



## APPENDIX G

# PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/OUTREACH MATERIALS

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# **Billings Bypass Advisory Committee Meeting Notes**





DAVID EVANS  
AND ASSOCIATES INC.

## MEETING MINUTES

<b>PROJECT:</b>	Billings Bypass EIS MDT Project No. NCPD 56(55), CN 4199
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	Billings Bypass Advisory Committee Meeting #11
<b>DATE HELD:</b>	December 11, 2012
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Billings Hotel and Convention Center
<b>ATTENDING:</b>	<b>MDT:</b> Fred Bente, Stefan Streeter, Gary Neville, Tom Gocksch <b>DEA:</b> Joe Hart, Wendy Wallach, Kacey Meis <b>DOWL HKM:</b> John Shoff, Doug Enderson, Todd Cormier <b>M&amp;A:</b> Bob Marvin <b>BBAC:</b> Angela Cimmino, Denis Pitman, John Ostlund, Jim Ronquillo, Daniel Zulniker, Roger Webb, Doug Kary, Bob Riehl, Paul Gatzemeier, Bill Kennedy, Thomas Hanel, Tom Zurbuchin, Scott Walker, Ron Wenger, Tim Miller, Mike Black, Barry "Spook" Stang, Conrad Stroebe, Bruce MacIntyre, Glenn French, Jim Reno, Clayton Fiscus <b>ATTENDEES:</b> Will Selph, Grant Johnson, Cody Cathey, Gary Cathey, Cheryl Cathey, Brent Cathey, Glenn French, Tracy Thoreson, Don Thorseon, Kathe Sebe, Cheryl Hoover, Terrin Mann, Deryk Mann, Johnathan McNiven, Tony Oostermeyer, Evelyn Pyburn
<b>COPIES:</b>	Attendees; BBAC members; MDT; FHWA; File

### Summary of Discussion

#### **Introductions and Project History**

Stefan Streeter welcomed the Billings Bypass Advisory Committee (BBAC) members and noted that several members of the public were also present. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was for the BBAC presentation and discussion, but the project team would be available to talk to members of the public after the meeting.

#### Billings Bypass Project History

Stefan provided a brief overview of the Billings Bypass project history. A feasibility study was conducted in 2001. David Evans and Associates was selected as the prime consultant for the Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement shortly afterwards. The project team completed scoping, developed preliminary alternatives, and met with the general to provide opportunities for input. In 2008, FHWA issued guidance on fiscal constraint. As proposed, the Billings Bypass project was estimated to cost more than \$300 million dollars and reasonably foreseeable funding could not be identified. This prompted the BBAC and project team to re-scope the project so that it focused on a smaller area with alternatives that could be constructed with reasonably foreseeable funding.

In 2010, a tornado hit the MetraPark and Billings Heights area. Damage from the tornado shut down Main Street and emergency services experienced difficulty providing a prompt response. This guided the project team as they identified a new purpose and need for the project. The project team proceeded with the environmental and alternatives analysis and released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in August 2012. A public hearing was held in September 2012 so the public could provide input on the project.

#### Purpose of BBAC

Stefan noted that there were several new members present so he wanted to discuss the purpose of the BBAC. Over the course of the project, BBAC members have provided technical input, helped identify a project purpose and project needs, participated in the study area validation, identification of alternatives, and provided input on the public involvement program. BBAC members are also responsible for reviewing the project team's recommendations throughout the process and discussing project findings with their constituents.

### Need for Project

Stefan explained why it is necessary to construct a new road in the Billings area. Billings Heights has seen substantial new development within the last ten years. Population is continuing to increase at a rate of approximately 12 percent per year, and much of the growth is concentrated in Billings Heights. Geographic and transportation constraints such as the rimrocks, Yellowstone River, and the Montana Rail Link (MRL) railroad tracks limit options for improving the transportation network.

Two Billings-area traffic studies were recently conducted by two independent consultant firms; one for the Billings Bypass project and one for a separate project. Both studies confirmed the same results: if this project is not completed, 11 intersections will fall into a Level of Service rating of E or F, which implies these intersections would experience long delays and cease to function. City leaders are responsible for mitigating the impacts of growth. They must look forward and address foreseeable problems.

Stefan noted that congressional earmarks were obtained for this project. When federal funds are utilized, federal rules must be followed for all decision-making. The federal process is fact-driven and all decisions must be defensible; they cannot be made based on opinion. Analysis is based on the identified Purpose and Need. A project of this magnitude cannot be implemented without impacts. However, by following the federal process, impacts can be defined and mitigated.

### **Purpose of Meeting**

Stefan explained the purpose of this BBAC meeting. The project team released the DEIS to the public in August and received 125 comments on the document. Stefan and the project team have thoroughly reviewed all of the comments and found that the majority focused on a few specific issues, such as:

- Noise from the new road
- Traffic on existing Mary Street
- Length of the comment period
- Public notification of the project
- Roadway access concerns
- Location of project

This meeting will discuss the feedback received on the DEIS.

### **NEPA Process**

Tom Gocksch explained that the NEPA process is intended to be a decision-making tool. Under NEPA, projects with impacts of a substantial nature warrant a study of the magnitude such as that conducted for the Billings Bypass.

Tom referred to a map of the original project study area and reminded the group that the original intent of the project was to construct a highway connecting I-90/I-94 with MT-3 to the west. As Stefan explained earlier, fiscal constraint issues prevented the project from moving forward as proposed. The decision was made by FHWA,

MDT, the local Policy Coordinating Committee, and the BBAC to proceed with a re-scoped version of the project in 2009. As such, the study area was reduced to focus only on the eastern segment of the project and the only alternatives considered were those that could be built with reasonably foreseeable funding. The logical termini for the re-scoped project were I-90/I-94 and Old Hwy 312.

Since the study area was reduced in size, the original project purpose and needs were no longer applicable. As such, the project team focused on the issues in the reduced study area, such as: traffic on Main Street and geographic constraints presented by the Yellowstone River and rimrocks. A new Purpose and Need statement was identified with the assistance of the BBAC and the public. Tom noted the “Bypass” term was a legacy from the old project.

#### Alternatives Screening Process

Tom explained that over 60 alternatives were considered for the re-scoped project. These alternatives were identified by the project team, the BBAC, members of the public, and other stakeholders, and were screened using a three-step screening process. Some of the alternatives were eliminated because they did not meet the purpose and need as well as other alternatives did; some alternatives had large impacts to the community or environment; and some alternatives did not cut down on the travel time. Three alternatives were carried forward for detailed evaluation in the DEIS – Mary Street Option 1, Mary Street Option 2, and Five Mile Road.

#### Alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The alternatives screening process included a preliminary analysis of traffic impacts to the existing street network that would be anticipated in the design year if any of these alternatives were to be implemented. Based on this information, it was determined that additional improvements to existing roads north of the Yellowstone River would be necessary if design objectives for operations and safety were to be met. Therefore, each alternative consists of a “primary corridor,” which is the alternative alignment; and a “secondary corridor” which is the existing roadway to undergo improvements to accommodate alternative-generated traffic.

For example, the Mary Street Option 1 Alternative alignment – the primary corridor - would be constructed to the north of existing Mary Street, but some traffic would utilize Five Mile Road to connect to the new arterial. Therefore, Five Mile Road – the secondary corridor – would require improvements to accommodate the traffic. The Mary Street Option 2 Alternative would be similar to Mary Street Option 1, but with a slightly different alignment over the Yellowstone River. The existing Mary Street corridor would not have additional traffic under the Mary Street alternatives.

Under the Five Mile Road Alternative, the existing Mary Street corridor would require secondary improvements to accommodate the expected traffic. Mary Street would be reconstructed to a City of Billings urban arterial roadway, with sidewalks, a two-way median turn lane, bike lanes, and intersection improvements.

#### Purpose of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Tom discussed the purpose of a DEIS. The draft document is released to resource agencies and the public to allow an opportunity to provide input and identify incorrect or missing information. The input received on the Billings Bypass DEIS indicated that the information presented in the draft document is accurate; however, the description of the proposed alternatives needs improvement and clarification. Input on the DEIS will be addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS); the FEIS will also include an appendix with formal written responses to each comment.

Tom explained that comments may be the most important contribution from citizens. Accordingly, comments should be clear, concise, and relevant to the analysis of the proposed action. Tom noted that he had brought several copies of the “Citizen’s Guide to NEPA,” which explains the NEPA process and helps guide the public in making relevant, effective comments on a project. Tom offered to hand out the copies if anyone wanted them. Tom mentioned that the project team has also maintained an active website with up-to-date information throughout the process. Kacey Meis noted she would email BBAC members with links to the “Citizen’s Guide to NEPA” and the project website after the meeting.

### **DEIS Public Availability**

Wendy Wallach stated that the public provided lots of good input on the DEIS. MDT and DEA have personally read every comment and are in the process of drafting the formal responses to be included in the FEIS. One surprising fact was that many of the comments indicated strong support for the project. Wendy noted that in her personal experience from working on dozens of projects, it is unusual to receive positive comments on a DEIS. Generally, only negative feedback is received.

### **DEIS Public Hearing and Comment Period**

Wendy stated that MDT placed three paid advertisements in the Billings Gazette on August 17th, 2012, August 26th, 2012, and September 9th, 2012, announcing both the availability of the DEIS for public comment and the date and time of the public hearing. The sixth project newsletter was also distributed to 1200 people in August 2012, announcing the availability of the DEIS and inviting residents to the public hearing. Hard copies of DEIS were made available at 6 locations throughout the Billings area, and electronic copies were posted online on the MDT website and project website.

The public hearing was held on September 12, 2012 and had 135 attendees. A transcript of the hearing will be included in the FEIS. During the hearing, the project team summarized the DEIS and provided time for both a Question and Answer (Q&A) session and a formal comment period. The Q&A session was extensive and included concerns such as:

- Property acquisition for right-of-way
- Noise impacts
- Truck traffic on the Bypass
- Traffic operations at Johnson Lane
- Stakeholder outreach efforts
- Alternative selection process

A 45-day comment period was provided for public and agency input on the DEIS. The length of the comment period was determined by taking the overall project schedule into consideration and was consistent with federal requirements. 125 comments were submitted on the project via phone, letter, email, at the public hearing, or the project website. None of the comments received were substantive – that is, they did not suggest that the analysis was flawed in a specific way. However, there were several common themes, suggesting that the document requires revisions to clarify information before the FEIS is released. In response to the comments, the project team prepared a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet. The full FAQ is provided in the meeting handout packet; however, Wendy would like to discuss five of the most frequent questions.

**1. Is the new roadway a bypass?**

MDT does not have a “formal” definition of a bypass and the current functional classification of the proposed facility would be a principal arterial. Wendy reminded the group that the project was re-scoped in 2009 due to FHWA’s guidance on fiscal constraint. The concept of building a full bypass of Billings was no longer the main focus of the project; however the long term vision of a future bypass route was maintained by including the objective of locating the western terminus of the route so that it could support a future connection to US 87 and MT 3. As Tom mentioned earlier, the “bypass” name is a legacy from the original project.

**2. Could the No Build Alternative be recommended as the Preferred Alternative?**

The No Build Alternative is presented in the DEIS as a baseline for comparison. The No Build Alternative does not meet the purpose and needs of the project and cannot be selected for that reason. Additionally, the No Build Alternative would result in substantial congestion on Main Street and other locations around Billings. For example, eleven existing intersections would receive a Level of Service (LOS) rating of F (the lowest rating). Under the Build Alternative, final design of the existing and new intersections would ensure that all intersections perform at LOS B or better in 2035.

**3. How were right-of-way impacts and property acquisitions calculated?**

Right-of-way impacts and property acquisitions were estimated based on the total construction footprint. The impact analysis is a conservative process and uses a “worst case scenario;” the roadway design used for the right-of-way impact analysis is conceptual and the final design will be refined to avoid as many residential impacts as possible. If the construction footprint conflicts with an existing structure, that structure is assumed to be fully affected. Similarly, if a minimum setback cannot be accommodated between an existing structure and the proposed right-of-way line, that structure is also considered to be affected. Potential impacts are also identified; these may be avoidable as the project moves into final design.

**4. Will the project affect current operations at the Interstate 90/ Johnson Lane Interchange?**

Current operations of the Johnson Lane Interchange are being stressed by continuing growth in the Lockwood area. It is anticipated that the current interchange geometry and traffic control features will be inadequate to accommodate expected traffic demands within the next ten years. As a result of a Bypass project connection, traffic patterns at the interchange would be redistributed in a manner that would affect the interchange differently than the existing traffic patterns.

Several improvement options for the Johnson Lane Interchange have been investigated and have been shown to be viable in addressing traffic operations and expected volumes at the interchange through the design year. A detailed configuration and design would be addressed during the design phase of the project

**5. Was there an alternative studied that goes through the gravel pits north of Five Mile Creek?**

Two alternatives traveling through the gravel pits north of Five Mile Creek were analyzed in response to public suggestions received in June 2011 at a small stakeholder meeting requested by landowners along Mary Street. The landowners suggested alternate alignments that would avoid or mostly avoid the Mary Street corridor. The suggestion was to route the new facility along the north side of Five Mile Creek through the land currently being used for gravel operations. These alternatives were analyzed in a manner consistent to other alternatives considered for the DEIS but were screened out due to greater impacts to the community and environment, including the proposed Kiwanis Trail. The results of the analysis were documented in a technical memorandum distributed to the BBAC members at Meeting #10.

Bill Kennedy asked if the primary reason for screening out the Five Mile Creek alternatives was due to the Kiwanis Trail extension. Wendy explained that there were multiple factors for screening out these alternatives and a full discussion would be provided later in the presentation.

**Project Schedule**

Wendy briefly presented the project schedule and next steps. Release of the FEIS is anticipated for Summer 2013, and a signed Record of Decision should follow in Fall 2013. Wendy explained that members of the BBAC may contact project team members with questions or comments after the meeting.

**Five Mile Creek Alternatives**

Tom presented the Five Mile Creek alternatives. As discussed, these two alternatives were suggested by members of the public. The suggestion was to route the new facility along the north side of Five Mile Creek through the land currently being used for gravel operations. Because the project team had already narrowed the alignment options south of the river down to Johnson Lane Option 1, both of these alternatives would use that alignment south of the river. The two alternatives were screened at a level commensurate with all other alternatives considered.

North Five Mile Creek

*Traffic Analysis*

Tom referred to a map of the North Five Mile Creek alignment and explained it would proceed west from the Yellowstone River along the north side of the Five Mile Creek floodplain to connect with Old Hwy 312 approximately half a mile south of Dover Road.

The traffic analysis performed for this alternative revealed that the alternative would draw a similar number of vehicles to the new Yellowstone River crossing as the alternatives presented in the DEIS – approximately 15,000 vehicles per day. However, west of the Yellowstone River between Bitterroot Drive and Old Hwy 312, the new roadway would draw only 100 – 400 vehicles per day. In comparison, the Mary Street alternatives would draw between 9,000 and 11,500 vehicles per day along that same segment (the Five Mile Road alternative would not have a primary corridor alignment in this area so an equal traffic comparison could not be provided for that alternative). The North Five Mile Creek alignment would not draw much traffic because Mary Street would provide a quicker route between Old Hwy 312 and the new Yellowstone River crossing. Therefore, most of the traffic (approximately 11,400 vehicles per day) would use Mary Street instead of the North Five Mile Creek

Alternative. Since this alternative would draw such a low amount of traffic and would have such a large impact on existing connecting streets, the alternative was eliminated.

### South Five Mile Creek

#### *Traffic Analysis*

Tom referred to a map of the South Five Mile Creek alignment and explained it would proceed west from the Yellowstone River along the north side of the Five Mile Creek floodplain, where it would veer south across Five Mile Creek and roughly follow the old railroad corridor for approximately half a mile. The alignment would then cross the railroad and proceed west north of Mary Street to connect with Old Hwy 312 at the intersection with US 87 and Main Street.

Traffic analysis performed for the South Five Mile Creek alternative revealed that it would draw a similar number of vehicles to the new Yellowstone River crossing as the alternatives presented in the DEIS – approximately 15,000 per day. West of the Yellowstone River between Bitterroot Drive and Old Hwy 312, the alignment would continue to draw a similar amount of traffic as the Mary Street alternatives; approximately 7,000 vehicles per day as compared with 9,000 to 11,500 for the Mary Street alternatives.

With regard to traffic impacts on existing connecting routes, the South Five Mile Creek alternative would perform similarly to the DEIS alternatives with the exception of Mary Street. The South Five Mile Creek alternative would draw approximately twice the amount of daily traffic to Mary Street as the Mary Street alternatives (approximately 4,000 vehicles per day versus 2,000, respectively). The Five Mile Road alternative would not have a primary corridor alignment in this area so an equal traffic comparison could not be provided for that alternative.

Although the increase of traffic along Mary Street would be higher for South Five Mile Creek than the Mary Street alternatives, the other results of the traffic analysis were comparable to the results for the DEIS alternatives. Therefore, the project team decided to proceed with additional screening on the South Five Mile Creek alternative to see if it was a viable alternative.

#### *Right-of-Way Impacts*

Wendy explained that the anticipated right-of-way impacts were analyzed for the South Five Mile Creek alternative and compared with the alternatives presented in the DEIS. All of the alternatives would share the same right-of-way impacts to residences south of the Yellowstone River: 5 direct and 2 potential. Direct impacts imply a structure located within the right-of-way footprint of the alignment, while potential impacts may be avoidable based on the final design of the roadway.

North of the Yellowstone River, the right-of-way impacts to residences would be the following (direct/potential):

- Mary Street Option 1: 4/3
- Mary Street Option 2: 3/3
- Five Mile Road: 2/2
- South Five Mile Creek: 3/2

The alternatives would directly impact the following number of privately owned parcels:

- Mary Street Option 1: 110

- Mary Street Option 2: 94
- Five Mile Road: 112
- South Five Mile Creek: 129

The alternatives would require purchasing the following amount of privately-owned acres:

- Mary Street Option 1: 171 acres
- Mary Street Option 2: 174 acres
- Five Mile Road: 139 acres
- South Five Mile Creek: 212 acres

Wendy explained that the South Five Mile Creek alternative would have very similar right-of-way impacts as the DEIS alternatives; notably, only one potential fewer impact than the recommended preferred alternative. However, with regard to impacts to privately owned parcel, the South Five Mile Creek alternative would impact a greater number of privately owned parcels, and would require the acquisition of more privately owned property. This is because the South Five Mile Creek alternative would require secondary corridor improvements to both Mary Street and Five Mile Road, in addition to the construction of the new roadway. The DEIS alternatives would only require secondary improvements to one connecting roadway. ROW impacts were one of the factors considered in the elimination of the South Five Mile Creek alternative.

#### *Section 4(f) Impacts*

Tom explained that Section 4(f) is a separate federal law outside of NEPA. It was included as a provision in the Department of Transportation Act of 1066, and prohibits the use of land from publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historical sites unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of that land.

The Kiwanis Trail is an existing multi-use trail in the Billings Bypass study area that runs approximately 2 miles between Mary Street and Two Moon Park. The City of Billings plans to extend this trail north of Mary Street along the Billings and Central Montana Railroad abandoned railway – a site deemed eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The extension would bring the trail north and east, past Five Mile Creek to Bitterroot Drive.

Although all of the DEIS alternatives would perpendicularly impact this planned trail extension, the impacts would be minimal and the recreational use of the facility would be maintained without negatively impacting activities, features, and attributes of the facility.

The South Five Mile Creek alternative would roughly follow the historic railroad corridor for approximately half a mile and would directly impact 4.75 acres. In order to meet minimal design standards, the roadway would need to cross the railroad corridor a total of three times, and would have a longitudinal impact along the entire length of the trail. Discussions with the City of Billings indicated that this trail is considered a significant resource. The City indicated that the impacts from the South Five Mile Creek alternative could not be mitigated by including the trail as a sidewalk next to the roadway. The Kiwanis Trail extension is intended to be an off-street, multi-use trail similar to the existing Kiwanis Trail south of Mary Street. Given that other feasible and prudent alternatives exist with lesser impacts to this Section 4(f) resource, the results of the Section 4(f) screening were one of the factors in eliminating the South Five Mile Creek alternative.

### *Cost Estimates*

The cost estimates for South Five Mile Creek were developed in the same manner as the cost estimates for the DEIS alternatives. The costs for each alternative are approximately as follows:

- Mary Street Option 1: \$121 million
- Mary Street Option 2: \$112 million
- Five Mile Road: \$110 million
- South Five Mile Creek: \$129 million

The South Five Mile Creek alternative would cost approximately \$9 - \$19 million more than the alternatives analyzed in the DEIS because it would require secondary corridor improvements to two existing roadways. The DEIS alternatives only require secondary corridor improvements to one existing roadway. The additional cost was not a primary consideration in screening out the South Five Mile Alternative, but it was one factor.

### **Comments and Questions**

Bill Kennedy asked if the number one reason the South Five Mile Creek alternative was eliminated was because of the Kiwanis Trail. Stefan responded that the full screening matrix was considered. The alternative does not offer as much benefit to traffic operations, and has a greater impact to the community and environment. Bill Kennedy stated that he believes constructing the roadway in front of the homes along Mary Street is an impact that was not considered to the level of detail that it should have been. Wendy explained that all alternatives need to be considered the same way. The South Five Mile Creek alternative would double the traffic along Mary Street. Alternatives screening is an objective process. Stefan added that the alternatives screening analysis is solid. The process is designed to identify the alternative which would provide the most benefit and have the least impact. Bill Kennedy indicated he did not agree. He noted that he had walked the Mary Street corridor with residents to consider the impacts and suggested project team members do the same. Bill wants to locate the new roadway behind the homes. Stefan stated that the project team did due diligence in screening the alternatives and following the NEPA regulations.

Clayton Fiscus inquired about the cost estimates. He does not believe property acquired from a parcel with a gravel pit would cost as much as residential property. He asked how the estimates were developed. Stefan explained the cost estimates are based on a preliminary roadway footprint and are a worst-case scenario. The right-of-way footprint will decrease in size as the final design is refined. Preliminary cost estimates are rough and based on average land prices, not specific parcel costs.

Clayton Fiscus stated that traffic along Main Street has never been better. He wonders if truck traffic along Main Street was a consideration – he believes truck traffic will increase along Main Street as a result of this project. Clayton stated his preference for the Five Mile Road alternative. He noted his plan to introduce a bill defining the term “bypass” in the upcoming legislative session; LCO 597. Clayton noted that the controversy with the project revolves around Mary Street. The project should be built, but it should avoid Mary Street. Stefan explained that the project team is following the federal process as they are legally required. Many potential impacts are considered during this process, but opinions cannot be used to determine the preferred alternative. Alternative selection is not done by voting or popular opinion.

Public Comment and Response: The South Five Mile Creek design should be modified to avoid home and the Kiwanis Trail extension. The S-curves could be tightened or removed. This would save money. The route needs to be re-evaluated. Todd Cormier explained that the South Five Mile Creek was designed to meet minimum design standards and the S-curves could not be tightened any more than they already are.

Jim Reno asked how much field work was performed on the ground and how much time was spent talking with residents and soliciting feedback. Wendy Wallach explained that environmental field surveys were performed in Summer 2011. Resource specialists examined the entire corridor for fatal flaws and the project team made a considerable effort to contact every single resident whose property was surveyed during the field review.

Clayton Fiscus stated that residents were not spoken with about the project. Wendy noted that a detailed description of public outreach efforts is included in the FAQ in the handout packet. She stated that project team members held three public meetings prior to the release of the DEIS and one after the DEIS release. Project team members have also met with small groups of landowners several times during the course of the project. Six newsletters have been distributed, and an active website has been maintained. Only two residents along Mary Street were identified who were not included on the mailing list and a special outreach effort will be made to contact these individuals. Stefan added that the project team has met with the Heights Task Force, Lockwood Urban Transportation, and the Public Coordinating Committee several times, among other stakeholder groups. Outreach efforts have far exceeded the requirements set forth by the NEPA process.

Public Comment and Response: I live north of Mary Street. The only notification I received on this project was a right-of-entry letter for MDT to enter my property.

Public Comment and Response: If this project has been going on since 1999, how come building permits were issued along Mary Street? Stefan explained that prior to 2010, no alternatives were considered in that area. The study area changed when the project was re-scoped.

Public Comment: Residents on the south side of Mary Street are not considered affected by this project, but they feel otherwise.

Public Comment: What is the purpose of this project? People in the Heights will not use this route.

Conrad Strobe asked for a cost-benefit analysis of the DEIS alternatives by segment. Wendy stated that this information is in the DEIS but is not available by segment. It is in Chapter 2. Wendy indicated she would follow up with Conrad after the meeting.

Clayton Fiscus asked for land costs for each segment of the alternatives. For example, the difference between a residential property with 7,000 acres versus the costs of a property with gravel pits. Wendy noted that right-of-way costs are only one factor, and the process requires that all factors are considered, including the benefits of the alternative.

Public Comment: No one wants this project.

Tom Zurburchen stated that he supports the Billings Bypass project. He has been involved since early on in the process. The value of land has changed over the past ten years. Early on, there was an attempt to identify parcel costs but this cannot be completed until the final design is done. The federal process must be followed to completion. Comments were made in regards to truck traffic increasing on Main Street as a result of this project. Trucking companies pay more insurance if they follow routes that go along city streets – no trucking company

will want this liability and trucks will avoid Main Street. Truckers also will not use a longer route with more intersections if a shorter route is available. Comments were made about notifying residents. Every effort has been made to notify residents about this project. One consideration is that many properties have changed owners over the years. Tom personally spent over three days going through property records and assisting the project team with the notification process. This BBAC meeting is just one of dozens of meetings that have been held with stakeholders and planning officials in Billings. The project has been in the works since 1977, where it was discussed on the front page of the Billings Gazette. The proposed river crossing location has been known since the 1980s. No one wants this project in their backyard, but Billings is going to continue to grow, and this project is necessary for the growing community.

Public Comment and Response: I appreciate the work that government officials do and I understand it is a difficult job. However, I spoke with a realtor about the plans to locate a highway 80 feet north of our property and she indicated this would automatically devalue the property by \$5,000. How is this accounted for? Stefan explained that MDT does not compensate for changes in property value. However, MDT also does not seek compensation for increases in property value as a result of a project.

Public Comment and Response: Based on what I have seen today, I do not feel that any changes have been implemented in response to public comments since the public hearing. Wendy noted that all comments will be responded to in the FEIS. As the project moves into final design, the roadway footprint will be refined and impacts mitigated. Tom reminded the group that there were no substantive comments received on the project. Substantive comments identify a problem with the analysis that would change the results. As explained earlier in the presentation, decisions on a project cannot be made on opinion alone. Analysis is fact-based. The most effective public comments on environmental studies point out the specific issues that need to be changed. Comments indicating general support or general opposition are not used in the decision making process. The member of the public indicated he felt a lawyer and an engineer would need to be consulted in order for him to be involved in the process.

Jim Reno stated that the Five Mile Creek alternatives go through gravel pits and do not impact residents as no one lives there.

Public Comment: MDT does not get involved in paying residents for property takes. Stefan explained this is incorrect. MDT pays for the appraised market value and relocation costs.

Public Comment and Response: It is wrong not to take the loss of property value into account. The damages to property value for residents along Mary Street could be as much as \$100 million. This is adverse condemnation and should be included in the project costs. Stefan explained that roads could never be improved if that were the case. Planners are responsible for identifying existing and future problems and implementing mitigation measures. For example, the Rockvale to Laurel project will reconstruct US 212 to mitigate for high fatality rates on the roadway, among other issues. The Bench Blvd project was not desired by residents along Bench Blvd during the planning stages but is considered a success now.

Public Comment: Consider disconnecting Mary Street from Five Mile Road and constructing one of the Five Mile Creek alternatives.

Public Comment and Response: I live on Columbine Street south of Mary Street. I am concerned about the water table and submitted a comment on the DEIS regarding this issue. There have been problems in the past resulting from the drains installed when the gravel pit was reclaimed and we experienced flooding. Does this project have

potential to disrupt the groundwater table? Tom thanked the member of the public for her DEIS comment and noted that the comment was one of the few received that brought up an issue not considered by the project team. The project team is looking into this issue further and will respond to the comment in the FEIS. Wendy noted that a high-level hydraulic analysis had been performed but specific answers cannot be provided until the project moves into final design.

Clayton Fiscus stated that there were no objections to the South Five Mile Creek alternative and lots of objection to the Mary Street alternatives. The project is fine but the Mary Street alternatives are not.

Tom Zurbuchin noted his objection to the South Five Mile Creek alternative.

Bruce MacIntyre noted that he understands the Mary Street residents' concerns. He lives along Five Mile Road and will also experience impact from the project. He also understands that the NEPA process is in place to remove emotion from the decision-making process. He would like to see the Mary Street residents' concerns addressed with regard to sound mitigation and other impacts. He would also like to know the next steps for this project and a general timeline of how it will proceed. Stefan explained that mitigation will be part of the final design process. The FEIS is expected to be released within the next six months. The Record of Decision will be signed shortly afterwards. Final design will take approximately three to five years; right-of-way negotiations and acquisition will occur during the same time period. Construction is anticipated in approximately six years.

Jim Reno asked if funding was in place for the project. Stefan explained that once the Bench Blvd project is completed, funding is available for roadway design, right-of-way corridor preservation, and some initial construction. Phasing is anticipated for this project. Roadway designers will meet with individual landowners to discuss minimizing private property acquisition and impacts.

### **Next Steps**

- Release FEIS
- Sign Record of Decision

### **Items distributed at the meeting:**

1. Agenda
2. Alternatives Maps and Typical Sections
3. Role of BBAC on the Billings Bypass Project
4. Frequently Asked Questions

### **Action Items**

- Distribute website links to the Billings Bypass project website and "Citizen's Guide to NEPA" packet



DAVID EVANS  
AND ASSOCIATES INC.

## MEETING MINUTES

<b>PROJECT:</b>	Billings Bypass EIS MDT Project No. NCPD 56(55), CN 4199
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	Billings Bypass Advisory Committee Meeting #10
<b>DATE HELD:</b>	February 28, 2012
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Hilton Garden Inn
<b>ATTENDING:</b>	<b>MDT:</b> Fred Bente, Stefan Streeter, Gary Neville, Tom Gocksch <b>FHWA:</b> Alan Woodmansey <b>DEA:</b> Joe Hart, Wendy Wallach, Kacey Meis <b>DOWL HKM:</b> John Shoff, Doug Enderson, Todd Cormier <b>M&amp;A:</b> Bob Marvin <b>BBAC:</b> Jim Ronquillo, Bill Rash, Denis Pitman, Glenn French, Bill Kennedy, Mike Black, Connie Herberg, Tim Miller, Bruce MacIntyre, H.R. "Spook" Stang, Candi Beaudry, Mike Penfold, Bob Riehl, Terry Smith, <b>ATTENDEES:</b> Jim Reno, John Ostlund, Doug Kary, Tim Sperry, Tom Zurbuchen
<b>COPIES:</b>	Attendees; BBAC members; MDT; FHWA; File

### Summary of Discussion

#### **Project Update**

Fred Bente provided a project update. The project team identified the alternatives for evaluation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Based on the results of the preliminary traffic analysis, the project team determined that improvements would be necessary to the existing roadway network if any of the proposed alternatives were constructed. These improvements have been incorporated into the DEIS alternatives as a "secondary corridor." More details on the primary/secondary corridor concept will be discussed during this presentation.

Overall, project work is proceeding on schedule. The preliminary draft of the DEIS was submitted to MDT the week prior and the DEIS is anticipated to be released to the public late summer of 2012. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is still on track to be released in December of 2012.

Wendy Wallach explained that the purpose of the meeting was to update the BBAC on the three alternatives analyzed in the DEIS, not to identify a preferred alternative. However, the project team is leaning towards one of the alternatives; to be discussed during this presentation. BBAC input on the alternatives is a key goal of the meeting.

#### **Project Schedule**

Wendy Wallach discussed the project schedule. The project team took a thorough approach in obtaining right-of-entry permits for the resource field work, which took longer than anticipated. Coordination efforts with landowners to obtain right-of-entry permits were completed approximately two months later than scheduled. Resource specialists could not begin field work until all right-of-entry permits were obtained; as such, resource reports were completed later than originally scheduled. During this time, the project team was informed of the new preliminary Yellowstone River floodplain delineation. Through coordination with resource agencies, the

project team determined it would be best to use the new floodplain data for project planning. The set of alternatives remaining after the Level 3 screening were refined and the hydraulics report was updated accordingly. Finally, a set of alternatives suggested by area landowners was developed and screened. This unanticipated work led to a three-month delay in project work. However, by advancing and streamlining other activities, the overall project is still on schedule and the DEIS and FEIS are on track to be released this year.

## **Alternatives**

### ***Review of Level 3 Screening Results***

Wendy reminded the group that at the time of the last BBAC meeting, the Level 3 screening had been recently completed. North and south of the Yellowstone River, four alignments were identified to be carried into the DEIS for detailed evaluation; Five Mile Road and Mary Street Option 2 north of the river and Johnson Lane Option 1 and Johnson Lane Option 2 south of the river. Each alignment north of the Yellowstone River could be matched with an alignment south of the Yellowstone River to create one complete alternative alignment. Three other alignments were retained as backups in case fatal flaws were found during field work; one north of the Yellowstone River - Mary Street Option 1 - and two south of the Yellowstone River - Pinehills and Pinehills Split.

Field work identified no fatal flaws along the proposed alignments. As such, it was determined that the Pinehills and Pinehills Split alignments should be screened out as recommended. However, during the field work, the team was informed of updates to the Yellowstone River floodplain delineation. The new floodplain delineation indicated that the floodplain had expanded in some areas and constricted in others. As a result, Level 3 screening results for the Johnson Lane Option 2 and Mary Street alignments were no longer justifiable. Johnson Lane Option 1 was still mostly outside of the new floodplain delineation. However, Johnson Lane Option 2 was almost completely within the new floodplain delineation for the entire length of the alignment and would result in a substantial longitudinal encroachment. For this reason, Johnson Lane Option 2 was screened out. The justification for screening out Mary Street Option 1 during the Level 3 screening had been the greater impacts to the floodplain and cost of construction in comparison with Mary Street Option 2. However, this justification was no longer valid since the floodplain had expanded and impacts were now very similar. Therefore, both Mary Street options were carried forward for detailed evaluation in the DEIS.

All of the alternatives carried forward for detailed evaluation in the DEIS now begin at the Johnson Lane interchange with I-90 and use the same alignment north and west toward the Yellowstone River. North of the Yellowstone River, there are three options to complete the connection with Old Hwy 312: Mary Street Option 1, Mary Street Option 2, and Five Mile Road.

### ***Primary/Secondary Corridor Concepts***

Joe Hart explained that the Level 3 screening included a preliminary analysis of traffic impacts to the existing street network that would be anticipated in the design year if any of these alternatives were to be implemented. Based on this information, it was determined that additional improvements to existing roads north of the Yellowstone River would be necessary if design objectives for operations and safety were to be met. Without these improvements, it would not be possible to recommend a preferred alternative due to the impacts from the increased volume of traffic on existing connecting routes. The improvements would not be required right away but would be necessary for design year traffic (2035).

Therefore, each alternative now consists of a "primary corridor," which is the alternative alignment; and a "secondary corridor" which is the existing roadway to undergo improvements to accommodate alternative-generated traffic. As identified by the traffic analysis, the following improvements described for the typical

sections would be less expensive than reconstructing existing segments of Five Mile Road, Dover Road, and Pioneer Road.

#### Mary Street Option 1 and Mary Street Option 2 Alternative Typical Sections

- Primary Corridor
  - South of the Yellowstone River, a National Highway System (NHS) Urban Principal Arterial would be used.
  - North of the Yellowstone River along Mary Street, a NHS Urban Principal Arterial with Local Access Road would be used. The existing corridor of Mary Street would be maintained as the local access road.
- Secondary Corridor
  - Five Mile Road would be extended to Old Hwy 312 and reconstructed to Yellowstone County Local Road standards along the entire length of the alignment. This would include shoulder and drainage improvements.

#### Five Mile Road Alternative Typical Sections

- Primary Corridor
  - South of the Yellowstone River, a NHS Urban Principal Arterial would be used.
  - North of the Yellowstone River along Five Mile Road, a NHS Rural Principal Arterial with Frontage Road would be used.
- Secondary Corridor
  - The segment of roadway between Mary Street and Five Mile Road would be reconstructed to Yellowstone County Local Road standards. This would include shoulder and slope improvements.
  - Mary Street would be improved to City of Billings Urban Arterial Roadway standards.

#### ***Five Mile Creek Alternatives***

Joe explained that during a stakeholder group meeting with landowners along Mary Street, two landowners suggested alternate alignments that would avoid or mostly avoid the Mary Street corridor. The suggestion by both landowners was to route the new facility along the north side of Five Mile Creek through the land currently being used for gravel operations. Because the project team had already narrowed the alignment options south of the river down to Johnson Lane Option 1, both of these alternatives would use that alignment south of the river. One landowner suggested a connection to Old Hwy 312 just north of Five Mile Creek; called Five Mile Creek North. The other landowner suggested an alignment that veered south using the old railroad corridor to reconnect with Mary Street at the intersection of Main Street, US 87, and Old Hwy 312; called Five Mile Creek South. The two alignment suggestions were developed and screened using the same criteria used to screen other alternatives throughout the project.

#### Five Mile Creek North

Although this alternative would attract an average daily traffic (ADT) volume of approximately 15,300 vehicles to the new river crossing, only 400 ADT would use the new alignment between Five Mile Road and Old Hwy 312. For Heights traffic, the travel time between the Yellowstone River and Old Hwy 312 would be longer than

using Mary Street. Because Mary Street would provide a quicker route; most of the traffic would use Mary Street instead of the North Five Mile Creek Alternative. Therefore, this alternative could be considered a redundant facility between Old Hwy 312 and Five Mile Road.

In addition, the North Five Mile Creek Alternative would connect to Old Hwy 312 across from the Sunny Slope subdivision. A future extension west to US 87 from this location would impact eight existing residential parcels requiring a full acquisition for seven of the homes. As a result, a future bypass connection to US 87 would likely require out-of-direction travel south on Old Hwy 312 to the intersection with US 87.

Because this alternative would draw very little traffic west of Five Mile Road and would perform poorly in support of a future connection to US 87 and MT 3, the recommendation is to screen out this alternative from further consideration. Similarly, the Oxbow Park Alternative was screened out in the Level 3 Screening for these same reasons.

#### Five Mile Creek South

As discussed, the DEIS alternatives would require secondary corridor improvements to either Mary Street or Five Mile Road to achieve operations and safety objectives. Traffic increases on the existing network as a result of construction of the Five Mile Creek South alternative would require improvements to both of these existing routes. The alternative would cost an additional \$8 million to \$19 million to construct, and would directly impact approximately 15 to 37 more parcels and 1 to 5 more structures than the alternatives carried forward for detailed evaluation in the DEIS. The alternative would also have an impact to the proposed Kiwanis Trail extension. For these reasons, this alternative was recommended to be screened out from further consideration.

Joe mentioned that a detailed technical screening memo was provided in the handout packet.

#### ***DEIS Alternatives: Benefits and Impacts***

Wendy explained that a Preferred Alternative has not yet been identified for this project. There was little variation between the benefits and impacts of each build alternative. However, upon cursory evaluation, Mary Street Option 2 seems to best meet the purpose and need while limiting impacts to the environment and the community. Wendy provided an explanation of how the team reached that conclusion.

#### Purpose and Need

**Need 1: Reduce physical barrier impacts to the transportation system.** The team determined that a high amount of average daily traffic (ADT) on the bypass indicates the impacts of physical barriers to the transportation network are reduced. Design-year ADT for each alternative is as follows:

- No Build: NA (no new roadway)
- Mary Street Option 1: ADT = 15,900
- Mary Street Option 2: ADT = 15,600
- Five Mile Road: ADT = 13,000

**Need 2: Improve connectivity between Lockwood and Billings.** A high reduction in ADT on the existing route between Lockwood and Billings indicates the bypass is an attractive alternative route. The reduction in design-year ADT on the existing route is as follows:

- No Build: 42,000
- Mary Street Option 1: ADT = 29,350 (reduction of 30%)

- Mary Street Option 2: ADT = 29,850 (reduction of 29%)
- Five Mile Road: ADT = 32,350 (reduction of 23%)

**Need 3: Improve mobility to and from Billings Heights.** An intersection with free-flow traffic has a level of service (LOS) of A, while non-functioning intersections have a LOS of E or F. In addition, a reduction in congestion reduces the number of crashes. Reduction of LOS E/F intersections and crashes indicate an improvement in mobility.

- No Build:
  - LOS E/F intersections = 11
  - No reduction in accidents
- Mary Street Option 1:
  - LOS E/F intersections = 4
  - Reduces area accidents by 12%
- Mary Street Option 2:
  - LOS E/F intersections = 4
  - Reduces area accidents by 12%
- Five Mile Road:
  - LOS E/F intersections = 5
  - Reduces area accidents by 9%

**Need 4: Improve truck/commercial vehicle access to and through Billings.** Providing a faster / more direct route between US 87 and the I-90/I-94 interchange is an indication that truck and commercial vehicle access to and through Billings has improved. Travel times were compared between the north and south termini on each alternative route and the existing route between US 87 and the I-90/I-94 interchange.

- No Build: 14.3 minutes
- Mary Street Option 1: 7.4 minutes
- Mary Street Option 2: 7.6 minutes
- Five Mile Road: 9.9 minutes

In summary, there is little variation between the two Mary Street alternatives and they both perform well against the No Build alternative using purpose and need criteria. Five Mile Road does not perform quite as well as the Mary Street alternatives but still provides an improvement over the No Build alternative.

#### Natural / Social / Community Resources and Project Cost

Wendy explained that there are no major discernible impacts to most natural resources. However, since wetlands are a regulated resource, the variation in impacts is important. The total impacts to wetlands by each alternative are as follows:

- No Build: 0 acres
- Mary Street Option 1: 5.39 acres
- Mary Street Option 2: 4.52 acres
- Five Mile Road: 4.70 acres

Wendy discussed the impacts to social and community resources. The alternatives do not adversely affect any existing social or community resources. However, there are impacts to private property. She listed the total number of acres required for the alignment right-of-way (ROW), and the total number of residences impacted along the primary and secondary corridors for each alternative:

- No Build: No impact
- Mary Street Option 1:
  - ROW = 261 acres
  - Impacted Residences (Primary/Secondary) 9 / 0
- Mary Street Option 2:
  - ROW = 254 acres
  - Impacted Residences (Primary/Secondary) 8 / 0
- Five Mile Road:
  - ROW = 221 acres
  - Impacted Residences (Primary/Secondary) 5 / 1

Wendy provided the estimated construction cost for the full build-out of each alternative, including primary and secondary corridors. She explained that the major cost differentiator is the bridge structure over the Yellowstone River. Mary Street Option 1 would require a longer bridge, accounting for the higher cost.

- No Build: \$0
- Mary Street Option 1: \$121,207,000
- Mary Street Option 2: \$111,950,000
- Five Mile Road: \$110,059,000 acres

Wendy explained that although all of the DEIS alternatives meet the purpose and need, the Mary Street alternatives seem to better meet the needs than the Five Mile Road alternative. The Mary Street alternatives also have very similar impacts to natural resources and the community. However, Mary Street Option 2 would impact fewer acres of wetlands, would require fewer acres of land for ROW acquisition, and would impact one fewer residence. Finally, construction costs for Mary Street Option 2 are approximately \$10 million less than those for Mary Street Option 1. For these reasons, the project team believes Mary Street Option 2 fares the best and should be identified as the preferred alternative. Wendy explained the team is soliciting input on this conclusion regarding the DEIS alternatives and asked if there were any comments or questions. The BBAC raised the following questions and concerns.

**Q:** Jim Reno (Yellowstone County) inquired if any funding was available for construction.

**A:** Stefan Streeter explained that none had been identified.

**Q:** Tom Zurbuchen (Resident) asked about the traffic modeling. He expects traffic in the Heights would increase as a result of the Mary Street alternatives, but this was not shown.

**A:** Bob Marvin explained that this was built into the model. There would be a redistribution of traffic between the Heights and Lockwood, accounting for approximately 20% of traffic volumes.

**Q:** Candi Beaudry (City of Billings) mentioned that the Mary Street alternatives would put a principal arterial in the middle of the Heights. She encouraged the project team to consider how the alignment will impact future growth. She believes the Five Mile Road alternative would function more like a bypass.

**A:** Wendy explained that during the detailed internal review, Mary Street Option 1 and Mary Street Option 2 better met local plans.

**Q:** Bill Kennedy (Yellowstone County) clarified that both of the Mary Street alternatives would maintain the existing corridor of Mary Street as a local access road and construct the new roadway to the north. He stated that with any alternative, the intersection of US 87/Old Hwy 312/Mary Street will need to be upgraded. Similarly, the Johnson Lane interchange will need to be upgraded, regardless of the alternative chosen. These upgrades would need to occur prior to the construction of the alternative alignment. Bill indicated a preference for Mary Street Option 1.

**A:** Stefan explained that the cost estimates include the interchange and intersection improvements and are for the full, four-lane build-out, although the alternative would initially be constructed as a two-lane road. Doug Anderson mentioned that the biggest difference in the cost estimates is the bridge structure over the Yellowstone River.

**Q:** Jim Reno (Yellowstone County) inquired if semi-truck traffic would be allowed on the route.

**A:** Wendy stated that it would be allowed.

**Q:** Jim commented that the Five Mile Road alternative would add truck traffic to Old Hwy 312, a route that already has safety concerns.

**A:** Need clarification on Bob's reply.

**Comment:** Denis Pitman (City of Billings) stated an appreciation that the need for secondary corridor improvements is being acknowledged.

**Q:** Mike Penfold (Yellowstone Conservation Forum) inquired if the project is still part of the larger bypass scenario; and if so, how the alternatives perform relative to the desire for a future bypass. He asked if there is still the option of crossing Old Hwy 312 and continuing on to US 87.

**A:** Tom Gocksch explained that support of future planning for a connection to US 87 and MT 3 was part of the screening criteria. All alternatives carried forward would support a future extension. The Mary Street options would directly connect with US 87, while the connection options identified at Old Hwy 312 for Five Mile Road were chosen because they would not immediately impact residences if the road is extended.

Wendy asked if there were any other comments, with no response. She reminded the group that although this project is on an aggressive schedule, comments and input will be taken into consideration at any time, and encouraged contacting the project team.

### ***Interchange and Intersection Concepts***

Joe explained that multiple concepts for the Johnson Lane interchange and the Old Hwy 312/US 87/Bench Boulevard/Main Street/Mary Street intersections have been developed. Rather than identify a preferred concept at these locations, the team identified a maximum area of impact by consolidating the ROW footprints of each concept. This maximum footprint was used to analyze the alternatives and calculate impacts in the DEIS. The various concepts for the interchange and intersections are included in an appendix to the DEIS. All of the concepts are functional and one will be selected during final design. This method allows more flexibility in final design and allows the public an opportunity to provide input on the concepts. A similar approach was taken on the Rockvale to Laurel EIS.

In addition, multiple concepts have been developed for the Mary Street/Bitterroot Drive intersection and two locations have been identified for the connection between Old Hwy 312 and Five Mile Road. The project team would prefer to select one concept and one connection option prior to release of the DEIS at these locations due to the impacts to landowners. Joe mentioned that any input on these concepts would be appreciated.

#### Johnson Lane Interchange

Five concepts have been developed at this location. They include:

- Replacing the signalized intersections at North Frontage Road, north access ramps, south access ramps, and Old Hardin Road with roundabouts. I-90 would be realigned slightly to the south to facilitate a more perpendicular crossing with Johnson Lane, and Johnson Lane would pass underneath the interstate via new I-90 structures.
- Implementing a single-point urban interchange (SPUI) to replace the standard diamond interchange. The signalized intersections at North Frontage Road and Old Hardin Road would be reconstructed, and could use signalization or roundabouts for control. The north and south access ramps would be controlled by one signalized intersection located below new I-90 structures. New structures would be required to accommodate the single combined access ramp intersection
- Implementing a SPUI with a roundabout to replace the standard diamond interchange. The signalized intersections at North Frontage Road and Old Hardin Road would be reconstructed with roundabouts at these locations. The north and south access ramps would be controlled by a single roundabout located below two new I-90 structures situated over each side of the roundabout
- Implementing a double crossover diamond interchange to replace the standard diamond interchange. The signalized intersections at North Frontage Road and Old Hardin Road would be reconstructed. The north and south access ramps would be controlled by cross-over signalized intersections. I-90 would be realigned slightly to the south to facilitate a more perpendicular crossing with Johnson Lane. Johnson Lane would pass below new I-90 structures.
- Implementing a double crossover diamond interchange to replace the standard diamond interchange. The signalized intersections at North Frontage Road and Old Hardin Road would be reconstructed with roundabouts at these locations. The north and south access ramps would be controlled by cross-over signalized intersections. I-90 would be realigned slightly to the south to facilitate a more perpendicular crossing with Johnson Lane. Johnson Lane would pass below new I-90 structures.

#### Mary Street / Bitterroot Drive Intersection

A new house was recently constructed at the southeast corner of Mary Street and Bitterroot Drive. The original intersection concept developed for Mary Street Option 1 and Option 2 would require acquisition of this house. MDT requested alternate options at this intersection to see if the house can be avoided. The concepts include:

- Curve the Mary Street local access road to the south in the area of the intersection to maintain adequate spacing from the signalized intersections proposed for the new arterial and Bitterroot Drive. This is the original concept requiring removal of the new house.
- Shift the new arterial alignment to the north at Bitterroot Drive to achieve the necessary spacing from the intersection of Mary Street and Bitterroot Drive. A roundabout would be constructed at this location.
- Shift the new arterial alignment to the north at Bitterroot Drive to achieve the necessary spacing from the intersection of Mary Street and Bitterroot Drive. A signalized intersection would be constructed at this location.

#### Old Hwy 312 / US 87 / Main St / Bench Blvd / Mary Street Intersection

Three concepts have been developed at this location. They include:

- Two roundabouts; one connecting US 87, Old Hwy 312, Main Street, and the Mary Street alternative alignment, and the other connecting Old Hwy 312, Bench Blvd, the Mary Street local access road and the Mary Street alternative alignment.
- Two roundabouts with a slightly different configuration. One roundabout would connect US 87, Old Hwy 312, Main Street, and the Mary Street alternative alignment, and the other would connect Bench Blvd and the Mary Street local access road with the first roundabout.
- A roundabout connecting Old Hwy 312, US 87, and the Mary Street alternative alignment. Access to the Mary Street alignment from the local access road and Mary Street would be provided with a T-intersection.

#### Two Connection Options at Five Mile Road and Old Hwy 312

Two connection options are proposed at the intersection of Five Mile Road with Old Hwy 312.

- The northern connection, Connection Option B, was originally proposed to connect to Old Hwy 312 when this project was originally scoped in 2003.
- The southern connection, Connection Option A, was identified when the Five Mile Road alternative was later developed in order to provide a perpendicular connection to Old Hwy 312. A perpendicular connection allows for maximum unrestricted turning movements (particularly for large trucks), a shorter crossing distance for vehicles and pedestrians, and maximum line-of-sight for drivers (MDT 2006).

Both options were retained because each would allow continuation of the alignment north of Old Hwy 312 in the future. A signalized intersection concept and a roundabout intersection concept were developed for Connection Options A and B at the connection between Five Mile Road and Old Hwy 312. These concepts could be used for the secondary corridor as well. The only difference would be the number of approach lanes along the Five Mile Road alignment.

Joe asked if there were any questions. Jim Reno inquired about coordination with the trucking industry.

**Q:** H.R. "Spook" Stang (Trucking Industry) stated that the trucking industry does not want roundabouts on major routes. Truckers find it difficult to maneuver through a roundabout with oversize loads and heavy traffic. Spook indicated that roundabouts on feeder roads would not cause an issue for truckers. He stated that he would check with his counterpart in Utah for input on the cross-over diamond interchange concept.

**A:** Tom Gocksch reminded the group that the interchange and intersection concepts would not be selected in the DEIS. A combined footprint of the concepts was used to evaluate physical impacts. This method will allow for flexibility for future development of the project and coordination with stakeholders.

**Q:** Tim Miller (Yellowstone County Public Works) inquired if grade-separation had been considered at the Mary St/Main St/Old Hwy 312/US 87/Bench Blvd intersection.

**A:** Bob explained that grade-separation had been considered early on. However, the at-grade concepts with roundabouts are functional. Per MDT policy, grade-separation is not considered if an at-grade concept is functional.

#### **Outreach and Coordination**

Wendy discussed recent public outreach and coordination efforts.

### Stakeholder Meetings

The BBAC members identified several stakeholder groups to contact at the last BBAC meeting. The project team attempted to arrange meetings with each group. The following groups did not indicate interest in meeting with project representatives:

- Most business owners along Johnson Lane and Coulson Road
- Bear Tooth Paddlers
- Lockwood Fire District Board of Directors
- Lockwood School Board

Project team representatives will be meeting with the following groups this week:

- Heights Community Development Task Force
- Lockwood Urban Transportation District
- One business owner along Johnson Lane

The project team is coordinating with the Yellowstone River Conservation District to arrange a meeting. All stakeholder meeting minutes will be posted on the project website.

### Newsletter

Newsletter 6 will be distributed in early spring of 2012 (anticipated in March). Information will include detailed information on the primary and secondary corridor concepts, the alternative typical sections, and the preferred alternative.

### Website

The website was updated last August with information about the alternatives screening process, the results of the Level 3 Screening, the primary/secondary corridor concepts, and stakeholder meeting summaries. It will be updated in spring of 2012 with more information about the DEIS alternatives, the primary/secondary corridor concepts, and an FAQ page.

**Q:** Jim Reno (Yellowstone County) asked how long the EIS is valid once it is finished.

**A:** Alan Woodmansey explained that the document is valid as long as it needs to be once the record of decision (ROD) has been signed and area conditions remain relatively unchanged.

**Q:** John Ostlund (Yellowstone County) asked how much funding is currently available and what will happen once the ROD is signed.

**A:** Stefan explained there was an initial \$20 million earmark; approximately \$16 million will be left after the environmental phase is completed. Some of this money will be used to move forward with the final design.

**Q:** Bill Kennedy (Yellowstone County) inquired if all of the ROW will be acquired prior to design.

**A:** Stefan stated that 90 percent of design work must be completed before ROW acquisition can occur.

**Q:** Jim Reno asked what would happen if a significant number of homes were constructed in the time between the signed ROD and start of ROW acquisition; he wondered if another environmental study could be triggered.

**A:** Stefan stated that homes could potentially be constructed in the corridor; however, the document does become part of the public record, so this is unlikely. The ROD will be signed in 2013 and final design will take approximately 2 years, so ROW acquisition could begin in 2016.

**Q:** Denis Pitman (Billings Heights Task Force) suggested starting with ROW acquisition so that development does not occur in the corridor. He would like to see the entire corridor secured before constructing a portion of it.

**A:** Candi Beaudry (City of Billings) explained that the city and county have zoning and subdivision processes in place to help preserve the corridor. Wendy Wallach mentioned that currently platted land is also considered in the EIS in order to avoid impacts. Stefan explained that MDT is bound by a specific process and this process takes time; the project is moving forward as quickly as it can.

### **Next Steps**

- Newsletter distribution and website updates
- Project phasing considerations
- Releasing the DEIS to resource agencies and the public
- Public Hearing in late summer

### **Items distributed at the meeting:**

1. Agenda
2. Project Schedule
3. DEIS Alternatives Map
4. Primary/Secondary Corridor Graphics
5. Five Mile Creek Alternatives Screening Technical Memorandum
6. Interchange and Intersection Concepts



DAVID EVANS  
AND ASSOCIATES INC.

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## MEETING MINUTES

<b>PROJECT:</b>	Billings Bypass EIS MDT Project No. NCPD 56(55), CN 4199
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	Billings Bypass Advisory Committee Meeting #9
<b>DATE HELD:</b>	June 23, 2011
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Billings Hotel and Convention Center
<b>ATTENDING:</b>	<b>MDT:</b> Fred Bente, Stefan Streeter, Gary Neville, Tom Gocksch <b>DEA:</b> Laura Meyer, Kacey Meis <b>DOWL HKM:</b> John Shoff, Doug Enderson, Todd Cormier <b>M&amp;A:</b> Bob Marvin <b>BBAC:</b> Peggie Gaghen, Scott Walker, Conrad Stroebe, Denis Pitman, Tim Miller, Tom Zurbuchen, Bill Kennedy, Terry Smith, Mike Penfold <b>ATTENDEES:</b> Bob Riehl, Dennis Cook, Liz Ching
<b>COPIES:</b>	Attendees; BBAC members; MDT; FHWA; File

### Summary of Discussion

#### **Project Update**

Fred Bente provided a project update. Since the BBAC meeting in September of 2010, the project team has held a meeting with the public, completed Level 3 of the alternatives screening, refined the purpose and need, and met with the cooperating and participating resource agencies. Recently, the project team has been contacting land owners in the study area to obtain permission to enter their land for field work. Project work is proceeding on schedule.

#### **Purpose and Need**

Laura Meyer discussed the purpose and need. The purpose and need guides the project through the NEPA phase. SAFETEA-LU requires that we provide an opportunity for resource agencies and the public to provide input on the purpose and need. Based on comments received through the scoping process, it was necessary to make slight refinements to the purpose and need. The wording was adjusted to speak more directly to the stated needs in local planning documents. The EPA suggested that the purpose and need should focus on the transportation needs to be addressed, without specifying the solution, i.e., a new bridge over the Yellowstone River.

The first need focuses on reducing the physical barrier impacts to the transportation network. This need comes from the *Billings Urban Area Long-Range Transportation Plan*. Compared to the original need statement, it does not specify providing an additional Yellowstone River crossing.

The second need is to “improve connectivity” instead of “provide a new connection” between Lockwood and Billings. This need is identified in the *Lockwood Community Plan* and the *Lockwood Transportation Study*.

The third need is to improve mobility to and from Billings Heights. This need is identified in the *Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan* and the *Billings Urban Area Long-Range Transportation Plan*.

The fourth need is to improve truck/commercial vehicle access to and through Billings. This need is identified in the *Billings Urban Area Long-Range Transportation Plan* and relates back to the original bypass project. This is important because the federal earmarked funds were for a bypass.

## **Alternatives Development/Screening Process**

### ***Design Objectives***

Laura Meyer discussed the design objectives; which act as guidelines in the development of alternatives. She referenced the handout that details design objectives for the project:

- Roadway Functionality
  - Design for NHS Principal Arterial standards
  - Incorporate access control measures
  - Consider existing and future land use
  - Provide service-level interchanges at the intersection
  - Locate the western terminus of the route
- Safety Considerations
  - Improve emergency access to Billings Heights
  - Provide grade-separated railroad crossings
  - Improve/maintain safety on connecting routes
  - Meet MDT standards
- Community and Environmental Considerations
  - Maintain/improve traffic conditions in the eastern area of Billings
  - Accommodate crossings for planned bicycle/pedestrian routes in adopted local plans
  - Include pedestrian and bicycle facilities where appropriate
  - Minimize social, environmental, and economic impacts as practicable

Laura noted that pedestrian/bicycle facilities will be considered where appropriate even though they are not part of the typical section.

- Yellowstone River Crossing (for applicable alternatives)
  - Minimize impacts to the Yellowstone River and floodplain as practicable
  - Locate the river crossing for future expansion of the bridge

Laura noted that these objectives are geared toward promoting use of the optimal river crossing locations.
- Cost Considerations
  - Phased construction
  - Limit use of frontage roads
  - Minimize supporting infrastructure costs

### ***Overview of Alternatives Screening Process***

Laura Meyer gave an overview of the alternatives screening process.

- Level 1 Screening: Evaluate all of the previously considered alignments. Alignments that would provide a connection between the interstate and Old Hwy 312 were advanced to Level 2.
- Level 2 Screening: Evaluate the previously considered alignments remaining after Screening Level 1 and new potential alignments based on the new purpose and need. This screening focused on evaluating key benefits related to the purpose and need and compared the alternatives based on criteria including private

property impacts, floodplain impacts, and impacts to community resources such as parks and known historic sites.

- Level 3 Screening: For the remaining alignments, conceptual designs were developed to estimate ROW and construction costs, projected traffic volumes, and traffic impacts on connecting routes.
- EIS Evaluation: The alternatives remaining after Screening Level 3 will be carried forward for detailed evaluation in the EIS. Each alternative is made up of an alignment, a typical section, and specific interchange designs. Based on the results of the detailed evaluation in the EIS, MDT and FHWA will select a preferred alternative.

### ***Review of Level 1 and Level 2 Screening***

Laura showed an alignments map where the last BBAC meeting left off on its review of the Level 2 alternatives screening.

- Two alternatives that would include a new I-90 interchange at Piccolo Lane were screened out because of high impacts to the river and substantial impacts to an established neighborhood.
- The Pioneer Road alignment was screened out because the Five Mile Road alignment provides similar benefits with fewer private property impacts.

Laura then discussed the alternatives remaining after the Level 2 screening:

- |                                      |                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Johnson Ln Option 1 – Mary St 1    | • Johnson Ln Option 2 – Legacy Ln    | • Pinehills – E1/E3                  |
| • Johnson Ln Option 1 – Mary St 2    | • Johnson Ln Option 2 – Oxbow Park   | • Pinehills Split – Mary St Option 1 |
| • Johnson Ln Option 1 – Legacy Ln    | • Johnson Ln Option 2 – Five Mile Rd | • Pinehills Split – Mary St Option 2 |
| • Johnson Ln Option 1 – Oxbow Park   | • Johnson Ln Option 2 – E1/E3        | • Pinehills Split – Legacy Lane      |
| • Johnson Ln Option 1 – Five Mile Rd | • Pinehills – Mary St Option 1       | • Pinehills Split – Oxbow Park       |
| • Johnson Ln Option 1 – E1/E3        | • Pinehills – Mary St Option 2       | • Pinehills Split – Five Mile Rd     |
| • Johnson Ln Option 2 – Mary St 1    | • Pinehills – Legacy Ln              | • Pinehills Split – E1/E3            |
| • Johnson Ln Option 2 – Mary St 2    | • Pinehills – Oxbow Park             |                                      |
|                                      | • Pinehills – Five Mile Rd           |                                      |

Two additional alignments were suggested after the public meeting in October. The public suggested the Oxbow Park alignment to provide a more direct route to Old Hwy 312 that would traverse agricultural parcels instead of using existing roadway corridors.

During the Level 2 screening, the project team noted that the Mary Street alignment had a longer crossing of the Yellowstone River floodplain than some of the other alignments. The team therefore added a second option for connecting to Mary Street using a shorter route across the Yellowstone River floodplain to minimize impacts to the river. These alternatives were evaluated in the Level 3 screening.

### ***Development of Design Standards and Typical Sections (Level 3 Screening)***

Laura Meyer discussed the development of design standards and typical sections to develop a conceptual level of design. The typical sections illustrated the design standards.

#### Context Sensitive Solutions

Instead of applying the same design standards to all of the corridors under consideration, the context of each corridor was evaluated including the surrounding land use, zoning, posted speed and functional classifications of connecting routes. Distinct segments along each corridor were identified based on changes in the context. Then appropriate design standards were applied to each segment.

Laura detailed how alternatives were evaluated against the screening criteria from Level 2 as well as traffic projections, safety and operations considerations, and construction and ROW cost.

#### Design Standards

Three different design standards were identified for the corridors under consideration. In all cases, National Highway System standards are used because the intent of this route is that it would ultimately connect between NHS routes. The following design standards were used:

- NHS Rural Principal Arterial with design speed of 70 MPH (flat terrain) and 60 MPH (rolling terrain)
- NHS Urban Principal Arterial with design speed of 55 MPH
- NHS Urban Principal Arterial with Frontage Road with design speed of 55 MPH

Many of the corridor segments are rural in nature. They are outside the city limits, surrounding land use is primarily agricultural and the posted speed on connecting routes is higher. For these segments, a rural principal arterial standard would be appropriate.

Some of the corridors are more urban in nature. They are within the city limits, they are zoned for residential, commercial, or industrial use, and the posted speed of connecting routes is lower. For these segments, an urban principal arterial standard would be appropriate.

The team identified one corridor where a frontage road would be needed. This is the Mary Street corridor. Because there are so many existing residential accesses to that street, the new arterial would be built as a parallel route directly north of Mary Street, and Mary Street would become a frontage road.

Conrad asked if the team had a map that highlights the urban/rural segments of the alignments. Laura responded that Pinehills and Pinehills Split alignments are very agricultural, so they would be rural. The Johnson Lane alignments are surrounded by land zoned for industrial and commercial uses so they would be urban. On Mary St the eastern half is rural, and the western half is urban. The design for this alignment is dependent on which connecting alignment south of the river is chosen. The entire length of the alignment will be rural if the Pinehills – Mary Street alignment is selected. However, if the Johnson Lane – Mary Street alignment is chosen, the alignment will be urban to maintain consistency throughout the alignment. Alignments further north would be rural, except for the transition to Old Hwy 312, which would be urban.

#### Typical Sections

Laura referred to the Typical Sections handout. Although the actual width of the roadway would be less with the urban standards, the minimum standard ROW of 160 feet for urban and rural standards is the same. The key

difference between urban and rural standards is the median type. The urban standard calls for a two-way left turn lane to accommodate access to connecting routes and adjacent land. The rural standard call for a depressed median because the speeds are higher and there is less need for access along these segments.

### ***Highlights from Screening Analysis***

#### **Main Street**

Although the specific purpose of this project is not to address traffic congestion, providing this alternate route would draw traffic off of Main Street. Depending on which alignment is selected, between 9,000 and 13,000 fewer cars would use Main Street each day.

It is estimated that about 5% of the traffic that would use this route would be trucks, which equates to between 450 and 650 fewer trucks on Main Street each day. This route would provide a good alternate route for local and regional truck traffic – which accounts for about 85% of the truck traffic through town.

#### **Mobility**

These alternatives also achieve the mobility benefits that the project is aimed at. Looking at travel times between Billings Heights and the eastern area of Lockwood, there would be good mobility benefits, depending on which alignment is selected.

Although the proposed routes are longer than the existing route along Main Street, the travel times would be 15% to 33% lower than they are using the existing route.

Conrad asked if the team had schematics of the interchanges. Laura explained that the initial concepts have been prepared and additional concepts are under review. Conrad expressed his concern over the impact of 9,000 – 13,000 additional cars in the Johnson Lane interchange. He would like to see the impact on Johnson Lane before he decides which alignment to support. Bob explained that the additional cars would not be new traffic; they would be redirected traffic currently using the interstate. In addition, these traffic projections are for 20 years into the future. Conrad asked what the present plans for Johnson Lane would be without the project. Stefan explained that there is no funding available so there are no other projects identified for that interchange. This project is the best chance to improve the intersection.

### ***Screening Results for Alternatives Originating at Johnson Lane***

Laura referred to the Johnson Lane Screening Table handout. South of the river, there are two potential routes connecting to Johnson Lane. North of the river there are six potential routes connecting across the river to Old Hwy 312. Given the level of information available at this point in time, there are few differences between the two Johnson Lane alignment options south of the river. Therefore, the discussion focused on options north of the river.

The Alternatives Screening maps show the locations where the alignments would connect to the existing street network. These existing streets are highlighted in red to indicate that they could see increases in traffic depending on which alignment is selected.

### **Key Factors**

**Traffic:** Bob Marvin performed the traffic analysis used for the screening, including projections of how much traffic the new alignments would draw. In general, the proposed route would draw between 11,000 and 16,000 daily trips. Alignments closer to Billings would better serve traffic going from and to the Heights. Alignments

further from the city start to serve more and more traffic from Huntley and the outlying areas northeast of Billings.

The ADT on alignments south of the river is higher than the ADT on alignments north of the river. This is because many drivers would use the existing street network when traveling to and from the new river crossing. Thus, the traffic north of the river would be distributed on existing streets to some extent.

The Mary Street alignments would increase traffic between 4,000 and 4,500 ADT on Pioneer, Dover, and Five Mile Road. There would not be an increase on Mary Street because it would become a frontage road to the new route.

Tom Zurbuchen asked why the Mary Street Option 2 alignment would require a new bridge over Five Mile Creek, since there is already an existing bridge. Laura explained in order to incorporate the existing bridge, too many curves would be introduced to the roadway design, and this would not meet the design standards.

The Legacy Lane alignment is somewhat unique in that it would not draw much or any traffic to Pioneer Road, Dover Road, and Five Mile Road. The traffic using the segment of this route north of the river is from the adjacent rural subdivisions and from further north toward Huntley. This alternative would not serve traffic from the Heights; this traffic would use Mary Street to access the new river crossing, adding more than 11,000 cars per day to Mary Street.

The Oxbow alignment would draw hardly any traffic north of the river. It would be more convenient for most drivers to use the existing street network to access the new river crossing because of the locations where the alignment connects to the network.

Traffic would be split evenly between Mary Street and the new Five Mile Road alignment. The Five Mile Road alignment would draw 7,800 ADT and increase traffic on the existing alignment of Mary Street by 7,800 ADT. Traffic on Dover Road would increase by 300 ADT.

The E1/E3 alignment would be similar to the Oxbow alignment in that it would not be used north of the river. It would be more convenient for drivers to use existing routes to access the river crossing.

**Cost:** The two most expensive alignments would be the Mary Street Option 1 and Legacy Lane; this is primarily due to the longer bridge over the Yellowstone River. The Legacy Lane alignment would also have the expense of a second structure over Five Mile Creek. The other alignments are fairly similar in cost.

**Private Property Impacts:** The Mary Street alignments would impact a higher number of parcels because they are located in areas where there are smaller residential lots as opposed to larger agricultural tracts of land. When looking at the full length of the alignments between I-90 and Old Hwy 312, the differences in the number of homes or businesses that would need to be relocated is not substantial; it would range from four to nine depending on the alternative. Alignments considered earlier in the process impacted 40-50 homes and businesses in some cases. In the broader context of alignments evaluated for this project, a range of four to nine homes and businesses is not a significant differentiator.

**Floodplain Impacts:** Mary Street Option 1 and Legacy Lane alignments have the longest crossings of the floodplain and therefore the highest potential for floodplain impacts.

**Purpose and Need:** In consideration of the key benefits related to the purpose and need, all of the alternatives performed well. The only exceptions are the Legacy Lane and Oxbow Park alignments, which had a moderate to poor rating for the fourth need – to facilitate a future connection to US 87 and MT 3. These alignments connect to Old Hwy 312 at a location surrounded by development to the west. This development would prevent further construction of the roadway so that it could connect with US 87 and MT 3.

***Screening Results for Alignments Originating at Pinehills and Pinehills Split***

For the alternatives originating at Pinehills and Pinehills Split, the travel time benefits are much less; in some cases there is no benefit at all. The costs are substantially higher due to the different interchanges. The Johnson Lane Interchange would cost approximately \$17 million while the Pinehills interchange would cost approximately \$81 million and Pinehills Split interchange would cost approximately \$63 million. The private property impacts would also be higher:

- Johnson Lane alignments – 4 to 9 homes/businesses
- Pinehills alignments – 14 to 17 homes/businesses
- Pinehills Split alignments – 15 to 18 homes/businesses

Since the Pinehills and Pinehills Split alignments would have higher costs, more impacts, and fewer benefits, these were recommended to be screened out, with the exception of the Pinehills and Pinehills Split – Mary Street Options, which will be screened out pending field work on the Johnson Lane alignments. Field work was performed on the Pinehills and Pinehills Split alignments under the original project, during which no fatal flaws were identified that would prevent construction of these alignments. If fatal flaws are found during the field work on the Johnson Lane alternatives, then the Pinehills and Pinehills Split – Mary Street Options will be carried forward for evaluation in the DEIS.

Tim Miller asked if there would be funding to secure the ROW. Stefan explained the project would be completed in three phases – the first is the environmental study, the second is the roadway design, and the third is construction. Funding will be secured as the project progresses.

Denis Pitman expressed his concern over the amount of traffic that would be added to Mary Street under the Five Mile Road alternative, particularly if no improvements were made to Mary Street. Laura responded the impacts would be evaluated in the EIS.

Conrad asked why the costs would be so much higher for the Pinehills area interchanges. Laura explained this is due to the type of interchange required. Bob stated that Johnson Lane would be a service level interchange, while the Pinehills area interchanges would have to be system level interchanges. This type of interchange has a bigger footprint since all the ramps must allow for a highway travel speed of 70 mph. Conrad asked why Johnson Lane would be able to use a service level interchange. Bob explained the Johnson Lane interchange would serve the local street arterials. System level interchanges are freeway to freeway.

Conrad asked what the long-term plans are for the I-90/I-94 interchange and if the project would fit in to these plans. Stefan noted that there are currently no plans to address the long term needs of the I-90/I-94 interchange (a.k.a. Pine Hills Interchange). Should the Bypass project identify a preferred alternative that would use the Pine Hills Interchange, improvements to the interchange would then be addressed. Stefan continued by noting that there is a current study being conducted for the I-90 corridor that is looking at the potential growth in traffic, but that this study does not include the Pinehills Interchange. Similarly, there currently is not a project programmed to

address possible improvements to the Johnson Lane Interchange, beyond what could be identified through this EIS.

### **Alternatives Identified for Detailed Evaluation in the DEIS**

The alternatives identified for evaluation in the DEIS include:

- Johnson Lane Option 1 – Mary Street Option 2
- Johnson Lane Option 2 – Mary Street Option 2
- Johnson Lane Option 1 – Five Mile Road
- Johnson Lane Option 2 – Five Mile Road

### **Outreach and Coordination**

#### Cooperating and Participating Agencies

Federal law requires that federal, state, regional, and local agencies must be invited to participate in the planning process if they have jurisdiction over resources in our project area, or if they have some vested interest or expertise relevant to the project.

This group of agency representatives was assembled on April 1, 2011 to review and solicit comments on the required coordination points. Input received at this meeting suggested that the purpose and need precludes alternatives that do not involve a new crossing of the Yellowstone River. They requested at least one alternative without a new crossing be evaluated. Three alternatives meeting these requirements were identified and screened, but they were screened out in Level 2 due to the significant number of private property impacts.

#### Recent Stakeholder Meetings

The project team met with a set of landowners on Mary Street on June 16<sup>th</sup>. The Mary Street landowners suggested a new alignment that would follow along the north side of Five Mile Creek. The project team also met with Lockwood Water and Sewer on June 16<sup>th</sup>. They indicated they will be constructing a new lift station at the southeast corner of Johnson Lane and Coulson Road. On June 17<sup>th</sup>, the team met with Yellowstone River and Parks Association (YRPA). They indicated a strong preference for Mary Street Option 1, but they are willing to discuss mitigation measures for other options.

Mike Penfold mentioned his appreciation for the project team taking the time to meet with the YRPA. He asked for further information on the discussion during the meeting. Laura explained that they discussed mitigation that would be required as a result of the roadway. YRPA identified refinements to reduce the impacts of the road. They did see some benefit to having additional access to the park from a new road, but would prefer that the alignment does not go through the park

Laura asked if the attendees knew of any other groups the project team should contact. Mike Penfold suggested the Yellowstone River Conservation District, Yellowstone River Council, and the Bear Tooth Paddlers. He implied he had contact info for all three groups. Bill Kennedy suggested the Flying J Truck Stop, the Town Pump, and other businesses in the Johnson Lane area. He also mentioned the Fire Department Board in Lockwood. Conrad suggested the business owners on Coulson Road. Scott Walker suggested the Lockwood School District.

### Newsletter

The team is putting together a newsletter that will be mailed in July or August. Contents will include a summary of project activities, public input from the October 2010 Open House, design standards and design objectives, and an alternatives map.

Conrad asked about additional public meetings. Laura replied there will not be any more public meetings until the public hearing for the DEIS.

### Website

The website was updated in March to include information on the project status, recent upcoming activities and events, information from the October 2010 Open House, and a new “Related Links” page. It will be updated in July or August with information on the alternatives screening process and the revised purpose and need.

### **Next Steps**

- Newsletter
- Complete Resource Field Surveys
- Refine Preliminary Design
- Assess Impacts of Alternatives
- Meet with BBAC – Review Impacts

### **Items distributed at the meeting:**

1. Agenda
2. Alternatives North of Yellowstone River Map
3. Alternatives South of Yellowstone River Map
4. Design Objectives
5. Refined Purpose and Need
6. Typical Sections

### **Action Items**

- Contact identified stakeholder groups and arrange to meet with them if they are interested



## MEETING MINUTES

<b>PROJECT:</b>	Billings Bypass EIS MDT Project No. NCPD 56(55), CN 4199
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	Billings Bypass Advisory Committee Meeting #8
<b>DATE HELD:</b>	September 28, 2010
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Billings Hotel and Convention Center
<b>ATTENDING:</b>	<b>MDT/FHWA:</b> Fred Bente, Stefan Streeter, Gary Neville, Alan Woodmansey, Michael Kulbacki, Kevin McLaury, Mike Duman <b>DEA:</b> Debra Perkins-Smith, Laura Meyer <b>HKM:</b> John Shoff <b>M&amp;A:</b> Bob Marvin <b>BBAC:</b> Peggie Gaghen, Jim Ronquillo, Scott Walker, Conrad Stroebe, Scott Walker, Denis Pitman, Tim Miller, Tom Zurbuchen, Connie Herberg, Paul Gatzemeier, Barry Stang, Mike Black, Bill Kennedy <b>ATTENDEES:</b> Evelyn Pyburn, Bob Riehl, Dennis Cook, Liz Ching, Rachel Court
<b>COPIES:</b>	Attendees; BBAC members; Tom Gocksch, MDT; File

### PURPOSE OF MEETING

### SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

#### Review of Purpose and Need

- The new purpose and need is primarily focused on improving mobility at the local level with a secondary focus on supporting planning for a future bypass route. This is a shift from the original purpose and need which focused primarily on improving the international trade corridor with a secondary focus on alleviating congestion on the urban network in Billings. The project no longer needs to provide an interstate-level facility for to improve the trade corridor route. A major arterial would be sufficient.
- Paul Gatzemeier expressed concern that under the new purpose and need, the facility won't remove commercial trucks from the urban network unless they are restricted from using urban routes. Debra Perkins-Smith clarified that even under the original purpose and need, there was no proposal to restrict commercial trucks from using the urban network.

#### Design Assumptions for Screening

- The design assumptions that were used to complete the preliminary screening were reviewed. It was explained that the design criteria for the alternatives that are developed may be different, but some assumptions were necessary to screen the conceptual alternatives.
- NHS major arterial
- Limited access control
- 60 mph design speed

- 130-foot to 200-foot right-of-way
- System-level interchange at I-90/I-94
- Service-level interchange at other interstate connection locations
- At-grade intersection for connection to Old Hwy 312
- Grade-separated railroad crossings

### **Overview of Alternatives Development and Fatal Flaw Analysis**

The alternatives development process was reviewed to highlight the range of alternatives that had been considered through the process. Many suggested alignments that used existing road corridors were screened out early on because an interstate level facility would be substantial impacts to private property along existing roadways. The concept of using the Johnson Lane interchange had also been screened out early on because a system level interchange was required and would not provide adequate spacing from the existing system interchange at I-90/I-94.

The alternatives that were last shown to the public were reviewed. Within the eastern segment (between I-90 and Old Hwy 312) only one of the alignments previously evaluated was feasible because the others traversed the historic Baker Battlefield site, which was identified as a significant historic resource during the field surveys completed last summer.

After the project was rescoped to focus on the I-90 to Old Hwy 312 connection, the project team had to re-screen all of the previously suggested alternatives against the new purpose and need. Because interstate level design and system level interchanges were no longer required, some of the earlier suggestions may be feasible. The project team developed a range of alternatives that would provide a connection between I-90 and Old Hwy 312, many of which were based on the earlier suggestions.

It was determined that routes too far north of the urban area would not meet the purpose and need very well because the proposed route would be much longer than the existing route. Therefore, alternatives north of the battlefield site were screened out. Only one of the preliminary alignments and two of the preliminary interchange options are still considered viable. These are the only alternatives for which preliminary design and field work has been completed. The other potential alternatives are only conceptual and have not been analyzed in any detail.

### **New Conceptual Alignments**

The new conceptual alignments included:

- Connection to the interstate at Piccolo Lane, river crossing near the refinery, use either Bitterroot Drive or a new route along the west bank of the Yellowstone River to connect with Mary Street and proceed west to Old Hwy 312.
- Connection to the interstate at Johnson Lane; river crossing at same location as preliminary alignment, use one of five potential routes to connect with Old Hwy 312 – existing Mary Street, Legacy Lane alignment, Five Mile Road Alignment, Pioneer Road Alignment, or preliminary alignment (EI/E3).  
Note: These connection options could also be used in combination with either of the interchange options from the preliminary alignments; Pinehills or Pinehills Split.

## **Preliminary Alternatives Screening**

### ***Screening Criteria***

- Travel time benefit
- Private property impacts
- Constructability issues
- Floodplain impacts

### ***Overview of Preliminary Screening Results***

- Piccolo Lane Alignment using Bitterroot Drive or River Edge alignment with connection to Mary Street
  - Offers the best travel time benefit of any alignments evaluated
  - River crossing is problematic because a side channel of the Yellowstone River would be impacted and the elevation change between the north and south side of the river is substantial at this location.
  - Impacts to homes along Bitterroot would be very high. The River Edge option impacts fewer homes, but impacts would still be high and would involve construction of a new road through a residential area.
- Johnson Lane Alignment
  - Offers good travel time benefits
  - Would require reconstruction of the existing interchange.
  - Very few existing buildings impacted

The Johnson Lane alignment can connect to any of the following alignments west of the river:

- Mary Lane Alignment
  - Offers good travel time benefits
  - Uses existing road corridor - may require frontage road due to large number of private accesses
  - 0 – 2 homes impacted
- Legacy Lane Alignment
  - Offers good travel time benefits
  - New road through agricultural area
  - Crosses Five Mile Creek
  - 2 – 4 homes impacted
  - Terminus at Old Hwy 312 is across from an existing residential subdivision
- Five Mile Road Alignment
  - Offers good to moderate travel time benefits (not as good as Mary Street or Legacy Lane)
  - Part of route uses an existing road corridor
  - No impacts to existing homes
- Pioneer Road Alignment
  - Offers moderate travel time benefits
  - Part of route uses an existing road corridor
  - 11 – 17 homes impacted

- E1/E3 Preliminary Alignment
  - Offers moderate travel time benefits
  - New road through agricultural area
  - No homes impacted

Note: the travel time analysis for Legacy, Five Mile, Pioneer, and E1/E3 assumes that drivers would use the existing surface streets to connect with Mary Street instead of proceeding north to Old Hwy 312.

- Pinehills Alignment
  - Can be paired with the same five alignments west of the river as discussed for Johnson Lane
  - Travel time benefits are moderate when paired with Mary Street or Legacy Lane and moderate to poor when paired with Five Mile Road, Pioneer Road or E1/E3.
  - 25 homes impacted
- Pinehills Split Alignment
  - Can be paired with the same five alignments west of the river as discussed for Johnson Lane
  - Travel time benefits are moderate when paired with Mary Street or Legacy Lane and moderate to poor when paired with Five Mile Road, Pioneer Road or E1/E3.
  - 46 homes impacted
  - Interchange concept could be modified to reduce impacts under new design criteria

***BBAC Comments and Discussion***

- Johnson Lane and Piccolo interchanges – need to consider traffic impacts. Johnson Lane interchange is already very congested.
- The southern terminus of Piccolo Lane is in front of Lockwood School. Lockwood representatives expressed traffic-related safety concerns associated with a potential I-90 interchange at Piccolo Lane.
- In the Lockwood Transportation Plan, a connection between Piccolo Lane and the Billings Heights was considered as a long term solution to the lack of connectivity between Lockwood and Billings Heights. However, this option was not evaluated as a bypass connection to Interstate 90 within that document.
- The I-90/I-94 area is better suited for an interchange – could create opportunities for improvement to surrounding neighborhoods
- The Johnson Lane interchange needs major changes and this project could provide an opportunity to improve that interchange. Upgrading this interchange would be much easier and cheaper than the interchange options at Pinehills.
- The Johnson Lane interchange is key for trucking services. Truck traffic/facilities bring in money to this area.
- The Lockwood Community Plan needs to evaluate the social impacts of the different interchange options and coordinate findings with the analysis for this project.
- Mary Street would need to be widened or a frontage road provided. Concern about impacts to residents if design speed is 60 mph.

- If the alternatives for this project would provide a surface street connection to Mary Street, improvements to Mary Street may need to be a component of the alternatives to mitigate traffic impacts.
- Legacy alignment goes through a rural residential area. Five Mile is a better choice.
- Need to consider who these alternatives would serve. Mary would be better for Heights residents. Five Mile would be better for Huntley and rural residential along Old Hwy 312.
- The intersection at US 87/312/Mary/Bench Blvd will be improved as part of the Bench Blvd reconstruction.
- The Pinehills and Pinehills Split interchanges need to be retained as alternatives. They offer more versatility in planning for a future bypass.
- Need to see the cost estimates to properly compare these alternatives.

### ***Screening Conclusions***

- Piccolo Lane Interchange and both alignment options (Bitterroot and River Edge) were screened out because they have high impacts to private property and many technical challenges near the refinery and Yellowstone River.
- Pioneer Road Alignment was screened out because it provides less benefit for travel time and has more impact to private property than other similar alternatives.
- The two Johnson Lane alignments with the Mary Street, Legacy and Five Mile alignment options will be carried forward for further analysis.
- The Pinehills, Pinhills Split and E1/E3 alignments will not be screened out, but will be set aside until additional information is available for new conceptual alignments.

### **Public Involvement Update**

- Revised Notice of Intent published on September 7, 2010
- Cooperating and Participating Agency Letters distributed on September 28, 2010
- Newsletter to be mailed out on October 7, 2010
- Press release and news adds to be release this week and next.
- Mailing list updated to include residents along potential routes
- Website update in progress
- Public meeting planned for October 13, 2010 at Lockwood School – 7:00 to 9:00 PM

### **Input on Meeting Locations**

- BBAC Meetings – hold in afternoon. No preference stated for location.
- Public Meetings – 1<sup>st</sup> Interstate Operation Center or 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor of Library. Wednesdays are not a good night to hold public meetings.

### **Comments/Questions**

- The public will want information on impacts and costs
- Don't take too many options to the public – it is confusing

- Move forward with project while concern about emergency/alternate access is at its peak due to the tornado.

**Next Steps**

- Newsletter / Press Release
- Public Meeting
- Resource Agency Meeting
- Complete design of preliminary alternatives
- Field work in spring

**Items distributed at the meeting:**

1. Agenda
2. Purpose and Need Comparison
3. Conceptual Alternatives Map
4. Alternatives Screening Matrix

**Action Items**

- None.



DAVID EVANS  
AND ASSOCIATES INC.

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## DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

<b>PROJECT:</b>	Billings Bypass EIS MDT Project No. NCPD 56(55), CN 4199
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	Billings Bypass Advisory Committee Meeting #7
<b>DATE HELD:</b>	July 28, 2010
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Quality Inn – Homestead Room
<b>ATTENDING:</b>	<b>MDT/FHWA:</b> Fred Bente, Stefan Streeter, Gary Neville, Lloyd Rue <b>DEA:</b> Debra Perkins-Smith, Laura Meyer <b>HKM:</b> John Shoff, Todd Cormier <b>M&amp;A:</b> Bob Marvin <b>BBAC:</b> Candi Beaudry, Peggie Gaughen, Bill Iverson, Mike Penfold, Tom Zurbuchen, Jim Ronquillo, Bill Kennedy <b>ATTENDEES:</b> Don Reed (Lockwood Steering Committee), Scott Walker, Wyeth Friday (City-County Planning), Mark Canton (Landowner), Bob Hiaring (Landowner), Don Holzheimer (Landowner), Janice Linn (Landowner), Liz Ching (Senator Max Baucus Office), Valerie Dangerfield (Lockwood Urban Transportation District),
<b>COPIES:</b>	Attendees; BBAC members; Tom Gocksch, MDT; File

### Introductions

Stefan Streeter, MDT Billings District Administrator, welcomed the attendees to the BBAC Meeting and self-introductions were made.

### Project Update

Fred Bente, MDT – Helena, provided a project update since the last BBAC Meeting was approximately two years ago.

**Meeting Purpose** – The main purpose for this meeting was to obtain input on the Draft Purpose and Need for the refined project. The Purpose and Need Statement is critical for the EIS and is used as criteria for evaluating project alternatives.

**Original Purpose and Need** – The original purpose of the project was: “To improve the Camino-Real International Trade Corridor and alleviate traffic congestion on the city street network by providing a bypass route connecting I-90 east of Billings with MT Highway 3 northwest of Billings. Based on this purpose and the supporting needs, numerous alternatives went through a screening process resulting in two main corridors identified for detailed evaluation in the EIS.

This original purpose and the supporting needs have been redefined because of new regulations requiring that federal projects be fiscally-constrained. Projects must show that they can be funded and therefore included in the

Regional Transportation Plan. Since the entire funding for the original project from the Interstate to MT 3 could not be identified, it did not meet the fiscally-constrained requirements. Therefore, the project was redefined at the PCC Meeting in February 2009.

***BBAC Meeting on November 14, 2008*** – Although sufficient funding could not be identified for the Interstate to MT 3 project, the local interest in continuing a project was verified at the BBAC meeting. The next step was to bring this issue to the PCC.

***PCC Meeting in February 2009*** – At the PCC Meeting, the new NEPA approval requirements and FHWA guidance regarding fiscally-constrained projects was discussed. The PCC expressed continued support for the project and recommended re-scoping the project to focus on the eastern segment between the Interstate and Highway 312. The PCC believed that this shorter project is fiscally constrained and can be funded and built in the next twenty years.

Although some new data may be necessary for the rescoped project, data collected for the original project is still usable.

### **Purpose and Need for Rescoped Project**

Debra Perkins-Smith of David Evans and Associates discussed the new project focus area from I-90/I-94 to Old Highway 312 and the refined purpose and need.

As required by NEPA, the rescoped project and project alternatives from the Interstate to Old Highway 312 must meet the following requirements:

1. Have logical termini and be of sufficient length to evaluate impacts.
2. Have independent utility meaning be useable on its own and not required additional transportation improvements.
3. Not restrict consideration of alternatives for other foreseeable transportation improvements.

Based on the rescoped project, the Project Purpose and Need was refined and presented for discussion with the BBAC.

***Project Purpose:*** Provide a connection between I-90 and Old Hwy 312 that improves mobility in the eastern area of Billings and supports long-term planning for the Billings urban area.

#### ***Project Needs:***

- Provide an additional Yellowstone River crossing for transportation system reliability/redundancy;
- Provide an additional connection between Lockwood and Billings; and
- Improve mobility to and from Billings Heights.

(A handout with a detailed description of the Purpose and Need was provided.)

### ***Discussion on Purpose and Need***

Several members noted that with the recent tornado at the Metra and street closures emphasized the need for another crossing of the Yellowstone River.

Candi Beaudry asked if the purpose and need can or should include alternatives for non-motorized uses such as bikes, pedestrians, or others. Or should the definition be qualified to say – “motorized” transportation? Wyeth Friday suggested that we should also look at other modes for the future.

Jim Ronquillo asked should the purpose and need include reference to supporting the Ports-to-Plains project and removing truck traffic from Main Street?

Scott Walker asked how close the previous project was to completion. The project team responded that the alternatives had been defined and some of the field work had been undertaken. However, the project would not have been able to be completed because a Record of Decision (ROD) could not be obtained for the EIS if the project was not within the fiscally-constrained long-range transportation plan. Therefore, the EIS would not have been able to be completed as it was defined. However, some of the work that was undertaken previously is still valid and earlier alternatives can be reviewed quickly based on the new purpose and need.

Bill Kennedy stated that the process is ridiculous and didn't understand why we couldn't proceed with getting a project on the ground. Lloyd Rue of FHWA responded that this is the federal process and the project is following the requirements. Bill Kennedy expressed additional concern that the consultants were wasting project funds by going through this additional work. Stefan Streeter replied that since the project is using federal funds it must follow the laws and requirements. (MDT – I summarized this exchange – are you okay with this wording?) Bill Kennedy suggested that to keep the process moving the next BBAC Meeting be held September 28, 2010, in two months. Debra Perkins-Smith noted that as in the past, the Director has had an interest in this project and MDT may need to coordinate with his schedule but otherwise September 28<sup>th</sup> is a good date.

There was concern that not including “Camino Real” as part of purpose and need could limit potential funding sources. Bill Kennedy said that the funding for the priority corridors went away so it is no longer critical.

### **Refined Alternatives**

Based on the refined purpose and need, all reasonable alternatives must be considered. The alternatives consist of three elements:

- Facility type or function such as interstate, major arterial, etc. and the typical section such as two lanes or four lanes, medians, etc.;
- Alignments – such as what is the route between the Interstate and Old Highway 312; and
- Interchange or intersection types at the Interstate and Old Highway 312.

The next steps in the process are to identify and screen alternatives, and then to develop these final alternatives for detailed evaluation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). With a refined purpose and need and refined project, all reasonable alternatives must be considered and these include the past eastern segment alternatives, previous alternatives identified by the public, and any new alternatives. These alternatives will be

quickly screened or evaluated to determine if they meet the refined purpose and need and other criteria. This information will be presented at the next BBAC meeting and at a future public meeting.

### **Public Involvement Plan**

Debra Perkins-Smith reviewed the tasks for the public involvement plan and asked for input from the BBAC. The next steps are to update the mailing list and website and prepare a public involvement plan. Detailed handouts were provided regarding future BBAC meetings, the public involvement plan, and agency coordination. Key decisions and input are summarized below.

**Newsletter and Mailing List** – A newsletter will go out to everyone on the mailing list including those west of Old Highway 3 explaining the refined project. After this newsletter, since the project is focused on the eastern section, those that are between Old Highway 312 and MT 3 (western sections) will be removed from the mailing list unless they specifically request to continue.

**Public Involvement Plan** – Candi Beaudry mentioned that Billings has an approved Public Involvement Plan that may be helpful for the Bypass public involvement plan because it was developed according to SAFETEA-LU requirements.

**Public Meetings** – A public meeting will be held to present the refined project.

Bill Kennedy suggested that the meeting be held in two locations: (1) Lockwood, and (2) along Highway 312 before September 28<sup>th</sup> BBAC Meeting, and other stakeholders be included. Subsequent discussion and consensus was that it would be better to have the BBAC review the screening information before it goes to the public for review. He also suggested other stakeholders such as Sindilar, Lockwood, School District and Parks.

Don Reed suggested a presentation at a Lockwood Planning Committee meeting. The next meetings are August 26<sup>th</sup> and September 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7 PM at the School Administration Building.

Wyeth Friday suggested the new Fire Hall for the meeting along Old US Highway 312.

### **Next Steps**

Debra Perkins-Smith stated that the next steps are to develop the public involvement plan as well as develop and screen alternatives for the next BBAC Meeting.

### **Handouts**

Agenda

Purpose and Need – July 2010 (includes focus area map)

Public Involvement – Overall Approach and Rescoping Phase Tasks

Billings Bypass Advisory Committee Draft Meeting Agendas

# **Billings Bypass Newsletters**



# Public Hearing September 12, 2012. Please join us!

Date: Wednesday, September 12

Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Place: Lockwood Middle School, Commons (Eileen Johnson Building),  
1932 U.S. Hwy 87 E, Lockwood

Copies of the Draft EIS are available for review at:

- MDT Billings District Office, 424 Morey Street, Billings, MT
- Montana State University Billings Library, 1500 University Drive, Billings, MT
- City-County Planning Department, 4th Floor Parmly Billings Library, 510 N. Broadway, Billings, MT
- Yellowstone County Commissioners Office (County Courthouse), 217 N. 27th Street, Room 403, Billings, MT
- MDT Environmental Services Bureau, 2960 Prospect Avenue, Helena, MT
- Lockwood Water & Sewer District, 1644 Old Hardin Road, Lockwood, MT

The Draft EIS may also be viewed and comments may be submitted on the MDT website at:

[http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/eis\\_ea.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/eis_ea.shtml)

Comments are due by October 1, 2012, and should be sent to Tom Martin, P.E., Environmental Services Bureau Chief, at Montana Department of Transportation Environmental Services, 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, Montana 59620-1001.

1,100 copies of this publication were produced at an approximate cost of \$1.08 each for a total cost of \$1,188. Alternative accessible formats of pertinent information will be provided on request. For further information, contact Mary Guse at 720-225-4608 or [mrg@deainc.com](mailto:mrg@deainc.com). For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592, or call Montana relay at 711.



Tom Martin, P.E.  
Environmental Services Bureau Chief  
Montana Department of Transportation  
Environmental Services  
2701 Prospect Avenue  
PO Box 201001  
Helena, Montana 59620-1001



## BILLINGS BYPASS EIS

NCPD 56(55)CN 4199

Issue No. 6

Summer 2012

### What is the Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement?

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) summarizes the results of the evaluation of a No Build Alternative and three “build” alternatives to improve access and connectivity between I-90 and Old Hwy 312, and to improve mobility in the eastern area of Billings. Each build alternative must meet the following needs:

- Reduce physical barrier impacts to the transportation system
- Improve connectivity between Lockwood and Billings
- Improve mobility to and from Billings Heights
- Improve truck/commercial vehicle access to and through Billings

Based upon this evaluation, the Final EIS will identify a Preferred Alternative for a new roadway alignment between I-90 and Old Hwy 312.

### Alternatives under consideration have been narrowed down to three!

The Alternatives Screening process resulted in three build alternatives that were advanced for detailed analysis in the Draft EIS. The elements of each of these alternatives are discussed in this newsletter on the following pages:

- Mary Street Option 1 (page 3)
- Mary Street Option 2 (page 4)
- Five Mile Road (page 5)

A map of all three alternatives is shown inside on page 2.

### What are “primary” and “secondary” corridors?

Each of the proposed alternatives consists of a “primary” corridor, which is the proposed alternative alignment, and a “secondary” corridor, which is an existing roadway that would undergo improvements to accommodate traffic that would be attracted to the alternative.

The need for secondary corridor improvements was identified during the alternatives screening process, which included an analysis of alternative-related traffic impacts to the existing roadway network. The analysis revealed that improvements to existing routes north of the Yellowstone River would be necessary to accommodate the increase in traffic generated by each of the alternatives.



*This segment of Five Mile Road would be improved under all build alternatives*

### Project Phasing

The recommended Preferred Alternative would likely include two phases of construction. The first phase is anticipated to consist of construction of a two-lane facility. The two-lane facility would be an interim solution that meets the traffic needs within the 20-year planning horizon. The second phase of the recommended Preferred Alternative would consist of the construction of the remaining two lanes of the alignment, in order to achieve a four-lane facility. Completion of the full four-lane roadway would serve as a long-term solution that would meet the projected traffic needs outside of the 20-year planning horizon.



See inside this newsletter for detailed information on the alternatives.



## Proposed Alternatives

### Mary Street Option 1:

Approximately 5 miles long, the primary corridor connects I-90 to Old Hwy 312 with a new bridge across the Yellowstone River. Proceeding north from I-90 along Johnson Lane, the alternative continues northeast along Coulson Road, crosses the railroad, and continues northwest to the Yellowstone River.

North of the Yellowstone River, the alternative proceeds directly west to Mary Street and parallels the existing road, terminating at Old Hwy 312. The existing Mary Street would be used as an access road for local residents.

### Mary Street Option 2:

Approximately 5 miles long, the primary corridor connects I-90 to Old Hwy 312 with a new bridge across the Yellowstone River. Proceeding north from I-90 along Johnson Lane, the alternative continues northeast along Coulson Road, crosses the railroad, and continues northwest to the Yellowstone River.

North of the Yellowstone River, the alternative proceeds northwest and then curves southwest toward Mary Street. The alternative parallels the existing road, terminating at Old Hwy 312. Mary Street would be used as an access road for local residents.

### Five Mile Road:

Approximately 4.5 miles long, the primary corridor connects I-90 to Old Hwy 312 with a new bridge across the Yellowstone River. Proceeding north from I-90 along Johnson Lane, the alternative continues northeast along Coulson Road, crosses the railroad, and continues northwest to the Yellowstone River.

North of the Yellowstone River, the alternative proceeds north along the Five Mile Road corridor. Five Mile Road would be reconstructed to extend north of Dover Road and terminate at Old Hwy 312. Mary Street would be reconstructed along its existing alignment to City of Billings standards for an urban arterial roadway.

## Public Hearing September 12, 2012. Please join us!

Public involvement is a crucial component of the decision-making process for this project. We want to hear from you! Please attend a public hearing about the release of the Draft EIS. The public hearing will provide a summary of the DEIS and an opportunity for you to comment on the proposed alternatives and the proposed measures to mitigate impacts to natural and community resources. There will be a short presentation, a question-and-answer session, followed by an opportunity for the public to make comments to the attendees.

**Date: Wednesday, September 12**

**Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.**

**Place: Lockwood Middle School, Commons (Eileen Johnson Building), 1932 U.S. Hwy 87 E, Lockwood**

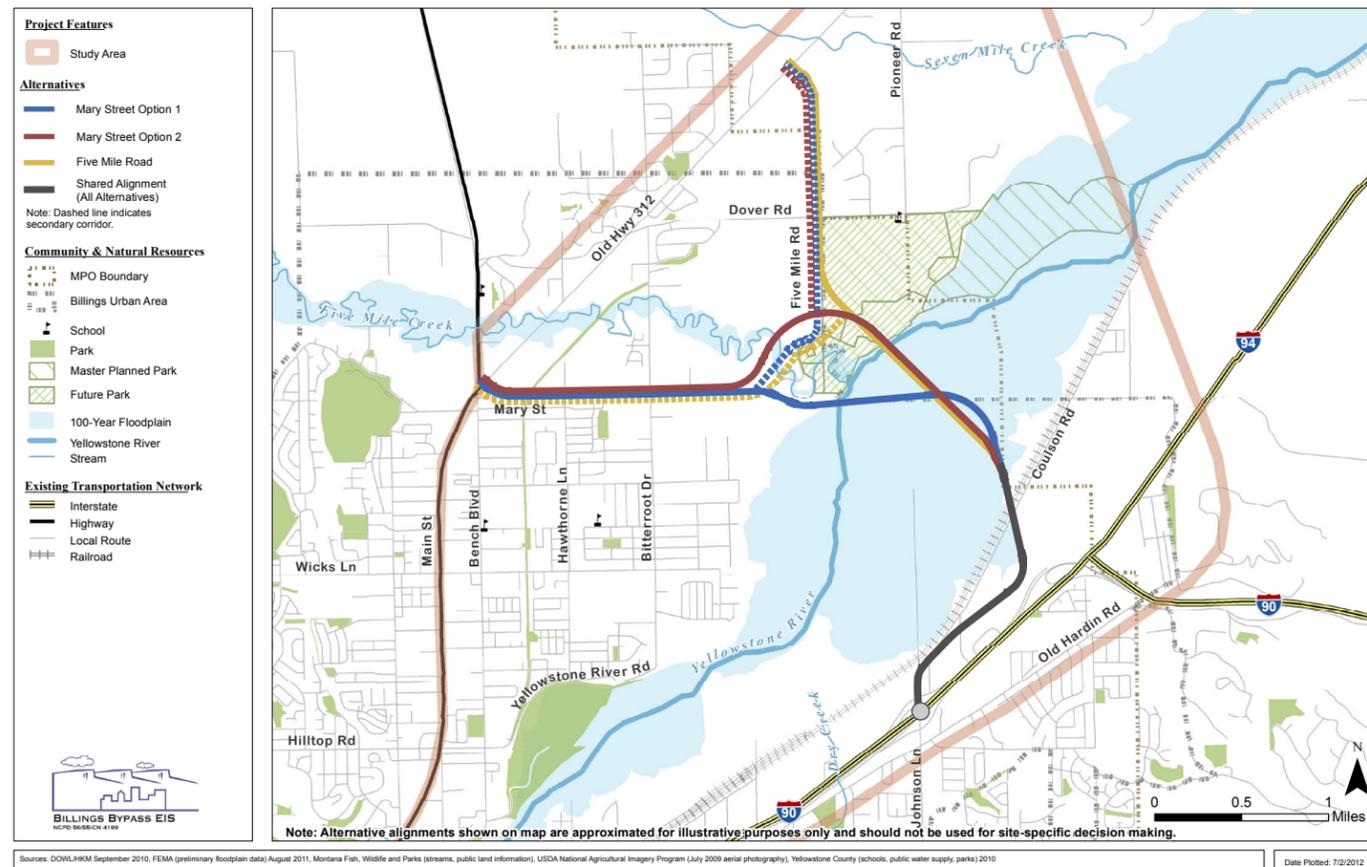
Copies of the Draft EIS are available for review at:

- MDT Billings District Office, 424 Morey Street, Billings, MT
- Montana State University Billings Library, 1500 University Drive, Billings, MT
- City-County Planning Department, 4th Floor Parmlly Billings Library, 510 N. Broadway, Billings, MT
- Yellowstone County Commissioners Office (County Courthouse), 217 N. 27th Street, Room 403, Billings, MT
- MDT Environmental Services Bureau, 2960 Prospect Avenue, Helena, MT
- Lockwood Water & Sewer District, 1644 Old Hardin Road, Lockwood, MT

The Draft EIS may also be viewed and comments may be submitted on the MDT website at:

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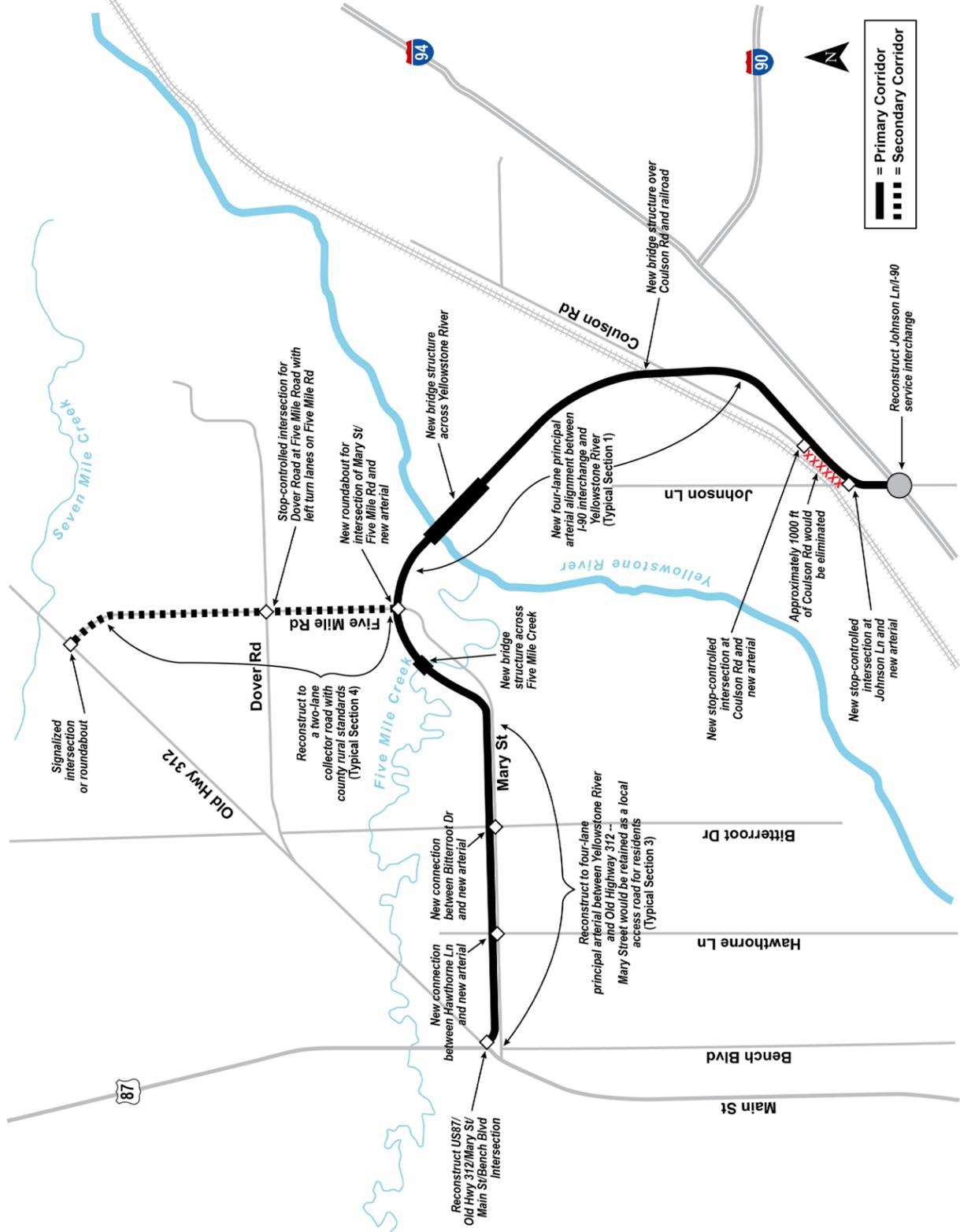


## Next Steps

The following project activities are anticipated by the end of 2012:

- Summer 2012** – Agency and public review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- Fall 2012** – Incorporate agency and public comments and prepare the Final EIS
- Winter 2012** – Release the Final EIS

## Mary Street Option 2 Alternative



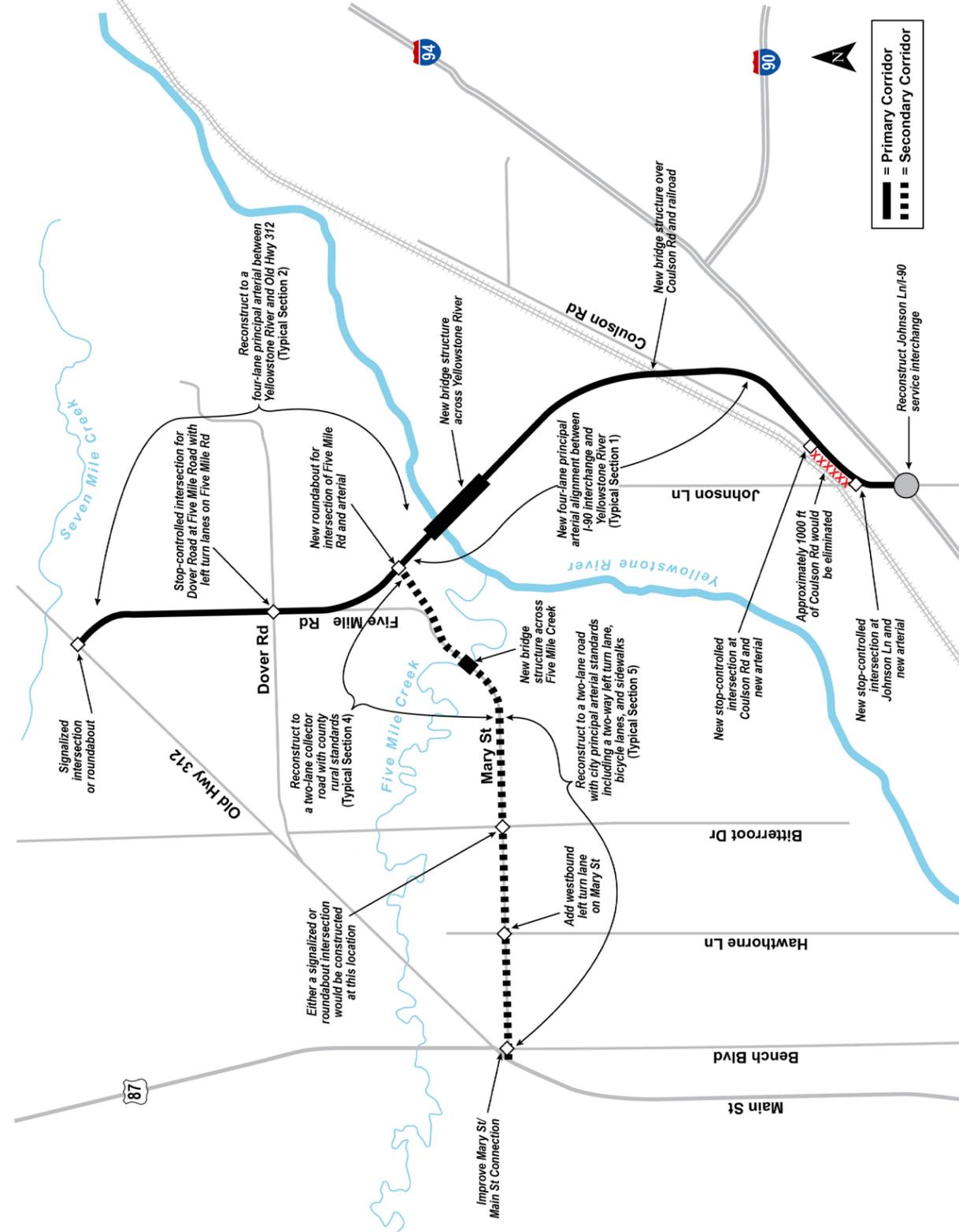
**Primary Corridor**

- Same as Mary Street Option 1, but bridge construction over the Yellowstone River is north of Five Mile Creek.

**Secondary Corridor**

- Reconstruction of the existing Five Mile Road corridor.
- Construction of a new segment of Five Mile Road between Dover Road and Old Hwy 312.
- Construction of a new bridge over Five Mile Creek.

## Five Mile Road Alternative



**Primary Corridor**

- Approximate 4.5 mile connection from I-90 to Old Hwy 312.
- Construction of new bridge across Yellowstone River north of Five Mile Creek.
- Reconstruction of Five Mile Road to extend north of Dover Road and terminate at Old Hwy 312.

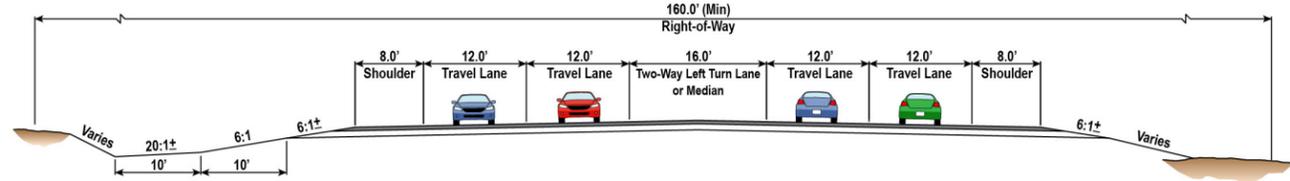
**Secondary Corridor**

- Reconstruction of the existing roadway connection between Mary Street and Five Mile Road.
- Reconstruction of Mary Street to City of Billings urban arterial standards, including the following improvements:
  - Two travel lanes with two-way left-turn lane
  - Curb and gutter
  - Pedestrian facilities
- Construction of a new bridge over Five Mile Creek.

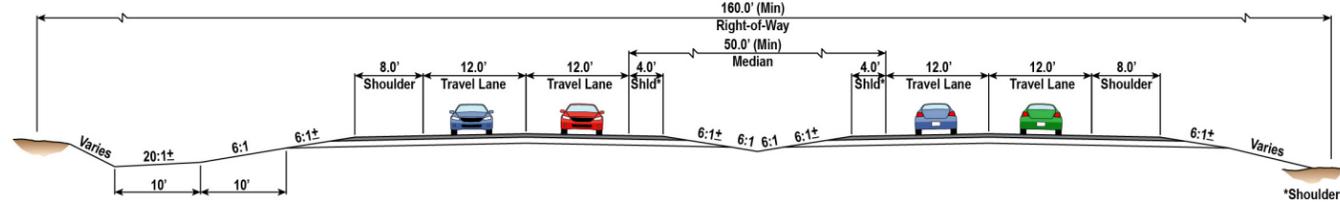
## Typical Sections

Typical sections are cross-sections that are representative of the roadway design throughout the project area. The proposed typical sections are based on the design standards for each segment. The lane widths and configurations are displayed below for illustrative purposes. Based on the demand for the proposed project as opening year approaches, the roadway may be striped with a lesser configuration (for example, two lanes instead of four, or facilities on the bridge may be configured to accommodate pedestrians on one side to allow wider shoulders for vehicle breakdown areas).

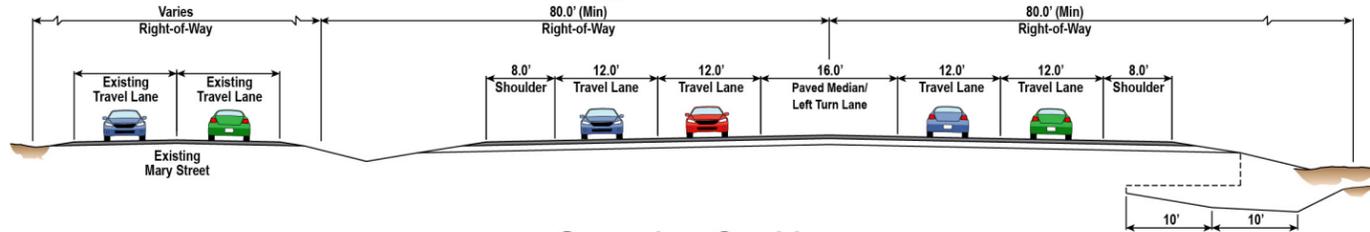
**Primary Corridor**  
**Urban Principal Arterial**  
**Typical Section 1**



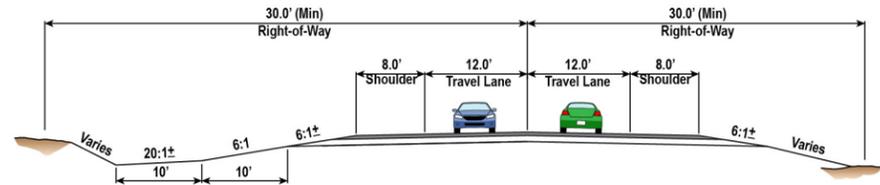
**Rural Principal Arterial**  
**Typical Section 2**



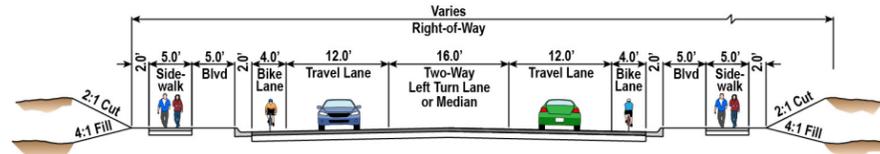
**Urban Principal Arterial with Local Access Road**  
**Typical Section 3**



**Secondary Corridor**  
**Yellowstone County Local Road**  
**Typical Section 4**



**City of Billings Urban Arterial Roadway**  
**Typical Section 5**



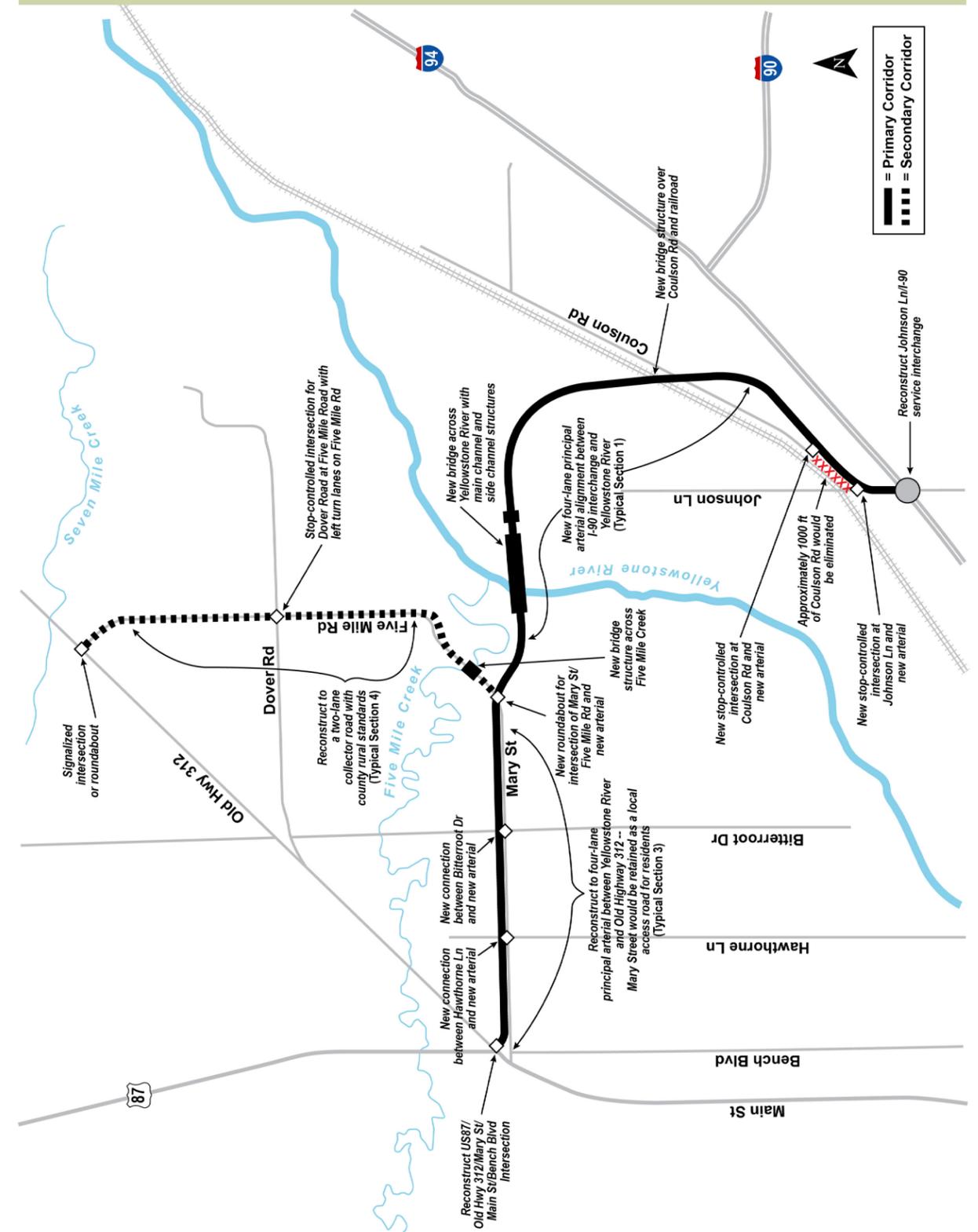
## Primary Corridor

- Approximate 5 mile connection from I-90 to Old Hwy 312.
- Construction of new bridge across Yellowstone River south of Five Mile Creek.
- Construction of roadway paralleling north side of Mary Street.

## Secondary Corridor

- Reconstruction of the existing roadway connection between Mary Street and Five Mile Road.
- Reconstruction of the existing Five Mile Road corridor.
- Construction of a new segment of Five Mile Road between Dover Road and Old Hwy 312.
- Construction of a new bridge over Five Mile Creek.

## Mary Street Option 1 Alternative



**Want to find out more?**

Public input is critical to making sound transportation decisions for the Billings Bypass. Here are some ways to get involved:

- Visit the project website at [www.billingsbypass.com](http://www.billingsbypass.com) to learn more about the project and submit your comments to the project team.
- Request a stakeholder meeting. Project team members are available to meet with groups that have a particular interest or concern about the project. Contact one of the project team members listed below to schedule a meeting.
- Individuals may contact one of the project team members listed below with questions or comments.

**Contact Information:**

**Primary Contact:**  
Stefan Streeter, MDT  
424 Morey St.  
Billings, MT 59104  
Phone: 406-252-4138  
Fax: 406-256-6487  
[ssstreeter@mt.gov](mailto:ssstreeter@mt.gov)

**EIS Coordinator:**  
Laura Meyer, DEA  
1331 17th Street, Suite 900  
Denver, CO 80202  
Phone: 720-225-4632  
Fax: 720-946-0973  
[lmeyer@deainc.com](mailto:lmeyer@deainc.com)

**Next Steps**

The following project activities are anticipated over the next year:

- Summer 2011 - Perform field surveys for resource studies and prepare technical reports
- Fall 2011 - Perform detailed impact evaluation for preliminary alternatives
- Winter 2011/2012 - Prepare the Draft EIS for cooperating and participating agency review
- Spring 2012 - Identify the preferred alternative



**BILLINGS BYPASS EIS**

NCPD 56(55)CN 4199

Issue No. 5

**Public Input from October 2010 Open House**

MDT received great input from attendees at the October 2010 public meeting. A summary of this meeting is available on the Public Meetings and Activities page of the project website at [www.billingsbypass.com](http://www.billingsbypass.com). Two issues in particular were on the minds of many in attendance:

**Q: If the project stops at Old Hwy 312 instead of continuing to MT 3, how will it draw truck traffic off of Main Street and how will it impact traffic on Old Hwy 312?**

**A:** Approximately 85% of the truck traffic using the roadways through Billings is local and regional truck traffic. This project would provide an alternate route to serve that traffic. It is anticipated this alternate route would attract approximately 450 to 650 trucks per day that would otherwise travel on Main Street. It should be noted that not all of the traffic using the new road would access the facility via Old Hwy 312. Because the new road would also connect to other existing roads that intersect the proposed alignments, traffic would be distributed among the various connecting routes. The project team has evaluated the traffic volumes for the proposed alternatives to determine the improvements needed at each of the potential connection locations at Old Hwy 312. Potential impacts to traffic and safety will be evaluated and the results of the analysis will be presented in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). These and other potential impacts are considered to select the preferred alternative for the project.

**Q: If one of the Mary Street alignments is selected, how can that road handle the additional traffic and how could residents along Mary Street access the road safely with traffic moving at 60 mph?**

**A:** The Mary Street alignment alternatives are located directly north of Mary Street. Similar to Rimrock Road west of 40th Street W, Mary Street would remain as a frontage road parallel to the new road. It is not anticipated that traffic on Mary Street would increase as a result of the project. Urban principal arterial design standards with a maximum design speed of 55 mph are proposed for this alignment alternative. Connections from Mary Street to the new road would be provided and designed to promote safe access. If the Five Mile Road Alignment alternative is selected, traffic would increase on Mary Street because drivers traveling to and from Billings Heights would use Mary Street to access the new river crossing. The Five Mile Road Alignment alternative would include improvements to Mary Street to safely accommodate the additional traffic. The specific improvements needed along Mary Street will be identified based on the traffic and safety analysis to be performed for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

**Summary of Project Activities Since the October 2010 Newsletter**

**October 2010**

- Met with the public to discuss the re-scoped project and get input on the revised purpose and need and draft conceptual alternatives.

**January 2011**

- Determined the road design standards and design criteria for the project alternatives.

**April 2011**

- Met with cooperating and participating agencies to get input on the impact assessment methodologies and range of alternatives.

**June 2011**

- Met with project stakeholders and the Billings Bypass Advisory Committee (BBAC) to present the results of the alternatives screening.
- Began field studies to collect data on existing conditions along the proposed alignments.

**August 2011**

- Updated the Level 3 alternatives screening results based on data collection from field surveys and preliminary FEMA floodplain delineation updates.
- Currently developing and screening newly suggested alignments from landowners on Mary Street – see website for more information on these alignments.

1,200 copies of this publication were produced at an approximate cost of \$0.34 each for a total cost of \$412.50. Alternative accessible formats of pertinent information will be provided on request. For further information, contact Mary Guse at 720-225-4608 or [mrg@deainc.com](mailto:mrg@deainc.com). For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592, or call Montana relay at 711.

MONTANA  
**MDT**  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
Stefan Streeter  
Montana Department of Transportation  
District 5  
424 Morey St.  
Billings, MT 59104-0437



BILLINGS BYPASS EIS  
NCPD 56(55)CN 4199



Old Highway 312

Looking west along Mary Street near Bitterroot Drive

**Billings Website**

We have recently updated the project website with new information on the purpose and need and the alternatives screening process. Please visit the website at [www.billingsbypass.com](http://www.billingsbypass.com) for more information.

## Alternatives Development and Screening Process

After consideration of a wide range of alternatives, the project team identified four alternatives south of the Yellowstone River and five alternatives north of the Yellowstone River that would meet the project purpose and need and achieve the project design objectives. These alternatives (shown in purple on the map on page 3) were presented to the community and stakeholder groups in October 2010 and April 2011 respectively.

Based on the evaluation of these alternatives and the public input received to date, the project team has identified the preliminary alternatives that perform the best when measured against the transportation needs identified for the project. Each of the alternatives begins at the Johnson Lane interchange with I-90 and uses the same alignment north and east toward the Yellowstone River. North of the river, three corridors have been identified to complete the connection to Old Hwy 312 (shown in dashed yellow lines on the map).

These alternatives will be carried forward for detailed evaluation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

## Design Standards

National Highway System (NHS) standards were selected for this project to reflect the purpose and need for the project, which includes support of long-term planning for a future bypass that would connect between the interstate and other NHS routes. Because this project seeks to balance through mobility and local access needs, principal arterial standards will be used. The use of urban standards or rural standards will be applied based on the character of each corridor under consideration. The character of each corridor is defined by the land use, zoning, and the type and speed of connecting routes.

## Design Objectives

The following objectives serve as guidelines in the development of alternatives.

### Roadway Functionality

- Design for NHS Principal Arterial standards.
- Incorporate access control measures that balance through mobility and local access needs.
- Consider existing and future land use in a context sensitive manner.
- At a minimum, provide service-level interchanges at the interstate.
- Locate the western terminus of the route so that it supports a future connection to US 87 and MT 3.

### Safety Considerations

- Improve emergency access to the Billings Heights.
- Provide grade-separated railroad crossings.
- Improve or maintain safety on connecting routes.
- Meet MDT standards based on the projected traffic volumes and vehicle mix.

### Yellowstone River Crossing (for applicable alternatives)

- Minimize impacts to the Yellowstone River and floodplain to the extent practicable.
- Locate the river crossing to provide flexibility for future expansion of the bridge.

### Community and Environmental Considerations

- Maintain or improve traffic conditions in the eastern area of Billings.
- Accommodate crossings for planned bicycle/pedestrian routes documented in adopted local plans.
- Include pedestrian and bicycle facilities where appropriate along the proposed facility.
- Minimize social, environmental, and economic impacts to the extent practicable.

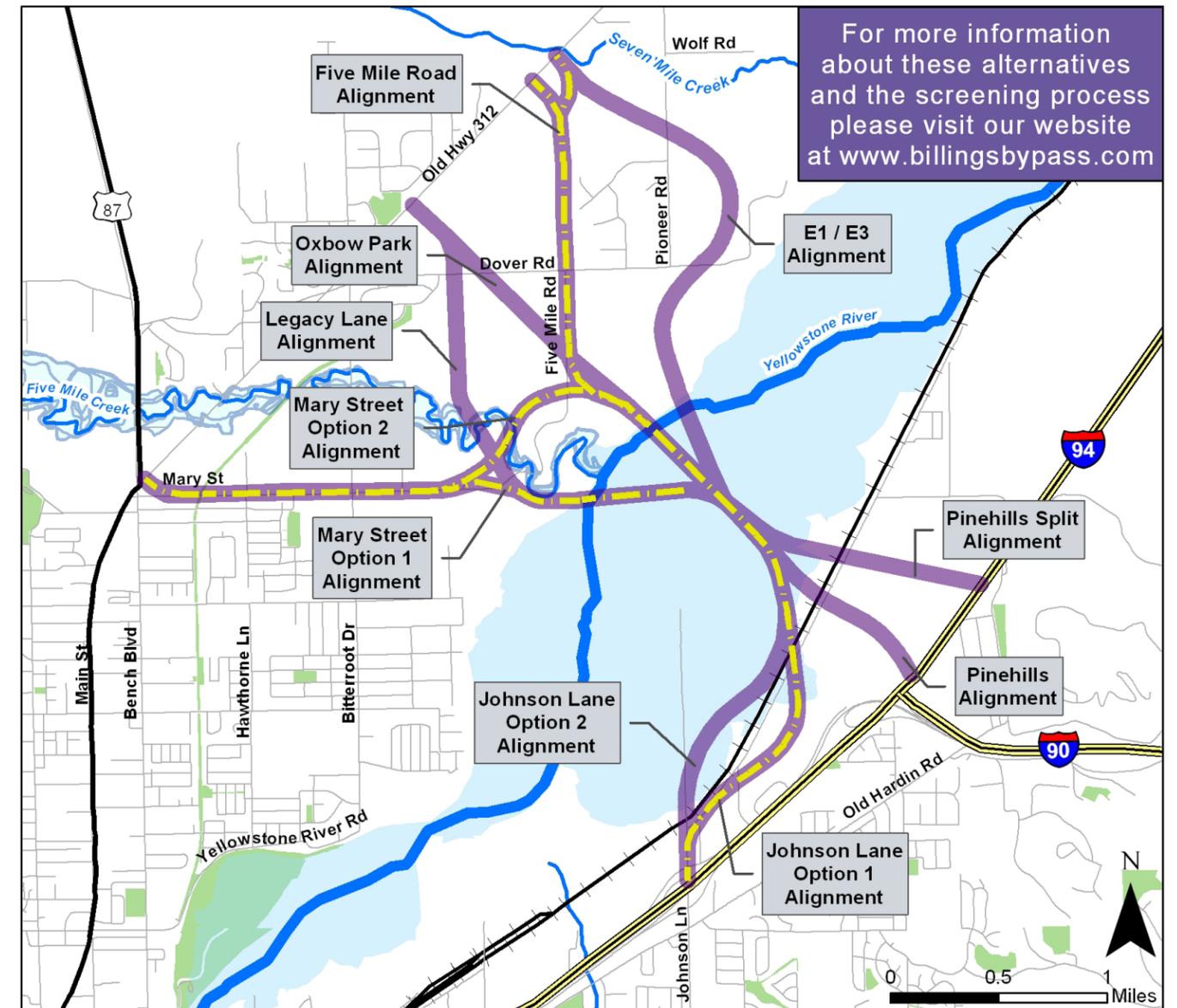
### Cost Considerations

- Allow for phased construction to accommodate funding availability.
- Limit the use of frontage roads to areas where they are essential.
- Minimize supporting infrastructure costs.

## Alternatives Identified for Evaluation in the DEIS

The preliminary alignments shown below in dashed yellow lines represent the alignments that best meet the purpose and needs and design objectives of the project. Based on the evaluation completed for the DEIS, MDT proposes to select one of the Mary Street alignments or the Five Mile Road Alignment as the primary corridor for the proposed new roadway. Regardless of which alignment is selected, traffic will use existing roadways to some extent to access the new river crossing. Therefore, the Mary Street alternatives include improvements along the Five Mile Road alignment to safely accommodate additional traffic. Likewise, the Five Mile Road alternative includes improvements along Mary Street to safely accommodate additional traffic.

Note: Two additional alignments recently suggested by the public are currently being screened in a manner consistent to that performed for other alternatives and are not pictured on this map. Please see the website for more information on these alignments.

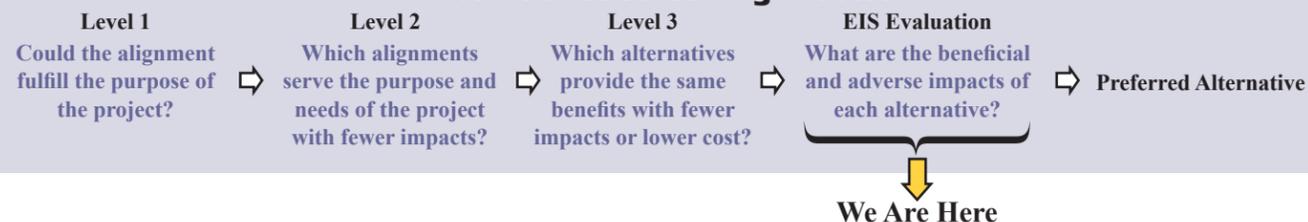


For more information about these alternatives and the screening process please visit our website at [www.billingsbypass.com](http://www.billingsbypass.com)

### Legend

Alignment Alternatives	Community & Natural Resources	Existing Transportation Network
Alignment Alternative Retained for Detailed Environmental Review	Park	Interstate
Alignment Alternative Eliminated from Further Consideration	100-Year Floodplain	Highway
	Yellowstone River	Local Road
	Creeks	Railroads

### Alternatives Screening Process



## Public Meeting Announcement

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) invites you to participate in an open house public meeting for the Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) project. This open house will be an informational meeting to identify and discuss ideas and concerns about the re-scoped Billings Bypass project. There will be a presentation at 7:15 PM and the project team will be available before and after the presentation to discuss the project and answer questions. MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person's participation in any service, program or activity for our department. If you require reasonable accommodations to participate at the upcoming public meeting, please contact Mary Guse at 720-225-4608 or mrg@deainc.com. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592, or call Montana relay at 711.

**Wednesday, October 13, 2010 from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**  
**Lockwood School, 1932 US Hwy 87, Billings**

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**MONTANA**  
**MDT**  
 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
 Stefan Streeter  
 Montana Department of Transportation  
 District 5  
 424 Morey St.  
 Billings, MT 59104-0437



**BILLINGS BYPASS EIS**  
 NCPD 56(55)CN 4199

Issue No. 4

October 2010

### This Newsletter Includes:

- Project status update (page 1)
- Summary of project activities since last newsletter (page 1)
- Request for updating the project mailing list (page 1)
- Revised purpose and need (page 2)
- Map of new project study area (page 3)
- Public meeting information (page 4)

### Would you like to be removed from the project mailing list?

The scope of this project has changed and we have updated our mailing list to include additional property owners between Interstate 90 and Old Hwy 312 that may be affected. Property owners west of Old Hwy 312 are no longer in the study area. If you would like to be removed from the project mailing list, please contact Mary Guse at 720-225-4608 or mrg@deainc.com.

### Summary of Project Activities since the January 2009 Newsletter

#### August 2009

- Completed field studies for the preliminary alignments that were presented in the January 2009 newsletter.

#### November 2009

- Due to funding constraints, the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) voted to re-scope the project to include the I-90 to Old Hwy 312 segment of the project only.

#### September 2010

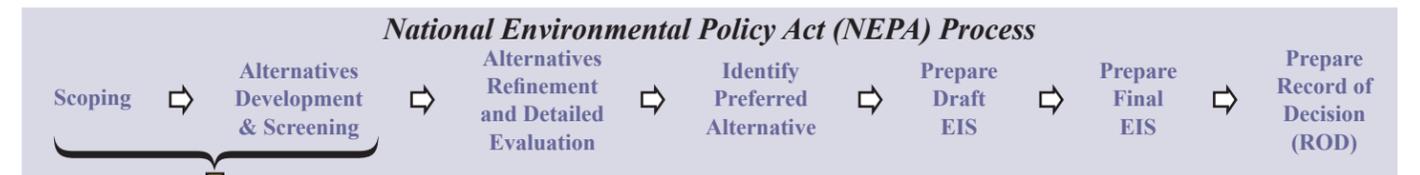
- Published a revised Notice of Intent for the Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in the Federal Register.
- Met with Billings Bypass Advisory Committee to discuss potential alternatives based on the revised purpose and need.
- Issued a press release for notification of October 13, 2010 public meeting.

### What is the status of the bypass project?

Funding constraints prompted a re-scoping of this project. The project is now proposed to provide a connection between I-90 and Old Hwy 312. As a result, the Billings Bypass project team re-evaluated the purpose of the project and what needs it will serve (see page 2).



Potential location for Yellowstone River crossing



## Comparison of Project Purpose and Needs

Original Purpose and Need	Revised Purpose and Need
<b>Project Purpose</b>	
<i>Improve the Camino-Real International Trade Corridor and alleviate traffic congestion on the city street network by providing a bypass route connecting I-90 east of Billings with MT 3 northwest of Billings.</i>	<i>Provide a connection between I-90 and Old Highway 312 that improves mobility in the eastern area of Billings and supports long-term planning for the Billings urban area.</i>
<b>Project Needs</b>	
<b>Improve the Camino-Real International Trade Corridor.</b> Provide interstate level facility that is consistent with the majority of the trade corridor route.	<b>Provide an additional Yellowstone River crossing for transportation system reliability/redundancy.</b> Support goals of the Billings Urban Area Long-Range Transportation Plan (2009) including (1) reduction of physical barrier impacts to transportation caused by the Rimrocks, the Yellowstone River and the railroad tracks and (2) development of an improved truck/commercial vehicle access to state highways serving the Billings area.
<b>Alleviate congestion on the Billings urban street network.</b> Remove regional traffic from congested urban routes.	<b>Provide an additional connection between Lockwood and Billings.</b> Provide an alternate to the congested segment of US 87 that currently connects Lockwood and Billings.
<b>Improve safety.</b> Remove regional traffic with hazardous cargo from the urban street network.	<b>Improved mobility to and from Billings Heights.</b> Provide an alternate route to the congested Main Street corridor for travel to and from Billings Heights for residents and emergency response.

### Want to find out more?

The following project activities are anticipated over the next year:

- Develop preliminary alternatives that meet the revised purpose and need.
- Perform field studies and perform detailed impacts evaluation for preliminary alternatives.
- Present the results of the impacts evaluation to the public.

Public input is critical to making sound transportation decisions for the Billings Bypass.

Here are some ways to get involved:

- Visit the project website at [www.billingsbypass.com](http://www.billingsbypass.com) to learn more about the project and submit your comments to the project team.
- Attend the next public meeting on October 13, 2010 (see page 4).

### Would you like to speak with a project team member?

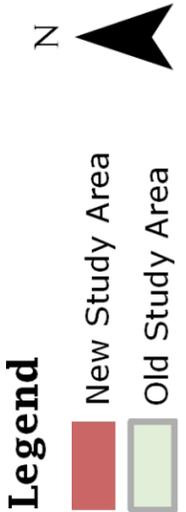
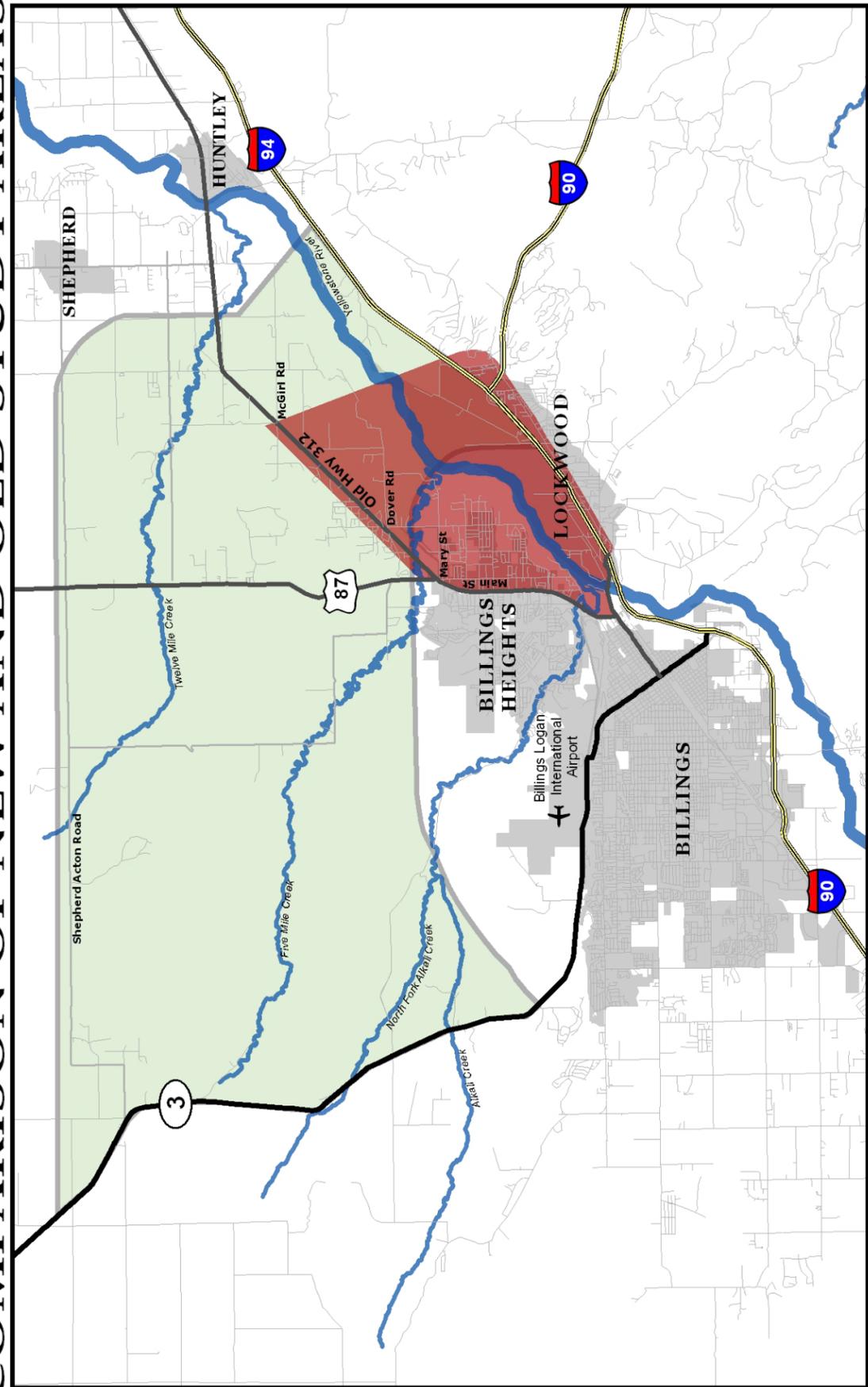
#### Primary Contact:

Stefan Streeter  
Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)  
424 Morey Street  
Billings, MT 59104  
Phone: 406-252-4138  
Fax: 406-256-6487  
[ssstreeter@mt.gov](mailto:ssstreeter@mt.gov)

#### EIS Coordinator:

Laura Meyer  
David Evans and Associates, Inc. (DEA)  
1331 17th Street  
Suite 900  
Denver, CO 80202  
Phone: 720-225-4632  
Fax: 720-946-0973  
[lmeyer@deainc.com](mailto:lmeyer@deainc.com)

## COMPARISON OF NEW AND OLD STUDY AREAS



September 2010



# Stakeholder Group Meeting Notes





DAVID EVANS  
AND ASSOCIATES INC.

## STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES

### Lockwood Urban Transportation District

<b>PROJECT:</b>	Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) <b>MDT Project No. NCPD 56(55)CN 4199</b>
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	Present the status of the project and receive comments and input
<b>DATE HELD:</b>	February 29, 2012 (2:00 – 3:30 PM)
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Parmly Billings Library 510 N Broadway Billings, Montana 59101
<b>ATTENDING:</b>	Conrad Stroebe, Don Reed, Jim Logan, Earl Blakley – Lockwood Urban Transportation District Woody Woods – Lockwood Water and Sewer District Fred Bente, Tom Gocksch – MDT Joe Hart, Wendy Wallach, Kacey Meis – DEA Todd Cormier – DOWL HKM Bob Marvin – Marvin & Associates Tom Zurbuchen - Resident
<b>COPIES:</b>	Attendees; MDT; FHWA; File

#### *Project Update*

Wendy Wallach provided a project update. In 2011, the project team completed field work and resource reports on the proposed alternatives, and determined it would be best to use new Yellowstone River floodplain data for project planning. As such, the set of alternatives remaining after the Level 3 screening process were refined to incorporate the new floodplain data. The project team recently completed the preliminary draft of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and the Draft EIS and Final EIS are on track to be released this year.

#### *DEIS Alternatives*

Wendy explained that the field work identified no fatal flaws along the proposed alignments. As such, it was determined that the Pinehills and Pinehills Split alignments should be screened out as recommended. However, during the field work, the team was informed of updates to the Yellowstone River floodplain delineation. The new floodplain delineation indicated that the floodplain had expanded in some areas and constricted in others. As a result, Level 3 screening results for the Johnson Lane and Mary Street alignments were no longer justifiable. Johnson Lane Option 1 was still mostly outside of the new floodplain delineation. However, Johnson Lane Option 2 was almost completely within the new floodplain delineation for the entire length of the alignment and would result in a substantial longitudinal encroachment. For this reason, Johnson Lane Option 2 was screened out. The justification for screening out Mary Street Option 1 during the Level 3 screening had been the greater impacts to the floodplain and cost of construction in comparison with Mary

Street Option 2. However, this justification was no longer valid since the floodplain had expanded and impacts were now very similar. Therefore, both Mary Street options were carried forward for detailed evaluation in the DEIS.

Conrad Stroebe asked why the Pinehills and Pinehills Split alignments were eliminated. Tom Gocksch explained that the interchange with I-90 and I-94 under the Pinehills and Pinehills Split alternatives would be system-level interchanges. Though they are functioning, the ramps at the I-90 / I-94 interchange do not meet current standards and would need to be reconstructed as part of these alternatives, increasing construction costs significantly without providing any added benefits. Conrad asked if the freeway would be extended across the Yellowstone River in the future. Bob Marvin explained that this would not happen. This project was previously an interstate-level facility with closed access. When the project was re-scoped to reduce the length of the facility, the nature of the bypass was changed to a limited-access principal arterial since there would not be enough traffic demand to extend the freeway across the river.

### ***Primary and Secondary Corridors***

Wendy explained that the Level 3 screening included a preliminary analysis of traffic impacts to the existing street network that would be anticipated in the design year if any of these alternatives were to be implemented. Based on this information, it was determined that additional improvements to existing roads north of the Yellowstone River would be necessary if design objectives for operations and safety were to be met. Without these improvements, it would not be possible to recommend a preferred alternative due to the impacts from the increased volume of traffic on existing connecting routes. The improvements would not be required right away but would be necessary for design year traffic (2035).

Therefore, each alternative now consists of a “primary corridor,” which is the alternative alignment; and a secondary corridor” which is the existing roadway to undergo improvements to accommodate alternative-generated traffic.

It was asked where access would be provided along the arterial. Tom Gocksch explained that access would only be provided from collector roads, and these intersections would be at-grade.

Conrad stated concern for the amount of project-generated traffic that could be funneled into the Johnson Lane interchange. He asked about the traffic origins and destinations. Bob Marvin explained that the Traffic Report details the changes to traffic patterns. The traffic volumes at Johnson Lane and Old Hardin Road under the build scenarios are the same as the no-build scenario. Bob offered to meet with Conrad at a future date to discuss the traffic report in detail. He will also provide Conrad with the trip distribution numbers. Conrad indicated this would be acceptable. Don Reed inquired if the alternatives would alleviate congestion at the Lockwood interchange (Exit 452). Bob responded that 6,000 vehicles would be removed from the interstate and congestion would be alleviated at that exit.

Joe Hart discussed the Johnson Lane interchange concepts. Rather than identify a preferred concept, the team identified a maximum area of impact by consolidating the ROW footprints of each concept. This maximum footprint was used to analyze the alternatives and calculate impacts in the DEIS. The various concepts for the interchange are included in an appendix to the DEIS. All of the concepts are functional and one will be selected during final design. This method allows more flexibility in final design and allows the public an opportunity to provide input on the concepts. Five concepts have been developed for Johnson Lane. They include:

- Replacing the signalized intersections at North Frontage Road, north access ramps, south access ramps, and Old Hardin Road with roundabouts. I-90 would be realigned slightly to the south to

facilitate a more perpendicular crossing with Johnson Lane, and Johnson Lane would pass underneath the interstate via new I-90 structures.

- Implementing a single-point urban interchange (SPUI) to replace the standard diamond interchange. The signalized intersections at North Frontage Road and Old Hardin Road would be reconstructed, and could use signalization or roundabouts for control. The north and south access ramps would be controlled by one signalized intersection located below new I-90 structures. New structures would likely be required to accommodate the access ramp signal
- Implementing an SPUI to replace the standard diamond interchange. The signalized intersections at North Frontage Road and Old Hardin Road would be reconstructed with roundabouts at these locations. The north and south access ramps would be controlled by a single roundabout located below two new I-90 structures situated over each side of the roundabout
- Implementing a double crossover diamond interchange to replace the standard diamond interchange. The signalized intersections at North Frontage Road and Old Hardin Road would be reconstructed. The north and south access ramps would be controlled by cross-over signalized intersections. I-90 would be realigned slightly to the south to facilitate a more perpendicular crossing with Johnson Lane. Johnson Lane would pass below new I-90 structures.
- Implementing a double crossover diamond interchange to replace the standard diamond interchange. The signalized intersections at North Frontage Road and Old Hardin Road would be reconstructed with roundabouts at these locations. The north and south access ramps would be controlled by cross-over signalized intersections. I-90 would be realigned slightly to the south to facilitate a more perpendicular crossing with Johnson Lane. Johnson Lane would pass below new I-90 structures.

Bob Marvin noted that the double crossover diamond interchange with roundabouts concept was developed because the crossovers are a two-phased cycle and roundabouts are more efficient at handling short cycles.

Conrad inquired if cost estimates included maintenance for the interchange. Todd Cormier stated that maintenance costs were not included but he could put together a rough estimate. Don stated his concern about heavy truck traffic intermingling with pedestrians. He inquired how this was accounted for in the design. Bob explained that pedestrian accommodations will be accounted for in the final design. Fred Bente confirmed that some concepts appear to be better for pedestrian accommodations than others, but this will need closer examination during final design. Don noted that there was a pedestrian underpass at the roundabout at Airport Rd and suggested the same could be incorporated into the roundabouts at Johnson Lane.

Tom Zurbuchen noted that Spook Stang, the trucking industry representative, had been adamant at the BBAC meeting that roundabouts do not accommodate trucks very effectively. He inquired if there were plans to restrict oversized loads in the roundabouts. Fred stated that the roundabouts are designed to national standards to accommodate trucks and, though MDT has received comments from the trucking industry, there has not been much collaborative effort on their part to discuss design solutions to better accommodate trucks.

A comment was made that truck fueling queues occur at the Flying J Truck Stop and trucks are often backed up along Old Hardin Road all the way to Johnson Lane. The commenter stated that the interchange redesign needs to increase the amount of storage so that this issue is resolved. Don noted that a new fire department is

going to be constructed to the south of Old Hardin Road on Johnson Lane. Conrad noted that the school district sends approximately 20 – 25 school busses through the Johnson Lane interchange every day.

Conrad asked about the capacity of the interchange. His concern is that the improvements may attract more traffic than indicated in the traffic analysis and there will be more interaction between Billings Heights and Lockwood. He mentioned that the Lockwood sewer system was recently constructed, so significant growth will occur in Lockwood regardless of the Billings Bypass. Bob indicated that there would be more through movements at this interchange in the future, as more traffic would be going straight along the bypass to the Heights. In addition, he is required to use the 2009 Urban Area Long-Range Transportation Plan to inform the traffic projections. Fred explained that the project is designed to accommodate traffic projections for 20 years in the future. As such, the interchange will still be functioning at that time. Don stated that the majority of future commercial development in Lockwood will occur south of Old Hardin Road along Johnson Lane. The requirements for improvements to serve this development on Old Hardin Road need to be taken into consideration. Tom Gocksch noted that a technical memorandum had been prepared which explained the required improvements if a new bridge were not constructed across the river. He suggested the memorandum be forwarded to the Lockwood Urban Transportation District for their review.

Conrad inquired about the project timeline. Fred explained that the EIS will be completed this year and a Record of Decision will be signed in 2013. The next step will be final design, which will take approximately two years. Then MDT will begin the ROW acquisition process. Due to project size and funding availability, the project will most likely be constructed in phases. Funding sources have not yet been identified for the full project so each phase of construction will need independent utility – for example, the bridge will not be constructed without connecting roads. Conrad asked about local funding. Tom explained that local funding has not yet been discussed, but the STIP assumes a local match of 13 percent. Local matches may also help the project move forward more quickly. Conrad asked if the cost estimates could be provided to the Lockwood Urban Transportation District. Kacey Meis indicated she will send them the cost estimates with the meeting summary and no-bridge technical memorandum. Conrad asked if Bob Marvin could attend the next Lockwood Urban Transportation District meeting. Bob indicated he would be in attendance.

### **Action Items**

- Bob and Conrad will meet to further discuss the traffic modeling assumptions
- Kacey will send the Lockwood Urban Transportation District members cost estimates and the no-bridge technical memorandum with the meeting summary

# **Lockwood Urban Transportation District**

@ 1<sup>st</sup> Interstate Bank Operations Center

## **Meeting Notes**

December 9, 2010

### **Attendees:**

Conrad Stroebe, Valerie Dangerfield, Jim Schmid, Jim Logan, Stefan Streeter, Bob Marvin, Stanley Jonutis, Gary Neville and Bob Riehl attended. Don Reed was unable to attend.

### **Action Items from the last meeting**

- Invite Stefan Streeter to discuss Billings Bypass and other MDT projects. (Done)
- Draft Bylaws – add mission statement and expand on purpose of the District. (next meeting)
- Talk with Taylor Brown and Jonathan McNiven on topics before the next legislative session. (done)
- Draft letter to County Attorney with question “Does the LTD Board have the authority to adopt road standards to be enforced within the District?” (Delayed)
- Valerie and Jim will submit applications to the County Offices for Director Positions. (Valerie’s has been submitted, Jim’s will be.)

### **Billings Bypass and other MDT projects**

Stefan Streeter with staff and Bob Marvin gave a synopsis of the activities for the Billings Bypass, led the discussion and answered questions from the Board. Briefly, they are currently developing the EIS. As they work through the process over approximately 2 years, a preferred option will arise from the criteria identified. At the onset there was approximately \$20 million of available funding from earmarks and other sources. When they get through the process there will be something around \$15 million available for beginning the project. Additional funding is key to completing the project. Concerns expressed by the Board were traffic on Johnson Lane Interchange, flow of traffic from the Lockwood end, and development of infrastructure in Lockwood to address the growth expected from completion of the Sewer project. Stefan assured the Board that if Johnson Lane Interchange were a part of the preferred option it would be redesigned and constructed to address the 20-year traffic projection.

### **Safe Routes to Schools – next meeting Dec 16<sup>th</sup> 1PM**

Valerie and Bob will attend. Currently, there will be a grant application by Anthony for a sidewalk on the north side of Hilner Lane. That is in keeping with

the Lockwood Transportation plan design for the Piccolo/Hwy 87 intersection issues and current priorities of the Board.

### **Discussions with Taylor Brown and Jonathan McNiven**

Conrad reported that the discussions were very positive and we are working with Taylor and Jonathan on two issues; Post Office language for incorporation and an exception to allow for development of a High School in any School District with more than 1000 students.

### **Discussion Meeting with the Commissioners – December 13 2PM**

Everyone is encouraged to attend. Discussion led by Dan Schwarz on CTEP and the Piccolo easement.

### **Action Items for the next meeting**

Urban Funding was used for redoing the widening of the road over the Irrigation Canal on Hwy 87. Does Lockwood need to be incorporated to access federal urban funding?

Bob to schedule meetings for the next 3 months. Start on Jan 6<sup>th</sup> and move the time up to Noon. Bring your lunch if you like.

Pierre Jomini from MDT provided Crash Statistics. Seems that the death on north frontage road (July 09) is not in the data. Also, the motor cycle death on HWY 87 beyond Johnson Lane was still inside the Transportation District. Bob talk to Pierre.

Meeting with EXON, Conrad will attend to represent LUTD. Don will attend to represent Steering Committee.

### **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM.

### **Next meeting**

Next meeting will be January 6<sup>th</sup>, 12 Noon at the 1<sup>st</sup> Interstate Operations Center.

Notes submitted by: Bob Riehl



**TO:** Laura Meyer, AICP  
David Evans and Associates

**FROM:** Todd G. Cormier, PE, PTOE, AVS

**DATE:** August 24, 2011

**RE:** **Billings Bypass EIS**  
**NCPD 56(55) CN 4199**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**COPIES:** Doug Enderson (DOWL HKM), John Shoff (DOWL HKM)

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**Update Meeting with Lockwood Sewer and Water**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**2:00PM – 3:30PM**

Participants:

Woody Woods (Lockwood Sewer and Water)  
Dave Mosser, PE (Morrison Maierle, Inc.)  
Todd Cormier, PE, PTOE, AVS (DOWL HKM)

**Overview**

A meeting was requested with Lockwood Sewer and Water to continue coordination with them regarding their proposed sewer lift station. The proposed lift station is generally located at the corner of Johnson Lane and Coulson Road, and would be affected by the current “J1” alignment.

**Discussion Items**

1. Todd recapped the current state of the project, and noted that the purpose of this meeting is to keep Lockwood Sewer and Water engaged through the development of the EIS.
2. Woody Woods noted that their project, which includes a new lift station, a force main, and several sewer mains, is expected to be ready to bid by about mid September.
3. The current project cost is approximately \$4.2M. Of this cost, it is estimated that approximately \$500K is directly related to the lift station.
4. As before, the lift station is situated on the SE corner of the intersection of Johnson Lane and Coulson Road, and will be generally located approximately 50-60-ft east of the

current Johnson Lane right-of-way. Because the project is so close to bidding, there is not an opportunity to investigate alternative locations for the lift station.

5. Based on the lift station's current location, the lift station would be directly impacted by the current "J1" alignment. It was noted that our project could investigate a larger radius horizontal curve at this location in an effort to reduce direct impacts to the lift station, but that this possibility may not result in eliminating direct impacts.
6. Through the course of discussing the two projects, the possibility of an alignment impacting this location was not considered to be a fatal flaw by Lockwood Sewer and Water, as the lift station could be relocated in the future as a part of this project.
7. Dave Mosser will provide DOWL HKM the alignments and lift station location for use in the Activity 118 design plans, should they be needed.

The meeting concluded at approximately 3:30 PM.



DAVID EVANS  
AND ASSOCIATES INC.

## STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES

### Lockwood Water & Sewer

<b>PROJECT:</b>	Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) <b>MDT Project No. NCPD 56(55)CN 4199</b>
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	Discuss potential conflicts with planned lift station along the Johnson Lane alignments
<b>DATE HELD:</b>	June 17, 2011 (8:00 AM)
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Morrison Maierle, Inc. – 315 North 25 <sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 102
<b>ATTENDING:</b>	Woody Woods – Lockwood Water & Sewer Laura Meyer – DEA Todd Cormier – DOWL HKM Dave Mosser – Morrison Maierle, Inc. (MMI)
<b>COPIES:</b>	Attendees; Fred Bente, MDT; Alan Woodmansey, FHWA; File

#### **Summary of Discussion**

- Lift station planned for Reichert property. Construction planned for this summer. Johnson Lane Option 1 would impact the lift station. Johnson Lane Option 2 may impact the lift station.
- New 8-inch sewer main is planned along the east side of Johnson Lane between the lift station and north frontage road.
- New 6-inch forced main is planned along west side of Johnson Lane between the lift station and Old Hardin Road.
- This new infrastructure is scheduled for construction this summer.
- Laura noted there are still numerous interchange concepts being evaluated for this location.
- MMI also identified another location adjacent to the Reichert property that may still be under consideration. MMI will let DEA know if the parcel location changes.
- MMI noted that they may be able to shift the locations of their proposed sewer lines. Further review will be undertaken.

#### **Action Items**

- Laura will provide plans to Bob Marvin.



DAVID EVANS  
AND ASSOCIATES INC.

## STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES

### Mary Street Landowners

<b>PROJECT:</b>	Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) <b>MDT Project No. NCPD 56(55)CN 4199</b>
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	Listen to concerns of landowners and answer questions about the project process and alternatives
<b>DATE HELD:</b>	June 16, 2011 (2:00 PM)
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Residence of Brent and Cheryl Cathey
<b>ATTENDING:</b>	Gary Cathey, Brent Cathey, Cheryl Cathey, Greg Gnerer, Hillary Gnerer, Doug Gullett, Kim Coomber, Shawna McCoskery – Landowners Stefan Streeter, Gary Neville – MDT Laura Meyer – DEA John Shoff, Doug Enderson – DOWL HKM Bob Marvin – Marvin & Associates
<b>COPIES:</b>	Attendees; Fred Bente, MDT; Alan Woodmansey, FHWA; File

#### **Summary of Presentation**

Laura Meyer began by stating the purpose of the meeting, which is to listen to the concerns of the landowners and answer questions about the project process and alternatives. She then gave an overview of the project, including background on the old project and reasons for the re-scoped project. She discussed the purpose of the project and the transportation needs the project would address.

#### **Comments:**

- This project may be a benefit to others, but not to me.
- Make sure landowners get notice.
- You should build all of the alignments so we don't get all of the traffic.
- This connection is unnecessary. No traffic goes to Lockwood. There is traffic on Airport Road, 1<sup>st</sup>, etc.
- We don't want this road here. The war is going to start.
- The Mary Street alignment is not compatible with the long-term plan.
- The impacts of this project are ridiculous - put it down in your notes "Mr. Secretary."

#### **Question and Answer**

**Q:** How do you determine the proposed alignments?

**A:** The alignments are identified through collaboration with the public and local agencies, as well as engineering/environmental considerations. The first step in identifying alignments for this project was to

review all of the alignments that had been suggested or considered through the course of the project. The concept of using the Mary Street corridor was originally suggested by the public at our first public meeting.

**Q:** You should look at alignments farther north because the river is narrower.

**A:** We have looked at alignments farther north. There are a number of issues that make those alignments not feasible. First, the farther north you go, the less the alignment will serve the needs of the project which are focused on improving access and connectivity in the eastern area of Billings. Another issue is that during the field work completed in 2007, a large historic battlefield site was identified. The MDT historian indicated that the site could not be impacted.

**Q:** Are the inner loop and outer loop still in the City plan?

**A:** The City still has the inner loop in their plans. This project would serve as the first leg of the outer loop.

**Q:** Why were we not notified about the October 2010 public meeting.

**A:** Newsletters were sent out to the owners of record with land abutting the proposed alignments. We will check the project mailing list to make sure all of you are included.

**Q:** There are sixty houses on Mary Street within 70 feet of the road centerline. How can this be a good alignment?

**A:** The proposal is to build a new road directly north of Mary Street. Mary Street would become a frontage road.

**Q:** Why can't you use an alignment that goes straight across undeveloped land to avoid houses?

**A:** We have evaluated a number of different alternatives. Some would use existing road corridors and some would create new road corridors through currently undeveloped land. There are pros and cons either way. The alignments we are recommending for the EIS would impact between four and nine occupied structures between the interstate and Old Hwy 312. That is a fairly low number when you consider that the larger range of alternatives evaluated for the project impacted as many as 50 occupied structures.

**Q:** How can we comment on Mary Street when we can't tell where the alignment is?

**A:** The alignments are still preliminary at this point in the project as we are early in the process. Right now, you can comment on the concept of building a new principal arterial directly north of Mary Street with Mary Street becoming a frontage road. As we progress in the process, more details will be available and you will continue to have the opportunity to provide input.

**Q:** It makes more sense to use the Bitterroot corridor. Why was that alternative eliminated?

**A:** The Bitterroot alignment was attractive because it would provide great travel time benefits, but it was one of the more impactful alignments that we evaluated. It had a lot of technical challenges at the river crossing, high floodplain impacts, it would impact approximately 100 parcels and would directly impact approximately 30 homes.

**Q:** Are you aware that there is a new subdivision on the north side of Mary that is scheduled for development.

**A:** Yes and that landowner is aware of the planning process for this project.

**Q:** This project does not make sense if it is not part of the outer loop.

**A:** Funding constraints have limited the scope of this project. However, developing a roadway that could be used as part of the outer loop in the future is one of the stated needs of this project.

**Q:** Building a roadway in this corridor would have wildlife impacts – we have ducks, geese, deer, turtles.

**A:** Wildlife impacts is a topic evaluated in detail in the Environmental Impact Statement. I can put you directly in touch with our biologists if you'd like to convey some information in that regard.

**Q:** What would you do if you were me and your dream home was in the path of this project?

**A:** Nothing today. We should have a preferred alternative identified within 18 months. Stay engaged and provide your comments.

**Q:** Does MDT pay for property devaluation due to proximity?

**A:** If proximity damages are proven as part of the appraisal process then damages would be paid, but proximity damages can be difficult to prove.

**Q:** You should stay north of Five Mile Creek through the gravel pit area. That would not affect homes. Have you looked at that alignment?

**A:** I don't think that is an alignment that has been explored. We can look into that and see if it's feasible.

**Q:** We were not notified of the October meeting and our opinions were not represented there. Had you notified us back then, we wouldn't be looking at this alternative now.

**A:** Input you provide now is just as valuable as it would have been in October.

**Q:** How much say so do we have?

**A:** Your input is considered. Some input is more valuable than other input. For example, if you identify reasons that the alternatives are not consistent with local plans or don't meet the purpose and need, that would be valuable input. Simply stating that you don't want the project on or near your property is good for us to understand, but is not as valuable. No matter where you put a new road, it will impact somebody.

**Q:** I've lived here for a long time. The need is to get Heights residents to the west end. This project is not well thought out.

**A:** The inner belt loop would address that need. That is not the purpose of this project. This project is focused on improving mobility in the eastern area of Billings.

**Q:** How far out from Mary is the survey?

**A:** Approximately 400 feet.

**Q:** Why don't you send out a more detailed map of the road plans ahead of the field work?

**A:** The plans are preliminary and are subject to change based on what we find during the field work. We don't want to release designs that will likely change in the near future.

**Q:** What happens if the project leaves remainder parcels – are those purchased?

**A:** The impacts are evaluated to determine if unusable remnant parcels are created. MDT pays appraised value and damages.

**Q:** Where did this project come from?

**A:** The project was conceived many years ago. A feasibility study was done in 1999. The results were positive and led to the Billings Bypass project. Fiscal constraints in 2010 caused the project to be re-scoped. This was voted on by the PCC – which is made up of County Commissioners, City of Billings, MDT, and City/County Planning. The needs that this project is intended to address are all from local adopted plans.

**Q:** What are you trying to do? Why does this make sense?

**A:** There are a lot of residences and businesses in the Heights and only one route in and out. The portion of Main Street past the Metra is a serious bottle-neck. There are a number of projects proposed to address congestion in the Heights, but none of them would provide an alternate route. There is only so much that can be done to address the transportation problems in this area with one route between Billings Heights and the downtown area and interstate. We have looked at alternatives to improve the existing Main Street corridor past the Metra. The infrastructure needs are substantial and the impacts to private property would be much higher than any other alternative evaluated. This project will provide an alternate route that would not only take pressure off of that bottleneck but provide an alternate access to the Heights in emergency situations.

**Q:** When will construction start?

**A:** The schedule for construction is dependent on the availability of funding. Currently, we only have a schedule for completing the NEPA process for the Spring of 2013.

**Q:** What would the speed limit on this new road be?

**A:** The design speed for the Mary Street alignment is 55 mph.

**Q:** How do we formally suggest another alignment?

**A:** Tell us now or submit through website.

**Q:** Will one of the routes shown on the map be chosen by this project?

**A:** One of these routes or the no-build alternative will be selected. NEPA requires consideration of not implementing the proposed action as an alternative.

**Q:** How much weight is put on impacts to biological resources versus community and property impacts?

**A:** It depends on the resource. Some biological resources such as threatened and endangered species are heavily regulated. The same can be said for some community resources such as significant recreational facilities. The EIS will evaluate a broad range of resources and topic areas. The preferred alternative will be selected based on consideration of all the benefits and impacts identified.

**Q:** What about school crossings?

**A:** School attendance boundaries and routes to school are evaluated in the EIS.

**Q:** When is the next public meeting?

**A:** The public hearing is tentatively scheduled for late summer/early fall of 2012.

**Q:** Will stakes show where roadway will be?

**A:** The stakes will mark the centerline of the proposed road.

**Q:** What will the road look like? Shiloh? Rimrock?

**A:** The preliminary design for this corridor is four travel lanes and a two way left turn lane. Drainage would be accommodated through roadside ditches as opposed to curb and gutter. Pedestrian facilities will be evaluated as part of the EIS.

**Q:** Why not re-build Mary Street instead of building a new parallel facility?

**A:** This road is intended to be a limited access facility. There are too many existing accesses on Mary Street for that type of facility.

**Q:** How will access work for houses north of Mary Street?

**A:** Private accesses to the new road will need to be evaluated on a case by case basis. Access will be preserved in some manner. If access can't be preserved, it is considered a full right-of-way impact.

**Q:** How will we know you looked at our suggestions?

**A:** All of the alternatives considered will be documented in the EIS. If they were eliminated, the reason for elimination will be stated.

**Q:** How wide is a 4-lane roadway?

**A:** The roadway itself could range from 80 feet to over 100 feet. The ROW is approximately 160 feet.

**Q:** Wasn't the Five Mile Creek bridge designed to accommodate a new access point for the bypass project?

**A:** The bridge was not designed to allow access.

Stefan Streeter asked if there were other questions on the process for field work. He noted that the intent was to cause no damage, and any special instructions should be written down on the access forms.

**Q:** What is landowner liability?

**A:** None. The contractors are insured.

**Q:** If we don't sign the agreement, will you come onto our land anyway?

**A:** Legally, the State can provide a 30-day notice. We would prefer not to do that. That is why we are reaching out to personally contact landowners. We want to work cooperatively.

**Q:** Did the landowners that signed know what the project is?

**A:** Everybody got the same information that you did.

**Q:** Why is there a northern and southern option on Mary Street?

**A:** Based on the current floodplain delineation, the southern option has a longer floodway and floodplain crossing. The second option was introduced to provide an option for the Mary Street corridor that had a shorter crossing.

**From:** "Enderson, Douglas" <[denderson@dowlhkm.com](mailto:denderson@dowlhkm.com)>

**Date:** September 21, 2012, 2:53:09 PM MDT

**To:** "Wendy Wallach ([WWallach@deainc.com](mailto:WWallach@deainc.com))" <[WWallach@deainc.com](mailto:WWallach@deainc.com)>

**Cc:** "Joseph Hart ([JHart@deainc.com](mailto:JHart@deainc.com))" <[JHart@deainc.com](mailto:JHart@deainc.com)>, "Shoff, John" <[JShoff@dowlhkm.com](mailto:JShoff@dowlhkm.com)>, "Cormier, Todd" <[TCormier@dowlhkm.com](mailto:TCormier@dowlhkm.com)>

**Subject:** Bypass Meeting with YRPA

Wendy –

Roger Williams from Yellowstone River Parks Association (YRPA) contacted Todd and I this morning to discuss the preferred alignment relative to their park, John H Dover Memorial Park. As you recall this park starts at Five Mile Creek close to the mouth and continues northeasterly. Roger wanted to meet in person to discuss instead of over the phone, so he stopped by our office at 1PM. Roger and I talked through the alignment and I was able to address his concerns. This email serves a summary of our meeting and YRPA will be submitting a formal comment next week.

- The board had concerns of the preferred alignment ultimately obliterating Lois's Point. Lois's Point is situated just above Five Mile Creek on the east which has a grave site and a proposed non-motorized boat launch near Five Mile Creek. We are actually not impacting that point as part of this project, so he was relieved about that. The preferred alignment actually crosses the park north and east of that point. With that said, the proposed roadway will divide the park and create a barrier between Lois's Point and the rest of the park.
- Roger asked if there are any plans to provide access across the new arterial for the park, which I believe he asked at the public meeting last week. As I recall, you answered the question to the affect that it would be an at-grade crossing. I reiterated to him that no crossing was considered at this level of design because no current trails or trail easements exist. I reassured him that it doesn't mean that a grade separated crossing is not possible. I informed him of the scope and purpose of the design at this stage of the process and once again he seemed relieved that not all hope was lost.
- Roger asked how FHWA, MDT, David Evans and DOWL HKM are partnered in this project. I explained the owner/client and consultant relationship and then also the hierarchy of the consultant team. He seemed to understand the working relationships.
- Roger wanted to know how YRPA can remain in the loop as the project progresses. He stated that only the one meeting between the consultant team and YRPA has taken place and they have received no other correspondence. I told him that on the comment form there is a box to check to be added to the distribution list. He will be adding YRPA's address to the comment. I also told him that the website is up to date and he can check there for further information.
- He asked general questions about the MDT right-of-way process. I told him if the project gets to that point that MDT real estate agents would be contacting them to enter into negotiations. He was relieved that they had a say in the matter and weren't going to be forced to 'give up' property.

The meeting ended around 1:40PM. By the way, he was impressed with the writing in the document.

Let me know if you have questions or concerns. Have a good weekend!

Doug

**Doug Enderson, P.E., PTOE**

Transportation Engineer

DID: 406.869.6337



**(406) 656-6399 | Fax (406) 656-6398 | 222 N. 32nd Street, Suite 700 | Billings, Montana 59101 | [www.dowlhkm.com](http://www.dowlhkm.com)**

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## STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES Yellowstone River Parks Association

<b>PROJECT:</b>	Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) <b>MDT Project No. NCPD 56(55)CN 4199</b>
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	Discuss potential issues/concerns with identified alternatives
<b>DATE HELD:</b>	June 17, 2011 at 10:00 AM
<b>LOCATION:</b>	201 North Broadway, Billings
<b>ATTENDING:</b>	Earl Guss, Board Member; Boris Krizek, Board Member; Mary Walter, President; Sam Walter, Member; Jean Smith; Ron Smith; Bruce W. Larsen – Yellowstone River Parks Association Laura Meyer – DEA Todd Cormier – DOWL HKM
<b>COPIES:</b>	Attendees; Fred Bente, MDT; Alan Woodmansey, FHWA; File

### Summary of Discussion

YRPA team provided the following input:

- Concerned about how to plan with the uncertainty of this project.
- Expressed that this proposed roadway may impede their ability to raise funds for the park.
- Construction of first phase is anticipated to begin next summer and YRPA is actively raising funds.
- Indicated strong support for the Mary 1 Option, which does not bisect the park.
- Suggested that adjusting the Mary Option 2 alignment so that it would follow the low point between the two Lois's Point overlooks. This might reduce visual impacts (visibility of road) and noise impacts. Lois's Point is considered an important feature for views of the river valley.
- The Five Mile Road alignment would bisect a more central area of the park and is undesirable.
- Road cuts – could they be designed to look like a natural valley instead of a road cut? This would reduce visual impacts of the roadway facility through the park land.

Todd and Laura explained the preliminary design/NEPA process and where the project is at in that process. They noted that there is opportunity to review/refine the designs as we move through the process. Minimizing impacts to the extent practicable is a goal of the NEPA process. All types of impacts including those to the river, the floodplain, private property, etc., must be considered.

### Action Items

- Assess potential for refining the Mary Option 2 alignment to minimize impacts based on the park master plan and input from YRPA team.



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## STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES

### Heights Community Development Task Force

<b>PROJECT:</b>	Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) <b>MDT Project No. NCPD 56(55)CN 4199</b>
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	Present the status of the project and receive comments and input
<b>DATE HELD:</b>	February 28, 2012 (7:00 PM)
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Castle Rock Middle School
<b>ATTENDING:</b>	Mike Craighill, Nancy Steel, Denis Pitman, Roy Neese, Tom Binon, Daniel Zolnikov, Tom Zurbuchen, Terry Odogard, Doug Story, Joy Stevens, Ken Peterson – Heights Community Development Task Force/Residents Fred Bente, Tom Gocksch, Stefan Streeter, Gary Neville – MDT Joe Hart, Wendy Wallach, Kacey Meis – DEA John Shoff, Doug Enderson – DOWL HKM Bob Marvin – Marvin & Associates
<b>COPIES:</b>	Attendees; MDT; FHWA; File

#### *Project Update*

Wendy Wallach provided a project update. The project team completed field work and resource reports on the proposed alternatives, and determined it would be best to use new preliminary Yellowstone River floodplain data for project planning. The set of alternatives remaining after the Level 3 screening were refined and the team distributed Newsletter #5 and updated the project website with information on the alternatives. During this time, a set of public-suggested alternatives was developed and screened. The preliminary draft of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was recently completed and the Draft EIS and Final EIS are on track to be released this year.

#### *DEIS Alternatives*

Wendy explained that field work performed over the summer identified no fatal flaws along the proposed alignments. All of the alternatives carried forward for detailed evaluation in the DEIS begin at the Johnson Lane interchange with I-90 and use the same alignment north and west toward the Yellowstone River. North of the Yellowstone River, there are three options to complete the connection with Old Hwy 312: Mary Street Option 1, Mary Street Option 2, and Five Mile Road.

#### *Primary and Secondary Corridors*

Joe Hart explained that the Level 3 screening included a preliminary analysis of traffic impacts to the existing street network that would be anticipated in the design year if any of these alternatives were to be implemented. Based on this information, it was determined that additional improvements to existing roads north of the Yellowstone River would be necessary if design objectives for operations and safety were to be met. Without these improvements, it would not be possible to recommend a preferred alternative due to the

impacts from the increased volume of traffic on existing connecting routes. The improvements would not be required right away but would be necessary for design year traffic (2035).

Therefore, each alternative now consists of a “primary corridor,” which is the alternative alignment; and a secondary corridor” which is the existing roadway to undergo improvements to accommodate alternative-generated traffic.

### ***Mary Street Typical Sections***

If the Mary Street Option 1 Alternative or Mary Street Option 2 Alternative is selected as a preferred alternative, a NHS Urban Principal Arterial with Local Access Road typical section would be used along Mary Street. The existing corridor of Mary Street would be maintained as the local access road.

If the Five Mile Road Alternative is chosen, Mary Street would be improved as the secondary corridor. The segment of roadway between Mary Street and Five Mile Road would be reconstructed to Yellowstone County Local Road standards. This would include shoulder and slope improvements. Mary Street would be improved to City of Billings Urban Arterial Roadway standards. This would include:

- Two travel lanes with two-way left turn lane (based on projected traffic volumes)
- Curb and gutter
- Storm water collection
- Bike lanes (based on recommendations in trails plan)
- Intersection control, as necessary
- Lighting at intersections (if signalized), but no lighting along corridor would be required unless requested by residents
- Accommodations for the crossing at Kiwanis Trail
- Pedestrian facility on both sides of the road

### ***DEIS Alternatives: Benefits and Impacts***

Wendy explained that a Preferred Alternative has not yet been identified for this project. There was little variation between the benefits and impacts of each build alternative. However, upon cursory evaluation, Mary Street Option 2 seems to best meet the purpose and need while limiting impacts to the environment and the community. Wendy provided an explanation of how the team reached that conclusion.

### Purpose and Need

**Need 1: Reduce physical barrier impacts to the transportation system.** The team determined that a high amount of average daily traffic (ADT) on the bypass indicates the impacts of physical barriers to the transportation network are reduced. Design-year ADT for each alternative is as follows:

- No Build: NA (no new roadway)
- Mary Street Option 1: ADT = 15,900
- Mary Street Option 2: ADT = 15,600
- Five Mile Road: ADT = 13,000

**Need 2: Improve connectivity between Lockwood and Billings.** A high reduction in ADT on the existing route between Lockwood and Billings indicates the bypass is an attractive alternative route. The reduction in design-year ADT on the existing route is as follows:

- No Build: 42,000

- Mary Street Option 1: ADT = 29,350 (reduction of 30%)
- Mary Street Option 2: ADT = 29,850 (reduction of 29%)
- Five Mile Road: ADT = 32,350 (reduction of 23%)

**Need 3: Improve mobility to and from Billings Heights.** An intersection with free-flow traffic has a level of service (LOS) of A, while non-functioning intersections have a LOS of E or F. In addition, a reduction in congestion reduces the number of crashes. Reduction of LOS E/F intersections and crashes indicate an improvement in mobility.

- No Build:
  - LOS E/F intersections = 11
  - No reduction in accidents
- Mary Street Option 1:
  - LOS E/F intersections = 4
  - Reduces area accidents by 12%
- Mary Street Option 2:
  - LOS E/F intersections = 4
  - Reduces area accidents by 12%
- Five Mile Road:
  - LOS E/F intersections = 5
  - Reduces area accidents by 9%

**Need 4: Improve truck/commercial vehicle access to and through Billings.** Providing a faster / more direct route between US 87 and the I-90/I-94 interchange is an indication that truck and commercial vehicle access to and through Billings has improved. Travel times were compared between the north and south termini on each alternative route and the existing route between US 87 and the I-90/I-94 interchange.

- No Build: 14.3 minutes
- Mary Street Option 1: 7.4 minutes
- Mary Street Option 2: 7.6 minutes
- Five Mile Road: 9.9 minutes

There is little variation between the two Mary Street alternatives and they both perform well against the No Build alternative. Five Mile Road does not perform quite as well as the Mary Street alternatives but still provides an improvement over the No Build alternative.

#### Natural / Social / Community Resources and Project Cost

Wendy explained that there are no major discernible impacts to most natural resources. However, since wetlands are a regulated resource, the minor variation in impacts is important. The total impacts to wetlands by each alternative are as follows:

- No Build: 0 acres
- Mary Street Option 1: 5.39 acres
- Mary Street Option 2: 4.52 acres
- Five Mile Road: 4.70 acres

Wendy discussed the impacts to social and community resources. The alternatives do not adversely affect any existing social or community resources. However, there are impacts to private property. She listed the total number of acres required for the alignment right-of-way (ROW), and the total number of residences impacted along the primary and secondary corridors for each alternative:

- No Build: No impact
- Mary Street Option 1:
  - ROW = 261 acres
  - Impacted Residences (Primary/Secondary) 9 / 0
- Mary Street Option 2:
  - ROW = 254 acres
  - Impacted Residences (Primary/Secondary) 8 / 0
- Five Mile Road:
  - ROW = 221 acres
  - Impacted Residences (Primary/Secondary) 5 / 1

Wendy provided the estimated construction cost for the full build-out of each alternative, including primary and secondary corridors. She explained that the major cost differentiator is the bridge structure over the Yellowstone River. Mary Street Option 1 would require a longer bridge, accounting for the higher cost.

- No Build: \$0
- Mary Street Option 1: \$121,207,000
- Mary Street Option 2: \$111,950,000
- Five Mile Road: \$110,059,000 acres

Wendy explained that although all of the DEIS alternatives meet the purpose and need, the Mary Street alternatives seem to better meet the needs than the Five Mile Road alternative. The Mary Street alternatives also have very similar impacts to natural resources and the community. However, Mary Street Option 2 would impact fewer acres of wetlands, would require fewer acres of land for ROW acquisition, and would impact one fewer residence. Finally, construction costs for Mary Street Option 2 are approximately \$10 million less than those for Mary Street Option 1. For these reasons, the project team believes Mary Street Option 2 fares the best. Wendy explained the team is soliciting input on this conclusion regarding the DEIS alternatives and asked if there were any comments or questions.

### **Question and Answer**

**Q:** Would the Mary Street portion of the alignment be funded by the city?

**A:** No, the roadway would be developed to city standards, but the money would come from project funding.

**Q:** Are the impacted residences simply impacted, or does that term refer to full removal of the property?

**A:** The impacted residences discussed would be fully acquired.

**Q:** Has there been any input from the Fire Department?

**A:** No.

**Q:** How far north would the new Mary Street roadway be constructed?

**A:** The project is not in final design yet, but the clear zone would be approximately 30-50 feet. The roadway would be constructed as close as possible to the existing corridor of Mary Street to limit impacts to properties to the north.

**Q:** What are the projected speeds?

**A:** The design speeds are 55MPH for Mary Street as a primary corridor and 45MPH if Mary Street is improved as a secondary corridor. However, a speed study would be required to assign the posted speed.

**Q:** Traffic going 45MPH next to a bike lane is not a good idea.

**A:** 45MPH is the design speed. The actual travel speed along Mary Street may be less than 45MPH; a speed study would be required to assign the posted speed.

**Q:** During the original project there was an issue with a historic battlefield; are there any issues like that this time?

**A:** No. Our cultural field survey indicated there are no major impacts to cultural or historic resources.

**Q:** Last year, one of the parks committees was concerned about wildlife along the river and the impact of the new bridge. Have they come on board with the project?

**A:** We have met with a number of agencies that deal with natural and biological resources. The required agencies have been included in discussions about the alternatives and all necessary clearances have been met up to this point. Coordination efforts will continue as the project moves forward.

**Q:** What will happen to the extension of the Kiwanis Trail? How will it be incorporated into the alignment?

**A:** The extension will be retained under all of the alternatives. We are not at the point of considering exactly how it will be incorporated into the design. It is possible the trail could pass under the roadway or cross at-grade. More consideration will be given during final design.

**Q:** Would there be a physical barrier between the Mary Street local access road and the Mary Street principal arterial? There should be a fence at a minimum.

**A:** We would put a right-of-way barrier fence and the principal arterial would have controlled access.

**Q:** Will the railroad crossing south of the Yellowstone River be grade-separated?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** How will the corridor be continued west to US 87 and MT 3?

**A:** For the Mary Street alternatives, traffic could continue north on US 87 and a location would be identified in a future project for the continuation west to MT 3. For the Five Mile Road Alternative, continuation to US 87 and MT 3 is also possible but further study would be needed.

**Q:** How will the project be funded?

**A:** Some money is available via an earmark. A source for the remainder of funding has not been identified yet. We are considering building the project in phases.

**Q:** Will there be any commercial islands for gas stations or other retail?

**A:** The route will be an access-controlled facility. Zoning and land use would be controlled by local jurisdictions.

**Q:** Could you describe the intersection options?

**A:**

New Arterial/ Bitterroot Drive Intersection

A new house was recently constructed at the southeast corner of Mary Street and Bitterroot Drive. The original intersection concept developed for Mary Street Option 1 and Option 2 would require acquisition of this house. MDT requested alternate options at this intersection to see if the house can be avoided. The concepts include:

- Curve the Mary Street local access road to the south in the area of the intersection to maintain adequate spacing from the signalized intersections proposed for the new arterial and Bitterroot Drive. This is the original concept requiring removal of the new house.
- Shift the new arterial alignment to the north at Bitterroot Drive to achieve the necessary spacing from the intersection of Mary Street and Bitterroot Drive. A roundabout would be constructed at this location.
- Shift the new arterial alignment to the north at Bitterroot Drive to achieve the necessary spacing from the intersection of Mary Street and Bitterroot Drive. A signalized intersection would be constructed at this location.

Old Hwy 312 / US 87 / Main St / Bench Blvd / Mary Street Intersection

Three concepts have been developed at this location. They include:

- Two roundabouts; one connecting US 87, Old Hwy 312, Main Street, and the Mary Street alternative alignment, and the other connecting Old Hwy 312, Bench Blvd, the Mary Street local access road and the Mary Street alternative alignment.
- Two roundabouts with a slightly different configuration. One roundabout would connect US 87, Old Hwy 312, Main Street, and the Mary Street alternative alignment, and the other would connect Bench Blvd and the Mary Street local access road with the first roundabout.
- A roundabout connecting Old Hwy 312, US 87, and the Mary Street alternative alignment. Access to the Mary Street alignment from the local access road and Mary Street would be provided with a T-intersection.

**Q:** Will the roundabouts be larger than the one at Airport Road to accommodate large trucks?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** For the Five Mile Road alternative, would Old Hwy 312 be improved?

**A:** There would not be a large increase in traffic on Old Hwy 312 that would warrant improvements.

**Q:** Will this road become a state highway?

**A:** The new route may become a state highway near US 87. However, Mary Street would remain a city street.



DAVID EVANS  
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## STAKEHOLDER MEETING MINUTES

### Lockwood Burger King

<b>PROJECT:</b>	Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) <b>MDT Project No. NCPD 56(55)CN 4199</b>
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	Present the status of the project and receive comments and input
<b>DATE HELD:</b>	February 29, 2012 (10:30 AM)
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Burger King 2813 Old Hardin Road Billings, MT 59101
<b>ATTENDING:</b>	Joe Hart, Wendy Wallach, Kacey Meis – DEA David Shea – Burger King
<b>COPIES:</b>	Attendees; MDT; FHWA; File

#### *Project Update*

Wendy Wallach provided a project overview and status. The intent of the project is to connect I-90 with Old Hwy 312. The project team has narrowed the alternatives to a set of three for detailed evaluation in the DEIS. All of the alternatives begin at the Johnson Lane interchange with I-90 and use the same alignment north and west toward the Yellowstone River. North of the Yellowstone River, there are three options to complete the connection with Old Hwy 312: Mary Street Option 1, Mary Street Option 2, and Five Mile Road.

Joe Hart discussed the Johnson Lane interchange concepts. Rather than identify a preferred concept, the team identified a maximum area of impact by consolidating the right-of-way (ROW) footprints of each concept. This maximum footprint was used to analyze the alternatives and calculate impacts in the DEIS. The various concepts for the interchange are included in an appendix to the DEIS. All of the concepts are functional and one will be selected during final design. This method allows more flexibility in final design and allows the public an opportunity to provide input on the concepts. Five concepts have been developed for Johnson Lane. They include:

- Replacing the signalized intersections at North Frontage Road, north access ramps, south access ramps, and Old Hardin Road with roundabouts. I-90 would be realigned slightly to the south to facilitate a more perpendicular crossing with Johnson Lane, and Johnson Lane would pass underneath the interstate via new I-90 structures.
- Implementing a single-point urban interchange (SPUI) to replace the standard diamond interchange. The signalized intersections at North Frontage Road and Old Hardin Road would be reconstructed, and could use signalization or roundabouts for control. The north and south access ramps would be controlled by one signalized intersection located below new I-90 structures. New structures would be required to accommodate the access ramp signal

- Implementing an SPUI to replace the standard diamond interchange. The signalized intersections at North Frontage Road and Old Hardin Road would be reconstructed with roundabouts at these locations. The north and south access ramps would be controlled by a single roundabout located below two new I-90 structures situated over each side of the roundabout
- Implementing a double crossover diamond interchange to replace the standard diamond interchange. The signalized intersections at North Frontage Road and Old Hardin Road would be reconstructed. The north and south access ramps would be controlled by cross-over signalized intersections. I-90 would be realigned slightly to the south to facilitate a more perpendicular crossing with Johnson Lane. Johnson Lane would pass below new I-90 structures.
- Implementing a double crossover diamond interchange to replace the standard diamond interchange. The signalized intersections at North Frontage Road and Old Hardin Road would be reconstructed with roundabouts at these locations. The north and south access ramps would be controlled by cross-over signalized intersections. I-90 would be realigned slightly to the south to facilitate a more perpendicular crossing with Johnson Lane. Johnson Lane would pass below new I-90 structures.

David Shea stated that he was in favor of increased traffic flow to the interchange. He noted that the area near Burger King underwent construction the year prior, which had a dramatic negative effect on the store's business. As such, he would prefer that work on the interchange is postponed for a few years to allow the restaurant a chance to recover lost revenue from the earlier construction work. He does not see an immediate need to improve the interchange until after the new alignment has been constructed. David also noted that there is a septic field on the northwest corner of the Burger King lot that could be impacted by the interchange reconstruction.



## **Public Meeting**

### **Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Project**

**Wednesday, October 13, 2010**

**Open House: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.**

**Presentation: 7:15 p.m.**

**Lockwood School**

**1932 U.S. Hwy. 87, Billings, MT**

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) will conduct its third public meeting to discuss the Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Funding constraints prompted a re-scoping of this project. The project is now proposed to provide a connection between I-90 and Old Hwy. 312. The goal of the EIS is to develop a preferred alternative for a bypass that will 1) provide an additional Yellowstone River crossing and support long-term plans; 2) provide an additional connection between Lockwood and Billings areas; and 3) improve mobility to and from Billings Heights. The purpose of the meeting is to solicit community input on the proposed project. Community input collected at the public meeting will contribute to the alternatives that will be carried forward for detailed evaluation in the Billings Bypass EIS.

The meeting is open to the public and the public is encouraged to attend. MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person's participation in any department service, program or activity. For reasonable accommodations to participate in this meeting, please contact Laura Meyer of David Evans & Assoc. at (720) 225-4632 at least two days before the meeting. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or (800) 335-7592, or Montana Relay at 711. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request.

Comments may be submitted in writing at the meeting, by mail to Stefan Streeter, MDT District Administrator, Billings District Office at PO Box 20437, Billings, MT 59104-0437 or online at

[www.billingsbypass.com](http://www.billingsbypass.com)

Please indicate comments are for project CN 4199.

# **Meeting Notes from Public Meeting #3 October 3, 2012**





DAVID EVANS  
AND ASSOCIATES INC.

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## PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

**PROJECT:** Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)  
MDT Project No. NCPD 56(55)CN 4199

**PURPOSE:** Public Meeting #3

**DATE HELD:** October 13, 2010

**LOCATION:** Lockwood School, 1932 US Hwy 87, Billings, Montana

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### Overview

The third public meeting for the Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was held at Lockwood School on October 13, 2010 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Approximately 66 members of the community as well as local, state, and federal officials attended this meeting, which was structured as an open house with a formal presentation beginning at 7:15 pm. The open house included displays on the following topics:

#### **Project History**

- Project Schedule
- Old vs. New Purpose and Need
- Next steps

#### **Alternatives**

- Alternatives Screening and Evaluation Process
- Previously Considered Alignments
- New Potential Alignments

#### **Conceptual Alternatives**

- Draft Conceptual Alternatives
- Alternatives Evaluation Process

#### **Existing Conditions**

- Study Area
- Opportunities and Constraints

In addition, the following handouts were available:

- Agenda (with study area map)
- Newsletter
- Comment sheet

### Presentation

#### **Purpose of Meeting**

The purpose of this meeting was to explain why it was necessary to re-evaluate the project approach, as well as to discuss the new purpose and need. Community input collected at this public meeting will contribute to the selection of the alternatives that will be carried forward for detailed evaluation in the Billings Bypass EIS.

#### **Project Overview and Re-scoping**

*Why does the project need to be re-evaluated?*

- The project is federally funded, and is required to comply with NEPA. The outcome of NEPA is a decision document, in this case a Record of Decision (ROD). We need to complete the ROD for this project before it can proceed to final design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction.

- The requirements for getting the ROD signed have changed. FHWA issued new guidance stating that projects need to be part of a fiscally constrained transportation plan in order to get a signed ROD.
- The 2005 Billings Urban Area Long-Range Transportation Plan did not include the Billings Bypass project between I-90 and MT 3 in the funded projects.
- The reason for this is because the projected cost of constructing a bypass between I-90 and MT 3 far exceeded available funding.
- MDT had to re-evaluate the project approach. A number of options for how to proceed with the project were discussed with local representatives.

### New Study Area

- The Policy Coordinating Committee for the Billings Urban Area voted to re-scope the project to focus on a connection between I-90 and Old Hwy 312. In May 2010, an update to the Billings Urban Area Long-Range Transportation Plan was approved and included the Billings Bypass project between I-90 and Old Hwy 312 in the list of funded projects.
- Now that the focus of the project had changed, we need to re-evaluate the purpose of the project and the transportation needs that should be served by this project.
- We've recently met with the project advisory committee twice to get input on the rescoped project.
- Based on this coordination we've developed a revised purpose and need and taken a look at some potential alternatives to address the revised purpose and need.
- We're here tonight to get input and feedback from all of you on the rescoped project.

### Purpose and Need

*What is a purpose and need statement and why is it important?*

The purpose and need is kind of a mission statement. It is the driver for the whole project and all of the alternatives are measured against the stated purpose and need.

*What was the original purpose of the project?*

Improve the Camino-Real International Trade Corridor and alleviate traffic congestion on the city street network by providing a bypass route connecting I-90 east of Billings with MT 3 northwest of Billings.

Needs:

- Improve the Camino Real International Trade Corridor
- Alleviate Congestion on the Billings Urban Area Street Network
- Improve Safety

*What is the new purpose of the project?*

Provide a connection between I-90 and Old Highway 312 that improves mobility in the eastern area of Billings and supports long-term planning for the Billings urban area.

Needs:

- Provide an additional Yellowstone River crossing for transportation system reliability/redundancy.
- Provide an additional connection between Lockwood and Billings.
- Improved mobility to and from Billings Heights.

*How does this change the focus of the project?*

The project has shifted from a very regional focus to a more local focus. The original purpose and need was focused on improving the Camino-Real International Trade Corridor by providing a better connection between I-90 and MT 3. Except for the section of the trade corridor between here and Great Falls, the entire trade corridor route is an interstate facility. So, one of the previous goals of the project was to provide an interstate level facility for the segment through the Billings Area. Another component of the project purpose was alleviating traffic

congestion on the city street network and it was thought that would be accomplished mainly by removing regional traffic from the urban network by providing an alternate route.

The revised purpose and need is focused on improving mobility in the eastern area of Billings by providing a new connection between I-90 and Old Hwy 312. This purpose does not require an interstate level facility, so it opens up the option of developing a major arterial. Supporting long-term planning for the Billings urban area is also a component of the revised project purpose and this includes planning for a future bypass route. We are requesting your input on the purpose and need this evening.

### **Alternatives Development/Screening**

*Why do we need to develop new alternatives?*

According to Federal regulations, all reasonable alternatives must be evaluated. Previously suggested alternatives that may not have been feasible must be reassessed based on the new purpose and need. Because the project is no longer proposed as an interstate level facility, some existing transportation corridors that could not be used previously may be feasible. Likewise, since a system level interchange at the interstate is no longer a design criteria, Johnson Lane could be a feasible location to connect to the interstate. Additionally, the project team has explored new alternatives that would meet the revised purpose and need. Concepts for potential alignments have been developed and we are seeking comments on these ideas from the public this evening.

### *Overview of Potential Alternatives*

The potential interstate connection locations include the existing I-90/I-94 interchange and the existing Johnson Lane interchange. At either of these locations, we would look at reconstructing the existing interchange. All of the alternatives would cross the river at approximately the same location – this was previously identified as one of two optimal locations to cross the river. We have identified four alignment options for connecting to Old Hwy 312. These include two existing road corridors - the Mary Street corridor and the Five Mile Road corridor, and two alignments that traverse agricultural land. We considered numerous other possibilities and have screened them out for various reasons. Information about the alternatives that have been considered is available at Station #4. The concepts that we propose to evaluate further are shown at Station #5. We would welcome your input on these options during the open house this evening.

### **Next Steps**

*What will happen next and when will it happen?*

The project team will meet with the resource agency representatives to provide them with an opportunity to comment on the purpose and need and the conceptual alternatives. If necessary, we will refine the purpose and need and/or the conceptual alternatives. When the project team has considered the input from the public and agencies, we will develop preliminary alternatives and identify area where field data needs to be collected. This would include new areas that could be affected by the alternatives that were not covered in the previous field efforts. Early next year, the people who own land adjacent to the alternatives in areas that have not previously been surveyed will receive requests to grant access for field work. Once the field work has been completed, we will evaluate the alternatives in detail and present the findings in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). When that document has been released, we will meet with the public again to get input. Our goal is to complete the DEIS in 2012.

*How can I provide input?*

- Project team members will record input at this meeting

- Submit a comment sheet  
(at meeting or mail later)
- Submit a comment via the project website [www.billingsbypass.com](http://www.billingsbypass.com)
- Phone or email the project contacts listed on the newsletter

### **Questions and Answer Session**

#### **Traffic and Congestion**

Q: The original project focused on providing an alternate route for regional truck traffic. How will this project address truck traffic?

A: Depending on which alignment is selected, it may provide a shorter route between I-90/I-94 and US 87, so it will attract some truck traffic. It will also provide a shorter route for local heavy truck traffic to get to the interstate. This project is just one part of a group of projects that will help with congestion on the Main Street corridor. Bench Boulevard and the Inner Beltloop are other projects that will help.

#### **Bypass Design**

Q: Will the road be two or four lanes?

A: We propose a two-lane facility initially, but the ultimate plan is for four lanes. MDT intends to pursue adequate right-of-way to allow for future expansion to four lanes.

Q: What type of intersection will connect this to 312?

A: The connection to 312 would be an at-grade intersection. We don't know what type of configuration may be necessary at this point, but we don't anticipate a grade separated interchange at 312.

Q: How is this part of a future bypass?

A: One of the criteria for developing the alternatives is going to be the feasibility of making a connection to US 87 and MT 3 in the future. We will be working to find the best alternative that improves mobility and still allows for a future bypass connection. However, the ability to make the ultimate connection to MT 3 depends on having an open corridor for the roadway and this project will not preserve that corridor.

#### **Safety**

Q: Considering all the existing residential development on Mary Street, how can we use Mary Street if the speed limit for this project is proposed at 60 mph?

A: Mary Street is not designated as the alternative. It is just a suggestion at this point and we are still taking input from the Advisory Committee, the public, and the agencies. This process helps to define the best alternatives to take forward in the environmental document.

### **Additional comments provided at the meeting:**

#### **Traffic and Congestion**

- We supported this project when it connected to MT 3. We do not support a project that stops at Old Hwy 312 because we don't want all that traffic being dumped onto Hwy 312.
- Unless we build the full bypass, we will create more traffic problems on Main Street and Old Hwy 312.
- This will add to the traffic on Hwy 312 and it will be hard to get on the road; the road is already too dangerous and more traffic is not a good idea.
- A standard at-grade intersection on Hwy 312 would be dangerous. There is too much traffic. There needs to be a free flow turn lane.
- I don't think these alignments will do a great deal to eliminate truck traffic on Main Street.

- I have a business on 312 that generates a lot of truck traffic past the Metra. This would be a good alternate route to the interstate.
- The Mary Street alternative will funnel traffic onto US 87. This is a concern because Independent School is located on US 87 and parents park on US 87 to pick-up and drop-off their kids.

### **Alternatives**

- We need to continue the bypass to MT 3 and think of the future in regards to the alignment we pick today.
- This project should focus on the ultimate bypass and complete it in stages.
- The project should go to MT 3 and should not be phased.
- If there is not enough money to get to MT 3, a connection to US 87 should be made at a minimum.
- We should keep the alignment off of existing roads and go through undeveloped fields.
- The alignments should not be close to subdivisions.
- The Pinehills to Mary Street alternative is the best.
- The Mary Street alternative should not connect directly into the US 87 and Old Hwy 312 junction, but should instead align with US 87 east of the current junction.
- The Mary Street corridor is not feasible for a future bypass route.
- The Legacy alignment would impact more properties than the Five Mile alignment.
- Connecting at Pinehills doesn't make any sense since Billings is a truck fueling hub and the distances between hubs is so great that long-distance haulers would need to back-track on I-90 to access the truck plazas at Johnson Lane before continuing their trip on I-94 or I-90.
- Stop control or a traffic light at Old Hwy 312 won't work. There is too much traffic. There needs to be free flow turn lanes. MDT should consider a roundabout.
- A roundabout for the connection at Old Hwy 312 would be an excellent idea.
- We don't want a roundabout at Old Hwy 312. There is too much traffic. A traffic light is needed.
- MDT should acquire ROW for four lanes.

### **Other Comments and Questions**

- Local area truckers would use any of the proposed routes extensively.
- 60 mph on Mary Street is too fast.
- Legacy Lane is a short east-west street and is not the same as the Legacy alignment, which follows a ditch road.
- What do you evaluate in the EIS?
- How will this project affect truck traffic on Main Street? We need to get trucks off Main Street - especially trucks transporting hazardous materials.
- Project staff in the field should display the MDT logo in their vehicles so that landowners can identify vehicles on their property.
- Some buildings near the I-90/I-94 interchange are on state land.



# **Public Hearing Materials**

## **September 13, 2012**

-----Original Message-----

From: Grant, Paul [<mailto:pgrant@mt.gov>]

Sent: Friday, August 31, 2012 9:09 AM

To: BECKY BOHRER; Big Sky Business Journal; Billings - Roadwatch Montana ([jon@roadwatchmt.com](mailto:jon@roadwatchmt.com)); Billings Business; BILLINGS GAZETTE; BILLINGS OUTPOST; [communicationsnewsfeeds@aaashto.org](mailto:communicationsnewsfeeds@aaashto.org); KBBB FM-KBUL-AM-KCTR-FM-KKBR-FM-KMHK-FM; KBLG-AM-KRKX-FM-KRZN-FM-KYYA-FM; KBLW-FM; KEMC-FM; KEMC-FM; KGHL-AM-KGHL-FM-KQBL-FM-KRSQ-FM-KZRV-FM; KNDZ;KBEZ; KHMT-TV; KPBR-FM-KPLN-FM-KWYF-FM; KSVI-TV; KTVQ-TV; KTVQ-TV; KULR-AM-KMZK-AM; KULR-TV; KULR-TV; KBSR; Laurel Outlook

Cc: Bente, Fredrick; Wendy Wallach; Geneva Hooten; Patricia Steinholtz; Streeter, Stefan; Neville, Gary; Nelson, Rodney; Erb, Michelle; Madison, Davey; Ryan, Lori; Grant, Paul; Gocksch, Thomas; Bruner, Heidy; Martin, Tom; Woodmansey, Alan; Becky Conner; Cormier, Todd; Shoff, John; [bobm@marvinassociates.com](mailto:bobm@marvinassociates.com); Clearwood, Celia; Road Supervisor; Tim Miller; Yellowstone County Commissioners

Subject: MDT Schedules a Public Hearing Regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Billings Bypass Project - Yellowstone County CN4199

August 31, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For More Information:

Lori Ryan, Public Information, MDT, (406) 444-6821

MDT Schedules a Public Hearing Regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Billings Bypass Project - Yellowstone County

Billings - The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is holding a public hearing to discuss the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Billings Bypass project and to solicit comments on the document. The public hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, September 12th at the Lockwood Middle School, Commons (Eileen Johnson Building), 1932 U.S. Hwy 87 E., Lockwood, MT. A public open house will occur from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m. An informational presentation will begin at 7:30 p.m., followed by a Public Hearing until 9:00 p.m. Comments may be submitted at the public hearing.

The Billings Bypass DEIS summarizes the results of the evaluation of a No Build Alternative and three "build" alternatives to improve access and connectivity between I-90 and Old Hwy 312 and to improve mobility in the eastern area of Billings. The purpose of the proposed project is to accomplish the following objectives:

- Reduce physical barrier impacts to the transportation system
- Improve connectivity between Lockwood and Billings
- Improve mobility to and from Billings Heights
- Improve truck/commercial vehicle access to and through Billings

The DEIS document is available for review at the following locations:

• Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), 424 Morey Street, Billings, MT • Montana State University Billings Library, 1500 University Drive, Billings, MT • City-County Planning Department, 4th Floor, Parmlly Billings Library, 510 N. Broadway, Billings, MT 59101 • County Commissioners' Office, 217 N. 27th Street, Room 403, Billings, MT • MDT Environmental Services Bureau, 2960 Prospect Avenue, Helena, MT • Lockwood Water & Sewer District, 1644 Old Hardin Rd., Lockwood, MT • Online at [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/eis\\_ea.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/eis_ea.shtml)

The purpose of the meeting is to present the DEIS and to gather public feedback. Community participation is a very important part of the process, and the public is encouraged to review the DEIS, attend the public hearing, and provide comments. Oral or written opinions, comments, and concerns may be presented at the public hearing. Alternatively, written comments may be submitted to Tom Martin, P.E., MDT Environmental Services, at 2690 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001, or online at

[http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment\\_form.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment_form.shtml)

The public review period is from August 17th through October 1st, 2012. All comments are due by October 1, 2012.

MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person's participation in any service, program or activity of our department. If you require reasonable accommodations to participate in this meeting, please call Paul Grant at (406) 444-9415 at least two days before the meeting. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or (800) 335-7592, or call Montana Relay at 711. Alternative accessible formats of pertinent information will be provided upon request.

-----END-----  
Project Name: Billings Bypass  
Project ID: NCPD 56(55)  
Control Number: 4199  
Yellowstone County



**BILLINGS BYPASS EIS**  
NCPD 56(55)CN 4199

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# WELCOME

## BILLINGS BYPASS

## DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL

## IMPACT STATEMENT

## RELEASE

# PUBLIC HEARING



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# **BILLINGS BYPASS**

# **AGENDA**

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

### **7:00-9:00**

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**7:00-7:30: Open House**

**7:30: Presentation**

**Question and Answer**

**Formal Public Hearing**

# DESIGN OBJECTIVES

These objectives served as guidelines in the development of an initial range of alternatives.

## ROADWAY FUNCTIONALITY

- Design for National Highway System (NHS) Principal Arterial standards.
- Incorporate access control measures that balance through mobility and local access needs.
- Consider existing and future land use in a context-sensitive manner.
- At a minimum, provide service-level interchanges at the interstate.
- Locate the western terminus of the route so that it supports a future connection to US 87 and MT 3.

## YELLOWSTONE RIVER CROSSING

- Minimize impacts to the Yellowstone River and floodplain to the extent practicable.
- Locate the river crossing to provide flexibility for future expansion of the bridge.

## SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- Improve emergency access to the Billings Heights neighborhood.
- Provide grade-separated railroad crossings.
- Improve or maintain safety on connecting routes.
- Meet MDT standards based on the projected traffic volumes and vehicle mix.

## COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Maintain or improve traffic conditions in the eastern area of Billings.
- Accommodate crossings for planned bicycle/pedestrian routes documented in adopted local plans.
- Include pedestrian and bicycle facilities where appropriate along the proposed facility.
- Minimize social, environmental, and economic impacts to the extent practicable.

## COST CONSIDERATIONS

- Accommodate phased construction to match funding availability.
- Limit the use of frontage roads to areas where they are essential.
- Minimize supporting infrastructure costs.



# PROJECT BACKGROUND

## HISTORY

- 2003: The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) began preparation of an EIS to construct a bypass route north of Billings to connect between I-90 and MT 3.
- 2006: Project scoping process began.
- 2007: Preliminary alternatives were developed.
- 2008: New FHWA guidance resulted in re-scoping the project to focus only on the eastern segment between I-90 and Old Hwy 312.
- 2008-2012: Draft EIS was prepared and submitted for public review.

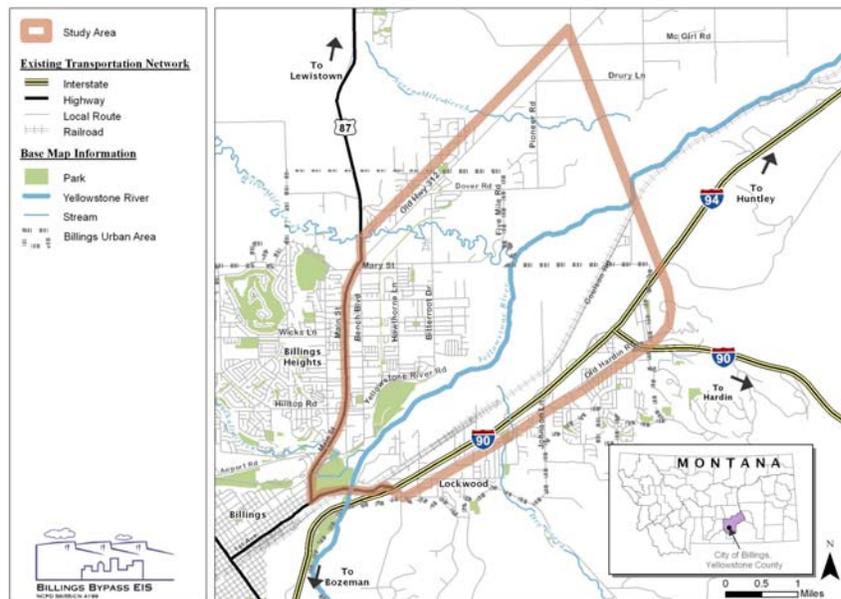
**An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** is a document prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that describes the predicted environmental effects of actions (in the form of alternatives) proposed by a Federal agency.

**Scoping** is a process that identifies public and agency concerns; defines environmental issues and alternatives to be examined in the EIS, identifies related issues based on other legislation or regulations, and identifies state and local requirements.

## STUDY AREA

The project area and the study limits were selected to:

- Connect logical termini and be of sufficient length to evaluate potential impacts to environmental resources.
- Address the lack of connectivity in the study area resulting from physical barriers located within eastern Billings that impede movement in the study area, especially from Lockwood to Billings Heights.
- Have “independent utility,” i.e., a “usable” project that would not require future transportation expenditures to justify the current investment.



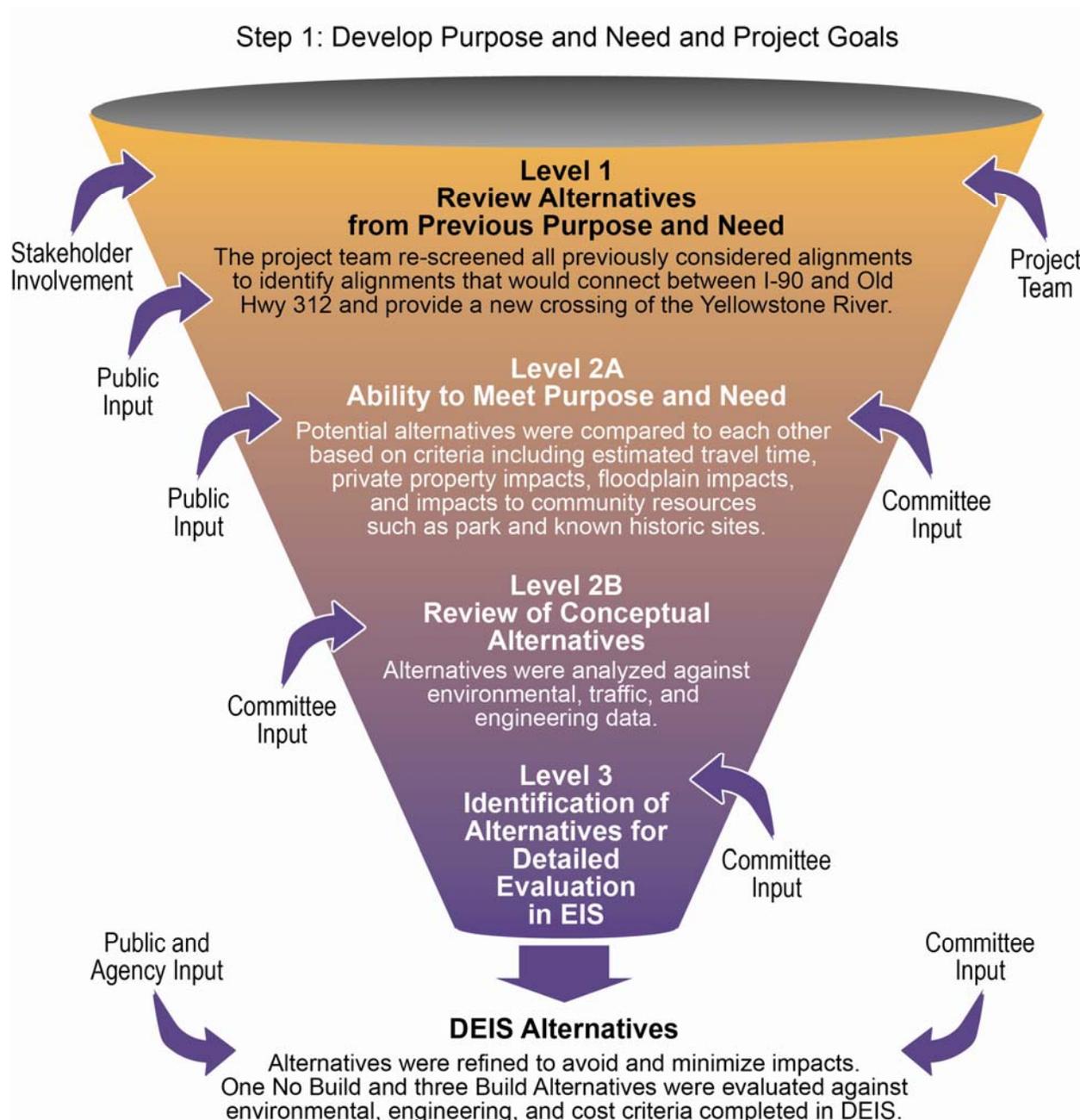


# ALTERNATIVES SCREENING CRITERIA

SCREENING CRITERIA
<b>LEVEL 1 REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVES FROM PREVIOUS PURPOSE AND NEED</b>
Does the alternative make a connection between the interstate and Old Hwy 312?
<b>LEVEL 2A ABILITY TO MEET PURPOSE AND NEED</b>
How well does the alignment meet the project purpose and need? including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce physical barrier impacts</li> <li>• Improve connectivity between Lockwood and Billings</li> <li>• Improve mobility to and from Billings Heights</li> <li>• Improve truck/commercial vehicle access to and through Billings</li> </ul>
Does the alternative have the ability to avoid: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Known cultural/historic sites?</li> <li>• Floodplain?</li> </ul>
<b>LEVEL 2B REVIEW OF CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVES</b>
Does the alternative reduce travel time?
How many right-of-way (ROW) impacts are associated with the alternative?
How does the alternative impact the floodplain?
Does the alternative impact important community resources?
<b>LEVEL 3 IDENTIFY ALTERNATIVES FOR DETAILED EVALUATION</b>
How much traffic will the alignment attract?
What are the impacts of the alternative on existing traffic?
What is the preliminary cost of the alternative?

# ALTERNATIVES SCREENING AND EVALUATION PROCESS

- Review previously identified alternatives.
- Identify a range of potential alternatives.
- Identify alternatives for detailed evaluation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

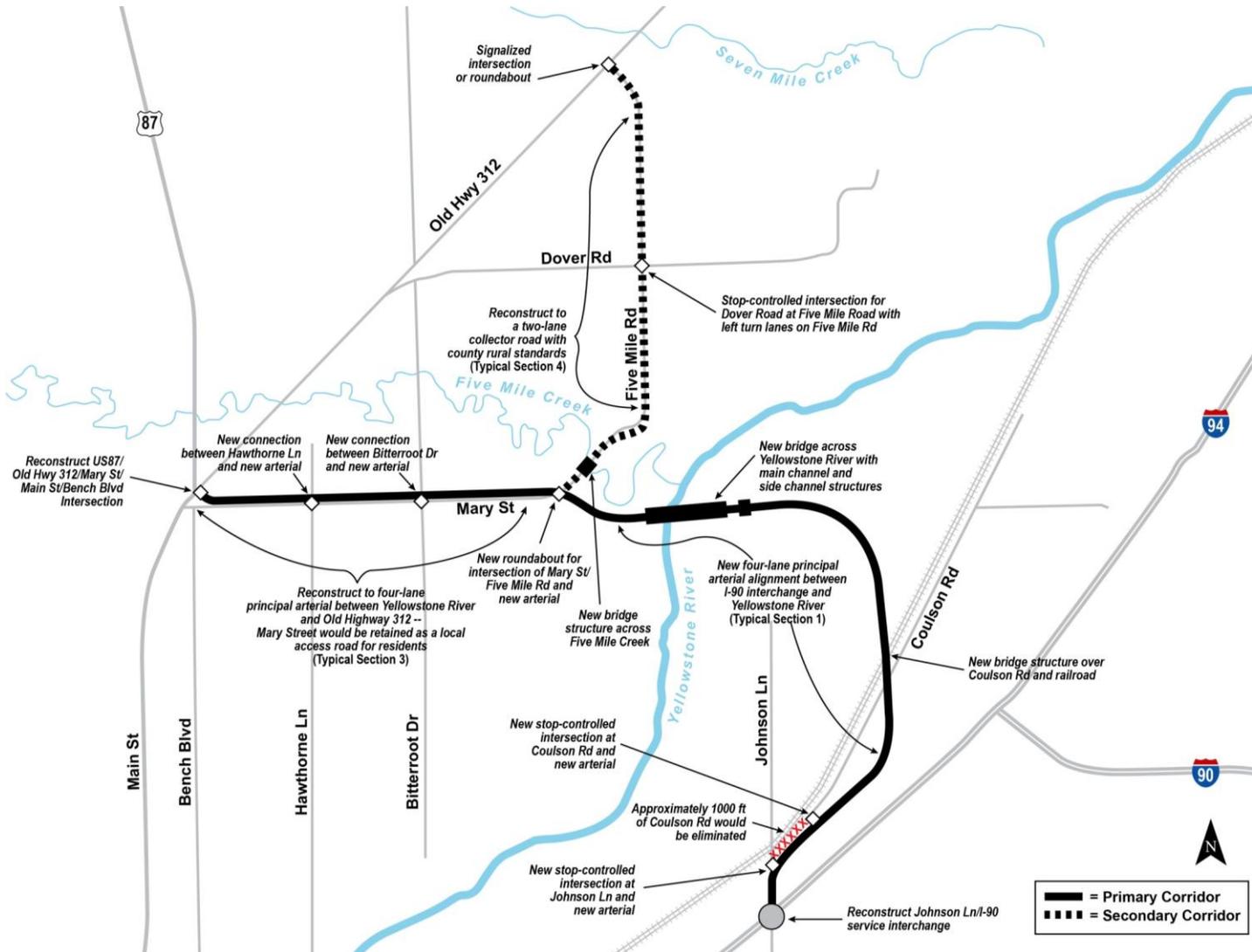






**BILLINGS BYPASS EIS**  
 NCPD 56155/CN 4199

# MARY STREET OPTION 1 ALTERNATIVE

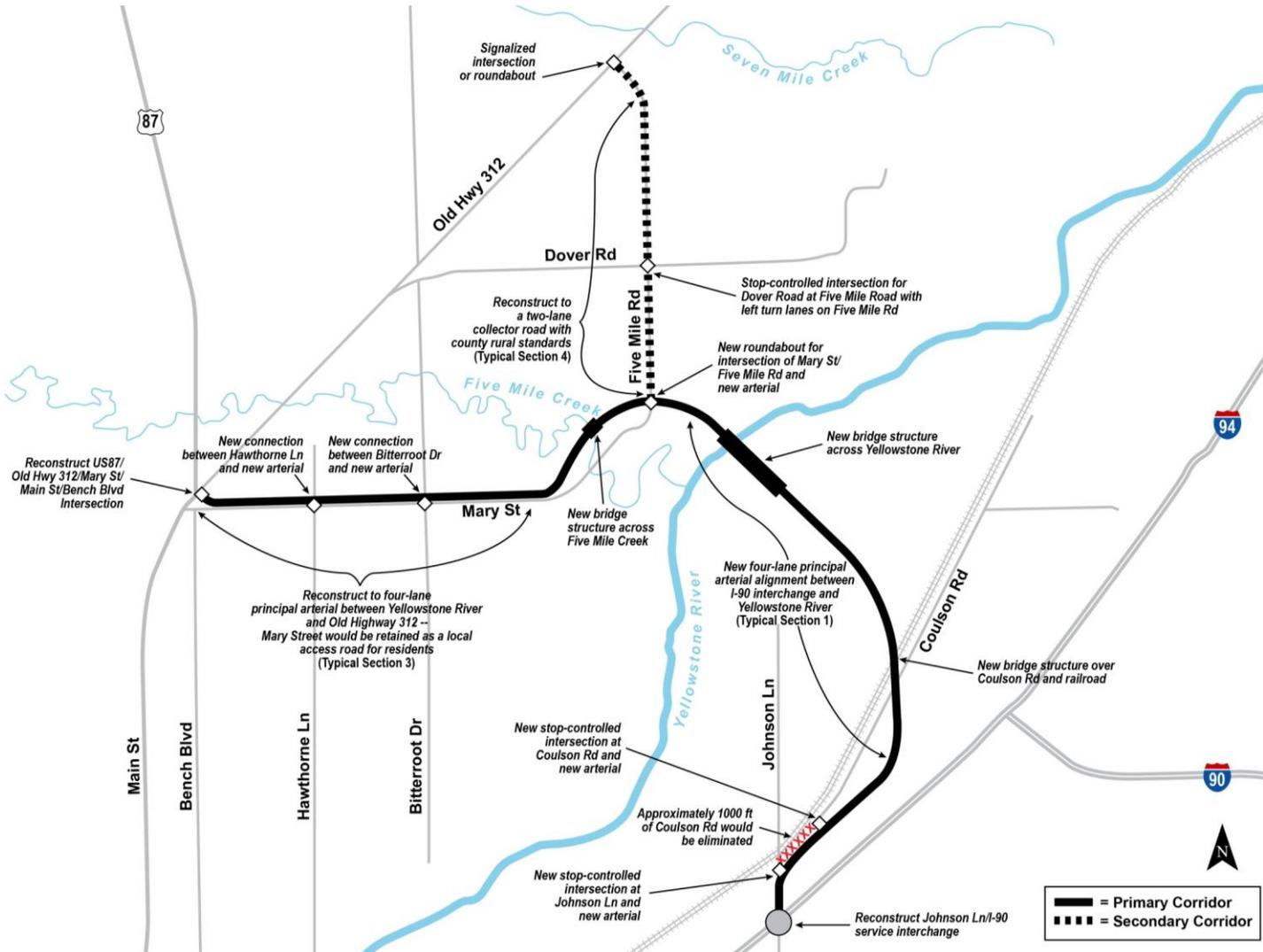


- 4.9 mile connection across Yellowstone River
- Connection to I-90 at Johnson Lane, requiring reconstruction of interchange
- New bridge to be constructed over Coulson Road and Montana Rail Link Rail Road
- Alignment would include connections to local street network
- Secondary improvements to Five Mile Road to meet future travel demand



**BILLINGS BYPASS EIS**  
NCPD 56155/CN 4199

# MARY STREET OPTION 2 ALTERNATIVE

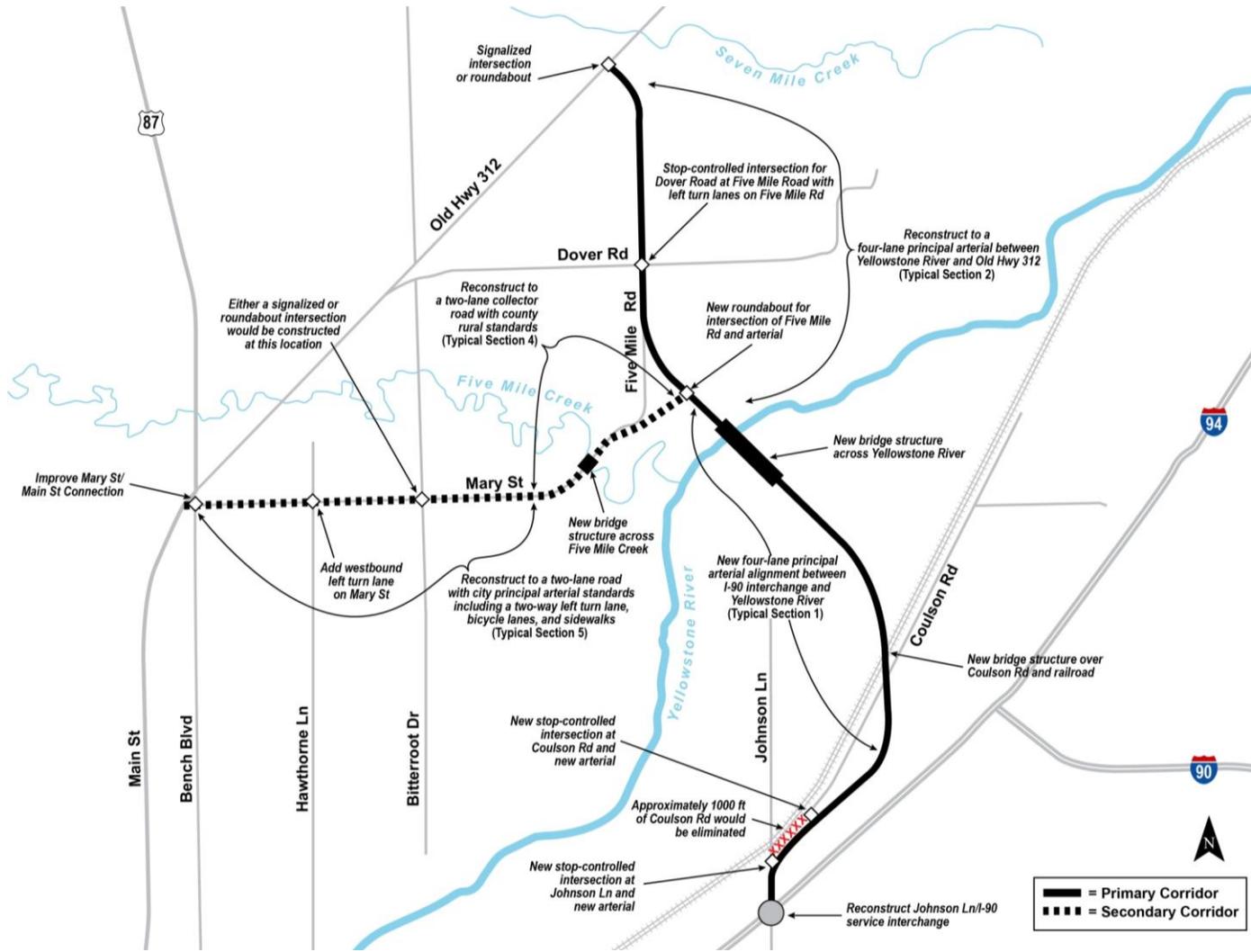


- 5.1 mile connection across Yellowstone River
- Would cross river to the north of Five Mile Creek
- New bridge crossing over Five Mile Creek
- Similar to Mary Street Option 1, would parallel north side of Mary Street
- Would include connections to local street network at Bitterroot Drive, Hawthorne Lane, Bench Boulevard
- Secondary improvements same as Mary Street Option 1



**BILLINGS BYPASS EIS**  
 NCPD 56155/CN 4199

# FIVE MILE ROAD ALTERNATIVE



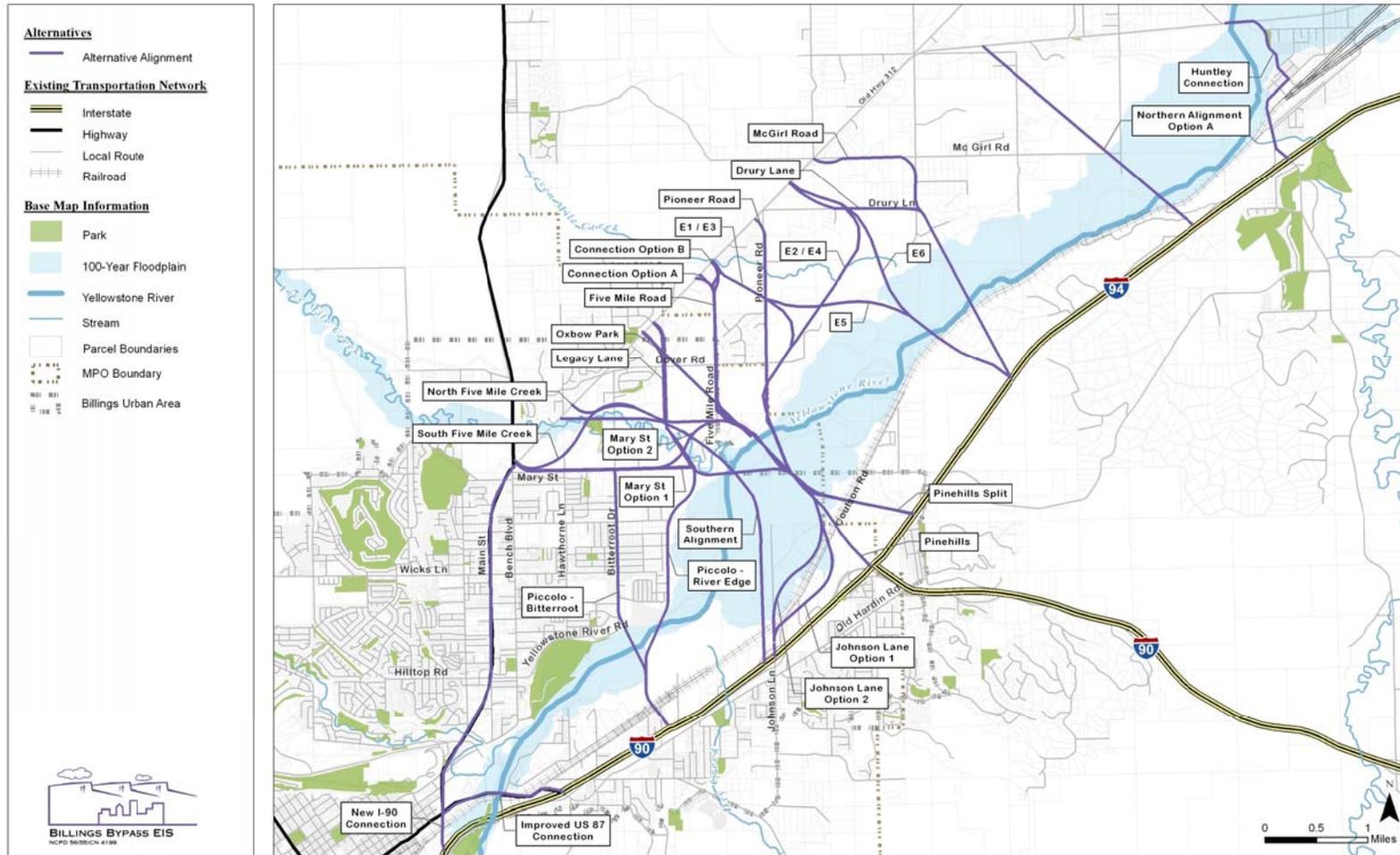
- 4.5 mile connection across Yellowstone River
- Would cross river to the north of Five Mile Creek
- New bridge crossing over Five Mile Creek
- Would parallel north side of Mary Street
- Alignment would include connections to local street network
- Secondary improvements between Five Mile Road and Mary Street and reconstruction of Mary Street



**BILLINGS BYPASS EIS**  
NCPD 56(55)CN 4199

# ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED

Other variations of these alternatives were also considered.



Sources: DOWL, HKM August 2011, FEMA (preliminary floodplain data) August 2011, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (streams, public land information), USDA National Agricultural Imagery Program (July 2009 aerial photography), Yellowstone County (schools, public water supply, parks) 2010

Date Plotted: 6/19/2012

# STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION

Federal law requires the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to coordinate with public and other agencies early in the process.

## AGENCY CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

- Federal Highway Administration
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Montana State Historic Preservation Office
- Montana Natural Heritage Program
- Yellowstone County
- Montana Department of Transportation
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Department of the Interior – Fish & Wildlife Service
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
- City of Billings
- Yellowstone County Planning Board

**2011:** Agencies met with FHWA and MDT to review the coordination plan, discuss the purpose and need, discuss the range of alternatives, and allow for collaboration on the impact assessment methodologies.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- Billings Bypass Advisory Committee (BBAC)
  - Established to provide advice to the project team and to facilitate involvement of a wide range of community interests in the study area
  - Composed of 25 individuals representing a broad spectrum of stakeholders
  - Ten meetings have been held to date
- Public Meetings were held at the following milestones
  - Scoping process (April 26, 2006)
  - Alternatives development and screening (October 4, 2007)
  - Second scoping phase (October 13, 2010)
- Stakeholder Interviews and Group Meetings:
  - Ongoing
- Information Sharing
  - Newsletters
  - Press Releases
  - Project Web Site





**BILLINGS BYPASS EIS**  
 NCPD 56155/CN 4199

# RESOURCE IMPACTS AND COSTS

<b>Natural / Social / Community Resources and Project Cost</b>				
<b>Alternative Alignments</b>	<b>Q:</b>	How are critical natural resources impacted?	How are social and community resources impacted?	Construction Cost in 2012 dollars (not adjusted for inflation)
	<b>A:</b>	There is not a discernible impact to most natural resources.  Since wetlands are a regulated resource, the impacts are listed below.	Total acres required for alignment right-of-way (ROW) and impacted residences (Primary/Secondary Corridor)	
<b>No-Build Alternative</b>		0 ac	No impact	\$0
<b>Mary Street Option 1 Alternative</b>		5.39 total acres	ROW footprint: 261 acres Impacted Residences (Primary/Secondary): 13 / 2	\$121,100,000
<b>Mary Street Option 2 Alternative</b>		4.52 total acres	ROW footprint: 254 acres Impacted Residences (Primary/Secondary): 13 / 0	\$111,900,000
<b>Five Mile Road Alternative</b>		4.7 total acres	ROW footprint: 221 acres Impacted Residences (Primary/Secondary): 6 / 5	\$109,900,000



**BILLINGS BYPASS EIS**  
NCPD 56155/CN 4199

# PURPOSE AND NEED FINDINGS

Purpose and Need					
Alternative Alignments	Q:	Is there a reduction in physical barrier impacts to transportation?	How can we tell that connectivity between Lockwood and Billings has improved?	How can we tell we've improved mobility to and from Billings Heights?	How can we tell that truck / commercial vehicle access to and through Billings has improved?
	A:	High average daily traffic (ADT) on the bypass indicates impacts of physical barriers to transportation network are reduced	High reduction in ADT on existing route between Lockwood and Billings indicates bypass is an attractive alternative	By reducing congestion, which in turn reduces crashes and waiting at intersections (measured by level of service, or LOS)	By providing a faster / more direct route between US 87 and the I-90/I-94 interchange
No-Build Alternative	NA	(no new roadway)	ADT += 42,000	No reduction to accidents LOS E/F Intersections = 11	14.3 minutes
Mary Street Option 1 Alternative	ADT = 15,900		ADT = 29,350 Reduction of 30%	Reduces area accidents by 12% LOS E/F Intersections = 4	7.4 minutes
Mary Street Option 2 Alternative	ADT = 15,600		ADT = 29,850 Reduction of 29%	Reduces area accidents by 12% LOS E/F Intersections = 4	7.6 minutes
Five Mile Road Alternative	ADT = 13,000		ADT = 32,350 Reduction of 23%	Reduces area accidents by 9% LOS E/F Intersections = 5	9.9 minutes

# PRELIMINARY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

- All three Build Alternatives meet project purpose and need.
- The No Build Alternative does not meet project purpose and need.

## MARY STREET OPTION 2

Mary Street Option 2 was recommended as a Preliminary Preferred Alternative as the best, most cost-effective option for the following reasons:

- Lower cost than Mary Street Option 1, with a negligible difference in traffic operations
- Similar cost to the Five Mile Road Alternative but with better traffic operations
- Anticipated to have fewer impacts to water resources than other alternatives

### Photo Simulation of Yellowstone River Crossing with Mary Street Option 2



# FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

## MARY STREET OPTION 2 PRELIMINARY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

FOUR-LANE	TWO-LANE
<b>COST: \$111 MILLION</b> (In 2012 dollars adjusted for inflation)	<b>COST: \$79.4 MILLION</b> (In 2012 dollars adjusted for inflation)
Available: \$22.3 million*	Available: \$22.3 million*
Needed to Complete: \$89 million	Needed to Complete: \$57.1 million

\* Approximately \$22.3 million has been “earmarked” for construction of the roadway by state and federal agencies. Subsequent phases or portions of phases could be implemented as additional funding is identified and included in the LRTP.

### FUNDING SOURCES

- Federal regulations require project to be included in the Fiscally-Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan before a Record of Decision can be issued.
- Funding sources for construction of the first phase could include, but are not limited to:
  - Interstate Maintenance
  - National Highway System
  - Surface Transportation Program
  - Bridge Program
- Most of the federal funding programs include a state or local “matching requirement.”





**BILLINGS BYPASS EIS**  
NCPD 56155/CN 4199

## PHASING CONSIDERATIONS

- The total cost for the four-lane Preliminary Preferred Alternative (Mary Street Option 2) is estimated at \$111 million.
- Approximately \$23.3 million has been “earmarked” for construction of the roadway by State and Federal agencies.
- Total project funding is not yet finalized so phased construction to meet fiscal constraints is anticipated.
- Federal regulations require project to be included in the Fiscally-Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan before a Record of Decision can be issued.
- Current funding for four-lane facility has not been identified, a first phase of construction could be a two-lane facility following the preferred alignment.



## HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

We want to hear from you.

- ✍ Fill out a comment sheet here tonight.
- ☺ Give verbal comments to a project team representative here tonight.

You can also send written comments to:

Tom Martin, P.E.  
Environmental Services Bureau Chief  
MDT Environmental Services  
2701 Prospect Avenue  
PO Box 201001  
Helena, MT 50620-1001

Or you can submit your comments through the MDT web site:

[http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment\\_form.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment_form.shtml)



All comments on the DEIS due by October 1, 2012

# SCHEDULE

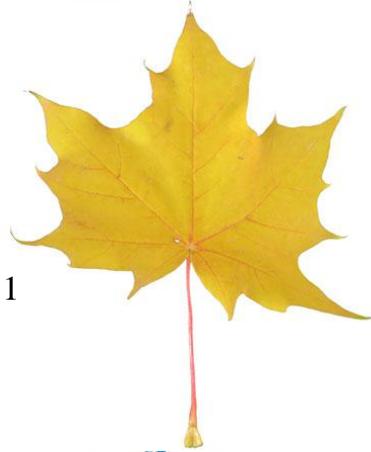
## SUMMER 2012

- Released Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for public review
- Public Hearing September 12, 2012
- End of public review period October 1, 2012



## FALL 2012

- Billings Bypass Advisory Committee Meeting #11
- Consider public comments and revise DEIS to address comments



## WINTER 2012/2013

- Release Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for public review



## SPRING 2013

- Sign Record of Decision



# **Pubic Hearing Transcript September 13, 2012**



**TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARING**  
**DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**  
**BILLINGS BYPASS**  
**CN4199**

**September 12, 2012**  
**Lockwood Middle School**  
**1932 US Hwy 87 East**  
**Lockwood, MT**

**OPENING**

Paul Grant: We appreciate the Lockwood School allowing us to use their facility. For those of you who had some frustration with finding the meeting, I apologize. I want to welcome you and thank you for being here tonight. My name is Paul Grant and I'm the Public Involvement Coordinator for the Montana Department of Transportation. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome you here tonight to share your comments with us.

This Public Hearing is to discuss the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which is also known as the DEIS for the Billings Bypass Project which is CN 4199. The Billings Bypass DEIS summarizes the results of the evaluation of a No-Build Alternative and three Build Alternatives to improve access and connectivity between I-90 and Old Highway 312 and to improve mobility in the eastern area of Billings.

I would like to introduce the rest of the MDT staff and consultants who are present here tonight to discuss this project and who will be listening to your questions and comments. First Stefan Streeter, MDT District Administrator has a few comments he would like to say and then I'll introduce the rest of the staff and the consultants.

***Stefan Streeter***

I want to thank everybody for taking the time this evening to come and join us on this very important project. This project started as a Feasibility Study back in 1999 when the Yellowstone County Commissioners and the town of Lockwood got together and requested that somebody look at the possibility of connecting Lockwood to the City of Billings through the Heights. It's gone through a lot of iterations over the years. About two and half to three years ago it got a revitalization or reemphasis on its importance with the tornado that hit the Heights. Prior to that the County Commissioners as well as the City, through the NPO process, decided we really needed to get moving on this and bring it to an end. For me, having been involved for most of my career in Billings which is going on 14 years, it's pretty exciting to be here today at the Public Hearing for the Draft EIS. I want to again thank everybody for coming; I appreciate you

taking time from your family life to come and be part of this meeting. Your comments are very important in the process.

### ***Introductions***

I would like to introduce the rest of the MDT staff and the consultants. Fred Bente, Consultant Project Manager; Tom Gocksch, District Project Development Engineer; as mentioned before, Stefan Streeter, MDT Billings District Administrator, Gary Neville, Project Design Manager from the Billings District; Celia Clearwood, Billings District Right-of-Way Supervisor; Paul Rieger, Billings Construction. From the Consultants David Evans and Associates from Denver: Wendy Wallach, who will be doing the presentation tonight; Geneva Hooten from Portland; and Joe Hart. From Dowl-HKM Engineering out of Billings: John Shoff , Greg Gable, and Todd Cormier. From Marvin and Associates: Bob Marvin.

*(Paul Grant asked all the elected officials to stand up and identify themselves for the audience. )*

Before Wendy Wallach gives her presentation of the overview of the DEIS, I have a few housekeeping matters to take care of so you'll have some idea of what to expect tonight. We're here tonight for many reasons – to briefly summarize the project history, to respond to previous comments, and describe the Draft EIS process. We're here to get public comment to ensure that the impacts of this project are appropriately mitigated. There are sign-in sheets at the entrance and we request that everyone sign in so we have it on public record that you were here tonight. Also there are Title VI Pamphlets on the table regarding MDT's policy on non-discrimination which you are welcome to take and review. If you have any questions regarding MDT's Title VI, please see me afterwards. The Draft EIS document is currently available for public review at various locations throughout the community and it is also available on line. If you are still wondering where the documents are located within the community, there will be a slide at the end of the presentation that lists the DRAFT EIS document locations.

### ***Meeting Agenda***

Tonight's agenda will be in three parts as follows: we are going to summarize the Draft EIS first, the presenter for this portion of the meeting will be Wendy Wallach; secondly after Wendy has given her information regarding the Draft EIS, we will move into the clarification session where you will have the opportunity to ask specific questions about the Draft EIS. So please keep in mind that this is the time for questions about the Draft EIS. The questions need to be very specific about that. If a question is more of a comment or it does not pertain to the Draft EIS or falls outside the parameters of the Draft EIS, Wendy may indicate that the question was more of a comment than a question and may ask you to restate that or wait and state it in the third part of the meeting which is known as the Hearing which is where you'll give your comments. Just be aware that if we ask you to do that, it's not that we're trying to be rude or avoid answering your question but if it is more of a comment or falls outside the parameters, we'll ask you to state that

in the Hearing portion of the meeting. Thirdly after the Draft EIS clarification period, then we'll open things up for the formal Hearing. Please remember this portion of the Hearing is the formal process of collecting comments and testimony. This is not a question and answer period, it's an opportunity for you to let us know what you think about what's contained in this particular Draft EIS document. If you haven't had an opportunity to view the document or if you're not prepared to give comments tonight, the comment period is open until October 1<sup>st</sup>. You can submit your comments in writing and leave them at the comment box located at the sign-in table, you can take the comment sheet home and submit your comments by mail or submit your comments on the internet. If you have questions in that regard, please see one of the team members after the meeting tonight regarding how to submit your comments. Public input, your comments must be sent by the comment deadline of October 1<sup>st</sup>. After the comment deadline, MDT and the Federal Highway Administration will take your comments into consideration and begin developing the Final Environmental Impact Statement. To reiterate one more time – we'll have Wendy discuss the Billings Bypass Project, we will have a Draft EIS clarification session where you can present your questions regarding the statement to the team, and finally we'll have a formal Hearing section where you can give your comments about the Draft EIS. During the Hearing no questions will be answered; MDT and the Consultants will just hear your comments. At this time I'd like to turn the meeting over to Wendy Wallach for her presentation regarding the overview.

### **PRESENTATION – Wendy Wallach**

Welcome to the Billings Bypass EIS Public Hearing. It's nice to see so many people who came out tonight. I recognize a lot of people from previous meetings and it's great to have such an active and engaged community. I'm going to walk through the Agenda briefly. We hope you all had a chance to review the project materials on the wall during the Open House portion of the meeting. If not it's a summary of a lot of the same materials you will see in the Power Point and that are contained in the EIS. I did want to mention, aside from the slides here, on the Agenda tonight that we handed out at the door, there is a listing of locations where you can review the EIS as well as the website so don't feel like you have to do it all tonight.

I'm going to give a brief presentation on the environmental process then we'll move into questions and answers and then the Public Hearing. I want to clarify one thing in the Public Hearing – even though we are not responding to comments tonight, we do consider each and every one of the comments and respond to them in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. While MDT, FHWA and the Team doesn't respond tonight, you will see a response to any of the comments you give us tonight or submit in writing or submit on the website.

### ***Environmental Process***

We have a copy of the EIS here tonight. It was prepared jointly by two lead agencies – MDT and Federal Highway Administration. The purpose of the document is to comply with federal and state guidelines and to look at impacts associated with the proposed improvements. This

slide shows the process we've gone through and a lot of people have been involved in this. The EIS is done as part of the NEPA process. Whenever there is a federal action, when a project receives federal money or federal earmark, or needs a federal permit from a federal agency we are required to do NEPA. In addition to that a lot of state agencies just chose to do an environmental process as part of environmental stewardship. So this document shows the evaluation and discloses impacts to the public of all the alternatives we have considered to date. As I mentioned it is a process. I think many of you have been involved and we'll talk about the project schedule. This project really came from the Feasibility Study that was completed in 2001 and right now we have done community participation and agency coordination throughout the project as part of scoping. We're in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement stage. After we get public review and comments, we still need to complete a Final Environmental Impact Statement. Then we will make a recommendation and a decision document.

The principles of NEPA include full and open disclosure. That's why we've been out to the community several times to talk about the alternatives under consideration and what the impacts to the community might be and what the benefits to the community will be. There is an interdisciplinary approach – we have an engineering team, planners, construction folks, and right-of-way folks. All these people look at the considerations when designing the alternatives.

We try to be brief. You wouldn't know that looking at the document but we try to be brief and focus on the key issues. So at the beginning of the project we look at what resources may be impacted as a result and try to analyze those a little bit more in depth. For the resources that aren't in the study area, we really try to keep the analysis brief.

We consider all reasonable alternatives. If you looked at the poster on the wall, we have been through a number of iterations of alternatives that were considered but eliminated for various reasons all the way starting with the Feasibility Study where they looked at some conceptual alternatives. So now we are down to the final three but any time there was a reasonable alternatives suggested by the public or the community, we looked at it and evaluated it with the same parameters as the other alternatives being considered. With each of the alternatives we look to avoid or reduce impacts to important resources. If we can't avoid a resource like a wetland, floodplain, endangered species, or critical habitat, we look at ways to mitigate it. But first and foremost we try to avoid resources with the alternatives.

We encourage public participation. You're here tonight to participate and I hope everybody submits a comment or leaves a comment with us, or goes home and puts a comment on the website; that's why we're here tonight.

Throughout the process we've also coordinated with local agencies, state agencies, federal agencies that have jurisdiction over some of the resources in the study area.

### ***History of Project***

As I just mentioned the project has been going on for a long time. Since they started the original Environmental Impact Statement, I believe, in 2006, FHWA and MDT have coordinated with the Army Corp of Engineers, the city of Billings, Yellowstone County, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the State Historic Preservation Office, as well as a couple of committees that represent the community. FHWA and MDT are the lead agencies. Throughout this process they've really made quite an effort to coordinate with the communities and the public. One of the ways they've done that is the Billings Bypass Advisory Committee. They've had 10 meetings so far with the Advisory Committee. It was established to provide advice to the project team and to represent the community interests. So we've checked in with them at critical milestones. Also we have coordinated with the Policy Coordinating Committee. While it's not specific to this project, it's specific to urban transportation decisions that affect Billings. So the City, the County, MDT and FHWA are represented.

There was a Feasibility Study that started in 2001. It looked at a Bypass route connecting I-90 and I-94 Interchange east of Billings with MT3 to the West. It was looked at as part of the Camino Real Trade Corridor originally so it was a much larger project area. At that time MDT and FHWA went out and solicited input from the public like they are doing tonight and they came up with a number of conceptual alternatives. In 2008, two years into the process, FHWA came out with new guidance regarding planning requirements. A summary of this guidance was that a project needed to be in the fiscally constrained plan of an urban transportation area. That means you have to show that you have money to build the project before you can clear a project through the NEPA process and get approval for construction. As proposed, the larger corridor that went all the way to MT3, there was not enough money to build the entire corridor. So at that time FHWA, MDT, the City and the County met through the Policy Coordinating Committee and they decided they had enough funding and had the need for the project to re-scope the project in the fall of 2010. So that's where we are today. If you look at that study area, the project is no longer a proposed bypass route per se; it's looking at improving connectivity and accessibility within Billings. So the nature of the project changed quite a bit. It goes from Johnson Interchange up to 312 but I want to mention that it would not preclude those future improvements. As we looked at all the alignments, we made sure that in the future, should there be a bypass north, it could be accommodated with this.

This is the project study area (referring to slide). As you can see the Yellowstone River bisects it and that is one of the constraints we were working with. It goes up to Old Hwy 312 along Old Hardin Road right out here and over to Main Street and then west.

### ***DEIS***

I will briefly go through what the DEIS contains. Chapter One is the Purpose and Need for the document and that is really the backbone of our analysis. Chapter Two explains the alternatives – how we developed the alternatives, what alternatives we considered and eliminated. There were a number of alternatives that did meet the Purpose and Need but we're really looking for the alternative that most effectively meets the Purpose and Need and minimizes impacts to the

community. Chapter Three and Four looks at the Build Alternatives and the No-Build Alternative and looked at the social, economic, and environmental impacts associated with them. Where we couldn't avoid impacts we looked at how we would mitigate for those impacts. Chapter Five describes not only the public outreach efforts but the agency outreach efforts as well. As I said MDT and FHWA have been really pro-active in soliciting input from the community during this process.

The Purpose and Need establishes the bench-mark on which to evaluate the project alternatives. The Purpose is why we're doing the project. The Purpose of the proposed project is to improve access and connectivity between I-90 and the Old Hwy 312; to improve mobility in the eastern and northern area of Billings. The Needs are really the heart of the analyses. We think of these as the problems we're trying to solve. When we're looking at the Alternatives we're asking ourselves: "Do they solve these problems? Do they reduce the physical barrier impacts to the transportation system? Do they improve connectivity between Lockwood and Billings? Do they improve mobility to and from Billings Heights? Would they be able to improve truck and commercial vehicle access to and through Billings?" It's all about access and connectivity.

As I said before, we looked at a number of alternatives. The original conceptual alternatives that were done for the previous EIS, variations of that were taken and started as a basis and then they went back out and re-scoped and there were additional alternatives added and variations of all those alternatives. I think they looked at somewhere between 50 to 100 iterations. If you want to read about it, it's in the Technical Report. Through the DEIS we found that we analyzed these three alternatives in depth (referring to slide).

We analyzed a No-Build Alternative – we always do that. We use it as a bench-mark – what would happen if we were not to do anything, how would traffic look in 20 years with just routine maintenance. We have separate alternative maps which I'll show you later.

Alternative One is Mary Street One.

Alternative Two. We looked at an option along Mary Street called Option 2. We'll talk about this a little later but right now we are recommending that as the Preliminary Preferred Alternative. Nothing has been decided. We'll walk through why we're making that recommendation. We're here to hear from you guys tonight on what you think about that recommendation.

Alternative Three. We looked at an Alternative along Five Mile Road.

***No Build Alternative***

Regarding the No-Build Alternative we analyzed this against the Build Alternatives in the document. It just assumes what would happen in the project area if nothing were done.

I was talking to some people a little bit earlier about the notion of primary and secondary corridors. For all three Alternatives, the two along Mary Street and the one along Five Mile, we have what we call the primary corridor and the secondary corridor. Pretty much the primary corridor is the main line arterial that we're proposing along either Mary Street or Five Mile but as a result of building a new arterial, there is traffic brought to the study area that needs to be accommodated trying to reach that new arterial. So as a result there would also be secondary improvements to either Five Mile or Mary Street depending on which one you pick. So when we talk about primary, we're talking about the main line improvements and then secondary is the local network that needs to be improved to accommodate the additional traffic.

***Mary Street 1 Alternative***

This slide shows Mary Street Option 1. The alternatives are all very similar in nature; south of Coulson especially. Mary One comes up here (referring to slide), comes along and moves at a right angle to follow to build the principle arterial along Mary Street. With this alternative we actually leave the existing Mary Street in place. This is built to the north.

It's a 4.9 mile new arterial roadway. As I mentioned, it parallels the north side of the existing Mary Street and Mary Street stays open for existing local access. There are new bridges over Coulson Road and the railroad, Five Mile Creek and the Yellowstone River. If you look in the background that is a photo simulation of what the bridge will look like over the Yellowstone with this alternative (referring to slide). There are a number of connections to existing local roadways in the area. I think its Bitterroot, Hawthorne, 312, Five Mile Road, Coulson, and then down at I-90 you would have improved or new connections. Then as I mentioned before there are secondary improvements to Five Mile Road to accommodate the future traffic demand.

***Mary Street 2 Alternative***

Mary Street 2 is very similar to Mary Street 1. South is pretty much the same. We looked at this alternative because of the topography right here (referring to slide) on either side of the River. Then also we looked at a number of alternatives to see if we could reduce impacts to the flood plain. During the course of the analysis, the delineation of the flood plain actually changed. This was done at an angle in order to reduce the width of the roadway across the floodplain and the structure across the Yellowstone. Again it follows Mary Street and there would be secondary improvements on Five Mile.

This is a little bit longer – it's 5.1 miles. You see the same new bridges over Coulson Road, Five Mile Creek, and the Yellowstone. Similar to Mary 1 it goes north along the existing Mary Street and access is maintained on the existing Mary. It includes the same connections I previously mentioned. Then it would require secondary improvements to Five Mile to meet the additional traffic demand.

Here is a typical section – they are kind of hard to see up here but if you look in the EIS or you also go over to the wall, there is a little bit more detail. South of the Yellowstone River for all of the Mary Street options, there would be an Urban Principle Arterial. That's the one you see

at the very top. Then north of the River along Mary Street it's an Urban Principle Arterial and there would be a Frontage Road as well. Then the existing corridor of Mary Street is maintained for local access. For the improvements to Five Mile it would be reconstructed to Yellowstone County local road standards along the entire length. This includes shoulder and drainage improvements, etc.

***Five Mile Alternative.***

Here is Five Mile (showing slide). It is very similar south of the River and then north of the River it improves to an arterial and then it's also extends up north of Dover Road to connect with 312 right there. So that's an improved roadway right there.

It's 4.5 miles, same new bridges, it includes connections to the local roadways at 312, Dover, Mary, Coulson, and I-90 (Johnson). There would be secondary improvements to Mary Street in order to accommodate the traffic. Here along Five Mile, south of the Yellowstone, it's the same – an Urban Principle Arterial would be used. North it's the same cross section – it's a Principle Arterial. For Mary Street it would be improved to City of Billings Urban Arterial roadway standards.

In Chapters 3 & 4, we analyzed with each of these the traffic operations, accessibility, safety, and how each of the alternatives would accommodate proposed pedestrian and bicycle paths as well as existing pedestrian and bicycle routes.

We pretty much look at both the community impacts of the alternatives as well as the benefits to the community as well as impacts and benefits to natural resources. As you can see there are a large number of resources. I added "cumulative impacts" to the end – that's basically an analysis we do. It doesn't just apply to the natural environment; it looks at all of the planned projects not just roadways in the project area and then looks at the addition of our project. Would it damage resources or cause a change to resources that our project would not cause by itself? We met with the agencies in the beginning and they had some concerns about changes to land use. So we looked at whether the project would expedite land use or cause growth and change in land uses. What we surmised is there's already a lot of good land use controls and a lot of planned developments and if we were to build this roadway it may expedite it but it wouldn't cause new growth.

So we measured all three alternatives against the Purpose and Need. As I said earlier, the intent of the project is for the alignment to meet Purpose and Need. Those were those problem statements I talked about – is there a reduction in the barrier impact, has connectivity improved, has mobility improved to and from Billings Heights, and has truck commercial vehicle access through Billings improved? As I said a number of the alternatives actually meet Purpose and Need but we are looking for the alternatives which best meet Purpose and Need. If you look at the reduction in the physical barrier impacts, we measure this by looking at how many vehicles would use the new roadway. As you see with Mary Street Option 1 & 2 they are very close – there are 15,900 for Option 1 and 15,600 for Option 2, and for Five Mile Road it is 13,000.

The next thing we looked at – has connectivity between Lockwood and Billings improved as a result? Has there been a reduction in the average daily traffic for the existing routes? That's how we can tell if there reducing it and they are going to the new Bypass and the Bypass is an attractive alternative. So for Mary Street Option 1 we see a reduction of 30%. For Option 2 we see a reduction of 29%. For Five Mile we see a reduction of 23%. What we deduce from that is the other cars are using the new roadway.

How can we tell if there's been improved mobility? Mobility is the opposite of congestion. We look at whether we've reduced congestion which in turn reduces crashes and the level of service at intersections. The level of service is defined by how long you are waiting at the intersection, is it backing up, and how long does it take you to get through the signal. For Mary Street Option 1 we see it reduces accidents by 12%. There's still a level of service that is failing at four intersections. For Mary Street Option 2 it is the same accident reduction and the same level of service at the same intersections. For Five Mile Road it reduces the accidents by 9% and there are five intersections that have a poor level of service.

Can we tell that truck and commercial vehicle access to and through Billings has improved? If we provide a faster more direct route between 87 and I-90, that is an indication that they are using that route. For Mary Street Option 1 it would be 7.4 minutes. For Mary Street Option 2 it would be 7.6 minutes. For Five Mile Road it would be 9.9 minutes.

To summarize this – all of the three Build Alternatives perform relatively close to each other; there are not a lot of large differences. Option 1 & 2 are very close as far as meeting Purpose and Need.

So you guys saw the long list of resources that we look at in Chapter 3 & 4. After that analysis we found that all three Build Alternatives had very similar impacts to the resources we were looking at. The difference in most cases was negligible at best. After we went through all of those resources, we asked ourselves which resources have any difference between the three alternatives for the critical natural resources and the social and community resources. For the critical natural resources we looked at wetlands. Wetlands are a good indication. It's a regulated resource; there are some real strict regulations that go along with wetlands. All three alternatives have very similar wetland impacts. Mary Street Option 1 had 5.39 acres; Mary Street Option 2 had 4.52 acres; and Five Mile Option had 4.7 acres.

Secondly there was not a lot of change in social and community resources so we looked at the right-of-way impacts associated with the roadways. We've divided them into right-of-way impacts for the primary improvements and those with the secondary improvements. With Mary Street Option 1 there are 13 with the primary and two to accommodate the secondary corridor improvements. With Marty Street Option 2 there are 13 impacted residents with the primary and zero with the secondary. Five Mile Road Option there are six primary and five secondary. So again they are very similar.

Then we looked at the construction costs in 2012 dollars. Mary Street Option 1 is \$121 million; Mary Street Option 2 is \$111 million; and Five Mile is \$109 million.

***Preliminary Preferred Alternative – Mary Street Option 2.***

As I said earlier tonight we are presenting a Preliminary Preferred Alternative and we want to get feedback on it. I walked through the Findings of the Analysis. Mary Street Option 2 was chosen as the Preliminary Preferred Alternative. They all performed very similarly – they all had similar improvements, they all met Purpose of Need very similarly, and had pretty similar costs relative to each other. But Mary Street Option 2 is anticipated to have fewer impacts to right-of-way and water resources and a very similar cost to Five Mile Road. As you saw both the Mary Streets Options perform a little bit better against the Purpose and Need than Five Mile Road. Then it had a lower cost by \$10 million than Mary Street Option 1 where again if you look at how it met Purpose and Need and the traffic options, the difference was very negligible; it was the same in most categories. That is why we've made that preliminary recommendation tonight. Again we're looking for your feedback.

As I just mentioned the total cost for the four-lane Preliminary Alternative is estimated to be \$111 million – that's if we do select Mary Street Option 2. Previously \$22.3 million had been earmarked for the project and had been set aside. The gap there is around \$89 million. The funding has not been finalized. As I mentioned earlier, in order to build it, it has to be in a fiscally constrained plan and you have to show that you have the money for it. We recommended the four-lane alternative but we don't have all the money for it yet. Federal regulations require the project to be in a fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan before we can get a Record of Decision and that's what allows us to go ahead with right-of-way and construction and final design. Current funding for the full four-lane has not been identified. First phase is construction and is anticipated to be a two-lane facility following the alignment. So if we select Mary Street Option 2, and again we're looking for feedback on that tonight, we have enough funding that we could build the first phase which would be a two-lane. All along we've gone out to meetings and said this will probably be built as an interim two-lane and then expand to a full four-lane.

We've coordinated with the Policy Coordinating Committee, the Billings Bypass Advisory Committee. We've coordinated with resources agencies; they received a review of the document early and made comments regarding it. We've had four public meetings, six newsletters, the website, and we've done a number of stakeholder interviews. I talked to a gentleman earlier who said he hadn't heard from us and we'd be happy to go meet with stakeholders if they are interested and answer questions that we can't answer here tonight. MDT and FHWA have made a tremendous effort to get outreach and solicit input on this. We're really looking for that here tonight.

I do want to remind everybody that there's a number of ways to comment but all the comments must be in by October 1<sup>st</sup>. You can access it on the website and submit your comments on the

website. All comments are due by October 1<sup>st</sup>. We need to keep this project moving; we've done a lot of work and we need to keep the momentum so we need to have all comments in by October 1<sup>st</sup> so we can look at the considerations and keep moving along with the project.

We're in the summer of 2012. After we gather all the feedback and usually the comments can be categorized with certain concerns and we decide how we will address them in the Final, then we will come back and meet with the BBAC and let them know what we heard so they can go back to the community. We'll address those comments for the Final EIS then in the winter/spring we will release the FEIS for review. Then in the spring of 2013 we are anticipating we will have a signed Record of Decision and we can go ahead and start with the final design and acquiring right-of-way. That's it. Thank you for your attention.

### **CLARIFICATION - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

(Paul Grant) We will now go into the clarification period of the meeting. This is to take technical questions that you might specifically have related to the Draft EIS or about information you just heard that needs clarification. Please remember this is the technical question and answer portion of the meeting, not a time for your comments. This portion of the meeting is to facilitate understanding of the proposal and the Draft EIS. For comments that you would like have considered as part of the formal testimony, we ask that you please pose those comments during the Hearing portion of tonight's meeting. Also your comments are being recorded should a transcript of these proceedings be necessary for review.

At this point I would like for you to understand that my role is to facilitate this meeting and make sure that everyone has an opportunity to speak and ask questions and make comments at the appropriate time. I apologize up front if I need to interrupt you when you're speaking to clarify a point or make a suggestion to progress the meeting along and allow everybody to speak. I'm not here to lecture you or bother you while you're speaking but I want to assist everyone in reaching our goal of allowing all participants to speak. Also we ask that you be respectful of your neighbors tonight. Somebody may have a lot to say and we want to hear all your comments, but again please don't be offended if a panel member interrupts you and asks you to summarize your question or comment in order for others to have a chance to speak. We ask that every time you speak that you take the microphone, hold it close so everybody can hear your comment and it gets recorded as well. State your name and if you are representing an organization or a group or government please be sure you state that for the record as well. We appreciate and understand there's a lot of concern regarding this Draft EIS and we want to hear your concerns so we strongly request that everyone be respectful of everybody's time and make your questions and comments as succinct as possible. Go ahead and raise your hand and I'll come around with the microphone.

Q: (Roger Williams) I'm with the Yellowstone River Parks Association. Our park land is right in the bull's eye of the impact of this. We wonder what consideration has been

given to how we will connect our trails on the north and south end of our park land over or under the highway.

A: (Wendy Wallach) If you look in the EIS, we looked at some of the planned trails. We looked at all the planned trails and we coordinated with the City of Billings's Parks Department. We talked generally about how the new alignments will accommodate planned and existing trails. The final details of the connections wouldn't be decided until final design. We make every effort to accommodate any planned or existing trails and we describe it in the EIS along with mitigation.

Q: (Roger Williams) Clarification – do you mean with a bridge or a tunnel under or over the road?

A: (Wendy Wallach) There would be a grade separation for the planned ones where we can but we are not precluding any of them and we won't know until final design. With the existing ones, we accommodate them with a crossing.

Q: (Clayton Fiscus) I'm a representative of Light House District 46. I have a question on the commercial aspect of this. When you cross into a new area that's very low on commercial businesses like Costco, hotels, Holiday Inn, Hampton Inn, it will be like Zoo, Montana in Missoula when they put that exchange in to that area that was undeveloped, that is where this is going. Was there any consideration for the expansion so that people have a place to shop without taking the loop and going to the west end and shopping? That Five Mile Creek proposal seems to open up more area to develop for commercial growth and that should benefit the Heights more. Has there been any consideration given to that aspect of commercial development and transportation and new commercial development?

A: (Wendy Wallach) In the EIS we do a review of all planned developments and land use and we have met with the City and County several times to talk about where they have areas planned for expansion and major activity centers. One of the things we look at is how well does the alternative accommodate planned land use and provide access to the planned land uses.

Q: (Clayton Fiscus) What areas are you talking about? When you go in along Mary Street, it is pretty well developed but the Five Mile approach did that show a larger degree for commercial development because the space is more wide open? Did you identify an area?

A: (Wendy Wallach) If we were to select the Five Mile option, it's actually a principle arterial with limited access. So even though there is more vacant land to the north of the study area, the access would be limited and it may actually slow the commercial growth because of the limited access. With the Mary Street alternatives, if you make the

secondary improvements, you may be improving access and that might expedite the commercial areas but also north of the study area, from what I understand, there is an Urban Growth Control boundary. Yellowstone County and the City of Billings have done a very good job at aiming and controlling growth where they want it to occur. All of the alternatives took that into consideration. You're right, that vacant land is zoned for commercial in certain areas and it could be developed. I think it would be developed less quickly with the Five Mile Option.

Q: (Susan Gilbert) I'm representing myself but I also serve on the local City County Planning Board and on the Yellowstone River Conservation District Council's Technical Advisory Committee. I have a couple of question pertaining to the River. If you began your project in 2001, there were no channel migration zone maps available and I'm curious to know if those are now being considered as part of the design factor for the bridges? I did not see that the Council or the local Conservation District was listed as a partner, so I'm wondering if that's accurate or just for the sake of summarizing things those were left out tonight?

A: (Wendy Wallach) I believe we have coordinated with them. I know the BBAC at one of the earlier meetings brought up stakeholder groups such as that. When we came out to meet with stakeholders in our last round with BBAC, I think we contacted one of the groups and offered to meet but it didn't work that night and we said we'd do it at another time. So we have contacted them. If you look at Chapter 5 there are a number of people we've done additional outreach to besides the major agencies that were listed.

Q: (Susan Gilbert) I was at a Technical meeting today and nobody at that meeting had been contacted.

A: (Wendy Wallach) I'll give you my card and look at who we reached out to. I'll turn it over to these guys to answer your other question.

A: (Greg Gable) We've looked at the river channel and there's been a couple of analyses done of where the channel has moved over the past years and we've taken that into consideration when we're looking at where we cross the river. That's where the two bridge alternatives for the Mary Option 2 and the Five Mile, the best place to cross the river that will limit impacts to the flood plain. We have done some river channel migration studies to look at where the best place to cross the Yellowstone River is.

Q: (Doug Kary) I'm representing constituents of House District 48. Have there been any noise studies done on any of the alternatives and if so are they listed?

A: (Wendy Wallach) Yes, we did detailed noise analysis for all three of the alignments. Right now I can walk back to the EIS with you and show you where the analysis is. I can't remember what option had what impacts to sensitive receptors and where we would

be mitigating but there's a threshold and if we reach that threshold we need to look at mitigation.

Com: (Doug Kary) There's a number of individual houses that are very close probably within 40 feet of the centerline of Mary Street

Q: (Wendy Wallach) On the existing Mary Street Option 1?

A: (Doug Kary) Correct.

A: (Wendy Wallach) Yes, and we have those numbers and I can show you where they are in the EIS. We did consider them.

Q: (Bob Medley) I live out past Mary Street interchange. The temporary two-lane they want to put next to Mary Street eventually and then the four-lane – is this also going to be truck bypass? With that are we going to allow hazardous waste trucks coming right down along through the residential areas that will be growing up on both sides of Mary Street and going into one of the worst intersections in the City?

A: (Wendy Wallach) I want Bob Marvin to address this because he looked at some of the commercial and truck vehicle patterns and then I can talk about this.

Q: (Bob Medley) Ok then the question I have to go with that is how many of you guys with the Highway Department have been involved with hazardous waste wrecks and cleanups? I have. I was part of the Yellowstone County one. I've done a lot of clean ups in Billings right down by the Metra. I don't think we want that right in the middle of a residential area. That's what you're talking about. It's one of the fastest growing areas in the State of Montana on both sides of Mary Street. I don't think Mary Street is a real good option.

A: (Wendy Wallach) I can have Bob talk a little bit to the clarification portion and then part of that was technically a comment and you should submit it as part of the comment portion or in a written comment.

A: (Bob Marvin) We looked at the traffic for trucks and for the 16,000 or less vehicles that would be in the Bypass in the year 2035, approximately 600 would be trucks. If it follows the same trends as today, about 15% of those trucks would be Interstate-type trucks. The rest of the trucks would be localized or regional truck traffic. As far as the hazardous materials, we didn't look specifically at that but we did look at the fact that these same trucks would be on Main Street alongside 60,000 other vehicles and going through the prime commercial area in Billings through the fairgrounds where we have a facility that was built in the 1960's. At least now we have an opportunity to build a new facility with the highest safety standards.

- Q: (Bob Medley) I believe the Bypass was originally designed to reduce the amount of truck traffic going through the Heights, now we're going to bring it through a residential area? That's my question. So you're saying 10 years from now when the population has grown further out beyond the other side of Mary Street, are we going to go out there and then put a Bypass further out? Shouldn't that Bypass be further out now so we've actually planned for the future instead of today?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) That was a public hearing comment. I can say that Bob spoke to the fact that it generated a similar number of truck traffic volumes but the original intent of the original EIS was that it was a Bypass. Perhaps I didn't clarify that very well but when the project was re-scoped it had a different Purpose and Need. It's no longer a Bypass but more of an Arterial. In the EIS we do make considerations for hazardous materials but not necessarily related to traffic. We look at the potential for encountering them during construction but we do consider it as a secondary impact associated with putting more trucks through residential neighborhoods. So it is considered in the EIS.
- Q: (Oscar Heinrich) How do you determine your right-of-way impacts especially along Mary Street? You've only come up with 13 along Mary Street. How do you determine the right-of-way impacts?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) For the right-of-way impacts, we're at a pretty conceptual level of design but we have typical sections that we've planned for the new alignment and we have survey information on the right-of-way lines for parcel information. We overlay the proposed alignment on top of the parcel information and then calculate acres and whether structures are going to be impacted. It's a pretty conservative methodology and we do our best to avoid it but during the final design the number may be tweaked and changed a little bit.
- Q: (Oscar Heinrich) The reason I'm asking is because Mary Street has more than 13 houses on it. It just seems incredibly low.
- A: (Wendy Wallach) The arterial is north of Mary Street.
- Q: (Oscar Heinrich) So anything along Mary Street you guys didn't consider?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) It was considered in the analysis but we're leaving the existing Mary Street as is unless we go with the Five Mile option which will reconstruct a portion of it.
- Q: (Oscar Heinrich) Ok going with that logic, then everybody that's on Mary Street isn't going to have an impact?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) The houses are not; a portion of the yard may be but there are not an equal amount of houses impacted and they are not necessarily going to be relocated.

Q: (Oscar Heinrich) Your notification of stakeholders, so if they are not considered to be impacted then they weren't considered a stakeholder?

A: (Wendy Wallach) We did over 1,200 mailings and outreach.

Q: (Oscar Heinrich) I talked with quite a few people that have never been notified in this whole process.

A: (Wendy Wallach) I heard that earlier but we sent out six newsletters.

Q: (Oscar Heinrich) I don't mean to interrupt but how many people were not notified and are in the impact area? (There was a show of hands). There's probably a lot more.

A: (Wendy Wallach) I hope you've signed up on the mailing list tonight. We do try to be as thorough as possible.

Q: (Mike Brown) I live just off Mary Street on Columbine. I understand you are going to do this in phases and the first phase would just leave Mary as a two-lane street, is that correct?

A: (Wendy Wallach) I don't think the first phase has been determined. It depends on the alternative that we select. So if the preliminary recommendation of Mary Street Option 2 is selected, then it would be a two-lane roadway and we would leave the existing Mary Street as is.

Q: (Mike Brown) Then if I take that one step further, there were two things that showed up that aren't on those drawings over there (referring to graphic) or in the drawings we got in the book. One said the one road was designed to be a 55 mph road and the other would be a 70 mph road. This is talking about Mary Street. These are on your sheets. That doesn't show up in the information we got. If Mary Street is going to remain a two-lane street for some period of time, a year or two years or whatever, all this additional traffic that is going to come down Mary Street is going to be on an existing two-lane street that was not built for that type of traffic.

A: (Wendy Wallach) If we select the Mary Street Option 2, in the Final EIS we will be looking at the phasing. FHWA and MDT will make sure that a two-lane can accommodate the projected volumes. That's part of what they look at in the analysis for phasing.

Q: (Mike Brown) But there isn't any money to build the four-lane right now and if you go with the two-lane and build it, we're talking about estimated traffic of 13,000-15,000 vehicles per day on a street that now had less than 2,000?

- A: (Wendy Wallach) We would have to redo the modeling to see how many people would be drawn towards a two-lane but it will be considered.
- A: (Stefan Streeter) No matter what option is taken other than Five Mile, if Five Mile is the selected option then Mary gets improved and it will all be done in that first phase of the two-lane project. If either of the Mary options are chosen then there will be parallel two-lane road to Mary and Mary will still act as a frontage road. So that traffic will be on its own road, it won't be on necessarily the immediate Mary Street even in the two-lane phase of the project. There will be another road alongside Mary Street with whichever option we pick except Five mile.
- Q: (Taylor Brown) Senate District 22. I don't own a residence in Lockwood anymore but my concern is about the 13 residences that would be purchased and the farmland or other businesses that might be purchased. I want to be sure about the right of that landowner to get the price that their land is worth. I'm sure you have the right of Eminent Domain or some sort of condemnation if you have a property that you have to take, but what right do they have in court to make sure they get paid the value? How does that work?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) We have to go through the Uniform Relocation Act process and it gives a lot of rights to the homeowner. It's a pretty long process where they determine Fair Market Value and they work with the owner and keep them engaged and look at replacement housing. So they have quite a few rights in the process.
- Q: (Taylor Brown) If they can't reach an agreement, they go to court is that right? And then it's the court that decides whether it's a taking or not?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) Yes.
- Q: (Bill Hall) On your Option 1 & 2 you guys have chosen to move Mary to the north to allow a buffer against existing residence. I actually live on the corner of Dover Road and the proposed Five Mile Route, is there any consideration of the residence there to move that to the west in that agricultural land that is open land to allow us the same buffer?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) I'm not sure if that was looked at in a previous alternative. I think we've always looked at putting it along Five Mile.
- Q: (Bill Hall) Correct, but Five Mile extending north runs directly next to the subdivision which I live in. I'm just curious if there was any option to move that to the west more in the agricultural land to allow a buffer as well.
- A: (Doug Enderson, Dowl - HKM) I was involved in the road design through there. Dover to the north there are homes on the east side. That was a relatively short piece of that

roadway that, with this design, we did consider that but for the impacts for the Draft EIS we kept it along that centerline which would be Five Mile extended. That would be a Final Design-type issue. We agree there is some opportunity to move over to the west side and avoid impacts to those homes. So that is something that will be considered as we move forward.

Com: (Bill Hall) Obviously to the west there is nothing but agricultural land; to the east is a multitude of homes that would be impacted not only by the noise but a reduced property value if the road goes directly next to them.

Q: (Brice Glen) I'm a landowner on the south side of the River. There seems to be a lot of people very concerned about the north side which I can understand. But we have the same concerns on the south. In the EIS you talked about change to the floodplain, currently Johnson Lane goes straight north in the floodplain and in the drawings we have much more soil disturbed with new construction when there's always a road going straight north. Could you clarify why you didn't think about using the current road to get to the bridge?

A: (Greg Gable, Dowl-HKM) When we were looking at the best place to cross the Yellowstone River, we looked at the topography and where we would minimize the impacts to the floodplain. Johnson Lane extends straight into the floodplain and if we have to start building a new four-lane road, we were going to impact and put more fill in the floodplain. That's the reason we made the arc around to find a higher elevation so we had less impacts in the floodplain. That's one of the reasons. We looked at going straight along there but there was just too much longitudinal impact to the floodplain.

Q: (Brice Glen) So we're talking the difference in topography might be four or five feet. Is that the difference in using property that is already a road?

A: (Greg Gable) Well the technical aspect that four or five feet makes a big difference in the hydraulic analysis. When we need to put a new bridge across the Yellowstone River, we can only raise the water surface in the floodplain one-half foot so four or five feet can make a big difference in raising the water surface.

Q: (Brice Glen) It is the vast amount of roadway. You look at Johnson Lane (referring to graphic), here's Johnson Lane going almost directly to and ending right about here to the red line you have. So you're saying as you add that material for fill, you're pushing down the soil which is raising up the water on either side of a road that's already here.

A: (Greg Gable) What's happening is there are some side channels in there and when you start getting into high floods, that road-fill is going to block more and more of the flow and raise backwater on the Yellowstone River and we couldn't make that option work.

Q: (Brad Zink) I'm a resident; I live north of where the Five Mile Road would be. I'd like to know where the road would come through. On the Impact Study it said it would impact six residents. Does that include my land?

A: (Wendy Wallach) We have right-of-way information and we've just generally summarized it for this but we can get the information of the parcels that are impacted. We have maps and analysis in the EIS and back at the office but I can't tell you off the top of my head. Part of the purpose of NEPA is to disclose the impacts and let people know so we're in no way trying to hide that, it's just that I don't know the properties that are impacted off the top of my head right now. I can give you my card and you can get in touch.

Impacted means ...we counted the number of residences that would have to be relocated but there are also a number of residences that may have some of the land used for construction easement, either permanently or temporarily, so we have a number impacted. If we take a portion of your land, it's not only if we're taking a structure; it's if we're touching your land and acquiring right-of-way.

Q: (Leslie Glen) We own property on the south side. What is the impact to the intersection that you're going to be connecting at Johnson Lane? Because that's huge.

A: (Wendy Wallach) We've looked at that and Bob can answer that.

A: (Bob Marvin) What is your question regarding Johnson Lane?

Q: (Leslie Glen) Johnson Lane, you've got it coming off of there as far as where it originates?

A: (Bob Marvin) Yes.

Q: (Leslie Glen) What is the impact? What are the plans for the arterial relief that's already there? If you've been in that area it's already heavily congested as it is and you're now adding to that.

A: (Bob Marvin) We're adding traffic to the Johnson Lane Interchange itself in conjunction with I-90 and the traffic that would access I-90 from this Arterial. There were a number of different design alternatives for reconstructing the Interchange. All of them appear to work or will work and some of them better than others. Those options are being left open for Final Design. We've evaluated the general impacts for each of those designs and I believe those drawings are in the Appendices of the DEIS.

Q: (Leslie Glen) I know originally way back when, they were going to connect it to the intersections where it comes from Sheridan, why did you go from there to Johnson Lane?

- A: (Bob Marvin) The Pine Hill Interchange is a system interchange; it connects to I-94 and I-90. In order to connect into that interchange we would have to build a service connection to the system interchange resulting in elevated structures of one bridge on top of another. In other words, three levels of interchange decks. It was prohibitively expensive to connect to a system interchange like I-90 and I-94. So it just became a massive undertaking and the cost was enormous.
- A: (Wendy Wallach) So we did consider those and if you look in the Alternative Report and the Draft EIS, we looked at the Pine Hill area and we summarize why they were not selected, so you can find additional information there.
- Q: (Glenn French) I'm one of the affected residents like Brad Zink; I'm his neighbor. I have a question that I think a lot of us that are impacted in some form have. Maybe we aren't going to have our property taken but for example on the Five Mile alignment, that goes right up against our back yard. At what point do we find out if we are going to get any sound abatement or impact to our environment that we originally bought out there? We wanted to be in the country where it's quiet and now we're having a road like Rimrock Road going right next to our house. How is it determined what we would get?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) Well part of the EIS is to look at those impacts and disclose them. You can see where the noise impacts will be in the EIS; we disclose that. We look at all of the resources impacted. We are in conceptual design like I said but we would know where we need to mitigate right now and during Final Design we would be working with the landowner to determine mitigation for impacted areas like irrigation facilities, impacted access, or impacted noise. We know that right now and it's disclosed in the EIS. As we move forward, MDT would be working with the landowner.
- Q: (Glenn French) A follow-up question. As a landowner, how would I know that I'm impacted enough that you'll contact me? Is there a process that I need to be following so that I know that I need to get in touch with somebody or that you are going to get in touch with me?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) If you look in the EIS, we should disclose the impacts and that would be one way. I can't speak to when MDT begins Final Design and when they contact the landowner.
- A: (Fred Bente, MDT) Fairly early.
- A: (Wendy Wallach) Ok. If there's any type of impact to your property, irrigation or right-of-way, temporary construction easement, MDT is proactive in reaching out to the landowner and establishing contact to work through to Final Design. You would know that you're being impacted.

Com: (Unidentified) That would lower a lot of anxiety that people have if you keep communicating with potentially impacted landowners. I think that would do real well.

A: (Stefan Streeter) As this process goes on if in fact we get to a Record of Decision from FHWA and we move forward with the Final Design, during that final design there will be public meetings. Once we have an alignment and grade which is where the road is going to go and centerline, widths, and the grade so we know the impact of the fills on individual properties, we'll again have meetings. The designers typically go meet each and every landowner along the corridor to talk to them about what's going to happen to their property in the back and the front. It's even more important to us during the design process because we may have missed a septic system, a well especially with the ranchers who irrigated who may have needs. We have to mitigation all of that through the design process. So as we get to the Final Design there is a lot of contact and the opportunity to interact continually through the process.

Q: (Jonathan McNiven) Like some of the residents from Lockwood area which I represent, there are a lot of concerns with some of the businesses I've talked to in that area. A lot of the questions were why they didn't do it off the I-90 and I-94 or somewhere right around there. Is there by chance any plans in the future whereas once there is so much congestion in the Johnson Lane which already has a lot of congestion, that it can be connected down the road? Is that option available to keep that on the table?

A: (Wendy Wallach) I don't think we looked at it in the EIS but we made sure that all of the alternatives we looked at did not preclude any future connections to a longer roadway or the ability to alleviate congestion. It was considered.

Q: (Jonathan McNiven) I've been in that intersection and I'm sure you know how congested it is, being one of the busiest truck routes in the State. Just imagine the people trying to go across, you can just imagine the backside. There is one little bridge that traffic is going to be going along Dickey Road in the back way that I'm assuming is going to be connecting up to it and the only other way is through Johnson Lane, so there's going to a lot more congestion there. So I'm hoping that in planning for the future that's going to be an option that's not ever taken off the table.

A: (Wendy Wallach) While I don't think it's precluded at this point, Johnson Lane would be reconstructed to accommodate any projected traffic volumes. Even though it is congested now we're not just funneling traffic through there, we would make the necessary reconstruction and when that became too congested, they would look at something.

Q: (Jonathan McNiven) And the other road off Dickey Road?

- A: (Wendy Wallach) I don't think we're closing off any access.
- Q: (Jonathan McNiven) You won't close it off but I know there is another way around the back way that a lot more traffic will be going down because of the option of the north end bypass. So taking that into consideration ...
- A: (Wendy Wallach) I think you're talking about Dover Road and we do consider ...
- Q: (Jonathan McNiven) You've got Old Hardin Road coming in here, then Dickey Road coming up here and it comes around and goes under the Interstate right before it goes up out of Billings, then it would catch up and I don't know exactly where but there is going to be a lot more traffic going up in that area. I hope you take that into consideration.
- Q: (Bob Marvin) We did consider the fact that people living in the Pine Hills community will use Dickey Road to access the new alternative alignment. It wasn't a tremendous amount but it was more than is there now.
- A: (Stefan Streeter) I'd like to add one more comment. Even the first phase with two lanes is going to have a rebuilt interchange at Johnson Lane. It's not going to be the interchange that's there today, it's going to have higher structures more than likely, it's going to have newer ramps, and it's going to be addressing all of the roads coming in and out. It's basically a complete rebuild of the interchange to meet the 20-year design life. That is something that's real important. We don't design our roadways for the traffic that's there today, we design them for what we project the growth will be 20 years from when we started. The congestion that's there today will be mitigated through a new design which will be designed to handle, not only the volumes today but the volumes projected out 20 years.
- Q: (Leon Scheeler) I live on Mary Street. If you pick one of the Mary Street options, is there going to be any noise suppression of any kind built between the new arterial and Mary Street?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) We looked at the noise impact associated with all of the alignments and it's in the EIS. We are required to look at mitigation every time we pass a threshold that's set by FHWA. I'm not sure if we've passed the threshold in that area or not; I don't think we did but I would need to look at the EIS. We do consider it and where there is an impact we look at mitigation if it's reasonable or feasible.
- Q: (Leon Scheeler) The reason I ask is because the center of the new arterial is going to be 80 feet from the north edge of Mary Street and that's not a very long distance. It's quite close actually.

- A: (Wendy Wallach) Yes, I've been out there. I know that we did look at it and I can show you where it is in the EIS. It was considered in the analysis. If there is an impact, we do need to mitigate it.
- Q: (Leon Scheeler) I heard at one of the meetings that they were also considering, and you've mentioned, improvements to whichever road isn't picked as the major option. It was also mentioned Mary Street possibly having a turn lane added at some point in time in the near future. If that were to happen, where would they get the right-of-away from because there just isn't right-of-way there for it right now with the irrigation ditch and the property lines right along Mary Street? If it comes to where they do that, what would they do for property?
- A: (Doug Enderson) For the purpose of this analysis we did consider that the City of Billings would require a three-lane alternative through there with a turn lane. We basically held the southern right-of-way line and then expanded to the north. There is a canal there that would have to be relocated. As far as the impacts to the homes on the south side of Mary Street, they would stay relatively ... they would be lessened because we'd be starting from there and working to the north.
- Q: (Mike Olstad) I live off Dover Road and I'll be affected by the Five Mile route. Has there been any thought about Pioneer School? I've got three young children who go school there. What affect will that road have on Pioneer School which is only a couple of blocks away from there?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) It depends on the alternative that's selected because there is difference. If Five Mile is selected it would be limited access but it would be an Arterial and Mary Street would be improved. We do look at community resources in the EIS and how they will be affected. As for specific accommodations and crossings there I think Bob brought it up earlier.
- A: (Bob Marvin) You've kind of hit on the purpose for the secondary improvements because in our initial look at traffic volumes we discovered that if we didn't improve Five Mile Road and connect it to Hwy 3, traffic would use Pioneer Road. There were so many impacts, school being the number one impact and the geometry of that connection, it was necessary to have Five Mile Road as a secondary improvement to accommodate Mary Street Option 1 or 2. As far as Mary Street Option 1 & 2 and the impacts to Pioneer Road, it will be just about negligible because the volumes we projected on Pioneer Road are volumes that would be on that road regardless of the alignment because of the growth in that area. That kind of summarizes how we looked at that.
- Q: (Mike Olstad) Are there still plans to put a Park off there out of Dover Road?

A: (Wendy Wallach) There are plans and we looked at that Park. They've acquired the land for it but it hasn't been built and they don't know when it's going to be built but we did consider the Park in our analysis and documented what we thought the impacts would be to and from the Park and at the Park.

Q: (Kendall McRae) My question is a little bit different and it hasn't been addressed at all. Your definition of impact first of all is a little narrow but there will be a lot of impact that hasn't been discussed on the other side of Main Street where Pemberton Road connects with Main Street. If you're going to add 13,000 cars coming in there on a roundabout that don't stop, you've got a traffic light at Pemberton and Main less than two blocks from where your roundabout is on Mary 1 & 2. How is that going to affect that intersection when you've got hundreds of families coming in and out of there every day and a school to deal with?

A: (Bob Marvin) All of our traffic projections utilized the traffic that would using be Pemberton Lane at Main Street. That intersection you're talking about in a No Build condition. When we added the alignments a portion of that traffic, not the majority, a portion of that traffic would then go north to the new connection at the alignment with Hwy 3. That would entail more left turns from Pemberton at that signal. There's also another thing that was considered in traffic projections and that is the project that the City is pursuing – an inner-Bypass going from Wicks to an intersection near Hwy 3 in the back of the Airport. That project would be built in the 2035 and a portion of that traffic that currently uses Pemberton would use the inner-Bypass. So there are a number of things that are occurring over that 20-year period that we tried to account for in our projections.

Q: (Mike Olstad) So how does that Pemberton traffic get in and off Main Street? I didn't understand what you said.

A: (Bob Marvin) Pemberton is currently a traffic signal. By the time the Bypass traffic is there, if there are operational problems there now ... were not adding a whole lot. What we're actually doing is taking future traffic that would have been on Main Street and we're putting it on the Bypass. So we're actually improving whatever would have happened without the Bypass – the No Build condition.

Com (Paul Grant) It's a little after 9:00 so we'll take a couple more questions and then get into the Hearing portion of the meeting to hear your comments as well.

Q: (Doug Gullet) I live down on Mary Street and I'm like most people here that it goes through their property. Can you answer why you don't use the Five Mile Creek south alignment that goes through gravel pits instead of going through people's houses and their yards?

- A: (Wendy Wallach) We recently looked at a Five Mile South and a Five Mile North alignment and we looked at them with the same criteria that we evaluated the other alternatives. I have that technical memo that I can give you. We decided that those didn't meet Purpose and Need as well.
- A: (Bob Marvin) One of the alternatives, North of Five Mile Creek, actually duplicated other accesses to that was about a ½ mile or ¾ quarter mile section with no traffic at all; it didn't serve anyone at all. The alternative on the south was ...
- A: (Wendy Wallach) I remember with one of the alternatives there are some pretty strict regulations regarding existing and future parks and that is why we were working with the City of Billings. If at all possible we need to avoid Park's resources. When we coordinated with them, the Five Mile South impacted some of their trails and their parks. That was one of the reasons as well. As I said before, all of the alternatives met Purpose and Need but there were alternatives that met Purpose and Need much better and did a better job of improving the accessibility and the connectivity without as many impacts. Those were the parameters we used.
- Q: (Unidentified) In regards to the parks, you mentioned the residential area that is directly north of Mary Street at the corner of Bitterroot. It's a relatively new subdivision and there was supposed to be park land designated in that subdivision. How is that going to be handled?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) We worked with the City of Billings to get a list of existing and future parks. If we were aware of it or if it showed up on a map that we were given of a subdivision, we included it in the analysis and we tried everything we could to avoid it. I'm not sure about that particular park but we looked at a lot of parks.
- Q: (Kevin McGovern) I'm a landowner on the south side of the river. Being that this is forethought for 20 years in the future, is the City considering annexation? There is utility expansion going on in Lockwood now. Will this project include any sort of infrastructure extension as you continue out to the north?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) Are you specifically talking about the north extension of Five Mile?
- Q: (Kevin McGovern) No. I'm talking on the south side of the River as you expand Coulson to the north. There's a lot of commercial development on-going right now, there's a project underway right now extending sewer infrastructure, wouldn't this be the time to put the services in to continue that out in the right-of-way?
- A: (Wendy Wallach) No. We do look at the existing utilities and we've been working with the Lockwood Sewer District and we try everything to avoid them. I don't know if we'll

be putting new ones in with this project in the right-of-way but we map existing ones and are careful to avoid them.

Com: (Kevin McGovern) Because the folks in Lockwood understand the expense and the hardship it's been to get those services from poor planning years ago, it would seem you could get ahead of the curve as you expand in that direction.

Q: (Stanley Newton) I'm a Heights resident. What is the truck count on Airport Road now?

A: (Bob Marvin) When the project used to be a pure Bypass, I used to know that number. However, this will not take or serve any of the traffic on Airport Road. It will not serve as a truck bypass because the travel time would be prohibitive. In this phase and the way this project is scoped right now it would be out of the way travel.

Q: (Stanley Newton) So you don't anticipate any trucks turning north on Main Street?

A: (Bob Marvin) On a daily operational basis, probably not, however, this would serve as an emergency truck bypass; it could service that purpose. On our projections we don't have any of the truck traffic on Airport using this particular roadway.

Q: (Kevin McGovern) I'm a property land owner on the south side. So where the new road is aligning down paralleling Coulson and we cross, there's going to be a pretty good grade separation there I assume to get over the tracks. Are there any planned improvements for Coulson Road as well up to that crossing?

A: (Bob Marvin) We have a new intersection planned with this arterial alignment and Coulson Road but it's closer to Johnson Lane. That is where the connection will be.

Q: (Kevin McGovern) So will the existing Coulson Road stay in place?

A: (Bob Marvin) Yes except I believe we're abandoning 200 feet.

Q: (Conrad Stroebe) I'm Chairman of Lockwood Urban Transportation District. What is the cost from the southeast corner where it gets real close to the off-ramp of I-94 coming onto I-90? What's the cost from there to Johnson Lane?

A: (Wendy Wallach) I don't know that we have that number off the top of our head. We've looked at certain cost estimates but we mostly did it for the alignment as a whole.

Q: (Conrad Stroebe) Would it be possible to just get on the Freeway right there?

A: (Bob Marvin) Do you mean at the Pine Hills Interchange?

Q: (Conrad Stroebe) No just fade into the I-94 to I-90 ramp?

A: (Bob Marvin) As it exists Johnson Lane and Pine Hill Interchanges are approximately a little over a mile apart; they are too close so there's no way that a third interchange could be introduced.

Q: (Conrad Stroebe) Even though we're going to be funneling 5,000 cars per day out of Johnson Lane?

A: (Bob Marvin) No. Federal Highways would not allow that interchange.

Com: (Paul Grant) If there are no further questions we'll go ahead and close the Clarification Meeting and go into the Formal Public Hearing. I want to thank everybody for their patience and the good questions you've asked, we appreciate that. Now is the time for you to make your comments. As I mentioned there are other opportunities for you to comment if you're not prepared to speak tonight or something comes up after you leave the meeting. You can mail your comments in or email your comments in and the addresses are on the screen as we end the meeting. We encourage you to get your comments into us no later than October 1<sup>st</sup>. Again, raise your hand and I'll come around with a microphone. Speak directly into the microphone and identify yourself and any organization you are representing. There will be no response to your comments during this portion of the meeting; you'll just be making your comments for the record.

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

Brent Cathey:

I live north of Mary Street and I'm one of the unlucky 13 whose house will be bulldozed by this project. I'm also a business owner (WBI Corrosion) in the Heights; I employ 50 people. I don't see any benefit to this road whatsoever. We need access to the west and downtown not to the east. I think our public dollars could be spent better either taking Wicks out to the west or building the Bypass over 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue from Bench. You guys that are worried about noise in the Mary area, get ready; we're going from zero decibels and a nice quiet country lane to noise like you've never seen before and it's not going to fun.

Jan Skougard:

I am also a property owner. My property borders Mary Street. I want to agree with you and I want to say that I really take offense to ... I understand what you're talking about when you say impacted property is property you're going right through, however, all of us along Mary Street are impacted in one way or another. It's going to affect our property values. I see no good to come out of any of this. Coming down Mary Street is just the wrong way to do it.

Tracy Thoreson:

I live on Mary Street. I was just wondering if anybody at this meeting has ever beaten the Federal Government in trying to put in a highway. If they know of anybody would they please contact me? I do want to beat this. It's ridiculous to put a Freeway or Highway through people's homes when you're doing a 20-year project. Go 20-years down the road not right at the edge of town where it's not needed.

Kim Coomber:

I'm a property owner on Mary Street. I just want to say that I really think that you really need to look at the Five Mile Creek South Option on the north side of Five Mile Creek. Look at that option again. It goes right through the gravel pits. Not a single home is affected by that. It goes through land that has already been reclaimed and ready to go. The land is there and it doesn't affect anybody. I really think you need to take another look at that option.

Mike Olstad:

I live off of Dover Road out by Pioneer. I have to say that there are about 30-40 homes in our development and only a handful of people out there got notices. All those people will be affected some way or another by noise. I was just wondering why and that only so many mailings went out.

Christie Hulverson:

We live on 312 where the Five Mile would come across and it would affect a lot of people on the Five Mile corridor. Our neighbors and us would be gone.

Bob Medley:

I don't understand when they were explaining about the floodplains. It looks like they took the widest spot in the River where the floodplains are and that's where they decided to go across. I'm just wondering who owns the property down there that they just want to give that money to in order to get that road across there. It sure looks like they are going to force that road down Mary Street to make somebody awfully happy. I can't see ... (inaudible) ... they would have had plenty of length down here to cross that would not have affected any person in here and they would have had 312 to come back up. It would have been a lot better alternative. They are going to be tearing it up all summer long to improve the turn-ins on Drury and McGill and Dover. Why not make all these improvements at the same time? Why are you going to go through an area that's already got homes? Move it out where there aren't any homes. Look to the future.

Jess Spect:

I'm a landowner on the Lockwood /Johnson Interchange. I think this even for business owners is going to be rough because if they don't do this project right like a lot of things they do along Billings and Lockwood, that it's useless to do. We have a Lockwood Sewer System that has no water down our street and this is off this Interchange. There's no reason to have all this because we're going to have all the traffic from the west end

coming in from Huntley and Shepherd. If they don't put a good Interchange in and a good system, it will be worthless, on top of everyone it affects in the Heights.

Mike Southworth:

I live north of Dover. I'm just curious of how many of the alternatives were actually considered before they were eliminated? I don't think anything was researched that hard. A lot of farm property and no houses; I don't think it was looked at good enough.

Will South:

I live off of Columbine and Mary Street. I have to echo what Mrs. Skougard said. I do think this negatively affects property values. I also think that's a huge gap in your funding that you're trying to make up. Having worked for the Federal Government, good luck! That well is running dry. I have to agree, I think there are a lot of people here tonight and the general consensus you need to take back to Helena and home with you tonight is that none of us like any of these ideas. Go back to the drawing board.

Jonathan McNiven:

I'm the House District Representative for this area which is also Taylor Brown's Senate District. I'm surprised there is only one comment from Lockwood. I'm assuming this is what Lockwood wants? I see a lot of inconsistencies in there. I think considering this is in Lockwood I think we're a little out-numbered in this area and you guys need to make yourselves known. That's what my job is. That's what Taylor's job is. That's what the County Commissioner's jobs are. That's why we're here taking this time to figure out what is it that you want to do. We're here to serve you so let us know.

Brice Glen:

I'm a resident of Lockwood. I want to stand up for you again. Here's one question that I have for the engineers. If they can do a suspension bridge in the Florida Keys wetlands where there's water, why can't we do that here where there's water for about ½ mile? Is it just that we're just trail end people or do we need to go visit somebody that already invented that wheel down in Florida? Maybe you can answer that at the end of this meeting.

Conrad Stroebe:

I'm on the Lockwood Urban Transportation District Board. I've got kind of an announcement. We have a Steering Committee that meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of every month here in Lockwood at the school board meeting room. Any and all of you are always welcome to attend that. We do regularly comment and that is probably the reason why we don't have a lot of people here tonight is we've been regularly commenting on this since the process started. The original Feasibility Study was done back in 1998 at the sole cost of the Lockwood business community. It's been a long, hard road and there's been a lot of changes in the concept of this thing. It started out as a road across the River from Johnson Lane to Wicks Lane which was a little less than a mile. It's gone from a

short arterial like that with a very expensive bridge obviously all the way to a road to Canada and then back. We really need your comments because our responsibility is the south side of the River and your responsibility on Mary Street is your homes and neighborhood.

Teresa Stroebe:

Would everybody from Lockwood raise your hands please? There aren't a lot of us from Lockwood here tonight and to the guy in the Heights who has a business, I would just as soon go across a bridge and shop in the Heights than drive all the way out to the west end. 24<sup>th</sup> Street is a long ways from my house and so is the Career Center for our kids. So I would like the opportunity to be united to the Heights. I think Lockwood appreciates its neighbors in the Heights and I think we can work this out.

Matt Martinson:

I'm out at the Eagle Rock Golf Course in Shepherd. I'm wondering if you've taken a look at if you do the Five Mile, there's still about a mile that is still two-lane on Hwy 312. If we did go with the Bypass through Five Mile and people are turning to go into the Heights, they are still going to be going onto a very dangerous two-lane highway for about a mile. Hopefully you will take a look at rebuilding that to at least a four-lane as it turns onto 312 going into the Heights.

Unidentified:

I live on Mary Street. The bottom line is nobody wants this going through their neighborhood or near their residential area. The City needs a north Bypass and that's what it started out to be. Now because of the funding or whatever reason that's been abandoned and you're going to have a half-baked project that's going to cause more problems than it's going to fix. I just think there's other alternatives that could be looked at that would impact far less people. It just seems like when it comes to government bureaucracy, we get some money and we've got to spend it no matter how much. Unfortunately for the Heights, when there's something out there that people want nobody will come up with a dime, but when it's something you don't want, by God they can find money.

## **CLOSING**

(Paul Grant) If there are no more comments we will officially close the Hearing. Again I want to thank you for being a great audience. We really appreciate your comments and your input. We'll be around if you have other questions. Again please know that the comments are due October 1<sup>st</sup>. If you haven't signed in please sign in before you leave. Thank you very much.