

* Annual Compounded Rate

Existing inspection and toll collection facilities on the plaza are inadequate to deal with this projected traffic growth. As discussed below, significant truck queues can occur even when all commercial primary inspection booths are staffed.

Backups Need to be Reduced

Improvements to the United States Plaza must minimize backups of commercial and passenger vehicles on both the Canadian and United States sides of the border. Some recent improvements have been made on the existing plaza to help reduce backups. These include conversion of inspection booths for use by both cars and trucks, increased inspection staffing, and an additional on-ramp lane to the plaza from I-94/I-69. CBP has implemented requirements for electronic pre-notification for truck shipments at the border which has also had some effect on border backups. These improvements will not address long-term potential backups resulting from new inspection procedures and/or traffic growth.

What Are Pre-notification Requirements?

Pre-notifications require traders shipping goods to the U.S. to submit certain cargo and conveyance information to the U.S. CBP before goods arrive at the border.

Fatal accidents due to vehicles rear-ending trucks during backups have occurred on both sides of the border. These backups interfere with local traffic using I-94/I-69 and often require traffic to stop quickly when reaching the end of the backup. Improvements to facilities on the Canadian side of the bridge are not part of this study. The BWBA has a plan for expansion of the Canadian plaza facilities to address their own

Figure 1.3 Truck Traffic Backups on the Blue Water Bridge

long-term space needs as a result of the growth in cross-border traffic. Space for backed up traffic headed to Canada is limited on the United States Plaza. Changes in inspection procedures, including outbound inspections as discussed previously under **New Inspection Technologies and Procedures Require More Space**, may lead to more frequent backups on I-94/I-69.

Table 1.6 Border Crossing Traffic Backup Frequency

Border Crossing	Type of backup	Frequency of Occurrence
Westbound to USA	Passenger Vehicles	Mainly associated with holidays
	Commercial Vehicles	Once a week on heavy commercial days
	I-94/I-69; Highway 402 backups	Averages twice a month
	Severe Weather	Once a year
Eastbound to Canada	Passenger Vehicles	Associated with holidays

Backups of trucks and cars waiting to enter the United States, as illustrated in **Figure 1.3** and discussed in **Table 1.6**, are common at the Blue Water Bridge. Daylight hours on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday are the peak times for truck crossings. For security and operational reasons, traffic is held at the toll plaza on the Canadian side of the bridge when backups extend to the center of the bridge. As backups near the middle of the bridge, adequate sight distance for drivers who must stop to join the queue is a concern. As illustrated in **Figure 1.4**, backups have extended three to five miles into Canada, nearly to the fourth interchange on the Canadian side of the bridge. Due to the implementation of pre-notification requirements such as FAST and NEXUS, three to five mile back-ups of trucks are now rare. The longest backups now occur for cars on holiday weekends. Although cars and trucks are instructed by signs to remain in certain lanes, these backups frequently create conflicts with Highway 402 traffic attempting to use interchanges near the Blue Water Bridge in Canada. This can require traffic to quickly adjust from freeway speeds to a complete stop. The backups are of

substantial concern to Canadian authorities and local residents.

Figure 1.4 Truck Traffic Backup on Highway 402
Courtesy: Blue Water Bridge Authority

The backups of commercial and passenger vehicles into Canada are caused by the inadequacy of inspection facilities on the existing United States Plaza. These backups will likely worsen over time as the traffic utilizing the Blue Water Bridge increases and at the same time, if no improvements are made.

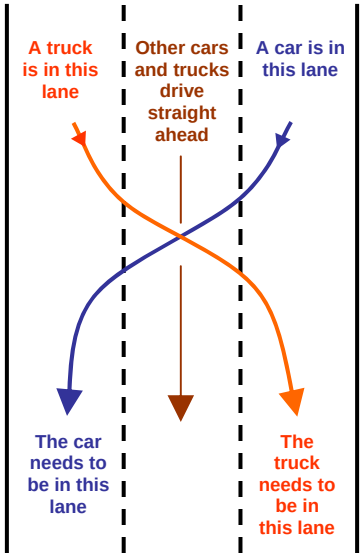
Reducing the Potential for Future Traffic Conflicts and Crashes

Plaza improvements must address a series of traffic weave movements and vehicle and pedestrian conflicts in order to enhance safety on the plaza and neighboring ramps and highways.

Traffic Weaves and Conflicts: A traffic weave is the movement of vehicles when traffic from one lane must cross in front of traffic in another lane (**Figure 1.5**). Weave movements should be avoided in congested situations where possible and designed to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards. A weave becomes more difficult and unsafe with the addition of large numbers of trucks as seen at the Blue Water Bridge. The potential for crashes and conflicts will increase as the commercial truck traffic increases.

Weaves occur at three locations at the Blue Water Bridge: 1) crossing the westbound bridge, 2) between trucks leaving primary inspection and trucks leaving secondary inspection, and 3) cars and trucks exiting the plaza toward either the M-25 Connector or I-94/I-69.

What is a traffic weave?



The car and truck must cross the other traffic to get to the lane they want to be in.

Figure 1.5

Two contributing factors are responsible for a weave movement on the westbound span of the Blue Water Bridge. The commercial secondary inspection area is located in the center of the plaza. Consequently, to avoid a severe weave on the plaza, primary inspection is placed on the left hand side for commercial vehicles and the right hand side for cars entering the United States. This alignment of inspection booths is in conflict with the general highway system in which trucks drive in the right hand lane. Commercial vehicles enter the Canadian plaza on the right hand side and drive through the toll booths with passenger vehicles on the left hand side. As a result of the placement of the United States inspection facilities, trucks must weave to the left most lanes to be inspected. The BWBA enacted an interim solution to deal with this undesirable weave and used a barrier wall to force all traffic west of the toll booths into one lane while exiting the Canadian toll plaza at slow speeds (this is considered a short-term fix). The barrier wall creates an undesirable situation for the Canadian toll booths, reducing their capacity and creating larger traffic queues along Highway 402.

Due to the location of commercial secondary inspection at the center of the U.S. plaza, a conflict also occurs between trucks leaving primary inspection and trucks leaving secondary inspection. Although vehicles are still traveling at relatively slow speeds, an undesirable conflict occurs.

There also are pedestrian and vehicle conflicts on the plaza as inspection officers, MDOT staff, customs brokers, and members of the public walk between primary and secondary inspection. Pedestrians are currently required to walk across the plaza through the flow of truck traffic, with no designated pedestrian crossings. MDOT spends approximately $85,000 each year on staff to direct traffic on the plaza during high traffic periods.

Crash Potential: Current crash rates on the bridge are below statewide averages. This low accident rate is directly caused by the slow moving or congested traffic combined with a high presence of surveillance across the bridge resulting in drivers paying more attention and being more careful.

The potential for serious crashes remains a concern. Fatal crashes have occurred as a result of backups on both I-94/I-69 and Highway 402. Improvements to the U.S. plaza facility, including the removal of the mid-bridge weave will improve the flow of traffic and improve operations on the bridge.

Improvements to I-94/I-69 Infrastructure

Black River Bridge

I-94/I-69 corridor improvements will allow for much needed updates to aging infrastructure including the replacement of the existing I-94/I-69 bridge over the Black River. The bridge was built in 1950 and is in poor structural condition with substandard shoulders. Currently the Black River Bridge has a below average sufficiency rating which qualifies the bridge for replacement. With continued deteriorating bridge conditions and forecasted increases in traffic, the replacement and expansion of the bridge will provide a safer and more efficient roadway.

The Black River Bridge shoulder widths do not meet the latest freeway standards and if a vehicle breaks down on the bridge, there is no shoulder to move to, therefore a lane is blocked. Upgrading the existing Black River Bridge, including the shoulders, would reduce the chance of a blocked lane and provide better conditions for avoiding back-up related rear-end collisions. Both deck conditions and the bridge structure will be improved to meet current MDOT standards.

Both the Water Street Bridge over I-94/I-69 and the Lapeer Connector overpass currently have deteriorating conditions that need to be addressed. The structure and deck of the Water Street Bridge (built in 1953) and the Lapeer Connector overpass (built in 1964) will be replaced and the Water Street Bridge deck elevated. In doing so, the under-clearance will be increased to meet current MDOT standards. In order to provide better access to the I-94/I-69 freeway, the Water Street Bridge will be widened from two lanes to four lanes with dedicated turning lanes. This will also reduce congestion on Water Street as it is a major freeway access point from the City of Port Huron and Port Huron Township. The Water Street interchange and Lapeer Connector improvements also are needed due to the widening of I-94/I-69 from four to eight

lanes. These lane additions will improve safety and accommodate traffic growth in the corridor.

Improving Local Roads and Access to Port Huron

An additional goal of the project is to improve local access to and around the plaza. Downtown Port Huron and the St. Clair County riverfront are two locations that could be served by improved access to and from the plaza. The downtown area and the riverfront are important features that contribute to the vitality of the local community. Plaza improvements should also improve the access to and the visibility of the duty free store affiliated with the plaza.

The existing plaza entrance and exit ramps are positioned to provide connections to and from I-94/I-69 but do not provide easy access to downtown Port Huron and the St. Clair Riverfront. **Figure 1.2** on page 1-4 illustrates the existing ramps between I-94/I-69, the plaza, and local roads. Improving congested local roads around the existing plaza may also assist economic development in the Port Huron area.

The duty free store also lacks the visibility and access of similar stores at many other border plazas. It is located off of Hancock Street and Pine Grove Avenue, past the ramp from I-94/I-69 to the plaza. Many drivers miss the opportunity to shop at the duty free store due to its current location. At other crossings the duty free store is generally located in a more visible and accessible location, often past the toll plaza. The existing duty free store also has poor control of exiting cars and trucks, which allows patrons to potentially, illegally exit the facility without going to Canada as is required for purchasing duty free goods.

Maintenance

The existing Blue Water Bridge Plaza presents maintenance challenges. The exit ramps to I-94/I-69 and the M-25 Connector are one-lane facilities. When the exit ramp to I-94/I-69 requires maintenance, traffic wishing to access the interstate must travel on a detour along local city roads. The plaza and United States side of the Blue Water Bridge are a part of the interstate system and significant maintenance requires

detouring international interstate freeway traffic onto city streets. The crowded existing elevated plaza also presents challenges in terms of snow removal and storage during large snowfalls.

Role of Canadian Officials: The plaza facilities on the Canadian side are owned and operated by the Blue Water Bridge Authority (BWBA), which reports to the Government of Canada. As a result of international agreements, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the BWBA has stated that improvements to the U.S. Plaza should not have adverse transboundary impacts on operations of the BWBA or Highway 402 in Canada. Among the concerns of the BWBA are fixing the westbound mid-bridge weave, minimizing traffic backups on Canadian facilities, and accommodating future traffic growth, which are discussed in this document. The BWBA is currently in the process of making improvements to their plaza facilities.

New Welcome Center

The Michigan Welcome Center is located on the north side of the Water Street Interchange and is accessible from the westbound exit ramp from I-94/I-69. See **Figure E-1** for a locator map of the existing Welcome Center. Currently, the Welcome Center is difficult to access, insufficient in size for the amount of visitors it receives, has inadequate parking, and restrooms are separated from the main building.

Michigan Welcome Center

The existing Welcome Center will be removed as part of the upgrades to the Water Street Interchange and is proposed to be relocated to an off-site location west of the Lapeer Connector. The new facility will be upgraded to replicate one similar to others around the state of Michigan and will have space for 50 trucks and 100 cars. A new Welcome Center will better accommodate current and future border crossing traffic levels and provide a better gateway for international travelers entering Michigan and the Unites States.

State and Local Planning Support for Plaza Improvements

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) 2030 Regional Transportation Plan includes engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of improvements to the border plaza at the Blue Water Bridge. All of these phases of improvements are included in the 2006-2010 timeframe for the Regional Transportation Plan.