

Gold Creek

Safety Rest Area Study

Summary Report

December 2017



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Need and Objectives	1
Public and Stakeholder Involvement.....	1
Alternatives	2
Conclusions and Recommendations	4
1.0 Introduction	6
2.0 Existing Conditions Analysis	7
2.1 Network Spacing and Demand.....	7
2.2 Water Rights & Water Systems.....	10
2.3 Public Wastewater Systems.....	11
2.4 Building Structure	12
2.5 Ramps and Parking Areas	13
2.6 Site Amenities.....	16
2.7 Accessibility	17
2.8 Safety Rest Area Maintenance	19
2.9 Environmental Conditions	19
3.0 Public and Stakeholder Involvement	27
3.1 Study Website and Study Posters.....	27
3.2 Team Meetings.....	27
3.3 Survey Summaries.....	27
3.4 Stakeholder Interviews.....	28
3.5 Written Comments	29
4.0 Need and Objectives	29
5.0 Alternatives	29
5.1 Alternative Identification.....	29
5.2 Screening	31
6.0 Conclusions and Next Steps	38

Tables

Table 1: Gold Creek Safety Rest Area Spacing Analysis.....	7
Table 2: Parking Demand Analysis	10
Table 3: Water Right at Gold Creek Safety Rest Area.....	10
Table 4: Noxious Weeds Found within the Study Area Vicinity.....	24
Table 5: Public Review Poster Locations	27
Table 6: Screening Summary.....	37

Figures

Figure 1: Study Area	6
Figure 2: Gold Creek Safety Rest Area Spacing Analysis.....	8
Figure 3: Phillips 66 Yellowstone Pipeline	22

Appendices

Appendix A: Photo Log
Appendix B: Parking Demand Calculations
Appendix C: Well Log Reports and Westbound Water Right
Appendix D: Drainfield Calculations
Appendix E: Record Drawings
Appendix F: Accessibility Data
Appendix G: Soils Data
Appendix H: Clark Fork River Impairment Data
Appendix I: NWI Mapping
Appendix J: FEMA Mapping
Appendix K: Asbestos and Lead Paint Inspection Reports
Appendix L: Weed List
Appendix M: General Wildlife, SOC, and T&E Species
Appendix N: Public and Stakeholder Coordination
Appendix O: Cost Estimates
Appendix P: FHWA Non-regulatory Supplement

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

The 2014 *Montana Rest Area Plan* identified several potential concerns at the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area relating to the number of oversized vehicle parking spaces and the remaining service life for the parking areas, structures, water systems, and wastewater systems. Facility ventilation, source water capability to meet peak daily demand, and backflow prevention were also issues identified at the site. A substantial capital investment would be required to address the identified concerns. Accordingly, MDT conducted this study to assess potential action alternatives at the eastbound and westbound sites.

Need and Objectives

MDT defined a need to address the existing Gold Creek Safety Rest Area. The current facilities are temporarily closed to the public pending the outcome of this study.

To optimize Rest Area Program investment strategies, MDT sought an alternative that accomplishes the following objectives.

- Minimizes capital and long-term maintenance costs.
- Leverages federal-aid funding and reduces demands for limited state funding.
- Minimizes impacts to physical, biological, and social/cultural resources which could result in costly and time-consuming mitigation and abatement activities.
- Provides safe stopping opportunities spaced by a maximum of approximately one hour of travel time.
- Accommodates public and stakeholder feedback regarding stopping and parking opportunities.
- Aligns with existing MDT plans, policies, and asset management strategies.
- Adheres to FHWA rules, regulations and guidance regarding the operation, maintenance and abandonment of Rest Area facilities.

Public and Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholder Interviews

Representatives from Motor Carriers of Montana, Granite County Commissioners, and the Powell County Chamber of Commerce participated in interviews in May and June of 2017. Collectively, interview participants expressed:

- an awareness of the safety benefits of truck parking areas;
- support for maintaining a truck parking area at the existing Gold Creek eastbound and westbound sites to perpetuate safe stopping opportunities; and
- rejection of full closure of the Gold Creek facilities.

Written Comments

A total of 21 written comments were received by stakeholders and members of the public before, during, and after the comment period from September 25 to October 25, 2017. A majority of the comments (15 of 21, 71%) supported a reduction in service (the truck parking alternative). These comments noted the need for safe stopping opportunities and truck parking

at the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area sites. Four comments supported complete closure, noting that adequate parking already exists in the area or suggesting MDT add truck parking at the Bearmouth or Anaconda sites. Other comments discussed desired amenities, seasonal travel patterns along the study corridor, and a desire for a full-service safety rest area, which was not an alternative considered by the study.

Alternatives

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) evaluated two alternatives for the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area: (1) reduction in service and (2) complete closure of the site.

Alternative 1: Reduction in Service

In accordance with MDT's *Safety Rest Area – Reduction of Service* memorandum, the Reduction in Service alternative would lessen the current functionality of the existing eastbound and westbound Gold Creek Safety Rest Area sites. The reduced service facilities would provide the function and features of a truck parking site. The alternative would entail maintaining entrance/exit ramps and parking areas; removing building facilities and foundations; filling or crushing wastewater tanks; capping associated wastewater piping; decommissioning drainfields; maintaining wells for irrigation and cleaning use; installing vaulted toilets; potential removal of picnic areas, pet amenities, and adjacent walkways; upgrading remaining sidewalks to meet ADA requirements; and reseeding reclaimed areas.

Capital and Maintenance Costs

- Initial capital costs would be lower compared to Alternative 2 (\$538,000 vs. \$610,000). Long-term maintenance costs would be higher (at approximately \$21,000 annually or \$520,000 totaled over 20 years, assuming 2% inflation) compared to Alternative 2 (no long-term maintenance costs).

Funding Eligibility

- The reduction in service alternative would be eligible for federal funding because it would continue to provide safe stopping opportunities with parking and vaulted toilet services.

Environmental Risk

- No adverse permanent impacts to prime farmland, geologic resources, surface water, TMDLs, wild and scenic rivers, wetlands, irrigation, floodplains and floodways, air quality vegetation, noxious weeds, general wildlife species, threatened and endangered species, species of concern, and special status species, demographics, economic conditions, land use, recreational resources, cultural resources, noise, or visual resources are anticipated.

Spacing and Corridor Needs

- A truck parking area at Gold Creek would provide additional safe stopping opportunities and positively impact existing facilities in the study area (primarily the Anaconda Rest Area and the Bearmouth Rest Area).

Public/Stakeholder Feedback

- Public and stakeholder sentiment generally supports maintaining the existing Gold Creek eastbound and westbound sites as truck parking areas to perpetuate MDT's investment and provide safe stopping/parking opportunities in the study area.

Alignment with MDT Plans

- Alternative 1 aligns with network evaluation guidelines outlined in the *Montana Rest Area Plan* and would provide continued investment in safe stopping opportunities as outlined in *TranPlanMT* and the *Montana Freight Plan*.

Additional Requirements

- This alternative would not be considered a form of abandonment because it would continue to provide a safe stopping opportunity with parking and vaulted toilet services. Therefore, a supplemental evaluation (justification of abandonment) would not be required to be submitted to FHWA.

Alternative 2: Closure

The second alternative would involve complete demolition of the eastbound and westbound building facilities, parking areas, ramps, water/wastewater systems, and site amenities. Under this scenario, the entire site would be reclaimed and reseeded.

Capital and Maintenance Costs

- Initial capital costs would be higher compared to Alternative 1 (\$610,000 vs \$538,000). Long-term maintenance costs would be eliminated.

Funding Eligibility

- The cost of safety rest area closures (abandonments) are not eligible for federal-aid funding. Consequently, this alternative would need to be advanced entirely with state funds.

Environmental Risk

- No adverse permanent impacts to prime farmland, geologic resources, surface water, TMDLs, wild and scenic rivers, wetlands, irrigation, floodplains and floodways, air quality general wildlife species, threatened and endangered species, species of concern, and special status species, demographics, economic conditions, land use, recreational resources, cultural resources, noise, or visual resources are anticipated.
- Alternative 2 has a greater environmental risk due to increased potential to encounter contaminated soils and greater likelihood of noxious weed establishment (with all other potential risks equal to Alternative 1).

Spacing and Corridor Needs

- Complete closure would reduce parking and stopping opportunities in the study area. During peak usage periods, some parking needs along this corridor (Anaconda to Bearmouth) would be unmet.

Public/Stakeholder Feedback

- Public and stakeholder sentiment generally opposes complete closure of the sites.

Alignment with MDT Plans

- Although closure of the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area would follow guidelines outlined in the *Montana Rest Area Plan*, it would not provide continued investment in safe stopping opportunities as stated in *TranPlanMT* and the *Montana Freight Plan*.

Additional Requirements

- Alternative 2 triggers an FHWA requirement that MDT perform a supplemental evaluation to demonstrate adequate safety rest area services remain after the abandonment of the Gold Creek Rest Area sites. It is unlikely that MDT could provide adequate justification for Alternative 2 based on truck parking and wastewater treatment demands along the I-90 corridor between the Anaconda Rest Area and the Bearmouth Rest Area.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the analysis conducted for this study, Action Alternative 1 (the reduction in service / truck parking option) is the preferred alternative for the following reasons:

- Existing facilities aren't sufficient to address truck parking needs during peak usage periods (summer months) along the I-90 corridor between the Anaconda Rest Area and the Bearmouth Rest Area.
- Alternative 1 (truck parking option) would provide additional stopping opportunities along this corridor – thus positively impacting parking and wastewater treatment demand at the adjacent Anaconda and Bearmouth Rest Areas.
- All Stakeholder groups expressed support for safe stopping / truck parking opportunities at the Gold Creek Rest Area site.
- All Stakeholder groups rejected Alternative 2 (closure option) for the Gold Creek Rest Area site.
- Public comments overwhelmingly supported the reduction of service option (vs. the closure option).
- Capital construction costs for Alternative 1 (truck parking option) are lower than Alternative 2 (closure option) by approximately \$70,000.
- Alternative 1 (truck parking option) is eligible for federal-aid and requires no state match.

- Alternative 2 (closure option) must be funded entirely with state funds (isn't federal-aid eligible).
- While maintenance costs are higher for Alternative 1 (truck parking option), the total amount of state funds required to implement Alternative 1 are lower than Alternative 2 (closure option) by \$90,000.
- Alternative 2 (closure option) triggers an FHWA requirement that MDT perform a supplemental evaluation to demonstrate adequate safety rest area services will remain after the abandonment of the Gold Creek Rest Area site.
- It is unlikely that MDT could provide adequate justification for Alternative 2 (closure option) based on truck parking and wastewater treatment demands along the I-90 corridor between the Anaconda Rest Area and the Bearmouth Rest Area.

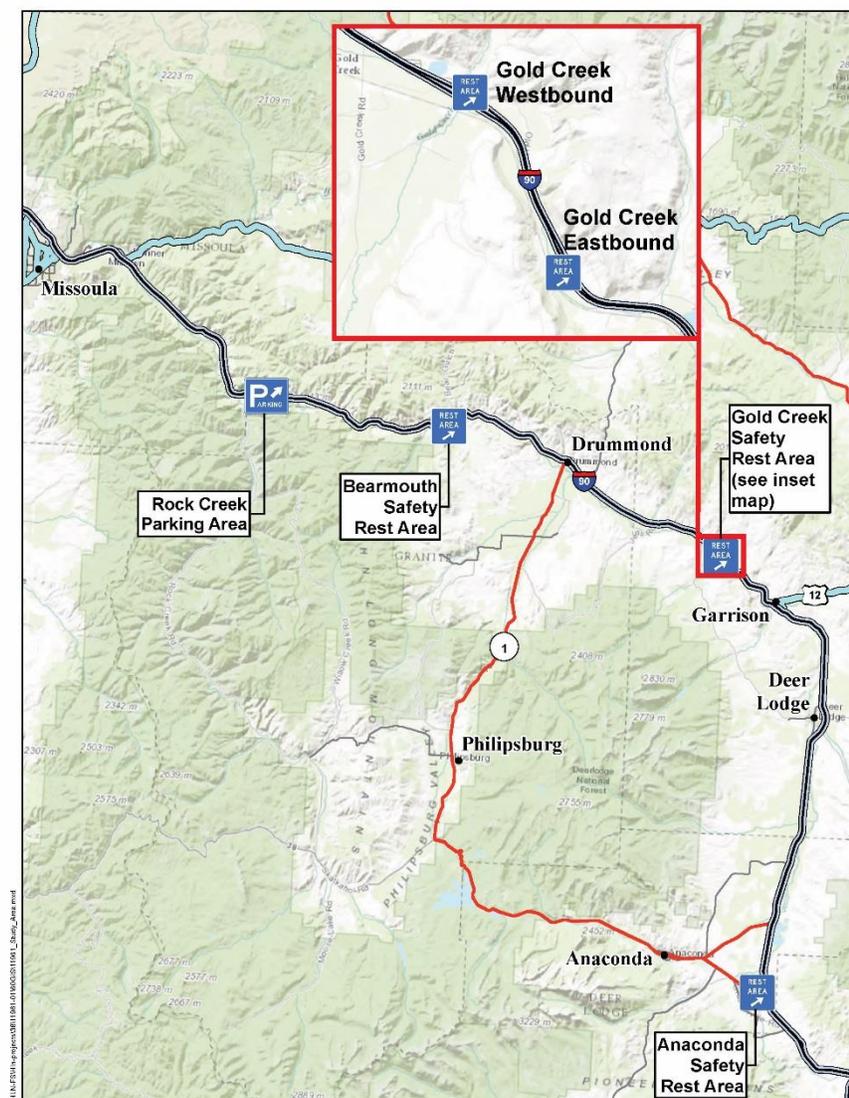
Consequently, this study recommends implementation of Action Alternative 1 (the reduction in service / truck parking option) at the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area sites.

1.0 Introduction

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) conducted a rest area study to evaluate two alternatives for the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area: (1) reduction in service and (2) complete closure of the site. The 2014 *Montana Rest Area Plan* identified several potential concerns at the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area relating to the number of oversized vehicle parking spaces and the remaining service life for the parking areas, structures, water systems, and wastewater systems. Facility ventilation, source water capability to meet peak daily demand, and backflow prevention were also issues identified at the site. Of the rest areas in Montana, the Gold Creek eastbound and westbound sites have the 4th and 5th lowest health index scores, respectively, due to these factors. A substantial capital investment would be required to address the identified concerns.

Figure 1 illustrates the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area location in reference to the communities of Drummond and Garrison along Interstate 90 (I-90). Network spacing criteria from the Montana Rest Area Plan characterized the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area as potentially redundant due to its proximity to the Bearmouth Safety Rest Area (approximately 25 miles to the northwest) and the Anaconda Safety Rest Area (approximately 40 miles to the south). The Gold Creek Safety Rest Area was closed in conjunction with the reopening of the newly reconstructed Bearmouth Safety Rest Area in April 2015.

Figure 1: Study Area



2.0 Existing Conditions Analysis

The following sections provide a summary of the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area features and characteristics to help identify opportunities, constraints, and needs within the study area. The analysis is based on existing site-specific data, publicly available data, and information gathered during a site visit conducted on April 19, 2017. The following sections are based on the most current data available, unless otherwise noted. Photographs from the site visit are catalogued in Appendix A.

2.1 Network Spacing and Demand

Spacing

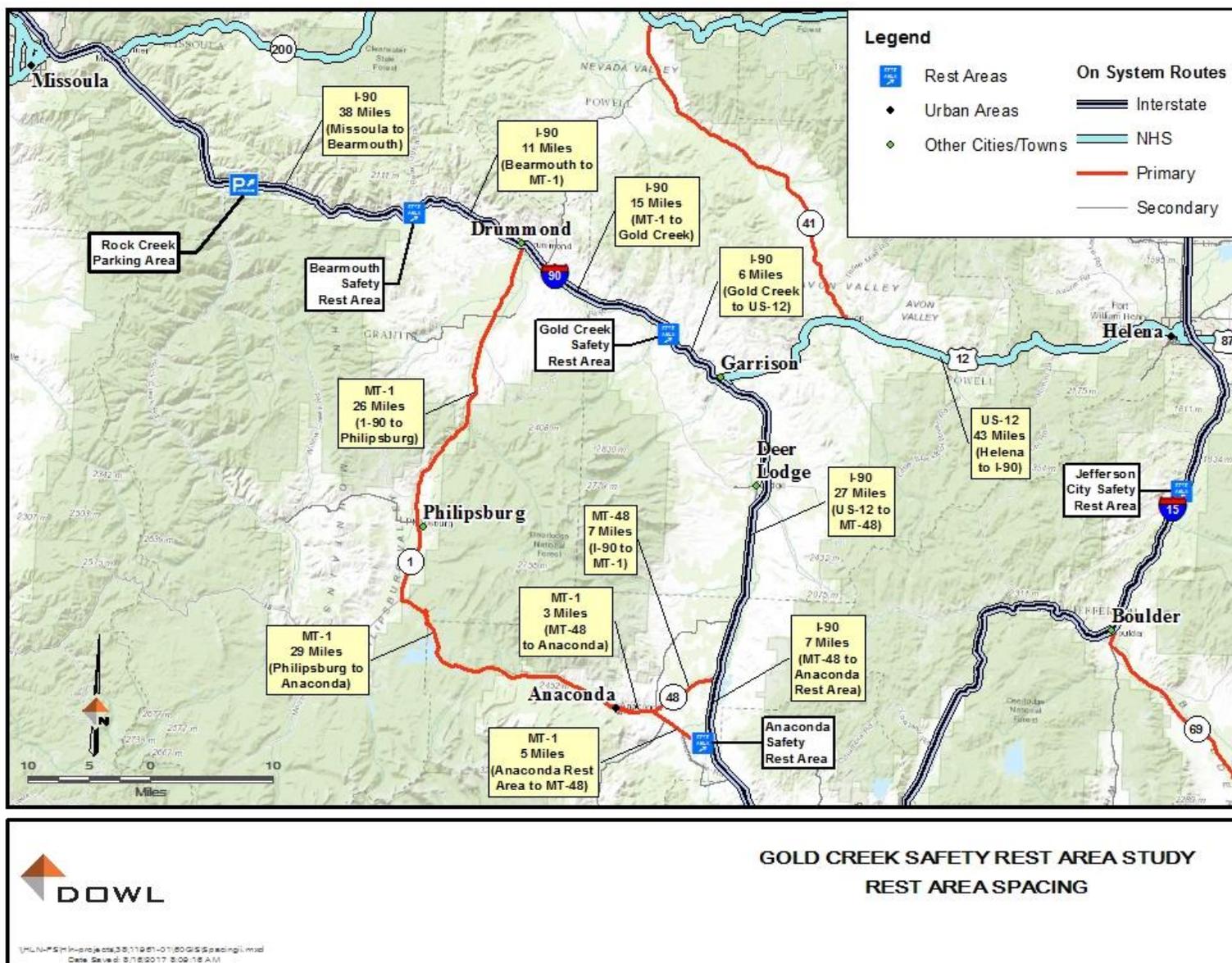
The Montana Rest Area Plan recommends approximately one hour of travel time between safety rest areas. This generally equates to a distance of approximately 70 miles. Table 1 and Figure 2 provide a summary of spacing distances between safety rest areas and urban areas in the vicinity of the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area measured according to the most direct route (i.e., shortest mileage). The analysis considers spacing only along Interstate, National Highway System (NHS), and Primary routes. Currently, the Anaconda and Bearmouth Safety Rest Areas are open year round. The Gold Creek Safety Rest Area is temporarily closed but has operated as a seasonal facility in past years.

Table 1: Gold Creek Safety Rest Area Spacing Analysis

Beginning Location	Ending Location (Mileage and Route)					
	Anaconda (Urban Area)	Anaconda Safety Rest Area	Bearmouth Safety Rest Area	Gold Creek Safety Rest Area	Helena (Urban Area)	Missoula (Urban Area)
Anaconda Safety Rest Area	8 miles (MT-1)					
Bearmouth Safety Rest Area	66 miles (I-90, MT-1)	66 miles (I-90)				
Gold Creek Safety Rest Area	43 miles (I-90, MT-48, MT-1)	40 miles (I-90)	26 miles (I-90)			
Helena (Urban Area)	80 miles (US-12, I-90, MT-48, MT-1)	83 miles (I-15, I-90)	75 miles (US-12, I-90)	49 miles (US-12, I-90)		
Missoula (Urban Area)	104 miles (MT-1, I-90)	104 miles (I-90)	38 miles (I-90)	64 miles (I-90)	113 miles (US-12, I-90)	

Source: DOWL 2017.

Figure 2: Gold Creek Safety Rest Area Spacing Analysis



Key findings regarding spacing between stopping opportunities are summarized below.

- The distance between the Bearmouth and Anaconda Safety Rest Areas is 66 miles, indicating the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area is redundant along Interstate 90.
- Distances slightly exceed 70 miles between Helena and Anaconda, the Anaconda Safety Rest Area, and the Bearmouth Safety Rest Area.
- The presence of the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area has no effect on the distances between Helena and the Anaconda urban area or Anaconda Safety Rest Area as routes to these locations do not pass by the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area.
- The distance between Helena and the Bearmouth Safety Rest Area is only slightly higher than the 70-mile target. A 75-mile distance is not sufficient to warrant an additional full-service safety rest area.

Parking Demand

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) *Guide for Development of Rest Areas on Major Arterials and Freeways* (1999) provides recommendations for estimating safety rest area usage based on national trends. MDT initiated a research project with the Western Transportation Institute (WTI) to develop guidelines that more accurately reflect conditions specific to Montana. The project culminated in completion of the *Rest Area Use: Data Acquisition and Usage Estimation Report* (2011). The goal of the WTI report was to investigate some of the variables thought to affect safety rest area usage and identify patterns at select study sites for application at all state-maintained safety rest areas in the absence of site-specific data. Using these publications as a foundation, MDT developed a modified demand methodology in the *Montana Rest Area Plan* (2014) to reflect site-specific door count data in place of assumed stopping percentages to identify peak-hour visitation at MDT safety rest areas.

This study uses 2017 traffic volumes and 2016 door count data to calculate updated parking demands at the Anaconda and Bearmouth Safety Rest Areas. Following the methodology outlined in the *Montana Rest Area Plan*, Table 2 presents a summary of the parking demand analysis conducted for the study area. Parking demand calculations are provided in Appendix B.

Table 2: Parking Demand Analysis

Parking Spaces		Anaconda Safety Rest Area	Bearmouth Safety Rest Area (EB)	Bearmouth Safety Rest Area (WB)
Passenger Vehicles	2017 Supply	30	53	51
	2016/2017 Demand	26	15	22
	2016/2017 Deficiency/Surplus	4	38	29
Oversized Vehicles	2017 Supply	15	17	21
	2016/2017 Demand	51	34	34
	2016/2017 Deficiency/Surplus	-36	-17	-13

Source: DOWL 2017. Demand calculations use peak daily door count data, average daily traffic, and peak hour traffic volumes collected by MDT in 2016 and 2017. Vehicle mix (i.e., the percentage of passenger vehicles and trucks) is based on percentages reported in the Montana Rest Area Plan. 2016 supply based on striping observed from Google Earth 2016 aerial imagery. Actual parking demand may vary from calculated demand due to variance in multiple input values.

According to the calculations, the Anaconda and Bearmouth Safety Rest Areas supply adequate passenger vehicle parking, but have a deficiency ranging from 13 to 36 oversized vehicle parking spots during peak usage periods.

2.2 Water Rights & Water Systems

Water Rights

The Gold Creek Safety Rest Area has one well associated with each of the eastbound and westbound sites to provide potable and irrigation water to the facilities. The water right for the eastbound well was recently submitted (July 2017) with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), although it was not recorded in the online database at the time this report was written. It is assumed that the existing well is part of the original water system. If the existing well is proposed for future use, it is recommended that an updated well log be created.

As listed in Table 3, the westbound water right provides for 22.0 gallons per minute (gpm) and 9.94 acre-feet per year (ac-ft/yr) from May 1 to October 31. The DNRC defines the total volume for small groundwater development use as 10 ac-ft/yr. It is recommended that the Gold Creek westbound water right be updated to reflect a pumping rate resulting in the maximum of 10 ac-ft/yr. Well log reports and the westbound water right are provided in Appendix C.

Table 3: Water Right at Gold Creek Safety Rest Area

Water Right Number	Owner	Quantity	Timeframe
76G-111728-00 (Westbound)	Montana Department of Transportation	22.0 gpm/ 9.94 ac-ft/yr	May 1 - October 31

Source: DNRC 2017. Note: Water right for eastbound safety rest area was not recorded in the DNRC database at the time of this report.

Water Supply and Well Data

The Gold Creek sites are considered transient/non-community facilities under the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) public water system classification, meaning they serve 25 or more persons per day but do not regularly serve the same persons for at least six months a year. Montana regulations require transient non-community water supplies to monitor for microbiological quality and for nitrates and nitrites.

The eastbound well has a static water level of four to five feet below the surface. The total eastbound well depth is not listed on the well log. No additional information is available for the eastbound well.

The current water supply for the westbound onsite well was first drilled on June 22, 1983. A second replacement well was drilled March 28, 2000. The replacement well produces 40 gpm at a pumping water level of 18 feet. The total westbound well depth is 240 feet, and the static water level in the westbound well is approximately six feet below the ground level.

Based on existing well logs, depth to seasonal high groundwater is estimated to range from four to six feet. The logs indicate that groundwater is located in sandy gravels that dominate the upper 26 feet of the wells. Based on the information presented in the well logs, potable water is located in an unconfined aquifer formation.

Overall the eastbound and westbound wells are in good condition and could continue to be used for irrigation purposes without major modifications. If MDT were to perpetuate these wells for public use, DEQ may require an updated water supply plan and additional treatment based on possible surface/groundwater connection. This assessment is based on the measured static water levels in the onsite wells and the presence of sandy gravel alluvium in the first 25 feet of each well.

2.3 Public Wastewater Systems

The Gold Creek Safety Rest Area sites each utilize a typical septic and drainfield system for wastewater treatment processes. The existing eastbound site has a standard pressure dose system and the westbound site has a conventional-type, gravity-fed treatment system.

The eastbound site utilizes a septic tank that transports the effluent to a lift station which doses a standard pressurized drainfield. The eastbound tank was full at the time of pumping on April 18, 2017, and half to three-quarters full at the time of the site visit on April 19, 2017. It was observed at the site visit that groundwater infiltrates into the collection lines. The 1973 as-built drawings indicate collection lines are a clay type that commonly degrade over time and become a source of infiltration. Additionally, pumping photographs indicate little solid accumulation suggesting dilution from groundwater infiltration.

The lift station portion of the eastbound system consists of two older pumps located in a confined space underground structure. MDT maintenance staff indicated they have had issues

with the lift station in the past. Repairs or maintenance of the pumps require confined space safety entry procedures.

The eastbound drainfield is located southeast of the rest area exit ramp and shows no signs of failure. Additionally, no trees or shrubs encroach on the drainfield that could contribute to future malfunction. Adequate right-of-way is available if future upgrades to the existing drainfield are needed.

The westbound septic tank was full at the time of pumping on April 18, 2017, and empty at the time of the site visit on April 19, 2017. Pumping photographs indicate the presence of solids, confirming that the septic system was probably not pumped at the end of the previous season. The westbound septic tank is in good condition and does not show any groundwater infiltration.

The westbound drainfield is located on the southwestern portion of the site behind the building facility. The drainfield does not show signs of failure and is clear of trees and shrubs.

Appendix D presents drainfield calculations based on current DEQ requirements. If MDT were to perpetuate public wastewater systems at these sites, the following issues must be addressed.

- Calculations indicate the westbound drainfield is not sized adequately to meet current DEQ requirements, as presented in Appendix D. Additionally, effluent levels in the septic tank (prior to pumping) are above the outflow line extending from the septic tank to the drainfield which may indicate a plugged transport line.
- The westbound system would require a new lift station (with lifts and rails to eliminate the current confined space entry concerns) and leak-proof tanks and risers. All risers would be required to be at least two feet above the base flood elevation.
- Federal regulations (23 CFR 650.115(b)) require rest area buildings and related water supply and waste treatment facilities to be located outside the base floodplain, where practicable. Due to the close proximity of the floodplain, a topographical survey and floodplain elevation analysis would be required to determine the actual location of the published floodplain. DEQ requires a 100-foot setback from the 100-year floodplain for any improvements to the drainfield system.
- DEQ non-degradation analysis requires 100-foot setback distances from surface water, four-foot minimum separation between groundwater and the natural ground surface (not including fill), and nitrate levels below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency threshold of 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L) with treatment. The close proximity to surface water, high groundwater, and typical high nitrate concentrations in rest area wastewater streams may make it difficult to pass DEQ non-degradation analysis standards - should MDT choose to perpetuate existing systems.

2.4 Building Structure

The Gold Creek eastbound and westbound buildings were originally constructed in 1973. In 2017, the estimated remaining service life of the structures is 6 years based on a 50-year design life. Record drawings for the safety rest area structures are provided in Appendix E for reference. The following statements reflect visual observations from the April 2017 site visit.

- The buildings are in sound structural condition. No cracking or separation occurs in either the interior floor or the exposed portion of the exterior foundation stem walls. At the westbound site, cracking is evident along the concrete ramp entering the men's bathroom.
- Exterior siding is in relatively good condition, apart from some observed holes likely caused by woodpeckers or small rodents and an isolated number of loose or splitting siding panels. At the eastbound site, ceramic tile surrounding the water fountain feature is in poor condition with broken and missing sections.
- At each site, the timber framework along the base of the interior plumbing chase is rotting. In some areas, leaking interior plumbing pipe is reinforced with duct tape patching. One section of vent piping is broken or missing at the eastbound site.
- Roofing is in good condition. Observations from inside the buildings indicate no discernable signs of leaks.
- Existing ventilation features are in poor condition due to accumulated dirt, dust, and debris. Odors are not noticeable given that the safety rest area is not currently in operation; however, past documentation and inventories indicate significant odor problems.

2.5 Ramps and Parking Areas

The following section summarizes visual observations of the Interstate 90 entrance/exit ramps and parking areas to identify the general condition of the pavement surface and other associated site features. A copy of the record drawings showing the original construction typical pavement section and alignment profiles for the ramps and parking areas is provided in Appendix E for reference.

Pavement Section

Record drawings indicate the original pavement section of the eastbound and westbound ramps and parking areas consists of the following, for a total thickness of approximately 13.8 inches (1.15 feet):

- 0.20-foot bituminous surface (approximately 2.4 to 2.5 inches);
- 0.20-foot crushed aggregate top surface (approximately 2.4 to 2.5 inches); and
- 0.75-foot crushed aggregate base course (approximately 9.0 inches).

Ramps and parking areas were originally constructed in 1973. As of 2017, the service life of the pavement has been exceeded by 24 years based on a 20-year design life and no known rehabilitation treatments. The Gold Creek Safety Rest Area has operated as a seasonal facility and has not been open year-round for the life of the pavement. However, due to the age of the pavement and no indication of any significant pavement rehabilitation, further investigative testing may be warranted to more accurately assess the existing pavement conditions. Testing could include coring samples to verify depths and materials of the existing pavement section as well as verification of subgrade soils to better evaluate remaining pavement service life.

MDT indicated that a chip seal treatment was applied to the ramps and parking areas in 2008 or 2009. Other than a chip seal treatment, there is no visual evidence of past asphalt pavement overlays or other structural section improvements since paved areas were originally constructed.

Surface Condition

The surface of the pavement is in relatively good condition with signs of some wearing surface aggregate loss and a limited number of transverse cracks. Pavement heaving is evident at the eastbound site along the perimeter of the trailer dump site area due to surfacing tree roots or some other vegetative roots. However, the overall structural integrity of the pavement is not included as a part of this existing conditions assessment.

The original eastbound parking area was constructed with an isolated paved area for a trailer dump site. The paved area still exists, but the sanitary disposal station has been abandoned and the area has been completely paved over. No signs of pavement distress occur in the area of the original disposal station.

MDT provided a pavement review on May 5, 2017, for both the eastbound and westbound sites. The review states that the pavement is in good condition with some aggregate loss in places. MDT estimates rehabilitation may occur in the next few years at a cost of approximately \$3.00/square yard (SY) for chip sealing and \$5.00/SY for microsurfacing (for a combined total ranging from \$75,000 to \$125,000). A limited number of cracks would need to be sealed before rehabilitation occurs.

Drainage Patterns

Ponding water and poor drainage can have a negative impact on pavement conditions. Pavement exposed to ponding water deteriorates at a faster rate and becomes brittle. As a result, small fractures occur in the surface and become vulnerable to repeated exposure to moisture, debris, and vehicle forces. As the deterioration worsens, larger cracks appear and allow the foundation to become susceptible to the damaging effects of water as well. The following section summarizes visual observations of general drainage patterns for the ramps and parking areas.

Record drawings indicate the eastbound parking area has positive longitudinal grade for the length of the site, which is consistent with observations during the site visit. Based on review of record drawings and visual observation, the eastbound parking area has an adequate pavement surface drainage pattern. The curb cut openings along the car parking area show some signs of minor ponding and debris buildup. Eastbound ramps have positive cross slopes that also allow for adequate pavement surface drainage.

Based on review of record drawings and visual observation, the westbound parking area lacks adequate pavement surface drainage. The pavement along the northern portion of the parking area shows signs of standing water with a few areas of localized pavement cracking. There is approximately 940 lineal feet of concrete pin-down curb along the northern perimeter of the

parking area that may be inhibiting surface water from draining off the adjacent pavement area into the drainage ditch immediately to the north. This visual observation is consistent with the review of record drawings that show the longitudinal grade of the WB parking area as flat (0.00% grade) and at a low point in the profile between two adjacent vertical curves.

Additionally, there are signs of standing water and large amounts of sediment buildup along the gutter flowline at the southwest corner of the westbound car parking area. The lack of parking lot gradient, small curb cut opening, and sediment buildup along the outlet of the curb cut are contributing factors to the lack of adequate pavement drainage at this location. MDT maintenance personnel confirmed that ponding does occur at these locations. The westbound ramps have positive cross slopes that allow for adequate pavement surface drainage.

Curbing

The pin-down curb located along the northern edge of the westbound parking area and extending along portions of the ramps is in very poor condition with exposed ends of rusted rebar in numerous locations. Approximately 330 lineal feet of concrete pin-down curb occurs along the western perimeter of the old trailer dump area at the eastbound parking area. This pin-down curb is also in poor condition with exposed ends of rusted rebar in numerous locations.

Striping

The widths of two measured truck parking stalls are approximately 13 feet at the eastbound site. This is less than the standard 15-foot width per the MDT Traffic Manual. Of the two car parking stalls measured in the field, widths range from 9 feet to 10 feet. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) parking requirements are addressed separately in Section 2.7.

At the westbound site, the widths of two measured truck parking stalls are approximately 10 feet. This is less than the standard 15-foot width per the MDT Traffic Manual. Of the two car parking stalls measured in the field, widths both meet the standard 10-foot width.

Signage

Ramp and parking area signage range from good to fair condition. At both sites, the “Wrong Way” and “Do Not Enter” signs were recently installed in 2014. The majority of the other road signs along the sites were installed in 1995. They are generally in good condition but starting to show some signs of wear. The eastbound “Pet Area” sign has been vandalized.

Ramp Slope

The Interstate 90 eastbound entrance ramp gore area may have grade breaks in excess of the maximum values outlined in MDT design guidelines. The eastbound Interstate 90 mainline and the entrance ramp converge at a point where the horizontal curves arc in opposing directions. This type of geometric layout tends to create cross slope rollover challenges since the superelevation cross slopes for the mainline and the ramp are acting in opposite directions from each other in this critical transition zone. Cross slope rollover criteria states that the algebraic difference between the transverse slope of the Interstate 90 mainline and the transverse slope of the ramp lane and/or gore should not exceed the following maximum values:

- Up to the physical nose: The cross slope rollover should not exceed a range of 4% to 5%.
- From physical nose to gore nose: The cross slope rollover should not exceed 8%.

Similar conditions do not occur at the westbound ramp. Additional assessment of eastbound ramp slope may be warranted should MDT choose to maintain the sites as truck parking areas. This assessment did not collect existing cross slope measurements for either the Interstate 90 mainline or the entrance ramps.

2.6 Site Amenities

The following section summarizes general condition of exterior site amenities. Record drawings showing the original construction of the picnic shelters, exhibit cases, and picnic tables are provided in Appendix E for reference.

Picnic Areas

Picnic facilities at both sites include roofed picnic shelters containing table/bench units with concrete bases and wood plank tops and bench seats served by adjacent concrete walkways. Additionally, a number of freestanding concrete table/bench units are located on concrete slabs within landscaped areas not adjacent to paved walkways.

Concrete picnic tables are generally in sound structural condition. The concrete table and bench supports do not show evidence of significant cracking. The wood plank table tops and bench seats are bolted down to the concrete slabs, and the connections are in good condition. The paint on the majority of the wood planks is showing significant signs of chipping and peeling.

Shelter roofs show signs of damage, decking is dried out and cracking, and fallen tree branches are common. Picnic shelters are in sound structural condition; however, some of the base plate and side plate roof post connections are rusty and dried out. Shelters are constructed on four-inch concrete slabs with two-foot square by three-foot deep footings for the roof posts. Some cracking occurs in the concrete slabs (occurring more frequently at the eastbound site), with rusted rebar exposed in one slab at the eastbound site.

Informational Signage

Signage is in poor condition in some cases, including informational kiosks and historical site markers. These features exhibit chipping/peeling paint, faded/worn marker text, damaged display cases, and rusting post connections.

The rock/stone bases for the “First Discovery of Gold in Montana” historical markers are also in poor condition. The base at the eastbound site is starting to break apart and showing signs of major deterioration. The paint is faded and some parts of the sign are not legible.

Pet Areas

Both the eastbound and westbound sites have two unfenced pet areas designated by signage. Pet areas are generally located along the ramps, within drainage swales, and adjacent to

wetlands. Moving pet areas to new locations may be warranted should MDT choose to maintain the sites as truck parking areas. New pet area locations may allow the opportunity to provide a greater buffer between the pet area sites, traffic movements, and environmentally sensitive areas.

Benches

Both sites provide freestanding benches not associated with picnic areas. The metal supports and connections of the wooden benches generally are in sound structural condition. However, horizontal timber slats are faded and the paint is chipping and peeling. Several of the wood slats are split and heavily splintered and in need of replacement.

Light Fixtures

Exterior pole-mounted light fixtures are the original mercury vapor luminaires on either 20-foot or 30-foot poles. The 30-foot high poles are generally located along the edges of the parking area; poles and luminaires are in good condition. The operational condition of the lights is not included as part of this existing conditions assessment.

2.7 Accessibility

The following section summarizes exterior feature compliance with ADA and associated implementing guidelines and standards. Accessibility of building facilities is not included, as these are anticipated to be demolished under both action alternatives considered for this study. Appendix F includes measurements and mapping showing measurement locations.

Pedestrian Ramps

Eastbound and westbound sites each have a single pedestrian ramp transitioning from the parking area to pedestrian access routes leading to site facilities. Field observations identified the following issues.

- The eastbound ramp cross slope and landing cross slope exceed acceptable limits, and the ramp does not have a detectable warning device.
- The westbound pedestrian ramp transition is not flush with the parking area surface and does not have a detectable warning device.

Accessible Parking Spaces

Section 208.2 of the 2010 ADA Standards requires at least one accessible parking space for parking areas providing up to 25 total parking spaces. For every six or fraction of six accessible parking spaces, at least one must be a van parking space. Field observations identified the following characteristics.

- The eastbound parking area has 20 total passenger vehicle spaces and two accessible spaces, in compliance with requirements noted above. One parking space fails to provide an international symbol of accessibility parking sign. Similar to

- the westbound site, this site lacks a van-accessible parking space with accompanying signage and adjacent access aisle.
- The westbound parking area has 19 total passenger vehicle spaces and one accessible space, in compliance with requirements noted above. However, the accessible parking space is not van accessible, is not signed for van accessibility, and does not provide an adjacent access aisle.

Picnic Areas

Both eastbound and westbound sites provide two picnic shelters each containing four concrete table/bench units with adjacent pedestrian access routes. Additional picnic table/bench units located in vegetated areas not served by pedestrian access routes are not accessible and are not included in this assessment.

According to the final rule on outdoor developed areas (36 CFR part 1191, Appendix C, Section F245), for sites providing more than two picnic areas, 20 percent (and not less than two) must be accessible. None of the picnic areas are accessible because picnic shelters fail to provide adequate clear space on all usable sides of the table and picnic tables are slightly lower than the required table height and do not provide a wheelchair space with knee and toe clearance.

Benches

Multiple freestanding benches constructed with metal cylindrical legs and wooden slat seats are provided at both sites. These features are not compliant with requirements outlined in the 2010 ADA Standards for the following reasons.

- Eastbound benches fail to provide any back support.
- Westbound benches fail to meet requirements for seat depth, seat height, and back support dimensions.

Pedestrian Access Routes

Concrete sidewalks traverse the eastbound and westbound sites providing access to building facilities and picnic areas. Concrete walkways are spalling in some locations and significant heaving and uplifting occurs along numerous stretches of walkways creating vertical discontinuities and trip hazards at both the eastbound and westbound sites.

Measurements reflect the most direct access route to the building pad and picnic shelters at approximately 20-foot intervals. The assessment included the following.

- Of the 25 access route measurements collected at the eastbound site, seven are noncompliant due to excessive cross slope, vertical discontinuities, and insufficient clear width due to overgrown vegetation.
- Of the 13 access route measurements collected at the westbound site, four are noncompliant due to trip hazards and excessive cross slopes.
- At both sites, MDT has employed patching and grinding to remove vertical surface discontinuities, resulting in compliant surfaces in these locations.

2.8 Safety Rest Area Maintenance

MDT Maintenance staff indicated that the majority of historical maintenance efforts have been related to preparation work for seasonal opening. Pre-season maintenance efforts have typically included painting, tree trimming, cleaning roof gutters, septic tank pumping, and overall site cleanup to address fallen tree limbs, animal waste, and garbage.

Maintenance efforts have also addressed occasional malfunctioning of the eastbound wastewater lift station and drainage issues in the westbound parking area. Since the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area has historically served as a seasonal site, snow plowing and removal has not been a major component of maintenance efforts.

2.9 Environmental Conditions

The following sections summarize existing environmental resources information within the study area gathered from April to May 2017 from previously published documents, websites, GIS data, and field site visit. The following environmental resources may pose potential constraints for future reduction in service or site closure.

- **Physical Resources:** Soil Resources and Prime Farmland, Geologic Resources, Surface Waters, Total Maximum Daily Loads, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wetlands, Irrigation, Floodplains and Floodways, Air Quality, Hazardous Substances
- **Biological Resources:** Vegetation, Noxious Weeds, General Wildlife Species, Threatened and Endangered Species, Species of Concern, and Special Status Species
- **Social and Cultural Resources:** Demographics, Economic Conditions, Land Use, Recreational Resources, Cultural Resources, Noise, Visual Resources

Appendices G through M provide supporting environmental data.

Physical Resources

Soil Resources and Prime Farmland

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil survey (MT644) for Powell County indicates the vast majority of both sites include soils comprised primarily of alluvium material. Most of these soils are not designated as prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance; however, a very small portion of soils just north of the westbound off-ramp is designated as prime farmland. This portion is part of MDT right-of-way and is not currently farmed.

Geologic Resources

Montana geological maps show surficial sedimentary deposits (Qs) make up both sites. These deposits include alluvium, fan, and terrace gravels; gravel deposits on pediment surfaces; landslide and travertine deposits (Pleistocene and Holocene); and till, glacial lake, and outwash deposits (Pleistocene). Surficial soils consist of silt, clay, sand, and gravel associated with the alluvium formation.

According to Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology mapping, no faults are mapped within or near the two sites. The sites are located within a Seismic Hazard Zone that is prone to strong ground motion; however, very few earthquakes have been documented in the area.

Surface Waters

Two surface waters occur in proximity to the two sites. The Clark Fork River is located directly adjacent to the eastbound site limits. The Clark Fork River is a large, perennial river and considered a jurisdictional water under the Clean Water Act (i.e., within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulatory jurisdiction).

At the westbound site, Carten Creek, which flows north to south toward the Clark Fork River, has been realigned into two separate channels along the northern limits of the site. One channel flows east along the safety rest area northern limits before it is diverted into a man-made ditch for field irrigation east of the rest area. The second ditch flows west along the safety rest area northern limits and discharges into a pond west of the safety rest area. Both ditches eventually discharge water back into the Clark Fork River. Given the connection to the Clark Fork River, Carten Creek is a potentially jurisdictional water under the Clean Water Act.

Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL)

The eastbound and westbound sites are located within the Upper Clark Fork Watershed (hydrologic unit code (HUC) 17010201) and within the Clark Fork River TMDL Planning Area. DEQ lists the Clark Fork in this area as impaired and not fully supporting for drinking water, primary contact recreation, and aquatic life. Causes of impairment include alterations in stream-side or littoral vegetative cover, arsenic, cadmium, copper, iron, lead, low-flow alterations, mercury, nitrogen, phosphorus, substrate habitat alterations, and sedimentation/siltation. TMDLs have been completed for all impairments except those related to stream and habitat alterations.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was created by Congress in 1968 to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. There are no wild or scenic rivers within or adjacent to the eastbound or westbound sites. The closest wild and scenic river is the Flathead River, approximately 75 miles north of the westbound site.

Wetlands

Large shrub-scrub/forested wetland complexes occur at both the eastbound and westbound sites. The wetland complexes at both sites are primarily comprised of willow (*Salix* sp.), sedge (*Carex* sp.), and black cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*), and generally surround the building structures and parking lots at both sites. Hydrology likely comes from a high water table at both the eastbound and westbound sites. The assessment did not include a wetland delineation or hydric soil/wetland boundary determination.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetland Inventory (NWI) mapping shows no wetland designations at the eastbound site. At the westbound site, freshwater forested/shrub

wetland and freshwater emergent wetland are designated just north of the parking area. Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) mapping includes forested and shrub/scrub riparian vegetation at both locations.

Irrigation

No irrigation ditches or canals occur at either site. Carten Creek flows along the northern limits of the westbound site and is eventually diverted into a man-made irrigation ditch just east of the site. This ditch provides stock water and flood irrigation for the field directly east of the site.

Floodplains and Floodways

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) issued flood insurance rate map (FIRM) 3000591125B indicates one floodplain zone, (Zone A), along the Clark Fork River. Zone A is defined as the 100-Year Flood event, with no base flood elevations determined. The FEMA FIRM map indicates a small portion of the eastbound site directly adjacent to the Clark Fork River is within the floodplain; however, most of the site (including the parking area and building structures) is just outside of the floodplain at a slightly higher elevation. Interstate 90 acts as a flood barrier near the westbound site, completely removing it from the floodplain.

Air Quality

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six criteria pollutants, including carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5), sulfur dioxide, and lead. The EPA designates communities that do not meet NAAQS as “non-attainment areas.” The eastbound and westbound sites are not located in a non-attainment area for any criteria pollutants. Additionally, there are no nearby non-attainment areas.

Hazardous Substances

Based on available DEQ information, there are no underground storage tank (UST) sites, petroleum release fund claims, hazardous waste handler sites, abandoned or inactive mine sites, or open cut permits within or directly adjacent to the two sites. The National Pipeline Mapping System shows one pipeline designated as a hazardous liquid pipeline crossing the eastbound site from east to west. The pipeline is designated as part of the Yellowstone Pipeline and is owned by Phillips 66 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Phillips 66 Yellowstone Pipeline



Source: National Pipeline Mapping System 2017; <https://www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov/>.

The eastbound site is located directly adjacent to the Clark Fork River Operable Unit (CFR OU). The CFR OU is part of the Milltown Reservoir/Clark Fork River Superfund Site and includes the Clark Fork River from its headwaters near Warm Springs Creek to the decommissioned Milltown Reservoir, just east of Missoula. The primary sources of contamination are tailings mixed with soil in the streambanks and historic floodplain. Contamination includes heavy metals (cadmium, copper, zinc, and lead) and arsenic. If MDT pursues closure or reduction of service at this site, soils testing may be required to determine if contaminated soils are located within the MDT right-of-way. If testing results indicate contamination, contractors will need to follow safe handling procedures and identify appropriate disposal methods if contaminated soil (or soil residue) is encountered.

The hazardous materials assessment collected and tested building and picnic shelter samples at both sites to determine the presence of asbestos-containing materials. Testing used polarized light microscopic (PLM) techniques with dispersion staining for identification of mineral forms of

asbestos. Of the 28 representative samples collected on May 8 and May 14, 2017, no materials contain asbestos quantities.

The assessment also inspected painted and glazed surfaces for the presence of lead-containing materials using an x-ray fluorescence spectrum analyzer. Results indicate multiple surfaces meet or exceed the federal threshold level of 1.0 milligram per square centimeter (mg/cm²). Specifically, surfaces testing positive for lead at both the eastbound and westbound sites include white ceramic tiles and white painted ceilings located in the interior of the men's and women's restrooms. Samples do not represent every positive surface or location.

Biological Resources

Vegetation

The Gold Creek Safety Rest Area is located within the Deer Lodge-Philipsburg-Avon Grassy Intermontane Hills and Valleys ecoregion of the Middle Rockies. This ecoregion is composed of stream terraces, foothills, and floodplains. Vegetation within this ecoregion is mapped as foothills prairie, with corridors of riparian vegetation found along the Clark Fork River and its tributaries.

Both sites are located within the Clark Fork River corridor. MTNHP mapping shows both are located on land cover designated as Human Land Use – Developed – Interstate. Land cover designations adjacent to the site include:

- Open Water/Wetland and Riparian Systems – Wet Meadow – Alpine Montane Wet Meadow;
- Grassland Systems – Montane Grassland – Rocky Mountain Lower Montane, Foothill, and Valley Grassland;
- Shrubland, Steppe, and Savanna Systems – Sagebrush Steppe – Montana Sagebrush Steppe; and
- Human Land Use – Agriculture – Cultivated Crops.

Observed plant species at both sites include several mature black cottonwoods (*Populus balsamifera*) and numerous cottonwood saplings, smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*), a number of willow species (*Salix* sp.), crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*), common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), sedge species (*Carex* sp.), red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*), Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*), mountain ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*), water birch (*Betula occidentalis*), and ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*). Vegetation directly surrounding the building structures includes landscape grasses and some ornamental plants.

Noxious Weeds

The Powell County Vegetation Management Plan 2016-2018 lists spotted knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe* or *maculosa*), leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*), houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), yellow toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), and sulfur cinquefoil (*Potentilla recta*) as the most abundant noxious weed species in the county. Table 4 indicates noxious weeds identified during the site visit.

Table 4: Noxious Weeds Found within the Study Area Vicinity

Common Name	Scientific Name	Montana Priority ¹
Canada thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	2B
Cheatgrass	<i>Bromus tectorum</i>	3
Houndstongue	<i>Cynoglossum officinale</i>	2B
Spotted knapweed	<i>Centaurea stoebe or maculosa</i>	2B

Source: DOWL 2017; Montana Noxious Weed Management Plan, Montana Department of Agriculture 2017.

¹Priority 2B: Weeds are abundant in Montana and widespread in many counties. Management criteria will require eradication or containment where less abundant. Priority 3: These plants are not noxious weeds but have the potential to have significant negative impacts.

General Wildlife Species

Mammals

The Clark Fork River is an important wildlife corridor for mammals. The abundant forested and shrub/scrub riparian and wetland vegetation found within both sites provides suitable habitat for a number of mammal species moving up and down the river corridor. According to the MTNHP database, mammal species include but are not limited to white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), beaver (*Castor Canadensis*), muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), northern river otter (*Lontra Canadensis*), and meadow vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) are known to occur in the general area. MDT Missoula District Maintenance staff also noted the presence of black bears (*Ursus americanus*) at the sites.

Amphibians and Reptiles

Amphibian species known to occur within the study area and vicinity include but are not limited to the Columbia spotted frog (*Rana luteiventris*) and the long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum*). Reptile species, such as common garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) and gopher snake (*Pituophis catenifer*), are likely to occur at both sites; however, no occurrences are documented on the MTNHP database.

Birds

Large riparian and wetland complexes at both sites include mature cottonwood trees and various shrub species that provide abundant suitable nesting habitat for bird species. Site visit observations included several small nests at both sites. More than 110 species of birds are documented with the potential to occur within the sites. These species include representative songbirds, birds of prey, waterfowl, owls, and shorebirds.

Fisheries

The closest surface water that supports fisheries is the Clark Fork River, approximately 0.04 miles south of the eastbound site. According to Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) Montana Fisheries Information System (MFISH) database, the stretch of river near the site supports a number of fish species including brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), largescale sucker (*Catostomus macrocheilus*), longnose dace (*Rhinichthys cataractae*), longnose sucker

(*Catostomus catostomus*), mountain whitefish (*Prosopium williamsoni*), slimy sculpin (*Cottus cognatus*), and rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Less common and rare species include westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*) and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). The ephemeral Carten Creek found near the westbound site, flows into a man-made irrigation ditch and is not considered suitable habitat for aquatic species.

Threatened and Endangered Species

USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) lists four threatened species and one potentially threatened species as potentially occurring within the vicinity of the eastbound and westbound sites. These species include yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), and North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*). In addition, the Clark Fork River is designated critical habitat for bull trout.

MTNHP shows Canada lynx and bull trout as potentially occurring within the vicinity of the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area, likely due to designated critical habitat in the vicinity. However, suitable habitat for these species is not found within the rest area limits. Given the large cottonwood stands within and adjacent to both sites, there is potential for yellow-billed cuckoo to occur in or pass through the area. In addition, because both locations are found within the riparian zone along the Clark Fork River, there is potential for grizzly bear to migrate through the area.

Species of Concern and Special Status Species

Nine Montana species of concern/special status species are documented within the vicinity of the eastbound and westbound sites. These species include fisher (*Pekania pennant*), fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*), hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), great blue heron (*Ardea Herodias*), long-billed curlew (*Numenius americanus*), and westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*).

Given the habitat found within both site limits (riparian and wetland forest and shrub/scrub), species such as fringed myotis and hoary bat may have the potential to occur within the study area, likely foraging.

Bald eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Site visit observations included one active bald eagle nest (confirmed when a bald eagle carried fish to the nest) approximately 0.4 mile southeast of the eastbound parking lot. The Montana FWP Bald Eagle Nest Database also recorded a nest at the same location. Site visit observations do not include any bald eagle nests at the westbound site, and the FWP database shows no recorded nests in the vicinity of this site.

According to the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Map, neither site is located within sage grouse core habitat, connectivity habitat, or general habitat.

Social and Cultural Resources

Demographics

According to U.S. Census Bureau population estimates, Powell County has seen a slight population decline in the last six years from 7,027 in 2010 to 6,858 in 2016. Montana Department of Commerce 2060 population projections show the population in Powell County continuing to decline to 6,344 by 2060.

This analysis does not assess the presence of Environmental Justice populations because any options proposed for the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area would have no new effects on the adjacent surrounding area.

Economic Conditions

The Powell County economic base includes construction, accommodation and food services, health care, retail trade and agriculture. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2015 Powell County had a very low unemployment rate of 2.2% compared to Montana's unemployment rate of 6.2%.

Land Use

Property maps for Powell County show land surrounding both sites as privately owned. No lands under federal or state jurisdiction, other than the Clark Fork River, were identified within the direct vicinity. Land use is primarily agriculture, with some commercial and residential uses. The Montana Rail Link railroad parallels the eastbound site on the south side of the Clark Fork River.

Recreational Resources

The only identified recreational resource within the immediate vicinity of the sites is the Clark Fork River. There are no other state or federal public lands, public parks, or recreational fields, within or immediately surrounding either site. Recreation use of the Clark Fork River includes fishing, boating, swimming, and wildlife viewing. A gate at the eastbound site provides access to the river; however, river access at this location is across private land and there is no signage at the gate indicating public river access.

No properties using National Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCFA) Section 6(f) grants are located within or adjacent to the eastbound and westbound sites.

Cultural Resources

Given that all potential alternatives are expected to remain within the previously-disturbed sites, a cultural resources investigation is not warranted. The structures associated with both sites were built in 1973 and are less than 50 years old.

Noise

The closest noise-sensitive receptor is a residence approximately 0.24 mile northwest of the westbound site. No other noise-sensitive receptors are within 0.25 mile of either site.

Visual Resources

Immediate views at both sites include the paved parking area and building structures surrounded by a forest and shrub/scrub wetland and riparian complex. Views of Interstate 90 are also directly visible from both sites. At the eastbound site, adjacent views of the Clark Fork River, the Montana Rail Link, agricultural fields, and conifer-covered hillslopes are also seen. Views adjacent to the westbound site include agricultural fields and conifer/grass covered hillslopes.

3.0 Public and Stakeholder Involvement

MDT invited stakeholders and members of the public to participate in the planning process by providing input on stopping opportunities in the study area. Specific outreach methods are described in the following sections. Additional information is provided in Appendix N.

3.1 Study Website and Study Posters

MDT hosted a website at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/goldcreek/> to provide information about the safety rest area study. The website provided information about how to submit comments, study contacts, a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs), and the study schedule. Related links provided access to the *Montana Rest Area Plan* and the online Montana Rest Area Map. The website also provided draft documents for public review and comment.

At the beginning of the study period and during the public review period, MDT placed posters in locations throughout the study area. Posters illustrated the rest area study location, explained the study focus, and provided links to the study website and comment form. Posters locations are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: Public Review Poster Locations

Locations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avon Family Café • Garrison Junction General Store • Drummond Town Pump • Bearmouth Rest Area (EB and WB) • Anaconda Rest Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonner Travel Plaza • Powell County Courthouse • Granite County Courthouse • Rocker Truck Stop/Town Pump • Haugan Weigh Station

3.2 Team Meetings

MDT subject matter experts met regularly during the study to discuss progress, methods, results, draft documents, public input, and other issues or concerns. The study team served in an advisory capacity and reviewed study documentation before publication. A full list of team members may be found in the acknowledgments section of this report. Meeting minutes are included in Appendix N.

3.3 Survey Summaries

The study team reviewed responses from the Anaconda, Bearmouth, and 2015 Biennial surveys to identify information about user perceptions of rest area facilities within the study vicinity and

statewide. Key findings relating to the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area study are summarized below. Additional survey information is provided in Appendix N.

Anaconda and Bearmouth Surveys

- During a period when the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area was closed, nearly 76% of Bearmouth Safety Rest Area patrons were satisfied with rest area spacing on the I-90 segment within the Gold Creek study area. This supports MDT's consideration of reduction in service at the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area.
- Restroom use and stretching/walking were patrons' primary purposes for stopping at the Anaconda and Bearmouth Safety Rest Areas. Assuming similar needs at the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area, these purposes could be accommodated by providing a truck parking area.

2015 Biennial Stakeholder and Public Survey

- Half of survey respondents indicated a need for additional facilities, equipment, or services at statewide rest areas.
- Improving rest areas received an average priority ranking, which was lower relative to other improvement options presented in the survey. Rest areas were also ranked third out of seven categories for improvement cuts should funding decline.
- Together, these results suggest public support for maintaining some level of service at the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area, while supporting MDT's consideration of reduction in service.

In conclusion, public and stakeholder survey results support MDT's consideration of a reduction in service at the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area (i.e., conversion from a full-service safety rest area to a truck parking area with a vaulted toilet). Survey results do not support complete closure of the safety rest area.

3.4 Stakeholder Interviews

Team members contacted 20 stakeholder representatives to request input on the study. Of these, representatives from the Motor Carriers of Montana, Granite County Commissioners, and the Powell County Chamber of Commerce participated in interviews in May and June of 2017. Members of the study team asked stakeholder representatives to provide input on stopping opportunities in the study area and opinions on the two alternatives considered for this study (reduction in service to a truck parking area or complete site closure).

Collectively, interview participants expressed:

- an awareness of the safety benefits of truck parking areas;
- support for maintaining a truck parking area at the existing Gold Creek eastbound and westbound sites to perpetuate safe stopping opportunities; and
- rejection of full closure of the Gold Creek facilities.

Additional interview information is provided in Appendix N.

3.5 Written Comments

The study website, newspaper advertisements, a press release, and social media postings on the MDT Facebook page encouraged members of the public to submit comments on the study. Examples of these efforts are included in Appendix N.

A total of 21 written comments were received before, during, and after the review period for the draft study which extended from September 25 to October 25, 2017. A majority of comments (15 of 21) supported a reduction in service over complete closure. These comments noted the need for safe stopping opportunities and truck parking in the current location of the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area sites. Four comments supported complete closure, noting that adequate parking already exists in the area or suggesting MDT add truck parking at the Bearmouth or Anaconda sites. Other comments discussed desired amenities, seasonal travel patterns along the study corridor, and a desire for a full-service safety rest area, which was not an alternative considered for the study. Comments are contained in Appendix N and are organized by the date received.

4.0 Need and Objectives

MDT defined a need to address the existing Gold Creek Safety Rest Area eastbound and westbound sites. The current facilities are temporarily closed to the public pending the outcome of this study.

To optimize Safety Rest Area Program investment strategies, MDT sought an alternative that accomplishes the following objectives.

- Minimizes capital and long-term maintenance costs.
- Leverages federal-aid funding and reduces demands for limited state funding.
- Minimizes impacts to physical, biological, and social/cultural resources which could result in costly and time-consuming mitigation and abatement activities.
- Provides safe stopping opportunities spaced by a maximum of approximately one hour of travel time.
- Accommodates public and stakeholder feedback regarding stopping and parking opportunities.
- Aligns with existing MDT plans, policies, and asset management strategies.
- Adheres to FHWA rules, regulations and guidance regarding the operation, maintenance and abandonment of Rest Area facilities.

5.0 Alternatives

5.1 Alternative Identification

MDT considered two action alternatives to achieve identified objectives for the existing eastbound and westbound Gold Creek Safety Rest Area sites.

Alternative 1: Reduction of Service

In accordance with MDT's *Safety Rest Area – Reduction of Service* memorandum, this alternative would lessen the current functionality of the existing eastbound and westbound Gold Creek Safety Rest Area sites. The reduced service facilities would provide the function and features of a truck parking site.

To reduce capital and long-term maintenance costs, the premise of this alternative is to maintain and/or rehabilitate existing site features only to the degree consistent with similar truck parking facilities across the state and, as required, to meet safety and regulatory requirements (such as ADA requirements). Additional improvements to the eastbound and westbound sites (such as upgraded lighting or other features) could be considered at the time MDT pursues a future project but are not reflected in this study. This alternative includes the following primary elements.

Maintain entrance/exit ramps and parking areas.

Existing pavement would remain in service to provide access to truck parking areas. MDT would remove raised median islands to facilitate winter maintenance and apply a chip seal treatment to the entire surface to preserve/maintain pavement areas.

Remove building facilities and foundations.

MDT would demolish and remove the existing building structures and concrete foundations.

Fill or crush wastewater tanks.

MDT would fill or crush existing underground wastewater tanks to eliminate future risk of collapse.

Cap associated wastewater piping and decommission drainfields.

MDT would cap existing wastewater transport piping approximately five to ten feet from building structures and abandon existing drainfields in place.

Maintain wells for irrigation and cleaning use (not as a public water source).

MDT would maintain existing water wells to serve irrigation and cleaning needs at the sites. MDT would not provide potable water for public use.

Install vaulted toilets.

MDT would install vaulted toilets and new storage tanks, which would require periodic pumping.

Remove picnic areas, pet amenities, and adjacent walkways.

Although existing picnic shelters are structurally sound, MDT does not typically provide picnic and pet amenities at truck parking areas. For consistency with the level of service provided at similar sites across the state, MDT may remove these amenities and adjacent walkways.

Upgrade remaining walkways to meet ADA requirements.

To comply with ADA requirements, MDT would upgrade remaining walkways adjacent to parking areas and vaulted toilets.

Reseed reclaimed areas.

MDT would reclaim and reseed all locations no longer in service (e.g., areas formerly occupied by building structures, picnic shelters, and walkways). Revised record drawings will show all abandoned site features, including piping and drainfield locations.

Alternative 2: Closure

The second alternative would involve complete demolition of the eastbound and westbound building facilities, parking areas, ramps, water/wastewater systems, and site amenities. Under this scenario, the entire site would be reclaimed and reseeded. It is anticipated that some paving work and shoulder shaping would be required to reconstruct asphalt wedges along the outside shoulder of the I-90 mainline where ramp pavement would be removed by saw cutting during the demolition process. Revised record drawings will show all abandoned site features, including piping and drainfield locations.

Alternatives Eliminated from Consideration

MDT determined that the no-action alternative is not viable. Water and wastewater systems have exceeded their service life. Additionally, the water systems at both eastbound and westbound sites are considered poor in terms of capability to meet peak daily demand and backflow prevention. Needed improvements to wastewater systems would be difficult for the reasons outlined in Section 2.3 of this report. Of the rest areas in Montana, the Gold Creek eastbound and westbound sites have the 4th and 5th lowest health index scores, respectively, due to these factors. Additionally, the facilities are not compliant with ADA accessibility requirements and have not been maintained in recent years. A substantial capital investment would be required to address the identified deficiencies.

MDT also determined that rehabilitation of the existing safety rest area is not a viable alternative due to spacing redundancy in the corridor, risks and costs associated with upgrading the water and wastewater systems, and safety rest area program funding constraints.

5.2 Screening

In consideration of MDT's *Safety Rest Area – Reduction of Service* memorandum, the study team identified the following seven screening criteria to evaluate the two action alternatives.

Capital and Maintenance Costs

MDT must weigh initial capital costs associated with demolition and site improvements with long-term maintenance costs associated with perpetuating service at the Gold Creek sites. Appendix O contains spreadsheets detailing anticipated cost items for each alternative and long-term costs inflated over the 2037 planning horizon. Costs are presented in 2017 dollars and represent combined totals for the eastbound and westbound sites.

Alternative 1 (Reduction in Service):

- Initial capital costs would be lower compared to Alternative 2 (\$538,000 vs. \$610,000).
- Long-term maintenance costs would be higher (at approximately \$21,000 annually or \$520,000 totaled over 20 years, assuming 2% inflation) compared to Alternative 2.

Alternative 2 (Closure):

- Initial capital costs would be higher compared to Alternative 1 (\$610,000 vs \$538,000).
- Long-term maintenance costs would be eliminated under this alternative.

Funding Eligibility

Certain MDT activities are typically eligible for federal funding (such as capital improvements to highway infrastructure); whereas others must be funded from state sources (such as maintenance costs). As outlined in the FHWA non-regulatory supplement (NS 23 CFR 752), the cost of safety rest area abandonment is not eligible for federal-aid funding. Accordingly, the closure alternative would be ineligible for federal funding and would need to be entirely supported by state funds. The reduction in service alternative would be eligible for federal funding because it would continue to provide a safe stopping opportunity with parking and vaulted toilet services.

Environmental Risk

MDT desires to avoid or minimize environmental resource impacts resulting from a future project at the Gold Creek sites. Associated mitigation and abatement activities can result in increased costs, schedule delays, and elevated project risk for MDT. Potential risks and associated screening outcomes are discussed below.

*Physical Resources*Alternative 1 (Reduction in Service):

- No adverse permanent impacts to prime farmland, geologic resources, surface water, TMDLs, wild and scenic rivers, wetlands, irrigation, floodplains and floodways, and air quality are anticipated.
- Contaminated soils may exist within the MDT right-of-way at the eastbound site. Ground-disturbing activities are necessary at this location and include removal of the building facilities and wastewater infrastructure. Encounters with contaminated soils would likely be minimal. However, contractors will need to follow safe handling procedures and identify appropriate disposal methods if contaminated soil (or soil residue) is encountered.
- The presence of lead-based paint on interior restroom building surfaces would require proper handling and disposal during building demolition.
- The screening outcome is **neutral** (○) due to the limited risk potential of encountering contaminated soils (with all other potential risks equal to Alternative 2).

Alternative 2 (Closure):

- No adverse permanent impacts to prime farmland, geologic resources, surface water, TMDLs, wild and scenic rivers, wetlands, irrigation, floodplains and floodways, and air quality are anticipated.
- Contaminated soils may occur within MDT right-of-way at the eastbound site. Ground-disturbing activities are necessary at this site and include complete demolition of the rest area site – thus resulting in a greater risk of encountering

- contaminated soils. Contractors will need to follow safe handling procedures and identify appropriate disposal methods if contaminated soil (or soil residue) is encountered.
- The presence of lead-based paint on interior restroom building surfaces would require proper handling and disposal during building demolition.
 - The screening outcome is **negative (-)** due to the greater potential for encountering contaminated soils (with all other potential risks equal to Alternative 1).

Biological Resources

Alternative 1 (Reduction in Service):

- No adverse permanent impacts to vegetation, noxious weeds, general wildlife species, threatened and endangered species, species of concern, and special status species are anticipated.
- The screening outcome is **neutral (○)** due to the limited likelihood of noxious weed establishment (with all other potential risks equal to Alternative 2).

Alternative 2 (Closure):

- No adverse permanent impacts to general wildlife species, threatened and endangered species, species of concern, and special status species are anticipated.
- Ground-disturbing activities to the entire site may increase the spread of noxious invasive weeds if native seeding does not establish.
- The screening outcome is **negative (-)** due to the greater likelihood of noxious weed establishment (with all other potential risks equal to Alternative 1).

Social and Cultural Resources

Alternative 1 (Reduction in Service):

- No adverse permanent impacts to demographics, economic conditions, land use, recreational resources, cultural resources, noise, or visual resources are anticipated.
- The screening outcome is **neutral (○)** due to limited risks associated with social and cultural resources (equal to Alternative 2).

Alternative 2 (Closure):

- No adverse permanent impacts to demographics, economic conditions, land use, recreational resources, cultural resources, noise, or visual resources are anticipated.
- The screening outcome is **neutral (○)** due to equal risks associated with social and cultural resources (equal to Alternative 1).

Spacing and Corridor Needs

Although the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area is redundant along I-90 due to its proximity to the Bearmouth and Anaconda Safety Rest Areas, the distance between stopping opportunities on other routes within the study area (such as from Helena to Phillipsburg) slightly exceeds MDT's one-hour target.

Alternative 1 (Reduction in Service):

- A truck parking area at Gold Creek would provide additional safe stopping opportunities and positively impact existing facilities in the study area (primarily the Anaconda Rest Area and the Bearmouth Rest Area). Accordingly, the screening outcome is **positive (+)**.

Alternative 2 (Closure):

- Complete closure would reduce parking and stopping opportunities in the study area. During peak usage periods, some parking needs along this portion of the I-90 corridor (Anaconda to Bearmouth) would be unmet. Accordingly, the screening outcome is **negative (-)**.

Public/Stakeholder Feedback

This screening criterion considers feedback provided through the MDT 2015 Biennial Survey, stakeholder interviews conducted for this Gold Creek Safety Rest Area study, and public comments provided by mail, email, and telephone.

Alternative 1 (Reduction in Service):

- Public and stakeholder sentiment generally supports maintaining the existing Gold Creek eastbound and westbound sites as truck parking areas to perpetuate MDT's investment and provide safe stopping/parking opportunities in the study area. Accordingly, the screening outcome is **positive (+)**.

Alternative 2 (Closure):

- Public and stakeholder sentiment generally opposes complete closure of the sites. Accordingly, the screening outcome is **negative (-)** screening.

Alignment with MDT Plans

A number of MDT plans provide guidance and outline goals, strategies, and best practices for MDT's safety rest areas.

The *Montana Rest Area Plan* outlines a series of guidelines to aid the Statewide Rest Area Prioritization Plan Committee and MDT Districts in managing rest area infrastructure and making investment decisions. The process for considering reduction of service decisions is further defined in the MDT *Safety Rest Area – Reduction of Service* memorandum.

TranPlanMT, the statewide long-range transportation, recognizes the value that safety rest areas offer in providing safe stopping opportunities for motorists along Montana's highways. *TranPlanMT* defines a safety strategy to: "Continue improvements to the safety rest area program to provide safe stopping locations for the traveling public."

The *Montana Freight Plan* discusses rest area conditions, trends, performance, and forecasts. Given continued public and freight movement demand for safe, clean, and functional rest and parking areas, the plan outlines MDT's intention to evaluate current and future availability of services to provide safe stopping opportunities where needed.

Alternative 1 (Reduction in Service):

- Alternative 1 would reduce service in accordance with network evaluation guidelines outlined in the *Montana Rest Area Plan* and provide continued investment in safe stopping opportunities as stated in *TranPlanMT* and the *Montana Freight Plan*. Accordingly, the screening outcome is **positive (+)**.

Alternative 2 (Closure):

- Although closure of the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area would follow guidelines outlined in the *Montana Rest Area Plan*, it would not provide continued investment in safe stopping opportunities as stated in *TranPlanMT* and the *Montana Freight Plan*. Accordingly, the screening outcome is **negative (-)**.

Additional Requirements

In 1992, FHWA issued a non-regulatory supplement (NS 23 CFR 752) addressing abandonment of Interstate rest areas. It noted the following pertinent points. The full text of the supplement is provided in Appendix P.

- A state may abandon an Interstate rest area provided there is a well-documented evaluation demonstrating that the rest areas to remain are adequate in both number and size to satisfy the needs of the traveling public.
- Recognizing the possibility that, in some instances, the driver or rider in a truck may have need for these facilities, exceptions which would permit rest areas for trucks without handicapped provisions should not be granted.
- The question of whether or not parking areas in rest areas, which lack other facilities, should continue to be available for use is an operational consideration and thus a state decision. The decision should be made on an individual basis depending on the circumstances. Retention could be a safety benefit. On the other hand if activities in these sites are or become nuisances, closure may be the only acceptable solution.
- If it is agreed there is a reasonable expectation that the site will be used for highway purposes at some time in the future, no further action is required. If, however, it is determined the site will never be used for such purposes disposal of the excess property to comply with OMB Circular A-102, Attachment N, Section 3, Real Property, will be necessary.
- A state may be permitted to retain the land on which an abandoned rest area is situated. Any use of an abandoned rest area should not be of a permanent nature so that it could revert to rest area usage if a future need should develop.
- The abandoned, but not disposed of, rest areas should be properly maintained and any activities occurring at the closed rest area, whether lawfully or by trespassers, should not be detrimental to the operation of the Interstate system.

Alternative 1 (Reduction in Service):

- This alternative would not be considered a form of abandonment because it would continue to provide a safe stopping opportunity with parking and vaulted toilet

services. The screening outcome is **positive (+)** because supplemental evaluation would not be required.

Alternative 2 (Closure):

- This alternative would be considered a form of abandonment because it would eliminate all services. An evaluation would need to be submitted demonstrating adequate remaining safety rest areas within the study area. MDT would need to maintain or dispose of the property as appropriate. The screening outcome is **negative (-)** because supplemental evaluation would be required.

Summary of Screening Results

Table 6 summarizes costs, funding eligibility, and screening outcomes for the two action alternatives.

Table 6: Screening Summary

Screening Criteria		Action Alternative 1 Reduction in Service	Action Alternative 2 Closure
A	Costs		
	<i>Capital</i>	\$538,000	\$610,000
	<i>Maintenance</i>	Annual cost of \$21,000 and cumulative cost of \$520,000 through 2037	\$0
B	Funding Eligibility		
	<i>Federal</i>	\$538,000 –eligible for federal funding per NS 23 CFR 752	\$0 – not eligible for federal funding per NS 23 CFR 752
	<i>State</i>	Long-term maintenance (annual cost of \$21,000 and cumulative cost of \$520,000 through 2037, assuming 2% inflation)	Demolition/reclamation costs (\$610,000)
C	Environmental Risk	<i>Physical Resources</i>	○ Limited risk potential to encounter contaminated soils (with all other potential risks equal to Alternative 2). ■ Greater potential to encounter contaminated soils (with all other potential risks equal to Alternative 1).
		<i>Biological Resources</i>	○ Limited likelihood of noxious weed establishment (with all other potential risks equal to Alternative 2). ■ Greater likelihood of noxious weed establishment (with all other potential risks equal to Alternative 1).
		<i>Social/Cultural Resources</i>	○ Limited risks associated with social and cultural resources (equal to Alternative 2). ○ Limited risks associated with social and cultural resources (equal to Alternative 1).
D	Spacing and Corridor Needs	■ Would provide safe stopping opportunities and augment parking facilities in the study area.	■ Would reduce parking and stopping opportunities in the study area.
E	Public/Stakeholder Feedback	■ Public/stakeholder support for maintaining the existing Gold Creek sites as truck parking areas.	■ Public/stakeholder opposition to complete closure of the sites.
F	Alignment with MDT Plans	■ Would provide continued investment in safe stopping opportunities.	■ Would not provide continued investment in safe stopping opportunities.
G	Additional Requirements	■ Supplemental evaluation would not be required.	■ Supplemental evaluation would be required.

Notes:

- All costs represent combined totals for the eastbound and westbound sites.
- A **+** symbol indicates a **positive screening outcome**. The alternative is considered desirable due to:
 - anticipated lack of adverse environmental impacts and lower risk of environmental mitigation/abatement;
 - ability to meet corridor needs;
 - positive public/stakeholder feedback;
 - alignment with MDT plans; and
 - no additional FHWA requirements.
- A **○** symbol indicates a **neutral screening outcome**. The screening criterion does not assist MDT in selecting between the two action alternatives, resulting in no effect on the screening result.
- A **-** symbol indicates a **negative screening outcome**. The alternative is considered less desirable due to:
 - anticipated adverse environmental impacts and/or higher risk of environmental mitigation/abatement;
 - inability to meet corridor needs;
 - negative public/stakeholder feedback;
 - conflict with MDT plans; and
 - additional FHWA requirements.

6.0 Conclusions and Next Steps

Based on the analysis conducted for this study, Action Alternative 1 (the reduction in service / truck parking option) is the preferred alternative for the following reasons:

- Existing facilities aren't sufficient to address truck parking needs during peak usage periods (summer months) along the I-90 corridor between the Anaconda Rest Area and the Bearmouth Rest Area.
- Alternative 1 (truck parking option) would provide additional stopping opportunities along this corridor – thus positively impacting parking and wastewater treatment demand at the adjacent Anaconda and Bearmouth Rest Areas.
- All Stakeholder groups expressed support for safe stopping / truck parking opportunities at the Gold Creek Rest Area site.
- All Stakeholder groups rejected Alternative 2 (closure option) for the Gold Creek Rest Area site.
- Public comments overwhelmingly supported the reduction of service option (vs. the closure option).
- Capital construction costs for Alternative 1 (truck parking option) are lower than Alternative 2 (closure option) by approximately \$70,000.
- Alternative 1 (truck parking option) is eligible for federal-aid and requires no state match.
- Alternative 2 (closure option) must be funded entirely with state funds (isn't federal-aid eligible).
- While maintenance costs are higher for Alternative 1 (truck parking option), the total amount of state funds required to implement Alternative 1 are lower than Alternative 2 (closure option) by \$90,000.

- Alternative 2 (closure option) triggers an FHWA requirement that MDT perform a supplemental evaluation to demonstrate adequate safety rest area services will remain after the abandonment of the Gold Creek Rest Area site.
- It is unlikely that MDT could provide adequate justification for Alternative 2 (closure option) based on truck parking and wastewater treatment demands along the I-90 corridor between the Anaconda Rest Area and the Bearmouth Rest Area.

Consequently, this study recommends implementation of Action Alternative 1 (the reduction in service / truck parking option) at the Gold Creek Safety Rest Area sites.



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