

Culbertson Corridor Planning Study

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

December 2011

Prepared for:

Montana Department of Transportation



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1.0 Introduction

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has initiated the process to develop the Culbertson Corridor Planning Study at the request from the Town of Culbertson. Due to considerable growth in the oil and gas industry in northeastern Montana, the Culbertson area has experienced an overwhelming increase in truck traffic and congestion through town. The Culbertson Corridor Planning Study will determine cost-effective ways to address transportation needs and safety concerns primarily on US Highway 2 (US-2) and Montana Highway 16 (MT-16).

MDT's Corridor Planning Process links transportation planning activities and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), as provided for in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Corridor planning studies are meant to provide information into any future NEPA/MEPA process, help advance viable improvement options into NEPA/MEPA, and provide opportunities for public involvement at all stages.

An initial step in conducting a corridor planning study is to develop a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) that identifies public involvement activities throughout the course of the study. The purpose of this PIP is to ensure a proactive public involvement process that provides opportunities for the public, stakeholders and resource agencies to be involved in all phases of the corridor study process. This is accomplished by providing complete information, timely public notice, opportunities for making comments, and ensuring full access to key decisions.

1.1 *Corridor Planning Study Purpose*

A corridor study analyzes existing data to determine current and future deficiencies and needs within the corridor, and identifies potential environmental issues and mitigation opportunities as projects are moved forward. Specifically, this study will address traffic and safety concerns on Highways US-2 and MT-16 in the study area including within the town of Culbertson. For this study, a number of public involvement strategies are proposed to reach the most people possible and elicit meaningful participation. Such opportunities will:

- Inform the public on the current and forecasted traffic conditions and the safety concerns that are associated with these conditions.
- Involve the public in the process of planning the US-2 and MT-16 corridors within Culbertson,
- Increase the public's ability to provide input and ask questions throughout the corridor planning study, and
- Present findings and update the public on short and long term improvement options.

1.2 *Study Area*

The study area encompasses a rectangular area around the Town of Culbertson. More specifically, the boundary includes a 4-mile segment of US-2 (between Reference Post (RP) 642.8 and RP 646.8) and a 4-mile segment of MT-16 (between RP 86.6 and RP 88.6 on N-22 and between RP 0 and RP 3 on N-62). Physical features within the study area include the Clover Creek, BNSF Railroad, airport, public school, parks, medical facility, and numerous other public and private properties. The study area boundary for the Culbertson Corridor Planning Study is shown in Figure 1.

DECEMBER 22, 2011

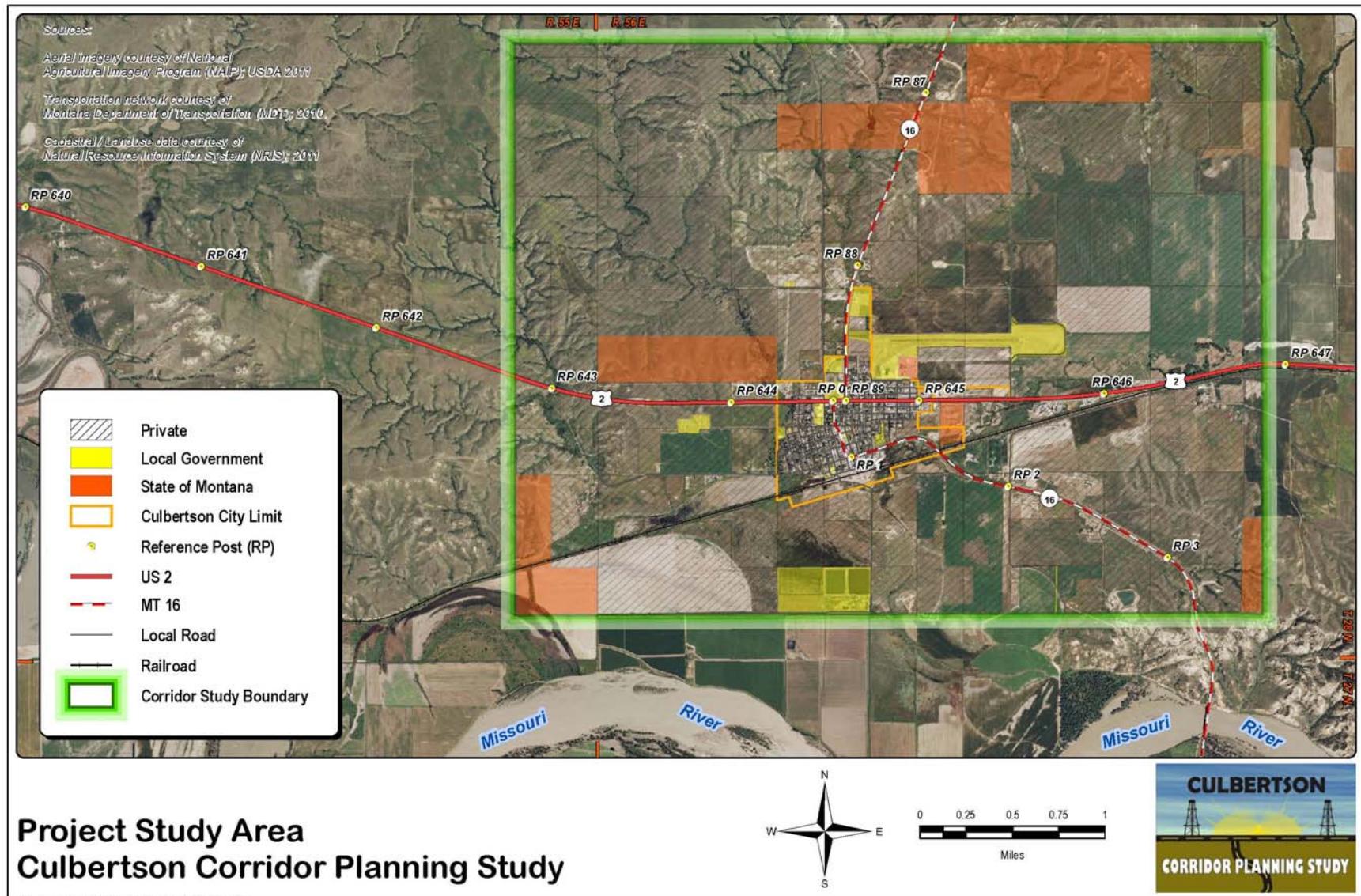


Figure 1 – Study Area Boundary

1.3 Goals of Public Involvement & Outreach Effort

Education and public outreach are an essential part of fulfilling the MDT's responsibility to inform the public about the corridor study effort. MDT encourages public involvement and meaningful participation to engage public ideas and vision regarding issues in the study area. These public outreach activities will be devoted to defining relevant issues and presenting preliminary findings of the study. MDT works to ensure early and continuous public involvement in all major actions and decision.

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2.0 Public Participation Procedures

The Public Involvement Plan describes the various input opportunities that will be provided as part of the development of the Culbertson Corridor Planning Study. This study encourages active participation in identifying and commenting on corridor issues at every stage of the planning process. Participants in this public participation process include:

- The general public – residents of the Town of Culbertson and adjacent unincorporated areas (Roosevelt County) affected by the study efforts;
- Landowners and business owners affected within the study area boundary;
- The Oversight Planning Committee – made up of representatives from MDT, Town of Culbertson, Roosevelt County, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA);
- Resource agencies; and
- Stakeholders and Outreach Groups.

Methods of notifying the public of the study process, upcoming meetings, and other information are detailed in this document. The public and interested parties shall provide input to the Consultant via the methods detailed below.

2.1 Study Contacts

Contact information for MDT and the Consultant will be provided to the public. Telephone numbers and email addresses of study contacts will be published in information that is released and is also included here.

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), Statewide and Urban Planning, 2960 Prospect Avenue (PO Box 201001), Helena, MT 59620-1001; (406) 444-9193; MDT Project Manager – Carol Strizich, cstrizich@mt.gov

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), Glendive District Office, 503 North River Avenue (PO Box 890), Glendive, MT 59330-0890; (406) 345-8200; District Administrator – Shane Mintz, smintz@mt.gov

Town of Culbertson, MT 59218; (406) 787-5315; Mayor of Culbertson – Gordon Oelkers, gordon@nemont.net

Camp Dresser & McKee, Inc. (CDM), 50 West 14th Street, Suite 200, Helena, MT 59601 (801) 363-3955; CDM Project Manager – Grey Turner, P.E., gturner@wilbursmith.com

2.2 Publications

Meeting announcements will be developed by CDM and advertised by MDT at least three weeks prior to 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 following print newspapers may carry the display ads.

Culbertson Searchlight – print and online <http://northeastmontananews.com>

Wolf Point Herald – print and online <http://northeastmontananews.com>

Sidney Herald – print and online <http://www.sidneyherald.com>

The Roundup – print and online <http://www.roundupweb.com>

Two newsletters will also be made available one month prior to each public meeting. Newsletters will describe work in progress, results achieved, preliminary recommendations, and other related topics. Each newsletter will be saved as a PDF and delivered to the Town of Culbertson, Roosevelt County, MDT, and select stakeholders for their use in posting to their individual internet sites. Hard copies of the newsletter will be distributed to the stakeholder contact list and made available as needed.

2.3 Stakeholder Contact List

A stakeholder contact list will be produced by CDM that will include individuals, businesses, or groups identified by Roosevelt County, Town of Culbertson, and MDT. The intent of developing the stakeholder list is to identify those individuals and groups to actively seek out and engage in all phases of the study process. Individuals who attend public meetings will also be added to the stakeholder list. The following groups or businesses (at a minimum) will be included in the initial list, providing that addresses and/or emails are obtainable from each respective group for these purposes:

- Town of Culbertson
- Roosevelt County Commissioners
- Culbertson Chamber of Commerce
- Trucking Industry

- Oil and Gas Commission
- Holly Sugar
- Roosevelt County contract planner, Scott Aspenlieder (WWC Engineering)
- Culbertson School District
- Roosevelt Medical Center
- BNSF Railway
- National Guard Shop
- Big Sky Field Airport
- County Fire Departments and Emergency Medical Personnel
- County Sheriff and Montana State Highway Patrol

2.4 Document Availability

All study deliverables and working draft technical memorandums will be available on the study website. The Draft Corridor Planning Study will also be available in hard copy at the following locations:

Document Availability Locations:

- Roosevelt County Extension Office, 307 Broadway Avenue, Culbertson, MT
- Culbertson Public Library, 307 Broadway Avenue, Culbertson, MT
- MDT District 4 Office, 503 North River Avenue, Glendive, MT

Electronic copies of study deliverables will be posted on the study website at the address shown below within 7 days of receiving approval to do so by the study partners.

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/culbertson/>

The following Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-required statement will be included on all published materials:

The MDT and CDM attempt to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program, or activity associated with this project. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request. For further information, call (406) 441-1400 or TTY (800) 335-7592, or by calling Montana Relay at 711. Accommodation requests must be made at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled activity and/or meeting.

2.5 Meetings

2.5.1 Oversight Committee Meetings

Oversight Committee meetings will be scheduled every three weeks for the duration of the twelve-month corridor study. These meetings will be held on Tuesday's from 9:30am – 10:30am in the form of conference calls and webinars, primarily for those that are unable to travel to the Helena MDT office. Individuals included in the meetings will be the Town of Culbertson, Roosevelt County, FHWA, MDT, the Consultant, and others as needed. The meetings are intended to track progress and address study development issues and questions. The meetings are considered an important aspect for the exchange of information and ideas during the development of the study. Throughout these meetings, issues, problems, and possible solutions will be identified and discussed.

2.5.2 Resource Agency Meeting/Involvement

A meeting will be scheduled and held with the Resource Agencies. The meeting will be organized and facilitated by CDM and MDT. This meeting will occur in Spring 2012, after the environmental scan has been completed.

2.5.3 Public Meetings

Two public meetings will be held throughout the duration of the Corridor Study. The first public meeting will be held early on in the study process and will serve to introduce the study and solicit input from local residents about the study area. In addition, current conditions and initial corridor issues will be presented.

The second public meeting will be conducted to present the draft Corridor Study. The draft study will identify preliminary recommendations and findings. The purpose of the meetings will be to present the various recommended improvement options and receive initial feedback from the Culbertson community.

2.5.4 Stakeholder Meetings

Up to four stakeholder meetings may be conducted over the 12-month schedule. While the Consultant is in the Culbertson community, meetings with local stakeholders and/or private corporations may be needed or requested. Some of these groups may include grain companies, trucking companies, railroad, and others. Coordination and approval by the study partners will be obtained prior to the meetings. Throughout the study, various other meetings will be conducted by phone in order to reach out to as many stakeholders as possible.

2.6 Consideration for Traditionally Underserved Populations

MDT and CDM recognizes that additional efforts must be made to involve traditionally underserved segments of the population in the public process for the study, including the disabled, racial and ethnic minorities, and low-income residents. Including these groups leads to planning that reflects the needs of everyone. The following steps will help with these efforts:

Plan Meeting Locations Carefully

- Public meetings will be held 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 the Town or County, then the meeting location should be in that area for convenience.

Seek Help from Community Leaders and Organizations

- To facilitate involvement of traditionally underserved populations, community leaders and organizations that represent these groups will be consulted about how to most effectively reach their members.

Be Sensitive to Diverse Audiences

- At public meetings, agency staff and the Consultant will attempt to communicate as effectively as possible. Technical jargon will be avoided and appropriate dress and conduct will be adhered to. A variety of visualization techniques may be used to present information on the study, including but not limited to, aerial photographs, maps, graphs, full size posters, color handouts, and PowerPoint presentations.

2.7 *Study Schedule*

Adherence to the study schedule is important to stay on track and keep all participating parties engaged. The Culbertson Corridor Planning Study schedule is attached as Figure 2. It is CDM's intent to adhere to the schedule.

3.0 Communication Strategies

3.1 *Summary*

The Culbertson Corridor Planning Study establishes guidelines and procedures for encouraging public participation. The following communication strategies and techniques may be used in their entirety (or partially) to distribute the information to the community at large and seek a higher level of engagement. The consultant will utilize as many of these techniques as possible that best suit the corridor study development.

- All relevant deliverables and associated materials will be posted on the study website at :

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolv/culbertson/>

- Public meeting announcements and press release will be developed.

- Special presentations may be made, upon request, to community groups and organizations.
- Select mailings, as requested by interested parties, will be provided to individuals or groups that have expressed interest or made comments at meetings.
- Study documents and materials will be distributed to the Oversight Committee, to provide a better understanding of proposed corridor issues and recommendations and provide the study entities with feedback and an opportunity for continual comment. Hard copies of all materials will be made available at the MDT Statewide and Urban Planning Section (2960 Prospect Avenue, Helena, MT).
- Fact sheets may be used to explain transportation related issues.
- Special issues documents may be announced or reported at meetings and/or via email on relevant corridor issues.

All comments received will be considered throughout the planning process. Responses to written comments received on the public draft Culbertson Corridor Planning Study will be made via written response in an Appendix to the actual Corridor Planning Study. In some circumstances, the MDT and/or the Consultant will respond directly to an individual or group by letter or telephone call, or by way of a periodic newsletter.

CULBERTSON CORRIDOR PLANNING STUDY - Project Schedule

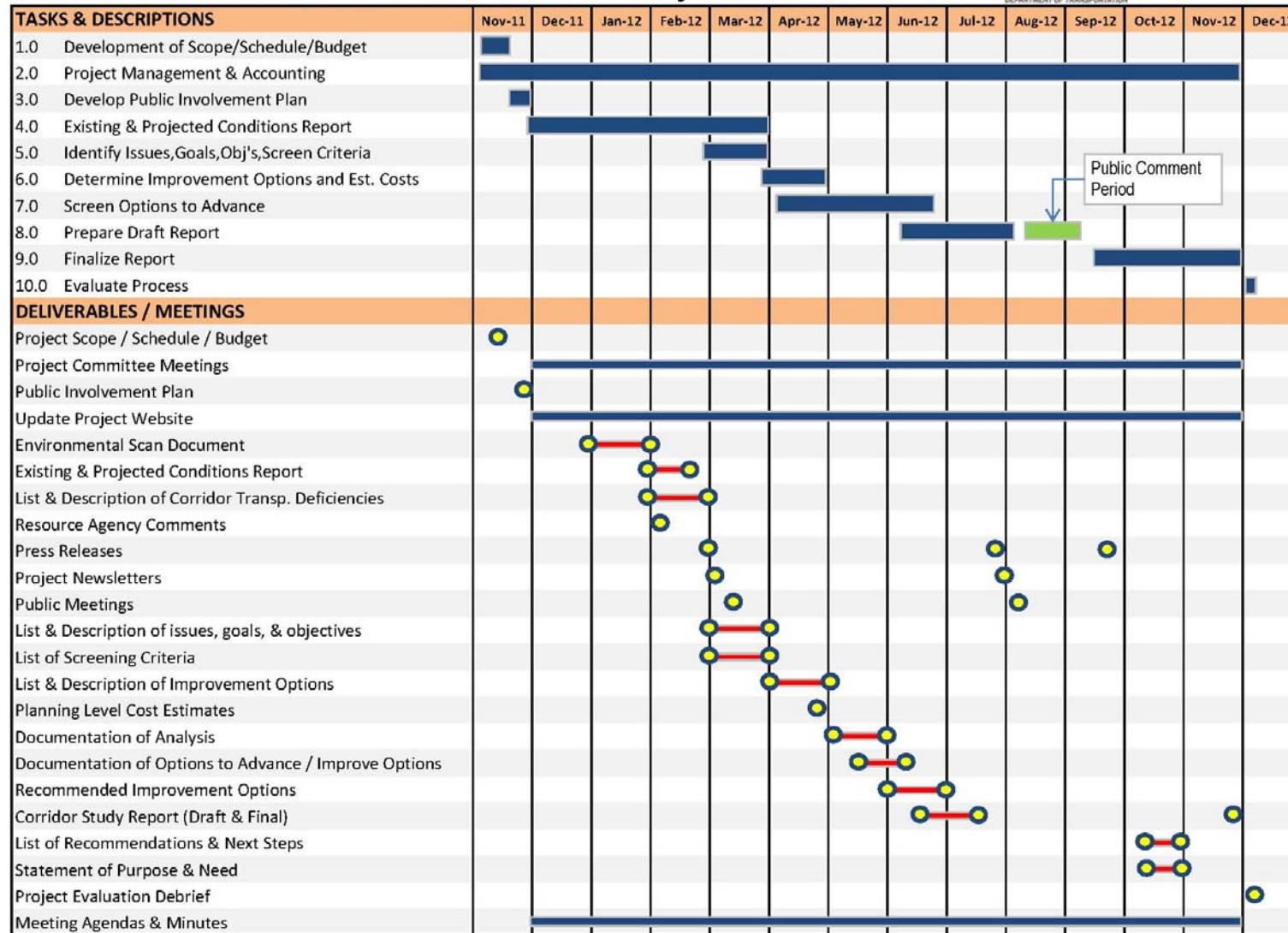

CDM


Figure 2 - Schedule