BILLINGS BYPASS EIS
NCPD 56(55)CN 4199

# Billings Bypass

## Final Environmental Impact Statement

## Open House

April 9, 2014

MONTANA MDT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# Welcome

- Welcome to the Billings Bypass informal open house
- We have released the Final EIS for the Billings Bypass Project
- Staff are here to answer your questions

# Project Leads & NEPA

- FHWA and MDT are the lead agencies for the Billings Bypass EIS

MONTANA MDT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

- The EIS was developed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which requires that environmental impacts be considered in federal decisions, including the use of federal funds
- NEPA requires an environmental impact statement (EIS) be prepared for major projects that have the potential for adverse impacts to the community and environment

# Agency Involvement

- The following federal agencies were involved throughout the EIS process:
  - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
  - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
  - U.S.D.A. Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS)
  - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)

# Agency Involvement

- The following state and local agencies were involved throughout the EIS process:
  - Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
  - Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
  - Montana Department of Environmental Quality
  - Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
  - City of Billings
  - Yellowstone County
  - Yellowstone County Planning Board

# Project Purpose

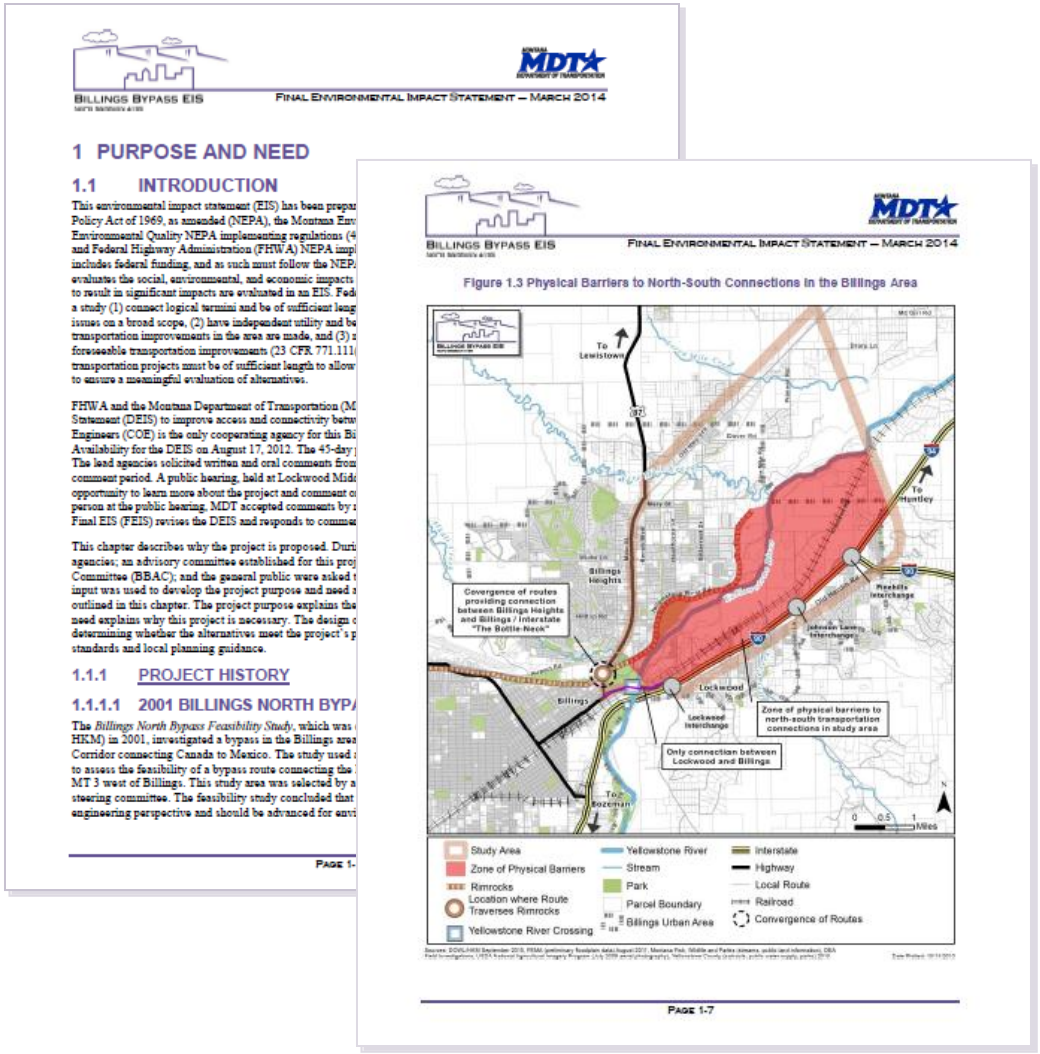
- The **purpose** of the Billings Bypass project is to improve access and connectivity between I-90 and Old Hwy 312, and to improve mobility in the eastern area of Billings

# Project Needs

- The **needs** of the Billings Bypass are to:
  - Reduce physical barrier impacts to the transportation system
  - Improve connectivity between Lockwood and Billings
  - Improve mobility to and from Billings Heights
  - Improve truck/commercial vehicle access to and through Billings

# Where to Learn More

- Chapter 1 of the FEIS discusses the project history and the Purpose and Need of the project in detail



BILLINGS BYPASS EIS — FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT – MARCH 2014

1 PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This environmental impact statement (EIS) has been prepar
Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the Montana Env
Environmental Quality NEPA implementing regulations (4
and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) NEPA impl
includes federal funding, and as such must follow the NEP
evaluates the social, environmental, and economic impacts
to result in significant impacts are evaluated in an EIS. Fed
a study (1) connect logical termini and be of sufficient leng
issues on a broad scope, (2) have independent utility and be
transportation improvements in the area are made, and (3)
foreseeable transportation improvements (23 CFR. 771.111
transportation projects must be of sufficient length to allow
to ensure a meaningful evaluation of alternatives.

FHWA and the Montana Department of Transportation (M
Statement (DEIS) to improve access and connectivity betw
Engineers (COE) is the only cooperating agency for this Bi
Availability for the DEIS on August 17, 2012. The 45-day
The land agencies solicited written and oral comments from
comment period. A public hearing, held at Lockwood Midd
opportunity to learn more about the project and comment o
person at the public hearing. MDT accepted comments by
Final EIS (FEIS) revises the DEIS and responds to comme

This chapter describes why the project is proposed. Duri
agencies; an advisory committee established for this proj
Committee (BBAC); and the general public were asked
input was used to develop the project purpose and need
outlined in this chapter. The project purpose explains the
need explains why this project is necessary. The design
determining whether the alternatives meet the project's p
standards and local planning guidance.

1.1.1 PROJECT HISTORY

1.1.1.1 2001 BILLINGS NORTH BYPA

The *Billings North Bypass Feasibility Study*, which was
HKM) in 2001, investigated a bypass in the Billings area
Corridor connecting Canada to Mexico. The study used
to assess the feasibility of a bypass route connecting the
MT 3 west of Billings. This study area was selected by a
steering committee. The feasibility study concluded that
engineering perspective and should be advanced for envi

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Figure 1.3 Physical Barriers to North-South Connections in the Billings Area



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# Project Background

## 2011 - 2012

- MDT and FHWA developed and published the DEIS which considered three build alternatives and one No Build alternative
- Mary Street Option 2 was identified as the Preferred Alternative
- MDT held an open house and solicited public comments after publication of the DEIS

## 2013 - 2014

- MDT and FHWA developed and published the FEIS

# Project Background

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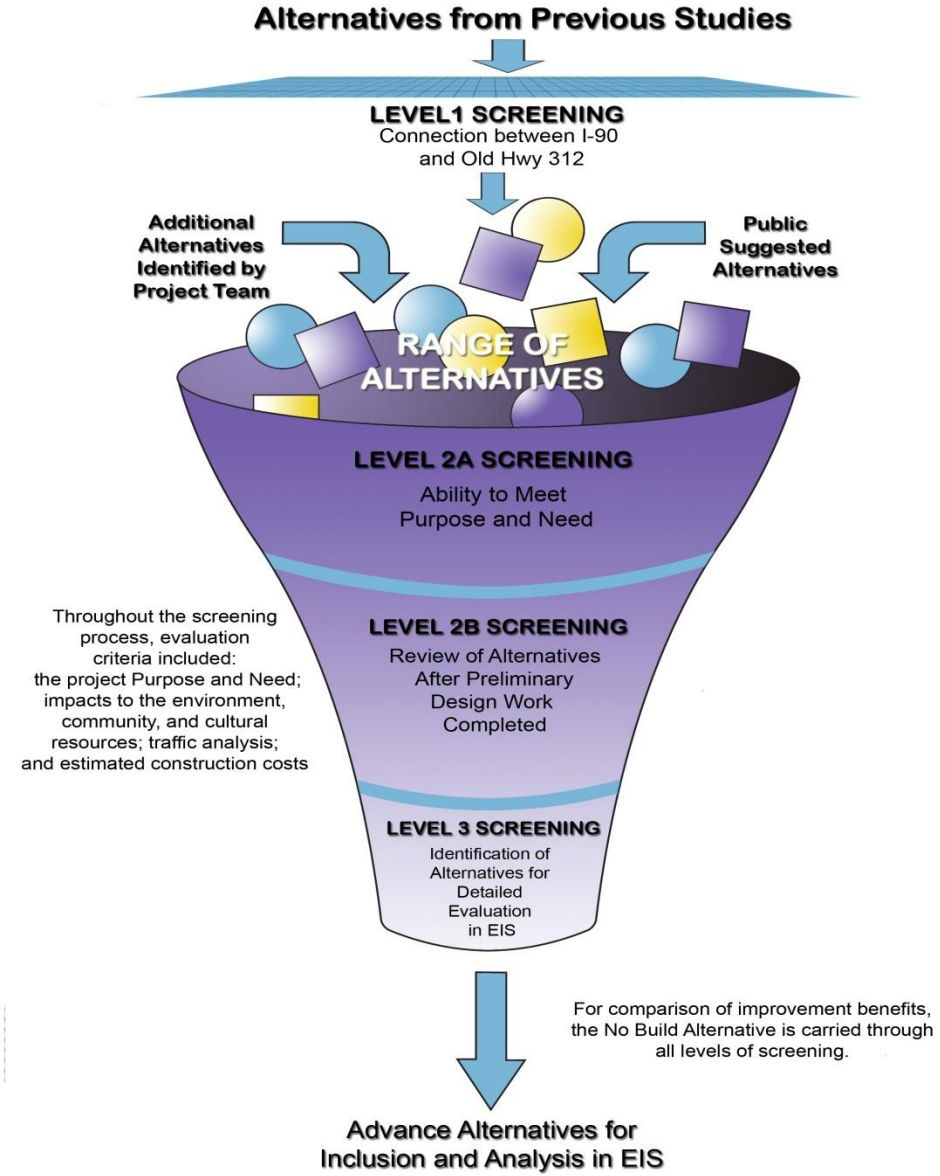


## 2011

- MDT and FHWA developed and screened over 60 alternatives using a three-step process, which is summarized in Chapter 2
- The Alternatives Report describes this process in detail and is included as Appendix I of the FEIS

# What Alternatives Were Studied in the EIS?

- No Build Alternative
- Three Build Alternatives
  - Mary Street Option 1
  - Mary Street Option 2
  - Five Mile Road

# Build Alternatives

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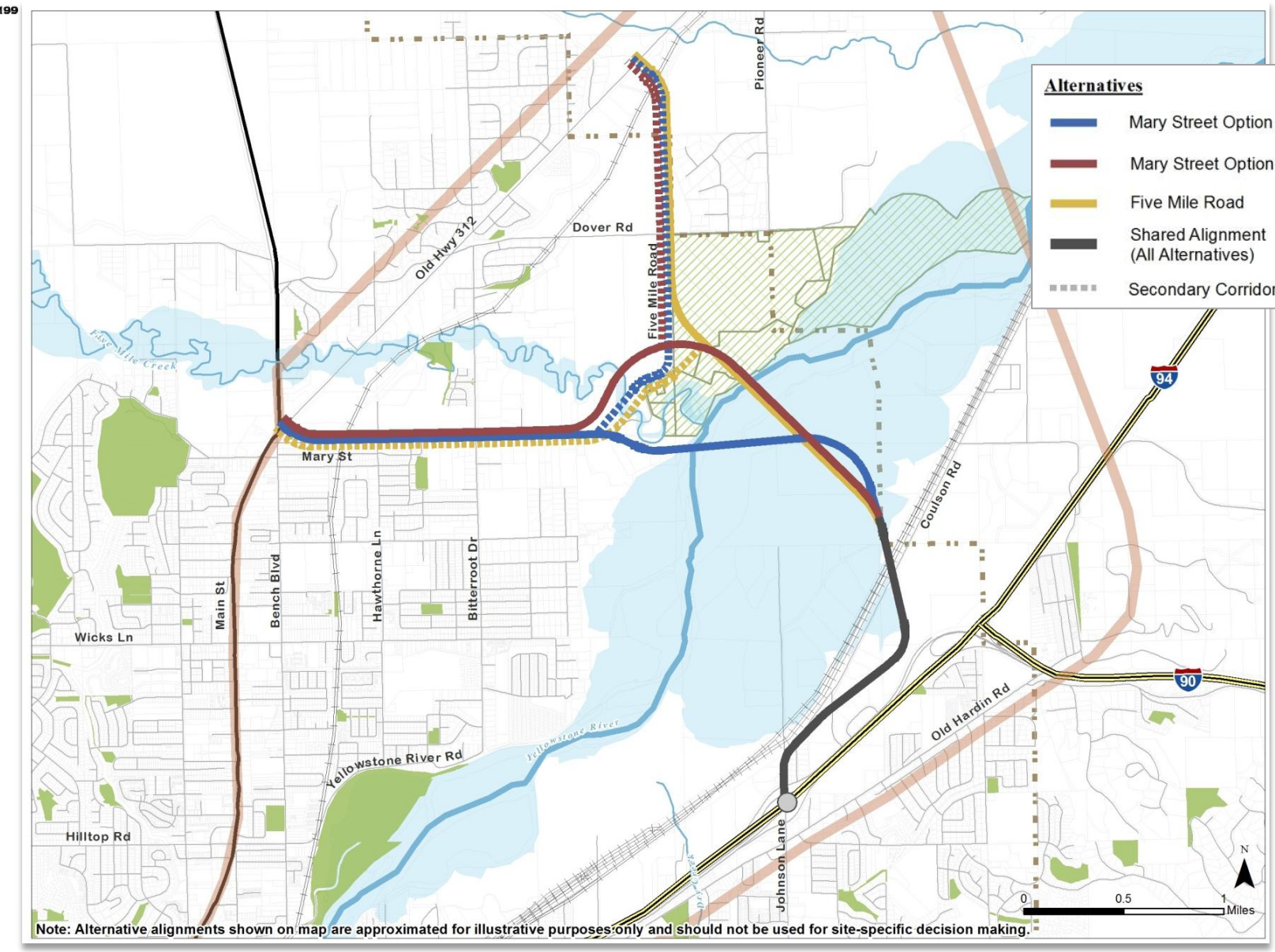
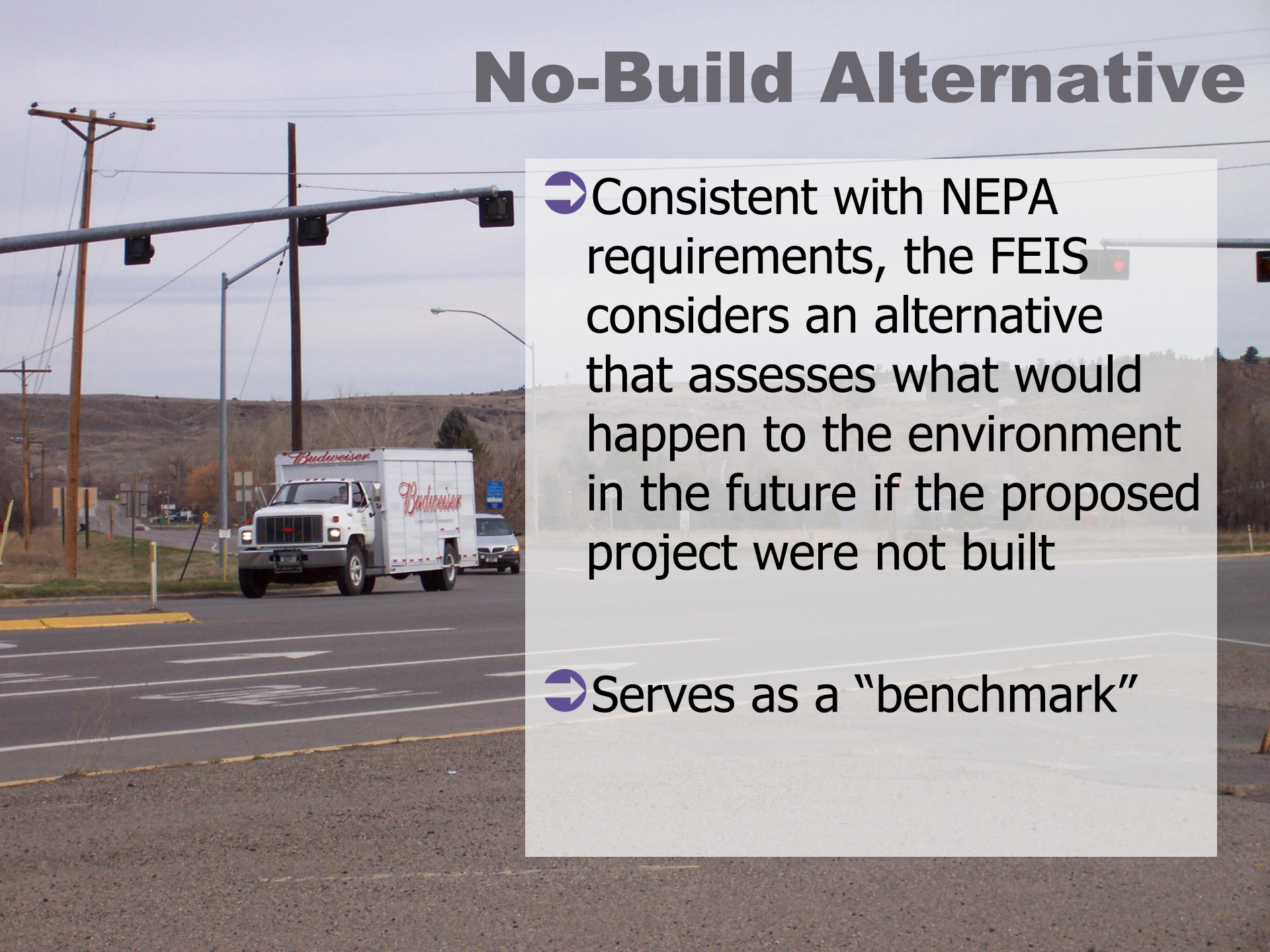


# No-Build Alternative




- Consistent with NEPA requirements, the FEIS considers an alternative that assesses what would happen to the environment in the future if the proposed project were not built
- Serves as a “benchmark”

# Build Alternatives

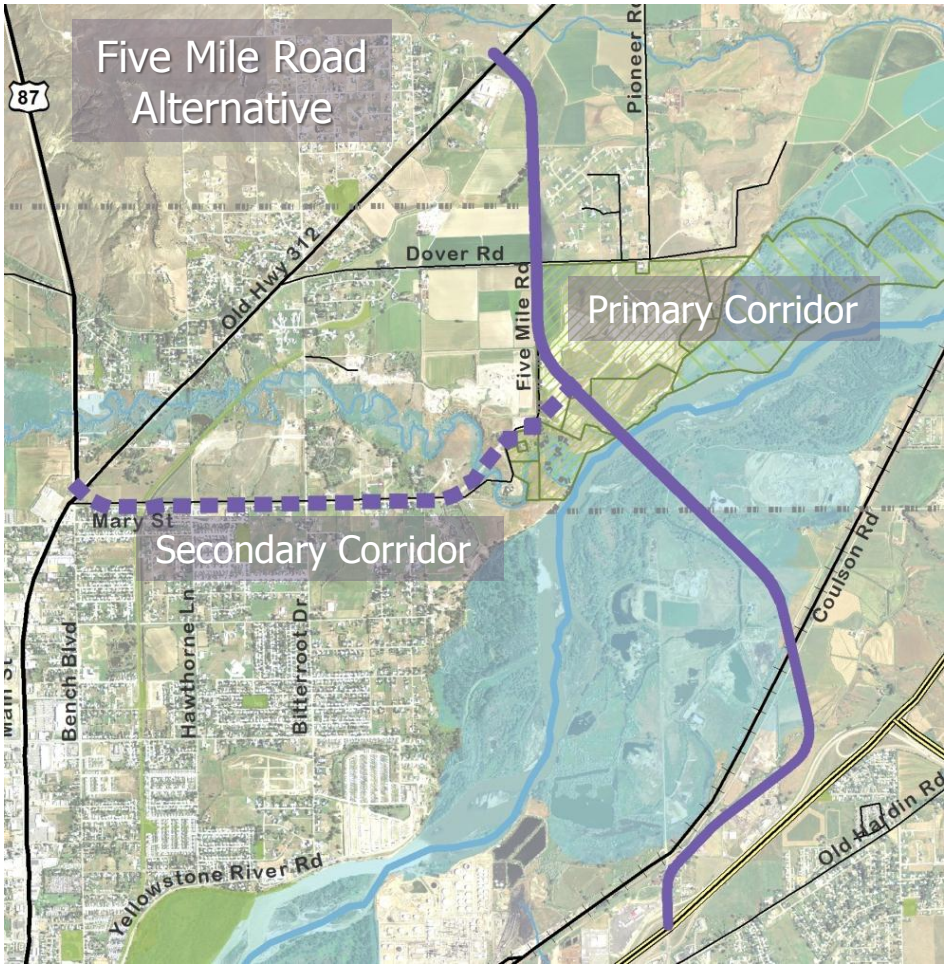
- Each of the proposed build alternatives:
  - Would include crossings at the Yellowstone River, MRL Railroad, and Five Mile Creek
  - Would reconstruct the Johnson Lane Interchange
  - Would include intersection improvements at connections to the local street network

# Build Alternatives have Primary and Secondary Corridors

- Each of the proposed build alternatives consists of a primary corridor and a secondary corridor
  - The "primary" corridor is the proposed alternative alignment
  - The "secondary" corridor is an existing roadway that would undergo improvements to accommodate traffic that would be attracted to the new roadway

# Primary and Secondary Corridors

- For example, if the Five Mile Road Alternative were constructed, secondary corridor improvements would be made to Mary Street



# Mary Street Option 1

- 4.9 mile new arterial roadway
- Would parallel north side of existing Mary Street
- New bridges over Coulson Road/Montana Rail Link, Five Mile Creek, and the Yellowstone River
- Alignment would include connections to local street network
- Secondary improvements to Five Mile Road to meet future travel demand

*Photo simulation of Yellowstone River crossing*

# Mary Street Option 1

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# Mary Street Option 1

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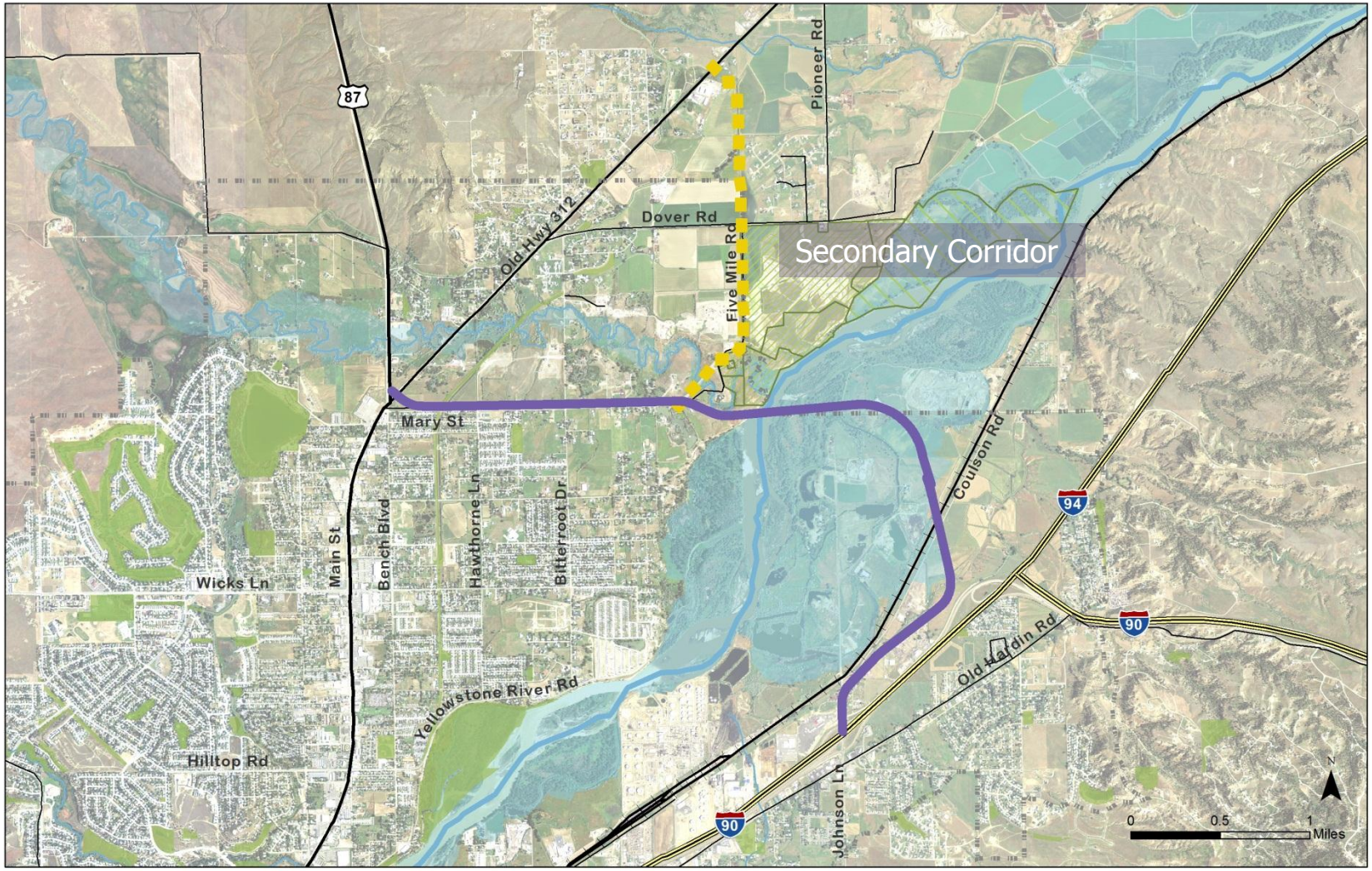

# Mary Street Option 2

- 5.1 mile new arterial roadway
- New bridges over Coulson Road/Montana Rail Link, Five Mile Creek, and the Yellowstone River
- Similar to Mary Street Option 1, would parallel north side of existing Mary Street

- Alignment would include connections to local street network
- Secondary improvements to Five Mile Road to meet future travel demand

*Photo simulation of Yellowstone River crossing*

# Preferred Alternative – Mary Street Option 2

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# Preferred Alternative – Mary Street Option 2

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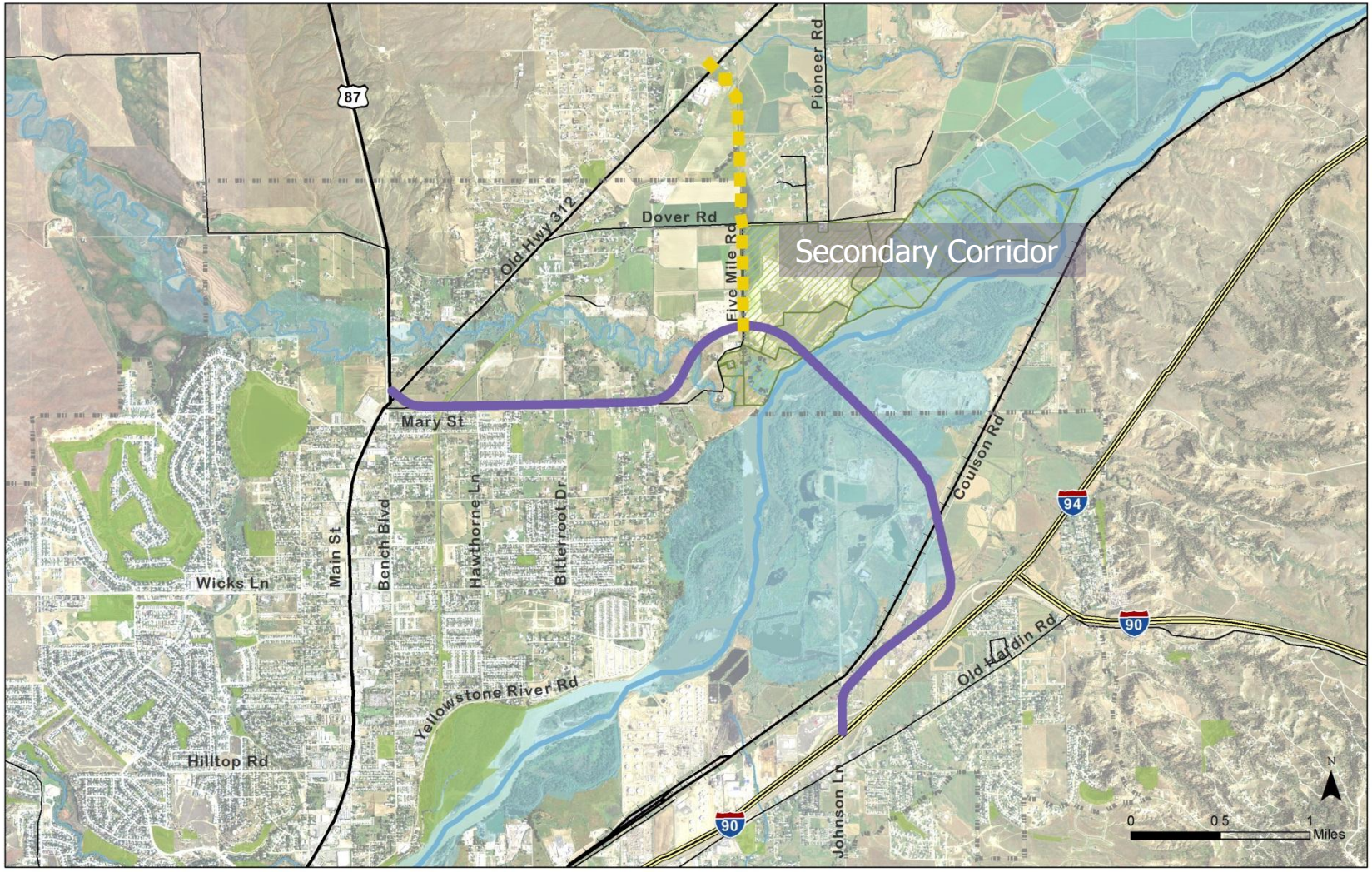

# Five Mile Road

- 4.5 mile new arterial roadway
- New bridges over Coulson Road/Montana Rail Link, Five Mile Creek, and the Yellowstone River

*Photo simulation of secondary corridor improvements*

- Alignment would include connections to local street network
- Improvements to Five Mile Road north of Dover Street
- Secondary improvements to Mary Street to meet future travel demand

# Five Mile Road

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# Five Mile Road

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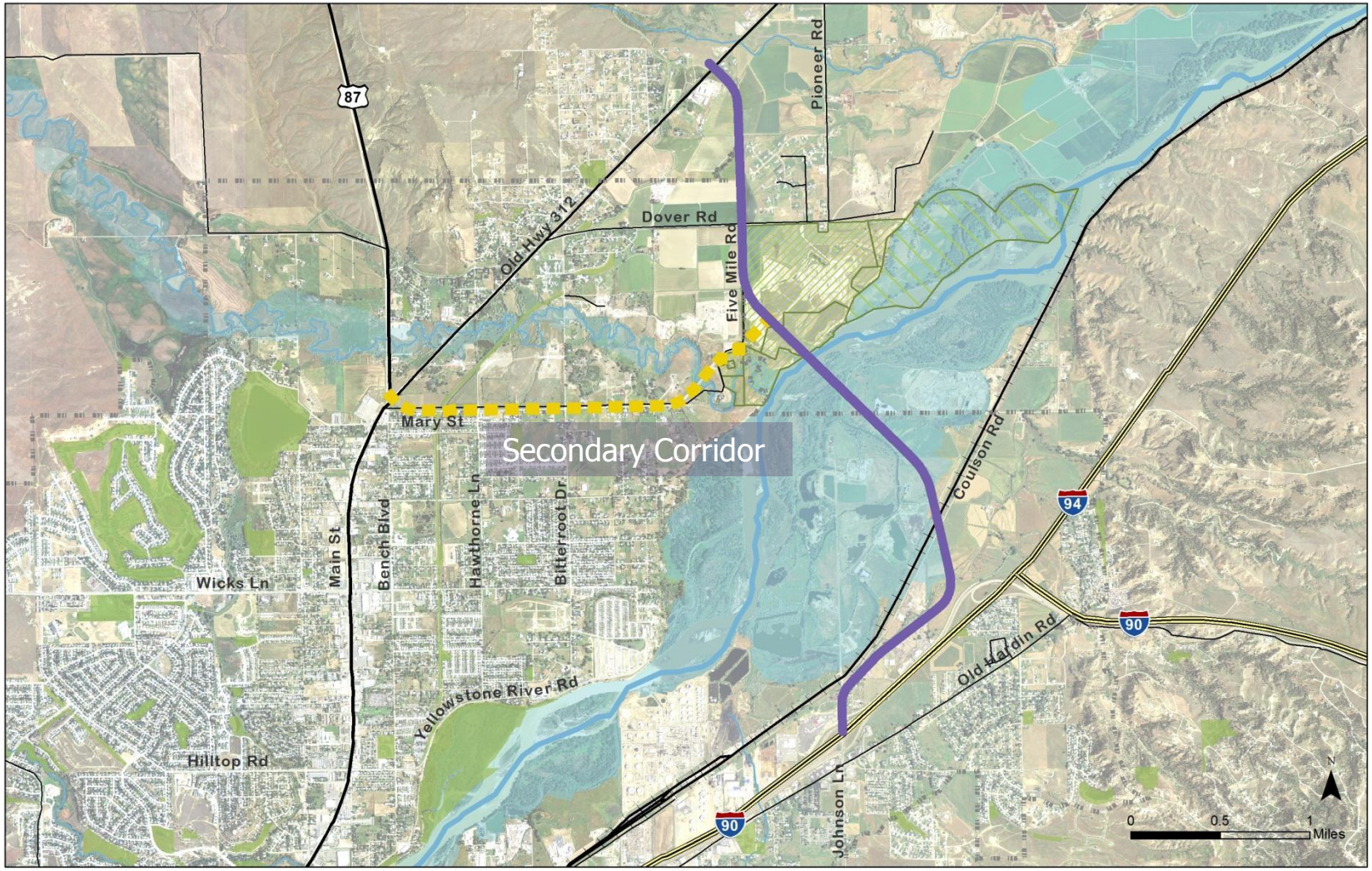
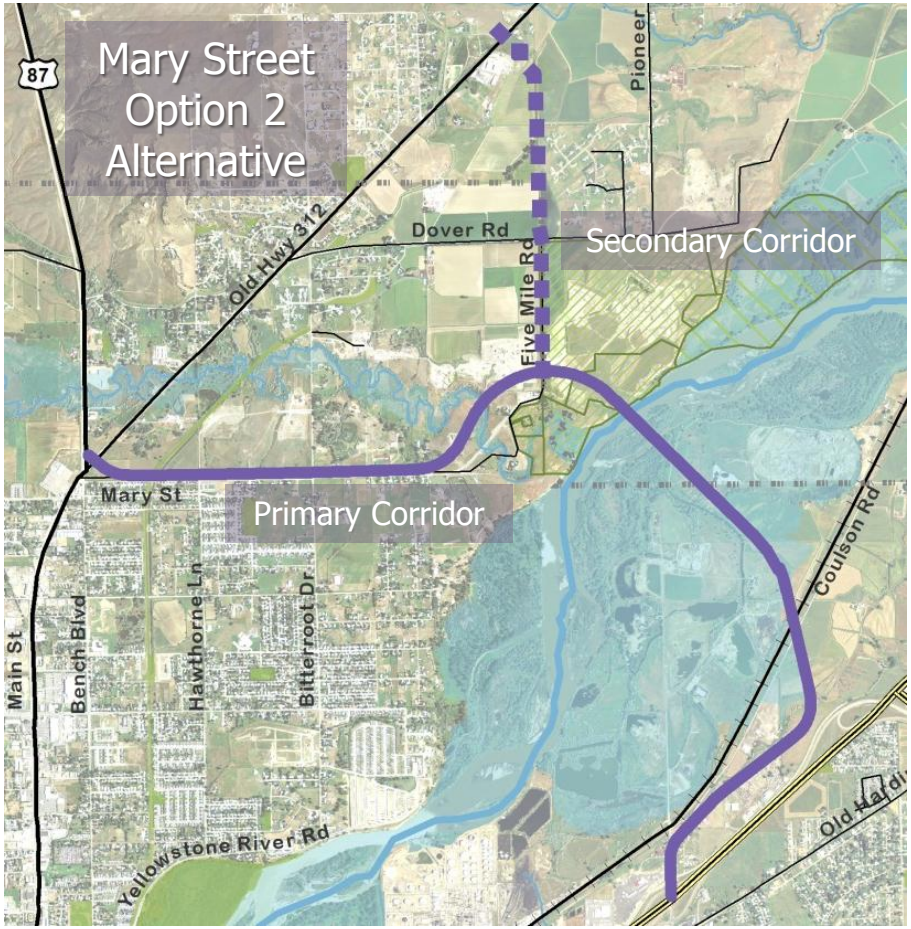


# Preferred Alternative

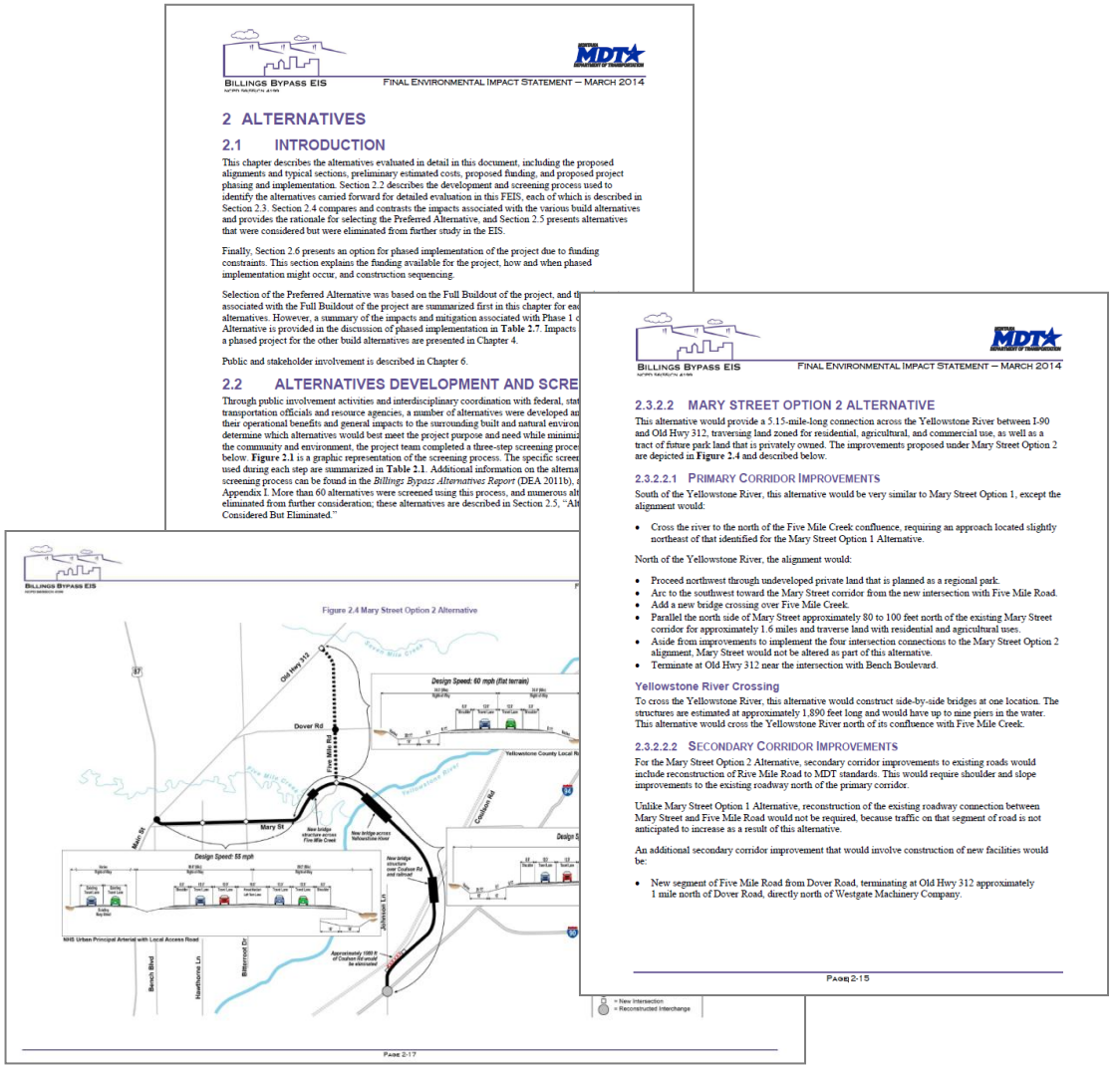
- **Mary Street Option 2** was chosen as the Preferred Alternative because it has a strong ability to meet the purpose and need, and because it minimizes the environmental impacts compared to other alternatives




- Due to funding constraints, the FEIS proposes to implement the Preferred Alternative in two phases

# Where to Learn More

- The alternatives and selection of the Preferred Alternative are described in greater detail in Chapter 2 of the FEIS



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## 2 ALTERNATIVES

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the alternatives evaluated in detail in this document, including the proposed alignments and typical sections, preliminary estimated costs, proposed funding, and proposed project phasing and implementation. Section 2.2 describes the development and screening process used to identify the alternatives carried forward for detailed evaluation in this FEIS, each of which is described in Section 2.3. Section 2.4 compares and contrasts the impacts associated with the various build alternatives and provides the rationale for selecting the Preferred Alternative, and Section 2.5 presents alternatives that were considered but were eliminated from further study in the EIS.

Finally, Section 2.6 presents an option for phased implementation of the project due to funding constraints. This section explains the funding available for the project, how and when phased implementation might occur, and construction sequencing.

Selection of the Preferred Alternative was based on the Full Buildout of the project, and t
associated with the Full Buildout of the project are summarized first in this chapter for ea
alternatives. However, a summary of the impacts and mitigation associated with Phase 1 c
Alternative is provided in the discussion of phased implementation in **Table 2.7**. Impacts
a phased project for the other build alternatives are presented in Chapter 4.

Public and stakeholder involvement is described in Chapter 6.

### 2.2 ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT AND SCRE

Through public involvement activities and interdisciplinary coordination with federal, stat
transportation officials and resource agencies, a number of alternatives were developed an
their operational benefits and general impacts to the surrounding built and natural environ
determine which alternatives would best meet the project purpose and need while minimiz
the community and environment, the project team completed a three-step screening proce
below. **Figure 2.1** is a graphic representation of the screening process. The specific screen
used during each step are summarized in **Table 2.1**. Additional information on the alterna
screening process can be found in the *Billings Bypass Alternatives Report* (DEA 2011b),
Appendix I. More than 60 alternatives were screened using this process, and numerous alt
eliminated from further consideration; these alternatives are described in Section 2.5, "Alt
Considered But Eliminated."

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Figure 2.4 Mary Street Option 2 Alternative



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#### 2.3.2.2 MARY STREET OPTION 2 ALTERNATIVE

This alternative would provide a 5.15-mile-long connection across the Yellowstone River between I-90 and Old Hwy 312, traversing land zoned for residential, agricultural, and commercial use, as well as a tract of future park land that is privately owned. The improvements proposed under Mary Street Option 2 are depicted in **Figure 2.4** and described below.

##### 2.3.2.2.1 PRIMARY CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

South of the Yellowstone River, this alternative would be very similar to Mary Street Option 1, except the alignment would:

- Cross the river to the north of the Five Mile Creek confluence, requiring an approach located slightly northeast of that identified for the Mary Street Option 1 Alternative.

North of the Yellowstone River, the alignment would:

- Proceed northwest through undeveloped private land that is planned as a regional park.
- Arc to the southwest toward the Mary Street corridor from the new intersection with Five Mile Road.
- Add a new bridge crossing over Five Mile Creek.
- Parallel the north side of Mary Street approximately 80 to 100 feet north of the existing Mary Street corridor for approximately 1.6 miles and traverse land with residential and agricultural uses.
- Aside from improvements to implement the four intersection connections to the Mary Street Option 2 alignment, Mary Street would not be altered as part of this alternative.
- Terminate at Old Hwy 312 near the intersection with Bench Boulevard.

**Yellowstone River Crossing**

To cross the Yellowstone River, this alternative would construct side-by-side bridges at one location. The structures are estimated at approximately 1,890 feet long and would have up to nine piers in the water. This alternative would cross the Yellowstone River north of its confluence with Five Mile Creek.

##### 2.3.2.2.2 SECONDARY CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

For the Mary Street Option 2 Alternative, secondary corridor improvements to existing roads would include reconstruction of Rive Mile Road to MDT standards. This would require shoulder and slope improvements to the existing roadway north of the primary corridor.

Unlike Mary Street Option 1 Alternative, reconstruction of the existing roadway connection between Mary Street and Five Mile Road would not be required, because traffic on that segment of road is not anticipated to increase as a result of this alternative.

An additional secondary corridor improvement that would involve construction of new facilities would be:

- New segment of Five Mile Road from Dover Road, terminating at Old Hwy 312 approximately 1 mile north of Dover Road, directly north of Westgate Machinery Company.

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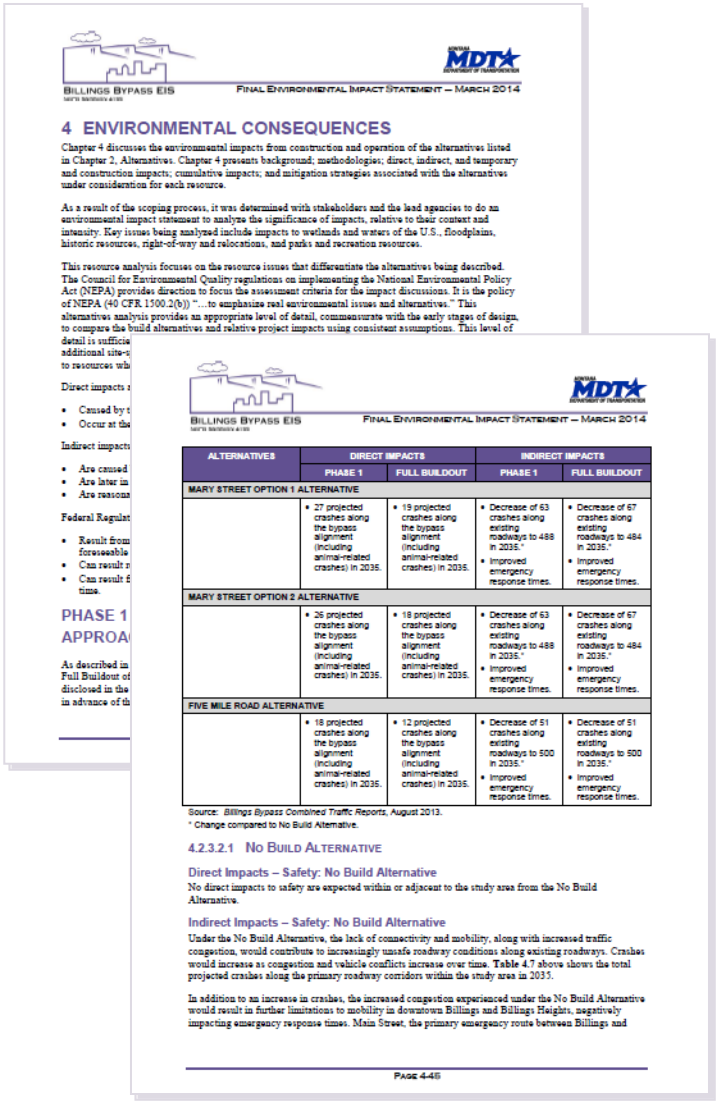
# Where to Learn More

- Chapter 4 discusses anticipated impacts and proposed mitigation measures in full detail for all three Build Alternatives
- You may learn more about the Preferred Alternative and impacts and mitigation at the Preferred Alternative station tonight



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4 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Chapter 4 discusses the environmental impacts from construction and operation of the alternatives listed in Chapter 2, Alternatives. Chapter 4 presents background; methodologies; direct, indirect, and temporary and construction impacts; cumulative impacts; and mitigation strategies associated with the alternatives under consideration for each resource.

As a result of the scoping process, it was determined with stakeholders and the lead agencies to do an environmental impact statement to analyze the significance of impacts, relative to their context and intensity. Key issues being analyzed include impacts to wetlands and waters of the U.S., floodplains, historic resources, right-of-way and relocations, and parks and recreation resources.

This resource analysis focuses on the resource issues that differentiate the alternatives being described. The Council for Environmental Quality regulations on implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides direction to focus the assessment criteria for the impact discussions. It is the policy of NEPA (40 CFR 1500.2(b)) "…to emphasize real environmental issues and alternatives." This alternatives analysis provides an appropriate level of detail, commensurate with the early stages of design, to compare the build alternatives and relative project impacts using consistent assumptions. This level of detail is sufficie
additional site-s
to resources wh

Direct impacts

- Caused by t
- Occur at the

Indirect impacts

- Are caused
- Are later in
- Are reasona

Federal Regulat

- Result from
foreseeable
- Can result
- Can result
time.

PHASE 1
APPROA

As described in
Full Buildout o
disclosed in the
in advance of th

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| ALTERNATIVES | DIRECT IMPACTS | | INDIRECT IMPACTS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | PHASE 1 | FULL BUILDOUT | PHASE 1 | FULL BUILDOUT |
| MARY STREET OPTION 1 ALTERNATIVE | | | | |
| | • 27 projected crashes along the bypass alignment (including animal-related crashes) in 2035. | • 19 projected crashes along the bypass alignment (including animal-related crashes) in 2035. | • Decrease of 63 crashes along existing roadways to 488 in 2035.* • Improved emergency response times. | • Decrease of 67 crashes along existing roadways to 484 in 2035.* • Improved emergency response times. |
| MARY STREET OPTION 2 ALTERNATIVE | | | | |
| | • 26 projected crashes along the bypass alignment (including animal-related crashes) in 2035. | • 18 projected crashes along the bypass alignment (including animal-related crashes) in 2035. | • Decrease of 63 crashes along existing roadways to 488 in 2035.* • Improved emergency response times. | • Decrease of 67 crashes along existing roadways to 484 in 2035.* • Improved emergency response times. |
| FIVE MILE ROAD ALTERNATIVE | | | | |
| | • 18 projected crashes along the bypass alignment (including animal-related crashes) in 2035. | • 12 projected crashes along the bypass alignment (including animal-related crashes) in 2035. | • Decrease of 51 crashes along existing roadways to 500 in 2035.* • Improved emergency response times. | • Decrease of 51 crashes along existing roadways to 500 in 2035.* • Improved emergency response times. |

Source: *Billings Bypass Combined Traffic Reports*, August 2013.
* Change compared to No Build Alternative.

4.2.3.2.1 NO BUILD ALTERNATIVE

Direct Impacts – Safety: No Build Alternative

No direct impacts to safety are expected within or adjacent to the study area from the No Build Alternative.

Indirect Impacts – Safety: No Build Alternative

Under the No Build Alternative, the lack of connectivity and mobility, along with increased traffic congestion, would contribute to increasingly unsafe roadway conditions along existing roadways. Crashes would increase as congestion and vehicle conflicts increase over time. Table 4.7 above shows the total projected crashes along the primary roadway corridors within the study area in 2035.

In addition to an increase in crashes, the increased congestion experienced under the No Build Alternative would result in further limitations to mobility in downtown Billings and Billings Heights, negatively impacting emergency response times. Main Street, the primary emergency route between Billings and

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# Public and Agency Outreach


- Billings Bypass Advisory Committee (BBAC)
- Resource Agency Coordination
- Public Meetings
- Newsletters and Website
- Stakeholder Interviews

# Billings Bypass Advisory Committee

- FHWA and MDT established the Billings Bypass Advisory Committee to provide advice to the Project Team and provide advice on community issues
  - Approximately 25 members represent a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including: elected officials, representatives from local organizations, and staff from the city and county
  - Met 11 times over the course of the project between 2004 and 2012
  - The eleventh meeting was held after receiving public and agency comments on the DEIS and concluded the BBAC's responsibilities

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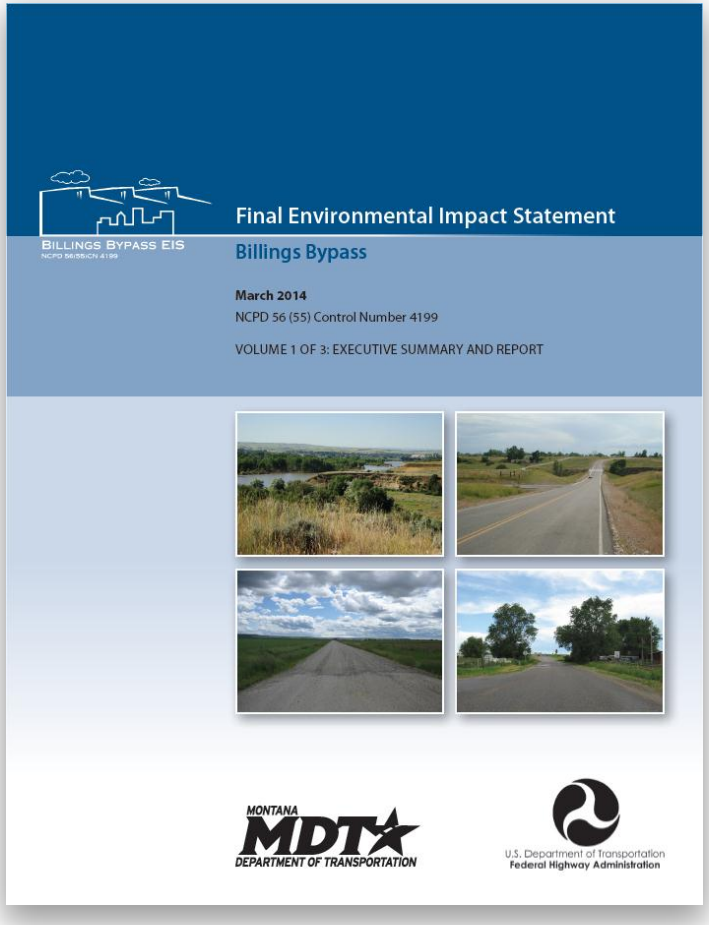
# FEIS Available for Review

- The FEIS was released for public review on March 28, 2014
- It can be viewed here at this open house, and in the following locations:
  - MDT Billings District Office
  - MDT Environmental Services Bureau
  - Montana State University Billings Library
  - City-County Planning Department
  - Yellowstone County Commissioners Office
  - Lockwood Water & Sewer District
  - http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/eis-ea.shtml



# FEIS Contents

- **Executive Summary**
  Reader-friendly summary of the document
- **Chapter 1**
  Documents the purpose and need for the project
- **Chapter 2**
  Explains the Project Alternatives
- **Chapters 3-5**
  Identify anticipated social, economic, and environmental impacts and proposed mitigation, and anticipated permits
- **Chapter 6**
  Describes the public outreach efforts
- **Chapters 7-11**
  List of preparers, distribution list, references, glossary, and index

# FEIS Contents

- **Appendices**

  Appendices provided to include key correspondence and technical information of note are:

  - Appendix A – maps showing the alignments of each alternative
  - Appendix I – intersection and interchange options
  - Appendix J – responses to comments for comments received on the DEIS

- **Supplemental Material**

  Resource reports (traffic, biology) and additional materials

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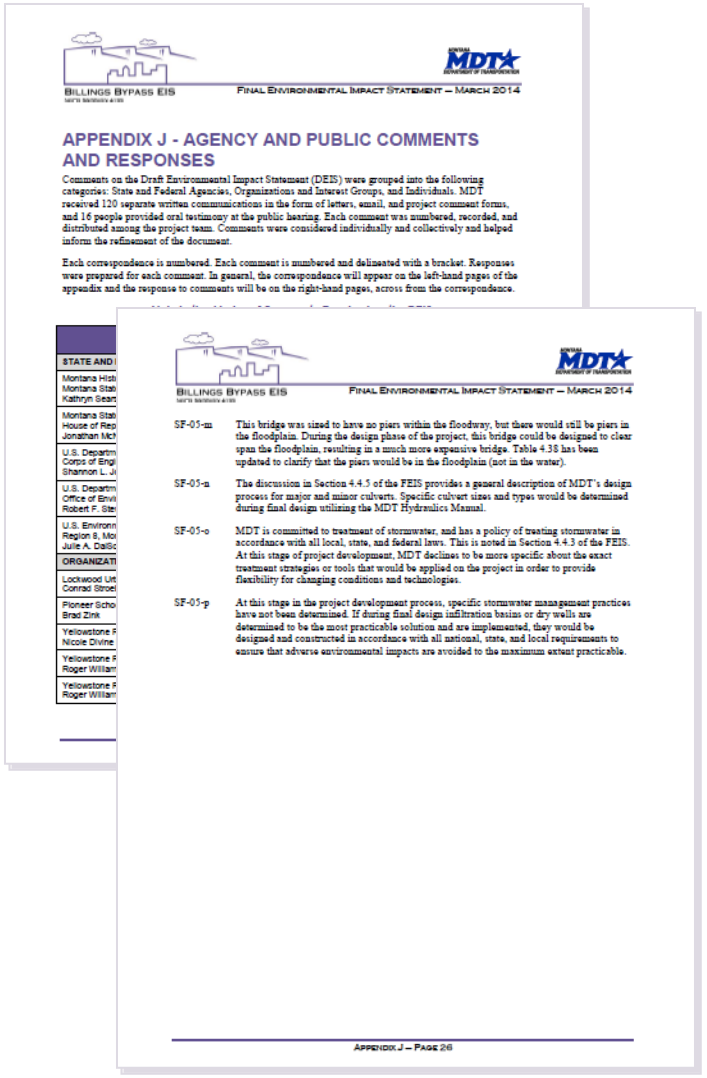
# Changes in the FEIS

- You may view a copy of the FEIS and learn more about changes between the DEIS and the FEIS at the Changes in the Final EIS station tonight

# Public and Agency Comments on the DEIS

- Interested in responses to DEIS comments? Read a summary in Chapter 6 or find detailed responses in Appendix J
- You can see responses to all comments on the DEIS at the Public Involvement Process station tonight



# Comments

- May be sent to:

**Tom Martin, P.E.**
Environmental Services Bureau Chief
MDT Environmental Services
2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 50620-1001

- Submitted online at http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/env-commentform.shtml

# Next Steps

# Phased Implementation

- Since the required funds for the entire project are not available in a single appropriation, the Billings Bypass FEIS proposes to implement the Preferred Alternative in two phases; Phase 1 and Full Buildout

# Phased Implementation

- Phase 1 would construct the first two lanes of the four-lane road along the entire length of the Preferred Alternative alignment and would include the secondary corridor improvements
- The Full Buildout would require another ROD in the future to expand the roadway to four lanes

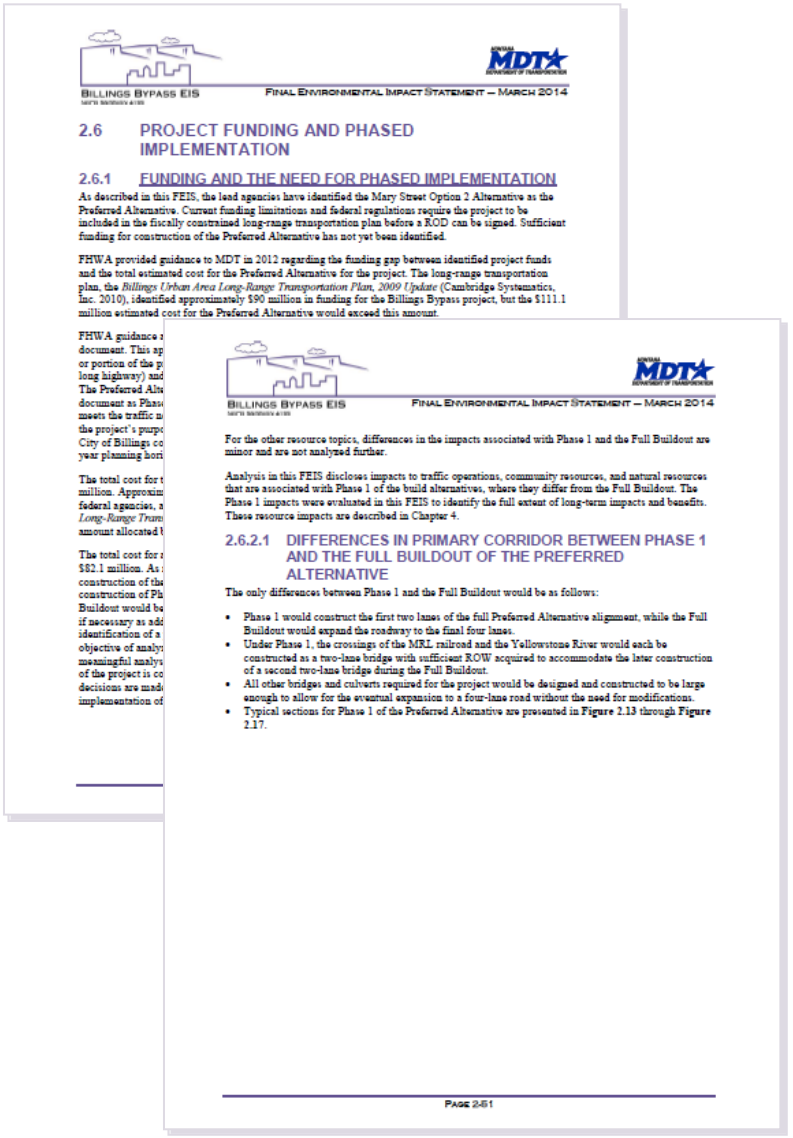
# Phased Implementation

- Phase 1 meets the traffic needs for the 20-year planning horizon identified in the FEIS
- The Full Buildout meets the project's purpose and need and is recommended as a long-term solution for the project corridor as the City of Billings continues to grow
  - This long-term solution would meet the traffic needs beyond the 20-year planning horizon

# Phased Implementation



- Chapter 2 discusses project funding and the need for phased implementation
- You may learn more about project phasing at the Phased Implementation station tonight



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## 2.6 PROJECT FUNDING AND PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

### 2.6.1 FUNDING AND THE NEED FOR PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

As described in this FEIS, the lead agencies have identified the Mary Street Option 2 Alternative as the Preferred Alternative. Current funding limitations and federal regulations require the project to be included in the fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan before a ROD can be signed. Sufficient funding for construction of the Preferred Alternative has not yet been identified.

FHWA provided guidance to MDT in 2012 regarding the funding gap between identified project funds and the total estimated cost for the Preferred Alternative for the project. The long-range transportation plan, the *Billings Urban Area Long-Range Transportation Plan, 2009 Update* (Cambridge Systematics, Inc. 2010), identified approximately $90 million in funding for the Billings Bypass project, but the $111.1 million estimated cost for the Preferred Alternative would exceed this amount.

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For the other resource topics, differences in the impacts associated with Phase 1 and the Full Buildout are minor and are not analyzed further.

Analysis in this FEIS discloses impacts to traffic operations, community resources, and natural resources that are associated with Phase 1 of the build alternatives, where they differ from the Full Buildout. The Phase 1 impacts were evaluated in this FEIS to identify the full extent of long-term impacts and benefits. These resource impacts are described in Chapter 4.

#### 2.6.2.1 DIFFERENCES IN PRIMARY CORRIDOR BETWEEN PHASE 1 AND THE FULL BUILDOUT OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The only differences between Phase 1 and the Full Buildout would be as follows:

- Phase 1 would construct the first two lanes of the full Preferred Alternative alignment, while the Full Buildout would expand the roadway to the final four lanes.
- Under Phase 1, the crossings of the MRL railroad and the Yellowstone River would each be constructed as a two-lane bridge with sufficient ROW acquired to accommodate the later construction of a second two-lane bridge during the Full Buildout.
- All other bridges and culverts required for the project would be designed and constructed to be large enough to allow for the eventual expansion to a four-lane road without the need for modifications.
- Typical sections for Phase 1 of the Preferred Alternative are presented in **Figure 2.13** through **Figure 2.17**.

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# Project Schedule

## Spring/Summer 2014

A Record of Decision can be issued no sooner than April 28, 2014.

## Summer 2014

Final design and right-of-way acquisition can begin after a Record of Decision is signed.

*For more information, see the Next Steps station.*

# What's Next?

- You may learn more about the next steps in the project at the Next Steps station tonight

# THANK YOU

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## Please read materials presented tonight, and talk to staff – we are here to answer questions

**If you have comments, submit your written comments or comment online**

**Any comments are requested by April 28 to be considered in a Record of Decision for the project**

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