

CHAPTER 5.0: COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the program of agency and public coordination and involvement activities conducted during the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. The agency coordination and public involvement activities were specifically planned to be open, inclusive, and ongoing throughout the EIS process.

The program included numerous outreach activities to ensure a high level of public awareness of the progress of the EIS and to provide a wide range of opportunities for public review and comment on key project findings and conclusions. These activities included agency and public scoping meetings, public workshops, agency briefings, presentations to local groups and organizations, newsletters, a project Web site, a telephone information hotline, a media information program, and two public opinion surveys. Special effort was made to reach low-income and minority communities located within the project area.

5.2 Agency Coordination

Agency coordination was conducted to ensure a timely flow of project information between the three levels of agencies involved in the EIS (federal, state, and local) and to ensure necessary interaction with and awareness of public issues and concerns identified during public involvement activities. Coordination activities included project scoping, regular meetings and briefings with agency staff, and creation of an Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) and Social Economic Environmental Team (SEE Team).

5.2.1 Cooperating Agencies

Letters were distributed to several agencies to request their involvement as cooperating agencies on the EIS, in accordance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) regulations 23 CFR 771.111(d). Three agencies—the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the US Army Corps of Engineers accepted the invitation to become a cooperating agency. The cooperating agencies participate in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and scoping process, and make staff available to participate in the proposed action. Upon request of the lead agency, any other federal agency that has jurisdiction by law shall be a cooperating agency.

5.2.2 Coordination with Local, State, and Federal Agencies

Local, state, and federal agencies were contacted by phone, fax, and email at various points in the process. The purpose of these contacts was to collect technical information regarding issues, such as wetlands, wildlife, community resources, and city and county long-range plans. Coordination with various agencies was conducted early on to assist in data collection and provide general guidance.

Table 5-1 lists meetings that have taken place with governmental agencies.

5.2.3 Interdisciplinary Team

An Interdisciplinary (ID) Team was established to provide coordinated project scoping input and to gain consensus on technical issues to be addressed in this document. The ID Team includes

**Table 5-1
Agency Coordination**

Date	Agency or Individual
November 7, 2002	Scoping Meeting with FHWA, Missoula County Commissioners, Missoula County staff
May 20, 2003	Missoula Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee presentation
May 20, 2003	Marsha Pablo, Preservation Officer, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
May 22, 2003	US Fish and Wildlife Service: Scott Jackson, Wildlife Biologist
June 24, 2003	Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks: Ladd Knotek, Fisheries Biologist
July 15, 2003	Missoula Board of County Commissioners
September 11, 2003	Larry Urban, MDT, Wetland Mitigation Specialist
September 12, 2003	Pat Basting, MDT, District Biologist
November 12, 2003	Missoula Board of County Commissioners
August 4, 2004	Paul Osborne, EPA
October 12, 2004	Coordination with City of Missoula (Steve King), County Public Works (Greg Robertson), and FHWA
November 2004	Pat Basting, MDT District Biologist

resource and permitting agencies (US Army Corps of Engineers; US Fish and Wildlife Service; US Environmental Protection Agency; US Forest Service-Lolo Ranger District; Montana Department of Environmental Quality; and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks), representatives of local government entities (Missoula County and the City of Missoula), Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) staff, and the FHWA. This committee met to provide feedback on technical and environmental issues, and participate in the identification of the preferred alternative. ID Team members possess technical expertise in the areas of engineering, environment, planning, utilities, transportation, and transit. Together, they provide a wealth of knowledge to assist in preparing this document.

The following meetings were held at key points in the EIS process:

- **ID Team Meeting #1 (March 25, 2003):** This meeting was intended to define a scope of resources to be addressed in this document. An overview of the project was presented to the team and input was gathered. Also discussed were the resources to be addressed in the cumulative impacts section of the document.
- **ID Team Meeting #2 (July 17, 2003):** The focus of this meeting was to present the range of alternatives that were developed and screened, and to identify alternatives to be eliminated and alternatives that would be carried forward in this EIS process.
- **ID Team Meeting #3 (October 22, 2003):** This was a joint meeting held with the SEE Team. The purpose of this meeting was to present the results of the alternatives evaluation and identify a preferred alternative.
- **ID Team Meeting #4 (September 14, 2004):** This was a joint meeting held with the SEE Team. The purpose of this meeting was to present the results of the alternatives evaluation and identify a preferred alternative, if one clearly stood out as preferred.



- **ID Team Meeting #5 (April 5, 2005):** This was a joint meeting held with the SEE Team. The purpose of this meeting was to present the results of the recent review and discuss identification of a preferred alternative.
- **ID Team Meeting #6 (March 24, 2006):** This was a joint meeting held with the SEE Team. The purpose of this meeting was to present the updated transportation analysis and alternatives, and to obtain concurrence on alternatives to be fully assessed in this document.
- **ID Team Meeting #7 (April 11, 2007):** This was a joint meeting held with the SEE Team. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss comments received on the DEIS.

5.2.4 Social Economic Environmental (SEE) Team

A SEE Team was formed to provide advice, guidance, and input for the EIS process. SEE Team members consist of representatives from the Federal Highway Administration, Missoula County, City of Missoula, Montana Department of Transportation, Missoula Office of Planning and Grants, and the City of Missoula Fire Department.

The following meetings were held at key points in the EIS process:

- **SEE Team Meeting #1 (February 28, 2003):** The purpose of this meeting was to define the team's role, provide an overview of the project, and discuss upcoming project activities, including the visioning process and public involvement.
- **SEE Team Meeting #2 (March 27, 2003):** This meeting focused on defining project goals and identifying project priorities based on a broad range of alternatives developed at the meeting.
- **SEE Team Meeting #3 (May 20, 2003):** The purpose of this meeting was to present and discuss the No-Action Alternative, project purpose and need, range of alternatives, data collected, alternatives screening process, and design details.
- **SEE Team Meeting #4 (July 16, 2003):** The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the upcoming public meeting; public opinion survey results; traffic impact analysis, including traffic influence by alternative and Blue Mountain traffic modeling; visioning session results; and alternatives being advanced.
- **SEE Team Meeting #5 (September 11, 2003):** The purpose of this meeting was to present the second evaluation of alternatives that would be carried forward in this document. Also, recent public involvement activities were discussed.
- **SEE Team Meeting #6 (October 22, 2003):** This was a joint meeting held with the ID Team. The purpose of this meeting was to present the results of the alternatives evaluation and identify a preferred alternative.
- **SEE Team Meeting #7 (March 10, 2004):** This meeting was held to discuss a revised purpose and need and alternative development/evaluation process.
- **SEE Team Meeting #8 (June 1, 2004):** This meeting was held to present a revised range of alternatives and conduct preliminary fatal flaw screening to include the new alternatives. Also, preparations were made for the next public meeting.
- **SEE Team Meeting #9 (September 14, 2004):** This was a joint meeting held with the ID Team. The purpose of this meeting was to present the results of the alternatives evaluation and identify a preferred alternative, if one clearly stood out as preferred.
- **SEE Team Meeting #10 (April 5, 2005):** This was a joint meeting held with the ID Team. The purpose of this meeting was to present the results of the recent review and discuss identification of a preferred alternative.



- **SEE Team Meeting #11 (March 24, 2006):** This was a joint meeting held with the ID Team. The purpose of this meeting was to present the updated transportation analysis and alternatives, and obtain concurrence on alternatives to be fully assessed in this document.
- **SEE Team Meeting #12 (April 11, 2007):** This was a joint meeting held with the ID Team. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss comments received on the DEIS.

5.3 Public Scoping Process

Public involvement was conducted to provide a high level of public awareness of the project and project decision making, and to ensure that interested residents, businesses, interest groups, and other potentially affected parties had opportunities to provide input into the development of the project and be directly involved in major EIS activities.

5.3.1 Notice of Intent

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare the Miller Creek EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on March 3, 2003. A copy of the NOI is included in **Appendix B**.

5.3.2 Public Opinion Surveys

The first Public Opinion Survey was conducted in May 2003 in the greater Missoula region and in the project area to obtain additional public opinion on transportation issues in the Miller Creek Road project area. This survey had a poor participation rate with inconclusive results. A second survey was conducted in September 2003. The survey was announced in a newsletter sent via bulk mail to area residents during the last week of August 2003 in a press release and on the project Web site. The survey asked citizens their opinion on the project alternatives that had been developed. Utilizing standard random sampling techniques, 1,422 households were selected for the second survey from the project area and the Blue Mountain Road area. Of the households receiving the survey, 57 percent completed and returned it, representing a 95 percent confidence rate. The information was tabulated in October 2003 and presented at the November 2003 public workshop. A summary of the September 2003 survey results can be found in **Appendix B**. The entire survey report is available for review on the project Web site or in hard copy format by request.

5.3.3 Public Workshops and Meetings

The project team conducted public workshops and a community meeting to provide information to the general public and to obtain input on the process and evaluation of project alternatives. All of the workshops were conducted in an open house format with brief presentations (see **Appendix B**).

- **Public Workshop #1** (March 26, 2003, 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM, Linda Vista Golf Course Clubhouse): This public scoping meeting was held to introduce the Miller Creek Road EIS project and to provide the general public with an opportunity to identify important issues to be addressed in the project area. One hundred and twenty-nine (129) people attended the workshop. A presentation was made describing the EIS process and public involvement component.
- **Public Workshop #2** (May 21, 2003, 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM, Linda Vista Golf Course Clubhouse): This public workshop was held in both open house and presentation format to present the project purpose and need and initial project alternatives, and to provide the

general public with an opportunity to identify additional issues to be addressed. One hundred and sixteen (116) people attended the workshop.

- **Public Workshop #3** (July 16, 2003, 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM, Linda Vista Golf Course Clubhouse): This public workshop was held in both open house and presentation format to bring the public up-to-date on project activities and present a list of screened alternatives for public comment. Fifty-four (54) people attended the workshop.
- **Blue Mountain Road/Hayes Creek Road Community Meeting** (September 11, 2003, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, Emmanuel Baptist Church): A community meeting was conducted in response to concerns from interested parties in the Blue Mountain Road/Hayes Creek Road areas. This community meeting was held for property owners, business owners, and residents living in areas along Blue Mountain Road and Hayes Creek Road to provide information about the project and solicit input on screened project alternatives. This meeting was held in a presentation, questions-and-answers, and open house format. Seventy-six (76) people attended the meeting.
- **Public Workshop #4** (November 13, 2003, 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM, Linda Vista Golf Course Clubhouse): This public workshop was held in both open house and presentation format to provide an opportunity for the general public to provide input on the preferred alternative that had been identified for the project at that time. One hundred and thirty-four (134) people attended the workshop.
- **Public Workshop #5** (June 22, 2004, 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM, Best Inn Conference Center): This public workshop was held in both open house and presentation format to present the modified project purpose and need, display additional alternatives, and explain the evaluation process. One hundred and twenty-seven (127) people signed in at the workshop.
- **Public Workshop #6** (March 23, 2006, 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM, Quality Inn and Conference Center): This public workshop was held in an open house with a formal presentation, followed by a question and answer session, to present the updated alternatives and receive comments. Approximately 168 people signed in at the workshop.

Citizen-Sponsored Public Meeting

Citizens sponsored a public meeting held on February 5, 2004, 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM, at Target Range School. The public meeting was held to discuss the US 93-Blue Mountain Road connection. The meeting was held to increase the understanding and awareness of the project and the preliminary preferred alternative, provide the public with the opportunity to comment and ask questions, and generate a list of potential issues or concerns specific to Blue Mountain Road residents. Representatives from FHWA, Lolo National Forest, and US EPA were among those invited to serve as panelists at the meeting (see **Appendix B**). Approximately 150 people attended the meeting

5.3.4 Visioning Workshops

The visioning process for Miller Creek Road included a series of workshops targeted specifically on developing and confirming project goals and project vision.

5.3.4.1 First Visioning Workshop

Visioning is typically the first step in the planning process. The first visioning session was held on March 27, 2003, with the SEE Team. SEE Team members consisted of representatives from the Federal Highway Administration, Missoula County, City of Missoula, Montana Department of

Transportation, Missoula Office of Planning and Grants, and the City of Missoula Fire Department. **Table 5-2** summarizes the discussion at the workshop.

The group brainstormed opportunities and constraints inherent to the project. Each goal was considered individually to help identify opportunities and constraints associated.

**Table 5-2
Visioning Workshop Summary**

Opportunities	Constraints	Associated Goal
Get large truck traffic off Miller Creek Road, away from residential Consider impacts beyond 20-year time frame Provides secondary access, enhances grid north and south Provide balanced TDM (Transportation Demand Management) approach through the project Improve safety and operations on US 93 Multimodal solution to access	\$\$\$\$ Railroad Existing land use	<i>Provide safe transportation solution for Miller Creek project area</i>
Right-of-way acquisition to satisfy comprehensive plan goals Accommodate mixed-use land use Consider land use and growth in surrounding communities		<i>Create transportation solution that is long term and consistent with comprehensive plan</i>
NEPA-required mitigation	NEPA requirements	<i>Economic and environmentally responsible project</i>
Improve/remove signals on US 93 at intersections with Blue Mountain Road and Miller Creek Road	US 93	<i>Maintain or improve operations of US 93 at future build-out</i>
TDM approach	Changing neighborhood traffic patterns	<i>Preserve and enhance character of neighborhood</i>
Context-sensitive design and aesthetics	Respect existing property rights	

The group then identified a broad range of alternatives and/or mitigation that could be considered.



Alternatives and Mitigation

- No-Action Alternative
- Bridge across Bitterroot River to US 93
- Pedestrian/bicycle system
- Accommodate bus service
- Acknowledge equestrian
- Enhance river access for recreation
- Lower intersection "Y" done first
- Miller Creek Road improvements
- Anticipate/accommodate separated pedestrian/bicycle path to fill gap from Lolo to Reserve Street and Brook
- Improve a second access east of Upper Miller Creek Road
- Intersection/interchange with US 93

5.3.4.2 Second Visioning Workshop

The second visioning workshop occurred on June 19, 2003. A focus group of participants was selected from the list of project stakeholders and attendees of past public meetings. The focus group attendees represented a broad range of interests and expertise.

The attendees included representatives from:

- City of Missoula
- Office of Planning and Grants, City of Missoula
- City Bike and Pedestrian Coordinator, City of Missoula
- Montana Department of Transportation
- Missoula County Public Works
- Missoula in Motion
- Mountain Line
- Five Valley Land Trust
- Missoula County Commissioner
- Federal Highway Administration
- WGM Group
- David Evans & Associates
- Carter & Burgess, Inc.
- HRA, Inc.

The purpose of these sessions was to develop an understanding of the context, route, and connections of the proposed new roadway. This included the physical appearance, operations, and functional characteristics, and multimodal considerations. The group focused on the big picture by considering questions, such as: How does the Miller Creek Road Project affect the city, county, the Miller Creek area, and US 93? The group also focused on identifying opportunities and constraints that would need to be further explored with respect to the interaction of the community and surrounding communities. The following key points were identified with highlights of the discussion listed in italics:

1. Continued growth - maintain US 93 operations.
Growth in the immediate area and further south in Lolo directly impacts increased congestion on US 93.



2. Lower Miller Creek - growth area.
There are limited development opportunities in Missoula. Miller Creek is one of the few areas where residential development can occur.
3. US 93 corridor management (urban route).
Need to manage traffic speeds and access on US 93 through Missoula not as a highway but as an urban arterial. Residential loads added to US 93, current and future, need to be addressed.
4. Improve overall traffic conditions (neighborhood).
Linda Vista Boulevard and Lower Miller Creek Road are tough residential streets with high volumes, fast speeds and noise. Development has increased beyond the capacity of the infrastructure, relief is needed at the "Y" and at US 93/Miller Creek intersection.
5. Promote (safe/attractive) TDM/multimode/transit smart growth.
Balance traffic movement with other elements. Create a self-sufficient neighborhood that includes local services. Provide safe, attractive, and efficient multimodal opportunities.
6. Smart growth (land use planning).
Look at ways to reduce need for travel out of the area.
7. Maintain character, i.e., open space/wildlife habitat.
The community currently has distinct edges between urban development and open space/wildlife habitat.
8. Approved subdivision as starting point.
9. Integrated into citywide plan south and north.
10. Maintains as "friendly" place.
The Miller Creek area is one of the nicer areas of town and would want to accommodate all modes of traffic and movement to promote the friendly place atmosphere.
11. Timely (avoid losing opportunities).
Residential growth along Miller Creek Road and commercial growth along US 93 is continuing, eliminating alternatives for access. Timely decisions are needed so opportunities for the best solutions are not lost. Then development goes where it can without blocking out access connections. Need to do something fast since improvements are needed now and more growth is already in motion or coming.
12. Good arterial network/functions - calmed.
13. Realistic expectations of speed and time in region
A new access will not necessarily reduce travel time. Improvements do not always mean faster travel time. People seem happier moving slow rather than moving fast but having to stop and sit.
14. Destinations close to origins (land use).
Miller Creek residential area is as big as most of Montana's small towns; therefore, it could have destination and commercial services such as food, gas, schools, and churches. A self-supporting area with basic services close to residential development reduces travel to Missoula.

15. Bicycle/pedestrian facilities, internal and external project.
It would be crazy to ride a bicycle on Miller Creek Road right now given the current conditions.
16. Miller Creek Comprehensive Plan, i.e., river corridor, urban service area.
Parcels have been purchased to preserve the river corridor and need to continue preserving. Current planning calls for a community service center located in the Miller Creek area with a new access.
17. Miller Creek interchange "gateway" or right-of-way.
A new interchange or bridge is an opportunity to make a gateway statement for the entrance to Missoula.
18. North transportation route US 93 to I-90 (south Missoula bypass to west side bypass).
Currently the only way to get to I-90 is through Missoula and it typically takes 45 minutes to get through.
19. US 93 historical major route through region.
Missoula is historically unique in that everything moving east/west has gone through it due to geography; Lewis and Clark, road, railroads, highway.
20. Potential rail commute along river.
Preserve rail corridor for future transportation options.
21. Tie to other Missoula planning including transportation - build-out/50 years.
Need to vision past 20 years, more like 50 years.
22. Minimize adverse impacts of growth.
Growth is happening regardless, have the opportunity to plan for it now.
23. Transit-oriented development (TOD).
24. Anticipate future US 93 needs (width) in design.
Accommodate the possibility of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes on US 93. Bridge overpass should consider widening of US 93, so may need to consider a longer bridge configuration.
25. Maintain overall "movement" in Missoula.
Do not want to see congestion on US 93 just shifted from one location to another location.

The group then focused on the typical components and roadway sections that would apply to the Miller Creek Road project. Specific questions were considered, such as: How would the roadway fit into the surrounding area? Could the roadway alignment meander and/or be split horizontally and vertically? Is the roadway an urban section with curb and gutter or a rural section with gravel shoulders? How should pedestrians and bicycles be accommodated?

Through an interactive design process the group came up with a development concept and typical sections that would be applied to the roadway alternatives (see **Figure 2-4, page 2-18; Figure 2-12, page 2-28; and Figure 2-11, page 2-27**). These concepts respond directly to the issues and goals identified earlier.



5.3.5 Public Involvement Activities Summary

Every reasonable effort was made during the EIS process to inform and involve the public. This will continue throughout the development of the Final EIS (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD). A summary of the major public involvement activities undertaken during the EIS process is shown in **Table 5-3**.

**Table 5-3
Public Involvement Activities**

Dates	Local Group or Individual
February 28, 2003	Meetings with two property owners
March 26, 2003	Public Workshop #1 (Public Scoping Meeting)
May 21, 2003	Public Workshop #2
May 20-22, 2003	Meetings with 16 property owners
June 19, 2003	Visioning Workshop
July 16, 2003	Public Workshop #3
September 10, 2003	Meeting with Clark Fork Coalition and Smart Growth, Helena
September 11, 2003	Blue Mountain Road/Hayes Creek Road Community Meeting
October 20-21, 2003	Meetings with 12 local business owners
November 13, 2003	Public Workshop #4
February 5, 2004	Citizen-sponsored Public Meeting
June 22, 2004	Public Workshop #5
December 9, 2004	Meeting with Miller Creek Road resident
March 23, 2006	Public Workshop #6
October 17, 2006	Public Hearing on DEIS
November 21, 2006	Presentation at the Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee Meeting
April 17, 2007	Presentation at the Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee Meeting

5.3.6 Summary of Comments Received

Written communication in the form of letters, comment sheets, Web site feedback forms, project hotline messages, and emails was received throughout the EIS process. From the beginning of the project until December 2007, over 850 comments have been received.

Following is a summary of some of the public comments received prior to public review of the DEIS:

- Numerous safety concerns about "Y" intersection, accesses to US 93, winter conditions, and school buses and semitrucks stopping at railroad tracks.
- Concerned about high speed of traffic.
- Concerned about impact of existing/future traffic noise.



- Need to improve access for Linda Vista, Maloney Ranch, and Upper and Lower Miller Creek for both existing and future developments.
- Relieve increasing traffic and congestion - keep traffic moving.
- Concerned that improving access for one area will create congestion in other areas, including on US 93.
- Consider commuter rail.
- Preserve character of neighborhoods and surrounding landscape.
- Try to solve problems by widening/improving existing roads.
- Concern for increase in traffic and speeds along Blue Mountain Road.
- Address wildlife crossing issues.
- Environmental concerns regarding wildlife habitat, tree/vegetation removal, effect of traffic congestion on air quality, impacts to river.
- A bridge is needed.
- Prefer a grade separation.
- Concern about where funding for improvements will come from.
- Consider parks, pedestrians, bicyclists, bus service and alternative transportation modes in improvements.
- Improvements need to happen soon.
- Concern that effective long-term, big-picture planning is not taking place. Plan better for the future of the entire area.
- Numerous comments about high level of growth/development.

5.4 Public Information Program

The lists in this section specify activities and outreach conducted for the public participation process.

5.4.1 Newsletters and Postcards

Project newsletters and postcards were published throughout the preparation of this document process informing and updating the public of the progress of the EIS process (see **Appendix B**):

- **Newsletter #1 (March 2003)**: Announced the first public workshop scheduled for March 26, 2003; solicited the public for comments about issues in the project area, and provided information about the project, including description, schedule, and opportunities for involvement. This was sent as a bulk mailing the week of March 10, 2003.
- **Public Information Packet (May 2003)**: Provided information on project need, project funding, project schedule, and need for continued public input. This was distributed at landowner meetings, city and county meetings, SEE Team and ID Team meetings, and was displayed at the first public meeting.
- **Postcard #1 (May 2003)**: Invited the public to attend the second public workshop scheduled for May 21, 2003. This was sent the week of May 5, 2003, as a bulk mailing to Miller Creek/Linda Vista area residents and mailed to individuals on the project mailing list.

- **Newspaper Flyer #1 (May 2003):** Announced the second public workshop scheduled for May 21, 2003. Flyer was inserted in the May 17, 2003, edition of the *Missoulian* distributed within the project area (areas that received the flyer were: Missoula 59808 Zone C40, Missoula 59802 Zone C50, Missoula 59803 Zone C60, Missoula 59801 Zone C70, Missoula 59804 Zone C80).
- **Newsletter #2 (June 2003):** Provided a project update, summary of the second public workshop, range of alternatives, alternatives screening process, project schedule, and announced the third public workshop scheduled for July 16, 2003. This was mailed to individuals on the project mailing list the week of June 30, 2003.
- **Newspaper Flyer #2 (July 2003):** Announced the third public workshop. Flyer was inserted in the July 6, 2003, edition of the *Missoulian* distributed within the project area (areas that received the flyer were: Missoula 59808 Zone C40, Missoula 59802 Zone C50, Missoula 59803 Zone C60, Missoula 59801 Zone C70, Missoula 59804 Zone C80).
- **Flyer #1 (August 2003):** Announced the upcoming distribution of the second public opinion survey. It was sent as a bulk mailing to addresses in the project area and the Blue Mountain Road area.
- **Newsletter #3 (August 2003):** Announced the community meeting on September 11, 2003, for property owners, business owners, and residents living in areas along Blue Mountain Road and Hayes Creek Road. It was sent as a bulk mailing to the Hayes Creek and Blue Mountain Road neighborhoods during the week of August 25, 2003.
- **Postcard #2 (November 2003):** Announced the fourth public workshop scheduled for November 13, 2003, to present the preliminary preferred alternative.
- **Newsletter #4 (November 2003):** Described the alternative screening process, described the six build alternatives and the results of the alternatives evaluation, announced the previously identified preliminary preferred alternative, announced the fourth public workshop scheduled for November 13, 2003, and solicited public input on the preliminary preferred alternative.
- **Newsletter #5 (June 2004):** Announced the fifth public workshop scheduled for June 22, 2004 to present the modified purpose and need and additional alternatives. It was mailed to individuals on the project mailing list and bulk mailed to the project area, which now included the Blue Mountain Road area.
- **Postcard #3 (March, 2006):** Announced the sixth public workshop scheduled for March 23, 2006 to present the updated alternatives. It was mailed to individuals on the project mailing list and bulk mailed to the project area.
- **Newsletter #6 (September, 2006):** Announced the public hearing and the Draft EIS and requested input on selection of a preferred alternative and the DEIS.
- **Postcard #4 (November, 2006):** Announced extension of the Draft EIS comment period to December 6, 2006.
- **Postcard #5 (January, 2008):** Will announce the Final EIS and request input on the preferred alternative and FEIS.

5.4.2 Project Mailing List

The local public notification process began with a bulk mailing that was distributed by US Post Office carrier route and rural routes to over 4,700 households within the Miller Creek area and northwest of US 93 in March 2003. This mailing included addresses developed from parcel data and community research. It included the following:

- Businesses along the US 93 corridor and the general project area.
- County, city, and state elected officials and agency staff.
- Local interest groups and non-governmental organizations having an interest in the project.
- Emergency service providers throughout the area
- Special residential developments including Linda Vista and Maloney Ranch.

This first project newsletter contained a toll-free number to call or email address to respond to if the recipients were interested in receiving future project information and newsletters. This resulted in a more focused mailing list of over 700 interested citizens. Sign-in sheets from the public workshops were cross-checked with the mailing list and new names added after each workshop. Individuals leaving a telephone hot line message, a Web site comment, or submitting written comments were cross-checked with the mailing list, and new names were added on a continuing basis.

5.4.3 Telephone Information Hotline

A toll-free telephone information "hotline" (1-800-865-6905) was established in February 2003, enabling the public to leave messages, comments, or ask questions regarding the project. The hotline message is updated regularly to provide current project information and the schedule of upcoming meetings and events.

The hotline was checked at least twice weekly and a message tracking system was established to ensure responses were handled in a timely manner. The hotline number is published in each project newsletter, in all news releases, at each public workshop, and in each workshop notice and summary. Over 125 messages had been received as of August 2007 on the hotline during the development of this FEIS.

5.4.4 Project Web Site (www.millereis.com)

The Miller Creek Road EIS Web site was on line in March 2003. This comprehensive Web site provides project information throughout the EIS process, including the Notice of Intent; a project overview; the purpose and need for the EIS; the EIS process; upcoming project activities; public meeting announcements; opportunities for public involvement, including a comment form and requests to be added to the project mailing list; the various project alternatives that evolved from the screening process; project newsletters; project map; project schedule; and meeting summaries, including public meeting graphics and questions/answers. The project Web site also includes links to the Web sites for FHWA Western Federal Lands; County of Missoula, Montana; City of Missoula, Montana; David Evans and Associates, Inc.; and Carter & Burgess, Inc. The Web site is updated with current project information and meeting announcements as necessary. The Web site is located on the World Wide Web at the following address: www.millereis.com. As of August 2007, there had been over 6,000 visitors to the Miller Creek Road EIS Web site. The DEIS, FEIS, and ROD also will be posted on the project Web site.

5.4.5 Posters

Posters announcing the Notice of Availability of the DEIS, comment period, public hearing, and later the extension of the comment period were displayed at the following locations in or near the study area:

- Golf course
- Clocktower gas station



- Silver Slipper
- Applebees (two posters)
- Golden Corral - on the way to Lolo
- Montana Athletic Club
- Homefitters -in Lolo
- Town Pump
- Car wash
- Kt's Hayloft (bar)
- Lolo Superstop - Lolo
- Town Pump (end of town)
- Taco Time
- Bitterroot Valley Bank
- Harvest Foods
- Discount Video
- Subway - Missoula, corner of Reserve and Brooks
- Lucky Diamond Casino
- Big Lots
- Kmart
- Noons (two posters)
- Safeway (two posters)
- Cine 3
- Espresso shop (two posters)
- Crazy Mikes Video
- Paradise Falls (four posters)
- Curts Auto Care
- University of Montana
- Costco

5.4.6 Media Information Program

Throughout the EIS process, a media information program utilizing local print media was conducted to ensure a high degree of public awareness about knowledge of the project and key project decisions. Program elements included regular news releases and advertisements in advance of and following major project activities (public workshops, public opinion survey, definition of project goals and evaluation criteria, identification and evaluation of alternatives, etc.), public service advertisements in advance of the public workshops, newspaper inserts, and on-air radio and television interviews (see **Appendix B**). There have been numerous public service announcements and news articles in local newspapers.

5.4.7 Environmental Justice Outreach

In an effort to ensure that project information was distributed to low-income and minority populations, a specific outreach program was conducted to reach potential Environmental Justice populations. The Environmental Justice outreach was based upon low-income and minority populations that could be identified within the project area. These populations were identified using US Census Bureau data, and through local and agency contacts.

5.5 Distribution and Review of the DEIS

The issuance of a DEIS is the formal opportunity for the public, agencies, and other interested persons or groups to comment on the project and assessment findings. These comments are considered in selection of the preferred alternative that will be addressed in the FEIS. The ROD is the formal decision on selecting the preferred alternative.

A Notice of Availability (NOA) of the DEIS, including the October 17, 2006 date for the Public Hearing, and September 22-November 6, 2006 dates for the 45-day comment period, were announced in the following ways:

- Printed in the Federal Register
- Posted on the project Web site
- Advertised in the Missoulian, Missoula Independent, and local papers approximately three weeks and one week prior to the public hearing
- Mailed to the project mailing list and bulk mailed to addresses in the study area
- Distributed to local television and radio media
- Message on the project hotline
- Displayed in posters (see Section Section 5.4.5 for poster locations)

The DEIS was distributed for official review to the federal, state, and local agencies listed in Chapter 7.0 of the DEIS, to members of the public at their request who could not utilize the formal viewing locations, and to the ID Team and SEE Team members. The DEIS was posted on the project Web site. The DEIS also was available for public review during the public comment period at the locations listed in **Table 5-4**.

**Table 5-4
 EIS Reviewing Locations**

Federal Highway Administration 585 Shepard Way Helena, Montana 59601 (technical reports also available for review at this location*)	Missoula County Public Works Office 6089 Training Drive Missoula, Montana 59808
Montana Department of Transportation 2100 West Broadway Missoula, Montana 59807-7039	Target Range School Library 4095 South Avenue West Missoula, Montana 59804
City of Missoula City Engineer’s Office 435 Ryman Street Missoula, Montana 59802-4297 (technical reports also available for review at this location*)	Missoula Public Library 301 East Main Missoula, Montana 59802-4799 (technical reports also available for review at this location*)
Missoula County Office of Planning and Grants City Hall, First Floor 435 Ryman Missoula, Montana 59802-4297	Project Web site: www.millereis.com
Missoula County Office of Planning and Grants Satellite Office 127 West Spruce Street Missoula, Montana 59802	

**See Appendix C for list of technical reports prepared for this project.*

All comments received on the Miller Creek Road Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) are contained **in Appendix E**. Due to the large number of similar comments received, Summary Responses were developed and included in the appendix to provide a simplified, yet comprehensive format for a specific issue in one of the following ways:

- Summary responses: This section of the appendix provides responses to similar comments received on the DEIS. To find responses to a specific comment, readers can locate the comment in the appendix, note the corresponding response letter (A, B, or C, etc.), and refer to the corresponding lettered response in the Summary Response section of the appendix, or locate a topic in the Summary Responses for related responses.
- Unique comment responses: Responses to unique comments are provided on the same page with the comment in the appendix.

At the end of each summary response, any modifications made to the Miller Creek Road Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in response to comments are noted

5.7 Final EIS and Record of Decision

All comments received were considered in the selection of the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative selected for the Miller Creek Road project is Alternative 5A: Miller Creek Road At-Grade Intersection. In response to public comments received, the design for Old US 93 included with Alternative 5A was modified to avoid and minimize impacts (see Chapter 2.0 for description of design modifications).

Announcement of availability of the FEIS for review will be made through local newspapers, mailings to project mailing list and bulk mailings, project Web site, and project hotline. The FEIS will be made available for public review at the locations listed in **Table 5-4**. The FEIS will be distributed for official review to the federal, state, and local agencies listed in Chapter 7.0 of the FEIS, to members of the public at their request who cannot utilize the formal viewing locations, and to the ID Team and SEE Team members. The FEIS will also be posted on the project Web site. A 30-day public comment period will be provided for review of the FEIS.

If the preferred build alternative is included in a fiscally constrained conforming transportation plan and TIP, the FHWA can sign a Record of Decision (ROD) for Alternative 5A. Conversely, if it is not in such plans, then FHWA could not sign a ROD advancing a build alternative. In addition, FHWA can delay issue of a ROD until the LRTP and TIP include the project or can select the No-Action Alternative. The relatively low cost of the preferred alternative compared to the other build alternatives may make it easier to identify funding to include the preferred alternative in local planning documents, given that this alternative adequately meets and enhances the overall plan's goals and objectives to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods for current and future transportation demand. See Section ES.7, page ES-9 for a definition of these planning terms.

A public hearing on the FEIS is not planned. Public comments on the FEIS will be responded to in the decision document.