



NORTH FORK FLATHEAD ROAD CORRIDOR STUDY
PUBLIC MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 2010
COLUMBIA FALLS CITY HALL

Below is a synopsis of comments received as transcribed from the meeting notes; all written statements submitted will be retained as part of the final document and comments provided verbally at the meeting to the study team are captured in the meeting minutes and will be retained for the study files..

Nearly seventy five people participated at the North Fork Flathead Corridor Study public meeting held April 20, 2010 at the Columbia Falls City office on 130 6th Street West. The attendees included local community residents and business owners, Flathead County staff, MDT staff, resource agency staff and public officials. The evening began with a half hour open-house; this was followed by a brief presentation by the consultant, and concluded with a full hour public comment period. The intent of the meeting was to find out what the issues of the study corridor. The most frequent concern raised was roadway dust and the potential driving hazards it poses including: requirements for drivers to travel at slower speeds, speed limit enforcement or lack thereof, reduced visibility, impacts on air and water quality, impacts to view shed and recreation.

Remarks regarding the timeliness of Emergency Service response to the community of Polebridge and other residents north of the study area were forwarded. Some of those who expressed concerns related to safety said they think that paving the gravel portions of the road will improve the unsafe road conditions they see, for example washboard driving surface, dust and overall slow driving condition causing delays for emergency services.

Other comments requested the study look at ways to minimize the potential for wildlife impacts including collisions in the corridor and expressed concern that if the gravel roadway sections are paved the increased speed will result in unsafe conditions for wildlife and motorists. Many stated that traffic is increased in the summer with GNP tourists coming from Camas Road.

Several participants were unclear about the ownership/jurisdiction and which entity is responsible for maintenance of the roadway within the study area – the consultant has provided a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document and a map of this on the study website. The FAQs and map will help clarify who is responsible for what. Others pointed out that the roadway was too wide and this adds to the roadway maintenance expenses.

Columbia Falls' Mayor submitted a proclamation at the meeting advocating roadway improvements including paving of the gravel portion of the roadway in the study area.

Many comments included discussion of the recent compact in the area regarding limits on development of oil and gas and mining. This led to the discussion of economics and concerns raised around this issue included balancing demands on this delicate ecosystem, future development, tourism, and distribution of taxes for all the county roads, not just NFFR.

All participants were encouraged to visit the study website as it is updated and as the study progresses they will be informed of additional ways to participate in the process.