



# **APPENDIX A:**

---

## **Public Review Period Comments**

*(3/4/25 - 4/4/25)*



# Appendix A: Public Review Period Comments

March 4 to April 4, 2025

ID	Name/Date	Comment	Response
01	David Adams 03/05/2025	<p>Thanks for keeping me up to date on the study. I reviewed it thoroughly and suggest one very minor correction on (I believe) page 7. Please see the attached screen shot. Essentially, the speed limit through Lolo is 35mph, not 25 as listed in the report. Looking forward to the finished product and eventually the implementation of some of the plans.</p> <p><b>RELEVANT CONDITIONS</b></p> <p>The study conducted wide-ranging analyses of the physical roadway, safety, traffic operations, and environmental features to establish baseline conditions for the corridor. This step was important to understand key issues, needs, and constraints influencing future improvements. Key findings from this effort are summarized below.</p> <p><b>ROADWAY CHARACTERISTICS AND CONSTRAINTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ US 93 is configured as a four-lane undivided rural facility. Multiple public roadways and private approaches intersect the highway.</li> <li>✓ The Bitterroot Trail, a shared use path extending between Hamilton and Missoula, is located adjacent to US 93 throughout the study corridor.</li> <li>✓ Three park-and-ride lots are located at Chief Looking Glass Road, Carlton Creek Road, and Rowan Street.</li> <li>✓ A single-track railroad operated by BNSF runs parallel to US 93 approximately 100 feet east of the edge of roadway pavement through much of the corridor.</li> <li>✓ The posted speed limit ranges from 25 miles per hour (mph) in Lolo to 70 mph on the straight, rural stretch of the highway between Lolo and Florence.</li> </ul>	<p>Thank you for reading through the study report and offering comments. While the speed limit in Lolo is posted at 35 mph, there is a designated school zone signed at 25 mph (when flashing), which this note is referring to. Additional clarity has been added to the discussion on page 8 where the speed limits are discussed.</p>
02	Blaze Miklautsch 03/10/2025	<p>As a resident on Rowan Rd, a roundabout or an rcut won't help that intersection. A traffic light is the only good option for that intersection.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Discussion is provided on page 51 explaining why an RCUT was proposed at this intersection. Additionally, the study report discusses the potential for a Continuous T intersection instead, stating that, <i>"Ultimately, the Rowan Street intersection configuration will be determined in coordination with MDT, Missoula County, and land owners through the [Systems Impact Action Process] SIAP as development occurs."</i> Additional discussion is provided on page 50 stating, <i>"RCUTs could be signaled in the future to accommodate increasing traffic demands, if signal warrants are met."</i></p>
03	Ian Varley 03/27/2025	<p>Thank you for providing us the opportunity to comment on the US 93: Missoula to Florence Corridor Study. Overall, we felt the plan was well written, well laid-out and well informed of many issues in the corridor study area. I've included below comments on the four segments that are established in the draft plan.</p> <p>1. Segment A: Urban/Rural Transition</p> <p>The County has periodically heard interest in developing the private land northwest of Buckhouse Bridge. Some development concepts have included a public river access site on the Bitterroot River. The interest in creating a river access here is motivated (in part) by the high numbers of recreationists parking along the west side of the highway during the summer months. This situation is a safety concern. The plan should address this issue, if only to leave open the possibility of creating a safe road access point (e.g., right in, right out, with deceleration and acceleration lanes) to a parking area that may come to fruition at this site.</p> <p>Another idea that has been suggested is a frontage road connecting Blue Mountain Rd to Buckhouse Lane, connecting Transolution Ln to Yuhas Ranch Ln. This frontage road could potentially connect to the</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p><b>Segment A:</b> The report now references these development concepts in the projected growth discussion in Section 2.3.2 and the Segment A discussion on page 47.</p> <p><b>Segment B:</b> The responsibility for approval and direction of growth and development rests with the County, while MDT's role is to evaluate and mitigate impacts to the state transportation system. The Missoula County Commissioners approved the Alexandra Estates development near Bird Lane during their December 7, 2011, meeting, subject to various conditions. One</p>



ID	Name/Date	Comment	Response
		<p>Buckhouse Bridge river access (should it be realized). This frontage roads might improve safety in this segment by consolidating access from the multiple small access roads and directing it to the signalized intersection at Blue Mountain. The areas north and south of Blue Mountain Road are zoned commercial and additional development is anticipated here. Current development proposals in this area appear to be proposing individual access on Highway 93 or accessing via small, unimproved roads such as Yuhas Ranch Lane, a situation we'd like to see avoided in the future. We'd like to see this concept explored in the plan.</p> <p>2. Segment B: Rural S Curves In Segment B, rural S curves, the document proposes "to accommodate the new development, it has been proposed to limit turning movements at the existing Bird Lane approach to be right-in, right-out only with a county-owned frontage road connecting Bird Lane to the main entrance of the proposed development". In a big picture sense, the County controls growth and development using two tools: 1) implementing land use regulations such as zoning to restrict or promote development and 2) developing or promoting infrastructure such as roads or sewer to encourage development. Improved access at Bird Lane would further stimulate growth in this location which is not well suited for it. The county has considered growth in this area and has repeatedly limited the potential for it because of the poor access, high cost of road infrastructure needed, lack of water, sewer and other critical infrastructure. This segment has a high crash density and is particularly susceptible to inclement weather and wildlife crossing.</p> <p>We'd be more supportive of investing in infrastructure to facilitate development in the Lolo area for example, where better conditions exist. We don't recommend access improvements or a county-maintained frontage road in this stretch of Highway 93 that would act as a catalyst for additional development.</p> <p>3. Segment C: Lolo Area I didn't see any mention of the proposed development at the former Lolo School. The current proposal, called the Belltower subdivision in Lolo is in element review but follows up a zoning and comprehensive plan change here. The proposal includes both residential and commercial development. 56 single-family residences are proposed for immediate development, with a Commercial Lot designated for dry utilities only. Additional residential (single family and multifamily units) and commercial development is anticipated if public water and sewer facilities are expanded and they become available. The 56 units are anticipated to generate 528 trips with the primary access being directly on Highway 93 via access roads opposite Tyler Lane. While I doubt the traffic generated would alter the results of any of the warrant studies, an additional look may be necessary. The developer's application exhibits note, "The primary approach to the subdivision will require improvement and may require improvements to the traffic signal located at [the Tyler Way] intersection." The proposal includes a network of pedestrian trails in dedicated open space and it's anticipated this development will generate pedestrian activity, especially crossing Highway 93.</p> <p>4. Segment D: Rural Highway I appreciate the emphasis on wildlife crossing in this section. The large blocks of ranchland and protected open space lend themselves to large numbers of wildlife using this area to move east-west across the Bitterroot Valley.</p> <p>The intersection of Rowan and Highway 93 has repeatedly been mentioned as a problem in meetings with the County's planning board. Safe access to Highway 93 was also an issue with a recent zoning variance process with the gravel mining operation located to the south on old Highway 93. Gravel mining is anticipated to continue here for</p>	<p>such condition included the construction of a "jug handle" turnaround to address safety concerns at the intersection prior to development.</p> <p>Given the documented crash history in this segment, MDT has proposed a reduced conflict intersection design, in the form of an RCUT or possible Continuous T intersection design, to proactively address safety issues. The concept of a frontage road connection was considered as part of this safety strategy, not as a means to promote additional development. To reflect this intent, the language on page 48 has been revised to refer to a "potential future frontage road" rather than a "county-owned frontage road."</p> <p>MDT remains committed to working closely with Missoula County and developer(s) through the Systems Impact Action Process to ensure transportation decisions reflect safety and traffic needs as well as broader community goals, including land use planning and environmental considerations.</p> <p><b>Segment C:</b> The Belltower Subdivision is noted in Sections 2.1.1 and 2.3.2. Given that Tyler Way is already signalized, the anticipated impacts to this highway are considered minimal. Any future improvements to the signal will be evaluated through the appropriate Missoula County and MDT review processes as development progresses. No changes are recommended to the report.</p> <p><b>Segment D:</b> Thanks you for your support for wildlife accommodations within this corridor. The plan includes discussion on page 51 explaining the rationale for proposing an RCUT at the Rowan Street intersection. It also notes that a Continuous T intersection may be considered as an alternative. As stated in the document, <i>"Ultimately, the Rowan Street intersection configuration will be determined in coordination with MDT, Missoula County, and landowners through the [Systems Impact Action Process] SIAP as</i></p>

ID	Name/Date	Comment	Response
		<p>the long term and this intersection is used by dump trucks hauling material from the site. We'd encourage a deeper look at this intersection to determine if it warrants a more significant improvement such as a traffic light or continuous T rather than the R-cut currently proposed there.</p> <p>Thank you again for inviting us to comment on the plan. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.</p>	<p><i>development occurs.</i>" Page 50 also clarifies that RCUTs may be signalized in the future, should traffic volumes meet the appropriate warrants. MDT remains open to reevaluating the intersection design as conditions evolve and through continued collaboration with the county and stakeholders.</p>
04	Jacob Martin & Christopher Downs 04/02/2025	<p>On behalf of the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, please accept this letter of support for implementing the wildlife crossing accommodations identified in the U.S. Highway 93 (US 93) Missoula to Florence Study Alternatives Analysis Report (Figure ES.2 of the Executive Summary). The report, dated February 17, 2025, was prepared by Robert Peccia and Associates for the Montana Department of Transportation.</p> <p>The study conducted wide-ranging analyses of the physical roadway, safety, traffic operations, environmental conditions, and opportunities to provide wildlife crossing accommodations along the corridor. The corridor serves a mix of local, commuter, and regional traffic between Missoula and Florence. Existing traffic volumes in the corridor range from 15,000-27,000 vehicles per day. A variety of wildlife use the study corridor including elk (<i>Cervus canadensis</i>), white-tailed deer (<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>), moose (<i>Alces alces</i>), mountain lion (<i>Puma concolor</i>), black bears (<i>Ursus americanus</i>), raptors, and songbirds as well as the Endangered Species Act listed grizzly bear (<i>Ursus arctos horribilis</i>). Accommodating safe wildlife movements across the study segment of US 93 benefits people in the form of reduced wildlife-vehicle collisions as well as wildlife by providing safe places to cross US 93, improving connectivity between wildlife habitats on either side of the highway, and reducing road-related mortality of individual animals.</p> <p>The study used multiple approaches to identify needs and opportunities for siting new wildlife crossing structures. It also evaluated existing structures that are, or could be with improvements, providing safe wildlife crossings under US 93. The study identified two areas that are important to maintain existing wildlife movement opportunities. One of these is the canyon area between Missoula and Lolo and the other is south of Lolo, between Delkarta Drive and Carlton Creek Road. These areas are already important linkage areas used by elk, moose, deer, wolves (<i>Canis lupus</i>), mountain lions, and more recently, grizzly bears. As grizzly bears naturally recolonize the Bitterroot Ecosystem over time, they will benefit from well-planned wildlife crossings in the project corridor.</p> <p>As the study notes, wildlife crossings must be thoughtfully designed and located, considering the range of target species the structure seeks to accommodate. Providing dry crossings conducive to easy movement under the roadway, designed for larger animals (e.g. moose, elk), has the potential to benefit smaller wildlife such as deer and bears. Providing openings of sufficient size with daylight clearly visible on both ends (or overpasses) will further enhance use. Wildlife fencing to guide wildlife to crossings, installed to prevent wildlife from digging under, will also enhance the effectiveness of the wildlife crossing efforts. Properly installed wildlife jump-outs will provide a way for wildlife to exit the roadway should they become entrapped within the roadway fencing.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide input as the project develops and for your efforts to enhance both the safety of people and wildlife in the US 93 corridor south of Missoula.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and continued partnership in supporting wildlife accommodations along the US 93 corridor.</p>