



BILLINGS BYPASS EIS
NCPD 56(55)CN 4199

BILLINGS BYPASS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

COORDINATION PLAN FOR AGENCY & PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

January 2011





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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This coordination plan for **Project Number NCPD 56(55), Control Number 4199** adheres to the guidance listed in the *MDT Public Involvement Handbook (2005)*. It also follows the requirements of Section 6002 of the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)*. SAFETEA-LU requires the lead agencies to establish a plan for coordinating public and agency involvement during the environmental review process.

This Coordination Plan is intended to define the process by which the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) will communicate information about the Billings Bypass Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to the lead, cooperating, and participating agencies and to the public. The plan also identifies how input from the agencies and the public will be solicited and considered.

SAFETEA-LU promotes early and continuous public involvement with key requirements as follows:

- ◆ Project development with input from all interested parties
- ◆ Outreach to those with limited English proficiency
- ◆ Emphasis on visualization in an effort to enhance project understanding
- ◆ Distribution of project information in a wide variety of formats, especially electronically, to reach more potentially interested parties

1.1 OVERALL PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COORDINATION PLAN

The purposes of ~~the~~ this Coordination Plan are to facilitate and document the lead agencies' structured interaction with the public and other agencies and to inform the public and other agencies of how the ~~coordination plan~~ will be accomplished. The coordination plan is meant to promote an efficient and streamlined process and good project management through coordination, scheduling, and early resolution of issues.

This coordination plan will:

- ◆ Identify the early coordination efforts;
- ◆ Identify cooperating and participating agencies to be involved in agency coordination;
- ◆ Establish the timing and form for agency involvement in defining the project's purpose and need and study area, the range of alternatives to be investigated, and ~~methods and data reports~~ as well as reviewing the draft EIS and the selection of the preferred alternative and mitigation strategies.
- ◆ Establish the timing and form for public opportunities to be involved in defining the project's purpose and need and study area and the range of alternatives to be investigated, providing input on issues of concern and environmental features, and commenting on the findings presented in the DEIS.
- ◆ Describe the communication methods that will be implemented to inform the community about the project.

This Coordination Plan is structured to encourage the public's participation and is not meant to be a static document but rather to represent an evolving process that will be refined as needed throughout the duration of the project.




1.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Billings Bypass project is a roadway construction project in Yellowstone County predominantly within the Billings Urban Area. MDT and FHWA are advancing this project through an EIS. The proposed project is approximately four miles long and is located between I-90 and Old Hwy 312 (see project vicinity map below). This is a change from the original proposed project, which involved the development of a bypass route connecting Interstate 90 (I-90) east of Billings with Montana Highway 3 (MT 3) northwest of Billings. A brief summary of the project history is provided below.

The Billings North By-Pass Feasibility Study, completed in 2001, investigated a bypass in the Billings area as part of the Camino-Real International Trade Corridor connecting Canada to Mexico. The study used a five-mile wide corridor north of Billings in order to assess the feasibility of a bypass route connecting the I-90/94 interchange area east of Billings with MT 3 west of Billings. This study area was selected by a consultant team and approved by the project steering committee. The study concluded that a bypass was feasible from an economic and engineering perspective and should be advanced for environmental analysis and refinement.

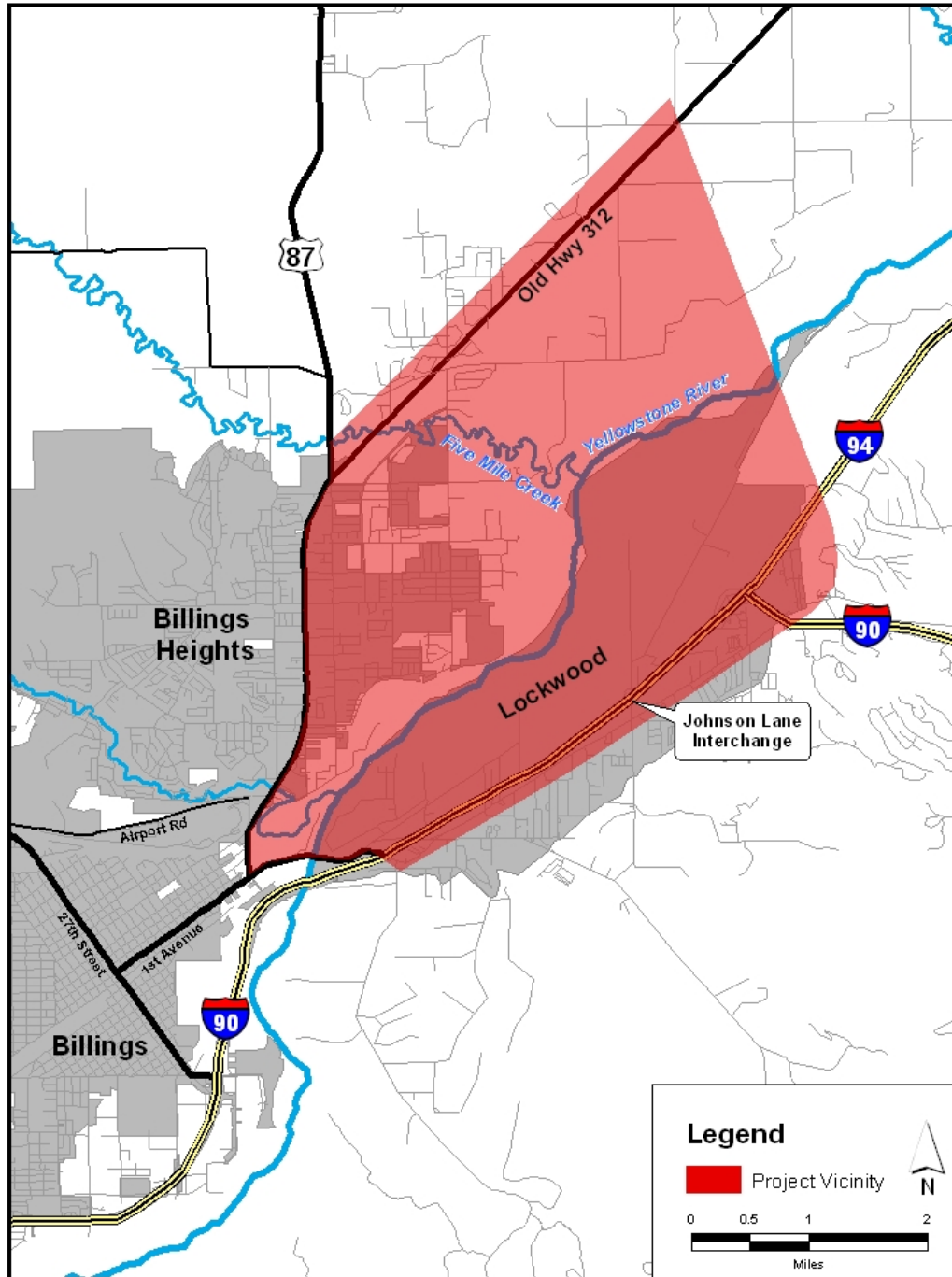
On August 13, 2003, FHWA issued the Notice of Intent (NOI) that MDT would prepare an EIS on a proposal to construct a bypass route north of Billings in Yellowstone County, Montana. The proposed bypass route north of Billings would connect between Interstate 90 (I-90) and Montana Highway 3. The scoping process began in 2006 following the 2005 update to the Billings Urban Area Long Range Transportation Plan. Local, State, and Federal agencies and the public were engaged in the scoping process and provided with opportunities to comment on the purpose and need and voice issues and concerns related to the proposed project. In 2007, the project team developed preliminary alternatives and again provided agencies and the public with opportunities for input.

 July 2008, FHWA released guidance on transportation planning requirements and environmental approvals. This guidance is applicable to the original proposed project and has necessitated it be re-scoped to be compliant with the requirements outlined in the July 17, 2008 letter from Kevin McLaury, FHWA Division Administrator. In November 2009, the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) of the Billings urban area transportation planning process voted to re-scope this project to focus only on the eastern segment between I-90 and Old Hwy 312. FHWA reissued the Notice of Intent (NOI) on September 7, 2010.

The Purpose and Need Statement is being revised based on input from agencies and the public. The public involvement process for the project provides opportunities for critical input during the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).



Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map



2.0 INITIAL AGENCY COORDINATION

2.1 AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Lead Agencies

Because the Federal Highway Administration is expected to provide funding for this project, FHWA serves as the lead agency for the project. MDT, as the direct recipient of Federal funds for the project, is the joint lead agency. The responsibilities of these agencies is to manage the 6002 process, prepare the EIS, and provide opportunities for public and participating/cooperating agency involvement.

Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating Agencies are those governmental agencies specifically requested by the lead agency to participate during the environmental evaluation process for the project. FHWA's NEPA regulations (23 CFR 771.111(d)) require those federal agencies with jurisdiction by law (with permitting or land transfer authority) or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposed project or project alternative be invited to be cooperating agencies for an EIS. A State or local agency of similar qualifications or, when the effects are on lands of tribal interest, a Native American tribe may, by agreement with the lead agencies, also become a cooperating agency.

Cooperating Agencies for this project are listed in Table 4. These cooperating agencies are also invited to be participating agencies. If new information reveals the need to request another agency to serve as a cooperating agency, MDT will issue that agency an invitation.

Participating Agencies

SAFETEA-LU (Section 6002) created a new category of agencies to participate in the environmental review process for EISs. These are Federal, State, tribal, regional, and local government agencies that have an interest in the project. These participating agencies are formally invited to participate in the environmental review of the project. Non-governmental organizations and private entities cannot serve as participating agencies. Any Federal agency that is invited to participate in the environmental review process for a project shall be designated as a participating agency unless the invited agency informs the lead agency, in writing, by the deadline specified in the invitation that the invited agency:

- ◆ has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the project;
- ◆ has no expertise or information relevant to the project; and
- ◆ does not intend to submit comments on the project.

The designated participating agencies are shown in Table 4. Designation as a participating agency does not imply project support and does not provide an agency with increased oversight or approval authority beyond its statutory limits.

2.2 INVITED AGENCIES

In May 2006, MDT sent scoping letters to local, State, and Federal agencies. These letters were either cooperating agency requests or information requests, and also solicited input on the



project. In September 2010, MDT sent new letters notifying agencies that the project had been re-scoped and the NOI reissued. The letters also notified agencies that FHWA and MDT would proceed with the project in accordance with the SAFTEA-LU process. As such, the letters served as an invitation to be cooperating or participating agencies Table 1 lists the agencies invited by letter to participate in the Billings Bypass EIS in the roles identified.

Table 1. Agency Invitations

Agency Name	Requested Status
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Cooperating Agency
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Participating Agency
U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service	Participating Agency
U.S. Department of the Interior - Fish & Wildlife Service	Participating Agency
U.S. Department of the Interior - Bureau of Land Management	Participating Agency
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	Participating Agency
Montana Department of Environmental Quality	Participating Agency
Montana State Historic Preservation Office	Participating Agency
Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation	Participating Agency
Montana Natural Heritage Program	Participating Agency
City of Billings	Participating Agency
Yellowstone County	Participating Agency

Agencies that Declined the Invitation

A State, tribal, or local agency needs to respond affirmatively to the invitation to be designated as a participating agency. If the State, tribal, or local agency fails to respond by the stated deadline or declines the invitation, regardless of the reasons for declining, the agency should not be considered a participating agency.

Table 2. Declined Invitations

Agency Name	Requested Status	Date of written response	Primary Reason(s) for Declining
Montana Natural Heritage Program	Participating Agency	October 5, 2010	Agency has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the project
Bureau of Land Management	Participating Agency	October 8, 2010	Agency does not intend to submit comments on the project



Should a Federal agency choose to decline cooperating agency status in part or in whole, that agency is obligated to respond to the invitation in writing and provide a copy of that response to the Council of Environmental Quality (40 C.F.R. 15.1.6(c)).

Should a Federal agency choose to decline cooperating agency status, that agency will automatically be considered participating. If a Federal agency should choose to decline both cooperating and participating status, that agency must submit a written response stating that their agency: 1) has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the project, 2) has no expertise or information relevant to the project, and 3) does not intend to submit comments on the project. In the absence of a written response, invited Federal agencies will automatically be considered participating.

2.3 COOPERATING AND PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

All cooperating and participating agencies will be responsible for the following:

- ◆ Participate in the scoping process
- ◆ Provide comments on purpose and need, methodologies, and range of alternatives
- ◆ Identify any issues of concern regarding the project's environmental or socioeconomic impacts
- ◆ Provide timely input on unresolved issues

Additional responsibilities are to be determined.

Table 3. Cooperating and Participating Agencies

Agency Name	Date of Response	Responsibilities
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	October 12, 2010 (Cooperating Agency)	Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 permit and Federal Rivers and Harbors Act Section 10 permit jurisdiction. Provide comments on purpose and need, impacts assessment methodologies, and range of alternatives. Review the EIS. This NEPA coordination process will incorporate Section 404 coordination requirements.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	October 4, 2010 (Participating Agency)	Provide comments on purpose and need, impact assessment methodologies, and range of alternatives. Review EIS for sufficiency.
U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service	October 8, 2010 (Participating Agency)	Farmland Protection Policy Act coordination, if required. Provide comments on purpose and need, methodologies, and range of alternatives. Review the EIS.
U.S. Department of the Interior - Fish & Wildlife Service	November 23, 2010 (Participating Agency)	Endangered Species Act Consultation, Biological Opinion. Provide comments on purpose and need, methodologies, and range of alternatives. Review the EIS.



Agency Name	Date of Response	Responsibilities
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	October 12, 2010 (Participating Agency)	Montana Stream Protection Act (SPA 124) process, coordination for Section 6(f) of the National Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act. Provide comments on purpose and need, methodologies, and range of alternatives. Review the EIS.
Montana Department of Environmental Quality	October 12, 2010 (Participating Agency)	Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 402/Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) and 318 Authorization. Provide comments on purpose and need, methodologies, and range of alternatives. Review the EIS.
Montana State Historic Preservation Office	October 1, 2010 (Participating Agency)	Coordination for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Provide comments on purpose and need, methodologies, and range of alternatives. Review the EIS.
Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation	October 13, 2010 (Participating Agency)	Land Use License/Easement Application and Application for Licensing Structures & Improvements on Navigable Water Bodies. Provide comments on purpose and need, methodologies, and range of alternatives. Review the EIS.
City of Billings	October 14, 2010 (Participating Agency)	Provide comments on purpose and need, methodologies, and range of alternatives. Review the EIS.
Yellowstone County	January 18, 2011 (Participating Agency)	Floodplain Development Permit. Provide comments on purpose and need, methodologies, and range of alternatives. Review the EIS.

Contact information for each agency is provided in Appendix B.

3.0 COORDINATION FOR EIS PROCESS

3.1 INITIAL COORDINATION

As discussed in the project overview, this EIS was initiated in 2003. FHWA with assistance from MDT prepared a NOI to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, as required by CEQ regulations 40 CFR 1501.7. The NOI was published in the Federal Register on August 13, 2003. FHWA reissued the NOI for the re-scoped project on September 7, 2010. A press release was issued on October 4, 2010 to notify the public of the re-scoped project and announce the public meeting to discuss the revised purpose and need and review some initial concepts for alternatives in the new study area. This information was also advertised in local newspapers and distributed in a newsletter to landowners, local, state, and federal agencies, and others on the project mailing list. More information about public outreach efforts is provided in Section 8.



3.2 PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND SCHEDULING

This section summarizes the key milestones of the coordination process, including which agency is responsible for activities associated with each milestone.

Table 4. Summary of Project Activities

Project Activities	Participants	Actions	Schedule for Completion
Original Project Process			
Issue Notice of Intent	Lead Agencies	FHWA submits NOI to Federal Register for publication	NOI published August 13, 2003
Scoping/Purpose and Need	Lead Agencies	Establish the Billings Bypass Advisory Committee (BBAC) to provide input and serve as a liaison between the project team and the community	February 2004
	Lead Agencies	Facilitate public meeting to present the project study area and the draft purpose and need; solicit comments.	April 26, 2006
	Public	Attend public meeting; provide comments on the study area, purpose and need, and issues of concern	April 26, 2006 No end date specified for comments
	Lead Agencies	Distribute letters inviting cooperating agencies	May 2006
	Cooperating Agencies	Responses back to lead agencies on cooperating agency invitations	June 17, 2006
Range of Alternatives	Lead Agencies	Provide the BBAC with information regarding alternatives being considered; solicit comments	October 3, 2007
	Lead Agencies	Facilitate a public meeting to provide information regarding alternatives being considered; solicit comments	October 4, 2007
	Public, BBAC, and Cooperating Agencies	Attend public meeting; provide comments on the alternatives	October 4, 2007 No end date specified for comments



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Project Activities	Participants	Actions	Schedule for Completion
Re-Scoped Project Process			
Issue Notice of Intent	Lead Agencies	FHWA submits NOI to Federal Register for publication	NOI published September 7, 2010
Scoping/Purpose and Need	Lead Agencies	Distribute letters inviting participating and cooperating agencies	September 27, 2010
	Participating and Cooperating Agencies	Responses back to lead agencies on participating and cooperating agency invitations	October 13, 2010
	Lead Agencies	Facilitate public meeting to present the re-scoped project study area and the revised purpose and need; solicit comments.	October 13, 2010
	Public, BBAC, and Participating and Cooperating Agencies	Attend public meeting; provide comments on the study area, purpose and need, and issues of concern	October 13, 2010 No end date specified for comments
	Lead Agencies	Distribute letter to Participating and Cooperating Agencies on the re-scoped project and the revised purpose and need; solicit comments. Also include information regarding the range of alternatives.	January 2011
	Participating and Cooperating Agencies	Provide comments on re-scoped project study area, revised purpose and need, and issues of concern	February 2011
Range of Alternatives	Lead Agencies	Facilitate a meeting with participating and cooperating agencies to review and discuss the range of alternatives. Note: The range of alternatives was provided at the October 13, 2010 public meeting was included in the January XX, 2011 purpose and need letter.	March 2011



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Project Activities	Participants	Actions	Schedule for Completion
	Participating and Cooperating Agencies and the public	Comments on Range of Alternatives and issues of concern	Two weeks following the range of alternatives meeting
Impact Assessment Methodologies	Lead Agencies	At the range of alternatives meeting, provide participating and cooperating agencies the opportunity to collaborate on the development and review of the methodologies and level of detail required for the analysis of alternatives.	March 2011
	Participating and Cooperating Agencies	Comments on proposed methodologies	April 2011
Circulation of DEIS	Lead Agencies	Distribute Administrative DEIS to cooperating agencies	February 23, 2012
	Cooperating Agencies	Review Administrative DEIS and provide comments	April 9, 2012
	Lead Agencies	Distribute DEIS for public review	June 29, 2012
	Participating Agencies and public	Review DEIS and provide comments	August 22, 2012
Circulation of FEIS	Lead Agencies	Distribute FEIS	December 21, 2012
	Participating and Cooperating Agencies and the public	Review FEIS and provide comments	January 22, 2013
Issue of ROD	Lead Agencies	FHWA to sign ROD	February 26, 2013

4.0 PROJECT TEAM CONTACTS

The standards for communication between project team members, MDT, FHWA staff, and the public have been established by the project team. Comments and responses will be facilitated through the public involvement coordinator in an effort to efficiently manage incoming comments and provide consistency of responses. The primary point of contact for the Billings Bypass project team is:

MDT Consultant Design

2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

- ◆ Fred Bente
Phone: (406) 444-7634; Fax: (406) 444-6253
Email: fbente@mt.gov

Other key members of the Billings Bypass project team include:

MDT Billings District

424 Morey Street, PO Box 20437
Billings, MT 59104-0437

- ◆ Stefan Streeter
District 5 Administrator
Phone: (406) 252-4138; Fax: (406) 256-6487
Email: sstreeter@mt.gov

FHWA

585 Shepard Way
Helena, MT 59601

- ◆ Allan Woodmansey
Operations Engineer
Phone: (406) 449-5302 x233; Fax: (406) 449-5314
alan.woodmansey@fhwa.dot.gov

Consultants – David Evans and Associates, Inc. (DEA)

1331 17th Street, Suite 900
Denver, CO 80202

- ◆ Debra Perkins-Smith, AICP
Consultant Team Project Manager
Phone: (720) 225-4623; Fax: (720) 946-0973
dps@deainc.com
- ◆ Laura Meyer, AICP
EIS Coordinator/Public Involvement Coordinator
Phone: (720) 225-4632; Fax: (720) 946-0973
llhu@deainc.com

5.0 MAILING LIST

A project contact list has been established and will be maintained. The mailing list for this project was initially established in 2006. In April 2006, a newsletter was distributed to the nearly 1300 land owners in the study area as well as representatives and elected officials from local, State and Federal agencies. This distribution included all individuals and businesses from the Billings North Bypass Feasibility Study mailing list. Enclosed with the newsletter was a postcard requesting that landowners desiring to be on the Billings Bypass EIS project mailing list return the post card with their contact information. This resulted in a mailing list of approximately 600



landowners (residential and commercial). Groups on the project mailing list included the following:

- ◆ Land owners and tenants
- ◆ Local businesses
- ◆ Agencies
- ◆ Neighborhood organizations
- ◆ Elected and appointed state and local officials
- ◆ Special interests
- ◆ Media contacts
- ◆ Utility companies
- ◆ Interested Public

This mailing list has been updated as necessary throughout the project to include additional groups, businesses, and individuals who attended public meetings or requested to be added to the list through the project website or by contacting a project team member.

When the project was re-scoped in 2010, the list was supplemented to include potentially affected land owners in the new study area. In Newsletter #4, distributed in October 2010, recipients were provided an opportunity to be removed from the mailing. This option was provided because the new study area is substantially smaller and many land owners on the mailing list are no longer affected by the project. Since distribution of that newsletter, very few people have elected to be removed and the distribution list includes approximately 1150 addresses.

6.0 BILLINGS BYPASS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A Billings Bypass Advisory Committee (BBAC) was established to provide advice to the project team and to facilitate involvement of a wide range of community interests in the project area.

6.1 PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

Purpose

The BBAC provides technical input and review to the Billings Bypass EIS project team. The BBAC represents a broad spectrum of stakeholders and includes local officials, staff from city and county departments, and representatives of local and regional organizations.

The BBAC fulfills two primary roles: members will provide advice and make recommendations to MDT and FHWA on transportation improvements and priorities; and they will serve as a liaison between the project team and the community. Members play a vital role in helping to identify key community issues and helping to engage the public and stakeholders in the planning process.

The BBAC has met eight times over the course of the project thus far and has accomplished the following primary goals with the project team:

- ◆ Provided input to the purpose and needs for the project
- ◆ Provided input to the study area validation



- ◆ Affirmed transportation goals for the corridor identified in the Billings North Bypass Feasibility Study
- ◆ Helped to identify the range of alignment alternatives to be studied
- ◆ Assisted in the development, evaluation, and refinement of alternatives
- ◆ Consulted with and represented the corridor and community interests
- ◆ Provided input to the public involvement program
- ◆ Provided input to the revised purpose and needs for the re-scoped project

Structure

The BBAC is comprised of approximately 25 individuals representing a variety of interests in the study area. Eight meetings have been held and three additional meetings are anticipated throughout the duration of the project. These meetings are keyed to decision-points in the EIS process. David Evans and Associates (DEA) moderates and facilitates these meetings, and also prepares materials, notices, and summaries for these meetings. MDT and FHWA team members attend these meetings as active participants.

BBAC members have committed to actively participate in meetings through the sharing of opinions and information. Project materials are distributed to committee members at meetings and are occasionally distributed to members prior to meetings. In addition to the BBAC meetings, members are expected to attend public meetings and workshops conducted in their respective interest areas.

6.2 MEETING SCHEDULE

Meeting 1

This meeting was held on February 5, 2004. The purpose of the meeting was to provide background information on the project, introduce team members and review roles and responsibilities of the BBAC, and to discuss project issues and schedule.

Meeting 2

This meeting was held on October 26, 2006. The purpose of the meeting was to present a summary of the public input to date, discuss the alternatives development process, identify the alternatives that have been eliminated, and get input from the advisory committee members.

Meeting 3

This meeting was held on October 3, 2007. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a project status update, preview the information and alternatives that would be presented to the public, get input from BBAC on anything the project team may have missed, and get input from BBAC on stakeholder groups to contact.

Meeting 4

This meeting was held on November 29, 2007. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a project status update, discuss the NEPA review process, explain different interchange types and options, present some new landowner suggested alignments, and report on topics raised at the last BBAC meeting.

Meeting 5

This meeting was held on October 8, 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to present the analysis performed to address some public and stakeholder requests and to get input from the BBAC on the results of that analysis. Topics discussed included the study area boundaries, the new western-segment northern alignment options, the Shepherd-Acton Road alignments, and project funding.

Meeting 6

This meeting was held on November 14, 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to review input from a stakeholder meeting with Shepherd-Acton Road landowners, present preliminary cost estimates for alternatives, and discuss new FHWA guidance applicable to the project.

Meeting 7

This meeting was held on July 28, 2010, and provided a project update. Committee members were asked to provide input on the Draft Purpose and Need for the re-scoped project. The re-scoped project focuses on the eastern segment between the Interstate and Highway 312.

Meeting 8

This meeting was held on September 28, 2010. The BBAC participated in the development of an initial range of transportation alternatives and creation of screening criteria to screen the initial alternatives of the re-scoped project.

Meeting 9

The results of the alternatives screening will be reviewed with the BBAC. The BBAC will provide input on the refinement of the alternatives to be carried forward to evaluation.



Meeting 10

After the alternatives have been evaluated by the project team, the evaluation process and impacts will be presented to the BBAC for their review and comment. The BBAC will also provide input on the Preferred Alternative and provide input for preparation of the public hearing.

Meeting 11

Comments from the public hearing will be presented to the BBAC for discussion. This meeting will conclude the BBAC responsibilities for the EIS.

6.3 BILLINGS BYPASS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BBAC) MEMBERS

Please see Appendix C for a list of BBAC members and contact information. The BBAC represents a broad spectrum of stakeholders and includes local officials, staff from city and county departments, and representatives of local and regional organizations.

7.0 PUBLIC ACTIVITIES

In addition to the Billings Bypass Advisory Committee, a number of activities are used to solicit public input and distribute information about the project. These activities are described below.



7.1 PUBLIC MEETINGS AND HEARINGS

Three (3) public meetings have been conducted and one (1) public hearing will be conducted for the project. The purpose of the public meetings is to provide information to the general public and to obtain their input. The public meetings were held at the following points in the project: during the scoping process for the project area, during development and screening of the alternatives, and during a second scoping phase for the re-scoped project.

The first public meeting introduced the community to the project and provided them with the opportunity to voice concerns and ask questions. The project team solicited input to the development and affirmation of the project purpose and need as well as project goals.

At the second public meeting, the community was presented with the range of bypass alternatives that were suggested. The community provided comments on these alternatives and input on the screening criteria for the preliminary evaluation of alternatives.

At the third meeting, the re-scope project was introduced and the revised purpose and need was presented. Conceptual alternatives based on the revised purpose and need were also presented. The project team solicited comments and input on these project elements.

The public hearing will occur during the comment period after the DEIS has been released and before formal decisions on the EIS are made. A Notice of Availability for the DEIS will be issued prior to the public hearing. Comments on the alternatives evaluated and the analysis in the DEIS will be solicited at these hearings and will be used in the preparation of the FEIS and for refinement of the preferred corridor alternative.

7.2 STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The project team has conducted and will continue to conduct small group or "one-on-one" meetings with individual property owners, tenants, neighborhood associations, and businesses to discuss specific project issues in an effort to gain insight on concerns in the project area.

At the second public meeting held in October 2007, the project team provided a sign-up sheet for individuals or groups that wanted to meet with project team representatives. In November of 2007, the project team conducted meetings with seven different stakeholder groups as identified below:

- ◆ Pine Hill Subdivision Residents
- ◆ Lockwood Residents
- ◆ Hidden Lake Subdivision Residents
- ◆ Lone Eagle Subdivision Residents
- ◆ Hiaring Subdivision Land Owners
- ◆ Ranchers and Land Owners in the Western Segment of the Study Area
- ◆ Yellowstone River Parks Association

As a result of the meeting with ranchers and land owners in the western segment of the study area, the project team updated the Study Area Validation to determine if updated construction costs and an adjusted design year for the project would result in a change in the boundaries within which a bypass route was feasible. Based on the updated analysis, the northern study area boundary was moved north to include the Shepherd-Acton Road corridor. Upon the request of the BBAC, the project team conducted a stakeholder meeting with landowners and residents along Shepherd-Acton Road in November 2008 to inform them of the project and the alternatives under consideration.



Additional meetings will be identified and scheduled by DEA and MDT staff as the project develops. Meetings may be scheduled with any of the following types of groups:

- ◆ Lockwood Steering Committee/Lockwood Transportation District
- ◆ Trucking Industry
- ◆ Oil and Gas representatives
- ◆ School district/school bus issues
- ◆ Agricultural groups
- ◆ EMT and Fire Departments
- ◆ Bicycle groups
- ◆ Business owners
- ◆ Homeowners associations
- ◆ Irrigation ditch companies
- ◆ Elected officials
- ◆ Affected property owners

7.3 ISSUES AND COMMENT TRACKING

Any team member receiving public comments will document the conversation via email or using a contact form. Please see Appendix D for a copy of this form. Comments should be forwarded to Mary Guse, DEA, who will maintain a database to track the issues. Laura Meyer along with Fred Bente, the MDT Project Administrator, will review the issues arising from the comments. Laura Meyer will assign the issues to the appropriate team members for discussion and resolution.

8.0 PUBLIC OUTREACH

8.1 NEWSLETTERS

Seven (7) project newsletters will be published and distributed throughout the course of the project to keep the public informed of current activities. These newsletters will be distributed to the project mailing list (assumed maximum of 1500 people/organizations). Three newsletters were distributed under the original project. These included the following:

- ◆ Announcement of project, project contacts, and first public meeting
- ◆ Announcement of second public meeting, provided information on alternatives
- ◆ Summarized issues of second public meeting and provided update on alternatives development

When the project was re-scoped in 2010, a fourth newsletter was distributed to provide information about the new purpose and need and the new study area. Three additional newsletters are planned for this project. Newsletters are assumed to be distributed at the following points during the project (final determination to be made after consultation with MDT project staff):

- ◆ Summarize public meeting #3 and provide information on the preliminary alternatives
- ◆ Announce public hearing, present final alternatives and evaluation
- ◆ Summarize public hearing, present refined preferred alternative

8.2 PRESS RELEASES

Press Releases have been and will be issued at key points during the project and to announce public meetings, workshops, and hearings and to summarize results of these meetings. Press releases have been issued in April 2006, September 2007, and October 2010 to announce each of the three public meetings.

The following newspapers and television and radio stations will be sent copies of all press releases:

- ◆ Billings Gazette
- ◆ Billings Outpost
- ◆ Big Sky Business Journal
- ◆ Billings Business
- ◆ KTVO 2/KRTV 3 - Community Calendar
- ◆ KHMT 4 - Community Calendar
- ◆ KFBB 5 - Community Calendar
- ◆ KSVI 6 - Community Calendar
- ◆ KULR 8 - Community Calendar
- ◆ KTGF 16 - Community Calendar
- ◆ Radio KBBB FM-KBUL-AM-KCTR-FM-KKBR-FM-KMHK-FM
- ◆ Radio KBLG-AM-KRKX-FM-KRZN-FM-KYYA-FM
- ◆ Radio KGHL-AM-KGHL-FM-KOBL-FM-KRSQ-FM-KZRV-FM
- ◆ Radio KPBR-FM-KPLN-FM-KWMY-FM
- ◆ Radio KULR-AM-KMZK-AM
- ◆ Radio KBLW-FM
- ◆ Radio KEMC-FM
- ◆ Radio KNDZ
- ◆ Radio KBEZ
- ◆ YNOP Website



A project website has been maintained at www.billingsbypass.com throughout the project. A link is provided from the MDT website to the project website. Links to the project website will also be provided on the city and county websites. DEA, in consultation with MDT, will continue to develop project information and updates to the project website.

Comments and queries received from the website will be compiled in the issues and comment tracking database (see Section 7.3). Laura Meyer with DEA will respond to most queries; all technical engineering questions will be forwarded to Todd Cormier, HKM Engineering, or MDT for responses.



8.3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A description of the re-scoped project was created to facilitate quick sharing of information. The project description provides a brief outline of the project history, objectives, parameters and design considerations, public involvement process, and schedule. Please see Appendix E for the project description.

APPENDIX A – PROJECT TEAM DIRECTORY

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- ◆ Thomas Gocksch
Environmental Services
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- ◆ ~~Dick Turner~~
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- ◆ Carol Strizich
Transportation Planning
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EIS & Public Involvement Coordinator
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Marvin & Associates

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DOWL/HKM Engineering

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- ◆ Todd Cormier, PE
Engineering
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APPENDIX B – COOPERATING AGENCY DIRECTORY

The following agency received a request to become a cooperating agency:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mr. Todd Tillinger, Montana Program Manager
Helena Regulatory Office
10 West 15th Street, Suite 2200
Helena, MT 59626

The following agencies received requests to become a participating agency:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mr. R. Mark Wilson, Field Supervisor
Montana Field Office
585 Shepard Way
Helena, MT 59601

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources and Conservation Service
Ms. Joyce Swartzendruber, State Conservationist
Federal Building, Room 443
10 East Babcock Street
Bozeman, MT 59715

U.S. Department of the Interior – Bureau of Land Management
Mr. Mike Nedd, Acting State Director
5001 Southgate Drive
Billings, MT 59101

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Ms. Julie Dalsoglio, Director
Region VIII, Montana Operations Office
10 West 15th Street, Suite 3200
Helena, MT 59626

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Director
1625 Eleventh Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Mr. Gary Hammond, Regional Supervisor
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PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Mr. Greg Hallsten, EIS Coordinator
Lee Metcalf Building
1520 East Sixth Avenue
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620

Montana State Historic Preservation Office

Dr. Mark Baumler, Director
225 North Roberts
PO Box 201201
Helena, MT 59620

Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP)

Mr. Bryce Maxell, Interim Director
Montana State Library
1515 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

City of Billings

Mayor Tom Hanel
PO Box 1178
Billings, MT 59103

Yellowstone County

Mr. Bill Kennedy, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners
PO Box 35000
Billings, MT 59107

The following agencies received information request letters:

US Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources and Conservation Service

Mr. Nick Vira, District Conservationist
Billings Field Office
1629 Avenue D, Building A, Suite 4
Billings, MT 59102

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Mr. Jim Darling, Habitat Section Supervisor
1420 East Sixth Avenue
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Mr. Walt Timmerman, Recreation Section
1420 East Sixth Avenue
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

Montana Department of Environmental Quality

Mr. George Mathieus, Administrator
Planning, Prevention and Assistance Division
Lee Metcalf Building
1520 East Sixth Avenue
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620

The following agencies received general information letters:

Billings K-12 Schools, District 2

Dr. R. Keith Beeman, Superintendent
415 North 30th Street
Billings, MT 59101

Montana Department of Environmental Quality

Ms. Judy Hanson, Administrator
Permitting and Compliance Division
Lee Metcalf Building, 1520 East Sixth Avenue
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620

Yellowstone County

Mr. Duane Winslow, Director
Disaster and Emergency Services
PO Box 35000
Billings, MT 59107

Crow Nation

Mr. Jeremy Not Afraid, District Conservationist
Tribal Administration Building
PO Box 699
Crow Agency, MT 59022

**APPENDIX C – BILLINGS BYPASS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEMBER DIRECTORY (AS OF JANUARY 2011)**

The following agencies and organizations participate on the BBAC and represent the local community in this proposed project's development:

Agencies and Organizations	Representatives
State Legislator	Dennis Himmelberger (also a member of the Heights Task Force)
State Senator	Kim Gillan
City of Billings	
City-County Planning Department	Candi Beaudry, Wyeth Friday, Scott Walker
Public Works	Dave Mumford, Vern Heisler
City Council	Ward 1 - Peggie Gaghen, Jim Ronquillo Ward 2 – Denis Pitman, Angela Cimmino
Yellowstone County	
County Commissioner	Bill Kennedy
Yellowstone County Planning Board	Dennis Cook, Paul Gatzemeier
Public Works	Tim Miller, Bob Moats
Lockwood	
Lockwood Transportation District	Conrad Stroebe
Lockwood Fire Department	Bill Rash
Billings Heights Community Development Task Force	Tom Zurbuchen
Shepherd Community Action Committee	Connie Herberg
Yellowstone River Conservation Forum/Frontier Heritage Alliance	Mike Penfold
Montana Motor Carriers Association	H.R. "Spook" Stang
Billings Area Chamber of Commerce	John Brewer
Yellowstone Valley Cycling Club	Representative not identified

The following project team members for this proposed project will attend the BBAC meetings to answer questions and provide guidance as necessary:

- Alan Woodmansey – Program Development, FHWA
- Fred Bente – Consultant Design, MDT
- Stefan Streeter – District 5 Administrator, MDT
- Debra Perkins-Smith and Laura Meyer – David Evans and Associates
- John Shoff and Todd Cormier – DOWL HKM
- Bob Marvin – Marvin and Associates



APPENDIX D – CONTACT FORM

Date: _____

Staff: _____

Source: _____

Parties

Involved: _____

Topic: _____

Comments: _____

Action: _____

Date Due: _____

Party Responsible

For Action: _____

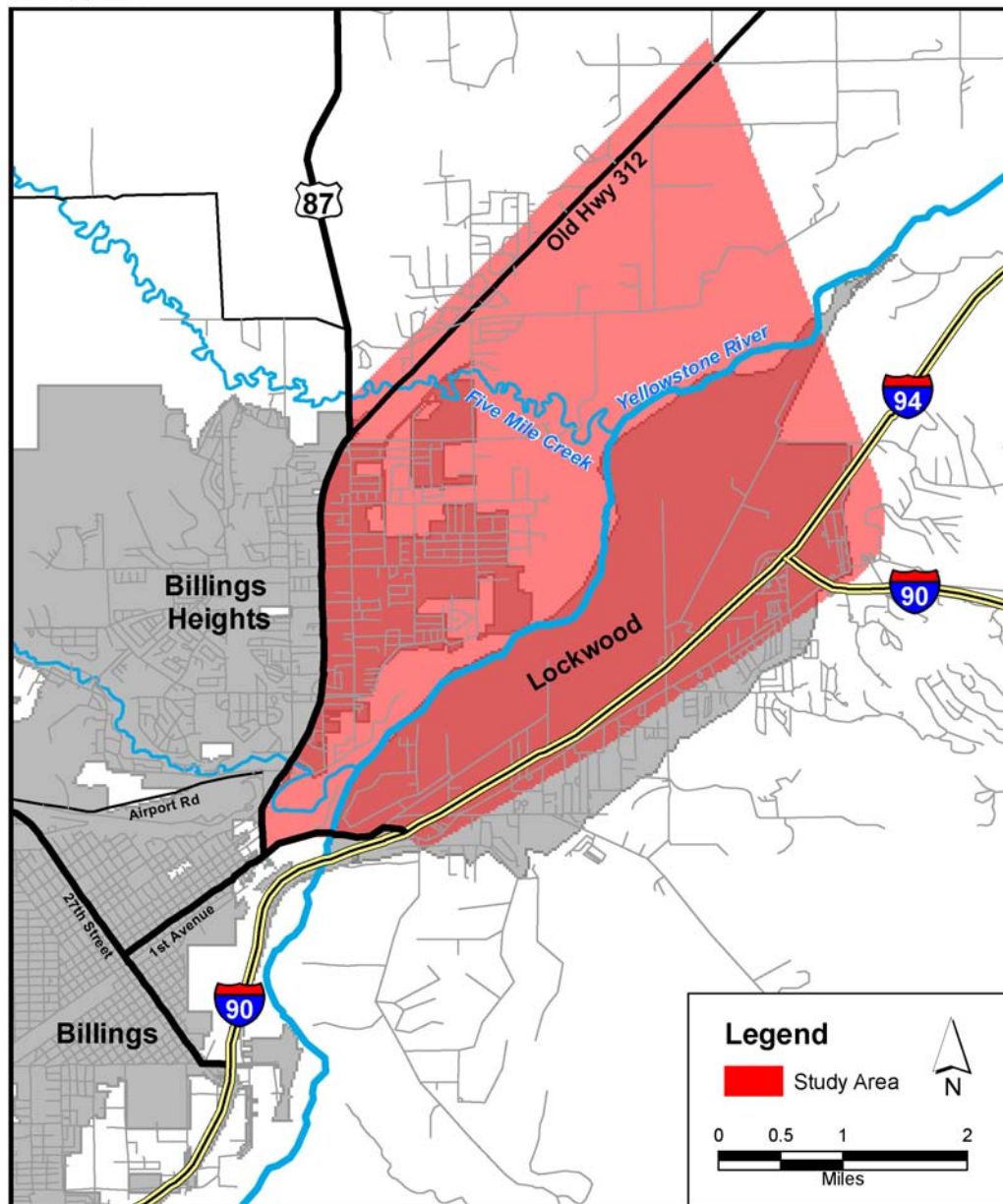
Please submit to: Mary Guse at mrg@deainc.com or fax to 720-946-0973.



APPENDIX E - PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project is in Yellowstone County and would provide a connection between I-90 and Old Highway 312 that improves mobility in the eastern areas of Billings and supports long-term planning for the Billings urban area. The project area includes is bounded by Old Highway 312 on the north, Main Street on the west, and the I-90/94 corridor on the south. The eastern boundary stretches from the intersection of McGirl Road and Old Hwy 312 to the I-94 corridor near the northeaster boundary of Lockwood (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Project Area Map



Project Objective

The proposed facility is intended to provide an alternate route that would enable local and regional traffic to bypass the highly congested US 87/Main Street corridor in Billings. Providing this alternate route would serve three primary needs in the Billings Urban Area:

- Provide an additional Yellowstone River crossing for transportation system reliability/redundancy.
- Provide an additional connection between Lockwood and Billings.
- Improve mobility to and from Billings Heights.

The project objective supports goals of the *Billings Urban Area Long Range Transportation Plan* (2009) including 1) reduction of physical barrier impacts to transportation caused by the Rimrocks, the Yellowstone River, and the railroad tracks and 2) development of an improved truck/commercial vehicle access to state highways serving the Billings area.

The project also supports the *Lockwood Community Plan* (August 2006) and the *Lockwood Transportation Study* (November 2008), which identify the lack of connectivity between Lockwood and Billings as a factor limiting growth and economic development opportunities in Lockwood.

The proposed facility would address a key concern identified in a survey completed for the *Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan* (2006) regarding the difficulty of travel to and from the Billings Heights neighborhood.

Project Constraints

The primary constraints in the project area are the Yellowstone River and existing development. The 100-year floodplain of the river is particularly wide through much of the study area. To minimize impacts, one optimal river crossing location has been identified. Existing and planned development in the study area also limits the feasible locations where the proposed facility could be constructed.

Public Involvement

For this project, a Billings Bypass Advisory Committee (BBAC) has been formed to include a wide range of project interests. An extensive public involvement program will also be conducted, including public meetings, small group presentations, website, newsletters, and press releases.

The BBAC and public will also assist in confirming goals for the proposed bypass and developing a range of actions or alternatives needed to support the identified goals. The bypass concepts will be developed into alternatives for evaluation in the environmental impact statement (EIS) process.

Primary MDT Contacts

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APPENDIX F – ELECTED OFFICIALS DIRECTORY

Local Officials

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BILLINGS BYPASS EIS
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Coordination Plan
January 2011

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