

## **DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVES**

To enable good choices among the wide variety of options open to a National Heritage Area – and in accordance with National Park Service planning procedure – the planning team and steering committee combine the most feasible options into “alternatives.”

These alternatives describe different “futures” that employ varying strategies and emphasis. They address possible ways to organize the heritage area’s management and partnerships, interpret themes, enhance the heritage area’s sites and communities, and conserve important historic, natural, and cultural resources. Each alternative must be completely feasible. Good alternatives are not just “small, medium, large” in terms of numbers of actions or dollars to be spent. Rather, they choose differing ways to emphasize such issues as heritage tourism, recreation, interpretation, or resource stewardship. A choice to emphasize heritage tourism and marketing to visitors, for example, would cause a cascade of choices in how to use varying strategies develop sites, communities and partnerships.

Each alternative can then be evaluated for their potential impacts and benefits, and likelihood of success. One alternative is always “no change” – which describes how the heritage area might evolve under present conditions over time. This provides a kind of “baseline” to enable comparison with alternatives that call for planned changes.

Draft alternatives will be developed for partner and public review and comment beginning in mid-November. The review and comment will help in refining the final draft alternatives and environmental impact statement to be issued for public review in February, 2010. The environmental impact statement provides the information needed for final evaluation and choices.

A key task of the Crossroads Association, working through the project steering committee and the Board of Directors, is to identify the alternative that best addresses issues and goals for the National Heritage Area. This “preferred alternative” may be identified either before or after the public review early next year.

Planners liken this process to bringing stakeholders to a crossroads, and then helping them to refine their sense of the best direction to take. The development of alternatives is an exciting learning process for all involved. To make good choices, stakeholders must develop a clear sense of their needs and goals. They must also learn about many possible strategies affecting everything from heritage tourism to recreation and interpretation, and think carefully about how those strategies will interact with one another and create positive outcomes for the heritage area.

The planning team has begun the process of developing alternatives by developing a statement of goals and strategies.