

Appendix 2:

Consultation, Coordination, and Public Involvement



Prepared by:

Robert Peccia & Associates

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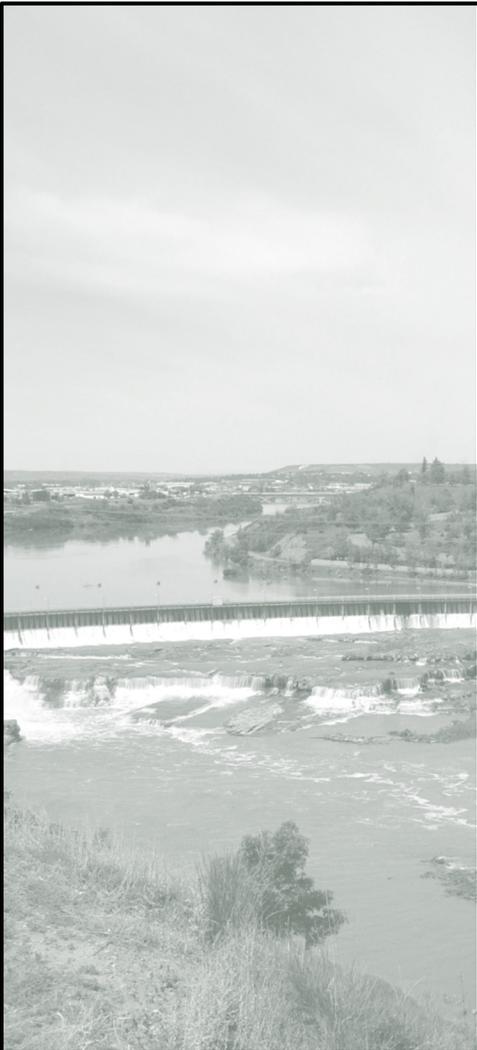
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PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT PLAN (PAIP)

August 07, 2014

prepared for:
Montana Department of Transportation



prepared by:
Robert Peccia & Associates
Helena, Montana



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PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT PLAN (PAIP)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and in coordination with the Great Falls 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, referred to as the *I-15 Corridor Study*, will identify feasible improvement options to address safety, operational, and geometrical concerns (i.e. road width, horizontal curves, vertical grades, approach 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 over the next twenty years. Developing these recommendations will help the study partners define the most critical needs and allocate resources.

An initial step in the corridor planning process is to develop a *Public and Agency Involvement Plan (PAIP)* that provides for and identifies public, stakeholder, and other interested parties involvement activities needed to communicate information about existing and future corridor needs. The purpose of the *PAIP* is to establish a process that provides opportunities for interested parties to participate in all phases of the corridor planning process. Providing complete information, timely notices, and opportunities to comment, as well as ensuring full access to key decisions, will help achieve the *PAIP* objectives.

1.1. CORRIDOR PLANNING PROCESS

MDT established the corridor planning process to investigate improvement options for the corridor via the Pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Study, as provided for in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). The corridor planning process will inform any projects that may develop from improvement options identified in the study. The process will help advance viable options for use in the NEPA/MEPA process, while providing an opportunity for partner involvement at all stages.

The purposes for conducting a corridor study are to analyze existing data to determine current and future deficiencies and needs within the corridor and to identify potential environmental constraints and mitigation opportunities. The *I-15 Corridor Study* is a pre-NEPA/MEPA study that allows flexibility in examining improvement options for the roadway system should any project move forward. Public, stakeholder, and interested-party involvement are important components of any successful corridor planning process. For this study, a number of proposed involvement strategies will aid in reaching the most people possible to elicit meaningful participation. These opportunities will achieve the following goals:

- Educate corridor users regarding the critical elements included in the Pre-NEPA/MEPA Corridor Planning Study process for the I-15 corridor through Great Falls.
- Provide opportunity for input and to solicit questions throughout the corridor planning study.
- Present findings and recommendations.

1.2. STUDY AREA

The study area includes I-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 (I-315) and 10th Avenue South west of the Missouri River (RP 95). **Figure 1** presents the location of the corridor and the study area.

1.3. GOALS OF PUBLIC AND AGENCY OUTREACH EFFORT

The primary goal of this *PAIP* is to provide ongoing opportunities for involvement by members of the public, stakeholders, and resource agency representatives throughout the planning study process. Education and outreach are essential elements in keeping individuals apprised about the planning study process.

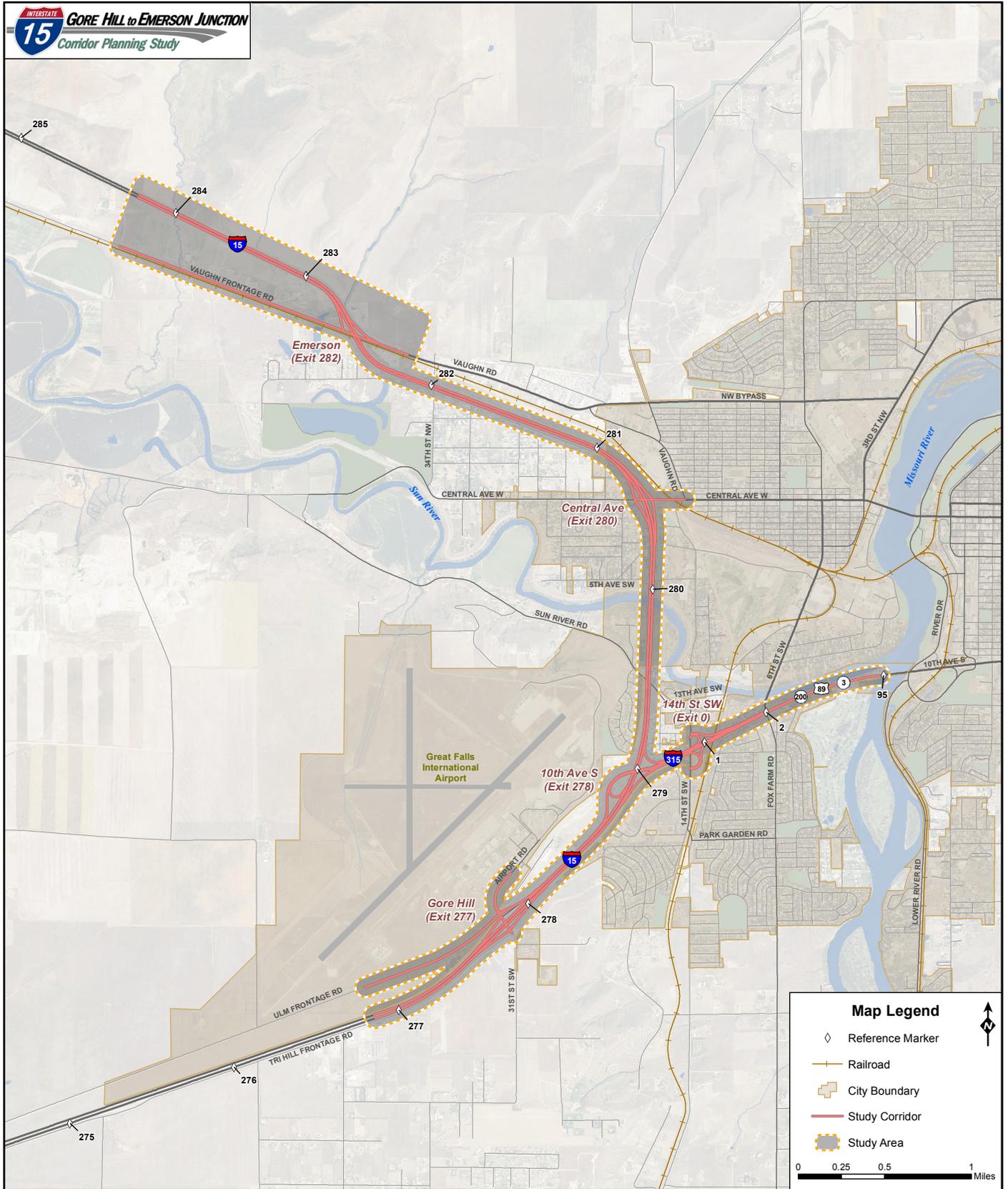


Figure 1: Vicinity Map

2.0 PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES

The *PAIP* describes the information and input opportunities that will be provided while developing the *I-15 Corridor Study*. This plan encourages active participation in identifying and commenting on study issues at every stage of the planning process. Participant involvement includes the following:

- The general public – residents of the city of Great Falls, Cascade County, and adjacent areas
- Landowners and business owners within the study area boundary
- Resource agencies
- Stakeholders and outreach groups
- Other interested parties

This document contains descriptions of notification for informational meetings and other information. MDT, the Great Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and Robert Peccia and Associates (RPA) will provide information regarding all aspects of the study to the public and interested parties and will seek their input throughout the process.

2.1. STUDY CONTACTS

All information published regarding the *I-15 Corridor Study* will have contact information for MDT and RPA. Comments can be submitted throughout the study process via the website (see **Section 2.5**) or by contacting those individuals listed below:

- **Dave Hand** – *MDT Great Falls District Administrator*
MDT Great Falls District
200 Smelter Avenue NE
PO Box 1359
Great Falls, MT 59403-1359
406-454-5880
dhand@mt.gov
- **Corrina Collins** – *MDT Project Manager*
MDT Statewide and Urban Planning
2960 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001
(406) 444-9131
ccollins@mt.gov
- **Scott Randall** – *RPA Project Manager*
Robert Peccia and Associates (RPA)
825 Custer Avenue
PO Box 5653
Helena, MT 59604
(406) 447-5000
scottr@rpa-hln.com

2.2. PUBLICATIONS

MDT and RPA will jointly develop meeting announcements. MDT will advertise the announcements at least twice before informational meetings (three weeks and one week before the meeting). The ads will contain the meeting location, time and date, meeting format and purpose, and locations for document review (if applicable). The following print publication will carry the display ads:

- **Great Falls Tribune** – print and online: <http://www.greatfallstribune.com/>

In addition, RPA will publish newsletters, flyers, or both, one month before each informational meeting. The newsletters will describe work in progress, results achieved, preliminary recommendations, and other related topics. RPA will deliver each newsletter and flyer to the Great Falls MPO, MDT, and select stakeholders for distribution and posting to their respective internet sites. Print copies of newsletters will be available at the public meetings.

2.3. RADIO AND TELEVISION

Meetings may also be announced on local radio and/or television stations.

2.4. STAKEHOLDER CONTACT LIST

A stakeholder contact list will include individuals, businesses, or groups identified by the Great Falls MPO and MDT. The stakeholder list will identify individuals and groups with likely project interests and will enable actively seeking out and engaging them in all phases of the study process. A sign-in sheet for individuals who attend informational meetings will facilitate expanding the stakeholder list. The groups listed below (at a minimum) will be included in the initial list. Additional stakeholders may be identified throughout the development of the study.

- City of Great Falls
- Great Falls City Commission
- Cascade County
- Cascade County Commission
- Great Falls Air National Guard
- Malmstrom Air Force Base
- Great Falls International Airport Authority
- Great Falls Policy Coordinating Committee
- Great Falls Transportation Technical Advisory Committee
- Great Falls Northern Industrial Task Force
- Others as Requested

2.5. STUDY WEBSITE

A study website will be used to encourage public interaction and to provide study information. The website will be hosted by MDT at the following address: www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15/

The website will be updated as needed throughout the study process. The website will contain contact information, meeting announcements, frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the corridor study process, a description of the study, finalized documents, and interim memorandums. Upon completion, the following documents will be made available on the study website:

- Study Schedule
- Study Newsletters
- Public and Agency Involvement Plan

- Environmental Scan
- Existing and Projected Conditions Technical Memorandum
- Needs and Objectives Technical Memorandum
- Improvement Options Technical Memorandum
- Informational Meeting Presentations
- Public Draft Corridor Planning Study Report
- Final Corridor Planning Study Report

2.6. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY

Electronic copies of study deliverables and technical memorandums will be posted on the study website. Additionally, hard copy materials may also be made available at the following locations:

- **City of Great Falls** – Planning and Community Development Department
#2 Park Drive South
PO Box 5021
Great Falls, MT 59403
- **Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)** – Great Falls District
200 Smelter Avenue NE
PO Box 1359
Great Falls, MT 59403-1359

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

Great Falls, MDT, and RPA attempt to provide accommodation 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 a least 48 hours prior to the scheduled activity and/or meeting.

3.0 MEETINGS

The I-15 Corridor Study will require various planning and informational meetings. The following sections will describe the various functions that each meeting type will serve.

3.1. ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Advisory Committee meetings will be scheduled every 4 weeks over the 12-month study period. Groups included in the meetings will be the Great Falls MPO, MDT, FHWA, RPA, and others as appropriate. The meetings will track progress and address study development issues and questions. The meetings are important for the exchange of technical information and ideas during the development of the study. Throughout the meetings, the Advisory Committee will identify and discuss issues, problems, and possible solutions.

The Advisory Committee will consider all public comments received for the duration of the study. All comments received from the public will be considered. Public comments received on the draft report during the public comment period will be logged into a public comment matrix for consideration by the Advisory Committee. Written responses will not be offered to the individual making the comment unless a specific question response is warranted. Following publication of the draft report, an additional public comment matrix will be created to log public comments received specific to the draft report. The matrix will contain written responses as applicable. All public comments received, and any provided responses, will be duly considered and placed in the appendices to the final report.

3.2. INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS

Two informational meetings will take place in Great Falls during the study. The first informational meeting will occur following evaluation of the existing conditions of the study area. The meeting will focus on introducing the study, presenting existing conditions, and discussing preliminary issues and concerns within the study area. The meeting will allow members of the public to provide information about the needs and constraints of the corridor.

The second informational meeting will occur following completion of the draft *I-15 Corridor Study* report. The purpose of this meeting will be to present the draft report and to discuss the recommended improvement options. Members of the public will be encouraged to provide feedback on the draft report.

Comments will be considered throughout the planning process. An official comment period will be provided after the release of the draft report. Additionally, RPA staff will record comments and concerns at all meetings for consideration throughout the planning process.

3.3. RESOURCE AGENCY MEETING/INVOLVEMENT

A resource agency meeting will be scheduled and held at the MDT Planning office in Helena. Polycom arrangements will be provided at the MDT Great Falls District Office, as appropriate. The purpose of the meeting will be to present the findings of the draft *Environmental Scan* developed by MDT. The resource agencies will be asked to help identify initial avoidance areas, mitigation needs, and opportunities.

3.4. CONSIDERATIONS FOR TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

Additional efforts are necessary to involve traditionally underserved segments of the population, including the disabled, minorities, and low-income residents. Including these groups helps to ensure planning that reflects everyone's needs. The following steps will help with these efforts:

- **Plan meeting locations carefully:** Hold informational meetings in locations that are accessible and compliant with ADA. If a targeted population is located in a certain geographic part of a city or county, then the meeting location should be close to the area for convenience.
- **Seek help from community leaders and organizations:** To facilitate involvement of traditionally underserved populations, consult with community leaders and organizations representing these groups about the most effective ways to reach their members.
- **Be sensitive to diverse audiences:** At informational meetings, study partner staff and RPA will attempt to communicate as effectively as possible. Presenters will avoid using technical jargon, and staff will wear appropriate dress and adhere to common rules of conduct.

3.5. STUDY SCHEDULE

Adherence to the study schedule is important to stay on track and to keep all participating parties engaged. **Figure 2** contains the study schedule for the *I-15 Corridor Study*. It is RPA’s intent to adhere to this schedule.

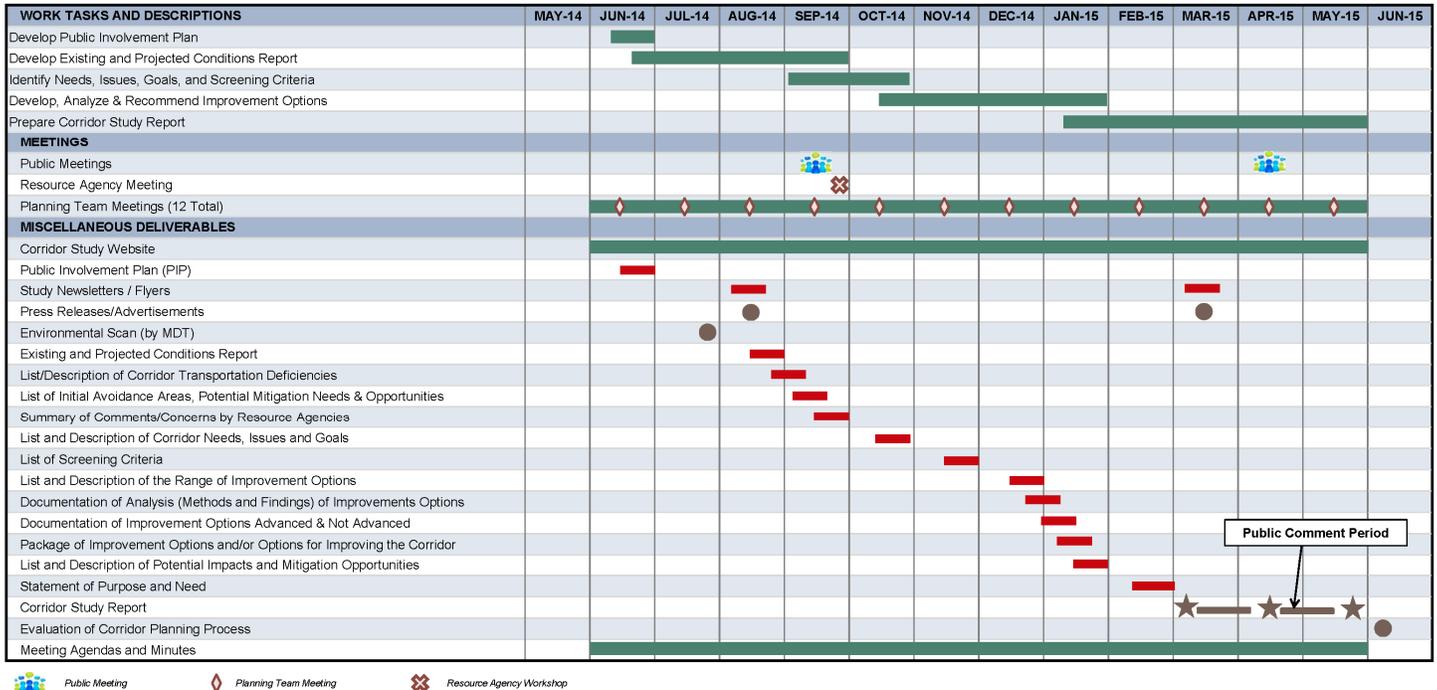


Figure 2: Study Schedule

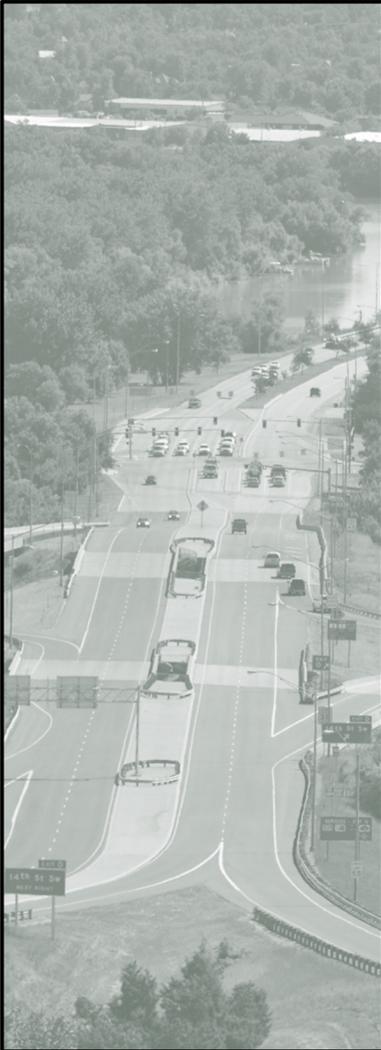
4.0 OVERALL STUDY COMMUNICATION

The PAIP establishes guidelines and procedures for encouraging participation. The following communication strategies and techniques will be used to distribute study information to the community at large and to seek a higher level of engagement. RPA will apply the techniques that best suit the *I-15 Corridor Study* development.

- All relevant deliverables and associated materials will be posted on the study website at the following address: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15/>
- Public service announcements and interviews on radio and television may be conducted to explain the subject matter and promote participation.
- Newsletters will be provided at least one month before each informational meeting.
- Press releases for the newspaper or other widely circulated publications will be developed.
- Technical memorandums will be provided to MDT for posting to the study’s internet site. They will also be distributed to the Advisory Committee to provide a better understanding of proposed issues and recommendations and, in return, to provide the study partners with feedback and an opportunity for continual comment.
- Hard copies of all materials can be made available at the locations described previously, as well as at the MDT Statewide and Urban Planning Section (2960 Prospect Avenue).
- Upon request, special presentations may be made to groups and organizations.
- Fact sheets may be developed to help explain or describe study-related issues.

- Special issues documents may be announced or reported on at meetings and/or via email.

Questions and comments from interested parties concerning the participation process, working draft technical memorandums, the draft *I-15 Corridor Study* documents, and other work products will be included in an appendix to the actual documents.



INFORMATIONAL MEETING 1

October 29, 2014

October 17, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:

Lori Ryan, Public Information Officer, MDT, (406) 444-6821

Meeting slated to discuss I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction Corridor Study

Great Falls – 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 in the Great Falls area. The study will examine I-15 through Great Falls between Gore Hill and Emerson Junction interchanges, as well as I-315 and 10th Avenue South west of the Missouri River.

An informational meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m., Wednesday, October 29 in the Gibson Room of the Great Falls Civic Center, 2 Park Drive South, Great Falls, MT. The project scope and purpose of the study will be presented followed by time for comments and questions. The project team will also be available for one-on-one discussions after the meeting. MDT is interested in gathering public input on the existing conditions and concerns within the corridor relevant to the planning effort.

The *I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction Corridor Planning Study* is a pre-environmental study that allows for early planning-level coordination with the public, stakeholders and environmental resource agencies. The goal of the study is to identify short- and long-term improvements to address safety, geometric and environmental concerns based on the needs presented. The study will help ensure an efficient transition from transportation planning to future project development/environmental review, if any, based on need and funding availability. This planning-level study is not a design or construction project.

The purpose of the meeting is to inform interested parties about the scope and purpose of the planning study, to solicit input on the existing conditions, and to understand roadway concerns within the study area that may be relevant to the planning effort.

Community input is a very important part of the process, and interested parties are encouraged to attend and participate. Comments and concerns may be submitted in writing at the meeting, by mail to Corrina Collins,



Informational Meeting

**Discuss the I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Jct. Corridor Planning Study
Wed., October 29, 2014 6:00 p.m.
Great Falls Civic Center
Gibson Room
2 Park Drive South, Great Falls, MT**

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 study will examine I-15 through Great Falls between Gore Hill and Emerson Junction interchanges, as well as I-315 and 10th Avenue South west of the Missouri River. The I-15 Corridor Planning Study is a planning-level study and is not a design or construction project.

More information is available at
www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15

Interested parties are encouraged to join the study mailing list by submitting their names and contact information to Scott Randall at: scottr@rpa-hln.com.

The purpose of the meeting is to inform interested parties about the scope and purpose of the planning study, to solicit input on the existing conditions, and to understand roadway concerns within the study area that may be relevant to the planning effort.

The meeting is open to the public and attendance is encouraged. MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person's participation in any department service, program or activity. For reasonable accommodations to participate in this meeting, please contact Scott Randall at (406) 447-5000 at least two days before the meeting. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or (800) 335-7592, or Montana Relay at 711. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request.

Comments may be submitted in writing at the meeting, by mail to Corrina Collins, Project Manager, MDT Statewide and Urban Planning, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT. 59620-1001, or online at:
www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment_form.shtml



INFORMATIONAL MEETING

I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction Corridor Planning Study

WELCOME



Pre-NEPA/MEPA Planning Studies

- ⇒ Are based on existing social, economic, environmental and roadway data and available reports
- ⇒ Are a “high level scan” of the study area
- ⇒ Define transportation issues/areas of concern
- ⇒ Consider social, economic and environmental constraints at an early stage
- ⇒ Identify cost-effective and feasible strategies
- ⇒ Provide opportunities for early and continuous community involvement

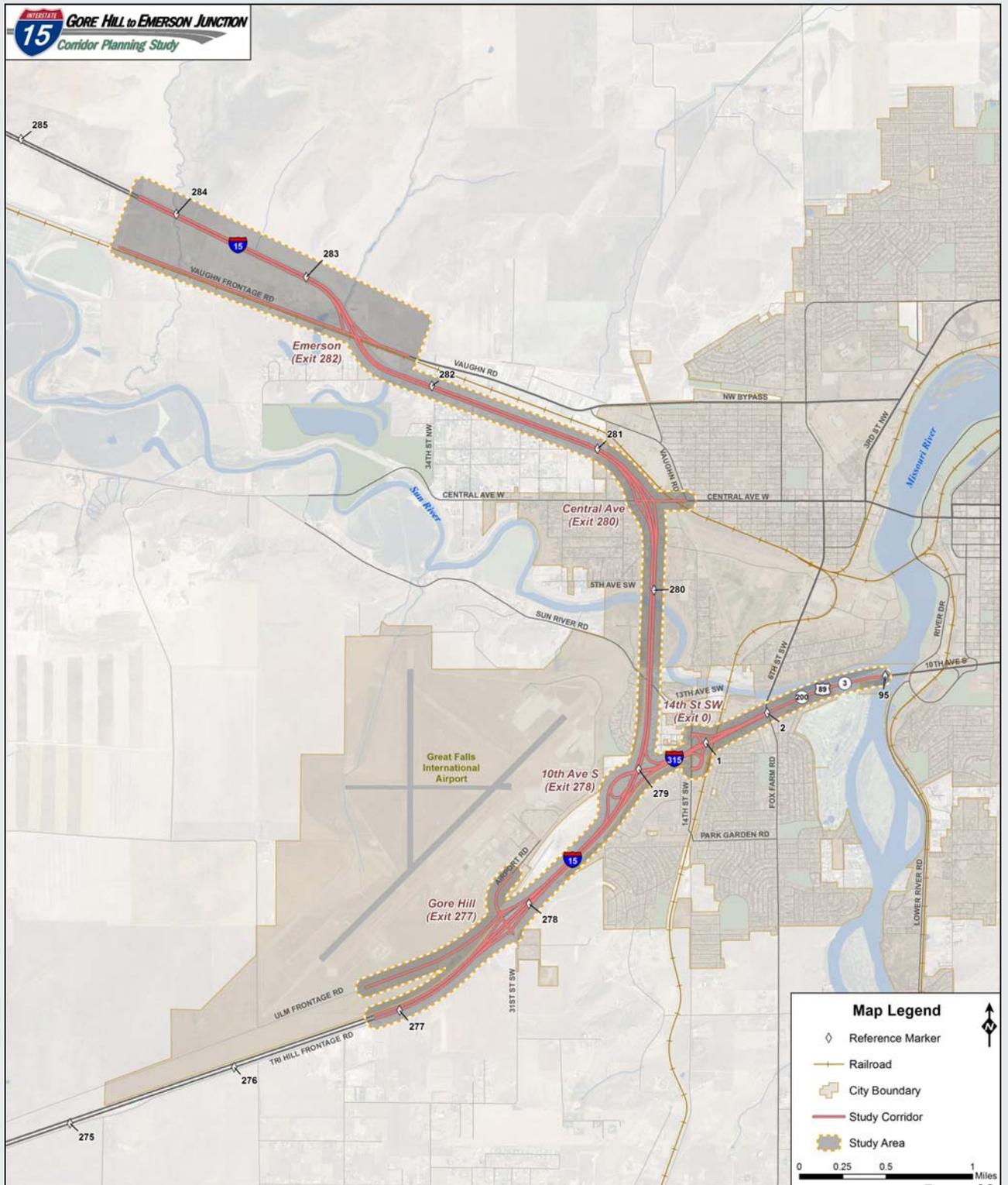
- ⇒ Are **not** a NEPA/MEPA study or environmental review
- ⇒ Are **not** a preliminary engineering or final design report
- ⇒ Are **not** a construction or maintenance project
- ⇒ Are **not** a right-of-way acquisition project

INFORMATIONAL MEETING

I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction Corridor Planning Study



Study Area





Existing Conditions—Key Findings

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.
- ⇒ A segment of I-15 currently has poor surfacing conditions. A resurfacing project is planned for this location in 2016.

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.

Interchanges

- ⇒ Seven of eight interchange on-ramps do not appear to meet current standards for acceleration length.
- ⇒ Three of seven interchange off-ramps do not appear to meet current standards for deceleration length.
- ⇒ Spacing between the 10th Avenue South and 14th Street SW Interchanges does not appear to meet current 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 CONSIDERATION

Physical Environment

- ⇒ 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.

Biological Environment

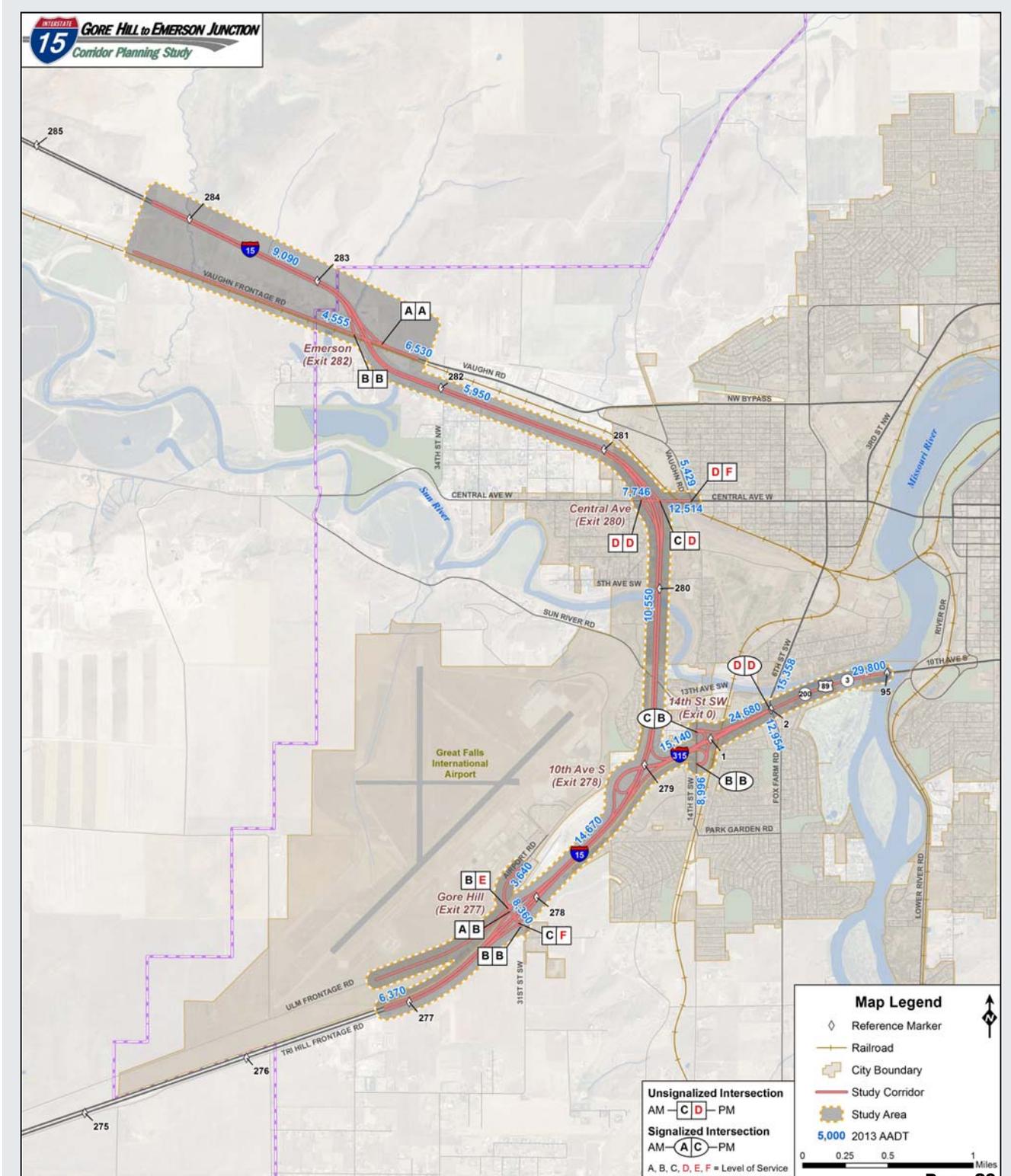
- ⇒ Thirty-nine animal carcasses were recorded over the past ten years.
- ⇒ Five threatened and endangered species are listed for Cascade County. No recorded observations are documented within the study area.

Social and Cultural Environment

- ⇒ There are recreational resources and historic age properties located within the study area.
- ⇒ The Missouri River/Warden Bridge is listed as a historic property.

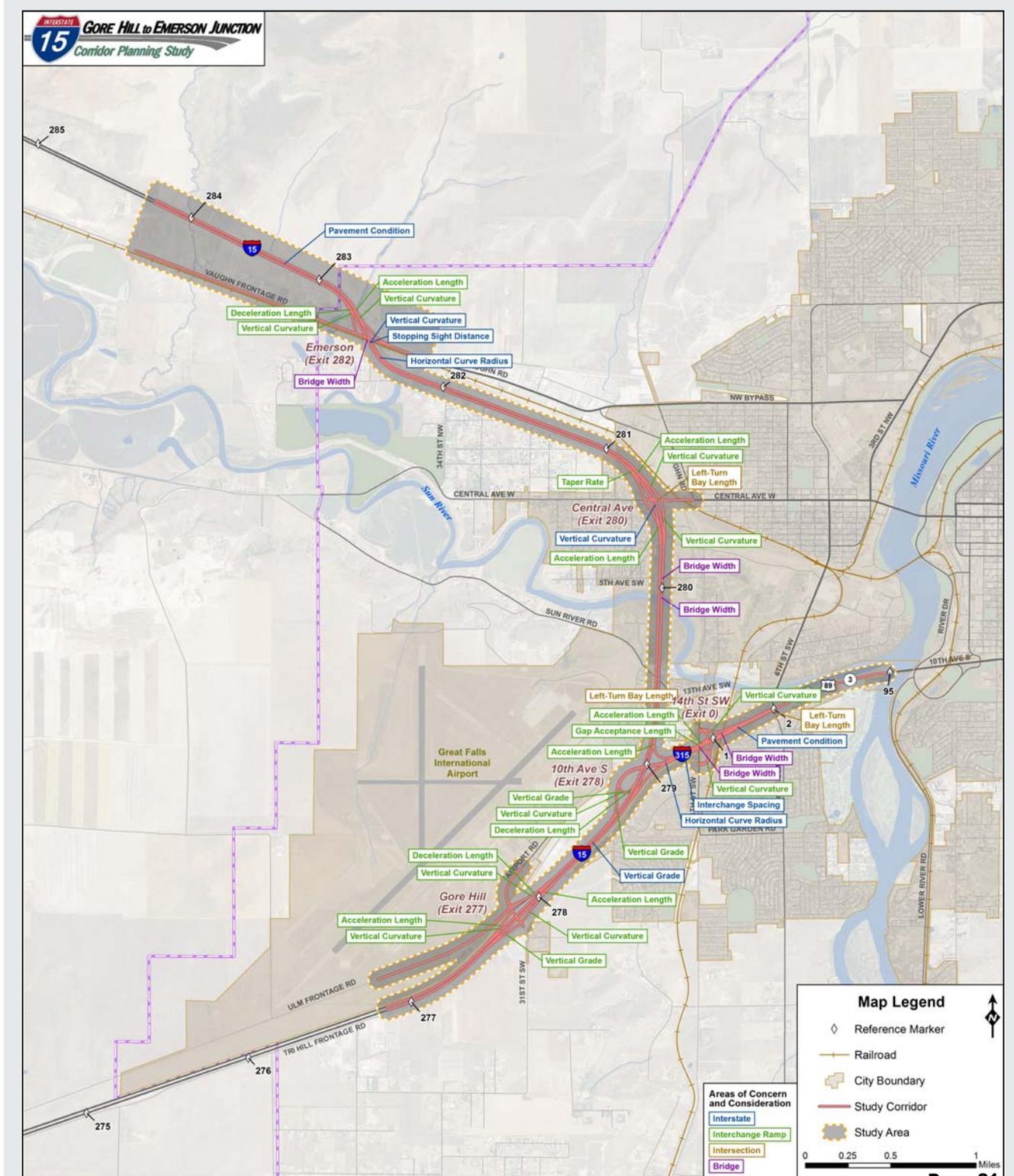


Existing Traffic Conditions



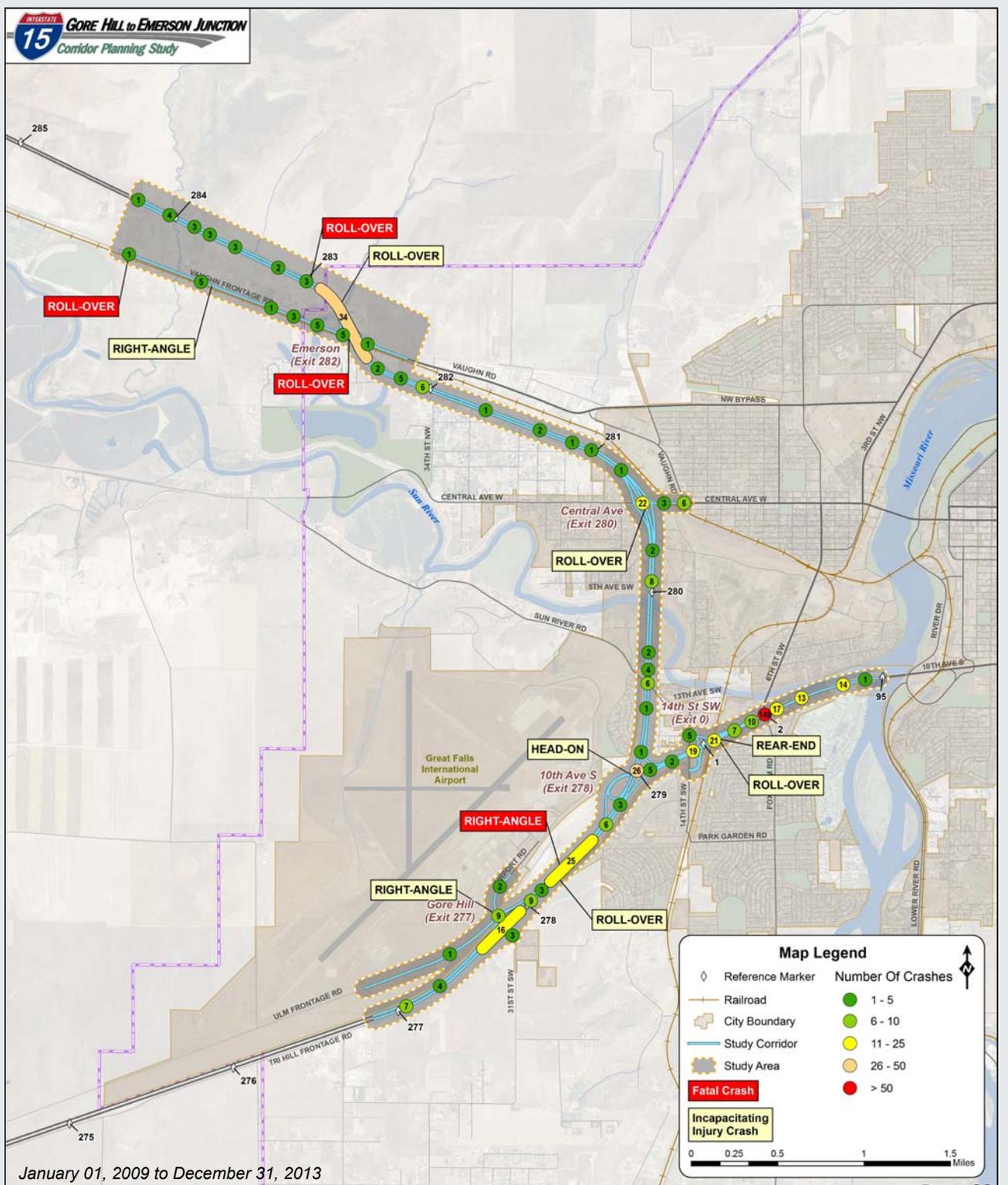


Areas of Concern and Consideration





Crash Locations





I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction

Corridor Planning Study

10-29-2014

Informational Meeting No. 1

Welcome and Introductions

2

- **Introductions**

- **Partners**
 - ▣ MDT
 - ▣ FHWA
 - ▣ City of Great Falls
 - ▣ Cascade County

- **Consultant team**



Meeting Outline

3

- Title VI considerations
- What is a corridor planning study?
- Study area boundary
- Study schedule
- Study background
- Transportation system
- Environmental setting
- Conclusion and next steps

Title VI Considerations

4

This meeting is held pursuant to Title VI of the 1964 Civil Right Act which ensures that no person shall, as provided by Federal and State Civil Rights law, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination on the basis of a protected status during any MDT project.

Further information is available in Title VI pamphlets available at the sign-in table.

What is a Corridor Planning Study?

5

- **Corridor planning studies:**
 - ▣ Are a “high level scan”
 - ▣ Define transportation issues/areas of concern
 - ▣ Consider social, economic, and environmental effects at an early stage
 - ▣ Identify cost-effective and feasible strategies
 - ▣ Provide a level of analysis that can support informed and sustainable decisions
 - ▣ Provide opportunities for early and continuous involvement

What a Corridor Planning Study is Not

6

- **A corridor planning study is not:**
 - ▣ An environmental compliance document
 - ▣ A preliminary or final design project
 - ▣ A construction or maintenance project
 - ▣ A right-of-way acquisition project

Goal and Purpose of Study

7

- Engage constituents early and often!
- Identify potential impacts and constraints
- Identify needs and objectives
- Identify short-range and long-range improvements
- Develop planning level cost estimates
- Develop information and data to be forwarded into the environmental process if a project moves forward from the study (dependent on available funds)

8

Study Background

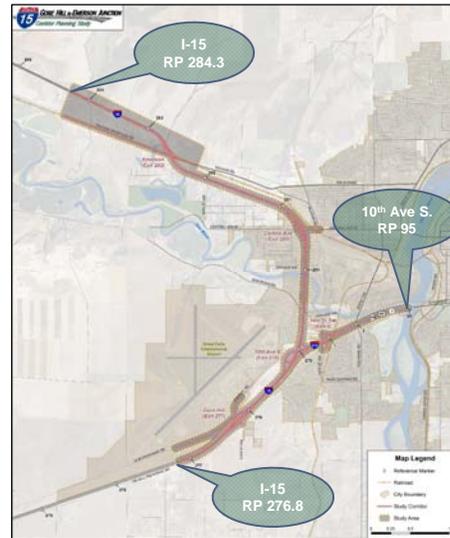
Study Area

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- **Interstate 15**
 - ▣ South of Gore Hill
 - ▣ North of Emerson Junction

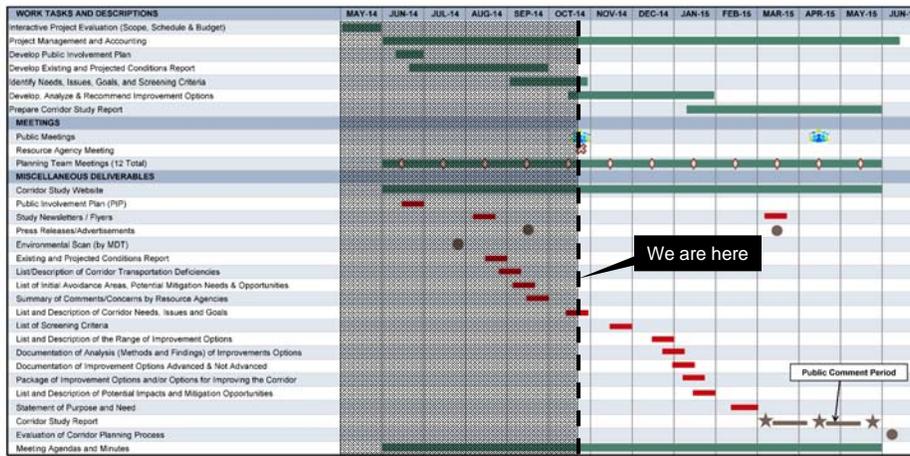
- **Interstate 315**

- **10th Avenue South**
 - ▣ West of Missouri River



Study Schedule

10



Public Involvement Activities

11

- Two informational meetings
 - ▣ October 29, 2014
 - ▣ Spring, 2015
- Outreach to interested parties, stakeholders, resource agencies, as warranted
- Study newsletters
- Website
 - ▣ <http://mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15>
- Other as needed



Identified Stakeholder Groups

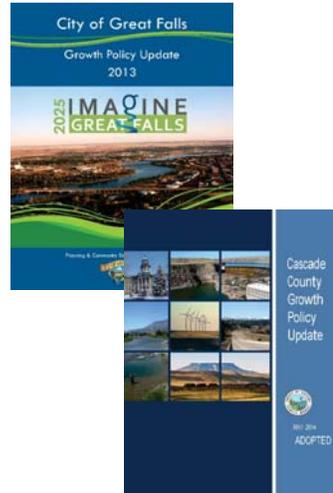
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- Great Falls Air National Guard
- Malmstrom Air Force Base
- Great Falls International Airport Authority
- Great Falls Policy Coordinating Committee
- Great Falls Transportation Technical Advisory Committee
- Great Falls Northern Industrial Task Force
- Others as Requested

Local Planning

13

- **Review past, current, and future planning documents:**
 - Great Falls Area Long Range Transportation Plan - 2014
 - Cascade County Growth Policy Update (2014)
 - City of Great Falls Growth Policy Update (2013)
 - Great Falls International Airport Master Plan (Ongoing)
 - Great Falls Transit Development Plan (2010)



Planned Projects

14

- **Emerson Junction to Manchester**
 - Major rehabilitation of I-15 beginning at RP 282.54 and ending at 286.42
- **Bridge Preservation, Great Falls IM**
 - Bridge deck preservation on I-15 and I-315 at RP 208.60

15

Transportation System

Physical Characteristics

16

- **Interstate 15**
 - 65 mph speed limit
 - 4 interchanges
- **Interstate 315**
 - 55 - 45 mph speed limit
 - 1 interchange
 - Ends at Fox Farm Rd
- **10th Ave S**
 - West of Missouri River
 - 45 mph speed limit



Area Features

17

- **Land Use**
 - Private and public
 - Mix of urban and rural
- **Railroad**
 - Interstate crosses railroad at 2 locations
- **Airport**
 - Great Falls International Airport
 - Accessed primarily by Gore Hill Interchange



Bridges

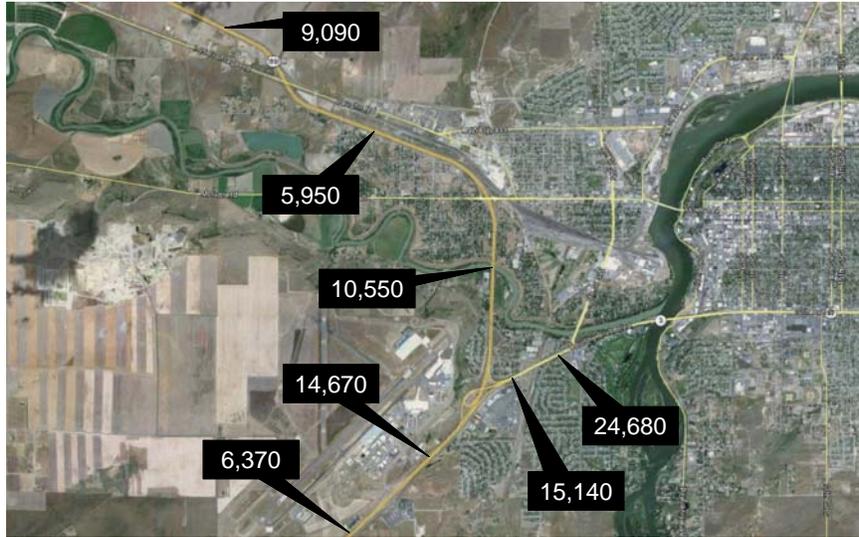
18

	Location	Feature Crossed	Year Built	Width (ft)	Length (ft)	Structure Condition	Deck Condition
I-15	RP 279.35 (NB)	Sun River	1966	28 ^(a)	485	Good	Good
	RP 279.35 (SB)	Sun River	1966	28 ^(a)	485	Good	Good
	RP 279.47 (NB)	5th Ave SW	1967	37 ^(a)	125	Good	Good
	RP 279.47 (SB)	5th Ave SW	1967	37 ^(a)	125	Good	Good
	RP 281.91 (NB)	Vaughn Rd / BNSF RR	1967	28 ^(a)	354	Good	Fair-1
	RP 281.91 (SB)	Vaughn Rd / BNSF RR	1967	28 ^(a)	359	Good	Fair-1
	RP 283.6	Access Rd	1960	126	18	Good	Good
I-315	RP 0.01	I-15	1967	45	294	Good	Fair-1
	RP 0.34 (EB)	14th St SW	1967	36 ^(a)	150	Good	Fair-2
	RP 0.34 (WB)	14th St SW	1967	45	145	Good	Fair-1
	RP 0.34 (EB Off)	14th St SW	1997	23	136	Good	Good
	RP 1.06 (EB)	BNSF RR	1946	45	178	Good	Fair-2
	RP 1.06 (WB)	BNSF RR	1967	37 ^(a)	208	Good	Fair-2
	RP 1.06 (WB Off)	BNSF RR	1996	23	186	Good	Good
Central Ave	RP 0.16 (EB)	BNSF RR	1967	27	551	Good	Fair-1
	RP 0.16 (WB)	BNSF RR	1967	27	551	Good	Fair-1
10th Ave S	RP 94.61 (EB)	Missouri River	1983	40	2122	Good	Fair-1
	RP 94.61 (WB)	Missouri River	1951	28	2093	Good	Good

Source: MDT Bridge Management System, 2014
^(a) Width less than 38 feet on the Interstate System

Existing AADT - Interstate

19



Existing AADT - Non-Interstate

20



Historic AADT Trends

21

Location		2013 AADT	1994-2013	2000-2013	2007-2013
I-15	S of Gore Hill	6,370	1.4%	0.4%	0.1%
I-15	N of Gore Hill	14,670	1.6%	1.3%	-0.1%
I-15	N of 10th Ave	10,550	1.5%	1.3%	0.3%
I-15	N of Central Ave	5,950	1.2%	0.5%	-1.8%
I-15	N of Emerson	9,090	0.9%	0.1%	-1.2%
I-315	W of 14th St SW	15,140	(a)	(a)	0.8%
I-315	W of Fox Farm	24,680	4.2%	1.8%	0.1%
31st St SW	S of Interchange	8,360	5.6%	4.7%	-0.8%
Airport Dr	N of Interchange	3,640	-0.1%	0.7%	2.3%
10th Ave S	Warden Bridge	29,800	1.5%	1.5%	0.4%
Central Ave	E of Interchange	12,514	0.0%	0.5%	3.0%
Central Ave	W of Interchange	7,746	0.6%	1.5%	4.4%
Vaughn Rd	E of Interchange	6,530	0.0%	-0.4%	1.5%
Vaughn Rd	W of Interchange	4,555	0.4%	0.7%	7.4%

Source: MDT Data and Statistics Bureau, Traffic Data Collection Section, 2014

(a) Data unavailable

Projected AADT

22

Location		2013 AADT	Traffic Model Projected AAGR (a)	2035 Projected AADT
I-15	S of Gore Hill	6,370	0.9%	7,681
I-15	N of Gore Hill	14,670	1.9%	22,358
I-15	N of 10th Ave	10,550	2.1%	16,693
I-15	N of Central Ave	5,950	0.6%	6,804
I-15	N of Emerson	9,090	0.9%	10,998
I-315	W of 14th St SW	15,140	0.8%	17,979
I-315	W of Fox Farm	24,680	0.7%	28,546
31st St SW	S of Interchange	8,360	2.3%	13,678
Airport Dr	N of Interchange	3,640	4.6%	9,887
10th Ave S	Warden Bridge	29,800	0.7%	34,630
Central Ave	E of Interchange	12,514	2.4%	21,270
Central Ave	W of Interchange	7,746	0.1%	7,974
Vaughn Rd	E of Interchange	6,530	1.4%	8,835
Vaughn Rd	W of Interchange	4,555	1.1%	5,762

(a) Average Annual Growth Rates calculated from traffic model developed for Great Falls Area LRTP - 2014

Mainline Interstate

23

- Mainline traffic meets LOS performance standards
- One vertical grade does not appear to meet current standards
- Two horizontal curves do not appear to meet current standards
 - ▣ Radius
- Two vertical curves do not appear to meet current standards
 - ▣ Curvature
 - ▣ Stopping sight distance



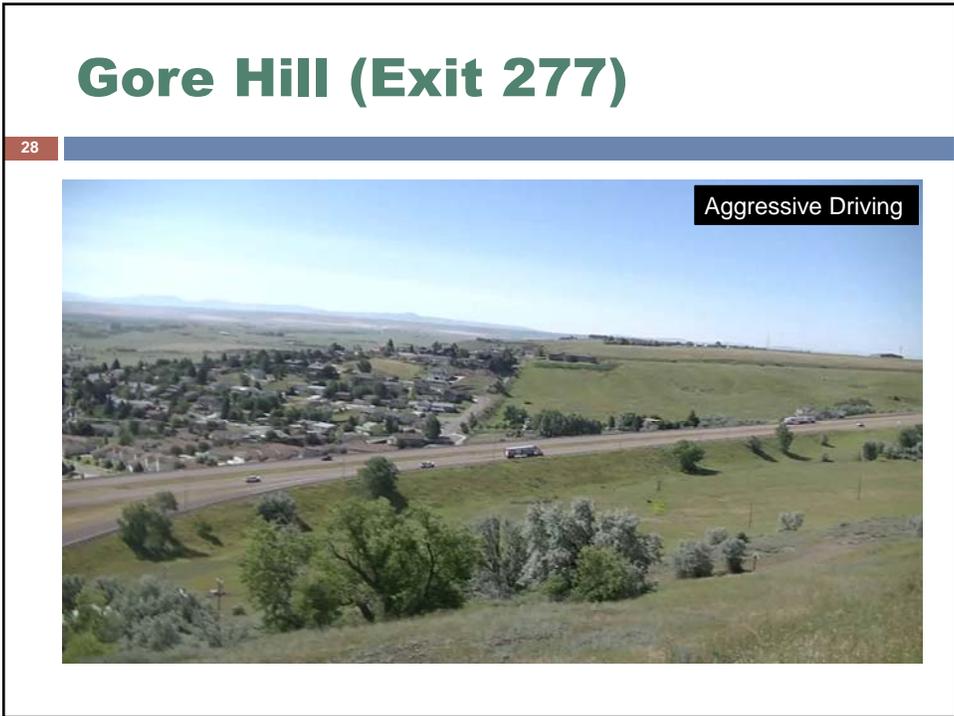
Interchanges

24

- Interchange traffic meets LOS performance standards
- 7 of 8 on-ramps do not appear to meet current standards
 - ▣ Acceleration length
- 3 of 7 off-ramps do not appear to meet current standards
 - ▣ Deceleration length
- Spacing between 10th Ave S and 14th St SW does not appear to meet current interchange spacing standards



27 **Driver Interaction Videos**



Weaving / Merging / Diverging

29



Weaving / Merging / Diverging

30



Weaving / Merging / Diverging

31



32

Environmental Setting

Environmental Resources

33

- Land Ownership
- **Soil Resources and Prime Farmland**
- Geologic Resources
- **Water Resources**
- Wetlands
- **Floodplains and Floodways**
- Hazardous Substances
- Air Quality
- Noise
- **Visual Resources**
- **Biological Resources**
- Vegetation
- **Cultural and Archaeological Resources**
- Social

Soil Resources and Prime Farmland

34

- Based on Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) soil survey
 - Prime if irrigated farmlands are found between RP 278.8-279.0 and 280.5-284.3
 - Farmlands of statewide importance are found between RP 266.8-278.0, 279.5-280.5, and 282.5-284.3



Water Resources

35

- Numerous drainage crossings
- Bridge across Sun River (RP 279.35)
- Steel drainage culvert (RP 283.4)
- Wetlands - delineated if and when a project is identified and advances



Floodplains and Floodways

36

- Avoid adverse impact to floodplains to the extent possible



Visual Resources

37

- Landscape character
- Visual Integrity
- Scenic Integrity
- Landscape visibility



Biological Resources

38

- Fish and Wildlife
- Vegetation



Fish and Wildlife

39

Cascade County

- **Canada Lynx**
 - ▣ Threatened
- **Red Knot**
 - ▣ Proposed
- **Wolverine***
 - ▣ Proposed
- **Sprague's Pipit**
 - ▣ Candidate
- **Whitebark Pine**
 - ▣ Candidate

**No longer proposed for listing*

Study Area

- No record of any threatened or endangered species found within the study area boundary^(a)
- No species of concern were found within the study area boundary^(a)

^(a)Montana Natural Heritage Program - Natural Heritage Map Viewer (report generated May 15, 2014)

Fisheries

40

- Missouri and Sun Rivers listed as a substantial fishery resources
- Common fish species
 - ▣ Brown trout
 - ▣ Longnose sucker
 - ▣ Longnose dace
 - ▣ Stonecat
 - ▣ Walleye
 - ▣ White sucker



Cultural and Archaeological Resources

41

□ Parks

- ▣ Westside Viaduct Park
- ▣ West Hill Park

□ Historic properties

- ▣ Missouri River Bridge
- ▣ At least 33 historic aged properties



42

Conclusion and Next Steps

Areas of Concern Summary

43

- **Bridges**
 - Bridges with narrow widths
- **Mainline Interstate**
 - Existing geometrics
- **Interchanges**
 - Ramp length
 - Spacing
- **Intersections**
 - Traffic operation
 - Queue lengths
- **Safety**
 - Four fatal, eight incapacitating injury
 - Fix object collision trend
- **Physical Environment**
 - Farmlands
 - Water resources
 - Parks & historic properties
- **Biological Environment**
 - Threatened and endangered species



Next Steps

44

- Continue study coordination and outreach
- Finalize Environmental Scan
- Finalize Existing and Projected Conditions Report
- Continue analysis of transportation needs
- Identify potential improvement options
- Draft corridor study report

Conclusion

45

- Questions, answers and/or comments
 - ▣ Study website:
<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15>
 - ▣ Study newsletters:
 - ▣ Study Contact
Corrina Collins
MT Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620-1001
P.O. Box 201001
(406) 444-9131
ccollins@mt.gov

15
GORE HILL to EMERSON JUNCTION
Corridor Planning Study

1
September 2014

this issue

- Study Description
- What is a Corridor Planning Study?
- Initial Considerations
- Study Structure
- Public Involvement Opportunities

Next Issue

Study Structure

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 for I-15 and I-215 in the Great Falls Area. The 2014 Great Falls Area Long Range Transportation Plan (L RTP) identified the need for an Interstate Corridor Study. The L RTP states that, "due to the need for improvements to both Emerson Junction and Open Hill Interchanges and other identified needs for additional and operational improvements on I-15 and I-215, an Interstate Corridor Study for the Great Falls area is recommended."

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 Act (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 opportunities for improvements, if any, that are feasible, and to support the study.

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 of a project in the future 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

Great Falls, Montana
Wednesday, September 10, 2014
10:00 AM
Great Falls Civic Center
1000 1st Street South

Purpose: Informational meeting at a meeting in person and online. The meeting will provide an overview of the study process and the study's goals and objectives. The meeting will be held in person at 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

MDT

SIGN-IN SHEET

Informational Meeting #1 – October 29, 2014

Name	Address	Email
Scott Randall	825 Custer, Helena	SCOTT@RPA-HUN.COM
JICKI CRZNICH	2701 PROSPECT HELENA	JCRZNICH@MT.GOV
Corina Collins	1701 Prospect, Helena	ccollins@mt.gov
Melissa Peterson	5291 FOX Farm Rd	
Bill Bronson	733-32nd Ave. N.E. Great Falls 59404	bill.bronson@bresnacn.net
Andrew Finch	City of Great Falls	aefineli@greatfallsmt.net
Chris Ward	3621 7th Ave S	christopher.ward@g.com
PATRICIA Zendejas-Feist	1100 23rd Ave. SW Great Falls	Patti.Feist@gmail.com
Jane Weber	325 2nd Ave N GF	jweber@cascaletecountymt.gov
Kenny Gray	2201 47 th N. SW	kenny@ehsiamt.com
Adam & Taha Smith	4900 Fox Farm Rd	
Bob & Gloria Small	31 Commonwealth Cat Falls	randt.smith@hellemail.com
Shane Forsythe	825 Custer, Helena	Shane@RPA-HUN.com

Meeting Minutes

Informational Meeting – Number 1

DETAILS

Location: Great Falls Civic Center, Gibson Room
2 Park Drive South, Great Falls, MT

Date: October 29th, 2014

Time: 6:00 PM – 7:00PM

MEETING NOTIFICATION

A press release for the meeting was released to area media outlets on October 14th. Display ads were printed in the Great Falls Tribune on October 19th and October 26th. Information about the meeting was posted to the study website: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15/>

ATTENDANCE

There was a total attendance of approximately 18 people at the meeting. Thirteen people signed the sign in sheet (see attached), while others were present who did not sign in. The following Advisory Committee Members attended the meeting:

- Steve Prinzing (MDT)
- James Combs (MDT)
- Corrina Collins (MDT)
- Vicki Crnich (MDT)
- Commissioner Fred Burow (City of Great Falls)
- Andrew Finch (City of Great Falls)
- Scott Randall (RPA)
- Shane Forsythe (RPA)

AGENDA

The first informational meeting for the I-15 Corridor Study was held on Thursday, October 29, 2014. The purpose of the meeting was to inform interested parties about the scope and purpose of the planning study, to solicit input on the existing conditions, and to understand roadway concerns within the study area that may be relevant to the planning effort. The meeting began at 6:00 PM and concluded at 7:00 PM.

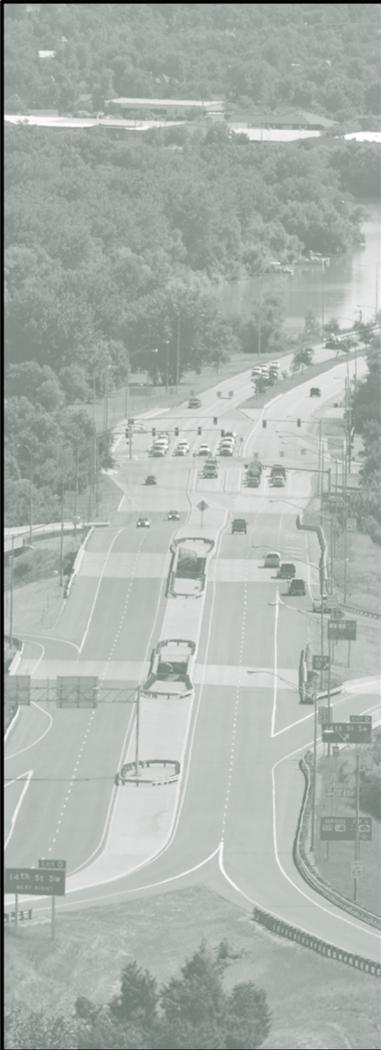
Meeting minutes are intended to capture the general content of meeting discussions and to document comments made by attendees. Meeting minutes may include opinions provided by attendees; no guarantees are made as to the accuracy of these statements and no fact checking of specific statements is provided or implied from the publishing of final meeting minutes.

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING #1

Scott Randall provided a 30-minute PowerPoint presentation focused on the purposes of a corridor planning study and the existing and projected conditions analysis of the study area. After the presentation, attendees were asked for questions and comments. In addition, comment sheets were available for all member of the audience. A summary of the comments and questions received during the meeting is presented below:

- Are we recommending a new connection across the Missouri River (i.e. Great Falls South Arterial)? A new connection across the river is needed.
- What is going on along Fox Farm Road? Is the road being reconstructed?
- What were some of the recommendations coming out of the Great Falls Transportation Plan that fall in the study area?
- A full movement interchange at Emerson Junction is important for the Great Falls Community.
- Have there been any issues with large trucks at the Gore Hill Interchange, particularly with difficult turning movements?
- Concern was expressed about difficult sight lines at the Central interchange. Additionally, it was stated that the channelization at the interchange can be confusing.
- When did design standards change? Why do segments of the corridor not meet standards?
- Did we look at the origin of drivers with our safety analysis? Are there crash trends related to out of town drivers or local drivers?
- What are some of the possible funding sources for projects that are identified by this study?

After concluding the question/answer portion of the meeting, the attendees were invited to review the displays and ask any further questions. The meeting concluded at 7:00 PM.



INFORMATIONAL MEETING 2

May 28, 2015

May 18, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:

Lori Ryan, Public Information Officer, MDT, (406) 444-6821

MDT to present recommendations for I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson
Junction Corridor Study

Great Falls – 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 in the Great Falls area. The study examines I-15 through Great Falls between the Gore Hill and Emerson Junction interchanges, as well as I-315 and 10th Avenue South west of the Missouri River.

The second informational meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m., Thursday, May 28 in the Gibson Room of the Great Falls Civic Center, 2 Park Drive South. The meeting will be in open-house format. A presentation will begin at 6 p.m., followed by a question and answer period..

The purpose of the meeting is to present the recommended improvement options developed for the corridor and to gather community feedback on the draft corridor planning study report. Beginning on May 22, 2015, the draft corridor study report may be viewed at:

www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15

The *I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction Corridor Planning Study* is a pre-environmental study that allows for early planning-level coordination with the public, stakeholders and environmental resource agencies. The goal of the study is to identify short- and long-term improvements to address safety, operational and environmental concerns based on the needs presented. The study will help ensure an efficient transition from transportation planning to future project development/environmental review, if any, based on need and funding availability. This planning-level study is not a design or construction project.

Community input is a very important part of the process, and interested parties are encouraged to attend and participate. Comments and concerns may be submitted in writing at the meeting, by mail to Corrina Collins,



Informational Meeting

**Present Recommendations for the
I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Jct.
Corridor Planning Study
Thursday, May 28, 2015 6:00 p.m.
Great Falls Civic Center
Gibson Room
2 Park Drive South, Great Falls, MT**

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 study will examine I-15 through Great Falls between Gore Hill and Emerson Junction interchanges, as well as I-315 and 10th Avenue South west of the Missouri River. The I-15 Corridor Planning Study is a planning-level study and is not a design or construction project.

The goal of the study is to identify short- and long-term improvements to address safety, operational, and environmental concerns based on the needs presented.

The purpose of the meeting is to present the recommended improvement options developed for the corridor and to gather community feedback on the draft corridor planning study report. Beginning on May 22, 2015, the draft corridor study report may be viewed at the project website:

www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15

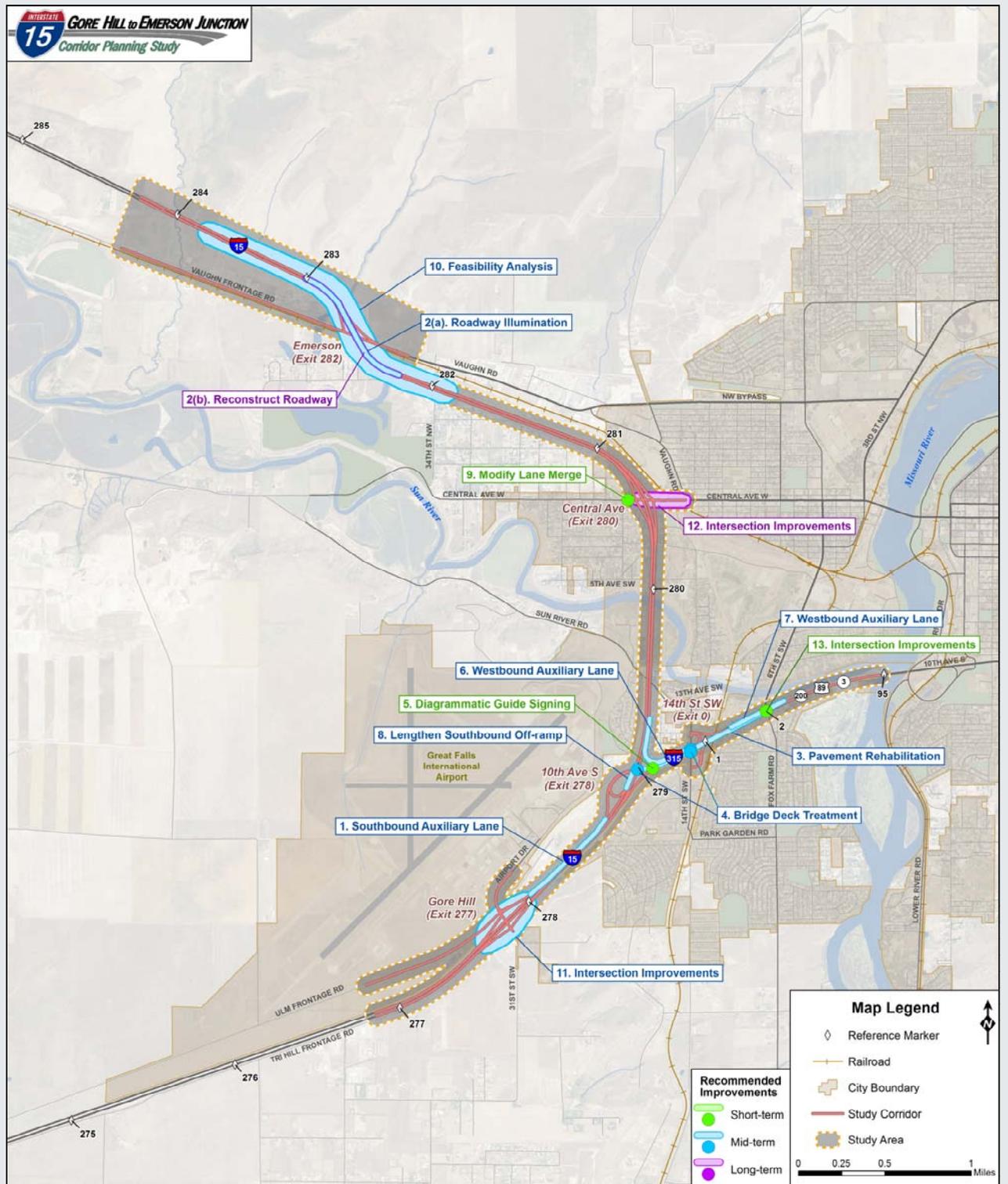
Interested parties are encouraged to join the study mailing list by submitting their names and contact information to Scott Randall at: scottr@rpa-hln.com.

The meeting is open to the public and attendance is encouraged. MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person's participation in any department service, program or activity. For reasonable accommodations to participate in this meeting, please contact Scott Randall at (406) 447-5000 at least two days before the meeting. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or (800) 335-7592, or Montana Relay at 711. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request.

Comments may be submitted in writing at the meeting, by mail to Corrina Collins, Project Manager, MDT Statewide and Urban Planning, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT. 59620-1001, or online at:
www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment_form.shtml



Recommended Improvement Options





Recommended Improvement Options

Improvement Option	Location	Description	Estimated Implementation Timeframe	Potential Funding Source	Agency Responsibility	Cost Estimate	
INTERSTATE 15							
1.0	Southbound Auxiliary Lane	RP 278.1 to 278.5	Construct auxiliary lane between Gore Hill and 10th Ave S interchanges in southbound direction.	Mid-term	NHPP HSIP	MDT	\$1.9M
2(a)	Roadway Illumination	RP 282.3 to 283.0	Install additional illumination along the Interstate.	Mid-term	NHPP HSIP	MDT	\$500k
2(b)	Reconstruction of Roadway	RP 282.3 to 283.0	Reconstruct roadway and bridge structures to meet current design standards.	Long-term	NHPP HSIP	MDT	\$24.0M
INTERSTATE 315							
3.0	Pavement Rehabilitation	RP 0.0 to 1.4	Resurface both directions of I-315.	Mid-term	NHPP	MDT	\$1.0M
4.0	Bridge Deck Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I-15 Overpass (RP 0.01) 14th St SW Overpass (EB) 14th St SW Overpass (WB) 	Rehabilitate bridge decks.	Mid-term	NHPP	MDT	\$600k
5.0	Diagrammatic Guide Signing	10th Ave S to 14th St SW	Install overhead diagrammatic guide signage for eastbound traffic.	Short-term	NHPP HSIP	MDT	\$200k
6.0	Westbound Auxiliary Lane	14th St SW to I-15	Reconstruct I-315 westbound and the I-15 on-ramp to provide an auxiliary travel lane.	Mid-term	NHPP HSIP	MDT	\$2.0M
7.0	Westbound Auxiliary Lane	Fox Farm Rd to 14th St SW	Reconstruct I-315 westbound and the Fox Farm Rd Intersection to provide an auxiliary travel lane.	Mid-term	NHPP HSIP CMAQ	MDT	\$1.2M
INTERCHANGES							
8.0	Lengthen Southbound Off-ramp	10th Ave S Interchange	Lengthen southbound off-ramp.	Mid-term	NHPP HSIP	MDT	\$260k
9.0	Modify Lane Merge	Central Ave west of Interchange	Modify signing and striping.	Short-term	STPU Local	Local	\$20k
10.0	Feasibility Analysis	Emerson Junction	Secure a local project sponsor to fund an operational analysis/feasibility study of the Emerson Junction Interchange.	Mid-term	Local Private	Local	\$250k
INTERSECTIONS							
11.0	Intersection Improvements	Gore Hill Interchange	Install additional traffic control such as roundabouts or traffic signals.	Mid-term	NHPP HSIP CMAQ	MDT	\$5.2M to \$9.0M
12.0	Intersection Improvements	Central Ave Interchange	Install additional traffic control such as roundabouts or traffic signals.	Long-term	NHPP HSIP CMAQ STPU	MDT	\$8.1M to \$10.6M
13.0	Intersection Improvements	Fox Farm Intersection	Install dual eastbound left-turn lanes.	Mid-term	NHPP CMAQ STPU	MDT	\$100k



I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction

Corridor Planning Study

5-28-2015

Informational Meeting No. 2

Welcome and Introductions

2

- **Introductions**

- **Partners**
 - ▣ MDT
 - ▣ FHWA
 - ▣ Great Falls MPO

- **Consultant team**



Meeting Outline

3

- Title VI considerations
- Corridor planning process
- Areas of concern
- Needs and objectives
- Recommended improvement options
- Next steps and conclusion

Title VI Considerations

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This meeting is held pursuant to Title VI of the 1964 Civil Right Act which ensures that no person shall, as provided by Federal and State Civil Rights law, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination on the basis of a protected status during any MDT project.

Further information is available in Title VI pamphlets available at the sign-in table.

5

Corridor Planning Process

What is a Corridor Planning Study?

6

- **Corridor planning studies:**
 - ▣ Are “high level scans”
 - ▣ Define transportation issues/areas of concern
 - ▣ Consider social, economic, and environmental effects at an early stage
 - ▣ Identify cost-effective and feasible strategies
 - ▣ Provide a level of analysis that can support informed decisions
 - ▣ Provide opportunities for early and continuous involvement

What a Corridor Planning Study is Not

7

- **A corridor planning study is not:**
 - An environmental compliance document
 - A preliminary or final design project
 - A construction or maintenance project
 - A right-of-way acquisition project

Goal and Purpose of Study

8

- Engage constituents early and often
- Identify potential impacts and constraints
- Identify needs and objectives
- Identify short-range and long-range improvements
- Develop planning level cost estimates
- Develop information and data to be forwarded into the environmental process if a project moves forward from the study (dependent on available funds)

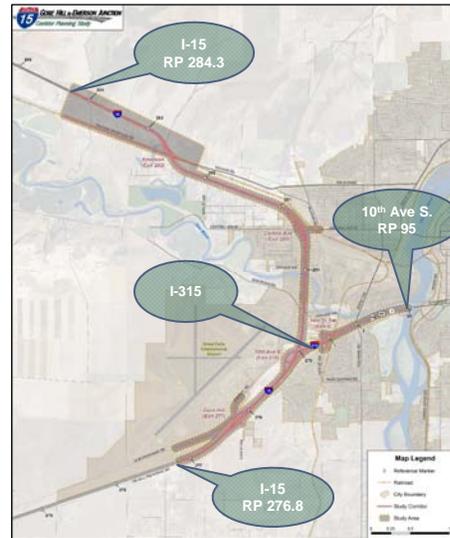
Study Area

9

- **Interstate 15**
 - ▣ South of Gore Hill
 - ▣ North of Emerson Junction

- **Interstate 315**

- **10th Avenue South**
 - ▣ West of Missouri River



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Areas of Concern

Areas of Concern

Transportation System

11

- **Bridges**
 - ▣ Width and deck condition
- **Road surfacing**
 - ▣ Pavement condition
- **Railroad**
 - ▣ Two crossings
- **Air service**
 - ▣ Access at Gore Hill



Areas of Concern

Transportation System

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- **Mainline Interstate**
 - ▣ Horizontal and vertical geometrics
- **Interchanges**
 - ▣ Ramp length
 - ▣ Interchange spacing
- **Intersections**
 - ▣ Operations (LOS)



Areas of Concern

Transportation System

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- **Safety**
 - ▣ Five-year analysis period
 - Four fatal crashes
 - Eight incapacitating injury crashes
 - ▣ Trend of fixed-object collisions



Areas of Concern

Environmental Considerations

14

- **Physical environment**
 - ▣ Land use
 - ▣ Sun River
- **Biological environment**
 - ▣ Fish, wildlife, and plants
- **Social and Cultural**
 - ▣ Historic properties
 - ▣ Parkland



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Needs and Objectives

Needs and Objectives

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Need 1: Improve the Safety of the Corridor

Objectives (To the Extent Practicable)

- ▣ Reduce the frequency and severity of crashes.
- ▣ Improve roadway elements to meet current design criteria to address identified safety concerns.
- ▣ Reduce conflicts between vehicles of varying types and speeds.
- ▣ Address identified crash trends and clusters.

Needs and Objectives

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Need 2: Accommodate Existing and Future Capacity Demands

Objectives (To the Extent Practicable)

- ▣ Maintain LOS standards for mainline segments and interchange ramps.
- ▣ Improve operations and maintain LOS standards for intersections.

Needs and Objectives

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Need 3: Provide for the Mobility of People and Freight

Objectives (To the Extent Practicable)

- ▣ Provide for the movement and transfer of people and goods.
- ▣ Maintain the roadway for effective and prompt emergency response.

Needs and Objectives

19

Other Considerations

- ▣ Environmental resource impacts of improvement options.
- ▣ Local and regional planning efforts.
- ▣ Funding availability.
- ▣ Construction feasibility and impacts.
- ▣ Security of the transportation system.

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Recommended Improvement Options

Recommended Improvement Options

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Interstate 15

1. **Southbound auxiliary lane** (RP 278.1 to 278.5)
2. **Interstate alignment** (RP 282.3 to 283.0)
 - (a) Roadway illumination
 - (b) Reconstruct roadway

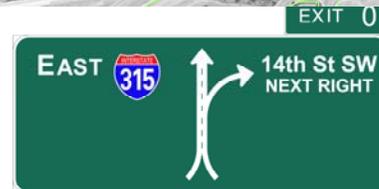


Recommended Improvement Options

22

Interstate 315

3. **Pavement rehabilitation** (RP 0.0 to 1.4)
4. **Bridge deck treatment**
5. **Diagrammatic guide signing** (10th Ave S to 14th St SW)
6. **Westbound auxiliary lane** (14th St SW to I-15)
7. **Westbound auxiliary lane** (Fox Farm Rd to 14th St SW)



Recommended Improvement Options

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Interchanges

- 8. Lengthen southbound off-ramp (10th Ave S Interchange)
- 9. Modify lane merge (West of Central Ave Interchange)
- 10. Feasibility analysis (Emerson Junction)



Recommended Improvement Options

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Interchanges

- 11. In (C)
- 12. In (C)
- 13. In (F)



Recommended Improvement Options

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Intersections

- 11. Intersection improvements (Gore Hill Interchange)
- 12. Intersection improvements (Central Ave Interchange)
- 13. Intersection improvements (Fox Farm Road Intersection)



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Next Steps and Conclusion

Next Steps

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- Receive and consider comments on draft corridor study report from:
 - ▣ Public
 - ▣ Stakeholders
 - ▣ Resource agencies
- Review with study planning team
- Prepare final corridor study report
- Post to study website, distribute, and conclude process

Comment period runs from May 22 through June 21, 2015

Implementation

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- Depends on availability of funds.
- Required steps:
 - ▣ Identify and secure a funding source(s)
 - ▣ Follow MDT guidelines for project nomination and development

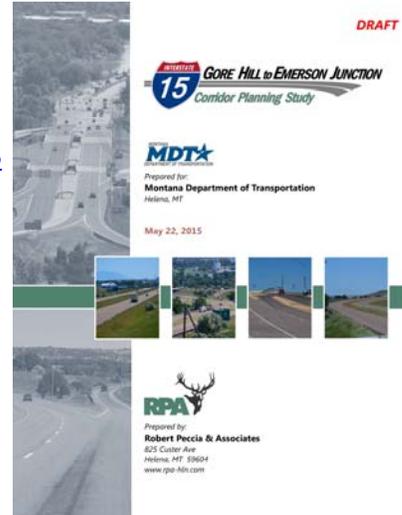
or

 - ▣ Coordinate with MDT via the System Impact Action Process (SIAP)

Conclusion

29

- Questions, answers and/or comments
 - Study website:
<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15>
 - Study newsletters
 - Study contact
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 P.O. Box 201001
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ccollins@mt.gov



SIGN-IN SHEET

Informational Meeting #2 – May 28, 2015

Name	Address	Email
Scott Randall	825 Custer, Helena	SCOTTR@RPA-HLV.COM
Shane Forsythe	825 Custer, Helena	Shane@RPA-HLV.com
Lorina Collins	MDT Helena	collins@mt.gov
MIKE SWANSON	3615 W W M. FRONTAGE RD - CHEER FANS	MIKE.SWANSON@ISTATEHILL.COM
Rickey L. YAFELT	401 17TH ST BACKLIFE MONT 59414	LINAfeLTER@msn.com
Annette Ostlie	Fedex Express	anostlie@fedex.com
Cheryl Ulmer	Junater Jan Tasker	cheryl-ulmer@tator.senate.gov
Michelle Mabe	2223 54th Ave. SW.	
Rep. Jeremy	2225 7th Ave	
Dwight Helman	1940 Airport Ct	shelman@HelmanAviation.com
JOE & JANELLE MURPHY	1502 Meadowlark Dr.	janellemurphy@bresnan.net
Andrew Finch	P.O. Box 5021	afinch@greatfallsmt.net
William Zucconi	617 Coyote Ln	WPZUCCONI@bresnan.net
Cherie Bowman-Lyons	1526C Meadowlark Drive	cherietoma@gmail.com
Tom Lyons	↓	↓
Jane Weber	325 2 Ave N.	jweber@cascadecountymt.gov
Jim Barsow	142 McCoy Rd Belt MT 59412	
Chris Ward	3624 7th Ave S GF	christopher.ward@g.com
TODD MORTAG	120 NW 2800 AIRPORT AVE B	TODD.E.MORTAG.MAIL@MIL
John Fayllmer	2800 Terminal Drive	john@Plygff.com

Meeting Minutes

Informational Meeting – Number 2

DETAILS

Location: Great Falls Civic Center, Gibson Room
2 Park Drive South, Great Falls, MT

Date: May 28th, 2015

Time: 6:00 PM – 7:00PM

MEETING NOTIFICATION

A press release for the meeting was released to area media outlets on May 15th. Display ads were printed in the Great Falls Tribune on May 10th and May 24th. An article was published by the Great Falls Tribune on May 27th. Information about the meeting was posted to the study website: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15/>

ATTENDANCE

There was a total attendance of approximately 26 people at the meeting. Twenty people signed the sign in sheet (see attached), while others were present who did not sign in. The following Advisory Committee Members attended the meeting:

- Steve Prinzing (MDT)
- Corrina Collins (MDT)
- Andrew Finch (City of Great Falls)
- John Faulkner (Great Falls International Airport)
- Scott Randall (RPA)
- Shane Forsythe (RPA)

AGENDA

The second informational meeting for the I-15 Corridor Study was held on Thursday, May 28, 2015. The purpose of the meeting was to present the recommended improvement options developed for the corridor and to gather community feedback on the draft corridor planning study report. The meeting began at 6:00 PM and concluded at 7:00 PM.

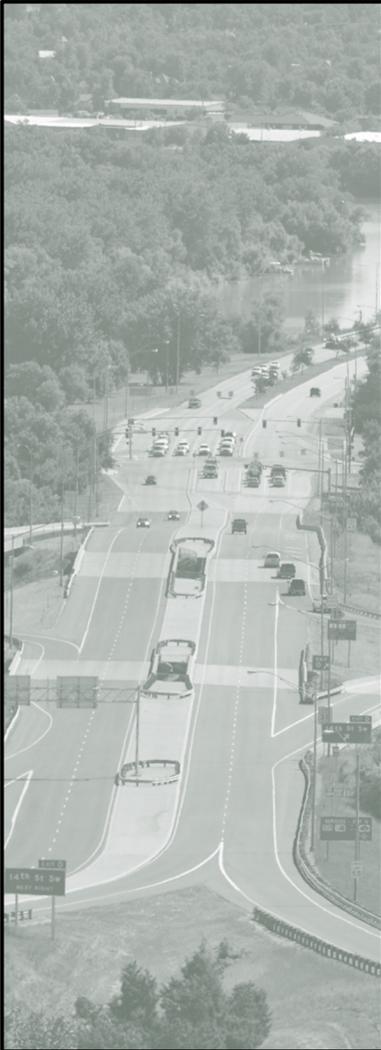
Meeting minutes are intended to capture the general content of meeting discussions and to document comments made by attendees. Meeting minutes may include opinions provided by attendees; no guarantees are made as to the accuracy of these statements and no fact checking of specific statements is provided or implied from the publishing of final meeting minutes.

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING #2

Scott Randall provided a 40-minute PowerPoint presentation focused on the purposes of a corridor planning study, the identified areas of concern, and the recommendations for the corridor. After the presentation, attendees were asked for questions and comments. In addition, comment sheets were available for all member of the audience. Members of the audience were encouraged to submit formal comments in writing by June 21st. A summary of the comments and questions received during the meeting is presented below:

- There is substantial traffic noise near the Meadowlark Subdivision. A noise analysis report was completed in 2003 for 10th Avenue S which resulted in several recommendations. Subsequent to the study, concrete barrier rails were added which did not significantly impact the noise level. Additional noise abatement is needed.
- Emerson Junction was not built as it was intended. The intent was to build a full-movement interchange.
 - The Emerson Junction area has multiple industrial and manufacturing developments which require large trucks. Currently, large trucks must use Central Avenue to connect to the industrial areas near Emerson Junction. This is undesirable from a safety and traffic standpoint. A full-movement interchange is needed to accommodate large trucks and to provide better access than Central Avenue.
- There should be pedestrian accommodations at the Gore Hill Interchange. It is currently unsafe for pedestrians to cross on the overpass structure.
- Consideration should be given to relocating the Gore Hill Interchange further to the southwest. The current location is constrained by land use and terrain.
- The trucking community would not be in favor of roundabouts at the Gore Hill Interchange.
- Roundabouts at Gore Hill would change the priority of traffic movements which may result in long vehicle queues.
- How are the recommendations prioritized?
 - The recommendations are not prioritized in the report. Prioritization comes during project development and is based on need, cost, and funding availability.

After concluding the question/answer portion of the meeting, the attendees were invited to review the displays and ask any further questions.



RESOURCE AGENCY WORKSHOP

November 13, 2014

October 06, 2014

To: Resource Agency Distribution

Subject: I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction Corridor Planning Study

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Cascade Counties, has initiated a corridor planning study to explore the potential need for improvements along Interstate 15 (I-15). The study will focus on the portion of I-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 (I-315) and 10th Avenue South west of the Missouri River (RP 95). The study area includes a 300-foot buffer on both sides of the roadway (for a total buffer width of 600 feet) throughout the majority of the corridor.

MDT invites you to attend a resource agency meeting to discuss environmental conditions in the study area, and identify any issues or concerns regarding environmental resources that may be affected by potential future improvement options.

When: **Thursday, November 13, 2014 from 1:00 PM. to 3:00 PM.**

Where: **MDT Planning Division** **MDT Great Falls District**
Conference Room A or Conference Room
2960 Prospect Avenue 200 Smelter Ave NE
Helena, MT 59601 Great Falls, MT 59403

Please review the draft environmental scan report in advance of the meeting. An electronic version of this document (with attachments) is provided on the enclosed CD. Please provide written comments on the enclosed report by **November 21, 2014**. If you are unable to attend the resource agency meeting, please forward these files to an appropriate agency designee.

Additional information about the study is available at the study website (<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15/>).

Please contact Scott Randall, Consultant Project Manager, by **November 07, 2014**, to confirm your participation in the resource agency meeting.

Scott Randall
Robert Peccia and Associates
PO Box 5653
Helena, MT 59604
406.447.5000
scottr@rpa-hln.com

Thank you in advance for your agency's input.

Sincerely,

Tom Martin
MDT Environmental Services Bureau Chief

Enclosure

Resource Agency Distribution:

Julie Dalsoglio, US Environmental Protection Agency
Mike McGrath, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Todd Tillinger, US Army Corps of Engineers
Gary Bertellotti, MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks - Region 4
Grant Grisak, MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks - Region 4
Mark Schlepp, MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks - Region 4
Robert Ray, MT Department of Environmental Quality
Paul Skubinna, MT Department of Environmental Quality
Beau Downing, MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Headquarters
Allan Kuser, MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Headquarters
Vicki Robinson, MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks - Region 4
Jason Sanchez, BNSF Railway Company
Charlie Sheets, City of Great Falls Floodplain Administrator
Susan Conell, Cascade County Floodplain Administrator
Mark Baumler, SHPO Program Manager

Copies (without enclosure):

Corrina Collins, MDT
Douglas Lieb, MDT
File



I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction

Corridor Planning Study

11-13-2014

Resource Agency Workshop

Welcome and Introductions

2

- **Introductions**

- **Partners**
 - MDT
 - FHWA
 - City of Great Falls
 - Cascade County

- **Consultant team**



Meeting Outline

3

- What is a corridor planning study?
- Study area boundary
- Study schedule
- Study background
- Transportation system
- Environmental setting
- Conclusion and next steps

What is a Corridor Planning Study?

4

- **Corridor planning studies:**
 - ▣ Are a “high level scan”
 - ▣ Define transportation issues/areas of concern
 - ▣ Consider social, economic, and environmental effects at an early stage
 - ▣ Identify cost-effective and feasible strategies
 - ▣ Provide a level of analysis that can support informed and sustainable decisions
 - ▣ Provide opportunities for early and continuous involvement

What a Corridor Planning Study is Not

5

- **A corridor planning study is not:**
 - ▣ An environmental compliance document
 - ▣ A preliminary or final design project
 - ▣ A construction or maintenance project
 - ▣ A right-of-way acquisition project

Goal and Purpose of Study

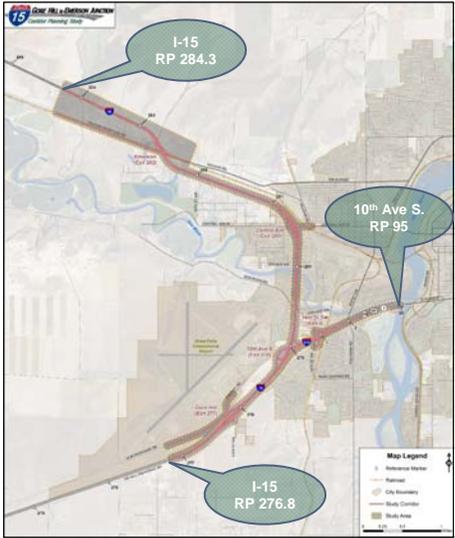
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- Engage constituents early and often!
- Identify potential impacts and constraints
- Identify needs and objectives
- Identify short-range and long-range improvements
- Develop planning level cost estimates
- Develop information and data to be forwarded into the environmental process if a project moves forward from the study (dependent on available funds)

7 Study Background

8 Study Area

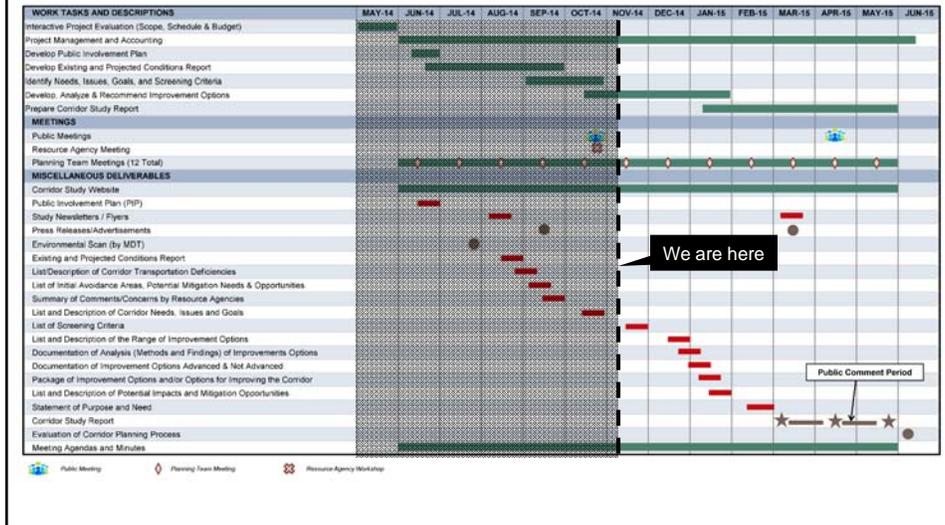
- **Interstate 15**
 - ▣ South of Gore Hill
 - ▣ North of Emerson Junction
- **Interstate 315**
- **10th Avenue South**
 - ▣ West of Missouri River



The map shows the study area in a geographic context. Interstate 15 is highlighted in red, with callouts for 'I-15 RP 284.3' and 'I-15 RP 276.8'. Interstate 315 is shown in blue. 10th Avenue South is shown in orange, with a callout for '10th Ave S. RP 95'. The map includes a legend for 'Map Legend' with categories: Interstate Highway, National, City Boundary, State Center, and Study Area. A scale bar and north arrow are also visible.

Study Schedule

9



Public Involvement Activities

10

- Two informational meetings
 - ▣ October 29, 2014
 - ▣ Spring, 2015
- Outreach to interested parties, stakeholders, resource agencies, as warranted
- Study newsletters
- Website
 - ▣ <http://mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15>
- Other as needed

Identified Stakeholder Groups

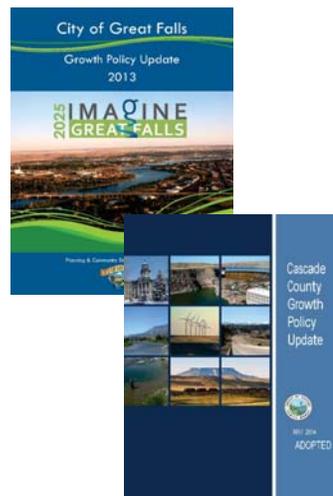
11

- Great Falls Air National Guard
- Malmstrom Air Force Base
- Great Falls International Airport Authority
- Great Falls Policy Coordinating Committee
- Great Falls Transportation Technical Advisory Committee
- Great Falls Northern Industrial Task Force
- Others as Requested

Local Planning

12

- **Review past, current, and future planning documents:**
 - Great Falls Area Long Range Transportation Plan - 2014
 - Cascade County Growth Policy Update (2014)
 - City of Great Falls Growth Policy Update (2013)
 - Great Falls International Airport Master Plan (Ongoing)
 - Great Falls Transit Development Plan (2010)



Planned Projects

13

- **Emerson Junction to Manchester**
 - ▣ Major rehabilitation of I-15 beginning at RP 282.54 and ending at 286.42

- **Bridge Preservation, Great Falls IM**
 - ▣ Bridge deck preservation on I-15 and I-315 at RP 208.60

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Transportation System

Physical Characteristics

15

- **Interstate 15**
 - ▣ 65 mph speed limit
 - ▣ 4 interchanges
- **Interstate 315**
 - ▣ 55 - 45 mph speed limit
 - ▣ 1 interchange
 - ▣ Ends at Fox Farm Rd
- **10th Ave S**
 - ▣ West of Missouri River
 - ▣ 45 mph speed limit



Area Features

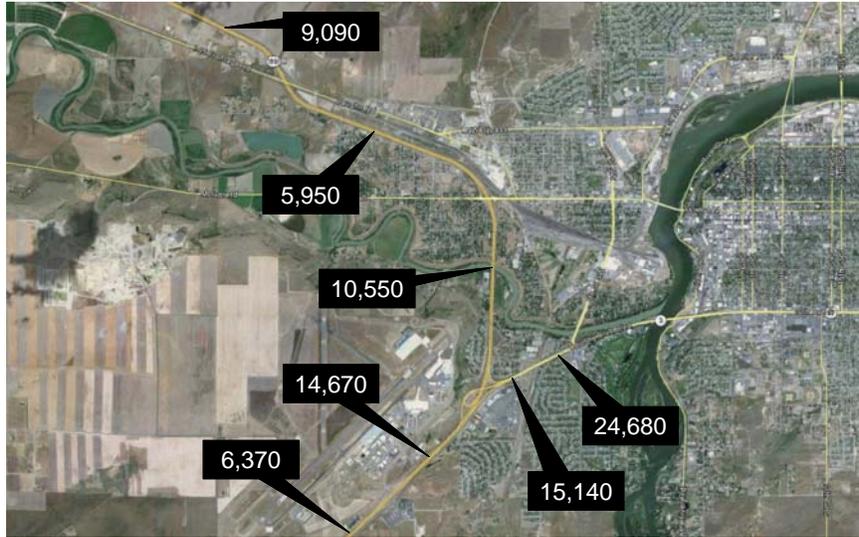
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- **Land Use**
 - ▣ Private and public
 - ▣ Mix of urban and rural
- **Railroad**
 - ▣ Interstate crosses railroad at 2 locations
- **Airport**
 - ▣ Great Falls International Airport
 - ▣ Accessed primarily by Gore Hill Interchange



Existing AADT - Interstate

17



Existing AADT - Non-Interstate

18



Historic AADT Trends

19

Location		2013 AADT	1994-2013	2000-2013	2007-2013
I-15	S of Gore Hill	6,370	1.4%	0.4%	0.1%
I-15	N of Gore Hill	14,670	1.6%	1.3%	-0.1%
I-15	N of 10th Ave	10,550	1.5%	1.3%	0.3%
I-15	N of Central Ave	5,950	1.2%	0.5%	-1.8%
I-15	N of Emerson	9,090	0.9%	0.1%	-1.2%
I-315	W of 14th St SW	15,140	(a)	(a)	0.8%
I-315	W of Fox Farm	24,680	4.2%	1.8%	0.1%
31st St SW	S of Interchange	8,360	5.6%	4.7%	-0.8%
Airport Dr	N of Interchange	3,640	-0.1%	0.7%	2.3%
10th Ave S	Warden Bridge	29,800	1.5%	1.5%	0.4%
Central Ave	E of Interchange	12,514	0.0%	0.5%	3.0%
Central Ave	W of Interchange	7,746	0.6%	1.5%	4.4%
Vaughn Rd	E of Interchange	6,530	0.0%	-0.4%	1.5%
Vaughn Rd	W of Interchange	4,555	0.4%	0.7%	7.4%

Source: MDT Data and Statistics Bureau, Traffic Data Collection Section, 2014

(a) Data unavailable

Projected AADT

20

Location		2013 AADT	Traffic Model Projected AAGR (a)	2035 Projected AADT
I-15	S of Gore Hill	6,370	0.9%	7,681
I-15	N of Gore Hill	14,670	1.9%	22,358
I-15	N of 10th Ave	10,550	2.1%	16,693
I-15	N of Central Ave	5,950	0.6%	6,804
I-15	N of Emerson	9,090	0.9%	10,998
I-315	W of 14th St SW	15,140	0.8%	17,979
I-315	W of Fox Farm	24,680	0.7%	28,546
31st St SW	S of Interchange	8,360	2.3%	13,678
Airport Dr	N of Interchange	3,640	4.6%	9,887
10th Ave S	Warden Bridge	29,800	0.7%	34,630
Central Ave	E of Interchange	12,514	2.4%	21,270
Central Ave	W of Interchange	7,746	0.1%	7,974
Vaughn Rd	E of Interchange	6,530	1.4%	8,835
Vaughn Rd	W of Interchange	4,555	1.1%	5,762

(a) Average Annual Growth Rates calculated from traffic model developed for Great Falls Area LRTP - 2014

Mainline Interstate

21

- Mainline traffic meets LOS performance standards
- One vertical grade does not appear to meet current standards
- Two horizontal curves do not appear to meet current standards
 - ▣ Radius
- Two vertical curves do not appear to meet current standards
 - ▣ Curvature
 - ▣ Stopping sight distance



Interchanges

22

- Interchange traffic meets LOS performance standards
- 7 of 8 on-ramps do not appear to meet current standards
 - ▣ Acceleration length
- 3 of 7 off-ramps do not appear to meet current standards
 - ▣ Deceleration length
- Spacing between 10th Ave S and 14th St SW does not appear to meet current interchange spacing standards



Intersections

23

- Six intersections do not currently meet LOS performance standards
- One additional projected to not meet standards for traffic operations
- Three intersections do not appear to meet current standards
 - ▣ Queue length
 - ▣ Turn-bay length



Safety

24

- 5 years of data
- 525 total reported crashes
 - ▣ Four fatalities
 - ▣ Eight crashes produced incapacitating injuries
 - ▣ 53% multi-vehicle crashes
 - ▣ 14% involved alcohol and/or drugs
 - ▣ Most common types were rear-end and fixed object



Areas of Concern Summary

25

- **Bridges**
 - ▣ Bridges with narrow widths
- **Mainline Interstate**
 - ▣ Existing geometrics
- **Interchanges**
 - ▣ Ramp length
 - ▣ Spacing
- **Intersections**
 - ▣ Traffic operation
 - ▣ Queue lengths
- **Safety**
 - ▣ Four fatal, eight incapacitating injury
 - ▣ Fix object collision trend



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Environmental Resources

Environmental Resources

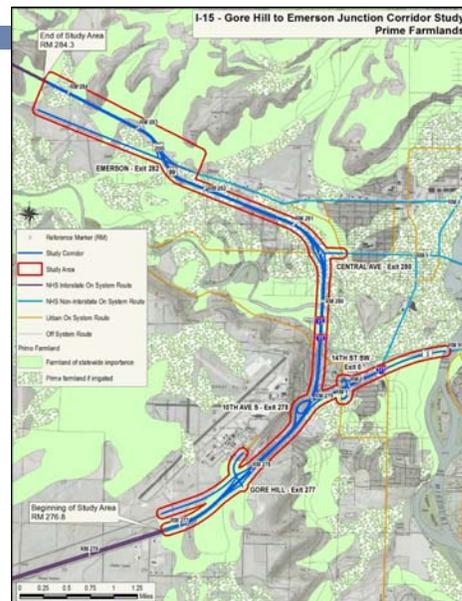
27

- Soil Resources and Prime Farmland
- Geologic Resources
- Surface Water
- Storm Sewer
- Groundwater
- Wetlands
- Floodplains and Floodways
- Air Quality
- Hazardous Substances
- Biological Resources
- Social
- Land Ownership and Use
- Recreational and Cultural Resources
- Noise
- Visual Resources

Soil Resources and Prime Farmland

28

- Based on Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) soil survey
 - Prime if irrigated farmlands are found between RP 278.8-279.0 and 280.5-284.3
 - Farmlands of statewide importance are found between RP 266.8-278.0, 279.5-280.5, and 282.5-284.3



Geologic Resources

29

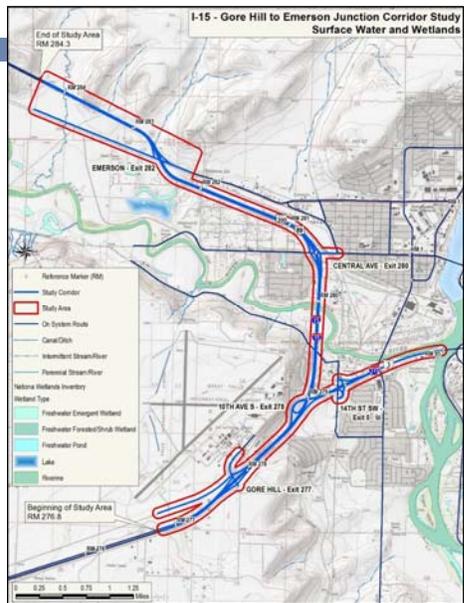
- Some risk of settlement of fills on valley floor
- Structures may require deep foundations
- Gore Hill
 - Effort to stabilize cuts
 - Past landslides
- Signs of instability
- Minimal risk for seismic activity



Surface Waters

30

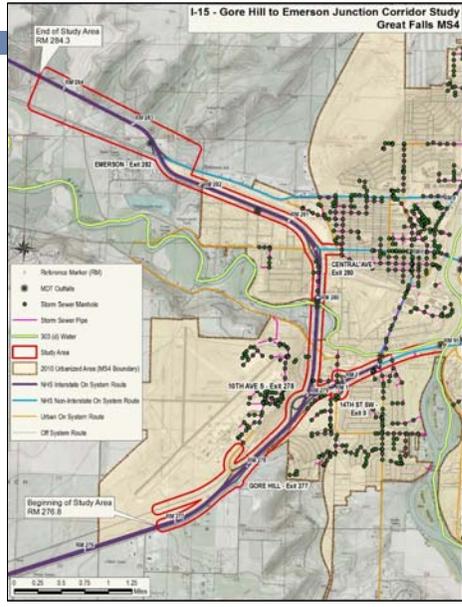
- Predominate surface waters:
 - Sun River
 - Impaired (category 4A)
- Numerous drainage crossings
- Bridge across Sun River (RP 279.35)
- Steel drainage culvert (RP 283.4)



Storm Sewer

31

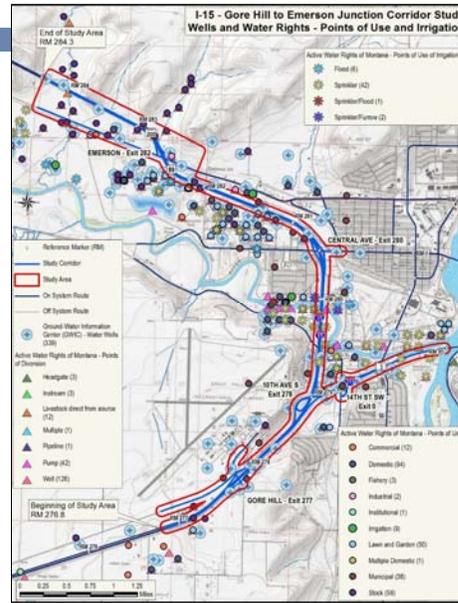
- Great Falls Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) area
- Small MS4 General Permit
 - 1 acre or larger
 - Low impact development (LID)



Groundwater

32

- Impacts to existing wells
- Setback standards
 - 100-foot isolation zone for public wells



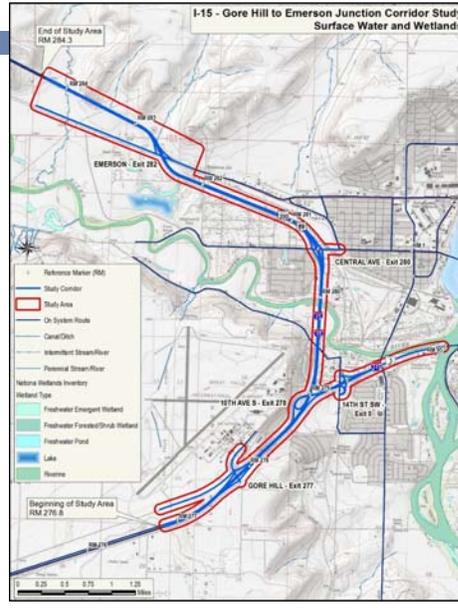
Wetlands

33

- NWI mapping
 - ▣ Not detailed enough for project development

- Formal wetland delineations during project development

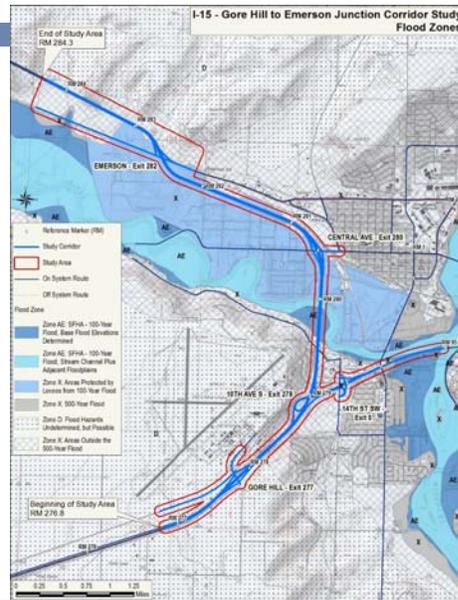
- Avoid and minimize impacts



Floodplains and Floodways

34

- Avoid adverse impact to floodplains to the extent possible
 - ▣ Zone AE – 100-year
 - ▣ Zone X – 500-year



Air Quality

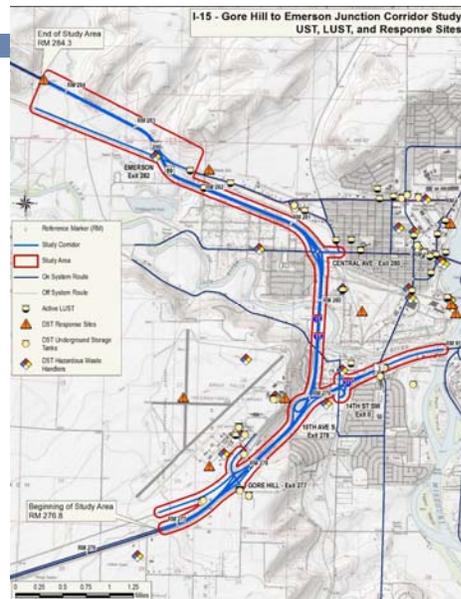
35

- Great Falls was non-attainment for CO in 1980
 - ▣ 10th Ave S Corridor
- 2002 received attainment status
- Currently under December 2000 CO LMP
- I-15 Corridor not within the former non-attainment area boundaries
- Evaluation of MSATs may be required
 - ▣ Low expectation for special design considerations

Hazardous Substances

36

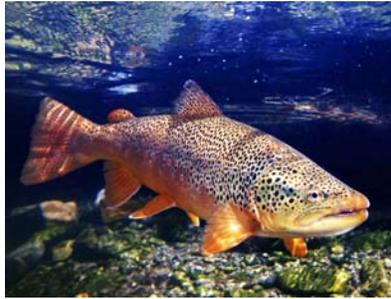
- UST and LUST near Airport
- Unresolved LUST sites
 - ▣ 1 near 34th St SW
 - ▣ 2 along Northwest Bypass
- 4 WQA or State Superfund Sites
 - ▣ 1 active (Western By Products)



Biological Resources

37

□ Fish and Wildlife



□ Vegetation



Biological Community

38

Cascade County – T&E

- **Canada Lynx**
 - ▣ Threatened
- **Red Knot**
 - ▣ Proposed
- **Wolverine***
 - ▣ Proposed
- **Sprague’s Pipit**
 - ▣ Candidate
- **Whitebark Pine**
 - ▣ Candidate

**No longer proposed for listing*

Study Area

- No record of any threatened or endangered species found within the study area boundary^(a)
- No species of concern were found within the study area boundary^(a)
- No bald eagle or golden eagle nests within ½ mile of study area

^(a)Montana Natural Heritage Program - Natural Heritage Map Viewer (report generated May 15, 2014)

Wild Animal Carcasses

39

- 39 animal carcass
 - ▣ 2004 – 2013 (10 years)
 - ▣ White-tail deer
 - ▣ Mule deer
 - ▣ 1 elk
 - ▣ 1 pronghorn antelope
 - ▣ 1 mountain lion
 - ▣ 2 coyotes
- Clustered near Sun River Bridge
 - ▣ RP 279.5 to RP 284

Fisheries

40

- Missouri River
 - ▣ Substantial fishery resource value
- Sun River
 - ▣ Managed as non-trout water



Social

41

- Existing and Projected Conditions Report includes:
 - ▣ Population and growth statistics
 - ▣ Race and ethnic statistics
 - ▣ Employment and income statistics
- Environmental justice will be evaluated further during any project development process

Land Ownership and Use

42

- Mostly private
 - ▣ Some City/County and State Trust
- Urban
 - ▣ Commercial
 - ▣ Residential
 - ▣ Industrial
- Rural
 - ▣ Agricultural
 - ▣ Farmstead



Recreational and Cultural Resources

43

- **Parks**
 - ▣ Westside Viaduct Park
 - ▣ West Hill Park
 - ▣ Community Hill Park

- **Historic properties**
 - ▣ Missouri River Bridge
 - ▣ At least 33 historic aged properties



Noise

44

- Traffic noise may need to be evaluated if a “Type I” project is developed
- A “Type I” project includes:
 - ▣ A significant shift in horizontal or vertical alignments
 - ▣ Increasing the number of through lanes
 - ▣ Increasing the traffic speeds and volume
- Noise abatement measures may be necessary if noise impacts exceed appropriated thresholds

Visual Resources

45

- Landscape character
- Visual integrity
- Scenic integrity
- Landscape visibility



46

Conclusion and Next Steps

Environmental Scan

47

- Draft Environmental Scan has been completed (10/08/2014)
- Helps provide information to develop needs and compare conceptual improvement options
 - ▣ Set prioritization criteria
 - ▣ Areas of concern?
 - ▣ Greater or lesser impacts?
 - ▣ Can impacts be avoided, minimized or mitigated – and at what cost?
 - ▣ Procedural requirements and regulatory compliance?

Next Steps

48

- Continue study coordination and outreach
- Finalize Environmental Scan
- Finalize Existing and Projected Conditions Report
- Continue analysis of transportation needs
- Identify potential improvement options
- Draft corridor study report

Conclusion

49

- Questions, answers and/or comments
 - ▣ Study website:
<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15>
 - ▣ Study newsletters
 - ▣ Study Contact
Corrina Collins
MT Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620-1001
P.O. Box 201001
(406) 444-9131
ccollins@mt.gov

15
GORE HILL to EMERSON JUNCTION
Corridor Planning Study

1
September 2014

this issue
 Study Description
 What is a Corridor Planning Study?
 Initial Consultations
 Study Features
 Public Involvement Opportunities

Study Description
 The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and in coordination with the Crow Fair Intermodal Planning Organization (IPPO), is developing a corridor planning study for Interstate 15 (I-15) in the Crow Fair 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 Open Hill interchanges and other identified needs for additional and operational improvements on I-15 and I-215, an Interstate Corridor Study for the Crow Fair area is recommended."

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 opportunities for improvements, grant available resources and how 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 of a project is forwarded from the study. The study includes consideration of multiple transportation 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
 Crow Fair, Montana, 10/28/14
 Crow Fair Civic Center
 700 Crow Fair

Purpose:
 An informational meeting at a public meeting to present the planning study process, a study area map and zoning and project location. The meeting will be held on October 28, 2014, at the Crow Fair Civic Center.

MDT

Meeting Minutes

Resource Agency Meeting

DETAILS

Location: MDTCNF Planning Room A
2960 Prospect Avenue
Date: November 13, 2014
Time: 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

ATTENDANCE

- Chris Dorington (MDT)
- Carol Strizich (MDT)
- Corrina Collins (MDT)
- Jean Riley (MDT)
- Doug Lieb (MDT)
- Vicki Crnich (MDT)
- Christy McOmber (MDT)*
- Vicki Robinson (FWP)*
- Lynda Saul (DEQ)
- Beau Downing (FWP)
- Scott Randall (RPA)
- Shane Forsythe (RPA)

* Denotes Call-in

AGENDA

The Resource Agency meeting for the I-15 Corridor Study was held on Thursday, November 13th, 2014. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss environmental conditions in the study area and to identify any issues or concerns regarding environmental resources that may be affect potential future improvement options . The meeting began at 1:00 PM and ended at 2:00 PM.

Meeting minutes are intended to capture the general content of meeting discussions and to document the Resource Agency meeting. Meeting minutes may include opinions provided by attendees; no guarantees are made as to the accuracy of these statements and no fact checking of specific statements is provided or implied from the publishing of final meeting minutes.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Scott Randall provided a welcome and made opening remarks for the Resource Agency Meeting. Introductions were made.

PRESENTATION

Scott Randall presented an overview of the corridor study process, a summary of the existing and projected transportation system, and a review of the Environmental Scan. The following comments were made during the presentation:

- What is the time frame for the traffic volumes presented? (Lynda Saul)
 - The volumes represent the average annual daily traffic (AADT) on the roadway. That is, they represent an average of how many vehicles are on the road in a single day. (Scott Randall)
 - Keep in mind that the traffic volumes shown are variable throughout the year and that these values represent the best approximation of an average day. (Jean Riley)
- What is meant by “the Sun River is not managed as a trout stream?” (Jean Riley)
 - The Sun River does support trout, however, it may not support the fish per mile required to be classified as a recreational trout stream. (Beau Downing)
- The Sun River Bridge is the only concern for fisheries within the study area. (Beau Downing)
- Has the Sun River Trail been captured in the environmental scan? (Beau Downing)
 - The Sun River Trail is not part of this study. While a portion is within our study area, we are not specifically looking at the impacts of the trail. (Scott Randall)

CONCLUSIONS / NEXT STEPS

At the end of the presentation, it was stated that the deadline for comments on the Environmental Scan by the Resource Agencies is November 21st, 2014. The Environmental Scan will be finalized and posted to the study website after the comment period.

The draft Corridor Study Report will also be distributed to the Resource Agencies for comments. It is anticipated that the draft report will be completed sometime in the spring of 2015.

The meeting concluded at 1:45 PM.

ACTION ITEMS

- Finalize the Environmental Scan after the November 21st, 2014 comment period deadline.



GORE HILL to EMERSON JUNCTION Corridor Planning Study



this issue

- Study Description **P.1**
- What is a Corridor Planning Study? **P.1**
- Study Area **P.2**
- Initial Considerations **P.3**
- Study Schedule **P.3**
- Public Involvement Opportunities **P.4**

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!

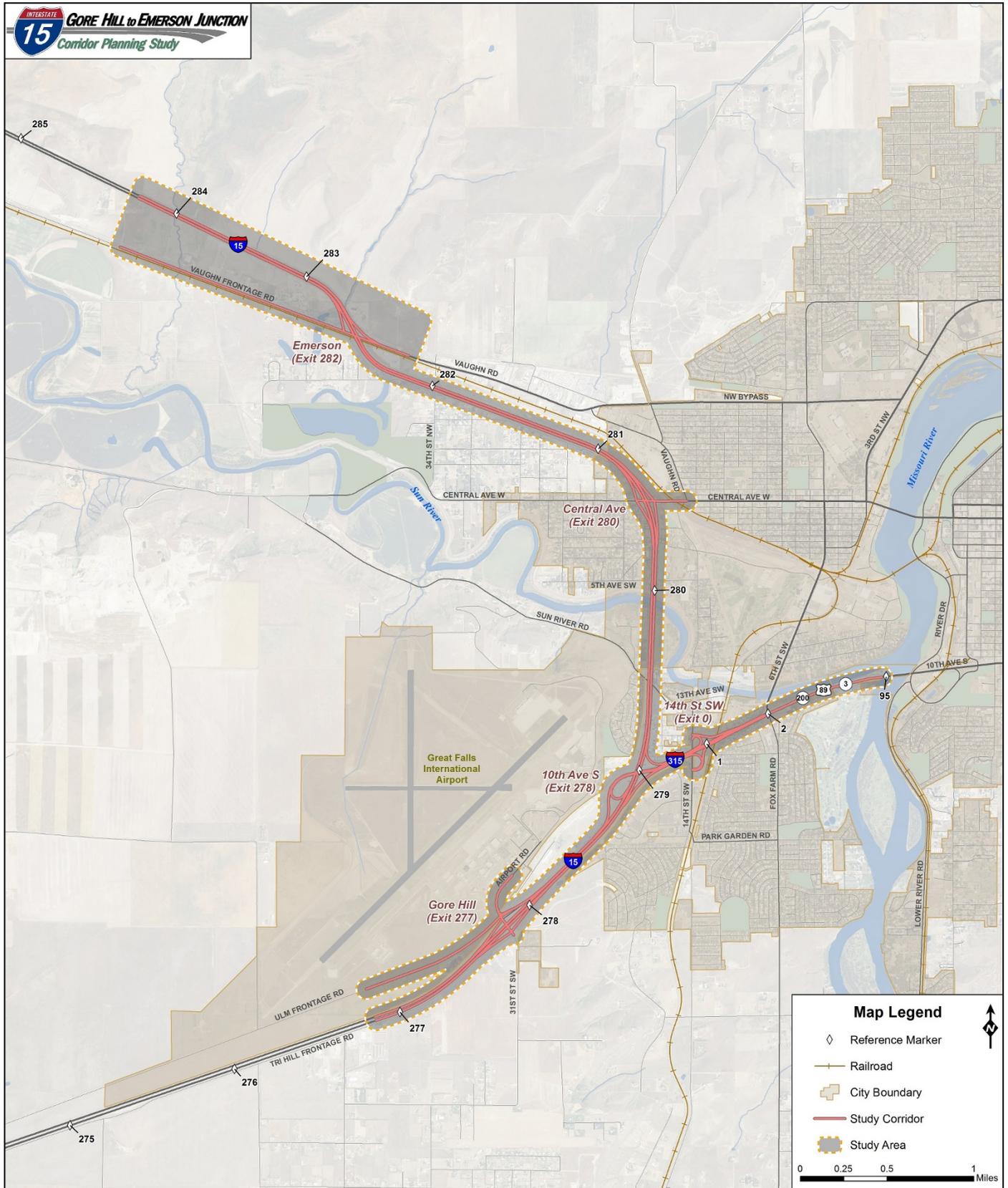
Great Falls:
Wednesday, October 29th
 6:00 PM
 Gibson Room
 Great Falls Civic Center
 2 Park Drive South

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

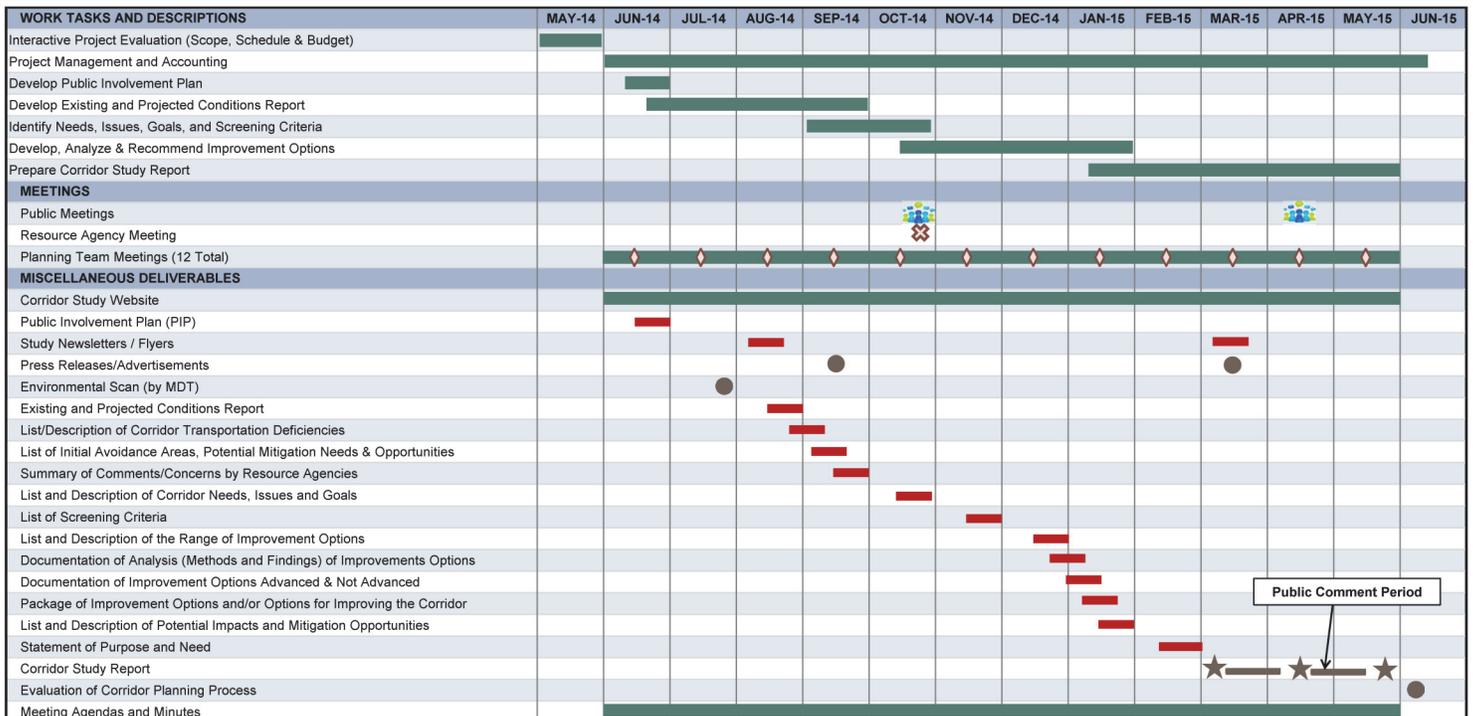
- There were 525 crashes reported from January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2013.
 - ◊ Four crashes resulted in fatalities. Eight crashes resulted in incapacitating injuries.
 - ◊ 32% of crashes were the result of careless driving.
 - ◊ 14% of crashes involved alcohol/drugs.
 - ◊ There were 178 rear-end collisions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





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RPA Project Manager
(406) 447-5000
scottr@rpa-hln.com

Website

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.



ROBERT PECCIA & ASSOCIATES

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Helena, MT 59604



GORE HILL to EMERSON JUNCTION Corridor Planning Study



this issue

- Corridor Planning Study Highlights P.1
- Corridor Needs and Objectives P.2
- Improvement Options Summary P.2
- Improvement Options Map P.3
- Contacts P.4
- Public Involvement Opportunities P.4
- Next Steps P.4

Corridor Planning Study Highlights

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), has developed a corridor planning study of Interstate 15 (I-15) in the Great Falls Area. The purpose of the study is to determine potential improvement options to address safety and operations within the transportation corridor based on identified needs.

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

The corridor planning study was developed through a collaborative process with MDT, Great Falls MPO, and FHWA that involved focused outreach to the public, key stakeholders, and resource agencies. An evaluation of known and publically available information was conducted. Activities completed for development of the study include the following:

- Research and analysis of existing roadway conditions
- Research and synthesis of known environmental resources and applicable regulations in the study area
- Identification of corridor issues and areas of concern
- Consultation and coordination with local officials, stakeholders, resource agencies, and public
- Identification of corridor needs and objectives
- Development of corridor improvement options with consideration of costs, available funding, feasibility, public input, and known resource constraints
- Documentation of potential funding mechanisms for improvement options

The draft *I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction Corridor Planning Study* will be made available for review and comment on May 22, 2015. Copies can be accessed via the study website at www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15. The deadline for receiving comments is June 21, 2015.



INFORMATIONAL MEETING #2

Please Join Us!

Great Falls:

Thursday, May 28, 2015
6:00 PM
Gibson Room
Great Falls Civic Center
2 Park Drive South

Purpose:

Informational Meeting #2 is being conducted to present the various improvement options developed for the corridor and to gather community feedback on the draft corridor planning study report.



Corridor Needs and Objectives

Based on the analysis of existing and future conditions of the study area, the following need and objectives were established. They were used in the development of improvement options.

Need 1: Improve the Safety of the Corridor Objectives (To the Extent Practicable)

- Reduce the frequency and severity of crashes.
- Improve roadway elements to meet current design criteria to address identified safety concerns.
- Reduce conflicts between vehicles of varying types and speeds.
- Address identified crash trends and clusters.

Need 2: Accommodate Existing and Future Capacity Demands Objectives (To the Extent Practicable)

- Maintain level of service (LOS) standards for mainline segments and interchange ramps.
- Improve operations and maintain LOS standards for intersections.

Need 3: Provide for the Mobility of People and Freight Objectives (To the Extent Practicable)

- Provide for the movement and transfer of people and goods.
- Maintain the roadway for effective and prompt emergency response.

Other Considerations

- Environmental resource impacts of improvement options
- Local and regional planning efforts
- Funding availability
- Construction feasibility and impacts
- Security of the transportation system

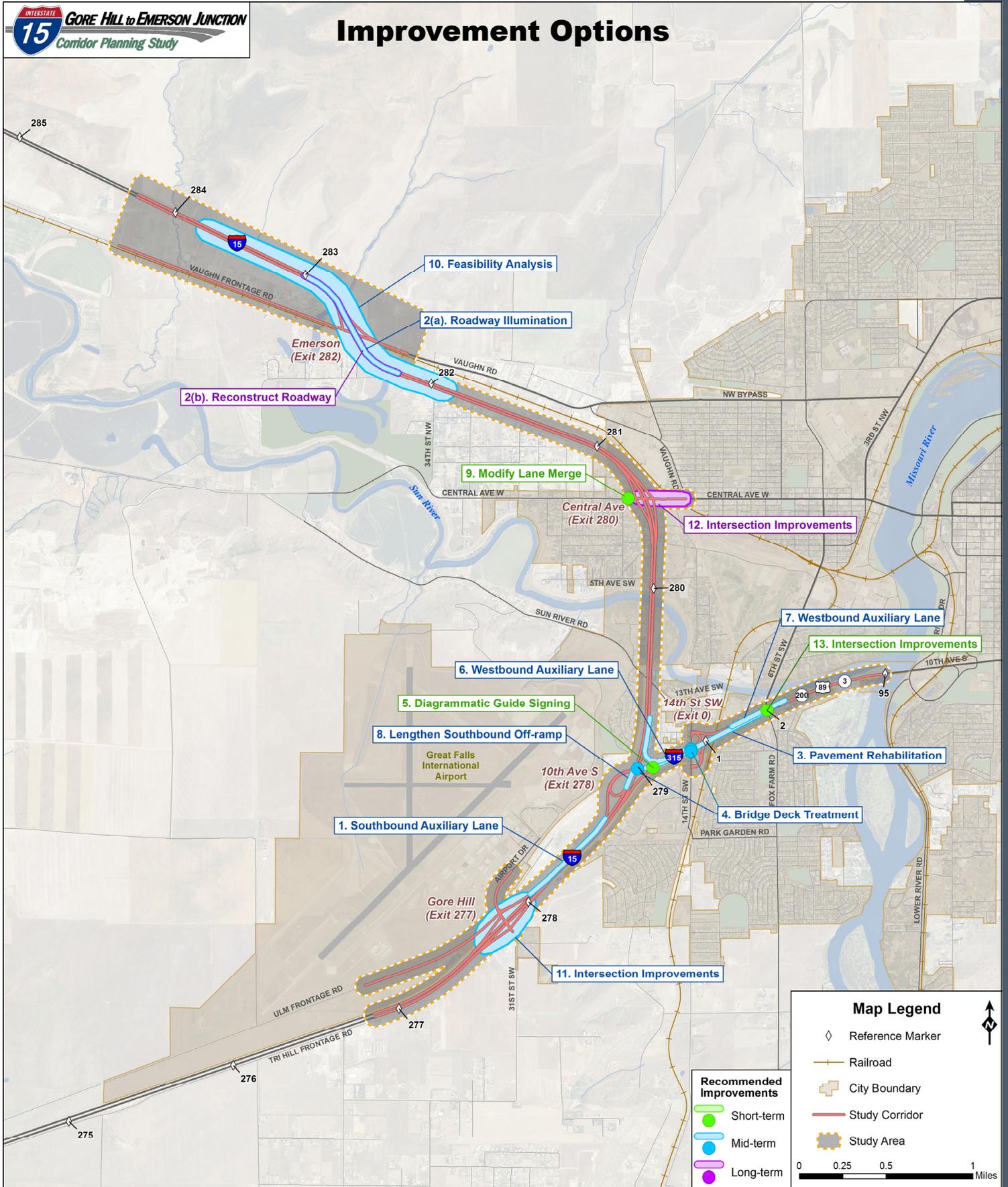
Improvement Options Summary

The following table is a summary of the potential improvement options, along with planning-level cost estimates. Implementation of any of the improvement options may require close coordination with resource agencies to identify areas of sensitivity.

Improvement Option	Location	Description	Cost Estimate	
INTERSTATE 15				
1.0	Southbound Auxiliary Lane	RP 278.1 to 278.5	Construct auxiliary lane between Gore Hill and 10th Ave S interchanges in southbound direction.	\$1.9M
2(a)	Roadway Illumination	RP 282.3 to 283.0	Install additional illumination along the Interstate.	\$500k
2(b)	Reconstruct Roadway	RP 282.3 to 283.0	Reconstruct roadway and bridge structures to meet current design standards.	\$24.0M
INTERSTATE 315				
3.0	Pavement Rehabilitation	RP 0.0 to 1.4	Resurface both directions of I-315.	\$1.0M
4.0	Bridge Deck Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I-15 Overpass (RP 0.01) • 14th St SW Overpass (EB) • 14th St SW Overpass (WB) 	Rehabilitate bridge decks.	\$600k
5.0	Diagrammatic Guide Signing	10th Ave S to 14th St SW	Install overhead diagrammatic guide signage for eastbound traffic.	\$200k
6.0	Westbound Auxiliary Lane	14th St SW to I-15	Reconstruct I-315 westbound and the I-15 on-ramp to provide an auxiliary travel lane.	\$2.0M
7.0	Westbound Auxiliary Lane	Fox Farm Rd to 14th St SW	Reconstruct I-315 westbound and the Fox Farm Road intersection to provide an auxiliary travel lane.	\$1.2M
INTERCHANGES				
8.0	Lengthen Southbound Off-ramp	10th Ave S Interchange	Lengthen southbound off-ramp.	\$260k
9.0	Modify Lane Merge	Central Ave west of Interchange	Modify signing and striping.	\$20k
10.0	Feasibility Analysis	Emerson Junction	Secure a local project sponsor to fund an operational analysis/feasibility study of the Emerson Junction Interchange.	\$250k
INTERSECTIONS				
11.0	Intersection Improvements	Gore Hill Interchange	Install additional traffic control such as roundabouts or traffic signals.	\$5.2M to \$9.0M
12.0	Intersection Improvements	Central Ave Interchange	Install additional traffic control such as roundabouts or traffic signals.	\$8.1M to \$10.6M
13.0	Intersection Improvements	Fox Farm Intersection	Install dual eastbound left-turn lanes.	\$100k



Improvement Options



Map Legend

- ◇ Reference Marker
- Railroad
- ▭ City Boundary
- Study Corridor
- ▭ Study Area

Recommended Improvements

- Short-term
- Mid-term
- Long-term

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



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Website

www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15

Public Involvement Opportunities

An informational meeting is scheduled for 6:00 PM, Thursday, May 28, 2015, in the Gibson Room at the Great Falls Civic Center. The purpose of the meeting is to present the recommended improvement options and gather feedback on the draft corridor study report. Starting May 22, 2015, the draft report will be made available for review on the study website (www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/i15).

Comments may be submitted in writing at the informational meeting, online via the study website, or by mail to Corrina Collins, MDT Statewide and Urban Planning, Project Manager, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001. Please indicate that comments are for the *I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction Corridor Planning Study*. MDT will collect and consider all comments to better understand the community's view of potential issues and concerns within the study area.

The deadline for receiving comments is June 21, 2015.

Next Steps

After the public comment period closes, comments will be reviewed, and the *I-15 Gore Hill to Emerson Junction Corridor Planning Study* will be finalized. The ability to implement improvement options for I-15 depends on the availability of existing and future federal, state, local, and private funding sources. At the current time, there is no funding to complete the improvement options contained in the study.

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.