

# Toston Missouri River Crossing Corridor Planning Study

## Public Involvement Plan



### Prepared For:

Montana Department of Transportation



### Prepared By:

Camp Dresser & McKee Inc.

Helena, Montana



December 28, 2009

# Table of Contents

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Corridor Study Purpose ..... 1
- 1.2 Project Background ..... 1
- 1.3 Study Area ..... 2
- 1.4 Goals of Public Involvement & Outreach Effort ..... 4

## 2.0 Public Involvement Procedures

- 2.1 Project Contacts ..... 4
- 2.2 Publications ..... 5
- 2.3 Stakeholder Contact List..... 5
- 2.4 Document Availability ..... 6
- 2.5 Meetings..... 6
  - 2.5.1 Planning Team Meetings..... 6
  - 2.5.2 Resource Agency Meeting/Involvement..... 6
  - 2.5.3 Public Meetings..... 7
- 2.6 Consideration for Traditionally Underserved Populations..... 7
- 2.7 Project Schedule ..... 8

## 3.0 Overall Project Communication

- 3.1 Summary..... 8

## List of Figures

- Figure 1-1: Project Study Area*
- Figure 2-1: Project Schedule*

## 1.0 Introduction

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has initiated the process to develop the Toston Missouri River Crossing Corridor Planning Study. The corridor planning study will determine cost-effective ways to address transportation needs within the US 287 corridor near Toston, Montana. The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has established the Corridor Planning Process in order to link the current transportation planning processes and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), as provided for in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The Corridor Planning Process will provide information into the NEPA/MEPA process, help advance viable improvement options into NEPA/MEPA, and provide the opportunity for partner involvement at all stages.

An initial step in conducting a corridor planning study process is to develop a Public Involvement Plan that provides for and identifies public involvement activities needed to gain insight and build consensus about existing and future corridor needs. The purpose of this Public Involvement Plan is to ensure a proactive public involvement process that provides opportunities for the public to be involved in all phases of the corridor study process. This is accomplished by providing complete information, timely public notice, opportunities for making comments, and ensuring full access to key decisions.

### 1.1 Corridor Study Purpose

A corridor planning study is an important document that enhances the linkage between planning and NEPA. The purpose and need for the study is to analyze existing data to determine current and future deficiencies and needs within the corridor, and identify potential environmental issues and mitigation opportunities as projects are moved forward. Public involvement is an important component in any successful corridor planning study process. For this project, a number of public involvement strategies are proposed to reach the most people possible and elicit meaningful participation. These opportunities will:

- Educate the public on the critical elements and the process of planning the US 287 corridor near Toston
- Increase the public's ability to provide input and ask questions in the corridor planning study
- Present findings

### 1.2 Project Background

In 2006, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) prepared a Revised Environmental Assessment and "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation for the Townsend-South (U.S. Highway 287) project. During the EA development, several alternative alignments were identified for possible consideration. One initial alternative alignment included a bypass of Townsend and Toston by relocating U.S. Highway 287 completely west of the Missouri River. This alternative alignment was not carried forward, however, due to significant public opposition.

The EA ultimately identified a Preferred Alternative for U.S. Highway 287, with a project termini beginning at the southern city limits of Townsend, near Milepost 78.1, to an ending project termini located just north of Toston, at Milepost 86.3. In the early stages of developing the EA, alignment alternatives for US 287 near Toston included moving the highway to a new location west of the Missouri River, reconstructing the highway east of the present corridor, and rebuilding the highway on or near the present road. After screening criteria were evaluated via the Townsend-South EA, all of the alternative alignments were eliminated from further consideration due to an increase in scope from that initially envisioned and the potential high cost of highway improvements. A major alignment shift would require MDT to undertake one massive project and the amount of road MDT would be obligated to maintain would significantly increase. Environmental effects were another associated concern for the rejection. There would be an increase in ground disturbance, right of way acquisition, and wetland infringement. All these impacts resulted in the rejection of the alignment options for US 287 near Toston, with the commitment made by MDT to study the area in greater detail. The Toston Missouri River Crossing Corridor Planning Study will address alignment options and focus on associated environmental issues and concerns, as well as technical feasibility and costs.

In 2009, the MDT selected the firm of Camp Dresser & McKee (CDM) Inc. (i.e., the Consultant) of Helena, MT to prepare the Corridor Planning Study.

### ***1.3 Study Area***

The termini of the project have been established by the MDT as being along Highway 287 from (RP) Reference Post 86.3 (end point of Townsend-South) to RP 89.1 (beginning point of Toston-South). Physical parameters include the Missouri River, BNSF Railway, and private property boundaries. The study area location for the Corridor Planning Study is shown in Figure 1-1. This figure has been prepared by CDM with the termini of the project shown. The specific study area boundary will be determined at the initial Planning Team meeting.

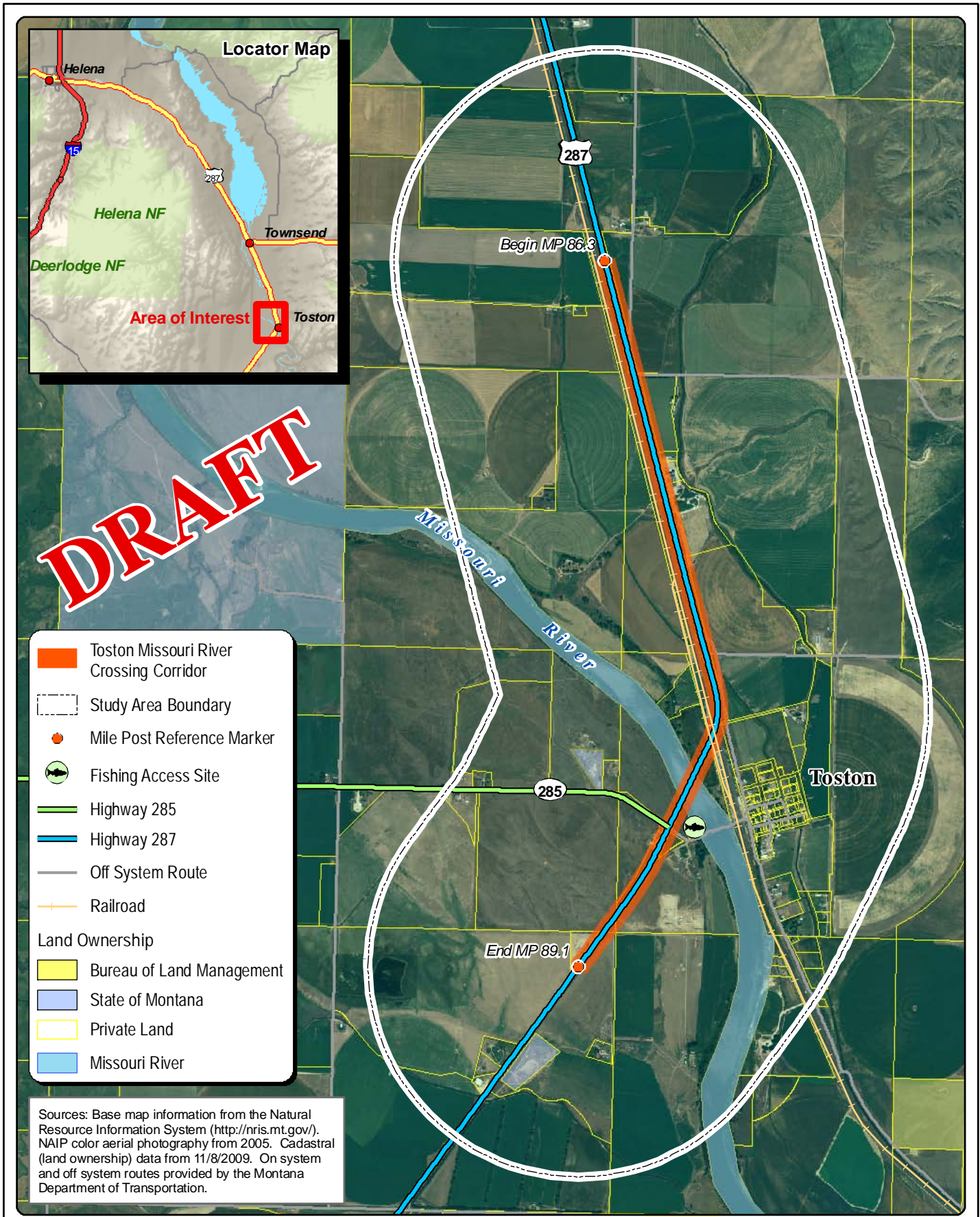


Figure 1-1  
Project Study Area  
Toston Missouri River Crossing Corridor



## 1.4 Goals of Public Involvement & Outreach Effort

The goal of MDT and the Consultant is to have ongoing public involvement for this corridor study process. Education and public outreach are an essential part of fulfilling MDT's responsibility to successfully inform the public about the corridor study process. MDT seeks to empower the public to voice their ideas and values regarding issues in the study area. The MDT strives to ensure early and continuous public involvement in all major actions and decisions.

*Education and public outreach are an essential part of fulfilling MDT's responsibility to successfully inform the public about the corridor study process.*

## 2.0 Public Involvement Procedures

The Public Involvement Plan describes the public information and input opportunities that will be provided as part of the development of the Toston Missouri River Corridor Planning Study. This plan encourages active participation in identifying and commenting on corridor issues at every stage of the planning process. Participants in this public involvement process include:

- Landowners affected by the study area boundary.
- Residents and business owners within Broadwater County.
- Targeted outreach groups – comprised of Broadwater County Commissioners, Montana Rail Link (which is leased by BNSF Railway), US 287 User's Group, water user's group, Broadwater County's contract planner, and any other groups or individuals that may be identified through the corridor study planning process.
- Resource agencies.

Methods of notifying the public of project status, upcoming meetings, and other information are detailed below. The general public will be kept informed of all aspects of the study, and their input will be sought throughout the process. The public and interested parties will provide input to the Consultant via the methods outlined below.

### 2.1 Project Contacts

Contact information for MDT and the Consultant will be provided to the public. Telephone numbers and email addresses of project contacts will be published in all information that is released and is also included here.

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), Statewide and Urban Planning, 2960 Prospect Avenue (PO Box 201001), Helena, MT 59620-1001; (406) 444-9240; Contact – Carol Strizich, [cstrizich@mt.gov](mailto:cstrizich@mt.gov)

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), Butte District Office, 3751 Wynne (PO Box 3068), Butte, MT 59702-3068; (406) 494-9600; Contact – Joe Olsen, [joolsen@mt.gov](mailto:joolsen@mt.gov)

Camp Dresser & McKee, Inc. (CDM), 50 West 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200, Helena, MT 59601  
(406) 441-1400; CDM Project Manager – Jeff Key, P.E., [KeyJA@cdm.com](mailto:KeyJA@cdm.com)

## **2.2 Publications**

Meeting announcements will be developed by CDM and advertised in the *Townsend Star* and the *Independent Record* as display ads at least two weeks prior to meetings. The ads will announce the meeting location, time, and date, the format and purpose of the meeting, and the locations where documents may be reviewed (if applicable). The following print newspaper will carry the display ads.

*Townsend Star* – print and online <http://www.townsendstar.net>

*Independent Record* – print and online <http://www.helenair.com>

Also, three newsletters will be produced that describe work in progress, results achieved, preliminary recommendations, and other related topics. Each newsletter will be saved as a PDF and posted on the project website.

## **2.3 Stakeholder Contact List**

A stakeholder contact list will be produced that will include individuals, businesses, or groups identified by Broadwater County, the MDT, and/or the Consultant. The intent of developing the stakeholder list is to identify those individuals and groups to actively seek out and engage in all phases of the project. Individuals who attend public meetings will also be added to the project list. The following groups or businesses (at a minimum) will be included in the initial list, providing that addresses and/or emails are obtainable from each respective group for these purposes:

- City of Townsend
- Broadwater County Commissioners
- Montana Rail Link (leased by BNSF Railway)
- BNSF Railway
- Broadwater County contract planner, Shawn Higley (WWC Engineering)
- Broadwater County Development Corporation (BCDC)
- Townsend School District
- US 287 User's Group
- Water User's Group (Missouri River)
- Toston Irrigation District
- Madison-Missouri River Fund
- Pat Barnes Chapter of Trout Unlimited
- Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (Fishing Access Site)
- County Fire Departments and Emergency Medical Personnel
- County Sheriff and Montana State Highway Patrol
- Leonard Lambott (Landowner)
- Landowners in the Corridor

## 2.4 Document Availability

In general, all project deliverables and working draft technical memorandums will be available in hard copy format at the MDT Statewide and Urban Planning Section office (2960 Prospect Avenue). It is anticipated, however, that hard copy materials may also be made available at the following locations as well (noted below):

Document Availability Locations:

- Broadwater County Commission, 515 Broadway, Townsend, MT
- MDT District 2 Office, 3751 Wynne, Butte, MT
- MDT Statewide and Urban Planning Section Office, 2960 Prospect Avenue, Helena, MT
- Townsend Library

Approved electronic copies of project deliverables will be posted on the project website at the address shown below within 7 days of receiving approval to do so by the project partners

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/toston/>

The following Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-required statement will be included on all published materials:

*The MDT and CDM attempt to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program, or activity associated with this project. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request. For further information, call (406) 441-1400 or TTY (800) 335-7592, or by calling Montana Relay at 711. Accommodation requests must be made at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled activity and/or meeting.*

## 2.5 Meetings

### 2.5.1 Planning Team Meetings

Planning Team meetings will be scheduled every 2 weeks for the duration of the twelve-month project period. Individuals included in the meetings will be the consultant, Broadwater County, FHWA, MDT personnel, and others as needed. The meetings are intended to track progress and address study development issues and questions. The meetings are considered an important aspect for the exchange of information and ideas during the development of the Study. Throughout these meetings, the issues, problems, and possible solutions will be identified and discussed.

### 2.5.2 Resource Agency Meeting/Involvement

After the first formal public meeting has been held on the project, a meeting will be scheduled and held with the Resource Agencies that are stakeholders in the project. The meeting will be organized by MDT



and facilitated by CDM. This meeting will occur after the first public meeting has been held on the project.

### **2.5.3 Public Meetings**

Three formal public meeting opportunities will be held throughout the duration of the Corridor Study. The first public meeting will be held early on in the study process and will serve to introduce the study and relevant features and process. This meeting will also serve to receive information from local residents about the study area. The second public meeting will occur when preliminary recommendations have been identified. After the presentation, individual work stations will be set up for participants to move to their areas of interest and review and comment on the preliminary findings. The purpose of this venue will be to present the types of recommended improvements and receive initial feedback from the community. Public comments and concerns will be recorded. The third public meeting will be conducted to present the draft Final Corridor Plan. All three public meetings will be held at the high school in Townsend.

Other meetings will be scheduled for user's groups, emergency services personnel, school district officials, special interest groups, additional Commission meetings, etc., as needed.

## **2.6 Consideration for Traditionally Underserved Populations**

CDM recognizes that additional efforts must be made to involve traditionally underserved segments of the population in the corridor study process, including the disabled, racial and ethnic minorities, and low-income residents. Including these groups leads to planning that reflects the needs of everyone. The following steps will help with these efforts:

### Plan Meeting Locations Carefully

- Public meetings will be held in locations that are accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If a targeted population is located in a certain geographic part of the County, then the meeting location should be in that area for convenience.

### Seek Help from Community Leaders and Organizations

- To facilitate involvement of traditionally underserved populations, community leaders and organizations that represent these groups will be consulted about how to most effectively reach their members.

### Be Sensitive to Diverse Audiences

- At public meetings, agency staff and the Consultant will attempt to communicate as effectively as possible. Technical jargon will be avoided and appropriate dress and conduct will be adhered to. A variety of visualization techniques may be used to present information on the project, including but not limited to, aerial photographs, maps, graphics, full size posters, color handouts, and powerpoint presentations.

## **2.7 Project Schedule**

Adherence to the project schedule is important to stay on track and keep all participating parties engaged. The project schedule for this Corridor Study is attached as Figure 2-1. It is CDM's intent to adhere to this schedule.

## **3.0 Overall Project Communication**

### **3.1 Summary**

The Toston Missouri River Crossing Corridor Planning Study Public Involvement Plan establishes guidelines and procedures for encouraging public participation. The following communication strategies and techniques may be used in their entirety (or partially) to distribute the information to the community at large and seek a higher level of engagement. The Consultant will utilize as many of these techniques as possible that best suit the Corridor Study development.

- All approved, relevant deliverables and associated materials will be posted on the project website at  
<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/toston/>
- Public meeting announcements and press releases for the newspaper may be developed.
- Informational presentations may be made at regional sites, open houses, round tables, or other community forums to receive input from the affected community.
- Select mailings and/or email, as requested by interested parties, may be provided to individuals or groups that have expressed interest or made comments at meetings.
- Study documents and materials may be provided to the MDT for posting to the project's internet site, and also distributed to the Project Team to provide a better understanding of proposed corridor issues and recommendations and, in return, to provide the project entities with feedback and an opportunity for continual comment. Hard copies of all materials will be made available at the MDT Statewide and Urban Planning Section (2960 Prospect Avenue).
- Special presentations may be made, upon request, to community groups and organizations.
- Fact sheets may be used to explain corridor related issues.
- Special issues documents may be announced or reported at meetings and/or via email on relevant corridor issues.

Responses to questions and comments from the public concerning the public participation process, working draft technical memorandums, the draft and public draft Corridor Plan document, and other work products will be made via written response in an Appendix to the actual Corridor Planning Study.

In some circumstances, the Consultant will respond directly to an individual or group by letter, email, or telephone call, or by way of a periodic newsletter.

# Figure 2-1: Toston Missouri River Crossing Corridor Planning Study



**PROJECT SCHEDULE**

PRESENT TIME

WORK TASKS AND DESCRIPTIONS		Dec '09	Jan '10	Feb '10	Mar '10	Apr '10	May '10	June '10	July '10	Aug '10	Sep '10	Oct '10
Task 1:	Interactive Project Evaluation ( <i>completed</i> )	[Completed]										
Task 2:	Project Management and Accounting	[Ongoing]										
Task 3:	Develop Corridor Study Work Plan	[Ongoing]										
Task 4:	Develop Existing and Projected Conditions Report	[Ongoing]										
Task 5:	Identify Needs, Issues, Goals, and Screening Criteria	[Ongoing]										
Task 6:	Determine Improvement Options Advanced and Not Advanced	[Ongoing]										
Task 7:	ArcGIS Spatial Analyst and Microstation/GeoPAK Technical Tool	[Ongoing]										
Task 8:	Recommend Improvement Options	[Ongoing]										
Task 9:	Prepare Draft Corridor Study Report	[Ongoing]										
	Public Meetings				•					•		•
	Project Committee Meetings	[Ongoing]										
MISCELLANEOUS DELIVERABLES												
	Corridor Setting Document		•									
	Public Involvement Plan (PIP)		•									
	Corridor Study Website	[Ongoing]										
	Existing and Projected Conditions Report			•								
	List/Description of Corridor Transportation Deficiencies			•								
	Maps of Known Environmentally Sensitive Areas			•								
	Summary of Comments/Concerns By Resource Agencies			•								
	List of Initial Avoidance Areas, Potential Mitigation Needs & Opportunities			•								
	Project Newsletters - 3 total (electronic only)		•						•			•
	Press Releases/Advertisements		•						•			•
	List and Description of Corridor Needs, Issues and Goals					•						
	List of Screening Criteria					•						
	List and Description of the Range of Improvement Options						•					
	Documentation of Analysis (Methods and Findings) of Improvement Options						•					
	Documentation of Improvement Options and/or Advanced & Not Advanced							•				
	Memorandum of Proposed Weighted Options						•					
	Package of Improvement Options and/or Option for Improving the Corridor								•			
	List and Description of Potential Impacts and Mitigation Opportunities								•			
	Corridor Study Report											•
	Statement of Purpose and Need										•	
	Final List of Recommendations and Next Steps											•
	Meeting Agendas and Minutes	[Ongoing]										