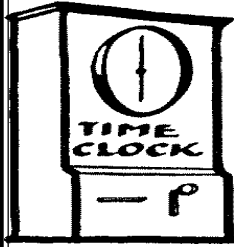


ROCKVALE TO LAUREL NEWSLETTER

Project Description & Update



This newsletter provides an update and extends an invitation for you to be involved in planning for reconstruction of Highway 212. Over 130 people attended the first Public Information Meeting and Open House on August 30th. The gathering provided an opportunity for attendees to be introduced to the reconstruction project,

review the extent of the study, comment on three alternative corridors and let the planners know about their concerns. Most participants were actively involved in discussing the alternatives and specific concerns. Less than one third of the people commenting to date have expressed a clear preference for one of the corridors. The West Bench and Existing Corridor have received the broadest support.

Comments emphasize the need for safety and the importance of considering a broad array of environmental issues. Participants in the first meeting viewed exhibits, listened to presentations and learned about the planning process. They told the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and the consultant,

CH2MHILL, what they were thinking, offered ideas about the existing roadway, roadway engineering and environmental design considerations, corridor alternatives and the planning process. *(Refer to the related articles below for a summary of comments.)* The public's ideas, along with technical analysis, resulted in four preliminary alternative proposals on highway location. You are encouraged to attend a second meeting to learn more about these proposals and comment on the preliminary alternative road locations. Preliminary alternatives on location include reconstruction of the highway on or close to the existing highway, as well as construction of a new road to the east or west. *(Refer to Invitation, back page for details on the meeting)*

The MDT proposes to reconstruct Highway 212 between Rockvale and Laurel. Increasing the capacity along this route is expected to reduce congestion and reduce the incidence and severity of accidents. The proposed project begins at Rockvale, Carbon County, and proceeds approximately 11.2 miles (18 km) to just south of Laurel, Yellowstone County. The study, public involvement and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are expected to take two years. The planning process will determine the most appropriate location, design and alternatives for the future reconstruction.

Safety of Highway is Public's Highest Priority

As of the end of October, nearly 200 comments have been received. The comments fall into four general categories addressing 1) Safety, 2) Environmental Considerations, 3) Process and Scope of the Project and 4) Engineering Design. The table below provides a general summary of comments to date. A complete record will be available for public review at the second public meeting. Individual comments are listed from most frequent to least frequent.

- Expressed general concern about the safety of the existing highway
- Requested safer accommodations for school buses
- Suggested that the speed limit should be lowered
- Requested safer access for existing residents and consideration of access control
- Requested safer accommodations for cyclists, joggers and pedestrians
- Expressed concerns regarding the safety of the Railroad Highway interface
- Expressed concern over emergency response time

38% Of Total Comments Pertain to Safety

- Impacts to future & existing development patterns
- Impacts to water resources
- Farmland, wildlife and biological resources
- Utilities
- Geology & soils
- Construction cost
- Historic Properties
- Hazardous Materials

33% Of Total Comments Pertain to Environmental Considerations

- Information requests related to traffic including type, volume and destination
- Questions related to MDT's responsibility for existing road if a new road is built
- Related to scope and process

14% Of Total Comments Pertain to Process and Scope

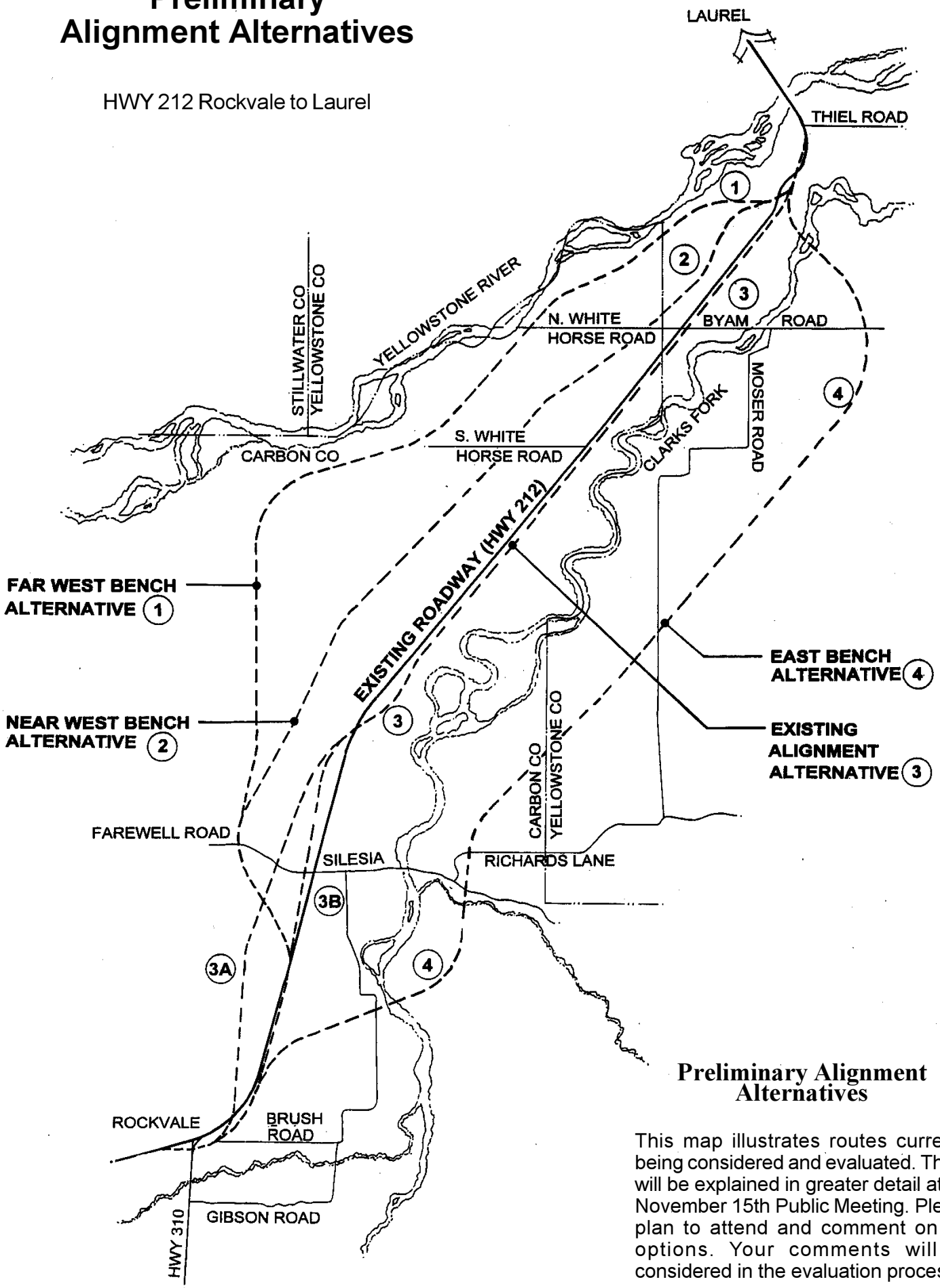
- Design suggestions related to width of turn lanes, road location and passing zones
- Related to roadway aesthetics: visual quality, landscaping and billboard controls

15% Of Total Comments Pertain to Engineering Design Concerns



Preliminary Alignment Alternatives

HWY 212 Rockvale to Laurel



Preliminary Alignment Alternatives

This map illustrates routes currently being considered and evaluated. These will be explained in greater detail at the November 15th Public Meeting. Please plan to attend and comment on the options. Your comments will be considered in the evaluation process.

FAQ's Frequently Asked Questions



What percent of traffic is through versus local?

We estimate that 70 to 80% of the traffic is "through" traffic; that is, those vehicles without destinations on US 212 between a point south of I-90 and the intersection with SR 310 at Rockvale. This estimate is based on a comparison of the highest traffic volume (5,900 vehicles per day at the Yellowstone/Carbon County Line) with the lower of the two traffic volumes at either end of the project (5,100 vehicles per day south of I-90 and 5,200 vehicles per day at Rockvale). Note that the "percent through vehicles" depends on where you are standing. At this time it is estimated that about 4,000 vehicles per day travel through the project area.

When, who and on what basis will the final right-of-way width be determined?

A width of 80 meters is being used for this presentation. 80 meters represents a reasonable planning width for width of roadway and associated features. There are numerous factors contributing to the determination of right-of-way width. These include terrain, need for shoulders and safety clearzones, the number of lanes and whether or not there will be a median. Additional width could be needed in specific locations for frontage roads and other local access considerations. The final right-of-way width is literally not known until the final design is underway. Up to that time increasingly accurate assumptions are used to fairly present and assess the effects of the project.

At this stage, the width of shoulders and clearzones are reasonably fixed. At this time we are considering enough width for four lanes. We believe this to be reasonable, based on preliminary traffic analyses. Whether the roadway will be two lanes, three lanes or four lanes will be determined by the projected traffic volumes, access issues and a number of other technical factors. We are in the process of gathering and interpreting available traffic counts, and anticipate the need for acquiring additional traffic counts at several strategic locations along the existing roadway.

We have included 60 feet for a median. This is a good nominal value if a divided roadway is to be constructed. That decision is not yet made. The full range of values could be 0 to 100 feet (no median or additional width at intersections to facilitate truck and farm equipment crossings.)

The width of the right-of-way also will vary depending on the need for cut and fill slopes. In the planning band presented at the next public meeting, we have enough width to accommodate 2 to 3 meters of difference in elevation between the roadway and the adjacent terrain. This should be adequate over much of the length of the alternatives shown. However a far more detailed study is required to refine this further.

When, who and on what basis will the final road alignment be determined?

The final road alignment is determined through the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act of 1969) process. Alternatives are developed within the NEPA framework based on public input, engineering requirements, MDT's needs and requirements, and traffic needs. The alternatives are then evaluated relative to impacts on the human and natural environments and in meeting the purpose and need of the project. The results of the analysis are then presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The preferred alignment is chosen by MDT based on the results of the analysis. This will be presented to the public in 2002 for their comment. The results of public input are evaluated and a final alignment is chosen by MDT and presented in the Final EIS and Record of Decision.

When will we be able to see the results of the analysis of alternative alignments?

The final results of the analysis will be presented in the DEIS. As the analysis moves along, interim updates will be posted on the website and included in future mailings of the newsletter.

When will we be able to see the results of the evaluation of the alternatives?

The project website will be periodically updated with new information, and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will be issued, with a public comment period to follow, before the EIS is finalized.

When is the next public meeting?

We do not have another Public Meeting like this one scheduled. Depending on public input from this meeting and other input during the detailed analysis of the alignments, another meeting can be scheduled if necessary.

What are the current and projected traffic volumes?

MDT estimates that the Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) on US 212 will increase at the rate of 1.5 percent per year over the next 25 years. At the highest volume location, in the vicinity of the Yellowstone/Carbon County Line, initial estimates provided by MDT indicate existing (2000) AADT of 5,900 vehicles per day (vpd), increasing to 8,600 vpd in 2025.

South of I-90, the estimated existing and future AADT volumes are 5,100 vpd and 7,600 vpd. At Rockvale the estimated AADT values are 5,200 and 7,600 vpd for years 2000 and 2025 respectively.

When will the web-site be up?

We have a website currently under construction and is expected to be fully operational by the end of November. The website address is: <http://projects.ch2m.com/rockvale>

When will road construction begin?

This project is currently funded through the final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD), which will include a conceptual design. The project schedule anticipates a ROD to be issued in July 2003. MDT will have to secure additional funding for the final design and construction. Typically a project of this nature would require 2 years to complete the final design, preparation of the construction plans and acquisition of the right-of-way. Depending on the alternative chosen, construction could take anywhere from 18-36 months after that.

How will MDT be acquiring properties for the necessary Right-of-Way?

MDT prefers to negotiate with landowners. On most of the recent projects MDT has been successful with negotiations and has avoided condemnation.

What will happen to the existing road if the new road is built in another location? Whose jurisdiction?

For all the alternatives presented here, the existing road will remain open for local access, and would remain under the jurisdiction of the Montana Department of Transportation. More specifically, the Montana Code Section 60-2-203 states "Maintenance responsibility. (1) The department shall maintain all public highways or portions of public highways that it maintained on July 1, 1976."

Newsletters will be sent out periodically to keep the public informed of the progress.



Would you like to tell us what you think.....

We are willing to listen! Several methods are available for the public to provide comments.



- Attend public meetings - Comments recorded via survey, tape recording and computer input.
- Comment through E-mail at Hwystudy@mcn.net
- Fax - Attn: Rockvale to Laurel Road Study - (406) 259-4963
- Letter - Send to: Project Team @ Fischer & Associates • 2815 Montana Avenue • Billings MT 59101
- or -
MDT District Office • P.O. Box 20437 • Billings, MT 59104-4138
- Phone Project Team (406) 294-9142 or MDT District (406) 252-4138
- or -
- Visit the Website at: <http://projects.ch2m.com/rockvale>

All attendees at public meetings will receive future correspondence including newsletters, meeting invitations and notice of the completion of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Please Note
Location
Change From
First Public
Meeting

YOU'RE INVITED

Information Meeting & Open House

Proposed Transportation Improvement Project

Highway 212, Rockvale - Laurel



- The Montana Department of Transportation invites you to discuss the proposed reconstruction of Hwy. 212, between Rockvale and Laurel. Increasing the capacity along this route is expected to reduce congestion, and the incidence and severity of accidents.
- This meeting will be held in Laurel on November 13th from 4:30 PM -9:00 PM at the **South Elementary School gym**, (NEW LOCATION) 606 S.W. Fifth Street. Presentations will be at 5:30 PM and 7:30 PM. Displays showing alternative road locations and opportunities for public comment will continue throughout the evening.
- The project begins at Rockvale in Carbon Co. and extends 11.2 miles (18km) to just South of Laurel in Yellowstone Co. This study, public involvement and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement are expected to take two years. The planning process will determine the appropriate location, design and alternatives for the road.
- **We'd like to hear your suggestions or comments.**
- For information or to comment please contact:
• Bruce Barrett, District Administrator (406) 252-4138 or The Project Consultant (406) 294-9142 or HwyStudy@mcn.net.
- *To arrange special accommodations for those persons with disabilities call MDT at (406) 494-9600 or TDD (800) 335-7592*

ROCKVALE TO LAUREL

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Hwy. 212 Study
c/o Fischer & Associates
2815 Montana Ave.
Billings, MT 59101