

US 2 - Badrock Canyon Corridor Planning Study

NEWSLETTER # 1

MARCH 2012

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What is a Corridor Planning Study?

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), in cooperation with Flathead County, Columbia Falls, the Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), and the canyon community, is conducting a corridor planning study along US Highway 2 (US 2) from Reference Post (RP) 140.0 northeast of Columbia Falls to RP 142.4 at the intersection of US 2 / 6th Street West in Hungry Horse.

A Corridor Planning Study is a **planning-level assessment** of a study area occurring before project-level environmental compliance activities under the National and Montana Environmental Policy Acts (NEPA/MEPA). MDT developed a corridor planning study process to provide a better link between early transportation planning and environmental compliance efforts. The process involves conducting a planning level review of safety, operational, and geometric conditions and environmental resources within a corridor to identify needs and constraints. This process allows MDT to save time and money in subsequent project phases by facilitating early coordination with members of the community, resource agencies, and other interested parties; screening of possible improvement options; and elimination of infeasible options. A corridor planning study is a planning document that considers multiple improvement options throughout a corridor. This planning process is distinct from a NEPA/MEPA environmental compliance document and from design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction phases for an individual project.

Please Join Us for an Informational Meeting!

Tuesday, April 10, 2012

U.S. Forest Service
Hungry Horse
Ranger District Office
10 Hungry Horse Drive
Hungry Horse, MT
6:30 p.m.

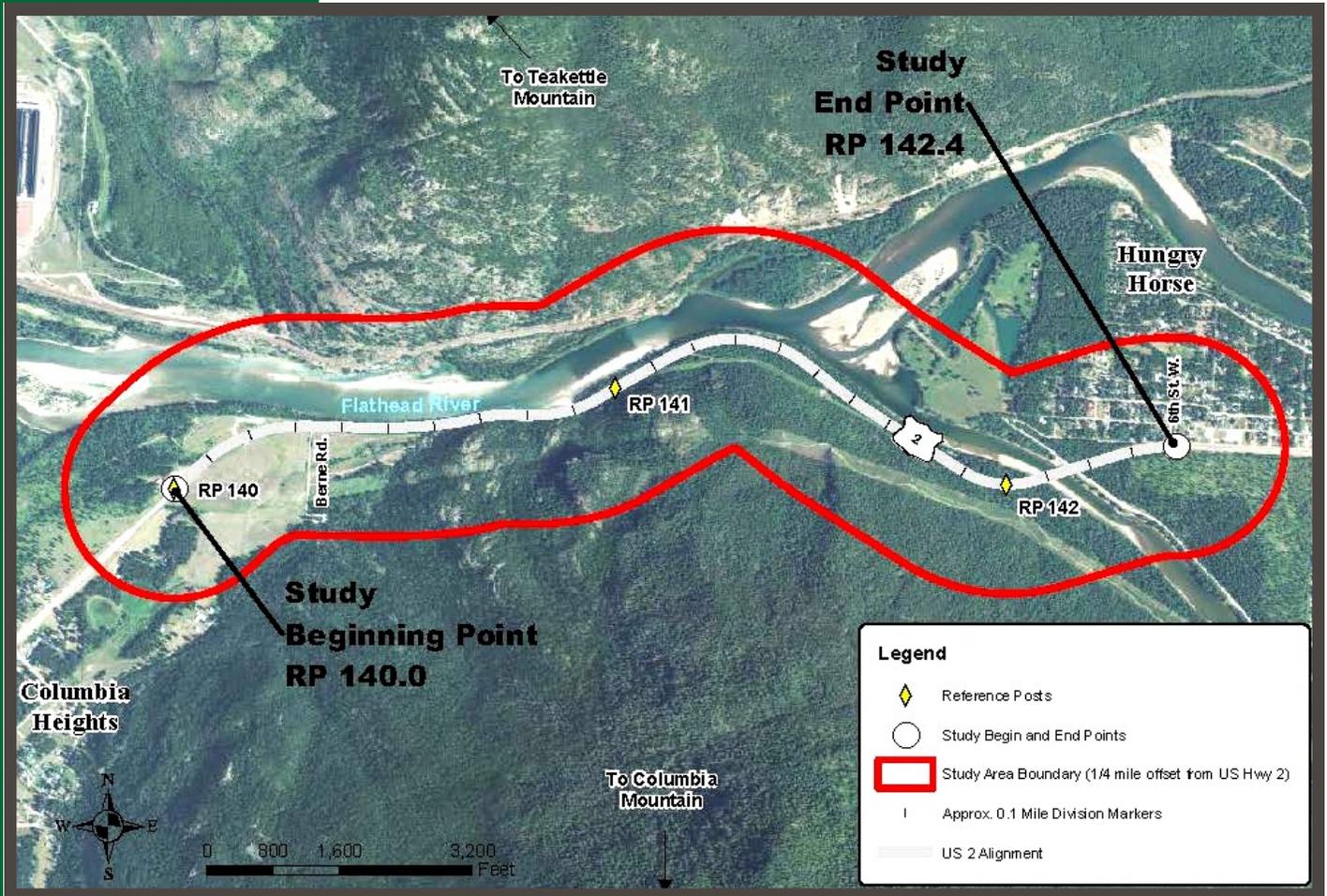
The purpose of the meeting is to provide an update on analysis efforts, present preliminary improvement option concepts, and request feedback.

Interested parties are encouraged to attend.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Study Area

The US 2 - Badrock Canyon Corridor Planning Study Area begins on US 2 at RP 140.0 northeast of Columbia Falls and extends to RP 142.4 at the intersection of US 2 / 6th Street West in Hungry Horse.



Draft Reports Available for Review

MDT has prepared a Draft Environmental Scan Report and a Draft Existing and Projected Conditions Report. These documents summarize transportation system conditions and environmental resources within the study corridor.

Draft reports may be viewed online at
<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/badrock>

Key Findings

Physical Features

- The South Fork Flathead River Bridge is structurally deficient, functionally obsolete, and eligible for replacement.
- During periods of snow melt, water ponds and flows across US 2.
- Multiple utilities are located in close proximity to US 2 alignment, including a high pressure gas pipeline and fiber optics line.
- There are no dedicated bicycle / pedestrian facilities in the corridor.

Geometric Conditions

- There are narrow to nonexistent shoulders along US 2 within the corridor.
- Nine horizontal and six vertical curves do not meet current MDT design standards.

Crash History (2006 to 2010)

- The corridor crash rate and severity rate are nearly three times higher than the statewide average for similar facilities.

Operational Conditions

- Within the corridor, US 2 currently operates undesirably during both peak and off-peak hours and seasons. Operations are projected to worsen during the 2035 planning horizon.

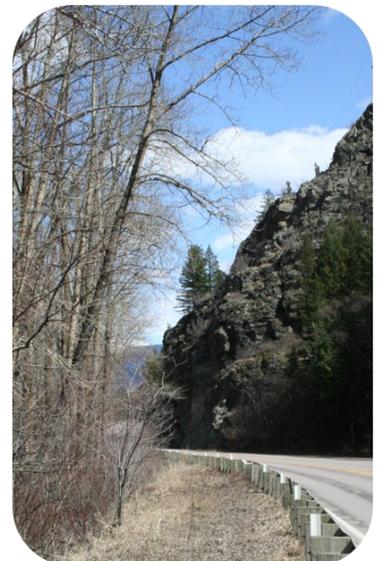
Environmental Conditions

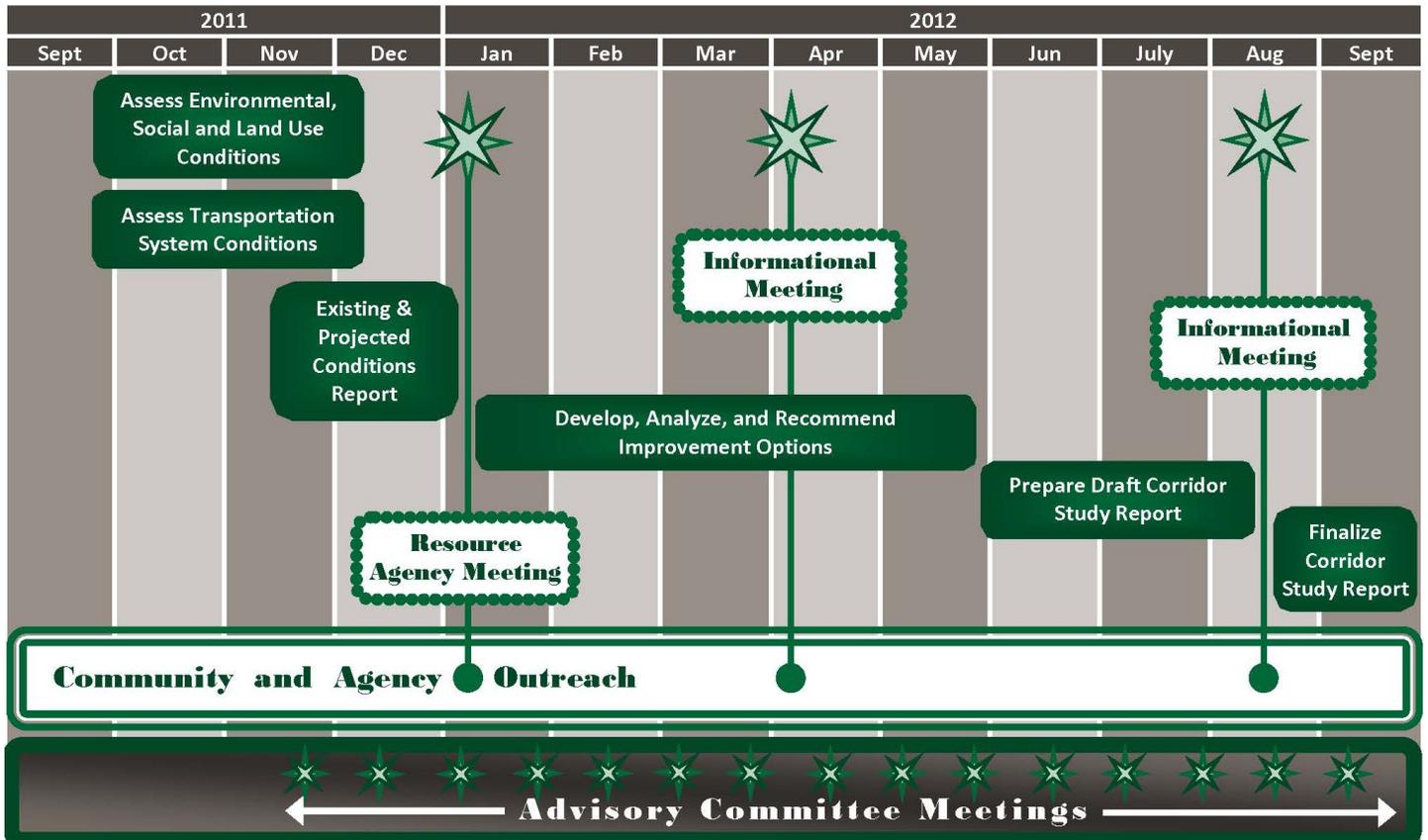
- Rock outcroppings in Badrock Canyon are unstable, creating potential for rockfalls.
- Critical habitat for bull trout and Canada lynx is located in the study area.
- Wildlife crossing points occur within the corridor. Crashes involving wild animals are concentrated from RP 140.0 to 140.5.
- Known cultural features in the study area include the historic Tote Road, an archaeological site, and the Badrock Canyon Cultural Landscape.
- Designated and dispersed recreational sites are located within the US 2 corridor, including Berne Memorial Park.
- US 2 encroaches into the 100-year floodplain for the main stem of the Flathead River and a portion of the South Fork of the Flathead River.

Needs and objectives were developed through a review of existing and projected conditions within the corridor, input from community members and resource agencies, and coordination with the study advisory committee, including representatives from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), Flathead County, Columbia Falls, and the Canyon Community. Corridor needs are listed below. The full list of corridor needs and objectives may be viewed on the study website at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/badrock>

Need 1: Improve the safety and operation of the US 2 roadway facility within the study area for all users, where practicable.

Need 2: Minimize adverse impacts from improvements to the environmental, historic, cultural, scenic and recreational characteristics of the corridor.





How can I stay involved in this study?

Please join us for an **Informational Meeting** on **Tuesday, April 10, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.** at the U.S. Forest Service Hungry Horse Ranger District Office, 10 Hungry Horse Drive in Hungry Horse.

To review additional information about the study and to submit comments electronically, visit the study website at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/badrock>

Contact Us

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