



# Stevensville Safety Improvements

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Table of Contents

**General/Project Overview ..... 2**

- Where exactly is this project going to take place? ..... 2
- How will this project make the roadway safer? ..... 2
- How will I know if my property may be impacted by this project? ..... 2
- Why doesn't this project include Logan Road? ..... 2
- What is being done to address wildlife crossings? How is MDT keeping the area's elk herd safe? ..... 2
- Will there be a bike lane or sidewalks? ..... 3
- Why are the shoulders being widened by four feet? ..... 3
- Why is there guardrail in some areas and not in others? ..... 3
- What is the "smart signal" that is being added to Bell Crossing? ..... 3
- What is being done to provide safety improvements for slower-moving farm equipment along the Eastside Highway? ..... 3
- Has there been any consideration made for the fire station located off of the Eastside Highway? ..... 3
- Are the Stevensville Safety Improvements, Highway 269 and the Eastside Highway all the same thing? ..... 3

**Schedule/Timing ..... 4**

- When is construction going to start? ..... 4
- How long will construction last? ..... 4
- Is MDT coordinating with the City of Stevensville, Ravalli County, and the schools to limit impacts of construction? ..... 4
- Why is MDT talking about this project now? ..... 4
- What other projects are in the pipeline for the Stevensville area? ..... 4

**Construction ..... 5**

- What will construction look like? ..... 5
- Will there be long delays? ..... 5
- Can the speed limit be lowered? ..... 5
- Will school buses be able to get through construction to make it to class on time? ..... 5
- Will there be additional landscaping once the project is done? ..... 5

**Budget ..... 5**

- How much is this project going to cost? ..... 5
- Will this increase my property taxes? ..... 5
- Who is paying for this? ..... 6

**Communication ..... 6**

- Who can I share my comments and/or concerns with? ..... 6
- Will the public be updated on this project? ..... 6
- How can I stay involved? ..... 6

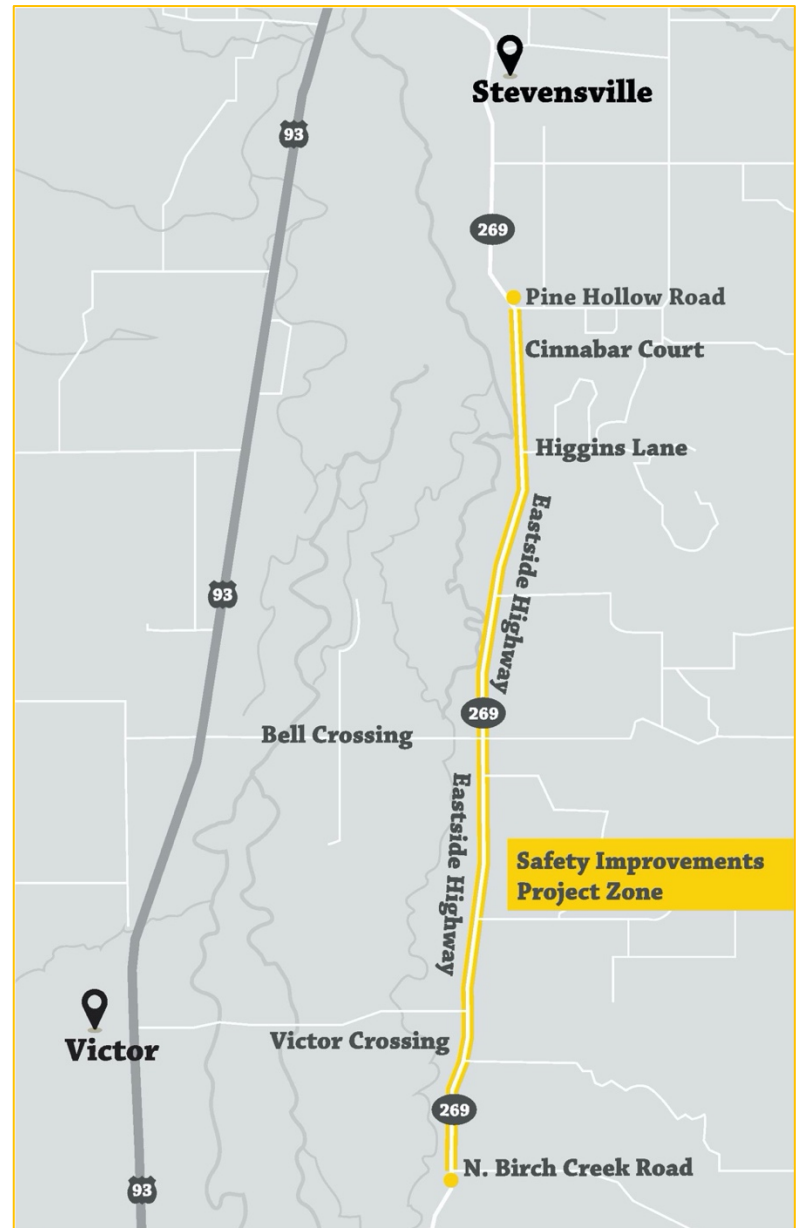
## General/Project Overview

### Where exactly is this project going to take place?

- The project will begin just north of the intersection with North Birch Creek Road and extend 5.9 miles north until the intersection with Pine Hollow Road.

### How will this project make the roadway safer?

- By adding four feet of shoulder to each side of the roadway, drivers will have more room to correct, should they drift off of the Eastside Highway.
- The new shoulders will also include rumble strips to alert drivers that they are leaving the roadway.
- Based on national data, the combination of wider shoulders and rumble strips are estimated to reduce roadway departure crashes by nearly 50%.
- The slopes and ditches along Highway 269 will be flattened. This will allow drivers to have increased lines of sight and will reduce the opportunity for wildlife to hide in the brush.
- The existing flashing signal at Bell Crossing will be updated. Instead of having just a blinking yellow, the signal will be optimized to begin blinking once vehicles are in the area. As a vehicle approaches on Highway 269, the stop signs along Willoughby Lane will begin flashing, alerting vehicles approaching the intersection to other travelers in the area.
- In addition to the updated signal, the Bell Crossing intersection will have overhead lights installed to illuminate the area.
- Lastly, there will be some sections of guardrail installed along the 5.9 miles of the project along Highway 269 and there will be mailbox pullout areas for residents to access their property away from traffic.



### How will I know if my property may be impacted by this project?

- The team will begin contacting landowners in January-March 2020 to begin conversations related to potential impacts.
- If you have a question about this process, please feel free to call the project hotline at (406) 207-4484 and we can look into your parcel for you.

### Why doesn't this project include Logan Road?

- Our team has heard that Logan Road has continued to grow and will see an increase of travel in the coming years. While the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) fully acknowledges and shares these concerns, project boundaries are defined by specific data sets, as required by the federal government.
  - Because this project is able to be completed with federal safety funding, MDT cannot add new roadway improvements to this plan.
- That said, feedback is being collected and this information will be used to help shape future area projects.

### What is being done to address wildlife crossings? How is MDT keeping the area's elk herd safe?

- The wildlife crossing on Highway 269 is well-known and is understandably a strong concern.

- This project will not include wildlife fencing. Fencing often displaces deer/elk from crossing where they would do so naturally and can lead to challenges of creating one concentrated area for herds.
- Once the highway is widened, slopes will be flattened off the side of the roadway, and once shrubbery has been thinned, drivers will be able to see wildlife far more easily than they can today.
- In addition to being able to see wildlife off to the side of the road, the ditches near Highway 269 will be removed or reduced. Therefore, deer and elk will not have areas to “hide” near the roadway.

**Will there be a bike lane or sidewalks?**

- We have heard from many residents that they would like to see a pathway for pedestrians and cyclists along the Eastside Highway.
- Sidewalks and dedicated bike lanes are not included in this safety improvement project.
- The addition of the four-foot shoulders will help to create a safer area for non-motorized users.

**Why are the shoulders being widened by four feet?**

- The shoulders are being widened by four feet to improve safety. These additional four feet outside of the painted line make a big difference in safety.
- These four feet allow drivers room to correct should they travel off of the roadway and provide more space between the highway and residential areas.
- The inclusion of rumble strips on the shoulders also determines the best practice of adding four feet.

**Why is there guardrail in some areas and not in others?**

- Guardrail will be provided in a select number of locations where the slopes are too steep and cannot be flattened.
- An important design feature of this safety improvement project is to provide a flattened vehicle recovery area beyond the shoulder and to avoid use of guardrails where not necessary.
- Guardrail is expensive to install and to maintain, which is why changing the slopes along the roadway is the preferred long-term solution.
- Guardrail is also fixed and used only when the roadway design will not allow for the shoulder to be widened and flattened.

**What is the “smart signal” that is being added to Bell Crossing?**

- The existing flashing signal at Bell Crossing will be updated. Instead of having just a blinking yellow, the signal will be optimized to begin blinking once vehicle are in the area. As a vehicle approaches on Highway 269, the stop signs along Willoughby Lane will begin flashing, alerting vehicles approaching the intersection to other travelers in the area.
- This device is interactive, meaning that it will begin flashing only when a vehicle approaches.
- In addition to the updated signal, the Bell Crossing intersection will have overhead lights installed to best illuminate the area.

**What is being done to provide safety improvements for slower-moving farm equipment along the Eastside Highway?**

- Widened shoulders and mailbox turnouts will provide opportunities for agricultural equipment to move over and allow traffic to pass.

**Has there been any consideration made for the fire station located off of the Eastside Highway?**

- Yes. The new fire station will access Willoughby Lane and the intersection will be widened to allow for large trucks.

**Are the Stevensville Safety Improvements, Highway 269 and the Eastside Highway all the same thing?**

- Yes. The Montana Department of Transportation’s name for this project is Stevensville Safety Improvements.
- The project runs 5.9 miles from North Birch Creek Road and extends 5.9 miles north, ending at the intersection with Pine Hollow Road.
- This project is located on Highway 269, also more commonly known to locals as the Eastside Highway.

## Schedule/Timing

### When is construction going to start?

- As of winter, 2019, project plans are nearly complete. That means that the project team can continue moving forward toward starting preliminary construction in the fall of 2020.
- The first construction activities will primarily consist of utility work – relocating cable, fiberoptic, power and other lines away from the roadway to make room for construction.
- Roadway construction will likely begin in the spring of 2021 and be completed in the late fall of 2021.

### How long will construction last?

- Work is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2020 with preliminary utility work.
- The majority of construction will occur throughout the spring, summer and fall of 2021.

### Is MDT coordinating with the City of Stevensville, Ravalli County, and the schools to limit impacts of construction?

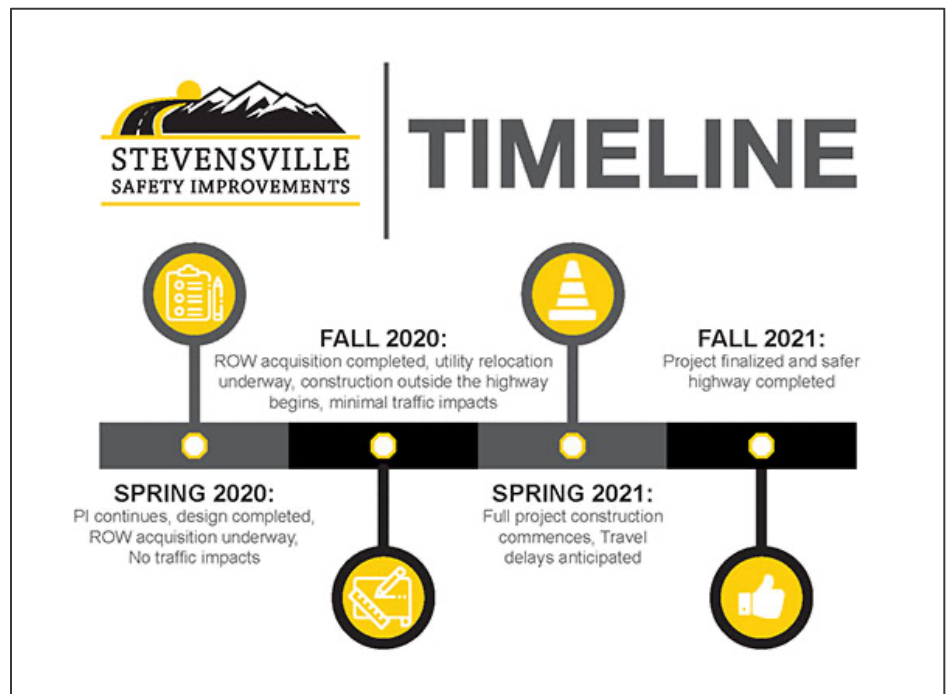
- Absolutely. The project team has been in conversations with the School District and local agencies to share current plans and learn of impacts.
- Once we move closer to construction, all efforts will be well coordinated to reduce impacts of construction. This will allow school buses to make their schedules and to ensure other area events are distributed as minimally as possible.

### Why is MDT talking about this project now?

- The Eastside Highway is well-traveled and has a high crash rate. From speaking with the community, improvements are very much needed.
- Once construction begins in earnest in 2021, there will be limited delays. We want the community to know well in advance what this project will look like and ensure we can all be best positioned for success.

### What other projects are in the pipeline for the Stevensville area?

- MDT is also working on plans for the “North of Stevensville – North” project.
  - The project will reconstruct the road to a 44-foot top width that will provide two 12-foot travel lanes, a 12-foot center/left-turn lane, and two 4-foot shoulders. Roadside slopes and ditches will be revised to improve safety and the vertical alignment and drainage features will be upgraded throughout the project. The 90° horizontal curves at Rathbun Lane and Ambrose Creek Road will be flattened. A graded platform for a future shared use path will not be included.
  - This project is located on Secondary-203 (Eastside Highway) and begins at Reference Post (RP) 4.0, about 3.7 miles north of Stevensville, and about 0.1 miles south of Wildfowl Lane and Moiese Lane. It extends northerly 5.8 miles to RP 10.1, about 0.2 miles south of Hidden Valley Road. This project will tie to the Florence – East project that was constructed in 2014.
  - More information regarding this project can be found on [MDT's webpage](#).



## Construction

### What will construction look like?

- Once the project moves into construction phases, there will be limited areas of one-way travel, likely facilitated by stoplights and/or flaggers.
- The public is encouraged to start planning for delays of up to 15 minutes.
- No complete closures are planned.

### Will there be long delays?

- Construction will be isolated to one area at a time. While we don't quite yet know how long each construction zone will be, construction zones will be as short as possible, which helps to reduce wait times for the traveling public.
- Delays of up to 15 minutes can be anticipated.

### Can the speed limit be lowered?

- During construction, the speed limit in the work zone will be reduced.
- However, we have heard from many in the community that they would like to see the speed limit on the Eastside Highway lowered.
- The Montana Department of Transportation cannot make that determination. In fact, the Ravalli County Commission would need to submit a speed study request to begin that process.
  - If you are interested in seeing the speed lowered, please contact the Ravalli County Commissioners' office: <https://ravalli.us/135/Commissioners>.
- The state legislature is the only other governing body that can adjust a speed limit.

### Will school buses be able to get through construction to make it to class on time?

- Yes!
- The project team has been in communication with the Stevensville School District to learn of bus timing for the 2020 and 2021 academic years. That information will then be shared with contractors to slow construction during these times and to allow school bus priority through pilot lines, if needed.
- The bulk project construction will also take place during the summer which will help to reduce impacts to the school.

### Will there be additional landscaping once the project is done?

- Although there won't be new landscaping, all areas affected by construction will have topsoil spread and be seeded with a native grass mix.

## Budget

### How much is this project going to cost?

- Current project estimates show that the project will be \$12 million.
- This includes:
  - Widening the roadway by adding four-foot shoulders on both sides of the highway;
  - Flattening the roadside slopes;
  - New sections of guardrail along the route;
  - A flashing signal at Bell Crossing;
  - Realigning Willoughby Lane to better facilitate safe travel at the intersection;
  - Utility upgrades and relocations;
  - Bridge replacements; and
    - For the roadway to be sealed with new pavement markings and signs.

### Will this increase my property taxes?

- No. This project is funded by the Montana Department of Transportation through state gas tax funds and federal safety dollars.

**Who is paying for this?**

- The project is funded through the Federal Highway Safety Improvements Program.

**Communication****Who can I share my comments and/or concerns with?**

- This project has a public involvement firm hired to help with all project questions and for you to share your thoughts.
- Call the project hotline Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at (406) 207-4484.
- Email Katie Kliez at [katie@bigskypublicrelations.com](mailto:katie@bigskypublicrelations.com).

**Will the public be updated on this project?**

- Yes!
- Regular updates will also be shared with the community as milestones are hit in the project development and as we move into construction.
- We will also be attending local events to help make an introduction between you and our team.
- An open house will also be held in the late summer of 2020.
- Weekly updates on construction will be sent via email to subscribers as the project begins construction in 2021.

**How can I stay involved?**

- Signing up for updates is the best way to ensure you're receiving all project updates.
- You can send a request to Katie Kliez at [katie@bigskypublicrelations.com](mailto:katie@bigskypublicrelations.com) to register for email updates.
- The project webpage will also be updated with all available materials:  
<https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/southstevi/default.shtml>.