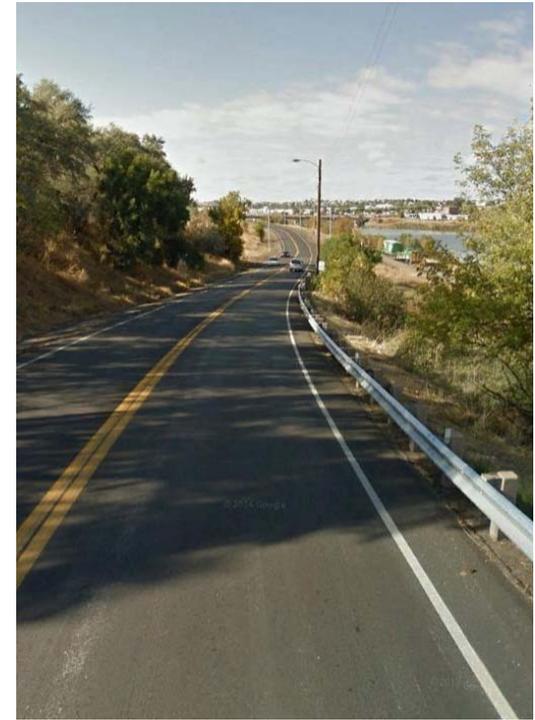


# PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT PLAN

*Technical Memorandum*



November 05, 2015



Prepared for:  
Montana Department of  
Transportation



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.....	i
List of Figures.....	i
1.0. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Corridor Planning Process.....	1
1.2. Study Area.....	2
1.3. Goals of Public and Agency Outreach.....	2
2.0. Participation Procedures.....	4
2.1. Study Contacts.....	4
2.2. Media Coordination.....	5
2.3. Stakeholders.....	5
2.4. Study Website.....	5
2.5. Document Availability.....	6
3.0. Meetings.....	6
3.1. Advisory Committee Meetings.....	6
3.2. Informational Meetings.....	7
3.3. Resource Agency Meeting/Involvement.....	7
3.4. Considerations for Traditionally Underserved Populations.....	7
3.5. Accessibility.....	8
4.0. Overall Study Communication.....	8
5.0. Study Schedule.....	9

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Study Area Boundary.....	3
Figure 2: Study Schedule.....	9

# Public and Agency Involvement Plan (PAIP)

## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has identified a need to develop a corridor study along River Drive in Great Falls, Montana. The study, referred to as the *River Drive Corridor Study*, will identify feasible improvement options to address safety, operational, and geometrical concerns (i.e. road width, horizontal curves, vertical grades, approach density, etc.) within the study area based on needs identified by the public, the study partners, and resource agencies.

The purpose of the study is to develop a comprehensive, long-range plan for managing the corridor and determining what improvements could be made to improve the corridor based on identified needs, public and agency input, and financial constraints. Data examined will include geometric characteristics, crash history, operational characteristics, land uses, and environmental resources. The study will be a collaborative process between MDT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Great Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), local jurisdictions, other agencies, and the public aimed at identifying transportation needs and potential solutions.

The final study report will include a comprehensive package of feasible short- and long-term improvement options intended to address the transportation needs over the next twenty years. Identifying these improvement options will help the study partners define the most critical needs and allocate resources.

## 1.1. CORRIDOR PLANNING PROCESS

MDT established the corridor planning process to investigate improvement options for the corridor via the Pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Study, as provided for in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21). The corridor planning process will inform any projects that may develop from improvement options identified in the study. The process will help advance viable options for use in the NEPA/MEPA process, while providing an opportunity for partner involvement at all stages.

The corridor study process involves early communication with interested parties to help identify needs, constraints, and opportunities to determine reasonable improvements given available resources and local support. Community, stakeholder, agency and other interested party involvement are important components in any successful planning process. For this study, a number of proposed involvement

strategies will aid in reaching the most people possible to elicit meaningful participation. These opportunities will achieve the following goals:

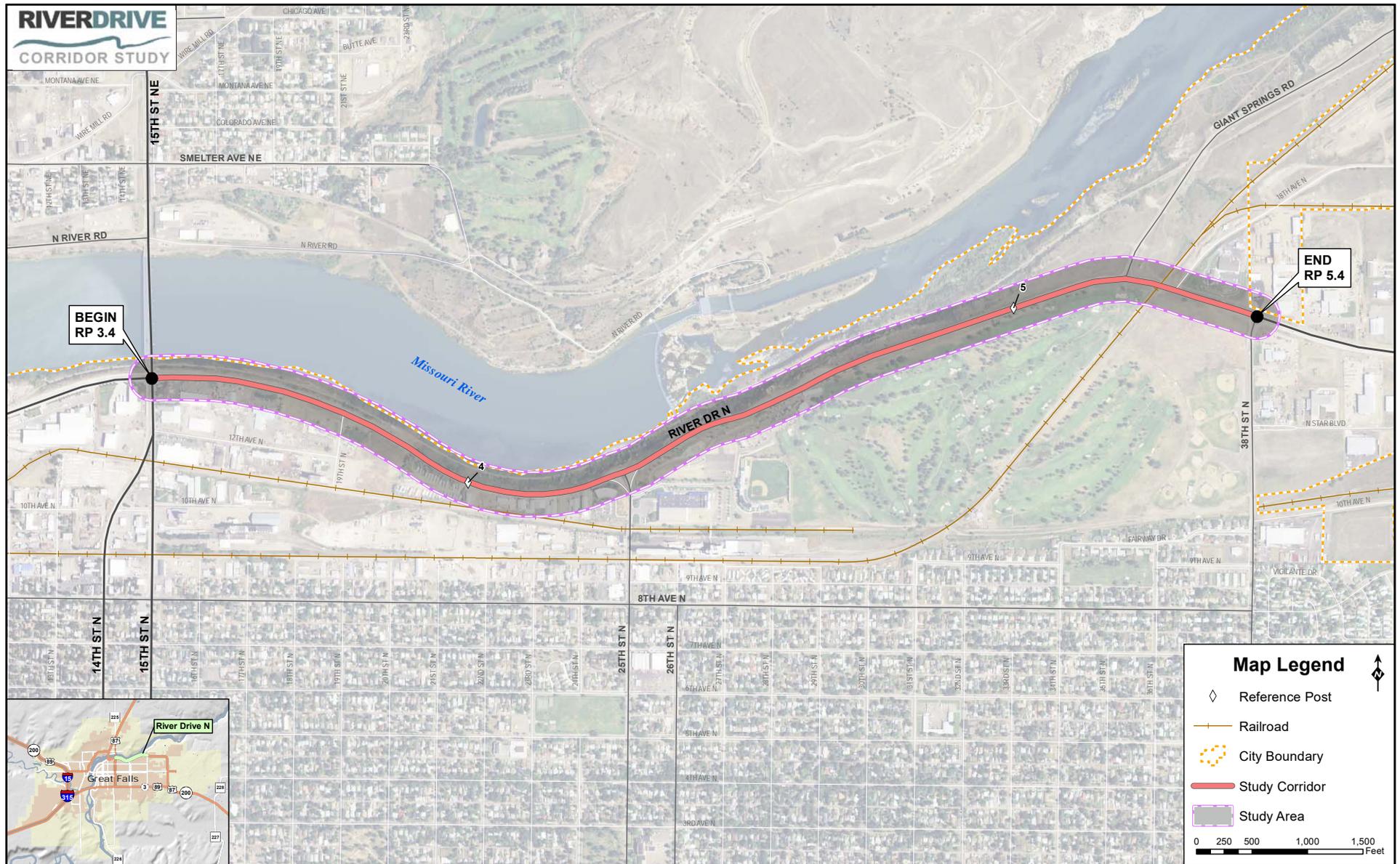
- Educate corridor users regarding the critical elements included in the Pre-NEPA/MEPA Corridor Planning Study process for the River Drive corridor in Great Falls.
- Provide opportunity for input and to solicit comments throughout the corridor planning study.
- Present findings and recommendations.

### 1.2. STUDY AREA

River Drive serves as a key route in the Great Falls transportation system that supports both local access and regional travel demand. The study area for the *River Drive Corridor Study* begins at the intersection with 15<sup>th</sup> Street N (Reference Post [RP] 3.4) and 38<sup>th</sup> Street N (RP 5.4). The corridor is classified as a principal arterial roadway on the Non-interstate National Highway System (NHS). The corridor is a designated truck route and provides access to several businesses, industrial areas, residential neighborhoods, community resources, and recreation. **Figure 1** presents the location of the corridor and the study area.

### 1.3. GOALS OF PUBLIC AND AGENCY OUTREACH

An initial step in the corridor planning process is to develop a *Public and Agency Involvement Plan (PAIP)* that provides for and identifies public, stakeholder, and other interested parties involvement activities needed to communicate information about existing and future corridor needs. The purpose of the *PAIP* is to establish a process that provides opportunities for interested parties to participate in all phases of the corridor planning process. The primary goal is to provide ongoing opportunities for involvement by members of the public, stakeholders, and resource agency representatives throughout the planning study process. Education and outreach are essential elements in keeping individuals apprised about the planning study process. Providing complete information, timely notices, and opportunities to comment, as well as ensuring full access to key decisions, will help achieve this goal.



## 2.0. PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES

The *PAIP* describes the information and input opportunities that will be provided while developing the *River Drive Corridor Study*. This plan encourages active participation in identifying and commenting on study issues at every stage of the planning process. Participant involvement includes the following:

- The general public – residents of the city of Great Falls, Cascade County, and adjacent areas
- Landowners and business owners within the study area
- Resource agencies
- Stakeholders and outreach groups
- Other interested parties

This document contains descriptions of notification for informational meetings and other information. MDT, the Great Falls MPO, and Robert Peccia and Associates (RPA) will provide information regarding all aspects of the study to the public and interested parties and will seek their input throughout the process.

### 2.1. STUDY CONTACTS

All information published regarding the *River Drive Corridor Study* will have contact information for MDT and RPA. Comments can be submitted throughout the study process via the website (see **Section 2.4**) or by contacting those individuals listed below:

➤ **Dave Hand**

*MDT Great Falls District Administrator*  
MDT Great Falls District  
200 Smelter Avenue NE  
PO Box 1359  
Great Falls, MT 59403-1359  
406-454-5880  
[dhand@mt.gov](mailto:dhand@mt.gov)

➤ **Corrina Collins**

*MDT Project Manager*  
MDT Statewide and Urban Planning  
2960 Prospect Avenue  
PO Box 201001  
Helena, MT 59620-1001  
(406) 444-9131  
[ccollins@mt.gov](mailto:ccollins@mt.gov)

➤ **Scott Randall**

*RPA Project Manager*  
Robert Peccia and Associates (RPA)  
825 Custer Avenue  
PO Box 5653  
Helena, MT 59604  
(406) 447-5000  
[scottr@rpa-hln.com](mailto:scottr@rpa-hln.com)

## 2.2. MEDIA COORDINATION

Meeting announcements will be developed and advertised at least three weeks prior to informational meetings. The ads will announce the meeting location, time, and date, the format and purpose of the meeting, and the locations where documents may be reviewed (if applicable). The Great Falls Tribune will carry the display ads. Meetings may also be announced on local radio and/or television stations.

RPA will publish newsletters, flyers, or both, one month before each informational meeting. The newsletters will describe work in progress, results achieved, preliminary recommendations, and other related topics. RPA will deliver each newsletter and flyer to the Great Falls MPO, MDT, and select stakeholders for distribution and posting to their respective internet sites. Print copies of newsletters will be available at the public meetings.

## 2.3. STAKEHOLDERS

A stakeholder contact list will include individuals, businesses, or groups identified by the Great Falls MPO and MDT. The stakeholder list will identify individuals and groups with likely project interests and will enable actively seeking out and engaging them in all phases of the study process. A sign-in sheet for individuals who attend informational meetings will facilitate expanding the stakeholder list. Potential stakeholders include:

- City of Great Falls
- Cascade County
- Great Falls City Commission
- Malmstrom Air Force Base
- Great Falls Policy Coordinating Committee
- Great Falls Transportation Technical Advisory Committee
- Great Falls Northern Industrial Task Force
- Great Falls Transit
- Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
- BNSF Railroad
- Recreational Trails, Inc.
- General Mills, Inc.
- Montana Motor Carriers Association
- Great Falls Baseball Club
- Montana Veterans Memorial
- United States Forest Service
- Adjacent landowners and businesses
- Others as requested

## 2.4. STUDY WEBSITE

A study website will be used to encourage public interaction and to provide study information. The website will be hosted by MDT at the following address: [www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/riverdrive/](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/riverdrive/)

The website will be updated as needed throughout the study process. The website will contain contact information, meeting announcements, frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the corridor study process, a description of the study, finalized documents, and interim memorandums. Upon completion, the following documents will be made available on the study website:

- Study Schedule
- Study Newsletters
- Public and Agency Involvement Plan
- Environmental Scan
- Existing and Projected Conditions Technical Memorandum
- Needs and Objectives Technical Memorandum
- Improvement Options Technical Memorandum
- Informational Meeting Presentations
- Public Draft Corridor Planning Study Report
- Final Corridor Planning Study Report

## 2.5. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY

Electronic copies of study deliverables and technical memorandums will be posted on the study website. Additionally, hard copy materials may also be made available at the following locations:

- **City of Great Falls**  
*Planning and Community Development Department*  
#2 Park Drive South  
PO Box 5021  
Great Falls, MT 59403
- **Montana Department of Transportation**  
*Great Falls District*  
200 Smelter Avenue NE  
PO Box 1359  
Great Falls, MT 59403-1359

## 3.0. MEETINGS

The *River Drive Corridor Study* will require various planning and informational meetings. The following sections will describe the various functions that each meeting type will serve.

### 3.1. ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Advisory Committee meetings will be scheduled once a month over the 12-month study period. Groups included in the meetings will be the Great Falls MPO, MDT, FHWA, RPA, and others as appropriate. The meetings will track progress and address study development issues and questions. The meetings are important for the exchange of technical information and ideas during the development of the study. Throughout the meetings, the Advisory Committee will identify and discuss issues, problems, and possible solutions.

The Advisory Committee will consider all public comments received for the duration of the study. All comments received from the public will be considered. Public comments received on the draft report during the public comment period will be logged into a public comment matrix for consideration by the Advisory Committee. Written responses will not be offered to the individual making the comment unless a specific question response is warranted. Following publication of the draft report, an additional public comment matrix will be created to log public

comments received specific to the draft report. The matrix will contain written responses as applicable. All public comments received, and any provided responses, will be duly considered and placed in the appendices to the final report.

### 3.2. INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS

Two informational meetings will take place in Great Falls during the study. The first informational meeting will occur following evaluation of the existing conditions of the study area. The meeting will focus on introducing the study, presenting existing conditions, and discussing preliminary issues and concerns within the study area. The meeting will allow members of the public to provide information about existing conditions and provide input for the needs and constraints of the corridor.

The second informational meeting will occur following completion of the draft *River Drive Corridor Study* report. The purpose of this meeting will be to present the draft report and to discuss the recommended improvement options. Members of the public will be encouraged to provide feedback on the improvement options and draft report.

Comments will be considered throughout the planning process. An official comment period will be provided after the release of the draft report. Additionally, RPA staff will record comments and concerns at all informational meetings for consideration throughout the planning process.

### 3.3. RESOURCE AGENCY MEETING/INVOLVEMENT

A resource agency meeting will be scheduled and held at the MDT Planning office in Helena. Polycom arrangements will be provided at the MDT Great Falls District Office, as appropriate. The purpose of the meeting will be to present the findings of the draft *Environmental Scan* developed by MDT as well as the initial findings of the *Existing and Projected Conditions Report*. The resource agencies will be asked to help identify initial avoidance areas, mitigation needs, and opportunities.

### 3.4. CONSIDERATIONS FOR TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

Additional efforts are necessary to involve traditionally underserved segments of the population, including disabled, minority, and low-income residents. Including these groups will help to ensure planning that reflects everyone's needs. The following steps will help with these efforts:

- **Plan meeting locations carefully:** Hold informational meetings in locations that are accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If a targeted population is located in a certain geographic part of a city or county, then the meeting location should be close to the area for convenience.
- **Seek help from community leaders and organizations:** To facilitate involvement of traditionally underserved populations, consult with community leaders and organizations representing these groups about the most effective ways to reach their members.

- **Be sensitive to diverse audiences:** At informational meetings, study partner staff and RPA will attempt to communicate as effectively as possible. Presenters will avoid using technical jargon, and staff will wear appropriate dress and adhere to common rules of conduct.

### 3.5. ACCESSIBILITY

The State of Montana attempts to provide accessible information and services to all individuals. MDT will employ the following measures for the *River Drive Corridor Study*:

- MDT will host informational meetings in locations that are accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- MDT and RPA will confer with the leaders of the communities and representative organizations about how best to involve traditionally underserved populations.

The following required ADA statement will be included on all published materials:

*Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided on request. Persons who need an alternative format should contact the Office of Civil Rights, Department of Transportation, 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620. Telephone 406-444-9229. Those using a TTY may call 1(800)335-7592 or through the Montana Relay Service at 711.*

## 4.0. OVERALL STUDY COMMUNICATION

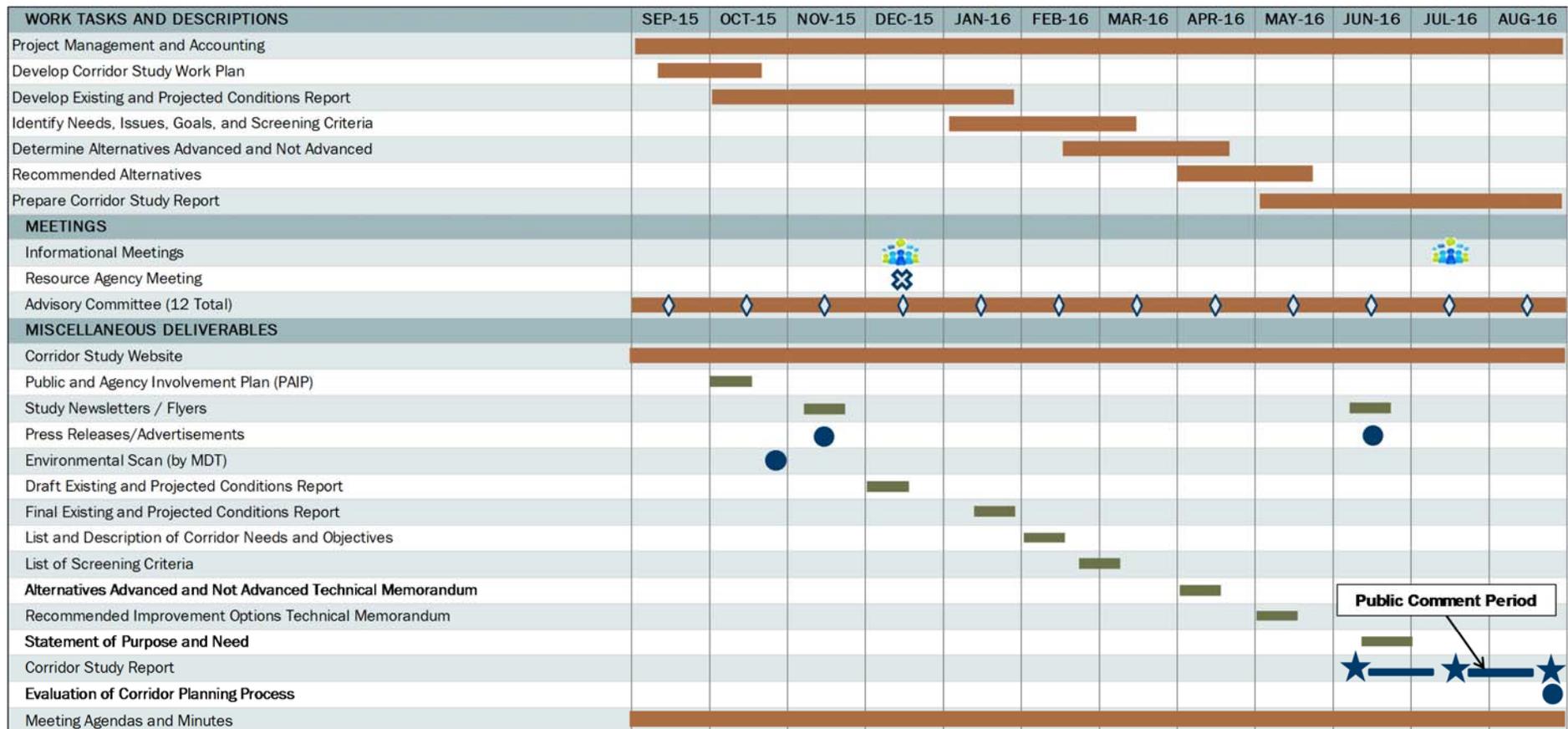
The *PAIP* establishes guidelines and procedures for encouraging participation. The following communication strategies and techniques will be used to distribute study information to the community at large and to seek a higher level of engagement. RPA will apply the techniques that best suit the *River Drive Corridor Study* development.

- All relevant deliverables and associated materials will be posted on the study website at the following address:  
<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/riverdrive/>
- Newsletters will be provided at least one month before each informational meeting.
- Press releases for the newspaper or other widely circulated publications will be developed.
- Technical memorandums will be provided to MDT for posting to the study's website. They will also be distributed to the Advisory Committee to provide a better understanding of proposed issues and recommendations and, in return, to provide the study partners with feedback and an opportunity for continual comment.
- Hard copies of all materials can be made available at the locations described previously.
- Upon request, special presentations may be made to groups and organizations.

Questions and comments from interested parties concerning the participation process, draft technical memorandums, draft *River Drive Corridor Study* documents, and other work products will be included in an appendix to the actual documents.

## 5.0. STUDY SCHEDULE

Adherence to the study schedule is important to stay on track and to keep all participating parties engaged. **Figure 2** contains the study schedule for the *River Drive Corridor Study*. It is RPA’s intent to adhere to this schedule.



Public Meeting     
 Advisory Committee     
 Resource Agency Workshop

**Figure 2: Study Schedule**