

MT 78 Corridor Study



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Project Newsletter No. 1

What is the MT 78 Corridor Study?

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has initiated a corridor planning process along the MT 78 corridor in order to comprehensively assess future transportation needs, prioritize future transportation projects, provide opportunities for early public input and resource agency coordination, and foster cooperative state and local transportation planning efforts. Corridor planning is a relatively new tool within the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) emphasizing public involvement and consideration of environmental issues at the planning level. Early corridor planning may save the state time and money by giving a context to later planning and environmental compliance documents.

Corridor planning is a process that is collaborative with local governments as well as regulating and resource agencies and includes extensive public participation opportunities. The process is designed to derive a planning-level analysis of the existing transportation system within the corridor and determine how it could be changed or managed to meet long-term needs.

What is a corridor?

A corridor is a broad geographic area defined by existing travel patterns that provides important connections for the movement of people, goods, and services within and between regions of the state.

What is the project's primary purpose?

This planning process will examine the existing transportation facility and travel characteristics, as well as existing social, economic and environmental issues within the corridor. The end result of the study will be a comprehensive package of recommendations intended to satisfy current design standards, meet mobility and level of service targets, improve safety, and fit within cost and constructability constraints.

MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program, or activity of the Department. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request. For further information, please call (406)442-0370 or TTY (800)335-7592, or by calling Montana Relay at 711. Accommodation requests must be made within 48 hours of a public meeting.



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What is involved in the Corridor Planning Process?

The Corridor Planning Process has several distinct phases that are illustrated as mileposts in the graphic below. There are two key aspects to this study: a proactive public participation program to ensure that we understand your concerns, and a rigorous exploration of improvement options to ensure that we are being responsive to the needs of area residents and users of the area's transportation facilities. We are now nearing the end of the scoping phase of the study and are developing and analyzing a variety of improvement options.

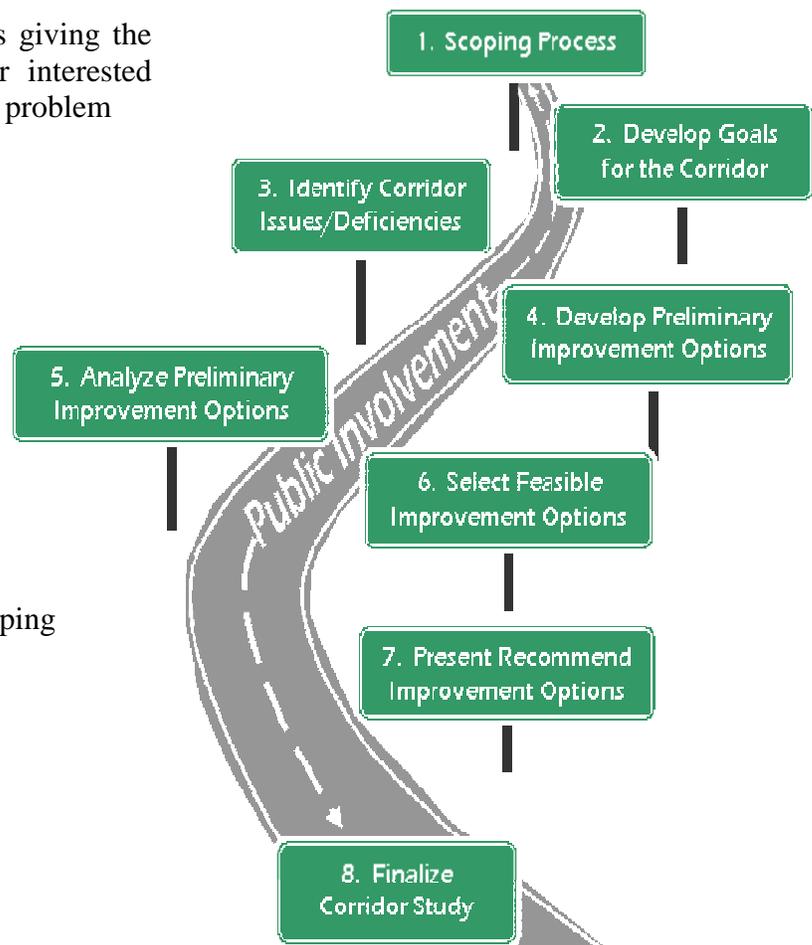
Scoping

Scoping is an active consultation process giving the public, resource agencies, and all other interested parties an opportunity to help identify any problem areas or individual concerns relevant to the project, and to suggest opportunities for improvement.

Public scoping meetings were held for this project on Tuesday, March 28 at the Roscoe Community Center and Thursday, March 30 at the Roosevelt Middle School in Red Lodge. We listened to your comments and had a productive discussion about the proposed project.

Some of the issues raised at the public scoping meeting (in no order of priority) were:

- ▶ Safety concerns
- ▶ Project cost
- ▶ Design considerations
- ▶ Aesthetic impacts
- ▶ Impacts to agriculture and tourism
- ▶ Pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- ▶ Traffic control and traffic volume



Next Step: Develop Improvement Options

In response to geometric and operational analyses and public input, improvement options will be developed to determine how well each meets the overall goals and objectives for this corridor. Once we have developed an initial range of options, we will schedule another public meeting to gather your input.



Is there a Need for this Project?

The MT 78 alignment between Red Lodge and Roscoe does not meet current design and safety standards. Ninety-seven of the 117 vertical curves within the project limits fail to meet the minimum stopping sight distance (SSD) requirement. Thirty-six of these curves fail to meet the maximum gradient. Fifty-one of the 55 passing opportunities within the project limits fail to meet the minimum passing sight distance (PSD) requirement. Fifteen of the 43 horizontal curves are too tight. As a result of these conditions, the accident rate for the segment is 65 percent higher and the accident severity rate is 62 percent higher than the statewide average for all primary roads. Consequently, there is a need to plan for improvements to this corridor.

Where will the project be located?

MT 78 is a two-lane highway that begins at the town of Red Lodge and runs through Roscoe, Absarokee, and Columbus before intersecting with Interstate 90. The portion of the highway chosen for this study begins five miles north of Red Lodge and extends to the north end of Roscoe.



Schedule

This Corridor Study is scheduled to be completed within a twelve (12) month timeframe. Project activities are detailed in the schedule below.

	2005		2006											
	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	
Scoping/Data Collection	■													
Public Scoping Meeting					★									
Develop Goals for the Corridor						■								
Development of Alternatives						■								
Public Meeting – Generate Alternatives											★			
Analysis of Alternatives									■					
Selection of Feasible Alternatives												■		
Internal Review and Revisions												■		
Public Meeting - Present Recommended Alternatives													★	
Corridor Study Issued													★	
Newsletters								✓				✓		



How Can I Stay Involved?

Please mail or email your name and address to HKM Engineering to receive further newsletters. We encourage you to continue to participate in further public involvement activities, and hope you will make sure your friends and neighbors are also aware of the project. You can also contact the Project Team at the phone numbers and addresses listed to the right.

Next Public Meeting . . .

We are currently developing a range of options. We will be coming back out to the community to discuss the most promising options and request further input to select a set of feasible options that meet the needs of the corridor, are environmentally sound, and physically and financially feasible. We anticipate this meeting to occur sometime in July, so watch the newspaper for an announcement.

For more information, please contact:

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