

# Chapter 1

## Project Introduction and Coordination





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### 1.1 Introduction

In 2001, the City of Hamilton undertook the development of a comprehensive Transportation Plan. The previous ten years saw significant growth both within the City and in the outlying areas of the County. The City lacked a transportation planning document, and the preparation of the Hamilton Transportation Plan in 2002 was a positive first step for improving transportation matters in the community. The Transportation Plan assessed those areas of the community directly within the city limits; however, it did not analyze travel characteristics in the unincorporated areas of Ravalli County adjacent to the city limits.

The Hamilton Transportation Plan Steering Committee (TPSC) was established to help guide the transportation planning process and to establish goals and priorities for the 2002 Transportation Plan. The committee also served to review the findings and guide the development of the Transportation Plan. The TPSC included representatives from the City Council, City Public Works, City Administration, the Montana Department of Transportation, the business community, development and contractor representatives, and Ravalli County. During the Plan development process, the TPSC also solicited input from local and regional emergency services providers, transit officials, and non-motorized advocates who commonly use the area's street and highway system. The 2002 Plan was a positive step in assessing and planning for the area's transportation infrastructure.

In an effort to be proactive and to serve the community's existing residents, while at the same time planning for growth, in 2008 the project partners decided the timing was right for preparing an update to the 2002 Transportation Plan. This update, called the 2009 Update, encompasses a much larger area than the 2002 Plan, and as such includes unincorporated lands adjacent to the City and within Ravalli County. Additionally, the Transportation Plan 2009 Update is being prepared on a parallel track to the City's Growth Policy Update and the City's Water Facilities Plan Update, lending to efficiency in data sharing and public outreach.

In 2009, the City of Hamilton, Ravalli County and MDT selected the firm of Camp Dresser & McKee (CDM) Inc. (i.e., the Consultant) of Helena, Montana to prepare the update to the 2002 Hamilton Transportation Plan. CDM coordinated with the consultants preparing other facility plan updates.

This update is intended to offer guidance for the decision-makers in the greater Hamilton community. It contains an analysis of the multi-modal transportation system in the Hamilton area. This Plan includes an examination of the traffic operations, roadway network, transit services, non-motorized transportation system, trip reduction strategies, and growth management techniques. This document also identifies concerns with the various transportation systems and offers

recommendations in the form of improvement projects and progressive programs that will address existing concerns and/or meet future needs.

## 1.2 Study Area

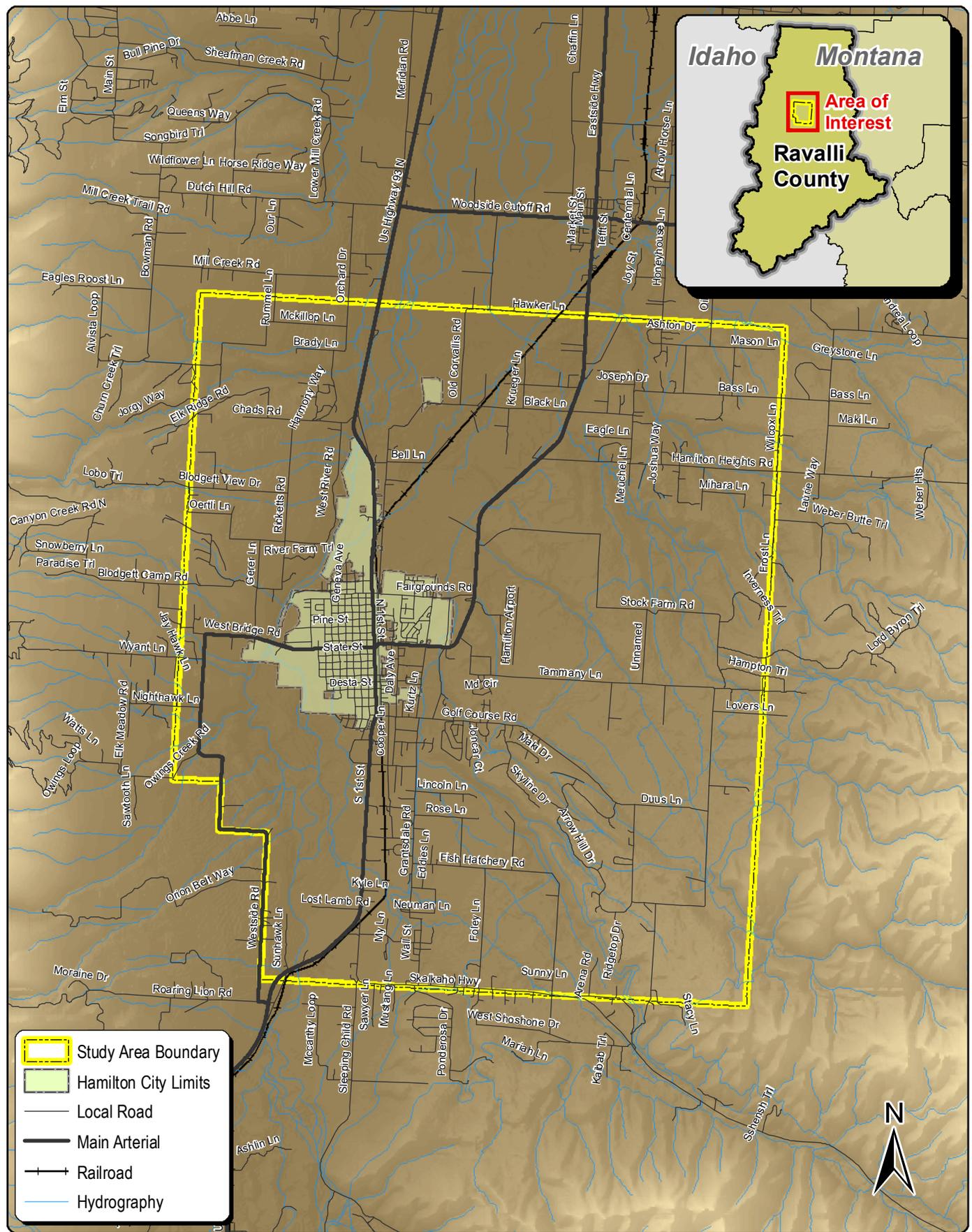
All transportation plans begin by defining the study area. Sometimes this study area follows governmental boundaries such as city limits, but most often they include land outside city limits in which future growth may likely occur. As part of the Hamilton Area Transportation Plan (2009 Update), an evaluation of the past Transportation Plan's Study Area Boundary was undertaken in consultation with the City of Hamilton, Ravalli County, and the Montana Department of Transportation.

The 2002 study area boundary was established by the TPSC based on a number of parameters, including physical boundaries (including the Bitterroot River), water and sewer service area restrictions, current and projected development potential, and an intuitive review of the layout of the existing transportation system and the system users.

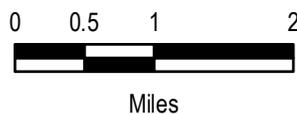
The study area boundary for the 2009 Update has been revised to follow Public Land Survey System (PLSS) geography and is shown in **Figure 1-1**. This revised study area boundary was the same boundary used for the Growth Policy Update and the Water Facilities Plan Update. This planning boundary encompasses lands under the jurisdiction of both the City of Hamilton and Ravalli County. This study boundary includes all of the major employers in the area, and includes all of the land projected to be used for employment centers in the next twenty years. It also includes developing residential land uses in the area, and those areas likely to increase the housing supply in the future and subsequently add traffic onto the transportation network.

The study area boundary was developed for two primary reasons. First, to include land where recent growth has occurred or is anticipated to occur in the foreseeable future and second, to include the 2002 Transportation Plan's study area.

It should be recognized that there are many other areas that are not formally included in the study area boundary that will exhibit development patterns affecting the area transportation system. These areas include rural areas within Ravalli County but outside of the defined study area boundary. These are not included in the study area due to both funding and jurisdictional constraints, however, cursory attempts at land use forecasting were made to capture the travel phenomena realized of Hamilton being a hub of activity for those living in the rural areas for overall transportation impacts through the travel demand modeling process. Land use changes outside of the "formal" boundary are still accounted for and incorporated into the travel demand model, however precise transportation system impacts are not identified for facilities outside of the "formal" study area boundary.



**Figure 1-1**  
Study Area Boundary



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## 1.3 Community Transportation Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of this project is to update the existing 2002 Hamilton Transportation Plan. This 2002 plan was developed by Morrison Maierle, Inc. The intent of this project is to take an entirely fresh look at the condition of transportation issues in the greater Hamilton area.

This Transportation Plan Update is intended to facilitate community goals and improve the transportation infrastructure and services within the Hamilton area to meet the needs of existing and future land use. The Plan addresses regional transportation issues, overall travel convenience, traffic safety, and property access, in addition to potential special issues such as traffic calming and multi-modal connections. The Plan includes recommendations for short-term Transportation System Management (TSM) improvements, as well as recommended modifications and capital improvements to the Major Street Network (MSN). The Plan addresses all modes of transportation in a balanced attempt to meet the current and future transportation needs of the greater Hamilton area.

With this background in mind, it is important to recognize that “Goals and Objectives” have been developed to guide this Transportation Plan Update. These are adopted via the recently completed Hamilton Growth Policy Update (2009) document, in which the transportation related goals were vetted within the public process and represent the goals and objectives of the general population at the present time. These goals and objectives are carried forward for this project and are listed below:

Goal 1: Provide a safe, efficient and economical system of roads that enhances the community.

- A. Adopt city design standards for construction of roads and streets in the unincorporated planning area.
- B. Ensure that roads in new development efficiently connect to the existing road network.
- C. Design access points to minimize traffic conflicts.
- D. Evaluate the impact of new development on the transportation network and require mitigation when necessary.
- E. Coordinate with local Transportation Advisory Committees, County, State and Federal agencies to implement the recommendations of the Transportation Plan and pursue funding sources.
- F. Ensure adequate right-of-way is dedicated for future improvements.
- G. Enhance east-west traffic circulation across US 93.

- H. Prioritize intersection improvements based on congestion and safety needs.

Goal 2: Transportation should be designed to improve quality of life as well as move traffic.

- A. Actively pursue alternative modes of transportation such as transit and trails and provide for the connectivity of pathways and trails.
- B. Include pedestrian safety crossing features particularly on Highway 93 when making improvements to the road network.
- C. Incorporate accessibility components to accommodate disabled residents into the design of transportation features
- D. Continue to work with community groups to enhance gateway signage and landscaped areas for the entrances to Hamilton.
- E. Control signage along Highway 93 to reduce clutter and promote clear views of the natural surroundings and enhance the community's image. Any signage and/or other wayfinding features within the MDT right-of-way is MDT's responsibility.
- F. Land use decisions should take into consideration impacts on the airport and be compatible with airport plans.

Goal 3: New developments should pay for the impacts of their projects on infrastructure and services.

- A. Explore methods such impact fees, annexation policies, adequate facility ordinances and exactions to recover the cost of infrastructure upgrades caused by the need to provide service to the development.
- B. Encourage development where there is existing infrastructure or where facilities can cost-effectively be expanded for new growth.
- C. Encourage partnerships and innovative approaches to improve facilities when necessary.
- D. Regularly review and update utility main extension policies for oversizing lines, cost-recovery agreements and plant investment hook-up fees.
- E. Analyze impact of new development on existing infrastructure to determine if there is capacity and examine the fiscal impact of upgrades.

- F. Use financing mechanisms such as tax increment financing, grants, and special improvement districts to fund infrastructure projects.
- G. Implement and update current impact fee system to reflect changing conditions.

## 1.4 Previous Transportation Planning Efforts

In the course of data collection, past plans and studies were obtained. From the review of these documents, applicable issues were incorporated into this Hamilton Area Transportation Plan (2009 Update). The contributing documents are as follows:

- Hamilton Growth Policy Update (2009);
- Hamilton Transportation Plan (2002);
- City of Hamilton Impact Fees for the Transportation System (February 2007 w/Addendum);
- City of Hamilton Subdivision Regulations (October 2006);
- City of Hamilton Zoning Map (2010);
- Ravalli County Impact Fee Feasibility Analysis (February 2006);
- Ravalli County Land Suitability Analysis (June 2008);
- Ravalli County Subdivision Regulations (May 2007);
- Ravalli County Airport Final Draft Environmental Assessment (EA);
- Miscellaneous Traffic Impact Studies (Ravalli County & City of Hamilton);
- City of Hamilton Public Works Standards;
- Ravalli County Roadway Design Standards;
- Ravalli County Roadway Improvement Schedule;
- Ravalli County Access Encroachment and Right-of-Way Management Policies;
- School Bus Routes;
- Postal Routes;
- Fire District Maps;
- Locally adopted master plans, public facility plans, and related development regulations;

- Municipal Code of the City of Hamilton;
- Montana Department of Transportation STIP and other Local Planning Documents
- U.S. Bureau of Census data;
- City building permits, County location and conformance permits, and utility records; and
- Socioeconomic data and projections compiled by the Planning Board, Montana Department of Commerce, and/or University of Montana.

## 1.5 Public Involvement Strategy

Public involvement is an important component in any successful transportation planning process. For this project, the goal of the City of Hamilton, Ravalli County, MDT, and the Consultant was to have significant and ongoing public involvement for this transportation planning process. Education and public outreach are an essential part of fulfilling the local entities' responsibility to successfully inform the public about the transportation planning process. All three contracting entities (Ravalli County, the City of Hamilton, and MDT) desired to empower the public to voice their ideas and values regarding transportation issues. The entities strove to ensure early and continuous public involvement in all major actions and decisions. To that end, a number of public involvement strategies were utilized to reach the most people possible and elicit meaningful participation. The interest of the public in transportation issues has increased with the community's rate of growth, and this plan update provided substantial and meaningful public outreach opportunities that:

- Educated the public on the critical elements of planning and engineering the community's transportation system;
- Responded to the increasing interest of the general public to participate in planning of the community; and
- Increased the public's investment in the Transportation Plan

### 1.5.1 Public Outreach Plan

A formal "public outreach plan" was completed within two weeks of the "notice-to-proceed" for the project. The public outreach plan included a month-by-month plan outlining the public outreach efforts to be conducted, including: advertising, newsletters, publications and handouts, meetings, and presentations. This served as a road map for conducting public outreach through the update process and allowed interested citizens to plan for their participation.

### 1.5.2 Committee Meetings

Both a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) were established for this project. These two committees provided project

oversight for this project by serving in an advisory capacity and also reviewing and commenting on materials over the project's duration. A total of six (6) meetings were held with each of these committees. Membership was composed of individuals as noted on the acknowledgements page of this document, and generally included representatives from the City of Hamilton, Ravalli County, the Montana Department of Transportation, and local business and citizen interests. These meetings were generally held every other month for the project's duration.

The interaction of the consultant with these two committees were considered to be the most important aspect of the exchange of information and ideas during the development of the Plan. During these meetings, the issues, problems, and possible solutions were identified and discussed. These meetings provided essential feedback during the development of the Plan and also provide the TAC and the CAC with numerous opportunities to become engaged.

### **1.5.3 Public Meetings**

Two formal public meeting opportunities were offered during the planning process. The first public meeting was held after the field studies were completed and an analysis of the existing transportation system was performed. Because attendance was minimal for this effort, additional outreach occurred via the local Hamilton Farmer's Market. During this event, a booth was utilized to reach out to members of the public. This effort resulted in one-on-one dialogue with approximately 50 individuals about the project, with another 50 citizens estimated to peruse the information located within the booth.

The second public meeting was held after preliminary recommendations were developed and just prior to release of the public draft document of the Transportation Plan. After a brief presentation, individual work stations were set up for participants to move to their areas of interest and review and comment on the preliminary findings. This allowed participants to become fully engaged. The purpose of this venue was to present the types of recommended improvements and receive initial feedback from the community.

### **1.5.4 Public Hearings**

Two public hearings were held after the public draft Transportation Plan was published. These public hearings were held separately with the Hamilton City Council and the Ravalli County Commission. These hearings were designed to obtain official comments from the public prior to final approval of the document and production of the final report.

### **1.5.5 Project Website**

The results of the traffic studies and analyses conducted during the study process were made available to the public on the Internet website. The website was created by CDM and hosted by the Montana Department of Transportation at the following "world wide web (www)" address:

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/hamilton/>

As sections of the report and graphic displays became available, they were posted on the web site for public review and comment. This enabled the public to stay abreast of the developments occurring during the planning process. It also provided an opportunity for the public to submit comments.

### **1.5.6 Meeting Announcements and Press Releases**

Meeting announcements were developed by CDM and advertised in the Ravalli Republic as display ads at least two weeks prior to meetings. The ads announced the meeting location, time, and date, the format and purpose of the meeting, and the locations where documents may be reviewed (if applicable).

A project press release was also prepared and submitted to the Associated Press and the Ravalli Republic by email early on in the project's development to inform readers of this project.

### **1.5.7 Published Information**

CDM produced two (2) newsletters in PDF format, and made them available on the project website. These newsletters described work in progress, results achieved, preliminary recommendations, and other related topics. The newsletters were structured to be user-friendly, with little or no engineering jargon.

Each newsletter included an invitation to the public to submit their comments and ideas to the team using any of the easy access methods listed above. The provided newsletters were made available electronically, except at public outreach activities, where hard copies were available to meeting attendees.

### **1.5.8 Consideration for Traditionally Underserved Populations**

Additional efforts were made to involve traditionally underserved segments of the population in the transportation planning process, including the disabled, racial and ethnic minorities, and low-income residents. Including these groups leads to planning that reflects the needs of everyone. The following steps assisted with these efforts:

- Public meetings were held in locations that were accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- To facilitate involvement of traditionally underserved populations, community leaders and organizations that represent these groups were consulted about how to most effectively reach their members.
- At public meetings, agency staff and the Consultant attempted to communicate as effectively as possible. Technical jargon was generally avoided to the extent possible, and appropriate dress and conduct was adhered to.

## 1.6 Coordination Summary

The following tables (**Table 1-1** thru **Table 1-4**) summarize the formal coordination that occurred over the course of this planning project. This includes all scheduled meetings, including Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings and workshops, and formal public meetings. Additionally, informal dialogue occurred regularly between agency partners and the consultants.

**Table 1-1**  
**Summary of TAC and CAC Activities**

| Date       | Agency or Individual |
|------------|----------------------|
| 04/15/2009 | TAC Meeting No. 1    |
| 04/15/2009 | CAC Meeting No. 1    |
| 06/10/2009 | TAC Meeting No. 2    |
| 06/10/2009 | CAC Meeting No. 2    |
| 08/10/2009 | TAC Meeting No. 3    |
| 08/10/2009 | CAC Meeting No. 3    |
| 09/21/2009 | TAC Meeting No. 4    |
| 09/21/2009 | CAC Meeting No. 4    |
| 11/16/2009 | TAC Meeting No. 5    |
| 11/16/2009 | CAC Meeting No. 5    |
| 01/11/2010 | TAC Meeting No. 6    |
| 01/11/2010 | CAC Meeting No. 6    |

**Table 1-2**  
**Summary of "Formal" Local Government Outreach Activities**

| Date       | Agency or Individual                           |
|------------|--|
| 03/04/2009 | Basis of Planning Workshop                     |
| 07/07/2009 | Ravalli County Commission Project Presentation |
| 07/07/2009 | Hamilton City Council Project Presentation     |
| 07/08/2009 | Public Information Meeting No. 1               |
| 12/01/2009 | Ravalli County Commission Project Presentation |
| 12/01/2009 | Hamilton City Council Project Presentation     |
| 01/06/2010 | Public Information Meeting No. 2               |
| 03/02/2010 | Hamilton City Council - Public Hearing         |
| 04/15/2010 | Ravalli County Commission - Public Hearing     |
| 04/30/2010 | Ravalli County Commission - Public Hearing     |

**Table 1-3**  
**Summary of "Other" Outreach Activities**

| Date       | Agency or Individual  |
|------------|---|
| 01/14/2009 | Project Partner Project Kick-Off (City, County, MDT and CDM)            |
| 01/29/2009 | Land Use Meeting with HDR, Applied Communication & City of Hamilton     |
| 03/20/2009 | MDT Planning Staff Meeting (TransCad Model Discussion)                  |
| 05/28/2009 | Hamilton Planning Director Meeting (Outreach/Interview)                 |
| 05/28/2009 | Ravalli County Planning Director Meeting (Outreach/Interview)           |
| 05/28/2009 | Bitterroot Bus / Summit ILC Meeting (Outreach/Interview)                |
| 06/11/2009 | MDT Planning Staff Meeting (TransCad Model Discussion)                  |
| 07/29/2009 | MDT Planning & Traffic Safety Staff Meeting (Crash Analysis Discussion) |
| 08/22/2009 | Booth, Hamilton Farmers Market  |
| 08/27/2009 | Project Meeting with Ryan Oster, Hamilton Chief of Police               |
| 08/27/2009 | Project Meeting with Dave Hedditch, Ravalli County Airport Board Chair  |
| 10/12/2009 | Hamilton School District - Board of Directors Outreach                  |

**Table 1-4**  
**Summary of Team Bi-Weekly Conference Calls**

| Date       | Agency or Individual        |
|------------|-----------------------------|
| 03/18/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 1  |
| 04/01/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 2  |
| 05/06/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 3  |
| 05/20/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 4  |
| 06/03/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 5  |
| 06/17/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 6  |
| 07/01/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 7  |
| 07/15/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 8  |
| 08/05/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 9  |
| 08/19/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 10 |
| 09/02/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 11 |
| 10/07/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 12 |
| 11/04/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 13 |
| 11/18/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 14 |
| 12/02/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 15 |
| 12/16/2009 | Team Conference Call No. 16 |

## 1.7 References

Morrison Maierle, Inc. June 2002. *Hamilton Transportation Plan 2002*, Hamilton, Montana.