

MONTANA³ BILLINGS

CORRIDOR STUDY



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

PREPARED FOR

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CORRIDOR STUDY

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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

1.0 Introduction

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) identified a need for a Corridor Study on Montana Highway 3, in Billings, Montana, from Apache Trail extending east to the roundabout that connects to E. Airport Road and N. 27th Street.

The purpose of the study is to develop a comprehensive long-range plan for managing the corridor and determining what can be done to improve the corridor based on needs, public and agency input, and financial feasibility. It will be a collaborative process with local jurisdictions, resource agencies, MDT, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the public to identify transportation needs and potential solutions given environmental and funding constraints.

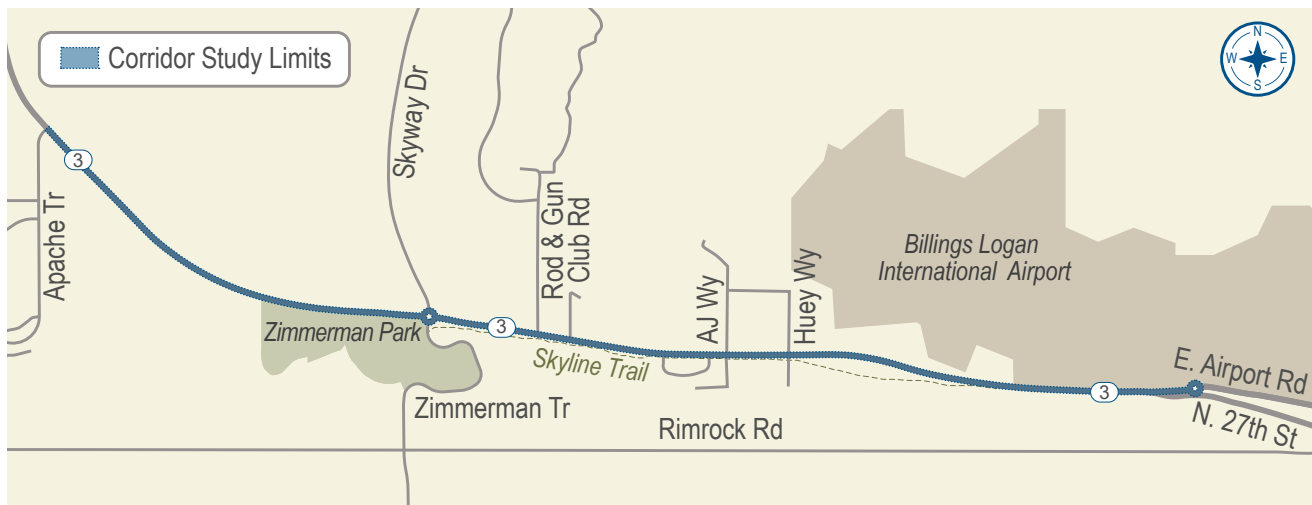
The purpose of the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is to ensure the *Montana 3 Billings Corridor Study* team provides relevant, accurate, and consistent study information to local jurisdictions, stakeholders, and the general public while collecting perspectives through the facilitation of engagement-oriented conversations. Through effective involvement and communication the study will benefit from community support and cooperation.

1.1 Study Area

The study area will include the following intersections of Montana Highway 3 (MT 3) with:

- Apache Trail.
- Zimmerman Trail and Skyway Drive.
- Rod and Gun Club Road.
- AJ Way.
- Huey Way.
- E. Airport Road and N. 27th Street.

MT 3 Billings Corridor Study Project Map



Growth in the Billings area has spurred capacity-related public comments. The corridor is the northwestern entry point to Billings, and serves a diverse group of users including agricultural, residential, military, construction, commuter, and tourism needs.

1.2 Goal of Public Involvement Plan

Effective and open communication is a vital component to the success of the study, as it relates to public, stakeholder, and agency receptiveness and their involvement.

The primary goal of this plan is to provide opportunities for members of the public, stakeholders, and elected leaders to learn about the process, review information about the corridor planning study, and provide input throughout the planning effort. In support of this goal, the following sections identify procedures that will guide the public and agency involvement effort.

The key communication objectives for this study are:

- Offer and communicate opportunities for public, agency, and stakeholder involvement in the study.
- Communicate the purpose of the study.
- Give timely and accurate responses to all media inquiries.
- Support the study team in message consistency.

2.0 Study Contacts

Contact information for MDT and the consultant will be provided in all published materials.

Jackson Lang, MDT Project Manager

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2701 Prospect Avenue
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3.0 Print Materials and Media Coordination

3.1 Display Advertisements. Announcements will be placed in the Billings Gazette at least three weeks before informational meetings. Advertisements will announce the meeting location, time, and date; the format (physical and virtual) and purpose of the meetings; and the locations where documents may be reviewed.

3.2 Press Releases and Media Coordination. Press releases will be distributed to local newspapers (Billings Gazette and Yellowstone County News), numerous radio stations, and television (KSVI, KTVQ, KULR8, and Northern Ag Network) stations announcing the study and explaining the objectives, schedule, provide contact information, and solicit public comment and involvement. DOWL will issue post-study press releases to the same area media that provides a retrospective view of study accomplishments, reinforce the value that potential improvements can have on the community, and thank community members for their involvement. We will coordinate with media representatives to maximize coverage on the study. After DOWL's contract is complete, MDT will serve as the point-of-contact for questions.



3.3 Stakeholder and Resource Agency Letters. Letters will be mailed or emailed to stakeholders, elected leaders, and property owners to inform them of the study and invite them to the public meetings.

4.0 Online Applications

4.1 MDT Website. We will provide website content pertaining to the study for MDT review and approval. This will include study branding, an overview of the schedule, contact information, and provide readers with the opportunity to engage with the study.

4.2 MDT Facebook and Nextdoor. Facebook and Nextdoor-ready content will be provided for updates to solicit public participation and invite the public to study meetings. Social media messaging will communicate the study needs and objective as well as encourage public comment.

4.3 Virtual Engagement Platform. We will use MDT's ArcGIS Reporter platform for the collection of study feedback and public comments.

5.0 Document Availability

5.1 Outreach and Meeting Documents. Public-facing materials will be posted to the study website. DOWL will also develop meeting materials for the informational meeting, including agendas, static exhibits, and other presentation materials. Electronic versions will be available on the project website prior to the meeting and distributed to virtual meeting attendees in advance of the meeting. If meetings are held in-person, print copies will be available at each informational meeting hosted for this study. Electronic versions of meeting materials will be posted on the study website following the meetings (at [insert website link]).

5.2 Reports. Electronic versions of reports will be posted on the study website. Print copies of the draft corridor study report will be available at the MDT Rail, Transit, and Planning Division Office (2701 Prospect Avenue; Helena, MT). Print copies of the report may also be made available at the Billings Public Library (510 N Broadway, Billings, MT) and the MDT Billings Area Office (424 Morey Street, Billings, MT). Physical copies of the draft corridor study report will also be provided by request (contact: Lisa Olmsted at 406-869-6329 or lolmsted@dowl.com). For post-study communications, MDT will be the point-of-contact (contact: MDT at 406-444-3445).



The recently improved Skyline Trail and Zimmerman Park draw many multimodal users to the trail system along the corridor.

6.0 Meetings

6.1 Technical Oversight Committee Meetings. Virtual Technical Oversight Committee (TOC) meetings will generally be scheduled to coincide with project milestones. TOC members will discuss study progress, analysis methodologies, and any issues or concerns that arise during the study. The TOC will also review study documentation before publication. Representatives from MDT, FHWA, Montana Army National Guard, Billings Logan International Airport, and various City of Billings and Yellowstone County representatives will be invited to participate in the oversight committee.

6.2 Stakeholder Meetings. We will conduct up to two one-hour in-person meetings (assuming there is interest from invitees) with representatives from local stakeholder groups to listen to concerns about the study corridor and discuss realistic solutions. These meetings will be informative and allow stakeholders time to provide comments. Stakeholder meetings would be held before informational meetings open to the public with the intent of identifying stakeholder concerns early in the process. We will invite elected officials and identify appropriate stakeholder representatives to engage during these meetings.

6.3 Informational Open Houses. We will facilitate a total of two in-person informational open houses. The first meeting will be after the existing and project conditions report to provide study overview, the second will be held after a draft improvement option report has been published. Each meeting will have approximately two 90-minute sessions, one held virtually mid-day along with an evening in-person open house to allow flexibility for participants. The general format will be to provide a study overview and allow participants an opportunity to provide comment at the end of the session. Zoom meetings will be recorded, edited to remove any dead time or technical issues, and posted on the project website.

6.4 Resource Agency Meetings. We will facilitate a one-hour virtual resource agency meeting, allowing flexibility for extended question and answer time, as needed. The meeting will present a summary of the draft environmental scan report and draft existing and projected conditions report and solicit input. MDT will assist in identifying appropriate agency contacts for this study, which may include the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ); Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP); the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE); and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

7.0 Public, Resource Agency, and Stakeholder Comments

Public, resource agency, and stakeholder comments are welcome throughout the planning process. Written comments may be submitted by mail to Lisa Olmsted, DOWL, 222 N. 32nd Street #700, Billings, MT 59101; by email to lolmsted@dowl.com; or online at [insert website link].

8.0 Accessibility

The State of Montana attempts to provide accessible information and services to all individuals. MDT will employ the following measures for the *Montana 3 Billings Corridor Study*.

- MDT will host informational meetings in locations that are accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- MDT and the consultant will confer with the leaders of the communities and representative organizations about how best to involve traditionally under-served populations.
- MDT and the consultant will communicate effectively at the informational meetings by avoiding technical jargon and exercising appropriate conduct and judgment. Alternative accessible formats of study materials will be provided upon request.



Airport traffic regularly passes through the corridor.

