

Baker Corridor Planning Study

Project Newsletter No. 1 | February 2015

In This Issue	
Study Description	1
What is a Corridor Planning Study?	1
Study Area	2
Study Area Information	3
Schedule	3
Public Involvement Opportunities	4
Study Contacts	4

STUDY DESCRIPTION

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and in coordination with Fallon County and the City of Baker, is developing a corridor planning study that includes the City of Baker and surrounding vicinity. A need has been identified for a planning study to examine highway freight through the downtown area, as well as the internal transportation network, highway and railroad issues, and other identified transportation needs.

The goal of the study is to assess current and projected conditions in the Baker area and to develop a package of short- and long-term improvement options addressing the needs identified through the study process. The study will identify feasible improvement options to address safety, operations, and roadway areas of concern. Additionally, the study will analyze potential impacts of the improvements; identify constraint areas; and gather public, resource agency, and stakeholder input.

WHAT IS A CORRIDOR PLANNING STUDY?

A Corridor Planning Study is a pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) planning study which provides for early planning-level coordination with the community, local government, resource agencies, and other stakeholders to identify issues and potential transportation improvement options within the study area. The Baker Corridor Planning Study will follow the MDT Corridor Planning Process which provides a linkage between early transportation planning and the environmental review process. The process includes a planning-level analysis of the existing transportation system and the environmental setting of the study area to identify needs and constraints.

The Corridor Planning Process can benefit future project development by streamlining the environmental review process and ultimately reducing costs. This process will develop goals and objectives, identify and analyze improvement options, eliminate non-feasible options, and identify potential environmental impacts and other constraints through a public involvement process.

The Corridor Planning Process is distinct from the NEPA/MEPA environmental compliance documentation and does not include design, right-of-way acquisition, or construction phases for any individual project.



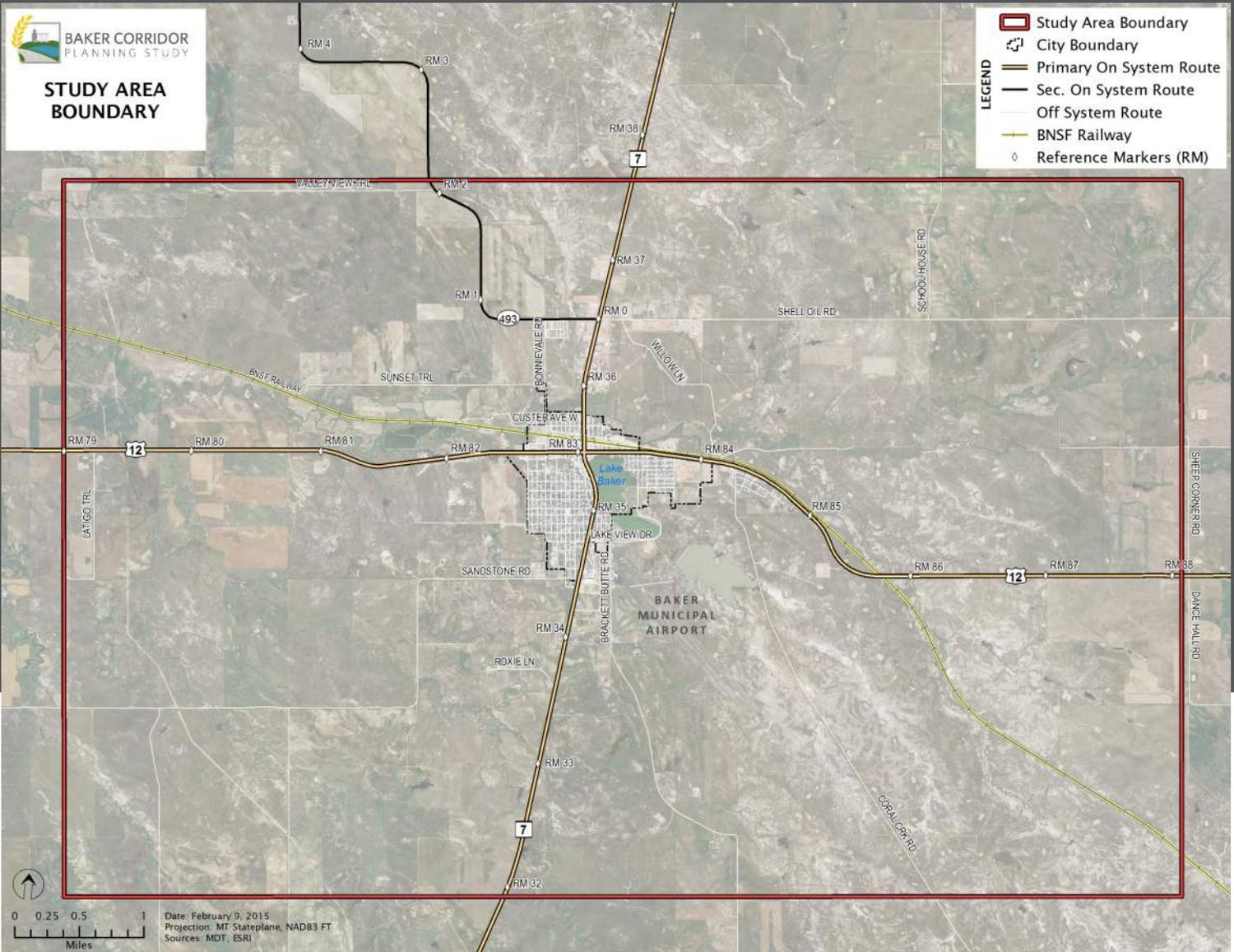
INFORMATIONAL MEETING NO. 1
Everyone is welcome to attend!

WHEN
Thursday, March 5th, 2015
6:00-8:00 p.m.

WHERE
Fallon County Fairgrounds Exhibit Hall
3440 Montana 7, Baker, MT

WHY

- Introduce the study and corridor planning process
- Present the existing conditions review
- Identify issues and constraints within the Study Area



Study Area

The study area includes U.S. Highway 12 (US 12) from Reference Marker (RM) 79 to RM 88.1 and Montana Highway 7 (MT 7) from RM 31.9 to RM 37.6. The City of Baker is within the study area, as well as Baker

Municipal Airport and the BNSF Railway. Land use in the study area is a diverse mix and includes rural residential, agricultural, oil and gas development, and recreational areas, among others.



Study Schedule

It is anticipated that the Baker Corridor Planning Study will be completed within a twelve-month period. Per the assumed schedule, all work on this study is expected to be completed by October 31, 2015.

Study Area Information

The following is a brief summary of initial study area information gathered through preliminary analysis of existing data and on-site review. This list is not exhaustive and additional information may be added as the planning process progresses.

Existing Roadway Conditions

- Highways US 12 and MT 7 are both functionally classified as Rural Minor Arterial routes on the Primary Highway System.
 - Several areas have been identified along the highway systems that do not meet existing MDT design standards.
- The main intersection of US 12 and MT 7 in downtown Baker has insufficient area for standard semitrailers to make right-turn movements without conflicting with either the angled parking or over-tracking into the opposing traffic lane.
- Based on assumed traffic growth and existing intersection configuration, the intersection of US 12 and MT 7 will experience increased delays and operate at a failing level of service in the future.

Vehicular Traffic

- The US 12 and MT 7 intersection in downtown Baker has an average annual daily traffic volume of approximately 3,750 vehicles per day and experiences a high percentage of heavy vehicles (requiring a Class B license).

- High volumes of heavy vehicles make turns from southbound MT 7 to eastbound US 12 and westbound US 12 to northbound MT 7 throughout the day in addition to the peak period.

Safety

- Accident records spanning the 10-year period of 2004 to 2013 for the Study Area were examined. Recorded over this period were a total of 57 crashes along US 12 and 35 crashes along MT 7. The crash rate within the Study Area for both the US 12 and MT 7 corridors is below the overall statewide average.

Bridges

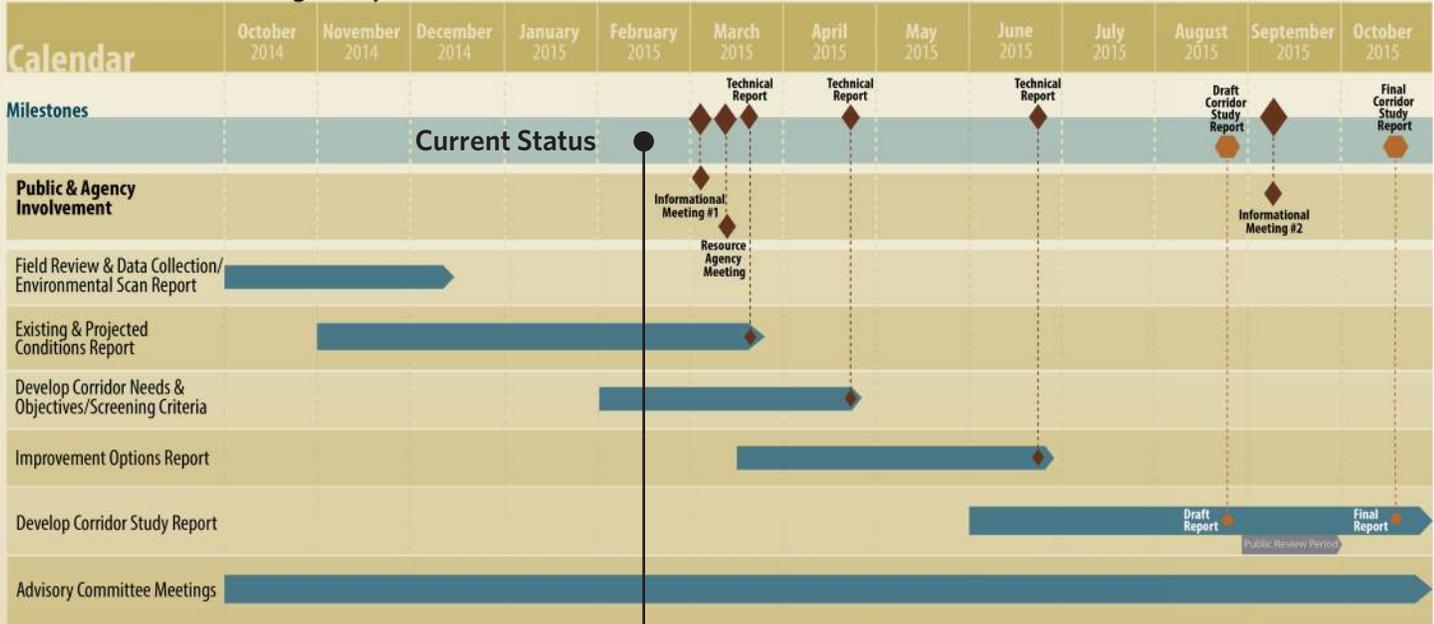
- Built in 1941, the bridge located just north of Baker on MT 7 spanning Sandstone Creek has been categorized as Functionally Obsolete and eligible for rehabilitation.

Environmental Conditions

- Sandstone Creek is a major drainage that crosses the Study Area. A variety of other surface waters, including Lake Baker, as well as many unnamed streams, natural drainages, wetlands, and ponds are present in the Study Area. An MDT wetland mitigation site exists south of Baker along MT 7.

- Historical flooding events have occurred within the Study Area. Regulated floodplains exist on and along Sandstone Creek within the Study Area.
- Soil surveys indicate the presence of prime farmland within the Study Area. The Study Area contains irrigated agriculture and associated irrigation canals, ditches, or pressurized systems.
- Hundreds of oil and gas wells exist in the entire eastern half of the Study Area.
- Two threatened and endangered species potentially can be found within the Study Area.
- There are multiple recreational properties located within the Study Area protected under federal law.
- Approximately 25 historic or archaeological properties have been recorded and are located within the Study Area, including historic buildings, bridges, a railroad, and several prehistoric sites.

Baker Corridor Planning Study Schedule



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Information sharing is at the heart of any public process and is important to the overall success of the corridor study planning process. Public involvement opportunities for the planning study will include informational meetings held in Baker, as well as opportunities to review and comment on ongoing study deliverables. The informational meetings will be advertised in advance through local media and the study mailing list. See page 1 of this newsletter for information on Public Informational Meeting #1.

A project website has also been developed at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/baker> to provide online opportunities to review and comment on the Baker Corridor Planning Study. The study team will compile and consider all comments received during the planning study process. To join the mailing list, please contact Jon Schick at jon.schick@hdrinc.com.



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MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program, or activity associated with this study. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request. For further information, call (406) 447-5000, TTY (800) 335-7592, or Montana Relay at 711. Accommodation requests must be made at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled activity and / or meeting.



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