



Mullan Road - Pulp Mill to Deschamps (public name)  
West of Missoula – NW (contract name)

**Draft Public Involvement Plan**

Montana Department of Transportation

STPP 263-1(28)6

UPN 6141000

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Mullan Road (S 263) Highway Reconstruction (public name)  
 West of Missoula – NW (contract name)

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Montana Department of Transportation  
 STPP 263-1(28)6  
 UPN 6141000

February 2023

**Project Description**

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) will reconstruct Mullan Road (Secondary Highway 263 (S 263)) from the intersection with Pulp Mill Road extending to just southeast of the intersection with Deschamps Lane. The improvements will provide an improved travel route for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians.



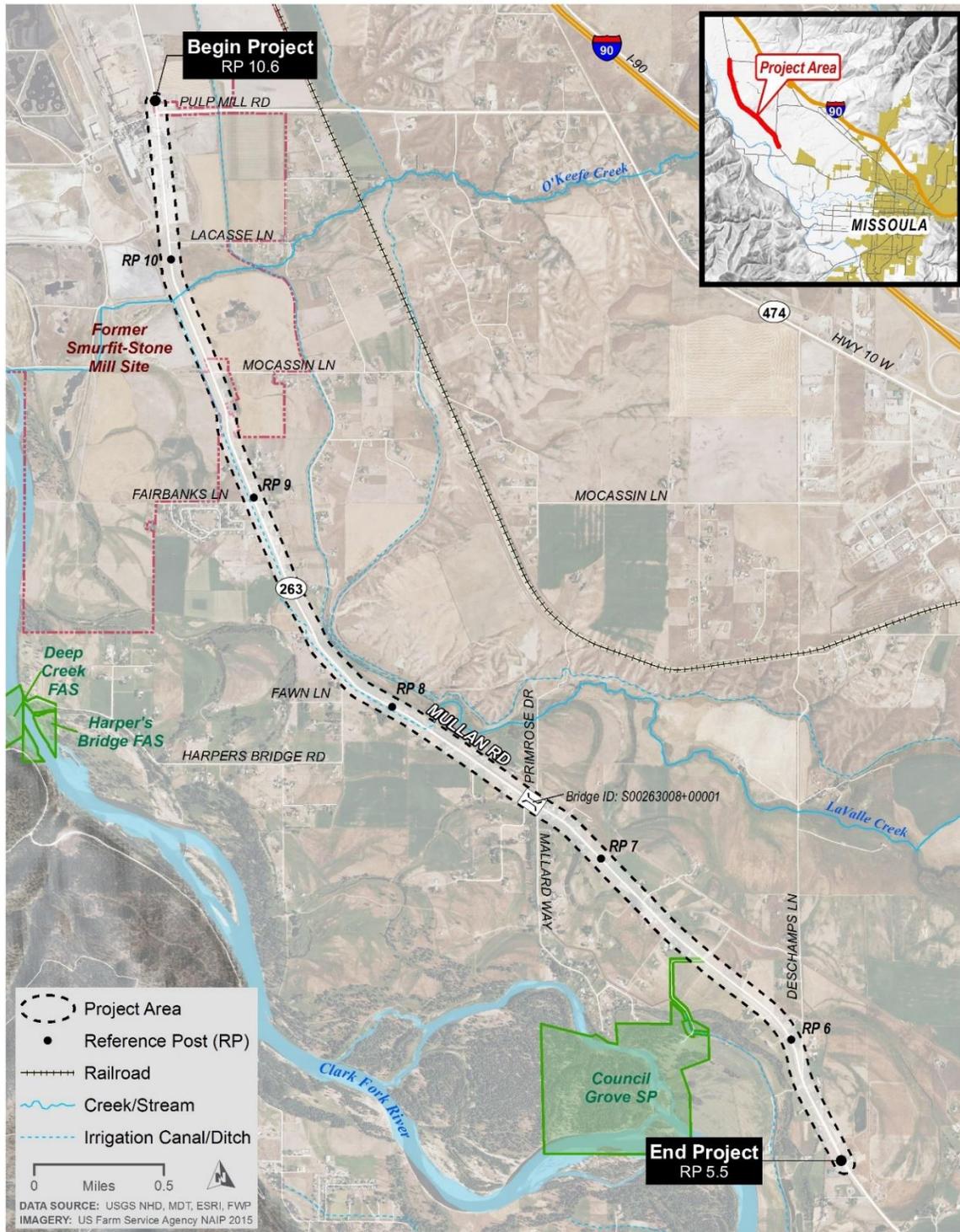
Project improvements will include the following:

- Construct a wider roadway including two 12-foot lanes with 6-foot shoulders on each side.
- Replace the culvert and bridge crossings at O’Keefe Creek, LaValle Creek, and the Primrose Irrigation Canal.
- Straighten curves and flatten hills where feasible, to improve visibility.
- Design a new shared-use pathway for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Increase ditch sizes where possible to better handle snow storage and drainage.
- Replace the guardrail and upgrade pavement markings, signage, fencing and pavement for a smoother driving surface.

The intersection with Deschamps Lane will be reconfigured to decrease the angle of approach and improve safety, and the intersection with Pulp Mill Road will remain as a 3-way stop controlled intersection after traffic analysis evaluated the need for additional turn lanes and alternative intersection treatments (e.g., stop sign, traffic signal, roundabout, etc.).

As the project continues through final design and nears construction, keeping the public, area stakeholders, and agency partners informed is critical. MDT and the project team are committed to clear and transparent communication regarding the design process and will take a proactive approach to inform the public about potential construction impacts.

# Project Area Map



DATA SOURCE: USGS NHD, MDT, ESRI, FWP  
 IMAGERY: US Farm Service Agency NAIP 2015

## Project Goals and Strategy

Project goals have been determined using the best information available at this time. This public involvement plan (PI Plan) is a living document, meaning the approach could be adjusted if issues arise or methods require refinement through the course of talking with stakeholders, property owners, and local agencies.

### Goals

Public involvement goals for this PI Plan include the following:

- Educate the public about the need for this project and project challenges. Communicate with the public in easy-to-understand terms.
- Provide transparency about possible project impacts and mitigation and inform the public about project benefits.
- Work with local officials and adjacent stakeholders early in the process to gather input and incorporate public suggestions into the design (or explain why suggestions cannot be incorporated into the design) and understand and mitigate impacts where possible.
- Provide timely and accurate project information to the traveling public.
- Create awareness about what to expect during construction.

### Strategy

The key public involvement strategies for meeting project goals are as follows:

- Develop a public involvement and outreach process that uses two-way communication to gather views, concerns, and issues from the community, affected property owners, local officials, and agencies.
- Develop quality information materials to help the public fully understand the project need and design, schedule, and construction impacts.
- Communicate about which suggested public input was included in designs, and which input could not be implemented and why (this feedback loop with stakeholders helps minimize public engagement fatigue because people understand their concerns were heard).
- Develop and maintain an expansive stakeholder list to facilitate ongoing communication about design and potential construction impacts.
- Reach out early to businesses and communities who may be affected by Mullan Road (S 263) construction and continue outreach throughout the project.

## Stakeholder/Public Interaction

### Schedule

HDR will prepare a calendar of internal and external tasks required to complete public involvement activities so that project team members are aware of deadlines, submittals, and outreach events. Public involvement activities will coincide with project milestones and will occur as questions and issues arise.

MDT and HDR are currently in the process of refining the project schedule. The project team is evaluating the schedule to identify opportunities for efficiencies to streamline project development. The current project schedule is as follows:

- 10% Design: Completed
- 30% Design: Completed
- 60% Design: Completed
- 90% Design: Summer 2023
- 100% Design: Fall 2024

### **Potential Public Involvement Issues**

- Right-of-way (ROW) and property impacts: One parcel will be heavily impacted and may result in a residential relocation. The other parcels will have moderate impacts to accommodate the addition of the shared-use path. The PI team will work with ROW to message impacts to properties including emphasizing the safety aspects of the project.
- Floodplain and irrigation impacts: The design and construction of necessary irrigation canal relocations will be included in project messaging.
- Shared-use pathway: MDT and Missoula County have agreed to include the design of a shared-use pathway within the project limits. The message will have to be capably handled because while the pathway design is part of the project, the County is responsible for the construction funding.
- Rumble strips: Rumble strips are often problematic for project area residents due to noise concerns. The new center rumble strips that are round, not strips, tend to be less noisy. The PI team will message the safety aspects of rumble strips as well as the new, quieter design.

### **Key Messages**

Clear and concise messages will be developed – early and throughout the project – to create a consistent voice and aid in managing public expectations. Developing messaging is an iterative task that MDT and the PI team will continue throughout the project. When we prepare for events or meetings, we will tailor our messages to reflect the event goals, topics at hand, and specific audiences. In addition to creating specific messages for the issues discussed above, messages for the initial stage of the project include the following:

- Project description, purpose and need.
- Project benefits, potential impacts, and possible mitigation.
- Ongoing safety and connectivity for the traveling public.

Other key messages from MDT will be provided to educate the public. Messaging may include specific information such as Vision Zero, or general information about the project construction process.

### **Stakeholder List Contact Database**

Central to successful stakeholder engagement is identification and maintenance of a database that includes a diverse group of regional and local stakeholders, organizations, project partners,

and property owners who may be interested, impacted, and influential. A comprehensive list of stakeholders is essential to the project. HDR will develop a list of stakeholders with input from MDT.

Key tabs for property owners, agencies, and local officials will be created and used for targeted outreach, including property owner meetings. Contacts will be added into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to house detailed contact information about each stakeholder as well as document and monitor communications and issues. Stakeholders will include:

<b>Stakeholder Type</b>	<b>Specific Stakeholders</b>
<b>Partner/Resource Agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks (Council Grove State Park)</li> <li>• Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)</li> <li>• Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC)</li> <li>• Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee (TPCC)</li> <li>• Frenchtown Irrigation District</li> <li>• EMS – fire, police/sheriff, ambulance</li> <li>• School District</li> </ul>
<b>Elected Officials and County Departments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frenchtown Community Coalition/West Valley Community Council</li> <li>• Missoula County               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Commissioners</li> <li>○ Floodplain Administrator</li> <li>○ County officials (pathway funding)</li> <li>○ Parks and Trails</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Community/Civic Organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MTB Missoula (bike advocacy)</li> <li>• Mullan Trail Development LLC</li> </ul>
<b>Corridor Outreach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property/land/business owner meetings/and ROW coordination</li> </ul>
<b>Media, as needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KPAX</li> <li>• The Missoulian</li> <li>• The Missoula Current News</li> <li>• ABC Fox Missoula</li> <li>• KECI NBC Montana</li> </ul>

## Outreach Activities and Notifications

### Stakeholder Meetings

Facilitating contact with stakeholders in the project area is an important part of public outreach. Developing relationships early will allow us to resolve issues and help ensure that accurate and consistent messages are reaching area residents.

We will schedule meetings with individuals and groups during times when team members plan to be in the project area for other work, like the public open house meeting. The team will also request the opportunity to present project information at regularly scheduled community meetings, including organizations and associations, as appropriate.

Currently, four meetings with the Frenchtown Community Coalition/West Valley Community Council are planned. Meetings with property owners, Frenchtown Irrigation District, and Missoula County will also be arranged. MDT ROW staff will attend meetings with property owners.

### Open House Public Meeting

The team will plan and conduct an open house public meeting after Plan-In-Hand (PIH) to educate the public about the project and identify issues and concerns. Open house public meetings will be advertised through press releases and mailers/newsletters three weeks and one week in advance of the meeting. The meeting will likely be two hours long. Project information will be available on display boards and handouts, and project experts will be available at “stations” to answer questions from the public. Participants will be asked to sign in and will be given opportunities to comment. The meeting information, attendees, and issues/comments will be documented, and a follow up report will be provided to MDT.

### Media Relations/Releases

Information provided to the media primarily will be in the form of press releases written and distributed to local media outlets by HDR; all press releases will be approved by MDT. News releases will announce the open house public meeting and will include general project details at various project phases.

MDT will handle inquiries from news media. HDR will assist MDT by understanding media requests and providing project information and key messages to MDT, as needed.

### Assistance with Public Inquiries

HDR will assist MDT with public inquiries about project issues as needed. HDR will keep a log of public communications as part of the project record.

## Tools and Materials Development

### Collateral

HDR will develop materials to support project messaging including fact sheets, postcards, display boards, print advertisements and notification emails. Materials may describe the purpose and need of the project and design elements, announce engagement opportunities,

and provide links to the project webpage and contact information for questions about the project. Materials will follow MDT branding and communication guidelines at:

<https://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/manuals/brandguide.pdf>.

## **Displays**

HDR will create display boards in preparation for the open house public meeting and include the following information:

- Welcome Board
- Project Overview/Description
- Project Map
- Typical Sections
- Proposed Project Elements
- Project Schedule
- Project Comments and Next Steps

## **Graphics**

The project team will develop graphics and a project area map to help enhance public understanding, especially related to the design of the project and technical concepts. Visual aids may include infographics to explain purpose, need and benefits, and maps to show the location and depict construction impacts, as needed.

## **Project Webpage**

HDR will create content for a project webpage hosted by MDT which will include a map, project overview, contact information and a schedule. Updates will be posted at project milestones and include meeting notifications and project display boards.

## **Coordination with Other Projects**

Mullan BUILD is off Mullan Road, closer to Missoula, and the majority of the construction is now complete.

## **Outreach Summary**

A final summary will be developed that documents stakeholder and public outreach efforts, activities, materials, and the results of those activities. It will also include deliverables and a summary of input received. The project summary will include an overall analysis of what went well and what could have been improved in a “lessons learned” section of the report.

## **Resources**

HDR will provide the necessary resources for this project to meet public involvement goals. HDR’s Sr. Public Involvement Coordinator, Lisa Gray, will be responsible for implementing this PI Plan to MDT’s satisfaction. Spencer Dodge will coordinate all public-facing activities via HDR’s Project Manager, Lisa Fischer, with Fred Bente, MDT Project Manager, and the MDT Public Information Officer (PIO), Lori Ryan.

## Contact List

Role/name	Phone	Email
MDT Project Manager, Fred Bente	406-444-7634	fbente@mt.gov
MDT PIO, Lori Ryan	406-444-6821	lryan@mt.gov
HDR Project Manager, Lisa Fischer	406-577-5016	lisa.fischer@hdrinc.com
HDR Public Involvement Lead, Spencer Dodge	406-202-9629	spencer.dodge@hdrinc.com