

**RECORD OF DECISION**

for the

US 2, Havre to Fort Belknap Corridor

Hill and Blaine Counties, Montana

PLH-TCSP 1-6(44)384

Control Number 4951

Final Environmental Impact Statement

Final Section 4(f) Evaluation

FHWA-MT-EIS-04-01-F

United States Department of Transportation

Federal Highway Administration

Helena, Montana

  
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Janice Weingart Brown - Division Administrator

Date: 11/22/04

**US 2, HAVRE TO FORT BELKNAP  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
RECORD OF DECISION**

**DECISION**

It is the decision of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to select the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative for improvements to the 72.2 km (44.9 mi) segment of US Highway 2 between Havre and Fort Belknap in Hill and Blaine Counties, Montana. This decision is based on the information presented in the *US 2, Havre to Fort Belknap Final Environmental Impact Statement and Section 4(f) Evaluation* (FEIS), released for public review on October 8, 2004. The FEIS presents a complete description of the alternatives considered and identifies the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative as the Preferred Alternative. Copies of the FEIS are available by request to MDT.

The purpose of the proposed US 2 improvement project from Havre to Fort Belknap is to replace the aging US 2 facility with an efficient and safe highway to serve the needs of local communities, agriculture, industry, commerce and tourism.

This project will provide highway improvements to US 2 to address the following needs:

- Provide an efficient highway to support economic vitality;
- Reduce roadway deficiencies;
- Improve safety; and
- Improve traffic operations.

The Selected Alternative will provide an improved two-lane highway with a system of intermittent passing lanes in rural portions of the project corridor. Left-turn lanes will be added in some locations in the corridor. The typical roadway section will differ within the communities of Chinook, Harlem, and Fort Belknap to accommodate local traffic operations and minimize environmental and social impacts.

The Selected Alternative will provide efficiency for the traveling public that is comparable to the four-lane alternatives evaluated in the FEIS. It will also provide a new, greatly improved and safer highway facility to serve the local communities, agriculture, industry, commerce and tourism, while incurring less cost and fewer environmental impacts than the four-lane alternatives.

The selection of the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative for this project is based on the relevant factors analyzed in the development of the EIS and discussed in this Record of Decision.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

This Record of Decision (ROD) is based upon evaluation of a No-Build Alternative and four build alternatives that best meet the purpose for and needs of the project. These alternatives are fully described in Chapter 2 and evaluated in Chapter 4 of the FEIS.

The build alternatives would each fulfill the purpose of and needs for the project and would follow the same alignment through the project area. The build alternatives would shift the existing roadway alignment to the south by up to 25 m (80 ft) in prioritized locations to provide a safer distance between the railroad and US 2 at railroad crossings with higher levels of safety and operational issues. The highway would remain close to its existing alignment in other locations to minimize impacts.

Context-sensitive design concepts would be incorporated into the design of the alternatives. Common design treatments for elements such as landscape and entry features in communities, pedestrian crossings, and signage along US 2 would enhance corridor identity through consistency and would simplify information interpretation for highway users. Bicycle or multi-use paths would be provided east of Havre, west of Chinook, and between Harlem and Fort Belknap for all of the build alternatives.

### ***No-Build Alternative***

This alternative is a no action alternative and would provide no improvements to US 2 from Havre to Fort Belknap. Projects that were previously planned for this corridor, which included reconstruction and resurfacing of the existing two-lane highway, are no longer active projects and would not be included in the No-Build Alternative. This alternative does not meet the purpose of and need for the project.

### ***Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative (Selected Alternative)***

The Selected Alternative will provide an improved two-lane highway in rural segments of the project corridor as described in Section 2.5 of the FEIS. Shoulders will be widened from the existing condition, the clear zone to each side of the highway will be improved, and roadway side slopes will be flattened to improve safety and meet current design standards. The typical section will consist of MDT's standard minimum width for a rural Non-Interstate NHS highway: 3.6 m (12 ft) travel lanes and 2.4 m (8 ft) shoulders for a total paved roadway width of 12 m (40 ft). Left-turn lanes will be added at some intersections in the corridor, as warranted by traffic volumes or railroad crossing conditions.

The Selected Alternative will also provide a system of intermittent 3.6 m (12 ft) passing lanes in rural portions of the project corridor. The total roadway typical section width will be 15.6 m (52 ft) in passing lane sections. This system of passing lanes will provide an additional margin of safety and operational efficiency over the Improved Two-Lane Alternative. The intermittent passing lanes, spaced 8 to 13 km (5 to 8 mi) apart, will clear traffic around slower vehicles upon exiting communities and in dispersed locations in the corridor. The passing opportunities provided by this alternative will be safer and more

consistent than those in the Improved Two-Lane Alternative because there will be a full passing lane for the maneuver without the risk of encountering opposing traffic.

The typical roadway section will differ within the communities to accommodate local traffic operations and to minimize environmental, social, and economic impacts. For example, east of Havre, a center two-way left-turn lane or series of left-turn lanes will extend approximately 2.4 km (1.5 mi) east from the western project limits to provide turn lanes for the multiple accesses in this area. In Chinook, the highway will remain within the existing curb lines, but will provide a center two-way left-turn lane through the community and one shoulder/parking lane in designated areas. Through Harlem, this alternative will provide left and right-turn lanes for the multiple road and business accesses in the area. Through portions of Fort Belknap, the highway will remain similar to the existing condition, with two travel lanes and acceleration and deceleration lanes. In other areas, auxiliary lanes will be added through Fort Belknap to provide better traffic operations at the multiple intersections in the area. (See Section 2.5 of the FEIS for a complete description.)

#### ***Improved Two-Lane Alternative***

This alternative would provide an improved two-lane highway in rural segments of the project corridor, but the typical roadway section would differ within the communities. For example, east of Havre, a center two-way left-turn lane or series of left-turn lanes would extend approximately 2.4 km (1.5 mi) east from the western project limits to provide turn lanes for the multiple accesses in this area. (See Section 2.4 of the FEIS for a complete description).

#### ***Four-Lane Undivided Alternative***

In rural portions of the corridor, this alternative would provide an undivided four-lane highway, changing to various other configurations through the towns as described in Section 2.6 of the FEIS.

#### ***Four-Lane Divided Alternative***

This alternative would provide a divided four-lane highway in rural portions of the project corridor, and similar to the four-lane undivided, change to other configurations through the towns as described in Section 2.7 of the FEIS.

#### ***Environmentally Preferred Alternative***

Based on the analysis in the FEIS, the Improved Two-Lane Alternative is the Environmentally Preferred Alternative, since it has the least environmental impact. The No-Build Alternative does not meet the project purpose and need.

However, the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative was selected for this project because its system of passing lanes would provide an additional margin of safety and operational efficiency over the Improved Two-Lane Alternative, with minimal additional environmental impacts. As discussed in the FEIS, the difference in

environmental impacts between the Improved Two-Lane Alternative and the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative includes small differences in floodplain encroachment, wetland impacts, right-of-way requirements, impervious surface increase, vegetation impacts, and farmland impacts. These small increases in environmental impacts are offset by the increases in public and community benefits associated with improved safety and operational efficiency.

### ***Factors in the Decision Process***

Safety, traffic operations, economic effects, cost, community impacts, environmental impacts, public and agency input, and Section 4(f) use were key factors in selecting the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative. In addition to these key factors, an assessment of all other relevant factors and impacts were evaluated in the FEIS. The factors presented below represent either important values for addressing the project purpose and need or the main impacts that distinguish the differences among alternatives.

**Safety.** The existing highway does not meet current design standards. All of the build alternatives would provide safety and design improvements to improve the highway to meet or exceed current standards.

Although this highway currently has an accident rate of 1.51, which is slightly above the statewide average of 1.36 for similar highways, the accident severity rate is slightly less than the statewide average. All the build alternatives analyzed in the FEIS would reduce the accident rate below or equal to the statewide average. Although the analysis indicates that the four-lane alternatives would provide slightly lower accident rates (1.13 and 1.22), the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative will provide a highway with a very low accident rate of 1.26 accidents per million vehicle miles traveled. The difference between this rate and the rate for the Four-Lane Undivided Alternative is 0.04 accidents per million vehicle miles traveled.

The Selected Alternative's system of passing lanes will provide safer passing opportunities than the Improved Two-Lane Alternative. These passing lanes will also improve traffic operations in the corridor, as discussed below.

**Traffic Operations.** All of the alternatives would provide a desirable level of service of B or better (including the No-Build Alternative) in the design year 2027. Although the additional travel lanes in the four-lane alternatives would improve passing opportunities throughout the corridor, the system of passing lanes in the Selected Alternative will improve passing opportunities over the standard for two-lane highways. Under the Selected Alternative, intermittent passing lanes spaced 8 to 13 km (5 to 8 mi) apart will clear traffic around slower vehicles exiting communities and in dispersed locations in the corridor. These passing opportunities will be safer and more consistent than those in the Improved Two-Lane Alternative because there will be a full passing lane for the maneuver without the risk of encountering opposing traffic.

**Economic Effects.** The existing conditions economic analysis, which relied on information from state, local, and regional business and economic development leaders,

concluded that a safe and modern US 2 is important to the area's economy. However, capacity improvements alone are unlikely to generate significant regional economic development benefits as fully explained in Section 4.2.6 of the FEIS.

A benefit-cost analysis, using the StratBENCOST model developed by FHWA, estimated the potential economic benefits and costs of each of the build alternatives and found that the benefit-cost ratios of 0.53 and 0.51 for the Improved Two-Lane and Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes respectively, were far better than the 0.35 and 0.32 of the Four-Lane Undivided and Four-Lane Divided. See Section 4.2.9 of the FEIS for a complete description of the economic analysis.

**Cost.** The estimated costs to design and construct the build alternatives range from \$69.7 million for the Improved Two-Lane Alternative to \$106.8 million for the Four-Lane Divided Alternative. Table 4.11 of the FEIS shows a potential \$21.1 million cost difference between the Four-Lane Undivided (\$94.5 million) and \$73.4 million for the Selected Alternative.

MDT can use its normal federal and state funding to pay for the construction of the Selected Alternative, and there is reasonable certainty that funding for this alternative will be available.

Montana 2001 Senate Bill 3, codified in Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 60-2-133, directs the Transportation Commission to direct the department of transportation to construct a four-lane highway along the present route of US 2 in Montana. To accomplish this task, MCA 60-2-133 directs MDT to seek additional federal funding that does not require a state funding match and also directs that MDT may not expend any resources on the project that would jeopardize other future highway projects. Each of the proposed alternatives was evaluated for consistency with the interpretation of this legislation presented to the Montana Transportation Commission and the Revenue and Transportation Interim Legislative Committee. As no funding is currently available that meets these requirements, the construction of the Selected Alternative is consistent with MCA 60-2-133. However, the issue of the Senate Bill 3 funding requirements, although important, is only one of the many factors considered in selecting the alternative.

In addition to design and construction costs, the long-term maintenance costs for each of the build alternatives are a consideration. The 20-year maintenance costs of the Four-Lane Undivided Alternative are estimated at \$3.4 million more than the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes. (See Table 4.10 in the FEIS for a complete list of estimated costs.)

**Community Impacts.** All of the corridor communities would experience some positive effects from implementation of any of the build alternatives through improved community transitions, improved accesses to businesses, strengthened connections between communities, improved community identity through entry features and improved signage, and improved pedestrian and bicycle movements within communities. While differences in impacts among the alternatives in Havre, Harlem, and Fort Belknap are relatively minor and are not anticipated to result in business or residential

relocations/acquisitions, impacts in Chinook would be much greater under the four-lane alternatives. Wider shoulders and an improved clear zone would improve traffic operations and safety for residents, travelers, police, fire protection, and emergency ambulance services.

The adverse effects from implementing the build alternatives relate to right-of-way acquisition and the extent of these impacts are generally proportional to the width of alternative.

**Environmental Impacts.** The extent of the impacts on cultural resources, wetlands, floodplains, and hazardous material sites is generally proportional to the width of the alternatives, and therefore, the two-lane alternatives would have fewer environmental impacts than the four-lane alternatives. The impacts on wetlands are especially important because federal law requires a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). The COE can only permit an alternative that satisfies the project purpose and need with the least amount of impact to wetlands. The COE was consulted on this project and recognizes that the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative has safety advantages over the Improved Two-Lane Alternative. Because of the safety advantages and the small difference in impact on waters of the U.S., both two-lane alternatives would satisfy the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines, and a Section 404 permit could be provided for either of the two-lane alternatives. (See Table 4.19 in the FEIS for a comparison of wetland impacts for all alternatives.)

**Section 4(f) Impacts.** Section 4(f) of the 1966 Department of Transportation Act prohibits FHWA from approving the use of land from a significant publicly owned public park, recreation area, or wildlife or waterfowl refuge, or any significant historic site unless a determination is made that (1) there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of land from the property and (2) the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property. There are several Section 4(f) resources in the project area that will be affected by this project. The two-lane alternatives would result in the least harm to Section 4(f) resources, as described in the following section.

## **SECTION 4(F) EVALUATION**

No public parks, wildlife refuges, recreational areas, or trails would be impacted by the Selected Alternative, and therefore no Section 4(f) evaluation is required for these resources.

Sixteen historic resources are located in the project area that are either listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Properties (NRHP). Each of these resources was evaluated for potential impacts under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, as amended.

The two-lane alternatives, including the Selected Alternative, would result in Section 4(f) use of five historic sites, potentially two historic bridges (if they are not adopted by other owners), and potentially one additional historic site (if regrading near the access requires incorporation of some of the site into the highway right-of-way). The five historic sites

that would result in Section 4(f) use are sites 24BL1541, the Vincent Pefaur Farmstead; 24BL1542, the Knute and Ardele Kulbeck Farmstead; 24BL838, the Harlem-Snake Butte Railroad; 24BL1351(24BL943) the Harlem Canal; and 24BL1573/24HL1128, US Highway 2. The three sites with potential Section 4(f) use are 24HL1133, Sunset Drive-In Theater; 24BL981(24BL1050), Lodge Creek Bridge; and 24BL1731, Fifteen Mile Creek Bridge.

The impact to Section 4(f) properties was greater for the four-lane alternatives because additional sites were impacted. An evaluation of the impacts for all alternatives is presented in Appendix I, Section 4(f) Evaluation, in the FEIS. Avoidance alternatives and measures to minimize harm are also discussed in Appendix I. As noted in the evaluation, the selection of the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative minimized impacts because it resulted in fewer Section 4(f) impacts than the four-lane alternatives. There is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of land from the historic sites, and this action includes all possible planning to minimize harm.

### **MITIGATION AND MEASURES TO MINIMIZE HARM**

All practicable measures to avoid or minimize harm from the Selected Alternative have been incorporated into the design of the alternative. Mitigation measures to minimize harm to the environment are discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of the FEIS and are summarized below.

Safety, land use, environmental justice, and cumulative impacts require no mitigation and have been eliminated from the following list:

#### ***Transportation Conditions***

- Ensure reasonable access to landowners and businesses along US 2.
- Develop Access Management Plan.

#### ***Socioeconomic Conditions***

- Roadway alignment will be designed to take a narrow, linear strip and avoid fragmenting the farmland parcels as much as possible.
- Replace existing culverts to maintain existing size and flow requirements. Operators of irrigation districts will be contacted for flow requirements on their ditches during final design.
- To mitigate longitudinal impacts on ditches, MDT will make every reasonable effort to relocate the facilities along the new roadway alignment and maintain the capacity of the original ditch.
- Right-of-way minimization will be considered during final design particularly at those residential and commercial structures outside the construction limits (identified in Tables 4.5 and 4.9 in Chapter 4 of the FEIS). Other mitigation measures to be assessed during final design include reconfiguring the access to a property, steepening the side slopes adjacent to the roadway or constructing a retaining wall, or shifting the alignment. The right-of-way acquisition process will follow the *Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970*, as amended.



- Consultations for easements within railroad right-of-way will be undertaken with Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF).
- Impacted fences, including livestock pens, will be relocated in consultation with the property owner. Property owners with impacted stockpases will be consulted during final design to continue this use as needed.
- Utility relocations will be coordinated with the utility companies. Temporary disruptions to utility services will be minimized through coordination with local utility providers.

### ***Environmental Conditions***

- MDT will use its Adopt-a-Bridge program to try to identify new owners for historic bridges. If new owners cannot be identified, MDT will remove the bridges to avoid safety and liability concerns.
- Shifting the alignment without impacting safety may be possible at two impacted receptors as mitigation for noise. See Table 4.17 in the FEIS. These mitigation measures will be investigated during final design.
- MDT will follow BMPs for winter maintenance operations to reduce the potential for water quality impacts resulting from maintenance activities. BMPs include increased use of chemical deicers and decreased use of sand, and post-winter sand removal from the roadway with mechanized pick-up brooms.
- Coordination with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) regarding total maximum daily load (TMDL) development for impaired water bodies will be conducted during final design. In addition, the applicability of sediment traps and vegetative filters near streams and wetlands will be considered during final design.
- MDT will continue consultation with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) on issues including riparian habitat enhancement and wetland development and river modifications at bridge crossings.
- MDT will also coordinate with MFWP to obtain a SPA 124 permit under the Montana Stream Protection Act for projects that may affect the bed or banks of any stream in Montana. This consultation will include consideration for revegetation of stream banks during final design.
- If private ground water wells or public water supplies are within the final right-of-way, they will be relocated as necessary.
- Unavoidable wetland losses will be mitigated with replacement wetlands. Additional wetland avoidance and minimization measures will be studied during final design. MDT will prepare a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) including the identification of BMPs. A wetland mitigation plan will be developed for the COE 404 Permit prior to construction. At that time, coordination and consultation will be

conducted with the Montana Interagency Wetlands Group and other appropriate agencies. This would include consultation with MFWP on issues including riparian habitat enhancement and wetland development at bridge crossings. During final design, additional design measures to reduce impacts to jurisdictional wetlands P, Q, V, Y, Z, and Ax (see Table 3.17 in FEIS) will be investigated.

- Clearing and grubbing of vegetation outside the construction area will be limited to that needed to construct the project. All disturbed areas will be revegetated with desirable species as soon as practical.
- A Notice of Intent (EPA – storm water), and PSA (agreement) with the Fort Peck Tribe will be necessary.
- Bridges will be rechecked for cliff swallow nesting activity closer to the start of construction. If bridges are to be removed during the cliff swallow nesting period, cliff swallow nests will be removed prior to the nesting period and efforts will be undertaken to ensure that new nests are not established prior to removal of the old structure.
- The opportunity to reduce wild animal crashes by facilitating wildlife movement at major bridge locations will be investigated during final design. MDT will also continue to consult with MFWP on this issue during final design.
- Clear Creek Bridge will be replaced with a structure capable of fish passage. The structure will be sized appropriately based on hydraulic design.
- Fish passage will be provided at Red Rock Creek (Coulee).
- Floodplain Development Permits administered by Hill and Blaine Counties will be required for floodplain encroachment throughout the corridor prior to construction.
- Design of the Selected Alternative will be in compliance with Federal-Aid Highway Program Manual (FHPM) 6-7-3-2 “Location and Hydraulic Design of Encroachments on Flood Plains” (23 CFR 650A) and Executive Order 11988 Floodplain Management.
- All work will be performed in accordance with state and federal guidelines regarding water quality and permit conditions
- Structures will be designed to minimize disruption of stream hydrology or permanent alterations of stream banks.
- Bridge spans will be designed following FHWA, MDT, and 23 CFR 650A guidelines and requirements. Bridge openings will be designed to span active channels and minimize floodplain impacts. Further, bridge openings will be designed to minimize scour and avoid sediment deposition above stream crossings.
- Culverts will be designed to accommodate fish passage at all crossings with known fisheries species as documented by MFWP.

- Impacted storage tanks will be moved to locations away from the right-of-way. Inactive petroleum storage tanks will be closed according to applicable regulations. Leaking underground storage tanks will be monitored for presence of contaminants. Soils contaminated with petroleum/oils will be mitigated by direct disposal or an on-site application (land farming). Disposal of contaminated soils will be in compliance with applicable federal, state and local regulations. Tank removal permits will be obtained from MDEQ, and all work will be undertaken in accordance with permit conditions.
- If excavation occurs north of the existing right-of-way, additional soil testing/investigation will identify potential contamination associated with railroad loading facilities. Additional investigation may be needed if the Selected Alternative includes removal or excavation on existing or abandoned farmsteads. Impacted electrical substations and transformers will be surveyed for releases of PCB-contaminates.
- Bridges with potential lead-containing paints or treated timbers will be disposed of in accordance with regulations.
- Industrial sites (e.g. the abandoned Diamond Asphalt Refinery) containing hazardous materials will undergo additional soil testing. A remediation/reclamation plan, if needed, will be developed in consultation with MDEQ and the counties.
- All structures slated for relocation or demolition will be inspected for asbestos by a state-licensed inspector. A National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) Demolition/Renovation Notification form will be filed with MDEQ for all relocated or demolished structures.
- Existing vegetation will be retained wherever possible. Road cuts and fill slopes will be graded and revegetated as necessary to blend with surroundings. Bridges will be low to the water and as horizontal in design as feasible, and meet hydraulic design requirements.

**Section 4(f) Resources:** For the Selected Alternative, mitigation for the adverse effect on one NRHP-eligible site was developed in consultation with the SHPO. MDT and FHWA developed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the SHPO for the effects on site 24BL1541, the Vincent Pefaur Farmstead. The MOA includes HABS-level documentation of the Vincent Pefaur Farmstead and the installation of an historical marker near the site. See Appendix I, Section 4(f) Evaluation, in the FEIS for the MOA. The following measures to minimize harm for all impacted Section 4(f) sites are detailed in Appendix I of the FEIS and include using MDT's Adopt-a-Bridge program for historic bridges, and investigating the applicability of design measures such as lowering the grade to minimize side slopes, steepening side slopes, adding guardrail, and minimizing right-of-way.

### ***Construction Mitigation***

- Improvements will be constructed in compliance with conditions of water quality permits and BMPs.

- Property owners will be notified early of construction activities in order to address potential construction impacts to property access and business operations.
- Construction will be phased to maintain two lanes of traffic and uninterrupted side road access to the greatest extent practicable.
- MDT will coordinate with emergency service providers and schools to solicit input into the construction traffic management plan and to provide ongoing information during construction.
- Mitigation will include maintenance of sidewalks and pavement to the extent feasible and provide pedestrian signage as needed during construction.
- Provide early notification and coordination with:
  - property owners, businesses and utilities of construction activities to address potential construction impacts.
  - farmers to address potential impacts during roadway construction and to schedule construction, where feasible, to minimize disruption to farming activities.
  - irrigation districts and ditch companies to address potential impacts to facilities during construction and irrigation ditch relocations. Reasonable measures will be taken to avoid disruption of irrigation activities, such as scheduling construction/relocation of a facility when it is not being used. Impacted irrigation canals and ditches will be relocated in consultation with ditch owners to minimize impacts to farming operations.
- If cultural material is unexpectedly encountered during ground-disturbing activities in the corridor, construction will cease immediately, and the Montana SHPO and a qualified archaeologist will be consulted to evaluate the significance of the cultural artifacts.
- Mitigation will include compliance with the Montana Administrative Rules to control emission of airborne particulate matter, implementation of measures identified by MDEQ permit, and the use of BMPs (e.g. the frequent use of water or other wetting agent to suppress particulate matter).
- Contractors will adhere to local ordinances to minimize noise impacts during construction. Advance notice of construction will be provided to area businesses and residences to minimize impact on community activities.
- There will be no unnecessary operation of equipment within the channels of any creeks or rivers in the project area.
- The contractor will be responsible for re-establishing vegetation in staging areas outside the construction limits. To reduce the spread of noxious weeds during construction, the contractor should clean equipment and trucks of contaminated soil or noxious weed seeds before moving from noxious weed infested areas to areas free of noxious weeds.

- Storage and use of fuel, petroleum products or deleterious materials will be done according to MDT standard specifications or as otherwise permitted.
- Alteration or disturbance of the bank and bank vegetation at Clear Creek, Red Rock Creek (Coulee), and the Milk River will be limited to that necessary to construct the project. All disturbed areas will be protected from erosion using BMPs. Banks will be revegetated with desirable species.
- If power lines are constructed or modified during construction they will be raptor-proofed in accordance with MDT policies. Location of active bald eagle nesting trees, if any, will be verified by a biologist close to the start of construction, and, if needed, appropriate measures will be coordinated with USFWS.
- Disturbed stream banks will be revegetated to reduce erosion. The contractor will be required to follow all state and federal guidelines regarding water quality, including applicable regulations under the Federal Clean Water Act of 1977, as amended (e.g. 404 Permit) and specific requirements of the Montana SPA 124 Permit. Other requirements may include the Floodplain and Roadway Management Act, Section 402/MPDES permit, a SWPPP, and any other laws or regulations that may apply to the project. Contractor will utilize current BMPs.
- The construction contractor will be required to comply with permit requirements for storage of fuel, petroleum products or deleterious materials and for management of unintended hazardous materials releases.
- Necessary construction permits include, but are not limited to those identified under Section 5.0 of the FEIS.

### **COMMENTS ON THE FEIS**

A Notice of Availability (NOA) of the FEIS was published in the *Federal Register* on October 8, 2004. A press release announcing the availability of the FEIS was sent to the *Great Falls Tribune*, the *Havre Daily News*, the *Blaine County Journal News Opinion*, and radio stations in the project corridor. A newsletter announcing the availability of the FEIS was mailed to those on the project mailing list. This information was also made available through the project website.

The FEIS was available for a 39-day public review period beginning October 8, 2004 and ending November 15, 2004. The FEIS was distributed for review to the federal, state, and local agencies listed in Chapter 7 of the FEIS, to the Citizens Advisory Committee, and to members of the public at their request. The FEIS was made available for the public review period at the viewing locations listed in Chapter 7 of the FEIS.

Sixteen comments were received from the general public and reviewing agencies during the public review period. These comments and responses to these comments are included in Attachment A.



# Attachment A: Final EIS Comments

No.	Affiliation	Date	Form	Comment	Response
1	U.S. EPA	10/28/04	Letter	<p>The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region VIII Montana Office has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the US 2, Havre to Fort Belknap, Hill and Blaine Counties, Montana project, as well as the Montana Dept. of Transportation's September 20, 2004 response to EPA's DEIS comments.</p> <p>The EPA is pleased that the Montana Dept. of Transportation (MDT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have identified the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative, as the preferred alternative instead of a four-lane facility. As noted in our DEIS comments EPA believes that the improved two-lane alternatives fulfill the project purpose and need with fewer adverse environmental impacts than a four-lane facility, and existing and future traffic volumes do not warrant a four-lane facility. The two-lane alternatives are also substantially less costly than the four-lane alternatives, and an economic analysis referenced in the DEIS reported that capacity improvements to U.S. 2 (i.e., four lane alternatives) were unlikely to induce development and create substantial growth in the economy of the area, nor were they likely to offer improvement to the regions economy or potential for future growth any more than the improved two-lane alternatives.</p> <p>We appreciate receiving responses to our DEIS comments, and thank you for providing improved analysis and discussion of wildlife passage, connectivity and fragmentation, and clarifying that the preferred alternative will not require construction of a bridge at Battle Creek, and thus, will avoid disturbance to Battle Creek riparian areas (-Battle Creek is a water quality limited, 303(d) listed stream). We also appreciate the additional analysis and discussion of air quality impacts.</p> <p>We do have some concerns regarding potential roadway construction impacts to water quality and habitat, including wetlands, and impacts to wildlife connectivity and fragmentation, but understand that proposed mitigation will avoid, minimize, and compensate for impacts as much as possible. We appreciate inclusion of a draft 404(b)(1) analysis in the EIS, and want to emphasize the importance of development of a detailed wetland mitigation plan during final project design.</p> <p>The EPA appreciates the opportunity to review and comment during the NEPA process. If you have any questions please contact Mr. Steve Potts of my staff in Helena at (406) 457-5022 or in Missoula at (406) 329-3313, or via e-mail at potts.stephen@epa.gov. Thank you for your consideration.</p>	Comments noted.



<i>No.</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Response</i>
2	Montana SHPO	10/19/04	Letter	<p>This is to acknowledge receipt of the final EIS on the US 2 Havre to Fort Belknap highway project. This office has no further comments to make on this undertaking.</p> <p>If you have further questions of us, you may call me at (406) 444-0388, or email <a href="mailto:jwarhank@state.mt.us">jwarhank@state.mt.us</a>.</p>	Comments noted.



<i>No.</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Response</i>
3	Fort Belknap Indian Community	11/12/04	Letter	<p>[1] Please accept the following as our comments regarding Phase 1 of the US 2 Havre - Fort Belknap Final EIS. The Fort Belknap Indian Community has supported the concept of a four lane highway along the present route of US 2 since S[enate] B[ill] 3's introduction, and continue to support this project.</p> <p>The concept of a four lane highway across Montana has been called a vision and or dream of many Montanans. However this is how many projects start out.</p> <p>We support the 4 lane concept for the potential economic development activities which would require a transportation system that would accommodate such activity, the ever expanding tourism market on the Hi-Line, the increase in agricultural activity, and for health &amp; safety reasons.</p> <p>We strongly agree with the purpose and need for the project as developed by the CAC and DEA &amp; Assoc. which are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide an efficient highway to support economic vitality.</li> <li>- Reduce roadway deficiencies.</li> <li>- Improve safety.</li> <li>- Improve traffic operations.</li> </ul> <p>Enhance Economic Development:</p> <p>[2] 80% of the Companies locate in or near communities that have a Four Lane Highway or better.</p> <p>[3] To Enhance Economic Development in each Community the 4 For 2 project is necessary in order to improve and maintain Economic Viability in the Region. Regional Economic Viability is defined as the utilization and availability of resources and infrastructures that allow the communities and the region to maintain its competitive standing in relation to similar surrounding communities or regions. Attributes of an area that contribute to its Economic Viability include adequate transportation in and out of the communities and the region, as well as public services, energy, water supplies and skilled labor. A good, safe and efficient highway system is especially important in the #2 Corridor, as rural areas are almost solely dependent upon the highway system to meet the needs for Agriculture, Industry, Commerce and Tourism, which is the basis of the overall well-being of the area. 4 For 2 would make communities eligible for site consideration by the vast majority of companies in the manufacturing and processing industries as these companies look to locate or relocate. It must be emphasized; they will come only if there is an adequate Transportation System.</p> <p>[4] Value Added Agriculture:</p>	<p>[1] Comments noted.</p> <p>[2] Section 1.1 of the Existing Economic Conditions Report discusses the ongoing disagreement among current research regarding the economic effects of highway investments. One line of thought contends that new highways create economic development; another line of thought contends that highways are necessary but not sufficient for economic development; and a third line of thought contends that highway development has little impact on economic growth. Studies have been conducted supporting each of these positions (several of which are cited in the Existing Economic Conditions Report), and the matter is a source of ongoing debate. No source or citation was provided for this statement, and we are unable to evaluate the statement in relation to other research.</p> <p>[3] The economic study conducted for this EIS examined the reliance of proposed initiatives in the project area on the highway system. Many of the initiatives were found to have a high reliance on US 2 and to have a need for safety and operational improvements to US 2. Very few initiatives would benefit from capacity improvements such as additional travel lanes. Proposed improvements under the Selected Alternative will provide a safe and efficient highway to serve communities, industry, agriculture, and tourism.</p> <p>[4] Comment noted.</p> <p>[5] Comment noted.</p> <p>[6] Comment noted.</p> <p>[7] The purpose of this EIS is to analyze highway improvements to the segment of US 2 between Havre and Fort Belknap within the state of Montana. As noted in response to Point 1 of Comment 9 on the FEIS, the 45-mile scope of this EIS was chosen in consultation with local officials and in response to factors related to funding, federal stipulations, and existing projects planned on US 2. The Montana Highway Reconfiguration Study includes analysis of the economic impacts of widening US 2 from border to border in Montana.</p> <p>[8] Information on traffic counts was provided in</p>





**No. Affiliation Date Form Comment**

The #2 Corridor is an Agricultural Area. Adding Value is an Industry that is virtually untapped in the corridor. It has great potential. By Adding Value to Ag Production means a greater piece of the pie stays locally, if it turns over 7 times as they say, is a real stimulus. The product could be shipped by truck or by rail thus creating competition in an area where the highest freight rates exist.

The U.S. and Canada are the largest trading partners in the world, over half a billion in business every day. With the advent of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Commerce will continue to grow. As we know US Hwy #2, traverses the border, and is an important trade route.

[5] Homeland Security:

US Hwy #2 as it traverses the longest border in the U.S. There has been a dramatic increase in Immigration Officers and Border Patrolmen thus creating more traffic. President Eisenhower authorized the construction of the Interstate System to enhance the movement of the Military in the event of an attack. 4 for 2 is important to having a strong Military in the nation, with bases in Minot and Great Falls, as well as National Guard Facilities located through out.

[6] We support the comments and concerns of the Highway #2 Association Board of Directors of which we are members, some of which are:

- The Highway 2 Association supports 4 lanes on US 2 across the entire State of Montana.
- The Highway 2 Association wholly supports the 4-lanes on US 2 from Havre to Fort Belknap along with the MT/WY Tribal Leader's Council recommendation in their August of 2004 meeting.
- [7] In dealing with any economic impacts, the corridor should be analyzed between Seattle and Minneapolis to give a clearer picture of economic potential in the impacted area. Not simply a 40-mile section of the corridor.
- [8] MDT and DEA should include in the EIS - traffic counts taken before the Eisenhower Interstate construction began to verify changes in traffic patterns on US 2, I-90, and I-94.
- [9] The funding issue should be stricken from the EIS based on the fact that funding is the second step in the overall process and it does not belong in the EIS.
- [10] The Cooper Report, as revised on 6/6/2004, needs to be incorporated into the EIS. With the exception of where the Cooper Report makes reference to the Indian communities in the study area should be inclusive of everyone in the study area.
- [11] The results of Bainville to Troy Poll conducted by the Highway 2 Association should be included in the EIS.

**Response**

Appendix K of the FEIS (see DEIS comment 17, point 3, pages 31-32 of 56). There are only two years prior to 1976 for which traffic volume data are available for both US 2 and I-94: 1961 and 1971. These numbers show similar traffic volumes on the two highways in 1971 and approximately 30% higher volumes on US 2 than I-94 in 1961. No discernable decrease in US 2 traffic volumes resulted from completion of the east-west Interstate system through Montana in 1986.

[9] As discussed in the Project Funding sections of Chapters 3 and 4 of the EIS, funding for the cost difference between four-lane and two-lane improvements must be federal funding that does not require state matching funds, per Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 60-2-133. Most federal highway money requires a state match, and therefore a special appropriation from Congress would be needed to fund the four-lane improvements. This type of funding is uncertain at this time. In contrast, the two-lane alternatives are eligible for several funding sources and therefore have more opportunity to be implemented in the near term. Cost and funding can affect the ability to implement a project, and therefore this information is disclosed in the EIS. The information on cost and funding, although important, is only one of many factors considered by FHWA and MDT in selecting a preferred alternative on any roadway project.

[10] The abstract from "A Critical Review of the U.S. 2, Havre to Fort Belknap, Montana EIS Existing Economic Conditions Report Final Document, June 2003" written by Cooper Consulting Company was included as DEIS comment 16 in Appendix K of the FEIS. The entirety of the Critical Review is incorporated into the EIS by reference.

[11] The referenced Bainville to Troy poll was included in Appendix K of the FEIS as an attachment to DEIS comment 17 (page 33 of 56).

[12] The Selected Alternative would include two lanes with a center turn lane through Chinook.

[13] Comments noted.



<i>No.</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Response</i>
				<p>- [12] Consideration should be given to temporarily postpone 4-lane construction through the City of Chinook included in the study area until special needs and problems are addressed and resolved by the citizens of the City of Chinook within the construction period.</p> <p>[13] Additionally the following comments about an expanded 4 lane highway system on the Hi-line are supported by the Fort Belknap Indian Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Montana State University - Northern provides financial impacts to the communities</li> <li>b. Border Stations provide financial impacts to the communities</li> <li>c. Homeland Security</li> <li>d. Farm, Ranch and Community Safety</li> <li>e. Opens options for commerce between Canada and the US</li> <li>f. Aggressive efforts to develop a 24-hour Border Station at Wildhorse, north of Havre</li> <li>g. Provide an efficient highway to support economic vitality</li> <li>h. Reduce roadway deficiencies</li> <li>i. Improve highway safety</li> <li>j. Improve traffic flow operations</li> <li>k. Infrastructure development</li> <li>l. Enhances options for oil and gas industry</li> <li>m. Provides an alternate trucking corridor to markets for commerce</li> <li>n. Enhance efficiency for emergency services on the hi-line</li> <li>o. Enhance movement of military personnel and equipment across the hi-line</li> <li>p. To Enhance the tourism industry</li> <li>q. To Enhance the Dinosaur Trail</li> </ul> <p>[14] Additional reasons to support a 4 lane highway:</p> <p>The global economy: if the Hi-Line is to be a player in the global economy in regard to their beef, wheat, oil, and natural gas there must be a good transportation network.</p> <p>Mix &amp; match alternatives: We support the concept of a four lane divided section in the rural areas and to narrow down to 2-3 lanes where needed for example through towns.</p> <p>The 4-lane highway concept would increase the economy of the area.</p> <p>Better Medical Services to the Hi-Line.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments for consideration in regard to the FEIS.</p>	[14] Comments noted.



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4	USFWS	11/12/04	Email	<p>I believe you should be receiving a letter with consolidated Dept. of Interior comments from the Departmental office in Wash. DC. As far as this office is concerned, we were satisfied with the document and generally do not issue letters of comment on FEISs unless we have substantial concerns.</p> <p>So, there likely would be "no comment" from the USFWS, and that is what we told the Interior Dept. when they requested our comments. I can't speak for the other DOI agencies, but I would be surprised if you would receive any comments from them on this project. Please let me know if you have questions.</p>	Comments noted.
5	MDEQ	11/15/04	Email	DEQ has no further comments on the Havre to Fort Belknap EIS.	Comment noted.



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6	Marvin Presser	10/19/04	Letter	<p>[1] This letter is in reference to the proposed rebuilding of Highway 2 from Havre to Fort Belknap. I understand that the final EIS favors a two-lane highway.</p> <p>[2] I couldn't disagree more with that decision. There can't be a great deal of difference in environmental concerns between an improved two-lane with passing lanes and a divided four-lane highway. But the long-term effect of not building the first four-lane segment of U.S. Highway 2 will be huge!</p> <p>[3] In the printed announcement I received (Final EIS Available for Public Review) there is a heading which states that a two-lane is the "preferred alternative". My question is: preferred by whom? Certainly not by the folks in Havre or along the Hi-Line.</p> <p>[4] We don't have to reinvent the wheel in regards to the benefits of a divided four-lane highway compared to two lanes. Our neighbors to the east in North Dakota already have the information we need. They are currently in the process of rebuilding U.S. Highway 2 from Minot to the Montana border. When this segment is completed, U.S. 2 will be divided four lanes completely across their state. They know the positive economic impact this is having and will have on their state.</p> <p>Why is it that the information they have and the decisions they are making so different in Montana? I am asking that the Montana DOT please reconsider their decision.</p>	<p>[1] The preferred alternative as presented in the FEIS was the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative.</p> <p>[2] Table S-1 in the Summary and Chapter 4 of the FEIS describe the differences in impacts among the proposed alternatives. Please also see the summary of impacts listed under "Factors in the Decision Process" in this Record of Decision. The four-lane alternatives would have much greater impacts on farmlands, business displacements, right-of-way acquisition, cultural and historic resources, wetlands, floodplains, and Section 4(f) resources.</p> <p>[3] FHWA is the decision-making agency for federal highway projects. FHWA, in conjunction with MDT, selected the Improved Two-Lane with Passing Lanes Alternative for this project based on the information presented in the EIS. The Record of Decision explains the decision-making process for the project.</p> <p>[4] The Final EIS for the North Dakota US 2 project - United States Highway 2, US Highway 85 to West of US Highway 52, Williams, Mountrail, and Ward Counties, North Dakota, Final Environmental Impact Statement/Section 4(f) Evaluation - is available for review on the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) website at: <a href="http://www.state.nd.us/dot/projects/ushwy2.html">http://www.state.nd.us/dot/projects/ushwy2.html</a>. The EIS does not cite any economic studies assessing the impacts of a four-lane highway in the project area. The economic impacts section of the EIS states that North Dakota's highway system is "pivotal in enabling economic growth" and that "a safe and reliable US 2 is an important component in supporting the economy of northwestern North Dakota." The impacts analysis does not, however, state that a four-lane highway would create economic growth in the project area.</p>



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7	R.F. Johnson	10/13/04	Letter	<p>It is my opinion if the Hwy Dept. can only afford what has been proposed in the way of construction the Dept. should forget the whole project. Money now spent is questionable in regard of the new guardrails. Money spend should be used only to keep the highway in excellent shape. There is no use spending money on a half *** project as now proposed.</p>	<p>The proposed project will provide a greatly improved and safer highway between Havre and Fort Belknap. Maintaining the existing highway without improvements would not meet the project purpose and need to improve safety, correct roadway deficiencies, improve traffic operations, and provide an efficient highway to support economic vitality.</p>
8	David McKinney	10/15/04	Letter	<p>My name is David McKinney. If you looked at my return address and are still reading, I thank you.</p> <p>First let me tell you that I am born and raised in Havre, and that after my incarceration ends, I'll return to Havre. Also I would like to say that I understand your dilemma in deciding what to do with Highway 2. It's hard for me to comment on what economic growth could be brought to the hi-line with a 4-lane highway, because I'm not educated in that area. I can only assume.</p> <p>What I can comment on, as a survivor of the type of highway you intend to install in place of a 4-lane. My wife was killed on the exact type of highway - expanded 2-lane with passing lanes - you plan to put between Havre and Fort Belknap. I and my family drive Highway 2 a lot since our family is spread from Malta to Shelby. My uncle died on that same piece of road from Havre to Chinook. As I've driven that road there seems to be a high volume of traffic. The only fact or data I have to justify asking you to spend the 34 million dollars difference you would save on the 2-lane, is the amount of life that has been lost on that road. I once counted the crosses from North Dakota to Havre. I came up with triple digits. The exact number escapes my memory. But I am sure if you or Mr. Galt had multiple family members remembered with some of those crosses you'd be more willing to spend that extra money to put in a 4-lane highway. I don't mean to come off harsh. I just want my point felt. Don't you also feel 34 million is a small sum to pay to save multiple lives? Thank you for taking the time [to] read my opinion. I only hope it changes someone's mind.</p>	<p>Safety is one of the primary goals of this project, as described in the project purpose and need. The Selected Alternative will provide 8-foot shoulders, improved clear zones, flatter side slopes, greater separation from the railroad, and turn lanes. All of these measures will improve safety on the highway and contribute to decreasing the accident rate.</p>



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9	Donald R. Bob Hellinger	10/7/04	Letter	<p>[1] I don't think your EIS study was worth doing! First of [all] you had a preconceived idea that it had to confirm. Such as, you limited it to that one small stretch of US 2. It should have studied the effect it would have on the entire route. In other words, just widening a bridge won't increase the capacity of a highway.</p> <p>[2] Why is it that North Dakota can see the importance of US 2, but Montana can't? Is it the difference in Governors, or the fact that there are more votes in the southern parts of the state?</p> <p>Believe it or not, the voters of Northern Montana will be watching! We may have to change things in Helena, but that can be done!</p>	<p>[1] The EIS was prepared in accordance with federal guidelines under the National Environmental Policy Act. Each alternative was analyzed to determine its impacts on transportation, social, economic, and environmental resources. The conclusions reached in the EIS were a result of this process.</p> <p>The limits for this project were chosen in consultation with local officials. The 45-mile scope of the project (as opposed to a border-to-border study of US 2 in Montana) was based on available funding, federal stipulations attached to that funding, and scheduled projects on segments of US 2. The Montana Highway Reconfiguration Study was initiated in 2001 to examine the economic impacts of widening Montana's two-lane highways; the reconfiguration study includes analysis of US 2 from border to border in Montana.</p> <p>[2] According to the FEIS published for the North Dakota US 2 project between Minot and Williston, the 1977 North Dakota Legislative Assembly passed a one-cent increase in the state gasoline tax to assure the state would have adequate finances for needed highway improvements. Montana Governor Martz signed Senate Bill 3 into law in 2001 (MCA 60-2-133). This law requires the state to seek federal aid that does not require a state match and prohibits the state from spending funds on a four-lane for US 2 if it would jeopardize other highway projects. Montana has sought special federal funding for the four-laning of US 2 every year since then; thus far, Montana has received two earmarks of special federal funding which are funding the EIS between Havre and Fort Belknap.</p>
10	Mary Sue Davis	10/12/04	Phone	<p>She wanted MDT to know that the decision we made to pick the two-lane with passing lanes was a good one. Montana is beautiful the way it is. A lot of people come to Montana to get away from city life and freeways and to enjoy the open spaces. To have picked a four-lane would make it look like a big city.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>



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11	Maryle Lynn Pester	10/8/04	Email	<p>It seems to me that to put a 4-lane highway across the Northern part of Montana is unnecessary and much too expensive. We live on the Hi-line and can see no real advantage but do see one disadvantage. Four-lane highways require exit ramps for traffic to go into towns along the highway. People that would drive into a small town, as the highway now is, probably would not bother to pull off the 4-lane highway to come into a small town. That is what we have along the Northern part of the State of Montana, small towns.</p> <p>However, we do need improvements to our 2-lane highway, as are being planned.</p>	Comments noted.
12	Lynn and Rhonda Minnick	10/12/04	Email	<p>My wife travels the road from Havre to Chinook 5 days a week for work. The traffic is heavy, dangerous and slow moving. We had to use a bridge on the Milk river built for Model T's till some accident made the department do something new.</p> <p>[1] As I understand the project would take 73 million for two lanes and over 100 million for 4 lanes. Some think we would save 27 million, but just as the bridge was built for Model T's, a two-lane is old thinking and we would spend money to take out the 73 million we put in at a later date. Our Home Land Security needs a good road for border protection.</p> <p>[2] Do whatever length we could for 73 million at 4 lanes. Then, we would have an investment to the future and not a liability to be taken out in the future. We would have a start and could build on the future.</p> <p>I feel we are doomed to throw 73 million at a project that would forever stop a 4-lane across Northern Montana.</p> <p>My uncle would come home hungry at night and when my aunt had nothing ready he would be upset. Then she found out that by setting the table, even if there was no supper cooking, he felt something was getting done. A short piece of good road would be a start.</p>	<p>[1] The typical design life for a highway construction project is 20 years, after which time the facility is assumed to require reconstruction or major rehabilitation.</p> <p>[2] Constructing a four-lane standard on a portion of the highway between Havre and Fort Belknap would provide safety and operational improvements to a portion of the project corridor while neglecting the remainder of the corridor. As stated in the Project Funding section of the FEIS, an overall four-lane standard for this project could not be built without reasonable confidence that the unique type of funding needed to complete the overall project would be secured for all final phases. If a portion of the corridor were built to a four-lane standard, and additional funding could not be obtained for the remainder of the project, part of the corridor would not receive any highway improvements and the project purpose and need would no longer be fulfilled.</p>



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13	W.A. & Gail Rader	11/6/04	Letter	<p>We are writing you to again plead, beg and implore you to not give up the "4 for 2" Highway for Highway #2 construction. We have been given a million reasons to NOT do this and now, that the election is finally over, think we might have a chance. The Hi-Line residents never did want an elaborate over-sized super sized highway, merely 4 lanes to make it a safe and reasonable road on which to travel. It is certainly only a rational route from St. Paul to Seattle, very much as the railroad was. This would seem particularly true when tourism has become the only "environmentally &amp; economically" business for Montana to have, whether northern route or southern.</p> <p>Please, please do not give up on this. The expensive EIS survey and documents seemed to only try and persuade all of us to quit trying and we are not going to do that. If the Federal Government can spend more than \$15 billion on that Boston mess, they surely could afford to spend some on north central Montana and we are still a part of Montana.</p>	Comments noted.
14	EJ Bud Baldwin	9/29/04	Comment Sheet	<p>[Comment received after comment period for the DEIS, but before release of the FEIS]</p> <p>It is extremely important that the US 2, Havre to Fort Belknap project not only be completed timely but also with regard to safety and economic enhancement to this area. It is apparent that this area of the state needs an economic boost. With the lack of bus service to our area and the concern that Amtrak service could be reduced or eliminated completely we at least need a better US 2 highway! Our North Dakota neighbors to our East understand the importance of a four lane highway and everyone in Montana should understand it as well. If it is built both tourist and truck traffic will increase. We might even get back some of the Canadian trade we have lost over the years. This will go a long way to improve the depressed economy along US 2.</p> <p>It should also be mentioned that a four-lane US 2 will remove some traffic from I-10 resulting in less maintenance cost for that highway.</p> <p>A four-lane US 2 between Havre and Fort Belknap is the place to start.</p>	Comments noted.





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15	Caroline Brown	11/12/04	Comment Sheet	<p>As an Individual resident along US Highway 2, and as a member of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, I am in support of the expansion of Highway 2 into a four lane highway for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved highway conditions and safety.</li> <li>2. Potential improvement for Economic Development, with increased traffic.</li> <li>3. Potential improvement for Tourism, with increased traffic.</li> <li>4. Potential increase in jobs, with increase in use of four-lane highway.</li> <li>5. Fort Belknap Indian Community is researching economic development projects which will require a considerable amount of truck transportation. A four-lane highway would make this more economically attractive.</li> <li>6. I agree with the statements provided by Fort Belknap Indian Community.</li> </ol>	Comments noted. The Selected Alternative will improve safety and traffic operations on US 2.
16	Two Rivers Economic Growth	11/10/04	Letter	<p>On behalf of the Highway 2 Association Board of Directors, and as Valley County's representative on the Board, I am submitting the following comments and concerns from the October 9, 2004 meeting held in Havre, Montana:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Highway 2 Association supports 4 lanes on US 2 across the entire State of Montana.</li> <li>2. The Highway 2 Association wholly supports the 4-lanes on US 2 from Havre to Fort Belknap along with the MT/WY Tribal Leader's Council's recommendation in their August of 2004 meeting.</li> <li>3. In dealing with any economic impacts, analyze the corridor between Seattle and Minneapolis to give a clearer picture of economic potential in the impacted area as opposed to a limited 45-mile section within the corridor.</li> <li>4. MDT and DEA should include in the FEIS - traffic counts taken before the Eisenhower Interstate construction began to verify changes in traffic patterns on US 2, I-90, and I-94.</li> <li>5. The funding issue should be stricken from the EIS because funding is the second step in the overall process and it does not belong in the EIS.</li> <li>6. The Cooper Report, as revised on 6/6/2004, needs to be incorporated into the EIS. With the exception of where the Cooper Report refers to the Indian communities in the study area, should be inclusive of everyone in the study area.</li> <li>7. The results of the Business Poll conducted by the Highway 2 Association from Bainville to Troy should be included in the EIS.</li> <li>8. Consideration should be given to temporarily postpone 4-lane</li> </ol>	Please see the response to Points 6 - 12 of Comment 3 on the FEIS from the Fort Belknap Indian Community.



<i>No.</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Response</i>
				<p>construction through each incorporated community and tribal government areas until special needs and problems are addressed and resolved within the construction time frame, in the study area. This should in no way effect or halt construction progress outside the incorporated entities.</p> <p>9. Consider temporarily postponing 4-lane construction through the City of Chinook included in the study area until special needs and problems are addressed and resolved by the citizens of the City of Chinook within the construction period, in the study area. This should in no way effect or halt construction progress outside the incorporated community of Chinook.</p> <p>10. Additionally - the following comments about an expanded 4-lane highway system on the Hi-Line are supported by the Highway 2 Association Board of Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a.) Montana State University - Northern provides financial impacts to the communities</li> <li>b.) Border Stations provide financial impacts to the communities</li> <li>c.) Homeland Security</li> <li>d.) Farm, Ranch, and Community Safety</li> <li>e.) Opens options for commerce between Canada and the US</li> <li>f.) Aggressive efforts to develop a 24-hour Border Station at Wildhorse, north of Havre</li> <li>g.) Provide an efficient highway to support economic vitality</li> <li>h.) Reduce roadway deficiencies</li> <li>i.) Improve highway safety</li> <li>j.) Improve traffic flow operations</li> <li>k.) Infrastructure development</li> <li>l.) Enhances options for oil and gas industry</li> <li>m.) Provides an alternative trucking corridor to markets for commerce</li> <li>n.) Enhance efficiency for emergency services on the hi-line</li> <li>o.) Enhance movement of military personnel and equipment across the hi-line</li> <li>p.) Enhance tourism</li> <li>q.) Enhance the Dinosaur Trail</li> </ul> <p>Thank you for your consideration of our concerns on these issues in regards to the proposed EIS.</p> <p>The Highway 2 Association Board of Directors in support of 4 lanes for US 2.</p>	