

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

on the

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for

US 89, BELT NORTH & SOUTH

**NH 60-2(55)71
Control No. 4043**

Cascade County

**Submitted Pursuant to
42USC 4332(2)(c) 49 USC 303
and Sections 2-3-104, 75-1-201 MCA**

by the

Montana Department of Transportation

and

**US Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration**

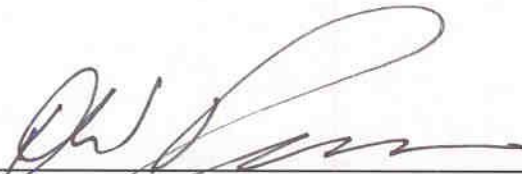
May 2004

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

for

US 89, BELT NORTH & SOUTH
NH 60-2(55)71
Control No. 4043
In
CASCADE COUNTY

THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION HAS DETERMINED THAT THIS PROPOSED PROJECT WILL HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. THIS *FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT* IS BASED ON THE ATTACHED ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WHICH HAS BEEN INDEPENDENTLY EVALUATED BY THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION AND DETERMINED TO ADEQUATELY AND ACCURATELY DISCUSS THE NEED, ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT AND APPROPRIATE MITIGATION MEASURES. IT PROVIDES SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS FOR DETERMINING THAT AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT IS NOT REQUIRED. THE FHWA TAKES FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACCURACY, SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE ATTACHED ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT.



Dale W. Paulson
Program Development Engineer
Federal Highway Administration

Date 6-29-2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 1.0 | Clarifications to the EA | 1 |
| 2.0 | Response to Comments and Questions on the EA | 5 |
| 3.0 | Summary of Impacts and Mitigation | 6 |
| 4.0 | Selection of the Preferred Alternative | 11 |
| 5.0 | Coordination Process | 12 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | | |
|---------|--------------------------------|---|
| TABLE 1 | Comparison of Impacts | 6 |
| TABLE 2 | Summary of Mitigation Measures | 8 |

APPENDICES

| | |
|-------------|---|
| APPENDIX A: | Public Notices |
| APPENDIX B: | Public Hearing Summary |
| APPENDIX C: | Written Comments Received and Responses |
| APPENDIX D: | Environmental Assessment |

1.0 CLARIFICATIONS TO THE EA

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION.

The following bullets are added to the description of the proposed action:

- Provide partial control of access (Limited Access Control) by allowing access at public roads and reasonable and safe access to all adjacent properties.
- Impose limitations on future access to ensure safety and operational goals are preserved.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED.

The third paragraph is replaced with the following:

Four build alternatives were determined to be feasible for development and initial comparison: one two-lane alternative and three four-lane alternatives.

The two-lane alternative that was analyzed for traffic capacity included a reconstructed facility with horizontal and vertical alignments meeting current standards, paved shoulders, dedicated turn lanes for all turning movements at intersections, and passing lanes for up to 80% of the length of the project. The traffic analysis concluded that, even with these significant improvements, the highest Level of Service (LOS) that a two-lane facility could achieve in the 2024 design year would be LOS D (ref. Traffic Report prepared for MDT by Jacobs Civil Inc., June 2003). This does not meet MDT's standard of LOS B. Therefore, the two-lane alternative was dropped from further consideration.

Under **Evaluation of Alternatives**, in the third paragraph after Table 1, the last sentence is replaced with the following text:

The existing roadway would no longer be used for public transportation or maintained by MDT. It would be obliterated in accordance with MDT specifications.

The term "land swap" in this context refers to the possible use of the existing right-of-way in this area (presently held in fee by the State of Montana) as partial compensation for the new right-of-way to be acquired for the cross-country portion of the alignment. This would only be considered if no other state or federal agency has use for the existing right-of-way. Whether this approach is used or not, all right-of-way negotiations and disposal of right-of-way held in fee would be in accordance with the MDT Right-of-Way Manual.

Under **The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 3 – Cross-Country Alignment)**, the following is added before the last sentence of the second paragraph:

The bridges would be replaced using staged construction so that temporary detours are not required.

Also, the following third paragraph is added:

Provide partial control of access (Limited Access Control) by allowing access at public roads and reasonable and safe access to all adjacent properties. In addition, limitations would be imposed on future access to ensure safety and operational goals are preserved.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION.

4.1 Land Use.

In **4.1.2 Impacts**, the following is added after the first sentence:

Expanding the two-lane road to a four-lane road, on a partial new alignment, may have some impact on land use patterns. However, existing adjacent property ownership patterns and the agricultural uses along the corridor should minimize the potential impact resulting from the Preferred Alternative.

4.2 Social and Economic

At the end of **4.2.2 Impacts**, the following paragraph is added:

It is not anticipated that development would occur as a result of the project. The Preferred Alternative would provide an improved facility with a portion of the project on a new alignment. However, the majority of the surrounding land is agricultural and is expected to remain so regardless of project improvements, as reflected by Cascade County development policies.

4.3 Right-of-Way / Relocation

In the first paragraph, the second sentence is clarified as follows:

There are no businesses or other commercial structures that would require relocation . . .

In the second paragraph, the second sentence is replaced with the following:

The existing right-of-way in that section (approximately 30.7 ha (75.9 ac)) which is currently held in fee by the State of Montana would be offered to the adjacent property owners as part of the compensation for the new right-of-way needed for the

cross-country alignment, resulting in a net total of additional right-of-way of 31.8 ha (78.5 ac). This would only be considered if no other state or federal agency has use for the existing right-of-way.

4.11 Vegetation and Wetlands

In **4.11.2 Impacts**, the third sentence of the second paragraph is replaced with the following:

In order to completely avoid Wetland 2, the alignment would need to be shifted approximately 10 to 12 meters. A shift of this magnitude in combination with the proposed roadway width would impact residences and would require extensive cut and a retaining wall, resulting in potential safety and maintenance issues. All of these impacts were evaluated when optimizing the feasible alignments. The Preferred Alternative balances the minimizing of cut and impacts to existing residences to the north and south of the wetland with the minimizing of the impact to the wetland.

4.12 Fish, Wildlife, and Threatened and Endangered Species

In **4.12.3 Mitigation**, the last sentence is clarified as follows:

Many of the existing drainage culverts would be removed and replaced with larger culverts (for hydraulic reasons), which may increase their use by smaller mammals for crossing the highway.

4.13 Floodplains

In **4.13.1 Existing Conditions**, the two floodplains crossed by the project are FEMA-defined floodplains: Floodplain 1 is at Belt Creek, and Floodplain 2 is at Johnson Flats, adjacent to Sand Coulee Creek, near the far west end of the project.

In **4.13.2 Impacts**, the first bullet is deleted.

In **4.13.3 Mitigation**, the first bullet is replaced with the following:

- Evaluate the proposed structure for the 50-year design flow, the 100-year flow, and either the 500-year or the overtopping flow, whichever is smaller.

4.18 Indirect and Cumulative Impacts

In the first paragraph, the last sentence is deleted, and the following sentence is added:

A careful analysis of the potential impacts from this project shows there are no clearly defined or substantial indirect effects.

4.19 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

In the first paragraph, the third sentence is revised as follows:

However, if a greater need for use of the land were to arise, or if the highway facility were no longer needed, the land could be converted to another use.

COMMENTS AND COORDINATION.

5.1 Agency Coordination

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) Regulatory Office is added to the list of agencies contacted.

The following sentence is added to this section:

In addition, requests were sent to both the USFWS and the COE to be cooperating agencies for the project. The USFWS agreed to be a cooperating agency.

REFERENCES.

Copies of all reports listed as prepared by Sverdrup Civil or Jacobs Civil Inc. are available for reference at MDT Headquarters in Helena.

The following is added to the list of references:

Jacobs Civil Inc. June 2003. Traffic Report.

GENERAL.

Throughout the document, where the word "wetland" is followed by an Arabic numeral (1, 2, 3, or 4), the numeral is intended for nomenclature/identification purposes, not to indicate the wetland classification. All wetlands on the project corridor (1, 2, 3, 4, and A) are Category III wetlands.

Throughout the document, any references to "paved median" are revised to read "center turn lane."

2.0 RESPONSE TO COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS ON THE EA

The public hearing for the US 89, Belt North & South EA was held on May 14, 2003. A copy of the hearing summary is included in Appendix B. The summary includes the comments made and the questions asked and answered during the hearing.

During the public comment period, one written comment and two e-mail comments were received. All comments were from individual property owners inquiring about anticipated right-of-way impacts and the plans for maintaining or providing access to their specific parcels. The comments and responses are included in Appendix C.

3.0 SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

Table 1 compares the impacts of the three build alternatives for each of the issues discussed in the EA.

| TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF IMPACTS | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| ISSUE | ALTERNATIVE 1 | ALTERNATIVE 2 | ALTERNATIVE 3 (Preferred) |
| Land Use | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.1.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.1.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No long-term impacts on Belt or Box Elder Creeks. |
| Social and Economic ⁽¹⁾ | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.2.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.2.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safer traveling conditions and improved accessibility (positive effect). ▪ Reduced travel times and improved mobility (positive effect). ▪ No disproportionately high and/or adverse effects on minority and/or low-income populations. |
| Right-of-Way/ Relocation ⁽²⁾ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 35.1 ha (86.7 ac) net total ROW required. ▪ Residential relocation at RP 72.5. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 37.0 ha (91.4 ac) net total ROW required. ▪ Residential relocation at RP 72.5. ▪ Impacts to Bar/restaurant at RP 85.3. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 31.8 ha (78.5 ac) net total ROW required. ▪ Residential relocation at RP 72.5. |
| Parks and Recreation | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.4.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.4.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No Section (4f) or 6(f) properties. |
| Pedestrians and Bicyclists | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.5.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.5.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Added shoulders improve safety and access for pedestrians and bicyclists (positive effect). |
| Historical/ Cultural/ Archaeological Resources | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.6.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.6.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finding of no effect on historic properties. |
| Prime and Unique Farmland | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.7.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.7.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Farmland Conversion Impact Rating points less than 160. |
| Air Quality | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.8.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.8.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Short-term construction impacts. ▪ No long-term impacts. |

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF IMPACTS

| ISSUE | ALTERNATIVE 1 | ALTERNATIVE 2 | ALTERNATIVE 3 (Preferred) |
|--|---|---|---|
| Noise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10 residences. ▪ 1 church. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10 residences. ▪ 1 church. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 residences. ▪ 1 church. |
| Water Resources/ Quality | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.10.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.10.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Short-term construction impacts. ▪ Minimal long-term impacts. ▪ No impacts to springs/wells. |
| Vegetation and Wetlands | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.11.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.11.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoids Wetland 1 (Cat. III). ▪ 0.10 ha (0.25 ac) impact on Wetland 2 (Cat. III). |
| Fish, Wildlife, and Threatened and Endangered Species | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.12.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.12.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No significant long-term impacts. ▪ No effect on bald eagle or mountain plover. ▪ Unlikely adverse impact on terrestrial and aquatic species. |
| Floodplains | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.13.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.13.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Short-term impacts due to increased sediment runoff and deposition during construction. |
| Visual | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.14.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.14.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Short-term impacts from vegetation removal, dust, debris, creation of construction staging areas, and traffic congestion during construction. ▪ Expanded pavement width and revised fill slopes. |
| Utilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minor relocations of power, telephone, and fiber optic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minor relocations of power, telephone, and fiber optic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minor relocations of power, telephone, and fiber optic. ▪ Possible relocation of power line to new alignment in cross-country portion. |
| Hazardous Substances | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.16.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.16.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No known hazardous substances. |

| TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF IMPACTS | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| ISSUE | ALTERNATIVE 1 | ALTERNATIVE 2 | ALTERNATIVE 3 (Preferred) |
| Permits Required | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.17.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.17.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MDEQ: Notice of Intent for Storm Water Discharges (under MPDES). ▪ COE: Notification for Nationwide 404 Permit. ▪ MDFWP: Montana Stream Protection Act Permit (124SPA). ▪ Cascade County: Floodplain Approval Permit. |
| Indirect and Cumulative Impacts | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.18.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.18.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No indirect impacts resulting from this project. ▪ No cumulative impacts on other MDT projects. |
| Irreversible and Irrecoverable Resources | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.19.) | SAME AS ALT 3. (See Section 4.19.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expenditure of various natural, physical, and human resources (e.g. fossil fuels, construction materials, construction labor, etc.), but none that are in short supply. |

- (1) **Social and Economic.** Although all three alternatives would have similar short-term impacts, Alternative 3 would produce fewer social and economic impacts because it includes the cross-country segment, which can be constructed without causing delays or impacting traffic on the existing roadway.
- (2) **Right-of-Way/Relocation.** All three alternatives require similar areas of additional right-of-way with Alternative 3 requiring the least. The net right-of-way shown for Alternative 3 assumes the existing right-of-way in the vicinity of the cross-country alignment (presently held in fee by the State of Montana) would be offered to the adjacent property owners as part of the compensation for the new right-of-way needed for the cross-country alignment. This would only be considered if no other state or federal agency has use for the existing right-of-way.

Table 2 summarizes the mitigation that will be implemented for the Preferred Alternative.

| TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES | |
|--|---|
| ISSUE | ALTERNATIVE 3 (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE) |
| Land Use | No mitigation required. |
| Social and Economic | No mitigation required. |
| Right-of-Way/ Relocation | Acquire right-of-way in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970, as amended (1989). |
| Parks and Recreation | No mitigation required. |
| Pedestrians and Bicyclists | No mitigation required. |
| Historical/ Cultural/ Archaeological Resources | No mitigation required. |

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES

| ISSUE | ALTERNATIVE 3 (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE) |
|---|--|
| Prime and Unique Farmland | No mitigation required. |
| Air Quality | Use dust palliatives, stabilize soil stockpile areas, and revegetate exposed areas to mitigate short-term construction impacts. |
| Noise | No mitigation required. |
| Water Resources/Quality | Prepare and comply with the project Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan, per Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Regulations (ARM 16.20.1314). Comply with Montana Stream Protection Act 124. Use best management practices (BMP) during construction. Revegetate in accordance with Seeding Special Provisions to be developed for the project and approved by the Cascade County Weed and Mosquito Management Board. |
| Vegetation and Wetlands | Minimize vegetation removal/disturbance. Promptly revegetate exposed areas. Provide bank stabilization and erosion control using BMPs. Implement sedimentation control methods along drainage routes. Adhere to BMPs relating to water quality and the handling of fuels and other contaminants common to staging areas. Mitigate impacts to jurisdictional wetlands as required per the COE Nationwide 404 permit at a location within the same watershed, within the proposed right-of-way, or pursue compensatory mitigation in accordance with the MDT Interagency Wetlands Group Operating Procedure. |
| Fish, Wildlife, and Threatened and Endangered Species | Follow mitigation described above for Vegetation and Wetlands. Protect migratory birds and nests during active periods. Acquire permits as necessary for removal of inactive nests. |
| Floodplains | Evaluate proposed structures for the 50-year design flow, the 100-year flow, and the smaller of the 500-year or the overtopping flow. Construct piers to align with flow to minimize obstruction. Install revetment such as riprap to protect abutments and embankments from scour. Revegetate promptly. Comply with requirements of the Floodplain Approval Permit to be issued by Cascade County. |
| Visual | Revegetate with desired vegetation of the type existing in the corridor. |
| Utilities | Relocate as required in accordance with MDT standards. |
| Hazardous Substances | No mitigation required. |
| Permits Required | MDEQ: Notice of Intent for Storm Water Discharges (under MPDES). COE: Notification for Nationwide 404 Permit. MDFWP: Montana Stream Protection Act Permit (124SPA). Cascade County: Floodplain Approval Permit. |
| Indirect and Cumulative Impacts | No mitigation required. |
| Irreversible and Irrecoverable Resources | No mitigation required. |

Note that the EA indicates various mitigation measures that “would” be implemented, if the project moves forward. Upon approval of this FONSI and advancement of the project, all mitigation measures discussed in the EA will be implemented.

4.0 SELECTION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Based on the US 89, Belt North & South EA and the summary of public comments and responses, the Federal Highway Administration has determined that Alternative 3 as described in the attached EA is the Preferred Alternative.

5.0 COORDINATION PROCESS

The proposed action has been coordinated with the appropriate federal, state, and local agencies in order to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and the Montana Environmental Policy Act. The Notice of Availability for the US 89, Belt North & South Environmental Assessment (EA) was published in two area newspapers on four different dates as follows:

- Belt Central Montana Press – May 1 and May 15, 2003
- Great Falls Tribune – April 27 and May 14, 2003

A copy of the notice is contained in Appendix A. The public review period began on April 29 and ended on May 28, 2003. Copies of the EA were available for review beginning April 29 at the following locations:

- MDT Great Falls District Office
- Great Falls Public Library
- City-County Planning Office in Great Falls
- Belt City Hall

Copies of the EA were also available upon request from MDT. State and Federal agencies, local entities, and property owners were notified by direct mail (flyer) that the EA was available for review. The flyer and distribution list are included in Appendix A.

A public hearing/open house was held on May 14, 2003 at the Belt School in Belt, Montana. The open house was held from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., and the public hearing was held at 7:00 p.m. The public hearing was attended by 47 persons, and a copy of the hearing summary is included in Appendix B.

**APPENDIX A
PUBLIC NOTICES**

Newspaper Notice.

Belt Central MT Press
May 1, 2003
May 15, 2003

Great Falls Tribune
April 27, 2003
May 14, 2003

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
**US 89, Belt North & South -
Environmental Assessment (EA)**

Project No. NH 60-2(55)71
PUBLIC HEARING

A Public Hearing will be held to provide information and take public comments on the EA addressing proposed improvements to US 89. The EA and preliminary design plans will be available for review. The project begins at Otter Creek near Armington Junction and extends approximately 16.3 miles (26.2 km) northwest toward Great Falls, connecting into the existing five-lane roadway just east of the Highwood-Stockett Intersection, or from RP 70.6 to 86.9. The Public Hearing will be held:

Wednesday, May 14, 2003
Belt School Cafeteria
1 Church Street, Belt, MT
Open House: 6:00 p.m.
Presentation: 7:00 p.m.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), and Jacobs Civil Inc. invite interested individuals, organizations, and federal, state, and local agencies to review the EA and provide comments.

Viewing Locations


Copies of the EA will be available for public review beginning April 29, 2003 at the following locations:

- MDT District Office, 200 Smelter Ave. NE, Great Falls - 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mon - Fri
- Great Falls Public Library, 301 2nd Ave. N, Great Falls - 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Sun; 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Mon - Sat
- City-County Planning Office, 415 3rd St. NW, Great Falls - 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mon - Fri
- Belt City Hall, 70 Castner St., Belt - 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mon - Fri

How to Comment

A 30-day calendar-day review period will begin on April 29, 2003, and conclude on May 28, 2003. Verbal or written comments may be presented at the Public Hearing. Written comments on the EA may also be addressed to: Cheryl Jones, Jacobs Civil Inc., 1455 West 2200 South, Suite 300, Salt Lake City, UT 84119, Fax (801)978-9121, or cheryl.jones@jacobs.com by **May 28, 2003**.

For further information or to arrange special accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact: Mick Johnson, MDT Great Falls District Administrator at (406)454-5887, Mark Studt at (406)444-9191, MDT at (888)231-5819, or TDD at (800)335-7592.


Montana Department of Transportation

Flyer, sent via direct mail.

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

US 89, Belt North & South - Environmental Assessment (EA)

Project No. NH 60-2(55)71

PUBLIC HEARING

A Public Hearing will be held to provide information and take public comments on the EA addressing proposed improvements to US 89. The EA and preliminary design plans will be available for review. The project begins at Otter Creek near Armington Junction and extends approximately 16.3 miles (26.2 km) northwest toward Great Falls, connecting into the existing five-lane roadway just east of the Highwood-Stockett Intersection, or from RP 70.6 to 86.9. The Public Hearing will be held:

Wednesday, May 14, 2003
Belt School Cafeteria
1 Church Street, Belt, MT
Open House: 6:00 p.m.
Presentation: 7:00 p.m.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), and Jacobs Civil Inc. invite interested individuals, organizations, and federal, state, and local agencies to review the EA and provide comments.

Viewing Locations

Copies of the EA will be available for public review beginning April 29, 2003 at the following locations:

- MDT District Office, 200 Smelter Ave. NE, Great Falls - 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mon - Fri
- Great Falls Public Library, 301 2nd Ave. N, Great Falls - 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Sun; 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Mon - Sat
- City-County Planning Office, 415 3rd St. NW, Great Falls - 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mon - Fri
- Belt City Hall, 70 Castner St., Belt - 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mon - Fri

How to Comment

A 30-day calendar-day review period will begin on April 29, 2003, and conclude on May 28, 2003. Verbal or written comments may be presented at the Public Hearing. Written comments on the EA may also be addressed to: Cheryl Jones, Jacobs Civil Inc., 1455 West 2200 South, Suite 300, Salt Lake City, UT 84119, Fax (801)978-9121, or cheryl.jones@jacobs.com by **May 28, 2003**.

For further information or to arrange special accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact: Mick Johnson, MDT Great Falls District Administrator at (406)454-5887, Mark Studt at (406)444-9191, MDT at (888)231-5819, or TDD at (800)335-7592.



Montana Department of Transportation

Distribution List for Public Hearing Notice.

PUBLIC AGENCIES

Belt City Council Members
PO Box 452
Belt, MT 59412

Patty Darko
Belt City Mayor
PO Box 453
Belt, MT 59412

Belt Creek Public Library
70 Castner Street
Belt, MT 59412

Calvin Johnson
Belt Public Schools
PO Box 197
Belt, MT 59412

Cascade County Commissioners
325 2nd Ave N
Great Fall MT 59401

John Nerud
Cascade Co. Planning Director
415 3rd ST NW
Great Falls, MT 59404

Cascade County Sheriff's Office
3800 Ulm N Frontage Road
Ulm, MT 59414

Centerville School
District No 5
Sand Coulee, MT 59472

Judith Basin County Sheriff's
Office
PO Box 427
Stanford, MT 59479

Judith Basin County
Commissioners
PO Box 427
Stanford, MT 59479

BUSINESSES

Belt Creek Brew Pub
57 Castner Street
Belt, MT 59412

Belt Creek Café
76 Castner Street
Belt, MT 59412

Belt Creek Service Center
332 1st Ave N
Belt, MT 59412

Black Diamond Bar & Supper
Club
64 Castner Street
Belt, MT 59412

C Lazy J Ranch
8018 US Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412-8016

Hanging "A"
8535 US Highway 89
Great Falls, MT 59405

LDS Church
US Highway 89
Belt, MT 59412

Lords Brothers Ranch
7742 US Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412

Jon & Charlotte Kantorowicz
Meadowlark Farms
166 Swift Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

Pleasant Valley Colony
734 McCoy Rd
Belt, MT 59412

Sentinel Rock Ranch
624 Robin Court
Great Falls, MT 59404

Sweeney Inc
21 Red Coulee Road
Belt, MT 59412

Wells Fargo Trust Department
Trustee for John Zoller
21 3rd St N
Great Falls, MT 59401

PRIVATE CITIZENS

Dave and Trish Anderson
44 US Hwy 87
Belt, MT 59412

Meg Anderson
44 US Hwy 87
Belt, MT 59412

Thomas & Clary Baiz
1103 4th Ave. North
Great Falls, MT 58401

Dick Ballatore
P.O. Box 107
Belt, MT 59412

Frank Ballatore
P.O. Box 444
Belt, MT 59412

Mary Ballinger – Evans
P.O. Box 462
Belt, MT 59412

Bob & Claudia Barber
6078 Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412

Rick Becker
7889 US Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412

Myron & Vivian Bell
P.O. Box 773
Fairfield, MT 59436-0773

Gary & Bonnie Black
3201 Jasper Rd.
Great Falls, MT 59404

Jim Dawson
P. O. Box 161
Belt, MT 59412

Barbara Grever
1021 2nd Ave North
Great Falls, MT 59401

Dennis Bough
RR 1 Box 82
Highwood, MT 59450-9706

Jonathon & JoAnn Lois Dullum
124 Riverview Drive
Great Falls, MT 59404

Dan & Karen Griffen
146 Treasure State Drive
Great Falls, MT 59404

Sharon Bough
626 Armington Road
Belt, MT 59412

Glen Enderson
307 2nd Ave N
Belt, MT 59412

Betty & Ed Heilig
6 Neil Creek Road
Belt, MT 59412

Charlie Bumgarner
8018 US Hwy 89
Great Falls, MT 59405

Mary Evans
P.O. Box 181
Raynesford, MT 59469

Louis & Shirley Hoffarth
8565 Highway 89 East
Great Falls, MT 59405

Gregory & Cynthia Bumgarner
7682 US Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412-8015

Phillip Fender
325 3rd Ave S
Belt, MT 59412

Chris Huestis
5 Homestake Lane
Great Falls, MT 59405

Everett & Vernelda Bumgarner
735 Spring Creek Rd.
Sand Coulee, MT 59412

George & Jean Foss
325 1st Ave. N.
Belt, MT 59412

Dana Huestis
2901 4th Ave North
Great Falls, MT 59401

J. Everett & Vernelda Bumgarner
7692 US Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412-8016

Alan & Elizabeth Frederick
33 Enger Road
Belt, MT 59412

Beverly Ness & Sharon Hughes
1522 W Lawrence Dr
Spokane, WA 99218-2446

Marc Bumgarner
7836 US Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412

Rose & Charles Fuller
7235 Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412

Patricia & Charles Irvine
20940 Hubbard Cutoff Rd NE
Aurora, OR 97002-9413

Jesse Butt
P.O. Box 204
Belt, MT 59412

David & Ruth Gliko
7128 US Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412

Patricia A. Johnson
2349 Harbor Avenue SW, Apt.
603

Eugene & Karen Cantley
7179 US Highway 87
Belt, MT 59412

Vernon & Frances Gliko
7004 US Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412-8015

Seattle, WA 98126-2156
Gary & Carol Keaster
7590 US Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412-8014

Tom Clister
P. O. Box 193
Belt, MT 59412

Robert Goodhart
P.O. Box 231
Belt, MT 59412

Wilmae Keaster
P.O. Box 285
Belt, MT 594120285

Glen & Leanne Coulter
99 Fife Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

Opal Goodman
P. O. Box 295
Belt, MT 59412

Marilyn Koontz
163 Castner
Belt, MT 59412

James & Delores Dawson
78 Spring Creek Road
Belt, MT 59412

Gary Gray
P.O. Box 492
Belt, MT 59412

James & Darae Larson
162 McCoy Road
Belt, MT 59412

Lloyd Locke
P.O. Box 85
Belt, MT 59412

Charles Marlen
8359 US Hwy 89
Great Falls, MT 59405-8060

Lilly Marlene Martin
P. O. Box 113
Belt, MT 59412

Jerry Mayberry
Box 101
Belt, MT 59412

Walter & Robyn Mehmke
8293 US Hwy 89
Great Falls, MT 59405-8036

Carl & Martha Mehmke
8293 US Hwy 89
Great Falls, MT 59405

Larry Murphy
Belt, MT 59412

Patrick Pierson
8 Neil Creek Road
Belt, MT 59412

Scott & Denise Puppe
2 Neil Creek Rd.
Belt, MT 59412

Ross & Karen Radzykewycz
51 Red Coulee Road
Belt, MT 59412

Steven & Lola Raska
246 Rickard Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

William Rogers
8345 US Highway 89
Great Falls, MT 59405

Richard Rounds
37 5th St N
Belt, MT 59412

Wayne Smith
4 Neil Creek Road
Belt, MT 59412

Ruth & John Stensrud
125 Central
Belt, MT 59412

Gerald & Marcelyn Stinson
P. O. Box 413
Belt, MT 59412

Thomas Thompson
178 Belt Creek Road
Belt, MT 59412

Aaron & Daphne Tillman
7257 US Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412

Enrique Tipiani
7259 US-89
Belt, MT 59412

Lee Voytoski
P.O. Box 626
Belt, MT 59412

Ronald Vihinen
8375 US Highway 89
Great Falls, MT 59405

Ronald Vihinen & Janice Dalton
PO Box 8096
Missoula, MT 59807

Violet Vihinen
8377 US Highway 89
Great Falls, MT 59405

Betty Rae Warehime
42 Cora Creek Road
Belt, MT 59412-8306

Shirley & James Warehime
P. O. Box 26
Belt, MT 59412

Anne Weintz
8073 US Hwy 89
Great Falls, MT 59405

Cheryl Wilson
8565 Hwy 89 East
Great Falls, MT 59405

Martin and Barb Winder
US Hwy 87
Belt, MT 59412

Carolyn Lippert Wood
7177 US Hwy 89
Belt, MT 59412

APPENDIX B
PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC HEARING – US 89, Belt North & South
May 14, 2003**

Attendees:

Mick Johnson, MDT District Administrator
Mark Studt, MDT Project Consultant Manager
Greg Teberg, MDT Consultant Design
Jerilee J. Weibel, MDT, Right-of-Way Supervisor
Cheryl Jones, Jacobs Civil Project Manager
Laura Cooper, Jacobs Civil Environmental Planner
John Blumenkamp, Jacobs Civil Roadway Engineer
Darrin Grenfell, FHWA
Carol Kruger, Wendt Kochman
Sandy Robinson, Wendt Kochman

Kim Skornogoski
Calvin Johnson
Richard Feisthamel
Betty Heilig
Pat Pierson
Janet Meissner
Marc Bumgarner
Martha Mehmke
James Warehiem
Anne Weintz
J. Everett Bumgarner
Frank Ballatore
Michael Zurhoski
Lora Huestis
Leanna Coulte
Rick Becker
Scott Puppe
Daphne Tillman
Dan Huestis
Carolyn Lippert Wood
Jim Larson
Louie Hoffarth
Neill Sweeney
David P. Wolp

Dan Smrdel
LeAnn Galt Feisthamel
Bill Heilig
Iola Pierson
Scott Meissner
Lloyd M. Locke
Carl Mehmke
Craig S. Osterman
Glen Enderson
Vernelda Bumgarner
Sharon Baugh
Dave R. Anderson
Gary Gray
Glen Coulter
Charlie Bumgarner
Patti Sweeney
Aaron Tillman
J. C. Kantorowicz
Harry Nisbet
Bill Heilig
Jarol P. Hofer
Dave Wilson
Marilyn Enderson

Meeting Summary:

The meeting provided an open forum for discussions with approximately 47 local residents in attendance and several representatives from MDT, FHWA, and Jacobs Civil Inc. to answer questions. From approximately 7:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., Mick Johnson, Cheryl Jones, and Laura Cooper made a formal presentation, discussing the proposed project, alternatives considered, the Preferred Alternative, and the anticipated impacts. The

presentation was followed by a question and answer/comment session.

Jacobs Civil had aerial photographs showing the Preferred Alternative. People gathered prior to the meeting for approximately an hour and then stayed after the Q&A phase to ask questions one-on-one.

Formal Meeting Overview:

Mick Johnson of the MDT opened the hearing with introductions of the representatives from MDT, Jacobs Civil, and FHWA. He explained the purpose of the public hearing was to discuss the proposed US 89 road improvements, called the Belt North & South Project. He explained that first representatives from Jacobs Civil Inc. would give an overview of the project, and then the meeting would be open to public comment and questions.

Cheryl Jones of Jacobs Civil said the purpose of the project is a wider, safer highway. After the MDT studied the needs of the roadway, they determined the need to expand to five lanes: four travel lanes, with a paved center turn lane. Construction will begin at Otter Creek near Armington Junction and go all the way to the existing five-lane roadway near Great Falls. The project will be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 will begin at Otter Creek and go as far as Mehmke's Hill, and Phase 2 will fill in the gap. The roadway will need to narrow to four lanes at Belt Hill. The comments made by members of the public at the previous public meetings were used to determine the current preferred alternative with an effort to minimize impact on existing features.

The construction approach will allow traffic to continue on the existing highway during construction without the need for detours. The plan is to tie-in to the existing roadway just west of the Otter Creek Bridge at Armington Junction and then shift the alignment to the left to avoid the rest area. The bridge at Belt Creek will be replaced, and then the roadway will shift to the right to avoid the neighborhood at Neil Creek Road. The road then continues up Belt Hill with the centerline shifted left of the existing centerline, to avoid impacts on the downstream side. The alignment continues shifted left of the existing centerline to the "cross-country" section, which deviates from the existing right-of-way at about Red Coulee Road and follows a straight alignment until it ties back in to the existing alignment at about the top of Mehmke's Hill. This results in the residences in this area being located further from the highway. The right-of-way associated with the existing highway will be turned back to the adjacent property owners after the new highway is completed. After the "cross-country" section, the new roadway will be offset to the left of the existing centerline, until the railroad bridge where it is centered, then ties-in to the existing five-lane roadway section.

Regarding drainage, the Belt Creek Bridge will be set three to four feet higher than the existing bridge to allow for 100-year floods to pass. At Neil Creek, there currently is a 48-inch concrete pipe, which will be replaced with two six-foot-high by seven-foot-wide concrete box culverts resulting in a net 14-foot-wide drainage structure. At Frenchman's Coulee, the two existing 30-inch corrugated metal pipes will be replaced with a single, larger concrete pipe, which will likely be installed by micro-tunneling.

The total right-of-way needed is 155 acres, but with the trade involved in the cross-country portion, the net right-of-way acquisition will be 78 acres. The corridor will impact one residence, but during the discussions held prior to this presentation, a compromise with the homeowners has quite possibly been reached which will allow them to remain in their residence.

Laura Cooper, Jacobs Civil Environmental Planner explained that the engineers and environmental planners worked very closely on the project. She discussed the following issues:

- Land use is great, in conformance with the county standards, and won't require taking any farms or homes, particularly in light of the compromise just mentioned by Cheryl. All residents in the area will benefit from a wider, safer road with provisions for pedestrians and bicycles. The new road will not have a designated pedestrian or bicycle lane, but it will have shoulders that will accommodate pedestrian and bicycle use.
- Four sites along the corridor have been designated by the State Historical Preservation Office as being eligible for the National Historic Register, but none will be affected by the project.
- There is no long-term air quality impact from the proposed project.
- One area of the road technically meets the criteria for mitigation for increased noise, which will impact six properties. The threshold for mitigation is 66 decibels, and the highest impact for any of these properties is 68 decibels. The planners determined that it is not feasible to mitigate for this amount of noise intrusion by building a wall, so there will be no mitigation for noise.
- The planners have also made every effort to preserve water resources by assuring that Belt Creek and Box Elder Creek will be protected for erosion and sediment control, with as little impact as possible for the fish in the creeks. One wetland will be impacted by the preferred alternative, but it would have been impacted by any of the alternatives considered. Therefore, the option with the least wetland impact was selected. Public sentiment from prior public meetings also favored this alternative.

Cheryl Jones reminded people that written comments can be submitted until May 28, 2003. She welcomed written comments and encouraged people to also mark on the aerial photos of the proposed roadway, including their name and phone number near their property, so that after the environmental phase of the roadway is completed, the designers can easily contact property owners to discuss issues such reconstruction of accesses to the new highway.

Questions & Answers:

- Dave Wilson – He asked if the five-lane roadway would fit under the railroad bridge, or if the road would have to squeeze to four lanes at the bridge.

John Blumenkamp, Jacobs Civil Roadway Engineer, confirmed that five lanes would fit under the existing bridge.

- Lloyd Locke – Lloyd commented that he would rather see a new two-lane road run from Highwood and then join to the existing road past Armington in order to make it simpler and avoid having to build so many bridges. He believes it is more expensive to tunnel under existing fill dirt at Belt Hill and to rebuild the 13 or 14 bridges on Otter Creek (east of the eastern project limit).

Mick Johnson, MDT District Administrator responded that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is providing 87% of the funding for the US 89 project through the National Primary Highway System budget. Building the road as proposed by Mr. Locke would require funding for state and county roads, and there is no money in the budget for that option.

- Charlie Bumgarner – Charlie asked if the existing power poles would be removed once the new cross country section of the roadway is constructed.

Cheryl Jones responded that they have studied that issue. It depends on whether the existing power poles are within the state highway right-of-way by permit or if they have an easement from the property owners. If they are in the right-of-way by permit, then they will move with the roadway. If not, the utility companies will contact the property owners for easement arrangements.

- Dan Smrdel – Dan asked when construction is scheduled to begin.

Cheryl Jones responded that they hope to begin in mid 2005.

Mick Johnson added that the design phase should be completed in September 2004; then they will begin to purchase right-of-way rights in the 2005 construction season.

- Dan Smrdel – Dan then expressed concern about traffic during the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial event in 2005.

Mick Johnson said the Great Falls District in general is planning to detour traffic to have as little impact as possible on the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Event.

- Dave Anderson – Dave asked which end of the project would be started first.

Cheryl Jones said it would be up to the contractor to make that determination based on season, weather conditions, etc.

- Dave Anderson – Dave commented that in nine out of ten years Belt Creek goes dry in the fall, so in his opinion, that is the logical time for the new bridge at the creek.

Laura Cooper concurred and indicated that there will be restrictions on the contractor regarding when they can work in the creek.

- Dave Anderson – Dave asked when the period of negotiations for right-of-way would begin.

Mick Johnson said as soon as plans are completed, the process would begin. He anticipates the time frame to be after Christmas of 2004. MDT will meet with each landowner to negotiate the price. After the right-of-way is acquired, then utility relocations will occur. Then construction would begin.

- David P. Wolp – Dave asked how price for the ground (right-of-way) is determined.

Jerilee J. Weibel, MDT, Right-of-Way Supervisor, said appraisers would come out to the property and then compare it to like properties that have been recently sold. She said landowners would receive the same price that they would get if selling the piece to a neighbor.

- J. C. Kantorowicz – J. C. asked what MDT would use for paving material on the new road.

Cheryl Jones said it would be asphalt.

Mick Johnson reminded people that the environmental document is on file at the Belt School and at the Belt Library. They are also on file at the Great Falls Public Library and the City-County Planning Office in Great Falls. He invited anyone concerns to take the time to visit with anyone from MDT or Jacobs after the meeting.

Laura Cooper reminded everyone that there are still 15 days left to make comments.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m., but many individual landowners remained to visit and ask questions until approximately 9 p.m.

Comments Made by Attendees After Formal Presentation:

A question was asked regarding the amount of right-of-way that would be taken in front of the Mehmke Farm Museum, and when the right-of-way would be purchased.

Response: *The amount of right-of-way was reviewed on the strip map with the owner, and it was clarified that this portion of the alignment is part of Phase II and would not be built until later in the future.*

Aaron Tillman expressed concern regarding his property at Sta. 41+20 (RP 72.5) and the proposed taking of his property for the new right-of-way corridor.

Response: *After discussing the issue with Mr. Tillman and MDT's right-of-way staff, it was determined that it may be possible to change the standard right-of-way corridor width to avoid impacting the Tillman's residence. This will be investigated during the design phase.*

Comments from Aerial Photographs:

The following is a summary of comments/notes written on the aerial photographs used in

the meeting, with responses.

Sheet 1 There are drainage concerns near the end of the project from approximately Sta. 266+00 (RP 86.4) to Sta. 271+00 (RP 86.7).

Response: *The proposed roadway profile will be designed to minimize ponding in this area.*

Sheet 2 An existing artesian spring, buried water lines, and an existing stock water tank were identified between Sta. 216+00 (RP 83.3) and Sta. 218+00 (RP 83.4).

Response: *The spring, water lines, and tank (locations identified by the residents) will not be affected by the proposed alignment.*

Sheet 3 Anne Weintz, who resides near the intersection of existing US 98 and Fife Road, inquired about the future access from her residence to the new US 89 alignment (along the cross country alignment). She also noted that she would like trees planted for a noise barrier.

Response: *Accesses from existing properties to the cross-country portion of the alignment will be determined in the next stage of roadway design. Property owners will be contacted so that the best scenario for each access can be provided. The noise analysis for the Preferred Alternative concluded that mitigation for noise impacts is not justified on the corridor.*

Sheet 7 Scott Meissner indicated his private approach at Sta. 28+60 (RP 71.9) could possibly be combined with the nearby approach at Sta. 27+90 (RP 71.8).

Response: *The possibility of combining the two approaches will be evaluated and determined during final design.*

Dave Anderson indicated that the fill east of Otter Creek poses a concern regarding sight distance and that the material may be suitable fill material.

Response: *This area is no longer within the project limits, and sight distance will not be evaluated in this area. The bidding contractors will be responsible for locating/identifying suitable fill material sources when preparing their bids.*

APPENDIX C
WRITTEN COMMENTS RECEIVED AND RESPONSES

Written comment received (comment form plus three attached pages).

Comment Form for: PUBLIC HEARING

May 14, 2003 - Belt School

Subject:

Reconstruction of Route US-89 - Belt North & South
Project No. NH60-2(55)71/Control No. 4043
Otter Creek to east of the Highwood-Stockett intersection.
Milepost 70.6 to 86.9

Comments:

THANK YOU FOR A VERY WELL PREPARED & DELIVERED EXPLANATION
OF THIS PROJECT.

WE WERE ASKED TO NOTE ON YOUR PLAN SHEETS THE
LAND THAT WE OWN & I DID SO - EXCEPT I SHOULD HAVE
NOTED:

OWNERSHIP: WELLS FARGO BANK AS TRUSTEE FOR
JOHN ZOLLER TRUST B
OPERATED BY: ZOLLER FARMS
CONTACT PERSON: DAN HUESTIS 406-453-2137
2901 4TH AVE. N.W. GREAT FALLS.

PLEASE PRESERVE THE 4 ACCESS PRIVATE ROAD APPROACHES
SHOWN ON THE R.O.W. AGREEMENT ATTACHED.

I ALSO IDENTIFIED THE "UNPAVED ROAD OBJECT" AS AN ARTESIAN SPRING

By (signature): *Dana Huestis*

Printed Name: MR. DANA HUESTIS

Address: 2901 4TH AVE. N.W.
GREAT FALLS, MT. 59401

If mailing comments after the meeting, send no later than May 28, 2003 to:

Jacobs Civil Inc.
1455 West 2200 South, Suite 300
Salt Lake City, UT 84119
Attn: Cheryl Jones
Or e-mail to: cheryl.jones@jacobs.com



DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS

Right of Way Bureau - Land Section
2701 Prospect Avenue, Helena, Mt 59620



TED SCHWENDEN GOVERNOR

2701 PROSPECT

STATE OF MONTANA

HELENA, MONTANA 59620

October 29, 1987

Elva Zoller
2101 First Ave. S.
Great Falls, Mt 59403

F 60-2(18)81
Great Falls-East
Parcel 15
Ref: 66-CC

We are forwarding herewith the certified approved copy of the Right of Way Agreement which you may retain for your records.

Thank you again for your cooperation in this matter.


Gerald Charlton, SR/WA
Supervisor, Land Section

GC:lw
encl.

**STATE OF MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS
 RIGHT OF WAY AGREEMENT**

R/W #28 (Rev. 10/85)

P.E. PROJECT

Great Falls - East
 Designation

R/W PROJECT F 60-2(18)81

Cascade
 County

CONST. PROJECT

| Parcel | From Station | To Station | Subdivision | Section | Township | Range |
|--------|--------------|------------|-------------|---------|----------|-------|
| 15 | 323+65 | 385+00 | N1/2SE1/4 | 28 | 20N | 5E |
| | | | N1/2SW1/4 | 27 | 20N | 5E |
| | | | NW1/2SE1/4 | 27 | 20N | 5E |

Owners:
 Elva Zoller
 2101 First Avenue South
 Great Falls, MT 59403

AND

The Great Falls National Bank
 N/K/A Norwest Bank Great Falls N/A
 21 Third Street North
 Great Falls, MT 59401

- As Co-Trustees For -
 (1) Elva Zoller
 (2) Lora Jo Huestis
 (3) Minor Children of Lora Jo Huestis

List Names & Addresses of the Grantor, Cont. Purchaser & Lessee

1. IN CONSIDERATION OF THE PAYMENTS HEREIN SET FORTH AND THE SPECIFIC AGREEMENTS TO BE PERFORMED BY BOTH PARTIES HERETO AND WRITTEN IN THIS AGREEMENT, THE PARTIES HERETO BIND THEMSELVES TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS SET FORTH HEREIN. NO VERBAL AGREEMENTS SHALL BE BINDING UPON EITHER PARTY AND THIS AGREEMENT SHALL BECOME EFFECTIVE UPON EXECUTION BY THE CHIEF, RIGHT-OF-WAY BUREAU OR A DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE.
2. COMPENSATION FOR LAND AND IMPROVEMENTS (List acres and improvements in the taking.)

| | |
|---|------------|
| 14.9 acres cropland (by deed) - Lump Sum - Limited Access | \$8,000.00 |
| 0.08 acre cropland (be easement) Shelterbelt | |
3. COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGES

| | |
|--|----------|
| Cost to Cure - Relocate inner farm access and depreciation to remainder - Lump Sum - | 5,100.00 |
|--|----------|
4. TOTAL COMPENSATION FOR PARCEL \$13,100.00.
5. IT IS UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED THE STATE SHALL MAKE THE FOLLOWING DISBURSEMENT OF PAYMENT.

6. For and in consideration of the compensation shown herein, the Grantor hereby grants, bargains, sells and conveys all rights of ingress and egress, including all existing, future or potential easements of access, light, view and air except as may be stated on the Bargain and Sale Deed.

(Continued on reverse side)

**CERTIFIED COPY OF
 ORIGINAL - DATE 10-29-87**

PROJECT NO. F 60-2(18)81
 PARCEL NO. 15

(Continued from front side)

7. Permission is hereby granted the State to enter upon the Grantor's land, where necessary and for the purposes described as follows:
 - A. Station 329+85 Construct 24' Private Road Approach RT SOP
 (10:1 in slopes)
 - B. Station 377+60 Construct 24' Private Road Approach RT SOP
 (6:1 in slopes)
8. Permanent access rights for a 24 foot private road approaches right of Stations 344+00 and 355+00 are granted on the Bargain and Sale Deed for future use and construction by the Grantor or Successors. Said future approach construction will be at the sole cost of the Grantor or Successors, and will be constructed so as to comply with the safety standards in effect at that time.
9. The machine crossing right of Station 370+67 will be constructed to be 30 feet wide rather than 24 feet wide as indicated on the cross-sections - NSOP.
10. It is hereby agreed that a free-flowing spring presently exists approximately 236.4 feet right of highway survey station 376+70.

It is further agreed that the State of Montana or its assigns has permission to enter upon the Grantor's land for the purpose of monitoring and documenting the existing flow and condition of said spring prior to construction of the highway project and periodically thereafter as found necessary. The purpose of this documentation is for future reference in assessing effects the road project and climatic conditions have on the flow prior to, during, and within (1) year following construction activities on the project.

In the event that the quality or quantity of the flow is adversely affected by construction of the project, the State agrees to replace the water in manner to result in at least, equal or better conditions as existed in the prior condition.

In the event that it becomes necessary to replace the existing water source and the replacement creates operational costs or expenses not existing under the existing system, the State agrees to compensate the Grantor accordingly in an equitable manner consistent with recognized appraiser principles. Copies of documents pertaining to monitoring and testing of the existing water source shall be furnished to the Grantor periodically as monitoring and testing progresses and as documents are developed and printed.

NEGOTIATIONS BASED UPON THE APPROVED PLANS DATED _____.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this agreement the day and year as written below.

RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL

 Right-of-Way Agent (Date)

Norwest Capital Management, Trustee (Date)
 for John Zoller Trusts; ID #81-6020338
Robert K Doerk 9/30/87
 BY: Robert K Doerk, Asst Trust Officer (Date)

 Supervisor - Right-of-Way Section (Date)

 Supervisor - Negotiation Section (Date)

APPROVED FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE MONTANA
 DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS

 (Date)
John Zoller 9-30-
 516-58-15685 (Date)

 Chief - Right-of-Way Bureau (Date)

 (Date)

 (Date)

RS:2:cni:506/p-8

Response to Written Comment.



Jacobs Civil Inc.
1455 West 2200 South
Suite 300
Salt Lake City, Utah 84119 U.S.A.
1.801-978-9050 Fax 1.801-978-9121

October 24, 2003

Dana Huestis
2901 4th Ave. N
Great Falls, MT 59401

SUBJECT: Montana Department of Transportation
US 89, Belt North & South Project
Project No.: NH60-2(55)71
Control No. 4043

Dear Dana:

Thank you for attending the US 89, Belt North and South Project public hearing in May and for the comments you provided. We appreciate you taking the time to identify the land you own and for providing us with additional ownership information and identifying the artesian spring. Also, with regard to your request to reserve the four private road approaches, I wanted to confirm that your accesses will be preserved.

Thank you again for your comments. Feel free to call me at any time if you have questions or would like an update on the status of the project.

Sincerely,

JACOBS CIVIL INC.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Cheryl A. Jones'.

Cheryl A. Jones, P.E.
Project Manager

A Subsidiary of Jacobs Engineering Group Inc.

Comment received via e-mail from Mr. Steve Sherman:

From: Steve Sherman [mailto:ssherman@pacbell.net]
Sent: Wednesday, April 30, 2003 3:32 PM
To: Jones, Cheryl
Subject: [Fwd: Project NH 60-2(55)71, Control # 4043]

Cheryl,

I had conversation with Margaret Simmons-Cross previously regarding this project. I continue to be interested in information regarding the exact path and plans for the area near my Father-in-law's property at 4 Neil Creak Rd in Belt, Montana. My father-in-law is currently in California, as am I, and will not be able to attend the meeting on May 14,2003. If you could provide the above info either via a website, ftp download, email, fax, or snail mail, it would be very helpful.

Thanks

Steve Sherman

=====
"Cheryl Jones" wrote:

Hello, Steve. I'd be happy to send you some current plans for the Belt project in the area near Neil Creek Road. Would you mind giving me your father-in-law's name, so I can verify with our ownership records that the information I'm giving you encompasses the area of his property? Unfortunately, our mapping does not include house numbers.

Thank you for your interest in the project.

Cheryl Jones

Jacobs Civil Inc.

801-978-9050

=====
"Steve Sherman" wrote:

Cheryl,

Sure: Wayne M Smith

Anything else you need please let me know. Thanks

Steve Sherman

=====
"Cheryl Jones" wrote:

Hmmm . . . that name doesn't appear on our list of owners. Perhaps the ownership our surveyor collected is out of date. Did he purchase the property within the last few years? If so, would it be possible to learn the name of the person he bought it from?

=====
"Steve Sherman" wrote:

No, he has owned the property for some time. It may be listed without the middle initial. He might have it listed with his wife Verna Smith. He built the house and garage approximately 8-10 year ago. It is right off the main highway US89. We can sit on his porch and watch and listen to the folks driving down the highway. He can see the rest stop from his front porch. Also, we received the notice of public hearing addressed to him at 4 Neil Creak Road. This was forwarded to us here. Hope this helps.

=====
"Cheryl Jones" wrote:

We've gone ahead and made a plot of the entire area around Neil Creek Road, so I'm sure it covers his parcel. It'll go out to you in today's mail. Once you take a look, please feel free to get back with me if you have any more questions.

Written response to Mr. Sherman:

JACOBS CIVIL INC.

Salt Lake City, UT

1455 West 2200 South, Suite 300
Salt Lake City, UT 84119

Phone: (801) 978-9050
Fax: (801) 978-9121

BELT NORTH & SOUTH, US-89
NH 60-2(55)71
CONTROL No. 4043

TRANSMITTAL

DATE: May 7, 2003

TO: Mr. Steve Sherman
PO Box 2626
Gardena, CA 90247

FROM: Cheryl A. Jones, P.E. *CAF*
Project Manager

SUBJECT: US 89, Belt North & South Project for Montana Department of Transportation
Vicinity of Neil Creek Road

Thank you for your inquiry about the referenced project. As I mentioned in my e-mail, I am not sure which parcel is owned by your father-in-law, but we went ahead and prepared the enclosed plot covering the entire area around Neil Creek Road. I hope your area of concern is within these limits.

The aerial photograph shows the existing conditions, while the heavy red lines show the proposed centerline and edges of pavement (including paved shoulders) of the new four-lane highway. In the immediate vicinity of Neil Creek Road, the existing US 89 right-of-way is quite wide, so the only additional right-of-way anticipated at this time to be acquired on the west side of the highway is the small sliver highlighted in yellow on the plot. Further south on US 89, the anticipated acquisition is a little wider, but I believe this is beyond the area you are interested in.

Based on comments received at the previous public meetings, the design team has shifted the proposed alignment to the east of the present alignment, to minimize impacts on the existing residences in this area. Hopefully there will be minimal or no affect on your father-in-law's property.

If you would like any additional information, do not hesitate to contact me again. We appreciate your interest in the project.

Enclosure

cc: Mark Studt – MDT (with enclosure)

FILE: Belt – 616.0.0

Comment received via e-mail from Mr. Howard Ness.

From: Howard Ness [mailto:hbness@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, May 05, 2003 8:40 PM
To: Jones, Cheryl
Subject: US 89 Belt North and South

We are interested in the proposed location, taking which may be needed, return of any unneeded existing right of way and in what condition, etc., etc.

As absentee landlords, it is not possible to participate in your Belt meeting. May we receive a print and an outline of the project as it may affect our ownership? (generally east of the Fife road, both north and south of portions of 89)

THE GOOD EARTH
Box 18967
Spokane, WA 99228

=====
"Cheryl Jones" wrote:

Hello, Mr. Ness.

We've run into a couple of questions while preparing the plot of the proposed project in the vicinity of your property, and it makes sense to get those resolved before we send you the information. Per your prior correspondence with Margaret Simmons-Cross, we're going to contact the surveyor that surveyed your property a couple of years ago and obtain a copy, since that will likely answer most of the questions. So it will probably be next Monday or Tuesday before we can send you the information. But rest assured, it's coming! Thanks for your patience.

=====
"Cheryl Jones" wrote:

Mr. Ness:

I just wanted to let you know that we haven't forgotten about you. We weren't able to reach your surveyor until yesterday and are planning to meet with him this afternoon (on our way to Belt) to review the survey he did for you. Once we see his information, we will be able to complete your plot and send it on to you.

Cheryl

=====
"Howard Ness" wrote:

Thank you for the print. Do you have a time line? Plans for access to the improvements on this property plus the Charlie Bumgarner ranch?

Howard Ness – Spokane

=====
"Jones, Cheryl" wrote:

Howard:

The current project schedule shows right-of-way acquisition starting in late 2004 or early 2005, with construction starting in mid-2005.

We had a nice chat with Charlie at the public hearing and talked about possible access routes. We agreed that we will contact him as we get further into the design phase to be sure we come up with something that works well for him.

Written response to Mr. Ness:

JACOBS CIVIL INC.

Salt Lake City, UT

1455 West 2200 South, Suite 300
Salt Lake City, UT 84119

Phone: (801) 978-9050
Fax: (801) 978-9121

BELT NORTH & SOUTH, US-89
NH 60-2(55)71
CONTROL No. 4043

TRANSMITTAL

DATE: May 15, 2003

TO: Mr. Howard Ness
Box 18967
Spokane, WA 99228

FROM: Cheryl A. Jones, P.E. *caj*
Project Manager

SUBJECT: US 89, Belt North & South Project for Montana Department of Transportation
Vicinity of Fife Road

Thank you for your inquiry about the referenced project. Enclosed is a plot showing the area of your property in the vicinity of Fife Road, and it's relation to the existing US 89 corridor and the new proposed roadway alignment.

The aerial photograph shows the existing conditions, while the heavy red lines show the proposed centerline and edges of pavement (including paved shoulders) of the new four-lane highway. As shown on the plot, the new alignment is located north of the existing US 89 corridor, and will be built within a new 70 meter (230 feet) wide right-of-way. At this time, it is planned that the existing US 89 roadway will be abandoned and demolished, and that the existing right-of-way will be negotiated back to the adjacent land owners.

If you would like any additional information, do not hesitate to contact me again. We appreciate your interest in the project.

Enclosure

cc: Mark Studt -- MDT (with enclosure)

FILE: Belt - 616.0.0

Follow-up response to Mr. Ness:



Jacobs Civil Inc.
1455 West 2200 South Suite 300
Salt Lake City, UT 84119
801.978.9050 (fax) 801.978.9121

BELT NORTH & SOUTH, US-89
NH 60 - 2 (63) 71
CONTROL No. 4043
W2X20100

April 26, 2004

Mr. Howard Ness
PO Box 18967
Spokane, WA 99228

Subject: US 89, Belt North & South Project for Montana Department of Transportation
Property in the Vicinity of Fife Road

Dear Mr. Ness:

You may recall that last May I sent you an aerial photograph with the proposed Belt North & South project depicted on it. As of this writing, the proposed alignment is unchanged from what was shown at that time.

In the transmittal accompanying the aerial photograph, I had stated that it is planned that the existing US 89 roadway will be abandoned and demolished and that the existing right-of-way will be negotiated back to the adjacent land owners. The Montana Department of Transportation has requested that I follow-up with this letter to clarify the following:

MDT will research the possibility of exchanging the existing right-of-way for any new right-of-way that may be required for the project. MDT must, however, notify all individuals owning property adjacent to the old right-of-way, and the adjacent property owners have the right to request that MDT sell the old right-of-way at public auction.

If you have any questions on this point, please call Jerilee Weibel with MDT in Great Falls (406-454-5893) or me (801-978-9050).

Sincerely,

JACOBS CIVIL INC.

Cheryl A. Jones, P.E.
Project Manager

cc: Mark Studt (MDT)

File: Belt - 602.0.0, 614.5.0, 616.0.0

A Subsidiary of Jacobs Engineering Group Inc.

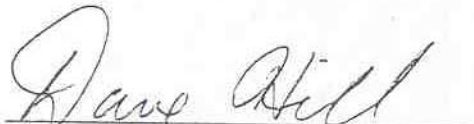
APPENDIX D
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Environmental Assessment
for
US 89, Belt North & South
NH 60 - 2 (55) 71 Control Number 4043
in
Cascade County, Montana

This document is prepared in conformance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) requirements and contains information required for an Environmental Assessment under the provisions of ARM 18.2.237(2) and 18.2.239. It is also prepared in conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for an Environmental Assessment under 23 CFR 771.119.


Submitted Pursuant to 42 USC 4332(2)(c) 49 USC 303
and Sections 2-3-104, 75-1-201 MCA
by the U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
and the
Montana Department of Transportation

Submitted By:


Montana Department of Transportation
Environmental Services

Date: 3-5-03

Reviewed and Approved for Distribution:


Federal Highway Administration

Date: 3/25/03

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

Dave Hill
Manager - Environmental Services
Montana Dept. of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

for Dale Paulson
Program Development Engineer
Montana Division
Federal Highway Administration
2880 Skyway Drive
Helena, MT 59602

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Environmental Assessment

US 89, Belt North & South

Project No. NH 60 – 2(55)71
Control No. 4043

PREPARED BY:

JACOBS CIVIL INC.

Salt Lake City, Utah

February 2003



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is proposing to widen, reconstruct, and partially realign a portion of US 89 in Cascade County to provide additional lane capacity to meet projected traffic volumes and to provide horizontal and vertical alignments that are appropriate for the design speed. This report describes the existing conditions present in the project area, potential impacts from the project, and mitigation measures to avoid, minimize, or compensate for any unavoidable adverse impacts.

Existing conditions along the corridor consist of two 3.6-meter (12-foot) lanes with no shoulders. Current traffic volumes were analyzed, and it was determined that these existing conditions provide a Level of Service (LOS) D. Adding full shoulders to the existing two-lane configuration would improve the current LOS to C, but looking forward to projected highway traffic volumes in 25 years, the LOS would be reduced to D. With the new undivided section of four lanes of travel and a center paved median, the current and projected LOS would be A, providing the most ideal highway conditions for the corridor.

Three build alternatives were developed and evaluated to consider the following issues (see appropriate sections in Section 4.0 – Affected Environment, Impacts, and Mitigation):

- **Wetlands.** All alternatives avoid Wetland 1. All three alternatives would result in 0.10 ha (0.25 ac) impact on Wetland 2.
- **Floodplains.** All three alternatives would result in similar areas of impacts on floodplains.
- **Farmlands.** Because farmlands along the corridor generally straddle the highway, all three alternatives would result in similar impacts.
- **Noise.** Alternative 3 would produce fewer impacts (ref. Section 4.9).
- **Property Avoidance.** All three alternatives would require similar areas of additional right-of-way. All would result in one residential relocation. Alternative 2 would impact the bar/restaurant at RP 85.3, whereas Alternatives 1 and 3 would avoid it.
- **Geometric Design.** No difference between the alternatives. All would be designed to meet the appropriate design standards.
- **Maintenance.** No difference between the alternatives.
- **Constructability.** In the cross-country alignment area, Alternative 3 would be easier to construct because of its distance from the existing roadway. Other segments of the project would have similar constructability issues associated with each alternative.
- **Capital Cost.** No significant difference between the alternatives.

Based on these findings, Alternative 3 – Cross-Country Alignment is proposed as the preferred alternative for its lesser impacts while providing a roadway that would satisfy current MDT design standards, provide additional lane capacity to meet the projected traffic levels for the 2024 design year, and improve the operational characteristics of US 89.

The Preferred Alternative consists of the following improvements:

- Reconstruct roadway to a five-lane roadway section with new shoulders and a center turn lane (except in the vicinity of Belt Hill where there would be no turn lane).
- Reconstruct intersections to current design standards, and add right- and left-turn bays as required.

- Construct new five-lane roadway on new alignment from RP 77.5 to RP 81.5 (i.e., cross-country portion of Preferred Alternative, Figure 2, sheet 2 of 3).
- Update lighting at the US 89/Belt Creek Road (Belt Turnoff) intersection.
- Replace the bridges at Belt Creek and Box Elder Creek.

The horizontal and vertical alignments would be reconstructed to meet current MDT design standards and AASHTO guidelines. Additional right-of-way would be required to accommodate shifts in the horizontal alignment that are required in order to provide a full roadway section, to avoid or minimize environmental impacts, and to maintain traffic on existing US 89 during construction.

The Preferred Alternative is consistent with the land use policies for Cascade County within the study area. The project would not have long-term impacts on Belt Creek or Box Elder Creek, nor would it change the agricultural landscape protected by the Cascade County development policies. The Preferred Alternative would benefit local residents by improving access to and through the project corridor. One residential property would be displaced by the proposed project. Overall, the Preferred Alternative would produce fewer noise impacts than the other alternatives; no noise mitigation is proposed.

A finding of no effect was recommended on the historic properties because the proposed improvements to US 89 would not directly or indirectly impact these sites. Concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on the determination has been obtained.

This proposed project is in an unclassifiable/attainment area of Montana for air quality under 40 CFR 81.327, as amended. This proposed project complies with *Section 176(c)* of the *Clean Air Act* (42 USC 7521(a)), as amended.

The total estimated impact on project wetlands is approximately 0.10 ha (0.25 ac). The alternatives have been designed to avoid, if possible, or minimize disturbance and impacts to identified wetlands. Due to the alignment restrictions, there are no practicable alternatives to entirely avoid wetland impacts from road reconstruction activities.

Based on informal consultation with the USFWS and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (MFWP), it is believed that the proposed project would have no effect on listed, proposed, or candidate species.

Based on initial consultation with the MNHP and MFWP, it is unlikely that terrestrial and aquatic species of concern would be adversely impacted as a result of this proposed project. Based on lack of known records of species of special concern within the project area and lack of suitable habitat, it is determined that the proposed project would not likely impact species of special concern.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|-------------|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | i |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | iii |
| LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES | iv |
| 1.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION | 1 |
| 2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED | 8 |
| 3.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED | 10 |
| 4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, IMPACTS, and MITIGATION | |
| 4.1 Land Use | 14 |
| 4.2 Social and Economic/Environmental Justice | 14 |
| 4.3 Right-of-Way/Relocation | 15 |
| 4.4 Parks and Recreation | 16 |
| 4.5 Pedestrians and Bicyclists | 16 |
| 4.6 Historical/Cultural/Archaeological Resources | 17 |
| 4.7 Prime and Unique Farmland | 17 |
| 4.8 Air Quality | 18 |
| 4.9 Noise | 18 |
| 4.10 Water Resources/Quality | 23 |
| 4.11 Vegetation and Wetlands | 25 |
| 4.12 Fish, Wildlife, and Threatened and Endangered Species | 28 |
| 4.13 Floodplains | 30 |
| 4.14 Visual | 33 |
| 4.15 Utilities | 37 |
| 4.16 Hazardous Substances | 37 |
| 4.17 Permits Required | 37 |
| 4.18 Indirect and Cumulative Impacts | 37 |
| 4.19 Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitment of Resources | 38 |
| 5.0 COMMENTS AND COORDINATION | |
| 5.1 Agency Coordination | 40 |
| 5.2 Public Involvement | 40 |
| 6.0 REFERENCES | 41 |
| APPENDICES: | |
| APPENDIX A -- PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DOCUMENTATION | |
| APPENDIX B -- STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CORRESPONDENCE | |
| APPENDIX C -- FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING | |
| APPENDIX D -- WETLAND PHOTOGRAPHS | |
| APPENDIX E -- PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARATION OF THIS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT | |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | | |
|----------|---------------------------|----|
| Figure 1 | Project Vicinity Map | 3 |
| Figure 2 | Preferred Alternative | 4 |
| Figure 3 | Typical Sections | 7 |
| Figure 4 | Noise Receiver Locations | 20 |
| Figure 5 | Wetland Locations Key Map | 27 |
| Figure 6 | Floodplain Location Map | 31 |
| Figure 7 | Floodplain Impacts | 32 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | | |
|---------|---|----|
| Table 1 | Descriptions of Alternatives | 11 |
| Table 2 | FHWA Noise Abatement Criteria | 19 |
| Table 3 | Summary of Preferred Alternative Noise Levels | 22 |
| Table 4 | Construction Equipment Sound Levels | 23 |

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is planning a highway reconstruction project on US 89, Project No. NH 60-2 (55) 71, Control No. 4043. US 89 is classified as a rural principal arterial and runs from south to north, from Mammoth Hot Springs in southern Montana to the Port of Piegan in northern Montana (see Figure 1).

The southeastern end of the project corridor lies in the Belt Creek Drainage, a steeply incised, narrow valley cut some 122 meters (m) [400 feet (ft)] below the surrounding bench land. The Jurassic Morrison Coal Field is exposed in the valley wall. The project corridor climbs out of the Belt Creek Valley and continues northwest across bench lands, almost all of which is now cultivated grain fields. The highway crosses several minor drainages. The glaciated benches along the project corridor are covered with residual soils of Cretaceous sandstone and shales, as well as glacial gravels.

The project area is located from about 28.9 kilometers (km) [18.0 miles (mi)] east of Great Falls to about 2.7 km (1.7 mi) east of Great Falls. It begins at Reference Post (RP) 70.5, about 0.8 km (0.5 mi) east of the intersection of US 89 and US 87 (Armington Junction) and extends approximately 26 km (16mi) to the northwest, to a point just east of the Highwood-Stockett intersection with US 89, at approximately RP 87.5 (see Figure 2). The total length of the proposed reconstruction corridor is 26.2 km (16.3 mi).

The project limits were originally defined as from RP 71.0 to RP 81.2. During the preliminary engineering phase, the study area was extended toward the northwest to approximately RP 87.5. The project would be constructed in two phases with Phase 1 identified as the original project boundaries and Phase 2 as the additional area added later (End Phase 1 / Begin Phase 2 is shown on Figure 2, sheet 2 of 3.)

The proposed action consists of the following improvements:

- Reconstruct roadway to a five-lane roadway section with new shoulders and a center turn lane (except in the vicinity of Belt Hill where there would be no turn lane).
- Reconstruct intersections to current design standards, and add right- and left-turn bays as required.
- Construct new five-lane roadway on new alignment from RP 77.5 to RP 81.5 (i.e., cross-country portion of Preferred Alternative, Figure 2, sheet 2 of 3).
- Update lighting at the US 89/Belt Creek Road (Belt Turnoff) intersection.
- Replace the bridges at Belt Creek and Box Elder Creek.

The horizontal and vertical alignments would be reconstructed to meet current MDT design standards and AASHTO guidelines. Additional right-of-way would be required to accommodate shifts in the horizontal alignment that are required in order to provide a full roadway section, to avoid or minimize environmental impacts, and to maintain traffic on existing US 89 during construction.

The design speed is 100 kilometers per hour (km/h) (62 miles/h), as required for a rural principal arterial and rolling terrain. The proposed roadway typical sections are shown in Figure 3 and for the majority of the corridor include four 3.6-m (12-foot) travel lanes, a continuous 4.2-m (13.8-foot) center turn lane, and 2.4-m (eight-foot) shoulders. In the vicinity of Belt Hill, the section does not include the center turn lane since it would not be cost effective to provide the additional width on such a high fill and since there are no accesses that need to be accommodated in that area.



FIGURE 1 - PROJECT VICINITY MAP

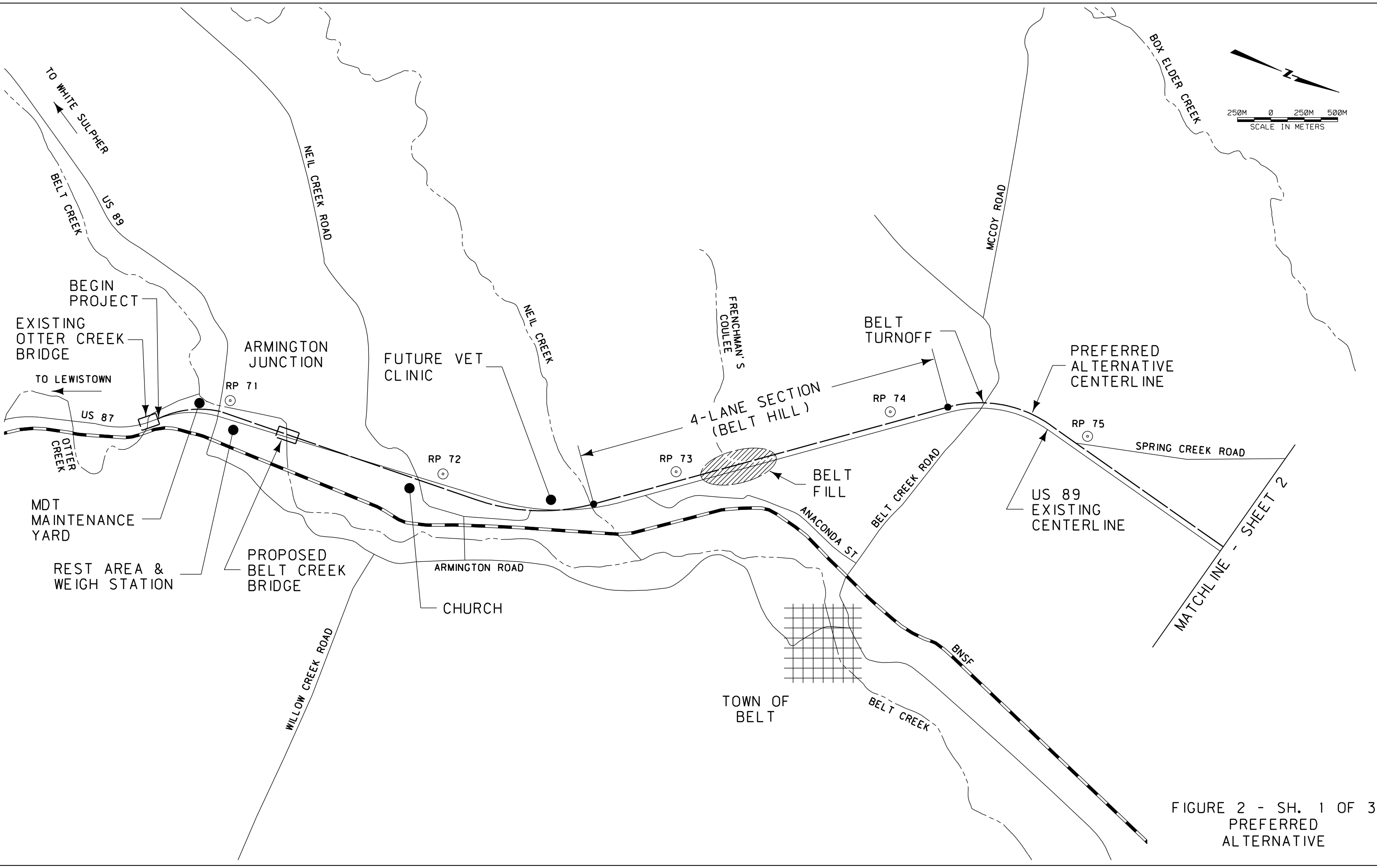


FIGURE 2 - SH. 1 OF 3
 PREFERRED
 ALTERNATIVE

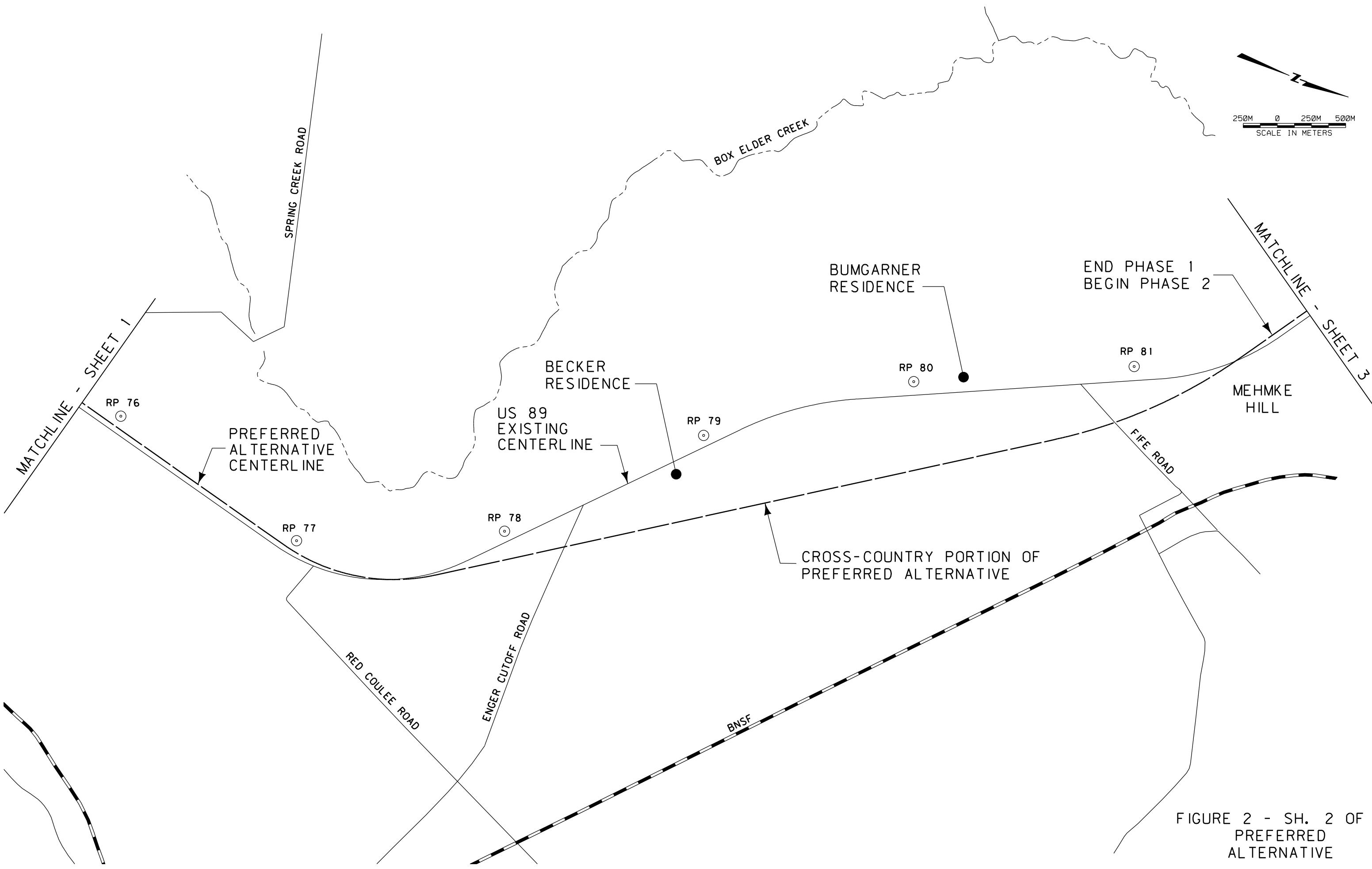


FIGURE 2 - SH. 2 OF 3
 PREFERRED
 ALTERNATIVE

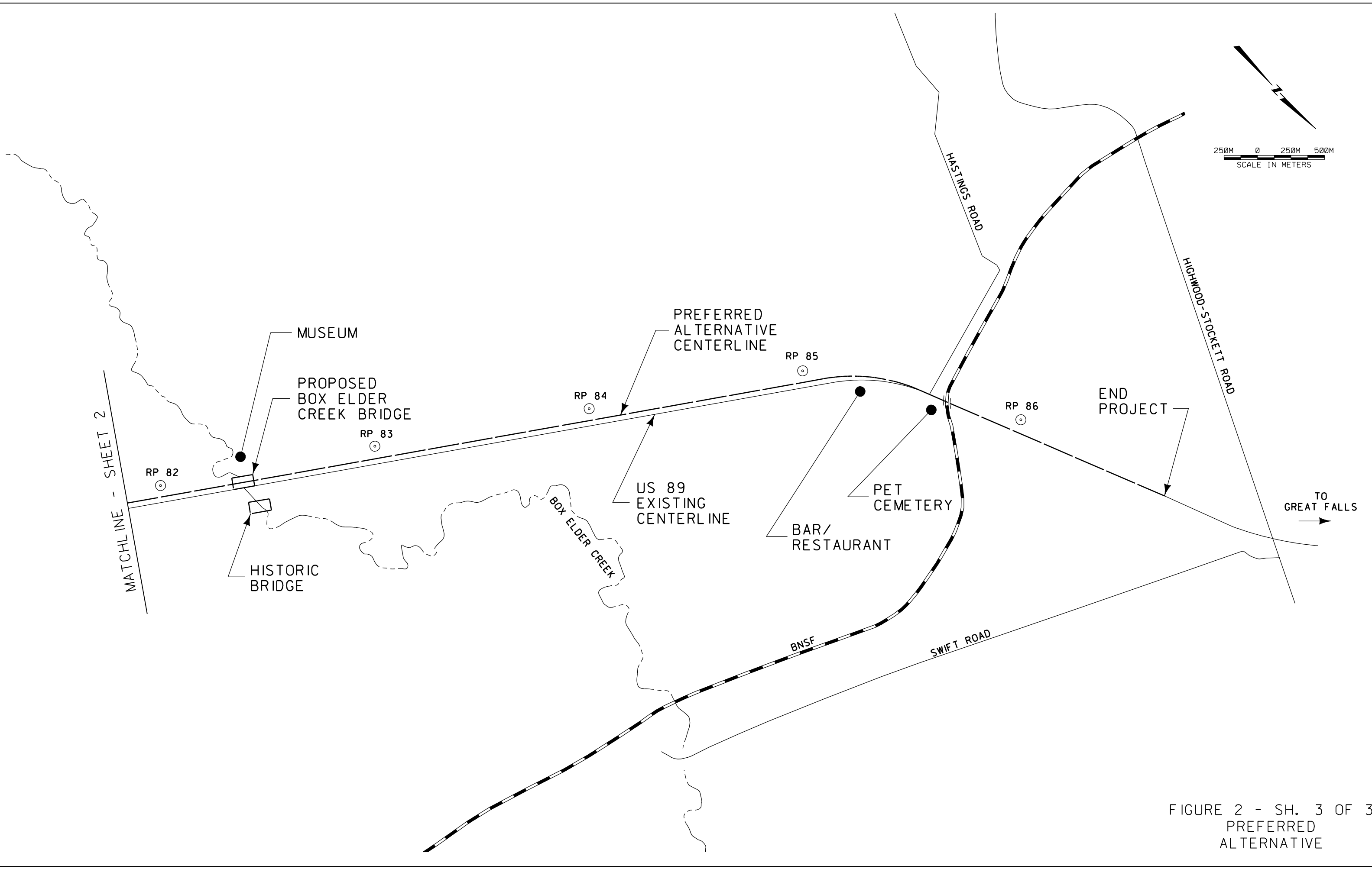
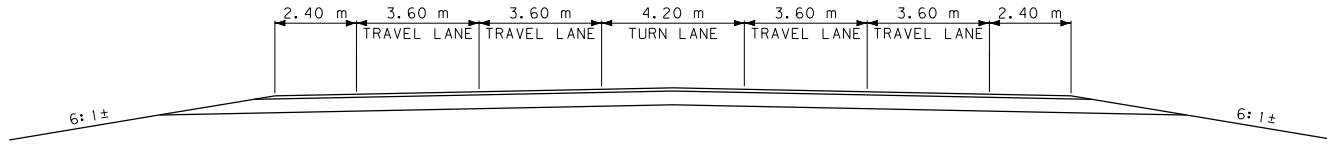
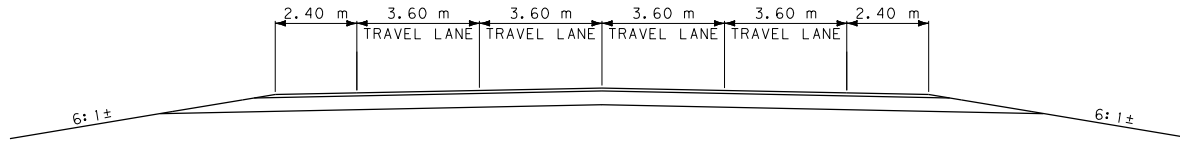


FIGURE 2 - SH. 3 OF 3
 PREFERRED
 ALTERNATIVE

TYPICAL ROADWAY SECTION (EXCEPT AT BELT HILL)



TYPICAL ROADWAY SECTION (AT BELT HILL)



BRIDGE SECTION

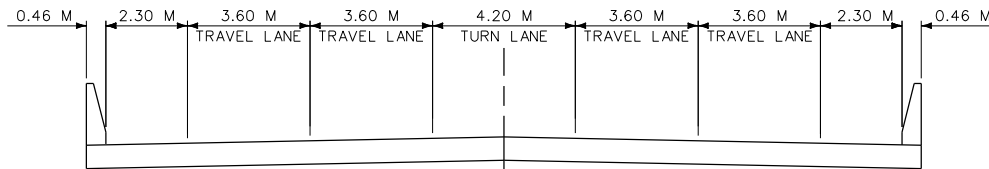


FIGURE 3 - TYPICAL SECTIONS

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this project is to reconstruct, widen, and realign a portion of US 89 to provide a roadway that satisfies current MDT design standards, provides additional lane capacity to meet the projected traffic volumes for the 2024 design year, and improves the operational characteristics of US 89.

Roadway Characteristics.

The functional classification of the existing two-lane roadway in the vicinity of the project is Rural Principal Arterial, and the terrain is classified as rolling. There are no separate facilities for pedestrians or bicycles in the area.

The existing roadway is physically characterized by inadequate vertical alignment for a 100-km/h (62-mile/h) design speed primarily due to the vertical curves not meeting minimum stopping sight distance requirements as currently defined in MDT and AASHTO design standards. The horizontal alignment provides few areas with adequate passing sight distance, and there are no paved shoulders.

The proposed project would increase roadway width, flatten vertical and horizontal curves, improve sight distance, and flatten side slopes. These improvements would enhance the operational characteristics of the highway.

Traffic Volumes and Characteristics.

As the population of the communities served by US 89 increases, traffic demand also increases. The current average daily traffic (ADT) volume along the existing road is 4,380 vehicles per day and is projected to reach nearly 7,500 vehicles per day in the year 2024, an increase of approximately 70%.

Existing conditions along the corridor consist of two 3.6-m (12-foot) lanes with no shoulders. Current traffic volumes were analyzed, and it was determined that these existing conditions provide a Level of Service (LOS) D. Adding full shoulders to the existing two-lane configuration would improve the current LOS to C, but looking forward to projected highway traffic volumes in 25 years, the LOS would be reduced to D. The proposed section of four travel lanes and a paved median would provide a current and projected LOS A, providing the most ideal highway conditions for the corridor.

Accidents/Safety.

In the project area there were significantly more accidents involving one or two vehicles driving straight than any other vehicle movement.

Otter Creek to Armington Junction

This section includes 1.1 km (0.7 miles) from Armington Junction heading east. For this 0.7-mile segment there were a total of nine recorded accidents during the data collection period, two of which were truck accidents. The accident rate in this section was 1.59 compared with a statewide average of 1.36; the truck accident rate was 2.13 compared

with a statewide average of 1.15; and the truck severity rate was 4.26 compared with a statewide average of 2.68

Armington Junction to Highwood-Stockett Intersection

This portion of US 89/US 87 is approximately 26.2 km (16.3 miles) and starts at Armington Junction, heading northwest. The total number of accidents during the data collection period was 228, with seven of the accidents fatal and 19 of the accidents involving a truck. The accident rate was 1.11, and the truck accident rate was 0.86, both below the statewide averages. The truck severity index for this section was 2.74, greater than the state average truck severity index of 2.33.

For this section of roadway:

- The percentage of icy road condition accidents was 27.63% compared with 18.77% statewide.
- The percentage of fatal accidents was 3.07%, whereas the statewide average was 1.92%.
- The percentage of off-road/shoulder accidents was 22.37% compared to a statewide average of 19.61%.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Preliminary alignments were studied throughout the length of the project and were considered for both horizontal and vertical design components. Each was evaluated and refined or rejected based on its ability to meet the project objectives, i.e. to provide a safe and efficient traffic facility with consideration for minimum environmental impact, maintenance requirements, and a reasonable construction cost. A “No-Build” alternative was also considered and evaluated.

Specific detailed alignments were then developed using the applicable horizontal and vertical geometric design criteria and giving consideration to other engineering and environmental constraints, such as the existing terrain, wetlands, and community issues.

Four build alternatives were determined to be feasible for development and initial comparison. One of the alternatives, reconstructing the current two-lane facility to improve the geometry and add shoulders along the existing alignment, was dropped from consideration when it was determined that two lanes would not provide the required Level of Service in the 2024 design year.

The remaining three alternatives would each include the following common improvements (see Figure 2 for landmarks mentioned in the following descriptions and for a depiction of Alternative 3):

- Reconstruct roadway to include four travel lanes, as shown in Figure 3, with new shoulders and a continuous center turn lane (except in the vicinity of Belt Hill, where there would be no turn lane).
- Reconstruct intersections to current design standards, and add right- and left-turn bays as required.
- Update the lighting at the US 89/Belt Creek Road (Belt Turnoff) intersection.
- Replace the bridges at Belt Creek and Box Elder Creek.

Horizontal alignment characteristics of the remaining three build alternatives are described in Table 1, beginning at the east end (beginning) of the project.

The No-Build Alternative. The “No-Build” Alternative was also evaluated. The existing roadway would be retained in its existing location, and only regular maintenance would be performed. This alternative would not meet any of the objectives described in Section 2.0 – Purpose and Need.

Evaluation of Alternatives.

On the eastern third of the project (to about RP 75), the most significant difference between Alternative 2 and Alternatives 1 and 3 is in the Belt Hill area, specifically at the Belt Hill. In Alternative 2, the new roadway centerline would match the existing centerline; in Alternatives 1 and 3, the new roadway would be shifted to south of existing by approximately 4.5m (14.8 feet).

| TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIONS OF ALTERNATIVES | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| LOCATION | ALTERNATIVE 1 | ALTERNATIVE 2 | ALTERNATIVE 3 |
| Begin Project to RP 72.5 | Starting at existing centerline at Otter Creek Bridge, shift to south side to avoid rest area and weigh station at RP 70.8. Stay south past Belt Creek Bridge to avoid Wetland 1 at RP 71.1. At about RP 71.6, shift north to avoid cluster of homes on south side at about RP 72. | Same as Alt. 1. | Same as Alt. 1. |
| RP 72.5 to RP 77.5 | Shift to south and stay south up Belt Hill to avoid fill that would affect homes at base of fill on north side. Continue on south side. | Shift to centered alignment through Belt Hill. Shift to north side at Belt Turnoff (RP 74.4). Continue on north side. | Same as Alt. 1. |
| RP 77.5 to RP 78.5 | Stay on south side, past Enger Cutoff Road. | Stay on north side. | Shift to north side just past Red Coulee Road, and follow cross-country alignment. |
| RP 78.5 to RP 79.5 | Stay on south side, past the Becker residence. | Shift to south side at Enger Cutoff Road to avoid the Becker residence. | Cross-country alignment. |
| RP 79.5 To RP 81.5 | Shift to north side and continue past the Bumgarner residence to Mehmke Hill. | Same as Alt. 1. | Cross-country alignment. |
| RP 81.5 to RP 85.7 | Shift to south side. Stay on south side to BNSF Railroad bridge (RP 85.7). | Stay on north side to BNSF Railroad bridge (RP 85.7). | Cross-country alignment rejoins existing corridor. Shift to and stay on south side to BNSF Railroad bridge (RP 85.7). |
| RP 85.7 to End Project | Shift to center to tie-in to existing roadway at end project. | Same as Alt. 1. | Same as Alt. 1. |

The Belt Fill is a very high fill (approximately 45m (150 feet)) at the mouth of Frenchman's Coulee. Presently, the top of the Fill is just wide enough to carry the existing roadway. To accommodate the proposed roadway, the Fill would need to be widened. The preliminary geotechnical evaluation concluded that the optimal way to

widen the Fill would be to construct a sliver fill from bottom to top, on one side only. There are several residences located at the north base of the Fill that would be impacted by additional fill on that side. Therefore, widening to the south side would be preferred. Since Alternative 2 would require fill on both the north and south faces of the Belt Fill, it would result in more impacts and be less desirable than Alternative 1 or 3 in this area.

On the western two-thirds of the project, Alternatives 1 and 2 are alike in the vicinity of the Becker and Bumgarner residences, in that the alignments would be slightly shifted away from the homes to minimize the impact of the wider highway. Away from these residences, the alternatives are generally on opposite sides of the existing roadway. However, there are no significant natural or man-made features (such as residences, businesses, wetlands, cultural sites, farmlands, etc.) that would be impacted differently by one alternative or the other.

Alternative 3 would differ from Alternatives 1 and 2 in the cross-country portion. The alternative was developed as a result of input received from owners of the adjacent property during the public involvement process. The property owners were interested in the future highway being further from their residences than the existing highway is, and they suggested a land swap to accomplish the shift. The result would be a shorter, more direct length of roadway that is further removed from the existing residences, with no adverse impacts. Construction of this segment would be facilitated by being well removed from the existing highway, resulting in less disruption to traffic as compared to Alternatives 1 and 2. New driveways would be designed to provide access from each residence to the new alignment. The existing roadway would be abandoned and no longer maintained by MDT for future public use. It would either be demolished or left in place, depending on property owner preference.

The three alternatives were evaluated to consider the following issues (see appropriate sections in Section 4.0 – Affected Environment, Impacts, and Mitigation):

- **Wetlands.** All alternatives avoid Wetland 1. All three alternatives would result in 0.10 ha (0.25 ac) impact on Wetland 2.
- **Floodplains.** All three alternatives would result in similar areas of impacts on floodplains.
- **Farmlands.** Because farmlands along the corridor generally straddle the highway, all three alternatives would result in similar impacts.
- **Noise.** Alternative 3 would produce fewer impacts (ref. Section 4.9).
- **Property Avoidance.** All three alternatives would require similar areas of additional right-of-way. All would result in one residential relocation at RP 72.5. Alternative 2 would impact the bar/restaurant at RP 85.3, whereas Alternatives 1 and 3 would avoid it.
- **Geometric Design.** No difference between the alternatives. All would be designed to meet the appropriate design standards.
- **Maintenance.** No difference between the alternatives.
- **Constructability.** In the cross-country alignment area, Alternative 3 would be easier to construct because of its distance from the existing roadway. Other

segments of the project would have similar constructability issues associated with each alternative.

- **Capital Cost.** No significant difference between the alternatives.

(Other areas of potential concern and impacts, such as land use, parks and recreation, visual impacts, etc., that were the same for all alternatives and did not affect the comparison of alternatives are addressed in Section 4.0 but are not reiterated here.)

Based on these findings, Alternative 3 – Cross-Country Alignment is proposed as the preferred alternative for its lesser impacts while providing a roadway that would satisfy current MDT design standards, provide additional lane capacity to meet the projected traffic levels for the 2024 design year, and improve the operational characteristics of US 89.

The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 3 – Cross-Country Alignment) - Widen the roadway to provide four 3.6-m (12-foot) travel lanes, 2.4-m (eight-foot) shoulders, and a continuous two-way 4.2-m (13.8-foot) center left turn lane (except at Belt Hill where the center turn lane is not required).

Improve horizontal and vertical alignments to meet the requirements of a 100km/h (62 miles/h) design speed. Reconstruct intersections to current design standards, and add right- and left-turn bays as required. Update lighting at the US 89/Belt Creek Road (Belt Turnoff) intersection, and replace bridges at Belt Creek and Box Elder Creek. Maintain one open travel lane in each direction throughout construction.

Removal of Existing Bridges. The existing bridges would be operational during construction of the replacement bridges and would then be removed in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. MDT would specify general removal criteria, and the contractor would submit a removal plan for review and approval.

4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, IMPACTS, and MITIGATION

The following sections describe the existing conditions and identify potential impacts of the preferred alternative. Urban impacts were not found in the study area due to the rural setting of the proposed project. Only those issues with a reasonable possibility for individual or cumulative impacts are assessed under this section.

4.1 Land Use

4.1.1 Existing Conditions

The study area is under jurisdiction of Cascade County, Montana, and is not currently subject to zoning. The majority of the study area is agricultural. The southeast end of the project corridor lies near the city of Belt. Modern development, consisting of several modern residences, commercial properties (including a proposed veterinary clinic), and a church extends along about 3.0 km (1.9 miles) of this end of the project corridor. A highway rest stop lies in the corridor near Armington Junction. Other residences, a museum, a pet cemetery, and a bar/restaurant are scattered along the remainder of the corridor.

According to the 1979 *Cascade County Development Plan*, the immediate need is to protect rural areas from activities that might be detrimental to their continued use and enjoyment, to insure health and safety in such development, and to safeguard sensitive or fragile environments from development abuse.

4.1.2 Impacts

The Preferred Alternative is consistent with the land use policies for Cascade County within the study area. The project would not have long-term impacts on Belt Creek or Box Elder Creek or change the agricultural landscape protected by the Cascade County development policies. The Preferred Alternative would benefit local residents by improving access to and through the project corridor.

4.2 Social and Economic

4.2.1 Existing Conditions

The US Census Bureau reports Cascade County's population at 80,357 in 2000, down slightly from the 1995 population of 81,040. Ninety-one percent of the total Cascade County population is white, with American Indians following second, comprising 4.2% of the total population. Roughly 82% of Cascade County's population resides in urban areas; the remaining population lives in rural areas.

The largest city in Cascade County and second largest in the state is Great Falls. Agriculture, livestock, and defense are the backbone of Great Falls' economy. The Malstrom Air Force Base is the most important contributor to the economic base in Cascade County. The Federal Government, which includes the Air Force Base, supports approximately 50% of the economic base. The median household income of Cascade County is \$31,489, compared with the statewide average income of \$29,672.

Emergency services are provided from Great Falls and Belt. The Cascade County sheriff, fire departments, and life support services from Great Falls and Belt all use the corridor for the provision of services to the community.

4.2.2 Impacts

The Preferred Alternative would have short-term impacts within the study area. Local traffic for residents, tourists, and service vehicles would be delayed at times during construction, as would other general traffic throughout the project area. Changes in local employment, sales, and revenues would be anticipated to be minor in the short-term during project construction. Regional employment and sales would increase in the short-term due to the presence of the construction work force, but the overall historical growth trend would not change in the long-term.

The Preferred Alternative would provide safer traveling conditions and improved traffic flows as a result of realigning, reconstructing, and widening the road and adding the two-way left turn lane. The Preferred Alternative would result in positive accessibility benefits. Reduced travel times and improved mobility and safety for local residents to regional destinations would be expected to occur. Emergency service providers and access to services would be enhanced because of improved access along US 89.

4.2.3 Environmental Justice and Title VI

Executive Order 12989 requires federal agencies to incorporate Environmental Justice considerations into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning process. The Executive Order requires that minority and low-income populations and minority-owned businesses do not receive a disproportionately high number of adverse or human health impacts as a result of Federal actions. According to the Cascade County Planning Office and the County Assessor, there are no known populations of minority households, minority businesses, low-income households, or low-income businesses within the project area that would be impacted by the Preferred Alternative.

In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Indian reservations, tribal land outside a reservation, and minority/low-income neighborhoods were identified and evaluated for impacts. The closest Indian reservation, the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, is approximately 137km (85 miles) northwest of the project location. There would be no impacts to the reservation as a result of the Preferred Alternative, although the improved regional mobility would improve access to it.

Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would not create disproportionately high and/or adverse effects on the health or environment of minority and/or low-income populations. The proposed project is in compliance with the provisions of *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* (42 U.S.C. 200d).

4.3 Right-of-Way/Relocation

Land use patterns are expected to remain unchanged by this proposed action. There are no businesses or other structures that would require relocation, however one residence would require relocation. To the maximum extent possible, the proposed alignment has

been selected and designed to specifically avoid residences located adjacent to the project. Access would continue to be provided to adjacent properties but may be different than what exists now.

An estimated 62.5 hectares (154.4 acres) of additional right-of-way would be needed for the Preferred Alternative, most of which is associated with the cross-country portion of the corridor. After construction of the cross-country portion, the existing right-of-way in that section (approximately 30.7 ha (75.9 ac)) would revert to the adjacent property owner, resulting in a net total of additional right-of-way of 31.8 ha (78.5 ac).

The potential adverse effects of permanent acquisitions and displacements resulting from implementation of the proposed project would be mitigated by complying with applicable government relocation assistance and property acquisition programs. In addition, although not a mitigation measure offered as part of the proposed project, the presence of favorable conditions for relocation in the local real estate market would help to reduce the potential adverse effects of permanent acquisition and displacement.

The potential effects of property acquisitions and displacements of persons would be substantially, if not completely, alleviated through compliance with the *Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisitions Policies Act of 1970 as Amended* (42 U.S.C. secs. 4601-4655) (Uniform Act). The FHWA has promulgated regulations implementing the Uniform Act in its *Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition for Federally Assisted Programs* (49 C.F.R. Part 24).

4.4 Parks and Recreation

Specifically designated recreation facilities do not exist along the proposed project. Glacier National Park is located approximately 160 km (100 miles) from the project and offers a number of recreational opportunities including hiking, camping, and wildlife viewing. The Preferred Alternative would improve access and safety conditions to the park and other recreational areas in the region.

Because there are no publicly-owned parks or recreation areas adjacent to the project, there are no park and recreation properties that need to be evaluated under *Section 4(f)* of the *U.S. Department of Transportation Act*. In addition, there are no properties purchased with funds from the Land and Water Conservation Act adjacent to the project. Therefore, no properties need to be evaluated under *Section 6(f)* of that Act.

4.5 Pedestrians and Bicyclists

4.5.1 Existing Conditions

Due to a lack of viable roadway shoulders in the vicinity of the proposed project, US 89 does not provide a travel course for pedestrians or bicyclists. This situation presently discourages, but does not eliminate, regular walking, hiking, and bicycling along the roadway. As vehicular traffic continues to increase along this roadway, the non-motorized travel environment would further deteriorate along the corridor.

4.5.2 Impacts

The Preferred Alternative would provide shoulders on both sides of improved US 89, thereby improving safety and access for pedestrians and bicyclists on the facility.

4.6 Historical/Cultural/Archaeological Resources

4.6.1 Existing Conditions

The Cultural Resources Inventory and Assessment (GCM Services Inc. 2001) identified ten cultural resource sites within the project limits, four of which are considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and one of which is covered under the terms of a programmatic agreement for which a Determination of Eligibility for the NRHP is not necessary.

The sites identified as eligible for the NRHP include:

- A segment of the Great Northern Railway grade, which has been previously recommended as eligible for NRHP under Criterion A for its association with events that have contributed to broad patterns of local and regional history;
- The “Bovey Siding” Site, which is recommended under Criterion A for its association with the Great Northern Railway and under Criterion C for a structure which embodies distinctive characteristics of type, period, and method of construction;
- The Ralph Bumgarner Place, which is recommended under Criterion C because of the excellent integrity of its primary structures which embody distinctive characteristics of type, period, and method of construction; and
- The Box Elder Creek Site, a prehistoric camp and bison-processing site, is recommended under Criterion D for its potential to yield information important to prehistory.

In addition, the old Box Elder Creek Bridge, a 1930’s-era highway bridge located north and downstream of the existing US 89 bridge over Box Elder Creek, was recorded and evaluated by MDT historian Jon Axline in a separate report and is covered under the terms of a programmatic agreement. No Determination of Eligibility for the NRHP is necessary for this structure.

4.6.2 Impacts

A finding of no effect was recommended on the historic properties listed in section 4.6.1 because the proposed improvements to US 89 would not directly or indirectly impact these sites. Concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on the determination has been obtained. SHPO correspondence is included in Appendix B.

4.7 Prime and Unique Farmland

4.7.1 Existing Conditions

Agricultural areas predominantly occupy the US 89 project area. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), several soils designated as “farmland of statewide importance” are located along this corridor.

4.7.2 Impacts

Direct farmland impacts can result from removal of cultivated or potentially cultivated lands by placement of impervious surface, cut and fill slopes, and/or acquisition of right-of-way. The Preferred Alternative would result in the conversion of no Farmland of Statewide Importance.

A Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form (#AD-1006) has been completed in accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA-7 USC 4201, et seq.) and has been reviewed by the NRCS. The form is included in Appendix C. The total points on the form for this proposed project's impacts is less than 160. Therefore, under the provisions of 7 CFR 658, no additional consideration for protection is necessary.

4.8 Air Quality

4.8.1 Existing Conditions

This proposed project is in an unclassifiable/attainment area of Montana for air quality under 40 CFR 81.327, as amended. As such, this proposed project is not covered under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Final Rule of November 24, 1993 on Air Quality conformity. Therefore, this proposed project complies with *Section 176(c)* of the *Clean Air Act* (42 USC 7521(a)), as amended. The closest non-attainment area is in the Great Falls metropolitan area.

4.8.2 Impacts

There would be no long-term impacts associated with air quality as a result of the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative would have minimal short-term impacts due to anticipated construction activities in the project area. Temporary impacts may include short-term increased emissions as a result of construction-related traffic and increases in particulate emissions from ground disturbances.

4.8.3 Mitigation

Short-term mitigation for construction impacts would include dust palliatives, stabilized soil stockpile areas, and revegetation of exposed areas.

4.9 Noise

A traffic noise analysis was performed in accordance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Federal Aid Policy Guide, Subchapter H, Part 772, *Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise and Construction Noise*, and the MDT guidelines contained in *Traffic Noise Analysis and Abatement: Policy and Procedure Manual*, dated June 2001.

The FHWA defines Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) for various land uses, as shown in Table 2. The land uses in this project fall under Category B, with NAC of 67 dBA, and Category C, with NAC of 72 dBA.

| TABLE 2: FHWA NOISE ABATEMENT CRITERIA HOURLY A-WEIGHTED SOUND LEVEL - DECIBELS (dBA) | | |
|--|---------------------|--|
| ACTIVITY CATEGORY | L _{eq} (h) | DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY CATEGORY |
| A | 57 (Exterior) | Lands on which serenity and quiet are of extraordinary significance and serve an important public need, and where the preservation of those qualities is essential if the area is to continue to serve its intended purpose. |
| B | 67 (Exterior) | Picnic areas, recreation areas, playgrounds, active sports areas, parks, residences, motels, hotels, schools, churches, libraries, and hospitals. |
| C | 72 (Exterior) | Developed lands, properties, or activities not included in Categories A or B above. |
| D | --- | Undeveloped lands. |
| E | 52 (Interior) | Residences, motels, hotels, public meeting rooms, schools, churches, libraries, hospitals, and auditoriums. |

Source: *Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise and Construction Noise, 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 772; December 1991.*

According to the FHWA’s 23 CFR, Part 772, a traffic noise impact occurs when “the predicted traffic noise levels approach or exceed the noise abatement criteria (NAC), or when the predicted traffic noise levels substantially exceed the existing noise levels.” MDT’s *Traffic Noise Analysis and Abatement: Policy and Procedure Manual* adds the following definitions to that statement:

- Approach: Design year noise levels are predicted to be one decibel below the levels shown for the land-use category in question in the Federal Noise Abatement Criteria.
- Substantially exceed: Design year noise levels are predicted to increase 13 decibels above existing levels.

For a residence, which falls in NAC B, an impact will occur if the predicted noise level is 66 decibels or more or if the predicted noise level is 13 decibels or more greater than existing noise levels.

4.9.1 Existing Conditions

The study analyzed noise at NAC Category B sites within 150 meters (500 feet) of the existing or proposed centerlines. There are 13 residential areas and one church that meet those requirements. In addition, one commercial property was also treated as NAC category B due to a residence on the property. Noise measurements were taken at 17 distinct noise receiver locations, which were divided into 10 areas as shown in Figure 4.

The ambient noise levels were not found to be at or above the NAC for the affected land use at any sites.

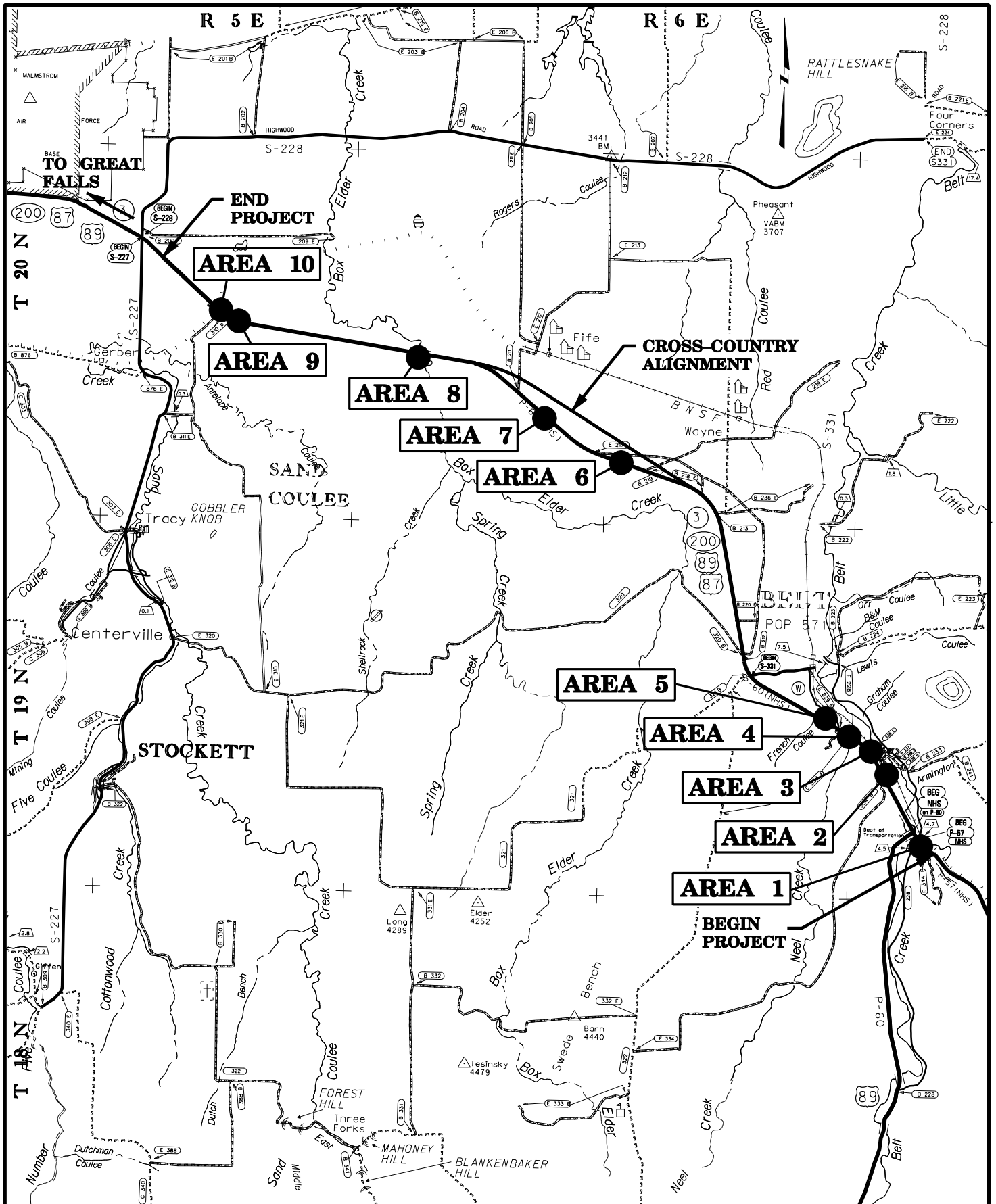


FIGURE 4 - NOISE RECEIVER LOCATIONS

4.9.2 Impacts

The results indicate which modeled receivers are predicted to experience noise impacts due to the proposed US 89 alignment options. Receivers at the church and five residences would experience noise impacts as a result of all three build alternatives. Alternatives 1 and 2 would also create impacts at five additional residential locations.

Overall, the Preferred Alternative would produce fewer noise impacts because it includes the cross-country segment, which moves the traffic away from a residence that is impacted in Alternatives 1 and 2 (see Table 3 and Figure 4).

4.9.3 Mitigation

Noise mitigation is considered for sites that would experience noise impacts. Mitigation measures that can be considered include:

1. Changing the horizontal or vertical alignment of the highway.
2. Constructing noise barriers (walls or berms) within the project right-of-way.
3. Using traffic management measures, such as modified speed limits, traffic control devices, or prohibition of certain vehicle types.
4. Insulating and/or air conditioning public use or institutional structures.

The characteristics of this project site generally do not lend themselves to noise mitigation. Noise barriers would not work well because US 89 has numerous access points including driveways, field accesses, and county road intersections, and effective noise barriers cannot have openings in them for driveways or other access points. No mitigation is proposed for the project.

The project site is not a good candidate for traffic management measures, either. US 89 is heavily traveled by trucks, and most of the noise comes from trucks. However, restricting trucks is not viable because there is no good alternate route for the trucks. Lowering speed limits can lower noise levels, but in order to achieve a large reduction in noise, limits need to be lowered a very large amount, which is not practical on a rural highway such as US 89.

Insulating public use or institutional structures does not apply to any of the noise impacts predicted for this project, which are all at private residences.

4.9.4 Construction Impacts

The major construction elements of this project are expected to be earth removal, hauling, grading, paving, and bridge construction. General construction noise impacts, such as temporary speech interference for passers-by and those individuals living or working near the project, can be expected, particularly from earth moving equipment during grading operations, paving operations, and pile driving. Table 4 lists some typical peak operating noise levels at a distance of 15 meters (50 feet), grouping construction equipment according to mobility and operating characteristics. Considering the relatively short-term nature of construction noise, impacts are not expected to be substantial.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE NOISE LEVELS

| RECEIVER | MEASURED NOISE LEVEL L_{eq} | MODELED EXISTING NOISE LEVEL L_{eq} | MODELED 2024 NO-BUILD NOISE LEVEL L_{eq} | INCREASE from EXISTING to NO-BUILD NOISE LEVEL L_{eq} | MODELED 2024 ALT 3, NO BARRIER NOISE LEVEL $L_{eq}^{(2)}$ | 2024 ALT 3 MINUS NO-BUILD L_{eq} | 2024 ALT 3 MINUS EXISTING $L_{eq}^{(2)}$ |
|----------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|------------------------------------|--|
| Area 1 | 49.4 | 55 | 57 | 2 | 61 | 4 | 6 |
| Area 1 | | 57 | 59 | 2 | 63 | 4 | 6 |
| Area 2 | 58.0 | 59 | 65 | 6 | 66 | 1 | 7 |
| Area 2 | | 54 | 59 | 5 | 60 | 1 | 6 |
| Area 2 | 58.2 | 61 | 65 | 4 | 67 | 2 | 6 |
| Area 2 | 58.6 | 59 | 63 | 4 | 66 | 3 | 7 |
| Area 2 | 55.6 | 62 | 66 | 4 | 68 | 2 | 6 |
| Area 2 | 51.8 | 59 | 61 | 2 | 60 | -1 | 1 |
| Area 2 | | 59 | 62 | 3 | 59 | -3 | 0 |
| Area 2 | | 59 | 62 | 3 | 60 | -2 | 1 |
| Area 2 | | 58 | 61 | 3 | 59 | -2 | 1 |
| Area 3 | 54.1 | 61 | 62 | 1 | 62 | 0 | 1 |
| Area 3 | 52.6 | 60 | 61 | 1 | 62 | 1 | 2 |
| Area 3 | 59.0 | 63 | 65 | 2 | 64 | -1 | 1 |
| Area 4 | 58.2 | 57 | 59 | 2 | 59 | 0 | 2 |
| Area 4 | 49.5 | 55 | 57 | 2 | 58 | 1 | 3 |
| Area 6 | 59.4 | 63 | 64 | 1 | 50 | -14 | -13 |
| Area 6 | 59.0 | 63 | 65 | 2 | 50 | -15 | -13 |
| Area 6 | | 59 | 60 | 1 | 53 | -7 | -6 |
| Area 7 | 60.5 | 64 | 66 | 2 | 53 | -13 | -11 |
| Area 7 | 60.3 | 65 | 67 | 2 | 53 | -14 | -12 |
| Area 7 | | 46 | 48 | 2 | 50 | 2 | 4 |
| Area 7 | | 46 | 48 | 2 | 52 | 4 | 6 |
| Area 7 | | 51 | 53 | 2 | 53 | 0 | 2 |
| Area 9 | 62.6 | 66 | 67 | 1 | 67 | 0 | 1 |
| Area 9 | | 62 | 63 | 1 | 63 | 0 | 1 |
| Area 10 | 52.1 | 55 | 57 | 2 | 61 | 4 | 6 |
| Area 10 | | 62 | 63 | 1 | 66 | 3 | 4 |
| Area 5 | | 57 | 58 | 1 | 60 | 2 | 3 |
| Area 8 | | 50 | 51 | 1 | 53 | 2 | 3 |

All noise levels are dBA

Shaded areas indicate analysis for which traffic noise impacts are predicted, that is, design year noise levels approach or exceed FHWA Noise Abatement Criteria level of 66 dBA $L_{eq}(h)$, or build noise levels will be equal to or more than 13 dBA over existing levels.

| TABLE 4: CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT SOUND LEVELS | | | | | | |
|---|---|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|
| EQUIPMENT POWERED BY INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINES | SOUND LEVEL (dBA) at 15 meters | | | | | |
| | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 | 110 |
| <u>Earth Moving</u> | | | | | | |
| Compactors (Rollers) | | — | | | | |
| Front Loaders | | ————— | | | | |
| Backhoes | | | ————— | | | |
| Tractors | | | | ————— | | |
| Scrapers, Graders | | | ————— | | | |
| Pavers | | | | — | | |
| Trucks | | | | ————— | | |
| <u>Materials Handling</u> | | | | | | |
| Concrete Mixers | | | ————— | | | |
| Concrete Pumps | | | | — | | |
| Cranes (Movable) | | | ————— | | | |
| <u>Stationary</u> | | | | | | |
| Pumps | | — | | | | |
| Generators | | | ————— | | | |
| Compressors | | ————— | | | | |
| <u>Impacts Equipment</u> | | | | | | |
| Pneumatic Wrenches | | | — | | | |
| Jack Hammers & Rock Drills | | | ————— | | | |
| Impact Pile Drivers (Peaks) | | | | ————— | | |
| <u>Other</u> | | | | | | |
| Vibrator | | | ————— | | | |
| Saws | | | — | | | |

Source: U.S. Report to the President and Congress on Noise, February 1972.

4.10 Water Resources/Quality

4.10.1 Existing Conditions

The aquatic resources within the study area are limited to four perennial streams (Box Elder, Neil, Belt, and Otter Creeks) and several ephemeral streams and washes (including Frenchman's Coulee) located west of Neil Creek. With the exception of the existing two-lane bridges over Box Elder Creek, Belt Creek, and Otter Creek, these drainages are conveyed under US 89 through culverts of varying sizes.

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has the responsibility under *Section 401* of the federal *Clean Water Act* (33 U.S.C. 1251 – 1376) and the *Montana Water Quality Act* (75-5-101 M.C.A., et seq.) to monitor and assess the quality of Montana surface waters and to identify impaired or threatened stream segments and

lakes. The MDEQ sets limits, known as Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDLs), for each pollutant entering a body of water. TMDLs are established for streams or lakes that fail to meet certain standards for water quality and describe the amount of each pollutant a waterbody can receive without violating water quality standards. The legislatively-mandated TMDL process determines the concentration of pollutants in waterbodies and stipulates controls needed to improve water quality in order to support designated uses.

The MDEQ has identified waterbodies (i.e., streams or lakes) that do not fully meet water quality standards and support the appropriate beneficial uses or are fully supporting their uses as stipulated in the standards but are threatened. Such streams or lakes are referred to as "water quality limited" and are in need of TMDL development.

The MDEQ released its Final Year 2000 303(d) List of *Impaired and Threatened Waterbodies in Need of Water Quality Restoration* in November 2000. Belt Creek is the only stream within the project limits that is included on that list. The MDEQ anticipates developing TMDLs for Belt Creek in 2006.

During the initial and second public information meetings, local residents identified the following springs and wells located along the project corridor:

- Spring at RP 72.1, south of existing roadway.
- Spring at RP 77.2, south of existing roadway; used as a source for watering cattle.
- Spring at RP 83.4, south of existing roadway; culvert-encased spring.
- Well at RP 80.2, south of existing roadway.

4.10.2 Impacts

The Preferred Alternative would have minimal short-term impacts due to anticipated construction activities around the creeks. These activities include construction of piers and abutments, which could result in increased sediment loading at specific locations. A short-term change in the rate of erosion from land surfaces could occur due to removal of vegetation, but such impacts would occur only in the event of a large rainstorm or snowmelt occurring during specific phases of construction.

The Preferred Alternative would also have minimal long-term impacts because of the increased area of impervious roadway and bridge deck surface that would increase the volume of storm run-off. Highway water run-off is characterized by heavy metals, nutrients, sediments, oil, grease, deicing salts, and litter pollutants. These pollutants could adversely impact water quality on roadways where average daily traffic (ADT) is over 30,000. Anticipated ADT on US 89 for the year 2024 is 7500, which is well under 30,000, so the concentrations in the study area would not be expected to adversely affect water quality.

The widened bridge crossings associated with the Preferred Alternative would indirectly decrease the likelihood of hazardous materials spills from occurring that would decrease water quality.

In all cases of springs and wells identified by local residents, the roadway associated with the Preferred Alternative would be further away than the existing roadway, resulting in no impacts.

4.10.3 Mitigation

An Erosion Control Plan would be submitted to the MDEQ's Water Quality Division in compliance with their Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Regulations (ARM 16.20.1314) for the proposed project. Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be included in the design of this plan using the guidelines as established in MDT's Highway Construction Erosion Control Work Plan. The objective is to minimize erosion of disturbed areas during and following construction of the proposed project.

In accordance with 7-22-2152 and 60-2-208 M.C.A., MDT would reestablish a permanent desirable vegetation community along all areas disturbed by the proposed construction. A set of revegetation guidelines would be developed by MDT that must be followed by the contractor. The Seeding Special Provisions developed for this proposed project would be forwarded to the Cascade County Weed and Mosquito Management Board for approval.

4.11 Vegetation and Wetlands

4.11.1 Existing Conditions

Native vegetation communities include Teton River-Judith Basin Grassland, including prairie junegrass, blue grama, bunchgrass, and sagebrush; Foothill Grassland, including wheatgrasses, needle-and-thread, black hawthorn, serviceberry, western chokecherry, and rose; and Undifferentiated River Bottom, characterized by narrowleaf cottonwood and willow. (Payne 1973).

Invasive Species

As a partially federally funded action, the US 89, Belt North & South project is subject to the provisions of Executive Order 13112 (dated February 3, 1999). Under Executive Order 13112, projects which occur on federal lands or are federally funded must: "subject to the availability of appropriations, and within Administration budgetary limits, use relevant programs and authorities to i) prevent the introduction of invasive species; ii) detect and respond rapidly to, and control, populations of such species in a cost effective and environmentally sound manner; iii) monitor invasive species populations accurately and reliably; and iv) provide for the restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded."

Coordination with the Cascade County Weed and Mosquito Management District indicated that invasive species (noxious weeds) are found in the project area, as they are throughout much of Montana. The most prolific species include spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, Canada thistle, Russian knapweed, diffuse knapweed and field bindweed, which are designated as Category 1 noxious weeds by the Montana Department of Agriculture.

Rare & Sensitive Plant Species

The Montana Natural Heritage Program database was reviewed for species of special concern in the project vicinity. Of the 34 species of vascular and non-vascular plants listed as occurring in Cascade County, no plant species of concern are identified as occurring within the immediate project area. Eight species are identified as having a historical presence (over 100 years ago), but none of these species has been observed in many years (MNHP 2001).

Wetlands

Project area wetlands were delineated in accordance with the Army Corps of Engineers 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual. A total of five wetlands were identified within the project area. Locations of the wetlands (1 through 4 and A) delineated within the site are shown in Figure 5, and photographs are included in Appendix D. The wetland resource inventory is found in the Biological Resources Report for the project (under separate cover). The only wetland impacted by the Preferred Alternative is Wetland 2.

Wetland 2 is a 0.37 ha (0.91 ac) palustrine area that is located on the north side of US 89 between RP 72.3 and RP 72.5. A local street to the Armington community is located north of and parallel to Wetland 2, which is primarily a scrub shrub area with low willows at its western end and low shrubs along its perimeter to the east.

Riparian grasses are the dominant herbaceous species in the wetland. Narrow-leaf cottonwood is the dominant tree, and sandbar willow is the dominant shrub species. Wetland 2 is classified using the Cowardin system as a palustrine, scrub-shrub wetland (Cowardin et al. 1979). Based on the HGM classification (according to Brinson), the wetland is an organic soil flat. The wetland is rated low for functions and values, and its overall analysis area rating is III.

4.11.2 Impacts

Given effective weed management, the Preferred Alternative should have little impact on the adjacent plant communities within roadside borrow areas. The acquisition of new right-of-way, however, would encroach upon portions of crop and pastureland throughout the project's length.

The total estimated impact on project wetlands is approximately 0.10 ha (0.25 ac), occurring at Wetland 2. The alternatives have been designed to avoid, if possible, or minimize disturbance and impacts to identified wetlands. Due to the alignment restrictions, there are no practicable alternatives to entirely avoid wetland impacts from road reconstruction activities.

4.11.3 Mitigation

The Preferred Alternative has been designed to avoid if possible, then to minimize disturbances and impacts to identified wetlands. However, since Wetland 2 is immediately adjacent to the existing roadway, complete avoidance would not be possible.

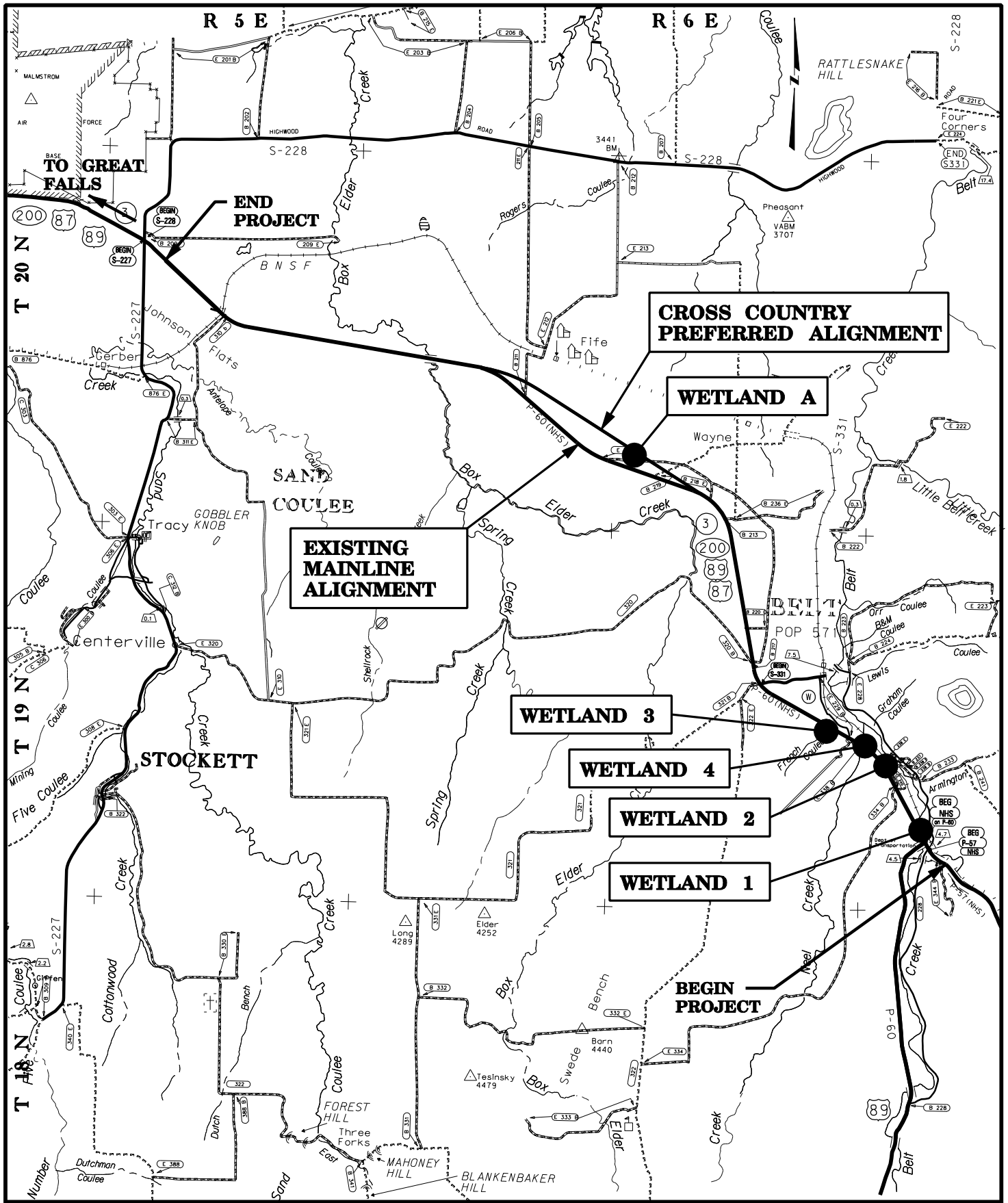


FIGURE 5 - WETLAND LOCATIONS KEY MAP

Where wetland losses are unavoidable, wetland losses would be minimized by implementing conservation measures in roadway design and construction. Specific mitigation during construction that will be adhered to or completed if feasible/practicable include:

- Minimize vegetation removal/disturbance
- Rapidly revegetate exposed areas with ground covers to inhibit invasion of noxious weeds and to reduce the potential for erosion
- Provide bank stabilization and erosion control to meet standards defined by *MDT Highway Construction Standard Erosion Control Plan*
- Implement sedimentation control methods along drainage routes
- Contractor adherence to MDT's BMPs relating to water quality and the handling of fuels and other contaminants common to staging areas

The Preferred Alternative includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands that may result from such use. Mitigation would be provided on site (i.e., within the project corridor), within the proposed right-of-way to provide an equivalent area to that being affected so that the net wetland area would not be reduced, if feasible. There are suitable areas for mitigation along the corridor, such as near the Belt Creek Bridge. Site selection and design would be coordinated with the appropriate resource agencies during the design phase of the project.

4.12 Fish, Wildlife, and Threatened and Endangered Species

4.12.1 Existing Conditions

Fish

Box Elder, Neil, Belt, and Otter Creeks typically support brown trout and rainbow trout. The last four years have experienced severe drought conditions, and the creeks have gone dry by early fall. Under normal flow conditions, trout would be expected to live and spawn in these creeks in the vicinity of the project (Leathe, Pers. Comm., 2002).

Wildlife

The proposed project is within the range of several big game animals such as mule deer, white-tailed deer, and antelope. Many small mammals, birds, bats, reptiles, and amphibians whose biogeographical ranges overlap the study area and have affinities for habitat present within the study area may be found in the project vicinity. The riparian corridors along Belt Creek and Box Elder Creek, which supply food, cover, and water for a diversity of animals, are known to support high-density populations of game animals and birds.

Threatened and Endangered Species

A threatened and endangered species biological assessment (BA) was prepared for the project in accordance with Section 7(c) of the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973. The purpose of the BA was to document whether listed or proposed for listing threatened/endangered species that may occur in the project area would be affected by project construction or long-term operations of the roadway.

According to informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), only one listed species was identified that has potential to occur the vicinity of the project area (USFWS 2001):

The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) occurs as a seasonal migrant in the project area. However, there are no known nests in the immediate project area, with the closest nest being found approximately 18 kilometers (11 miles) west of the project site near Ulm, Montana.

In addition, the USFWS identified the mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*), which is proposed as threatened, and the black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*), which is a candidate species, as potentially occurring in the project area. According to the local Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) wildlife biologist, these species have not been seen in the project area, and their presence is unlikely because of limited suitable habitat due to conversion of prairie to agriculture (DuBois 2002).

A database search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) revealed rare and sensitive plant and animal species that could potentially occur in the project area (MNHP, 2001). Based on initial consultation with the MNHP and MFWP, it is unlikely that terrestrial and aquatic species of concern would be adversely impacted as a result of the proposed project due to the lack of suitable habitat and no known records of occurrence.

4.12.2 Impacts

Existing human activity associated with US 89, such as residences, grazing, farming, and mining, has already created pressure on the natural environment adjacent to the project area. The Preferred Alternative would likely result in short-term displacement of various bird species during the period of construction as well as localized, but recoverable, losses of small rodents and occasional herptiles occupying areas within the right-of-way. No significant long-term impacts are expected.

Replacing the bridges and realigning and widening US 89 would not greatly impact wildlife species in the area based on the abundance of similar habitat in the vicinity of the project area. Big game mammals, such as deer and antelope, can avoid construction by moving to adjacent habitats. Mortality of small mammals, such as rodents and other burrowing animals, is a possibility with the construction of additional lanes, shoulders and new alignments. The increase from two to five lanes may result in increased mortality of wildlife crossing US 89.

Impact to bird species in the area would likely occur in riparian areas along Belt Creek and Box Elder Creek. Construction associated with bridge replacement could impact birds nesting in the tree, shrub, and herbaceous vegetation. Trees, shrubs, and herbaceous vegetation commonly found in riparian/wetland areas provide nesting and foraging habitat and cover for migratory birds. Removal of vegetation in the riparian areas could potentially reduce nesting, foraging, and cover habitats for mammals and birds.

Based on informal consultation with the USFWS and MFWP, it is believed that the proposed project will have no effect on the bald eagle or the mountain plover.

Based on initial consultation with the MNHP and MFWP, it is unlikely that terrestrial and aquatic species of concern would be adversely impacted as a result of this proposed project. Based on lack of known records of species of special concern within the project area and lack of suitable habitat, it is determined that the proposed project would not likely impact species of special concern.

4.12.3 Mitigation

Mitigation measures described in Section 4.11.3 would be followed. Migratory birds and nests would be protected during active periods, and permits would be acquired as necessary for the removal of inactive nests. Many of the existing drainage culverts would be removed and replaced with larger culverts, which may increase their use by smaller species for crossing the highway.

4.13 Floodplains

4.13.1 Existing Conditions

The proposed project crosses two floodplains: Floodplain 1 is at Belt Creek, and Floodplain 2 is near the far west end of the project (see Figure 6). Based on flood hazard area maps prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for Cascade County, portions of US 89 are inundated by the 100-year floodplain.

The natural and beneficial floodplain values associated with water resources in the project area include natural moderation of floods, water quality maintenance, fish wildlife, plants, and natural beauty.

4.13.2 Impacts

Executive Order (EO) 11988 and FHWA's floodplain regulations (23CFR 650, Subpart A) require an evaluation of the proposed action to determine if any of the alternatives encroach on the base floodplain. The Preferred Alternative would result in approximately 8.3 ha (20.5 ac) of encroachment within the 100-year floodplain, transverse to the direction of flow (see Figure 7). The encroachment would be due to the widened roadway embankment required to support the proposed five-lane section.

Generalized impacts of this encroachment would be:

- The Preferred Alternative would result in a permanent positive effect to natural and beneficial floodplain values by containing roadway runoff that would reduce water quality impacts.
- The Preferred Alternative would not be expected to support incompatible floodplain development, since no additional development would be induced.
- The Preferred Alternative would result in a temporary negative effect to natural and beneficial floodplain values due to increased sediment runoff and deposition during construction. These effects would be minimized by prompt revegetation of disturbed areas.

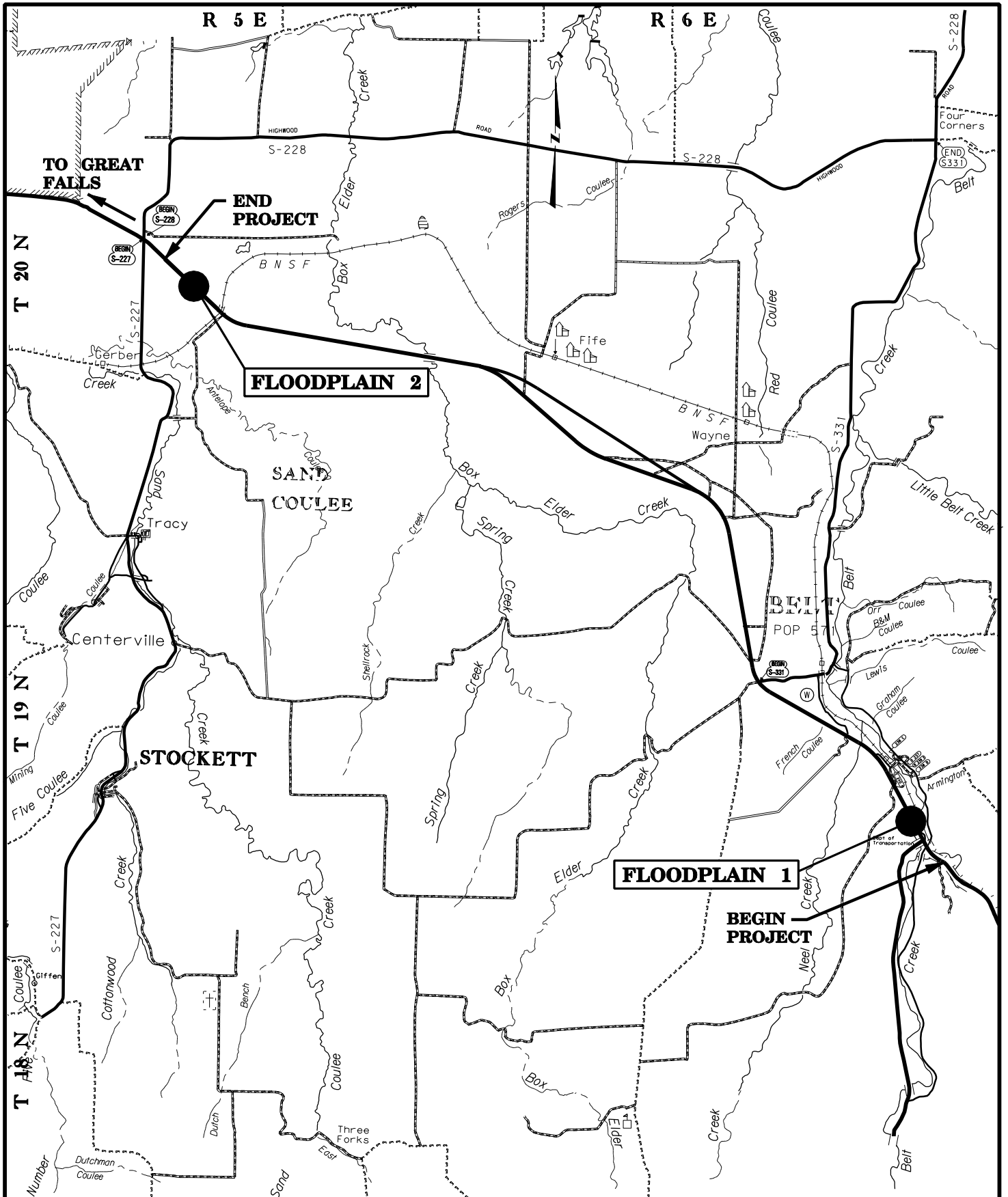


FIGURE 6 - FLOODPLAIN LOCATION MAP

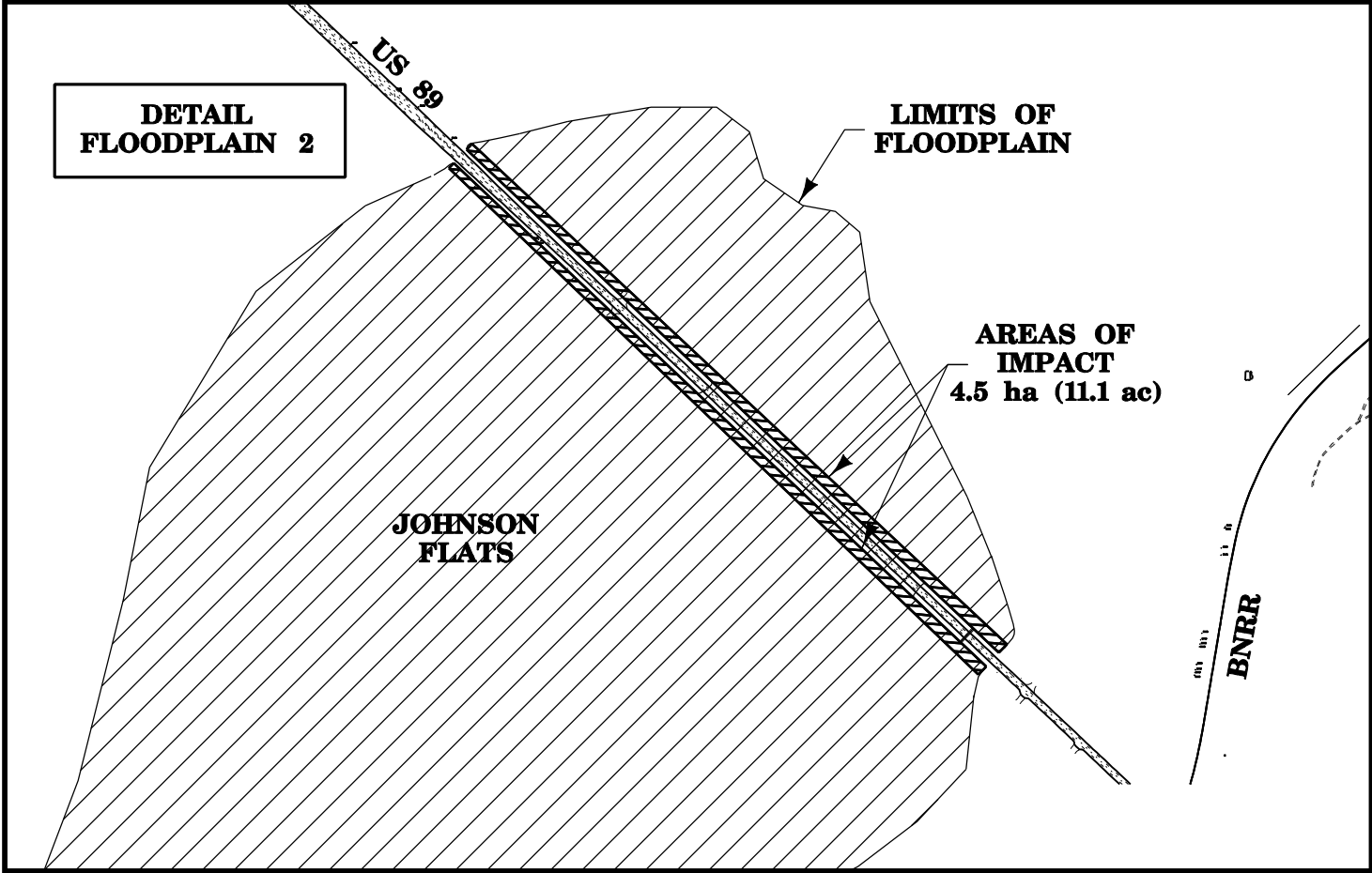
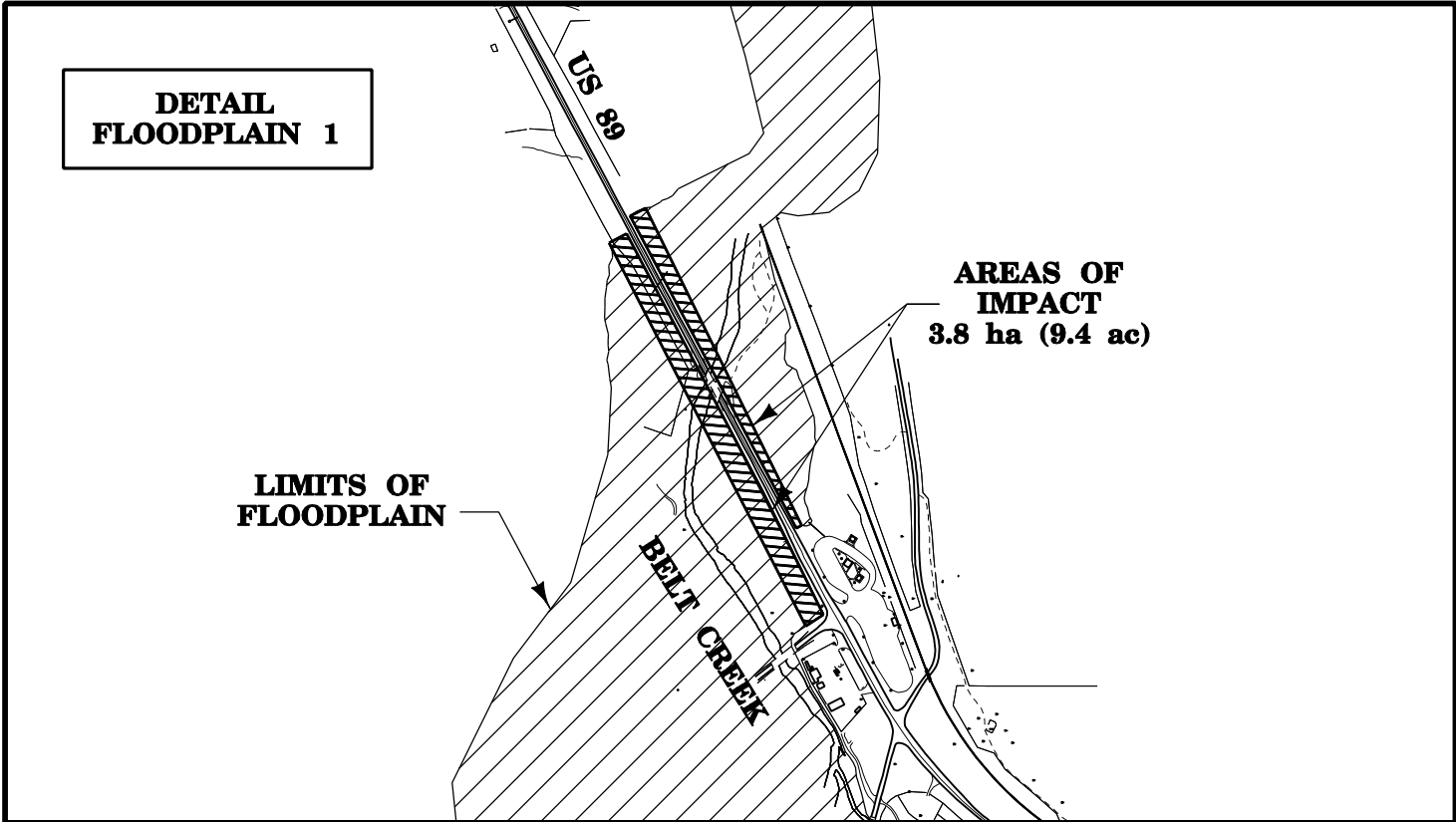


FIGURE 7 - FLOODPLAIN IMPACTS

- This project would not promote or encourage development within this delineated floodplain or increase flood liability hazards as a result of its construction. The proposed project is therefore considered to be in compliance with EO 11988.

4.13.3 Mitigation

The following mitigation measures would be implemented as part of the Preferred Alternative.

- Construct the bridge foundation and structure to withstand the effects of scour during the 500-year storm.
- Construct piers to align with the flow such that the obstruction of flow is minimized.
- Install revetment, such as riprap, to protect the abutment and embankments from scour.
- Construct the road so that the fill material is stable, compacted, well-graded, pervious, generally unaffected by water and frost, devoid of trash, asphalt, and other petroleum based material, devoid of organic material, and appropriate for the purpose of supporting the intended use and/or permanent structure.
- Rapidly revegetate exposed areas with ground covers to inhibit invasion of noxious weeds and to reduce the potential for erosion.

The Preferred Alternative would require a Floodplain Approval Permit issued by Cascade County. To evaluate the permit application, the Floodplain Administrator would review the construction plans, flood-proofing measures, and hydraulic calculations certified by a Professional Engineer.

Since the floodplain encroachment that would occur with the Preferred Alternative is not considered a significant encroachment, no practicable alternative finding is necessary.

4.14 Visual

4.14.1 Existing Conditions

Within the project area, US 89 contains broad panoramic vistas. The roadway alignment is rolling with the most substantial grade changes occurring near Belt Hill, and travelers heading in either direction are exposed to natural pastoral and agricultural fields. The highway corridor runs adjacent to fields, a number of residences and commercial establishments, and the border of the town of Belt.

Foreground landscape units are those that are immediately visible along the corridor. They are created and influenced by such factors as the type of adjacent land use, the width of the roadway, the roadway elements, and the character of adjacent vegetation. Combining these factors provides the traveler with a general character or “feel” of open or closed views along the roadway. Foreground landscape units included within this study corridor are as follows:

- Agricultural. The majority of the adjacent land use is pasture/agricultural fields. Farming equipment and outbuildings can be seen directly from the roadway. These provide generally open views with little or no tree canopy.
- Riparian. At a number of locations along the highway, notably Belt Creek, Neil Creek, Frenchman's Coulee, and Box Elder Creek, mature trees associated with the floodplain provide a break in the otherwise open landscape.
- US 89 contains roadway elements typical to this rural setting such as grass-lined ditches, above ground utility lines, varied right-of-way or property fencing, no curb and gutter, and minimal signage.
- Residential/Commercial. There are a number of residences, a restaurant/bar, a pet cemetery, and a museum located along the highway.

4.14.2 Impacts

Visual impacts associated with the Preferred Alternative would be both short-term as well as long-term. Short-term visual impacts include:

- Dust and debris associated with construction activity
- Construction equipment and excavated material associated with construction in the staging areas
- Traffic congestion associated with construction activity
- Removal of vegetation

Long-term visual impacts include:

- An expanded pavement width. The expanded pavement width would increase the motorist's foreground view of the roadway considerably from that provided by the existing road.
- Fill slopes would change the existing landform immediately adjacent to the roadway edge.

4.14.3 Mitigation

The vegetation areas impacted would be revegetated with native grasses and recommended seed mixes. The plant palette for revegetation would be derived from tree, shrubs, and grass species existing in the corridor.



US 89 at entrance to church building (RP 71.9) – looking east



US 89 along northwest extension (RP 83.5) – looking east



US 89 on approach to Belt Hill (RP 72.6) – looking west



US 89 at Belt Turnoff (RP 74.0) – looking west

4.15 Utilities

Very minor utility relocations would be required for the construction of the Preferred Alternative. These generally involve moving lines or poles outside the new pavement envelope, new right-of-way boundaries, or as a result of revised vertical alignment. Affected utilities include overhead power lines owned by Montana Power Corporation, telephone lines owned by Three Rivers Telephone, and fiber optic cables owned by US West Communications.

4.16 Hazardous Substances

An Initial Site Assessment for hazardous materials/substances was conducted in June 2001. There are no known hazardous substances or hazardous wastes that are expected to be impacted by the proposed project. There is historic mine waste in the project vicinity, but the Preferred Alternative is not expected to encounter contamination during project construction. The contractor would be required to take precautions to minimize the effects of construction operations and to prevent leakage or spilling of fluids from equipment.

4.17 Permits Required

The following permits would be required for the Preferred Alternative and would be acquired prior to any relevant disturbance:

A Notice of Intent (NOI) for Storm Water Discharges under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit (P.L. 92-500) would be required from the MDEQ for the control of water pollution for both specific and non-point sources.

The proposed project would require the following under the *Clean Water Act* (33 U.S.C. 1251-1376)

- A *Section 404* permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). The COE would be notified that this proposed project qualifies for a “Nationwide” 404 permit under the provisions of 30 CFR 330.

A Montana Stream Protection Act Permit (124SPA) would be required prior to any bridge work. The permitting authority for the 124SPA is the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.

A Floodplain Approval Permit would be required from Cascade County as the Floodplain Administrator for work in the floodplain.

All work would also be in accordance with the *Water Quality Act* of 1987 (P.L. 100-4), as amended.

4.18 Indirect and Cumulative Impacts

Indirect effects are those that are caused by an action and are later in time or farther removed in distance but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect impacts are generally induced by the initial action and comprise a wide variety of effects, such as changes in

land use, water quality, economic conditions, or population density. The indirect impacts of this proposed project are addressed in appropriate sections of this document.

Implementing the US 89, Belt North & South project would not trigger the need for improvements to other adjoining segments of US 89 in the project area. Likewise, implementation of other road projects within Cascade County would not require that the Belt project could not be constructed.

MDT would continue to coordinate future projects with the public and other appropriate agencies, complete a review of potential impacts to the environment, and identify requirements for mitigation of any adverse effects as projects are developed and implemented.

Future growth in the project area, Cascade County, or adjoining Counties would likely be driven by factors other than this reconstruction project. Such factors are primarily related to the national and global economic conditions and the price of energy. For these reasons, it is impossible to predict what types of impacts might occur. It is certain that such development, should it occur, would happen independently of this US 89 project.

There are no known projects being proposed or undertaken by others in the US 89, Belt North & South project area.

Cumulative impacts are defined as impacts that “result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) undertakes such actions”.

There are no other known projects planned in the vicinity of the proposed US 89 project. Therefore, the proposed new construction and reconstruction project would have no cumulative environmental impacts on any other MDT projects.

4.19 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would involve a commitment of a range of natural, physical, human, and fiscal resources. Land that would be used in the construction of the Preferred Alternative would be considered an irreversible commitment during the time period that the land is used for a highway facility. However, if a greater need for use of the land were to arise, or if the highway facility were no longer needed, the land would be converted to another use. At present, there is no reason to believe such a conversion would ever be necessary or desirable.

Considerable amounts of fossil fuels, labor, and highway construction materials such as cement, aggregate, and bituminous material would be expended in the construction of a build alternative. Additionally, minor amounts of labor and natural resources would be used in the fabrication and preparation of construction materials. These materials are generally not retrievable. However, they are not in short supply, and their use would not have an adverse effect on continued availability of these resources. Any construction

would also require a substantial expenditure of both state and federal funds which are not retrievable and would require allocation of funds which may be used by other projects.

5.0 COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

5.1 Agency Coordination

The following agencies and parties were contacted in preparing this Environmental Assessment:

- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Natural Resource and Conservation Service
- Federal Highway Administration
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
- Montana Natural Heritage Program
- Montana State Historic Preservation Office
- Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
- Cascade County Planner

5.2 Public Involvement

Initial Public Information Meeting. On January 18, 2000, a public meeting was held in Belt, Montana, to gather input on the US 89, Belt North & South reconstruction project. The purpose of the meeting was to describe the study process, introduce the study team, discuss and obtain input to project goals and objectives, and respond to issues and questions. The meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Belt School Cafeteria. Over 40 residents attended the meeting.

Second Public Information Meeting. On April 24, 2001 a public meeting was held in Belt, Montana, to gather input on the US 89, Belt North & South reconstruction project. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and obtain input regarding the initial set of alternatives and the preliminary environmental analysis and to respond to issues and questions. The meeting was held from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Belt School Cafeteria. Approximately 56 residents attended the meeting.

Documentation of both public meetings and responses to questions and comments are contained in Appendix A.

Remaining Public Involvement

A public hearing will be conducted following the distribution of this Draft EA for public comment. Comments received will be documented in the Final EA.

6.0 REFERENCES

Cascade County, Montana. 1979. *Cascade County Development Plan*.

Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990.

Cowardin, L.M., V. Carter, F.C Golet, and E.T. LaRoe. 1979. Classification of wetlands and deepwater habitats of the United States. U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. Publication #FWS/OBS-79/31.

DuBois, Kristi. 2002. Personal communication (telephone conversation with Laura Cooper, Jacobs Civil Inc., regarding wildlife in the vicinity of the project site). Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Wildlife Technician, Region 4, Great Falls, MT.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). December, 1991. Federal Aid Policy Guide, Subchapter H, Part 772, *Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise and Construction Noise*.

Freeman, Jim. 2000. Personal communication (meeting with Laura Cooper, Sverdrup Civil, Inc., regarding noxious weeds in the vicinity of the project site). Cascade County Weed and Mosquito Management, Great Falls, Montana.

GCM Services Inc. June 2001. Cultural Resources Inventory and Assessment: US Highway 87/89. Cascade County, Montana "Belt North & South".

Leathe, Stephen. 2002. Personal communication (telephone conversation with Laura Cooper, Jacobs Civil Inc., regarding fisheries in the vicinity of the project site). Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Regional Fisheries Manager, Region 4, Great Falls, MT.

Montana Department of Commerce 1998. Montana County Statistical Reports. Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce, Helena, MT.

Montana Department of Environmental Quality. 2001. Web site information regarding Total Maximum Daily Load streams (December 7, 2001).

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) 1996. Traffic Noise and Abatement: Policy and Guidance. MDT Environmental Services, Helena, MT.

Montana Natural Heritage Program. 2001. Agency correspondence on the presence of endangered and threatened species of plants and wildlife near the project site.

Payne, Gene. 1973. "Vegetative Rangeland Types in Montana," Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 671. Montana State University, Bozeman.

Sverdrup Civil, Inc. July, 2001. Preliminary Traffic Report.

Sverdrup Civil, Inc. November, 2001. Draft Traffic Noise Analysis Report.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 1987. Corps of Engineers wetlands delineation manual. Wetlands research program technical report Y-87-1. AD/A176 734. U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Waterway Experiment Station, Environmental Laboratory, Vicksburg, Mississippi.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2000 Census. United States Census Bureau, Washington, DC.

U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 772 (23 CFR Part 772). July 1982.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. 1987. Hydric soils of the United States. In cooperation with the National Technical Committee for Hydric Soils., USDA Soil Conservation Service, Washington D.C.

USDA. 1988. Hydric soils for the state of Montana.

U.S. Department of Transportation, *DOT Order 5680.1, DOT Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, February 3, 1997 [Federal Register: April 15, 1997 (Volume 62, Number 72)].

USFWS. 2001. Agency correspondence on the presence of endangered and threatened species of plants and wildlife near the project site. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Montana Field Office.

The White House, Washington, *Memorandum for All Heads of All Departments and Agencies*, Re: Executive Order on Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. February 11, 1994. Washington, D.C.

APPENDIX A
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DOCUMENTATION

APPENDIX A1: 1/18/00 PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

APPENDIX A2: 4/24/01 PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

**APPENDIX A3: RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS
FROM PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS**

APPENDIX A1

1/18/00 PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

1455 West 2200 South, Suite 300
Salt Lake City, UT 84119

Phone: (801) 978-9050
Fax: (801) 978-9121

BELT NORTH & SOUTH, US-89
NH 60 - 2 (55) 71
CONTROL No. 4043
W2X20100

February 8, 2000

MEMORANDUM

TO: Karl Helvik, Consultant Design Section

FROM: Margaret Simmons-Cross

SUBJECT: Public Information Meeting of 1/18/00
Summary of Meeting Comments and Input
Belt N&S, US-89

The following is a summary of comments and input received during the Public Information Meeting of 1/18/00 held for the Belt N&S project from 6PM to 8PM at the Belt School Cafeteria:

Attendees:

Mick Johnson, MDT Great Falls District Administrator
Bob Thomson, MDT Great Falls District Engineering Services
Karl Helvik, MDT Consultant Design Section
Doug Gregory, MDT Great Falls District Construction Supervisor
Don Smith, Sverdrup Civil, Inc.
John Blumenkamp, Sverdrup Civil, Inc.
Margaret Simmons-Cross, Sverdrup Civil, Inc.

| | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Anne M. Weintz | Marlene Martin |
| Ross Radzykewycz | Kenneth Martin |
| Karen Radzykewycz | Lee Voytoski |
| George Foss | Dan Griffin |
| Jean Foss | Karen Griffin |
| James Warehime | Tom Cheslin |
| James Larson | Gary Keaster |
| Gerald L. Stinson | John Antonid |
| Rick Becker | Jim Dawson |
| Frank Ballatore | Scott Puppe |
| Marc Bumgarner | Denise Puppe |
| Jerry Maberry | Jesse Buff |
| Philipp Fender | |

1/18/00 Public Information Meeting

Meeting Summary:

The meeting provided an open forum for discussions with over 40 local residents in attendance and several representatives from both MDT and Sverdrup Civil, Inc. to answer questions. A formal presentation occurred from approximately 6:30PM to 7:00PM made by Mick Johnson, Margaret Simmons-Cross, and Karl Helvik, discussing the schedule, design criteria, right-of-way requirements, and environmental issues. The presentation was followed by a question and answer/comment session.

There was general support expressed for the project in that everyone attending has safety concerns due to the poor sight distance and problems making turns from the existing roadway.

There were three topics of concerns expressed by the local residents abutting the corridor. These topics include: 1) the proximity of the new roadway and right-of-way to their homes and farms; 2) the difficulty experienced in accessing driveways with approaches directly onto US-89; and 3) safety concerns when making turns to and from the numerous county roads/S-331 and US-89 due to poor sight distance and excessive speeds.

Comments Noted on Aerial Plan Sheets:

(Note: Stationing mentioned below refers to stationing presented in the roadway initial layout and does not necessarily reflect final project stationing.)

- Sight-distance concerns exist at the intersection of US-89/SR-234 as well as US-89/SR-240.
- Note that leach field exists for property at Sta. 34, south of US-89.
- There is a spring/wet area at Sta. 34 (south of US-89). Disturbance to the ground could affect wells set in adjacent property.
- At approximately Sta. 36, residents would like sign for “No Jake Brakes”, due to the noise generated by trucks descending Belt Hill.
- A resident would like consideration to a left turn lane from EB US-89 to NB access road/turn-off to camp Ponderosa.
- It was suggested that a turn lane be considered from WB or EB US-89 for SB movement onto County Road at sta. 43.
- There are plans currently being developed and in review by Cascade County for a veterinarian clinic at Sta. 43 at a parcel on the south side of US-89.
- Potential wetland located at Sta. 45, north side of US-89, as commented by John Antonid.

1/18/00 Public Information Meeting

- There was a concern expressed by a resident that traffic would be detoured onto SR-229 during construction.
- A resident expressed a question and concern whether the intersection of US-89/SR-229 could be improved.
- Lagoons near property of Marlene Martin built by Bobord Construction. Can lagoons be used for wetlands?
- A suggestion was made to check with Dave Kelly, GF District Maintenance Chief, about the landfill behind property along SR-229, toward Belt, and its potential use as a wetland mitigation site.
- General questions regarding the cut/fill activity on Belt Hill were expressed. It was explained that the approach for that area has not been determined at the time of the meeting.
- Concerns were expressed that the passing lane on Belt Hill needs to be extended.
- There is a spring/water source used for cattle watering located a house #7692 on US-89, as expressed by Everett Bumgarner.
- The property owner on the north side of US-89 approximately at Sta. 117 inquired about MDT R/W compensation policy. Also asked if alignment could be shifted south in the area to avoid acquisitions from his narrow tract.

Question & Answer:

- Q. Ross Radzykewycz - What's driving this project in the first place? What is it that we are trying to fulfill by redesigning the road?
- A. Mick Johnson – We're going to replace it. The primary purpose is for safety. We have a road that has reached its capacity. We have several safety issues, capacity, stopping sight distance, 40-50 year old road. We design roads for a 20 year life, and this road has reached two and a half of its life.
- Q. You mentioned that you spend \$600,000 thousand or \$60,000 a mile recently on construction?
- A. MDT - The reason why we did this was because the road needed maintenance. We knew that it would be another 5-6 years before we could completely rebuild the road, so to preserve it and prevent casualties, we felt that it was a good time to put a thin lift overlay over the existing road to get a smooth riding surface on it again and to hold it together until we could build it correctly.

1/18/00 Public Information Meeting

- Q. Gerry Stinson – On Anaconda Street, next to the field towards the bottom end... One of my concerns is the size of culvert going underneath from Neil Creek. It is known for backing up – so are you going to make the culvert larger? There are always beaver dams that get in the middle of the culvert and block it up. Also, as you are coming down from the turn-off to Belt, why wouldn't you hug the south side rather than the north side where the residents are? But if you are going to impact, why would you impact both sides of the fill, why not just add on to one side. Preference – South side – (less residents). Extreme amount of road noise, concerned about the potential for future right-of-way. Is there any type of barrier that you can build for road noise? (Would like for someone to come in and talk to him.)
- A. Margaret Simmons-Cross - We aware that the State looked at this a few years ago. We will review Neil Creek as part of our design efforts. There are noise walls which can be built, should the level of noise merit construction.
- Q. Charlie Bumgarner – For the record, what I would like to see happen is to come off the top of Mehmke Hill, stay north of all of the residences, and then hook back in to the Enger Cutoff, in that curve there somewhere. It looks like you're taking 200 and something feet from my property. Were you planning on putting passing lanes on our flat?
- A. Margaret Simmons-Cross – We are hoping to put a passing lane for both EB and WB traffic. Bumgarner Flats has been mentioned as the appropriate place for this. Will try to accomplish that but have not looked at that yet. Checking roadway geometrics.
- A. Mick Johnson. Yes...if we move the alignment away from the existing alignment we take 230 feet of additional ROW. In those areas if we do not need the existing roadway for access to anybody over there, then all likelihood, we will abandon it (ROW).
- Q. What do you mean, it will stay the way it is?
- A. Mick Johnson - By state law it means that each land owner on each side of the roadway gets their first shot at their half from the center line. In your case where you are on both sides of the roadway we will abandon, it will go to you. In those cases where we are adding roadway next to the existing roadway, we would need approximately 70 to 100 feet more right of way because right now we are probably running.....
- Q. The highway, would it stay like that? Or would it be taken out and then the right of way used?
- A. Mick Johnson - If it was taken out, we may not have any access. I can not leave anybody out there without a road...
- Q. Rick Becker, 7889 US Highway 89 – Is there some kind of a law or something that says that you can't bring the highway this close to a residence? (Also concerned about environmental and noise pollution.) Well we're pretty close to the road now, we always

1/18/00 Public Information Meeting

thought that it'd be perfect if it were another 50 yards away. I'm just wondering, as the current scheme here indicates that they would actually come closer to our place, and I'm just wondering is there a place where you can't get any closer? Q2: When will these final decisions be made in terms of the routing?

A. Mick Johnson - There is no law restricting how close you get to a residence, as long as the right-of-way does not coincide with the actual house. What we usually do, is we allow a certain amount of time for example about 30-60 days for all the public comments to come in. Once the public comments are received, we evaluate those with the consultant, and we make a decision at that time as to what we want them to design. Right now we have given them a contract that has a kind of a blanket design feature in it. We can have them design a 40-foot wide roadway wherever we deem it necessary. So once the decision is made based upon your comments tonight and based upon our reviewing the route, we will then decide with the consultant what the configuration of the roadway is. Then we start them on what we call our first group of alignment review meetings, general meetings with MDT and we invite the county officials with us and that is called the Plan-in-Hand review. We will determine the alignment of the roadway is and tell them to provide any last comments.

Q. Rick Becker – When will the right-of-way be decided?

A. Margaret Simmons-Cross - July 2000.

Q. Marlene Martin, 71 Anaconda Street – Will there be any additional pipes that run underneath the road? There is the cement culverts that comes off of the hillside from the mine water that drains behind into the highway landfill and behind one of our houses. That is drainage that comes from those mines. Then it is converted into some pipes that drain down towards the bottom of our gate. There is a manhole and there is another one down by Dick and Betty Ballatore's and then the water comes out somewhere down by George Bestwina's. Well those manholes, occasionally they get plugged, like once or twice a year and we have to call rotor rooter to unplug the manholes because the water backs up and then drains into our property. And if you are going to do some kind of improvements on that hillside, than those pipes either need to be enlarged or something different routing. (Consider) Routing the water somewhere differently. Years ago, my father gave the highway department, or I guess he sold the land or something, but the well over in that house across the road from us where the drainage systems contaminated our well that was there, and there is no longer any water that is usable for drinking purposes at that house. Comment? So, you cannot even use it for irrigation, and it comes out completely rusty, like mine water. So that is something else that needs to be looked at.

A. Mick Johnson - O.k.

Q. Dr. Mary Ballinger-Evans – For the public record, note that I plan on building a veterinary clinic on the east side of Neil Creek Road, up against the mountain there, which has been approved by the county. And there will be a vet practice, so trucks and

1/18/00 Public Information Meeting

trailers will be coming and going from both directions. It would be nice to have a turning lane in there. It might take off some of the heat on the noise because there will be barking dogs, and no one will be able to hear the trailers.... (laughter).

A. Mick Johnson - Thank you.

Q. Tom Cheslin - I live in Belt but farm across on Tiger Butte Road, up on top of the hill. Is there any way of getting merging lanes up here on top? Coming from Great Falls onto Tiger Butte Road, that corner is more than a 90-degree turn to get there. What we need is a big sweeping curve of some kind because you cannot get around that curve in the winter on the ice at more than 5mph. When you come from Tiger Butte Road onto the highway, the highway slopes completely away from you, and with a load of cows at 5mph, you are going off of that road when you are making that curve. I hope that there are going to be a lot of changes made. Right now, at 80 mph, when somebody is coming down the road, you are taking your life in your hands crossing the road. So I hope the alignment and the grade and everything will be taken care of and help the people considerably.

A. Margaret Simmons-Cross - You turn from Tiger Butte Road and onto 89?

Q. Yes, but I live in Belt,

A. Margaret Simmons-Cross - But your concern is for the merge lanes on 89?

Q. Carolyn Wood, 7177 US-89 - The sight at the intersection is terrible on top of the hill. Coming out of our approach – poor sight distance. Four residences at that approach.

A. No response.

General Comment, Mick Johnson - Any Bicycle/Pedestrians/Hitch hiker concerns?

Q. Jim Dawson, 78 Spring Creek Road - Now Spring Creek Road is one of the main roads from Belt Highway to Centerville. There is a lot of traffic on that road at milepost 75, does not meet the new specifications. It comes in at a sharp angle, and it has a hill to the north but east/west traffic, traffic from the Great Falls towards this way, the cars are on top of you right away. (Wants to make sure that the alignment will be realigned.) A lot of hills and blind spots between Armington Y and Mehmke's. Concerned about speed limit, driving conditions, hills, blind spots, bad passes, poor visibility.

A. No response.

Q. Bicycling Response– Road is terrible to ride between here and Great Falls until you hit Mehmke Hill. And what they did going up towards Monarch was a disaster for a biker as far as the shoulders. And we do not want to see that again because I used to have an exit on that road if it got tight, but the way they put the guardrails up, there is no way to escape now. Something to take into consideration.

1/18/00 Public Information Meeting

General Comment, Mick Johnson – Considering installation in roadway - Electronic Vehicle-in-Motion Weighing Device at the Armington Jct. location: Approx. ½ a mile to the west of the Belt Creek Bridge. Will probably be installed before this reconstruction.

General Comment, Bob Thomson – I have a few Right-of-Way Brochures here for distribution. It explains the R/W process.

Comments Compiled from Comment Forms:

- Our address is 7742 US-89. The turn off for our driveway is very unsafe. We have two semi trucks and four trailers that are 40 to 45 feet long. With the amount of traffic on US-89, the amount of traffic in and out of our driveway and the location of our approach, we suggest the safest solutions to this problem would be to put in a turning lane in both directions of traffic for our approach. **Signed: Ron and Lou Ann Lords, 7742 US-89, Belt, MT 59412.**
- My concern is the possibility of re-routing highway US-89/87 traffic onto the Anaconda Street while doing construction and land filling. The potential of increased danger to the residents living on Anaconda Street trying to enter and leaving their driveways needs to be addressed. Also, the culvert near Stinson's residence needs to be better or bigger to handle spring run-off. These are rare, but flooding has happened in that area. Also, the pipe coming from the old mines across US-89/87 drains down behind #78 Anaconda Street house in a cement culvert then is routed to drainage pipes to 2 manholes, one at the entrance to our driveway and the other one that is near Dick and Betty Ballatore's, then drains out by George Bestwina's. Drainage plugs and needs to be opened by rotor-roter. Also, well contaminated at 78 Anaconda St. residence related to mine water contamination due to MT highway landfill drainage. Dave Kelly at MT Highway Dept. is aware of problems with drainage behind 78 Anaconda Street. **Signed: Lilly Marlene Martin, P.O. Box 113, 71 Anaconda Street, Belt, MT.**
- I will be building a mixed practice veterinary clinic east of Neil Creek Road. There will be numerous trucks and trailers turning into Neil Creek Road on the south of US-89. The project has been approved by Cascade County Planner John Nerud. I would appreciate consideration of a turning lane onto Neil Creek R. to the south of US-89. I'm calling the road Neil Creek Road between Sta. 43 and 44. It may be called by another name. **Signed: Mary Ballinger-Evens, DVM, Box 462, 166 Castner Street, Belt, MT.**
- Increase size of culvert for Neil Creek. At present during spring run-off, the culvert is not capable of handling the water flow. Need to address the road noise and lack of safety barrier on the fill. Need "No Jake Brake" sign for trucks. Need to build safety barrier. When increasing the width of the highway on the fill, only increase the width on the south side of the highway which would therefore have no impact to the residences on the north side. Anaconda Street enters US-89 at an angle and slight uphill slant. It needs to be corrected. The highway cut across from Anaconda Street entry onto US-89 needs to be terraced and

1/18/00 Public Information Meeting

seeded. This was never done since the fill was initially put in. **Signed: Gerald L. Stinson, P.O. Box 413, 105 Anaconda, Belt, MT.**

- From the town of Belt turnoff, going east over the fill to the bottom of that grade, I would appreciate the road expansions to favor the south side. The finished product would help eliminate some of the road noise for all of us who live on the north side of Anaconda St. Since that south side is acreage instead of lots, it would also be more economical. Going west up the fill area, it would be nice to have a marked turn lane on to Anaconda Street. If for some unexpected reason, a lot of traffic starts using Anaconda Street to by-pass the construction zone, there will definitely be a need for that street to be watered down or spread with reject oil to control the dust. There is a health hazard even now with the existing traffic. **Signed: Frank A. Ballatore, 44 Anaconda Street, P.O. Box 444, Belt, MT 59412.**
- As far as reconstruction of US-89, okay with us. Would be nice when they widen the road that it would be more on the south side. And if they're going to do any blasting on the high fill, to let us know. **Signed: Dick Ballatore, Box 107, Belt, MT 59412.**
- First, we would like to thank you for the informative meeting held at the Belt school, 1/18/00. The information was delivered in a concise manner, yet the meeting was informal enough to allow those of us with questions to be heard, with plenty of time for discussion. It is a relief to know you genuinely want to know our concerns on this matter.

The reconstruction of Highway 89, milepost 71 to 81 is of great interest to us as we live between mileposts 78 and 79. Our twenty-acre homestead has two homes on it, both occupied. The house we live in is nearest to the road about 235 feet from the centerline. Our property's west border is a seven-row shelterbelt planted forty to fifty years ago, perpendicular to the highway. When our home was built thirty years ago, snow removal, low traffic flow, and other transportation considerations made it a desirable distance from the highway. Today the sheer volume of traffic makes close proximity very undesirable and the future seems to have more of the same. If the future includes a four-lane roadway, it would look very bleak to us.

The preliminary plan has the centerline of the proposed construction 25 feet closer to our property. It was also mentioned the total right of way would be approximately 230 feet. This would make the new boundary 95 feet from our home. The edge of our shelterbelt is less than 100 feet from the existing centerline. We could lose 50 to 60 feet of seven rows of mature trees that really have a lot of value in this windy part of the country. **We would like, at the very least, to see the new centerline moved south instead of north, starting at the first curve immediately west of us.** We realize the line should be moved north at Bumgarner's but the curve in between should make an adjustment possible. We would be interested in knowing how far south the centerline could be moved, as the farther the better as far as we are concerned.

What we would really like to see is a study of the plan offered by Charlie Bumgarner, a total rerouting of about one half the project, from Mehmke hill to the corner at about milepost 77 or 76. A gradual arcing route would flatten out two curves, eliminate one altogether, and the

1/18/00 Public Information Meeting

topography would lend itself to a potentially safer roadway with less vertical variation. Future expansion would not be a problem on this route and I think this plan would be acceptable to all that live along the road in this area.

We learned at the meeting from some of the engineers present that it would actually be less expensive to build a wider road through 'virgin' territory rather than changing an existing roadbed. It is not often these days that a plan that benefits those it effects actually costs less tax dollars instead of more.

In closing, I would like to re-emphasize our desire to either re-route the road entirely or move the centerline farther south in the proximity of our property. The adverse effect on our property value and general quality of life in the short term would be very significant, and in the long term would be disastrous if the proposed route were used. Thank you kindly for your consideration! **Signed: Rick Becker and Beryl Bonahoom, 7889 US-89, Belt, MT.**

APPENDIX A2

4/24/01 PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

1455 West 2200 South, Suite 300
Salt Lake City, UT 84119

Phone: (801) 978-9050
Fax: (801) 978-9121

BELT NORTH & SOUTH, US-89
NH 60 - 2 (55) 71
CONTROL No. 4043
W2X20100

May 31, 2001

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ed Larson, Consultant Design Section

FROM: Margaret Simmons-Cross

SUBJECT: Public Information Meeting of 4/24/01
Summary of Meeting Comments and Input
Belt N&S, US-89

The following is a summary of comments and input received during the second Public Information Meeting of 4/24/01 held for the Belt N&S project from 6PM to 8PM at the Belt School Cafeteria:

Attendees:

Mick Johnson, MDT GF Dist Administrator
Bob Thomson, MDT GF Dist Engineering Services
Ed Larson, MDT Consultant Design Section
Patrick O'Connell, MDT GF District Right-of-Way
Annette Compton, Sverdrup Civil, Inc.
John Blumenkamp, Sverdrup Civil, Inc.
Margaret Simmons-Cross, Sverdrup Civil, Inc.
Carol Kruger, Wendt Kochman
Elise Qvale, Wendt Kochman

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Dan Huestis | Glen Coulter |
| Jacob Hofer | Leanne Coulter |
| Jacob Wipf | Charles Marlen |
| Paul Wipf | Dave Anderson |
| Betty Heilig | Trish Kenny |
| Anne Weintz | JC Kantorowicz |
| Cheryl Wilson | Charlotte Kantorowicz |
| Louie Hoffarth | Chris Huestis |
| James Warehime | Gary Gray |
| Thomas Thompson | Carol Keaster |
| Wayne Smith | Jerry Maberry |
| Ruth Stensrud | Rick Becker |
| John Stensrud | Everett Bumgarner |
| Charlie Bumgarner | Vernelda Bumgarner |

4/24/01 Public Information Meeting

James Larson
Philipp Fender
Gene Cantley
Karen Cantley
Sharon Bough
Richard Rounds
Marilyn Koontz
Glen Enderson
Martin Winder
Barb Winder
Larry Murphy
William Heilig
Mary Evans
Harold Anderson

Scott Puppe
Denise Puppe
Meg Anderson
James Dawson
Greg Bumgarner
Bob Barber
Claudia Barber
Carolyn Lippert Wood
Aaron Tillman
Daphne Tillman
Lloyd Locke
Deloris Dawson
Ross Radzykewycz
Ken Maki

Meeting Details:

The meeting provided an open forum for discussions with approximately 56 local residents in attendance and several representatives from both MDT and Sverdrup Civil, Inc. to answer questions. A formal presentation occurred from approximately 7:00PM to 7:30PM made by Mick Johnson and Margaret Simmons-Cross, discussing what has happened since the previous meeting, the schedule, design criteria, right-of-way requirements, and environmental issues. The presentation was followed by a question and answer/comment session.

Sverdrup Civil had full displays laid out on tables of the entire, proposed designs in aerial photo visuals. People gathered prior to the meeting for approximately an hour and then stayed after the Q&A phase to ask the consultants one-on-one questions. Wendt Kochman organized the meeting.

Formal Meeting Overview:

Mick Johnson with MDT began the meeting at the Belt School at 7:00 p.m. He introduced people from MDT and Sverdrup Civil, Inc.

- He explained the public involvement process that began the project. MDT came to the public to explain the concept at a January 2000 meeting. At that meeting they looked for input from the public so they could build the project to fit the people's needs.
- He talked about some of the things that have been incorporated into the project based on comments from the first meeting. The largest is the move by Fife. The project starts beyond Armington Junction and Mehmke Hill and goes all the way to the Highwood-Stockett Interchange. The revised project was explained and people informed that they could submit comments either by filling out comment forms at the meeting or else by mailing in written comments.
- Mick turned the meeting over to Margaret Simmons-Cross, Project Manager from Sverdrup Civil, to explain the concepts for the project, which should begin in 2005.

Margaret Simmons-Cross took the floor and began by explaining that there will be another meeting in less than a year to discuss the chosen Alignment Option.

4/24/01 Public Information Meeting

- Since the last meeting in January, in response to the cross-country alternative, additional mapping has been done, and new realignment concepts developed for the roadway past Charlie Bumgarner and Rick Becker's property to the north.
- After reviewing the completed preliminary traffic report, Sverdrup and MDT determined that in the design year (25 years from now) and with the projected traffic, a two-lane roadway was not enough, and a 4 or 5-lane roadway was needed.
- Sverdrup reviewed both a divided roadway and a 5-lane alternative. Right-of-way impacts, access issues, and safety issues were all considered.
- The review favored a 5-lane roadway section with a dedicated center two-way left-turn lane to provide left turning movements into all the approaches along the corridor. That option should address many of the comments from the last meeting in terms of access issues.
- The project expanded on the northwest end to tie-in to the existing 5-lane section that terminates just east of the Highwood-Stockett intersection. The project is now a 28 km corridor. On the south end the project has been extended past the first bridge at Armington Junction to reconstruct the bridge to 4-lanes and then tie-in to the existing roadway.
- There are essentially three alignments.

Alignment Option 1 – This option begins centered on the existing roadway at the Otter Creek Bridge. The roadway will be 7 lanes through the Armington Jct. turnoff in order to accommodate all the needed turn lanes. Proceeding west, the alignment shifts to the south past the Armington Jct. Rest Area and stays south to the start of the Belt Hill, where it transitions to match the existing centerline. The alignment continues on center through the Belt turnoff and transitions to the north of the existing roadway just west of the intersection and continues on the north until the curve east of the Enger Cutoff. At this point, the roadway transitions from the north to the south past the Becker residence and then south to north past the Bumgarner residence. The roadway stays north of the existing roadway to a point just east of the BNRR bridge, after which it transitions south to match the existing roadway centerline.

Alignment Option 2 – Similar to Option 1, Option 2 begins centered on the existing roadway at the Otter Creek Bridge and shifts to the south past the Armington Jct. Rest Area and continues on south through the Belt Hill and Belt turnoff, past the Enger Cutoff Road and Becker residence. At this point, the roadway transitions from the south to the north past the Bumgarner residence, transitions back to the south at Mehmke Hill, and remains south to just east of the BNRR bridges. At that point, the roadway shifts north to match centerlines with the existing roadway to the project's end.

Alignment Option 3 – Option 3 is identical to Option 1, with the exception of the cross-country portion from RP 77.5 to RP 81.5. For this portion, the roadway follows the "cross-country" alignment that takes the road north of the existing roadway from approximately Red Coulee Road through to Mehmke Hill. From there, the roadway remains on the north of the existing roadway, per Option 1.

- The project alignment has not yet been determined; no one option may prevail. Other factors in the decision making process include review of environmental screenings to identify the

4/24/01 Public Information Meeting

issues in the field, such as historical remnants and wetlands. Sverdrup and MDT will determine the best place for the roadway based on all of the input, with a team of engineers and environmental planners working together.

- Margaret reminded those present that there will be another meeting once the environmental project is finalized and the plans have been brought up to a higher level of design. They are proposing to submit a preferred alignment in June 2001. She then opened the floor to formal Q&A.

Question & Answer:

- Dave Anderson – He lives by Otter Creek and is right where the project will begin. By widening to 4-lanes they will be moving right into his yard unless they can get some easement from Burlington Northern Railroad. How close can the road go to the RR?
- Dave Anderson – With the 2-lane road going to a 4-lane right by the Centerville turnoff, one set of cars will speed up and one will stay the same speed, causing a lot of congestion right by his driveway. He already has trouble getting onto the highway from the driveway, and making it a 4-lane will only make it worse. Would they possibly widen to 5-lanes there so he can at least have a lane to get up to speed so he is able to get on the roadway?
- Dave Anderson – He questioned possibly a new access road to the highway going under the bridge. Although they would need to make a road on the east side for him, having access to the bridge would make getting on the highway a lot easier.
- Lloyd Locke - Why not go where the road is straighter to change from 4 or 5-lanes to 2-lanes? There isn't good visibility where they are going to do it now. Just move it down a bit more where there is better visibility.
- Dave Anderson – It is a poor location to change to a 4 or 5-lane. It's a blind area. They move machinery, and when you are moving a tractor and have the road blocked up it would be very dangerous.
- Trisha Kenny – Are there plans down the road to change the proposed spot where the 2-lane will begin again? It will always be a bad corner.
- Dave Anderson – The spot in-between the first and second bridge at Otter Creek would be better for him to get access to the road.
- Charlie Bumgarner and Rick Becker prefer Option 3.
- Charlie Bumgarner – He lives where Option 3 is, and he prefers it because it would get away from a lot of residences, and it would be a straighter route. There would be a need to build access roads however. It will also put the highway away from his house.

4/24/01 Public Information Meeting

- Dave Anderson – When they widen the road they will be putting their construction pit in his back yard. Because of where their house sits, the road is going to be right next to it. Is there a restriction on how close a highway can build to an existing residential structure before it has to move that structure?
- Dave Anderson – He's worried about accidents, which if they occurred off of the highway would land right in his front room.
- Lloyd Locke - Would the residence need to be relocated?
- Meg Anderson – Is there a ruling on how close a road can be to a railroad track?
- Cheryl Wilson – She lives by the pet cemetery. Will they be able to get 5-lanes under the bridge opening? They desperately need the middle lane in order to be able to get into their house because it's bad due to the Hastings Road. Without the lane there are many accidents.
- Cheryl Wilson – Clearance of the railroad trestle? There isn't a sign and it needs one.
- Larry Murphy – He lives on the hill just outside of Belt. When he comes up the hill with a loaded truck it's dangerous because he is moving so slow. He would like about an eighth of a mile extra lane coming out of Belt for big equipment because they are traveling so much slower than normal vehicles. Another issue is when they design the project and someone is coming from Great Falls to Belt, the turn into Belt should be on a level plane, not a slope. Making the turn when it is snowy or icy is very tricky. Also, possibly having an overpass at the Belt turn because it is so hard to drive a truck across four lanes of traffic.
- Dave Anderson - From Great Falls to Belt there isn't proper sight elevation.
- Lloyd Locke – Level out the county road approach so a person is hitting the road level, not ending up below the normal road surface.
- Charlie Bumgarner – Spring Creek Road. What are they planning on doing with it? He questions the visibility issues with the road because of the hill?
- Deloris Dawson – The county is planning to put a dumpster right at the turn near Belt, which will lead to a lot more traffic at that intersection. Has MDT thought about that?
- Ross Radzykewycz – Will the speed limit raise due to the 4-lane?
- Lloyd Locke – Can the roadway near the Bar S just slide through the bridge?
- Dave Anderson – The road from the Centerville turnoff to Great Falls is awful. He is hoping they will not be doing the same kind-of thing for this project as they did on that one. The driving surface isn't good.

4/24/01 Public Information Meeting

Mick Johnson reminded all about the comment forms and that the sheets can be mailed to Sverdrup. Margaret said the next meeting will be after the New Year. The exact design should be known by the next meeting. It is important to speak up now because it is still the planning process. If there are more issues MDT and Sverdrup Civil need to be aware of, please bring it up to them.

- Lloyd Locke – Can you build through Otter Creek?
- Mick Johnson, MDT – Can't build through Otter Creek, so once it is needed they will probably have to go around the top of the creek. They are already detouring wide loads. It will bypass Raynesford.
- Trish Kenney – What would happen to the old road near Otter Creek?
- Vernelda Bumgarner – Have they considered going from Belt Hill and out before they even get to the Otter Creek Coulee?
- Lloyd Locke – Doesn't make sense going down hill and then just going right back up the hill to bypass the Otter Creek. It should be kept a level road.
- Mick Johnson, MDT – There is a problem because of the tie-in with the rest area.
- Larry Murphy – What will be the price differential between Option 1, 2, & 3?

Mick Johnson closed the Q&A session.

Comments Made by Attendees After Formal Presentation:

- Dave Anderson (lives by Big Otter Creek Bridge) - Concerned about sight distance issues at Otter Creek Bridge. Would like designers to look into widening road toward BN RR instead of his house. Currently looks like would transition from a 2- to 4-lane right by his driveway, and he is very concerned about having this transition here because people tend to speed up to get around people at transitions. Also concerned about guardrail along the edge of the road in this area because there is not room to get off the shoulder with farm equipment if a car is coming at you. Last year, he was "t-boned" at his driveway intersection by a pickup truck traveling over 70 mph—hit just behind his cab or he would have been killed.
- Larry Murphy (at top of hill by Belt) - Entrance lane coming out of Belt would be really helpful to pick up speed. Add a lane up until road flattens out. Flatten out area by Belt. Turnoff to be able to make a left-hand turn going out toward Tiger Hill Butte area would be good.
- Charlie Bumgarner - County road is lower than the existing road (Tiger Hill Butte). Spring Creek Road. What will we do with it?

4/24/01 Public Information Meeting

- Delores Dawson - County is considering adding a garbage bin by Spring Creek Road and is concerned about access and traffic. (County contact is Fred Handwork, per Patti Sweeney.)
- Dave Anderson - Centerville junction is very dangerous—please don't do that.
- Dr. Charlie Marlen - Dr. Marlen would like road widened to the south near his property.

Comments from Scroll Plans:

The following is a summary of comments/notes on scroll plans used in the meeting (note – there were three sets of scroll plans used in the meeting: Option 1, Option 2 and Option 3).

Option 1

Sheet 1 Drainage concerns from Sta. 262+00 to Sta. 267+00. Ponding has been occurring at this location.

Question on clearance under railroad bridge.

Sheet 2 Stock water tank and culvert-encased spring identified at Sta. 219+00 and at Sta. 217+00.

Vertical sight distance concern at Sta. 211+00 to Sta. 214+00.

Everett Bumgarner indicated MDT might have not achieved desired cut at Sta. 211+00 to Sta. 214+00.

Sheet 3A None

Sheet 3B None

Sheet 4 There is concern and a desire for a lower roadway profile and improved approach at Sta. 109+00 to Sta. 112+00.

An existing spring was identified at Sta. 116+00 (outside existing right-of-way).

Sheet 5 There is concern regarding the deceleration length for traffic from US 89 eastbound making the turn to the town of Belt – would like to deter tailgating.

Sheet 6 There is a concern regarding erosion from a natural spring at Sta. 34+00.

Residents at Sta. 32+00 to Sta. 34+00 are concerned with septic locations near roadway – would like new alignment to be located north of existing centerline.

4/24/01 Public Information Meeting

Option 2

Sheet 1 None

Sheet 2 None

Sheet 3A Existing well is located on the Bumgarner property at Sta. 166+50.

Sheet 3B None

Sheet 4 None

Sheet 5 Resident Gary Stinson would prefer that the alignment would be located to the south (in the vicinity of Sta. 46+00).

Sheet 6 The Anderson property access near Otter Creek is a major concern regarding sight distance and merge conditions. Owners would like consideration of cutting back existing fill to the south (possibly 3:1) and would also like center turn lane.

Option 3

Sheet 3C Resident Anne Weintz is concerned about the new access that would be created to her property with cross-country alternative.

Resident Kantorowicz is concerned about the subdivision of his existing parcel with the cross-country alternative.

Comments Compiled from Comment Forms:

- A plea: Would you consider shortening, by a few feet, the length of the widening project? The current plan projects widening to or through the second bridge on Otter Creek. But a future plan to extend widening may not follow Otter Creek basin. In many places the creek runs along US 87. Widening would require gouging a different creek bed. Instead, another route may be selected, allowing construction of a straighter run. Guardrails, while increasing auto safety on curving, jeopardous road beds, pose hazards for moving farm machinery.

Given the uncertainty of future routing of 87, widening now, the first two (of eleven to Raynesford) bridges seems an ill-focused expenditure. West of the first bridge, space on both sides allows easy widening. For now, why not stop this project there? A more logical, sensible site for drivers flowing eastward to make the mental adjustment for narrower bridges and only two lanes would seem to be right at the Y rather than up the road (87) a half mile, after they've crossed the first two bridges. **Signed: Harold S. Anderson, 44 US 87, Belt, MT 59412.**

4/24/01 Public Information Meeting

- We prefer Alignment Option #2 and Alignment Option #3. Questions and comments:
 1. Neil Creek Highway Culvert – what is the present culvert size and what is size of proposed culvert? The reason Neil Creek floods and culvert gets blocked from debris and floods over highway is current size.
 2. South side of highway where Anaconda Street meets highway – The cut that was made in the hillside when the highway was originally built was never sloped or seeded into grass. It has been an eyesore for the last 40 years. It needs to be dressed up with top soil and seeded in natural grass.
 3. Road noise on the highway has increased with the amount of traffic and will continue to escalate in the future. Need “No Jake Brake” signs for downhill traffic on the fill by Belt. Also need sound barriers (earth or concrete) put in where residences are close to highway to deal with road noise.
 4. In years with “normal” precipitation you will need to address the problem of underground springs throughout the proposed roadway – especially from the Armington “Y” to the top of Belt Hill. They will interfere with roadway stability. Many of these springs you are not aware of because of the drought. **Signed: Gerald Stinson and Marcelyn Stinson, PO Box 413, Belt, MT 59412.**

- Spring Creek Road approach is very unsafe. No visibility from northwest and on uphill slope to get onto the highway. And a jump to get onto the highway. The state highway always plows this approach full of snow – you need a four-wheel drive to get onto the highway! A new dumpster site at the snow fence at Spring Creek Road will cause a lot of extra traffic. **Signed: Dolores Dawson, #78 Spring Creek Road, Belt, MT 59412.**

- At the top of Belt Hill it is often very dangerous to turn left when coming out from Great Falls toward Belt. I hope there will be a long turning lane, as traffic tends to build up behind us “Belt people” who may have to stop completely before turning left to go down into Belt. **Signed: Sharon Bough, 626 Armington Road, Belt, MT 59412.**

- We like Option #3 the best. Also, if you would start and end the four or five lane highway at the weigh station (as it is now) you wouldn’t have the problems as Dave Anderson was talking about at the meeting. **Signed: Claudia and Bob Barbers, 6078 Highway 89, Belt, MT 59412.**

- Thank you for taking time from your busy day to discuss Montana Highway project NH60-2(55)71 Control No. 4043 in our recent phone visit. I’m sorry to say, time and distance make it impossible to attend your community information meetings held in the Belt area.

The ownership of this property would appreciate a map with the right-of-way considerations in order to comment more appropriately. We are very much in favor of the improvement to the highway and the many benefits it may bring to the community. As a general observation, our concerns are focused on a couple of matters. The continued ease and safety of free turn access to the existing buildings without increases of traffic noise levels created by placement of the right-of-way close to the buildings. Additionally, the bisection of the property as it may decrease the farming efficiencies by possible property segregation created by a new

4/24/01 Public Information Meeting

right-of-way. As an informational resource, we have a survey of the farm in progress at this moment. The field work has been completed and preliminary drawings are available from Henen Land Surveying Co of Great Falls. Please feel free to request a print from Mike Henen showing the property lines and the location of the existing buildings. Please keep us informed of your design for this project. **Signed: Howard Ness, The Good Earth, c/o Beverley J. Ness and Sharon D. Hughes, West 1522 Lawrence Drive, Spokane, WA 99218.**

- Over the last several years we have tried repeatedly to get a turn lane in front of our approach leading up to the Pet Cemetery. There have been 3 bad accidents there in the past 5 years. The situation is getting worse now due to increased business and also the escalated traffic now using "Hastings Road" which is south of our approach. Our repeated calls and letters to local and state offices have been ignored. When the road was resurfaced last year we again asked for consideration but to no avail. The repeated road work and resurfacing has also left our approach with a drop-off, yet they leveled the approach on Hastings Road across from us! These points were brought up by my daughter, Cheryl Wilson, at the Belt meeting. She and her husband also live out here and can attest to the problem. If the new road would supply the 5th middle lane for turns this should solve our problem. We were also assured at the Belt meeting that our approach would be finished to "our" satisfaction at the time of the new construction. **Signed: Louis Hoffarth (Memory Gardens Pet Cemetery), 8565 Highway 89 East, Great Falls, MT 59405.**
- I support Option #2. **Signed: Carolyn Lippert Wood, 7177 US Highway 89, Belt, MT 59412.**
- I think the new part of the highway should be constructed on the south side from 208 to 250. there are several houses and a restaurant on the north side and no houses on the south side. The crossover from north to south should be 203 and 208 so as not to involve the Mehmke Steam Museum. Also the phone line is underground on the north side and possibly other lines. **Signed: Diane C. Doyle-Marlen, 8359 US Highway 89, Great Falls, MT 59405-8060.**
- Please do not align US 89 to the south just west of Neel Creek Road Junction, as it will take out fence, hedges, trees, and well along with lawn on my property. Thank you. **Signed: Patrick E. Pierson, #8 Neel Creek Road, Belt, MT 59412.**
- This is an addition to my mailed comments of May 9, 2001 when I suggested the alignment (construction) be on the south side between Station 208+30 and Station 250+50. As I noted before, there are 6 homes and a business on the north side and none on the south side.

My additional comment relates to the buried transmission cables on the north side (such as the buried phone cable) and electric poles on the north side. The buried cables are very close to the present highway at the Bar S Restaurant and would need to be moved. Heavy equipment over the cables in other areas could break them resulting in loss of service for a period of time. I know at least one of the cables is not buried very deep – a wild animal digging on my land uncovered it.

4/24/01 Public Information Meeting

I plan to mail a copy of this and my previous comments to the Montana Department of Transportation. **Signed: Charles J. Marlen, M.D., 8359 US Highway 89, Great Falls, MT 59405-8060.**

- See attached two pages concerning: 1) impact to nearby residences and a business by a north alignment between Stations 208 and 250; 2) safety; 3) wildlife, including a rare species for Montana; and 4) landfill. Dated May 9, 2001:

To avoid impact to nearby residences and a business:

There are 6 homes and a business (Bar S Café and Bar) to the north and none to the south between Station 208+30 and Station 250+ 50. Thus it is suggested the alignment (construction) be on the south side of this section of Highway 89. It is also suggested the alignment move from north to south between 208+30 and 301+40 to avoid the Mehmke Steam Museum entrance.

Safety:

This suggest south alignment is expected to allow a longer line of sight along the curve leading uphill from the railroad overpass (Station 255+40). A north alignment would probably result in even a "tighter" curve leading down the hill to the overpass. There are two business entrances on this curve (both to the Bar S Café and Bar).

Other factors to consider:

Wildlife – including a rare species for Montana. The well-developed shelterbelt at Station 221+50 to 223+40 is used by many different birds and mammals. This will experience some impact by the very close highway if a north alignment is done. The shelterbelt is on a 30-acre property where 132 bird species have been recorded. This includes the first and only recorded scrub jay for Montana (verification by the Audubon Montana Rare Birds Records Committee). It is too early in the year to know if this species will return. The scrub jay was recorded here last year.

The large pond (Station 228 to 229) is used by wildlife, especially by water birds migrating across this dry land. Less use by shy wildlife is to be expected if the highway is placed closer to the pond with a north alignment.

Landfill: Presumably there will be less landfill (cost savings?) with a south alignment since this is on the uphill side of the highway.

Signed: Charles J. Marlen, M.D., 8359 US Highway 89, Great Falls, MT 59405-8060.

- See attached two pages. (Attached May 9, 2001 letter from Dr. Marlen, transcribed above.)
Signed: Ronald Vihinen, 8375 US Highway 89, Great Falls, MT 59405.
- See attached two pages. (Attached May 9, 2001 letter from Dr. Marlen, transcribed above.)
Signed: Violet Vihinen, 8377 US Highway 89, Great Falls, MT 59405.

4/24/01 Public Information Meeting

Telephone Conversations:

- Margaret Simmons-Cross conversation with Howard Ness, 4/19/01.

Great Falls District personnel contacted me to request that I respond to a phone call received from Howard Ness regarding the upcoming Public Information Meeting scheduled for 4/24/01 that he could not attend.

Howard Ness owns ranching/farming property in T20N R6E section 31 on the project. He leases his property to Charlie Bumgarner for farming purposes. I explained that current there are 3 alignment options up for consideration and that the purpose of the meeting was to review the options with the community to receive their input on issues and concerns. I further explained that the roadway had previously been proposed as a 2-lane facility with widened shoulders, but had been upgraded to a 5-lane facility due to capacity issues for the 25-year traffic volume projections. He concurred with the added capacity.

His concerns are as follows:

1. What are the impacts on his existing buildings?
2. Does not want negative impact to the farming practices that occur on his property.

He is concerned that the proposed roadway would bisect his property and create a hardship for his tenant, Charlie Bumgarner. I explained that we have been in close contact with Mr. Bumgarner throughout this process and he is quite aware of the project status and will hopefully be present at the public information meeting.

Mr. Ness explained that he is currently getting his property surveyed and we could get a copy of the survey. His contact is a surveying company in Great Falls called Henen Land Surveying. Mike is the contact name at (406) 453-7820.

Mr. Ness would appreciate an update on the project when available. I will call him this summer to bring him up to date.

- Margaret Simmons-Cross conversation with Enrique Tipiani, 4/27/01.

Michael Johnson, MDT Great Falls District Administrator, contacted me via e-mail to request that I respond to a phone call received from Enrique Tipiani. Mr. Tipiani was concerned that did not receive a direct mailing notice of the 4/24/01 Public Information Meeting and as he did not attend, he had questions and desired to provide his input on the roadway reconstruction alternatives presented during the meeting. Mr. Tipiani's name and address were not included on the mailing list database, but have now been added. Mr. Tipiani lives at the address noted above, which is just north of the "Johnnie's Bar" location and just to the west of Neil Creek Road intersection.

I explained what transpired during the public meeting and discussed the alternatives developed to date. He had also had the opportunity to speak with his next-door neighbor, Aaron Tillman, following the meeting. Similar to Mr. Tillman's comments, Mr. Tipiani

4/24/01 Public Information Meeting

expressed his support for locating the roadway to the south of the existing roadway in that segment of the corridor to avoid impacts to his property.

I offered to send him a copy of the information brochure and comment form to allow him to have benefit of the materials and to have the ability to make additional comments. I also informed Mr. Tipiani that roll plans of the alignment options discussed during the 4/24/01 meeting will be available through Pat O'Connell at the MDT Great Falls District Office the week of May 7th. He can contact Pat to mutually determine a time to review the plans.

- Annette Compton conversation with Cherry Loney and Fred Handwork, 5/2/01.

Today I spoke with both Cherry Loney and Fred Handwork from Cascade County regarding the placement of a Garbage Dumpster along the US-89 corridor. I initially spoke with Cherry Loney, *Cascade County Health Officer*, 406-454-6950, and she referred me to Fred Handwork, *Cascade County Solid Waste Manager*, 406-727-8990.

Fred said that they were considering placing a garbage dumpster on the Spring Creek Road near US-89, but they could not come to an agreement with the landowners and have started looking at alternate locations. The most likely location currently under consideration is the Tiger Butte Road/US-89 junction. This location is still up in the air and they are still in the process of determining landowners.

Fred also said that the Belt community is currently not in the Cascade County Garbage District and this issue may go to the voters as to whether or not to join. He said currently Belt has free garbage service and residents just bring their garbage to a dumpster. The area using the dumpster goes all the way to Monarch.

Cherry mentioned that there is a dumpster at Armington Junction and the new dumpster may replace the old one.

I asked Fred to keep me updated as his pursuit progresses. He would also like to know more information about the Belt turnoff intersection and how much right-of-way MDT will be acquiring here, so he can be sure to keep the dumpster outside of the new ROW. He would like to talk to us next time we are in Great Falls if possible.

APPENDIX A3

**RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS
FROM PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS**

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

INITIAL PUBLIC MEETING – 1/18/00

Responses to comments are in *CAPITAL ITALICS*.

Comments Noted on Aerial Plan Sheets:

(Note: Stationing referenced refers to stationing presented in the roadway initial layout and does not necessarily reflect final project stationing.)

- Sight-distance concerns exist at the intersection of US-89/SR-234 as well as US-89/SR-240.
PROPOSED VERTICAL GEOMETRY HAS BEEN IMPROVED TO MEET SIGHT DISTANCE REQUIREMENTS.
- Note that leach field exists for property at Sta. 34, south of US-89.
PROPOSED ALIGNMENT HAS BEEN SHIFTED AWAY FROM PROPERTIES (TO THE NORTH OF EXISTING ALIGNMENT) IN THIS AREA.
- There is a spring/wet area at Sta. 34 (south of US-89). Disturbance to the ground could affect wells set in adjacent property.
PROPOSED ALIGNMENT HAS BEEN SHIFTED AWAY FROM PROPERTIES (TO THE NORTH OF EXISTING ALIGNMENT) IN THIS AREA.
- At approximately Sta. 36, residents would like sign for “No Jake Brakes”, due to the noise generated by trucks descending Belt Hill.
SIGNING REQUIREMENTS FOR ‘JAKE BRAKES’ WOULD BE REVIEWED IN FINAL DESIGN.
- A resident would like consideration to a left turn lane from EB US-89 to NB access road/turn-off to camp Ponderosa.
CENTER TURN LANE WOULD BE PROVIDED WITH PROPOSED FIVE-LANE SECTION.
- It was suggested that a turn lane be considered from WB or EB US-89 for SB movement onto County Road at sta. 43.
CENTER TURN LANE WOULD BE PROVIDED WITH PROPOSED FIVE-LANE SECTION.
- There are plans currently being developed and in review by Cascade County for a veterinarian clinic at Sta. 43 at a parcel on the south side of US-89.
THE VETERINARIAN CLINIC PLANS WILL BE REVIEWED AND EVALUATED AGAINST FUTURE ROADWAY DESIGN.

Responses to Comments – 1/18/00 Meeting

- Potential wetland located at Sta. 45, north side of US-89, as commented by John Antonid.
THIS AREA WOULD BE EVALUATED FOR POTENTIAL AS A WETLAND MITIGATION SITE DURING FINAL DESIGN.
- There was a concern expressed by a resident that traffic would be detoured onto SR-229 during construction.
PROPOSED CENTERLINE WOULD BE OFFSET FROM EXISTING SO THAT LOCAL ACCESS ROADS WOULD NOT NEED TO BE UTILIZED DURING CONSTRUCTION.
- A resident expressed a question and concern whether the intersection of US-89/SR-229 could be improved.
ALL INTERSECTIONS WOULD BE REVIEWED FOR PROPER VEHICLE MOVEMENT TO/FROM THE RECONSTRUCTED HIGHWAY, INCREASING TURNING RADII AND SIGHT DISTANCE AS REQUIRED. VEHICLES MAKING LEFT TURNS OFF OF US 89 WOULD USE THE CENTER TURN LANE. VEHICLES MAKING RIGHT TURNS OFF OF US 89 WOULD USE THE OUTSIDE LANES, WHILE THROUGH TRAFFIC WOULD PASS THEM ON THE INSIDE LANE.
- Lagoons near property of Marlene Martin built by Bobord Construction. Can lagoons be used for wetlands?
IT MAY BE POSSIBLE. THIS AREA WOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR WETLAND MITIGATION DURING FINAL DESIGN.
- A suggestion was made to check with Dave Kelly, GF District Maintenance Chief, about the landfill behind property along SR-229, toward Belt, and its potential use as a wetland mitigation site.
MR. KELLY WILL BE CONTACTED.
- General questions regarding the cut/fill activity on Belt Hill were expressed. It was explained that the approach for that area has not been determined at the time of the meeting.
SINCE THE TIME OF THE PUBLIC MEETING, IT HAS BEEN DECIDED THAT THE ROADWAY WOULD BE WIDENED TO THE SOUTH AT BELT HILL, WITH ADDITIONAL FILL PLACED ON THE FACE OF THE EXISTING FILL.
- Concerns were expressed that the passing lane on Belt Hill needs to be extended.
THE PROPOSED DESIGN WOULD PROVIDE TWO LANES IN EACH DIRECTION FROM THE BASE OF THE BELT HILL WESTWARD TO THE BELT TURNOFF.
- There is a spring/water source used for cattle watering located a house #7692 on US-89, as expressed by Everett Bumgarner.
PER LOCATION IDENTIFIED BY OWNER, THE SPRING/WATER SOURCE APPEAR TO BE WELL OUTSIDE OF THE PROPOSED ALIGNMENT AND RIGHT-OF-WAY CORRIDOR AND WOULD NOT BE IMPACTED BY THE PROJECT.

Responses to Comments – 1/18/00 Meeting

- The property owner on the north side of US-89 approximately at Sta. 117 inquired about MDT R/W compensation policy. Also asked if alignment could be shifted south in the area to avoid acquisitions from his narrow tract.

ALIGNMENT WOULD BE PLACED SOUTH OF EXISTING ALIGNMENT TO MINIMIZE PROPERTY IMPACTS IN THIS AREA.

Question & Answer:

(Note: Only those comments that require clarification beyond the responses provided at the meeting are included here.)

- Q. Gerry Stinson – On Anaconda Street, next to the field towards the bottom end... One of my concerns is the size of culvert going underneath from Neil Creek. It is known for backing up – so are you going to make the culvert larger? There are always beaver dams that get in the middle of the culvert and block it up. Also, as you are coming down from the turn-off to Belt, why wouldn't you hug the south side rather than the north side where the residents are? But if you are going to impact, why would you impact both sides of the fill, why not just add on to one side. Preference – South side – (less residents). Extreme amount of road noise, concerned about the potential for future right-of-way. Is there any type of barrier that you can build for road noise? (Would like for someone to come in and talk to him.)
- A. Margaret Simmons-Cross - We aware that the State looked at this a few years ago. We will review Neil Creek as part of our design efforts. There are noise walls that can be built, should the level of noise merit construction.
*PROPOSED WIDEINING AT BELT HILL WOULD BE TO THE SOUTH.
NOISE STUDY PERFORMED FOR THE CORRIDOR CONCLUDED THAT NOISE WALLS WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE PROJECT.*
- Q. Charlie Bumgarner – For the record, what I would like to see happen is to come off the top of Mehmke's Hill, stay north of all of the residences, and then hook back in to the Enger Cutoff, in that curve there somewhere. It looks like you're taking 200 and something feet from my property. Were you planning on putting passing lanes on our flat?
- A. Margaret Simmons-Cross – We are hoping to put a passing lane for both EB and WE traffic. Bumgarner Flats has been mentioned as the appropriate place for this. Will try to accomplish that but have not looked at that yet. Checking roadway geometrics.
SINCE THE MEETING, THE PROPOSED CONCEPT WAS REVISED TO INCLUDE FOUR TRAVEL LANES, SO PASSING LANES WOULD NO LONGER BE REQUIRED. THE PROPOSED CROSS-COUNTRY ALIGNMENT WOULD BE FURTHER NORTH AND AWAY FROM THE BUMGARNER RESIDENCE.

Responses to Comments – 1/18/00 Meeting

- A. Mick Johnson. Yes...if we move the alignment away from the existing alignment we take 230 feet of additional right-of-way. In those areas if we do not need the existing roadway for access to anybody over there, then all likelihood, we will abandon it (right-of-way).
- Q. What do you mean, it will stay the way it is?
- A. Mick Johnson - By state law it means that each land owner on each side of the roadway gets their first shot at their half from the center line. In your case where you are on both sides of the roadway we will abandon, it will go to you. In those cases where we are adding roadway next to the existing roadway, we would need approximately 70 to 100 feet more right of way because right now we are probably running.....
- Q. The highway, would it stay like that? Or would it be taken out and then the right of way used?
- A. Mick Johnson - If it was taken out, we may not have any access. I can not leave anybody out there without a road...
NEW DRIVEWAY ACCESSES WOULD BE DESIGNED TO EACH RESIDENCE IN THE AREA (BUMGARNER, BECKER, WEINZ).
- Q. Rick Becker, 7889 US Highway 89 – Is there some kind of a law or something that says that you can't bring the highway this close to a residence? (Also concerned about environmental and noise pollution.) Well we're pretty close to the road now, we always thought that it'd be perfect if it were another 50 yards away. I'm just wondering, as the current scheme here indicates that they would actually come closer to our place, and I'm just wondering is there a place where you can't get any closer? Q2 When will these final decisions be made in terms of the routing?
THE PROPOSED CROSS-COUNTRY ALIGNMENT WOULD MOVE THE PROPOSED ALIGNMENT FURTHER NORTH AND AWAY FROM THE BECKER RESIDENCE.
- Q. Marlene Martin, 71 Anaconda Street – Will there be any additional pipes that ran underneath the road? There is the cement culverts that comes off of the hillside from the mine water that drains behind into the highway landfill and behind one of our houses. That is drainage that comes from those mines. Then it is converted into some pipes that drain down towards the bottom of our gate. There is a manhole and there is another one down by Dick and Betty Ballatore's and then the water comes out somewhere down by George Bestwina's. Well those manholes, occasionally they get plugged, like once or twice a year and we have to call rotor roter to unplug the manholes because the water backs up and then drains into our property. And if you are going to do some kind of improvements on that hillside, than those pipes either need to be enlarged or something different routing. (Consider) Routing the water somewhere differently. Years ago, my father gave the highway department, or I guess he sold the land or something, but the well over in that house across the road from us where the drainage systems contaminated our well that was there, and there is no longer any water that is usable for drinking

Responses to Comments – 1/18/00 Meeting

purposes at that house. Comment? So, you cannot even use it for irrigation, and it comes out completely rusty, like mine water. So that is something else that needs to be looked at.

THE CULVERTS UNDER BELT HILL WOULD BE IMPROVED TO ADEQUATELY HANDLE THE APPROPRIATE STORM FLOW.

- Q. Dr Mary Ballinger-Evans – For the public record, note that I plan on building a veterinary clinic on the East side of Neil Creek Road, up against the mountain there, which has been approved by the county. And there will be a vet practice, so trucks and trailers will be coming and going from both directions. It would be nice to have a turning lane in there. It might take off some of the heat on the noise because there will be barking dogs, and no one will be able to hear the trailers.... (laughter).

THE VETERINARIAN CLINIC PLANS WOULD BE REVIEWED AND EVALUATED AGAINST FUTURE ROADWAY DESIGN.

- Q. Tom Cheslin - I live in Belt but Farm across on Tiger Butte Road, up on top of the hill. Is there anyway of getting merging lanes up here on top? Coming from Great Falls onto Tiger Butte Road, that corner is more than a 90-degree turn to get there. What we need is a big sweeping curve of some kind because you cannot get around that curve in the winter on the ice at more than 5mph. When you come from Tiger Butte Road onto the highway, the highway slopes completely away from you, and with a load of cows at 5mph, you are going off of that road when you are making that curve. I hope that there are going to be a lot of changes made. Right now, at 80 mph, when somebody is coming down the road, you are taking your life in your hands crossing the road. So I hope the alignment and the grade and everything will be taken care of and help the people considerably.

ALL INTERSECTIONS WOULD BE REVIEWED FOR PROPER VEHICLE MOVEMENT TO/FROM THE RECONSTRUCTED HIGHWAY, INCREASING TURNING RADII AND SIGHT DISTANCE AS REQUIRED. ALSO, THE PROPOSED ALIGNMENT LOCATION THRU THE BELT TURNOFF AREA WOULD BE LOCATED TO MAXIMIZE SIGHT DISTANCE FOR VEHICLES TURNING ONTO US-89.

- Q. Carolyn Wood, 7177 US-89 - The sight at the intersection is terrible on top of the hill. Coming out of our approach – poor sight distance. Four residences at that approach.

ALL INTERSECTIONS WILL BE REVIEWED FOR PROPER VEHICLE MOVEMENT TO/FROM THE RECONSTRUCTED HIGHWAY, INCREASING TURNING RADII AND SIGHT DISTANCE AS REQUIRED.

- Q. Jim Dawson, 78 Spring Creek Road - Now Spring Creek Road is one of the main roads from Belt Highway to Centerville. There is a lot of traffic on that road at milepost 75, does not meet the new specifications. It comes in at a sharp angle and it has a hill to the north but east/west traffic, traffic from the Great Falls towards this way, the cars are on top of you right away. (Wants to make sure that the alignment will be realigned.) A lot of hills and blind spots between Armington Y and Mehmke's. Concerned about speed limit, driving conditions, hills, blind spots, bad passes, poor visibility.

Responses to Comments – 1/18/00 Meeting

ALL INTERSECTIONS WOULD BE REVIEWED FOR PROPER VEHICLE MOVEMENT TO/FROM THE RECONSTRUCTED HIGHWAY, INCREASING TURNING RADII AND SIGHT DISTANCE AS REQUIRED.

- Q. Bicycling Response– Road is terrible to ride between here and Great Falls until you hit Mehmke Hill. And what they did going up towards Monarch was a disaster for a biker as far as the shoulders. And we do not want to see that again because I used to have an exit on that road if it got tight, but the way they put the guardrails up, there is no way to escape now. Something to take into consideration.

NEW ROADWAY WOULD PROVIDE FULL SHOULDERS. GUARDRAIL WOULD BE UTILIZED AS REQUIRED.

Comments Compiled from Comment Forms:

- Our address is 7742 US-89. The turn off for our driveway is very unsafe. We have two semi trucks and four trailers that are 40 to 45 feet long. With the amount of traffic on US-89, the amount of traffic in and out of our driveway and the location of our approach, we suggest the safest solutions to this problem would be to put in a turning lane in both directions of traffic for our approach. **Signed: Ron and Lou Ann Lords, 7742 US-89, Belt, MT 59412.**

THE PROPOSED FIVE-LANE SECTION WOULD PROVIDE TWO LANES OF TRAFFIC IN THE EASTBOUND DIRECTION FOR MOVEMENT IN/OUT OF THIS PROPERTY. THE CENTER MEDIAN LANE WOULD PROVIDE AN AREA WHEN ACCESSING THE HIGHWAY HEADING WESTWARD.

- My concern is the possibility of re-routing highway US-89/87 traffic onto the Anaconda Street while doing construction and land filling. The potential of increased danger to the residents living on Anaconda Street trying to enter and leaving their driveways needs to be addressed. Also, the culvert near Stinson's residence needs to be better or bigger to handle spring run-off. These are rare, but has happened flooding in that area. Also, the pipe coming from the old mines across US-89/87 drains down behind #78 Anaconda Street house in a cement culvert then is routed to drainage pipes to 2 manholes, one at the entrance to our driveway and the other one that is near Dick and Betty Ballatore's, then drains out by George Bestwina's. Drainage plugs and needs to be opened by rotor-rooter. Also, well contaminated at 78 Anaconda St. residence related to mine water contamination due to MT highway landfill drainage. Dave Kelly at MT Highway Dept. is aware of problems with drainage behind 78 Anaconda Street. **Signed: Lilly Marlene Martin, P.O. Box 113, 71 Anaconda Street, Belt, MT.**

BECAUSE THE PROPOSED ALIGNMENT WOULD BE OFFSET FROM THE EXISTING ROADWAY, TRAFFIC WOULD REMAIN ON THE EXISTING CORRIDOR DURING CONSTRUCTION, AND LOCAL STREETS LIKE ANACONDA STREET WOULD NOT BE UTILIZED FOR DETOURS. THE CULVERT UNDER THE BELT HILL WOULD BE IMPROVED TO ADEQUATELY HANDLE APPROPRIATE STORM FLOW.

Responses to Comments – 1/18/00 Meeting

- I will be building a mixed practice veterinary clinic east of Neil Creek Road. There will be numerous trucks and trailers turning into Neil Creek Road on the sought of US-89. The project has been approved by Cascade County Planner John Nerud. I would appreciate consideration of a turning lane onto Neil Creek R. to the sought of US-89. I'm calling the road Neil Creek Road between Sta. 43 and 44. It may be called by another name. **Signed: Mary Ballinger-Evens, DVM, Box 462, 166 Castner Street, Belt, MT.**
THE VETERINARIAN CLINIC PLANS WILL BE REVIEWED AND EVALUATED AGAINST FUTURE ROADWAY DESIGN.
- Increase size of culvert for Neil Creek. At present during spring run-off, the culvert is not capable of handling the water flow. Need to address the road noise and lack of safety barrier on the fill. Need "No Jake Brake" sign for trucks. Need to build safety barrier. When increasing the width of the highway on the fill, only increase the width on the south side of the highway which would therefore have no impact to the residences on the north side. Anaconda Street enters US-89 at an angle and slight uphill slant. It needs to be corrected. The highway cut across from Anaconda Street entry onto US-89 needs to be terraced and seeded. This was never done since the fill was initially put in. **Signed: Gerald L. Stinson, P.O. Box 413, 105 Anaconda, Belt, MT.**
CULVERT WOULD BE RESIZED TO ACCOMMODATE FLOW. SIGNING REQUIREMENTS FOR 'JAKE BRAKES' WOULD BE REVIEWED IN FINAL DESIGN. PROPOSED BELT HILL WIDENING WOULD OCCUR TO THE SOUTH. ALL INTERSECTIONS WOULD BE REVIEWED FOR PROPER VEHICLE MOVEMENT TO/FROM THE RECONSTRUCTED HIGHWAY, INCREASING TURNING RADII AND SIGHT DISTANCE AS REQUIRED. RECONSTRUCTED AREAS WOULD BE GRADED AND SEEDED ACCORDING TO MDT STANDARDS.
- From the town of Belt turnoff, going east over the fill to the bottom of that grade, I would appreciate the road expansions to favor the south side. The finished product would help eliminate some the of the road noise for all of us who live on the north side of Anaconda St. Since that south side is acreage instead of lots, it would also be more economical. Going west up the fill area, it would be nice to have a marked turn lane on to Anaconda Street. If for some unexpected reason, a lot of traffic starts using Anaconda Street to by-pass the construction zone, there will definitely be a need for that street to be watered down or spread with a reject oil to control the dust. There is a health hazard even now with the existing traffic. **Signed: Frank A. Ballatore, 44 Anaconda Street, P.O. Box 444, Belt, MT 59412.**
PROPOSED BELT HILL WIDENING WILL OCCUR TO THE SOUTH. THE PROPOSED 5-LANE SECTION HAS BEEN EXTENDED WEST PAST THE ANACONDA STREET INTERSECTION TO PROVIDE IMPROVED TURNING MOVEMENTS FOR BOTH EASTBOUND AND WESTBOUND TRAFFIC. LOCAL STREETS WILL NOT BE UTILIZED FOR DETOURS DURING CONSTRUCTION.
- As far as reconstruction of US-89, okay with us. Would be nice when they widen the road that it would be more on the south side. And if they're going to do any blasting on the high fill, to let us know. **Signed: Dick Ballatore, Box 107, Belt, MT 59412.**
PROPOSED BELT HILL WIDENING WOULD OCCUR TO THE SOUTH.

Responses to Comments – 1/18/00 Meeting

- First, we would like to thank you for the informative meeting held at the Belt school, 1/18/00. The information was delivered in a concise manner, yet the meeting was informal enough to allow those of us with questions to be heard, with plenty of time for discussion. It is a relief to know you genuinely want to know our concerns on this matter.

The reconstruction of Highway 89, milepost 71 to 81 is of great interest to us as we live between mileposts 78 and 79. Our twenty-acre homestead has two homes on it, both occupied. The house we live in is nearest to the road about 235 feet from the centerline. Our property's west border is a seven-row shelterbelt planted forty to fifty years ago, perpendicular to the highway. When our home was built thirty years ago, snow removal, low traffic flow, and other transportation considerations made it a desirable distance from the highway. Today the sheer volume of traffic makes close proximity very undesirable and the future seems to have more of the same. If the future includes a four-lane roadway, it would look very bleak to us.

The preliminary plan has the centerline of the proposed construction 25 feet closer to our property. It was also mentioned the total right of way would be approximately 230 feet. This would make the new boundary 95 feet from our home. The edge of our shelterbelt is less than 100 feet from the existing centerline. We could lose 50 to 60 feet of seven rows of mature trees that really have a lot of value in this windy part of the country. **We would like, at the very least, to see the new centerline moved south instead of north, starting at the first curve immediately west of us.** We realize the line should be moved north at Bumgarner's but the curve in between should make an adjustment possible. We would be interested in knowing how far south the centerline could be moved, as the farther the better as far as we are concerned.

What we would really like to see is a study of the plan offered by Charlie Bumgarner, a total rerouting of about one half the project, from Mehmke hill to the corner at about milepost 77 or 76. A gradual arcing route would flatten out two curves, eliminate one altogether, and the topography would lend itself to a potentially safer roadway with less vertical variation. Future expansion would not be a problem on this route and I think this plan would be acceptable to all that live along the road in this area.

We learned at the meeting from some of the engineers present that it would actually be less expensive to build a wider road through 'virgin' territory rather than changing an existing roadbed. It is not often these days that a plan that benefits those it affects actually costs less tax dollars instead of more.

In closing, I would like to re-emphasize our desire to either re-route the road entirely or move the centerline farther south in the proximity of our property. The adverse effect on our property value and general quality of life in the short term would be very significant, and in the long term would be disastrous if the proposed route were used. Thank you kindly for your consideration! **Signed: Rick Becker and Beryl Bonahoom, 7889 US 89, Belt, MT.**

THE CROSS-COUNTRY ALIGNMENT IS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR THIS AREA, AND THE NEW ALIGNMENT WOULD BE FAR TO THE NORTH OF THE BECKER RESIDENCE. RICK BECKER HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS, AND IS AWARE AND SUPPORTIVE OF THE PROPOSED ALIGNMENT LOCATION.

Responses to Comments – 4/24/01 Meeting

SECOND PUBLIC MEETING – April 24, 2001

Question & Answer:

- Dave Anderson – He lives by Otter Creek and is right where the project will begin. By widening to 4 lanes they will be moving right into his yard unless they can get some easement from Burlington Northern Railroad. How close can the road go to the RR?
PROJECT LIMITS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED, AND THIS AREA WOULD NO LONGER BE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION LIMITS.
- Dave Anderson – With the 2-lane road going to a 4-lane right by the Centerville turnoff, one set of cars will speed up and one will stay the same speed, causing a lot of congestion right by his driveway. He already has trouble getting onto the highway from the driveway, and making it a 4-lane will only make it worse. Would they possibly widen to 5 lanes there so he can at least have a lane to get up to speed so he is able to get on the roadway?
PROJECT LIMITS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED, AND THIS AREA WOULD NO LONGER BE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION LIMITS.
- Dave Anderson – He questioned possibly a new access road to the highway going under the bridge. Although they would need to make a road on the east side for him, having access to the bridge would make getting on the highway a lot easier.
PROJECT LIMITS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED, AND THIS AREA WOULD NO LONGER BE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION LIMITS.
- Lloyd Locke - Why not go where the road is straighter to change from 4 or 5-lanes to 2-lanes? There isn't good visibility where they are going to do it now. Just move it down a bit more where there is better visibility.
PROJECT LIMITS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED, AND THIS AREA WOULD NO LONGER BE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION LIMITS.
- Dave Anderson – It is a poor location to change to a 4 or 5-lane. It's a blind area. They move machinery, and when you are moving a tractor and have the road blocked up it would be very dangerous.
PROJECT LIMITS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED, AND THIS AREA WOULD NO LONGER BE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION LIMITS.
- Trisha Kenny – Are there plans down the road to change the proposed spot where the 2-lane will begin again? It will always be a bad corner.
PROJECT LIMITS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED, AND THIS AREA WOULD NO LONGER BE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION LIMITS.
- Dave Anderson – The spot in-between the first and second bridge at Otter Creek would be better for him to get access to the road.
PROJECT LIMITS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED, AND THIS AREA WOULD NO LONGER BE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION LIMITS.

Responses to Comments – 4/24/01 Meeting

- Charlie Bumgarner and Rick Becker prefer Option 3.
THE CROSS-COUNTRY ALIGNMENT (OPTION 3) IS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.
- Charlie Bumgarner – He lives where Option 3 is, and he prefers it because it would get away from a lot of residences, and it would be a straighter route. There would be a need to build access roads however. It will also put the highway away from his house.
THE CROSS-COUNTRY ALIGNMENT (OPTION 3) IS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.
- Dave Anderson – When they widen the road they will be putting their construction pit in his back yard. Because of where their house sits, the road is going to be right next to it. Is there a restriction on how close a highway can build to an existing residential structure before it has to move that structure?
PROJECT LIMITS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED, AND THIS AREA WOULD NO LONGER BE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION LIMITS.
- Dave Anderson – He’s worried about accidents, which if they occurred off of the highway would land right in his front room.
PROJECT LIMITS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED, AND THIS AREA WOULD NO LONGER BE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION LIMITS.
- Lloyd Locke - Would the residence need to be relocated?
NO RELOCATION OF ANY RESIDENCES WOULD BE REQUIRED IN THIS AREA. THE ALIGNMENT WOULD BE LOCATED TO THE NORTH OF THE EXISTING ALIGNMENT, WHEREAS THE RESIDENCES ARE TO THE SOUTH.
- Meg Anderson – Is there a ruling on how close a road can be to a railroad track?
ROADWAYS MUST BE OUTSIDE OF THE RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY.
- Cheryl Wilson – She lives by the pet cemetery. Will they be able to get 5-lanes under the bridge opening? They desperately need the middle lane in order to be able to get into their house because it’s bad due to the Hastings Road. Without the lane there are many accidents.
FIVE LANES WOULD BE PROVIDED UNDER THE RAILROAD BRIDGE, AND THE CENTER TURN LANE WOULD BE PROVIDED THROUGHOUT THIS AREA OF THE CORRIDOR.
- Cheryl Wilson – Clearance of the railroad trestle? There isn’t a sign and it needs one.
ALL SIGNING REQUIREMENTS WOULD BE REVIEWED AND PROVIDED FOR IN FINAL DESIGN.
- Larry Murphy – He lives on the hill just outside of Belt. When he comes up the hill with a loaded truck it’s dangerous because he is moving so slow. He would like about an eighth of a mile extra lane coming out of Belt for big equipment because they are traveling so much slower than normal vehicles. Another issue is when they design the project and someone is coming from Great Falls to Belt, the turn into Belt should be on a level plane, not a slope.

Responses to Comments – 4/24/01 Meeting

Making the turn when it is snowy or icy is very tricky. Also, possibly having an overpass at the Belt turn because it is so hard to drive a truck across four lanes of traffic.

FIVE LANES WOULD BE PROVIDED WITH THE NEW DESIGN, INCLUDING TWO LANES IN EACH DIRECTION AND A CENTER TURN LANE. THE EXISTING SLOPE WOULD BE EVALUATED TO DETERMINE IF THE SLOPE CAN BE FLATTENED THRU THE INTERSECTION AREA. NO OVERPASS STRUCTURE IS BEING CONSIDERED AT THIS LOCATION.

- Dave Anderson - From Great Falls to Belt there isn't proper sight elevation.
VERTICAL GEOMETRY WOULD BE IMPROVED TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE SIGHT DISTANCE.
- Lloyd Locke – Level out the county road approach so a person is hitting the road level, not ending up below the normal road surface.
INTERSECTIONS AND APPROACHES WOULD BE DETAILED IN FINAL DESIGN TO MEET SIGHT DISTANCE AND TURNING RADII REQUIREMENTS.
- Charlie Bumgarner – Spring Creek Road. What are they planning on doing with it? He questions the visibility issues with the road because of the hill?
SPRING CREEK ROAD APPROACH WOULD BE REALIGNED IN FINAL DESIGN TO PROVIDE BETTER SIGHT DISTANCE.
- Deloris Dawson – The county is planning to put a dumpster right at the turn near Belt, which will lead to a lot more traffic at that intersection. Has MDT thought about that?
FINAL PROPOSED LOCATION OF DUMPSTER IS NOT KNOWN AT THIS TIME.
- Ross Radzykewycz – Will the speed limit raise due to the 4-lane?
PROPOSED SPEED LIMIT WOULD BE 100 KM/H (60 MPH).
- Lloyd Locke – Can the roadway near the Bar S just slide through the bridge?
THE PROPOSED FIVE LANE SECTION WOULD FIT UNDER THE EXISTING BRIDGE.
- Dave Anderson – The road from the Centerville turnoff to Great Falls is awful. He is hoping they will not be doing the same kind-of thing for this project as they did on that one. The driving surface isn't good.
NEW ROADWAY SURFACE WOULD MEET CURRENT MDT STANDARDS AND REQUIRE THEIR APPROVAL.
- Trish Kenney – What would happen to the old road near Otter Creek?
THIS ISSUE IS RELATED TO POTENTIAL WORK NOT INCLUDED IN THIS PROJECT.

Responses to Comments – 4/24/01 Meeting

- Vernelda Bumgarner – Have they considered going from Belt Hill and out before they even get to the Otter Creek Coulee?
THIS ISSUE IS RELATED TO POTENTIAL WORK NOT INCLUDED IN THIS PROJECT.
- Lloyd Locke – Doesn't make sense going down hill and then just going right back up the hill to bypass the Otter Creek. It should be kept a level road.
THIS ISSUE IS RELATED TO POTENTIAL WORK NOT INCLUDED IN THIS PROJECT.
- Larry Murphy – What will be the price differential between Option 1, 2, & 3?
DETAILED COST ESTIMATES WERE NOT COMPLETE AT THE TIME OF THE PUBLIC MEETING. HOWEVER, SINCE THE VARIATIONS BETWEEN THE OPTIONS PRESENTED WERE MINOR, THE ASSOCIATED COST DIFFERENCES WERE ASSUMED TO BE MINOR AS WELL.

Comments Made by Attendees After Formal Presentation:

Dave Anderson (lives by Big Otter Creek Bridge) - Concerned about sight distance issues at Otter Creek Bridge. Would like designers to look into widening road toward BN RR instead of his house. Currently looks like would transition from a 2- to 4-lane right by his driveway, and he is very concerned about having this transition here because people tend to speed up to get around people at transitions. Also concerned about guardrail along the edge of the road in this area because there is not room to get off the shoulder with farm equipment if a car is coming at you. Last year, he was “t-boned” at his driveway intersection by a pickup truck traveling over 70 mph—hit just behind his cab or he would have been killed.

PROJECT LIMITS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED, AND THIS AREA WOULD NO LONGER BE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION LIMITS.

Larry Murphy (at top of hill by Belt) - Entrance lane coming out of Belt would be really helpful to pick up speed. Add a lane up until road flattens out. Flatten out area by Belt. Turnoff to be able to make a left-hand turn going out toward Tiger Hill Butte area would be good.

FIVE LANES WOULD BE PROVIDED WITH THE NEW DESIGN, INCLUDING TWO LANES IN EACH DIRECTION AND A CENTER TURN LANE. THE EXISTING SLOPE WOULD BE EVALUATED TO DETERMINE IF IT CAN BE FLATTENED THRU THE INTERSECTION AREA.

Charlie Bumgarner - County road is lower than the existing road (Tiger Hill Butte). Spring Creek Road. What will we do with it?

SPRING CREEK ROAD APPROACH WOULD BE REALIGNED IN FINAL DESIGN TO PROVIDE BETTER SIGHT DISTANCE.

Delores Dawson - County is considering adding a garbage bin by Spring Creek Road and is concerned about access and traffic. (County contact is Fred Handwork per Patti Sweeney.)

FINAL PROPOSED LOCATION OF DUMPSTER IS NOT KNOWN AT THIS TIME.

Responses to Comments – 4/24/01 Meeting

Dave Anderson - Centerville junction is very dangerous—please don't do that.

NEW ROADWAY SURFACE WOULD MEET CURRENT MDT STANDARDS AND REQUIRE THEIR APPROVAL.

Dr. Charlie Marlen - Dr. Marlen would like road widened to the south near his property.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WOULD ACCOMMODATE THIS REQUEST.

Comments from Scroll Plans:

The following is a summary of comments/notes on scroll plans used in the meeting (note – there were three sets of scroll plans used in the meeting: Option 1, Option 2 and Option 3).

Option 1

Sheet 1 Drainage concerns from Sta. 262+00 to Sta. 267+00. Ponding has been occurring at this location.

Question on clearance under railroad bridge.

PROPOSED ROADWAY PROFILE WOULD BE DESIGNED TO ELIMINATE PONDING. REQUIRED CLEARANCE WOULD BE PROVIDED AT THE RAILROAD BRIDGE.

Sheet 2 Stock water tank and culvert-encased spring identified at Sta. 219+00 and at Sta. 217+00.

PER LOCATION IDENTIFIED BY RESIDENTS, TANK AND SPRING WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

Vertical sight distance concern at Sta. 211+00 to Sta. 214+00.

PROPOSED PROFILE WOULD BE DESIGNED TO MEET SIGHT DISTANCE REQUIREMENTS.

Everett Bumgarner indicated MDT may have not achieved desired cut at Sta. 211+00 to Sta. 214+00.

PROPOSED PROFILE WOULD BE DESIGNED TO MEET SIGHT DISTANCE REQUIREMENTS.

Sheet 4 There is concern and a desire for a lower roadway profile and improved approach at Sta. 109+00 to Sta. 112+00.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WOULD PROVIDE A LOWER PROFILE AS SUGGESTED. APPROACH WOULD BE EVALUATED IN FINAL DESIGN FOR POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS.

An existing spring was identified at Sta. 116+00 (outside existing right-of-way).

PER LOCATION IDENTIFIED BY RESIDENTS, SPRING WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

Sheet 5 There is concern regarding the deceleration length for traffic from US 89 eastbound making the turn to the town of Belt – would like to deter tailgating.

NEW FIVE LANE SECTION WOULD ACCOMMODATE TURNING MOVEMENT TO/FROM THE TOWN OF BELT.

Responses to Comments – 4/24/01 Meeting

Sheet 6 There is a concern regarding erosion from a natural spring at Sta. 34+00. Residents at Sta. 32+00 to Sta. 34+00 are concerned with septic locations near roadway – would like new alignment to be located north of existing centerline.
NEW ALIGNMENT WOULD BE LOCATED TO THE NORTH TO AVOID CONFLICTS WITH EXISTING PROPERTIES AND OTHER STRUCTURES AND UTILITIES.

Option 2

Sheet 3A Existing well is located on the Bumgarner property at Sta. 166+50.
CROSS-COUNTRY ALTERNATIVE WOULD ELIMINATE ANY POTENTIAL CONFLICT WITH THE EXISTING WELL.

Sheet 5 Resident Gary Stinson would prefer that the alignment would be located to the south (in the vicinity of Sta. 46+00).
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE SHIFTED TO THE SOUTH IN THIS AREA.

Sheet 6 The Anderson property access near Otter Creek is a major concern regarding sight distance and merge conditions. Owners would like consideration of cutting back existing fill to the south (possibly 3:1) and would also like center turn lane.
PROJECT LIMITS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED, AND THIS AREA WOULD NO LONGER BE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION LIMITS.

Option 3

Sheet 3C Resident Anne Weintz is concerned about the new access that would be created to her property with cross-country alternative.
NEW ACCESS WOULD NEED TO BE PROVIDED WITH CROSS-COUNTRY ALTERNATIVE. VARIOUS SCENARIOS WOULD BE EVALUATED, INCLUDING ACCESS FROM THE CROSS-COUNTRY ALTERNATIVE, AND ALSO ACCESS FROM EXISTING FIFE ROAD. DETERMINATION OF FINAL SOLUTION WOULD BE COORDINATED WITH MS. WINTZ.

Resident Kantorowicz is concerned about the subdivision of his existing parcel with the cross-country alternative.
PROPOSED ALIGNMENT WOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH MR. KANTOROWICZ AT THE PUBLIC HEARING AND DURING FINAL DESIGN TO ENSURE THAT ALL ISSEUS ARE ADDRESSED.

Comments Compiled from Comment Forms:

- A plea: Would you consider shortening, by a few feet, the length of the widening project? The current plan projects widening to or though the second bridge on Otter Creek. But a future plan to extend widening may not follow Otter Creek basin. In many places the creek

Responses to Comments – 4/24/01 Meeting

runs along US 87. Widening would require gouging a different creek bed. Instead, another route may be selected, allowing construction of a straighter run. Guardrails, while increasing auto safety on curving, jeopardous road beds, pose hazards for moving farm machinery.

Given the uncertainty of future routing of 87, widening now, the first two (of eleven to Raynesford) bridges seems an ill-focused expenditure. West of the first bridge, space on both sides allows easy widening. For now, why not stop this project there? A more logical, sensible site for drivers flowing eastward to make the mental adjustment for narrower bridges and only two lanes would seem to be right at the Y rather than up the road (87) a half mile, after they've crossed the first two bridges. **Signed: Harold S. Anderson, 44 US 87, Belt, MT 59412.**

PROJECT LIMITS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED, AND THE OTTER CREEK BRIDGE WOULD NO LONGER BE WITHIN THE CONSTRUCTION LIMITS. PROJECT.

- We prefer Alignment Option #2 and Alignment Option #3. Questions and comments:
 1. Neil Creek Highway Culvert – what is the present culvert size and what is size of proposed culvert? The reason Neil Creek floods and culvert gets blocked from debris and floods over highway is current size.
 2. South side of highway where Anaconda Street meets highway – The cut that was made in the hillside when the highway was originally built was never sloped or seeded into grass. It has been an eyesore for the last 40 years. It needs to be dressed up with top soil and seeded in natural grass.
 3. Road noise on the highway has increased with the amount of traffic and will continue to escalate in the future. Need “No Jake Brake” signs for downhill traffic on the fill by Belt. Also need sound barriers (earth or concrete) put in where residences are close to highway to deal with road noise.
 4. In years with “normal” precipitation you will need to address the problem of underground springs throughout the proposed roadway – especially from the Armington “Y” to the top of Belt Hill. They will interfere with roadway stability. Many of these springs you are not aware of because of the drought. **Signed: Gerald Stinson and Marcelyn Stinson, PO Box 413, Belt, MT 59412.**
EXISTING CULVERT IS 48-INCH DIAMETER. IT WOULD BE REPLACED BY A CULVERT SIZED TO ADEQUATELY HANDLE THE APPROPRIATE STORM FLOW. RECONSTRUCTED AREAS WOULD BE GRADED AND SEEDED ACCORDING TO MDT STANDARDS.
SIGNING REQUIREMENTS FOR ‘JAKE BRAKES’ WOULD BE REVIEWED IN FINAL DESIGN.
NOISE BARRIERS ARE NOT PROPOSED FOR THE PROJECT. THEY WOULD NOT BE EFFECTIVE DUE TO THE FREQUENT OPENINGS REQUIRED BY DRIVEWAY ACCESSES.
SPRINGS WOULD BE IDENTIFIED DURING FINAL DESIGN AND THE ROADWAY EMBANKMENT AND BASE DESIGNED APPROPRIATELY.
- Spring Creek Road approach is very unsafe. No visibility from northwest and on uphill slope to get onto the highway. And a jump to get onto the highway. The state highway always plows this approach full of snow – you need a four-wheel drive to get onto the highway! A

Responses to Comments – 4/24/01 Meeting

new dumpster site at the snow fence at Spring Creek Road will cause a lot of extra traffic.

Signed: Dolores Dawson, #78 Spring Creek Road, Belt, MT 59412.

SPRING CREEK ROAD APPROACH WOULD BE REALIGNED IN FINAL DESIGN TO PROVIDE BETTER SIGHT DISTANCE.

- At the top of Belt Hill it is often very dangerous to turn left when coming out from Great Falls toward Belt. I hope there will be a long turning lane, as traffic tends to build up behind us “Belt people” who may have to stop completely before turning left to go down into Belt.

Signed: Sharon Bough, 626 Armington Road, Belt, MT 59412.

THE CENTER TURN LANE WOULD BE CONTINUOUS THROUGHOUT THIS AREA.

- We like Option #3 the best. Also, if you would start and end the four or five lane highway at the weigh station (as it is now) you wouldn't have the problems as Dave Anderson was talking about at the meeting. **Signed: Claudia and Bob Barbers, 6078 Highway 89, Belt, MT 59412.**

ALTERNATIVE 3 (CROSS-COUNTRY) IS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

- Thank you for taking time from your busy day to discuss Montana Highway project NH60-2(55)71 Control No. 4043 in our recent phone visit. I'm sorry to say, time and distance make it impossible to attend your community information meetings held in the Belt area.

The ownership of this property would appreciate a map with the right-of-way considerations in order to comment more appropriately. We are very much in favor of the improvement to the highway and the many benefits it may bring to the community. As a general observation, our concerns are focused on a couple of matters. The continued ease and safety of free turn access to the existing buildings without increases of traffic noise levels created by placement of the right-of-way close to the buildings. Additionally, the bisection of the property as it may decrease the farming efficiencies by possible property segregation created by a new right-of-way. As an informational resource, we have a survey of the farm in progress at this moment. The field work has been completed and preliminary drawings are available from Henen Land Surveying Co of Great Falls. Please feel free to request a print from Mike Henen showing the property lines and the location of the existing buildings. Please keep us informed of your design for this project. **Signed: Howard Ness, The Good Earth, c/o Beverley J. Ness and Sharon D. Hughes, West 1522 Lawrence Drive, Spokane, WA 99218.**

ALTERNATIVE 3 (CROSS-COUNTRY) IS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE. IT WOULD RELOCATE THE ROADWAY SIGNIFICANTLY AWAY FROM THE RESIDENCES, WHICH WOULD GREATLY REDUCE TRAFFIC NOISE. DISCUSSIONS WITH MR. BUMGARNER HAVE INDICATED THAT FARMING OPERATIONS WOULD NOT BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE NEW ALIGNMENT.

- Over the last several years we have tried repeatedly to get a turn lane in front of our approach leading up to the Pet Cemetery. There have been 3 bad accidents there in the past 5 years. The situation is getting worse now due to increased business and also the escalated traffic

Responses to Comments – 4/24/01 Meeting

now using “Hastings Road” which is south of our approach. Our repeated calls and letters to local and state offices have been ignored. When the road was resurfaced last year we again asked for consideration but to no avail. The repeated road work and resurfacing has also left our approach with a drop-off, yet they leveled the approach on Hastings Road across from us! These points were brought up by my daughter, Cheryl Wilson, at the Belt meeting. She and her husband also live out here and can attest to the problem. If the new road would supply the 5th middle lane for turns this should solve our problem. We were also assured at the Belt meeting that our approach would be finished to “our” satisfaction at the time of the new construction. **Signed: Louis Hoffarth (Memory Gardens Pet Cemetery), 8565 Highway 89 East, Great Falls, MT 59405.**

PROPOSED FACILITY WOULD PROVIDE CENTER TURN LANE IN THIS AREA.

- I support Option #2. **Signed: Carolyn Lippert Wood, 7177 US Highway 89, Belt, MT 59412.**

THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE IS A BLEND OF THE OPTIONS PRESENTED AT THE PUBLIC MEETINGS. IN THE VICINITY OF MS. WOOD’S PROPERTY, THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE IS SIMILAR TO OPTION #2.

- I think the new part of the highway should be constructed on the south side from 208 to 250. There are several houses and a restaurant on the north side and no houses on the south side. The crossover from north to south should be 203 and 208 so as not to involve the Mehmke Steam Museum. Also the phone line is underground on the north side and possibly other lines. **Signed: Diane C. Doyle-Marlen, 8359 US Highway 89, Great Falls, MT 59405-8060.**

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE ON THE SOUTH SIDE IN THE AREA REQUESTED. THE CROSSOVER TO THE SOUTH SIDE OCCURS PRIOR TO (EAST OF) THE MEHMKE STEAM MUSEUM, BUT THE PROPOSED ALIGNMENT IS STILL A SUFFICIENT DISTANCE AWAY FROM AND WOULD NOT IMPACT THE MUSEUM.

- Please do not align US 89 to the south just west of Neel Creek Road Junction, as it will take out fence, hedges, trees, and well along with lawn on my property. Thank you. **Signed: Patrick E. Pierson, #8 Neel Creek Road, Belt, MT 59412.**

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE SHIFTED TO THE NORTH IN THIS AREA AND WOULD AVOID THESE IMPACTS.

- This is an addition to my mailed comments of May 9, 2001 when I suggested the alignment (construction) be on the south side between Station 208+30 and Station 250+50. As I noted before, there are 6 homes and a business on the north side and none on the south side.

My additional comment relates to the buried transmission cables on the north side (such as the buried phone cable) and electric poles on the north side. The buried cables are very close to the present highway at the Bar S Restaurant and would need to be moved. Heavy equipment over the cables in other areas could break them resulting in loss of service for a period of time. I know at least one of the cables is not buried very deep – a wild animal digging on my land uncovered it.

Responses to Comments – 4/24/01 Meeting

I plan to mail a copy of this and my previous comments to the Montana Department of Transportation. **Signed: Charles J. Marlen, M.D., 8359 US Highway 89, Great Falls, MT 59405-8060.**

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THESE SUGGESTIONS.

- See attached two pages concerning: 1) impact to nearby residences and a business by a north alignment between Stations 208 and 250; 2) safety; 3) wildlife, including a rare species for Montana; and 4) landfill. Dated May 9, 2001:

To avoid impact to nearby residences and a business:

There are 6 homes and a business (Bar S Café and Bar) to the north and none to the south between Station 208+30 and Station 250+ 50. Thus it is suggested the alignment (construction) be on the south side of this section of Highway 89. It is also suggested the alignment move from north to south between 208+30 and 301+40 to avoid the Mehmke Steam Museum entrance.

Safety:

This suggest south alignment is expected to allow a longer line of sight along the curve leading uphill from the railroad overpass (Station 255+40). A north alignment would probably result in even a “tighter” curve leading down the hill to the overpass. There are two business entrances on this curve (both to the Bar S Café and Bar).

Other factors to consider:

Wildlife – including a rare species for Montana. The well-developed shelterbelt at Station 221+50 to 223+40 is used by many different birds and mammals. This will experience some impact by the very close highway if a north alignment is done. The shelterbelt is on a 30-acre property where 132 bird species have been recorded. This includes the first and only recorded scrub jay for Montana (verification by the Audubon Montana Rare Birds Records Committee). It is too early in the year to know if this species will return. The scrub jay was recorded here last year.

The large pond (Station 228 to 229) is used by wildlife, especially by water birds migrating across this dry land. Less use by shy wildlife is to be expected if the highway is placed closer to the pond with a north alignment.

Landfill: Presumably there will be less landfill (cost savings?) with a south alignment since this is on the uphill side of the highway.

Signed: Charles J. Marlen, M.D., 8359 US Highway 89, Great Falls, MT 59405-8060.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THESE SUGGESTIONS.

THE SHELTERBELT WOULD NOT BE IMPACTED BY THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

Responses to Comments – 4/24/01 Meeting

- See attached two pages. (Attached May 9, 2001 letter from Dr. Marlen, transcribed above.)
Signed: Ronald Vihinen, 8375 US Highway 89, Great Falls, MT 59405.
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THESE SUGGESTIONS.
THE SHELTERBELT WOULD NOT BE IMPACTED BY THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.
- See attached two pages. (Attached May 9, 2001 letter from Dr. Marlen, transcribed above.)
Signed: Violet Vihinen, 8377 US Highway 89, Great Falls, MT 59405.
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THESE SUGGESTIONS.
THE SHELTERBELT WOULD NOT BE IMPACTED BY THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

APPENDIX B

**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER
CORRESPONDENCE**



Montana Department of Transportation

2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001

David A. Galt, Director
Judy Martz, Governor

August 7, 2001

MASTER FILE
COPY

Dr. Mark Baumler
State Historic Preservation Office
1410 8th Avenue
P.O. Box 201202
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Subject: NH 60-2(55)71
Belt - North & South
Control No. 4043

Enclosed is the cultural resource survey, CRABS, and site forms for the above project in Cascade County. GCM Services recorded ten historic and prehistoric sites within the designated survey corridors. They recommend four sites eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. They are: a Great Northern Railway segment (24CA604), the Bovey Siding (24CA663), Ralph Bumgarner Place (24CA665), and the Box Elder Creek Site (24CA668). We agree with their recommendations and request your concurrence. In addition to the above sites, the abandoned Box Elder Creek Bridge (24CA660) is also located within the survey area. Because of the existing programmatic agreement, however, no Determination of Eligibility is required.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 444-6258.

Jon Axline, Historian
Environmental Services

Enclosures

cc: Mick Johnson, Great Falls District Administrator
Carl Peil, P.E., Preconstruction Bureau
Gordon Stockstad, Resources Bureau

| Date Recd Preconst | | 8-7-01 | |
|--------------------|------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Act | Info | MAIL ROUTE | Attach critical |
| | ✓ | 30 Preconst Engr | |
| | | 30 Assistant | |
| | | 30 Office Mgr | |
| | | 31 Safety Mgmt. | |
| | | 32 Road Design | |
| | | 33 Environment | |
| | | 34 Hydraulics | |
| | | 35 Survey & Mapping | |
| | | 36 Traffic Eng | |
| | ✓ | 39 Consultant Dsn. | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | ✓ | File | |



MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

225 North Roberts ♦ P.O. Box 201201 ♦ Helena, MT 59620-1201
♦ (406) 444-2694 ♦ FAX (406) 444-2696 ♦ www.montanahistoricalsociety.org ♦

August 23, 2001

RECEIVED

AUG 24 2001

ENVIRONMENTAL

JON AXLINE
MDT
2701 PROSPECT AVENUE
PO BOX 201001
HELENA MONTANA 59620 1001

RE: NH 60-2(55)71 Belt – North & South Control No. 4043

Dear Jon,

We Concur that sites 24CA0604, 24CA0663, 24CA0665 and 24CA0668 are eligible for the National Register. We understand that site 24CA0660 is covered under the programmatic agreement although it is within the survey area, so we will not make a Determination of Eligibility on it.

The other five sites 24CA0662, 24CA0664, 24CA0666, 24CA0667 and 24CA0669 were not addressed in your letter so they remain unresolved. We hope that they will be avoided as the undertaking moves forward.

If you have any questions or concerns about the points presented here, please call me at (406) 444-0388.

Sincerely,

Josef J Warhank
Review & Compliance Officer

file: MDT/2001



2002041803



Montana Department of Transportation

2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001

David A. Galt, Director
Judy Martz, Governor

MAY 15 2002

April 16, 2002

Mark Baumler
State Historic Preservation Office
1410 8th Avenue
P.O. Box 201202
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Josef
MDT
Belt - N & S
2002

RECEIVED
APR 18 2002
BY:
E

Subject: NH 60-2(55)71
(Belt - North & South)
Control No. 4043

Enclosed is the Determination of Effect for the above project in Cascade County. We have determined that the proposed reconstruction project would have **No Effect** to the Neihart Branch of the Great Northern Railway (24CA604), the Bovey Siding (24CA663), the Ralph Bumgarner Place (24CA665), and the Box Elder Creek Site (24CA668) for the reasons stipulated in the document. We request your concurrence.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 444-6258.

Jon Axline
Jon Axline, Historian
Environmental Services

CONCUR
MONTANA SHPO

DATE 4/17/02 SIGNED *Jon Axline*

Enclosure

cc: Mick Johnson, Great Falls District Administrator
Carl Peil, P.E., Preconstruction Bureau
Dave L. Larson, P.E., Engineering Bureau
Gordon Stockstad, Resources Bureau

RECEIVED
E

APPENDIX C

FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING

U.S. Department of Agriculture

FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING

PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)

Date Of Land Evaluation Request: 5/13/02

Name Of Project: US 89 - Belt North and South

Federal Agency Involved: FHWA

Proposed Land Use: HI64WAY

County And State: Cascade, Montana

PART II (To be completed by NRCS)

Date Request Received By NRCS: 5/10/02

Does the site contain prime, unique, statewide or local important farmland? (If no, the FPPA does not apply - do not complete additional parts of this form). Yes No

Acres Irrigated: 0 Average Farm Size: 1500

Major Crop(s): Winterwheat, Hay, CRP

Farmable Land in Govt. Jurisdiction Acres: _____ %

Amount Of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: _____ %

Name Of Land Evaluation System Used: *

Name Of Local Site Assessment System: *

Date Land Evaluation Returned By NRCS: _____

PART III (To be completed by Federal Agency)

| | Alternative Site Rating | | | |
|---|-------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Site A | Site B | Site C | Site D |
| A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly | 154 | | | |
| B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly | | | | |
| C. Total Acres In Site | 0.0 | 453 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

PART IV (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information *

A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland: 0

B. Total Acres Statewide And Local Important Farmland: 16.0

C. Percentage Of Farmland In County Or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted: 6.1%

D. Percentage Of Farmland In Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value: _____

PART V (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Criterion

Relative Value Of Farmland To Be Converted (Scale of 0 to 100 Points)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | — | 0 | 0 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency)

Site Assessment Criteria (These criteria are explained in 7 CFR 558.5(b))

| Criteria | Maximum Points | Site A | Site B | Site C | Site D |
|--|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. Area In Nonurban Use | | | | | |
| 2. Perimeter In Nonurban Use | | | | | |
| 3. Percent Of Site Being Farmed | | | | | |
| 4. Protection Provided By State And Local Government | | | | | |
| 5. Distance From Urban Builtup Area | | | | | |
| 6. Distance To Urban Support Services | | | | | |
| 7. Size Of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average | | | | | |
| 8. Creation Of Nonfarmable Farmland | | | | | |
| 9. Availability Of Farm Support Services | | | | | |
| 10. On-Farm Investments | | | | | |
| 11. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services | | | | | |
| 12. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use | | | | | |
| TOTAL SITE ASSESSMENT POINTS | 160 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)

| | | | | | |
|---|-----|---|---|---|---|
| Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V) | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Site Assessment (From Part VI above or a local site assessment) | 160 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines) | 260 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Site Selected: _____ Date Of Selection: _____ Was A Local Site Assessment Used? Yes No

Reason For Selection:
 * No Land Evaluation System has been set up for this County.
 No Site assessment systems have been developed for this County.
 All acres are estimated.

(See instructions on reverse side)

This form was electronically produced by National Production Services Staff

APPENDIX D
WETLAND PHOTOGRAPHS

US 89, Belt North & South Wetlands



WETLAND 1



WETLAND 2



WETLAND 3

US 89, Belt North & South Wetlands



WETLAND 4



WETLAND A

APPENDIX E

**PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARATION OF
THIS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARATION
OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOR THE
US 89, Belt North & South Reconstruction Project**

| NAME | DISCIPLINE | EDUCATION | YEARS EXPERIENCE |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Blackham, Paul B. | Structures | BS, MEM | 18 |
| Blumenkamp, John | Roadway | BS | 11 |
| Cooper, Laura S. | Environmental | BS, MBA | 23 |
| Ferguson, David | Cultural Resources | BA, MA | 14 |
| Jones, Cheryl A. | Civil | BS | 24 |
| Simmons-Cross, Margaret | Civil | BS | 19 |
| Smith, Donald C. | Environmental | BS, MS | 30 |
| Sorensen, Glenn A. | Drainage | BS | 18 |

