

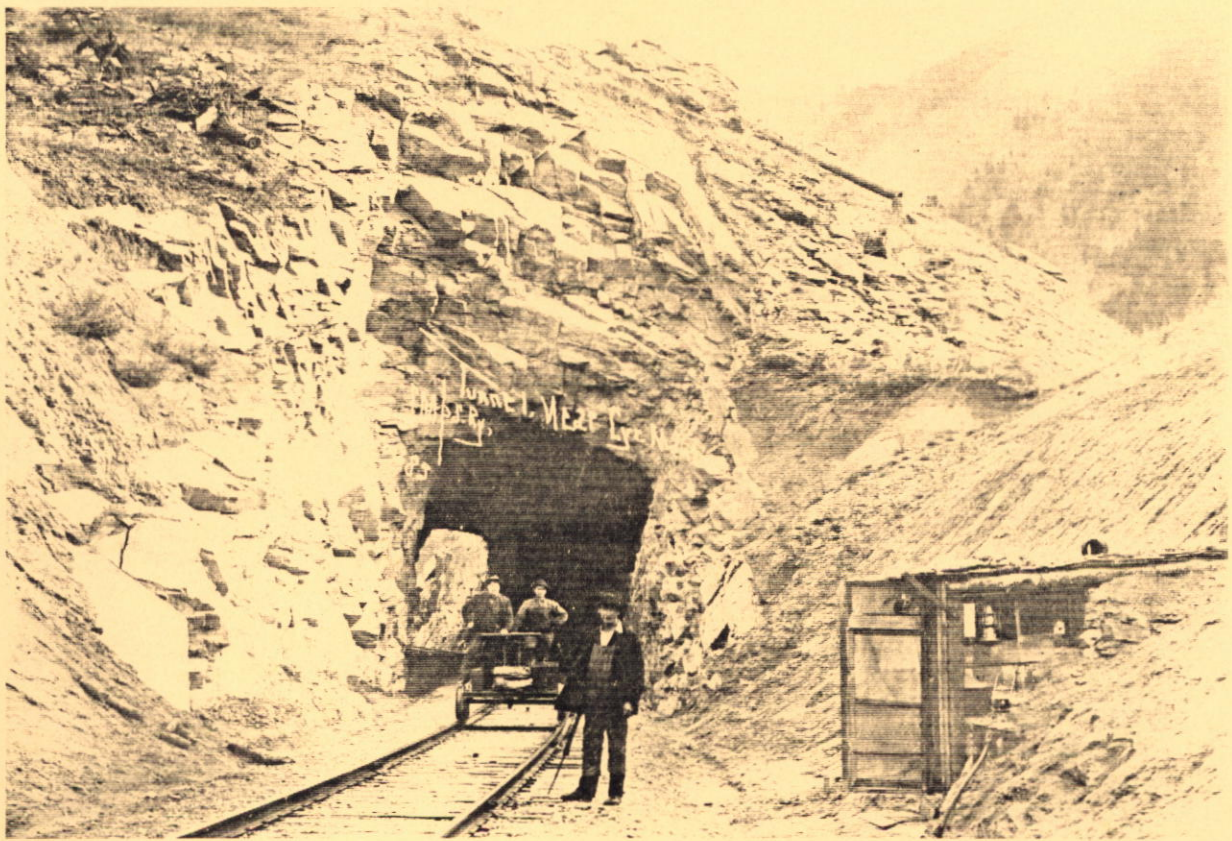
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

For

North Reserve Street/Mead Land Exchange

in

Missoula and Mineral Counties, Montana



Montana Department of Transportation

Montana Department of
Natural Resources and
Conservation

May, 1999

MEPA ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for

NORTH RESERVE STREET / MEAD LAND EXCHANGE

in

MINERAL AND MISSOULA COUNTY

This document is prepared in conformance with MEPA requirements and contains the information required for an Environmental Assessment under the provisions of ARM 18.2.237(2) and 18.2.239.

Submitted pursuant to **42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)**

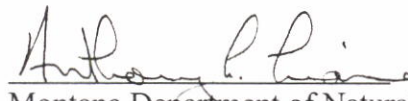
by the

Montana Department of Transportation

Reviewed and Approved
for Distribution


Montana Department of Transportation
Environmental Services

Date: 5/24/99


Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
Trust Lands Management Division

Date: 5/25/99

The following persons may be contacted for additional information concerning this document:

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MEPA Environmental Assessment

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed State Action

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and the Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNR&C) is proposing a land exchange which would include excess highway lands owned by MDT, school trust lands administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), and private lands owned by Charles L. & Hazel J. Mead (Mead).

2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action

MDT - Title 60, Chapter 4, Section 201, M.C.A.
DNRC - Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 4
- Title 77, Chapter 2, Part 2, M.C.A.

3. Name of Project

North Reserve Street/ Mead Land Exchange

4. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)

Montana Department of Transportation, 2701 Prospect, P.O. Box 201001,
Helena, MT 59620-1001 (406)444-7228

Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation, Southwestern
Land Office, 1401 27th Avenue, Missoula, MT 59804 (406)542-4200

5. If Applicable:

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date NA
Estimated Completion Date of Land Exchange August 1999
Current Status of Project Design (% complete) NA

6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)

MDT property - Missoula County

T13N, R19W Section 30 -E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ - two parcels 2.81 acres
 Orchard Homes Addition #4, Lot 48, Parcels A & B of C.O.S. 4743

DNRC property - Mineral County

T14N, R23W	Section 6	-Lots 1, 2 & 7	43.5± acres
T15N, R23W	Section 32	-Lot 8 and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	32± acres
T15N, R24W	Section 36	-W $\frac{1}{2}$ W $\frac{1}{2}$ W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	5 acres
		-W $\frac{1}{2}$ W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	2.5 acres
		-SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	10 acres
		-W $\frac{1}{2}$ W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	<u>2.5 acres</u>
			95.5 acres

Mead property - Mineral County

The abandoned Milwaukee Road Railroad grade north of Interstate 90 beginning at the west line of Section 6, T14N, R23W, continuing easterly through the N $\frac{1}{2}$ of Section 6 and through the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 31, T15N, R23W and through the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 32, T15N, R23W ending at the midsection line of Section 32.
 39± acres

7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (a) Developed: | (d) Floodplain... <u>0</u> acres |
| residential... <u>2.81</u> acres | |
| industrial..... <u>0</u> acres | |
| (b) Open Space/Woodlands/ | (e) Productive: |
| Recreation..... <u>0</u> acres | irrigated cropland... <u>5</u> acres |
| Railroad Grade.. <u>39</u> acres | dry cropland..... <u>0</u> acres |
| (c) Wetlands/Riparian | forestry..... <u>90.5</u> acres |
| Areas..... <u>0</u> acres | range land..... <u>0</u> acres |
| | other..... <u>0</u> acres |

8. **Map/site plan: attach an original 8 ½" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.**

Attached.

9. **Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.**

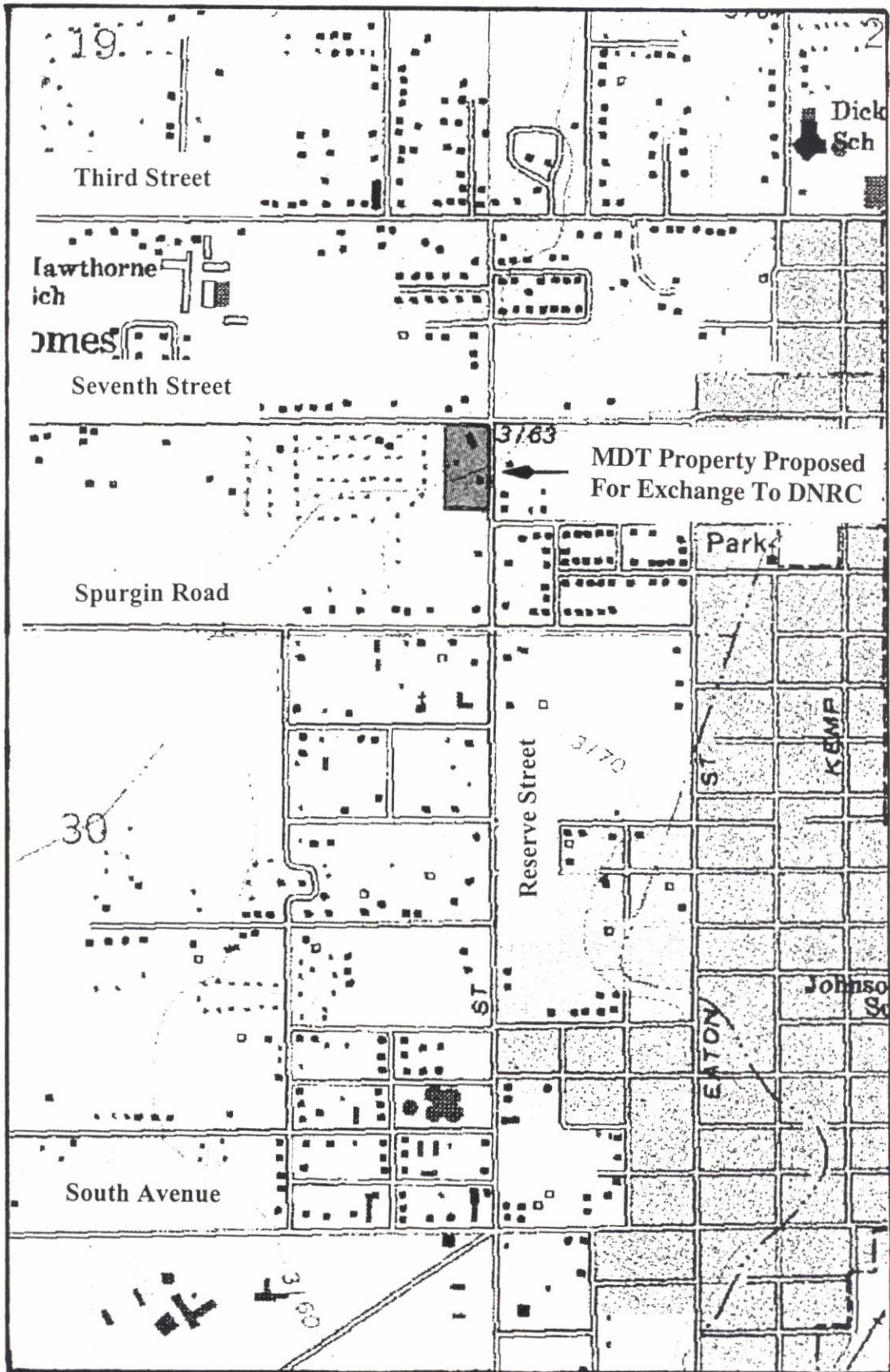
The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) jointly with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) are proposing a land exchange which includes excess highway lands, school trust lands, and private lands. The MDT land involved in the land exchange are two parcels of land along Reserve Street within the City limits of Missoula, MT located in Section 30, Township 13 North, Range 19 West. The school trust lands administered by DNRC proposed for this land exchange are three parcels in the Alberton area located in Section 6, Township 14 North, Range 23 West; Section 32, Township 15 North, Range 23 West; and in Section 36, Township 15 North, Range 24 West. The private land involved in the land exchange is a portion of the abandoned Milwaukee Road Railroad grade owned by Charles L. and Hazel J. Mead of Alberton, MT which is adjacent to and in the same sections as the school trust lands. (See attached maps).

MDT would receive in the land exchange portions of the above mentioned three DNRC school trust land parcels in the Alberton area. The parcels MDT would receive from the DNRC in Sections 6 (43.5 acres) and 32 (32 acres) combined with adjacent parcels MDT already owns contain a 2½ mile intact segment of the historically significant Mullan Road. This proposed land exchange would provide MDT a way to protect this original segment of the historic Point of Rocks Segment of the Mullan Road. The third parcel of 20 acres of school trust land (in Section 36) that MDT would receive from DNRC would be exchanged with the Mead's for their ownership of a portion of the abandoned Milwaukee Road Railroad grade.

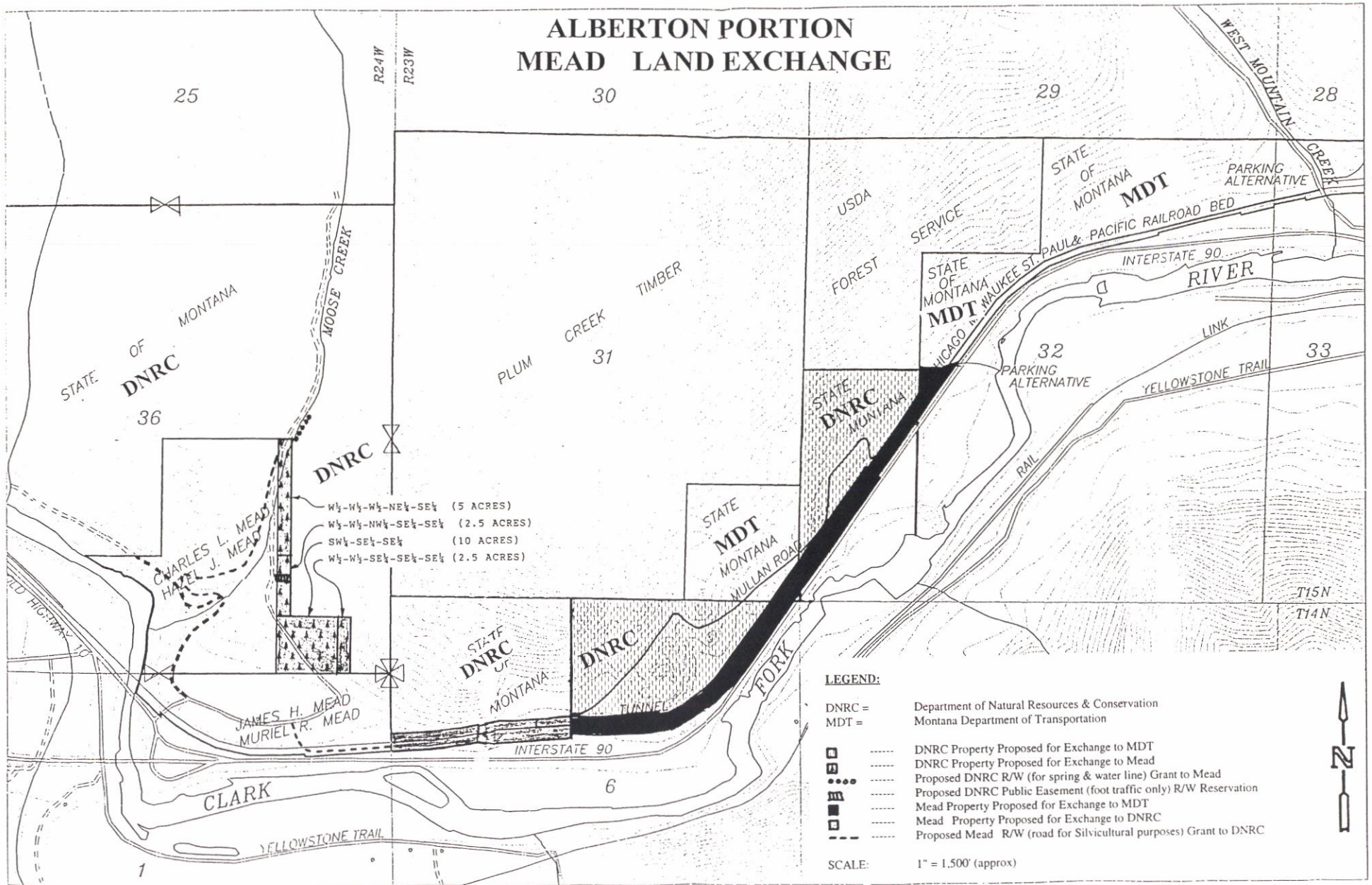
The Mead's propose to grant to the MDT and DNRC approximately 2 miles (39 acres, more or less) of the abandoned Milwaukee Road Railroad grade. The west end of the railroad grade in Section 6, T14N, R23W (approximately 11 acres) would go to the DNRC. The east end of the railroad grade (approximately 28 acres) would go to MDT. The 20 acres the Mead's would receive from the DNRC,

Missoula Portion Meade Land Exchange

Scale: 1" = 1,000' (approx)



ALBERTON PORTION MEAD LAND EXCHANGE



25

30

29

28

R24W
R23W

STATE OF MONTANA
DNRC
36

PLUM CREEK
TIMBER
31

USDA SERVICE FOREST
STATE OF MONTANA MDT
PARKING ALTERNATIVE
PACIFIC RAILROAD BED
STATE OF MONTANA MDT
CHICAGO IN WAUKEE ST. PAUL & PACIFIC RAILROAD BED
INTERSTATE 90
RIVER
32
PARKING ALTERNATIVE
LINK
33

DNRC

W $\frac{1}{2}$ -W $\frac{1}{2}$ -W $\frac{1}{2}$ -NE $\frac{1}{4}$ -SE $\frac{1}{4}$ (5 ACRES)
W $\frac{1}{2}$ -W $\frac{1}{2}$ -NW $\frac{1}{4}$ -SE $\frac{1}{4}$ -SE $\frac{1}{4}$ (2.5 ACRES)
SW $\frac{1}{4}$ -SE $\frac{1}{4}$ -SE $\frac{1}{4}$ (10 ACRES)
W $\frac{1}{2}$ -W $\frac{1}{2}$ -SE $\frac{1}{4}$ -SE $\frac{1}{4}$ -SE $\frac{1}{4}$ (2.5 ACRES)

STATE OF MONTANA
MDT
MULLAN ROAD

STATE OF MONTANA
DNRC

DNRC
TUNNEL

CLARK FORK

T15N
T14N

CHARLES L. MEAD
HAZEL J. MEAD

JAMES H. MEAD
MURIEL R. MEAD

INTERSTATE 90

6

CLARK

YELLOWSTONE TRAIL

1



through MDT, is adjacent to the Mead property. In addition, the DNRC would retain a trailhead easement and walking trail on the 20 acre parcel they would transfer to the Mead's. The DNRC would grant an easement to the Mead's for a spring development and existing water line. This land exchange would consolidate the Mead's land holdings and provide the MDT with the Milwaukee Road Railroad grade necessary for the development of the recreational and historic trail. The Mead's agreed to give the DNRC access across other land's Mead owns to allow DNRC access to DNRC lands for timber management purposes.

The abandoned Milwaukee Road Railroad grade to be obtained from the Mead's is immediately adjacent to the Mullan Road. It retains all of the features historically associated with it (excepting the tracks, ties, and power poles), including a 252-foot tunnel. MDT intends to develop a future recreational and historical bicycle/pedestrian trail loop that would consist of a 2± mile segment of the original Mullan Road and a 1½ mile segment of the abandoned Milwaukee Road Railroad grade and provide public access to both historic properties. The trail would include interpretation of the historical features. The land exchange would enable the MDT to fulfill its legal requirements under the National Historic Preservation Act providing for a cultural resource mitigation bank for MDT impacts to historically significant railroad grades.

The Point of Rocks Segment of the Mullan Road was a component of a significant early road in Montana. The Mullan Road was financed, surveyed and constructed by an appropriation from the U.S. Army to facilitate the movement of troops, equipment and supplies between the head of navigation on the Missouri River and Fort Walla Walla in Washington Territory. In 1859, the War Department authorized Lieutenant John Mullan to construct a military road between Fort Benton on the Missouri River and Fort Walla Walla in Washington Territory, a distance of about 624 miles. Completed in 1860, the Mullan Road was an important route in western Montana. After the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, government support of the road ended. Maintenance of it then passed to private entrepreneurs who maintained segments of it as toll facilities. It functioned as an important emigrant and supply road during the Montana gold rush of the early 1860s. Most of the original 624-mile road has been obliterated by subsequent highway and Interstate construction. Intact segments of the Mullan Road are very rare and are generally inaccessible to the public. This segment of the Mullan Road retains many features constructed by Mullan and his work crew and is well documented through John Mullan's diaries and subsequent journals kept by users of the facility. The Point of the Rocks Segment of the Mullan Road is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

The Milwaukee Road Railroad grade was the last transcontinental railroad constructed through Montana. Built between 1907 and 1909, the railroad served the agricultural areas of central Montana and functioned as an important freight and passenger line in the state until 1980, when it was abandoned. Because of the Milwaukee Road Railroad's association with the agricultural and industrial history of Montana, the abandoned grade is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The railroad grade contains a combination concrete and treated timber crib 252-foot tunnel carved through a rock promontory. The tunnel has been little altered since 1936 and is eligible for the NRHP as a contributing component to the railroad.

The three school trust land parcels (95.5 acres) are currently classified as forest lands. From an appraisal conducted on lands near Alberton by an independent fee appraiser, the fair market value for the school trust lands and the Mead's railroad grade properties near Alberton are estimated to be \$3000/acre. The Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (DFW&P) holds a lease for wildlife winter range and hunting/recreational purposes on over 600 acres in this area, including the school trust lands being considered for this trade. Initial comments from them indicate no immediate concerns with this proposal. Rental paid by DFW&P attributable to the proposed exchange lands is estimated at less than \$50.00 a year.

The value of the two parcels in Sections 32 and 6 (75.5 acres) would be approximately \$226,500. In exchange for these two DNRC parcels, the Montana Department of Transportation proposes to give to the DNRC the two parcels of land in Missoula of approximately 2.8 acres. These two parcels adjoin each other and are on the southwest corner of the intersection of South 7th Avenue and North Reserve Street, and have a potential yearly income of \$25,000 to \$50,000. Appraisals conducted for MDT's two parcels indicate they have a value of \$4.46/sq. feet or a total value of roughly \$545,369. The difference in values will be applied to potential future land exchanges.

Both the Meads and MDT have offered to grant the DNRC easements across intervening lands for access for timber management purposes on the remaining trust lands and other lands in the area which will help facilitate timber harvests. It is anticipated that a greater public use value will be created by the transfer of these lands to MDT.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Interest in some type of a land exchange began as a request Charles L. Mead made of the former Department of State Lands (Department of Natural Resources and Conservation) in January 1993. His proposal was to exchange railroad right-of-way for State Lands adjacent to his land. At that time the proposal did not meet the

Department of State Lands requirements for land exchanges. In June 1994, Mineral County submitted a Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) application to the Montana Department of Transportation for the improvement and interpretation of a 2½ mile segment of the historically significant Mullan Road in Mineral County. Funds acquired through the CTEP program were to be applied by the county to the development of the site as a recreational trail. It was discovered by Charles Mead that by including the Milwaukee Road Railroad grade he owned with the Mullan Road recreational trail project, a loop could be made in the trail system that would begin and end at the MDT owned gravel pit parcels in Sections 32 & 33.

In late 1995, Mineral County requested the assistance of the Lolo National Forest and the Environmental Services office of the Montana Department of Transportation to help provide a solution to a land exchange that did not meet the conditions specified in state regulations. In July 1996, a DNRC archaeologist, a Lolo National Forest archaeologist, and the MDT's archaeologist and historian recorded both the Milwaukee Road Railroad grade and the Point of Rocks Segment of the Mullan Road to determine their National Register eligibility. At a meeting held on November 22, 1996 between MDT, DNRC, Lolo National Forest, Charles Mead, and other supporters of the project, a new strategy was discussed to hopefully expedite the development of the Point of the Rocks Segment of the Mullan Road and the Milwaukee Road Railroad grade into a recreational facility. The MDT proposed to trade land owned by the department to the DNRC for the 20 acre tract adjacent to Mr. Mead's property. And then upon completion of that transfer, MDT would trade those parcels to Mead for the abandoned railroad grade.

Several properties have been evaluated by MDT and DNRC over the past two years to locate property suitable to both agencies for the land exchange. This land exchange as proposed is beneficial to all the parties involved. The income derived from school trust lands will significantly increase and the DNRC would obtain timber management easements to lands that were previously difficult to manage. The MDT would obtain cultural resource mitigation credits. The Meads would acquire hay fields adjacent to their property. The public would also benefit by the opportunity to experience, enjoy and learn about these unique historic properties.

10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

Agency Name Permit Date Filed/#

No permits are required.

(b) Funding:

Agency Name Funding Amount

None

(C) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name Type of Responsibility

None

11. List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:

None.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Evaluation of the Impacts of the Proposed Action Including Secondary and Cumulative Impacts on the Physical and Human Environment:

IMPACTS

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES

Will the proposed action result in:

a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?

X

b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?

X

c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?

X

d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?

X

e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?

X

f. Other: _____

UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

No impacts would occur.

IMPACTS

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in: a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? b. Creation of objectionable odors? c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally? d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants? e. Other: _____	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

No impacts would occur.

IMPACTS

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
<p>3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:</p> <p>a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?</p> <p>b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?</p> <p>c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?</p> <p>d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?</p> <p>e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?</p> <p>f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?</p> <p>g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?</p> <p>h. Increase in the risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?</p> <p>I. Violation of the Montana Non-Degradation Statute?</p> <p>j. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?</p> <p>k. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?</p> <p>l. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?</p> <p>m. Other: _____</p>	<p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p>				<p align="center">F.</p> <p align="center">J.</p>

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

F. An area landowner expressed a concern about his groundwater. This land exchange will have no effect on groundwater in the area. No impacts would occur.

J. The DNRC would grant an easement to the Mead's for an existing spring development and water line.

IMPACTS

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
<p>4. <u>VEGETATION</u></p>					
<p>Will the proposed action result in:</p>					
	X				
<p>a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?</p>	X				
<p>b. Alteration of a plant community?</p>	X				
<p>c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered plant species?</p>	X				
<p>d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?</p>	X				
<p>e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?</p>	X				E.
<p>i. Other: _____</p>					

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

E. The land exchange would not disturb any soil. The development of the trail will evaluate and develop a plan to address the concerns on the spread of noxious weeds.

No impacts would occur.

IMPACTS

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
<p>5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action result in:</p>					
	X				
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?	X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?	X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?	X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?	X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?	X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?	X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?	X				
h. Other: _____					

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish/Wildlife Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

No impacts would occur.

IMPACTS

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

	UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
<p>6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action result in:</p> <p>a. Increases in existing noise levels?</p> <p>b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?</p> <p>c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?</p> <p>d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?</p> <p>e. Other: _____</p>		X				B.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Effects (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

B. The land exchange would have no effect on existing noise levels. The future trail development process will evaluate the potential for noise impacts.

No impacts would occur.

IMPACTS

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

	UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
<p>7. <u>LAND USE</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action result in:</p> <p>a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?</p> <p>b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?</p> <p>c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?</p> <p>d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?</p> <p>e. Other: _____</p>			X			A.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Use (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

A. As part of the land exchange, both the Mead's and MDT will grant the DNRC access easements for timber management purposes to remaining DNRC lands and other lands in the area which will facilitate timber harvests. The access easements will allow the DNRC to manage lands and potentially generate income off of the lands that DNRC previously did not have access easements to. Any development DNRC may undertake on school trust land would be consistent with current zoning. Any changes would go through local planning and zoning review processes.

IMPACTS

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

	UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
<p>8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action result in:</p> <p>a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?</p> <p>b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?</p> <p>c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?</p> <p>d. Other: _____</p>		X				
		X				
		X				

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

No impacts would occur.

IMPACTS

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
<p>9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACTS</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action result in:</p> <p>a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?</p> <p>b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?</p> <p>c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?</p> <p>d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?</p> <p>e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?</p> <p>f. Other: _____</p>	<p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p> <p align="center">X</p>				<p align="center">C.</p> <p align="center">E.</p>

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impacts (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

C. The development of the interpretive/ historical trail would be accomplished through the use of MDT staff, volunteers, local historical societies, and any grants that may be come available.

E. A landowner has expressed a concern about the safety of the county road used for access to the Alberton property and the potential increased risk of additional traffic on the road. The expected increase of traffic due to the historic and interpretation trail is less than 10 vehicles per day. Traffic volumes and traffic safety will be considered further as the MDT develops the trail project. Additional concerns expressed on public safety and adjacent landowner privacy will also be considered and evaluated during the trail project development.

IMPACTS

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/ TAXES/UTILITIES

Will the proposed action:

a. Have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: _____

X

A.

b. Have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?

X

B.

c. Result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?

X

d. Result in increased used of any energy source?

X

e. Other: _____

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

A. The need for sanitary service and maintenance of the trail will be determined as the trail project is developed. The management and funding of needed services will be provided for at that time.

B. The bulk of the property involved in the land exchange will remain under State of Montana ownership. The state tax base will only change slightly, due to the Mead's acquiring 20 acres of farm and timber land in exchange for 39 acres of abandoned railroad grade.

IMPACTS

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

	UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
<p>11. <u>AESTHETICS/ RECREATION</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action result in:</p> <p>a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?</p> <p>b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?</p> <p>c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational opportunities and settings?</p> <p>d. Other: _____</p>		X				A.
		X				B.
			X			C.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- A. The goal of the trail is to preserve the historic integrity of the Mullan Road and Milwaukee Road Railroad grade and their associated scenic vistas.
- B. Fencing and 'No trespassing' signs will be placed at the end of MDT property to identify and protect adjacent private property.
- C. The goal of this project is that with the development of the recreation and historical/ interpretative trail that the recreational opportunities and settings will be greatly increased. Currently the site and its historical importance is generally unknown to the general public.* The DNRC will retain a public access trailhead in Section 36, T15N, R24W. The Mead's have agreed to provide access to the trailhead across the property they would receive in the land exchange.
*The people in the area have known about it for years.

IMPACTS

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT
(Continued)

	UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
<p>12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action result in:</p> <p>a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?</p> <p>b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?</p> <p>c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?</p> <p>d. Other: _____</p>		X				A.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

A. A cultural resources report was completed for this land exchange by MDT in 1998. This proposed project's goal is to protect and preserve the historic integrity of the Mullan Road and the Milwaukee Road Railroad grade with it's associated tunnel.

IMPACTS

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

	UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:*	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:*	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
<p>13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</p> <p>Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:</p> <p>a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)</p> <p>b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?</p> <p>c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?</p> <p>d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?</p> <p>e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?</p> <p>F. Other: _____</p>		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (Continued)

2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative No. 1: No Action.

With this alternative, no land exchange would take place. All parties would retain existing ownership. The MDT would retain their partial ownership of some of the Mullan Road and be unable to provide public access to both historic properties. The MDT would also continue to own the Reserve Street property which is considered surplus property and not needed for highway construction. The DNRC would have piecemeal land ownership in the Alberton area and no access easement to some of the lands. The Mead's would also continue to have piecemeal ownership of property that is not productive (i.e. the railroad grade). The existing ownership does not allow the owners to use the properties for their best use.

The land exchange would put each parcel of land involved under the ownership of the party that would be best able to get the most beneficial use of that property.

Alternative No. 2: Preferred Alternative. Project as Proposed.

A land exchange between MDT, DNRC, and the Mead's in which the MDT would receive three parcels of school trust land from DNRC in the Alberton area. One parcel of 20 acres would be traded with the Mead's for approximately 39 acres of the abandoned Milwaukee Road Railroad grade. The other two parcels from DNRC combined with the railroad grade from the Mead's and the land that MDT currently owns would then be developed by MDT to provide for a pedestrian and bicycle historical/ interpretive trail loop on a portion of the Mullan Road and Milwaukee Road Railroad grade contained on the properties. The DNRC would receive (in exchange for the three Alberton parcels) from MDT the Reserve Street property, and access easements for timber management purposes from MDT and the Mead's to facilitate management of additional properties that DNRC manages in the area. In addition, the Mead's would grant a trailhead easement on the 20 acre parcel they will receive to DNRC. The DNRC would grant an easement to the Mead's for an existing spring development and water line.

The land exchange would take place as soon as it is approved by the State Land Board and the appropriate paperwork can be completed. The development of the

historical/ interpretative trail loop would be completed by MDT staff in the future and would take in to consideration any public safety, adjacent landowners, and traffic safety concerns that have been expressed during the public involvement process. Concerns also expressed on the long term management of the trail and the associated resources available for the management of the trail will be addressed and resolved during the development of the trail project.

Alternative No. 3.

With this alternative the land exchange would be the same as in the preferred Alternative No. 2 except that the MDT would only receive portions of the school trust parcels that contain the Mullan Road segment and turn over to the DNRC the portions of MDT parcels that did not contain the Mullan Road segment. This alternative was determined to make the existing piecemeal ownership even more piecemeal by splitting ownership of parcels currently owned by one agency to being owned by both agencies. In addition this alternative would not provide and adequate corridor or buffer zone to protect the viewshed associated with this portion of the historic Mullan Road. This alternative would make management of the parcels by the agencies more difficult than it currently is, and was rejected by both agencies.

3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

No mitigation is necessary.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

This land exchange is one that is mutually beneficial to all the parties involved. The MDT would obtain ownership of the historically significant Point of the Rocks Segment of the Mullan Road and the Milwaukee Road Railroad grade. The DNRC would obtain the Reserve Street property with the potential to add \$25,000 to \$50,000 a year to the school trust fund. The DNRC would receive timber management easements to school trust lands. The Mead's would obtain a 20 acre parcel adjacent to their existing holdings that would provide them with a needed hay field for their farming operations. The DNRC would grant an easement to the Mead's for an existing spring development and water line. The public would also benefit by the opportunity to experience, enjoy, learn about, and have preserved for the future these historic properties. The project has great support from the Montana

Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks, Mineral County Commissioners, the local community, historical and preservation organizations, and numerous individuals.

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

An EIS is not required.

This Environmental Assessment has analyzed the proposed project and the project is not expected to have significant impacts to the environment or the public. The Environmental Assessment was the appropriate level of analysis.

2. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

In the summer of 1998, public notices were published in both the Missoulian and the Mineral Independent newspapers advertising a 30-day comment period and public hearings on the proposed project. The public hearings to explain the land exchange proposal and to gather public comments were held in August 1998 in Alberton and Missoula. The public hearings were co-sponsored by MDT and DNRC. The public involvement included an opportunity to tour the parcels involved in the land exchange. Approximately 36 people attended one or both public hearings. Both written and oral comments were received on the proposed project. Several concerns were raised primarily about the trail itself such as traffic safety on the gravel road, and protection of private landowners adjacent to the proposed trail. Transcripts of the public hearings are available from either Bob Storer, DNRC, 542-4264, or Jon Axline, MDT, 444-6258. The project has great support from the Mineral County Commissioners, the local community, historical and preservation organizations, and numerous individuals. It is believed the public notices and public hearings were sufficient to solicit public comment.

3. Duration of comment period if any:

This Environmental Assessment will be available for a 30 day comment period. All written comments received will be considered, and a Decision Notice will be issued.

4. Name, title, address and phone number of the Person Responsible for Preparing the EA:

Joel M. Marshik, P.E.
Environmental Services Manager

MT Department of Transportation

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Phone (406) 444-7228

Tony Liane
Area Manager, Southwestern Land
Office
MT Dept. of Natural Resources &
Conservation
1401 27th Avenue

Missoula, MT 59801-4733
Phone (406) 542-4200

5. Distribution of this Environmental Assessment.

The following individuals and agencies were sent a copy of this Environmental Assessment:

MT Dept of Transportation
2701 Prospect
Helena MT 59620

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Alberton MT 59820

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