

CHAPTER 5.0: COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the program of agency and public coordination and involvement activities conducted during the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. The agency coordination and public involvement activities were specifically planned to be open, inclusive, and ongoing throughout the EIS process.

The program included numerous outreach activities to ensure a high level of public awareness of the progress of the EIS and to provide a wide range of opportunities for public review and comment on key project findings and conclusions. These activities included agency and public scoping meetings, public workshops, agency briefings, presentations to local groups and organizations, newsletters, a project Web site, a telephone information hotline, a media information program, and two public opinion surveys. Special effort was made to reach low-income and minority communities located within the project area.

5.2 Agency Coordination

Agency coordination was conducted to ensure a timely flow of project information between the three levels of agencies involved in the EIS (federal, state, and local) and to ensure necessary interaction with and awareness of public issues and concerns identified during public involvement activities. Coordination activities included project scoping, regular meetings and briefings with agency staff, and creation of an Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) and Social Economic Environmental Team (SEE Team).

5.2.1 Cooperating Agencies

Letters were distributed to several agencies to request their involvement as cooperating agencies on the EIS, in accordance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) regulations 23 CFR 771.111(d). Three agencies—the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the US Army Corps of Engineers accepted the invitation to become a cooperating agency. The cooperating agencies participate in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and scoping process, and make staff available to participate in the proposed action. Upon request of the lead agency, any other federal agency that has jurisdiction by law shall be a cooperating agency.

5.2.2 Coordination with Local, State, and Federal Agencies

Local, state, and federal agencies were contacted by phone, fax, and email at various points in the process. The purpose of these contacts was to collect technical information regarding issues, such as wetlands, wildlife, community resources, and city and county long-range plans. Coordination with various agencies was conducted early on to assist in data collection and provide general guidance.

Table 5-1 lists meetings that have taken place with governmental agencies.

5.2.3 Interdisciplinary Team

An Interdisciplinary (ID) Team was established to provide coordinated project scoping input and to gain consensus on technical issues to be addressed in this document. The ID Team includes



**Table 5-1
Agency Coordination**

Date	Agency or Individual
November 7, 2002	Scoping Meeting with FHWA, Missoula County Commissioners, Missoula County staff
May 20, 2003	Missoula Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee presentation
May 20, 2003	Marsha Pablo, Preservation Officer, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
May 22, 2003	US Fish and Wildlife Service: Scott Jackson, Wildlife Biologist
June 24, 2003	Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks: Ladd Knotek, Fisheries Biologist
July 15, 2003	Missoula Board of County Commissioners
September 11, 2003	Larry Urban, MDT, Wetland Mitigation Specialist
September 12, 2003	Pat Basting, MDT, District Biologist
November 12, 2003	Missoula Board of County Commissioners
August 4, 2004	Paul Osborne, EPA
October 12, 2004	Coordination with City of Missoula (Steve King), County Public Works (Greg Robertson), and FHWA
November 2004	Pat Basting, MDT District Biologist

resource and permitting agencies (US Army Corps of Engineers; US Fish and Wildlife Service; US Environmental Protection Agency; US Forest Service-Lolo Ranger District; Montana Department of Environmental Quality; and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks), representatives of local government entities (Missoula County and the City of Missoula), Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) staff, and the FHWA. This committee met to provide feedback on technical and environmental issues, and participate in the identification of the preferred alternative. ID Team members possess technical expertise in the areas of engineering, environment, planning, utilities, transportation, and transit. Together, they provide a wealth of knowledge to assist in preparing this document.

The following meetings were held at key points in the EIS process:

- **ID Team Meeting #1 (March 25, 2003):** This meeting was intended to define a scope of resources to be addressed in this document. An overview of the project was presented to the team and input was gathered. Also discussed were the resources to be addressed in the cumulative impacts section of the document.
- **ID Team Meeting #2 (July 17, 2003):** The focus of this meeting was to present the range of alternatives that were developed and screened, and to identify alternatives to be eliminated and alternatives that would be carried forward in this EIS process.
- **ID Team Meeting #3 (October 22, 2003):** This was a joint meeting held with the SEE Team. The purpose of this meeting was to present the results of the alternatives evaluation and identify a preferred alternative.
- **ID Team Meeting #4 (September 14, 2004):** This was a joint meeting held with the SEE Team. The purpose of this meeting was to present the results of the alternatives evaluation and identify a preferred alternative, if one clearly stood out as preferred.



Transportation, Missoula Office of Planning and Grants, and the City of Missoula Fire Department. **Table 5-2** summarizes the discussion at the workshop.

The group brainstormed opportunities and constraints inherent to the project. Each goal was considered individually to help identify opportunities and constraints associated.

**Table 5-2
Visioning Workshop Summary**

Opportunities	Constraints	Associated Goal
Get large truck traffic off Miller Creek Road, away from residential Consider impacts beyond 20-year time frame Provides secondary access, enhances grid north and south Provide balanced TDM (Transportation Demand Management) approach through the project Improve safety and operations on US 93 Multimodal solution to access	\$\$\$\$ Railroad Existing land use	<i>Provide safe transportation solution for Miller Creek project area</i>
Right-of-way acquisition to satisfy comprehensive plan goals Accommodate mixed-use land use Consider land use and growth in surrounding communities		<i>Create transportation solution that is long term and consistent with comprehensive plan</i>
NEPA-required mitigation	NEPA requirements	<i>Economic and environmentally responsible project</i>
Improve/remove signals on US 93 at intersections with Blue Mountain Road and Miller Creek Road	US 93	<i>Maintain or improve operations of US 93 at future build-out</i>
TDM approach	Changing neighborhood traffic patterns	<i>Preserve and enhance character of neighborhood</i>
Context-sensitive design and aesthetics	Respect existing property rights	

The group then identified a broad range of alternatives and/or mitigation that could be considered.



5.3.5 Public Involvement Activities Summary

Every reasonable effort was made during the EIS process to inform and involve the public. This will continue throughout the development of the Final EIS (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD). A summary of the major public involvement activities undertaken during the EIS process is shown in **Table 5-3**.

**Table 5-3
Public Involvement Activities**

Dates	Local Group or Individual
February 28, 2003	Meetings with two property owners
March 26, 2003	Public Workshop #1 (Public Scoping Meeting)
May 21, 2003	Public Workshop #2
May 20-22, 2003	Meetings with 16 property owners
June 19, 2003	Visioning Workshop
July 16, 2003	Public Workshop #3
September 10, 2003	Meeting with Clark Fork Coalition and Smart Growth, Helena
September 11, 2003	Blue Mountain Road/Hayes Creek Road Community Meeting
October 20-21, 2003	Meetings with 12 local business owners
November 13, 2003	Public Workshop #4
February 5, 2004	Citizen-sponsored Public Meeting
June 22, 2004	Public Workshop #5
December 9, 2004	Meeting with Miller Creek Road resident
March 23, 2006	Public Workshop #6
October 17, 2006	Public Hearing on DEIS
November 21, 2006	Presentation at the Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee Meeting
April 17, 2007	Presentation at the Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee Meeting

5.3.6 Summary of Comments Received

Written communication in the form of letters, comment sheets, Web site feedback forms, project hotline messages, and emails was received throughout the EIS process. From the beginning of the project until December 2007, over 850 comments have been received.

Following is a summary of some of the public comments received prior to public review of the DEIS:

- Numerous safety concerns about "Y" intersection, accesses to US 93, winter conditions, and school buses and semitrucks stopping at railroad tracks.
- Concerned about high speed of traffic.
- Concerned about impact of existing/future traffic noise.



