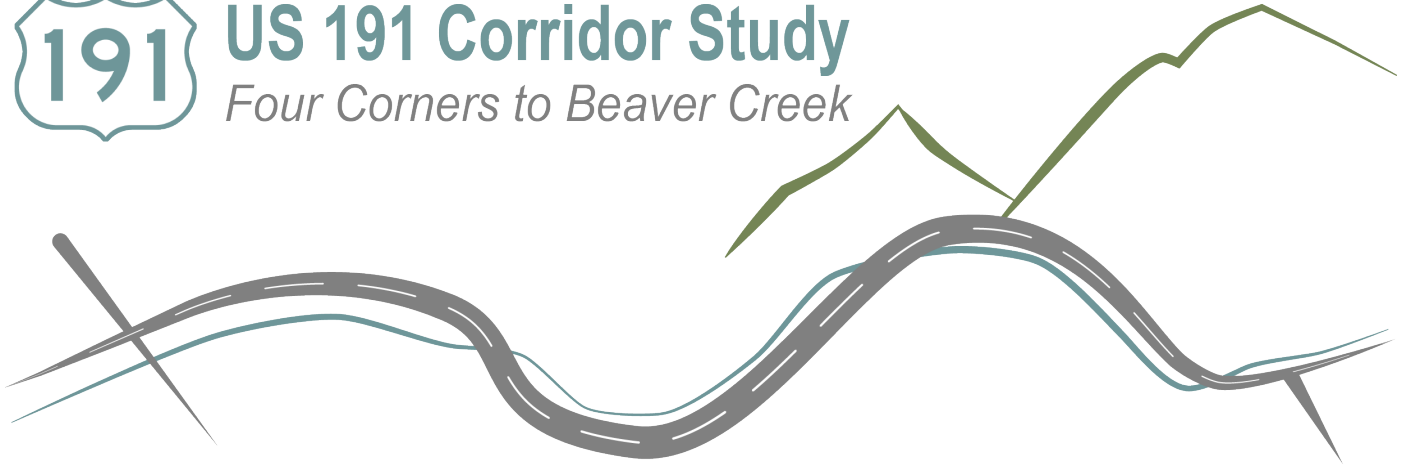




US 191 Corridor Study

Four Corners to Beaver Creek



Public and Agency Involvement Plan

Technical Memorandum
October 4, 2019

Prepared for:
Montana Department of Transportation



Prepared by:
Robert Peccia and Associates





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Public and Agency Involvement Plan

1.0. INTRODUCTION

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is developing a corridor study of US Highway 191 (US 191) between Four Corners and the junction with Beaver Creek Road. The purpose of the *US Highway 191 Corridor Study* is to develop a comprehensive long-range plan for managing the corridor and determining what improvements can be made to address identified needs while considering public and agency input, environmental considerations, and financial feasibility. The study will be a collaborative process with MDT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), local jurisdictions, resource agencies, and the public to identify transportation needs and potential solutions.

An initial step in the transportation planning process is to develop a *Public and Agency Involvement Plan* (PAIP) to guide public and agency involvement opportunities throughout the corridor planning process. The corridor study process encourages early communication with interested parties to help identify needs, constraints, and opportunities to determine reasonable improvements given available resources and local support. Community, stakeholder, agency, and other interested party involvement are important components in any successful planning process. The PAIP identifies several traditional and non-traditional strategies to encourage meaningful participation and engagement. The PAIP aligns with MDT's established processes as outlined in its *Public Involvement Plan*¹.

1.1. Purpose of the PAIP

The purpose of this PAIP is to guide the implementation of strategies to provide opportunities for public and stakeholder review and comment at key decision points in the planning process. The PAIP identifies the appropriate strategies to be used, defines the sequencing within which the various strategies will be implemented, and charts out a course of action to be followed as the planning process commences. The methods described in this PAIP are not intended to restrict consideration or use of other methods to include the public and stakeholders. Early and continuous public involvement in all major actions and decisions is paramount to the success of the planning process.

1.2. Study Area

The study area for the corridor study includes US 191 between the intersection of US 191/Huffine Lane/Norris Road/Jackrabbit Lane in Four Corners (milepost [MP] 81.9), and the intersection of US 191/Beaver Creek Road near Big Sky (MP 45.3). US 191 is a National Highway System route which connects the greater Bozeman and Belgrade areas to West Yellowstone and Yellowstone National Park. The study corridor serves the unincorporated communities of Four Corners, Gallatin Gateway, and Big Sky. The roadway accesses individual residences, rural subdivisions, ski areas in the Big Sky area, and numerous trailheads, campgrounds, and recreation areas along the Gallatin River on public lands in the Custer Gallatin and Beaverhead National Forests. The study area boundary is shown in **Figure 1**.

¹ Montana Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Plan*, available at: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/manuals/pubinvhb.pdf>

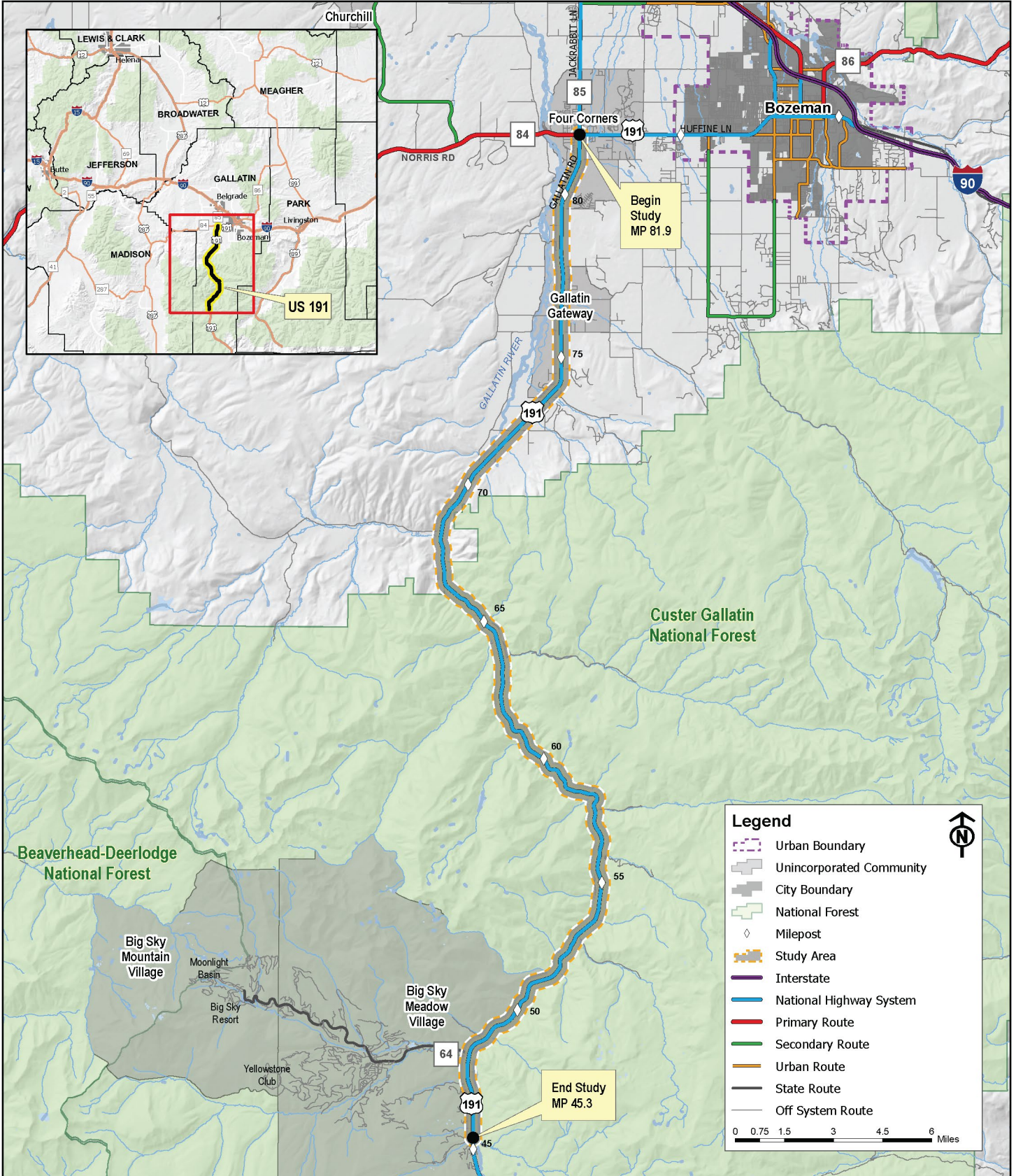


Figure 1: Study Area



2.0. PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES

Active participation and input will be encouraged throughout the planning process. Key audiences that will be engaged include both internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are those involved in the planning process and tasked with making decisions both through the planning process and through implementation. External stakeholders include everyone with interest or expertise related to the study corridor. Local officials, regulatory agencies, organizations, advocacy groups, and the public represent stakeholders that have initially been identified for outreach. This list is not all-inclusive and additional stakeholders may be identified as the process evolves and as needs for specific input are recognized. The following sections discuss the primary contacts for the study, anticipated key stakeholders, and other interested parties to be included in the planning process.

2.1. Plan Contacts

Contact information for the MDT and Consultant project managers will be provided in all information that is published. This information is provided below:

Katie Potts

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2.2. Advisory Committee

The development of the corridor study will be overseen by an Advisory Committee (AC) comprised of MDT staff, FHWA, and local representatives. The AC will guide work and review deliverables produced by the planning team. Up to nine AC meetings will be held to review materials and discuss project status. Meetings will be scheduled approximately every six weeks and will align with key project milestones. The meetings will track progress and address study development issues and questions. The meetings are important for the exchange of technical information and ideas during the development of the study. The following topics are anticipated to be covered at the AC meetings:

- AC Meeting 1: Project work plan and Public and Agency Involvement Plan
- AC Meeting 2: Environmental Scan
- AC Meeting 3: Draft Existing and Projected Conditions
- AC Meeting 4: Final Existing and Projected Conditions and public meeting
- AC Meeting 5: Needs and Objectives
- AC Meeting 6: Preliminary recommendations
- AC Meeting 7: Improvement Options Memo and public meeting
- AC Meeting 8: Administrative Draft Corridor Study Report
- AC Meeting 9: Public Comments Review (if necessary)

The AC will consider all public comments received for the duration of the planning effort. Public comments received on the draft *Corridor Study Report* during the public comment period will be logged into a public comment matrix for consideration by the Steering Committee. The public comment matrix will be included in an appendix to the final report.

2.3. Stakeholders

Everyone's opinions and experiences are important to the planning process. Stakeholders, the public, local officials, and other interested parties will be engaged throughout the planning process. A stakeholder contact list will be developed and will include individuals, businesses, or groups identified by the AC. The intent of the stakeholder contact list is to identify individuals and groups with potential interest in the planning process so they can be actively engaged. Input from a diverse range of stakeholders is important to the planning process and the outcome of the corridor study.

Identified stakeholders will be encouraged to either submit public comments or participate in the public meetings. The intent of engaging these partners is to obtain meaningful public input about the major transportation issues and concerns and to promote collaboration from these groups in future improvement projects on US 191. Potential stakeholders are listed below, the list is intended to capture general stakeholder groups and does not include the individual organizations within these groups. The stakeholder list will continually be updated throughout the planning process.

- Adjacent landowners and businesses
- Big Sky Resort
- Big Sky School District #72
- Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport
- Community of Big Sky (Big Sky Chamber of Commerce)
- Community of Four Corners
- Community of Gallatin Gateway
- Conservation and Wildlife Organizations
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- Four Corners Community Foundation
- Gallatin County
- Gallatin Gateway School
- Gallatin Valley Land Trust
- Irrigation Companies
- Law Enforcement
- Local Contractors/Realtors
- Lone Mountain Ranch
- Montana Motor Carriers Association
- Moonlight Basin
- Recreational outfitters and guides
- Skyline Transit System/Big Sky Transportation District
- Utility Companies
- Yellowstone Club
- Others yet to be identified

2.4. Public Comments and Input

Public comments and input will be solicited and considered throughout the planning process. An official comment period will be provided after the release of the draft *Corridor Study Report*. Additionally, comments and concerns received at meetings and through individual discussions will be shared with the AC throughout the planning process. These comments will be categorized by common themes to help establish critical areas of concern to be addressed in the corridor study.

3.0. OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Information regarding the planning process will be provided to the public and interested parties. Public and stakeholder input will be solicited and encouraged at every stage of the planning process. Several public engagement strategies are proposed to work together to reach the most people possible and elicit meaningful participation. This section provides an overview of the outreach methods that will be used to gather input from the various stakeholders and the public.

3.1. Media Outreach and Coordination

Meeting announcements will be developed and advertised at least three weeks prior to informational meetings. The ads will announce the meeting location, time, and date; the format and purpose of the meeting; and the locations where documents may be reviewed (if applicable). The Bozeman Chronicle, Explore Big Sky, and Belgrade News will carry the display ads. Meetings may also be announced on local radio and/or television stations. If other organizations are interested, links can be provided for their webpages to point to the study.

RPA will also develop and distribute a newsletter before each informational meeting. The newsletters will describe work in progress, results achieved, preliminary recommendations, and other relevant topics. Newsletters will be distributed to the local government representatives of the Advisory Committee, the MDT Bozeman Area Office, and select stakeholders for distribution and posting to their respective internet and social media sites. Print copies of newsletters will be available at the informational meetings and electronic versions will be available on the project website.

3.2. Electronic Media

The project team recognizes that people lead increasingly busy lives. Allowing the public to provide input on their own schedules has been proven to increase the quantity, quality, and diversity of input. Electronic media allows for focused and expansive outreach while allowing the public to participate at their convenience to encourage meaningful feedback. Multiple electronic public engagement tools will be used to solicit input and provide information. These include maintaining a project webpage, providing social media updates, employing interactive mapping and commenting tools, and publishing informational materials. The following sections discuss these electronic outreach tools in more detail.

Project Website

A project website will be used to encourage public interaction and to provide study information. The website will be hosted by MDT and be updated as needed throughout the study process. The website will contain various information including contact information, meeting announcements, newsletter/flyers, frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the corridor study process, a description of the study, finalized documents, and interim memorandums. The website will be the main tool for developing and maintaining an online presence and will be updated frequently. The project website will offer a means to submit online comments to MDT over the duration of the corridor study.

Social Media

Periodic updates will be provided to MDT's social media platforms. The updates will announce meetings and will give notice when updates are made to the website.

Wikimap Commenting Platform

To supplement MDT's traditional online commenting system, an interactive 'wikimap' commenting platform will be used. The wikimap will allow the public to provide feedback on the performance of the existing transportation corridor in many of the same ways as a paper map would serve during a public meeting. Visitors to the platform will be able to leave notes and identify areas of concern just as if they

were present at an official project event. This feature will be a convenient way to provide feedback for a large portion of the study area population and those with a general interest in the project. We will also use the wikimap to present our draft improvement options and recommendations in a user-friendly format. A link to the wikimap will be provided on the project webpage so users can view the online platform and comment accordingly.

Interactive Mapping

ArcGIS Online Story Boards will also be used to supplement the project website. The Story Boards will be used to present data, constraints and opportunities, and more in a simple, graphical manner. Information will be conveyed in various formats such as maps, images, video and web content to disseminate information and engage the interested audience. The information can be shown in a sequence of steps to demonstrate how the project team arrived at key decisions such as the improvement options for the corridor study. A link to the Story Boards will be provided on the webpage.

Electronic Outreach

A contact list of stakeholders and interested parties will be maintained and updated as needed throughout the planning process. The contact list will consist of email addresses for those wishing to receive periodic updates on the corridor study. Email addresses will be collected for identified stakeholders, individuals who make public comments, and those wishing to stay informed about the planning process. Outreach to the contact list will include periodic updates as needed, distribution of newsletters, meeting announcements, and other important news regarding the planning process. The outreach will describe work in progress, results achieved, and other related information.

3.3. Targeted Outreach and Meetings

Targeted outreach is intended to obtain meaningful input and dialogue about the project, to share information, and to identify important considerations for the project. The goal is to reach as diverse a cross section of interests as possible. The following sections discuss the anticipated targeted outreach events and strategies.

Informational Meetings

Two public open houses will be held during the corridor study process. Each open house will be held at two locations: one in the Big Sky area and in the Four Corners/Gallatin Gateway area. The open houses will be held in two separate locations in order to better serve the communities along the corridor and to encourage greater participation from roadway users and residents. The informational meetings will be formatted as open houses with extended hours to allow for convenient attendance and to help facilitate anticipated larger groups.

The meetings will take place at two key points during the planning study. The first informational meeting will occur after the existing and projected conditions have been evaluated for the study area. The purpose of this meeting will be to explain the corridor study process, disseminate the information available to become and stay involved, and discuss preliminary issues and concerns identified within the study area. The meeting will allow members of the public to share information about existing conditions and provide input for developing the needs and objectives for the corridor.

The second informational meeting will occur after initial recommendations are identified. The purpose of this meeting will be to present the improvement options considered and to discuss the preliminary recommendations. Members of the public will be encouraged to provide feedback on the improvement options and preliminary recommendations.

Resource Agency Meeting/Involvement

A resource agency meeting will be scheduled and held at the MDT Planning office in Helena. Skype arrangements will be provided at the MDT Bozeman Area Office, as appropriate. The purpose of the meeting will be to present the findings of the draft *Environmental Scan* as well as the initial findings of the *Existing and Projected Conditions Report*. The resource agencies will be asked to help identify avoidance areas, mitigation considerations, and opportunities. In an effort to heighten resource agency participation, RPA's project manager will personally contact and invite each identified resource agency to the workshop and convey the importance of the exercise to the overall success of the corridor planning process.

Special Stakeholder Meetings

Special meetings, presentations, phone calls, and discussions with select stakeholders may occur throughout the project. This targeted stakeholder outreach is intended to share information about the project and encourage meaningful input and dialogue about the project. If necessary, stakeholder groups requiring special meetings will be identified as the project evolves.

3.4. Easy Access and Visibility

All information published regarding the corridor study will provide contact information for the project managers. Comments can be submitted throughout the planning process via the website, through the interactive commenting platform, or by contacting the individuals listed previously. The following describes considerations to be made throughout the planning process.

Information

Technical and planning level information related to the data or content used in the development of the study will be available in memorandums, project updates, newsletters, graphics, and other miscellaneous materials. The materials will be made available on the project website.

Consideration of Public Input

Input and comments from stakeholders and the public will be considered by the AC throughout the planning process. Public comments received on the draft *Corridor Study Report* will be documented and included as an appendix.

Considerations for Traditionally Underserved Populations

Additional efforts are necessary to involve traditionally underserved segments of the population, including disabled, minority, and low-income residents. The following steps will help with these efforts:

- Plan meeting locations carefully: Open houses will be held in locations that are accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If a targeted population is located in a certain geographic part of the county, then the meeting location should be close to the area for convenience.
- Seek help from community leaders and organizations: To facilitate involvement of traditionally underserved populations, we will consult with community leaders and organizations representing these groups about the most effective ways to reach their constituents.
- Be sensitive to diverse audiences: At public meetings, the project team will attempt to communicate as effectively as possible. Presenters will avoid using technical jargon, and staff will wear appropriate dress and adhere to professional conduct.

4.0. OVERALL STUDY COMMUNICATION

This PAIP establishes guidelines and procedures for encouraging public and stakeholder participation. The following communication strategies will be used to share information and seek input.

- A project website will be developed to include information about the planning process.
- An interactive commenting platform and online mapping will be created and shared via the project website.
- Once reviewed by the AC, technical memorandums will be posted to the website.
- Newsletters will be provided in advance of public informational meetings.
- Targeted outreach will occur with resource agencies and if needed, stakeholders.
- Public comments and input will be collected and considered throughout the study.
- Social media posts will be shared through MDT's social media sites as appropriate.

5.0. PLAN SCHEDULE

Adherence to the schedule is important to stay on track and to keep all participating parties engaged. The anticipated schedule follows a 12-month time frame. It is anticipated that a public draft *Corridor Study Report* will be completed by June 1st, 2020. This will allow time for internal review and a 30-day public review and comment period with all work to be completed by early August 2020. **Figure 2** contains the anticipated schedule.

US Highway 191 Corridor Study

STUDY SCHEDULE

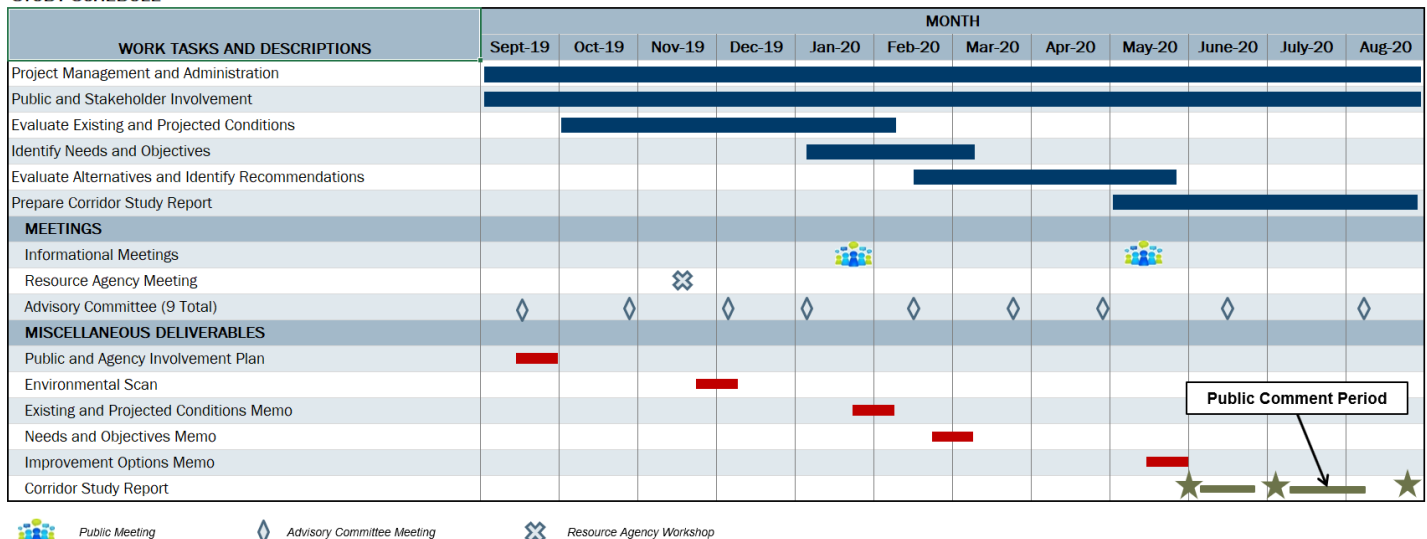


Figure 2: Study Schedule

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