



# GORE HILL to EMERSON JUNCTION Corridor Planning Study



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### Study Description

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and in coordination with the Great Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), is developing a corridor planning study of Interstate 15 (I-15) in the Great Falls Area. The 2014 Great Falls Area Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) identified the need for an Interstate corridor study. The LRTP states that, *“due to the need for improvements to both Emerson Junction and Gore Hill interchanges and other identified needs for added lanes and operational improvements on I-15 and I-315, an Interstate Corridor Study for the Great Falls area is recommended.”*

The study will identify feasible improvement options to address safety, operational, and geometrical concerns (i.e. road width, horizontal curves, vertical grades, access density, etc.) within the study area based on needs identified by the public, the study partners, and resource agencies. Data examined will include geometric characteristics, crash history, operational characteristics, land uses, and environmental resources.

The study will include a comprehensive package of feasible short- and long-term recommendations intended to address the transportation needs of the corridor.

### What is a Corridor Planning Study?

A *Corridor Planning Study* is a planning-level assessment undertaken before conducting project-level environmental compliance activities under the National and Montana Environmental Policy Acts (NEPA/MEPA). The study involves early communication with interested agencies and the public to help identify needs, constraints, and opportunities for a corridor and to determine if there are implementable improvements, given available resources and local support.

The *Corridor Planning Study* is a planning activity, rather than a design or construction project. The study is designed to facilitate a smooth and efficient transition from transportation planning to project development and environmental review if a project is forwarded from the study. The study includes consideration of multiple improvement options to address the needs and objectives within the study area. The planning process is distinct from NEPA/MEPA environmental compliance documentation and from the design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction phases of an individual project.

### INFORMATIONAL MEETING #1

*Please Join Us!*

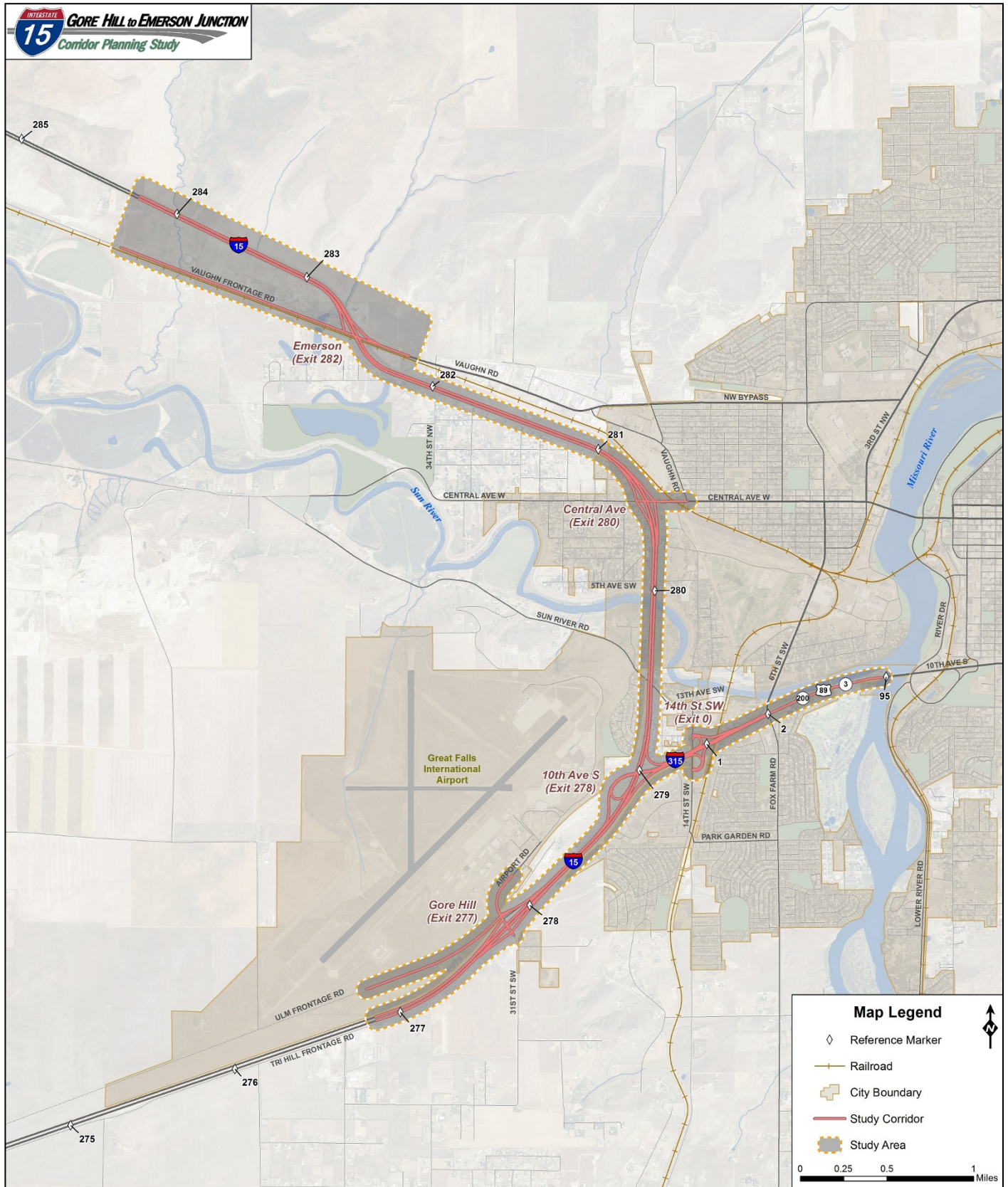
**Great Falls:**  
**Wednesday, October 29th**  
 6:00 PM  
 Gibson Room  
 Great Falls Civic Center  
 2 Park Drive South

**Purpose:**  
 Informational Meeting #1 is intended to explain the planning study process, present information about existing and projected conditions, and gather feedback on issues and concerns related to the I-15 corridor.



## Study Area

The study area includes Interstate 15 through Great Falls, beginning southwest of the Gore Hill Interchange (I-15 Exit 277) near Reference Post (RP) 277 and ending northwest of Emerson Junction (Exit 282) near RP 284. The study area also includes Interstate 315 and 10th Avenue South west of the Missouri River (RP 95).



## Initial Considerations

The following initial considerations have been identified through on-site reviews and preliminary data analysis. This list is not all-inclusive and is subject to change over the course of the planning process.

### Transportation System

#### Interstate 15 (I-15)

- I-15 has an average annual daily traffic (AADT) volume ranging between 5,950 vehicles per day (vpd) north of Central Avenue to 14,670 vpd north of Gore Hill.
- Speed differences exist between passenger and heavy vehicles.

#### Interstate 315 (I-315)

- I-315 has an AADT of 15,140 vpd west of 14th Street SW and 24,680 vpd west of Fox Farm Road.
- Some ramp spacing and geometric characteristics do not meet existing standards.

#### Intersections

- Drivers at the intersections at the Gore Hill Interchange experience excessive delay during the PM peak hour.
- Drivers at the intersection of Fox Farm Road / 10th Ave South experiences excessive delay during the peak hours.
- Drivers at the intersections at the Central Avenue interchange, along with the intersection of Central Avenue / Vaughn Road, experience excessive delay during the PM peak hour.

### Safety

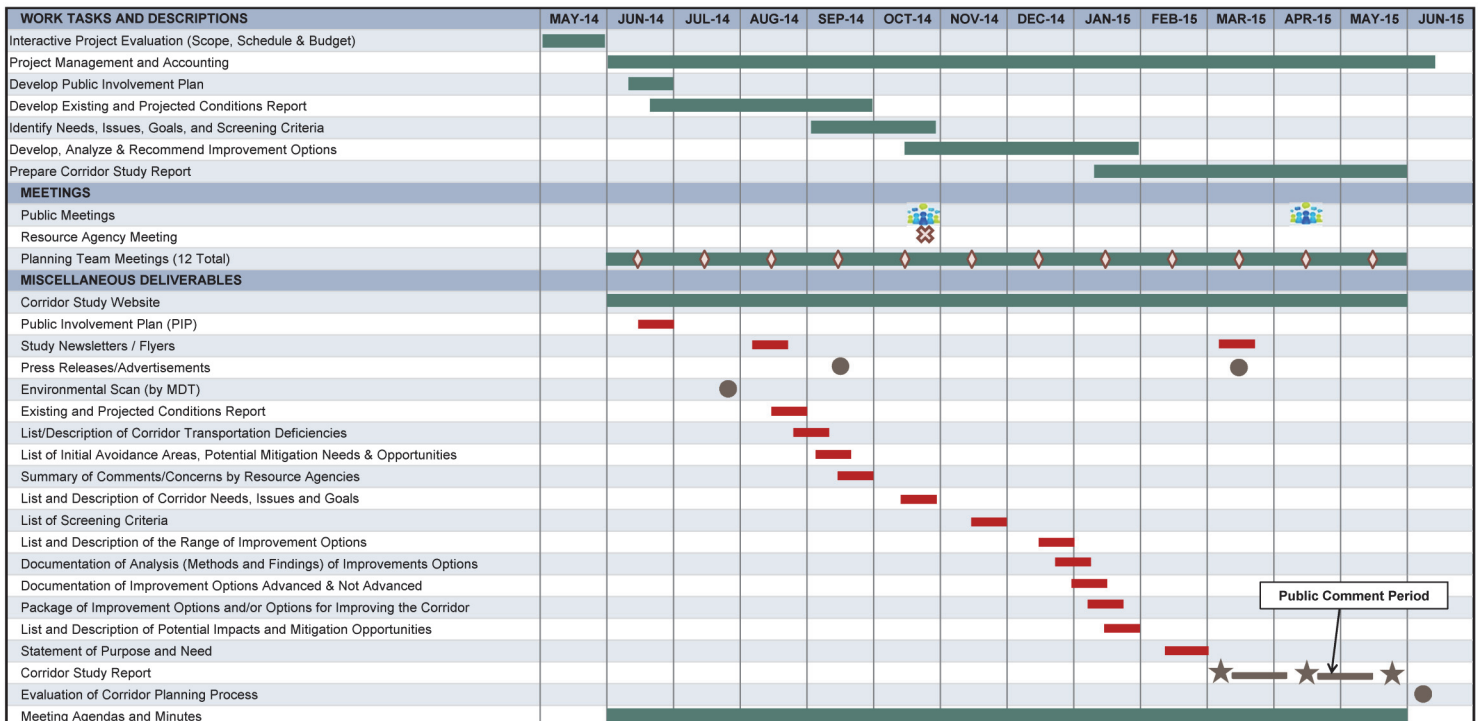
- There were 525 crashes reported from January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2013.
  - ◊ Four crashes resulted in fatalities. Eight crashes resulted in incapacitating injuries.
  - ◊ 32% of crashes were the result of careless driving.
  - ◊ 14% of crashes involved alcohol/drugs.
  - ◊ There were 178 rear-end collisions and 138 collisions involving a fixed object.

### Environmental Considerations

- I-15 crosses the Sun River south of Central Avenue.
- Prime if irrigated farmland and farmland of statewide importance are present within the study area.
- A State Superfund site (Western By Products) is located near the north end of the study area between I-15 and Vaughn Road.
- Five threatened and endangered species are listed for Cascade County. No recorded observations are documented within the study area.
- There are recreational resources and historic age properties located within the study area.

## Study Schedule

The I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction Corridor Planning Study began in June 2014 and is slated for completion by the end of May 2015.





## Contacts:

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### Website

[www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15)

## Public Involvement Opportunities

Public involvement is important to any successful corridor study process. It is a proactive process that gives the public an opportunity to participate in all phases of the study. The public is invited to participate by attending community informational meetings, as well as reviewing and contributing input on ongoing study information.

The website developed for the study provides online opportunities to comment on the *I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction Corridor Planning Study*. Dates, times, and locations for all community outreach events will be announced in advance by using local media and the study mailing list. Notices will also be posted on the study website.

The study team will collect and consider all public comments received to aid in understanding community views on potential issues. People with a specific interest in the study are encouraged to visit the website, submit comments, and/or attend the Informational Meetings. For more information, refer to the list of contacts contained on this page.

*MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program, or activity associated with this study. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request. For further information, call (406) 447-5000, TTY (800) 335-7592, or Montana Relay at 711. Accommodation requests must be made at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled activity and / or meeting.*



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