

# MT 78 Corridor Study



September 2006

Project Newsletter No. 2

## *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. The study will focus on assessment of the existing transportation system within the corridor and determine how it could be changed or managed to meet long-term needs.

## *Where is the study 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 at milepost 5.0 northwest of Red Lodge and extends milepost 20.15 southeast of Roscoe.

## *Purpose of the Study*

The primary intent of this study is to present a set of alternatives that:

- Improve safety conditions and address accident concentrations within the corridor
- Improve geometric elements within the corridor to meet current MDT design standards, including horizontal alignment, vertical alignment, and sight distance



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.



# MT 78 Corridor Study

## What is involved in the Corridor Planning Process?

The Corridor Planning Process has several 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 have begun developing goals for the corridor, identifying corridor deficiencies, and developing preliminary improvement options.

### Corridor Goals

Goal setting is an active consultation process giving the public, resource agencies, and all other interested parties an opportunity to help identify a vision for the corridor.

A set of preliminary corridor goals have been developed in cooperation with MDT and with input from the public involvement process. These goals, together with baseline data, will be used to evaluate alternatives and identify the most desirable alternatives to be included in this Plan's recommendations.

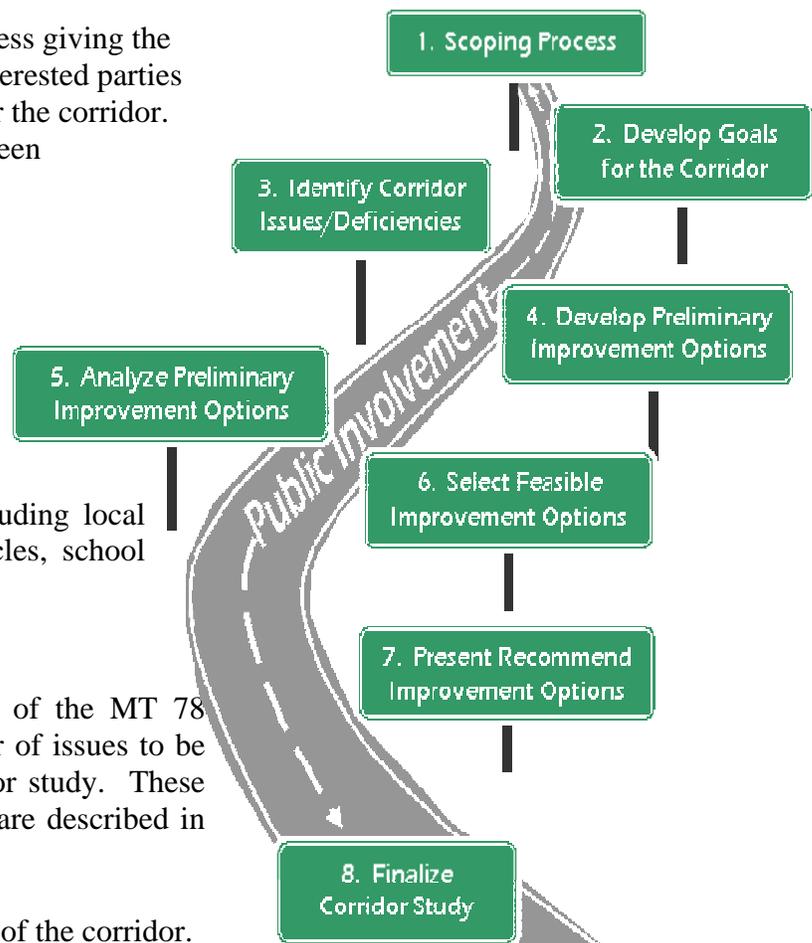
Preliminary corridor goals include:

- Preserve the character of the corridor
- Balance the needs of all users, including local residents, tourists, agricultural vehicles, school buses, motorcyclists, and bicyclists

### Corridor Deficiencies

The investigation of existing conditions of the MT 78 transportation system identified a number of issues to be considered in development of the corridor study. These existing corridor deficiencies and issues are described in the following list.

1. Steep grades exist over a large portion of the corridor.
2. Sharp curves exist at the southern and northern ends of the corridor and at a few scattered locations within the middle portion of the corridor.
3. Passing and stopping sight distances are limited not only due to poor horizontal and vertical alignment, but also due to steep side slopes in several locations.
4. Shoulder widths throughout the corridor are not wide enough to safely accommodate vehicle stops or bicycle travel.
5. There are a number of poorly-aligned access points along the corridor.
6. Accident concentrations are located between MP 5 to 9.5 and from MP 18.5 to 20, as well as in scattered locations between MP 12 to 14 and MP 17 to 18.

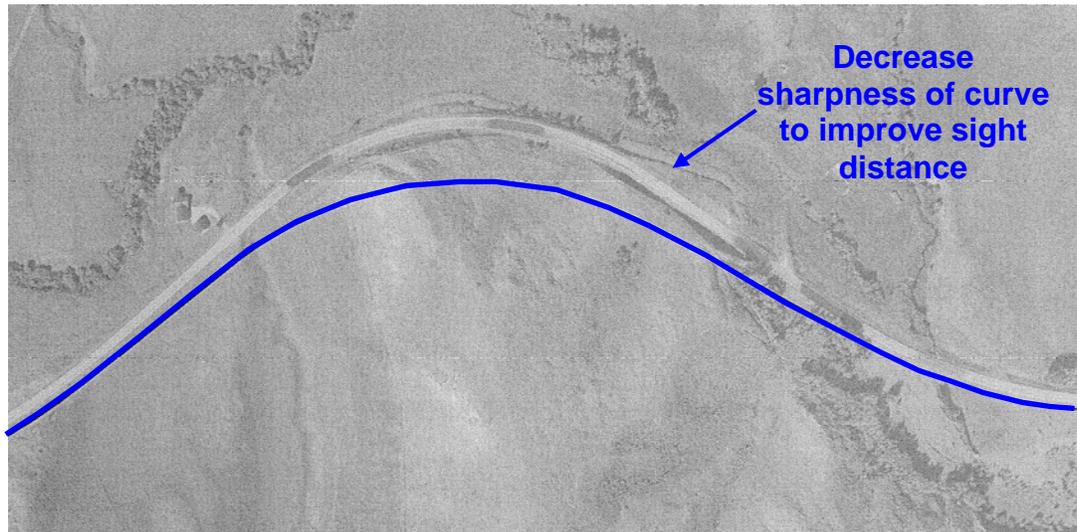




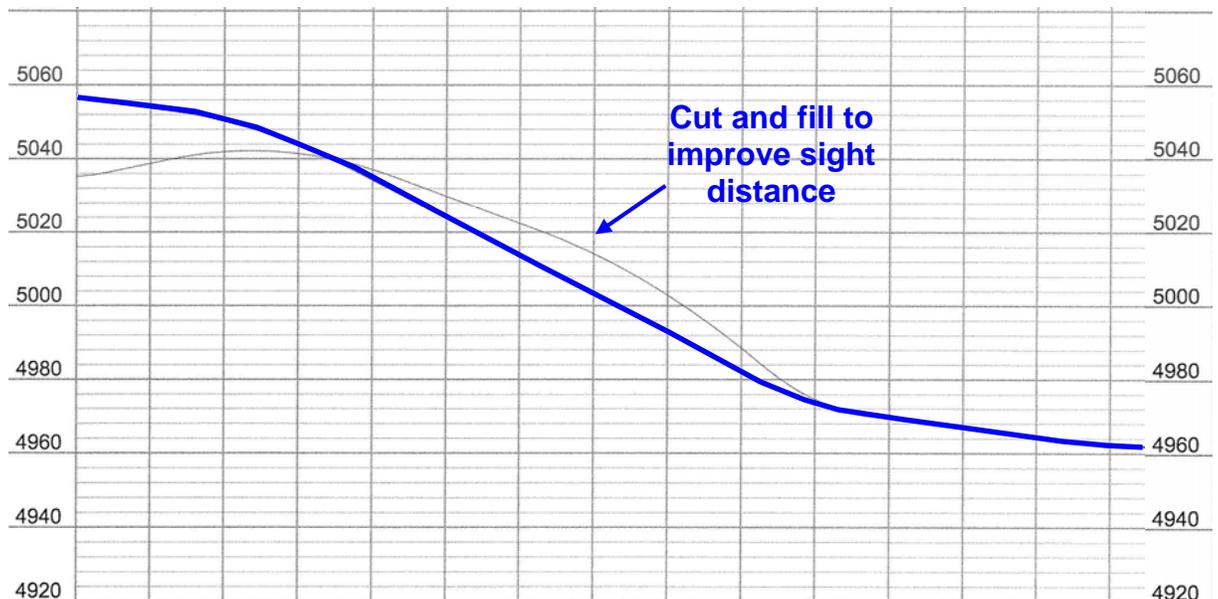
## Preliminary Improvement Options

In response to geometric and operational analyses and public input, we have developed a set of preliminary improvement options for the corridor. The figures shown below are included as representative examples of these improvement options. Figure 1 is an aerial photograph of the MT 78 highway between MP 9.3 and MP 9.8. The existing roadway is visible as a gray line on the aerial. The blue line shows the proposed new horizontal alignment, which would decrease the sharpness of the horizontal curve to improve sight distance. Figure 2 is a profile view of the same portion of the roadway. The gray line represents the existing roadway, and the blue line represents the proposed new grade, which would also improve sight distance. The numbers on the right and left side of Figure 2 are elevations.

**Figure 1**  
Aerial  
View



**Figure 2**  
Profile  
View





## MT 78 Corridor Study

### *How Can I Stay Involved?*

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 contact the Project Team at the phone numbers and addresses listed to the right.

### *Next Public Meeting . . .*

We have developed a set of preliminary goals for the corridor, identified corridor deficiencies, and developed preliminary improvement options. We will be coming back out to the community to discuss the preliminary goals and the most promising improvement options. At that time, we will request further input to select a set of options that meet the needs of the corridor, are environmentally sound, and physically and financially feasible. The next public meeting will be held on **September 20, 2006** from **7:00 pm to 9:00 pm** at the **Roscoe Community Center** north of Roscoe. We invite you to join us!



The Power Block West  
7 West 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 3W  
P.O. Box 1009  
Helena, MT 59624-1009

**For more information, please contact:**

**Bruce Barrett**

Billings District Administrator  
MDT  
424 Morey St.  
PO Box 20437  
Billings, MT 59104-0437  
(406) 657-0210  
bbarrett@mt.gov

**Carol Strizich**

Project Manager  
MDT Planning  
2701 Prospect Drive  
PO Box 201001  
Helena, MT 59620-1001  
(406) 444-9240  
cstrizich@mt.gov

**Darryl L. James**

Project Consultant  
HKM Engineering  
7 West 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 3W  
P.O. Box 1009  
Helena, MT 59624  
(406) 442-0370