

3.0 KALISPELL BYPASS AS CURRENTLY PROPOSED

3.1 REASONS FOR DESIGN CHANGES

Since the Record of Decision (ROD) was signed in 1994, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has been steadily implementing actions agreed to in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and ROD by designing and constructing segments of the US 93 Somers to Whitefish corridor. Projects include Ashley Creek South, Ashley Creek North, Ashley Creek Kalispell, Grandview North, Montana 40 South, Montana 40 North, and Whitefish Urban Area (under design).

Additionally, MDT began a corridor preservation project to identify the specific right-of-way needs for the bypass. The corridor preservation project recommended three alignment modifications. The first was at the south terminus of the bypass which was shifted away from Snowline Lane to Gardner Auction to relocate the intersection with US 93 to a perpendicular intersection for safety rather than on a curve and to resolve access issues to adjacent properties. The second alignment modification was at the northern end, where the bypass was shifted east of Stillwater Road to allow Stillwater Road to remain a farm-to-market road and shorten the overall bypass length. A third alignment modification was recommended based on the results of a supplemental noise analysis performed by MDT. The analysis recommended that the alignment be shifted away from neighborhoods along West Reserve Drive, south toward a nearby power line to reduce potential noise impacts. Once the corridor preservation project was complete, MDT was able to begin passive acquisition of property needed for the Kalispell Bypass right-of-way. Passive acquisition means that MDT purchased land from willing owners who contacted MDT about selling. As of May 2006, approximately 40% of the land needed for the bypass has been acquired through passive acquisition.

In August 1997, the Montana Transportation Commission passed an access control resolution designating the Kalispell Bypass as a limited access highway. This resolution was revisited by the Commission in August 2004 when, with support of the City of Kalispell and Flathead County, the Commission reaffirmed the desire for private access restrictions and proposed public road connection treatments. As a result, the Commission amended the 1997 resolution to allow for public road approaches at Airport Road, Sunnyside Drive, Foy's Lake Road, US 2, Three Mile Drive, Four Mile Drive, Section 36 Connector, and Garden Drive only.

Lastly, in early 2001, MDT recognized that increased traffic growth in the Kalispell area was not accounted for in the 1994 FEIS and could negatively impact traffic conditions along the bypass segment of the US 93 project. To accommodate the changed traffic conditions, MDT began considering design modifications to accommodate projected future traffic increases, thereby increasing the service life of the facility. Potential modifications include replacing at-grade signalized intersections with grade-separated interchanges (overpasses and underpasses) to allow unimpeded traffic movement along the bypass.

3.2 SUMMARY OF DESIGN CHANGES AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The following provides a summary of proposed design changes and a description of the road section, alignment and access, and other proposed new road improvements.

3.2.1 Proposed Design Changes

The proposed alignment for the bypass continues to extend 7.6 miles (12.3 km) along the western side of the City of Kalispell, following the same general corridor shown in the FEIS (see **Figure 1.2**). Overall southern and northern termini have been adjusted, but not significantly changed. A summary of the proposed design changes to the bypass alternative in the FEIS includes (see **Figure 3.1**):

- Moving the southern termini with US 93 north approximately 1/3 mile.
- Making a minor alignment shift between Foy's Lake Road and US 2.
- Shifting the alignment to the east of Stillwater Road.
- Shifting the alignment to the south of West Reserve Drive.
- Replacing two culverts across Ashley Creek with bridge structures.
- Adding two new pedestrian grade-separated crossings.
- Replacing at-grade intersections with grade-separated interchanges at Airport Road, Foy's Lake Road, US 2, Three Mile Drive, and Four Mile Drive.
- Reducing access at Sunnyside Drive.
- Replacing at-grade intersections with over- or underpasses only (no access) at Two Mile Drive.
- Constructing a new grade-separated interchange at the new Reserve Loop Road.
- Constructing connecting roads at the northern termini as part of improvements to the West Reserve Drive and US 93 intersection (see **Section 3.2.4**).
- Changing the cross section to include a rural section (no curb and gutter) from US 2 to Four Mile Drive.

FIGURE 3.1 - PROPOSED BYPASS ALIGNMENT



The proposed design changes provide for stricter access control with grade-separated interchanges rather than the at-grade intersections proposed in the 1994 FEIS. With the proposed design changes, the facility would better meet the transportation needs while addressing community concerns relating to unregulated access and commercialization of the bypass corridor. Furthermore, the overall bypass alignment remains in the Kalispell Growth Area, an area that is planned to be urbanized in the future.

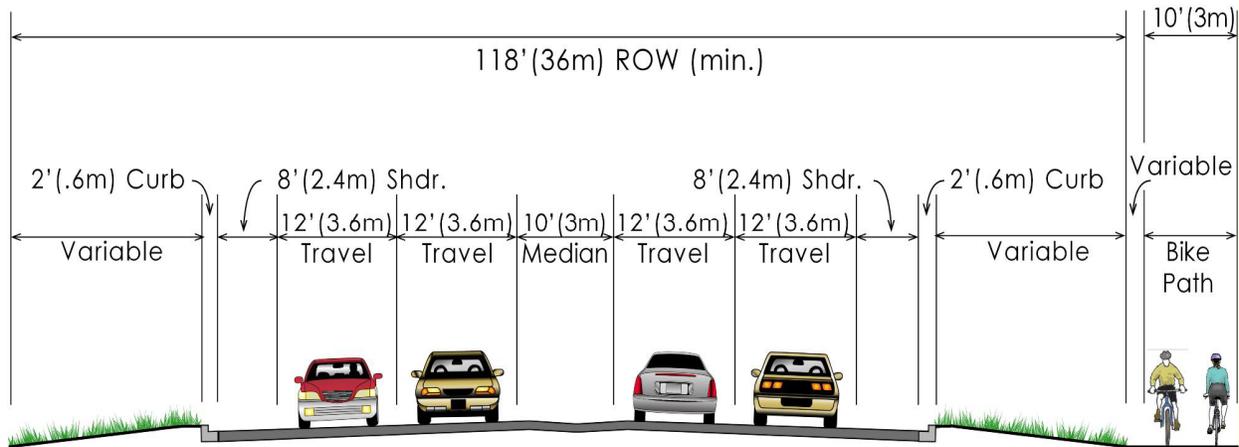
3.2.2 Proposed Road Section

Both the 1994 FEIS and proposed bypass provide a four-lane, limited access roadway that includes 12-foot (3.6-meter) travel lanes and 8-foot (2.4-meter) outside shoulders, separated by a 10-foot (3.0-meter) paved median. **Figure 3.2** depicts the proposed roadway sections. In select portions of the project, outside drainage ditches would be replaced by a curb. At the south and north project termini, the center median would be widened to allow for construction of turn lanes and/or raised medians.

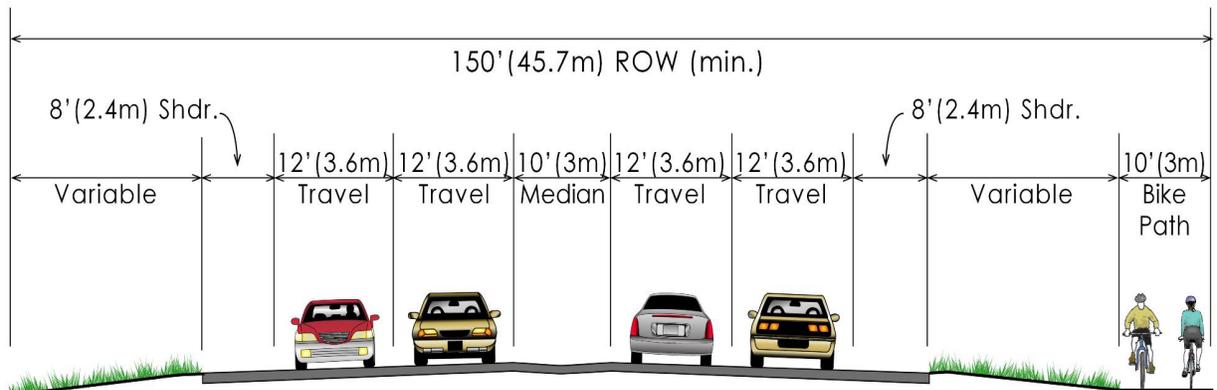
The 1994 FEIS and proposed bypass included a 10-foot (3.0-meter) bike path constructed along the entire length of the bypass, primarily on the east side of the bypass. With the proposed design, the bike path would parallel ramp alignments at all cross-streets to avoid at-grade crossings of high-speed ramps. Users would follow the ramp alignment to each cross-street and then proceed to cross the streets at the ramp intersections. Two new grade-separated bike path crossings are planned: one near the existing Sunnyside Drive which leads to Lone Pine State Park, and one at the north end of the project approximately ½ mile from the bypass terminus near the newly constructed high school.

FIGURE 3.2 - PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTIONS

Typical Urban Section: North of Four Mile Drive



Typical Rural Section: South of Four Mile Drive



3.2.3 Proposed Road Alignment and Access

Figure 3.1 depicts the proposed bypass alignment. From the south, the bypass begins on US 93 approximately 1/3 mile south of the US 93 intersection with Cemetery Road and proceeds west and northwest following an abandoned railroad alignment with its first crossing over Ashley Creek.

Continuing to follow the railroad alignment, the bypass crosses under Airport Road. Partial access is provided to Airport Road with no northbound bypass access to Airport Road. The bypass continues northwesterly to Sunnyside Drive where Sunnyside Drive would terminate at the bypass right-of-way. A northbound off-ramp provides access from the bypass to Sunnyside Drive only.

The bypass continues northwesterly to Foy's Lake Road where the road begins to leave the railroad alignment and crosses the former sawmill property referred to as Montana Forest Products. The bypass crosses above Foy's Lake Road where full access is provided via a standard diamond interchange. North of Foy's Lake Road, the bypass again crosses over Ashley Creek on a single structure and then rises to cross above US 2.

The US 2 interchange requires relocation of two existing US 2 intersections—Appleway and Corporate Drives. After crossing over US 2, the bypass begins a series of curves to continue the northwesterly heading. Two Mile Drive is proposed to cross over the bypass and would have no access to the bypass. North of Two Mile Drive, the bypass turns north and crosses over Spring Creek using a culvert.

The bypass crosses below the proposed Three Mile Drive bridge. The bypass provides limited access only at Three Mile Drive, allowing southbound access onto the bypass and northbound access from the bypass. The bypass continues north crossing under Four Mile Drive. An interchange at Four Mile Drive provides full access to the bypass. North of Four Mile Drive, the bypass then crosses under the Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA's) electric transmission line then curves northeasterly to its terminus at the (existing) US 93 and West Reserve Drive intersection.

Before terminating at US 93, the bypass crosses over a new proposed road (Reserve Loop which is part of this project), with an interchange providing full access. A grade-separated bike path crossing is planned at this interchange.

3.2.4 Other Proposed New Road Connections

A number of new roadways are planned in addition to the four-lane bypass at the northern termini to improve operations of the Reserve Drive and US 93 intersection (See **Figure 3.1**):

- **Reserve Loop** is planned as a four-lane road with a raised median that would replace existing West Reserve Drive from Stillwater Drive to US 93. The existing roadway would be terminated at US 93 with all access restricted to the west via Garden Drive Connection. Reserve Loop would likely have a number of controlled intersections, including the ramps to the bypass.
- **Hutton Ranch Road** would extend a three-lane road from the east end of developer-constructed Hutton Ranch Road. The new road would curve to the north and intersect with West Reserve Drive, west of the bridge at Stillwater River. The West Reserve Drive intersection is planned for a future traffic signal.
- **Frontage Road** would be a two-lane road in the northeast quadrant of US 93 and West Reserve Drive to provide all local access to this quadrant of land. The road would begin on US 93 north of West Reserve Drive. The road would align with the proposed Hutton Ranch Road intersection with West Reserve Drive.
- **Garden Drive Connection** would construct a right-in, right-out only access from the westbound lane of the bypass west of US 93. The access from the bypass would intersect with West Reserve Drive.