

TOSTON STRUCTURES UPDATE SELECTING A PREFERRED CORRIDOR FOR US 287

This newsletter briefly summarizes the Toston Structures project history, presents reasons for the Montana Department of Transportation's (MDT's) current preference for a central corridor alignment that is subject to public comment and revision, and identifies next steps in the effort to reconstruct Highway 287 in the Toston area.

WHY IS MDT CONSIDERING THIS PROJECT?

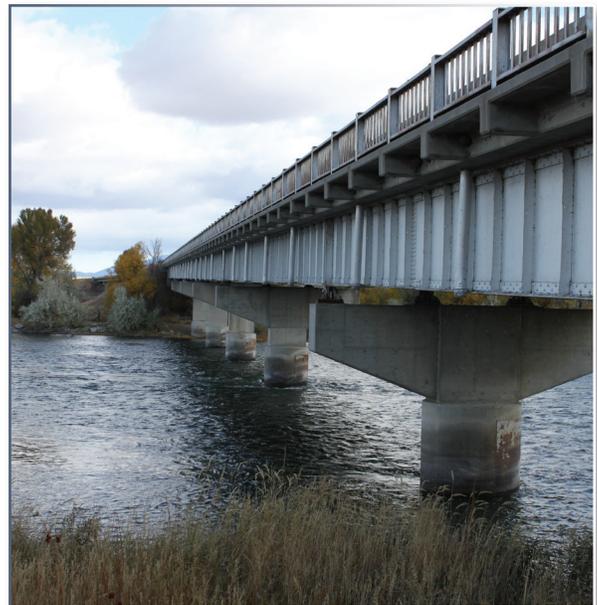
U.S. 287 is an important state highway connecting Interstate 90 to Helena and surrounding communities that is receiving increased usage. The corridor has higher crash and crash severity rates than the statewide average and does not meet current design standards.

WHAT'S INVOLVED?

U.S. 287 would be reconstructed from reference posts 85.9 to 89.3, which is the segment between the completed Townsend-South Passing Lanes project and the on-going Toston-South project. It would require replacement of three structures: the Six Mile Creek crossing, the Montana Rail Link Bridge, and the Missouri River Bridge. The roadway and bridge structures would be upgraded to current standards for existing and future traffic demands. Traffic safety, functionality, and operations would be improved for through traffic, local access, and unique local needs such as moving farm equipment. This project will tie into the projects north and south of Toston to provide a continuous length of two through lanes in each direction, with center turn lanes as needed.

HOW DID WE GET TO THIS POINT?

Project planning began with an Environmental Assessment in 2006 conducted jointly by MDT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that considered several alternative alignments for U.S. 287. In 2009, MDT initiated the Toston Missouri River Crossing Corridor Study, which recommended two corridors for further consideration: a central corridor and an eastern corridor, both shown in the figure inside. Since the last project public meeting in November 2013, MDT has completed an alternatives analysis, a risk assessment workshop, and a value engineering review to gather information about the proposed project and the surrounding area.

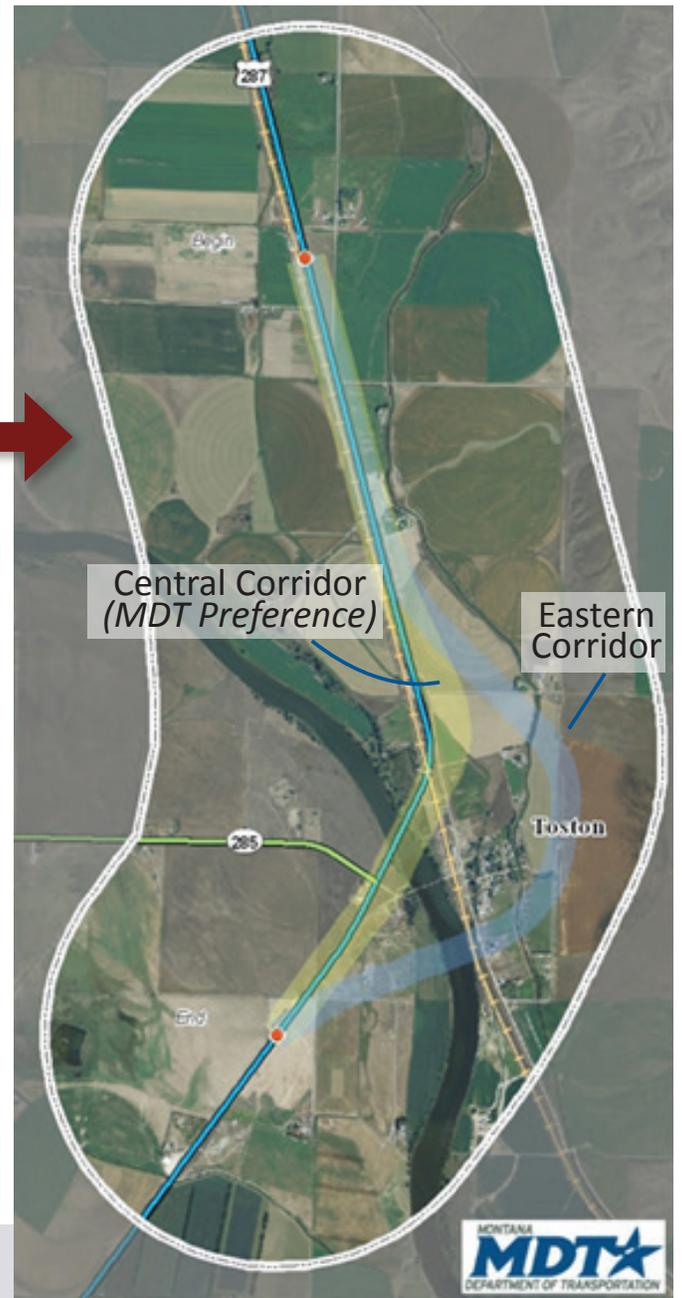
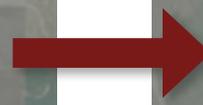
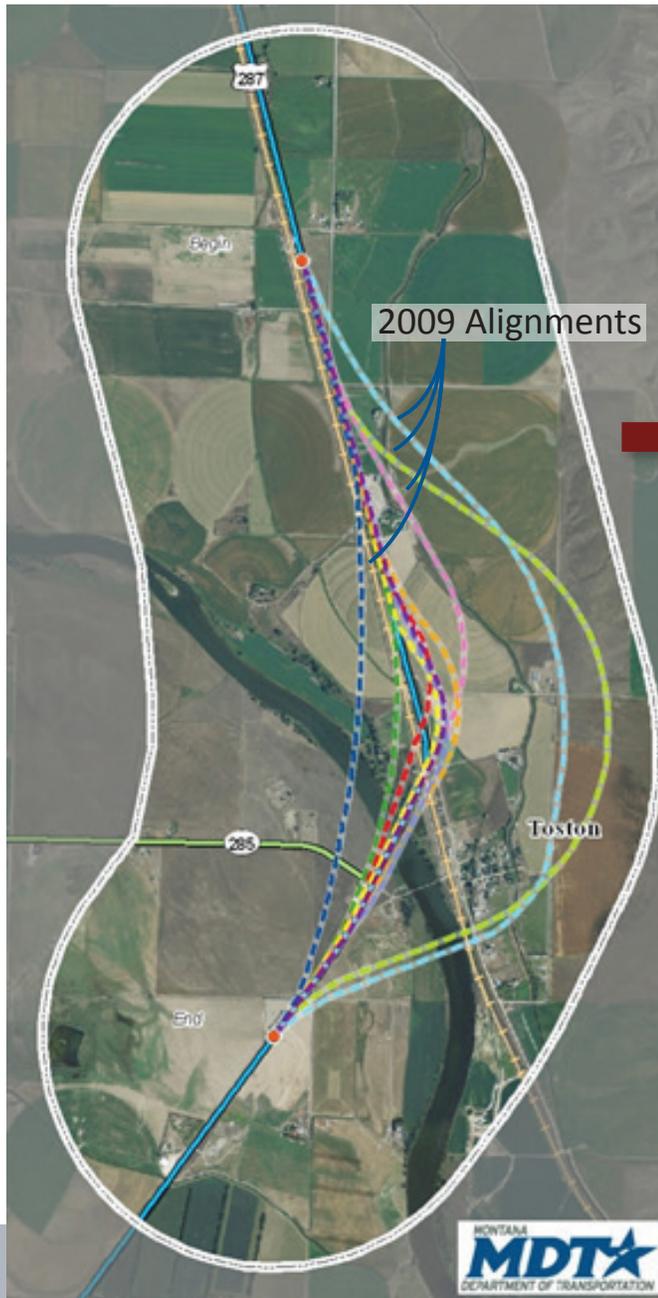


SAVE THE DATE: Public Meeting

Wednesday, October 29, 6 PM

**Broadwater County High School Community Room
201 North Spruce Street, Townsend**

MDT is hosting a public informational meeting to present findings from the October 2014 Alternatives Analysis report along with current design concepts and the project schedule. Ample opportunity for public discussion and testimony on the relative merits of the central and eastern corridor options will be provided. The meeting is open to the public and will be recorded. 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 Paul Grant at (406) 444-9415 at least two days before the meeting.



The Toston Missouri River Crossing Corridor Study put the focus on two Corridors from which a preferred alignment must now be selected based on a wide range of human, environmental, and financial considerations identified in the October 2014 Alternatives Analysis Report.

WHAT DECISIONS ARE BEING MADE NOW?

MDT will use all of this new information and data along with public comments to select a preferred corridor. While the central and eastern corridors have many similarities in terms of costs and impacts, going into the public meeting MDT finds a preference for a proposed alignment within the central corridor. This corridor has been heavily supported through prior public comment, with comments frequently mentioning:

- » reduced residential noise in Toston for the central corridor
- » fewer right-of-way impacts for the central corridor

Other considerations MDT finds notable about the central corridor are:

- » shorter travel distance
- » less highway curvature
- » smaller number of impacts to irrigation facilities

Unfortunately, the central corridor would have greater impacts on wetlands and the Toston Fishing Access Site property. If an alignment within the central corridor is formally selected as the preferred alternative, wetland impacts would need to be mitigated according to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permitting requirements, and impacts to the fishing access site would need to be approved by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

The full alternatives analysis report is available at:
www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/tostonstructures/

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The purpose of the second public informational meeting scheduled for Wednesday October 29th, 6 PM at the Broadwater County High School Community Room, 201 North Spruce Street, Townsend, is to discuss the alignment selection process. A third public meeting is anticipated after a preferred alternative has been selected to present the basis for the decision.

Work will then progress to detailed design and right-of-way acquisition. Pending adequate funding, construction may begin as soon as 2019. A more detailed short-term project schedule is available at:
<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/tostonstructures/schedule.shtml>

Community participation is a very important part of the design and construction process, and the public is encouraged to attend this meeting.



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Return Service Requested

MDT's mission is to serve the public a transportation system and services that emphasizes quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality, and sensitivity to the environment.

MDT Wants Your Comments!

Consideration of human impacts and public acceptance are required elements in MDT decision-making. Opinion, comments and concerns regarding the alternatives analysis and corridor selection may be submitted in writing at the October 29, 2014 public meeting, by mail, or by phone, to:

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MDT Project Manager
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001
Phone: (406) 444-9369

Phill Forbes, P.E.
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Project Manager
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Jeff Ebert, P.E.
Butte District Administrator
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Butte, MT 59702-3068
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online: www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment_form.shtml

Please indicate comments are for project UPN 7668000 and submit comments by December 1, 2014. All future public meetings will be announced in local newspapers and through direct mailings. Additional newsletters may also be provided. Please contact Phill Forbes if you would like to be included in the project mailing list.

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 Paul Grant at (406) 444-9415 at least two day 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.