



3.2 Existing Social and Economic Conditions

Existing Population Profile

Assessment of population patterns contributes to a general understanding of overall trends in growth and long-term transportation needs in the study area. For this study, demographic data was collected in terms of potential catchment areas within the corridor. A catchment area represents the geographic distance from a transit station that passengers are willing to travel to access transit. Nationally, the catchment area for high capacity transit (bus or rail that serves regional destinations) is two miles.

For transit planning, it is important to understand both general population patterns as well as the employment distribution that surrounds potential stops or stations. Information about population patterns contributes to an understanding of the overall transportation needs in the Bitterroot Valley while information about employment distribution helps determine the potential travel demand for commuter trips and serves as a basis for determining regional travel patterns during the most congested travel periods. Table 3.14 presents household and population data in the region.

Table 3.14 Regional Population Profile (2005)

	Households 2005	Population 2005
US 93 Corridor (within 2 miles of US 93)	30,280	70,031
Bitterroot Valley (within 5 miles of US 93)	36,558	86,011

Source: US Bureau of Census Block Group Data, Montana Department of Labor & Industry for year 2005, and Montana Department of Revenue for year 2005

Table 3.15 presents the population within a two mile catchment of the downtown centers of each town in the study area.

Table 3.15 Catchment Area Population Profile (2005)

Town	Population 2005	Households 2005
Missoula	32,871	15,069
Lolo	3,796	1,412
Florence	1,629	634
Stevensville	2,745	1,228

2005 Source: US Census Bureau Block Group Data, 2000, and Montana Department of Revenue



Existing Employment Profile

It is also important to assess employment distribution within the study area to help determine the potential travel demand for commute trips and the regional travel patterns during the most congested travel periods. Table 3.16 presents employment within a two mile catchment of the downtown centers of each town in the study area.

Table 3.16 Catchment Area Employment Profile (2005)

Town	Retail Employees 2005	Non Retail Employees 2005	Total Employment 2005
Missoula	16,627	6,997	23,624
Lolo	492	363	855
Florence	346	207	553
Stevensville	925	238	1,163

Source: US Census Bureau Block Group Data, 2000, and Montana Department of Labor & Industry, 2005

Existing Density Profile

In transit planning, it is common to analyze population in terms of housing density. Nationally it has been shown that housing density, expressed as the number of housing units per acre, has a very high correlation to ridership on transit systems. For high capacity transit systems such as passenger rail, it is commonplace to find minimum housing densities of at least two units per acre within two miles of a station. Housing densities within the study area are presented in Table 3.17 and in Figure 3-22. The catchment area around each of the towns in the study area is shown in Figure 3-22 for reference purposes.

Table 3.17 Catchment Area Density Profile (2005)

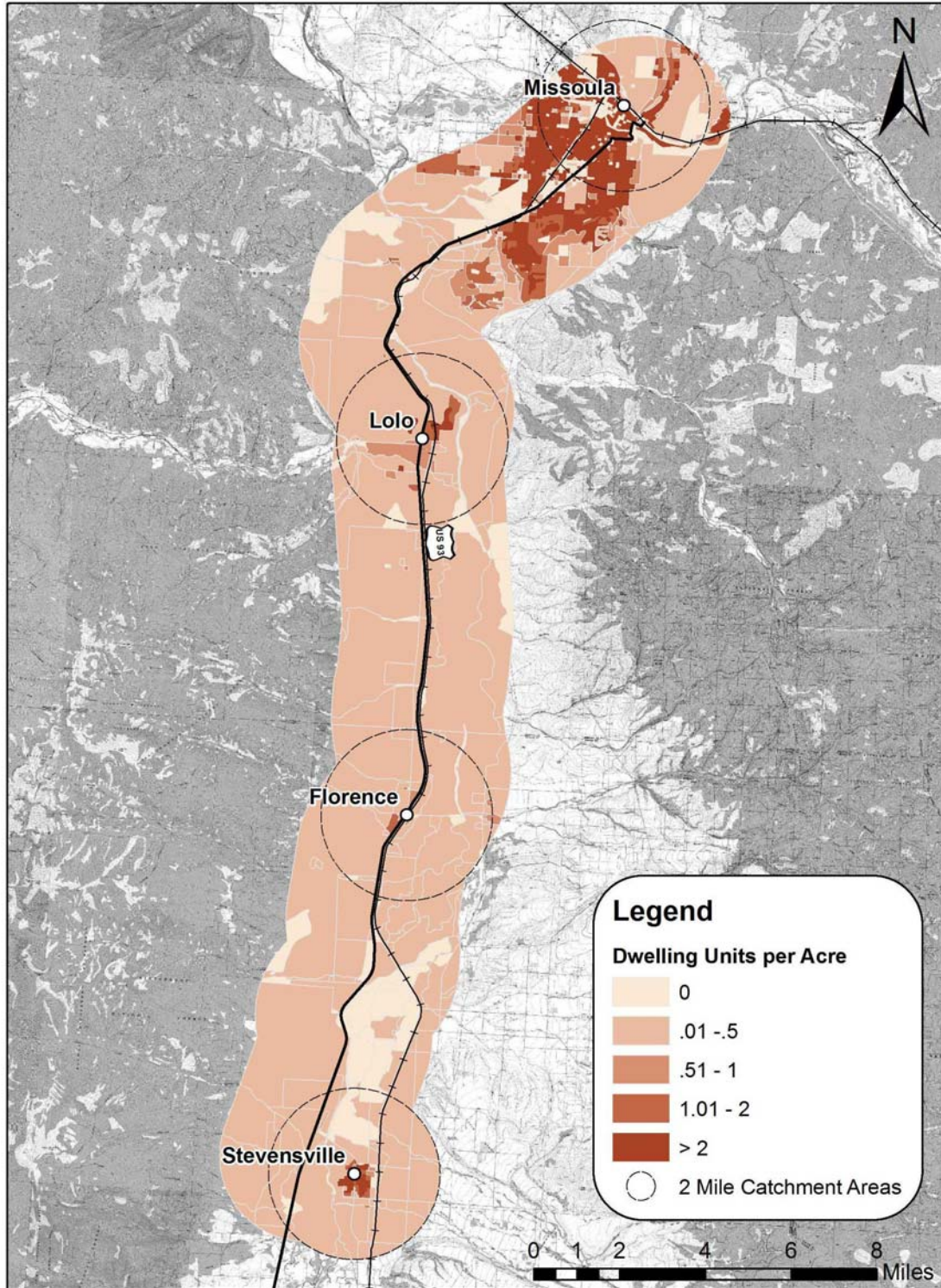
Town	2005 Station Area Density (Dwelling Units/Acre)
Missoula	1.87
Lolo	0.18
Florence	0.08
Stevensville	0.15

Source: US Bureau of Census Block Group Data

US 93 Corridor Study

Missoula to Florence

Figure 3-22 Household Density within US 93 Catchment Area





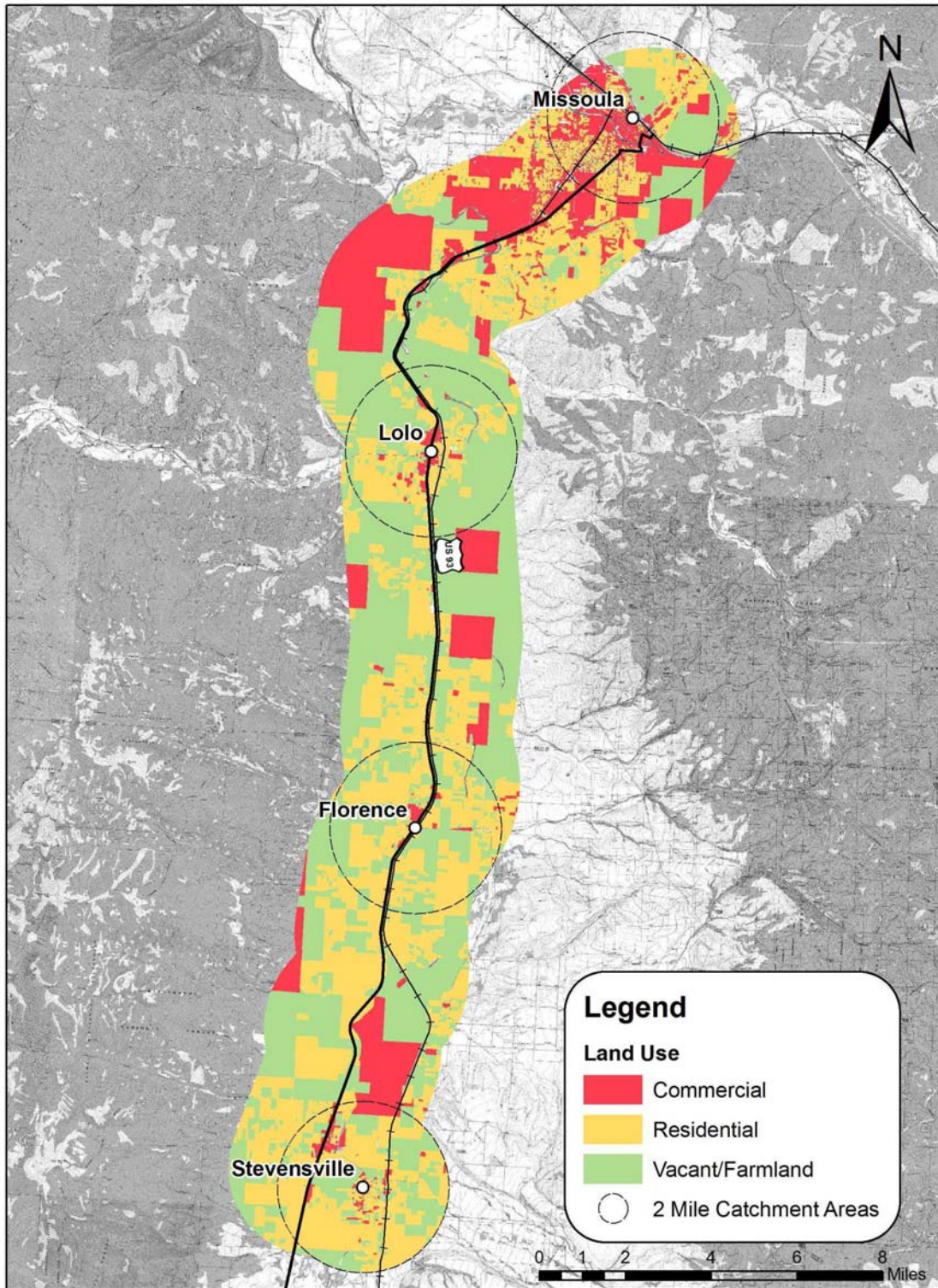
Existing Land Use Profile

Current zoning, land use, and development patterns are good predictors of future population and employment concentrations. Figure 3-23 presents current land uses within two miles of the US 93 corridor. The catchment area around each of the towns in the study area is shown for reference purposes.

US 93 Corridor Study

Missoula to Florence

Figure 3-23 Land Use within US 93 Catchment Area





3.3 Plans and Regulations

This section summarizes relevant points from a number of local planning and regulatory documents.

Access Control Report (2006)

An Access Control Report was conducted for the portion of US 93 between Lolo and Missoula in 2006. The report identifies direct access points on US 93, which include residential, commercial, field, and public driveways. The report recommends the elimination of existing and future direct access to US 93 for many properties with access to other intersecting public roads. Access Control Report recommendations are included in Appendix G.

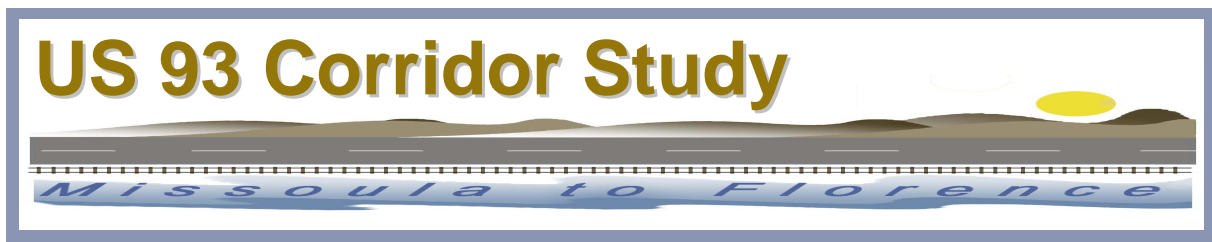
Miller Creek Road EIS (2008)

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was conducted for the portion of US 93 south of Missoula, from approximately MP 86 to MP 91. The Preferred Alternative is intended to improve safety at the “Y” intersection of Upper Miller Creek Road and Lower Miller Creek Road with the addition of a traffic signal and reconfiguration of the intersection. The Preferred Alternative would not include a new connection to US 93, but the southbound approach to Miller Creek Road would add a second left-turn lane.

Hamilton to Lolo EIS (1997)

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was conducted for the portion of US 93 between MP 49.0 at the northern end of Hamilton to MP 83.2 at the southern end of Lolo. The Preferred Alternative from the EIS includes the following elements in that portion of the US 93 corridor:

- Reconstruction of the highway along the existing alignment using a four-lane undivided section in rural areas with left turn and auxiliary lanes where appropriate, and a five-lane section with a center turn lane in developed areas.
- Construction of park-and-ride lots in or near the major population centers within the corridor to facilitate and encourage car pooling and use of public transportation.
- Establishment of a transportation management association (TMA) to provide public education, promote local efforts, and encourage methods to reduce traffic on the highway.
- Construction of turning lanes, traffic signals, wider shoulders, and bicycle facilities to enhance traffic flow and safety and to provide for pedestrian/bicycle movement.
- Realignment at Bass Creek Hill to improve grades and at Silver Bridge to provide a new crossing of the Bitterroot River.
- Use of curb, gutter, and sidewalk in urban areas to improve drainage, better define accesses, and provide for pedestrian and bicycle movement.



- Utilization of a combination of restrictive, permissive, and situational access control policies to encourage densification of existing growth areas and to discourage growth elsewhere.

Five Valleys Regional Transit Study (2008)

MDT completed a regional transit study in January 2008 for the rural areas of Missoula, Granite, Lake, Mineral, Ravalli, and Sanders Counties. The study was intended to identify the intercity bus transportation needs in the area and to develop a service plan for meeting these needs. Recommendations from the study include strengthening the rideshare and vanpool programs currently operated by MR TMA and offering limited bus service in the region, including phased service in the US 93 corridor. Phasing is recommended to ensure sufficient demand and adequate funding. Phase I would offer commuter service from Lolo to Missoula; Phase 2 would extend commuter services to Hamilton; Phase 3 would offer all-day service from Lolo to Missoula; and Phase 4 would extend all-day service from Hamilton to Missoula.

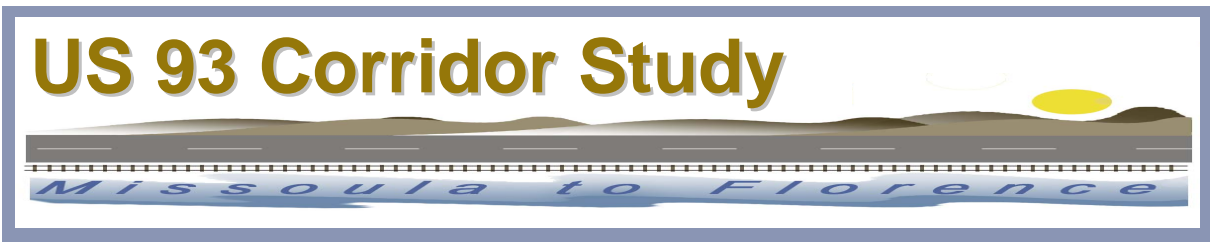
Missoula Urban Transportation Plan Update (2004)

The 2004 Missoula Urban Transportation Plan Update provides a multi-modal approach for addressing the current and anticipated future transportation needs for roadways/highways, transit, non-motorized facilities, and freight movement within and through the Missoula Metropolitan Planning Area. The following goals from the Plan are pertinent to this study.

1. Develop an interconnected, intermodal transportation network that provides reliability, equity, efficiency, choice, safety, and opportunity for all potential users.
2. Promote efficiency in land use and development patterns.
3. Enhance the natural and social environment.
4. Develop a transportation system that will maintain or improve air quality.
5. Formalize intergovernmental (primarily City, County, and MDT) and public/private partnerships in the development of the proposed system.
6. Promote and implement transportation system improvements that minimize the occurrence of and the potential for crashes that might result in the loss of health, life, and property.
7. Implement and promote transportation system improvements that provide effective movement of people and goods.

The Plan identifies US 93 as a principal arterial with 2000 daily traffic volumes in the range of 24,000 – 25,000 between Blue Mountain Road and Cochise Drive. The Plan also identifies US 93 as “Approaching Capacity” with a volume to capacity ratio between 0.8 and 1.0 for existing conditions (2000) as well as future conditions (2025).

Under the Current Transportation Issues section, the Plan identifies transit improvement needs



on US 93 between Blue Mountain Road and Cochise Drive and suggests extension of bus and trail systems as well as consideration of passenger rail service over the US 93 corridor.

Missoula Urban Comprehensive Plan (1998)

The 1998 Urban Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide a general framework for decision making and further planning in relation to development within the Missoula urban area. The urban area, as defined in the Plan, is generally contained within the Missoula Valley and includes the community of Lolo at the south end of the Missoula Valley. The following action strategies from the Plan are pertinent to this study.

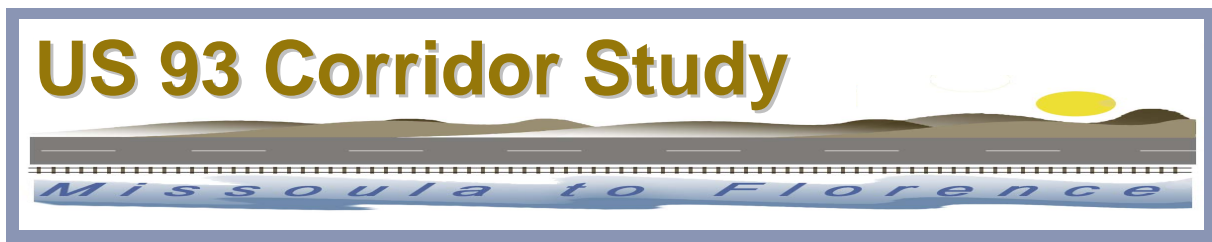
1. Identify where in Missoula County certain types of growth should or should not occur and how the integration of developed lands and open spaces can best be accomplished.
2. Identify those developed and developing areas that are served by inadequate infrastructure.

Missoula Non-Motorized Transportation Plan (2001)

The 2001 Non-Motorized Plan is intended to be an amendment to the Missoula Urban Comprehensive Plan. The following goals from the Plan are pertinent to this study.

1. Increase the percentage of non-motorized trips and increase the percentage of residents and visitors who choose non-motorized modes for all trips, including work and school commute, social, recreational, and utility.
2. Create an on-street and off-street non-motorized network that connects all major destinations with a safe, convenient, interesting, and well-maintained circulation system that is easily accessed by all residents and visitors including those with disabilities.
3. Protect the Missoula area’s natural resources, including air and water quality, riparian areas, plants, and wildlife.
4. Identify and preserve important non-motorized transportation corridors for future public and private development.





Transit Development Plan (TDP) – Missoula Urban Transportation District (MUTD) / Mountain Line (2008)

The April 2008 TDP summarizes Mountain Line’s current services, sets forth a mission statement and a series of goals, outlines anticipated capital projects over a five-year planning period (FY 2008 – 2012), and discusses potential funding sources for transit improvements. Current services include fixed route bus service on twelve routes, ADA Comparable Paratransit Services, as well as a number of special services including transportation to various community events. The TDP sets forth the mission statement for the Missoula Urban Transportation District as follows:

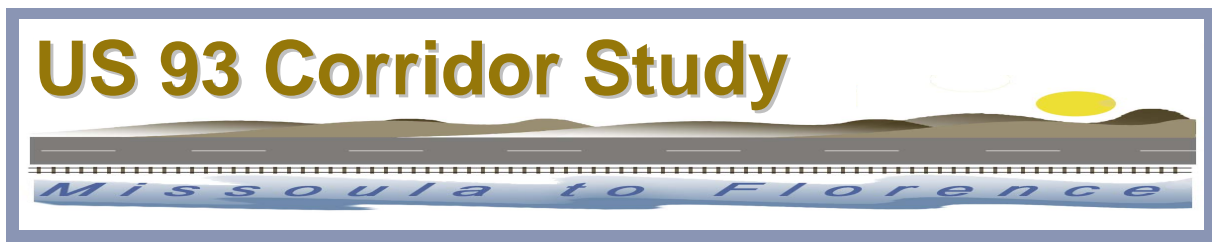
- Contribute to a seamless, safe, convenient and accessible transportation system for the Missoula community.
- Reduce air pollution and traffic congestion in the valley.
- Provide transportation options to improve the quality of life in Missoula.

MUTD also intends to seek increases in transit funding and improved funding partnerships; expand and improve the existing transit system by providing greater frequency of service and additional passenger amenities; improve air quality and reduce vehicle miles traveled in the Missoula area; encourage transit-supportive land use and development; and expand outreach and education efforts to increase awareness of public transportation options in Missoula.

Capital projects proposed over the five-year planning period include expansion and gradual replacement of the vehicle fleet and passenger shelters and amenities. An expansion and renovation of the maintenance and administrative facility was completed in May 2008. Additionally, service expansion is also proposed for the planning period, and would include increased mid-day service, increased service to North Reserve Street and the Missoula International Airport, expanded paratransit operations, and provision of service to new developments on the edge of the MUTD.

There are also a number of long-range improvements that are currently under review by the MUTD Board of Directors, including provision of commuter service to Lolo, increased service for the Miller Creek area, an upgraded fare collection system including expansion of the Smart Card System, and purchase of a GPS system for key congested intersections.

With regard to funding, the TDP notes that approximately 19 percent of Mountain Line’s revenues are generated from operations. Remaining revenues are received through property tax mills and government agencies. The TDP notes that in the future, MUTD would like transit funding to receive consideration equal to that of highway funding.



Lolo Regional Plan (2002)

The Lolo Regional Plan is intended to guide development, redevelopment, and community projects in a manner that will enhance the planning region as a place to live, work, and recreate while preserving the region's unique character and natural resources. The following goals from the Plan are pertinent to this study.

1. Protect natural resources in the planning region including hillsides, agricultural soils, wildlife, wildlife habitat, surface water, groundwater, and air.
2. Efficiently integrate new development and infrastructure with existing land use patterns.
3. Enhance the small town development pattern of the community of Lolo in order to encourage a broad range of uses ranging from more intense uses closer to the community core and less intense uses further from the core.
4. Reinforce the existing rural development pattern in the Lolo planning region.
5. Ensure that transportation systems are adequate to meet the present and future needs of the Lolo planning region. Provide a safe, integrated, and efficient transportation system that allows people and products to travel through the region without negatively impacting adjacent uses and character.
6. Protect open space resources. Provide recreational opportunities for community residents.
7. Maintain the integrity of the Community of Lolo apart from the Missoula Urban Area and adjacent Development Areas.
8. Preserve the rural character of the area while also establishing areas for additional development.
9. Recommend a land use pattern that collectively contributes to the community and the region while retaining cultural and physical characteristics that make the Lolo planning region unique.

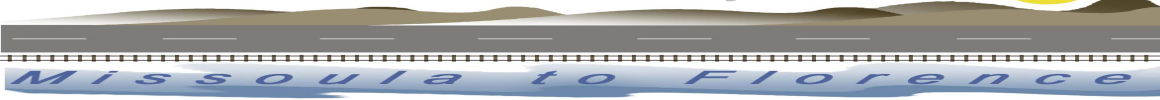
Ravalli County Growth Policy (2004)

The 2004 Ravalli County Growth Policy is intended to establish a comprehensive set of long-range goals and goal-related policies to guide future growth and development. It seeks to provide an increased level of predictability to land owners, neighbors, and developers about where and how growth can be accommodated in ways that are compatible with fiscal and environmental concerns. It is designed to guide growth toward areas where it is expected and where it can be accommodated.

The following goals and objectives from the Growth Policy are pertinent to this study.

1. Promote private open land, farm land, ranch land, and recognition of agriculture and forestry as valued land resources.

US 93 Corridor Study



2. Protect the air quality of Ravalli County.
3. Provide necessary infrastructure and public services to accommodate population growth and new development without undue impacts on the quality, quantity, and cost of service to existing residents.
4. Protect and enhance natural resources and public open space.
5. Plan for residential and commercial development.

Missoula City / County Growth Policy (2005)

The 2005 Update of the Missoula County Growth Policy sets forth a series of principles, goals, objectives, and implementation measures that were derived from three previous documents – the Missoula Urban Comprehensive Plan 1998 Update, the 1996 Policy Document: Planning for Growth in Missoula County, and the 1975 Missoula County Comprehensive Plan. These planning documents were adopted by the governing bodies after extensive public involvement and comment.

The following goals and objectives from the Growth Policy are pertinent to this study.

1. Integrate development patterns with preservation or enhancement of the environment.
2. Maintain and improve air quality in the urban area.
3. Identify where in Missoula County certain types of growth should or should not occur and how the integration of developed lands and open spaces can best be accomplished.
4. Preserve the diversity, integrity, and unique values of neighborhoods, communities, and rural areas.
5. Encourage development at appropriate densities within the urban growth area.
6. Conserve resources and minimize transportation demand in rural areas by structuring commercial centers around existing facilities.
7. Encourage development to locate in areas where facilities are available and where the public costs of providing needed facilities and public services are lowest.
8. Encourage a land use pattern that facilitates use of all modes of transportation and provides for safe, healthy, affordable, efficient and convenient access to transportation connections for residential, commercial, industrial, and emergency traffic.
9. Provide adequate infrastructure to ensure a healthy natural, economic, and social environment in Missoula County. Ensure the availability and affordability of infrastructure such as sewer, water, transportation, public safety, health and social services, public lands, parks and other open spaces, cultural resources, and education.
10. Improve, rather than extend, the present transportation system network for the conservation of natural resources, energy and public funds.

US 93 Corridor Study



11. Concentrate commercial and residential development in activity centers where the transportation system can support it.
12. Provide accommodations for and promote the use of more sustainable modes of transportation, including public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. Expand the service of the transportation network by providing families, commuters, and senior citizens access to community and neighborhood centers. Promote the use of renewable energy and less reliance on fossil fuels.
13. Address noise, air quality, and safety impacts of major transportation facilities on adjacent land uses.
14. Encourage a land use pattern that facilitates provision of emergency services.
15. Continue interjurisdictional cooperation between public safety agencies.