

Kalispell Bypass Frequently Asked Questions



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Project Overview

What is the Kalispell Bypass?

- The Kalispell Bypass is an eight-mile stretch of roadway that was designed as a four-lane westside bypass, providing another high-volume route in addition to US 93 in order to divert traffic around the center of Kalispell.
- The southernmost three miles were built in an interim configuration which currently only provides two lanes and roundabouts at public road intersections.

Is this the same as the US 93 Alternate Route?

- Yes.

What are the project locations?

- *Kalispell Bypass – US 93 to Airport Road*
 - This project begins at the intersection with US 93 on the southern edge of Kalispell and extends north along the Bypass approximately 1.7 miles, ending 0.6 miles north of the Airport Road roundabout.
- *Kalispell Bypass – Foy's Lake Road Interchange*
 - Project limits begin 0.6 miles north of the Airport Road roundabout and extends north along the Bypass approximately 1.7 miles, ending south of the Ashley Creek Bridge which is 0.5 miles south of the intersection with US 2.



Clarification of Two Projects

Why are there two projects for the Kalispell Bypass?

- For funding and timing purposes, the Foy's Lake Road Interchange project is a separate project than the study and design of the US 93 to Airport Road project.
- By separating these projects, MDT can address both the short- and long-term needs of the Kalispell Bypass in a timely manner.
- The Foy's Lake Road Interchange project already has established preliminary design and construction plans.
 - With federal funding secured for the Foy's Lake Road Interchange portion of the project, MDT plans to begin construction on this particular intersection as soon as the fall of 2020.
 - While final plans have not been fully developed, the major components of this project have been determined. The roundabout at Foy's Lake Road will be removed and replaced with an interchange consisting of an overpass and four access ramps. The Foy's Lake Road crossing will be built above the Bypass to provide safe and efficient highway travel.
 - The existing two-lane roadway will be widened to four lanes. The shared-use path connections along the well-established trail system will be maintained.

Why isn't construction on the Foys Lake Road Interchange project going to be completed at the same time as construction on the US 93 to Airport Road project?

- The existing Foys Lake Road roundabout was always intended to be just an interim solution and Foys Lake Road traffic volumes are currently exceeding what the roundabout was designed to carry. For these reasons, the City of Kalispell in partnership with MDT has been proactive in working with federal partners to secure funding and was awarded a federal BUILD grant in the fall of 2018. MDT can now move forward with final design and construction of a long-term solution for the Foys Lake Road intersection.

Why is MDT going to do further evaluation with the US 93 to Airport Road project but not for the Foys Lake Road Interchange project?

- MDT always planned to reconstruct the Foys Lake Road intersection with an interchange. A temporary roundabout solution was installed to ensure federal funding would be awarded to get the initial construction for the Bypass launched in 2010. Now that we have funding, the long-term solution of the Foys Lake Road Interchange project can be initiated.
- The Airport Road roundabout will also be replaced with an interchange with the US 93 to Airport Road project, however the roundabout just west of US 93 does not have similar predictable traffic patterns as we see at Foys Lake Road and Airport Road. The Flathead Valley is developing in ways that were not known 10-20 years ago when this intersection was in the early design stages. As a result, a study is necessary to understand the needs of this specific intersection.
- Therefore, MDT and their engineering partner, KLJ, are evaluating current traffic counts, patterns, and Flathead County growth projections to determine the best long-term solution for the roundabout just west of US 93.

Why was the Foys Lake Road roundabout designed to be temporary? Isn't that a waste of taxpayer dollars?

- Yes - this was a temporary design. No – this was certainly not a waste of taxpayer dollars. In fact, quite the opposite...
- Originally, MDT anticipated completing the Bypass in its entirety (four full lanes for the length of the Bypass with full interchanges at all but one intersection) by approximately 2030. With the fully developed infrastructure in place, the roadway would be equipped to carry the traffic volumes estimated for 2030.
- However, funding to build the Bypass in its entirety was not initially available.
 - The Bypass had to be constructed in phases as funding became available.
- Building the Bypass in this way is known as "phased development." As each phase is constructed, in order to have functional roadway sections that can be used by the public, phased development requires short-term solutions to be used while funds are accrued, and property is acquired, for a permanent solution.
- With the initial construction of the two-lane configuration of the south half of the Bypass in 2010, roundabouts were constructed as an affordable, short-term solution. They were built to create a functional section of the Bypass until when funds would be available to build the interchange overpasses and all lanes of the Bypass.
- When the north half of the Bypass was built, a combination of multiple beneficial factors, a primary one being funding, allowed MDT to fully complete the north half of the Bypass in its final four-lane configuration, instead of two lanes, and with interchanges.
- With the completion of the north end of the Bypass in its final four-lane configuration in 2017, approximately 13 years ahead of schedule, traffic volumes increased dramatically and quickly.
- Traffic volumes reached the 2030 projections almost immediately due to the route's popularity. This 2030 traffic volume creates an especially large challenge at the roundabout at Foys Lake Road, where the Bypass transitions from four lanes to the interim two-lane configuration.
- MDT's plan was always to replace the roundabouts at Foys Lake Road and Airport Road with interchanges with overpasses and expand the south half of the Bypass to four lanes once funding became available.

Budget

How much will this cost?

- The construction of the final two remaining phases of the Kalispell Bypass, including the Foy's Lake Road Interchange project and the US 93 to Airport Road project, is estimated to cost \$35.2 million.

What is the grant that was awarded?

- The Foy's Lake Road Interchange project was awarded \$12.75 million through the [Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development](#) (or BUILD) Grant.

Who is paying for this?

- The Foy's Lake Road Interchange project is partially funded with the BUILD Grant and the remainder of the two projects is being paid for through a combination of federal and state highway funding sources.
- The federal government provides about 87% of the funding, meaning that the Montana gas tax funds required to receive the federal funding only need to contribute about \$3.0 million.

Timing

What is the schedule for the Foy's Lake Road project?

- The project is in the final process of securing the funding from the BUILD Grant program and will hire the consultant and contractor team in late 2019 to complete the final design.
- Project leadership anticipates that construction will begin as soon as the fall of 2020.

Why is the Foy's Lake Road Interchange project being addressed now?

- The interim configuration of the Bypass has reached the limits of being able to effectively and efficiently handle the existing traffic. The Foy's Lake Road Interchange and US 93 to Airport Road projects will provide a long-term safety solution for efficient travel in the Flathead Valley.

How long will the design of the US 93 to Airport Road project take?

- The study, evaluation, and design for the US 93 to Airport Road project will take approximately four years. Work began in the spring of 2019 and project plans are anticipated to be fully completed in 2023.

Construction

When will we see construction start?

- The Kalispell Bypass – Foy's Lake Road Interchange project is anticipated to begin construction in the fall of 2020.
- The remaining Kalispell Bypass – US 93 to Airport Road project will be constructed when funding becomes available, potentially in 2024 or 2025.

What will construction schedules look like?

- Because both projects are somewhat early in development, construction schedules are still being developed. Like all Montana construction projects, the bulk of work will be completed between April and October.

When will we know who the contractor is for these projects' construction?

- Contractors are selected anywhere from two to six months prior to construction beginning. As soon as a contractor is selected, the public will be able to access that information.

Will traffic be able to continue to use the Bypass during construction?

- Because both projects are somewhat early in development, the determination of construction phasing is still being developed.
- Impacts to traffic will be minimized as much as possible but lane closures and short-term full closures are likely, especially during portions of the construction of the overpass bridges.

Design

Why are you building roundabouts in other locations around Kalispell and tearing out the roundabout at Foys Lake Road?

- Roundabouts are constructed primarily for safety and traffic flow reasons. Each intersection and each project are evaluated individually. There is not a one-size-fits-all solution.
- While the roundabout at Foys Lake Road is considered a safer intersection than a signalized intersection in a rural high-speed setting, it lacks the capacity to function as efficiently as possible under current traffic volumes.
 - The roundabout at Foys Lake Road has a relatively balanced amount of traffic on all four legs meaning north/south traffic has to stop when east/west traffic is within the roundabout. At present, this is creating significant congestion at the Foys Lake Road intersection during morning and evening commute times. By comparison, the Airport Road roundabout currently has less east/west traffic intersecting the Bypass, and there is generally a free-flow of traffic moving along the north-south Bypass route.
 - For these reasons, the Foys Lake Road Interchange project will be constructed before the Airport Road intersection which is included in the US 93 to Airport Road project.

Is there an opportunity for the public to weigh-in on the design?

- Yes. Public meetings will be held throughout the design process.
- In addition, the public is highly encouraged to contact the Bypass communications manager, Katie Klietz, by phone (207-4484) or email (katie@bigskypublicrelations.com) to share their thoughts.
- Additional project resources are available online: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/kalispellbypass/>.

Will the sound wall be lengthened?

- A noise analysis/evaluation will be performed to determine if additional sound barriers will be required as part of these projects.
- At this time, there are no expansions to the existing sound walls included in the preliminary project plans.

What will the final design of the Bypass look like?

- As envisioned today, the final design of the Kalispell Bypass will consist of an eight-mile, four-lane roadway with new interchanges built where they best serve each intersection's unique needs.
- With the community's input, more specific plans will be finalized in the future.

After all is said and done in the next few years, will this be the *final* KBP configuration?

- As hard as we try to predict the future, there is no way to anticipate what traffic and safety needs might require further modifications to the Kalispell Bypass. That said, at this time, these two remaining projects will develop the Kalispell Bypass to its final configuration.
- As one of the fastest growing micropolitan (city with a population between 10,000 and 50,000) areas in the country, Kalispell has already exceeded many growth projections. The Bypass is being designed and constructed based on the most recent and best data available to MDT.

What will be the construction limits on either side of the Bypass?

- The construction limits are anticipated to remain on MDT property, but final construction areas will not be known until further into the design process.

How will driving lanes be added to the Bypass?

- The overall roadway width will be widened to provide two additional travel lanes to the west of the current roadway and to include a paved center median.
- The final road section will consist of four 12-foot wide travel lanes, two eight-foot wide shoulders, and one nine-foot wide center median.

Will the stoplight at the intersection of the Bypass and US 93 be evaluated with the US 93 to Airport Road project?

- The projected traffic at this intersection will be evaluated, but at this time it is not anticipated that any major improvements will need to be made.
- The Bypass leg of the intersection has already been constructed to its final four-lane configuration with turn lanes.

Will there be new trail connections?

- The location of the existing shared-use path along the Bypass was designed to accommodate the future widening and is anticipated to remain as is though the path will be reconfigured at the new interchanges to tie into the new roadway geometry.

What considerations are being made for cyclists and pedestrians in the design?

- The road widening will attempt to avoid any impacts to the existing shared-use path.
- Non-motorized access will be considered in the configuration of the public road intersection.

Will wildlife crossings be considered?

- Previous analysis has indicated that wildlife crossings will not be needed.

Will utilities be impacted?

- Existing utilities are anticipated to be impacted by the proposed projects, mainly at the new interchange locations.
- Utility relocation work will be carefully managed to minimize impacts to the traveling public.

Will the new design impact the new Jeannette Rankin Elementary School?

- The school may see temporary traffic impacts during construction, but traffic flow will be improved after the construction of the new interchange is complete.
- MDT intends to work closely with the school and provide information to parents to ensure all are well-informed about the project and have ample opportunities to engage with the project team.

Will adding lanes to the Bypass bring in more vehicles? Won't that lead to more traffic and more congestion?

- Additional lanes will increase the capacity of the roadway while easing congestion.
- Additional traffic is predicted on this roadway regardless of expansion. Proactive planning for construction and widening of the roadway is intended to help manage predicted traffic increases.

How will the projects impact local residents and businesses?

- Local residents and businesses will see temporary traffic impacts during construction. Increased traffic volumes and anticipated residential and commercial growth will likely occur in the future. These projects better accommodate future traffic.

Will the new designs accommodate truckers and other large vehicles?

- The Bypass, including interchange ramps, will be designed to accommodate large vehicles. The Airport Road legs of the new interchange will be designed to accommodate school buses.

Will the speed limit remain the same?

- Yes, the speed limit on the Bypass will remain unchanged at 60 MPH. Traffic will no longer be required to slow down through the roundabouts once they are replaced with interchanges.

Design Review/Evaluation/Study

When MDT says that the intersections will be studied and/or evaluated, what does that mean?

- MDT has identified these intersections for improvements and has hired an Engineering firm to collect, prepare, and interpret data to help MDT determine what the true needs are for these locations.

What goes into a traffic study?

- Traffic analysis will be completed for estimated traffic conditions through 2045 to identify how intersections should be designed and constructed to best provide efficient traffic flow and low crash potential.