



BAKER CORRIDOR
PLANNING STUDY

Public and Agency Involvement Plan (PAIP)

Baker Corridor Planning Study

January 2015

Prepared for:

Montana Department of Transportation



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1. Introduction

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. The *Baker Corridor Planning Study* will align with MDT's corridor planning process, which provides for early planning-level coordination with the community, resource and other agencies, and develops feasible improvement options to address transportation needs within the study area. The *Baker Corridor Planning Study* is considered a pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process that will develop needs and objectives, identify and analyze improvement options, eliminate non-feasible options, and identify potential environmental impacts and constraints through public, resource agency, and stakeholder input. Information developed will serve to streamline the environmental review process and any future project development.

Information sharing is at the heart of any public process. In accordance with federal and state guidance, this *Public and Agency Involvement Plan (PAIP)* is an important initial document that outlines informational outreach efforts and communication protocols to be followed throughout the planning study process.

1.1 Study Background

The City of Baker (pop. 1,741) is located in Fallon County, in eastern Montana. The city is situated at the junction of U.S. Highway 12 and Montana Highway 7. U.S. Highway 12 (Montana Avenue) and Highway 7 (Main Street) converge at Baker's main intersection, which is used by passenger vehicles both traveling through town and for local access, as well as heavy freight traveling to and from oil and gas development areas in the region. Fallon County has identified the need for a planning study to investigate alternative transportation corridors or alignment options to reduce the volume of truck traffic traveling through town. In addition, the study will examine the railroad crossings, train traffic, and related transportation impacts occurring within the study area.

1.2 Study Goals

The goal of the study is to assess current and projected conditions in the Baker area and to develop a package of improvement options addressing the identified needs. The study will examine freight traffic through the downtown area, as well as the internal transportation network, highway issues, and other identified transportation needs. The study will analyze alternative routes and attempt to minimize the cost of any selected route, while considering and avoiding environmental and social constraints. The study will be conducted over a 12-month period and will utilize Quantm route optimization software to develop and evaluate road alignment scenarios.

1.3 Study Area

Figure 1 provides an overview of the study area. The study area encompasses approximately 48 square miles, and includes the City of Baker and surrounding vicinity.

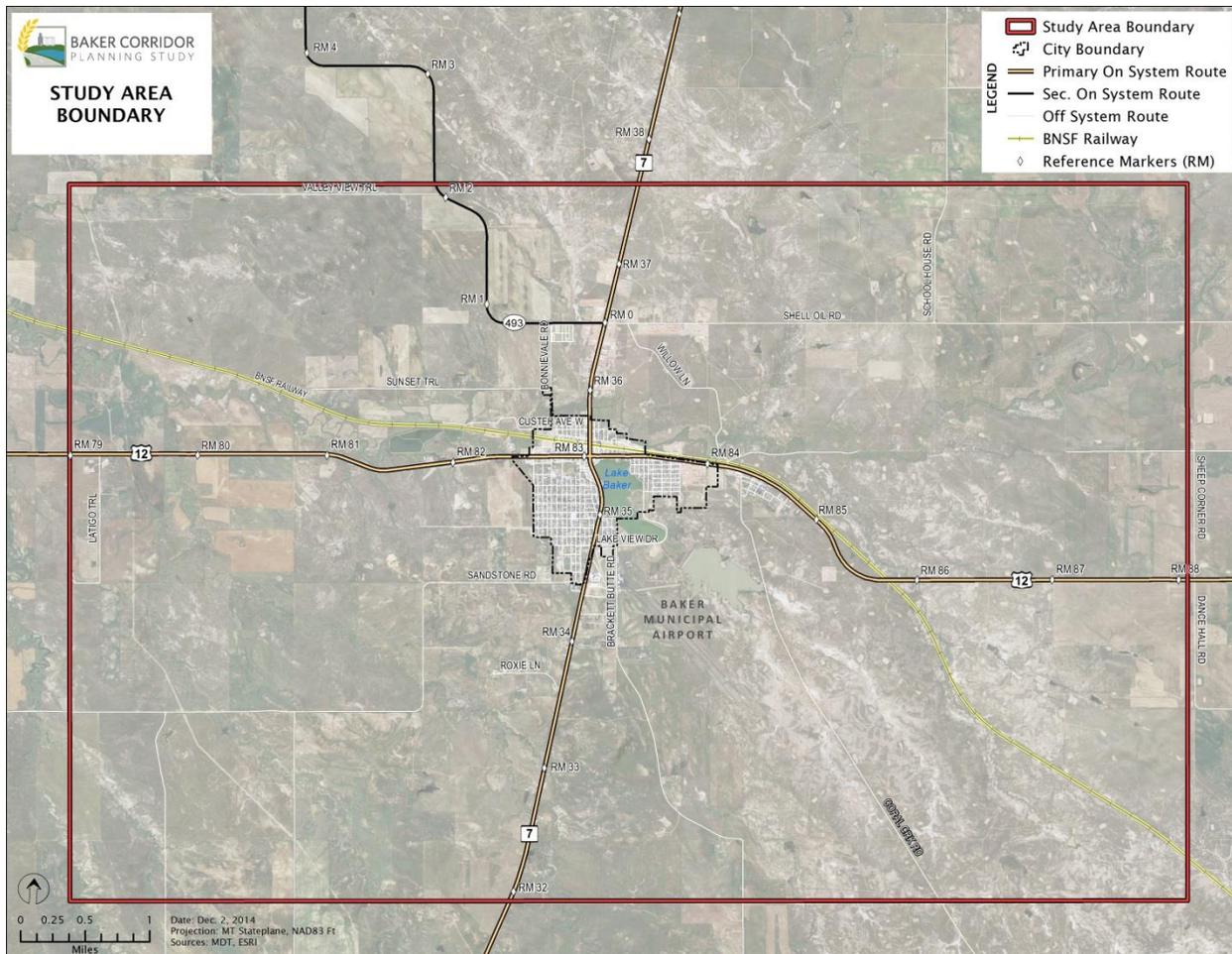


Figure 1: Baker Corridor Planning Study Area

2. Public and Agency Involvement

2.1 Public and Agency Involvement Plan Goals

The *PAIP* provides members of the public, stakeholders, and resource agency representatives with opportunities for involvement and input throughout the planning study process. The *PAIP* focuses on a basic premise: MDT commits to working with the public and stakeholders to relay accurate and timely information relating to the study and to ensure concerns relating to planning process are heard and, when possible, are considered.

The goals of the *PAIP* include the following:

- Communicate the purpose and goals of the study.
- Inform the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, opportunities, and solutions associated with the study.
- Work with the public, resource and other agencies, and stakeholders to ensure their concerns are understood.
- Demonstrate sensitivity and, when possible, responsiveness to issues and ideas.

2.2 Study Contacts

Contact information for MDT and the consultant, as shown below, will be provided in all published materials.

Shane Mintz, MDT District Administrator

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Glendive District Office
503 North River Avenue
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Glendive, MT 59330-0890
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HDR
1715 South Reserve Street, Suite C
Missoula, MT 59801
406.532.2231
jon.schick@hdrinc.com

2.3 Publications

Publications detailing public involvement opportunities will include newsletters and press releases/advertisements. Informational meeting announcements will be developed by MDT and HDR and placed in the *Fallon County Times* twice prior to each meeting (three weeks and one week before), and will include the meeting date, time, location, purpose, and, if applicable, locations for document review. Informational meeting announcements will also be posted by Fallon County onto their website in advance of the meetings.

Study newsletters will be developed by HDR in coordination with MDT and provided in PDF format at least one month prior to each information meeting and will include updates on study status and findings, recommendations, and other topics as relevant. The newsletters will be posted to the study website by MDT and distributed by HDR to Fallon County for their distribution as well as mailed to study stakeholders. A mailing list will be developed throughout the study process and newsletters will be mailed to list members. The newsletters will also be made available at the informational meetings and MDT, City, and County locations.

2.4 Study Website

MDT will host the project website. The study website is located at the following address: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/baker/>. This website will provide current study information, including study overview, contacts, status updates, upcoming meetings, schedule, and documents. Final version documents will be made available on the website and will include:

- Study Schedule
- *Public and Agency Involvement Plan*
- Environmental Scan
- *Existing and Projected Conditions Technical Memorandum*
- *Needs and Objectives Technical Memorandum*
- *Improvements Options Technical Memorandum*
- Informational Meeting Presentations and Newsletters
- *Public Draft Corridor Planning Study Report*
- *Final Corridor Planning Study Report*
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

2.5 Document Availability

As stated in Section 2.4 above, electronic versions of study deliverables will be available on the study website. Hard-copy materials will also be distributed to Fallon County and made available at the following City and County locations:

- Fallon County Planning Office – 10 West Fallon Avenue, Baker, MT 59313
- Fallon County Library – 6 West Fallon Avenue, Baker, MT 59313
- MDT Glendive District Office – 503 North River Avenue, Glendive, MT 59330
- MDT Miles City Area Office – 217 North 4th Street, Miles City, MT 59301

2.6 Radio and Television

Meetings may be announced on local radio and/or television stations. Fallon County recommends advertising for the informational meetings on Channel 3 as well as on KFLN radio.

2.7 Stakeholder Contact List

A stakeholder contact list will be developed and updated throughout the planning study process. The stakeholder list will include individuals, businesses, and interest groups identified by the City of Baker, Fallon County, and MDT. Informational meeting sign-in sheets will also serve to expand the list of interested stakeholders. The following stakeholders have been preliminarily identified (see below); additional stakeholders will be included as the study develops.

- City of Baker
- City of Baker Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture
- Baker Municipal Airport
- Fallon County
- Southeast Montana Area Revitalization Team (SMART) – Fallon County Economic Development
- BNSF Railway

- Equity Coop Elevator
- Trucking Operations (Freight and Oil/Gas Services)
 - Continental Pipeline
 - Mitchell's
 - D&M
 - Power Fuel
 - Woody's Trucking
- John Brosz, Brosz Engineering
- Others as requested

2.8 Accommodations for Traditionally Underserved Populations

MDT will attempt to involve and accommodate traditionally underserved segments of the population to ensure disabled, minority, and low-income residents are included in the planning study process. Accommodative measures will include:

- Plan meeting locations carefully: Informational meetings held in Baker will be conducted at a facility that is accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in accordance with Title VI regulations.
- Seek help from community leaders and organizations: MDT and HDR will consult with community leaders and representative organizations about how to more effectively involve traditionally underserved populations.
- Be sensitive to diverse audiences: MDT and HDR will make every effort to communicate effectively during informational meetings by avoiding technical jargon and following appropriate rules of conduct.

3. Study Meetings

3.1 Advisory Committee Meetings

Approximately 14 Advisory Committee meetings will be conducted throughout the study, with one occurring every three to four weeks. The Advisory Committee, comprised of MDT and FHWA staff and Fallon County representatives, will track progress, ensure that the corridor planning process is followed, address issues identified through the study process, and review deliverables. These meetings will be held at MDT's Planning offices in Helena, with teleconference/*GoToMeeting* participation made available by MDT.

A one-month comment period will follow the publication of the *Public Draft Corridor Planning Study Report*. All comments received on the report will be compiled into a public comment matrix for review by the Advisory Committee. Written responses to comments will be included in the public comment matrix as appropriate. All comments received, as well as their provided responses, will be compiled into an appendix to the *Final Corridor Planning Study Report*.

3.2 Resource Agency Meetings

One resource agency meeting will be held at MDT's Planning offices in Helena, with conference call arrangements at the MDT's Glendive District Office and Miles City Office. Resource

agencies with jurisdictional authority in the study area will be asked to confirm the accuracy and completeness of the Environmental Scan document and to identify areas of concern, avoidance areas, and other constraints.

3.3 Informational Meetings

Two informational meetings will be conducted during the planning study process; these will be held in Baker at an ADA-accessible location and will be facilitated by HDR. The first informational meeting will be held in Baker once the draft *Existing and Projected Conditions Technical Memorandum* and corresponding Environmental Scan have been prepared. The first informational meeting will focus on introducing the study and corridor planning process, presenting the existing conditions, and identifying preliminary issues and constraints within the study area through an interactive process.

The second informational meeting will be held following publication of the *Public Draft Corridor Planning Study Report*. The purpose of this meeting will be to present the findings of the report and discuss recommended improvement options.

3.4 Stakeholder Meetings

HDR and MDT staff will be available as needed to meet with stakeholder groups.

3.5 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. Figure 2 illustrates the schedule.

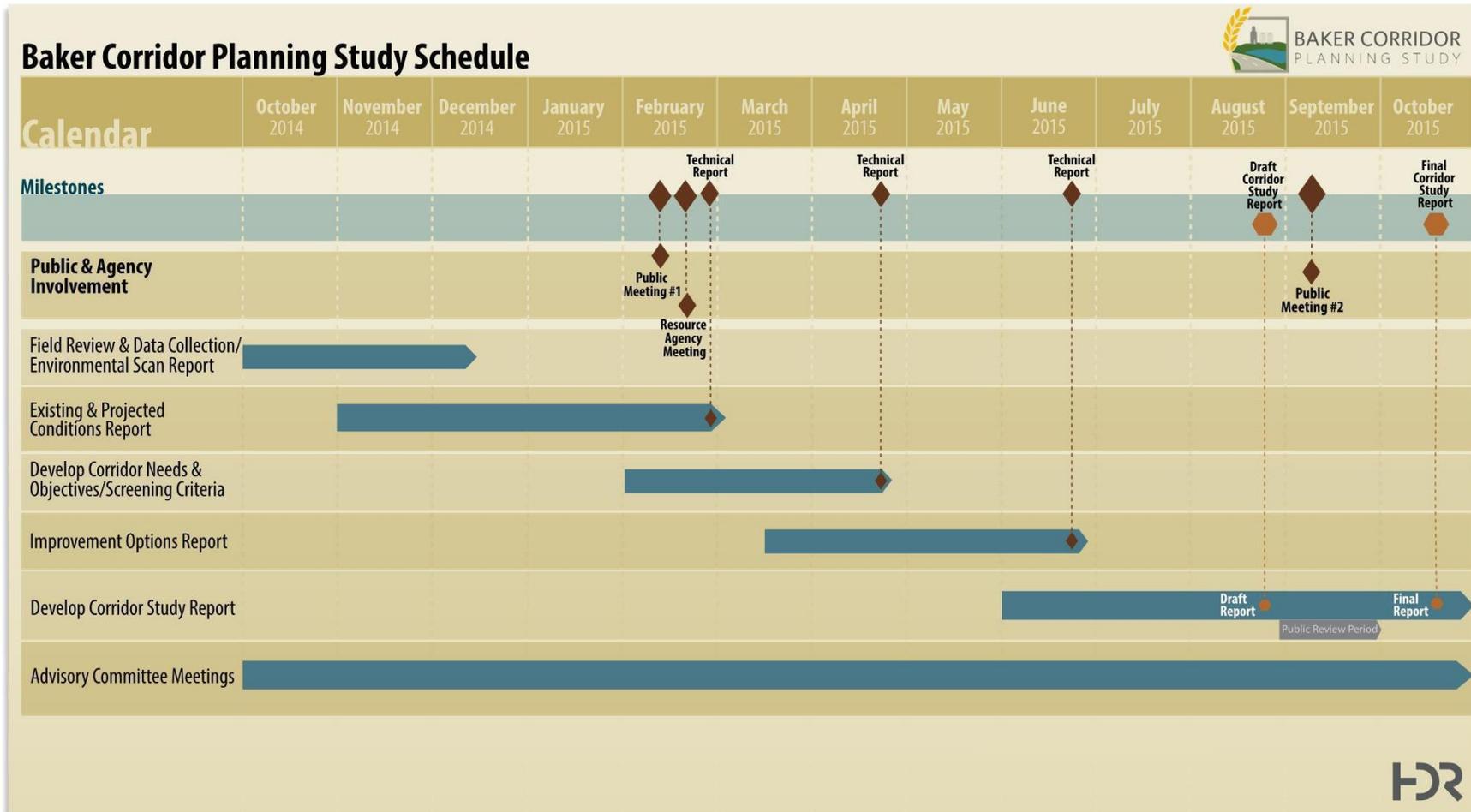


Figure 2: Planning Study Schedule