



# Highway 84 – East of Norris Corridor Study Questions & Answers

## HIGHWAY 84 · EAST OF NORRIS CORRIDOR STUDY ·

### *What does the Highway 84 – East of Norris Corridor Study project entail?*

- The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has identified a stretch of Montana Highway 84, between the Warm Springs Boat Launch and Red Mountain Campground near Norris, as an area where safety can be improved.
  - This winding part of the road has a higher crash rate than the statewide average for similar highways.
- In order to determine the best safety solution for this corridor, MDT launched the Highway 84 – East of Norris Corridor Study.
  - MDT has hired Morrison-Maierle as the consultant to explore all potential solutions and identify the most cost-effective and feasible option.
- MDT has not yet identified how this road will change.
  - By the end of the study, MDT will have a clear recommendation for how the project will move forward.

### *Why is this work happening?*

- Highway 84 has a demonstrated crash history and its hazards are well-known by many.
  - This project will help bring Vision Zero, MDT's goal of zero deaths and zero serious injuries on Montana roads, to a reality along this corridor.
- With increasing Gallatin Valley growth and increasing tourism, more people are driving Montana Highway 84 than ever before.
  - MDT wants to ensure that this roadway remains safe for years to come and can continue to accommodate growth.

### *What is a corridor study?*

- Corridor studies are conducted in the early phases of a project to identify safety issues on a roadway and provide potential solutions and reduce risk.
  - This process occurs to help identify the appropriate scope for the design of a future construction project.
- Once MDT identifies a road that could be made safer, a study is conducted to catalogue all possible safety solutions.
  - Studies ensure that project teams think creatively about all possibilities, factoring in cost and feasibility of construction, and move forward with the best solution.
- At the end of the study, MDT will use the gathered research to identify how they will move forward with making changes to the road.

### *What solutions are currently being explored?*

- This section of Highway 84 has many winding curves and drivers cannot always see beyond them. This can lead to crashes, as drivers have limited reaction times.
- Researchers are exploring ways to flatten curves and increase the amount of roadway a driver can see. Below are some of the main ideas the study is exploring:
  - Carve into the landscape: cutting the hills to flatten curves
  - Re-align road including a bridge

- Tunneling through the hillside
- Re-align road to go around mountains



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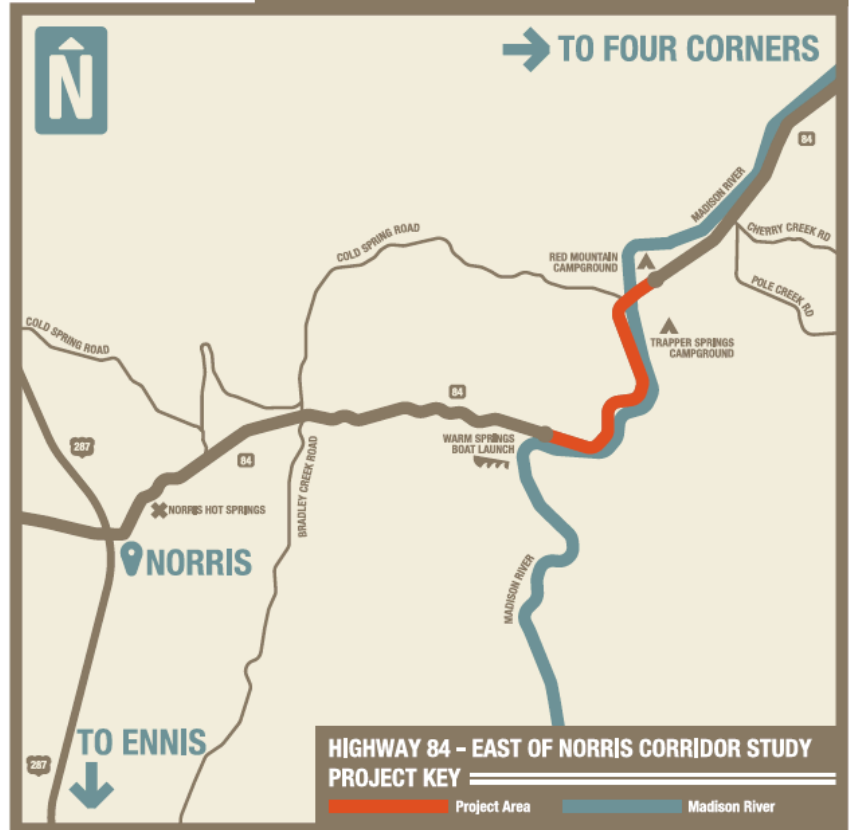
• PROJECT MAP •

### What area is being researched?

- This study will look at the area between Red Mountain Campground and the BLM Warm Springs Boat Launch, roughly five miles east of Norris, Montana.
- The study area is three miles long.

### What about other areas on Highway 84? Will those be improved?

- MDT is also planning the Madison River – Turn Lanes project in the same area. The intent of this project is to provide left turn lanes into the Warm Springs Boat Launch site and the Blacks Ford Fishing Access. This is a separate project from the Madison River Corridor Study, but one that also addresses safety in the corridor.
- To learn more about Madison River – Turn Lanes, please contact Duane Liebel, 406-494-9636, [dliebel@mt.gov](mailto:dliebel@mt.gov), or visit [https://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment\\_form.shtml](https://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment_form.shtml) and submit a comment or question.
- The Madison River – Turn Lanes project is focusing on the areas that have the highest need for safety improvements. Other areas may also need improvement but funding is limited.



### When will construction begin on this project?

- A construction timeline cannot be projected at this time.
- The Highway 84 – East of Norris Corridor Study is still in the beginning phases.
- Multiple safety solutions need to be researched and explored before a project can be identified, designed and constructed.
- Once the corridor study is completed and a solution for Highway 84 has been identified, the project competes with other projects throughout the state in the budgeting process.
  - MDT has thousands of miles of roadway to consider and carefully weighs needs to ensure the entire state receives fair treatment.

### What about just lowering the speed limit?

- Speed limit changes occur via a separate process outside of corridor studies and project planning. The process is as follows:
  - Since speed zone requests must start at the local level, citizens should first obtain buy-in from their local city or county government.
  - The local government then contacts the MDT District Office with specific details about the speed zone request.

- The MDT District Office then initiates an Engineering Study through MDT's Headquarters.
- This study involves gathering and analyzing speed, crash data and citation data considering the context of the roadway (rural, suburban, urban) and adjacent land uses such as residential, commercial or undeveloped land.
- The study recommendations are presented to the local government for a 60-day review and comment period.
- After addressing any comments from the local government, MDT places the speed limit proposal on the Transportation Commission's agenda for a final decision. The Transportation Commission is the final authority on all speed limits.
- The target timeframe for a typical speed study is one year from initial request to Transportation Commission action. Requests are typically handled on a first come – first serve basis.
- A speed study for Highway 84 is currently in process. A request has been submitted by Madison County Commissioners.
- Identifying better safety solutions for Highway 84 via the corridor study is still needed, regardless of the outcome of the speed study. The sharp curves in the corridor continue to pose challenges to safe driving and with increasing vehicles on the roadway each year, a long-term solution is being sought.

### ***Will this study affect access points to the Madison River?***

- No. Recreational river access points will remain open throughout the study.
- The Bureau of Land Management in Montana manages many of the recreation sites along this corridor. There are currently no plans to increase parking or change access points.

### ***Will my commute be affected by this work?***

- Minimal impacts are possible. Most research work can be performed off of the roadway. However, researchers may need to set up traffic control to collect soil samples or perform surveying. This would likely impact drivers for a short amount of time, not for multiple weeks like in construction.
- The best way to stay up to day on potential closures is to sign up for email updates by contacting [takami@bigskypublicrelations.com](mailto:takami@bigskypublicrelations.com). You can also call 406-207-4484 or visit the website at [bitly.com/highway84](https://bitly.com/highway84).

### ***How do I provide a comment or stay up to date on this work?***

- MDT strongly encourages the public to get involved so that together, we move forward with the best solution for the drivers of this corridor.
- Questions or comments can be sent to:
  - Email: Contact Takami at [takami@bigskypublicrelations.com](mailto:takami@bigskypublicrelations.com)
  - Project Hotline: 406-207-4484 during business hours
- Learn more about the projects at: <https://bitly.com/highway84>.