



West Three Forks to Bear Canyon

Involvement Plan



April 6, 2026

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is developing a corridor study of Interstate 90 (I-90) between the West Three Forks Interchange in Broadwater County and the Bear Canyon Road Interchange in Gallatin County. The purpose of the *I-90 Corridor Study* is to develop a comprehensive long-range plan for managing the corridor and determine what improvements can be made to address identified needs while considering public and agency input, environmental constraints, access management, and financial feasibility. The study will be a collaborative process with MDT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), local jurisdictions, resource agencies, and the public to identify transportation needs and potential solutions.

An initial step in the transportation planning process is to develop an *Involvement Plan* (IP) to guide involvement opportunities throughout the planning process. The corridor study process encourages early communication with interested parties to help identify needs, constraints, and opportunities and determine reasonable improvements given available resources and local support. The IP identifies multiple strategies to encourage meaningful participation and engagement and aligns with MDT's established processes as outlined in its *Public Involvement Plan*.¹

1.1 Purpose of the IP

The purpose of this IP is to guide implementation of strategies providing ongoing opportunities for involvement by the public, stakeholders, and agency representatives throughout the corridor study process. Providing complete information, timely notices, and ample opportunities to comment, as well as ensuring full access to key decisions, will help achieve MDT's public involvement goals. The methods described in this IP are not intended to restrict consideration or use of other methods to encourage participation. Early and continuous involvement in all major actions and decisions is paramount to the success of the planning process.

1.2 Study Area

The study area focuses on I-90 between the West Three Forks Interchange in Broadwater County at reference point (RP) 274.6 and the Bear Canyon Road Interchange in Gallatin County at RP 313.7, passing through multiple communities including Three Forks, Logan, Manhattan, Belgrade, and Bozeman. The Interstate route is part of the National Highway System and is important to local, state, and federal transportation.

The corridor serves as a vital local commuter route, connecting residents to jobs, schools, commercial districts, and essential services, as well as a national freight spine that must perform reliably year-round. The corridor also provides a direct connection between the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport and tourist destinations such as Yellowstone National Park, Big Sky, and surrounding recreation areas. The surrounding area has emerged as one of the fastest-growing regions in the state and nation, with sustained population growth, expanding economic activity, and seasonal peaks in traffic volumes related to summer tourism, winter ski traffic, and major events. The study area is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

¹ Montana Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Plan*, available at: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/manuals/pubinvhb.pdf>

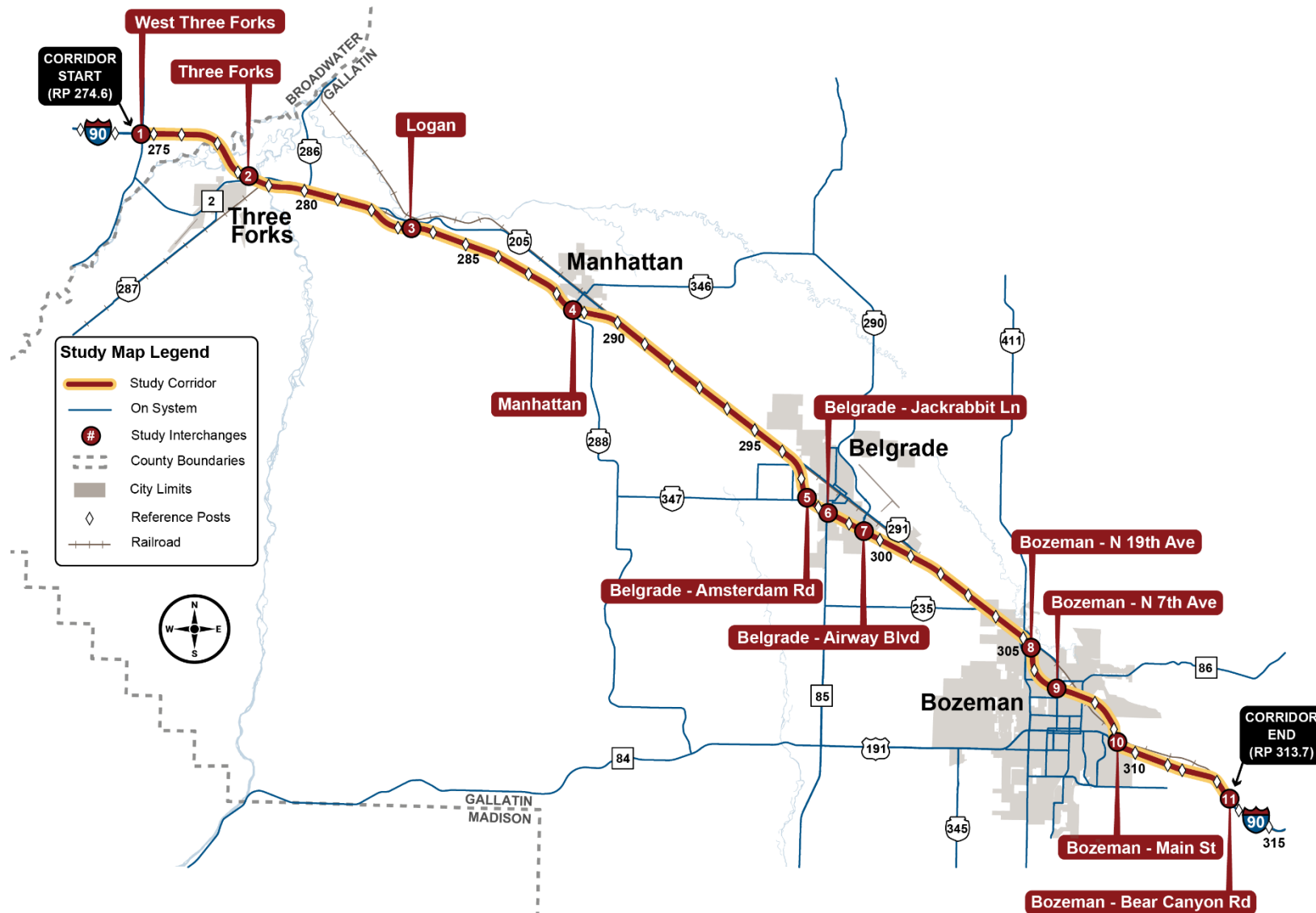


Figure 1: Study Area

2.0 AUDIENCES

Active participation and input will be encouraged at every stage of the planning process. Target audiences include both internal MDT staff and external stakeholders. MDT representatives will assist in guiding the planning process and will be tasked with making decisions relating to the study and future project development. External stakeholders include all others with interest, jurisdiction, or expertise related to the study corridor.

2.1 Study Contacts

Contact information for the MDT and Consultant project managers will be provided in all information that is published. This information is provided below:

Jackson Lang
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MDT Project Manager
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2.2 Project Management Team

A project management team (PMT) consisting of a core group of MDT staff will guide the study and provide direction to the consultant team. Virtual PMT meetings will occur approximately every two weeks, for a total of up to 24 meetings over the study period. Meetings will be informal, with discussion items and follow-up action items communicated using electronic status reports before and after the meetings. These meetings will be important to ensure the consultant team stays on track with the overall study schedule and provides services in alignment with MDT goals and expectations for the study.

2.3 Advisory Committee

An advisory committee (AC) will be established to guide the study process and review deliverables produced by the consultant team. Approximately nine AC meetings will be scheduled over the 12-month study period in coordination with planned deliverables. Meetings are intended to be informational to report on consultant progress, identify issues and questions regarding the study development process, gain information from partner agencies, and solicit feedback on study deliverables. The consultant will prepare meeting agendas and summaries for each meeting. Consultant managers and other key team members will attend the AC meetings to make presentations covering the current work effort. Topics will address the status of ongoing tasks associated with individual study components, data requests for partner agencies, summaries of key findings and recommendations from study components, and upcoming or recent public/stakeholder outreach activities. The meetings will be important for the exchange of technical information and ideas during the development of the study and will provide the consultant team with essential information, feedback, and guidance. Anticipated discussion topics are listed below.

- **AC Meeting 1:** Kickoff, Work Plan, Involvement Plan, Study Schedule
- **AC Meeting 2:** Environmental Scan, Resource Agency Meeting Preparation
- **AC Meeting 3:** Resource Agency Meeting Summary, Existing and Projected Conditions
- **AC Meeting 4:** Draft Existing and Projected Conditions Report, Outreach #1 Preparation
- **AC Meeting 5:** Outreach #1 Summary, Draft Needs & Objectives Memo
- **AC Meeting 6:** Initial Improvement Options
- **AC Meeting 7:** Draft Improvement Options Memo, Outreach #2 Preparation
- **AC Meeting 8:** Outreach #2 Summary, Draft Corridor Study Report, Public Review Period
- **AC Meeting 9:** Public Comments, Final Corridor Study Report (*if needed*)

2.4 Resource Agencies

The planning team will coordinate with study team members, the AC, and MDT to develop a list of key resource agency contacts for this study. Invitations to participate in the planning process will be extended to state and federal agencies including the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP), Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Montana State Historic Presentation Office (SHPO), United States Forest Service (USFS), United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), United States Bureau of Land Management, (USBLM), and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Agencies will be asked to confirm resources and permitting/authorization requirements within the study corridor, define anticipated mitigation needs, identify opportunities to avoid or offset potential project impacts, and assist in considering wildlife crossing feasibility and potential wildlife mitigation features. Heightened agency interest in wildlife habitat, movement, and wildlife-vehicle conflicts in the corridor is anticipated.

2.5 Other Stakeholders

Input from a diverse range of stakeholders is important to the planning process. Issues and areas of concern will be identified through stakeholder outreach and may include safety, traffic operations, wildlife conflicts and mitigation strategies, incident management, enforcement, trucking/freight movements, and future development. Specific stakeholder representatives will be identified in coordination with study team members, the AC, and MDT. Stakeholders may include city and county government entities including staff and elected officials, law enforcement and emergency service providers, schools, local business owners, adjacent landowners, wildlife and conservation non-governmental organizations, trucking and freight representatives, utilities, recreational groups, community members and residents, and other interested and knowledgeable individuals. Potential stakeholders are listed below.

Municipalities, Government, & Education

- Broadwater County and Gallatin County
- Cities of Belgrade, Bozeman, and Three Forks
- Town of Manhattan and Community of Logan
- Gallatin Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC)
- Montana Association of Counties
- Montana League of Cities and Towns
- City, Town, and County School Districts
- Montana State University
- Western Transportation Institute
- State and Federal Legislators

Transportation Services & Agencies

- Federal Highway Administration
- Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport
- Montana Trucking Association
- Streamline Bus Service and Other Transit/Paratransit Services
- Towing Services
- Move Over Montana
- Multimodal and Active Transportation Organizations

First Responders, Medical, & Health Entities

- Montana Highway Patrol
- City, Town, County, and Rural Fire Departments
- City, Town, and County Police Departments/Sheriff/Law Enforcement
- City, Town, County, and Rural Emergency Medical Service Providers
- American Medical Response
- Bozeman Health and Billings Clinic
- Area Agencies and Councils on Aging
- Disability and Independent Living Organizations

State/Federal Resource Agencies & Recreation

- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Montana Department of Natural Resources
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Montana State Historic Preservation Office
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- US Forest Service
- US Bureau of Land Management
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Wildlife, Conservation, and Recreational Organizations

Economic Development & Private Businesses

- City and Regional Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Organizations
- Interstate-Adjacent Businesses
- Airport-Adjacent Industries and Fixed Base Operators
- Logan Landfill
- Tourism Organizations
- Bridger Bowl & Big Sky Ski Areas
- Hotels and Hospitality Organizations
- Realtors and Development Associations
- Warehousing, Manufacturing and Tech Businesses

Utilities

- NorthWestern Energy
- BNSF
- Telecommunications
- Pipelines
- Irrigation Districts
- Water and Sewer Districts
- Bozeman Water Quality
- Sand and Gravel Companies

2.6 Public

Members of the public have a vested interest in safe and efficient travel on Montana’s public roadways, with elevated mobility expectations for Interstate corridors. To address public concerns, comments and input will be collected and considered throughout the planning process. An official comment period will be provided after the release of the draft report. Additionally, all comments and concerns received at meetings and through individual discussions will be considered by the AC throughout the planning process and will help establish critical areas of concern and consideration.

3.0 STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

Engagement strategies are intended to share information about the planning process, offer opportunities for dialogue, identify known barriers and constraints within the corridor, and obtain meaningful input by reaching a diverse cross section of interests. Individual strategies and outreach tools are discussed in the following sections.

3.1 Study Branding

Cohesive branding is an effective communication tool to visually associate study components with MDT's overall identity and reputation. A brand guide will be tailored to this study using a selected set of colors, fonts, and branded elements drawn from the July 2025 *MDT Brand Book*. A clear and simple study logo will be developed without use of elaborate artwork that may distract from the study focus. The brand guide will be used to direct the look of all public-facing materials including reports, exhibits, and handouts.

3.2 Study Website

A study website will be used to encourage public interaction and to provide study information. The website will be hosted by MDT and updated as needed throughout the study process. Informational materials will be posted to the website including contact information, meeting announcements, frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the corridor study process, a description of the study, and study documents. The study landing page will be a critical communication platform to share information and provide study updates.

3.3 Commenting Platform

To supplement MDT's traditional online commenting system, an interactive commenting platform will be developed using the *ArcGIS Online Reporter* application that will allow the public to provide feedback on the performance of the existing transportation corridor in many of the same ways as a paper map would serve during a public meeting. Visitors to the platform will be able to leave notes and identify areas of concern just as if they were present at an in-person event. This platform is a convenient way to provide feedback for a large portion of the population, separate from in-person events. Public comments will be reviewed before approval for publication and visibility to the public.

3.4 Public Outreach

Public outreach will occur at two key points during the planning study. Initial outreach will occur after existing and projected conditions have been evaluated for the study area. The purpose of initial outreach will be to explain the corridor study process and discuss preliminary issues and concerns within the study area. Participants will have an opportunity to provide information about known conditions and share input for developing the needs and objectives for the corridor. The second round of outreach will occur after preliminary improvement options are identified. The purpose will be to present improvement options, discuss preliminary recommendations, and invite feedback.

For each round of outreach, in-person open houses will be held in up to three separate locations to serve the communities along the corridor and to encourage participation from diverse roadway users and residents. Open houses are anticipated in the communities of Three Forks, Belgrade, and Bozeman. Drop-in open house hours will be offered to allow convenient attendance; presentations will not be provided. Printed open house materials will include static exhibits, handouts, and mapping.

In addition to the in-person meetings, the study team will host multiple remote participation opportunities. Virtual public meetings will be scheduled around the time of the in-person open houses and will include a presentation and live question-and-answer session. Additionally, RPA will develop content for an online open house, which will contain materials from the in-person open houses and recordings of the virtual meetings for those unable to attend the live events.

Meeting announcements will be developed and advertised before the open houses in accordance with MDT notification requirements. The ads will announce meeting locations, times, and dates, the format and purpose of the meetings, the locations where documents may be reviewed (if applicable), and accessibility considerations. At the discretion of the MDT PIO, the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, *Belgrade News*, and *Three Forks Voice* may carry display ads announcing the meeting details. Meetings may also be announced on local radio and/or television stations and by email to the study contact list.

3.5 Resource Agency Meetings

A virtual resource agency meeting will be held to present the findings of the draft *Environmental Scan* and the *Existing and Projected Conditions Report*. Resource agencies will be asked to help identify initial avoidance areas, mitigation needs, and opportunities. To ensure maximum participation, a scheduling poll will be emailed to resource agency contacts to identify the meeting date and time. Additionally, an in-person field visit will be offered to review wildlife movement patterns and potential locations for wildlife accommodations or mitigation strategies.

3.6 Stakeholder Outreach

To improve engagement and to gain valuable information, the study team will target key stakeholder groups that are familiar with transportation conditions and needs, land uses, and resources in the corridor. The study team will develop a stakeholder contact list in coordination with the AC and send electronic study updates and announcements to encourage broad stakeholder participation in the planning process.

During the information-gathering phase of the study, the consultant team will schedule up to five meetings with stakeholders selected by RPA and the PMT. Meetings may take the form of in-person or virtual conversations scheduled exclusively to discuss the study, potentially with Montana Highway Patrol or emergency services personnel. Alternatively, the consultant team will be available to provide presentations as part of a regularly scheduled agenda, such as the Gallatin Valley MPO TTAC or City/County Commissions. The purpose of these stakeholder meetings will be informational and collaborative to share information about the study and identify issues in the corridor, such as incident management, enforcement, and trucking/freight concerns. Information gathered from stakeholder conversations will help the study team fill potential data gaps and identify areas for special consideration throughout the planning process.

3.7 Agency and Public Review Period

At the conclusion of the study, the consultant team will facilitate an agency and public review period for the draft *I-90 Corridor Study* to obtain input and feedback. This will be an important opportunity to demonstrate how the study incorporated background research and considered resource agency, stakeholder, and public input within the study findings and recommendations. Targeted emails will announce availability of the draft study, with specific focus on partner agencies, stakeholders, resource agencies, and other study participants to request their review and comment on the draft study.

4.0 ACCESS AND VISIBILITY

The consultant team will be available to all interested parties to receive comments and answer questions. All information published regarding the corridor study will provide contact information for the project managers and public involvement contacts. Comments can be submitted throughout the planning process via the website, in writing, by phone, or by email.

4.1 Document Availability

Technical and planning-level information related to the data used in the development of the study will be available in memoranda, mapping, graphics, and other formats. The materials will be made available on the study website.

4.2 Information Accessibility

All public-facing study materials will be compliant with Health and Human Services (HHS) Section 508 and Accessibility Standards Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220), which requires that when MDT develops, procures, maintains or uses information and communication technology (ICT), it shall be accessible to people with disabilities.

4.3 Consideration of Public Input

Input and comments from stakeholders and the public will be considered by the AC throughout the planning process. Public comments received on the draft report and corresponding responses will be documented and included as an appendix.

4.4 Community Considerations

The consultant team will use the following methods to broadly serve all communities potentially affected by MDT's transportation planning process.

- **Provide appropriate accommodations**
Appropriate non-discrimination statements and alternative accommodation contacts will be provided on all printed materials. Accessibility accommodations will be offered for all public outreach activities, including in-person and virtual meetings. Upon request, alternative participation methods and materials will be made available.
- **Seek help from community leaders and organizations**
To facilitate meaningful involvement, local community leaders participating in the AC will be asked for guidance on the most effective times, methods, and locations to reach affected populations.
- **Be sensitive to target audiences**
At meetings and in printed materials, the study team will attempt to communicate clearly and understandably and be sensitive to local concerns. Printed materials will be developed using easy-to-understand language. Language translation will be offered upon request.

5.0 OUTREACH SCHEDULE

The anticipated schedule follows a 13-month time frame. A public draft of the I-90 Corridor Study is anticipated by December 2026. Following a public review and comment period, all work is anticipated to be completed by the end of January 2027. The anticipated schedule is depicted in **Figure 2** and is subject to modification over the course of the study in coordination with MDT.

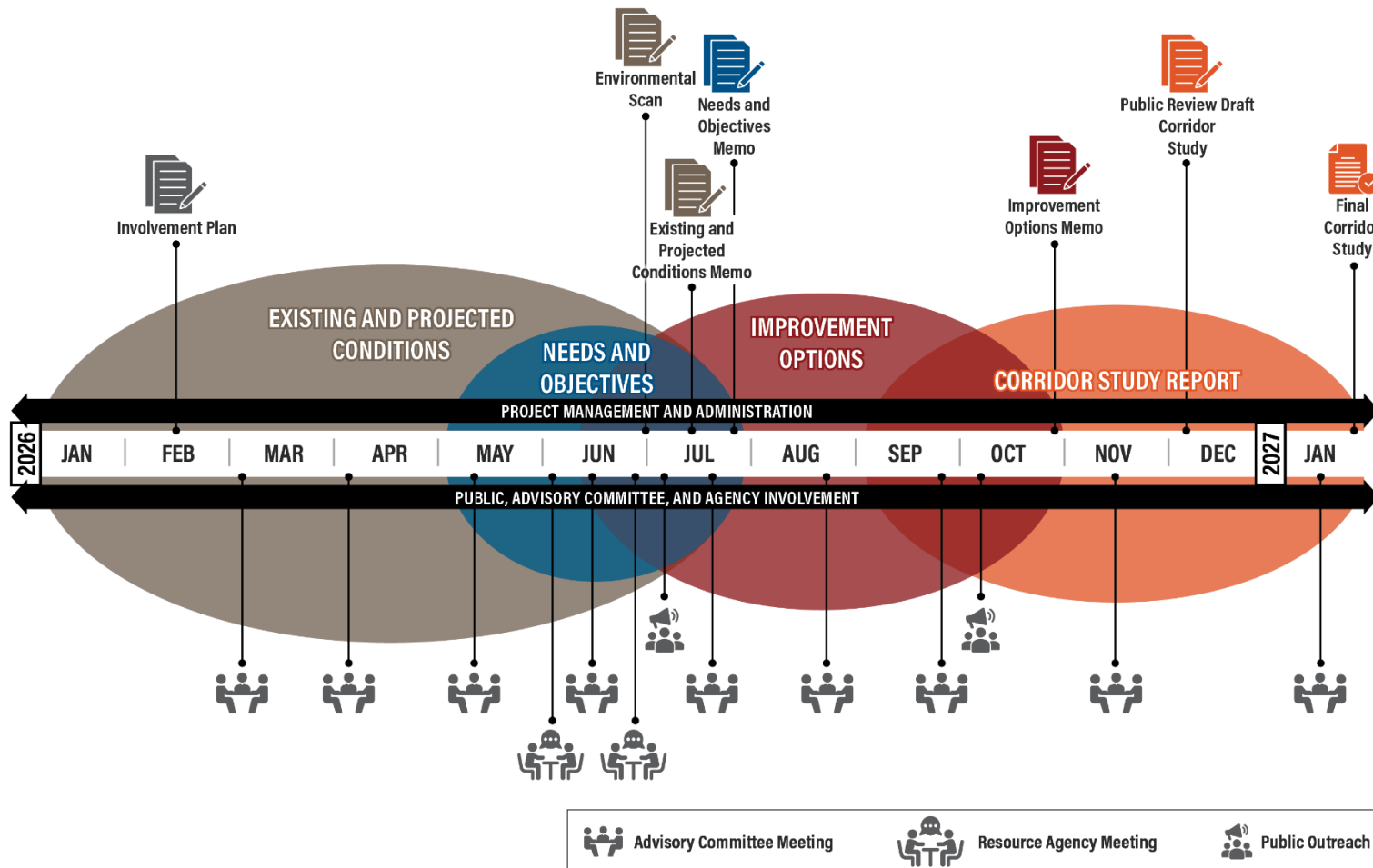


Figure 2: Anticipated Study Schedule

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