

Project NH 5-3(59)109  
Kalispell Bypass  
Control Number 2038

**RE-EVALUATION**  
**(for the Kalispell Bypass only)**

**US Highway 93 – Somers to Whitefish West**  
**Final Environmental Impact Statement**  
**and**  
**Final Section 4(f) Statement**  
**Approved September 12, 1994**  
(Prepared pursuant to 23 CFR 771.129)

**FINDINGS:**

Based on the studies performed for this re-evaluation of the 1994 US Highway 93 – Somers to Whitefish West Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Final Section 4(f) Statement as it relates to proposed design changes to the Kalispell Bypass only, no new significant environmental impacts have been identified. Proposed design changes re-evaluated include 1) alignment shifts at the north and south ends, 2) replacing 6 at-grade intersections with grade-separated interchanges of the bypass, and 3) reconfiguring the northern terminus with US 93 and West Reserve Drive. All other aspects of the 1994 FEIS remain unaffected by this re-evaluation.

This is to request the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) concurrence that a supplemental EIS for the referenced project will not be necessary. Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has found that in accordance with 23 CFR 771.129, this action will not have any new significant environmental impacts.

**Submitted by:**



Montana Department of Transportation

Date 7/13/08

**Approved by:**



Federal Highway Administration

Date 7/17/08

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides a re-evaluation of the September 1994 US 93 Somers to Whitefish West Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) as it pertains to the Kalispell Bypass alternative only. The US 93 Somers to Whitefish project is located in northwestern Montana in Flathead County. The proposed bypass evaluated in the FEIS is located on the west side of the City of Kalispell (see figure below). The bypass is a 7.6-mile (12-kilometer [km]) segment of the 29-mile (46-km) Preferred Alternative recommended in the 1994 FEIS and selected in the November 1994 Record of Decision (ROD). Since the ROD was finalized, several design changes have been proposed by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) for the bypass that require evaluation to determine if they result in new significant environmental impacts not previously considered in the FEIS. The design changes center around shifting the bypass alignment at the north and south ends, replacing six at-grade intersections with grade-separated interchanges, and modifying the northern terminus with US 93 and Reserve Drive.



Additionally, MDT conducted the re-evaluation to determine if new information or circumstances relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action were considered and would not result in significant environmental impacts not evaluated in the FEIS. These would include the bull trout listing and new Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) Stormwater Program for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) Phase II requirements.

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND AND HISTORY**

The US 93 is a north-south principal arterial that extends along the western portion of the state of Montana and is part of the National Highway System. The segment of US 93 that was covered by the 1994 FEIS is an approximately 29-mile (46-km) segment from Somers to west of Whitefish, Montana. This segment of US 93 links Missoula to urban areas and tourist destinations to the north.

Improvements to US 93 between Somers and Whitefish were originally proposed by MDT in the 1980s to reduce congestion on the existing facility, provide for planned growth and development, improve safety, provide for improved intermodal facility connections, and provide for enhanced scenic values. Since the FEIS and ROD were finalized in 1994, MDT has made steady and continued progress on the overall construction project along US 93 from Somers to Whitefish. Approval of the ROD initiated project activities that began with right-of-way acquisition, final design awards, and construction services segment by segment.

In 1996, MDT began a corridor preservation project to identify the specific right-of-way needs for the bypass. The corridor preservation project recommended three alignment modifications to allow better traffic flow: (1) the south terminus of the Bypass was shifted away from Snowline Lane to Gardner Auction, and (2) the alignment at the northern end was shifted east of Stillwater Road. A third alignment modification was recommended around this time based on the results of a supplemental noise analysis performed by MDT. The analysis recommended that the alignment be shifted away from neighborhoods along West Reserve Drive, south toward a nearby overhead electric transmission line to reduce potential noise impacts. Once the corridor preservation project was complete, MDT began passive acquisition of property needed for the Kalispell Bypass right-of-way. Passive acquisition means purchasing property from willing sellers who contacted MDT about selling. As of May 2006, approximately 40% of the land needed for the bypass has been acquired through passive acquisition.

Also, in August 1997, the Montana Transportation Commission passed an access control resolution designating the Kalispell Bypass as a limited access highway. This resolution was revisited by the Commission in August 2004 when, with support of the City of Kalispell and



Flathead County, the Commission reaffirmed the designation of a limited access highway for the bypass.

Lastly, in 2001, MDT recognized that levels of traffic growth in the Kalispell area may exceed expectations and could negatively impact traffic conditions along the bypass segment of the US 93 project. To accommodate the changed traffic conditions, MDT began considering design modifications to accommodate projected future traffic increases, including replacing at-grade signalized intersections with grade-separated interchanges.

### **PURPOSE OF THE RE-EVALUATION**

The Council on Environmental Quality and Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) regulations require that a supplemental environmental impact statement be prepared whenever changes to a proposed action, or new circumstances or information may result in significant environmental impacts that were not evaluated in the FEIS. To determine if such changes are significant, the regulations require the development of appropriate environmental studies. MDT and FHWA use an environmental re-evaluation to determine whether an approved environmental document, such as an FEIS and ROD, remain valid.

Re-evaluations are generally required three or more years after either environmental document approval, if no additional major steps to advance the project have been taken; when design or scope changes occur; when new environmental impacts not discussed in the original environmental document are identified or impacts previously discussed change; or when environmental documentation requirements change.

While more than 10 years have passed since the signing of the ROD for the Somers to Whitefish West FEIS, as described previously, MDT has taken major steps to advance the overall project. As for the Kalispell Bypass segment of this overall project, MDT has undertaken major steps to identify and secure right-of-way. However, during this period, project development activities have refined the design for the bypass and allowed for more accurate quantification of some environmental effects disclosed in the FEIS. Flathead County continues to be one of Montana's fastest growing area and changes in traffic volumes and motor vehicle accident rates have occurred since the time of the FEIS. Changes to Federal and state regulations relevant to some

project activities have changes. Other concerns have been identified that have required design changes. Lastly, there is continued public interest associated with the development and effects of providing a bypass around the City of Kalispell. For these reasons, FHWA and MDT decided to re-evaluate the 1994 Somers to Whitefish West FEIS, for the Kalispell Bypass only, in accordance with provisions of 23 CFR 771.129 (b) and (c).

As the FHWA's Technical Advisory T 6640.8A states: "the entire project should be revisited to assess any changes that have occurred and their effect on the adequacy of the FEIS." This re-evaluation discloses new information or circumstances relevant to the development of the project and ensures that all current environmental requirements are addressed. The re-evaluation focuses on the changes with the bypass project corridor and its surroundings, the potential for new or previously undisclosed impacts, and new project-related issues that have arisen since the FEIS was approved.

Therefore, the primary purpose of this re-evaluation is to determine whether or not the approved FEIS for the proposed construction of the Kalispell Bypass remains valid. Additionally, the findings of this re-evaluation will provide the information needed for FHWA and MDT to determine whether or not a supplemental EIS is needed for the bypass project as provided for in 23 CFR 771.130(a) and (f).

## **FORMAT AND ORGANIZATION OF THE REEVALUATION**

The US 93 Somers to Whitefish West FEIS Re-evaluation as it pertains to the Kalispell Bypass only consists of six sections:

1. Introduction
2. Summary of Findings from 1994 FEIS and ROD
3. Kalispell Bypass as Currently Proposed
4. Impacts of Proposed Changes
5. Impacts Comparison Summary
6. Comments and Coordination

**Section 1.0** includes project background, history, and reasons for the re-evaluation.

**Section 2.0** contains a summary of findings from the original 1994 FEIS and ROD as they relate to the Kalispell Bypass including the purpose and need, Preferred Alternative, impacts, and mitigation.

**Section 3.0** contains an overview of the proposed design changes for the Kalispell Bypass.

**Section 4.0** provides an evaluation of new impacts to human, social, and environmental resources compared to those identified in the 1994 FEIS. A summary of impacts and potential mitigation is provided in

**Section 5.0**, and public and agency coordination are discussed in **Section 6.0**.

## **CONFIRMATION OF PURPOSE AND NEED**

The 1994 FEIS indicated the primary transportation needs on US 93 were to reduce congestion on the existing facility, provide for planned growth and development, improve safety, provide for improved intermodal facility connections, and provide for enhanced scenic values. These overall needs have not changed aside from those addressed by improvements already made by MDT during implementation of the Preferred Alternative in the 1994 FEIS. The purpose and need for the bypass was further elaborated in the 1993 Kalispell Bypass Feasibility Study commissioned by the Flathead Regional Development Office. This document contains an overview of existing conditions, population and employment projections, traffic projections, and bypass alternatives development and evaluation. The document described a long-term need for a bypass around Kalispell that has the following goals:

1. Relieve traffic congestion in the Central Business District (CBD), especially on Main Street.
2. Reduce truck traffic in the CBD.
3. Relieve traffic congestion at the intersection of Main Street and Idaho Street.

At the time the FEIS was prepared, the accident rate on US 93 between Somers and Whitefish was higher than the statewide average for similar highways. Accidents were considerably higher in the urban areas and in areas where there were multiple access points. Safety problems were occurring in the downtown areas from large commercial vehicles mixing with automobiles, bicycles, and pedestrian traffic. This condition continues to contribute to safety issues in the downtown Kalispell area.

In 1994, US 93 operated at a level of service (LOS) D or E in many locations. 2015 traffic forecasts projected the LOS of US 93 to reduce to level F throughout the Kalispell area, with traffic volumes greater than the capacity of the roadway. Capacity issues caused by the large volume of trucks, recreational traffic, and local business traffic in the downtown Kalispell area were an important factor leading to a recommendation to evaluate a bypass around Kalispell, a need that remains valid.

Access points to US 93 were and still are concentrated in the Kalispell City limits, particularly in the downtown area. This concentration continues to lead to congestion and safety issues. Most of these access points are designed such that there is no opportunity for drivers accessing US 93 to accelerate to higher speeds. Traffic signals on every block in downtown Kalispell further slow traffic and cause congestion. The proposed bypass is still needed to improve these conditions in the downtown area by diverting through traffic around Kalispell.

Economic and social needs were also addressed by including the Kalispell Bypass with the Preferred Alternative. US 93's growing reputation for being a difficult and dangerous driving experience was anticipated to deter some people from visiting, and increased congestion was negatively impacting businesses. This economic condition continues to remain valid, particularly in the downtown Kalispell area. Social needs were addressed by providing provisions for bicycle and pedestrian facilities and reducing barriers created by crossing a busy state highway.

## **PROPOSED DESIGN CHANGES TO THE FEIS BYPASS ALTERNATIVE**

The proposed alignment for the bypass extends 7.6 miles (12.3 km) along the western side of the City of Kalispell, following the same general corridor proposed in the FEIS. Overall southern

and northern termini have been adjusted. A summary of the proposed design changes to the bypass alternative in the FEIS includes:

- Moving the southern termini with US 93 north approximately 1/3 mile.
- Making a minor alignment shift between Foys Lake Road and US 2.
- Shifting the alignment to the east of Stillwater Road.
- Shifting the alignment to the south of West Reserve Drive.
- Replacing two culverts across Ashley Creek with bridge structures.
- Adding two new pedestrian grade-separated crossings.
- Replacing at-grade intersections with grade-separated interchanges at Airport Road, Foys Lake Road, US 2, Three Mile Drive, and Four Mile Drive.
- Reducing access at Sunnyside Drive.
- Replacing at-grade intersections with over- or underpasses only (no access) at Two Mile Drive.
- Constructing a new grade-separated interchange at the new Reserve Loop Road.
- Constructing other new connecting roads at the northern termini as part of improvements to the Reserve Drive and US 93 intersection.
- Changing the cross section to include a rural section (no curb and gutter) from US 2 to Four Mile Drive.

The proposed design provides for stricter access control with grade-separate interchanges rather than the at-grade intersections proposed in the 1994 FEIS. With the proposed design, the facility would better meet the transportation needs while addressing community concerns relating to unregulated access and commercialization of the bypass corridor. The overall bypass alignment remains in the Kalispell Growth Area.

Unchanged from the 1994 FEIS design, the proposed design would provide a four-lane, limited access roadway that includes 12-foot (3.6-meter) travel lanes and 8-foot (2.4-meter) outside shoulders, separated by a 10-foot (3.0-meter) paved median. In select portions of the project, drainage ditches would be replaced by a curb. At the south and north project termini, the center median would be widened to allow for construction of additional turn lanes and/or raised medians.

Also unchanged from the 1994 FEIS, a 10-foot (3.0-meter) bike path would be constructed the entire length of the bypass, primarily on the east side of the bypass. In the proposed design, the bike path would parallel ramp alignments at all cross-streets to avoid at-grade crossings of high-speed ramps. Two new grade-separated bike path crossings are planned: one near the existing Sunnyside Drive and one at the north end of the project. Also, the existing Ashley Creek Trail, which travels east-west just south of US 2, would be relocated.

At the northern terminus of the bypass, a number of new connecting roadways are planned to improve operations of the Reserve Drive and US 93 intersection:

- **Reserve Loop** is planned as a four-lane road with a raised median that would replace existing West Reserve Drive to US 93;
- **Hutton Ranch Road** would extend a three-lane road from the east end of developer-constructed Hutton Ranch Road;
- **Frontage Road** would be a two-lane road in the northeast quadrant of US 93 and West Reserve Drive to provide all local access to this quadrant of land; and
- **Garden Drive Connection** would construct a right-in, right-out only access from the westbound lane of the bypass.

## CHANGED ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

The re-evaluation summarizes impacts from the original bypass design disclosed in the 1994 FEIS. It also describes the conditions that have changed since 1994, and provides revised impacts based on the proposed design of the bypass. Many environmental conditions remain unchanged or only slightly changed since completion of the FEIS. A summary of the major changed conditions includes the following:

### **COMPLETION OF KALISPELL GROWTH POLICY**

Since the completion of the FEIS, the *Kalispell Growth Policy 2020* (City of Kalispell 2003), adopted February 18, 2003, has replaced the *Kalispell Master Plan*. Over the past 10 years, the City of Kalispell has annexed substantial portions of land along the proposed bypass. Today, approximately 50% of the study area falls within the planning jurisdiction of the *Kalispell Growth Policy 2020*. The remainder of the proposed bypass falls under the jurisdiction of the *Flathead County Master Plan* (Flathead County, 1994), which is in the process of being updated

by a growth policy document. Generally, City and County land use policies for lands within the study area have not changed since the FEIS and development along the corridor has been approved by the City and County with the bypass corridor in mind. The Kalispell Bypass is now identified as a first priority transportation project by the City of Kalispell.

### ***ADDITIONAL POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT FORECASTS***

Population forecasts in the 1994 FEIS were made for year 2000 and 2015. Population forecasts in the FEIS for the year 2000 appear to be reasonable since after being adjusted to year 2003, the actual 2003 population exceeded the FEIS forecast by only 2%. Population forecasts in the FEIS for year 2015 predicted a population exceeding 100,000. As an update, The *Kalispell Bypass Traffic Forecasting Report* (Stelling, 2005), now projects a population of 97,300 persons in Flathead County by 2015. This number is projected to increase to 120,100 persons by 2030. Overall, Flathead County continues to grow more rapidly than the state as a whole. According to the US Census of Population, between 1990 and 2000, the population of Flathead County increased by 25.8% while the population of Montana increased by 12.9%.

### ***CHANGES IN FEDERAL ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT LISTINGS***

Since the FEIS, the American peregrine falcon has been de-listed and is currently being monitored during its first five years of de-listing. Additionally, the Bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) has been listed.

Based on coordination with United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP), and implementation of specified coordination measures, a *no effect* determination was rendered for the bypass relative to the Bull trout.

### ***DISCOVERY OF ONE ADDITIONAL CULTURAL SITE***

Since completion of the FEIS, more recent cultural resource surveys have been conducted in the study area to account for proposed design changes. *The Cultural Resource Inventory and Assessment of the Kalispell Bypass Project* (Ferguson and McKay 1999) reviewed previous studies and conducted updated research on properties potentially eligible for the National

Register of Historic Properties (NRHP). The study reaffirmed the eligibility of the Kalispell-Somers Railroad Spur line and McCormack Farm, but did not discover new eligible properties.

Since 1999, proposed design changes have necessitated additional study of areas previously not affected. *The Kalispell Bypass Cultural Resource Supplement Report* (Renewable Technologies 2006) evaluated areas within the northern portion of the proposed bypass and at several interchange areas. The survey documented five historic sites in the study area. Four of these sites are not considered eligible for listing in the NRHP. One property, the Miller Residence, had been deemed eligible by the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer in 1994. The supplement report reaffirmed this property's eligibility.

The proposed design changes would not alter the previously determined effects to the Kalispell-Somers Railroad Spur Line and McCormack Farm. The proposed design changes would not affect the Miller Residence.

### **CONCLUSIONS REACHED FROM THIS RE-EVALUATION**

Based on the new information obtained and developed for this re-evaluation, MDT and FHWA reached the following conclusions:

***Conclusion 1: The FEIS adequately describes the overall environmental impacts associated with construction of the Kalispell Bypass and there were no new environmental impacts identified that might change the decision made in the original environmental document.***

The anticipated environmental effects associated with construction of the Kalispell Bypass portion of the US 93 Somers to Whitefish West were fully described in the FEIS. The re-evaluation shows that environmental conditions with the bypass corridor have changed little since the publication of the FEIS.



***Conclusion 2: The proposed design changes to the bypass minimize or reduce some previously disclosed impacts and improve the overall service life of the facility.***

The re-evaluation determined that the proposed design changes to the bypass alternative described in the FEIS would:

1. Reduce wetland impacts from approximately 4 acres (1.6 hectares) to 1 acre (0.4 hectares) by making minor alignment shifts,
2. Reduce noise impacts from 51 to 39 impacted receivers by shifting the alignment south from West Reserve Drive and lowering the roadway grade where feasible,
3. Improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and access by adding two grade-separated crossings of the bypass, and
4. Reduce water resource impacts by replacing two culverts on Ashley Creek with bridges.

Additionally, MDT recognized that traffic conditions evaluated in the 1994 FEIS only considered forecasts to the year 2015 and that recent population increases in the Kalispell area could negatively impact future traffic conditions. To accommodate the changed traffic conditions, MDT proposed design modifications to accommodate year 2030 projected future traffic increases, thereby increasing the service life of the facility. The modifications include replacing at-grade signalized intersections with grade-separated interchanges (overpasses and underpasses) to allow unimpeded traffic movement along the bypass and reconfiguring the US 93 and West Reserve Drive intersection.

***Conclusion 3: The proposed design changes to the bypass would cause some additional impacts.***

This re-evaluation determined that the following additional impacts would result from the proposed design changes to the bypass:

1. Right-of-way needed to accommodate the proposed design changes would require the relocation of an additional five residential structures and one outbuilding.
2. Construction of six grade-separated interchanges would create a new permanent visual element.

***Conclusion 4: There are no new significant environmental impacts caused by the proposed design changes.***

This re-evaluation found that the proposed design changes would not result in new significant impacts beyond those reported in the 1994 FEIS. Therefore, the conclusions reached in the FEIS remain valid and a supplemental EIS is not required.

***Conclusion 5: Additional Mitigation Requirements.***

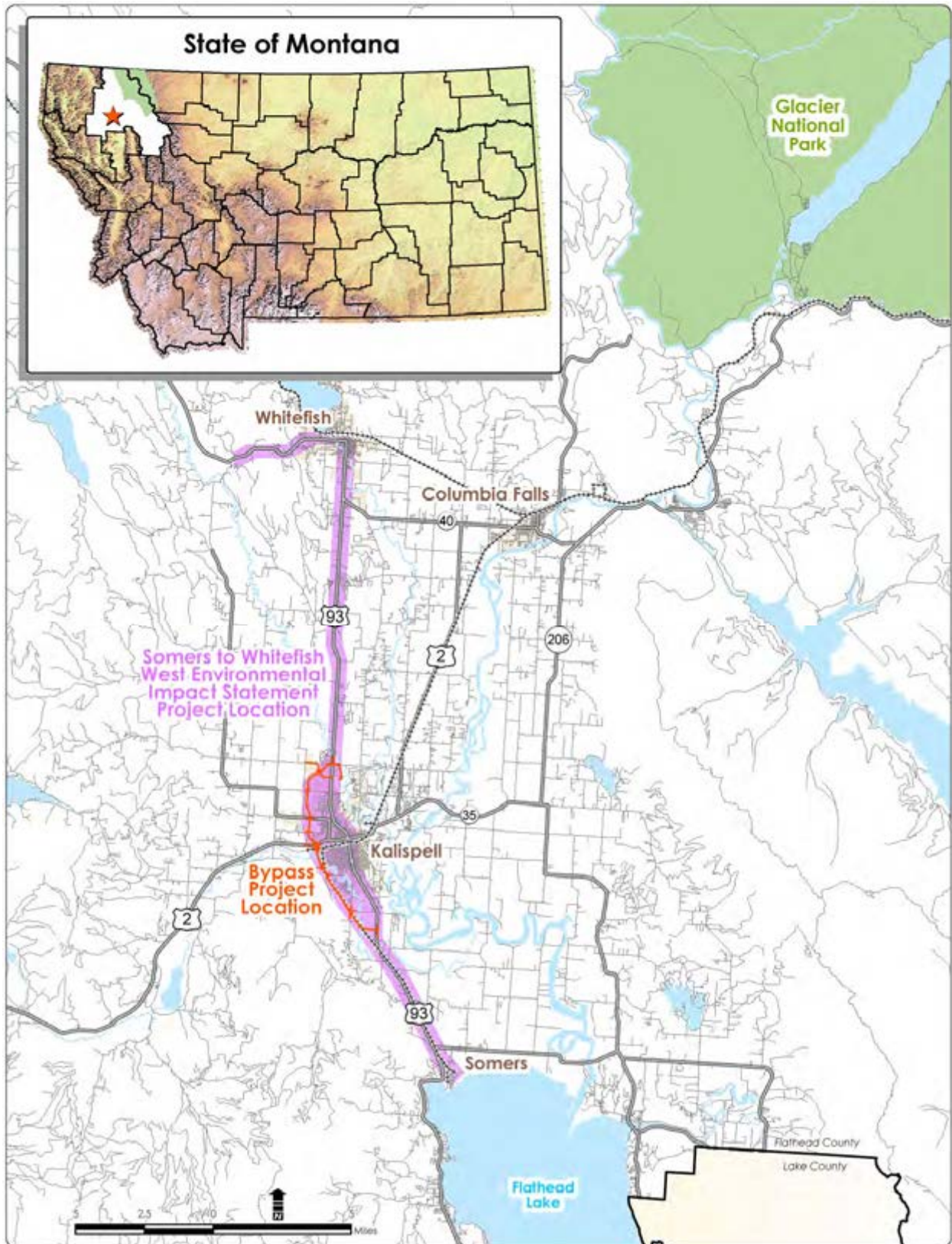
The only additional mitigation requirements over those in the 1994 FEIS resulting from the proposed design changes is the relocation of five additional residences and one outbuilding.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document provides a re-evaluation of the September 1994 US 93 – Somers to Whitefish - Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) as it pertains to the Kalispell Bypass alternative only. The Somers to Whitefish Project on US 93 is located in northwest Montana, near Glacier National Park. The proposed bypass is located on the west side of the City of Kalispell. The bypass is a 7.6 miles (12 kilometer [km]) component of the 29 miles (46 km) Preferred Alternative recommended in the FEIS and selected in the subsequent November 1994 Record of Decision (ROD). Since the ROD was finalized, several design changes have been proposed by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) for the bypass that require evaluation to determine if they result in new significant environmental impacts not previously considered in the FEIS. **Figure 1.1** provides a regional location map and **Figure 1.2** depicts the bypass project location.

This document contains seven sections. In addition to this introduction, **Section 1.0** includes project background and history. **Section 2.0** contains a summary of findings from the original 1994 FEIS and ROD as they relate to the Kalispell Bypass including the purpose and need, Preferred Alternative, impacts, and mitigation. **Section 3.0** contains an overview of the currently proposed design changes for the Kalispell Bypass. **Section 4.0** provides an evaluation of new impacts to human, social, and environmental resources compared to those identified in the 1994 FEIS. A summary of impacts and potential mitigation is provided in **Section 5.0**, and public and agency coordination are discussed in **Section 6.0**.

**FIGURE 1.1 - REGIONAL LOCATION MAP**



**FIGURE 1.2 - PROJECT LOCATION MAP FOR KALISPELL BYPASS**



## 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The US 93 is a north-south principal arterial that extends along the western portion of the state of Montana and is part of the National Highway System. The segment of US 93 that was covered by the 1994 FEIS is an approximately 29-mile (46-km) segment from Somers to west of Whitefish, Montana (see **Figure 1.1**). This segment of US 93 serves as a major traffic corridor between Missoula in the south, the region’s largest city, and the Kalispell, Whitefish, and Columbia Falls urban areas in the north. In addition, this segment of the highway serves tourist traffic that is destined for Glacier National Park and the Flathead Lake area, which results in a higher than average percentage of recreational vehicles. Other heavy users of the highway include the logging industry with vehicles that exceed a 60-foot (18-meter) wheelbase, smaller trucks serving local commerce and agricultural needs, and local commuters.

Improvements to US 93 between Somers and Whitefish were originally proposed by MDT in the 1980s to reduce congestion on the existing facility, provide for planned growth and development, improve safety, provide for improved intermodal facility connections, and provide for enhanced scenic values. **Table 1.1** contains a historical timeline for this project. Of importance is the steady and continued progress that MDT has made on the overall construction project along US 93 from Somers to Whitefish since the FEIS and ROD were finalized in 1994. Approval of the ROD initiated project activities that began with right-of-way acquisition, final design awards, and construction services segment by segment.

**TABLE 1.1 - PROJECT HISTORY**

<b>1992 – 1994</b>
US 93, Somers to West of Whitefish Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) evaluates alternatives for US 93. The DEIS combined several ongoing and planned projects from Somers to Whitefish, including the Kalispell Bypass. An Advisory Committee is involved in the process.
<b>1993</b>
The Kalispell Transportation Plan and Bypass Feasibility Study issued in October recommend a bypass around Kalispell.
<b>1994</b>
The FEIS recommends western bypass around Kalispell as the Preferred Alternative.
The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issues a ROD on US 93, Somers to West of Whitefish, in November. In the ROD, FHWA selects Alternative A (COMBO) as the Preferred Alternative, but includes Alternative B West (the bypass) as part of the Preferred Alternative.

**TABLE 1.1 (CONTINUED) - PROJECT HISTORY**

<b>1995</b>
MDT identifies six of the projects covered in the FEIS on which to begin design work.
<b>1996</b>
MDT begins design on the six projects — final design on five projects and preliminary design for corridor preservation on the Kalispell Bypass. Several revisions to the alignment shown in the FEIS for the Kalispell Bypass are proposed based on community input.
Montana 40 South project awarded for construction in April. (US 93, Reference Post [RP] 122.3-122.5, construction complete)
Grandview North project awarded for construction in April. (US 93, RP 114.9-117.6, construction complete)
<b>1997</b>
MDT and FHWA approve right-of-way plans for the Kalispell Bypass project in February and begin passive right-of-way acquisition of corridor footprint.
The Advisory Committee reconvenes to consider design modifications to the Stillwater River project. The Advisory Committee agrees to modify the design from the FEIS to accommodate changed conditions.
Montana 40 North project awarded for construction in June. (US 93, RP 125.5-126.9, construction complete)
<b>1999</b>
Somers Ashley Creek South project awarded for construction in June. (US 93, RP 103.2-106.0, construction complete)
<b>2000</b>
Somers Ashley Creek North project awarded for construction in May. (US 93, RP 106.0-109.1, construction complete)
<b>2003</b>
MDT begins design of US 93 in the Whitefish Urban area. (US 93, RP 126.9-127.9)
<b>2004</b>
Ashley Creek Kalispell project awarded for construction in February. (US 93, RP 109.1-111.6, under construction)
In June, MDT begins re-evaluation of the Kalispell Bypass portion of the 1994 FEIS and begins preliminary designs for the bypass.
MDT holds public meetings in June and August to review the Kalispell Bypass project with members of the community and to obtain comments.
<b>2005</b>
In August, the City of Kalispell and Flathead County issue resolutions recommending the currently proposed design for the bypass.
MDT holds a third bypass public meeting in August to update members of the community on design changes and preliminary environmental findings.

Source: Compiled by Carter & Burgess, Inc.

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF THE FEIS RE-EVALUATION

The Council on Environmental Quality and FHWA's regulations require that a supplemental environmental impact statement be prepared whenever changes to a proposed action, or new circumstances or information may result in significant environmental impacts that were not evaluated in the FEIS. To determine if such changes are significant, the regulations require the development of appropriate environmental studies. MDT and FHWA use an environmental re-evaluation to determine whether an approved environmental document and approval document, such as an FEIS and ROD, remain valid. The results of the environmental re-evaluation are generally indicative of the need for preparing a supplemental environmental document.

Specific regulations regarding re-evaluations are contained in Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 771, Environmental Impact and Related Procedures. Specifically, 23 CFR 771.129 contains requirements for conducting re-evaluations:

- (a) A written evaluation of the draft EIS shall be prepared by the applicant in cooperation with the Administration if an acceptable final EIS is not submitted to the Administration within 3 years from the date of the draft EIS circulation. The purpose of this evaluation is to determine whether or not a supplement to the draft EIS or a new draft EIS is needed.
- (b) A written evaluation of the final EIS will be required before further approvals may be granted if major steps to advance the action (e.g., authority to undertake final design, authority to acquire a significant portion of the right-of-way, or approval of the plans, specifications and estimates) have not occurred within three years after the approval of the final EIS, final EIS supplement, or the last major Administration approval or grant.
- (c) After approval of the EIS, Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI), or Categorical Exclusion (CE) designation, the applicant shall consult with the Administration prior to requesting any major approvals or grants to establish whether or not the approved environmental document or CE designation remains valid for the requested Administration action. These consultations will be documented when determined necessary by the Administration.

Additionally, 23 CFR 771.130 contains requirements for conducting supplemental environmental impact statements:

- (a) A draft EIS, final EIS, or supplemental EIS may be supplemented at any time. An EIS shall be supplemented whenever the Administration determines that:



1. Changes to the proposed action would result in significant environmental impacts that were not evaluated in the EIS; or
2. New information or circumstances relevant to environmental concerns and bearings on the proposed action or its impacts would result in significant environmental impacts not evaluated in the EIS.

(b) However, a supplemental EIS will not be necessary where:

1. The changes to the proposed action, new information, or new circumstances result in a lessening of adverse environmental impacts evaluated in the EIS without causing other environmental impacts that are significant and were not evaluated in the EIS; or
2. The Administration decides to approve an alternative fully evaluated in an approved final EIS but not identified as the preferred alternative. In such a case, a revised ROD shall be prepared and circulated in accordance with Sec. 771.127(b).

(c) Where the Administration is uncertain of the significance of the new impacts, the applicant will develop appropriate environmental studies or, if the Administration deems appropriate, an EA to assess the impacts of the changes, new information, or new circumstances. If, based upon the studies, the Administration determines that a supplemental EIS is not necessary, the Administration shall so indicate in the project file.

Re-evaluations are generally required three or more years after either environmental clearance or approval, if no additional major steps to advance the project have been taken; when design or scope changes occur; when new environmental impacts not discussed in the original environmental document are identified or impacts previously discussed change; or when environmental clearance requirements change.

While more than 10 years have passed since the signing of the ROD for the Somers to Whitefish West FEIS, as described previously, MDT has taken major steps to advance the overall project. As for the Kalispell Bypass segment of this overall project, MDT has undertaken major steps to identify and secure right-of-way. However, during this period, project development activities have refined the design for the bypass and allowed for more accurate quantification of some environmental effects disclosed in the FEIS. Flathead County continues to be one of Montana's fastest growing area and changes in traffic volumes and motor vehicle accident rates have occurred since the time of the FEIS. Changes to Federal and state regulations relevant to some

project activities have changes. Other concerns have been identified that have required design changes. Lastly, there is continued public interest associated with the development and effects of providing a bypass around the City of Kalispell. For these reasons, FHWA and MDT decided to re-evaluate the 1994 Somers to Whitefish West FEIS, for the Kalispell Bypass only, in accordance with provisions of 23 CFR 771.129 (b) and (c).

As the FHWA's Technical Advisory T 6640.8A states: "the entire project should be revisited to assess any changes that have occurred and their effect on the adequacy of the FEIS." This re-evaluation discloses new information or circumstances relevant to the development of the project and ensures that all current environmental requirements are addressed. The re-evaluation focuses on the changes with the bypass project corridor and its surroundings, the potential for new or previously undisclosed impacts, and new project-related issues that have arisen since the FEIS was approved.

Therefore, the primary purpose of this re-evaluation is to determine whether or not the approved FEIS for the proposed construction of the Kalispell Bypass remains valid. Additionally, the findings of this re-evaluation will provide the information needed for FHWA and MDT to determine whether or not a supplemental EIS is needed for the bypass project as provided for in 23 CFR 771.130(a) and (f).

## 2.0 SUMMARY AND FINDINGS OF THE 1994 FEIS AND ROD

### 2.1 PURPOSE AND NEED

The 1994 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) indicated the primary transportation needs on US 93 were to reduce congestion on the existing facility, provide for planned growth and development, improve safety, provide for improved intermodal facility connections, and provide for enhanced scenic values. These overall needs have not changed aside from those addressed by improvements already made by Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) during implementation of the Preferred Alternative in the 1994 FEIS and Record of Decision (ROD).

The purpose and need for the bypass was further elaborated in the 1993 Kalispell Bypass Feasibility Study commissioned by the Flathead Regional Development Office. This document contains an overview of existing conditions, population and employment projections, traffic projections, and bypass alternatives development and evaluation. The document described a long-term need for a bypass around Kalispell that has the following goals:

- Relieve traffic congestion in the Central Business District (CBD), especially on Main Street.
- Reduce truck traffic in the CBD.
- Relieve traffic congestion at the intersection of Main Street and Idaho Street.

At the time the FEIS was prepared, the accident rate on US 93 between Somers and Whitefish was higher than the statewide average for similar highways. Accidents were significantly higher in the urban city areas and in areas where there were multiple access points. Safety problems were occurring in the downtown areas from large commercial vehicles mixing with automobiles, bicycles, and pedestrian traffic. This condition continues to contribute to safety issues in the downtown Kalispell area.

In 1994, US 93 operated at a level of service (LOS) D or E in many locations. LOS defines the conditions in terms of speed and travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort, convenience, and safety (A is best and F is worst). LOS D is characterized by

movements that are more restricted and queues and delays occurring during short peaks. LOS E is characterized by delays to all motorists from congestion. 2015 traffic forecasts projected US 93 to lower to LOS F throughout the Kalispell area, with traffic volumes greater than the capacity of the roadway. Capacity issues caused by the large volume of trucks, recreational traffic, and local business traffic in the downtown Kalispell area were an important factor leading to a recommendation to evaluate a bypass around Kalispell, a need that remains valid.

Access points to US 93 were and still are concentrated in the Kalispell city limits, particularly in the downtown area. This concentration continues to lead to congestion and safety issues. The majority of these access points are poorly designed such that there is no opportunity for drivers accessing US 93 to accelerate to higher speeds. Traffic lights on every block in downtown Kalispell further slow traffic and cause congestion. The proposed bypass is still needed to improve these conditions in the downtown area by diverting through traffic around Kalispell.

Economic and social needs were also addressed by including the Kalispell Bypass with the Preferred Alternative. US 93's growing reputation for being a difficult and dangerous driving experience was anticipated to deter some people from visiting, and increased congestion was negatively impacting businesses. This economic condition continues to remain valid, particularly in the downtown Kalispell area. Social needs were addressed by providing provisions for bicycle and pedestrian facilities and reducing barriers created by crossing a busy state highway in downtown.

## 2.2 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR THE BYPASS

The Preferred Alternative selected in the ROD included the Kalispell Bypass Alternative B, which was a rural four-lane facility south of US 2 and an urban four-lane facility with median north of US 2. The Preferred Alternative also included a separated bike path along the bypass south of US 2 and a separated bike path (where feasible) along the bypass north of US 2. The 1994 alignment is depicted in **Figure 1.2**. A general description of the 1994 bypass includes:

### Alignment and Location

- At the southern termini, begins just north of US 93 and the Burlington Northern Railroad (BNRR).

- Follows the BNRR alignment north and crossing Airport Road.
- Continues along the BNRR alignment to Foys Lake Road.
- Crosses Foys Lake Road curving west then north to cross US 2 west of the Appleway intersection.
- Extends north of US 2 on a new road alignment through Two Mile Drive area, crossing Two Mile and Three Mile Drives.
- Just south of Two Mile Drive the alignment was shifted during the FEIS process to avoid impacts to the Greenbriar Subdivision.
- Continues to extend north and west to Stillwater Road, then north to Reserve Drive, crossing Four Mile Drive.
- Follows Reserve Drive east to US 93.

### Other Design Elements

- South of US 2, the typical section is four 12-foot (3.6-meter) lanes with left-turn lanes as needed at critical intersections.
- Right-of-way to be acquired is sufficient to allow for future implementation of a depressed median.
- Four intersections require major cross-street realignments:
  - Airport Road
  - Sunnyside Drive
  - US 2
  - Reserve Drive and Stillwater Road
- Route signing.
- Virtually all future access rights would be purchased.

Furthermore, the FEIS notes that because of limited funding, the bypass alternative would likely be built as staged construction.

## 2.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

This section summarizes of impacts and mitigation described in the FEIS specifically related to the Kalispell Bypass portion of the Preferred Alternative.

### 2.3.1 Impacts

Impacts disclosed in the FEIS related to the Kalispell Bypass are summarized in **Table 2.1**.

**TABLE 2.1 - SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FROM THE 1994 FEIS  
 (FOR KALISPELL BYPASS ALTERNATIVE ONLY)**

RESOURCE	IMPACTS
Transportation	The bypass would accommodate increasing travel demand, relieve congestion on existing US 93 through Kalispell, and decrease overall accident potential.
Land Use	Development currently occurring in the west Kalispell area would continue and be accelerated upon completion of the bypass.
Farmland	Approximately 40 acres (16 hectares) impacted.
Social/Economic	Less through traffic on neighborhood streets. Bypass would have little impact on population growth, but could influence spatial distribution. Highway-related impacts will occur to residences along corridor. Improved mobility would create economic benefits.
Right-of-Way/Relocation	Displacement of three residences, three businesses, and one outbuilding.
Pedestrian/Bicycles	Would provide improved accommodations, relocation of Ashley Creek Trail.
Air Quality	Would meet emissions standards. Projected PM <sub>10</sub> emissions determined to be lower than the projected emissions from future no build alternative.
Noise	51 receptors impacted.
Water Resources	Potential for increased pollutants and sediment from stormwater runoff.
Wetlands	Approximately 4.2 acres (1.7 hectares) impacted.
Wildlife/Fisheries	Approximately 88 acres (36 hectares) of wildlife habitat converted.
Floodplains	Approximately 9 acres (4 hectares) of floodplain encroachment.
T&E Species	No impacts.
Historic/Cultural	Adverse effect to railroad spur; no adverse effect to McCormack property.
Parks and Recreation	Direct impact to Ashley Creek Trail—relocation required.
Hazardous Waste Sites	Six sites identified that could pose contamination risk.
Visual Quality	Roadway would be a new visual element; visible to adjacent properties
Energy	Reduced congestion would decrease fuel consumption. Construction and maintenance activities would expend fuel.
Implementation	Short-term benefits stemming from construction (e.g., hiring of local construction works, materials purchase). Temporary effects to traffic flow during construction.
Cumulative	Future projects identified.
Section 4(f)	Bypass would use a 0.25-acre (0.1-hectare) portion of the Ashley Creek Trail and a portion of the historic Kalispell-Somers railroad spur.

### 2.3.2 Mitigation

**Section 4(f) Mitigation.** The ROD contained commitments to mitigate for unavoidable impacts from the bypass. Commitments for the Section 4(f) use of the Ashley Creek Trail included:

- Purchasing property for and building approximately 2,050 feet (625 meters) of relocated trail generally south of Ashley Creek, just south of US 2.
- Providing an at-grade signalized intersection across the Kalispell Bypass at US 2.
- Providing a grade-separated bike path crossing adjacent to and on the south side of Ashley Creek as it crosses the Kalispell Bypass just south of US 2. Equestrians use would be provided for if possible.
- Connecting the Ashley Creek Trail with the new bike lane along the Kalispell Bypass.
- Providing approximately 5.2 acres (2.1 hectares) of property to Flathead County Parks. This is planned for at least partial use as parking and a trailhead facility to compensate for the approximately 0.25-acre (0.1-hectare) of Section 4(f) land converted from a recreational use. If the appraised value of the replacement land is less than the appraised value of the impacted property, additional property to make up the difference would be provided to Flathead County Parks as replacement property.

Mitigation commitments made in the ROD for the historic Kalispell-Somers Railroad Spur include installation of a historic marker describing the history and significance of the railroad spur.

**Other Mitigation.** Other mitigation commitments made in the ROD regarding the Kalispell Bypass included:

- Relocation mitigation (under the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended).
- Wetland mitigation at two or three "on-site locations" adjacent to the area of impact, with locations to be determined during the final design process.
- Hazardous materials mitigation for Site B6 (Montana Forest Products) which would include excavation and/or land-farming of potentially-contaminated soils in concert with roadway construction (if necessary).
- Construction mitigation to provide adequate safety and convenience to motorists, pedestrians, and construction workers at all times. Also, traffic control plans and public information plan would be prepared.





## **3.0 KALISPELL BYPASS AS CURRENTLY PROPOSED**

### **3.1 REASONS FOR DESIGN CHANGES**

Since the Record of Decision (ROD) was signed in 1994, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has been steadily implementing actions agreed to in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and ROD by designing and constructing segments of the US 93 Somers to Whitefish corridor. Projects include Ashley Creek South, Ashley Creek North, Ashley Creek Kalispell, Grandview North, Montana 40 South, Montana 40 North, and Whitefish Urban Area (under design).

Additionally, MDT began a corridor preservation project to identify the specific right-of-way needs for the bypass. The corridor preservation project recommended three alignment modifications. The first was at the south terminus of the bypass which was shifted away from Snowline Lane to Gardner Auction to relocate the intersection with US 93 to a perpendicular intersection for safety rather than on a curve and to resolve access issues to adjacent properties. The second alignment modification was at the northern end, where the bypass was shifted east of Stillwater Road to allow Stillwater Road to remain a farm-to-market road and shorten the overall bypass length. A third alignment modification was recommended based on the results of a supplemental noise analysis performed by MDT. The analysis recommended that the alignment be shifted away from neighborhoods along West Reserve Drive, south toward a nearby power line to reduce potential noise impacts. Once the corridor preservation project was complete, MDT was able to begin passive acquisition of property needed for the Kalispell Bypass right-of-way. Passive acquisition means that MDT purchased land from willing owners who contacted MDT about selling. As of May 2006, approximately 40% of the land needed for the bypass has been acquired through passive acquisition.

In August 1997, the Montana Transportation Commission passed an access control resolution designating the Kalispell Bypass as a limited access highway. This resolution was revisited by the Commission in August 2004 when, with support of the City of Kalispell and Flathead County, the Commission reaffirmed the desire for private access restrictions and proposed public road connection treatments. As a result, the Commission amended the 1997 resolution to allow for public road approaches at Airport Road, Sunnyside Drive, Foy's Lake Road, US 2, Three Mile Drive, Four Mile Drive, Section 36 Connector, and Garden Drive only.

Lastly, in early 2001, MDT recognized that increased traffic growth in the Kalispell area was not accounted for in the 1994 FEIS and could negatively impact traffic conditions along the bypass segment of the US 93 project. To accommodate the changed traffic conditions, MDT began considering design modifications to accommodate projected future traffic increases, thereby increasing the service life of the facility. Potential modifications include replacing at-grade signalized intersections with grade-separated interchanges (overpasses and underpasses) to allow unimpeded traffic movement along the bypass.

## 3.2 SUMMARY OF DESIGN CHANGES AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The following provides a summary of proposed design changes and a description of the road section, alignment and access, and other proposed new road improvements.

### 3.2.1 Proposed Design Changes

The proposed alignment for the bypass continues to extend 7.6 miles (12.3 km) along the western side of the City of Kalispell, following the same general corridor shown in the FEIS (see **Figure 1.2**). Overall southern and northern termini have been adjusted, but not significantly changed. A summary of the proposed design changes to the bypass alternative in the FEIS includes (see **Figure 3.1**):

- Moving the southern termini with US 93 north approximately 1/3 mile.
- Making a minor alignment shift between Foy's Lake Road and US 2.
- Shifting the alignment to the east of Stillwater Road.
- Shifting the alignment to the south of West Reserve Drive.
- Replacing two culverts across Ashley Creek with bridge structures.
- Adding two new pedestrian grade-separated crossings.
- Replacing at-grade intersections with grade-separated interchanges at Airport Road, Foy's Lake Road, US 2, Three Mile Drive, and Four Mile Drive.
- Reducing access at Sunnyside Drive.
- Replacing at-grade intersections with over- or underpasses only (no access) at Two Mile Drive.
- Constructing a new grade-separated interchange at the new Reserve Loop Road.
- Constructing connecting roads at the northern termini as part of improvements to the West Reserve Drive and US 93 intersection (see **Section 3.2.4**).
- Changing the cross section to include a rural section (no curb and gutter) from US 2 to Four Mile Drive.

**FIGURE 3.1 - PROPOSED BYPASS ALIGNMENT**



The proposed design changes provide for stricter access control with grade-separated interchanges rather than the at-grade intersections proposed in the 1994 FEIS. With the proposed design changes, the facility would better meet the transportation needs while addressing community concerns relating to unregulated access and commercialization of the bypass corridor. Furthermore, the overall bypass alignment remains in the Kalispell Growth Area, an area that is planned to be urbanized in the future.

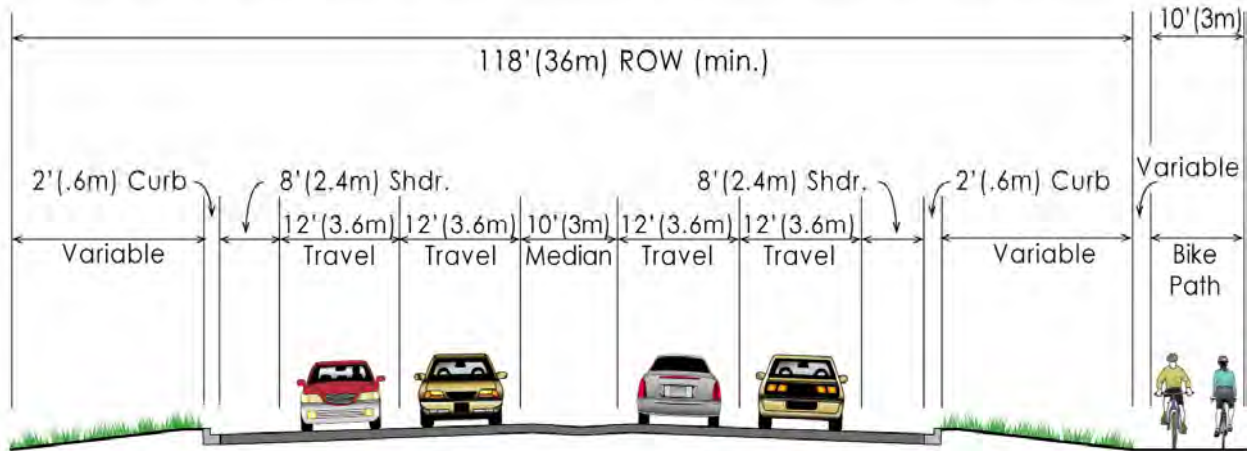
### **3.2.2 Proposed Road Section**

Both the 1994 FEIS and proposed bypass provide a four-lane, limited access roadway that includes 12-foot (3.6-meter) travel lanes and 8-foot (2.4-meter) outside shoulders, separated by a 10-foot (3.0-meter) paved median. **Figure 3.2** depicts the proposed roadway sections. In select portions of the project, outside drainage ditches would be replaced by a curb. At the south and north project termini, the center median would be widened to allow for construction of turn lanes and/or raised medians.

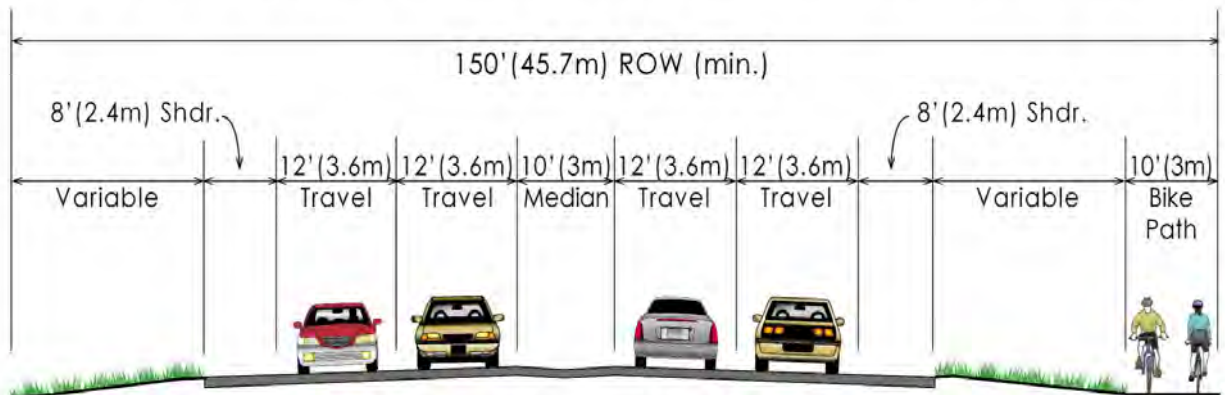
The 1994 FEIS and proposed bypass included a 10-foot (3.0-meter) bike path constructed along the entire length of the bypass, primarily on the east side of the bypass. With the proposed design, the bike path would parallel ramp alignments at all cross-streets to avoid at-grade crossings of high-speed ramps. Users would follow the ramp alignment to each cross-street and then proceed to cross the streets at the ramp intersections. Two new grade-separated bike path crossings are planned: one near the existing Sunnyside Drive which leads to Lone Pine State Park, and one at the north end of the project approximately ½ mile from the bypass terminus near the newly constructed high school.

**FIGURE 3.2 - PROPOSED TYPICAL SECTIONS**

## Typical Urban Section: North of Four Mile Drive



## Typical Rural Section: South of Four Mile Drive



### 3.2.3 Proposed Road Alignment and Access

**Figure 3.1** depicts the proposed bypass alignment. From the south, the bypass begins on US 93 approximately 1/3mile south of the US 93 intersection with Cemetery Road and proceeds west and northwest following an abandoned railroad alignment with it's first crossing over Ashley Creek.

Continuing to follow the railroad alignment, the bypass crosses under Airport Road. Partial access is provided to Airport Road with no northbound bypass access to Airport Road. The bypass continues northwesterly to Sunnyside Drive where Sunnyside Drive would terminate at the bypass right-of-way. A northbound off-ramp provides access from the bypass to Sunnyside Drive only.

The bypass continues northwesterly to Foys Lake Road where the road begins to leave the railroad alignment and crosses the former sawmill property referred to as Montana Forest Products. The bypass crosses above Foys Lake Road where full access is provided via a standard diamond interchange. North of Foys Lake Road, the bypass again crosses over Ashley Creek on a single structure and then rises to cross above US 2.

The US 2 interchange requires relocation of two existing US 2 intersections—Appleway and Corporate Drives. After crossing over US 2, the bypass begins a series of curves to continue the northwesterly heading. Two Mile Drive is proposed to cross over the bypass and would have no access to the bypass. North of Two Mile Drive, the bypass turns north and crosses over Spring Creek using a culvert.

The bypass crosses below the proposed Three Mile Drive bridge. The bypass provides limited access only at Three Mile Drive, allowing southbound access onto the bypass and northbound access from the bypass. The bypass continues north crossing under Four Mile Drive. An interchange at Four Mile Drive provides full access to the bypass. North of Four Mile Drive, the bypass then crosses under the Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA's) electric transmission line then curves northeasterly to its termini at the (existing) US 93 and West Reserve Drive intersection.

Before terminating at US 93, the bypass crosses over a new proposed road (Reserve Loop which is part of this project), with an interchange providing full access. A grade-separated bike path crossing is planned at this interchange.

### 3.2.4 Other Proposed New Road Connections

A number of new roadways are planned in addition to the four-lane bypass at the northern termini to improve operations of the Reserve Drive and US 93 intersection (See **Figure 3.1**):

- **Reserve Loop** is planned as a four-lane road with a raised median that would replace existing West Reserve Drive from Stillwater Drive to US 93. The existing roadway would be terminated at US 93 with all access restricted to the west via Garden Drive Connection. Reserve Loop would likely have a number of controlled intersections, including the ramps to the bypass.
- **Hutton Ranch Road** would extend a three-lane road from the east end of developer-constructed Hutton Ranch Road. The new road would curve to the north and intersect with West Reserve Drive, west of the bridge at Stillwater River. The West Reserve Drive intersection is planned for a future traffic signal.
- **Frontage Road** would be a two-lane road in the northeast quadrant of US 93 and West Reserve Drive to provide all local access to this quadrant of land. The road would begin on US 93 north of West Reserve Drive. The road would align with the proposed Hutton Ranch Road intersection with West Reserve Drive.
- **Garden Drive Connection** would construct a right-in, right-out only access from the westbound lane of the bypass west of US 93. The access from the bypass would intersect with West Reserve Drive.





## 4.0 IMPACTS OF PROPOSED CHANGES

This chapter summarizes impacts from the original bypass design disclosed in the 1994 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). It also describes the conditions that have changed since 1994, and provides revised impacts based on the proposed design changes of the bypass.

While an update to existing conditions was necessary for most all environmental resources discussed in the FEIS, this review determined there were no additional impacts caused by the alignment shifts and grade-separated interchanges to land use, farmlands, social, economic, noise, pedestrians and bicycles, air quality, water resources, noise, wetlands, fisheries and wildlife, floodplains, threatened and endangered species, historic and cultural resources, parks and recreation, hazardous materials, energy, and cumulative effects.

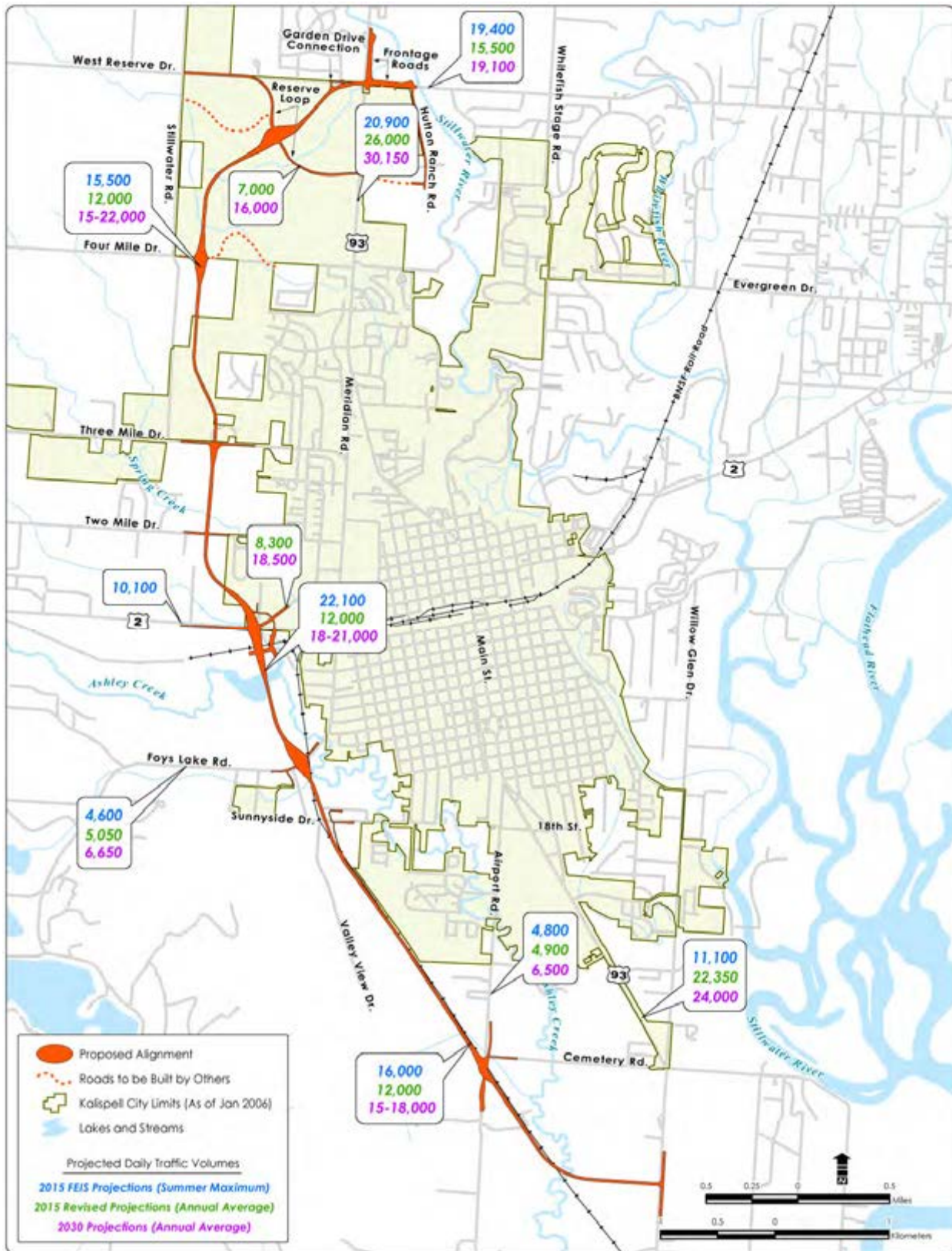
Resources with some additional impacts caused by the proposed design changes are right-of-way and relocation and visual quality.

### 4.1 TRANSPORTATION

Impacts to the transportation network disclosed in the FEIS in terms of traffic projections, traffic operations and circulation, and traffic safety are described in this section.

**Traffic Projections.** The FEIS modeled traffic projections to 2015 to represent approximately 20 years from the beginning of construction (assuming that construction started in 1995). Summer traffic conditions were modeled for a worst-case condition. Traffic growth was estimated to increase approximately 50% over the 20-year period. 2015 traffic projections for the bypass showed that its construction would relieve between 8,400 and 12,100 vehicles per day (vpd) on US 93 through downtown Kalispell. Traffic projections for the bypass included approximately 19,000 vpd on the bypass at the northern termini with West Reserve Drive and US 93. Projections for the southern termini with US 93 included approximately 13,400 vpd on the bypass. **Figure 4.1** depicts the 2015 projected summer daily traffic volumes for the bypass.

**FIGURE 4.1 - YEAR 2015 AND 2030 TRAFFIC PROJECTIONS**



**Traffic Operations and Circulation.** The no-build alternative considered in the FEIS would provide inadequate traffic flow through and across Flathead Valley. In the Kalispell area, traffic would continue to divert to parallel local streets in residential areas that were not designed to handle the volume of traffic. The Kalispell Main Street/Idaho Street intersection would continue to bottleneck operations on US 93.

The intersection of Reserve Street and US 93 would also become more congested by 2015 under the no-build alternative. The no-build alternative assumed that the intersection would be improved with west- and eastbound double lefts and separate right-turn lanes. Projected increases in local east-west traffic would cause the intersection to reduce LOS to C/D by 2015.

The fewest impacts to traffic operations were found in the alternatives where through traffic was provided an opportunity to bypass the congested downtown Kalispell area. Access control features, such as consolidating access locations and providing medians, would benefit commuters using the US 93 corridor under the Preferred Alternative. Improved intersections would provide traffic with safer haven by constructing turn bays, installing traffic signals, and providing a lateral separation of the opposing traffic flows, there by reducing headlight glare.

The FEIS applied the traffic projections to determine how the traffic will operate - or the level of service (LOS). Existing LOS was described as D and E; with increased traffic growth, the no-build alternative considered in the FEIS was expected to operate at LOS E and F. There would be fewer gaps for additional traffic to enter or exit the highway, particularly left turns. The Preferred Alternative (including the bypass) would relieve traffic growth by operating at LOS C and above at all major intersections. The southern termini of the bypass would operate at LOS A and the northern termini at LOS C.

**Traffic Safety.** Under the no-build alternative, the FEIS disclosed that accident potential along US 93 through Kalispell would increase due to an increase in driver frustration from congested conditions, lack of passing opportunities, inadequate intersections to handle the traffic volumes, and use of parallel city streets not designed to accommodate heavy traffic volumes.

Construction of the bypass would decrease overall accident potential. Higher speeds on the bypass could result in a greater accident severity, but an overall fewer number of accidents. The bypass would also create a safer environment for pedestrians to cross with fewer vehicles in the pedestrian-orientated areas of downtown Kalispell and with refuges in the median areas of the bypass.

#### **4.1.1 Changed Conditions and Impacts**

Traffic projections for the Kalispell area and bypass were updated by Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) in 2005 (Stelling, 2005). The update reviewed 2003 existing conditions, provided an interim year (2003) comparison to 1993 modeled data, and forecasted traffic trends for a 25-year period to 2030. The expanded evaluation period provides an added benefit by identifying transportation needs over a longer period of time than the 2015 forecasts provided in the FEIS. This expanded planning horizon was used to identify bypass design concepts that could meet longer-term traffic conditions, a benefit over the planning period used in the FEIS.

**Traffic Projections.** Flathead County and the greater Kalispell area have experienced higher growth in the last 5 years for population, employment, and traffic. However, this rate is not expected to continue for the next 25 years. The countywide 2030 annual average daily traffic (AADT) was estimated by applying the weighted, historical average growth rate (1.75%), continuing over 27 years between current values (2003) and the design year of 2030. The countywide AADT total was then allocated to each census tract based upon percentages estimated by city, county, and MDT planners. No adjustments were made to account for additional or increased road links or road capacity. **Figure 4.1** depicts the 2030 traffic projections.

For comparison to projections in the FEIS, 2015 traffic volumes were re-estimated using a straight-line interpolation of 2003 values to estimate traffic volumes of non-bypass roads for 2015. The 2015 bypass volumes were projected with a higher assumed growth in the initial five years to allow for attracting regional traffic from other roadways. The growth rate was then lowered to reflect a countywide average growth rate for the years between 2015 and 2030 (1.75%). Because the bypass currently has no traffic, the numbers were estimated based on the 2030 forecasts. It is important to note that the FEIS considered summer average daily

traffic and the re-estimate was based on average annual traffic volume. Re-estimated 2015 projections are shown in **Figure 4.1**.

**Traffic Operations and Circulation.** Overall traffic operations would be greatly improved over the Preferred Alternative for the bypass in the FEIS with the addition of the six grade-separated interchanges and an improved northern terminus configuration. Allowing free flowing traffic on the central bypass corridor through major cross roads at Airport Road, Foy's Lake Road, US 2, Two Mile Drive, Three Mile Drive, and Four Mile Drive will substantially eliminate traffic congestion and improve mobility. Travelers on the cross roads would also have improved mobility since they would not have to wait for bypass traffic to pass before crossing the bypass. LOS for the cross streets would no longer be reduced by bypass traffic and be impacted by only vehicles exiting the bypass.

Traffic operations at the Reserve Drive and US 93 intersection would also be improved with the addition of loop and frontage roads. West bound traffic volumes on Reserve Drive approaching the intersection with US 93 will be reduced with an alternate route for those wishing to travel south on US 93. Approximately two-thirds of the 2030 projected vehicles will use the loop road to access southbound US 93, reducing the number of vehicles entering the Reserve Drive and US 93 intersection. Year 2030 LOS for this intersection is anticipated to improve from D (restricted movement) to C (minor restrictions) with the addition of the loop road concept.

**Traffic Safety.** Proposed changes to the bypass would substantially decrease overall accident potential. Elimination of traffic signals, stop signs, and at-grade cross traffic movements through the central portion of the bypass will greatly reduce potential conflict points. Realignment of the bypass to the south of Reserve Drive and east of Stillwater Drive and limiting access further reduces potential conflict points for nearby residents entering and exiting the bypass. The realignment also improves safety along these existing roads as the large volume of traffic anticipated for the bypass will be diverted, reducing accident potential to local residential traffic. Higher speeds on the bypass could continue to result in a greater accident severity as noted in the FEIS, but will contribute to an overall fewer number of accidents.

The bypass would also create a safer environment for pedestrians to cross with three grade-separated crossings. Pedestrian underpasses are planned at the West Reserve connection to serve the proposed new high school and south of Foys Lake Road for citizens in the southwest part of the city to access Lone Pine State Park. A third pedestrian crossing would be on the Ashley Creek bike trail, where the bypass would span the existing trail with a bridge.

## 4.2 LAND USE

The FEIS described recent trends in land development within and around Kalispell. At the time the FEIS was written, new residential development was occurring in a more dispersed development pattern, resulting in fewer centralized population centers and the conversion of substantial amounts of agricultural land to non-agricultural land uses. New commercial development consisted of retail and service businesses along US 93. Land use planners and local professionals participating in a land use advisory committee for the study agreed that the substantial new residential, commercial and industrial development occurring in the west Kalispell area would continue and would be accelerated upon completion of the bypass.

The FEIS stated that the development of a bypass around Kalispell would not substantially affect the total new development occurring in the Flathead Valley, but would have some influence on the characteristics and geographic distribution of this development. By splitting numerous agricultural parcels and improving access to rural areas, construction of the bypass would hasten the conversion of farmland to residential land uses. With limited access points, it was expected that the center median would create a physical barrier that would inhibit new development north and south along the corridor and favor residential development in areas served by east-west county roads.

### 4.2.1 Changed Conditions

Since the completion of the FEIS, the *Kalispell Growth Policy 2020* (City of Kalispell 2003), adopted February 18, 2003, has replaced the *Kalispell Master Plan*. Over the past 10 years, the City of Kalispell has annexed substantial portions of land along the proposed bypass. Today, approximately 50% of the study area falls within the planning jurisdiction of the *Kalispell Growth Policy 2020*. The remainder of the proposed bypass falls under the jurisdiction of the *Flathead County Master Plan* (Flathead County, 1994), which is in the process of being updated by a growth policy document. Generally, city and county land use policies for lands within the

study area have not changed since the FEIS. The Kalispell Bypass is now identified as a first priority transportation project by the City of Kalispell.

Although the dominant land use adjacent to the study area remains agricultural, substantial residential and some commercial development has occurred in the study area since 1994. A comparison of 1990 and 2002 aerial maps shows that new development has occurred north and south of Kalispell along US 93. Substantial residential and commercial development has occurred and is planned at the northern and southern terminus of the proposed bypass and along US 2 east of the proposed bypass.

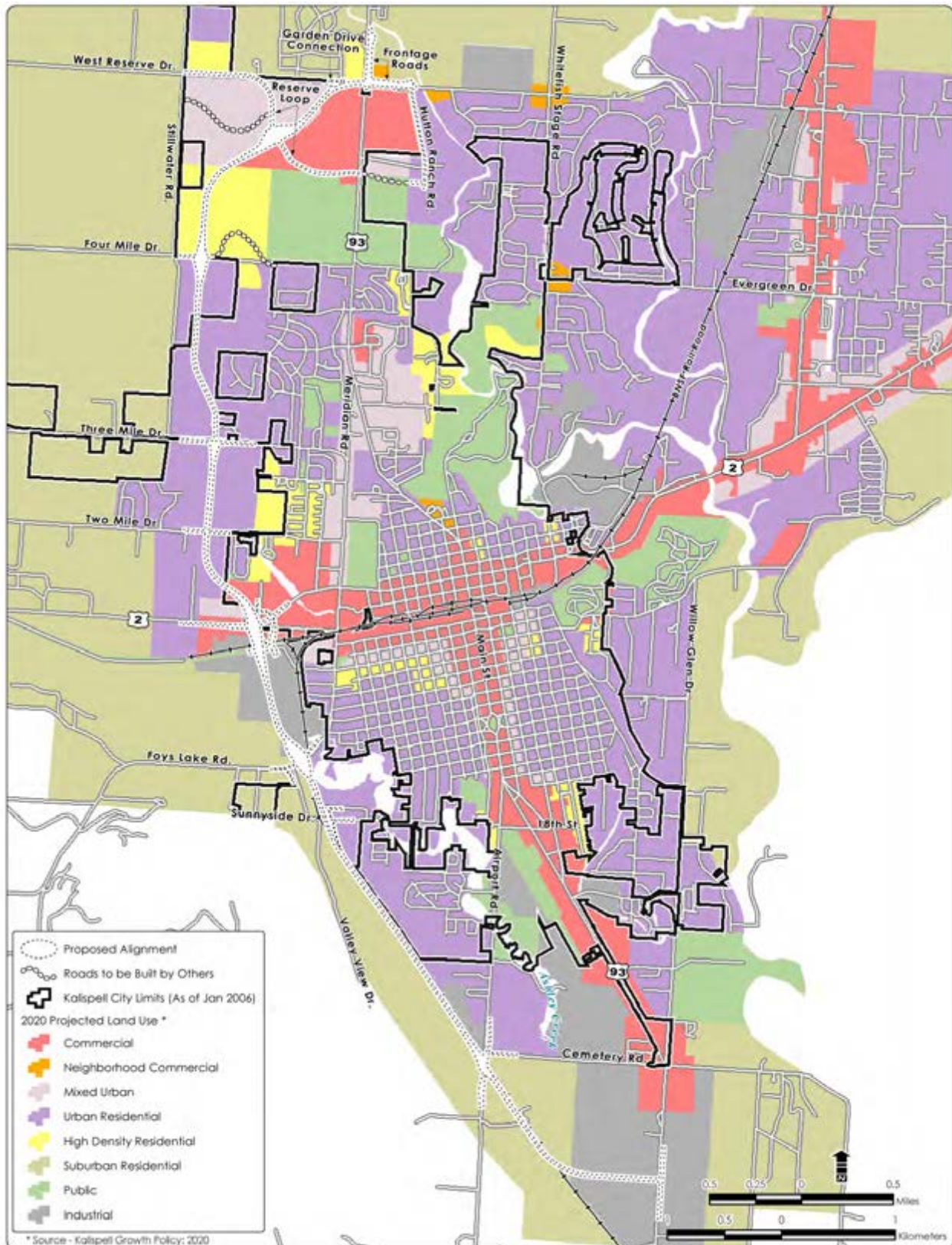
The City now anticipates substantial commercial, high-density residential and mixed-use development along the proposed bypass. In addition, a high school is being built between West Reserve Drive and the proposed bypass. Future land use in the study area is shown in **Figure 4.2**. In anticipation of the bypass, the City of Kalispell and Flathead County have been careful to preserve the bypass corridor from development and have encouraged new development that is compatible with the proposed alignment.

#### **4.2.2 Revised Impacts**

The proposed design changes are not expected to substantively alter the project's effects on future land use, as reported in the FEIS. While the bypass as currently designed closely follows the alignment proposed in 1994, it has changed from an at-grade facility with intersections to a free flowing facility with access only provided at grade-separated interchanges. Because of this restricted access, the current bypass would not induce development between interchanges, but could continue to concentrate development near interchanges.

Between Three Mile Drive and West Reserve Drive, the alignment was shifted east from its original location (see **Figure 1.2**). Consistent with the *Section 36 Neighborhood Plan* and the *Kalispell Growth Policy 2020*, this area already is slated for commercial and high-density residential development, surrounded by suburban and urban residential.

FIGURE 4.2 - FUTURE LAND USE





### **4.3 FARMLANDS**

The FEIS indicated the presence of Prime and Prime if Irrigated Farmlands along the bypass. A “Farmland Conversion Impact Rating Form” (Form AD-1006) was processed for the FEIS in accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA). The Land Evaluation and Site Assessment scores on the form totaled 72 points.

The FEIS indicated that the bypass would impact approximately 40 acres (16 hectares) of farmland. The FEIS stated that the conversion of prime farmland to residential or commercial use would occur with all alternatives, including the No Build Alternative. However, construction of the bypass was expected to impact the greatest amount of farmland and accelerate the conversion of farmland to other uses. The FEIS included avoidance and minimization measures that would be addressed during the roadway design.

#### **4.3.1 Changed Conditions**

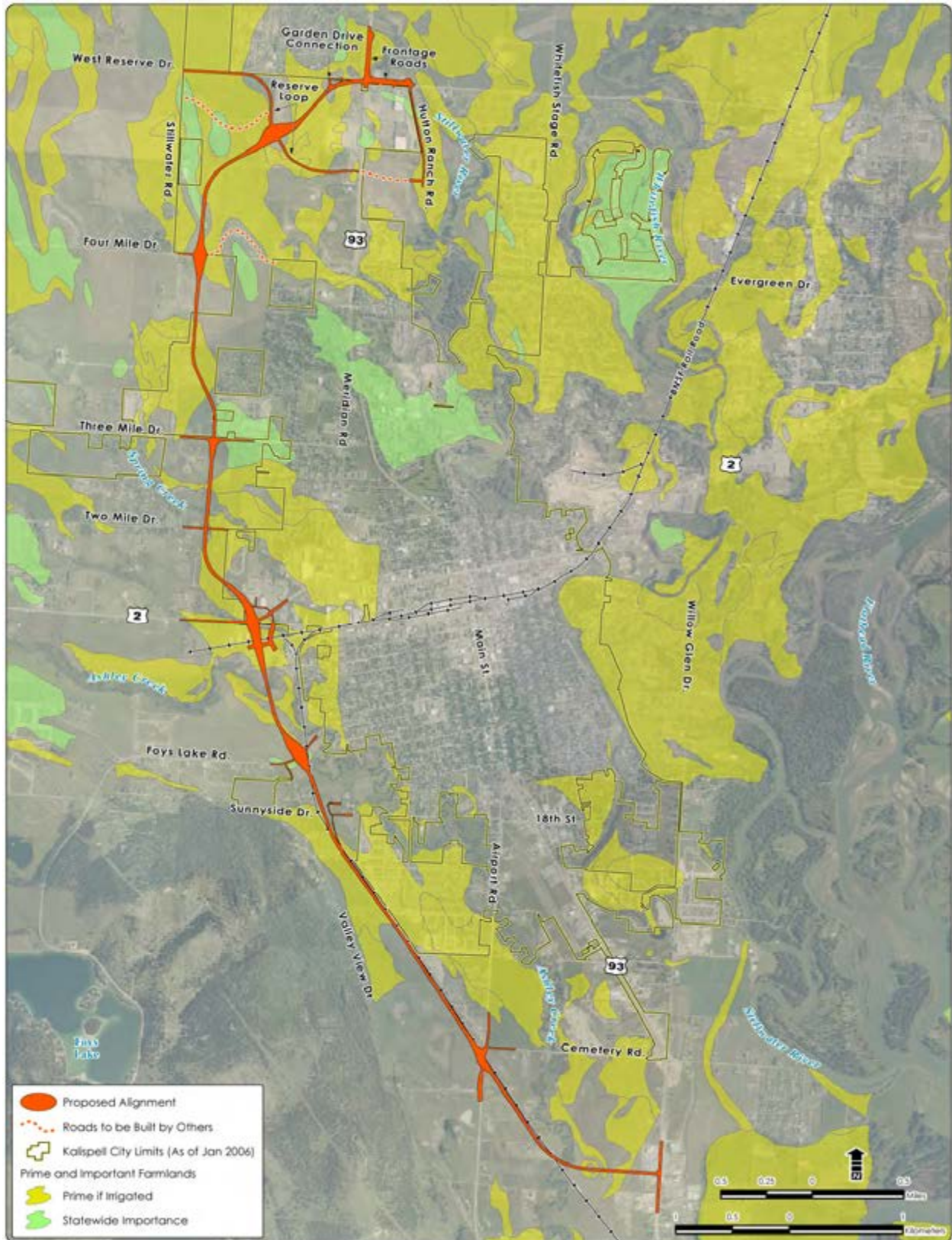
Soils and farmland classifications have not been revised since the FEIS. In spite of new residential and commercial developments north and south of Kalispell, land uses in the study area remain generally similar to those that existed at the time of the FEIS. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, since 1997 the number of farms, areas available for farming, and acres harvested has declined in Flathead County. FPPA farmlands within the study area are shown in **Figure 4.3**.

Consistent with the FPPA, prime soils that are currently slated for development or are located within a 2000 Census Urbanized Area (UA) are not included in the calculation of existing prime soils. According to the US Census, a UA consists of densely settled territory that contains 50,000 or more people.

#### **4.3.2 Revised Impacts**

The proposed design changes would not result in any additional impacts to farmlands described in the FEIS. Conversion of farmlands to other uses will continue in the bypass corridor.

**FIGURE 4.3 - PRIME AND IMPORTANT FARMLANDS**



## 4.4 SOCIAL

The FEIS documented demographic and social conditions reported by the 1990 US Census for Flathead County. In the early 1990s, the county was experiencing rapid population growth. Population projections developed for traffic modeling in the FEIS indicated substantial population growth in the county through 2015, regardless of whether improvements were made to US 93.

The FEIS disclosed that although the construction of the 1994 bypass would have little impact on population growth, it would likely have some influence on the geographic distribution of the area's future population. This was expected to occur where the highway changed the quality of access into areas with development potential. Roadway construction was not expected to affect long-distance commuter patterns or seasonal population and housing trends.

The Kalispell Bypass was expected to displace three residences. Traffic-related impacts were anticipated for the residential areas adjacent to the 1994 bypass.

### 4.4.1 Changed Conditions

The 1993 population forecasts appear to have been reasonable. Actual 2003 population exceeded the 2003 forecast in the FEIS by only 2%. Although the general population in the greater Kalispell region has not grown as forecasted (Kalispell tracts analyzed in the FEIS have lost population since 1990), the tracts immediately surrounding the Kalispell area have captured much of the projected growth. Such ex-urban development is consistent with regional development trends over the past 10 years.

Between 1994 and 2003, the population of Flathead County increased by 16,888 persons, from 64,000 in 1994 to 80,888 in 2003. During the same time period, the number of persons per household declined from 3.2 to 2.4. Population growth is expected to continue in Flathead County. The *Kalispell Bypass Traffic Forecasting Report* (Stelling, 2005), now projects a population of 97,300 persons in Flathead County by 2015. This number is projected to increase to 120,100 persons by 2030. Overall, Flathead County continues to grow more rapidly than the state as a whole. According to the US Census of Population, between 1990 and 2000, the

population of Flathead County increased by 25.8% while the population of Montana increased by 12.9%.

Few other changes in social conditions have occurred in the study area since the FEIS was completed.

#### **4.4.2 Revised Impacts**

The proposed design changes would not accelerate growth in a manner that is significantly different than set forth in the 1994 FEIS. The combined effect of access control and grade separated interchanges would inhibit uncontrolled strip development along the bypass corridor.

The current bypass will require the relocation of eight residential properties. Two of these residential acquisitions have since been purchased (see **Section 4.5**). No additional social impacts are anticipated.

#### **4.5 RIGHT-OF-WAY AND RELOCATIONS**

The FEIS described a mix of agricultural, residential, and industrial properties that would be crossed by the bypass. A total of approximately 90 acres (36 hectares) of land would be required to construct the roadway only portion of the bypass alternative described in the FEIS. The estimate was approximated based on a conceptual level of design and did not include temporary or permanent easements for cut and fill slopes or construction work. The FEIS also documented that a total of three residences, three businesses, and one outbuilding would be displaced by the originally proposed bypass.

Included in the FEIS right-of-way and relocation evaluation was 2.7 miles (4.3 km) of railroad track and railroad right-of-way that would need to be acquired. Also, just south of Foys Lake Road, the FEIS described displacing the operations building and storage yard of a construction contractor. Just north of Foys Lake Road, the original bypass would cross through an existing lumber yard/milling operation, where it would supplant three large open walled buildings used for storing lumber materials, and equipment. At the time of the evaluation, the displacement of these features would likely have necessitated the lumber yard's relocation.

Other displacements identified in the FEIS included approximately 40 acres (16 hectares) of agricultural land that was primarily used for growing small grains. Segments of the originally proposed bypass were described as likely to render some parcels too small or remote to be economically farmed, possibly causing family or corporate farming operations to be discontinued.

#### **4.5.1 Changed Conditions**

While the bypass closely follows the alignment proposed in 1994, the bypass has been shifted south at the north end to parallel the existing power line (see **Figure 1.2**). Furthermore, access along the bypass has been revised to improve safety by including six grade-separated interchanges rather than an at-grade facility.

Since 1994, the conceptual design in the FEIS has been advanced to include the above changes at a preliminary level of design for this re-evaluation. The preliminary design includes further consideration of right-of-way needed for expanded interchanges and intersection improvements, and for cut and fill slopes. The overall construction footprint for the currently proposed bypass and associated improvements is approximately 365 acres (148 hectares). This estimate includes cut and fill slopes, ramps, improvements intersections and interchanges, and right-of-way along existing cross roads at their respective interchange/intersection with the bypass. Of this total, approximately 87 acres is required for the interchange ramps, cross street improvements, and new roads associated with the northern terminus at Reserve Drive and US 93.

Other changed conditions affecting the bypass right-of-way and relocations regard the urbanization of the bypass corridor. In 1994, the bypass corridor was outside the urban area of Kalispell and described primarily as rural residential (low density) with large tracts of agricultural land. Since that time, urban style development from Kalispell has been pushing westward into the bypass corridor and the bypass is now either within or adjacent to the current Kalispell city limits. As a result, there is currently an increase of higher density residential developments and decrease of agricultural lands within the bypass corridor than previously considered in the FEIS.

Furthermore, with the knowledge of the original bypass alignment approved in the FEIS and the likelihood of the subsequently proposed alignment shift at the north end, the City of Kalispell included the current bypass alignment in its Kalispell Growth Policy 2020. Although still primarily outside of the current Kalispell city limits, the entire bypass corridor is now within the growth policy area of Kalispell and within the potential utility service area. As such, both the City and Flathead County planning departments have been reviewing and approving developments in the corridor with the bypass alignment in mind. While some conflicts remain (see **Section 4.5.2**), development has been prevented from occurring along the current bypass by the local agencies, minimizing new right-of-way and relocation impacts.

#### **4.5.2 Revised Impacts**

The addition of grade-separated interchanges, cross road improvements, and new roads associated with the northern terminus at Reserve Drive and US 93 would increase the amount of right-of-way needed by approximately 87 acres (35 hectares). Including right-of-way for cut and fill slopes and construction limits adds approximately 188 acres (76 hectares) to the right-of-way required. The 1994 FEIS estimated that approximately 90 acres (36 hectares) of right-of-way was needed; the proposed design change calls for approximately 365 acres (148 hectares) of right-of-way. The main difference between the 1994 and current estimates is that cut and fill construction limits and cross-section improvements were not included. Also, the additional right-of-way needed for construction of the six grade-separated interchanges and power line alignment shift and associated new roadway were also not included in the 1994 FEIS.

**Table 4.1** shows that the recently proposed changes to the 1994 FEIS bypass would result in displacing eight residences, three businesses, and two outbuildings. This is a difference of an additional five residences and one outbuilding from the FEIS findings.

Right-of-way acquisition for this project will comply with the *Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970*, as amended. The purpose of this act is to provide for fair and equitable treatment of all persons displaced from their homes, businesses, or farms. Owners of property to be acquired will be compensated at fair market value for their property. All reasonable opportunities to avoid relocations and minimize the impacts of acquisition to private property have been taken in the conceptual and preliminary design for the

bypass. The alignment shift at the north end moved the bypass toward an existing power line, where no homes or businesses were located.

**TABLE 4.1 - NUMBER OF DISPLACED HOUSING UNITS AND BUSINESSES**

LOCATION	BYPASS FEATURE	PARCEL	STRUCTURE TYPE	PREVIOUSLY PURCHASED?
Airport Road Interchange	Southbound Ramp	12	Residential House	No
Airport Road Interchange	Southbound Ramp	13	Residential House	Yes
Airport Road Interchange	Northbound Ramp	74	Business – Salvage Yard Building	No
Sunnyside Drive	Alignment	22	Business – Garage	Yes
Foys Lake Road	Alignment	35	Residential House & Garage	Yes
Two Mile Drive	Overpass	47	Residential Trailer Home	No
Two Mile Drive	Overpass	47	Residential House	No
Two Mile Drive	Overpass	51	Residential House	No
Two Mile Drive	Overpass	52	Residential House	No
Two Mile Drive	Alignment	54	Outbuilding	Yes
North Two Mile Drive	Alignment	55	Outbuilding	No
Three Mile Drive	Southbound Ramp	56	Residential House	No
US 93 and Reserve Drive	Intersection Improvements	None	Business – Ole's Convenience Store	No

Source: Compiled by Carter & Burgess, Inc.

Interchange planning attempted to minimize impacts to nearby residences and businesses by creating the smallest footprint possible, while meeting design and safety standards.

According to the 2000 Census data, the City of Kalispell had 6,532 total housing units listed, of which 390 were identified as vacant (a vacancy rate of 5.9%). The National Association of Realtors Web site (January 2006) identified approximately 233 residential units for sale in the Kalispell area. Of those, 125 had asking prices less than \$200,000, 82 had asking prices between \$200,000 and \$500,000, and 26 had asking prices over \$500,000. 2000 Census data listed the median value for owner-occupied housing at \$104,000 for the City of Kalispell.

While the total number of commercial and retail properties in the Kalispell area is not readily available, numerous realtors have listings of commercial and retail buildings and vacant

property for sale or lease. Prices are highly variable (from tens of thousands to millions) depending on location and amenities.

#### **4.6 ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

The FEIS documented recent economic trends in Flathead County. At the time the FEIS was written, economic growth was occurring along US 93 and US 2 in businesses catering to tourists and local and regional trade (especially with Canada). Continuing business development along these highways was expected to contribute to increasing traffic volumes and congestion.

Employment projections developed for traffic modeling in the FEIS indicated substantial growth in employment by 2015. Average annual employment in Flathead County was predicted to increase by 59%, more rapidly than in most of the state. The majority of this economic growth was expected to occur in the service and retail sectors.

The FEIS disclosed varying impacts to businesses in the Kalispell area. Diverting through traffic and truck traffic from the central business district was expected to reduce congestion, improve the attractiveness of the downtown area, and improve access. The FEIS recognized that some sales to drive-through travelers and truck services would be directed away from businesses on US 93 in Kalispell. However, most of the diverted services were expected to be made elsewhere in Flathead County and have minimal effect on the area's overall economy. The bypass was expected to increase the commercial development potential and market value for properties located at the bypass's two intersections with US 93 and at its intersection with US 2. It was estimated that 40 acres (16 hectares) of agricultural land would be removed from production. In addition, the northern portion of the bypass would split agricultural parcels, increasing the cost of farming the remaining parcels. Selling prices for previously isolated agricultural lands southwest of Kalispell were expected to increase, as they would be available for ranchette-type residential development.

The Kalispell Bypass was expected to displace three businesses, several timber storage areas, and approximately 40 acres (16 hectares) of agricultural land.



#### **4.6.1 Changed Conditions**

Employment forecasts approximate the employment currently observed in the greater Kalispell area. However, if the area immediately surrounding the greater Kalispell area is included, actual employment exceeds 1993 employment forecasts.

Flathead County continues to be Montana's fastest growing county. The *Kalispell Bypass Traffic Forecasting Report, 2005*, now projects 65,550 jobs in Flathead County by 2015. This number is projected to increase to 80,500 jobs by 2030. Consistent with past trends, most of these jobs are expected to occur in the retail and service sectors.

The economy of Flathead County has continued to expand and diversify since the 1994 FEIS. The county's growing economy has resulted in rising housing costs and property values. The availability of affordable housing appears to be a growing concern for the community.

#### **4.6.2 Revised Impacts**

The current bypass will still require the relocation of three commercial properties (similar to the FEIS), so there are no new impacts to businesses. Right-of-way acquisition on this project will comply with the *Uniform Relocation and Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970*, as amended.

The current bypass would not detract from the economic benefits associated with the bypass discussed in the FEIS. In fact, since the design changes allow for a free flowing facility, the economic benefits associated with improved mobility and diversion of through traffic and discussed in the FEIS would only be enhanced.

### **4.7 PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE FACILITIES**

The Record of Decision (ROD) included commitments to enhance bicycle facilities along the Kalispell Bypass; including a separated bike path. The separated bike path would run along the bypass south of US 2 and continue (where feasible) to the north of US 2.

Also, because of unavoidable Section 4(f) impacts to a 0.25-acre (0.1-hectare) portion of the Ashley Creek Trail, the ROD included the following mitigation:

- Purchase property and construct approximately 2,050 feet (625 meters) of relocated trail to the south of US 2.
- Provide for an at-grade signalized intersection across the Kalispell Bypass at US 2.
- Provide for a grade-separated bike path crossing adjacent to and on the south side of Ashley Creek as it crosses the Kalispell Bypass just south of US 2.
- Connect Ashley Creek Trail with the new bike lane along the Kalispell Bypass.

#### **4.7.1 Changed Conditions**

There is one new pedestrian and bicycle facility within the Kalispell Bypass study area, and one proposed. Since the FEIS, a 10-foot (3-meter) bike lane from Somers to Whitefish called the Meridian Trail has been constructed. This trail begins at Center Street and Meridian Road. Also, the Three Mile Drive bike path was constructed along the road's north side (see **Figure 4.4**). This bike path is owned by homeowners associations.

#### **4.7.2 Revised Impacts**

There are no changes to impacts on the Ashley Creek Trail.

Three Mile Drive and its bike path would be placed on structure to span the bypass. Therefore, the path would not be permanently impacted, although use of the trail would be affected temporarily. The bypass project would not impact the Meridian Trail.

### **4.8 AIR QUALITY**

The FEIS described potential air quality affects from the selected alternative. It defined existing Particulate Matter (PM)<sub>10</sub> non-attainment conditions in Kalispell and Whitefish, delineating the primary sources of PM<sub>10</sub> pollutants as re-entrained roadway dust, wood burning, and tail pipe emissions. A qualitative analysis of PM<sub>10</sub> for both re-entrained dust and tail pipe emissions was completed using a vehicle miles traveled (VMT)-based transportation model. The projected PM<sub>10</sub> emissions from the proposed Kalispell Bypass were determined to be lower than the projected emissions from the future No Build Alternative for that area.

**FIGURE 4.4 - PARKS AND RECREATION TRAILS MAP**



#### 4.8.1 Changed Conditions

Air quality issues in the Kalispell area still include visibility and gaseous pollutant levels related primarily to wood burning and re-entrained dust, but include contributions from motor vehicle emissions. The proposed design change includes six interchanges, which have been designed for safety, future traffic volumes, and interchange operations at an acceptable level of service (LOS C). The north and south connections with US 93, which are proposed as at-grade, signalized intersections, have been designed to operate at LOS C (see **Figure 4.5**).

#### 4.8.2 Revised Impacts

As discussed in **Section 3.2.2** and **3.2.3**, the northern bypass terminus area was modified to include a frontage road system. The proposed design change would better distribute traffic originating locally and distribute exiting bypass traffic using the two exits with equitable local roadway and business access. Traffic analysis indicates the LOS at the three involved intersections and interchange would operate at acceptable levels. The reduced congestion and time delays resulting from this proposed design change compared to the 1994 design would result in better relative air quality because of fewer idling vehicle engines and less exhaust-related emissions.

The conformity provisions of the federal Clean Air Act still apply. Therefore, the impacts of motor vehicle emissions in the study area on concentrations of PM<sub>10</sub> were analyzed for the revised bypass alternative alternatives (build scenario).

**PM<sub>10</sub>**. The major sources of particulate matter are re-entrained road dust from passing vehicles on paved and unpaved roads and residential wood combustion. Motor vehicle-tailpipe PM<sub>10</sub> emissions are also a source of PM<sub>10</sub> in the study area. In addition to regional emissions analysis, the conformity rule requires project-level analysis for PM<sub>10</sub> to determine if localized violations of the PM<sub>10</sub> standard are likely. Under the rule, until the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) issues a quantitative PM<sub>10</sub> hotspot model, a qualitative analysis is required. In order to perform this analysis, traffic volumes from the project were compared to traffic volumes elsewhere in Montana where PM<sub>10</sub> air quality monitors are located, specifically in Missoula.

FIGURE 4.5 - AIR MONITORING LOCATIONS



The Missoula PM<sub>10</sub> monitoring station is exposed to traffic on several urban arterials and I-90, with higher traffic volumes than those projected for western Kalispell (see **Table 4.2**). Neither of the Kalispell or Missoula PM<sub>10</sub>-monitored communities has experienced a PM<sub>10</sub> violation in recent years. For detailed information, please refer to the *Air Quality Technical Memorandum* (Carter & Burgess, 2006).

The similarity of 2030 traffic volumes relates that there should be no expectation of PM<sub>10</sub> violation due to the projected traffic volumes in the Kalispell Bypass and US 93 area.

**TABLE 4.2 - AVERAGE TRAFFIC VOLUME COMPARISONS**

KALISPELL 2003 TRAFFIC VOLUME (VPH)	KALISPELL BYPASS 2030 TRAFFIC VOLUME (VPH)	MISSOULA 2004 TRAFFIC VOLUME (VPH)
2084*	3005*	3428**

Source: Compiled by Carter & Burgess, Inc.

vph = vehicles per hour

\* Average peak hour volume for US 93 and US 2 (2003), plus bypass average peak hour volumes (2030).

\*\*Represents 30th worst hour hourly traffic volume for I-90 and SH 533.

**Other Critical Pollutants.** The remaining mobile air pollutants of carbon monoxide (CO), PM<sub>2.5</sub>, and ozone were monitored near the study area and have not experienced an exceedance of either the Montana standards or the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) since 1996 (or since monitoring began for PM<sub>2.5</sub>).

Motor vehicle emissions in the study area would not result in any exceedance of the NAAQS; therefore, no direct project air quality mitigation is necessary.

All proposed improvements to Kalispell have been included in the fiscally constrained, conforming Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). This project has been coordinated with MDT and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Consultation procedures, as outlined in the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM 17-3-1306), are being followed regarding this coordination.

## 4.9 NOISE

The FEIS evaluated potential future noise impacts associated with the bypass. The FEIS predicted that noise levels would increase from 1 to 19 decibels (dBAs) along the bypass between 1993 and 2015. The FEIS identified approximately 28 receptors along Stillwater Road, Reserve Drive, and the bypass that would approach or exceed Federal Highway Authority (FHWA) Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC). In addition, the FEIS identified another 23 receptors along Stillwater Road, Reserve Drive, and the bypass that were expected to receive substantial increases in noise levels from 1993 to 2015.

Noise mitigation measures were recommended in the FEIS for these impacted areas, and detailed analysis of mitigation measures was recommended to be completed during the final design.

### 4.9.1 Changed Conditions

While the revised bypass closely follows the alignment proposed in 1994, it has been shifted slightly to the north at the south end and shifted south at the north end (see **Figure 2.1**). As part of the corridor preservation study (see **Section 3.1**), residents of the Country Estates Subdivision north of West Reserve Drive petitioned MDT to conduct a noise study and to consider an alignment shift at the north end, if necessary, to minimize noise impacts to that neighborhood. MDT subsequently conducted the analysis and determined that an alignment shift was warranted to reduce future noise impacts to this subdivision.

In addition, several elements that affect the noise analysis have changed since completion of the FEIS:

- Access along the bypass has been revised to improve safety by including six grade-separated interchanges rather than at-grade intersections. Other design changes have been proposed that will affect the geometry used in the noise model.
- MDT has updated their noise policy: *Traffic Noise Analysis and Abatement: Policy and Procedure Manual* (MDT 2001).
- FHWA has required the use of the Traffic Noise Model for project analysis versus the use of the older noise model, Stamina, which was used for the FEIS.

- Traffic has been updated for 20 years into the future to the design year of 2030 (the FEIS analysis year was 2015). Different traffic volumes and vehicle mix (cars and trucks) affect the noise model input as the source.
- Development has occurred along the bypass, adding to the number of noise-sensitive properties.

#### 4.9.2 Revised Impacts

As an update to the FEIS findings, a new noise analysis was completed in accordance with federal policy and guidelines as stated in Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 772 (23 CFR 772). The main objectives of 23 CFR 772 are "to provide procedures for noise studies and noise abatement criteria, and to establish requirements for information to be given to local officials for use in the planning and design of highways approved pursuant to Title 23, United States Code (U.S.C.)."

Furthermore, MDT's *Traffic Noise Analysis and Abatement: Policy and Procedure Manual* (MDT, 2001) indicates that a traffic noise impact occurs when the predicted level of noise approaches or exceeds FHWA's NAC as follows:

- **Approach** – Design-year noise levels (Leq (h)) are predicted to be one dBA below the levels shown for the land use category in question in the NAC (see **Table 4.3**).
- **Substantially exceed** – (Leq (h)) are predicted to increase 13 dBA above existing levels.

Noise abatement measures will be considered when either or both of the above conditions are met.

**TABLE 4.3 - FHWA NOISE ABATEMENT CRITERIA (NAC)**

ACTIVITY CATEGORY	$L_{AEO1H}^A$ (dBA)	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY CATEGORY
A	57 (Exterior)	Land serving an important public need in which serenity and quiet are of extraordinary significance, and where the preservation of those qualities is essential if the area is to continue to serve its intended purpose.
B	67 (Exterior)	Picnic areas, recreation areas, playgrounds, active sports areas, parks, residences, motels, hotels, schools, churches, libraries, and hospitals.
C	72 (Exterior)	Developed land, properties, or activities not included in Categories A or B above.



**TABLE 4.3 - FHWA NOISE ABATEMENT CRITERIA (NAC) (CONTINUED)**

ACTIVITY CATEGORY	L <sub>AEO1H</sub> <sup>A</sup> (dBA)	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY CATEGORY
D	–	Undeveloped land.
E	52 (Interior) <sup>B</sup>	Residences, motels, hotels, public meeting rooms, schools, churches, libraries, hospitals, and auditoriums.

Source: 23 CFR 772.

<sup>A</sup> Laeq1h is the 1-hour A-weighted energy equivalent sound level.

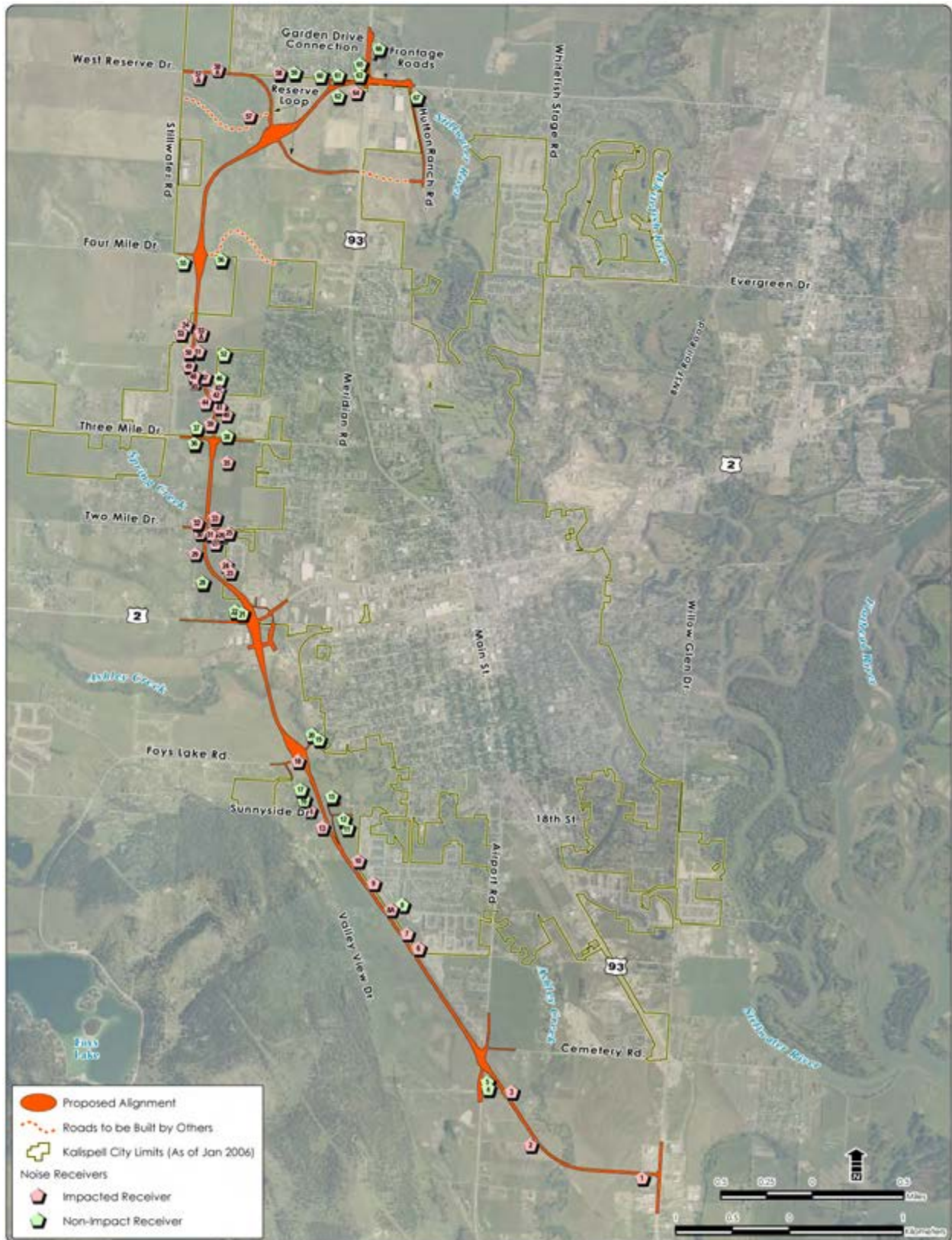
<sup>B</sup> The interior sound levels (activity) apply to 1) indoor activities for those parcels of land where no exterior noise-sensitive land use or activity is identified, and 2) those situations where the exterior activities are either remote from the highway or shielded in some manner so that the exterior activities will not be affected by the noise, but the interior activities will be affected.

**Land Use and Noise Receivers.** Presently, the study area is comprised of a mixture of agricultural, residential, and commercial land uses. The noise analysis focused on 70 specific receivers (Receivers 1 to 67) identified from sensitive land uses as defined in **Table 4.7**. All sensitive receivers within the study area are classified within activity Category B with the exception of Receivers 21 and 62, which were classified within Category C. These receivers are grouped into southern and northern sections and divided out further by major cross streets (see **Figure 4.6**). Land use per section is as follows:

### Southern Section

- US 93 (bypass southern terminus) to Sunnyside Drive – Land use north and south of the bypass between existing US 93 and Airport Road is comprised of sparsely located single family homes (Receivers 1 to 5). Land use northwest and southeast of the bypass between Airport Road and Sunnyside Drive consists of single family homes (Receivers 6 to 13). Receiver 6 is located in the Ashley Park Subdivision, Receiver 7 is located on a privately owned parcel, Receiver 8 is located in the South Meadows Subdivision, Receivers 8A and 9 are located in the Stratford Village Subdivision, Receiver 10 is located in the Sunnyside Subdivision, and Receivers 11 to 13 are located on privately owned parcels adjacent to Sunnyside Drive.
- Sunnyside Drive to Foys Lake Road – This noise study area consists of land east and west of the bypass between Airport Road and Foys Lake Road and is comprised of low-density residential parcels (Receivers 14 to 19). Receiver 18 is within MDT’s right-of-way and was included as a baseline receiver for comparing the measured noise levels with future noise levels.
- Foys Lake Road to US 2 – This area consists of land east and west of the bypass between Foys Lake Road and US 2. It includes one residential parcel, Receiver 20, located adjacent to Foys Lake Road.

**FIGURE 4.6 - NOISE RECEIVERS AND IMPACTS**



- US 2 to Two Mile Drive – This area consists of land east and west of the bypass between US 2 and Two Mile Drive and is comprised of single family residences (Receivers 21 to 31). Receivers 23 to 25 are located within the Greenbriar Subdivision, and the remaining receivers are located on privately owned parcels. Receiver 21 was a single family home that has been converted to commercial use.
- Two Mile Drive to Three Mile Drive – This area consists of land east and west of the bypass and is comprised of single family homes (Receivers 32 to 36). All receivers in this section are on privately owned parcels adjacent to the bypass and not located in specific subdivisions.

### Northern Section

- Three Mile Drive to Four Mile Drive – This area consists of single family homes (Receivers 37 to 56) located east and west of the bypass. Receivers 37, 39, 44, 45, and 48 to 50 are located within the Empire Estates Subdivision; Receiver 38 is located in the Bitterroot Heights Subdivision; Receivers 43, 46, and 52 are located in the Meadowland Subdivision; Receivers 40, 47, 51, and 53 to 56 are located on privately owned parcels adjacent to the bypass but not located in specific subdivisions. Receivers 41 and 42 are located in the Northview Heights Subdivision.
- Four Mile Drive to West Reserve Connection – This area consists of land east and west of the bypass between Four Mile Drive and Reserve Drive and is comprised of the future high school (Receivers 57 and 57A). Receiver 57 is the entrance to the school and Receiver 57A is located within a soccer field.
- West Reserve Connection to US 93 (bypass northern terminus) – This area consists of land north and south of the bypass between Reserve Drive and US 93 is comprised of single and multi family residential units (Receivers 58 to 66). Receivers 58 to 61 are located in the Country Estates Subdivision, Receivers 62 and 64 are located in a multi-use area, where Receiver 62 will become multi family housing and Receiver 64 will become a new department store. Receiver 58A is located on a privately owned parcel on the north side of Reserve Drive. Receiver 67 is located on the east side of US 93 where future college housing is planned.

**Existing Noise Levels.** Ambient or existing noise level readings were taken at 12 representative noise-sensitive locations shown in **Table 4.4**. Although the analysis of noise impacts focuses on future traffic noise, these readings establish current noise levels in the study area. Where existing traffic along cross streets generated major ambient noise, noise levels were modeled.

**TABLE 4.4 - AMBIENT/EXISTING NOISE LEVEL READINGS**

NOISE STUDY AREA	MONITORING LOCATION	LOCATION DESCRIPTION	RECEIVER	AVERAGE AMBIENT NOISE LEVEL (dBA)
US 93 and Airport Road and South of Proposed Bypass	1	Single Family Manufactured Home located just east of existing US 93	1	56
South of Future Interchange of Airport Road and Proposed Bypass	2	Single Family Residence	2	38
Between Airport Road and Sunnyside Drive - East of Proposed Bypass	3	Single Family Residence in Ashley Creek Subdivision	7	47
Between Airport Road and Sunnyside Drive- East of Proposed Bypass	4	Single Family Residence in Stratford Village	8A	48
Between Airport Road and Sunnyside Drive- East of Proposed Bypass	5	Single Family Residence in Sunnyside Subdivision	10	48
Southwest Corner of Ashley View Drive and intersection of Bypass	10	Located just south of future Ashley View Drive in Cottonwood Estates	50	45
Along West Reserve Drive Connection – West of Bypass	11	Located in vicinity of new school	57	42
Located north of US 93 and existing intersection of West Reserve Drive	12	Located at Mountain Villa Apartments South of US 93	65	59

Source: Compiled by Carter & Burgess, Inc.

**Future Noise Levels.** Future noise levels were estimated using the Traffic Noise Model (TNM) prescribed by FHWA for evaluating impacts from highway projects. **Table 4.5** presents the modeling results for existing and future conditions. The table reveals that noise levels are predicted to increase from 0 to 27 dBAs, which is similar to the FEIS prediction. Additionally, the analysis identifies that the bypass would impact an estimated 39 receivers, a decrease in the number of impacts reported in the FEIS. Nineteen of these receivers would receive substantial noise increases, while 5 would experience noise levels that approach the NAC. Fifteen would experience both types of impact. **Figure 4.6** shows these estimated impacts.

**TABLE 4.5 - TRAFFIC NOISE MODEL RESULTS**

RECEIVER	LOCATION DESCRIPTION <sup>A</sup> :	EXISTING (2005) NOISE LEVEL TNM MODEL /OR *MONITORED LEVEL	FUTURE (2030) NOISE LEVEL: MODELED L <sub>AEQ1H</sub> <sup>B</sup> (dBA)  SHADING= IMPACT <sup>C</sup>	MDT APPROACH LEVEL (A) OR SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE (S) OR BOTH (B)	INCREASE OVER EXISTING LEVEL	MITIGATION CONSIDERED ?
1	SFR	53/56	68	A	12	No
2	SFR	38*	63	S	25	No
3	SFR	38*	64	S	26	No
4	SFR	51	59	-	8	No
5	SFR	52	60	-	8	No
6	SFR	47*	64	S	17	Yes
7	SFR	47*	65	S	18	Yes
8	SFR	48*	55	-	7	No
8A	SFR	48*	64	S	16	Yes
9	SFR	48*	63	S	15	Yes
10	SFR	48*	63	S	15	Yes
11	SFR	48*	59	-	11	No
12	SFR	48*	60	-	12	No
13	SFR	45	66	B	21	No
14	SFR	46	59	S	13	No
15	SFR	55*	58	-	3	No
16	SFR	55*	57	-	2	No
17	SFR	55*	57	-	2	No
18	P	55*	70	B	19	No
19	SFR	46	57	-	11	No
20	SFR	47	58	-	11	No
21	C	55*	66	-	11	No
22	SFR	51	63	-	12	No
23	P	49*	61	-	12	No
24	SFR	49*	59	-	10	No

**TABLE 4.5 (CONTINUED) - TRAFFIC NOISE MODEL RESULTS**

RECEIVER	LOCATION DESCRIPTION <sup>A</sup> :	EXISTING (2005) NOISE LEVEL TNM MODEL /OR *MONITORED LEVEL	FUTURE (2030) NOISE LEVEL: MODELED L <sub>AEQ1H</sub> <sup>B</sup> (dBA)  SHADING= IMPACT <sup>C</sup>	MDT APPROACH LEVEL (A) OR SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE (S) OR BOTH (B)	INCREASE OVER EXISTING LEVEL	MITIGATION CONSIDERED ?
25	SFR	51	56	-	5	No
26	SFR	47	56	-	9	No
27	SFR	40	61	S	21	No
28	SFR	49*	59	-	10	No
29	SFR	49*	62	S	13	No
30	SFR	46	66	B	20	No
31	SFR	46	67	B	21	No
32	SFR	47	60	S	13	No
33	SFR	41	61	S	20	No
35	SFR	43	56	S	13	No
36	SFR	56	60	-	4	No
37	SFR	50	58	-	8	No
38	SFR	61*	63	-	2	No
39	SFR	47	69	B	22	Yes
40	SFR	43	62	S	19	Yes
41	SFR	40	67	B	27	Yes
42	SFR	45*	64	S	19	Yes
43	SFR	45*	61	S	16	Yes
44	SFR	45*	66	B	21	Yes
45	SFR	45*	66	B	21	Yes
46	SFR	45*	57	-	12	No
47	SFR	45*	68	B	23	Yes
48	SFR	45*	68	B	23	Yes
49	SFR	45*	66	B	21	Yes
50	SFR	45*	67	B	22	Yes

**TABLE 4.5 (CONTINUED) - TRAFFIC NOISE MODEL RESULTS**

RECEIVER	LOCATION DESCRIPTION:	EXISTING (2005) NOISE LEVEL TNM MODEL /OR *MONITORED LEVEL	FUTURE (2030) NOISE LEVEL: MODELED $L_{Aeq1h}^B$ (dBA)  SHADING= IMPACT	MDT APPROACH LEVEL (A) OR SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE (S) OR BOTH (B)	INCREASE OVER EXISTING LEVEL	MITIGATION CONSIDERED ?
50	SFR	45*	67	B	22	Yes
51	SFR	45*	67	B	22	Yes
52	SFR	45*	58	-	13	No
53	Church	45*	60	S	15	No
53A	MFR	45*	65	B	20	Yes
54	SFR	45*	62	S	17	No
55	SFR	48	58	-	10	No
56	SFR	45*	56	-	11	No
57	School	42*	73	B	31	No
57A	School	59*	67	A	8	No
58	SFR	59	66	A	7	No
58A	SFR	59*	67	A	8	No
59	SFR	56	52	-	-4	No
60	SFR	59	50	-	-9	No
61	SFR	57	55	-	-2	No
62	Future C	52	59	-	7	No
63	MFR	64/59	64	-	0	No
64	MFR	62	70	A	8	No
65	MFR	63	64	-	1	No
66	SFR	54	57	-	3	No
67	MFR	48	64	S	16	No

Source: Compiled by Carter & Burgess, Inc.

<sup>A</sup> The receiver number corresponds to the receiver location displayed in **Figure 4.6**. The Number 34 was intentionally not used.

<sup>B</sup>  $L_{Aeq1h}$  is the one-hour A-weighted energy equivalent sound level.

<sup>C</sup> The shading indicates that the noise levels will exceed the FHWA Noise Abatement Criteria (67 dBA) and/or the criteria stated in the *MDT Traffic Noise Analysis and Abatement: Policy and Procedure Manual* (66 dBA).

SFR = Single Family Residential

MFR = Multi Family Residential

P = Open Space or Park

C = Commercial

Findings regarding the noise mitigation analysis include:

- Receivers 1 to 3, 13, 14, 27, 29 to 35, 53, and 54 are isolated receivers where the cost of the providing noise abatement will exceed the allowable limit and not be reasonable.
- Receiver 18 is an open space area within MDT right-of-way and was not considered for mitigation.
- Receivers 57, 57A, 58 and 58A experience more traffic noise impacts from the West Reserve Connection rather than the bypass. Due to access along West Reserve Drive, a 6 dBA noise lowering would not be able to be achieved through mitigation and therefore noise mitigation would not be feasible.
- Receiver 64 receives traffic noise from the existing US 93 and is surrounded by commercial land use. Due to access requirements for surrounding land use, a 6 dBA noise lowering could not be achieved through mitigation and therefore noise mitigation would not be feasible.
- Receivers 6 to 10, 39 to 45, 47 to 52, and 53A meet MDT noise policy requirements for mitigation and are currently being examined for mitigation of noise impacts.

Of the effected receivers eligible for mitigation, appropriate mitigation will be implemented during final design in accordance with MDT's Noise Policy and in coordination with affected landowners. MDT Policy states that noise impacts on sensitive noise receivers (residences, schools, public open spaces, etc.) require consideration of noise mitigation. Mitigation considerations include shifting the horizontal alignment, depressing the roadway, acquiring real property, managing traffic, and constructing noise barriers. The applicability of these options are as follows:

- **Shifting the horizontal alignment of the roadway from impacted sites.** This option involves increasing the distance between the roadway (source) and the affected land use or activity (receiver), thereby reducing the noise levels for the receiver. As mentioned previously, the northern section of the bypass has been shifted from its original alignment. This mitigation option has been applied where practicable to meet the project design requirements.
- **Depressing the roadway.** This option places the mainline of the highway below the level of the surrounding terrain to minimize noise impacts. The cost of roadway excavation, additional roadway drainage, and operational changes must be considered. This option already has been applied in a few areas.
- **Managing traffic (detouring trucks, reducing speed, etc.).** Truck and/or speed restrictions may be evaluated as a means to mitigate noise in some extreme cases. Such restrictions are not recommended when in conflict with the intended use of the roadway or when creating unreasonable delay or hardship to the motoring public. Applying these restrictions would be contrary to the project purposes of reducing



congestion on existing US 93 and improving safety. Therefore, this option is not being evaluated further.

- **Constructing noise barriers between traffic and impacted receivers.** The most widely used roadway noise mitigation technique involves the construction of noise barriers. Barriers can consist of walls, berms, or a combination of both. Noise barriers are considered when feasible and reasonable conditions are met. Feasibility has primarily to do with engineering considerations (e.g., a barrier can be built given the topography of the location; a substantial noise reduction can be achieved given certain access, drainage, snow, safety, or maintenance requirements; are other noise sources present in the areas). Reasonableness is a more subjective criterion, which includes, but is not limited to, factors such as amount of noise reduction provided, cost of abatement, views from affected residents, future noise levels, development trends and land use controls, and life cycle of noise abatement benefits.

#### 4.10 WATER RESOURCES

The FEIS study area contains the confluence of four major streams. Two of these four streams fall within the bypass study area: Stillwater River and Ashley Creek. The FEIS described water quality within the watersheds as being generally high to very high. A notable exception was a 13.4-mile (21.5-km) section of Ashley Creek from Airport Road to Smith Lake. Water quality in this creek segment was impaired due to the release of public wastewater effluent from the City of Kalispell.

Major water quality issues associated with the project and discussed in the FEIS included:

- Increased impurities in stormwater runoff from increased traffic flow, increased impervious surface and/or increased maintenance activities.
- Sediment loading during and after construction activities due to the exposure of bare substrate.

The FEIS noted that the corridor passes over water features in an approximately perpendicular manner (as opposed to running longitudinally along them), thereby reducing the opportunity for impacts. The ROD also included commitments to adhere to the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences (MDHES) stormwater management requirements. Therefore, water quality impacts from the build alternatives were expected to be minor.

#### **4.10.1 Changed Conditions**

Surface water quality along the proposed Kalispell Bypass continues to be high, although the same section of Ashley Creek from Airport Road to Smith Lake remains on the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's (MDEQ) 303(d) list, meaning that it is still degraded. Upgrades in Kalispell water treatment have been made, but MDEQ's 303(d) report cites dewatering and flow alteration from agriculture as causes for this section to not fully meet recreational use standards.

Additionally, there have been revisions to the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) permit laws to include Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) Phase II requirements.

#### **4.10.2 Revised Impacts**

The 1994 design called for at-grade crossings of the surface waters involving installation of culverts into stream beds. The proposed design change instead proposes bridges at both the northern and southern crossings of Ashley Creek. These bridge designs would span streams and avoid in-stream construction activities, thereby lessening the stream impacts from what was originally proposed.

Areas within the Kalispell City Limits are covered under the MS4 Phase II requirements and MDT is a co-permittee with the City. The design for the project would be consistent with the requirements of the permit and no additional impacts are likely.

### **4.11 WETLANDS**

Field surveys for the FEIS located a total of 28 wetland locations in the Somers to Whitefish project area. Of that total, 9 wetlands were located along the bypass. The FEIS estimated that approximately 4.2 acres (1.7 hectares) of wetlands would be impacted by construction of the bypass.

Wetlands previously identified in the study area were typical of those found in western Montana. About two-thirds of the wetlands had permanent water, typically adjoined a pond or small lake, and were characterized by erect, rooted, herbaceous plants specifically adapted to

growing in water. Approximately one-third of the wetlands were riverine or had a riverine component to them, occurring in or immediately adjacent to rivers or creeks. The remaining wetlands had a forested to scrub/shrub component, characterized by the presence of trees and shrubs typically found in wetland areas.

#### **4.11.1 Changed Conditions**

While the current bypass closely follows the 1994 alignment, it has been shifted south at the north end (see **Figure 1.2**). Furthermore, access along the bypass has been revised to improve safety by including six grade-separated interchanges rather than an at-grade facility. The proposed design change also includes two bridge structures over Ashley Creek, which were planned as culverts in the FEIS.

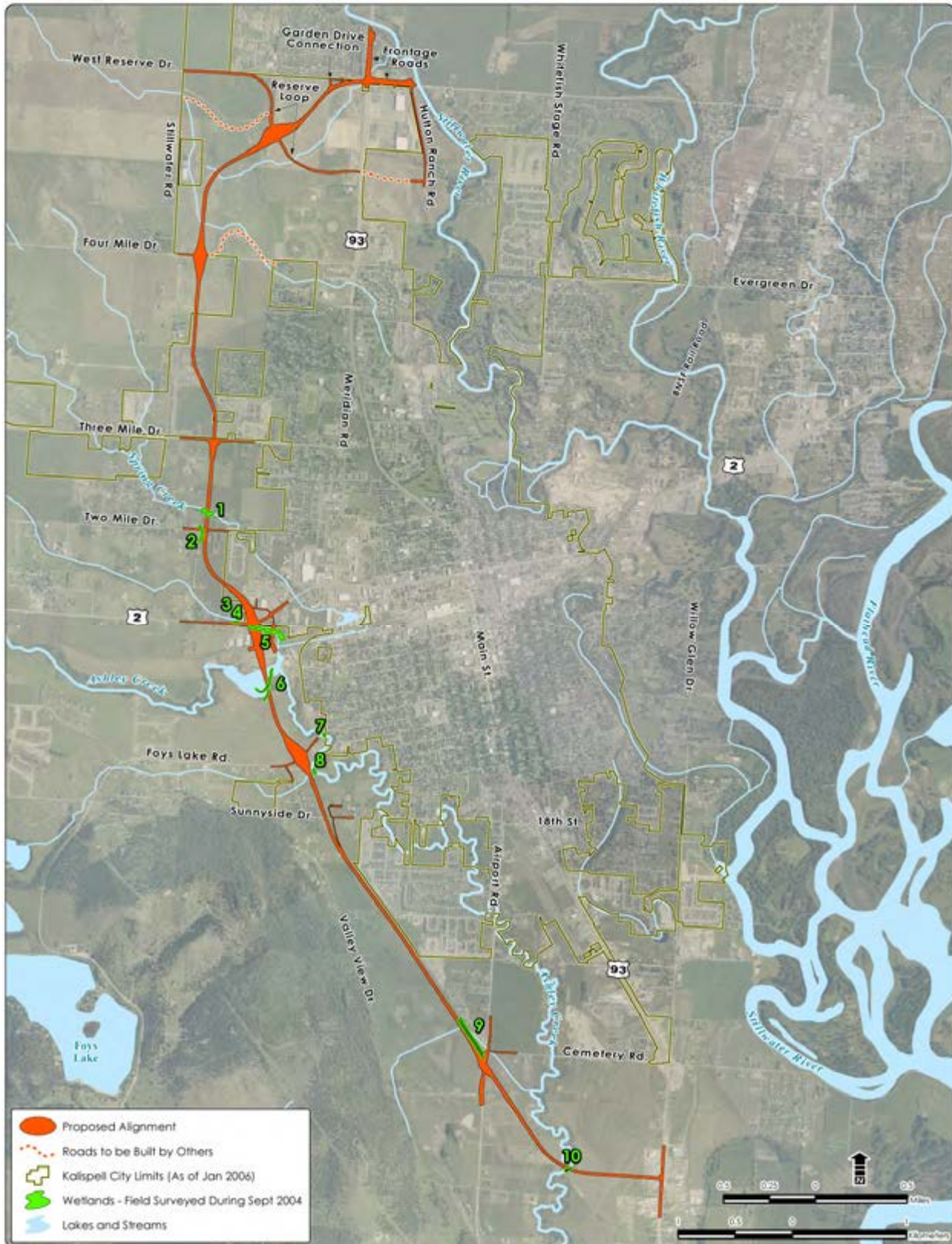
Wetlands were resurveyed in 2004 as part of the *Kalispell Bypass Biological Resources Report* (Carter & Burgess, 2006) to evaluate potential impacts from the proposed design changes. Since 1994 FEIS, wetland areas have diminished in some areas and remained close to the originally observed size in others. The survey identified 10 wetland sites totaling 5.8 acres (2.3 hectares) within the study area (**Figure 4.7**).

#### **4.11.2 Revised Impacts**

The proposed bypass would impact four of the ten wetlands identified, totaling 1.20 acres (0.49 hectares) of impacts (see **Table 4.6**). These revised impacts are considerably lower than the FEIS impacts, due to several factors:

- There are no wetlands located in the northern section of the bypass and therefore, the proposed alignment shift at the north end would not result in additional wetland impacts.
- Construction of the proposed grade-separated interchanges would expand the construction footprint, but will not impact additional wetlands.
- The proposed design change includes bridge structures over the two crossings of Ashley Creek that would avoid these previously-impacted wetlands.
- The proposed design changes would considerably reduce impacts to Wetland 9.

**FIGURE 4.7 - WATER RESOURCES AND WETLAND LOCATIONS**



**TABLE 4.6 - WETLAND IMPACT SUMMARY OF PROPOSED BYPASS**

WETLAND	WETLAND CLASSIFICATION	IMPACT AREA ACRES (HECTARES)
Wetland 1	Scrub/Shrub and Emergent	0.25 (0.10)
Wetland 2	Scrub/Shrub and Emergent	0.04 (0.02)
Wetland 5	Emergent	0.59 (0.24)
Wetland 9	Emergent	0.33 (0.13)
<b>Total</b>		1.20 (0.49)

Source: Cowardin, L.M. et al. 1979. *Classification of Wetland and Deepwater Habitats of the United States*. United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Biological Services Program; FWS/OBS-79/31.

## 4.12 FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife present within the study area is representative of the intermountain valley type of life zone. Much of the study area has been disturbed from human development leaving various wildlife habitats, such as urban areas, small riparian wetlands, and expanses of agricultural land. All major wildlife groups are represented with semi-aquatic wildlife species potentially occurring in areas containing suitable habitat.

The most extensive aquatic habitat within the study area is Ashley Creek and Spring Creek, both of which are low gradient water bodies occurring within glacial till. Spring Creek is a perennial tributary to Ashley Creek.

Fish species present at Ashley Creek within the study area are mountain whitefish (*Prosopium williamsoni*), rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), largescale sucker (*Catostomus macrocheilus*), longnose sucker (*Catostomus catostomus*), northern pike (*Esox lucius*), northern pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus oregonensis*), peamouth (*Mylocheilus caurinus*), redbelly darter (*Richardsonius balteatus*), and yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*).

### 4.12.1 Changed Conditions

While the bypass closely follows the alignment proposed in 1994, the current bypass has been shifted south at the north end to parallel the existing power line (see **Figure 1.2**). Furthermore, access along the bypass has been revised to improve safety by including six grade-separated interchanges rather than an at-grade facility. The proposed design change

also includes two bridge structures over Ashley Creek, which were previously planned as culverts in the FEIS.

Although recent residential development throughout the study area has reduced wildlife habitat, wildlife conditions generally have not changed since the FEIS.

Both Ashley Creek and Spring Creek were observed in greater detail since the FEIS and were found to contain several various fish species. Fish species present at Ashley Creek within the study area are mountain whitefish (*Prosopium williamsoni*), rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), largescale sucker (*Catostomus macrocheilus*), longnose sucker (*Catostomus catostomus*), northern pike (*Esox lucius*), northern pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus oregonensis*), peamouth (*Mylocheilus caurinus*), redbelt shiner (*Richardsonius balteatus*), and yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*). Brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) is the only species found to occur within Spring Creek. No sensitive fish species are known to occur in either of these streams.

#### **4.12.2 Revised Impacts**

The proposed alignment shift at the north end of the bypass corridor would be along an overhead electric transmission line, under which the land has been historically farmed. This property is also currently being developed with residential, commercial, and retail uses. Therefore, the alignment shift would not further impact wildlife habitat in this area. Additionally, while the grade-separated interchanges would require additional right-of-way, the land around these locations is already being urbanized with residential and commercial development. Adding interchanges to these locations, therefore, would not further impact wildlife more than disclosed in the FEIS. Lastly, placing bridge structures over Ashley Creek would provide an improved condition for aquatic species over the conditions disclosed in the FEIS when culverts were planned. Therefore, the proposed bypass would not result in any substantial change to the impacts described in the FEIS.

#### **4.13 FLOODPLAINS**

The bypass runs perpendicular to several major drainages that flow into Flathead Lake with regulated, 100-year floodplains. The FEIS discussed potential impacts to the following floodplains:

- Ashley Creek at the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad.
- Ashley Creek south of US 2 at Meridian.
- Ashley Creek Tributary at US 2.
- West Spring Creek north of Two Mile Drive.

The 1994 FEIS also contained a number of statements and commitments regarding floodplains to meet the requirements of Executive Order 11988 and 23 CFR 650.

#### **4.13.1 Changed Conditions**

Since 1994, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has updated their floodplain mapping and added floodplains. **Figure 4.8** shows the 100-year floodplains listed above, as well as floodplains associated with minor drainages not included in the original FEIS. The current Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) from FEMA categorizes the 100-year floodplains into different zones. Zone A corresponds to 100-year floodplains determined by approximate methods of analysis, whereas Zone AE includes 100-year floodplains determined by detailed analysis methods, including hydraulic analyses.

Also, as discussed in **Section 4.5.2**, the proposed bypass has been developed to a greater level of design detail than the conceptual design used in 1994. Therefore, this proposed design change considers additional right-of-way needed for expanded interchanges, intersection improvements, and cut and fill slopes. Adding grade-separated interchanges to the design has also expanded the construction footprint along roads that would cross the bypass (see **Figure 4.8**).

#### **4.13.2 Revised Impacts**

In addition to the crossings listed above, the bypass would have a transverse impact of the 100-year floodplains for Foy's Lake Creek just south of Foy's Lake Road.

The proposed bypass would continue to meet the requirements of 23 CFR 650 and Executive Order 11988. Floodplain hydraulics would not be appreciably changed or modified. Also, flooding risks are negligible since roadway elevations are set above the 100-year flood levels

**FIGURE 4.8 - 100-YEAR FLOODPLAINS**





based on design requirements. Roadway fill would not be allowed to impact the natural stream channel, and would not be allowed to encroach into floodplains beyond that which would create approximately 0.5-foot (0.2-meter) of standing backwater during a predicted 100-year flood event. The proposed bypass is consistent with local, state, and federal floodplain and water resource programs. All practical measures to minimize harm to the floodplains have been incorporated into the proposed design changes.

#### **4.14 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES**

During preparation of the FEIS, consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that two federally listed species, the American bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), potentially occurred in the study area, along with nine sensitive species (eight plant species and one bird species).

##### **4.14.1 Changed Conditions**

Since the FEIS, the American peregrine falcon has been de-listed and is currently being monitored during its first five years of de-listing. The American bald eagle is still listed. After review of the USFWS list of threatened, endangered, and proposed species that may be present in Montana counties, it was determined the Bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and proposed critical habitat may potentially occur within the project boundaries. There were no other changes to conditions identified in the FEIS.

##### **4.14.2 Revised Impacts**

A Biological Resource Report was prepared for the Kalispell Bypass, which analyzed, in depth, the potential for Bull trout and proposed critical habitat occurring on site (Carter & Burgess 2006). For this analysis the USFWS Dichotomous Key for Making Endangered Species Act Determinations of Effect from *A Framework to Assist in Making Endangered Species Act Determinations of Effect for Individual or Grouped Actions at the Bull Trout Subpopulation Watershed Scale* (USFWS 1998), was applied.

Based on results from the dichotomous key, coordination with USFWS and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP), and implementation of specified coordination measures, a *no effect* determination was rendered relative to the Bull trout.

There are no new impacts to other threatened or endangered species from the original FEIS.

#### 4.15 HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

In the bypass study area, the FEIS documented potential impacts to the two following cultural resources that had been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NHRP) (see **Figure 4.9**):

- **Kalispell-Somers Railroad Spur Line (24FH350)** - Constructed in 1900, this nine-mile spur runs from Somers, Montana, at the north end of Flathead Lake, to its intersection with the former Great Northern railroad on the west side of Kalispell. The bypass was determined to have an adverse effect on this resource.
- **McCormack Farm (24FH277)** - Located on the east side of Valley View Drive, the site is comprised of a salt-box dwelling, chicken house, two barns, and an outhouse. The FEIS indicated that the bypass would not create direct physical impacts to the farm, but could create visual and audible impacts.

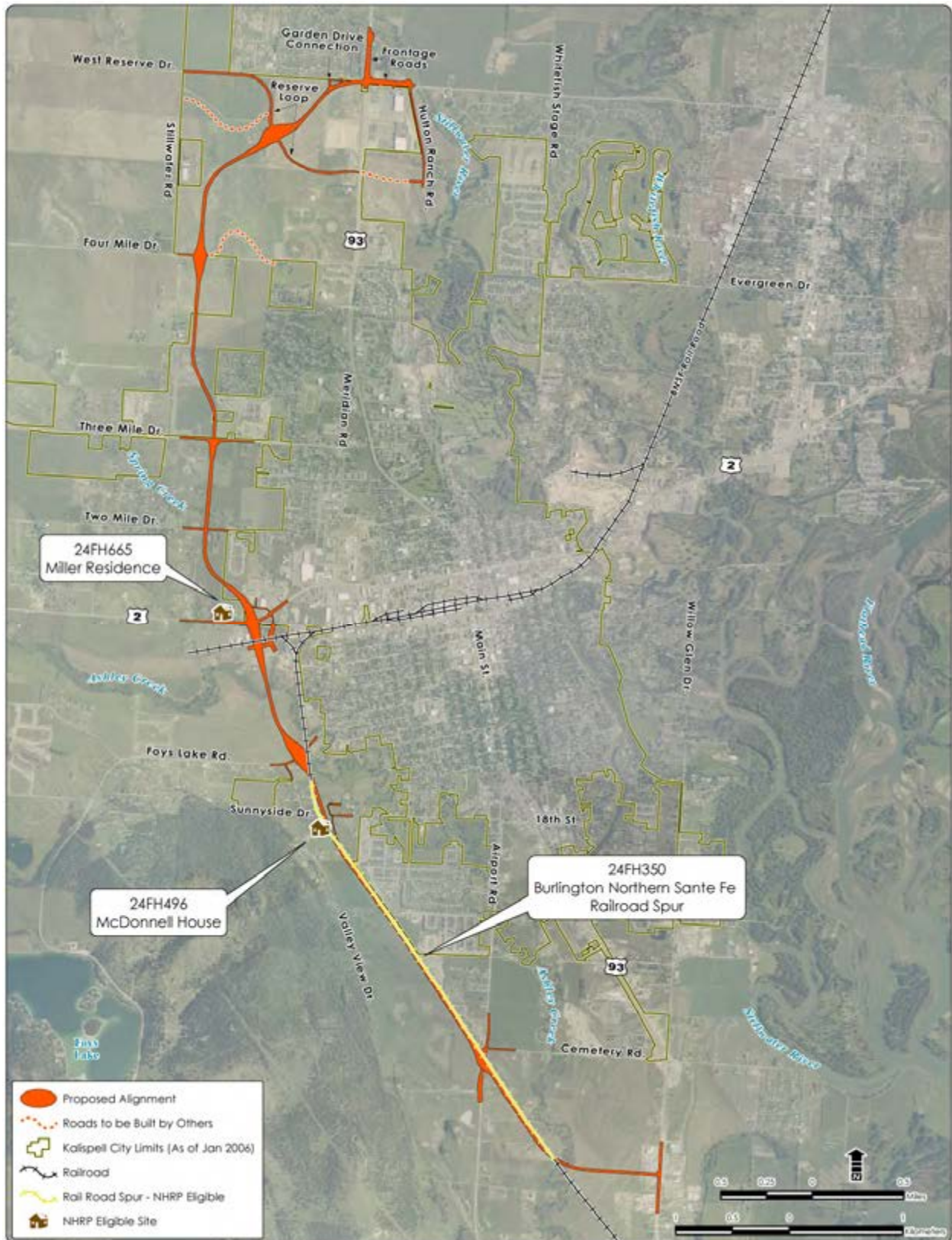
A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) dated June 13, 1990, included mitigation measures for these impacts. For the McCormack Farm, MDT would conduct monitoring to assess the visual and audible impacts to the site before, during, and after construction. Also, MDT would install a historic marker describing the history and significance of the railroad spur. Because the effects to the railroad spur constituted a Section 4(f) use, the resource is discussed further in **Section 4.22**.

##### 4.15.1 Changed Conditions

Since completion of the FEIS, more recent surveys have been conducted in the study area to account for proposed design changes. *The Cultural Resource Inventory and Assessment of the Kalispell Bypass Project* (Ferguson and McKay 1999) reviewed previous studies and conducted updated research on properties potentially eligible for the NHRP. The study reaffirmed the eligibility of the Kalispell-Somers Railroad Spur line and McCormack Farm, but did not discover new eligible properties.

Since 1999, proposed design changes have necessitated additional study of areas previously not affected. *The Kalispell Bypass Cultural Resource Supplement Report* (Renewable Technologies 2006) evaluated areas within the northern portion of the proposed bypass and at several

**FIGURE 4.9 - ELIGIBLE HISTORIC PROPERTIES**



interchange areas. The survey documented five historic sites in the study area. Four of these sites are not considered eligible for listing in the NHRP. One property, the Miller Residence (24FH665) had been deemed eligible by the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer in 1994 (see **Figure 4.9**). The supplement report reaffirmed this property's eligibility.

#### **4.15.2 Revised Impacts**

The proposed design changes would not alter the previously determined effects to the Kalispell-Somers Railroad Spur Line and McCormack Farm. Construction would remain within existing right-of-way of the railroad spur and conditions outlined in the MOA still would apply. The proposed design changes would not affect the Miller Residence. MDT prepared a supplement to the effect determination it originally prepared for the project. On March 27, 2006, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with this revised effect determination.

### **4.16 PARKS AND RECREATION**

The FEIS listed these recreational resources located in the study area: the Airport Park; the Soccer Park; and the Ashley Creek Trail. The 1994 bypass would have impacted a 0.25-acre (0.1-hectare) portion of the Ashley Creek Trail, but would not have impacted the Airport and Soccer Parks.

#### **4.16.1 Changed Conditions**

The following changed conditions to parks and recreation were observed:

- The soccer park is no longer part of the public parks system. Since the FEIS was released in 1994, several new park and recreational areas have been built. **Figure 4.4** shows these and the parks discussed above.
- A new linear park located on the northwest side of the BNSF Railroad. The park, situated halfway between Sunnyside Drive and Airport Road, functions as a passive park and a buffer between the railroad and a neighboring residential development.
- Two new residential parks located above Three Mile Drive on the east side of the proposed Kalispell Bypass. Each park is approximately 300 feet (90 meters) from the bypass, within a residential development.
- A new sports complex under DNRC ownership. This parcel is located just north of Four Mile Drive and bordered by US 93 and the proposed bypass. It includes 12 soccer fields and other recreational facilities.
- According to the City of Kalispell Planning Director, a proposed high school park is being constructed on the Section 36 property. This 60-acre (24-hectare) parcel is located

beside the above-mentioned sports complex and approximately 800 feet (243 meters) from the Kalispell Bypass alignment.

- The Kalispell Planning Director indicated a new park has been constructed a few hundred feet west of the bypass in the Empire Estates subdivision, located north of Three Mile Drive. The park offers passive recreational opportunities and a playground.

#### 4.16.2 Revised Impacts

**Section 4.7** discusses impacts to the Ashley Creek Trail. The bypass would not require land from any other publicly owned park property. Furthermore, it would not substantially impair the features of nearby park properties.

### 4.17 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The FEIS summarized the results of a hazardous materials investigation that involved database searches, past and present land use research, and field review. It documented the presence of six sites along the original bypass alignment that could pose contamination risks during construction.

#### 4.17.1 Changed Conditions

Carter & Burgess performed a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) of the proposed bypass that is documented in the *Phase I ESA: Proposed Kalispell Bypass Corridor Report* (Carter & Burgess, 2005). The Phase I ESA was performed in general conformance with the scope and limitations of American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) International's Standard Practice E 1527. The ESA involved an environmental database search and site inspection. No new hazardous material sites have been identified (see **Section 4.17.2**).

#### 4.17.2 Revised Impacts

A review of environmental regulatory records identified 13 mapped sites within the search distance. None of these, however, appear to warrant further investigation and are unlikely to impact the project. Two sites, the Village Mart at 490 West Reserve Drive and Montana Tractor, Inc., at 3167 Highway 93 South, are Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) sites with a listed regulatory status of OPEN (see **Figure 4.10**). The study recommended that air monitoring for volatile organics be conducted if excavations are performed near these sites.

**FIGURE 4.10 - POTENTIAL HAZARDOUS MATERIAL SITES**



The site reconnaissance identified two properties along the revised bypass alignment that indicate the possible presence of potentially hazardous materials based upon current or past uses of the properties (see **Figure 4.10**). Both of these had been sites were identified in the 1994 FEIS. The McFarland Pole site, located south of US 2, and a red metal building near the intersection of Ashley Drive and 18th Street, have potential for the presence of hazardous materials. The McFarland Pole site is a former lumber processing facility that may have used hazardous materials or generated hazardous waste during the processing and treatment of wood products. The property near Ashley Drive and 18th Street is currently being used as a shop of some type. Drums with unknown contents and several pieces of equipment are stored behind the building. The Phase I ESA recommended that Phase II ESAs of these two properties be conducted prior to construction of the project. Phase II analysis was not recommended for the other four sites identified in the 1994 EIS. The design changes would not result in impacts to new hazardous materials sites not identified previously.

#### **4.18 VISUAL QUALITY**

Short- and long-term visual impacts disclosed in the FEIS were described in terms of views from the roadway and views of the roadway. Short-term visual impacts included stockpiling of excavated material and construction equipment, dust and debris from construction activities, vegetation clearing, and traffic congestion during construction. The Preferred Alternative was identified as having a longer construction period, and, therefore, a longer duration of short-term visual impacts.

The FEIS also identified permanent changes to the visual character of the area from the Preferred Alternative. These include expansion of width of pavement; access that is more organized; cut and fill sections; addition of special design features; addition of landscaping; additional structures; such as retaining walls, guard rails, and bridges; expanded right-of-way; including the clear zone; changes in adjacent land use; expanded billboard control areas; and addition of new roadway.

Mitigation techniques were planned to minimize the visual impact of the project and include:

- Final design will be done in such a manner as to best fit the new highway within the existing topography. This includes contour grading of cut and fill slopes, sensitive design of roadway alignment and profile, and design of roadside signage and lighting.
- Landscape enhancements will utilize only native materials. Care will be taken to avoid installation of species that are palatable to wildlife in areas immediately adjacent to the roadway.
- Slope cutting will be done in such a manner as to be compatible with the adjacent slope. This includes laying the slope back at draws, modifying slope ratios to reflect existing terrain, and rounding at the top and bottom to present a softer transition.
- Design and construction of roadside and median landscape treatments will not produce the desired affect if the maintenance of those features falls short of what is required. MDT will seek assistance from local communities in the maintenance of landscaping features.
- Open road segments in rural areas can be maintained through conventional roadside methods with seasonal mowing and trash pickup. Local groups can also be enlisted to maintain roadsides.
- Special light fixtures will be used in sensitive areas to minimize stray light pollution.

#### **4.18.1 Changed Conditions**

Overall, Flathead Valley remains rural in character, but the communities continue to generate a more downtown visual character with increased residential, commercial, and industrial development. Since the FEIS was prepared, 10 years of growth has occurred in Kalispell and along the bypass, giving it a more suburban and urban character. Changes in land uses from agricultural to residential and commercial throughout the bypass corridor have altered local visual expectations. The entire study area is now within the Kalispell Growth Management Area and has continued to suburbanize with additional residential subdivisions and commercial properties. The overall look and feel of the corridor is substantially different from the rural character it once had prior to 1994. Growth and development have permanently altered the visual setting to a more suburban or urban core with higher densities of population and employment centers.

#### **4.18.2 Revised Impacts**

Proposed changes to the bypass alignment alone would continue to cause the same short- and long-term visual impacts disclosed in the FEIS. Additionally, by shifting the alignment at the north end south toward the power line, MDT was able to reduce localized noise and visual



impacts to existing residents along Stillwater and West Reserve Drives. Further changes to lower the roadway profile through the Three Mile Drive area also reduced localized noise and visual impacts to surrounding residents.

Design changes to include six new grade-separated interchanges would create a new permanent visual element not considered in the FEIS. The FEIS based the visual analysis on at-grade intersections. Current plans call for the construction of six overpasses that are as much as 35 feet (11 meters) above ground surface. Access ramps and cross road improvements would also occupy a greater area. However, these features are not uncommon expectations for urban roadway corridors. The elevated interchanges are located in specific areas with higher traffic demands resulting from higher density residential and commercial development (at cross roads). Aside from these specific locations, most of the bypass corridor would have the same visual character as considered in the FEIS. Concerns about visual quality raised during the public involvement process regarded the use of low-impact lighting to reduce night-time glare and light pollution.

Design changes to minimize or reduce potential visual impacts from the grade-separated interchanges include:

- Lowering the roadway profile and structure at Three Mile Drive.
- Designing cross roads to cross over the top of the bypass mainline to reduce the overall size of the structure and ramps (Airport Road, Two Mile Drive, Three Mile Drive, and Four Mile Drive).
- Using low-impact lighting.

#### **4.19 ENERGY**

The FEIS reported that reduced congestion would decrease vehicular fuel consumption under any build alternative. Construction and maintenance activities would expend fuel. The proposed design change would not result in any substantial change to the energy or resource impacts described in the FEIS.

## 4.20 IMPLEMENTATION

The proposed design change would not result in any substantial change to the construction impacts described in the FEIS. The project is anticipated to provide the same short-term benefits stemming from construction activities (e.g., hiring of local construction workers, materials purchase).

## 4.21 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The FEIS identified six reasonably foreseeable future actions with an assessment of probable cumulative impact. The actions are summarized below along with an update:

**TABLE 4.7 - FORESEEABLE ACTIONS AND UPDATE**

ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE FEIS	CURRENT UPDATE
Big Mountain Expansion	Ongoing and likely to continue through 2009.
Improvements to Big Mountain Road	Difficulties acquiring right-of-way and funding withdrawn in 2003.
Replacement of the Burlington Northern Railroad overpass in Whitefish	Ongoing.
Updating Flathead County Master Plan	Currently updating growth management policy
EIS for US 93 between Evaro and Polson	Supplemental EIS currently being prepared.
EIS for US 2 between Columbia Falls and Hungry Horse	Re-evaluated and approved in 2002.

### 4.21.1 Changed Conditions

New, reasonably foreseeable development and transportation projects in the vicinity of the bypass not described in the 1994 FEIS include the following:

#### Development Projects

- Section 36 Plan, Business and Technology Park—Mixed-use development by DNRL between Four Mile Drive and West Reserve Drive with 640 acres (259 hectares) of single family residential, office/professional, school, and recreation uses.
- Empire Estates—80 acres (32 hectares) of residential subdivision at Three Mile Drive and Stillwater Road.
- Single family, 100-acre (40-hectare) development—700 units abutting bypass at US 2 between Appleway Drive and Foys Lake Road.
- Lone Pine—60 acres (24 hectares) with 68 single family units, 0.25 mile west of the bypass south of Foys Lake.

- Ashley Park—Residential development in final phase, east of bypass south of Foys Lake Road.
- Hutton Ranch Plaza—11 acres (7 hectares) of commercial space across 46 acres (19 hectares) on US 93 south of West Reserve Drive. Construction began in the fall of 2005.

### Transportation Projects

- US 93, approximately 2.5 miles (4 km) north of Stillwater River – Roadway reconstruction and structure. (US 93, RP 119.1-122.3 [4 km north of Stillwater River-north] and US 93, RP 117.9-119.1 [Stillwater River North])
- MT 35, northeast Kalispell – Intersection upgrade (turn lane)/signals. (MT 35; RP 50.6-50.9 and S-317; RP 4.4-4.5, under construction)
- US 2 – Access control. (US 2, RP 122.8-142.4)
- US 2, west Kalispell – Roadway reconstruction, structure, and slope flattening. (US 2, RP 110.0-119.6)
- SH 206, east Kalispell – Slope flattening and guardrail. (S-206, RP 1.8-2.5)

#### 4.21.2 Revised Impacts

Cumulative effects from the project were evaluated in the 1994 FEIS. As discussed in **Section 4.2**, the proposed design changes are not expected to substantively alter the project's effects on future land use, as reported in the FEIS. Therefore, there are no indications that the changes in bypass design would contribute to new cumulative effects when considered in conjunction with the projects listed above. In addition, a bypass in this location has been envisioned for over a decade and has been an integral part of the planning process for development in the Kalispell area.

#### 4.22 SECTION 4(f)

The FEIS identified two Section 4(f) resources that would be used by the Kalispell Bypass alignment - the Ashley Creek Trail and the historic Kalispell-Somers Railroad Spur. Mitigation commitments made in the ROD for the historic railroad spur include installation of a historic marker describing the history and significance of the railroad spur.

Mitigation commitments made in the ROD for Ashley Creek included:

1. Purchase property for and build approximately 2,050 feet (625 meters) of relocated trail generally south of Ashley Creek, just south of US 2.

2. Provide for an at-grade signalized intersection across the Kalispell Bypass at US 2.
3. Provide for a grade-separated bike path crossing adjacent to and on the south side of Ashley Creek as it crosses the Kalispell Bypass just south of US 2. Usage by equestrians will be provided if possible.
4. Connect the Ashley Creek Trail with the new bike lane along the Kalispell Bypass.
5. Provide approximately 5.22 acres (2.1 hectares) of property to Flathead County Parks. This acreage is planned for at least partial use as parking and a trailhead facility to compensate for the approximately 0.25-acre (0.1-hectare) of Section 4(f) land converted from a recreational use. If the appraised value of the replacement land is less than the appraised value of the impacted property, additional property to make up the difference will be provided to Flathead County Parks as replacement property.

#### **4.22.1 Changed Conditions**

There are no new Section 4(f) resources in the study area.

#### **4.22.2 Revised Impacts**

The proposed design changes would not result in use of new 4(f) resources not reported in the FEIS. The proposed use of Ashley Creek Trail and Kalispell-Somers Railroad Spur (see **Section 1.15**) would not change. MDT would adhere to the mitigation commitments listed in the FEIS for these resources.

## 5.0 IMPACTS COMPARISON SUMMARY AND ADDITIONAL MITIGATION

**Table 5.1** shows impacts presented in the 1994 FEIS, as well as revised impacts based on the proposed design changes.

**TABLE 5.1 - COMPARISON OF 1994 FEIS IMPACTS TO 2006 IMPACTS (BYPASS ONLY)**

RESOURCE	1994 FEIS IMPACTS	2005 PROPOSED DESIGN IMPACTS
Transportation	The bypass would accommodate increasing travel demand, relieve congestion on existing US 93 through Kalispell, and decrease overall accident potential.	The proposed design change provides improved safety and mobility over FEIS with addition of grade-separated interchanges. Traffic forecasts updated from Year 2015 to Year 2030.
Land Use	Development currently occurring in the west Kalispell area would continue and be accelerated upon completion of the bypass.	Design changes not expected to substantively alter the project's effects on future land use. Bypass included in Kalispell 2020 Growth Policy. City and County subdivision and development approvals in accordance with proposed design changes.
Farmland	Approximately 40 acres (16 hectares) of Federal Protection Policy Act (FPPA) farmland would be impacted.	No substantial changes expected. Recent development has already caused conversion of farmland to other uses (residential/commercial) within bypass corridor.
Social/Economic	The 1994 bypass would have little impact on population growth, but could influence spatial distribution. Highway-related impacts would occur to residences along corridor. Improved mobility would translate to economic benefits.	There are no changed social effects. The employment and population growth forecasts in FEIS for 2015 are fairly accurate; updated forecasts to 2030 use recent growth rates. Changes now allow for a free flowing facility. Economic benefits discussed in the FEIS would only be enhanced.
Right-of-Way/Relocation	Displacement of three residences, three businesses, and one outbuilding.	Additional displacements required are five residences and one outbuilding. Access revisions to improve safety include six grade-separated interchanges rather than an at-grade facility, requiring more right-of-way at those locations. Conceptual design in the FEIS has been advanced to preliminary design.
Pedestrians and Bicycles	Provides improved accommodations. Relocation of Ashley Creek Trail.	The proposed design change provides improved accommodations over FEIS with pedestrian/bicycle undercrossings.
Air Quality	Meets emissions standards. Projected PM <sub>10</sub> emissions determined to be lower than the projected emissions from future no build alternative.	Motor vehicle emissions would not exceed standards; no mitigation necessary. Project included in the fiscally constrained, conforming Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).
Noise	Fifty one receptors impacted—28 would approach or exceed The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC); 23 receptors expected to receive substantial increases. Mitigation measures recommended in FEIS, with detailed analysis to be completed during final design.	An estimated 39 receivers impacted—5 would approach or exceed the NAC; 19 receptors expected to receive substantial increases; and 15 would experience both types of impact. Alignment shifts made to reduce impacts (e.g. near West Reserve Drive). Detailed mitigation plans to be completed with final design.

**TABLE 5.1 (CONTINUED) - COMPARISON OF 1994 FEIS IMPACTS TO 2006 IMPACTS (BYPASS ONLY)**

RESOURCE	1994 FEIS IMPACTS	2005 PROPOSED DESIGN IMPACTS
Water Resources	Potential for increased pollutants and sediment from stormwater runoff; mitigation proposed.	Impact of the proposed design changes generally similar to FEIS. The proposed design change includes bridges (instead of culverts originally planned) at northern and southern crossings of Ashley Creek.
Wetlands	Approximately 4.2 acres (1.7 hectares) impacted.	Impacts reduced to 1.20 acres (0.49 hectares) Fewer impacts from minimization measures, including use of bridge structures over Ashley Creek.
Wildlife/Fisheries	Approximately 88 acres (36 hectares) of wildlife habitat converted.	Impact of the proposed design changes similar to FEIS. Urbanization of bypass corridor from residential construction already reduced habitat quality.
Floodplains	Approximately 9 acres (4 hectares) of floodplain encroachment.	Impact of the proposed design changes similar to FEIS.
T&E Species	No impacts.	Since FEIS, Bull trout listed as Threatened. Bypass would result in no effect.
Historic/Cultural	Adverse effect to railroad spur. No adverse effect to McCormack property.	No new impacts: additional NHRP eligible property in study area but not impacted.
Parks and Recreation	Direct impact to Ashley Creek Trail—relocation required.	No substantial change expected. New parks in study area, but not impacted.
Hazardous Materials	Six sites identified that could pose contamination risk.	No new sites would be impacted. Phase II investigation proposed for two sites, both identified in FEIS.
Visual Quality	Roadway would be a new visual element; visible to adjacent properties.	Alignment shifts at the north end and near Three Mile Drive reduced localized visual impacts. Interchanges would create a new permanent visual element; proposed design change includes measures to reduce and minimize impacts.
Energy	Reduced congestion would decrease fuel consumption. Construction and maintenance activities would expend fuel.	No substantial change expected.
Implementation	Typical impacts associated with construction activities.	No substantial change expected.
Cumulative	Future projects identified.	New projects identified; new cumulative effects from design changes not anticipated.
Section 4(f)	Bypass would use the Ashley Creek Trail and Kalispell-Somers Railroad Spur.	No change expected.

Source: Compiled by Carter & Burgess, Inc.

As noted in the table above, the only additional mitigation requirements from the proposed design changes to the Bypass alternative in the 1994 FEIS is the relocation of five residences and one outbuilding.

## 6.0 COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

This section describes the integrated program of agency and public coordination and involvement activities conducted during the re-evaluation process. These activities were specifically planned and conducted to accommodate the intent of a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) re-evaluation, the Montana Environmental Protect Act (MEPA) and to provide a commensurate level of public awareness and participation. The activities were open, inclusive, and ongoing throughout the re-evaluation. The objectives of the agency and public involvement program included:

- Conduct outreach to all segments of the community.
- Provide opportunities for timely agency and public review and comment.
- Educate agencies and the public about the project, thereby enabling them to make knowledgeable and thoughtful comments.
- Provide Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the City of Kalispell, and Flathead County with well-defined and clearly stated agency and public input.

The activities of the agency and public involvement program included focused meetings with affected landowners and public interest groups, public meetings, agency briefings, mailed announcements to the project mail list, and project newsletters.

### 6.1 AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Agency coordination provided for the timely flow of project information between MDT, FHWA, the City of Kalispell, Flathead County, and other local agencies. MDT and/or the project team conducted meetings with these agencies to provide regular updates, identify project issues, and to coordinate the overall project. A summary of agency coordination activities is provided below.

#### 6.1.1 Kalispell Technical Advisory Committee

Throughout the course of the re-evaluation, the project team provided regular briefings and updates to the Kalispell Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The Kalispell TAC addresses a wide range of local issues and topics and is made up of representatives from the City of

Kalispell, Flathead County, the local Chamber of Commerce, Flathead Safety Council, MDT, and citizens from both the city and county.

The project team met with and obtained input from the TAC on the following dates:

- June 21, 2004
- August 24, 2004
- April 21, 2005
- July 21, 2005

During July 2005, the TAC formally recommended to the Kalispell City Council and the Flathead County Commissioners that the proposed bypass configuration dated July 21, 2005, be approved through resolution. Subsequently, the Kalispell City Council and the Flathead County Commissioners unanimously passed resolutions approving the configuration on August 1 and 3, 2005, respectively.

### **6.1.2 Local Agency Coordination**

The project team also held a series of meetings with City and County representatives and affected service providers and local agencies to discuss the project and obtain input. The following meetings were held:

- City and County Bypass Access Meeting: June 28, 2004
- City and County Bypass Traffic Forecasting Meeting: June 28, 2004
- Local Emergency Services Meeting: August 23, 2004
- City and County Socio-Economic Growth Allocation Meeting: October 21, 2004
- Preliminary Geometrics and Traffic Forecasting: December 14, 2004
- City, County, DNRC & School Design Issues in Section 36: January 11, 2005
- City, County and MDT Conceptual Alignment Review: April 20 and 21, 2005
- Department of Natural Resource Conservation: May 13, 2005, June 2, 2005, October 14, 2005, December 1, 2005, and miscellaneous other dates
- County Briefing Meeting: July 15, 2005
- Flathead Valley Community College: May 13, 2005, and October 12, 2005
- City, County and MDT Jurisdiction Meeting: October 13, 2005



- West Valley Fire Department: October 13, 2005
- Kalispell Fire Department: October 13, 2005

Meetings with local emergency service providers focused on identifying potential impacts to emergency response times in the vicinity of the bypass corridor. The current bypass and access locations were discussed as well as future traffic projections and congestion estimates. The overall conclusion was that response times for most providers would not be impacted by the proposed bypass configuration. The West Valley Fire Department believed that an increased response time would result from the bypass construction because of their boundaries (which overlap across the bypass), the possibility of signalization of intersections, and increased response distance from their western facility. Based upon increasing congestion, it is believed that their response time would continue to increase because there is a lack of alternative routes and increasing demand upon major arterials. The Kalispell Fire Department and Ambulance Response is planning a new station within 1,640 feet (500 meters) of the proposed bypass and would see a beneficial increase in response time with the bypass construction.

Meetings with City and County representatives were held to discuss the project and to coordinate future plans and growth needs. The meeting with City and County planners to allocate future growth in October 2004 revealed that population, employment, and traffic projections in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) were generally accurate. This meeting further allocated growth in the greater Kalispell area to 2030 to assess how the bypass would function with a longer planning horizon than the 2015 planning horizon used for the FEIS.

## **6.2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Public involvement activities were conducted during the FEIS re-evaluation to provide widespread awareness of the project and opportunities for timely public input to proposed design changes. Activities included newsletters, public meetings, and advertisement in local newspapers. Participants included concerned and interested citizens, property owners, special user groups, and the general public.

### **6.2.1 Project Mail List**

A mail list was developed and maintained for the mailing of the project newsletters and announcements of project public involvement activities. The mail list was derived from a listing of affected property owners from MDT right-of-way and previously interested parties. In addition, it includes local agencies, attendees signing in at the public meetings, local groups and organizations in the area, and other individuals contacting the project team (via e-mail, fax, calls, and letters). The mail list contains approximately 350 entries.

### **6.2.2 Newsletters**

Three project newsletters were published during the re-evaluation process. An introductory newsletter was mailed on June 19, 2004, to entries on the mail list to inform them of an introductory public meeting held on June 21, 2004. The newsletter contained an introduction to the project history and the proposed design and a general reference map, as well as contact and meeting information. The second newsletter was mailed in early August 2004 to entries on the mailing list to inform them about the second public meeting on August 24, 2004. The newsletter contained information about the FEIS re-evaluation, FEIS environmental topics, a project location map, details about the upcoming public meeting location and time, and contact information.

A third newsletter was mailed in mid June 2005 to entries on the mail list to provide an update on project activities and issues that had occurred since the August 2004 public meeting. The newsletter included descriptive text regarding the project background and history, factors leading to the decisions for the recently proposed design changes, a description of the currently proposed design concept, access concepts, and plans for the future. A map was also included that depicted the current bypass and access locations.

### **6.2.3 Postcard Announcement**

A postcard announcing the August 2005 public meeting was mailed to all entries on the mail list for receipt 10 days in advance of the meeting. In addition to announcing the meeting, the postcard indicated the purpose of the meeting, the types of information to be available for public review and comment, a map of the bypass corridor, location of the meeting, and directions on obtaining special access or other accommodations to attend.

#### **6.2.4 Public Meetings**

Three public meetings were conducted to provide timely project information to the public and to obtain input on the proposed design changes to the bypass from the original design presented in the 1994 FEIS. A fourth public meeting is planned at the completion of this re-evaluation process. Announcements of the public meetings were mailed to entries on the project mail list. Announcements were also provided in the *Daily Interlake*, with 2-week and 1-day advance notice for each meeting. All of the public meetings were held between 5:00 pm and 8:00 pm at the West Coast Kalispell Center Hotel at 20 N. Main Street in downtown Kalispell.

**Public Meeting #1 (June 21, 2004).** The purpose of this kickoff meeting was to announce startup of design for the bypass and to re-familiarize the community with the project. A formal presentation was provided by the project team to summarize the project history, FEIS re-evaluation process, schedule, and design. Contact information was provided, as well as an initial opportunity for questions and comments by attendees. Sixty-seven members of the community and local officials attended this meeting.

Comments were received from the public during the question and answer period after the presentation and during the open house portion of the meeting. Attendees expressed both support for and concerns about the proposed project. Those in support indicated preference to expedite completion of the project, which has been discussed and planned for more than 20 years. Concerns about the bypass included recommendations for other bypass corridors, traffic congestion at the US 93 and West Reserve Drive intersection, reconstruction of other east-west roadways, addressing recent growth patterns, impacts to regional trails, impacts from noise to residential properties, where and how access to and from the bypass would be provided, and impacts to emergency response times.

**Public Meeting #2 (August 24, 2004).** The purpose of this meeting was for members of the community to provide input on scoping environmental issues and concerns for the project. The format for the meeting included an open house with a formal presentation by the MDT project team and a question and answer period at the end of the presentation. Sixty-four members of the community and local officials attended this meeting.

Project officials were available throughout the meeting to answer questions or concerns and to receive comments on the project. During the meeting, attendees viewed and commented on the currently proposed design for the bypass and environmental resources in the study area. Scoping comments were received from the public in a number of ways: personal comments given to project officials were summarized on 5 x 8 cards that were immediately displayed for public review; comment forms were completed and placed in a comment box or mailed at to the project team at a later date; and comments were received during the question and answer period at the end of the presentation. Additional comments were provided to project officials via Email after the meeting.

Similar to the first public meeting, attendees expressed both support for and concerns about the proposed project. Those in support continued to indicate a preference to expedite completion of the project as currently proposed. Concerns about the project mirrored those provided at the first public meeting, with many of the comments regarding current and future traffic conditions at the US 93 and West Reserve Drive intersection. The majority of those who were concerned about how this intersection would operate in the future preferred to have MDT consider a new bypass alignment that terminated farther north on US 93.

The majority of other concerns mentioned at the meeting included providing safe pedestrian and bicycle access to recreational sites, using low-impact lighting, reducing noise impacts to residential properties, limiting access at Sunnyside Drive/Valley View Drive, less signalization, including landscaping or other aesthetic improvements, traffic safety and congestion, and increased population growth. There were no other major concerns raised about environmental resources located in the bypass corridor.

**Open House #3 (August 9, 2005).** The purpose of this meeting was to update the public on design changes and improvements to the proposed bypass design since the last public meeting and to disclose preliminary environmental findings. The format for the meeting included an open house with a formal presentation by the MDT project team and a question and answer period at the end of the presentation. One hundred and twenty members of the community and local officials attended this meeting.

Materials available during the open house portion of the meeting included large-format maps detailing the current bypass and access locations and configurations, maps of environmental resources and potential impact areas, educational information and criteria regarding noise impacts, and project background and history information. The presentation provided an overview of the project background, public comments received to date, the currently proposed design, traffic conditions, preliminary environmental findings, funding constraints, and a statement from the Kalispell TAC.

Comments were received from the public in a similar manner as the second public meeting. Similar to the first two public meetings, attendees expressed both support for and concerns about the proposed project. Concerns this time, however, were more narrowly focused since MDT and the project team made revisions to the design presented at the August 2004 public meeting to address public concerns. For example, prior to the August 2005 public meeting, meetings were held with emergency services to address response time issues, pedestrian and bicycle improvements were proposed to allow safe access to recreational sites, and a major design revision was made to the US 93 and West Reserve Road intersection to improve future traffic conditions (adding a loop road). Remaining concerns raised by community members at this meeting primarily regarded relocating the bypass alignment to other locations in the community and the effects on property values along the bypass corridor.

#### **6.2.5 Meetings with Affected Landowners and Public Interest Groups**

Throughout the re-evaluation, the project team conducted meetings with affected landowners and public interest groups to obtain their feedback. Major meetings held include the following:

- Non-Motorized Groups—August 25, 2004 and October 14, 2005.
- Affected Landowners (including developers)—Ongoing meetings between June, 2004 and continuing through final design.

#### **6.2.6 Project Advance Notification Signs**

MDT recognized the need to inform persons traveling in the vicinity of the bypass, yet not aware of its planned location. In spring of 2005, MDT installed nine large signs at the major roadway intersections planned with the bypass. The signs provide visual notification of the

planned roadway and are planned to remain in place until construction of the bypass. The signs provide telephone and Email contacts.

The signs were placed at the following planned bypass intersections:

- US 93 South
- Airport Road
- Sunnyside Drive
- Foys Lake Road
- US 2
- Two Mile Drive
- Three Mile Drive
- Parkridge and Stillwater Road (approximately at Three and half Mile Drive location)
- US 93 North/West Reserve Drive