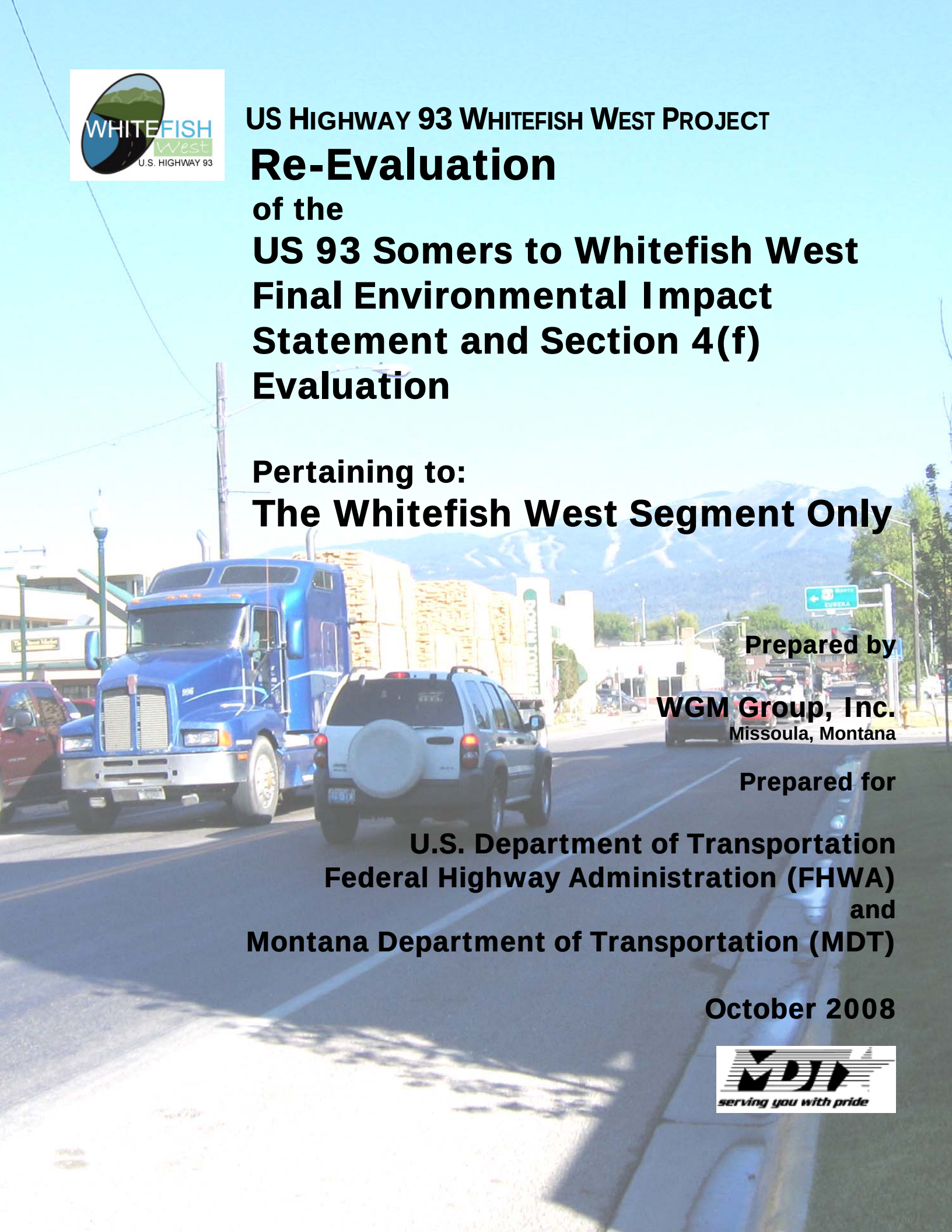

US HIGHWAY 93 WHITEFISH WEST PROJECT

Re-Evaluation
of the
US 93 Somers to Whitefish West Final Environmental Impact Statement and Section 4(f) Evaluation

Pertaining to:
The Whitefish West Segment Only

Prepared by

WGM Group, Inc.
Missoula, Montana

Prepared for

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
and
Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)

October 2008

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RE-EVALUATION
of the
US 93 Somers to Whitefish West
(Milepost 104.3 to 133.0)
Final Environmental Impact Statement
and
Section 4(f) Evaluation
Approved: 9/12/94
FHWA- MT- EIS-94-01-F

Flathead County, Montana

PERTAINING TO THE WHITEFISH WEST SEGMENT ONLY

(Milepost 127.8 to 133.0)
NH-STPP 5-3(42)128, UPN 2017

Prepared Pursuant to 23 CFR 771.129 and ARM 18.2.247
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
and
Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)

October, 2008

Submitted by:

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION Date: 11/25/2008

Approved by:

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION Date: 12-12-2008

Abstract: The proposed project would improve 8.3 kilometers (5.2 miles) of US 93 (N-5) west of Whitefish, Montana. The primary purpose and need for improvements to US 93 is to reduce congestion on the existing facility, provide for planned growth and development, improve safety, provide for improved intermodal facility connections and provide for enhanced scenic values. Potential project impacts include impacts to six historic properties; displacement of nine residences, two businesses, and four outbuildings; wetland impacts of 1.0 hectares (2.5 acres); and noise and visual impacts.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) proposes to reconstruct and widen 8.3 kilometers (5.2 miles) of U.S. Highway 93 (N-5) west of Whitefish, Montana. This project, known as *US 93 Whitefish West*, begins at milepost 127.8 in downtown Whitefish on West Second Street, one half block west of the Baker Street intersection, and extends westerly to milepost 133.0, west of Twin Bridges Road.

This project was approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in November 1994 under the *US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish West Final Environmental Impact Statement* (FEIS) *and Record of Decision* (ROD). The majority of the project segments included in the 1994 FEIS have been, or are currently being, constructed.

The purpose of this re-evaluation is to determine if changes to the proposed action, or new information or circumstances relevant to environmental concerns, would result in new significant impacts that were not evaluated in the FEIS.

Description of Changed Conditions

The purpose and need for the project has not changed from the 1994 FEIS. The primary purpose and need for improvements, as stated in the FEIS, is to "reduce congestion on the existing facility, provide for planned growth and development, improve safety, provide for improved intermodal facility connections and provide for enhanced scenic values."

The *Current Proposed Action* for the Whitefish West segment is the Preferred Alternative identified in the FEIS and ROD with modifications to provide the desired level of service, safety, and benefits identified in the FEIS.

New or Revised Features of the Preferred Alternative

Development of a more detailed preliminary design revealed that, due to the rolling terrain, it was not possible to meet current design standards for clear zones and stopping sight distance in the FEIS typical sections without acquiring additional right-of-way. Additional right-of-way would also be required to accommodate utilities, signs, light poles, and construction of slopes and retaining walls. A traffic analysis identified the need for turn lanes at several new locations to safely remove turning vehicles from through traffic.

In addition, the City of Whitefish and Citizens Working Group identified a strong desire to preserve the character of downtown Whitefish and minimize right-of-way impacts to residences and businesses along the highway. Preserving downtown character and minimizing right-of-way impacts would result in changes to lane configurations, lane widths, and the use of a curb and gutter section at various locations within the Whitefish West project segment that were not included in the FEIS typical sections.

New or Revised Laws, Regulations, and Local Ordinances

A number of relevant laws, regulations, and local ordinances have changed since the FEIS was written. These include:

- Clean Air Act
- Montana Water Quality Integrated Report 2004

- Executive Order (E.O.) 13112
- Flathead County Growth Policy (2007)
- 2007 Whitefish City-County Growth Policy (updated from the 1996 Whitefish City-County Master Plan)
- Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)
- Whitefish Downtown Master Plan (2005)

Changes in the Affected Environment

New information and changes to the existing environmental conditions have occurred since the 1994 FEIS. These changes affect the following:

- Water Resources and Quality
- Wetlands
- Fisheries and Wildlife
- Threatened or Endangered Species
- Cultural and Historic Resources
- Parks and Recreation
- Hazardous Materials

How Changes Affect the FEIS

The effects of the changed conditions under the Current Proposed Action were compared with the impacts related to the Preferred Alternative described in Chapter 4 of the FEIS, and a conclusion as to the significance of the changes was made for each of the criteria.

Conclusion

Changes to the Preferred Alternative and the affected environment would occur within the Whitefish West project segment that were not evaluated in the 1994 FEIS. This re-evaluation concludes that the current conditions, new circumstances, and changes to the Preferred Alternative within the Whitefish West project segment would not result in any new significant impacts that were not evaluated in the 1994 FEIS. The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately describes the impacts of the Current Proposed Action and provides mitigation for those impacts.

1.0 BACKGROUND

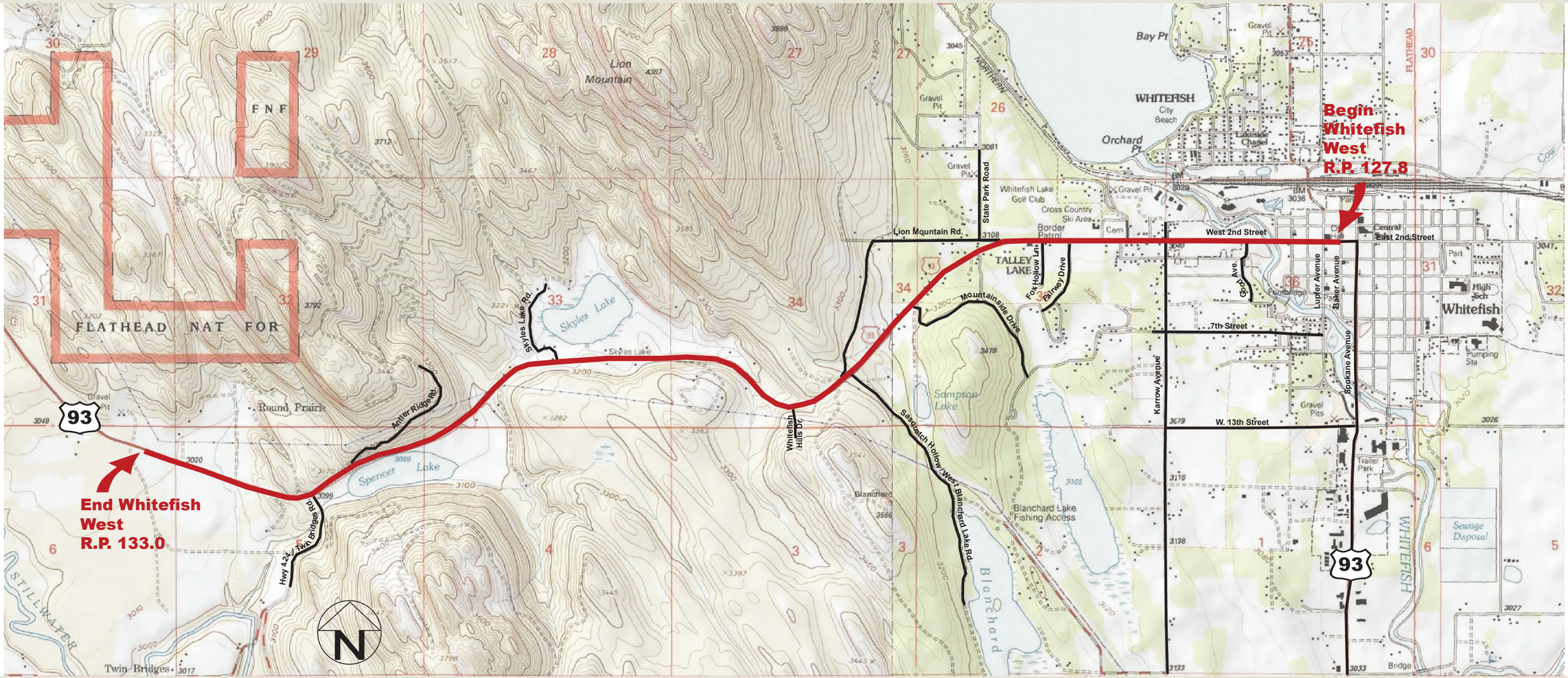
The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) proposes to reconstruct and widen 8.3 kilometers (5.2 miles) of U.S. Highway 93 (N-5) west of Whitefish, Montana. This project, known as *US 93 Whitefish West*, begins at milepost 127.8 in downtown Whitefish on West Second Street, one half block west of the Baker Street intersection, and extends westerly to milepost 133.0, west of Twin Bridges Road (see **Figure 1**).

The project was originally evaluated under a 1988 Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) prepared for the Kalispell to Whitefish segment of US 93. In 1992, due to public concerns over the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the project, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared. This EIS included 46.2 kilometers (28.7 miles) of US 93 from Somers, Montana to west of Whitefish, Montana (mileposts 104.3 to 133.0). The *US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish West Final Environmental Impact Statement* (FEIS) and *Record of Decision* (ROD) were approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in November 1994. The majority of the project segments included in the 1994 FEIS have been, or are currently being, constructed.

This re-evaluation pertains to the Whitefish West segment only.

WHITEFISH West
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

FIGURE 1: US 93 WHITEFISH WEST PROJECT LOCATION AND MILEPOST LIMITS



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2.0 REASON FOR THE RE-EVALUATION

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 23, Part 771 sets forth all Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Department of Transportation (DOT) requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for processing highway projects.

Specifically, Section 771.130 of the federal regulations requires a supplemental EIS to be prepared whenever the FHWA determines that:

- Changes to the proposed action would result in significant environmental impacts that were not evaluated in the EIS; or

- New information or circumstances relevant to environmental concerns and bearings on the proposed action or its impacts would result in significant environmental impacts not evaluated in the EIS.

In order to determine if changes to the proposed action or new circumstances are significant, the regulations require the preparation of appropriate environmental studies. It has been accepted practice in FHWA to use an Environmental Re-evaluation, as defined in CFR Section 771.129, to determine the need for a supplemental EIS.

Additionally, Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) set forth agency requirements under the Montana Environmental Policy Act. ARM 18.2.247 states the following:

1) "The agency shall prepare supplements to either draft or final environmental impact statements whenever:
    a. The agency or the applicant makes a substantial change in a proposed location;
    b. There are significant new circumstances, discovered prior to final agency decision, including information bearing on the proposed action or its impacts that change the basis for the decision; or
    Following preparation of a draft EIS and prior to completion of a final EIS, the agency determines that there is a need for substantial, additional information to evaluate the impacts of a proposed action or reasonable alternatives.

2) A supplement must include, but is not limited to, a description of the following:
    a. An explanation of the need for the supplement
    b. The proposed action; and
    c. Any impacts, alternatives of other items required by ARM 18.2.243 for a draft EIS or ARM 18.2.245 for a final EIS that were either not covered in the original statement or that must be revised based on new information or circumstances concerning the proposed action.

3) The same time periods applicable to draft and final EISs apply to the circulation and review of supplements." (History: Sec. 2-3-103, 2-4-201, MCA; IMP: Sec. 2-3-104, 75-1-201, MCA; NEW, 1988 MAR p. 2692, Eff. 12/23/88.)

3.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Due to the high level of public interest and potential controversy related to the project, MDT and FHWA elected to provide a pro-active public involvement program as part of the Re-evaluation process even though it is not a NEPA requirement. Public involvement included two public open houses; a Citizens Working Group (CWG), representing major interest groups in the community; and a Decision Team. A total of ten CWG meetings were held between 2005 and 2007. On January 7, 2008 the Whitefish City County passed Resolution No. 08-01 expressing the City's position with respect to the Whitefish West project. Public input provided valuable information related to changed conditions and potential project impacts.

Meeting summaries and the City Council Resolution are included in **Appendix C**.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF CHANGED CONDITIONS

The purpose and need for the project has not changed from the 1994 FEIS. The primary purpose and need for improvements, as stated in the FEIS, is to "reduce congestion on the existing facility, provide for planned growth and development, improve safety, provide for improved intermodal facility connections and provide for enhanced scenic values."

The FEIS identified poor level of service (LOS D and E) in many locations, and a high percentage of trucks with limited opportunity for passing. LOS conditions were projected to worsen noticeably by the year 2015, with LOS E and F anticipated, resulting in significant delays to the traveling public. In addition, the FEIS identified higher than average accident rates, including significantly higher rates in the urban areas and in areas with multiple access points.

LOS goals for the 2015 design year were identified as:

- LOS C – rural areas
- LOS D – urban areas

The FEIS examined the impacts related to several alternatives, including a "No-Build" Alternative, three alternatives for the US 93 corridor, and five alternatives for the Whitefish area by-pass. The selected Preferred Alternative identified in the FEIS and ROD was Alternative A (COMBO) for the existing highway project area west of Whitefish.

Alternative A (COMBO) consists of a combination of both turn-lane and median cross-section designs. The application of the cross-sections with several lane configurations varies as indicated by the conditions and needs of the highway project area.

Updated population and traffic counts were compiled in 2003 for the Whitefish West project segment. Population and traffic growth since 1994 have been similar to the forecasts made in the FEIS. The number of large logging and chip trucks have declined with the closure of several nearby mills, but this traffic has been replaced by other large trucks (such as commercial haulers and construction vehicles). The overall percentage of large trucks remained consistent with the FEIS, at 8 to 13 percent.

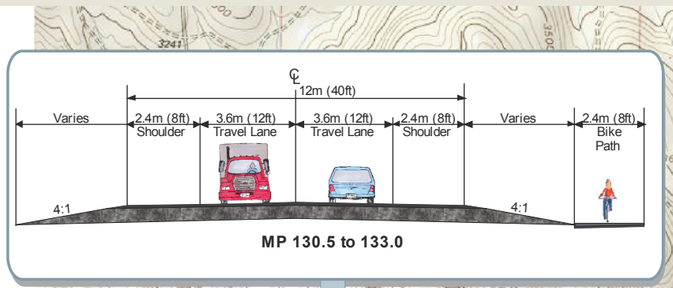
Traffic forecasts for the Whitefish West project segment were updated to a 2030 design year. LOS goals for the urban and rural areas remain consistent with the FEIS.

The Current Proposed Action for the Whitefish West segment is the Preferred Alternative identified in the FEIS and ROD with modifications to provide the desired level of service, safety, and benefits identified in the FEIS. These changes are described in the following sections; as well as changes in relevant laws, regulations, and local ordinances; and changes in the affected environment.

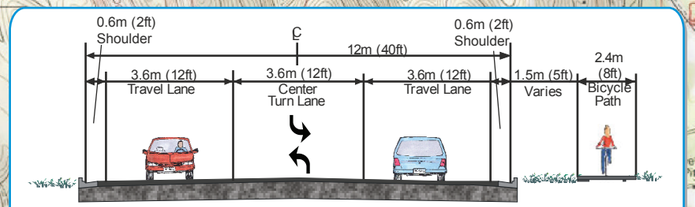
An exhibit illustrating the Current Proposed Action is included as **Figure 2**. Detailed conceptual plans and a summary of the proposed scope of work are included in **Appendix E**.

WHITEFISH West
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

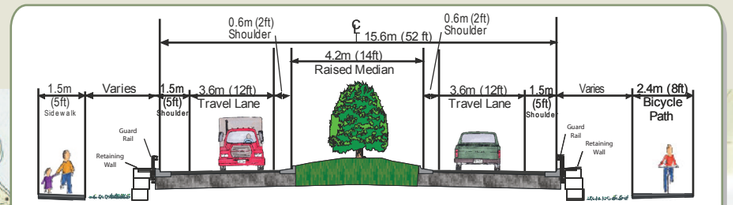
FIGURE 2: CURRENT PROPOSED ACTION



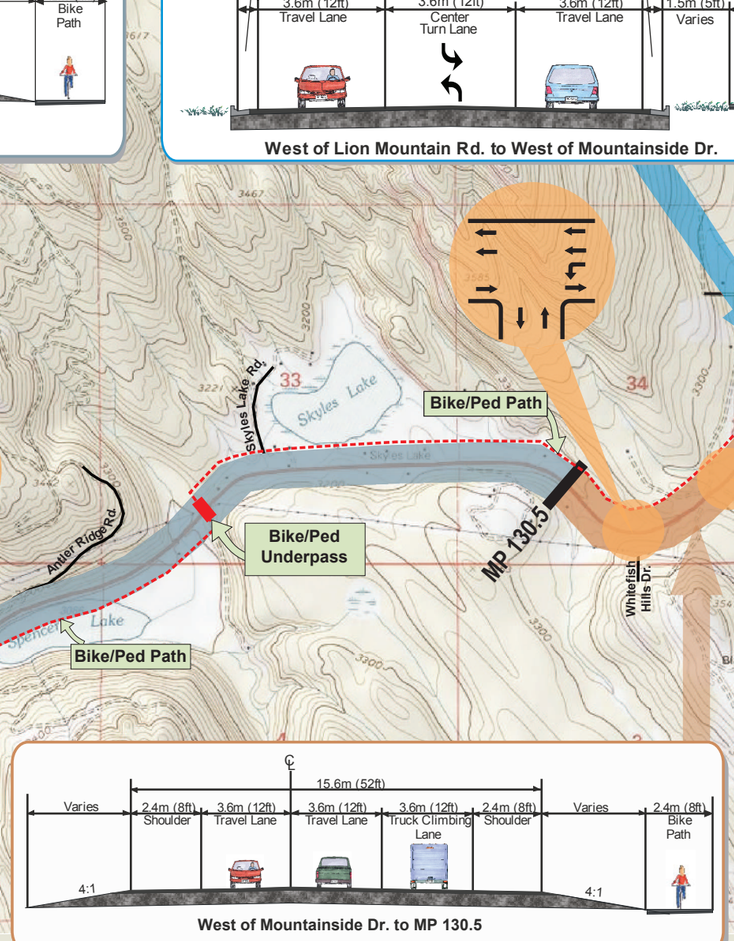
MP 130.5 to 133.0

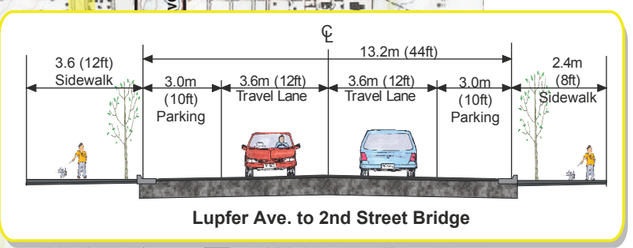


West of Lion Mountain Rd. to West of Mountainside Dr.



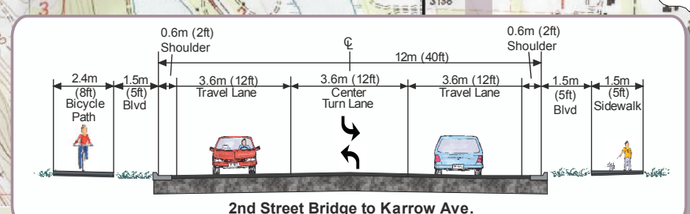
Karrow Ave. to West of Lion Mountain Rd.





Lupfer Ave. to 2nd Street Bridge

West of Mountainside Dr. to MP 130.5



2nd Street Bridge to Karrow Ave.

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4.1 NEW OR REVISED FEATURES OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

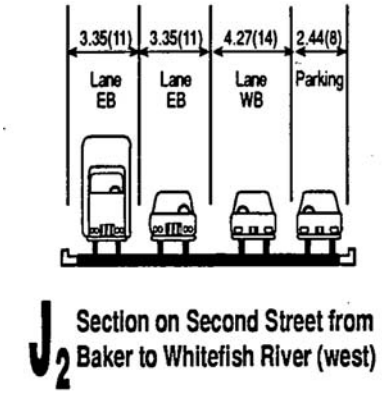
This section provides a detailed description of the new or revised features of the Preferred Alternative included in the Current Proposed Action, and an explanation of why these changes were made.

Development of a more detailed preliminary design revealed that, due to the rolling terrain, it was not possible to meet current design standards for clear zones and stopping sight distance in the FEIS typical sections without acquiring additional right-of-way from adjacent properties. Additional right-of-way would be required to accommodate utilities, signs, light poles, and construction of slopes and retaining walls. Traffic analysis identified the need for turn lanes at several new locations to safely remove turning vehicles from through traffic.

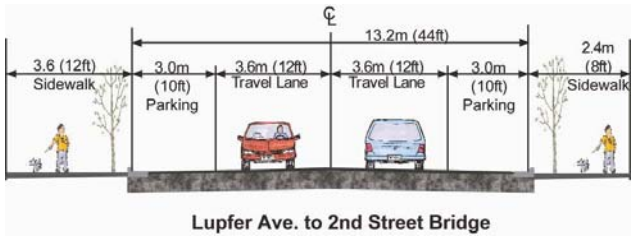
In addition, the City of Whitefish and Citizens Working Group identified a strong desire to preserve the character of downtown Whitefish and minimize right-of-way impacts to residences and businesses along the highway. Preserving downtown character and minimizing right-of-way impacts would result in changes to lane configurations, lane widths, and the use of a curb and gutter section at various locations within the Whitefish West project segment that were not included in the FEIS typical sections.

The Current Proposed Action includes the following new or revised features in the Whitefish West project area:

Lupfer Avenue to 2nd Street Bridge



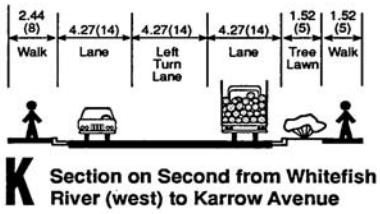
FEIS Section J2



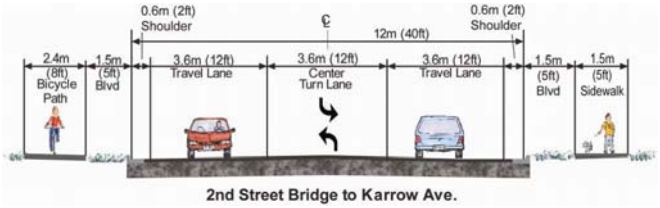
Current Proposed Action

New or Revised Feature	Reason for Change
The lane configuration would be revised to two 3.6 m (12 ft) travel lanes, with 3.0 m (10 ft) parking lanes on each side. The overall width of the street would not change.	The City of Whitefish and the CWG expressed a strong desire to preserve downtown character and minimize impacts to businesses. The Current Proposed Action maintains the existing lane configuration pending the outcome of the Whitefish Urban Corridor Study.
Variable width sidewalks were shown in Section J1 in the FEIS.	This is not a changed condition.

2nd Street Bridge to Karrow Avenue



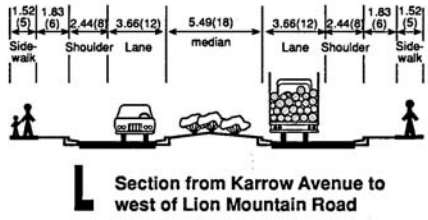
FEIS Section K



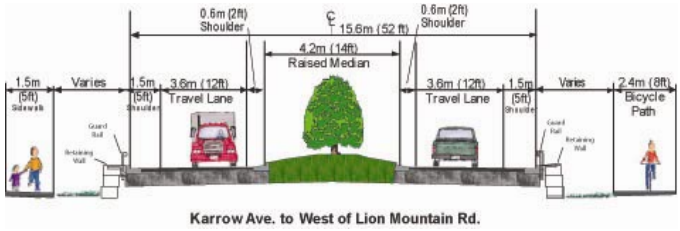
Current Proposed Action

New or Revised Feature	Reason for Change
The travel lanes and the center turn lane would be reduced from 4.2 m (14 ft) to 3.6 m (12 ft).	The City of Whitefish and the CWG expressed a strong desire to promote lower speeds and minimize right-of-way impacts.
A 0.6 m (2 ft) shoulder would be added on both sides of the road.	The shoulder provides the necessary shy distance from the face of curb, and would be striped to give the appearance of a narrower lane.
1.5 m (5 ft) boulevards would be added between the curb and sidewalk where feasible. The addition of boulevards would increase the amount of right-of-way required.	Boulevards provide additional separation of pedestrians from vehicles, snow storage, and landscaping opportunity.

Karrow Avenue to West of Lion Mountain Road



FEIS Section L

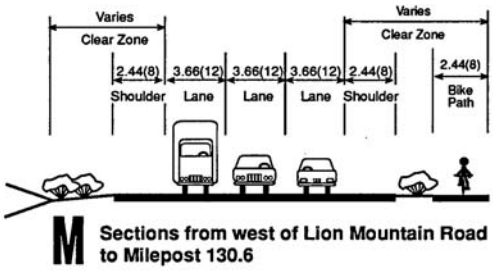


Current Proposed Action

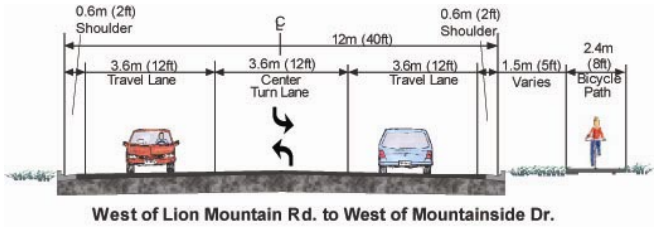
New or Revised Feature	Reason for Change
Raised median width would be reduced from 5.5 m (18 ft) to 4.2 m (14 ft) with 0.6 m (2 ft) inside shoulders. The outside shoulder width would be reduced from 2.4 m (8 ft) to 1.5 m (5 ft).	This change is proposed to avoid impacts to 4(f)/6(f) properties (golf club and park).
The intersection with Lion Mountain Road would be relocated approximately 90 m (300 ft) west of the existing intersection, including accommodation for a future signal and a new approach from the south.	This change is proposed to safely accommodate future access needs at Lion Mountain Road/State Park Road.

New or Revised Feature	Reason for Change
The sidewalk would be modified to a 2.4-m-wide (8 ft) shared bicycle/pedestrian path.	This change is proposed to provide a continuous bicycle path. A continuous separated bicycle path was identified in the FEIS, where feasible. The CWG and City of Whitefish indicated a strong desire to include the path throughout the project with grade separated crossings at appropriate locations.
An eastbound right-turn lane at Karrow Avenue would be added.	Traffic analysis indicated a right-turn lane is warranted at this location. This change is proposed to meet the purpose and need of the project, which is to improve overall safety conditions.

West of Lion Mountain Road to West of Mountainside Drive



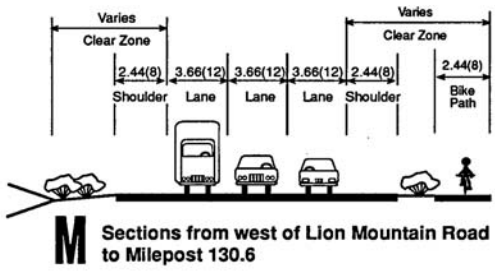
FEIS Section M



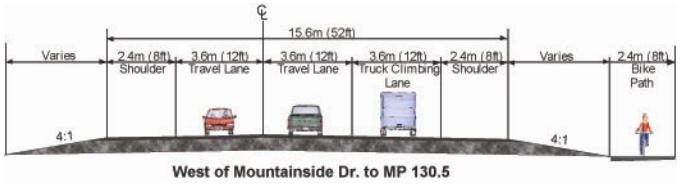
Current Proposed Action

New or Revised Feature	Reason for Change
Curb and gutter would extend to station 32+00 (approximately 350 m (1,150 ft) west of Mountainside Drive).	This change is proposed to reduce right-of-way impacts to businesses and residences.
The eastbound truck climbing lane (approximately 805 m (2,600 ft)) would be eliminated and the westbound truck climbing lane would be shortened from approximately 1,448 m (4750 ft) to 483 m (1,584 ft).	This change is proposed to reduce right-of-way impacts to businesses and residences. Traffic analysis indicated that reducing or eliminating the truck climbing lane would have only minor effects on safety and operations.
A 3.6 m (12 ft) center turn lane would be added.	Traffic analysis indicated that a turn lane would improve safety by removing turning vehicles from the through lanes. This change is proposed to meet the purpose and need of the project, which is to improve overall safety conditions.

West of Mountainside Drive to MP 130.5



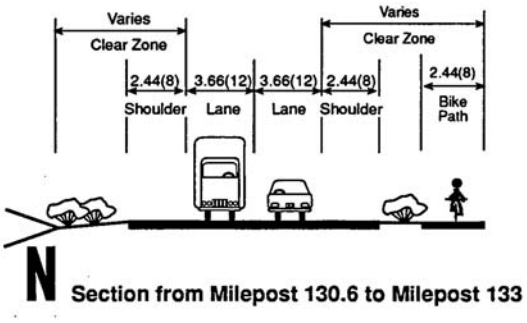
FEIS Section M



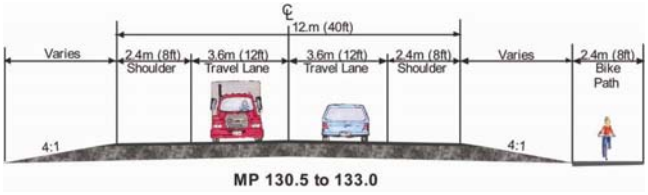
Current Proposed Action

New or Revised Feature	Reason for Change
Left-turn lanes would be added at Mountainside Drive and Sasquatch Hollow/West Blanchard Lake Road.	Traffic analysis indicated that a turn lane would improve safety by removing turning vehicles from the through lanes. This change is proposed to meet the purpose and need of the project, which is to improve overall safety conditions.

MP 130.5 to MP 133.0



FEIS Section N



Current Proposed Action

New or Revised Feature	Reason for Change
West of Skyles Lake, the bicycle/pedestrian path would be revised to cross US 93 and follow the highway on the south side. An underpass would be provided at this location. The bicycle/pedestrian path would be revised to end at Twin Bridges Road, where it would connect with the planned Whitefish Trail System.	This change is based on input from the City of Whitefish and the CWG to provide improved safety for path users, better connections to recreational areas at Spencer Lake, and better integration with the planned Whitefish Trail System.
A westbound left-turn lane at Whitefish Hills Drive would be added.	This change is proposed to meet the purpose and need of the project, which is to improve overall safety conditions.

4.2 NEW OR REVISED LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND LOCAL ORDINANCES

The following relevant laws, regulations, and local ordinances have been adopted or changed since the 1994 FEIS was written. The affects of these changed conditions are considered in **Section 5**.

Clean Air Act

This project is affected by the 1967 Clean Air Act and amendments (1972, 1977, and 1990) (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq). The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated Whitefish as a non-attainment area for small particulate matter (PM_{10}) since 1993. Section 110 of the Clean Air Act required states to develop State Implementation Plans (SIPs). The FEIS identified this issue and noted that a SIP for Whitefish had not been adopted. The FEIS listed possible mitigation measures related to the highway reconstruction activities that were expected to minimize air quality violations.

An implementation plan to comply with the Clean Air Act was adopted in Montana in 1996. Air Quality provisions and standards were defined and adopted in the Montana Code Annotated (MCA), Title 75, Chapter 2. Section 75-2-301 MCA established local air pollution control programs. The Flathead County Health Department administers the County Air Pollution Control regulations within the project area. New policies and procedures that define requirements for reduction of small particulate matter in the Whitefish airshed are contained in Sub-Chapter 7, Whitefish District Rules.

In March 2001, the EPA issued a final rule on Controlling Emissions of Hazardous Air Pollutants from Mobile Air Sources under provisions of the Clean Air Act. This requires the EPA to characterize, prioritize, and control emissions of Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSATs) as appropriate. The effect of these new regulations is described in **Section 5.8** (Air Quality) of this document.

Montana Water Quality Integrated Report 2004

The Federal Clean Water Act requires an ongoing program of water quality assessments and reporting to help protect and improve water quality of waterbodies in the state. In recent years the data was reported in two separate reports known as the 303(d) List and the 305(b) Report. Now under EPA's direction, the two separate reports are being combined into an "Integrated Report". Waterbody categories have been developed to define when a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) must be developed to address the factors causing the waterbody impairment or threat. In 2004, The Whitefish River was added to the impaired waterbody list requiring a TMDL scheduled for completion in the next few years. The effect of these new regulations is described in **Section 5.10** (Water Resources and Quality) of this document.

Executive Order (E.O.) 13112

Executive Order (E.O.) 13112, signed on February 3, 1999, addresses federal agency responsibilities with respect to invasive species (noxious weeds). As a partially federally funded action, the project is subject to the provisions of E.O. 13112. According to the Invaders Database System (Rice 2005), twenty-two noxious weeds have been identified in Flathead County since 1985. These species are listed in the BRR, along with their Category ranking and whether or not they were observed on-site during the field reconnaissance.

Flathead County Growth Policy (2007)

On March 19, 2007, Flathead County adopted a new growth policy. The Flathead County Growth Policy seeks to allow the market to benefit naturally from the desirable impacts of growth and land use changes while protecting the community from the accompanying undesirable impacts to public health, safety, morals, convenience, order or general welfare.

The Growth Policy defines numerous policies developed to achieve their stated goal to manage and mitigate the concerns of the community. For US 93 related activities, the transportation section of the Growth Policy recommends implementing improvements that closely resemble the Preferred Alternative described in the 1994 FEIS and Record of Decision. The effect of these new regulations is described in **Section 5.2** (Land Use) of this document.

2007 Whitefish City-County Growth Policy (updated from the 1996 Whitefish City-County Master Plan)

On November 19, 2007, the Whitefish City Council adopted the City-County Growth Policy. The growth policy sets forth a broad body of public policy that is founded in a community vision, and that addresses growth and development issues through natural resources, economic development, land use, community facilities, housing and transportation. The growth policy contains community goals, policies and recommended actions for achieving those goals. The Whitefish City-County Growth Policy includes several recommended actions pertaining to transportation including:

- Make construction of new sidewalks and pathways a priority in areas where they do not currently exist.
- The City shall make the provision of sidewalks, pathways and other non-motorized transportation facilities part of a concurrency program and policy.
- Through the community-wide transportation plan, the City shall assess the need and feasibility of a highway-by-pass to alleviate through traffic in the downtown area.
- Coordinate with the Montana State Department of Transportation in developing corridor studies for state highways within the planning jurisdiction.

The effect of these new regulations is described in **Section 5.2** (Land Use) of this document.

SAFETEA-LU

On August 10, 2005, President George W. Bush signed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). This new law establishes extensive new resources and opportunities to advance highway safety throughout the country in a comprehensive, strategic manner. SAFETEA-LU builds on the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) by supplying the funds and refining the programmatic framework for investments needed to maintain and grow transportation infrastructure.

Whitefish Downtown Master Plan (2005)

The 2005 Whitefish Downtown Master Plan identified key elements to ensure efficient, safe auto and truck movement without negatively affecting the pedestrian and bicycle environment through downtown. Key elements for Highway 93 improvements included:

- Improve auto and truck circulation by providing a couplet along Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue.
- Maintain on-street parking along Second Street for a minimum of a half block on either side of Central Avenue (to alleys).
- Improve access options by providing a "contra-flow" lane along Baker Street.
- Provide turn lanes and improve truck-turning radii at the intersection of Second Street and Baker Avenue.
- Prohibit left turn lanes from Second Street onto Central Avenue.
- Provide a new bridge crossing at Seventh Street.

4.3 CHANGES IN THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This section describes changes to the existing environmental conditions evaluated in Chapter 3 of the 1994 FEIS. The effects of these changes are described in **Section 5** of this document.

Water Resources and Quality

In 2004, the Whitefish River was listed as an impaired waterbody in the Integrated Water Quality Report prepared by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. The water quality-monitoring database lists the Whitefish River as poor fish rearing and spawning habitat, with very low populations of trout. Development of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is required to address the impairment.

One of the causes of impairment is the Whitefish Wastewater Treatment Plant. From Whitefish Lake to Hodgson Road Bridge, the river reach condition is listed as suffering from moderate to severe impairment (Mathieus, personal communication, 2005).

Another cause of impairment is contaminated sediments near the old railroad facility. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, polychlorinated biphenyls, and concentrations of diesel and other oils are well above natural levels. Benthic sediment data from the EPAs website shows that lead exceeds aquatic life standards in the Whitefish River.

Wetlands

In 2008, a wetland delineation of the Whitefish West project segment was completed by PBS&J. It identified seven new wetland areas not previously identified in the 1994 FEIS. These were in addition to the eight wetlands identified in the FEIS within the Whitefish West segment.

Fisheries and Wildlife

The Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) data search results indicated three known occurrences of wildlife species of concern within a 3.2 km (two mile) radius of the proposed project (MTNHP 2005a), which were not identified in the FEIS.

- Common Loons (*Gavia immer*) are known to nest at nearby Whitefish and Blanchard Lakes, and were seen during the field survey utilizing Spencer Lake near the west end of the project. Nesting at Spencer Lake has not been documented.

- Le Conte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*), which typically occupies wet meadow peat lands, is the other sensitive wildlife species documented in the project area, although the most current record for this species is from 1987 (MNHP 2005a).

- Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus)* was removed from the threatened and endangered species list in 2007 and is currently designated a sensitive species in Montana. The greater Kalispell area including Whitefish supports the highest density of nesting Bald Eagles in the state; however, no active Bald Eagle nest sites are known to occur within five kilometers (three miles) of the proposed action. The nearest nesting records occur towards the north end of Whitefish Lake and along Swift Creek, a tributary to Whitefish Lake.

In addition, the BRR identified six amphibian species, seven reptilian species, and common small mammals that may occur in the project area that were not discussed in the FEIS.

Threatened or Endangered Species

Under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as amended, activities conducted, sponsored, or funded by federal agencies must be reviewed for their effects on species federally listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered. The 1994 FEIS and its accompanying biological assessment described the occurrence of two threatened or endangered species within the project corridor:

- Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)
- Peregrine Falcon (Falco peregrinus)

These species have since been delisted from the USFWS list of threatened or endangered species. An updated Biological Resources Report (BRR) was prepared for the Whitefish West project in 2008 (PBS&J). Based on the current USFWS list of threatened, endangered, and proposed species that may be present in Montana counties (USFWS 2004), and range/habitat descriptions found in technical literature, the following listed species were considered with respect to this project:

- Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*: endangered)
- Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*: threatened)
- Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*: threatened)
- Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*: threatened)

The findings and determination of effect of the Current Proposed Action on listed species are described in the BRR and summarized in **Section 5.14** (Threatened or Endangered Species) of this document.

Cultural and Historic Resources

On May 15, 2001, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with MDT's finding that the number of historic properties along West Second Street (US 93) was insufficient to qualify as a historic district. Consequently, only impacts to ten properties individually eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) would be assessed under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act in the Whitefish West project segment.

- Masonic Temple (24FH558)
- Duncan Samson Block (24FH559)
- J.A. Samson House (24FH560)
- Hennessey Log Bungalow (24FH569)
- Harlow House (24FH570)
- Midby Bungalow (24FH571)
- Whitefish Country Club (24FH573)
- Patten Mattress Factory (24FH497)
- Westermark Place (24FH579)
- Woodsman Cottage (24FH580)

SHPO correspondence is included in **Appendix D**

Parks and Recreation

One new park was developed after completion of the 1994 FEIS. Kay Beller Park is a City-owned facility located south of West Second Street and east of the Whitefish River. The park has one formal paved access point on West Second Street (US 93). Situated in an area overlooking the Whitefish River, Kay Beller Park comprises 0.4 ha (1 ac) and includes Whitefish River access and other amenities such as a walking path and observation deck. The park was developed with federal assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and is protected by Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCF Act).

Hazardous Materials

A Phase II Hazardous Materials Assessment completed in 2005 identified new hazardous materials sites that were not identified in the 1994 FEIS. Drilling and sampling was conducted to verify the extent of subsurface contamination within the right-of-way. Lab tests were conducted on the samples to determine whether special provisions would be needed to mitigate soil, sediment, and/or groundwater contamination during construction.

The Phase II Hazardous Materials Assessment identified 7 probable sites where project related work might encounter contamination in the Whitefish West project area. Two of the seven sites were identified in the FEIS; Michaels Auto Repair and the Whitefish River. A total of 5 newly identified sites were identified as having documented or potential hazardous material contamination issues. In general, these sites can be characterized as follows: 4 sites were documented by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) as using, storing, or generating hazardous materials/wastes; and 1 site was a commercial user observed in the field

as having moderate to high probability of using, storing, or generating hazardous materials/wastes but were not listed by government agencies.

Subsurface petroleum impacts were identified along the Whitefish River at the Second Street Bridge. Soil impacts at the Second Street Bridge include potential worker breathing zone safety issues as well as aesthetics during construction activities. Petroleum impacted soil exceeding MDEQ Tier 1 Risk-Based Screening Levels could be encountered during construction activities. Composite soil samples would likely have to be collected from stockpiles of impacted soil excavated during construction work to characterize the waste for disposal (Maxim Technologies, 2005).

Environmental investigation and remediation work for the Burlington Northern fueling facility is regulated by the MDEQ. Remedial investigation reports and a draft ecological risk assessment prepared for the facility, including impacts to the river, are currently being reviewed by the MDEQ.

5.0 HOW CHANGES AFFECT THE FOLLOWING AREAS FROM THE FEIS

This section provides a summary of the impacts described in the 1994 FEIS related to the Preferred Alternative, a description of the changed conditions and their effect, and a conclusion as to the significance of the changes. The criteria are organized according to Chapter 4 of the FEIS.

5.1 TRANSPORTATION

FEIS Findings

Traffic Operations and Circulation Impacts

The Preferred Alternative would provide an improvement in traffic flow. The Whitefish West segment was projected to operate at Level of Service (LOS) A in the year 2015. The additional lanes would provide opportunities to pass slower moving vehicles, and remove left-turning vehicles from the through lanes by providing separate turn bays at intersections. Access control measures would also benefit traffic operations; however, the use of raised medians would result in an increase in out-of-direction travel and u-turns.

Traffic Safety

The Preferred Alternative would provide a reduction in rear-end and angle accidents associated with left-turn maneuvers; wider shoulders and clear zones resulting in improved recovery areas for errant vehicles and for emergency stopping; and improved separation between through travel lanes to minimize headlight glare and potential for head-on conflicts. The use of raised medians would provide physical protection for vehicles turning left at bays, a refuge for pedestrians, and reduce the potential for head-on collisions.

Parking Impacts

The Preferred Alternative would result in the loss of 25 on-street parking spaces in the Whitefish downtown area from Baker Avenue to the Whitefish River. Loss of parking would create a demand for more on-street parking on the side streets and in adjacent parking lots.

Access Impacts

The Preferred Alternative would implement a policy of *Restrictive Access Control (with flexibility)* as described in Table 2-2 of the FEIS and included below. There would be modifications to existing driveways. The addition of lanes and/or shoulders would require existing driveway approaches to be reconfigured. In addition, some driveway consolidation would occur and in some cases, internal circulation roads would be added to serve multiple driveways.

Access control guidelines (FEIS Table 2-2)

Restrictive Access Control
Major arterial street intersections – no turn intersections.
Minor collector/local street intersections – limit to right-turn-only.
Driveways serving major traffic generators – no turn restrictions (major shopping centers, major employers, special events centers or similar generators – does not include single businesses or small shopping centers).

Driveways near arterial intersections (less than 152.5 meters (500 feet)) – close driveway and provide connection to arterial cross street/drive where practical.
Closely spaced driveways (less than 152.5 meters (500 feet)) – consolidate driveways to one of the existing drives or common lot line where practical.
Where structures are well set-back from US 93 and successive driveways exist, consider frontage road.
Driveways to properties that have frontage on another road, provide right-turn-only access, and develop auxiliary access to the other road where practical.
In undeveloped areas, access may be allowed at approximately one-half-mile intervals with no turn restrictions. Access spacing should be coordinated with opposing properties to develop a four-legged intersection. Intermediate access should be limited to right-turn-only and to no less than 500-foot spacing. A maximum of one driveway with no turn restrictions should be provided per individual property.
Where collector/local streets and driveways are limited to right-turn-only in areas of potential large truck activity, provide U-turn opportunities at approximately 1.61-kilometer (one-mile) intervals.

Restrictive Access Control would have the following impacts on future access:

- Minor street intersections may be limited to right-turns only
- Full turn access in undeveloped areas will be allowed at approximately 0.8 km (half-mile) intervals
- Additional cost and delay in the right-of-way acquisition process

Construction Impacts
Construction of the Preferred Alternative would cause delays to the general traveling public and drivers attempting to access abutting land uses. Traffic may be detoured within the US 93 right-of-way or on other local streets. Motorists would be required to adjust their travel schedules to consider the length of possible delays. Some users may choose alternate travel routes to avoid construction sites, impacting local city streets.

Changed Conditions

The Current Proposed Action would provide similar safety and operational benefits as those discussed in the FEIS. The Current Proposed Action is projected to operate at LOS A in the year 2030 for US 93 intersection approaches throughout the Whitefish West project area. Side street approaches will experience LOS E or F at several intersections, similar to what was discussed in the FEIS.

Modifications to the lane configuration between Baker Avenue and the Whitefish River (FEIS Section J2), which would eliminate the one eastbound lane and allow on-street parking in its place, would result in reduced LOS and may increase the number of rear-end crashes when compared to the Preferred Alternative. Traffic analysis determined that congestion at the intersection of West Second Street and Baker Avenue is the controlling factor for operations in this area. Unless improvements are made at Second/Baker, the additional eastbound lane would have little or no effect on traffic operations. Improvements to West Second/Baker are not part of this project, however the width provided by the parking lane would allow for re-striping a second eastbound travel lane in the future.

Modifications to FEIS Section K, which would include narrowing the left-turn lane from 4.2 m (14 ft) to 3.6 m (12 ft), would result in a small reduction in LOS and safety. Narrower lanes have reduced capacity (approximately 7 percent for a two foot lane reduction); however, because this

is a continuous two-way left-turn lane (TWLTL), the reduced capacity would have only a minor effect on operations. The effect on safety would be less maneuvering space and sight distance for opposing vehicles in the TWLTL. The minor impacts to LOS and safety would be offset by the reduction in right-of-way impacts. The use of a boulevard sidewalk section would provide additional clear zone width, separation of vehicles and pedestrians, snow storage, and space for signs, light poles, and utilities, resulting in improved safety. A boulevard sidewalk would result in increased right-of-way impacts compare to the FEIS.

Modifications to FEIS Section L, which would include reduced median and shoulder widths, would result in a minor impact to operations and safety. The addition of 0.6 m (2 ft) inside shoulders would result in improved safety by providing a shy distance from the face of curb, however, reduction of the outside shoulder from 2.4 m (8 ft) to 1.5 m (5 ft) would result in a small decrease in the free flow speed (approximately 1.3 mph (2.1 km/h)) and less space for stalled vehicles. The minor impacts to operations and safety would be offset by the reduction in right-of-way impacts to the golf course and park (Section 4(f)/6(f) properties).

Modifications to FEIS Section M, which would include extending the curb and gutter section; eliminating the eastbound truck climbing lane; shortening the westbound climbing lane; and adding a TWLTL, would result in a minor impact on operations, but an overall improvement in safety. The curb and gutter section and truck climbing lane changes would reduce right-of-way impacts to adjacent residential and commercial properties. These changes would result in a 5-8 km/h (3-5 mph) decrease in average travel speed; a 38-61 percent increase in time spent following other vehicles, a minor increase in travel time and delay, and reduced level of service.

The roadway segment LOS (as opposed to the intersection LOS discussed above) on US 93 within Section M is projected to be LOS E with the reduced truck-climbing lanes, as compared to LOS D with the full truck climbing lanes originally anticipated in the Preferred Alternative. This mid-block LOS is an evaluation of travel speed and the amount of time drivers must follow behind another vehicle.

The addition of the TWLTL within Section M would result in improved safety for approximately 14 access points located in this section of the project. The benefits to safety, speed reduction, cost, and right-of-way impacts would outweigh the minor increase in travel time, delay, and reduced LOS.

Turn lanes would also be added at the following intersections that were not identified in the FEIS, which would result in improved safety and operations. These changes would result in increased right-of-way impacts at several locations in the area west of Lion Mountain Road.

- Northbound left-turn lane on Karrow Avenue at US 93
- Eastbound right-turn lane on US 93 at Karrow Avenue
- Eastbound left-turn lane on US 93 at Murray Avenue
- Westbound left-turn lane on US 93 at Parkhill Drive
- Eastbound left-turn lane on US 93 at Whitefish Golf Club entrance
- Westbound left-turn lane on US 93 at Fairway Drive
- Westbound left-turn lane on US 93 at Nelson Lane
- Westbound left-turn lane on US 93 at Fox Hollow Lane

- Eastbound and westbound left-turn lanes on US 93 at State Park Road; and southbound left-turn lane on State Park Road at US 93
- Eastbound left-turn lane on US 93 at Antler Ridge Road

The Current Proposed Action includes access consolidation, driveway and intersection modifications, and construction of internal circulation roads similar to what was discussed in the FEIS. This includes reconfiguring the Lion Mountain Road/State Park Road intersection to provide improved geometry and a future road to the south. This intersection would be designed to accommodate a future traffic signal, to be installed when warranted, and provides a turn-around opportunity for westbound vehicles. This change would result in relocation of one residential property. Other individual access modifications would be considered during the final design.

Construction impacts would be similar to those discussed in the FEIS. One-lane traffic control with flagging may be required for short durations, which would increase delays during construction.

Conclusion

The anticipated transportation impacts in the Whitefish West project area are similar to what was discussed in the FEIS. The Current Proposed Action includes minor changes that were not discussed in the FEIS. These changes would provide an overall benefit to safety and only a minor reduction in operations. The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address the impacts and mitigation related to these changes.

5.2 LAND USE

FEIS Findings

US 93 alternatives would not substantially affect the total amount of new development occurring in the Flathead Valley, but would have some influence on the characteristics and geographic distribution of this development. US 93 alternatives are one of many factors that would influence the character and distribution of future land uses in the Flathead Valley. Other factors include: city and county land use plans and regulation practices; Montana Department of Transportation highway access restrictions; city and county road improvement policies; the characteristics of public and private utility services; the locations of business markets and job centers; site specific amenities and physical and socioeconomic constraints; land owner and developer resources and preferences regarding development; and the availability of other developable lands.

The US 93 “Build Alternatives” would directly displace a small number of residential, commercial and industrial buildings. Residential land areas displaced by the “Build Alternatives” consist mainly of yard and driveway areas. Commercial and industrial lands displaced by the project are mainly driveway, parking, and green areas. Agricultural land removed from production includes a mix of crop and grazing lands.

Imposition of restrictive access controls would discourage development of commercial and residential land uses at new locations along rural highway segments. MDT restrictions of new road or driveway access onto US 93 would reinforce the effectiveness of rural zoning

ordinances that seek to prohibit new commercial land uses and intensive residential development. Especially in urbanizing areas, strict limitations on new access would favor new development and reinvestment in areas with established access onto the highway. Stringent access controls would favor more intensive (higher density) commercial and industrial development patterns. Highway access controls would also favor industrial development along frontage roads.

Changed Conditions
General land use trends in the Whitefish area have not changed. The indirect effects of the Current Proposed Action on land use would remain similar to those discussed in the FEIS.

The Current Proposed Action would displace a higher number of residential and business properties, and require more right-of-way than what was identified in the FEIS. This is discussed in **Section 5.5** (Relocations).

The Current Proposed Action is consistent with current planning documents including the *2007 Whitefish City-County Growth Policy,* the *2005 Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan,* and the *2007 Flathead County Growth Policy*.

Conclusion
The Current Proposed Action would not result in new significant land use impacts not previously evaluated in the 1994 FEIS.

5.3 FARMLAND

FEIS Findings
The entire Whitefish portion of the project is in an area designated either as “Forest Upland / Potential Grazing Land” or “Urban Area.” There were no “Prime Farmlands” or “Unique Farmlands” mapped within the Whitefish West project area, therefore there would be no direct farmland impacts.

Changed Conditions
There are no changed conditions.

Conclusion
The FEIS adequately addresses farmland impacts in the Whitefish West project area.

5.4 SOCIAL

FEIS Findings
In 1994, Flathead County was one of Montana’s fastest growing counties. The 1994 population was estimated to be 64,000. In 1993, the county’s summer population was estimated to exceed 74,000. The wintertime seasonal population influx in the county centered on Whitefish. Overall, the county’s population was centered in the Flathead Valley with the large majority of the

population living within 10 miles of the US 93 project area. Flathead County's population tends to be slightly older, more racially homogenous, with higher average incomes and less percentage of the population born in Montana than statewide.

Population projections were developed for 2000 and 2015. The projections were developed using a linear regression technique based population trend data from 1970 to 1993. Flathead County was predicted to continue to experience substantial population growth. It was predicted to have a 46 percent (27,000 person) increase in year-round population and the mid-summer population was expected to exceed 100,000 people by 2015.

The FEIS determined that the impacts of the US 93 alternatives would not meaningfully affect the area's appeal as a place to retire or locate a second home. However, the US 93 alternatives might have some influence on the geographic distribution of future settlement wherever the highway substantially changes the quality of access into areas with development potential.

Travel times from east and west valley areas to Whitefish would not be sufficiently improved and as a result, would not induce substantial additional commuter oriented settlement. The greatest traveler time savings for commuters would be for persons commuting between Whitefish and Kalispell (an estimated 2 to 4 minute savings).

No specific relocations were identified in the Whitefish West project area; however the FEIS stated that outside of cities, the Preferred Alternative would displace a small number of residences and businesses. Highway alternatives would not displace the homes or places of employment of substantial numbers of elderly or handicapped persons, transit dependent persons, members of racial or ethnic minorities, or other special population groups.

Changed Conditions

Flathead County continues to be one of Montana's fastest growing counties with an estimated population of 81,217 in 2004, which is a 9.06 percent increase from the 2000 census. Flathead County's population grew by 26 percent between 1990 and 2000, and is expected to reach 105,000 by 2020. Nearly 1,000 new businesses were established in Flathead County during the 1990's (Flathead County Economic Development Authority 2006).

The Current Proposed Action would displace a higher number of residential and business properties, and require more right-of-way than what was identified in the FEIS. This is discussed in **Section 5.5** (Relocations). The Current Proposed Action would not disproportionately impact homes or places of employment of elderly or handicapped persons, transit dependent persons, members of racial or ethnic minorities, or other special population groups.

Conclusion

The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address social impacts in the Whitefish West project segment.

5.5 RELOCATIONS

FEIS Findings

The 1994 FEIS estimated that approximately 6.5 ha (16.1 ac) of right-of-way would be acquired for the Whitefish West project. No residential or commercial relocations were specifically identified for the Whitefish West project area.

Page 4-31 of the FEIS states that outside of cities, the Preferred Alternative would displace a small number of residences and businesses. Further, page 4-35 of the FEIS states:

> The quantities in Tables 4-8 and 4-9 are approximate and based on design prepared to a conceptual level of detail. They do not include temporary or permanent easements which may be needed for cut/fill slopes or construction work. These would be determined during the final design process.

The 1990 Census listed 4,145 residential vacancies, of which 2,517 were reported as seasonally vacant (US Department of Commerce, 1991). The high percentage of seasonal vacancies in housing units reflects the prevalence of ski-season and summertime second home residents in the Flathead area. Seasonally occupied units are generally not available for occupancy by year-round residents.

The 1990 Census reported the median value of owner occupied housing to be $64,200 and the median rent to be $332. Since the census, Flathead County has experienced a period of vigorous population growth. Robust demand for housing has increased the market values of housing units and cost for rental housing. The median sales price for a house sold in 1993 is estimated to be about $88,000, a percent increase since the census (Jim Kelly, 1993).

Table 4-10 of the FEIS illustrates that 952 housing units were on the market in Flathead County in December of 1993, which is about 3 percent of the county-wide housing stock. The asking price for the majority of houses for sale in Flathead County exceeded $100,000. The number of houses for sale in Flathead County tends to increase during summer months.

The FEIS found that the market values for most of the houses potentially displaced by the highway project were expected to be less than $100,000, with one or two of the units being in the less than $50,000 value range. Moderate and low cost housing are the least procurable part of the Flathead County housing market (Shirley Schmidt, 1993). It is noteworthy that only 30 percent of housing units for sale at the end of 1993 were priced in the $50,000 to $100,000 range, and only six percent were priced at less than $50,000. In the Whitefish area there were 33 units for sale in the $50,000 to $100,000 range and 1 house selling for less than $50,000 (Flathead Board of Realtors, 1993).

Changed Conditions

The Current Proposed Action would require acquisition of approximately 13 ha (33 ac) of right-of-way in the Whitefish West project segment. This includes the areas needed to construct cut/fill slopes, which was not considered in the FEIS, as well as additional right-of-way area necessary to meet current MDT design standards for stopping sight distance and clear zones.

The Current Proposed Action would displace up to nine residences, two businesses, and four outbuildings that were not identified in the FEIS (potential relocations are shown on the exhibits in **Appendix E)**. Right-of-way impacts and potential relocations were shown at the public open house, April 26, 2005, and discussed extensively with the Citizens Working Group and the City of Whitefish. Numerous mitigation measures to minimize right-of-way impacts were identified and agreed on. These include:

- Reduced shoulder widths
- Steepened slopes
- Guardrail
- Retaining walls
- V-ditches
- Curb and gutter section

These mitigation measures would be incorporated in the final design, where feasible. Mitigation measures for relocations that are discussed in the FEIS would remain applicable.

The number of housing units in Flathead County has steadily increased over recent years. The total housing units in 2000 equaled 34,773 and grew to 36,077 in 2004, a 4% increase (Population Division, US Census Bureau, July 21, 2005).

The year 2000 overall vacancy rate for the available rental and owner-occupied housing units was nearly 15% or 5,186 units, however approximately 69%, or 3,570 units, of those were designated as seasonal, recreational or for occasional use. Therefore the actual vacancy rate in 2000 for non-seasonal housing was 7% for rental units and 1.7% for owner-occupied units (Flathead County Growth Policy 2007). The continued high percentage of seasonal vacancies in housing units reflects the prevalence of ski-season and summertime second home residents in the Flathead area. Seasonally occupied units are generally not available for occupancy by year-round residents.

Year 2006 Census data (American Fact Finder US Census, 2006) indicates median value of owner occupied housing in Flathead County to be $213,600. As stated in the FEIS, Flathead County continues to experience a period of vigorous population growth. Robust demand for housing has increased the market values of housing units and cost for rental housing. The market values for most of the houses potentially displaced by the Current Proposed Action are expected to be in excess of $200,000.

A comparative market analysis for the project was completed in 2007. The sales data indicates a range value from $5.90 to $19.80 per square foot for residential land in town that is connected to city water and sewer. Business property in downtown Whitefish is in strong demand. It is anticipated that all commercial acquisition in downtown Whitefish would be in excess of $20 per square foot.

Conclusion

There would be new relocation impacts within the Whitefish West project segment that were not specifically described in the FEIS. However, these impacts are consistent with the nature and type of relocation impacts described in the FEIS for the overall Somers to Whitefish West corridor. In addition, efforts to avoid or minimize the number of relocations would be made

during the final design. The mitigation measures described in the FEIS relating to relocation assistance remain valid for mitigating the relocation impacts described above.

5.6 ECONOMIC

FEIS Findings

In the early 1990's, Flathead County's economy was growing much faster than the economy of Montana as a whole. The area's historic natural resources, manufacturing, and railroad industries had little to do with recent economic expansion. The economy crested during the summer season reflecting the influences of tourism, summertime residents, and seasonal employment in construction, the wood products industry, agriculture and federal government. From 1979 through 1991, 87 percent of the total growth in county jobs occurred in the service, retail trade, construction, and financial (finance, insurance, real estate) sector.

In-migration of retirees and others with substantial investment and transfer income has caused non-earned income to grow more rapidly in Flathead County than in many other areas of Montana. Because most non-earned income is derived from sources outside Flathead County, it contributes to the overall growth in the area's economy. In spite of the growing economy, unemployment rates in Flathead County were higher than was typical in Montana.

Travelers were estimated to spend about $150 million in Flathead County in 1992. Flathead County was estimated to attract about 11 percent of statewide expenditures by non-resident travelers. Over 75 percent of non-resident visits occurred in the summer. Over the past decade visitors to Glacier National Park and Whitefish Mountain (Big Mountain) Ski Resort had been growing at about 4 percent per year. Increasing portions of Rocky Mountain tourists were residents of foreign countries. Because foreign tourists tended to spend more during their vacations than did domestic tourists, the growth in foreign visitation served to further increase the benefits of tourism on local and regional economies.

Historic natural resources, manufacturing, and railroad industries in Flathead County had experienced little or no growth in the last 20 years. Mechanization of previously manual tasks had caused reduced work forces. Downsizing and closures of area wood processors had contributed to declining employment by forest products businesses. The reduced role of agriculture was attributed to conversion of agricultural lands into residential subdivisions and the transformation of fulltime agricultural operations into hobby farms and ranches.

Increases in employment and commerce would add considerably to the transportation demands. Highway alternatives would have some influence on the geographic distribution of growth. Retail and service businesses catering to drive-through travelers and tourists are the most susceptible to changes in highway conditions and convenience of access. Improvements to highway conditions would allow for greater volume of drive-by traffic and would cause additional business growth along commercial strips.

The Preferred Alternative in the Whitefish West project area would help to evenly distribute the business opportunities and would likely promote additional business growth near intersections in the rural areas.

Changed Conditions

General economic trends in the Whitefish area remain similar to those discussed in the FEIS. The Current Proposed Action would result in two business relocations, which were not discussed in the FEIS, and would have a minor economic impact on the Whitefish West project area.

The FEIS stated that improvements to highway conditions "would allow for greater volume of drive-by traffic" and "would cause additional business growth along the commercial strips." While such growth is likely and therefore reasonably foreseeable, there are no methods to forecast the exact nature of the growth, because such growth is dependent on so many variable factors, such as land use planning, the local and national economy, the price of gasoline, and many other elements. It is impossible to forecast the exact details of where, when, and how the growth would occur.

Conclusion

The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address economic impacts in the Whitefish West project segment.

5.7 PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS

FEIS Findings

Overall conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists would improve by implementation of the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative included a separated bike path along US 93 as much as possible, and provisions for bicyclists on the shoulder where a separated bike path was not feasible. Accommodations to facilitate easier pedestrian crossing of US 93 would improve pedestrian safety as well.

Changed Conditions

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are notably important to the City of Whitefish and Citizens Working Group (CWG). The Current Proposed Action would improve bicycle and pedestrian safety and connectivity with the following changes:

- A continuous bicycle and pedestrian path would be included throughout the length of the project area, which would provide improved access and connectivity to and from parks and recreation areas in Whitefish.

- An undercrossing would be provided at the Second Street Bridge, and would connect to the existing Whitefish trail system.

- Improvements to the existing golf course underpass would provide improved safety and access for golf club maintenance crews, golf club users, and bicycle/pedestrian trail users.

- The bike path was located along the north side of US 93 at the golf club and Skyles Lake to allow access to State Park Road, the Skyles Lake fishing access, and other trail connections.

- The bike path was located on the south side of US 93 along Spencer Lake to better access recreation areas and connecting trails on Twin Bridges Road.

The separated bike path would require additional right-of-way at some locations, however the path is generally located within the required clear zone for the highway or within necessary cut/fill slopes, and thus the need for additional right-of-way would be minor.

Conclusion

The Current Proposed Action provides additional improvements to pedestrian and bicycle facilities that were not included in the FEIS. The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address impacts to pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the Whitefish West project area.

5.8 AIR QUALITY

FEIS Findings

Whitefish has been designated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a nonattainment area for particulate matter that is less than or equal to ten microns in diameter (PM_{10}). During 1992, eight concentrations in Whitefish were recorded that exceeded the 24-hour standard. No violations were recorded in 1993. It was believed that re-entrained road dust and smoke produced by residential wood burning were likely the largest PM_{10} emission sources.

A regional PM_{10} emissions analysis was performed for the No-Build and Build Alternatives for 2005 and 2015. The analysis concluded that emissions from the Build Alternatives would be higher than the No-Build Alternative in the Whitefish Nonattainment Area, which includes the Whitefish West project area. Hot Spot analysis is required in PM_{10} nonattainment areas (40 CFR Parts 51 and 93). This analysis was not conducted for the FEIS because EPA had not released guidance pertaining to this analysis.

Changed Conditions

The following guidance pertaining to Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSATs) and NEPA documentation has been issued since the FEIS was written, and therefore was not discussed in the FEIS.

Based on the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) *Interim Guidance on Air Toxic Analysis in NEPA Documents*, February 2006, the Clean Air Act identified 188 air toxics, also known as hazardous air pollutants. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has assessed this expansive list of toxics and identified a group of 21 as mobile source air toxics, which are set forth in an EPA final rule, *Control of Emissions of Hazardous Air Pollutants from Mobile Sources (66 FR 17235)*. The EPA extracted a subset to this list of 21 that it now labels as the six priority Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSATs). These are *benzene, formaldehyde, diesel particulate matter/diesel exhaust organic gases, acrolein, and 1, 3-butadiene*.

The Current Proposed Action would not result in any meaningful changes in traffic volumes, vehicle mix, location of the existing facility, or any other factor that would cause an increase in emissions impacts relative to the No-Build Alternative. This project would generate minimal air

quality impacts for Clean Air Act criteria pollutants and has not been linked with any special MSAT concerns. Consequently this project is exempt from analysis of MSATs.

Moreover, interim FHWA guidance on air toxic analysis states that EPA regulations for vehicle engines and fuels would cause overall MSATs to decline significantly over the next 20 years. Even after accounting for a 64 percent increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), FHWA predicts MSATs would decline in the range of 57 percent to 87 percent, from 2000 to 2020, based on regulations now in effect. This would reduce both the background level of MSATs as well as the possibility of even minor MSAT emissions from this project.

Air quality is continuously monitored in the Whitefish airshed; however an air quality trend analysis is not available because data collection has not been consistent over the years. The air-monitoring site has been moved since the FEIS was written.

On March 29, 2007, the EPA finalized the Clean Air Fine Particle Implementation Rule, which defined requirements for state plans to clean the air in 39 areas where particle pollution levels do not meet national air quality standards. Libby is currently the only designated $PM_{2.5}$ non-attainment area in Montana. Whitefish is currently designated a PM_{10} non-attainment area. The EPA published notice of attaining standards November 1, 2001 (66 FR 55102) for the years 1997-99. However, this action did not re-designate Whitefish as an attainment area because Montana has not submitted the required maintenance plan.

Since the FEIS was published, the EPA provided the following guidance pertaining to Qualitative PM_{10} Hot Spot Analyses. In addition to a regional emissions analysis, 40 CFR Parts 51 and 93 require a project level hot-spot analysis for PM_{10} nonattainment areas in order to determine whether localized violations of the PM_{10} standard are likely. Under the rule, until EPA issues a quantitative PM_{10} hot-spot model, a qualitative analysis is required. In order to perform this analysis, traffic volumes from the project were compared to traffic volumes in other locations in Montana where a PM_{10} air quality monitor was located. The PM_{10} monitors in Missoula and Kalispell are exposed to traffic on several urban arterials, with higher traffic volumes than those projected for US 93 in the Whitefish area. Because Missoula and Kalispell have not violated the PM_{10} standard in recent years, and although an increase in VMT would increase particulates, the 2030 traffic volumes in Whitefish are not expected to result in a violation. A decrease in traffic congestion would decrease vehicle emissions.

Commitments to mitigate PM_{10} emissions identified in the FEIS would be included in the Current Proposed Action for the Whitefish West project. These include: surfacing gravel and dirt shoulders and employing dust mitigation Best Management Practices (BMPs) during construction. These measures are in compliance with the current local air quality regulations and serve to support and enhance the mitigation efforts in effect within the Whitefish airshed.

Flathead County adopted air pollution control regulations in 1994, including specific regulations for controlling PM_{10} emissions in the Whitefish airshed. The rules require testing of sanding and chip seal materials, construction activity permits, paving of roadways and parking lots, and a street sweeping and flushing program. These adopted rules reflect the same strategies that were identified in the FEIS.

Conclusion
Air quality regulations have changed since the FEIS was written. However, the FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address impacts to air quality within the Whitefish West project area.

5.9 NOISE

FEIS Findings
The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) specifies categories for noise sensitivity. The residences, churches and parks along the existing highway project area and the proposed alternatives fell into Category B of the NAC and should not receive exterior noise of greater than 67 decibels (dBA), at equivalent steady-state (Leq). Businesses along the existing US 93 alignment fell into NAC Category C and should not receive exterior noise levels greater than 72 dBA Leq.

Noise monitoring was performed in September and October 1993 during peak traffic periods. The monitoring points represented sensitive receptors of each land use as defined by the NAC Categories B and C. Three out of the four sites monitored in Whitefish exceeded the NAC Category B criteria of 67 dBA Leq. A predictive noise model was used to evaluate noise levels for 2015. Based on these model results, it was predicted that more sites along the Whitefish highway alignment would experience noise levels that approach or exceed FHWA NAC standards by 2015. However, no receptors are predicted to receive a substantial increase between noise levels measured in 1993 to the 2015-modeled levels under any of the design alternatives.

Title 23 CFR 772 requires that noise abatement measures be considered for this project. The noise abatement analysis showed that noise barriers were not a reasonable alternative due to access issues and visual concerns. Changes in the horizontal and/or vertical road alignment can be effective in reducing noise and could be considered in detail after the Preferred Alternative had been selected and the project entered final design.

Changed Conditions
Federal NAC categories have not changed since the FEIS was written (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 2004). On April 1, 2005, the Federal Register published an amendment to Title 23 CFR 772.17 Traffic Noise Prediction stipulating current methodology should be consistent with the FHWA Traffic Noise Model (Report FHWA-PD-96-010).

MDT performed a Preliminary Noise Analysis (PNA) in 2002 for the Whitefish West project. This PNA concluded that traffic noise impacts already exist (greater than 66 dBA for residential areas, greater than 71 dBA for commercial areas) at various locations along the project length. Projected future traffic volumes would increase these noise levels, as would any new alignments that bring traffic lanes closer to existing receivers.

Because existing noise levels already exceed the noise abatement criteria levels at several locations within the project limits, a detailed noise analysis would be required for the Whitefish

West project based on the current design. The "Detailed Noise Analysis" (DNA) would be performed when plans for the horizontal and vertical alignments have been finalized. Until that time, the findings of the PNA would serve as a guide in the planning process for minimizing traffic noise impacts associated with this project.

Conclusion
The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address noise impacts within the Whitefish West project segment.

5.10 WATER RESOURCES AND QUALITY

FEIS Findings
The 1994 FEIS identified two major issues related to water quality:

- Increased impurities in storm water runoff from increased traffic flow, increased impervious surface, and/or increased maintenance activities.

- Sediment loading during and after construction activities due to the exposure of bare substrate.

Water resource impacts were expected to be minor for two reasons. First, the project overlays an existing transportation project area with its specific profile and grading that has been used consistently for a number of years without excessive water or stream degradation. Second, because the project area passes over the water features in an approximately perpendicular manner, the potential for impacts is reduced.

Storm water delivery systems would be designed in accordance with current MDT and local jurisdictional practice. Storm water detention areas constructed for this project would also be available to detain hazardous or toxic materials spills, as well as other chemicals and sediment. These detained materials would not directly enter the aquatic environment.

The design intention for all the proposed build alternatives was to limit encroachment below the mean high water mark to the extent feasible at each crossing. There were no plans to place any abutment materials below the mean high water mark. Only the pier substructure necessary for support would be placed directly in the flow of the river.

Changed Conditions
The Current Proposed Action would result in approximately 2.7 ha (6.7 ac) of additional impervious surface (compared to the Preferred Alternative) in the Whitefish West project segment, which would result in increased impurities from storm water runoff. Increased impervious surface areas can be attributed to the additional width on bridges, additional shoulder widths, additional sidewalks and bike paths, and more accurate measurement based on preliminary design.

Current bridge plans include bridge abutments within the mean high water mark. Sloping abutments are proposed and the toes of the abutments would extend several meters beyond

the existing bank. Because the abutments would be sloped, they would act as only a minor constriction on the river channel.

Skyles Lake and Spencer Lake are adjacent to the project area, but were not included in the FEIS. No direct impacts to Skyles Lake and Spencer Lake are anticipated.

While water quality degradation has been measured in the Whitefish River, numerous sources not directly or specifically related to the US 93 project area have been listed as the primary causes. The Current Proposed Action has the potential for temporary water quality impacts associated with storm water runoff during construction. However, mitigation measures and best management practices (BMPs) were identified in the FEIS that would minimize the construction related impacts. Proposed storm water conveyance and detention facilities would result in a net improvement in water quality along the highway alignment. Standard erosion and sediment control BMPs have been developed and updated in 2003 by MDT, and would be incorporated into the project. These procedures and methods are proven technology to reduce erosion and sediment associated with highway-related pre-construction, construction, and post construction activities.

Although TMDLs have not yet been developed for the Whitefish River, TMDLs may need to be considered during final design and construction of this project.

Conclusion

There would be additional water quality impacts within the Whitefish West project segment that were not identified in the FEIS, however these impacts are similar in type and nature to the impacts described in the FEIS. The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address the mitigation requirements.

5.11 WETLANDS

FEIS Findings

Eight wetlands were identified in the 1994 FEIS within the Whitefish West project segment using aerial photos and the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps. In July 1993, wetlands along the highway alignment were delineated using the MDT guidelines for evaluating wetlands (MDT1991). No wetland impacts were identified in the Whitefish West project area.

Changed Conditions

A Biological Resources Report (BRR) completed in 2008 delineated fifteen primary wetland areas in and adjacent to the project area. Eight wetlands identified in the BRR are the same as those identified in the 1994 FEIS and seven were newly identified.

The Current Proposed Action would result in 1.0 hectares (2.5 acres) of wetland impacts that were not identified in the FEIS. Wetland impacts are listed below and shown on exhibits included in **Appendix E**.

Wetland impacts based on the Current Proposed Action

Wetland ID	Approximate Stationing	Source of Wetland Hydrology	Estimated Impact Hectares (acres)	Narrative Description & Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination**
WL-6 (Same as FEIS Wetland 24)	Sta. 5+30 Left	Whitefish River	No impacts	Narrow wetland fringe along SE bank of Whitefish River at the 2nd Street bridge. Likely Jurisdictional.
WL-7 (Same as FEIS Wetland 24)	Sta. 5+70 Left	Whitefish River	No impacts	Narrow wetland fringe along SW bank of Whitefish River at the 2nd Street bridge. Likely Jurisdictional.
WL-8 (Same as FEIS Wetland 24)	Sta. 5+80 Right	Whitefish River	No impacts	Narrow wetland fringe along NW bank of Whitefish River at the 2nd Street bridge. Likely Jurisdictional.
WL-9*	Sta. 39+20 to 39+60 Right	Groundwater & surface runoff	0.018 ha (0.044 ac)	Isolated depression within existing roadside ditch. Likely non-jurisdictional.
WL-10	Sta. 42+40 to 42+70 Right	Groundwater & surface runoff	0.061 ha (0.151 ac)	Apparently isolated pothole wetland surrounded by coniferous forest habitat. Likely non-jurisdictional.
WL-11 (Same as FEIS Wetland 25)	Sta. 47+00 to 49+70 Right	Groundwater, Skyles Lake	0.247 ha (0.610 ac)	Upper end of Skyles Lake – wetland is hydrologically connected to Skyles Lake. Likely jurisdictional.
WL-12 (Same as FEIS Wetland 26)	Sta. 58+40 to 59+50 Right	Outflow from Skyles Lake	0.131 ha (0.324 ac)	Emergent marsh wetland influenced by surface flow out of Skyles Lake. Likely jurisdictional.
WL-13 (Same as FEIS Wetland 27)	Sta. 62+60 to 63+21 Right	Perennial surface flow and groundwater	0.141 ha (0.348 ac)	Emergent marsh and scrub/shrub wetland with drainage pattern through wetland that connects to Spencer Lake. Likely jurisdictional
WL-13a (Same as FEIS Wetland 27)	Sta. 63+10 to 63+25 Left	Perennial surface flow and groundwater	0.004 ha (0.010 ac)	Emergent marsh and scrub/shrub wetland connected to Wetland 13 via small culvert under highway. Drainage pattern through wetland that connects to Spencer Lake. Likely jurisdictional
WL-14	Sta. 80+95 to 85+10 Right	Groundwater & surface runoff	0.099 ha (0.245 ac)	Roadside ditch wetland towards north end of project. Possible down-gradient connection to water of the U.S. Jurisdiction unknown.
WL-15	Sta. 80+30 to 85+18 Left	Groundwater & surface runoff	0.231 ha (0.571 ac)	Roadside ditch wetland towards north end of project. Possible down-gradient connection to water of the U.S. Jurisdiction unknown.
WL-16	Sta. 80+20 to 80+30 Right	Groundwater & surface runoff	0.014 ha (0.035 ac)	Roadside ditch wetland towards north end of project. Possible down-gradient connection to water of the U.S. Jurisdiction unknown.

Wetland ID	Approximate Stationing	Source of Wetland Hydrology	Estimated Impact Hectares (acres)	Narrative Description & Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination**
WL-17 (Same as FEIS Wetland 28)	Sta. 64+40 to 75+20 Left	Spencer lake	0.051 ha (0.126 ac)	Spencer Lake and its associated wetland fringe. Likely jurisdictional.
WL-18	Sta. 29+25 to 29+42 Left	Groundwater & surface runoff	0.005 ha (0.012 ac)	Roadside ditch wetland – appears isolated. Non-jurisdictional.
WL-19	Sta. 25+80 Left	Groundwater & surface runoff	0.013 ha (0.032 ac)	Pothole wetland. Jurisdiction unknown.
		Total Impacts:	**1.015 ha (2.508 ac)**	

1 = EM is Emergent Marsh; SS is Scrub/Shrub; 2 = Cowardin et. al. 1979; 3 = From Berglund 1999
* Wetland Identification begins at 9 instead of 1, because the BRR originally included the Whitefish Urban area. Wetland identification numbers were not changed in order to retain consistency from data collection.
** Jurisdictional determination and mitigation requirements are made by the US Army Corps of Engineers during the 404 Permit process.

Minor, temporary impacts within the right-of-way and temporary construction easements may occur, although these impacts cannot be quantified because precise construction techniques/approaches are unknown at this time. Temporary impacts to wetlands within the right-of-way and construction easement areas would be restored to original contours and revegetated immediately following construction. Additional wetland avoidance and minimization opportunities including adjusting slopes and installation of guardrail would be explored during final design where practical.

Compensatory mitigation for the wetland loss would be pursued according to United States Army Corps of Engineers requirements. Both on-site and off-site mitigation would be pursued. Off-site mitigation would be pursued at a MDT mitigation reserve located within Watershed 4.

Roadside ditch wetlands impacted by the project could potentially re-establish in the new ditch over time, thereby replacing wetlands that might have been lost in these areas. The specific amount of wetland that might be created is difficult at best to determine, but could be monitored over time to establish an acreage.

Conclusion

There would be new wetland impacts in the Whitefish West project area that were not identified in the FEIS, however the wetland impacts are similar in type and nature to the impacts described in the FEIS for the overall Somers to Whitefish West corridor. The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately identifies the requirements to mitigate wetland impacts. A wetland mitigation plan would need to be discussed and approved by the resource agencies for the additional wetland impacts identified.

5.12 FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

FEIS Findings

Wildlife

Wildlife habitat in the project area is predominantly upland in character. Much of the project area habitat has been disturbed by human development. White tail deer was the most common big game species present. Observations of elk, mule deer, and moose have been recorded but the highly developed condition probably limited use of the project area by these species. Specific issues of concern to both the public and resource management agencies related to the proposed project included, reducing wildlife hazards, minimizing the effects of the project on nearby wildlife refuges, and minimizing disruption of big game migrational patterns. Some portions of the area were utilized for seasonal movements; however no specific routes had been documented. No raptor nests were known to exist in the study area within 152 m (500 ft) either side of US 93.

Fisheries

The project area crosses the Whitefish River, which is a low gradient river occurring within glacial till. Use of the Whitefish River by fish species is limited due to the high amount of sediment. Fish primarily use the Whitefish River for migration. Due to the high amount of development in the project area, the banks of the Whitefish River are somewhat degraded.

Wildlife Habitat

Riparian habitat within the highway project area for this segment is restricted to adjacent wetlands particularly along the Whitefish River. Within the developed areas, the habitat was typically limited to weedy species and planted exotic species. Wildlife associated with these areas was limited to species adapted to high levels of human disturbance.

The Preferred Alternative would physically remove habitat available for wildlife; however, none of the areas to be impacted were critical or limiting for wildlife species. Minor displacement would occur. The potential for additional wildlife collisions was not expected to increase substantially because the road was established and wildlife in the area are accustomed to the highway's presence. Approximately 10.5 ha (26 ac) of coniferous forest wildlife habitat would be removed along the Whitefish West portion of the project area.

Changed Conditions

The Whitefish West Biological Resources Report (BRR) (PBS&J 2008) addresses potential changed biological conditions in the project area. Impacts to fisheries and wildlife that were not included in the FEIS are discussed below.

Wildlife

Common mammals occupying habitats in the general project area that were not discussed in the FEIS are discussed in detail in the BRR. Residential and commercial development has eliminated most wildlife habitat within city limits; however, suitable habitat is still abundant along the Whitefish West segment. No critical wildlife habitat, such as important white-tailed deer winter range, occurs within project limits. Consequently, upland habitat to be affected by the project is generally judged overall as being of low to moderate quality. From a quality

perspective, direct impacts to existing vegetation and wildlife habitat in the project area are considered relatively minor.

The project site is within the distributional range of approximately six amphibian and seven reptilian species (Maxell et al. 2003), which are discussed in the BRR. No amphibians or reptiles were observed during the July 2005 field visit.

The project area is likely to be occupied by a variety of species adapted to riparian, wetland, forested, and open meadow habitats of western Montana. Those species are discussed in detail in the BRR.

The Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) data search results indicated three known occurrences of wildlife species of concern within a 3.2 km (two mile) radius of the proposed project (MTNHP 2005a). Common Loons are known to nest at nearby Whitefish and Blanchard Lakes, and were seen during the field survey utilizing Spencer Lake near the west end of the project. Nesting at Spencer Lake has not been documented. The Le Conte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*), which typically occupies wet meadow peat lands, is the other sensitive wildlife species documented in the project area, although the most current record for this species is from 1987 (MTNHP 2005a).

The Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus)* was removed from the threatened and endangered species list in 2007 and is currently designated a sensitive species in Montana. The greater Kalispell area, including Whitefish, supports the highest density of nesting Bald Eagles in the state; however, no active Bald Eagle nest sites are known to occur within five kilometers (three miles) of the proposed action. The nearest nesting records occur towards the north end of Whitefish Lake and along Swift Creek, a tributary to Whitefish Lake.

Fisheries

Fish species present in this reach of the Whitefish River are discussed in detail in the BRR. Bull trout are discussed in the Threatened and Endangered Species section. Water temperatures in the river below Whitefish Lake are typically higher in the summer months than are preferred by salmonids and therefore few trout are found in this reach. Although the Whitefish River is not considered important bull trout habitat, the species would be discussed in the Threatened and Endangered Species section of this re-evaluation.

The Whitefish River is on the Montana 303d list of impaired waterbodies (MTDEQ 2002), with metals, nitrogen, nutrients, oil and grease, PCB's, thermal modifications, industrial point sources, silviculture, construction, land development, and urban runoff/storm sewers listed as probable sources.

Impacts to aquatic resources within project limits would primarily result from direct disturbance associated with demolition and new bridge construction at the Whitefish River, and culvert installation at the perennial drainage bisected by the roadway near Station 63+00. Direct impacts to Skyles and Spencer Lakes are not anticipated at this time, although wetlands associated with these lakes would be impacted and are discussed in the wetlands section of this re-evaluation. Existing impacts from sand/gravel use during the winter months and general roadway runoff are expected to continue following construction. Temporary detours and/or work bridges may be required at each bridge crossing depending on alignment and construction techniques, thus introducing additional sources of disturbance to the river and its banks.

The multi-span bridge at the Whitefish River/Second Avenue crossing would be replaced with a new bridge. Construction could temporarily introduce sediment into the river and re-suspend sediment into the water column. The number of piers in the water would be reduced from two to one set of columns placed parallel to the flow of the river.

Increases in turbidity, suspended sediment, and other pollutants can reduce stream productivity, reduce feeding opportunities for fish, and result in fish avoidance of important habitat. Deposited sediments reduce habitat volume by filling pools and intergravel spaces, which are critical to young fish.

Prior to and during construction, MDT would acquire and comply with state and federal water quality permits in association with this project as described in the Permits section of this re-evaluation. Additional state and federal water quality permit conditions may be stipulated at the time of permit issuance.

Wildlife Habitat

Rare and sensitive plant species that could potentially occur in the project area were identified in the BRR, but no sensitive plant species were observed during field reconnaissance.

Construction would disturb existing noxious weed communities and would create additional habitat suitable for noxious weed establishment within newly disturbed areas. Exposed soils, particularly adjacent to roadways, are extremely vulnerable to weed establishment. Off-site movement from roadway project areas onto adjacent land can result in reduced land values and productivity through a reduction in vegetative diversity and native plant biomass. Spotted knapweed and Canada thistle are common along the proposed alignment and would likely colonize newly disturbed areas.

Habitat fragmentation can result in impediments to wildlife dispersal and corresponding genetic exchange among populations. The existing two-lane highway with moderate average daily traffic (ADT) counts has presented a minor impediment to wildlife movement as shown in the collected roadkill data in the BRR. The addition of turning and climbing lanes to the project area would add to habitat fragmentation in the project area by: further reducing the amount of physical cover adjacent to the highway, incrementally increasing separation between cross-highway habitats, and increasing traffic speeds, thereby increasing the chance for wildlife/vehicle collisions.

Impacts to fish and wildlife are expected to be minor due to the lack of important habitat features in the project area and due to the current urbanization of the immediate project vicinity. Measures to minimize impacts to fish and wildlife include the following:

- Any temporary clearing outside the construction limits but within the right-of-way would be kept to the smallest area possible and reclaimed immediately following construction.

- Disturbed wetland and streamside areas would be revegetated with desired plant material obtained from local sources as quickly as possible following construction. In accordance with 7-22-2152 MCA and 60-2-208 MCA, MDT would re-establish a permanent desirable vegetation community along all areas disturbed by proposed

construction. A set of revegetation guidelines would be developed by MDT, which the construction contractor must follow.

- No construction equipment would be allowed within the active Whitefish River channel unless specifically permitted to do so.
- Clearing and grubbing would not be allowed within the right-of-way beyond the construction limits or required clear zone.
- All State and Federal water quality permit conditions would be adhered to.

Conclusion

New species were found to occur in the project area that were not discussed in the FEIS. However, the FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address the impacts to fish and wildlife in the Whitefish West project segment.

5.13 FLOODPLAINS

FEIS Findings

There were no locations along the existing US 93 alignment subject to road surface flooding during a 100-year flood event. Mapping of the 100-year floodplain was based on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Encroachment on the floodplains would be minimal and impacts on the natural and beneficial values of the floodplains would be insignificant. The footprint of fill placed within the floodplain would be minimal when compared to the total extent of the floodplain surface area. The minimal encroachments would result in a loss of minor flood conveyance or storage. The steep and narrow character of the floodplains along with the rural setting of many floodplain crossings would not support floodplain development. The Preferred Alternative would result in a minor encroachment on the 100-year floodplain (approximately 5 m^2 (50 ft^2)).

The Preferred Alternative is consistent with local, state and federal floodplain and water resource management programs. Impacts to the floodplain would be minimized by following standard stream crossing design criteria, avoiding direct impacts on stream channels, and adjusting alignments where possible. All practical measures to minimize harm would be incorporated.

Changed Conditions

The Current Proposed Action would result in a similar encroachment on the 100-year floodplain, depending on the type of structure selected for the bridge. The use of sloped abutments would increase the encroachment, however the Whitefish River is wide and slow moving and impacts to the hydrology of the river would be insignificant. A permit would be obtained from the Flathead County Floodplain Administrator for floodplain encroachment activities.

Conclusion

Although encroachment impacts would vary slightly from the FEIS, impacts to floodplains would still be minimal and impacts on the natural and beneficial values of the floodplains would be

inconsequential. The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address floodplain impacts within the Whitefish West project segment.

5.14 THREATENED OR ENDANGERED SPECIES

FEIS Findings

Through consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in June 1993, it was determined that two federally listed species potentially occur in the project area: the bald eagle and the peregrine falcon. No adverse indirect, direct, or cumulative impacts were anticipated to bald eagles and their nests, or to peregrine falcons as a result of the proposed project.

Sensitive species were identified by the Montana Natural Heritage Program and were discussed in the Threatened and Endangered Species section of the FEIS. Two sensitive fish species (bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout) and one sensitive plant species (western witchgrass) were documented to occur in the project area. Bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout were identified as primary species of concern in the Stillwater and Whitefish rivers. Their occurrence was limited to the migratory periods when they move between tributaries of the Stillwater and Whitefish rivers and Flathead Lake and no adverse indirect, direct, or cumulative impacts were anticipated. Western witchgrass is associated with marsh areas near Spencer Lake; however habitat for this species is not expected to be impacted by the project.

Changed Conditions

The Biological Resources Report (BRR) (PBS&J 2008) reflects the changes in the status of affected species and updates the conditions related to threatened and endangered species and critical habitat. The Biological Resources Report includes a Biological Assessment (BA) of species listed or proposed for listing by the USFWS as threatened or endangered. Under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as amended, activities conducted, sponsored, or funded by federal agencies must be reviewed for their effects on species federally listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered. Based on the USFWS list of threatened, endangered, and proposed species that may be present in Montana counties (USFWS 2004), and range/habitat descriptions found in technical literature, the following listed species were considered with respect to this project:

- Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*: endangered)
- Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*: threatened)
- Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*: threatened)
- Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*: threatened)

The peregrine falcon and bald eagle were included in the FEIS but were delisted from the USFWS list of threatened and endangered species.

The BRR identified two wildlife species of concern that were documented by the Montana Natural Heritage Program to occur within a 3.2 km (2 mi) radius of the project area. The common loon and Le Conte's sparrow are discussed in the Fish and Wildlife section of this re-evaluation.

Gray Wolf

No active wolf dens are known to occur in the project area. Due to the general lack of wolf pack activity in the immediate project area, breeding, denning, and other reproductive functions are not likely to be affected by the project.

Potential wolf habitat loss resulting from the project is considered a less-than-substantial impact due to the moderate disturbance levels associated with existing roadside vegetation communities.

The roadway through the Whitefish West project area would be widened to include a turning lane and/or truck climbing lane, thus increasing the distance between cross-highway habitats, but substantial barriers to wolf movement are not anticipated because no concentrated movement areas have been identified in the project area. Occasional movement through the project area is likely to continue following construction.

Based on the above information, it is determined that implementation of the proposed action would have **no effect** on the gray wolf.

Grizzly Bear

Potential grizzly bear habitat loss resulting from the project is considered a less-than-substantial impact due to the moderate disturbance levels associated with existing roadside vegetation communities and the fact that grizzly bears only occasionally visit the project area.

Due to the presence of scattered rural home sites along the west segment of the project, use of this area by grizzly bears is discouraged by wildlife managers so as to avoid human/bear conflicts. Therefore, construction activity and noise associated with the project would potentially discourage use of the project area for a short time and would be consistent with management goals in this area.

US 93 through the western portion of the project would be widened to include a turning lane and/or truck climbing lane, thus increasing the distance between cross-highway habitats. Substantial barriers to grizzly bear movement are not anticipated because no concentrated grizzly movement areas have been identified in the project area. Occasional movement through the project area is likely to continue following construction.

Based on the above information, a **may affect, not likely to adversely affect** determination is rendered relative to the grizzly bear.

Canada Lynx and Proposed Critical Habitat

Potential lynx habitat loss resulting from the project is considered a less-than-substantial impact due to the moderate disturbance levels associated with existing roadside vegetation communities and the fact that lynx are not expected to utilize habitat in the project area except on rare occasions by transient animals.

The roadway through the western portion of the project may be widened to include a turning lane and/or truck climbing lane, thus increasing the distance between cross-highway habitats. Substantial barriers to lynx movement are not anticipated because no concentrated lynx movement areas have been identified in the project area. Occasional movement through the project area is likely to continue following construction.

Based on the above information, it was determined that the project would have **no effect** on the Canada lynx as a result of the Whitefish West project.

Bull Trout

Through the project area, the Whitefish River contains poor bull trout habitat that is better suited for warmer water species such as northern pike and yellow perch. Water temperatures are elevated, substrates are comprised of silt and sand, and overall water quality is poor due to various point and non-point sources. The Whitefish River is not considered Critical Habitat by the USFWS. In spite of the poor habitat conditions in the project area, individual bull trout may occasionally occupy habitat in the Whitefish River near the project area (Delaray pers. comm.).

The USFWS Dichotomous Key For Making Endangered Species Act Determinations of Effect from *A Framework to Assist in Making Endangered Species Act Determinations of Effect for Individual or Grouped Actions at the Bull Trout Subpopulation Watershed Scale* (USFWS 1998) was applied in making the determination of effect. This key, along with the rationale for the highlighted conclusions, is included in the Biological Resources Report.

Based on the above information, coordination with the USFWS and MFWP, and implementation of specified coordination measures, a **may affect, not likely to adversely affect** determination is rendered relative to bull trout. The Biological Assessment (PBS&J 2008) includes recommended coordination measures to reduce potential impacts to bull trout.

Cumulative Effects

Temporary impacts to threatened and endangered species may ultimately occur in conjunction with other recently constructed or proposed highway projects and other private development in the general area. Substantial highway improvements are proposed and ongoing for US 93 between Evaro and Polson to the south of this project, as well as a newly proposed bypass around the City of Kalispell, potentially resulting in additional habitat loss or degradation for threatened and endangered species. Increased human development in the general project area is reasonably foreseeable and attributable to a variety of factors. Adverse indirect effects sometimes associated with such development may occur. These include habitat loss/degradation and increase of mortality risk from human/wildlife conflicts.

Impacts to threatened and endangered species are expected to be minor due to the lack of important habitat features in the project area and due to the current urbanization of the immediate project vicinity.

The Biological Assessment includes recommended coordination measures to reduce potential impacts to threatened and endangered species, including the following:

- All State and Federal water quality permit conditions would be adhered to.
- Construction equipment operating in wetlands would be limited to that which is needed to perform the necessary work.
- Disturbed streamside areas would be revegetated with appropriate plant material as recommended by MDT's agronomist. Coconut fiber mats (or an acceptable equivalent)

would be used to help stabilize disturbed streambank areas until permanent vegetation becomes established.

- If MDT becomes aware of any threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate species located in the vicinity of construction activities, they would inform the contractor of those locations and of potential restrictions that may be associated with avoiding impacts to those species.

No adverse indirect, direct, or cumulative impacts are anticipated to the gray wolf, grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and bull trout as a result of the Whitefish West project.

Conclusion

New threatened and endangered species were found to occur in the project area that were not discussed in the FEIS. However, the FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address the impacts related to these species in the Whitefish West project segment.

5.15 CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

FEIS Findings

The FEIS identified historic sites that are both individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and eligible as contributing components of the Whitefish Residential Historic district. As stated in the FEIS, the proposed action would affect visual characteristics of the setting of the NRHP eligible properties in the project area. In addition, the FEIS stated that all construction would be confined to the existing right-of-way and no trees would be removed, therefore no direct or indirect impacts would occur. However, the addition of sidewalks where none currently exist along West Second Street would constitute an Adverse Effect to the setting of the historic neighborhood.

The MDT proposed to mitigate the Adverse Effect by conducting additional survey work and by preparing the nomination of the historic district to the National Register of Historic Places. After the nomination was accepted, MDT proposed to prepare a NRHP sign describing the Whitefish Residential Historic District and its significance to the history of the community.

Changed Conditions

Under the Current Proposed Action, there would be direct and indirect impacts to historic properties along the project area. Historic properties in the project area are shown on the exhibits in **Appendix E**. The following table describes impacts to historic properties that would be affected by the Current Proposed Action in the Whitefish West project area.

Historic Properties Affected by the Current Proposed Action

Address of Historic Properties	Name of Historic Properties	Impacts to Historic Properties
304 East 2nd St.	Masonic Temple	**No impacts to** the property would occur.
301 East 2nd St.	Duncan Samson Block	**No impacts to** the property would occur.

Address of Historic Properties	Name of Historic Properties	Impacts to Historic Properties
223 East 2nd St.	J.A. Samson Residence	There would be approximately 115 m^2 (1,238 ft^2) of temporary impacts to this property. The existing building would remain intact and its historic significance would be perpetuated. There would be **NO ADVERSE EFFECT** to this property.
118 West 2nd St.	Henessy Log Bungalow	Approximately 93 m^2 (1,001 ft^2) of property adjacent to US 93 would be permanently incorporated into the highway right-of-way. The existing building would remain intact and its historic significance would be perpetuated. There would be **NO ADVERSE EFFECT** to this property.
415 West 2nd St.	Harlow House	Approximately 124 m^2 (1,335 ft^2) of property adjacent to US 93 would be permanently incorporated into the highway right-of-way. The existing building would remain intact and its historic significance would be perpetuated. There would be **NO ADVERSE EFFECT** to this property.
427 West 2nd St.	Midby Bungalow	Approximately 124 m^2 (1,335 ft^2) of property adjacent to US 93 would be permanently incorporated into the highway right-of-way. The existing building would remain intact and its historic significance would be perpetuated. There would be **NO ADVERSE EFFECT** to this property.
1200 US 93	Whitefish Country Club Building	**No impacts to** the property would occur.
2055 US 93	Patten Mattress Factory	Approximately 81 m^2 (872 ft^2) of property adjacent to US 93 would be permanently incorporated into the highway right-of-way. The existing building would remain intact and its historic significance would be perpetuated. There would be **NO ADVERSE EFFECT** to this property.
2626 US 93	Westermark Place	Approximately 2,776 m^2 (29,881 ft^2) of property adjacent to US 93 would be permanently incorporated into the highway right-of-way. The existing building would remain intact and its historic significance would be perpetuated. There would be **NO ADVERSE EFFECT** to this property.
2860 US 93	Woodsman Cottage	Approximately 308 m^2 (3,315 ft^2) of property adjacent to US 93 would be permanently incorporated into the highway right-of-way. The existing building would remain intact and its historic significance would be perpetuated. There would be **NO ADVERSE EFFECT** to this property.

Portions of six historic properties in the Whitefish West project area would be permanently incorporated into the highway right-of-way; however, all of the historic buildings would remain intact and their historic integrity would be perpetuated. There would be no adverse effect to any of the historic properties in the Whitefish West project area.

The following measures are included in the Current Proposed Action to mitigate impacts to historic properties that were not discussed in the FEIS:

- Landscaped boulevards, a bicycle path, lighting and sidewalks would be added from Lupfer Avenue to Lion Mountain Road (State Park Road), which would provide improved visual quality, safety and access.

- Visual impacts would be minimized through the use of landscaped medians and boulevards, weathered steel guardrail, and rock texture facing treatments on retaining walls.

On November 13, 2007 the State Historic Preservation Office concurred with the *de minimis* impact determination for the historic properties in the Whitefish West project area. Coordination letters with the State Historic Preservation Office are included in **Appendix D**. Additional discussion of the *de minimis* impact determination is included in **Section 5.27** (Section 4(f) Analysis).

Conclusion
Although there would be impacts to historic properties that were not discussed in the FEIS, these impacts would be minor. The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address historic properties in the Whitefish West project segment.

5.16 PARKS AND RECREATION

FEIS Findings
The 1994 FEIS identified three parks in the Whitefish West project area that were immediately adjacent to US 93. All of these parks were identified as Section 4(f) properties.

- Whitefish Lake Golf Club is located north and south of US 93 and west of the Whitefish cemetery. It is a 48.6-ha (120-ac) site with one formal paved access point from US 93. The Whitefish Lake Golf Club was developed with federal assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and it is protected by Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.

- Grouse Mountain Park (Whitefish Tennis Courts/Soccer Fields) is located on the south side of US 93 at mp 128.8, west of Grouse Mountain Lodge. It is a 3.04- ha (7.5 ac) site with one formal, paved access point from US 93. Grouse Mountain Park was developed with federal assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and is protected by Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.

- Skyles Lake Access is a 1.54-ha (3.8-ac) state owned sportsman access. Facilities include an unimproved dirt road connecting US 93 to the waters edge. There are no signs along US 93 for this facility.

The FEIS concluded that parks and recreation properties would incur minor indirect impacts related to access and visual criteria but there would be no purchase or direct conversion of use for these properties. Generally the build alternatives would result in improved access, safety

and pedestrian and bicycle conditions. Landscape buffers were planned in the raised medians along the golf course to reduce visual impacts of the increased street width.

In compliance with Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, there would be no conversion of properties that were acquired or developed with Land and Water Conservation Fund grants to a non-recreational purpose.

Changed Conditions

The Current Proposed Action would result in direct temporary and permanent impacts to parks and recreational properties.

Kay Beller Park, developed after the completion of the FEIS, would be temporarily impacted by reconstruction of the existing driveway and parking area. A retaining wall and guardrail are proposed within the highway right-of-way along the northern property boundary. Approximately 455 m^2 (4,898 ft^2) of the northern property boundary of the park would be temporarily impacted during construction. Approximately three trees may be removed during construction. Additional impacts would include modified access to the park during construction. The Current Proposed Action would also provide an under crossing – part of the Second Street Bridge construction – which would improve access to riverfront trails at the park. No portion of Kay Beller Park would be permanently incorporated into the highway right-of-way. In compliance with Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act there would be no conversion of use of this property to a non-recreational purpose.

The Current Proposed Action would result in permanent changes to the Whitefish Lake Golf Club in the form of improvements to the existing golf club underpass and path system, both within the highway right-of-way and on the golf club property. Improvements would be determined during final design that would benefit the golf club. Changes may include extending, replacement, and/or widening of the existing underpass, adding a second underpass, and improvement to the existing pathway. Changes to the existing underpass would allow improved safety and access for golf club maintenance crews, golf club users, and bicycle/pedestrian trail users. Approximately 1,802 m^2 (19,397 ft^2) of the southern portion of the golf club would be temporarily impacted during construction. Approximately 5,584 m^2 (60,106 ft^2) of the northern portion of the golf club would be temporarily impacted during construction. A retaining wall and guardrail are proposed within the highway right-of-way along both property boundaries north and south of US 93. Construction impacts would be limited to modified access to the underpass and golf course during construction, grading and slope construction and partial driveway reconstruction. One tree may be removed in the southern portion of the park during reconstruction of the underpass. Approximately seven trees may be removed in the northern portion of the property. No portion of the Whitefish Lake Golf Club would be permanently incorporated into the highway right-of-way. In compliance with Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act there would be no conversion of use of this property to a non-recreational purpose.

The Current Proposed Action would result in minor temporary impacts at Grouse Mountain Park. A retaining wall and guardrail are proposed within the highway right-of-way along the northern property boundary and a portion of the driveway would be reconstructed. Approximately 685 m^2 (7,373 ft^2) of the park would be temporarily impacted during construction. Construction impacts would be limited to modified access. No portion of Grouse Mountain Park would be permanently incorporated into the highway right-of-way.

The Current Proposed Action would result in permanent impacts at the Skyles Lake Fishing Access Site. The point of access from US 93 would be realigned, but would be retained. Approximately 718 m^2 (7,728 ft^2) of the access road to the park would be permanently incorporated into the highway right-of-way, but the long-term recreational use of the property would not change. Access to the park would be temporarily disrupted during construction. Mitigation for the permanent impacts would include minor grading and base course gravel improvements for the length of the existing access road. Specific details regarding these improvements would be negotiated as part of the right-of-way acquisition.

Temporary construction impacts would be restored to a condition that is at least as good as that which existed prior to the project. If trees are removed, new trees would be planted in their place.

On November 27, 2007 the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks concurred with the *de minimis* impact determination, based on 23 CFR 774, for the Skyles Lake Fishing Access. Coordination letters with the City of Whitefish, the Whitefish Lake Golf Club and the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks are included in **Appendix D**. Additional discussion of the *de minimis* impact determination is included in **Section 5.27** (Section 4(f) Analysis).

Conclusion

There would be new impacts to parks and recreation that were not discussed in the FEIS, however these impacts are minor or would provide permanent beneficial changes to the affected properties. Therefore, the FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address parks and recreation impacts in the Whitefish West project segment.

5.17 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

FEIS Findings

Petroleum hydrocarbons were the primary contaminant of concern identified by assessment in the project area. Use, storage, and disposal conditions were observed from the public right-of-way during field investigations completed in the summer of 1993. Additionally, information regarding the presence or spillage of hazardous materials was collected from historical files and regulatory database searches.

Two sites within the Whitefish West project segment were identified with hazardous material contamination issues. Detailed hazardous materials analyses, including sampling and testing of questionable soils or water were not conducted during the FEIS process. Additional analysis was recommended prior to construction. Mitigation measures identified include excavation of contaminated soil and land farming (spreading contaminated soils over an evenly distributed area and providing the area with nutrients and vegetation).

Changed Conditions

The 2005 Phase II Hazardous Materials Assessment identified seven probable sites where project related work might encounter contamination in the Whitefish West project segment (two of which were identified in the FEIS).

- Former Sinclair Gas Station, a.k.a. Big Mountain One Stop (340 2nd St. E.)
- Whitefish Furniture (326 2nd St. E.)
- Glacier Bank (319 2nd St. E.)
- Duncan Sampson Building (301-305 2nd St. E.)
- Westside Exxon and Groceries (145 2nd St. W.)
- Michaels Repair (2140 US Hwy 93)
- Whitefish River

Conclusion

Although the number of documented and/or potential hazardous materials sites has increased from the FEIS, impacts and mitigation measures would be similar to those discussed in the FEIS.

5.18 VISUAL QUALITY

FEIS Findings

Landscape units visible from the roadway project area were mapped in the FEIS. Background views dominate throughout the project area but these views are supported and often framed by the lower foreground fields, hills, and vegetation. This scenic project area is important on a national basis because it serves as the western entrance to Glacier National Park. The importance of visual quality was identified at a number of public meetings for the US 93 project. The unique character and visual quality of the Flathead Valley were generally felt to be a primary reason that tourists travel through this project area.

Historically the valley bottom enjoyed undisturbed views of the surrounding mountains. Several downtown buildings in Whitefish are visual resources that contribute to the character and cultural significance of the community. Development has changed the US 93 roadside landscape from tree lined city entries to strip shops, gas stations, and hotels with multiple driveways and parking lots extending up to the roadside.

As stated in the FEIS, the Flathead Master Plan identified protection of high visual quality as a priority among 61% of the residents. Landscapes where visual improvements were recommended included industrial areas, extraction areas, strip commercial developments, urban, and semi-urban areas.

The following permanent visual changes (beneficial and adverse) were discussed in the FEIS:

- Expansion of width of pavement. The most noticeable area of expanded roadway or clear zone would occur west of Whitefish.
- Access would be more organized.
- Cut and fill sections.
- Addition of special design features.
- Addition of landscaping.
- Additional structures (such as retaining walls, guardrail and bridges).
- Expanded right-of-way, including the clear zone.

- Changes in adjacent land use.
- Expanded billboard control area.
- Addition of new roadway.

The Preferred Alternative would improve the chaotic visual character of disorganized and undifferentiated access points along the highway. Special design features were specifically located to enhance scenic vistas, areas of natural resource significance and the gateways to the urban areas. The medians and the roadside areas would be enhanced by the addition of landscaping. Final design would incorporate techniques to best fit the highway within the existing topography. In the Whitefish West project area, visual impacts would occur with cut and fill slopes to accommodate climbing lanes and some curve straightening to improve sight distance.

Changed Conditions
Visual impacts and mitigation measures discussed in the FEIS would be similar under the Current Proposed Action for the Whitefish West project segment.

Conclusion
The FEIS adequately addresses visual impacts within the Whitefish West project segment.

5.19 ENERGY

FEIS Findings
Increased traffic congestion along US 93 would continue to cause increased vehicular fuel consumption. Vehicular fuel consumption would decrease as a result of the proposed project due to enhanced traffic flow and reduced congestion. The long term maintenance fuel requirements would increase as a result of the proposed project due to the greater area of roadway surface to clear, de-ice, patch and maintain.

The FEIS listed the following mitigation activities for implementation that would serve to reduce the amount of fuel consumed during construction phases:

- Maximum use of on-site material to reduce haulage of materials
- Adequate construction vehicle maintenance
- Adequate construction phasing and detour plan
- Turning off equipment when it is not in use
- Design of construction access roads and staging areas to limit distances traveled

Changed Conditions
Energy impacts and mitigation measures discussed in the FEIS would not change under the Current Proposed Action.

Conclusion
The FEIS adequately addresses energy impacts within the Whitefish West project segment.

5.20 IMPLEMENTATION

FEIS Findings

Right-of-way costs would vary depending on the access control policy that would be implemented. A firm date for initiating construction of US 93 improvements had not been established. Through traffic would be delayed during construction. A temporary rerouting of vehicles on to side streets would increase trip times for travelers and expose residents of Whitefish residential areas to impacts from detoured traffic. Construction improvements would have positive short-term impacts on the local economy and would cause a small short-term increase in the local population. Construction improvements would expose persons living or working near the project area to noise and dust inconveniences. Utility relocation is time consuming.

The following implementation mitigation measures were discussed in the FEIS:

- Low maintenance plant material would be used (in the medians) for the rural areas. This would minimize the need for higher intensity maintenance.

- A construction-staging plan would be developed to minimize construction impacts to adjacent property owners. This would include specifications to address issues such as number of lanes open to traffic, traffic control, restrictions related to work hours or haul routes, pavement marking, flagging operations, and area disturbed. Access to adjacent properties would be maintained during construction. Consideration would be given to providing incentives to contractors to minimize the construction disturbance.

- Construction involving discharge to streams shall not occur in spawning areas if practical alternatives exist. Construction would be timed to prevent disruptions to migration of aquatic species.

Changed Conditions

Implementation impacts and mitigation discussed in the FEIS are similar to the Current Proposed Action for the Whitefish West project segment. No detours are proposed during construction, but traffic would be diverted into lanes within US 93. A temporary reduction in US 93 travel lanes during construction would slow traffic and increase trip times for travelers. One lane traffic control with flagging may be required for short durations, which would increase delays during construction.

Increased right-of-way and construction costs, and limited funding, may require a phased implementation of the Whitefish West project. The project would be spilt into smaller segments and constructed over several years under separate contracts.

Conclusion

The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address implementation impacts within the Whitefish West project area.

5.21 SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

The table below provides a summary of impacts associated with the FEIS No-Build alternative, the FEIS Preferred Alternative and the Current Proposed Action.

Summary of impacts

Environmental Element	No-Build	FEIS Preferred Alternative	Current Proposed Action
Traffic	• Decrease in circulation. • Increase in delays and congestion. • Increase in safety problems. • No parking spaces lost.	• Improved circulation, traffic operations and safety. • Reduced delay and congestion. • Loss of parking along East Second Street between Lupfer and O'Brien.	• Traffic operation, safety, and access impacts are similar to those discussed in FEIS. • Improved safety and capacity with additional turn lanes and access reconfiguration. • There would be minor adjustments to existing on-street parking in order to accommodate current design standards, but a reduction in the number of existing parking spaces is not anticipated.
Land Use	• Worsening congestion would slow business development. • Development would be more likely to occur in agricultural areas.	• Denser and more coordinated development would be encouraged.	• Similar to the FEIS Preferred Alternative.
Farmland	• No impacts	• No impacts	• No impacts
Social	• Travel times would continue to increase.	• There might be some influence on the geographic distribution of future settlement wherever the highway substantially changes the quality of access into areas with development potential. • There would be a small number of residential and business displacements.	• Similar to the FEIS Preferred Alternative.
Relocation	• No impacts	• Approximately 6.52 ha (16.1 ac) of right-of-way acquired. • No residential or business acquisitions were identified at the level of detail analyzed.	• Approximately 13 ha (33 ac) of right-of-way acquired; 2 commercial relocations, 9 residential relocations, and 4 outbuilding relocations.
Economic	• Worsening congestion would limit economic viability.	• There would be business growth along commercial strips from highway improvements. • There would be a small number of business displacements.	• Similar to FEIS Preferred Alternative.
Pedestrian and Bicyclists	• Increased congestion decreases safety and function.	• Improved pedestrian/bicyclist facilities.	• Additional facilities would further improve connectivity, especially at under crossings and bridges.
Air Quality	• Re-entrained road dust and smoke produced by residential wood burning were the likely largest PM_{10} emission sources.	• Emissions would be higher in the Whitefish Nonattainment Area.	• Similar to the FEIS Preferred Alternative.

Environmental Element	No-Build	FEIS Preferred Alternative	Current Proposed Action
Noise	• Existing noise levels along US 93 approach or exceed FHWA NAC. Truck noise would continue to increase downtown.	• No receptors are expected to receive a noticeable increase in noise.	• Similar to FEIS Preferred Alternative.
Water Resources and Quality	• No new impervious surfaces. • No new river encroachment.	• Increased impurities in storm water runoff due to 3 ha (7.9 ac) of new impervious surface. • There would be 14 m^3 (18 yd^3) of new river encroachment.	• Increased impurities in storm water runoff due to 5.77 ha (14.26 ac) of new impervious surface. • The areas of river encroachment would be similar to the areas discussed in the FEIS.
Wetlands	• No impacts.	• No wetland impacts were identified at the level of detail analyzed.	• There would be new wetland impacts that were not identified in the FEIS. • Approximately 1.015 ha (2.508 ac) of wetlands would be impacted.
Fisheries and Wildlife	• No impacts.	• Impacts to fish and wildlife are expected to be minor due to the lack of important habitat features in the project area and due to the current urbanization of the project area.	• Similar to FEIS Preferred Alternative. • Minor increase in wildlife habitat converted.
Floodplains	• No impacts.	• Minor new encroachments at bridge.	• Similar to FEIS Preferred Alternative.
Threatened and Endangered Species	• No impacts.	• No adverse indirect, direct, or cumulative impacts were anticipated to bald eagles and their nests, or to peregrine falcons as a result of the proposed project.	• Listed threatened and endangered species have changed since the FEIS was written. • The proposed action would have no effect on the gray wolf and Canada lynx. • A may affect, not likely to adversely affect determination is rendered with regard to grizzly bear, and bull trout.
Cultural Resources	• Increased traffic congestion and noise along 2nd St would have a negative affect on cultural resources.	• The project would affect visual characteristics of the setting of eligible properties. • All construction would be confined to the existing right-of-way and no trees would be removed, therefore no direct or indirect impacts would occur. • The addition of sidewalks where none currently exist along West Second Street would constitute an Adverse Effect to the setting of the historic neighborhood.	• A portion of six historic properties would be acquired. One historic property would be temporarily impacted during construction. Although portions of properties along Second Street and US 93 west of Lion Mountain Road would be incorporated into MDT's right-of-way, MDT determined and SHPO concurred there would be **NO ADVERSE EFFECT** to the setting of the historic properties.
Parks and Recreation	• Increased noise and traffic congestion at parks.	• There would be minor indirect impacts related to access and visual criteria. • There would be no purchase or direct conversion of use of parks and recreation properties.	• There would be new temporary impacts during construction at Kay Beller Park and Grouse Mountain Park. • There would be new permanent, beneficial changes to the under crossing at the Whitefish Lake Golf Club. • A portion of the road to the Skyles Lake Fishing Access Site would be improved and permanently incorporated into MDT right-of-way.

Environmental Element	No-Build	FEIS Preferred Alternative	Current Proposed Action
Hazardous Materials	• Sites with potential hazardous materials would continue to exist in the project area, but would not be disturbed by construction of this project.	• Potential concerns with 2 sites were identified at the level of detail analyzed.	• A total of 5 additional sites were identified as having documented or potential hazardous material contamination issues.
Visual Quality	• No impacts.	• Special design concepts would be an improvement. • There would be expanded roadway fill and clear zones, and new cut and fill sections	• Similar to the FEIS Preferred Alternative.
Energy	• No energy impacts to construct and greater energy would be lost to traffic congestion.	• Construction operations consume energy. • Decreased vehicular fuel consumption due to better traffic flow. • Greater roadway surface requires more energy for maintenance.	• Similar to FEIS Preferred Alternative. • Further reductions in congestion would result in greater reductions in fuel consumption.
Implementation	• Not applicable.	• Traffic would be delayed during construction. A temporary rerouting of vehicles on to city side streets would increase trip times. • Construction improvements would have positive short-term impacts on the local economy and would cause a small short-term increase in the local population. • Construction improvements would expose persons living or working near the project area to noise and dust inconveniences. • Utility relocation is time consuming.	• Similar to FEIS Preferred Alternative. • One lane traffic control with flagging may be required for short durations, which would increase delays during construction.

5.22 PERMITS NEEDED

FEIS Findings

The FEIS and Record of Decision (ROD) listed the following permits which must be obtained prior to the construction of the Preferred Alternative:

- Section 404 permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers.
- Section 401 water quality certification from Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Water Quality Bureau in support of a Section 404 permit.
- Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit from the DEQ, Water Quality Bureau.
- Flathead County Floodplain Development Permit.
- Montana Stream Protection Act (SPA) 124 Permit from the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

- As a condition of the SPA 124 Permit, 3A Authorization from the DEQ for construction activities that may cause unavoidable short-term violations of state surface water quality standards for turbidity, total dissolved solids, or temperature.

- Montana Land Use License or Easement on Navigable Waterways from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC).

- Beneficial Water Use Permit, a temporary water use permit under the Montana Water Use Act, would be required from the DNRC if water is needed for dust control or other construction-related purposes.

- Local Air Pollution Control Permits would be required for open burning, asphalt plant and gravel crushing operations during construction. Compliance with current city and county ordinances would be met.

- Construction Blasting Permit would be required from any contractors performing any blasting required. The contractor must be licensed from the Safety and Health Bureau of the Montana Department of Labor and Industry.

Changed Conditions

The Joint Application for Proposed Work in Montana's Streams, Wetlands, Floodplains, and Other Water Bodies would be used to apply for the local, state and federal permits that would be required for the project. The joint application form was revised in July 2008.

3A Authorization is now known as 318 Authorization from the DEQ for activities that would cause unavoidable short-term violations of water quality standards for any state water.

Stormwater Discharge General Permits require construction activities, which result in a disturbance of one or more total acres, to obtain permit authorization under a Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) "General Permit". Permit authorization is effective upon DEQ receipt of a complete Notice of Intent (NOI), Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), and fee.

Conclusion

The basic permitting requirements are similar to those identified in the 1994 FEIS. However, many permit application procedures and submittal requirements have evolved or have been amended since that time, and would require attention to details as defined in current rules. It is anticipated that coordination with permitting agencies and compliance with current regulations would effectively serve to minimize impacts and protect resources commensurate with the current environmental needs in the project area. The permitting process would have the flexibility to address current conditions of the environmental impacts identified in the FEIS and this re-evaluation.

5.23 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

FEIS Findings

Cumulative impacts are defined as impacts which "result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what the agency (federal or non-federal) undertakes such other actions." Cumulative impacts include indirect or secondary impacts which are addressed in each section of the FEIS and impacts associated with other projects. The FEIS identified the following known projects in the vicinity with potential cumulative impacts to the US 93 project:

- A Final EIS was prepared for the reconstruction of Highway 2 between Columbia Falls and Hungry Horse, Montana. These improvements would compliment the planned US 93 upgrades with no direct or indirect effects.

- The Flathead County Master Plan is under development to define desired future land use for Flathead County.

Changed Conditions

The following projects in the vicinity are planned or ongoing and may have potential cumulative impacts on the Current Proposed Action. The US 93 Whitefish West project is not currently funded and is not likely to be constructed until after 2011. As a result many of the projects listed below may be completed before the Whitefish West project is constructed.

The following projects may have potential cumulative impacts in the Whitefish area:

- The City of Whitefish is planning several bicycle path projects, which could influence bicycle movement in the project area.

- MDT is currently working on a design for the US 93 Kalispell bypass. Potential improvements implemented as a result of the bypass would not influence traffic in the Whitefish area.

- The City of Whitefish is planning to construct medians on US 93 north of MT 40 which could result in minor delays during construction.

- MDT is reconstructing a portion of US 93 north of Stillwater River which could result in minor delays during construction.

- MDT and the City of Whitefish are completing the Whitefish Transportation Plan and Urban Corridor Study of US 93, which could influence traffic in the project area, if implemented.

- The Flathead County Growth Policy (the Flathead County Master Plan as referenced in the FEIS) was completed in 2007, which could influence traffic in the project area.

- The City of Whitefish completed the Downtown Business District Master Plan in 2005, which could influence traffic on US 93 in the project area, if implemented.

- The City of Whitefish is planning improvements to the sewer and water system within the project area, which could result in additional delays during construction.

Conclusion

Continued growth is expected in the area, and it is impossible to forecast the exact details of where, when, and how the growth will occur (see **Section 5.2** Land Use and **Section 5.6** Economic). New projects have been identified that may have potential cumulative impacts on the Whitefish West project. It is anticipated that due to funding limitations, many of these projects would be complete prior to the Whitefish West project; therefore potential cumulative impacts are not likely. Continued coordination between the City of Whitefish and the Montana Department of Transportation would mitigate potential impacts of concurrent projects.

5.24 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL SHORT-TERM USES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

FEIS Findings

Local short-term uses of the environment that would occur are:

- Some loss of soils through erosion.
- Short-term disruptions in traffic and economic conditions.
- Some increases in turbidity during construction.
- Vegetation would be lost due to construction clearing.
- Wetlands would be filled for construction.
- Some wildlife would be displaced and/or would die during construction.
- Some fish or aquatic resource habitat would be temporarily destroyed.
- Temporary changes to visual quality would occur.

Long-term productivity that would be maintained or enhanced by this action includes:

- Long-term improved safety.
- Long-term improved use of energy from vehicular fuel consumption.
- Long-term enhancement in traffic capacity.
- Long-term improvements in economic conditions.
- Long-term replacement of wetland values lost.

Changed Conditions

Current conditions reflect expanded population growth, increased land development, and higher traffic volumes. However, the expected short-term uses and long-term productivity relationships are anticipated to remain unchanged from those identified in the FEIS.

Conclusion
The FEIS adequately addresses any short-term environmental use, impacts, or long-term productivity issues within the Whitefish West project area.

5.25 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

FEIS Findings
Land used to construct any build alternative would be considered an irreversible commitment during the time period that such land was used for a highway facility. There was no reason to believe the highway project area would ever be converted to another land use.

Considerable amounts of fossil fuel, labor and highway construction materials would be expended in the construction of a build alternative. These items are generally not retrievable. Labor and construction materials were not in short supply and their use would not have an adverse effect on continued availability of the resources. Any construction would require a substantial expenditure of both state and federal funds. These funds would require allocation, which could be used by other projects.

Changed Conditions
Irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources would be similar to those discussed in the FEIS.

Conclusion
The FEIS adequately addresses the irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources in the Whitefish West project area.

5.26 SUMMARY OF MITIGATION
Mitigation commitments as stated in the 1994 FEIS and Record of Decision (ROD), as well as new mitigation commitments resulting from the Current Proposed Action are summarized in the following table. These would be implemented and monitored by appropriate MDT staff.

Avoidance and minimization measures would be incorporated into the Whitefish West project through design changes and exceptions during final design. These may include increasing the vertical slope, adding guardrail, retaining walls, and v-ditches where feasible. Avoidance and minimization measures implemented at specific locations would include the following:

- Lupfer Avenue to Second Street Bridge - Existing trees and on-street parking would be retained. Minor adjustments to existing on-street parking may be made during final design in order to accommodate current design standards and to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, but a reduction in the number of existing parking spaces is not anticipated.

- Second Street Bridge to Karrow Avenue - Retaining walls and guardrail would be added to reduce impacts to adjacent properties. The travel lanes and the center turn lane would be reduced from 4.2 m (14 ft) to 3.6 m (12 ft). There would be a 0.6-m (2-ft) shoulder on both sides of the road. 1.5-m (5-ft) boulevards would be added between the curb and sidewalk where feasible to separate pedestrians from vehicles. A reduced clear zone would be considered where appropriate.

- Karrow Avenue to West of Lion Mountain Road (State Park Road) - The raised median width would be revised from 5.5 m (18 ft) to 4.2 m (14 ft) and the shoulder width would be revised from 2.4 m (8 ft) to 1.5 m (5 ft) to reduce impacts to the golf course and parks. Retaining walls and guardrail would be added to avoid impacts to the golf course and parks. A 2.4-m (8-ft) bicycle/pedestrian path would be added. The underpass at the golf course would be perpetuated and improved.

- West of Lion Mountain Road to West of Mountainside Drive - Curb and gutter would extend to station 32+00 (approximately 350 meters west of Mountainside Drive) which would reduce some right-of-way impacts. The travel lanes and the center turn lane would be reduced from 4.2 m (14 ft) to 3.6 m (12 ft). There would be a 0.6-m (2-ft) shoulder on both sides of the road. The truck climbing lane would also be modified which would also reduce some right-of-way impacts.

- Mountainside Drive to MP 133.0 – The standard shoulder width of 2.8 m (9 ft) would be reduced to 2.4 m (8 ft) and inslopes would be steepened from 6:1 to 4:1 to reduce right-of-way impacts. West of Skyles Lake, the bicycle/pedestrian path would be revised to cross US 93 and follow the highway on the south side. An underpass would be provided at this location (depending on availability of funding). The bike path would be revised to end at Twin Bridges Road, where it would connect with other planned trail systems.

- Throughout the project corridor, the proposed vertical alignment was adjusted to improve sight distance to the extent possible, while seeking to minimize impacts on adjacent development and maintain access to adjoining properties.

Summary of mitigation

	FEIS and ROD mitigation	Current Proposed Action mitigation
Traffic Operations and Circulation Impacts	• Some special access designs would be necessary depending on the extent of access control as described in the access control guideline.	• Adjustments were made to project design, and as a result, a reduction in the number of existing parking spaces is not anticipated.
Traffic Safety	• Sight distance would be improved by prohibiting parking near intersections and tree limbs/ foliage would be removed. • Speed limit signs would be installed. • Permanent marking tape for pavement markings would be considered. • Advance signage for street names at major intersections would be posted.	• Wide striping would be used to improve lane delineation.
Access	• Supplemental business/residential access would be considered for adjacent cross-streets or parallel streets. • Signage to alternative access points would be provided.	• The intersection of Lion Mountain Road might warrant a traffic signal in future years. The Lion Mountain Road intersection would be designed to accommodate a future traffic signal.

	FEIS and ROD mitigation	Current Proposed Action mitigation
Construction	• Contractors would be required to develop construction schedules and adequate traffic control plans. • Safety and convenience to motorists, pedestrians and workers would be ensured at all times. • The progress of the project would be advanced in a manner that would be most beneficial for the public. • Traffic control would be implemented for all construction activities. • Construction signage would be appropriately managed and various communication media would be used to inform motorists of construction delays. • Work plans would restrict certain construction activities and include some nighttime construction where traffic volumes warrant.	• No new mitigation is proposed.
Relocation	• The standard provisions of Public Law 91-646 (Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970) as amended by Public Law 100-17 (Surface Transportation Act of 1987) would be followed. • There would be no relocation from dwellings until comparable replacement based on functional rather than physical similarity has been made available. • Reasonable and necessary moving costs as established by procedural requirements would be provided.	• Avoidance and minimization options would be explored to the extent practicable throughout final design. These measures may include reduced shoulder widths, steepened slopes, guardrail, retaining walls, v-ditches, and curb and gutter sections where appropriate.
Pedestrian and Bicycle	• There would be continued coordination with county bicycle groups regarding the design of pedestrian and bicycle facilities.	• Additional pedestrian and bicycle facilities are included in the Current Proposed Action. These include expansion of the underpass at the golf course and the addition of a bicycle/pedestrian crossing near Skyles Lake.
Air Quality	• Permanent design features would include surfacing gravel and dirt shoulders and constructing curbs and gutters from the beginning of the Whitefish project through Lion Mountain Road. These permanent design features have been shown to reduce PM_{10} levels in Whitefish to below No-Build levels by reducing carry-on dust. • Construction phase actions would include street sweeping as needed, watering or chemically stabilizing unpaved detours, following open burn permit conditions, securing air quality permits for asphalt plants and gravel crushers.	• No new mitigation is proposed.
Noise	• If noise problems due to construction activities are identified, construction activities would be limited as needed to daytime hours. Additional measures would be considered including temporary noise barriers, and planning detours that do not create additional noise impacts for sensitive receptors.	• No new mitigation is proposed.
Water Resources and Quality	• Storm water pollution prevention plans would be developed during construction phases. The use of procedures described in the MDT Highway Construction Standard Erosion Control Work Plan would be considered as needed.	• No new mitigation is proposed.
Wetlands	• The CEQ priority sequence would be followed – avoid, minimize impacts, repair/rehabilitate/restore, preserve and maintain, replace. • A Section 404 permit would be secured from the USACE, and a mitigation plan would be developed with resource agencies.	• Additional wetland avoidance and minimization opportunities including adjusting slopes, and installation of guardrail would be explored during final design where practical. • Compensatory mitigation for the wetland loss would be pursued according to the United States Army Corps of Engineers requirements. • On-site and off-site wetland mitigation opportunities would continue to be explored.

	FEIS and ROD mitigation	Current Proposed Action mitigation
Fisheries and Wildlife	• Proper erosion control techniques would be used during construction. • Bridge structures or underpasses would be sized to accommodate wildlife if possible. • Loss of trees would be avoided wherever possible.	• Any temporary clearing outside the construction limits but within the right-of-way would be kept to the smallest area possible and reclaimed immediately following construction. • Disturbed wetland and streamside areas would be revegetated with desired plant material obtained from local sources as quickly as possible following construction. In accordance with 7-22-2152 MCA and 60-2-208 MCA, MDT would re-establish a permanent desirable vegetation community along all areas disturbed by proposed construction. A set of revegetation guidelines would be developed by MDT, which the construction contractor must follow. • No construction equipment would be allowed within the active Whitefish River channel unless specifically permitted to do so. • Clearing and grubbing would not be allowed within the right-of-way beyond the construction limits or required clear zone. • All State and Federal water quality permit conditions would be adhered to.
Floodplain	• Standard MDT erosion control measures would be used to minimize impacts to beneficial floodplain values during construction. • Any floodplain encroachment would be coordinated with Flathead County.	• No new mitigation is proposed.
Threatened and Endangered Species	• No conservation measures are proposed	• All State and Federal water quality permits would be adhered to. • Operating in wetlands would be limited to that which is needed to perform the necessary work. • Disturbed streamside areas would be revegetated with appropriate plant material as recommended by MDT's agronomist. Coconut fiber masts (or an acceptable equivalent) would be used to help stabilize disturbed streambank areas until permanent vegetation becomes established. • If MDT becomes aware of any threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate species located in the vicinity of construction activities, they would inform the contractor of those locations and of potential restrictions that may be associated with avoiding impacts to those species.
Cultural Resources	• The MDT proposed to mitigate impacts to historic properties by conducting additional survey work and by preparing the nomination of the historic district to the National Register of Historic Places. After the nomination was accepted, MDT proposed to prepare a NRHP sign describing the Whitefish Residential Historic District and its significance to the history of the community.	• Landscaped boulevards, a bicycle path, lighting, and sidewalks would be added from the Second Street Bridge to Lion Mountain Road, which would provide improved visual quality, safety and access. • Visual impacts would be minimized through the use of landscaped medians and boulevards, weathered steel guardrail, and rock-texture facing treatments on retaining walls. • Additional avoidance and minimization opportunities including, but not limited to alignment modification, adjusting slopes, and installation of guardrail would be explored during final design.

	FEIS and ROD mitigation	Current Proposed Action mitigation
Parks and Recreation	• Landscape buffers are planned in raised medians to reduce visual impacts of the increased street width at the Whitefish Golf Club. • A bicycle and pedestrian trail is proposed for sections of this project.	• At the end of construction the disturbed park land would be returned to a condition which is at least as good as that which existed prior to the project. • A bicycle and pedestrian trail would be added throughout the length of the project area, which would provide improved access and connectivity to and from parks and recreation areas in Whitefish. • Improvements to the golf course underpass would provide improved safety and access for golf club maintenance crews, golf club users, and bicycle/pedestrian trail users. • Additional avoidance and minimization opportunities including adjusting slopes, the addition of retaining wall, and installation of guardrail would be explored during final design. • Mitigation measures at the Skyles Lake Fishing Access Site would include minor grading and base course gravel improvements for the length of the existing access road. Specific details regarding these improvements would be negotiated as part of right-of-way acquisition.
Hazardous Materials	• Detailed hazardous materials analysis, including sampling and testing of questionable soils or water would be conducted during final design. • Underground storage tanks adjacent to the highway would be located to avoid potential contact during construction. • Before roadway construction occurs on these sites, soil located adjacent to the roadway would be analyzed to determine if existing petroleum levels are higher than those accepted by the MT DEQ for this type of project. • If so, mitigation opportunities include excavation of contaminated soil, or landfarming (spreading contaminated soils over an evenly-distributed area and providing the area with nutrients and vegetation).	• Mitigation measures may also include appropriate construction techniques, use of best management practices, and performing work in the river when aquatic organisms are minimally active. All work related to the construction of the Whitefish West project would be subject to the provisions included in the current edition of Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction as adopted by MDT and the Montana Transportation Commission.
Visual Quality	• The final design would be done in such a manner as to best fit the new highway within the existing topography. • This includes contour grading of cut and fill slopes, sensitive design of roadway alignment, and profile and design of roadside signage and lighting. • Slope cutting would be done in such a manner as to be compatible with the adjacent slope. • MDT would seek assistance from local communities in the maintenance of landscaping and streetscape features. • Special light fixtures would be used in sensitive areas to minimize stray light pollution.	• No new mitigation is proposed.
Energy	• Energy consumption would be reduced during construction through maximum use of on-site materials. • Construction vehicles would be maintained, and there would be adequate construction phasing and detour plans. • The design of construction access roads and staging areas would limit distances traveled.	• No new mitigation is proposed.

	FEIS and ROD mitigation	Current Proposed Action mitigation
Implementation	• Mitigation that would be implemented to minimize traffic disruption during construction is described in the "construction" section of this table. • Mitigation that would be implemented to minimize construction impacts at the Whitefish River crossing is described in the Water Resources & Quality section. • MDT would develop landscape maintenance agreements with local jurisdictions to maintain the landscaped median and roadside area in the urban areas. • A construction staging plan would be developed to minimize impacts on adjacent property owners. • Construction involving discharges to streams shall not occur in spawning areas if practical alternatives exist. • Construction would be timed to prevent disruptions to migration of aquatic species.	• No new mitigation is proposed.
Section 4(f)	• For the Whitefish Residential Historic District, the MDT proposes to conduct additional survey work and prepare the nomination of the historic district to the National Register of Historic Places. When the nomination has been completed and accepted by the NRHP, the MDT would then prepare a NRHP sign to the local historical society describing the Whitefish Residential Historic District and its significance to the history of the community.	• Same as mitigation proposed in the Cultural Resources and Parks and Recreation sections of this table.

5.27 FINAL SECTION 4(F) ANALYSIS

A Final Section 4(f) Evaluation for the US 93 Somers to Whitefish West project was prepared in conjunction with the FEIS. The following discussion refers only to properties in the Whitefish West project area.

Historic Properties

FEIS Findings

The project area contains properties that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places are discussed in Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

Changed Conditions

The existing conditions and the design of the highway in the Whitefish West project area have undergone several changes since 1994. As a result, determinations of effect and SHPO concurrences have changed over the years. See **Section 5.15** (Cultural and Historic Resources) of this document for a description of these changes.

The November 13, 2007 SHPO concurrence letter provides information showing the proposed impacts would be sufficiently minor and have "no adverse effect" for purposes of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and therefore be eligible for a *de minimis* finding based on 23 CFR 774.

Parks and Recreational Properties

FEIS Findings

There are three publicly owned, recreationally used, Section 4(f) properties located adjacent to the Preferred Alternative in the Whitefish West project area. The properties listed below would incur minor indirect impacts related to access and visual criteria, but are located completely

outside of the existing highway right-of-way. There would be no purchase or direct conversion of use of the properties listed below.

- Whitefish Lake Golf Club
- Grouse Mountain Park (Whitefish Tennis Courts/Soccer Fields)
- Skyles Lake Fishing Access Site

Changed Conditions

The existing conditions and the design of the highway have undergone several changes since 1994. As a result, impacts to parks and recreation areas have changed. The Current Proposed Action would result in direct temporary and permanent impacts to parks and recreational properties:

- Kay Beller Park 455 m^2 (4,898 ft^2) temporary construction impacts
- Whitefish Lake Golf Club 1802 m^2 (19,397 ft^2) temporary construction impacts
- Grouse Mountain Park 685 m^2 (7,373 ft^2) temporary construction impacts
- Skyles Lake Fishing Access 718 m^2 (7,728 ft^2) permanent incorporation

See **Section 5.16** (Parks and Recreation) of this document for a complete description of these changes.

On June 7, 2007 the Montana Department of Transportation met with the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks regarding potential project impacts to the Skyles Lake Fishing Access Site. The meeting was an agreement that the proposed project impacts would have no adverse effect to the activities, features, and attributes of the recreational area. Based upon that meeting and the recommendation of MDT and FHWA staff, a *de minimis* impact determination was made. A November 27, 2007 letter from FHWA to the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks documenting this meeting and confirming Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks concurrence is included in **Appendix D**. Additional coordination letters with the City of Whitefish, the Whitefish Lake Golf Club and the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks are also included in **Appendix D**.

Conclusion

Portions of six historic properties in the Whitefish West project area would be permanently incorporated into the project right-of-way; however, all of the historic buildings would remain intact and their historic integrity would be perpetuated. There would be no adverse effect to any of the historic properties in the Whitefish West project area. It was determined that there would be *de minimis* impacts to the six historic properties.

Impacts to Kay Beller Park, Whitefish Lake Golf Club, and Grouse Mountain Park would be temporary and would not result in a change in recreational use. Impacts to Skyles Lake Fishing Access Site would be permanent, but would not adversely affect the features, attributes, or activities qualifying the property for protection under Section 4(f). It was determined that there would be *de minimis* impacts to the Skyles Lake Fishing Access Site.

Because impacts to parks and historic properties would either be temporary or *de minimis,* preparation of an avoidance analysis is not necessary, although avoidance alternatives were considered during project design. The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately addresses Section 4(f) impacts in the Whitefish West project area.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Changes to the Preferred Alternative and the affected environment would occur within the Whitefish West project segment that were not evaluated in the 1994 FEIS. These include:

- Changes to the Preferred Alternative to provide the desired level of safety and operations, which would result in greater impacts to right-of-way/relocations, water resources/quality, and hazardous materials sites. These impacts are consistent with the type and nature of impacts described in the FEIS for the overall Somers to Whitefish West corridor. The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address mitigation for these impacts.

- Changes to the Preferred Alternative to provide the desired level of safety and constructability, which would result in impacts to Section 4(f) properties that were not addressed in the FEIS. Because impacts to parks and historic properties would either be temporary or *de minimis* (minimal), preparation of an avoidance analysis is not necessary. The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address Section 4(f) impacts in the Whitefish West project segment.

- Changes in the affected environment, including a new park, which would result in impacts to wetlands and threatened and endangered species that were not identified in the FEIS. These impacts are similar in type and nature to the impacts described in the FEIS for the overall Somers to Whitefish West corridor. The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately address mitigation requirements.

This re-evaluation concludes that the current conditions, new circumstances, and changes to the Preferred Alternative within the Whitefish West project segment would not result in any new significant impacts. The FEIS, along with the information presented in this re-evaluation, adequately describes the impacts of the Current Proposed Action and provides mitigation for those impacts.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF PREPARERS AND REVIEWERS

LIST OF PREPARERS

Jeremy W. Keene, P.E. – WGM Group, Principal Engineer/Project Manager
Mark Bancale, P.E. – WGM Group, Senior Traffic Engineer
Trevor Iman – WGM Group, Staff Engineer
Laura Jones Lofink – WGM Group, Environmental Planner
Rose Kirschenheiter – WGM Group, Project Assistant

LIST OF REVIEWERS

Jon Axline – Montana Department of Transportation, Historian
Pat Basting – Montana Department of Transportation, Missoula District Biologist
Tim Conway, P.E. – Montana Department of Transportation, Consultant Design Bureau Chief
Cora Helm – Montana Department of Transportation, Environmental Services
Susan Kilcrease – Montana Department of Transportation, Missoula District Project Development Engineer
Blair Nordhagen, P.E. – Montana Department of Transportation, Consultant Design Project Manager
Ben Nunnallee, P.E. – Montana Department of Transportation, Missoula District Projects Engineer
Craig Genzlinger – Federal Highway Administration
Carl James – Federal Highway Administration

APPENDIX B

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. 2004. Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets.

American Factfinder US Census, 2006 Community Survey. S2506. Financial Characteristics for Housing Units with a Mortgage. Data Set 2006 American Community Survey. Survey 2006 American Community Survey. Flathead County

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Flathead County Growth Policy. Adopted March 19, 2007. Resolution number 2015A.

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Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP). 2005a. Data search for Montana Species of Concern in vicinity of the Whitefish Urban and Whitefish West projects. June 27th. Helena, Montana.

Population Division, US Census Bureau. July 21, 2005. Table 4: *Annual Estimates of Housing Units for Counties in Montana: April1, 2000 to July 1, 2004 (HU-EST2004-04-30)*.

Rice, P. 2005. INVADERS Database System (http://invader.dbs.umt.edu). Division of Biological Sciences, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana.

The following documents were prepared in conjunction with this re-evaluation:

- US 93 Whitefish West Biological Resources Report, 2008, PBS&J
- US 93 Whitefish West Alignment and Grade Traffic Report, 2007, WGM Group, Inc.
- Phase II Hazardous Materials Assessment, US 93 Whitefish Urban and Whitefish West, 2005, Maxim Technologies
- US 93 Whitefish West Preliminary Noise Analysis, 2002, MDT
- Comparative Market Analysis, 2007, Bryan Flaherty

APPENDIX C

MEETINGS

WHITEFISH
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

US 93 Whitefish Urban & West Citizen Working Group

May 24, 2005 (Charter Meeting)

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss critical issues and design details regarding the reconstruction of Highway 93 in the Whitefish vicinity.
2. Respond to specific questions asked of the Group by FHA, MDT, WGM, and the Decision Team and to issues raised by members of the Working Group.
3. Develop collaborative responses and recommendations to the Decision Team regarding the principles and design details that will guide implementation of the project.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Duane Bauch	Bruce Boody	Ron Brunk
John Chaney	Dale Duff	George Gardner
Monte Gilman	Jerry House	Ed Lieser

Mary Jo Look (represented by her husband, Bob Look, because of illness)

Gary Stephens	Steve Thompson	Virginia Tribe - Facilitator

TECHNICAL SUPPORT GROUP IN ATTENDANCE

Diane Harvester (WGM)	Jeremy Keene (WGM)	Jennifer Kendall (WGM)
Blair Nordhagen (MDT)	Shane Stack (MDT)	

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

Participant "Agendas" within this Process

- Assure safety for the community.
- Influence the project so it contributes to the free flow of all traffic – be strategic and proactive toward that objective.
- Maintain the integrity and "niceness" of the community.
- Make sure input is made regarding the long-term development of Whitefish.
- Address bikes and business needs.
- Encourage quality design and community aesthetics as they are connected to the reconstruction of Highway 93 through and out of Whitefish.
- Help the community "stay in control of itself".
- Preserve the Whitefish downtown core; address the intersection at 2nd and Central.
- Support the future of downtown Whitefish; assure safety; help design a project that is functional for transportation.
- Honor the town's character and adequately address ecological and environmental concerns, water quality, and effects on vegetation.
- Assure a pedestrian "friendly" downtown that is safe and has adequate parking.
- Maintain our "sense of community".

Working Group "Governance"

Working Group Charter

The purpose of the Whitefish Highway 93 Citizen Working Group is to offer comment to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), its Consultants, and local decision makers on critical issues and design details regarding the reconstruction of Highway 93 in the Whitefish vicinity as framed by the completed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the decisions contained in the Record of Decision (ROD).

The Group consists of a diverse body of citizens representing the interests of local people who will benefit from, and feel the impacts of, the Highway 93 project individually and as a community.

The Group is chartered to develop creative, collaborative responses, suggestions, and recommendations to the Decision Team regarding the principles and design details that will guide implementation of the project. The Group's products should address specific questions asked by the FHWA, MDT, its Consultants, and the Decision Team, as well as implementation interests brought to the table by the Group's members.

Discussion Ground Rules/Process Agreements

Working Group members agreed to the following ground rules and agreements to encourage productive discussion throughout the process:

- Be on time and be present with the discussion topic; come prepared.
- Monitor your own communication style and behaviors:
  - Allow the other to finish.
  - Avoid side conversations.
  - Welcome all comments, ideas and questions.
  - Address issues, not personalities and don't bring politics to the table.
- Raise you hand to get the floor. Establish a time limit for speakers if necessary.
- Manage issue discussions to completion or use a simple majority to table an issue. The facilitator will use a flip chart "shelf" to keep track of tabled issues and issues that are not pertinent within the immediate process.
- Aim for 100% agreement on recommendations. When agreement has not been reached, the facilitator will use interest-based problem solving to move the group toward agreement. When 100% agreement cannot be reached, the agreement will be based on a 2/3 majority with a minority report if requested by the minority.
- Stay within agreed upon meeting times; commit to attending for the full meeting.
- At the end of the process, a report of the Working Group's recommendations will be provided to the public. Starting with the second meeting, a news release describing agenda items and general progress will be provided to the local media. Agreement on news release "bullets" will be the last item on each agenda.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Working Group members will honor the Charter; follow the ground rules and process agreements; and work to complete their charge.

- The facilitator will design the meeting process and prepare the agenda; facilitate each session; send a meeting summary to Jennifer by the end of 5 business days after each meeting; act as the neutral in disputes among Working Group members; and use process tools to help the group arrive at a collaborative set of recommendations.

- WGM will provide administrative support to the Working Group including providing needed data and information; sending meeting summaries (WORD and PDF) to Working Group participants the day after receiving them from the facilitator; and distributing a progress report news release to the media following each meeting after the first meeting.

- WGM, Montana Department of Transportation, and Federal Highway representatives will serve as a Technical Team providing support to the Working Group.

Setting the Calendar

- Working Group meeting dates in 2005 are as follows:
  - May 24 (Charter meeting)
  - June 30
  - July 13
  - August 22
  - September 20
  - October 24
  -
- Meetings will be held in the Whitefish City Council Conference Room unless Jennifer informs us otherwise.

JENNIFER'S NOTE

- **Meeting Location Change: The next three meetings—June, July, and August—will be held at the Whitefish Branch of the Flathead County Library, 9 Spokane Avenue, Whitefish. The library only books 2 months in advance. We will try to schedule (in late July) the September and October meetings at the library as well.**

- Meetings will start at 5:30 PM and conclude no later than 8:30 PM.

- The Working Group decided not to have a light supper together before the meetings but would come at 5:30 ready to work.

What have we been asked to do and around what issues (as of May 24, 2005)?

- Explore and provide suggestions and recommendations regarding the following:

  Urban
  - Priorities
  - Contra-Flow lanes – Baker & Spokane
  - Spokane Bikeway – on street or separated
  - 7th Street Bridge
  - Truck mitigation
  - Parking mitigation

  West
  - Alignment shift at Golf Course
  - State Park Intersection
  - Bike Trail connections
  - Lane widths

  Additional issues identified by Working Group members at their May 24 meeting
  - Twin Bridges intersection
  - Second and Central
  - Baker Bridge/Bike crossing

Establishing Discussion Context

"Hard facts"

- The Environmental Impact Statement is complete.
- The Record of Decision is signed.
- There is no approved by-pass.
- There is a 90 degree turn at Spokane and Second.
- There are four bridge crossings.
- Money for the project is not secured.
- Reconstruction of the Highway is controversial.
- Reconstruction of the Highway will impact businesses.
- Change will occur as a result of the project.
- This is a long-term project.
- These (2) projects encompass 13th Street to Twin brides Road plus another mile.
- Boulevards on Spokane exist.
- We have mixed traffic (i.e. trucks, buses, bicycles, vehicles, pedestrians).

First Cut at Guiding Principles

- We believe that economic vitality is linked to community character.
- We believe that safe design for all traffic (pedestrians, bicycles, vehicles, trucks, buses, etc.) is important to enhancing the "Whitefish" experience for visitors as well as community members.
- We believe in preserving the character and quality of life of Whitefish including a strong sense of "small community"; architectural and landscape aesthetics; and existing natural environs.
- We believe that the Highway 93 design must be adaptable and flexible to accommodate future growth in the area.

Identification of Relevant "Interests"

It's in the interest of…

- The Whitefish community to preserve its character and sense of place.
- Local business to be able to provide ease of access to customers, be visible and have adequate parking.
- Youth (and all citizens) to have safe access throughout the community.
- Whitefish Schools to have safe pedestrian and vehicle access and safe bus routes.
- Visitors to the community to have safe access and guidance to area attractions and facilities.

Planning for the Next Meeting

Additional Data Requests

- CD's of the condensed version of the EIS and ROD
- Open house graphics and public comments from the open house
- Information and graphics per issue as we address them (Alignment shift at the Golf Course and State Park Intersection for the June 30 Working Group meeting)

Homework

- Review the notes from this meeting and continue to think about the guiding principles and "interests" so we can complete them at the June 30 meeting.
- Read anything else sent to you before the June 30 meeting.
- Identify 5 persons with whom you have general conversation on a fairly regular basis, and who might have some interest or opinion about the items we will be discussing in this process. (It's important that they don't all think exactly the way you do.) Try to visit briefly with them before each meeting and come to the table each time with their comments and thoughts as well as your own.
- Visit the golf course and think about the alignment shift; visit the State Park intersection and think about the situation. These will be the first issues discussed.

WHITEFISH
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

US 93 Whitefish Urban & West Citizen Working Group

June 29, 2005 (2nd Meeting)

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss critical issues and design details regarding the reconstruction of Highway 93 in the Whitefish vicinity.
2. Respond to specific questions asked of the Group by FHA, MDT, WGM, and the Decision Team and to issues raised by members of the Working Group.
3. Develop collaborative responses and recommendations to the Decision Team regarding the principles and design details that will guide implementation of the project.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Duane Bauch	Bruce Boody	Ron Brunk
John Chaney	Dale Duff	George Gardner
Monte Gilman	Ed Lieser	Mary Jo Look
Don Nelson	Terry Nelson	Gary Stephens
Steve Thompson		
(Virginia Tribe - Facilitator)		

[Jerry House was not present.]

TECHNICAL SUPPORT GROUP IN ATTENDANCE

Brent Campbell (WGM Jeremy Keene (WGM)

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

"Ratifying" the May 24 Meeting Summary

Working Group members ratified the May 24 meeting summary with the following corrections:

- Under Roles and Responsibilities on page 3, third bullet, add:
  - Jennifer Kendall at WGM will be the information contact for the Working Group.
- A couple of the e-mail addresses used in the last mailing are incorrect and need to be updated. **PLEASE EMAIL JENNIFER KENDALL (jkendall@wgmgroup.com) WITH YOUR CURRENT/CORRECTED EMAIL ADDRESS.**

Observations from "Mailboxes"

Working Group members listed the following as "a very important thing" they heard from their "mailboxes":

- The couplet on Highway 95 in Moscow, Idaho seems to work well.
- Vegetation along the Highway and in the center will be very important.
- Consider the impact of a "large road" in or through Whitefish.
- Where will customers park if parking is reduced or done away with on "93"?
- Abandon the 7th Street bridge idea and direct truck traffic based on signage.
- Dovetail the "Heart of Whitefish" Downtown Plan with the Highway 93 Plan, where useful.
- What's the timeline and how will access to businesses occur during the project?
- Address the width and vegetation issues because they are connected to community character.
- The Central/2nd Avenue intersection is critical to downtown vitality.
- Baker is a very big issue, as well as parking and lights, in terms of traffic.
- Second Street access to businesses is critical to maintaining community character.
- We don't want faster, bigger roads with more pavement.
- There is a significant safety issue at the corner of twin Bridges at Livermore Flats.
- Maintain 2 lanes at Central and 2nd; don't divide the downtown in two.
- "Big shoulders" are not useful and make big roads. Use turn lanes.

Working Group members also heard the following from their "mailboxes":

- The following are issues: Lane configurations versus weather; maintenance of local character; effects on downtown with particular emphasis on the couplet; trucks; a bypass; the 7th Street Bridge.
- Traffic is too great for the improvements stated; bike safety is very important; pedestrian safety is very important; the need for the 7th Street bridge is not understood as opposed to using 13th Street.
- The Central Avenue/2nd Street intersection is the most important issue because it is critical to the economic well-being of downtown. A by-pass seems necessary; the Twin Bridges road intersection design is inadequate; the couplet idea isn't popular; culverts should be removed on the River. It will be impossible to get out of the Post Office parking lot with Baker as a primary road.
- We don't want it to look like Highway 93 South; the crest of the hill on 93 West should be lower if possible, and straighter; safety of all (automobiles, trucks and buses, bikes, pedestrians) is critically important; the 7th Street bridge is too expensive – merge 13th (or 12th) Street to Baker; 0n 93 West, we need trail access and crossing of 93; keep the small town appearance and character; break the project up to get it done – don't let the 7th Street bridge stall the project; 2nd Street parking is a concern; left turns can stall the movement – limit left-hand turns.

- Control spillage within the right-of-way by Golf Course property; the 7th Street bridge is questionable when you consider cost versus improvement. What happens to the abandoned land by the State Park Road and Highway 93 with re-alignment? What is the actual construction time line? What will be the economic impact on businesses during construction and how will that be mitigated?
- The following are issues: "Contra flow"; width of Spokane and impact on trees; width of Highway 93 on Second; safety at Twin Bridges; need to look at alternative ways of travel, thinking about a "walkable community."
- Second Street must remain two lanes only, as it goes from Spokane to the bridge at Kay Beller Park; it seems confusing to go from the one-way idea to 2 lanes one way and one lane the other; safety and bicycle issues are very important.
- The following are issues: Traffic from 7th through the Whitefish core, particularly 2nd Street and Spokane; 2nd Street and Central; 2nd Street and Baker to the west to the Whitefish River; Whitefish River west to the State Park road needs sidewalks and a left turn lane, particularly from the Golf Course and Grouse Mountain. Most mentioned a truck by-pass. Parking is an absolute for all businesses on 93; people wonder about the 7th Street Bridge; traffic lights help move traffic.
- The one-way couplet might be inconvenient but worthwhile if it reduces congestion; downtown zone on Central should be closed to cars, with possibility of a parking structure; the couplet on Highway 95 in Moscow, Idaho seems to work well. Are the trees on the north side of the Golf Course dying because of winter de-icer? (Question answered – It is the larch that has Larch Case Bearer and while they show signs of the infestation, they are not dying.)
- Comments on re-alignment of Highway 93 at the Golf Course were uniformly indifferent; effect of realigning the Highway south must improve the safe entrance onto 93; entrance onto 93 from the State Park road must improve sight distance; vegetation is necessary along the Highway on the sides and in the center.
- From 6 people – 3 are somewhat in favor of the Plan (ROD) but are worried about the negative impact of growth on the community in general; concern about the 7th Street bridge; 3 were not in favor of the Plan (ROD) and were anti-growth. The most important issue seems to be the negative impact of a "large road" through or in Whitefish. Only 1 of 6 actually knew any details of the Plan (ROD).
- It is critical that the 93 Plan be similar to the Crandall-Arambula proposed Downtown Plan in supporting downtown vitality and in particular, for 2nd Street between Spokane and Baker – loss of parking would materially impact respective businesses. An alternative approach is suggested to the 7th Street Bridge – instead of a bridge, use signage at Highway 93 and Columbia Avenue to direct truck traffic (e.g., North on Highway 93 for direction of travel to Eureka; west on 13th Street and then north on Baker for truck traffic to Big Mountain/Whitefish Lake, etc.).
- Is a by-pass still possible? How important is a by-pass strategy and its effect on the retail district? Where does the "Heart of Whitefish" Downtown Plan dovetail with the ROD (WGM) Plan? Several neighbors are particularly interested in plans for bike paths. How long will the project take? What about the 7th Street bridge – How far are we looking into the future?

Issue Discussion

Alignment Shift at the Golf Course

Observations from Site Visits

- It's unsafe pulling out from the Tally Lake Ranger Station. There is fast traffic going north and the center land is extremely narrow.
- This whole section seems unsafe in terms of traffic flow and speed.
- From the Golf Course west, it's a real problem area.
- At 8:15 AM, there are in excess of 30 vehicles before one is able to enter the Highway. There is less than 1000' visibility. It's posted a certain speed but people drive much faster.
- There is a general mix of traffic uses (cars, bikes, trucks, buses, joggers, etc.,) on Highway 93 – phenomenally – almost as if it were a neighborhood street rather than a major highway.
- Alternative bike routes need to be shown.
- The Larches along the Golf Course look bad because of Case Bearer but are okay. However, the Douglas Firs are being affected by drought and exhaust.
- The hill by the cemetery is a safety and visibility issue.

Issue Statement

There is an expectation of a pass-through of the median at the Gold Course and Grouse Mountain. Violation of the speed limit in this area is a safety issue.

Specific "Interests

It is in the interest of:

- The Whitefish community to preserve its character and sense of place.
- All citizens to have safe access throughout the community.
- Whitefish Schools to have safe bus routes.
- Visitors to the community to have safe access and guidance to area attractions and facilities.
- The Whitefish community to explore the costs and benefits of a "transit" system.

Pertinent and/or Additional Guiding Principles

- We believe that this project must be completed in a timely, organized, and well-planned manner to mitigate overall impacts on the community.
- We believe that blending useful and important parts of the Highway 93 Plan with the "Heart of Whitefish" Downtown Plan will result in positive short- and long term outcomes for the community.

Alignment Shift at the Golf Course Cont.

Objectives

1. Facilitate traffic safety and establish clear signage.
2. Create an attractive northern entrance to Whitefish that enhances and maintains the character of the community.
3. Provide for all forms of transportation (pedestrian, bicycles, vehicles, etc,).
4. Accommodate the needs of school buses and buses for winter transit.
5. Take advantage of public/private partnership potentials.

Ideas and Suggestions

- Consider narrowing the shoulders to reduce speeds, and perhaps to enhance bike traffic and pedestrian use.
- There is a potential for a right-turn lane into the Golf Course going north.
- Consider narrowing the median for left-turn lanes and perhaps a left-turn bay.
- Alternative bike routes need to be shown.

State Park Intersection

Observations from Site Visits

- I don't understand why a fork in the road at the State Park intersection is not identified.
- Where the road "Ys" off, the island is now an absorption area. We don't want to create a drainage issue at the State Park intersection.
- I think the State Park intersection basically looks pretty good.
- People seem to change their minds and ignore other traffic when they are at the State Park intersection. It's confusing and unclear and doesn't seem like a "normal" intersection situation.

Issue Statement

The following issues exist at, or are related to, the State Park intersection: Safety; drainage; signs; speed; right-of-way width; visibility; grade; access; bikes; character and aesthetics; and maintenance of the median.

Specific "Interests"

It's in the interest of:

- The Whitefish community to preserve its character and sense of place.
- All citizens to have safe access throughout the community.
- Visitors to the community to have safe access and guidance to area attractions and facilities.
- Whitefish Schools to have safe bus routes.
- The Whitefish community to maintain a clean and healthy environment.

State Park Intersection Cont.

Pertinent and/or Additional Guiding Principles

- We believe that safe design for all traffic is important to enhancing the "Whitefish" experience for visitors as well as community members.
- We believe in preserving the character and quality of life of Whitefish, including landscape aesthetics and existing natural environs.
- We believe that economic vitality is linked to community character.

Objectives

1. Improve safety (visibility, grade) and provide safe, controlled access.
2. Protect the hydrology in the area.
3. Provide for safe, controlled access.
4. Improve and maintain aesthetics.

Ideas and Suggestions

- Reduce right-of-way width.
- Close off the ramp going north and create a right-turn lane for the off ramp.
- Flatten the curve on the south side of the road.

Discussing the Downtown Plan and the Record of Decision

WGM personnel asked the Working Group to consider the differences between the Downtown Plan (Heart of Whitefish) and the Highway 93 Plan (ROD) in the following areas, and be prepared for further discussion regarding further analysis at the July 13 meeting:

1. Treatment of the Gateway at the State Park ***(Tentative agreement – Working Group favors the Record of Decision approach)***

2. Spokane Avenue – "Two-way bike path" ***(Will discuss with July bike discussion)***

3. Baker - Contra flow lane; Spokane; some form of two-way, couplet; trees in the area ***(WGM will draw enlarged sections to facilitate Working Group discussion about the specific sites/sections; develop cross sections of the existing roadway and where possible, do overlays; provide transit information.)***

4. Second Street:
   - How can downtown not be divided?
   - What tradeoffs exist as a result of what happens with Baker?
   - What strategies could allow traffic volumes to be such that a 2-lane could be accommodated?
   - How can the parking issue be solved so that business interests are honored?

Where do we go from here?

Third meeting:

- July 13, 2005 – 5:30 – 8:30 PM
- Whitefish City Library Meeting Room

"Homework"

- Think about the following items from the Downtown Plan and how they are addressed in the Record of Decision. Be prepared to give the WGM Technical Team feedback about how they should approach those items, in terms of further analysis, as well as their general preferences regarding those items:

    1. Treatment of the Gateway at the State Park ***(Tentative agreement – Working group favors the Record of Decision approach)***
    2. Spokane Avenue – "Two-way bike path" ***(Will discuss with July bike discussion)***
    3. Baker - Contra flow lane; Spokane; some form of two-way, couplet; trees in the area ***(WGM will draw enlarged sections to facilitate Working Group discussion about the specific sites/sections; develop cross sections of the existing roadway and where possible, do overlays; provide transit information to help inform the discussion.)***
    4. Second Street:

    - How can downtown not be divided?
    - What tradeoffs exist as a result of what happens with Baker?
    - What strategies could allow traffic volumes to be such that a 2-lane could be accommodated?
    - How can the parking issue be solved so that business interests are honored?

- Review the Record of Decision and other materials regarding bicycle trails, paths, connections, etc., for both the urban and west sections and be prepared to address them as the main discussion issue at the July 13 meeting.
- Continue discussions with your "mailboxes" concentrating on bicycle trails, etc., and on those items listed above regarding the Downtown Plan and the Record of Decision.

WHITEFISH
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

US 93 Whitefish Urban & West Citizen Working Group

July 13, 2005 (3rd meeting)

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss critical issues and design details regarding the reconstruction of Highway 93 in the Whitefish vicinity.
2. Respond to specific questions asked of the Group by FHA, MDT, WGM, and the Decision Team and to issues raised by members of the Working Group.
3. Develop collaborative responses and recommendations to the Decision Team regarding the principles and design details that will guide implementation of the project.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Duane Bauch	Bruce Boody	Ron Brunk	John Chaney
George Gardner	Monte Gilman	Jerry House	Ed Lieser
Mary Jo Look	Don Nelson	Terry Nelson	Gary Stephens
Steve Thompson	(Virginia Tribe - Facilitator)		

[Dale Duff was not present.]

TECHNICAL SUPPORT GROUP IN ATTENDANCE

Brent Campbell (WGM Jeremy Keene (WGM)

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

"Ratifying" the June 30 Meeting Summary

Working Group members ratified the June 30 meeting summary with the following corrections and suggestions:

- On page 6, State Park Intersection "Ideas and Suggestions", second bullet should read: Close off the ramp going north or create a right-turn lane for the off ramp.
- The Group requested that Facilitator record specific agreements that come forward as part of the ongoing discussion during the meeting. Brent Campbell (WGM) told the Group that he was taking notes throughout the meeting as well.

New Factors in the Local Operating Environment

- A local concept/draft map for a loop trail around Whitefish Lake is being developed. The idea is that it would tie into other bike trails in the community.
- The City's Bike Committee and Parks Committee will be updating the bike use Master Plan in the near future.
- Public comments regarding The "Heart of Whitefish" Downtown Plan will be taken until the end of July.

Issue Discussion

Comments, Questions and Suggestions Regarding Specific Items in the Downtown Plan and the Record of Decision

State Park Gateway

- The Working Group affirmed their support for the Record of Decision approach.

Beginning discussion related to bikes: two-way bike lane

- Would a bike lane northbound on Spokane and southbound on Baker accommodate bike traffic? Could the concept of one street north, the other south, work for bikes?
- Can the bike lane be over one block? Is there an alternative route off the Highway (e.g., Spokane)?
- The two-way bike trail is dangerous with poor design.
- The approach to bike traffic needs to consider diversity in bike riders, including commuter bikers, recreational bikers, kids on bikes, touring bikers, visitors to the community, etc.
- Cycle tourist will probably follow the Highway into town anyway because they don't know the area. They probably wouldn't follow the river trail because they don't know where it goes.

Comments and Ideas - Baker and Spokane; Second Street

- What would happen if left-turn pockets were located at every other intersection on Spokane?
- Consider giving up raised dividers and have visual dividers such as brick pavers.
- Consider left turn lanes to move traffic, but slowly, through town.
- Would a Baker contra flow take traffic off Spokane?
- How do contra-flow lanes accommodate pedestrians in terms of safety? In terms of community character?
- What about left-hand arrows in traffic lights within lights at Spokane and Baker and Second?
- A Parking Inventory is needed to further analyze parking on Spokane and Baker.

- Parking may not be the same issue on Baker. There are only two private residences and they can be accessed from the alley. Commercial entities rely on their own parking and any new commercial enterprises would have to demonstrate how they will provide parking as part of the permitting process.
- Baker is hard to cross any time of day, but particularly at prime times. Baker has high traffic volume.
- Parking between Second and Third on Baker is, currently, heavily used.
- A safe pedestrian crossing is critical at Baker and Riverside Park.
- The "Seventh Street Bridge" is meant to carry local and some school traffic across town without being on Highway 93. A probable light at the Bridge would facilitate "gaps" in traffic. The stop sign at Thirteenth to hold up traffic may need to be reevaluated in light of the Bridge.
- Boulevard trees are an important value. The trees on Baker are newer, younger, and may be able to be relocated. There may be more design options on Baker regarding trees, etc.
- Would a Baker contra-flow take traffic off Spokane?
- Consider left hand arrows in traffic lights within lights at Baker and (Spokane) and Second.
- A Parking Inventory is needed to look at parking on Baker and Spokane.
- Look at the intersection at Second and Baker and the two blocks between Baker and Spokane. Do what's necessary to avoid the predictable bottlenecks.
- Look at the predictable bottleneck at the school location at Second and Spokane. It's a safety issue.

Specific Working Group Agreements based on the Issue discussion

- To have traffic "slow down" through town is not a bad thing.
- Keep the trees and boulevards. Do whatever is possible to maintain the community character of Whitefish (e.g., the trees).
- A two-way bike lane on one side of the Highway isn't safe, useful, or functional.
- For further discussion and analysis, the following 4 design scenarios should be modeled and analyzed:
    1. No Action
    2. Design option reflecting the Record of Decision
    3. Design option reflecting contra-flow lanes on Spokane; two lane option at Second; contra flow and/or ____ on Baker; and sub-design options from the Working Group (i.e., Gary's suggestion for Spokane, etc.; other ideas about Spokane and Baker, left-turn lanes, alternative parking ideas, etc.).
    4. "93 Truck" design option (Duane's suggestion), where trucks are directed away from downtown depending on where they are going.
- The Group will issue a progress report news release that includes the Charter, Guiding Principles, interests, and names of the Working Group members. The Facilitator will prepare the news release after the Group receives the meeting summary from this meeting to assure accuracy in terms of the Group's

agreements. Jennifer Kendall (WGM) will distribute the news release to the media.

- The Group will send comments to the City Council regarding the Downtown Plan, as listed below. The Facilitator will prepare a draft of those comments and they will be e-mailed to Working Group members for review before they are submitted to the City Council by the end of July.

Comments to the City Council Regarding the Downtown Plan

Comments will include the Group's charter, interests, guiding principles, and names of Working Group members and the following specific comments based on the Working Group's agreements thus far:

- It's important to do further education and information efforts within the community before decisions are made. In talking to people, it's obvious that many are not well-informed about potential U.S. Highway 93 plans and additional opportunities for public input are necessary.

- The two-way bike lane on one side of Spokane is not a good idea because it is unsafe and poorly designed.

- The Gateway at State Park (Record of Decision approach) is the preference of the Working Group.

- Trees and boulevards need to be saved whenever possible.

- The Citizen Working Group has recommended to WGM that they model the following 4 design options for further analysis and they agreed:
    1. No action
    2. Record of Decision
    3. Contra-flow lanes with sub-models representing various ideas identified by the Working Group
    4. "93 Truck" design option directing truck traffic

Where do we go from here?

5. Fourth meeting: August 22, 2005, 5:30 to 8:30 PM; Whitefish City Library Meeting Room
6. What's next in terms of issue discussion? Additional data needs?
    - Bike trails, paths, etc. (Steve will bring copies of the map that displays the new bike loop around the lake concept)
    - "Trucks"

"Homework"

- Continue to review the Record of Decision and other materials regarding bicycle trails, paths, connections, etc., and truck traffic for both the Urban and West sections and be prepared to address them as the main discussion items at the August 22 meeting. Try to visit bike trails, etc., before the August meeting.

Homework cont.

- Think about the following regarding bikes:
  - Where and how should diverse bike users be accommodated?
  - How should we interchange the recreation trail system with the street (Highway 93)?
  - How might touring bikes best move through the community?
  - Ideas and suggestions regarding bikes?
- Think about the following regarding truck traffic:
  - From your perspective, what is the current situation with trucks in Whitefish?
  - What are the major issues regarding trucks?
  - What values are important regarding truck traffic?
  - Any ideas or suggestions?
  - How about signage, as it relates to truck traffic?
- Continue discussions with your "mailboxes" concentrating on bicycle trails, etc., and truck traffic.

WHITEFISH
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

US 93 Whitefish Urban & West
Citizen Working Group
August 22, 2005 (4th meeting)

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss critical issues and design details regarding the reconstruction of Highway 93 in the Whitefish vicinity.
2. Respond to specific questions asked of the Group by FHA, MDT, WGM, and the Decision Team and to issues raised by members of the Working Group.
3. Develop collaborative responses and recommendations to the Decision Team regarding the principles and design details that will guide implementation of the project.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Duane Bauch	Bruce Boody	Ron Brunk	John Chaney
George Gardner	Monte Gilman	Jerry House	Mary Jo Look
Don Nelson	Gary Stephens	Steve Thompson	

(Virginia Tribe - Facilitator)

[Terry Nelson, Dale Duff, and Ed Lieser were not present.]

TECHNICAL SUPPORT GROUP IN ATTENDANCE

Brent Campbell (WGM	Jennifer Kendall (WGM)
Blair Nordhagen (MDT)	Shane Stack (MDT)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

Jim Gustafson
Judy Hessellund (786 7th Street West, Whitefish
Reggie McMurdo (2475 Highway 93 West, Whitefish 59937)

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

"Ratifying" the July 13 Meeting Summary, News Release and Comments to the "Heart of Whitefish" Downtown Plan

Working Group members ratified the July 13 meeting summary, the news release and the comments to the "Heart of Whitefish" Downtown Plan with the following corrections and suggestions:

- On page 2 of the meeting summary, the second to the last "bullet" should read:

  "Parking may not be the same issue on Baker. There are only 2 private residences that do not currently have parking spaces. Those residences can be accessed from the alley. Commercial entities relay on their own parking and

any new commercial enterprises would have to demonstrate to the City how they will provide parking as part of the permitting process."

Issue Discussion

"Bikes" and Bike Trails

General observations and questions; "mailbox" items

- Separate bikes from traffic on the Highway.
- Safety and visibility are important for long distance cyclists.
- We need to look at underpasses for bikes on Highway 93 West.
- From the cyclist's perspective, where the trail can't continue, it would be preferable to put in bike lanes rather than parking.
- We need good connection from trails to lanes and vice versa.
- Use wide shoulders.
- Connect to the community's "historic" bike trails.
- Think about multiple uses on bike lanes/trails.
- How will cyclists and pedestrians get across Baker if it becomes a main street in the design? Could bikes/pedestrians go under the Baker Avenue Bridge?
- The design needs to accommodate families in terms of bike users - trails and lanes wide enough for bikes with trailers or second bikes riding next to a child.
- Why have 3 bike paths – do we need that many?
- Consider private property along the River – bikes passing through people's yards?
- There's a potential bike loop planned that would link open forest lands – part of it is along Highway 93. That includes talk of two crossings of the Highway or "underpasses" for bikes.
- A structured conversation will take place September 6 at a City Council workshop with the intent of orchestrating a public/private partnership in support of the potential bike loop.
- There's about 3 million dollars in the transportation fund for bikes.
- In the final design, there's need for coordination between "crossings" and trails and who will pay for what. We need to leverage funds where possible.

Comments/questions related to bikes from earlier Working Group meetings

- Would a bike lane northbound on Spokane/southbound on Baker accommodate bike traffic? Could the concept of one north, the other south, work for bikes?
- Can the bike lane be located over one block? Is there an alternative route off the Highway (e.g., Spokane)?
- The two-way bike trail is dangerous with poor design.
- The approach to bike traffic needs to consider diversity in bike riders.
- Cycle tourist will probably follow the Highway into town anyway because they don't know the area. They probably wouldn't follow the river trail because they don't know where it goes.

"Bikes" and Bike Trails cont.

Issue statement

The final design needs to accommodate diverse bike traffic including touring cyclists, recreation cyclists, "kids," commuter bikers, and family biking (with its special equipment) and provide for safety for all bike users. In specific terms, the design should successfully interchange the recreation bike trail system with the Highway and determine where and how bike trails, paths, and lanes should be located on and near Highway 93. The design should be logical and connect seamlessly with the community's current larger bike network as well as future plans.

Exploring ideas

- West of the Bridge to State Park – Bike trail on the north side; only shoulder lane on the south side; put in bike underpasses
- Move the bike path a block or two away as part of funding
- Baker/River - Elevate the bridge; put in an underpass; move the City bike path

Trucks and Truck Traffic

General observations and questions; "mailbox" items

- In a general sense, people in the community view "trucks" as a problem. Trucks are a particular problem on Second Street.
- In the winter, trucks eastbound on Highway 93 and westbound on Spokane get stuck on the hill.
- Might the ratio of kinds of trucks change in the future with a decrease in logging?
- Crossing Baker left into town is almost impossible at certain times of the day. What we do with trucks could make it worse.
- Some people state the need for a bypass for trucks.
- We need to do whatever we can to ease the flow of traffic and decrease the bottlenecks and frustrating slowdowns because of trucks waiting to turn, etc.
- Trucks get backed up at the viaduct. We need to deal with left turns with a left turn pocket northbound on Baker; we need a right turn pocket as well.
- People associate truck traffic almost entirely with over-the-road, long-haul trucks but we have local trucks as well.
- Local truck traffic has reverted to what trucks didn't want – major tie-ups, waiting, noise. Deliveries are a problem for trucks as well as the driving public.
- Regardless of the design option, safety has to come first – and that has to include pedestrians and the risks associated with truck traffic.
- Trucks have a hard time getting in/out of town and in/out of delivery and work locations. Other truckers become barriers. This is an economic issue for truckers.

Trucks and Truck Traffic cont.

Issue statement

Truck traffic is a problem in Whitefish (e.g., Baker and Second) and the final design should attempt to mitigate that traffic through the community to the extent possible. Within this discussion, it's important to look at the difference between long-haul trucks moving through town to another destination and trucks working locally or delivering locally. The issues include safety, economics, and basically, traffic flow. However it is solved, we recognize that it's going to change the status of Baker – and that controlling and slowing traffic flow on Baker is the key.

Objectives/additional guiding principles

- We see signals and crossing safety as most important when it comes to managing traffic flow and trucks. The priority is safety with common sense through managing traffic flow.

Exploring ideas

- Put a light at Baker and Fourth.
- Put a light at Baker and Seventh.
- Consider a pedestrian/bike turnout at River/Baker Park.
- Explore a 13th Street Bridge rather than the Seventh Street Bridge and how options in that area might be used to help manage traffic flow.
- The City should look at the light at Baker and 1st.
- Explore eliminating 2 turns – with no turns for trucks northbound and only one intersection to pass through for east/west traffic.
- The design option presented by Duane at the last meeting is worth exploring in terms of traffic flow and trucks.
- Signage will be critical to flow – use signage to direct traffic (business, trucks).

Additional issues

A Working Group member brought forward an issue related to the Seventh Street Bridge after a discussion he had with a City staff member. Citing the Working Group's guiding principles related to aesthetics, he asked to put his following statement into the minutes and for further discussion about it in a subsequent meeting when bridge design is discussed:

> "Whitefish should strongly encourage the design and construction of a signature bridge over the Whitefish River at Seventh Street.
>
> If and when such a bridge becomes part of the future Highway 93 plan, the City Council should work closely with the MDT to emphasize the importance of a design that can become a symbol of Whitefish and an icon in the Fathead Valley.

A simple plate girder or pre-stressed concrete beam bridge will not be memorable. And certainly a series of culverts would be a pretty poor solution to such a crossing.

Our committee can become an advocate for aesthetic excellence in the creation of an important link in the Highway 93 of the future. This is an opportunity that comes to a community perhaps once in a century. We should grasp it."

Specific Working Group Agreements based on the Issue discussion

- Within the discussion regarding trucks and traffic flow, the Working Group agreed that the priority is safety with common sense.

Where do we go from here?

1. Fifth meeting: September 20, 2005 – 5:30 to 8:30 PM; Whitefish Library Meeting Room
2. The Group agreed to 2-3 additional meetings beyond the scheduled October meeting to review designs returned to the table by WGM and to be involved in providing comment as part of analyzing the four to five design models that will be produced by December.
3. What's next in terms of issue discussion? Additional data needs?
    - At the September meeting, the Working Group will concentrate its efforts on completing bike trails, etc. WGM will produce some draft ideas based on tonight's preliminary discussion for the Group's reaction, comment, and suggestions. WGM is also hoping to have received the demographic data in time for the September information update.
    - The remaining discussion issues (as of the May 24th list) are:
        - The Seventh Street Bridge – Brent hopes to have bridge engineers present at the October meeting;
        - Parking mitigation and lane widths – will be discussed as we look at the draft designs and models in October and November (Jeremy hopes to present drafts in response to the Group's input on individual issues starting at the October meeting);
        - An analysis of the four to five draft design models at a December meeting;
        - And the Group's sense of "priorities," should the project be phased.

"Homework"

- Take a rest

WHITEFISH
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

US 93 Whitefish Urban & West
Citizen Working Group
September 20, 2005 (5th meeting)

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss critical issues and design details regarding the reconstruction of Highway 93 in the Whitefish vicinity.
2. Respond to specific questions asked of the Group by FHA, MDT, WGM, and the Decision Team and to issues raised by members of the Working Group.
3. Develop collaborative responses and recommendations to the Decision Team regarding the principles and design details that will guide implementation of the project.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Duane Bauch	Bruce Boody	Ron Brunk	John Chaney
Dale Duff	George Gardner	Monte Gilman	Ed lieser
Mary Jo Look	Don Nelson	Steve Thompson	

(Virginia Tribe - Facilitator)

TECHNICAL SUPPORT GROUP IN ATTENDANCE

Brent Campbell (WGM Jeremy Keene (WGM)

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

"Ratifying" the August 22 Meeting Summary

Working Group members ratified the August 22 meeting summary with the following corrections:

- Page 2, under corrections and suggestions - "Parking may not be the same issue on Baker." Change the following language to "Those 2 residences cannot be accessed from the alley. These are the only two residences on this section of Baker that do not have off-street parking."
- Page 4, under Trucks and Truck Traffic cont., exploring ideas should read: "Explore a 13th Street ***route*** rather than the Seventh Street Bridge." No new bridge would be required at 13th street.
- On page 1, there should be a parenthesis enclosing WGM after Brent Campbell's name.
- On page 1, the last sentence should read "Commercial entities rely on their own parking…"

Getting On the Same Page

News from the news from the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)

- WGM personnel will meet with MDT on September 21 to discuss the process and draft products.

General Information Update

- WGM's draft products are about a month behind schedule – particularly in terms of progress on alternative design options.
- WGM hopes to have demographic information by October.

What's new in the community?

- There is a rumor that a "boutique" hotel will be constructed at First and Central on the "Paddle and Axe" property.
- The City has purchased the Burlington Northern Credit Union site but has not announced how the property will be used.
- The City Council approved going forward on the public/private partnership on the loop trail system. It's not yet known where intersections with the 93 project are desired. Where possible, sections of the trail could be built as part of the 93 project.
- The local and regional news media has given good coverage to the "loop trail" public/private partnership idea.

Issue Discussion

"Bikes" and Bike Trails

Spokane Crossing – Observations, questions and ideas

- The community's Bike/Pedestrian Committee prefers a river-level crossing below street level.
- The City has worked with the landowner to provide river and street connections on the SE quad.
- The right-of-way on the west side may be difficult to acquire.
- Integration of the street and trail system – at some point in the area– is very important.

Seventh Crossing – Observations, questions and ideas

- The loop could be attractive with landscaping and connection to the system.
- Sidewalks are important on both sides of the Bridge.
- The bike lane should continue SB from Baker across the Bridge.
- Seventh Street serves the Elementary School as well as the High School.
- It's important to continue sidewalks east of Spokane.

Baker Crossing – Observations, questions and ideas

- Can a new bridge accommodate a trail under-crossing?
- What about a bicycle overpass?
- Consider an at-grade crossing with a signal.
- How can the bridge be constructed with no net loss of park space while accommodating the trail?
- Can the trail and vegetated grade serve as mitigation to no net loss?
- Consider aesthetic rock face retaining walls.
- Consider a separated box culvert.

Second Street – West – Observations, questions and ideas

- Put the trail on the south side to the Golf Course underpass – then on the north side to West.
- Shared use with the Golf Course needs to be explored and so all interests are considered.
- Provide access to Skyles (north side) and Spencer Lake (south side).

Specific Working Group Agreements Based on the Issue Discussion

1. Whatever happens with bike facilities, they should contribute to the "system" and a sense of connection throughout the community.

2. The Working Group felt "so far – so good" pertaining to the draft work on bike facilities, acknowledging that functional integration of the street and trail system is very important.

3. At Baker, the Parks should be connected with grade separated under-crossing. If Baker becomes de-facto Highway 93 (i.e., contra-flow), grade separation is critical.

4. If necessary in the design at Baker, the Working Group would ask the "Decision Team" to explore options to the "no net loss" situation regarding the Parks and the Baker crossing.

Where do we go from here?

- The **October 24th meeting is cancelled** to allow WGM time to move ahead on their draft design options. The sixth meeting is **re-scheduled for November 16** from 5:30 to 8:30 PM; Whitefish City Library Meeting Room and will include the following agenda items:
    - Review WGM draft designs produced in response to the Working Group's earlier input on particular issues.
    - The Seventh Street Bridge (with bridge engineers in attendance)
    - Demographic data

- The Group also scheduled a December 14 meeting so they are able to complete their review as well as be involved in analyzing the (4-5) design models WGM is developing. Parking mitigation and lane widths will be discussed as we look at, and analyze the models. WGM would also like to explore the Group's sense of "priorities" should the project be phased.

"Homework"

- Continue discussion with your "mail boxes" particularly regarding the "Seventh Street Bridge".

WHITEFISH
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

US 93 Whitefish Urban & West Citizen Working Group
December 14, 2005 (6th meeting)

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss critical issues and design details regarding the reconstruction of Highway 93 in the Whitefish vicinity.
2. Respond to specific questions asked of the Group by FHA, MDT, WGM, and the Decision Team and to issues raised by members of the Working Group.
3. Develop collaborative responses and recommendations to the Decision Team regarding the principles and design details that will guide implementation of the project.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Duane Bauch	Bruce Boody	Ron Brunk	John Chaney
Dale Duff	George Gardner	Monte Gilman	Mary Jo Look
Don Nelson	Terry Nelson	Gary Stephens	Steve Thompson

(Virginia Tribe - Facilitator)

TECHNICAL SUPPORT GROUP IN ATTENDANCE

Jeremy Keene (WGM)

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

"Ratifying" the September 20 Meeting Summary

Working Group members ratified the September 20 meeting summary with the following correction:

- Page 3, under Baker Crossing – Observations, questions and ideas, last bullet- Change to "Consider a grade separated box culvert."

Catching Up - Process Update

- WGM Group continues to work with the MDT to clarify ways to look at specific design options that are not outside the footprint of the EIS and Record of Decision. When those agreements are reached, WGM will bring the information back to the Working Group.

Pertinent Items in the Local Operating Environment

- With the development of the community's Bicycle Master Plan, the treatment of crossings, etc., become more significant in the design options.
- Economic consultants identified negative impacts of one-way streets on business.
- The community is about to start an intensive growth policy update.
- Whitefish has experienced important changes in the 10 years since the EIS and Record of Decision were completed including:
    - Significant growth in traffic, especially north of town
    - Development and endorsement of the Downtown Plan by local government
    - The possibility of public transportation
    - Updating of the Big Mountain Master Plan with a Board that is capitalized for projects and growth

Reviewing the Whitefish West Preliminary Design

- WGM presented 16 sections of preliminary design for Whitefish West.
- While the initial reaction of the Working Group was basically supportive, they identified the following concerns:
    - Lane widths of 14 feet (MDT standards versus the Federal Highway Administration "flexible design" manual) don't encourage slower traffic through town.
    - Impacts (properties, view, vegetation, etc.) will occur along the highway because of breadth of right of way for some proposed new portions.
    - How will bicycle access and crossings occur in a safe manner, particularly in the areas of the State Park and Lake?
    - What are the potential consequences of 4F lands (State Lands) and wetlands along the highway?
    - Some driveways/access roads will be difficult.
    - What is the best outcome for the golf course culvert situation?

Suggested Project Phasing Priorities

Criteria

The Working Group suggested these criteria for deciding priority phases for the project:

- By doing a particular phase, will it give the community the confidence that the project is truly moving along?
- Are there obvious benefits that are important to the community (is connected to another ongoing community effort/remedies a significant problem in the community/has urgency for some reason/etc.)?
- Can it be done more quickly/efficiently than waiting for the whole project?
- Can it be done without impacting the ultimate design?

Members of the Working Group identified the following as priority phases and ranked them as listed:

1. Second Avenue
2. Crossings at Parks; Second Street Bridge
3. Bike crossing at Spokane/River; entrances to the community

Where does the Group go from here?

- The Working Group agreed to meet for a 7th meeting on Thursday, February 2 from 5:30 – 8:30 PM in the Whitefish City Library Meeting Room.
- The following discussion items are planned:
  - The 7th Street Bridge (with bridge engineers in attendance)
  - Demographic data
  - Review of other WGM draft design options produced in response to the Working Group's earlier input on particular issues
  - Final discussion on Whitefish West sections
  - Analysis of (4-5)m design models WGM is developing, including parking mitigation and lane widths

"Homework"

- Continue discussion with your "mail boxes"
- Continue to review and think about Whitefish West draft sections

WHITEFISH
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

US 93 Whitefish Urban & West Citizen Working Group
February 2, 2006 (7th meeting)

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss critical issues and design details regarding the reconstruction of Highway 93 in the Whitefish vicinity.
2. Respond to specific questions asked of the Group by FHA, MDT, WGM, and the Decision Team and to issues raised by members of the Working Group.
3. Develop collaborative responses and recommendations to the Decision Team regarding the principles and design details that will guide implementation of the project.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Duane Bauch	Bruce Boody	Ron Brunk	John Chaney
Dale Duff	George Gardner	Ed Lieser	Mary Jo Look
Don Nelson	Gary Stephens	Steve Thompson	

(Virginia Tribe - Facilitator)

TECHNICAL SUPPORT GROUP IN ATTENDANCE

Brent Campbell	Dustin Hirose	Jeremy Keene
Blair Nordhagen	Mark Bancale	

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

"Ratifying" the December 14, 2005 Meeting Summary

Working Group members ratified the December 14, 2005 meeting summary without corrections.

Revisiting the Working Group Charter and Products as of February 1, 2006

Charter

The purpose of the Whitefish Highway 93 Citizen Working Group is to offer comment to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), its Consultants, and local decision makers on critical issues and design details regarding the reconstruction of Highway 93 in the Whitefish vicinity as framed by the completed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the decisions contained in the Record of Decision (ROD).

The Group consists of a diverse body of citizens representing the interests of local people who will benefit from, and feel the impacts of, the Highway 93 project individually and as a community.

The Group is chartered to develop creative, collaborative responses, suggestions, and recommendations to the Decision Team regarding the principles and design details that will guide implementation of the project. The Group's products should address specific questions asked by the FHWA, MDT, its Consultants, and the Decision Team, as well as implementation interests brought to the table by the Group's members.

Citizen Working Group Guiding Principles

- We believe that economic vitality is linked to community character.
- We believe that safe design for all traffic (pedestrians, bicycles, vehicles, trucks, buses, etc.) is important to enhancing the "Whitefish" experience for visitors as well as community members.
- We believe in preserving the character and quality of life of Whitefish including a strong sense of "small community"; architectural and landscape aesthetics; and existing natural environs.
- We believe that the Highway 93 design must be adaptable and flexible to accommodate future growth in the area.

(First Cut at Guiding Principles; May 24, 2005; Charter meeting, p. 5)

- We believe that project must be completed in a timely, organized and well-planned manner to mitigate overall impacts on the community.
- We believe that blending useful and important parts of the Highway 93 Plan with the "Heart of Whitefish" Downtown Plan will result in positive short and long term outcomes for the community.

Additional Guiding Principles; June 29, 2006 (2nd meeting, p. 4)

Citizen Working Group Agreements on Recommendations Regarding Specific Issues:

- Having traffic "slow down" through town is not a bad thing.
- Within the discussion regarding trucks and traffic flow, the Working Group agreed that the priority is safety with common sense.
- Keep the trees and boulevards. Do whatever is possible to maintain the community character of Whitefish (e.g., the trees).
- A two-way bike lane on one side of the Highway isn't safe, useful or functional.
- For further discussion and analysis, the following 4 design scenarios should be modeled within the footprint of the EIS and ROD and analyzed:
  - No Action
  - Design option reflecting the Record of Decision
  - Design option reflecting contra flow lanes on Spokane; two lane option at Second; contra flow on Baker; and sub-design options from the Working Group (other design option ideas; left turn lanes, alternative parking ideas, etc.).
  - "93 Truck" design option where trucks would be directed away from downtown depending on where they are going.
- Whatever happens with bike facilities, they should contribute to the "system" and a sense of connection throughout the community.
- The Working Group felt "so far – so good" pertaining to the draft work on bike facilities, acknowledging that functional integration of the street and trail system is very important.
- At Baker, the Parks should be connected with grade separated under-crossing. If Baker becomes de-facto Highway 93 (i.e., contra-flow), grade separation is critical.
- If necessary in the design at Baker, the Working Group would ask the "Decision Team" to explore options to the "no net loss" situation regarding the Parks and the Baker crossing.

(Specific Working Group Agreements based on the issue discussion; September 20, 2005 – 5th meeting, p. 3)

Citizen Working Group Consensus Recommendations Relating to the "Whitefish Downtown Master Plan"

- Further education and information efforts for the community are critical before final decisions are made. In talking to people, it's obvious that many are not well-informed about potential Highway 93 plans and additional opportunities for public input are necessary.

- The two-way bike lane (in the Downtown Plan) on one side of Spokane is not a good idea because it is unsafe and poorly designed.
- The Gateway at State Park (Record of Decision approach) is the preference of the Working Group.
- Trees and boulevards need to be saved whenever possible.
- For further discussion and analysis, the following 4 design scenarios should be modeled and analyzed:
    1. No Action
    2. Design option reflecting the Record of Decision
    3. Design option reflecting contra flow lanes on Spokane; two lane option at Second; contra flow and/or… on Baker; and sub-design options from the Working Group (i.e., Gary's suggestion for Spokane, etc.; other ideas about Spokane and Baker, left turn lanes, alternative parking ideas, etc.).
    4. "93 Truck" design option (Duane's suggestion) where trucks are directed away from downtown depending on where they are going.

    (Comments to the City Council Regarding the Downtown Plan; July 13, 2005; 5th meeting, p. 4; Comments related to the "Heart of Whitefish" Downtown Plan submitted to Whitefish City Council on 7-29-05)

Demographic Data

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation with demographic information will be sent out with the meeting notes.

Getting Started on Traffic Projections

Traffic projections based on "no action" for the year 2030 were presented to the Working Group. Further discussion will take place at the April 10 meeting.

Presentation and Discussion: Bridges as Part of the Highway 93 Project

Following the presentation related to bridges, Working Group members had the following comments, questions, and suggestions:

- The Seventh Street Bridge will be visible in its length. It could be an "icon" for the village if done right.
- There should be sidewalks on both sides.
- Bridges need "dark sky" lighting and antique lights to blend with the community.
- Mimic the historic appearance of the downtown area.

- The bridges should have a low profile in grade and elevation.
- There should be visibility to the natural environment.
- Bridges should incorporate natural materials.
- Is there a way to minimize interrupting the flow of the river?
- There should be vista points with the sidewalks.
- We may be willing to trade off other "bridge" things to have an icon Seventh Street Bridge.
- We need to explore bike trails and trail connections.
- How might fish be accommodated?

Reviewing Working Group Comments to the Downtown Plan

Crandall Arambula Consultants, who were involved in developing the Downtown Master Plan, briefly discussed transportation issues involving the Highway 93 project. Working Group members will continue to discuss those issues as they look at alternative design options.

Where do we go from here?

Setting the Calendar

- The Working Group will meet April 10 and May 2 to complete their work
- Unless otherwise announced, the meetings will be held at the Whitefish Public Library from 5:30 – 8:30 PM.
- Open House – late May or early June

Remaining Discussion Items for the April and May Meetings

- Continued discussion related to traffic projections
- Feedback on the Whitefish West preliminary design (includes discussion of land widths and other issues)
- Review and contribute to the analysis of design option models which will include parking mitigation and lane widths

Homework

- Review the Record of Decision for both the Urban and West sections.
- Revisit the Whitefish West preliminary design materials distributed at the December 14, 2005 Working Group meeting. Be prepared to provide the Consultants with feedback.
- Continue discussion with your "mail boxes."

WHITEFISH
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

US 93 Whitefish Urban & West
Citizen Working Group
June 7, 2007 4:00 – 5:30 PM

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Provide the Working Group with an update on the Re-Evaluation process and an overview of the current transportation planning effort for the Whitefish vicinity; respond to Working Group member questions.
2. Present the preliminary design for the Whitefish West portion of the Highway and get feedback from the Group.
3. Explore a continued role for the Working Group related to the Whitefish West portion of Highway 93

AGENDA ITEMS

Introduction to the session:

- Objectives and agenda review
- Who's in the room and why - Getting re-acquainted
- Revisiting the Working Group Charter and Guiding Principles

General process update:

- Overview and rationale for the current transportation planning effort for the Whitefish vicinity
- Questions and answers with the Working Group

Highway 93 Whitefish West update:

- How does the Whitefish West portion fit in the original EIS and Record of Decision?
- Where are we in the design process for this portion of Highway 93?
- What features are included in the preliminary design and how have the Working Group's previous comments been incorporated?

Exploring a continued role for the Working Group for the Whitefish West portion of Highway 93

Where do we go from here?

Citizen Working Group Initial Charter

The purpose of the Whitefish Highway 93 Citizen Working Group is to offer comment to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), its Consultants, and local decision makers on critical issues and design details regarding the reconstruction of Highway 93 in the Whitefish vicinity as framed by the completed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the decisions contained in the Record of Decision (ROD).

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Citizen Working Group Guiding Principles

- We believe that economic vitality is linked to community character.
- We believe that safe design for all traffic (pedestrians, bicycles, vehicles, trucks, buses, etc.) is important to enhancing the "Whitefish" experience for visitors as well as community members.
- We believe in preserving the character and quality of life of Whitefish including a strong sense of "small community"; architectural and landscape aesthetics; and existing natural environs.
- We believe that the Highway 93 design must be adaptable and flexible to accommodate future growth in the area.

  (First Cut at Guiding Principles; May 24, 2005; Charter meeting, p. 5)
- We believe that project must be completed in a timely, organized and well-planned manner to mitigate overall impacts on the community.
- We believe that blending useful and important parts of the Highway 93 Plan with the "Heart of Whitefish" Downtown Plan will result in positive short and long term outcomes for the community.

  Additional Guiding Principles; June 29, 2006 (2nd meeting, p. 4)

WHITEFISH
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

US 93 Whitefish Urban & West
Citizen Working Group
September 19, 2007 (9TH meeting)
5:30 – 8:00 PM - City Library

Facilitator's Summary

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Get up to date collectively on the status of the US 93 Whitefish West Project.
2. Discuss design options and issues including costs.
3. Get feedback on the preliminary design.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ron Brunk	John Chaney	George Gardner
Monte Gilman	Mary Jo Look	Gary Stephens
Terry Nelson		

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

Revisiting the Working Group's Governance Structure

Discussion Ground Rules

- Be on time and be present with the discussion topic; come prepared.
- Monitor your own communication style and behaviors:
  - Allow the other to finish; welcome all comments, ideas and questions.
  - Avoid side conversations.
  - Address issues, not personalities and don't bring politics to the table.
- Raise you hand to get the floor. Establish a time limit for speakers if necessary.
- Manage issue discussions to completion or use a simple majority to table an issue. (The facilitator will keep track of tabled issues and those not pertinent at that point.)
- Aim for 100% agreement on recommendations. When agreement has not been reached, the facilitator will use interest-based problem solving to move the group toward agreement. When 100% agreement cannot be reached, the agreement will be based on a 2/3 majority with a minority report if requested by the minority.
- Stay within agreed upon meeting times; commit to attending for the full meeting.
- At the end of the process, a report of the Group's recommendations will be provided to the public. Starting with the 2nd meeting, a news release describing agenda items and general progress will go to the local media. Agreement on news release "bullets" will be the last item on each agenda.

Charter

The purpose of the Whitefish Highway 93 Citizen Working Group is to offer comment to the Federal Highway Administration, the Montana Department of Transportation, its Consultants, and local decision makers on critical issues and design details regarding the reconstruction of Highway 93 in the Whitefish vicinity as framed by the completed Environmental Impact Statement and the decisions contained in the Record of Decision.

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Roles and Responsibilities

- Working Group members will honor the Charter; follow the ground rules and process agreements; and work to complete their charge.
- The facilitator will design the process/agendas; facilitate sessions; send a meeting summary to Jennifer by the end of 5 business days after each meeting; act as a neutral and use process tools to assist the Group meet its objectives.
- WGM will provide administrative support to the Working Group including providing needed data and information; sending meeting summaries (WORD and PDF) to Working Group participants the day after receiving them from the facilitator; and distributing a progress report news release to the media following each meeting after the first meeting.
- WGM, Montana Department of Transportation, and Federal Highway representatives will serve as a Technical Team providing support to the Working Group.

Guiding Principles

- We believe that economic vitality is linked to community character.
- We believe that safe design for all traffic (pedestrians, bicycles, vehicles, trucks, buses, etc.) is important to enhancing the "Whitefish" experience for visitors as well as community members.
- We believe in preserving the character and quality of life of Whitefish including a strong sense of "small community"; architectural and landscape aesthetics; and existing natural environs.
- We believe that the Highway 93 design must be adaptable and flexible to accommodate future growth in the area.
- We believe that project must be completed in a timely, organized and well-planned manner to mitigate overall impacts on the community.
- We believe that blending useful and important parts of the Highway 93 Plan with the "Heart of Whitefish" Downtown Plan will result in positive short and long term outcomes for the community.

Warming up - What's new in Whitefish?

- The development on Baker Avenue makes the area significantly different from the 1994 EIS. Recent factors have pretty much made the 1994 EIS fairly obsolete in and around the downtown area of Whitefish.
- Whitefish has and is experiencing overall exponential growth.
- Anything done with the 2nd Avenue Bridge will affect the heart of what goes on in Whitefish.
- City government is in the process of instituting a "critical area" ordinance.
- We are experiencing huge growth in the numbers of bike groups doing tours here.
- Local government is working with Fish, Wildlife & Parks to try to eliminate motorized traffic on the River within the City limits of Whitefish.
- The "circle Whitefish" bike trail around the Lake is moving forward.
- We still need to address the traffic light situation in terms of left turns in busy areas of the community.
- Some are still thinking about a bypass – and a group has been established to re-explore the concept.

Preliminary Overall Design for the Whitefish West Project - Review and Discussion

Concerns about Project Costs

- Costs for the US Highway 93 West project is estimated in the neighborhood of 28 million – with the rights-of-way acquisition in current dollars at approximately 30 million. The Consultants are trying to answer the following questions and would like the Working Group to think about them as they review and give comments on the preliminary overall design:
  - Where changes can be made without significantly affecting costs?
  - Where money might be saved without sacrificing the needs and principles of the community?
  - What is just not affordable?

Plans for the 2nd Street Bridge

- The Consultants reported that they are still "thinking" about the bridge.
- A bridge engineer will come to the November meeting and a full discussion with the Working Group is planned at that time.

Working Group Feedback on the Preliminary Design, Money and "Priorities" - Specific Project "Pieces"

Parking East of the Bridge

Working Group members:

- Suggest starting the project at O'Brien rather than Lupfer to retain current needed parking and save money.

Tree Removal/Landscaping/Urban Limits
Working Group Members:

- Wondered if there could be a sidewalk/path on one side only – with the other side curb and gutters with grass, wood chips, etc.
- Suggest blacktop paths rather than cement to reduce costs.

Turning Movements at the Golf Course; Golf Course Impacts
Working Group members:

- Prefer a two-tunnel underpass but understand that a wide tunnel that accommodates both uses may be more cost effective.
- Wondered if there could be a right turn into the Golf Course.
- Suggest a cut at Cemetery Hill and remind us again of the safety issue at Cemetery Hill.

Truck Climbing Lanes
Working Group members:

- Agreed that a shorter west bound truck climbing lane was acceptable but were less certain about elimination of a west bound climbing lane.
- Agreed that an eastbound climbing land is not needed because of the speed situation as traffic enters town.
- Stated that the steakhouse parking situation needs to be improved.

Rights-of-Way Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Working Group members:

- Agreed to V-Ditch approaches to save money.
- Suggest that steeper slopes may be a way to reduce rights-of-way acquisition costs.

Locations of Bike Path
Working Group members:

- Affirmed the need and desire for the trail under the 2nd Street Bridge. The Trail is part of the Whitefish Master Plan.
- Suggested in Section 4 – by the Twin Bridge bike path trail – make one and the same.
- Agreed that a trail on the south side makes sense.

Coordination with the "A Trail Runs Through it" Project
Working Group members:

- Agree that a combined crossing seems useful and appropriate.
- Suggest that the crossing should be located in the most affordable area (i.e., a fill area) and this may mean further west.
- Problems with parking at the steakhouse property need to be addressed.
- All trail crossings must be safe.
- Affirmed the trail under the 2nd Street Bridge because it is part of the Trail Master Plan.
- Any trail crossing needs to be safe.

General Comments

- If the community experiences changes in land uses from residential to commercial, can minor changes in the design be accommodated?
- Working Group members wondered if narrower lanes might be less expensive and if they would be adequate.
- Working Group members wondered if the future use of the ID Timber property has been considered in the overall equation.

Individual Comments

- The City is in the process of adopting its Growth Policy. One of the "recommended actions" is to develop corridor plans. This corridor is on the list of priorities. How does this project and design fit with that? It's hard to say at this time. Land use and transportation are so tightly tied together. Do we accomplish access control with a suicide lane?
- The speed limit of 25 miles per hour from town going east should start at Grouse Mountain Lodge.
- Going west to Grouse Mountain Lodge, the speed limit should be 25 miles per hour from Fairway Drive to Grouse Mountain.
- There has been a lot of time, money and politics spent on "A Trail Runs Through It". I know the separated trail/path along the highway is expensive but I think many in the community see it as important. Personally, I think a separate path/trail out west to the State Park road is adequate if on the road lanes both east and west – this would function but we still need the below ground crossing.
- Keeping lanes/roadway as narrow as we can will lessen impacts on Whitefish – but we need to provide left turn options.
- Look at areas most likely to develop and think about crossings in those terms.
- The aesthetic values of medians need to be planned byt consider maintenance costs.
- The accident ratio from east of Skyles west does not support the huge costs of right-of-way acquisition. Just build the western section of the highway to minimum standards except for the Twin Bridges intersection. Leave that improvement as planned.
- The bike/pedestrian path is much better than earlier plans. I compliment this version.

Where do we go from here?

Are you still willing...?

- Working Group members in attendance agreed to continue their advisory work regarding US Highway 93 West for 3-4 more meetings.

Setting the Calendar; Agenda Topics

- The Working Group will meet again on November 14. Agenda topics will include:
  - A final overview of the broad design for scope of work items.
  - Discussion regarding the 2nd Avenue Bridge.
  - Discussion regarding parking, landscaping, etc.
  - Preliminary discussion about specific design approaches.
- The Working Group will also meet in April and June to continue discussion and advice about specific design approaches.

"Homework"

- The Working Group was asked to "reconstitute" their 5-7 mailboxes.

US 93 Whitefish West
Citizen Working Group Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2007 (10th Meeting)
5:30 - 8:00 PM

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Present the current proposed action/scope of work for the Whitefish West portion of the highway and get feedback from the group.
2. Present the preliminary bridge design and get feedback from the group

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Gary Stephens	Monte Gilman	George Gardener
John Chaney	Mary Jo Look	Bruce Boody
Terry Nelson	Duane Bauch	

TECHNICAL SUPPORT GROUP IN ATTENDANCE

John Wilson – City of Whitefish	Shane Stack – MDT	Laura Jones Lofink – WGM Group, Inc.
Gary Hall – Flathead County Commissioner	Niel Curry – TD&H	Virginia Tribe – Facilitator
	Jeremy Keene – WGM Group, Inc.	

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES

Janey Conat
Wendy Compton-Ring
Torkel Torkelson

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

Introduction

Ginny Tribe reviewed the objectives for the meeting and provided an update on the process.

Whitefish West Scope of Work

Jeremy gave a brief summary of the information he will present at the city council meeting on Monday, November 19th.

Changes made to the design since the last CWG meeting include:

- The eastbound climbing lane was eliminated.
- The westbound climbing lane was shortened.
- The curb and gutter was extended to Grouse Mountain Road.
- The bike path was separated from the highway and moved onto the golf course.
- The bike path was moved to the south side of the highway west of Skyles Lake. An additional crossing is proposed at this location. They type of crossing is yet to be determined and is dependent on the availability of funding.

Virginia Tribe asked the Citizens Work Group to provide input on notecards indicating their general feelings regarding the current proposed action/scope of work. Each member discussed the issues listed on their note cards. The following is a list of individual member input. This list is inclusive and some comments are duplicated and some comments conflict:

- General support:
  - I like the Plan – I think they listened to us.
  - Overall the project looks good and is reactive to the Working Group's inputs.
  - Generally I support the Plan.
  - While the Plan is moving ahead, I'm still concerned about costs – if it is too expensive and cannot be built – the Plan doesn't matter. Acquisition costs will be huge. How can we reduce rights- of- way costs? What other realistic tools exist?
  - The Plan is certainly an improvement and much better than no Plan at all.
- Regarding cost:
  - Reduce acquisition costs wherever possible including steeper slopes, four foot shoulders, reduced land widths, guard rails, and reduced speeds in areas with reduced land widths (Lupfer west to State Park Road).
  - Reduce costs by eliminating "suicide" lanes.
  - Not enough has been done to reduce cost of project, particularly right-of-way. Is this project fundable?
  - Just east of State Park Road - west through beginning of the truck climbing lane, right-of-way can be reduced; use guard rails and steeper fill slopes.
  - It's good that the land used at the golf course will be "easements" rather than acquisition.
  - Are there "lessons learned" about acquisition from other projects?
- Regarding traffic management, left turn lanes and parking:
  - Shakers Steakhouse access needs resolution
  - Parking only on one half of the block between Lupfer and O'Brien is fine.
  - Reduce right-of-way acquisition by eliminating the two-way-left-turn-lane.
  - Adequate left turn lanes need to be included – parking is secondary in the business area.
  - Lupfer to O'Brien should not be three lanes
  - Bridge should be two lanes
  - Reduce lane widths in the low speed areas, reduce right-of-way acquisition area
  - Left hand turn lanes are a good design option.
  - We need on-street parking between Lupfer and Miles.
  - I'm concerned about parking west of Baker.
  - Three lanes west of the bridge is a good design option and is necessary to improve traffic flow.
  - Can the Plan allow for the transition point (changing from three lanes to two lanes on Highway 93) mid-block between O'Brien and Miles (across from the Whitefish Community Center)?
  - There is not a need for a left turn lane to O'Brien – the entrances in the middle of the block should not be eliminated.

- The left turn will become more and more important as we grow – especially the neighborhoods near Miles Avenue and O'Brien Avenues.
- The left turn to Miles should be allowed/continued.
- We should be concerned about visibility with the existing roadway and access concerns for people who live along the Highway. We don't want to lose the full movement access.
- Have we considered frontage roads as a solution to the access situation?
- Have we considered mass transit as an alternative to planning for more cars? We need to get "green" in today's world.

- Regarding community character/community values:
  - Widening the bridge to 3 lanes offends community character.
  - Lane widths are excessive in the urban, lower speed limit areas – reduce widths of center turn lane travel lanes. "Flexibility" for lane widths is addressed in the following sources:
    - Flexibility in Highway Design. FHWA Pub. No.FHWA-PD-97-062. Federal Highway Administration, 1997. p. 37 - Design Exception Process; p. 76 - Lane Width; p. 78 -"Two-way left-turn lanes improve safety and efficiency for vehicular traffic but do not afford a safe refuge for pedestrians."
    - A Guide for Achieving Flexibility in Highway Design. Washington, DC: American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 2004
    - A Guide to Best Practices for Achieving Context Sensitive Solutions. Washington, DC: National Cooperative Highway Research Program, 2002.
  - O'Brien west through the bridge could easily be two lane with the center lane eliminated.
  - Put some emphasis on future transit, i.e. bus pullouts
  - It's important that we are able to maintain businesses west of town like the Michaels Auto Repair. Whitefish has lost local businesses because of the cost of land and competition from the south. Whatever we do, we need to support them. If land is acquired for right-of-way, these businesses can't afford to re-start.
- Regarding safety:
  - What will be the width of the tunnel at the golf course?
  - Although more expensive, I still think that two separate underpasses at the golf course is the best alternative. It is a safety issue and it's important to maintain a functional golf course while accommodating bike and pedestrian travel.
  - Bike paths and sidewalks on the golf course have to be safe for golfers and bikers and pedestrians and not be intrusive to golfers.
  - The golf course underpass should be separate for golfers and bikers/walkers for safety.
  - Speed limits need to be slower throughout or at least past milepost 130.
- Regarding bike paths and bike safety:
  - Safety of the bike path crossings is critical.

  - In general – the bike path separation from roads is very important for safety and the bike underpass is essential.
  - The adjustments made to the bicycle/pedestrian path are too intrusive to the golf course users.
  - If an underpass at Skyles Lake is cost prohibitive, consider moving the bike path to the south at the first crossing (golf course).
  - If we can move the bike path further out into the right-of-way at the crossing west of Skyles Lake without adding right-of-way impacts, that could improve safety
- Regarding landscaping:
  - For safety reasons vegetation on the medians should be deer resistant.
  - Reduce landscaping on the south side near State Park road.
  - Reduce landscaping to allow for parking.
- There is still no mention of an alternate road from Highway 93 West to Highway 40. It is being explored in the other Whitefish Corridor Study (separate project).

Second Street Bridge

Neil Curry from TD& H presented preliminary bridge plans to the group. Below is a summary of that presentation:

- The original bridge was a three span bridge; the new bridge will be two spans.
- The proposed bridge will be somewhat shorter than the original bridge (existing 215 feet-long, proposed 160 feet-long).
- The bridge must carry traffic during construction.
- It is likely the bridge will take one full building season to construct.
- There will be a bicycle pedestrian path under crossing.
- The location does not allow for much flexibility in bridge design.
- The bridge could be four meters shorter if it did not include a path beneath it. A separate under crossing will be considered for the path.
- The proposed bridge is wider than the existing bridge (existing 44 feet-wide, proposed 63 feet-wide).
- Bridge costs are approximately $10,000 per foot, per length of bridge and $25,000 per foot, per width of bridge.
- The bridge will include lighting.
- Aesthetic treatments can be discussed at a future CWG meeting. TD&H will prepare concepts for discussion.

Below are comments from the CWG about preliminary plans for the 2nd Street Bridge:

- Is the old (current) bridge safe? Should it be a priority in the project?
- Would it be cheaper with two lanes?
- How will the height of the bridge affect current users?
- Community character remains important.
- What about storm drainage? Are you anticipating storm water that currently goes right into the river?
- Will there just be a roadway and walkway? No shoulders?
- How will aesthetics be addressed?
- We need to make sure the bike path happens.
- There is a safety issue going south off Miles – visibility is almost zero – downhill grade.

- It should be a good looking bridge based on its location and view from other parts of the community.
- Who would be in charge of lighting on the east end of the bridge?
- The bridge needs to accommodate the Christmas decorations.
- We need to meet the lighting ordinance with "cut-off" opticals.
- We want to maintain the historic feel of the lighting.
- Is maintenance an issue with concrete? Are there alternatives that should be considered? What about cost regarding materials?

Where do we go from here?
Jeremy will meet with the Whitefish City Council on Monday, November 19th at 7:10 pm and would like to see members of the Citizens Work Group attend.

Next, the Decision Team will meet sometime in January 2008. The decision team includes the County, City, MDT and FHWA.

The next Citizens Work Group meeting will take place sometime in spring 2008.

We anticipate a plan-in-hand design review in autumn 2008. The right-of-way acquisition phase could begin between 2009 and 2011.

Agenda: US 93 Whitefish West
Decision Team Meeting

When: Monday, February 4, 2008 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Where: Whitefish City Council Conference Room

Attendees:

Dwane Kailey - MDT
Blair Nordhagen - MDT
Craig Genzlinger – FHWA
Mike Jenson – Mayor of Whitefish
Martin McGrew – Whitefish City Council
John Wilson – Whitefish Public Works Director
Dave Taylor – Whitefish Planning Director
Rick Hanners – Whitefish Pilot
John Chaney – Whitefish Citizens Working Group (CWG)
Mary Jo Look – CWG
Monte Gilman – CWG
George Gardener – CWG
Bruce Boody – CWG
Janey Conat – Whitefish Citizen
Jeremy Keene - WGM
Trevor Iman – WGM
Laura Jones Lofink – WGM

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the design exceptions that have been proposed by the Citizens Working Group (CWG) and Whitefish City Council. *Additional clarifications and information have been added in italics.*

Process and Framework for Decisions
Jeremy Keene presented the process and framework for decisions. The City Council determined that it is critically important to 1)Preserve the unique community character of Whitefish and seek to eliminate or minimize impacts from the reconstruction and future use of US 93; 2)Enable timely completion of the US 93 Whitefish West project by reducing costs for right-of-way acquisition and construction activities.

The design criteria are based on AASHTO Design Criteria, which is continuously evolving. Factors that are considered when making design exceptions include safety and risk; agency and personal liability; crash analysis; benefits vs. cost; and justification/rational. There are multiple stakeholders in this project which requires balance, flexibility and compromise. Ultimately, MDT is the responsible stakeholder and they obtain community buy-in.

Information and Discussion of Specific Design Recommendations
Jeremy presented the following Specific Design Recommendations:

<u>Preserve downtown character and minimize impacts to businesses</u>

- Eliminate the two-way-left-turn-lane (TWLTL) and retain on-street parking east of the Whitefish River.

- The intersections between the bridge and Lupfer Street function similar with or without a turn lane, however, 2nd and Baker will be a bottle neck and a two-lane option with on-street parking would work.
- Vehicle speeds in the area are low, therefore, it is not expected that removal of the TWLTL would affect safety.
- Mayor Jenson commented that cut-through traffic to avoid the intersection of 2nd and Baker is an issue.

- Change Miles Avenue to a southbound one-way street
  - Craig questioned whether making Miles Ave. right-in/right-out might have any other implications. It is not likely to affect the bridge width.
  - Mayor Jenson said the residents living in the condo units near the river would have to drive around the block.
  - Turning radius could be an issue.
  - The group agreed to discuss the details during final design.
  - Decisions and Agreements:

- Provide a two-lane bridge over the Whitefish River
  - Jeremy commented that money is saved with a two-lane bridge, but construction phasing is more difficult because there are not many detour options. A work bridge would add cost to the project.
  - Dwane stated that the bridge should be built to a 3-lane width, but can be striped as a two-lane bridge.
  - John Wilson suggested dedication of the extra width go to pedestrians and bicyclists.
  - Dwane said the pedestrian area can be wider as long as the barrier is not permanent. They do not want to preclude options for the Urban Corridor Study.
  - FHWA also prefers a 3-lane width on the bridge in case it is needed in the future.
  - Mayor Jenson and the CWG concurred that a 3-lane width on the bridge was acceptable if temporary barriers can be added and the extra width can be used by pedestrians.

Decisions and Agreements: The downtown character will be preserved and impacts to businesses will be minimized by eliminating the TWLTL, retaining parking east of the Whitefish River, and providing a two-lane bridge over the Whitefish River. The bridge will be constructed to a 3-lane width with temporary barriers for wider pedestrian crossing. The possibility of changing Miles Avenue to a southbound one-way street will be considered during final design.

<u>Promote lower speeds and minimize right-of-way acquisition</u>

- Provide 11-foot driving lanes between Lupfer and Grouse Mountain Road
  - MDT is reluctant to construct 11-foot driving lanes because US 93 must serve many different uses as a National Highway System route. The reduction in lane width affects safety and capacity. Wider lanes can better accommodate truck traffic. MDT would like to take a look at what else we can do to narrow the right-of-way (ROW) instead of narrowing the lanes. To date, MDT has never allowed 11-foot driving lanes on a National Highway System and they are not willing to go to 11-foot lanes on this project.
  - Dwane stated that Montana's elderly population is growing at a significant rate. As a result, they've increased striping from 4 inches to 6 inches so that the

elderly population has greater visibility. We have to look to the future when considering lane width. MDT's minimum lane width for US 93 is 12 feet.

- MDT is willing to consider options such as reducing the center turn lane from 14-feet to 12-feet; increasing striping from 4 inches to 6 inches and striping a 2-foot shoulder to reduce the apparent width; and allowing a narrower clear zone.
    - John Wilson asked how this affects bicyclists on the road.
        - The intent is for bicyclists to use the path, but experienced riders may chose to use the highway.
- Mary Jo Look commented that the bike path is causing the right-of-way costs to increase and could go elsewhere.
    - Jeremy clarified that the bike path is not the primary cost driver. ROW costs are being driven by changes to the alignment and grade, which require construction of cut and fill slopes and additional ROW. This primarily occurs in the rural area.
    - Mayor Jenson asked the CWG if this issue has been previously discussed and agreed upon. The majority of the CWG previously agreed that the bike path should be a part of the project.
    - *The current ROW cost estimate is $23.6 million, including the design changes discussed in November. This will decrease based on the changes discussed at the Decision Team meeting. The ROW cost from Lupfer to State Park Rd is estimated at $2.8 million. The remaining $20.8 million occurs west of State Park Rd. Routing the bike path under the 2nd Street Bridge requires about 10 feet additional length on the bridge, which is estimated to cost about $75,000.*

- Reduce the speed limit to 35 mph from Lupfer Ave. to Grouse Mountain Road.
    - In order to change a speed limit, the City must make a request and MDT will complete a speed study and submit it to the Transportation Commission. Transportation Commission then sets the speed limit based on the speed study and public input. In the past, community input has swayed the Transportation Commission's determination.
    - Dwane noted that there is a big difference between the design speed and the posted speed limit and the two are mutually exclusive. The design speed from the beginning of the project to State Park Road is 50 miles per hour and in the western portion of the project is 65 miles per hour. MDT starts with a higher design speed, and then makes exceptions on a case-by-case basis.
    - Jeremy noted that there are many design exceptions in the current design where it is appropriate and necessary to design for a lower speed.
    - *Bruce Boody clarified that the existing speed limit from Lupfer to the bridge is 25 mph; and the speed limit from the bridge to Ramsey is 35 mph; and from Ramsey to Mountainside Drive the speed limit is 45 mph. The intent is to reduce the speeds from the bridge to Ramsey to 25 mph and from Ramsey to Mountainside Drive to 35 mph.*

- Allow large trees in the right-of-way between Lupfer Ave. and Grouse Mountain Road.
    - MDT will allow trees within the ROW, but the trees may have to be removed if they grow larger than 4 inches in diameter.
    - *Bruce Boody asked if the speed limit from Karrow to the bridge was reduced to 25 mph would large trees similar to those on Spokane Ave (in the 25 mph zone) be allowed. The answer is that if actual running speeds were lower it may be possible to reduce the clear zone and allow larger diameter trees within*

the boulevard areas..

- Investigate the feasibility of burying overhead utilities
    - The team will proceed with this recommendation. The cost of buying ROW may be similar to the cost of burying utilities.
    - This can be a challenging issue for the utility company because older buildings may need to be re-wired.

Decisions and Agreements: Lower speeds will be promoted and ROW acquisition will be minimized from Lupfer Ave. to Grouse Mountain Road by reducing the center turn lane from 14 feet to 12 feet; increasing striping from 4 inches to 6 inches and striping a 2-foot shoulder to reduce the apparent width; and narrowing the clear zone. The speed limits will not be changed unless the City requests a speed study. This could occur independent of the Whitefish West project. Trees will be allowed in the boulevard between Lupfer Ave. and Grouse Mountain Road. Trees greater than 4-inches in diameter may need to be removed if they become a hazard. The feasibility of burying overhead utilities will be investigated during final design.

<u>Reduce costs, ROW acquisition and visual impacts</u>

- Provide 4-foot shoulders west of Grouse Mountain Road.
    - Research and a crash prediction model indicate that there is some reduction in safety associated with narrower shoulders. Data suggests a 4-foot shoulder would result in an average of one additional crash per mile per year, when compared with an 8-foot shoulder.
    - An 8-foot shoulder allows space for emergency vehicles to pass, provides space for mail carriers and stalled vehicles.
    - An 8-foot shoulder provides greater recovery area for motorists to regain control of their vehicles.
    - As an alternate option to 4-foot shoulders that would achieve the same goal of reducing impacts, MDT suggested providing 8-foot shoulders with 4:1 inslopes. This results in a greater reduction in ROW and less impact to safety.
        - Mayor Jenson confirmed that this was acceptable to the CWG.

- Provide guardrail where feasible to enable steeper roadside slopes
    - Guardrail is a hazard to motorists and deaths occur every year due to collisions with guardrail.
    - Guardrail will be considered on a case-by-case basis in final design.

- Consider eliminating the westbound truck climbing lane west of Grouse Mountain Road
    - Mayor Jenson noted that this was misstated in the City Council Resolution. The intent was to say that the eastbound truck climbing lane should be eliminated and the westbound truck climbing lane should be shortened.
        - The CWG confirmed that this was their recommendation.
    - Dave Taylor commented that realignment of the curve is important.

Decisions and Agreements: Costs, right-of-way acquisition, and visual impacts will be reduced by: providing 8-foot shoulders and 4:1 inslopes; considering guardrail on a case-by-case basis; and eliminating the eastbound passing lane and shortening the westbound passing lane.

Discussion of Specific Goals

- Minimize impacts to businesses and homes adjacent to ROW using all practical design alternatives and other means available, with particular attention to properties near and west of Grouse Mountain Road.
    - This will require ROW design exceptions to a 3-meter buffer and use of slope easements or construction permits, but could result in substantial reductions in ROW costs and relocations.
    - **Recommendation: Consider in final design**

- Construct the project in multiple phases to expedite construction in spite of extremely high right-of-way and construction costs. The project is likely to be split due to funding. The first phase should begin at the east end of the project to facilitate improvements for the Whitefish sewage collection system. These improvements have been included in the City's capital improvements plan and the need is urgent.
    - It is likely that the project will be split into multiple phases because of funding constraints.
    - MDT will seek community input on prioritizing each section.
    - Projects are typically split into section that can be constructed in 1-2 seasons.
    - Coordination with the sewer project is desirable.
    - Bruce Boody asked if the bridge might be a separate project and Dwane said that is a possibility.
    - MDT would like to complete the Downtown Corridor Study before making decisions on splitting the Whitefish West project.
    - Mayor Jenson noted that the 2nd/Baker and 2nd/Spokane intersections should be a priority. They would like to see some changes within the next 3-5 years.
    - Mary Jo Look commented that she would like to see a bypass. This needs to be part of the Whitefish Transportation Plan.
    - **Recommendation: Consider in final design.**

- Provide two tunnels at the golf course crossing to ensure safety by reducing conflicts between pedestrians/cyclists and golf course related equipment.
    - Jeremy noted that a single, wide tunnel is a viable option for both golf and bicycle traffic. WGM will prepare a cost comparison of tunnel options.
    - A crossing is also needed at Skyles Lake. Costs at the golf course should to be weighed against this need.
    - **Recommendation: Consider in final design.**

- Provide dark sky compliant, City standard light fixtures, without high intensity highway lighting overhead.
    - Lighting design will meet the city ordinance.
    - City may need to provide additional funding for decorative lighting.
    - **Recommendation: Consider in final design.**

- Consider opportunities to manage stormwater runoff by means of micro-drainage or low impact design.
    - Opportunities are limited by ROW, but will be considered in final design.
    - Bruce Boody mentioned that we should consider storm drainage opportunities in the State Park Road area.
    - **Recommendation: Consider in final design.**

- Improve in and out access for the rest area west of Fairway Drive and provide an RV dump station.
    - The rest area is currently owned and maintained by the City.
    - The project will improve the access. A dump station could be incorporated into the site, but the City may need to share costs.
    - **Recommendation: Consider in final design.**

Other Discussion Items

- Mayor Jensen requested that MDT investigate the possibility of extending the "no passing zone" near Grouse Mountain Road due to safety issues. The city would like to see new striping as an interim improvement.

- Bruce Boody encouraged the team to envision the area from the Bridge to Karrow to be like Spokane Avenue and verified that the bicycle trail and crossings are a part of the project.

- Mayor Jenson stated that increased traffic on Baker contributes to reduced traffic impacts on Spokane.

Review of Decisions and Agreements

- Decisions and agreements were reviewed. These are previously shown in bold text.

Next Steps

Jeremy concluded that the CWG will meet again in the spring to discuss final design. A date and time will be scheduled in a few weeks.

RESOLUTION NO. 08-01

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WHITEFISH, MONTANA, EXPRESSING THE CITY'S POSITION WITH RESPECT TO THE US 93 WHITEFISH WEST PROJECT.

WHEREAS, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is in the process of producing a preliminary design for the US 93 Whitefish West Project; and

WHEREAS, MDT has requested that the City of Whitefish review the preliminary design and express its position with respect to the adequacy of the design; and

WHEREAS, on December 10, 2007, the Whitefish City Council conducted a Workshop regarding the US 93 Whitefish West Project, which Workshop was also attended by members of the Citizen's Working Group, a representative from MDT, and a representative from WGM Group; and

WHEREAS, at the Workshop members of the Council expressed their views with respect to the US 93 Whitefish West Project, and the Public Works Director has summarized those views herein;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Whitefish, Montana as follows:

Section 1: The position stated herein is the official position of the Whitefish City Council, and the City Council directs that such position be conveyed to MDT at the Decision Team meeting on the afternoon of Monday, February 4, 2008.

Section 2: The City Council hereby determines that it is critically important to:

A. Preserve the unique community character of Whitefish and seek to eliminate or minimize impacts from the reconstruction and future use of US Highway 93.

B. Enable timely completion of the US 93 Whitefish West Project by reducing costs for right of way acquisition and construction activities.

Section 3: The objectives identified above will both be served by reducing the project width and associated right-of-way acquisition using all design alternatives and practical means available. Toward this end, the City of Whitefish urges the Montana Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration to:

A. Provide eleven foot wide driving lanes between Lupfer Avenue and Grouse Mountain Road, with a corresponding speed limit reduction to 35 miles per hour.

B. Reduce the width of all two way left turn lanes to the greatest extent possible.

C. Approve design exceptions to enable large trees in the right of way between Lupfer Avenue and Grouse Mountain Road.

D. Provide 4 foot wide shoulders west of Grouse Mountain Road.

E. Provide guard rails where feasible to enable steeper roadside slopes.

F. Consider eliminating the westbound passing lane west of Grouse Mountain road.

G. Provide a two lane bridge over the Whitefish River.

H. Eliminate the two way left turn lane and retain on-street parking east of the Whitefish River. The City is willing to consider changing Miles Avenue to a southbound one way street.

I. Investigate the technical and financial feasibility of burying overhead utilities under pedestrian walkways to reduce the need for additional right of way and thereby reduce overall costs.

Section 4: In addition to the above, the City of Whitefish has identified the following important goals with respect to the US 93 Highway Whitefish West Project:

A. Minimize impacts to businesses and homes adjacent to the right of way, using all practical design alternatives and other means available, with particular attention to properties near and west of Grouse Mountain Road.

B. Construct the project in multiple phases to expedite construction in spite of extremely high right of way and construction costs. The first phase should begin at the east end of the project to facilitate improvements for the Whitefish sewage collection system. These improvements have been included in the City's capital improvements plan and the need is urgent.

C. Provide two tunnels at the golf course crossing to ensure safety by reducing conflicts between pedestrians/cyclists and golf course related equipment.

D. Provide dark sky compliant, City standard light fixtures, without high intensity highway lighting overhead.

E. Consider opportunities to manage stormwater runoff by means of micro-drainage or low impact design.

F. Improve in and out access for the rest area west of Fairway Drive and provide an RV dump station.

Section 5: This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption by the City Council, and signing by the Mayor thereof.

PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WHITEFISH, MONTANA, ON THIS 7TH DAY OF JANUARY, 2008.

MICHAEL JENSON, MAYOR

ATTEST:

Necile Lorang, City/Clerk

APPENDIX D

CORRESPONDENCE

WGM GROUP
PLANNING ■ SURVEYING ■ ENGINEERING ■ DESIGN

3021 Palmer Street
P.O. Box 16027
Missoula, MT 59808-6027
TEL: 406-728-4611
FAX: 406-728-2476
www.wgmgroup.com

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 24, 2007

TO: Blair Nordhagen, P.E.
Consultant Design Section
Montana Department of Transportation

CC: Tom Martin, P.E.

FROM: Jeremy Keene, P.E.
Trevor Iman, E.I.

RE: Climbing Lane Analysis
NH-STPP 5-3(42)128
Whitefish – West
UPN 2017

At the request of the Traffic Section, we are providing additional analysis of the proposed truck climbing lanes for the above referenced project. This analysis addresses both the functional capacity of climbing lanes based on level of service and travel time, and an estimate of the right-of-way and construction costs.

Background

Truck climbing lanes and auxiliary turn lane needs were identified in the Preliminary Traffic Report. Discussion at Alignment and Grade Review (AGR) included consideration of a three-lane section between 26+80 and 32+00, without a westbound climbing lane to reduce right-of-way impacts and improve left turn safety. The climbing lane would begin at approximately 32+00 at the start of the 6.5% grade. A left turn lane would be provided at Sasquatch Hollow (36+00) to separate left-turning vehicles from the climbing lane. Eliminating the eastbound climbing lane was also discussed to reduce right-of-way impacts and speeds entering the urban area.

In addition, extending the urban (curb and gutter) section to 32+00 was discussed based on current development patterns and the City of Whitefish sewer and water service area. This would extend the urban area to what is expected to be developed when this project is built, and would further reduce right-of-way impacts and cost.

Traffic Analysis

The purpose of climbing lanes is to reduce congestion and improve safety. Climbing lanes allow slow-moving vehicles to safely move out of the traffic stream, reducing the potential for accidents and allowing smoother travel with fewer delays.

Truck traffic represents a significant percentage of total traffic on US 93 west of Whitefish. In the area identified for climbing lanes in the EIS/ROD, the peak hour truck percentage ranges from 4 to 8 percent in the peak direction and from 12 to 22 percent in the off-peak direction (off-peak being westbound in the AM peak hour and eastbound in the PM peak hour). The total number of trucks counted during the August 2003 peak-hour traffic counts was 16 eastbound and 23 westbound in the AM peak hour and 23 eastbound and 11 westbound in the PM peak hour. These counts and percentages included all vehicles the size of a single unit truck (UPS delivery vehicle) or larger. The number of trucks and other heavy vehicles is expected to increase consistent with the rate of general traffic growth through the design year.

Operational Considerations

An analysis using the design year projected traffic and geometry was conducted both with and without a climbing lane. For the westbound direction two different climbing lane lengths were considered. The first encompassed the entire uphill section beginning west of State Park Road and ending at the top of the 6.5% grade (current design), and the second shorter section encompassing only the segment of 6.5% grade. Table 1 summarizes the results of this analysis.

Table 1: Summary of Climbing Lane Analysis

	Length (miles)	Average Travel Speed (mph)	Percent Time Spent Following	LOS	Travel Time*
Westbound US 93					
No Climbing Lane	—	37.2	80.9	E	4.2
Short Climbing Lane	0.3	38.6	69.3	E	3.9
Full Climbing Lane	0.9	41.3	50.2	D	3.8
Eastbound US 93					
No Climbing Lane	—	40.1	80.4	E	2.1
Full Climbing Lane	0.5	44.5	49.8	D	1.9

*Travel Time = Peak 15-minute total Travel Time in vehicle-hours.

Safety Considerations

There will be 17 access points within the length of the full westbound climbing lane, 8 within the length of the short westbound climbing lane, and 6 within the length of the eastbound climbing lane. The combination of access points and passing lanes increases the potential for crashes between turning and passing vehicles. Vehicles entering from right-side access points may have difficulty seeing vehicles in the passing lane that are screened by a nearer truck in the climbing lane. Left-turns would be made from the passing lane, potentially resulting in crashes between vehicles slowing to turn and trailing vehicles speeding up to pass. This potential hazard occurs on all multi-lane roadways, but is magnified within climbing lanes where significant differences in travel speed can occur between vehicles in the climbing and passing lanes.

In addition, the eastbound climbing lane would end at approximately the same location as the beginning of the existing 45 mph speed zone. The purpose of a climbing lane is to allow faster moving traffic to pass slower vehicles and regain speed. However, this may be undesirable just prior to a speed zone where a reduction in speed is required. Eliminating the eastbound climbing lane would encourage lower speeds as vehicles enter the lower speed zone and urban area.

Cost Considerations

Reducing or eliminating the climbing lanes would result in a savings in construction cost and right-of-way cost. A cost comparison is included in Table 2. Reducing or eliminating the climbing lanes also may reduce the number of relocations; further design will be necessary to fully identify these reductions.

Table 2: Summary of Cost Savings

Item Number	Description	Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Total (savings)
Westbound US 93: No Climbing Lane					
1	Right-of-Way Area Reduction	(26,273)	m2	$ 105.00	$ (2,758,665)
2	Decreased Pavement Area	(3,853)	m2	$ 25.74	$ (99,176)
3	Concrete Curb and Gutter	892	m	$ 209.00	$ 186,428
4	Combination Manholes and Inlets	7	EACH	$ 1,749.00	$ 12,243
5	Median Inlets	2	EACH	$ 3,068.00	$ 6,136
6	750 mm Storm Drain Pipe	644	EACH	$ 280.00	$ 180,320
	Total				**$ (2,472,714)**
Westbound US 93: Short Climbing Lane					
7	Right-of-Way Area Reduction	(17,768)	m2	$ 105.00	$ (1,865,640)
8	Decreased Pavement Area	(224)	m2	$ 25.74	$ (5,766)
9	Concrete Curb and Gutter	892	m	$ 209.00	$ 186,428
10	Combination Manholes and Inlets	7	EACH	$ 1,749.00	$ 12,243
11	Median Inlets	2	EACH	$ 3,068.00	$ 6,136
12	750 mm Storm Drain Pipe	644	EACH	$ 280.00	$ 180,320
	Total				**$ (1,486,279)**
Eastbound US 93: No Climbing Lane					
7	Right-of-Way Area Reduction	(3,649)	m2	$ 105.00	$ (383,145)
8	Decreased Pavement Area	(3,947)	m2	$ 25.74	$ (101,596)
	Total				**$ (484,741)**

Public Involvement Considerations

The Citizens Working Group (CWG) requested that MDT consider shortening or eliminating the truck climbing lane to reduce impacts to adjacent properties. This analysis was presented to the Citizens Working Group on September 19, 2007. The CWG supported a shorter westbound climbing lane, and removal of the eastbound climbing lane.

Recommendation

Given these considerations, we recommend the following changes to the current design:

- Extend curb and gutter to station 32+00
- Shorten the westbound climbing lane to begin at station 32+00
- Eliminate the eastbound climbing lane

It is our opinion that the benefits to safety, speed reduction, cost, and right-of-way impacts outweigh the minor increase in travel time, delay, and reduced level of service. A drawing of the proposed design is attached.

200710 3002

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Montana Division

585 Shepard Way
Helena, MT 59601

October 26, 2007

Mark Baumler
State Historic Preservation Office
PO Box 201202
Helena, MT 59620-1202

In Reply Refer To:
HDA-MT

- Josef
- FHWA
- Whitefish - West
Section 4f
De minimis
Finding

Subject: NH-STPP 5-3(42)128
Whitefish - West
Control No. 2017

CONCUR
MONTANA SHPO
DATE 13 Nov 07 SIGNED

Dear Mr. Baumler:

By way of this letter, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is requesting written concurrence from the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) that the determinations of effect are still applicable for the subject project, as defined in the attached concurrence letter dated April 3, 2007. If you concur, FHWA intends to make a finding that those impacts to historic resources resulting from the implementation of this project would be *de minimis* for purposes of Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, as recently amended by Congress.

Briefly, the determinations are as follows:

- Hennessey Log Gungalow (24FH569); No Adverse Effect
- Harlow House (24FH570); No Adverse Effect
- Midby Bungalow (24FH571); No Adverse Effect
- Patten Mattress Factory (24FH497), No Adverse Effect
- Westermark Place (24FH579), No Adverse Effect
- Woodsman Cottage (24FH580), No Adverse Effect

Exhibits which clearly depict each of the proposed impacts are enclosed.

This letter provides information showing the proposed impacts would be sufficiently minor and have "no adverse effect" for purposes of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and therefore be eligible for a *de minimis* finding.

In addition to NHPA, FHWA must comply with Section 4(f) which is codified at both 49 U.S.C. § 303 and 23 U.S.C. §138. Until recently, Section 4(f) required the FHWA to perform an evaluation (Avoidance Analysis) when a proposed federally-approved or -funded highway project would result in "use" of land designated as a Section 4(f) resource, which includes listed

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ECONOMY

or eligible historic properties under NHPA, to determine whether there is a "feasible and prudent" alternative to avoid the Section 4(f) resource.

With regard to the proposed Whitefish - West Project, FHWA has determined the impacts to the historic properties, while causing "no adverse effect" for purposes of NHPA, would nonetheless result in "use" of land designated as Section 4(f) resources because it would require the permanent incorporation of small areas of Section 4(f) land and resources into the expanded highway right-of-way.

Congress recently amended Section 4(f) when it enacted the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Public Law 109-59, enacted August 10, 2005) ("SAFETEA-LU"). Section 6009 of SAFETEA-LU added a subsection to Section 4(f) authorizing FHWA to approve a project which uses Section 4(f) lands that are part of a historic property without preparation of an Avoidance Analysis if it makes a finding that such use would have *de minimis* impacts upon the Section 4(f) resource, with concurrence from the relevant SHPO.

More specifically with regard to Section 4(f) historic resources such as those that would be affected by the Whitefish - West Project, Section 6009(a) (1) of SAFETEA-LU adds the following language to Section 4(f):[1]

> (b) De Minimis Impacts. --
> (1) REQUIREMENTS.--
> (A) REQUIREMENTS FOR HISTORIC SITES.--The requirements of this section shall be considered to be satisfied with respect to an area described in paragraph (2) if the Secretary determines, in accordance with this subsection, that a transportation program or project will have a de minimis impact on the area.
> ******
> (C) CRITERIA.--In making any determination under this subsection, the Secretary shall consider to be part of a transportation program or project any avoidance, minimization, mitigation, or enhancement measures that are required to be implemented as a condition of approval of the transportation program or project.
> (2) HISTORIC SITES.--With respect to historic sites, the Secretary may make a finding of de minimis impact only if--
> (A) the Secretary has determined, in accordance with the consultation process required under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), that--
> (i) the transportation program or project will have no adverse effect on the historic site; or
> (ii) there will be no historic properties affected by the transportation program or project;

[1] This provision will be codified as 23 U.S.C. § 138(b). Section 6009(a)(2) of SAFETEA-LU adds identical language at 49 U.S.C. § 303(d).

(B) the finding of the Secretary has received written concurrence from the applicable State historic preservation officer or tribal historic preservation officer (and from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation if the Council is participating in the consultation process); and

(C) the finding of the Secretary has been developed in consultation with parties consulting as part of the process referred to in subparagraph (A).

This new provision of Section 4(f) is the basis of this letter and FHWA's determination of *de minimis* impacts.

De Minimis Determination

The findings of "no adverse effect" reflect a conclusion that for each Section 4(f) historic resource impacted by the Whitefish - West Project, those impacts will not "alter, directly or indirectly, any of the characteristics of [the] historic property that qualify the property for inclusion in the National Register in a manner that would diminish the integrity of the property's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association." See 36 CFR § 805(a)(1). Based on those findings and taking into consideration the harm minimization and mitigation measures that have been incorporated into the proposed Project, it is the conclusion of the FHWA that the proposed Whitefish - West Project and impacts shown on the attached exhibits, would have *de minimis* impacts on Section 4(f) historic sites and that an Avoidance Analysis under Section 4(f) is therefore not required.

Request for Concurrence

FHWA requests written concurrence from the Montana SHPO in the above-described finding of "no adverse effect" on historic resources from the proposed Whitefish - West Project. This written concurrence will be evidence that the concurrence and consultation requirements of Section 6009 of SAFETEA-LU, as they will be codified in 23 U.S.C. § 138(b)(2)(B)&(C) and 49 U.S.C. § 303(d)(2)(B) and (C), are satisfied. Concurrence can be provided either by signing and dating this letter or by a separate letter from the Montana SHPO to the Federal Highway Administration, Attn: Craig Genzlinger, 585 Shepard Way, Helena, MT 59601.

Sincerely,

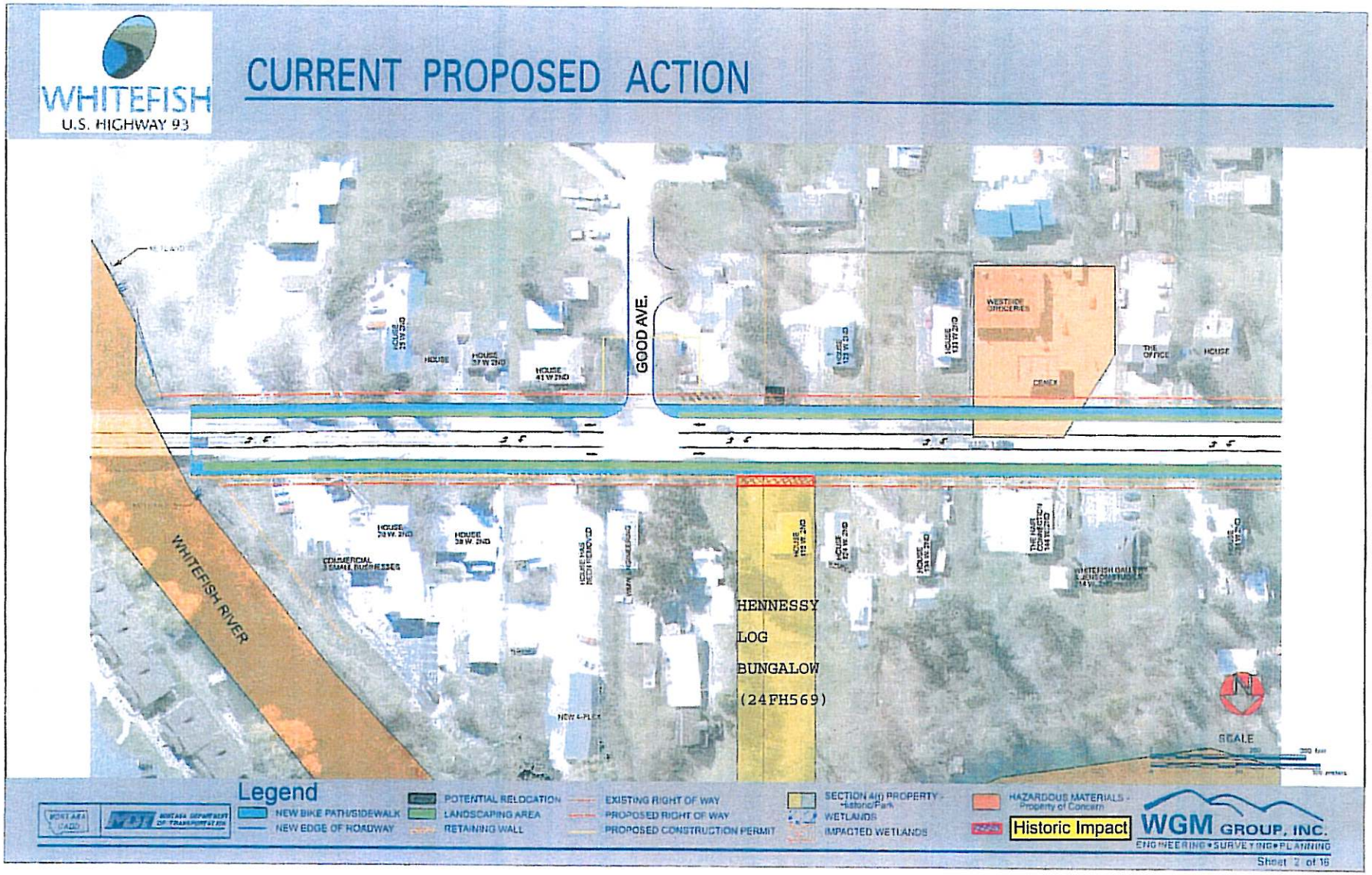
Kevin L. McLaury, P.E.
Division Administrator

Enclosures

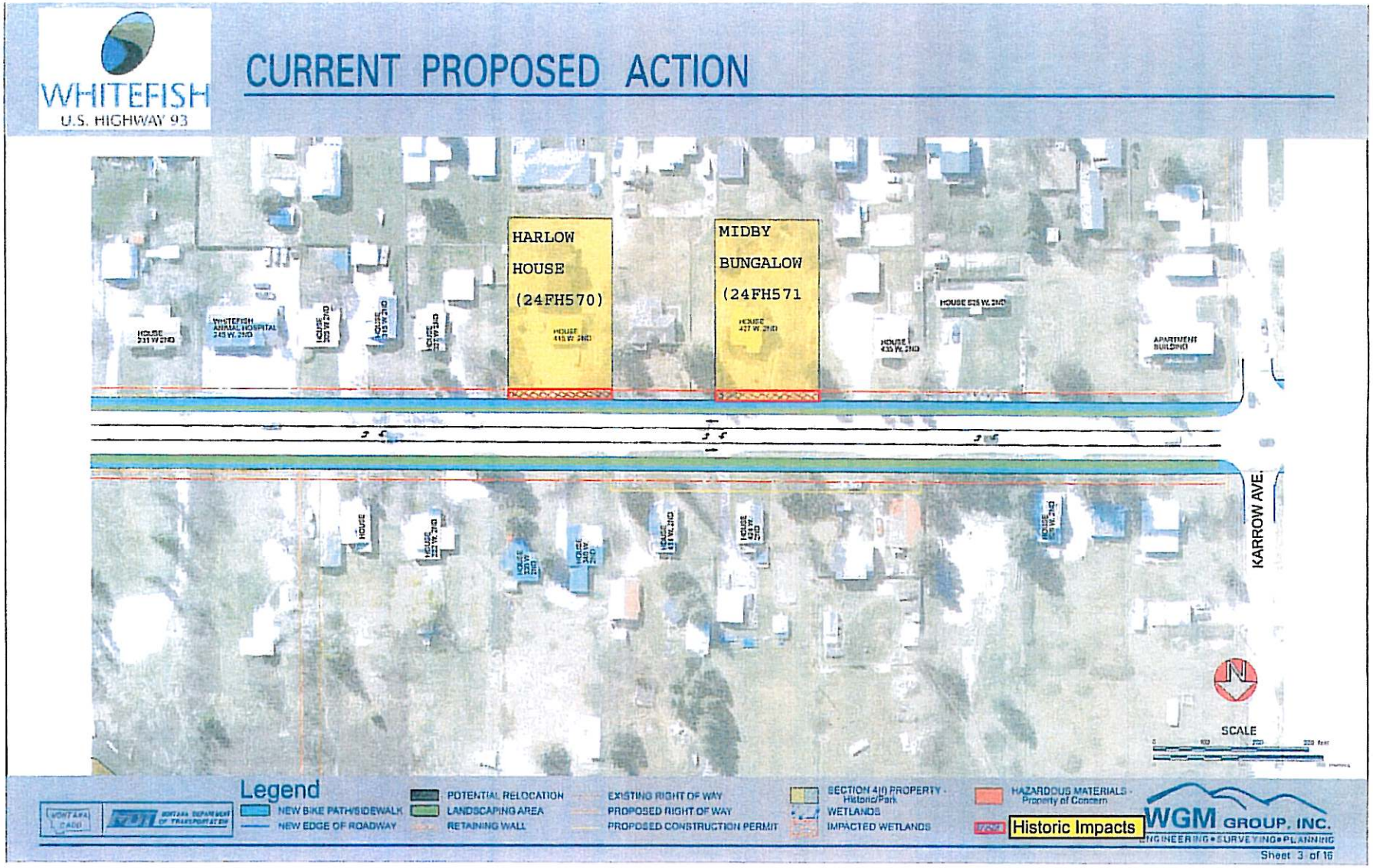
cc: Dwane Kailey, MDT Missoula District Administrator
Tom Martin, MDT Consultant Design
Jon Axline, MDT Historian

File: NH-STPP 5-3(42)128 cj/lw

EXHIBITS FOR WHITEFISH - WEST SECTION 4(f) PROPERTIES; DE MINIMIS FINDING



EXHIBITS FOR WHITEFISH - WEST SECTION 4(f) PROPERTIES; DE MINIMIS FINDING



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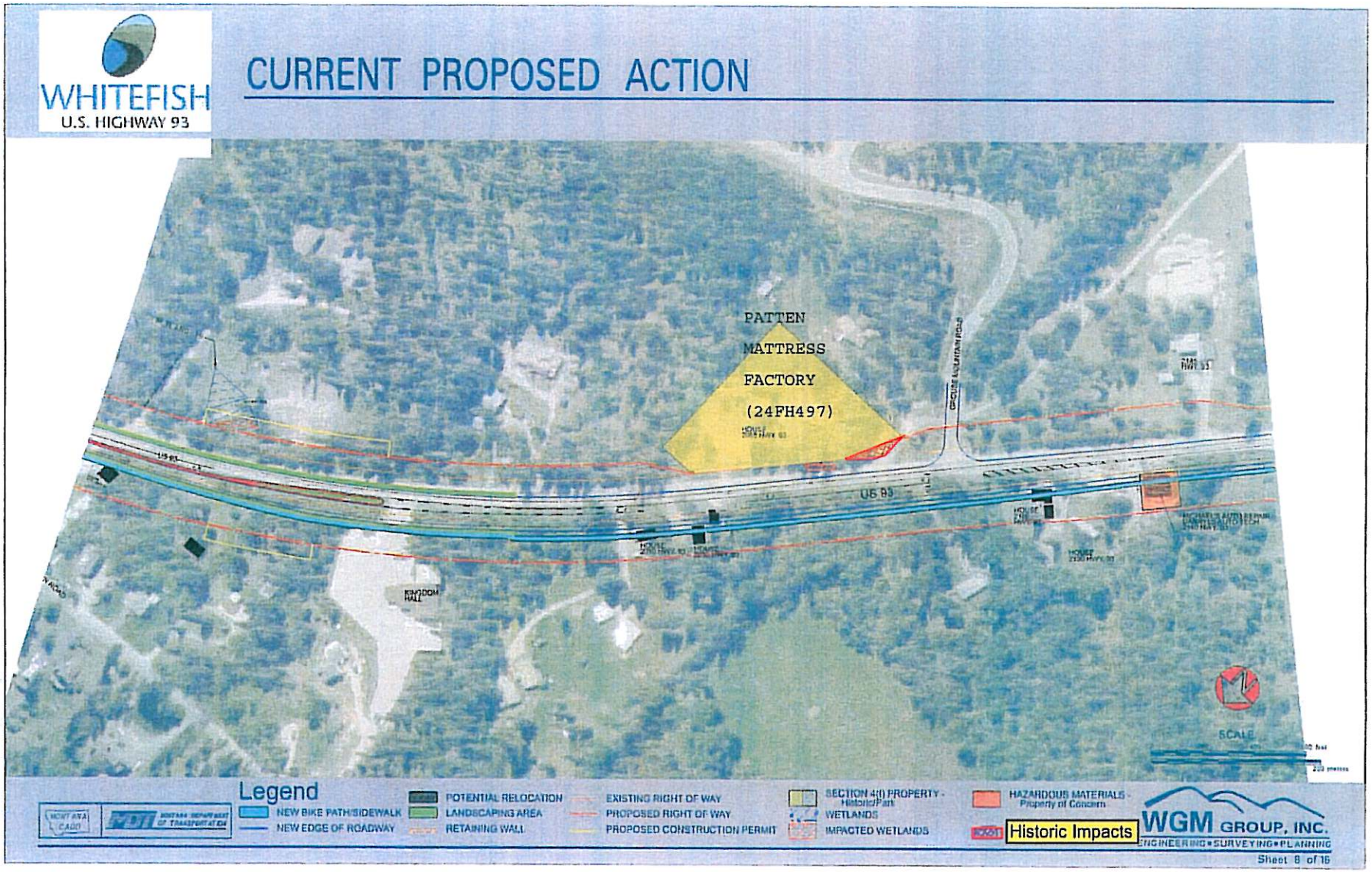
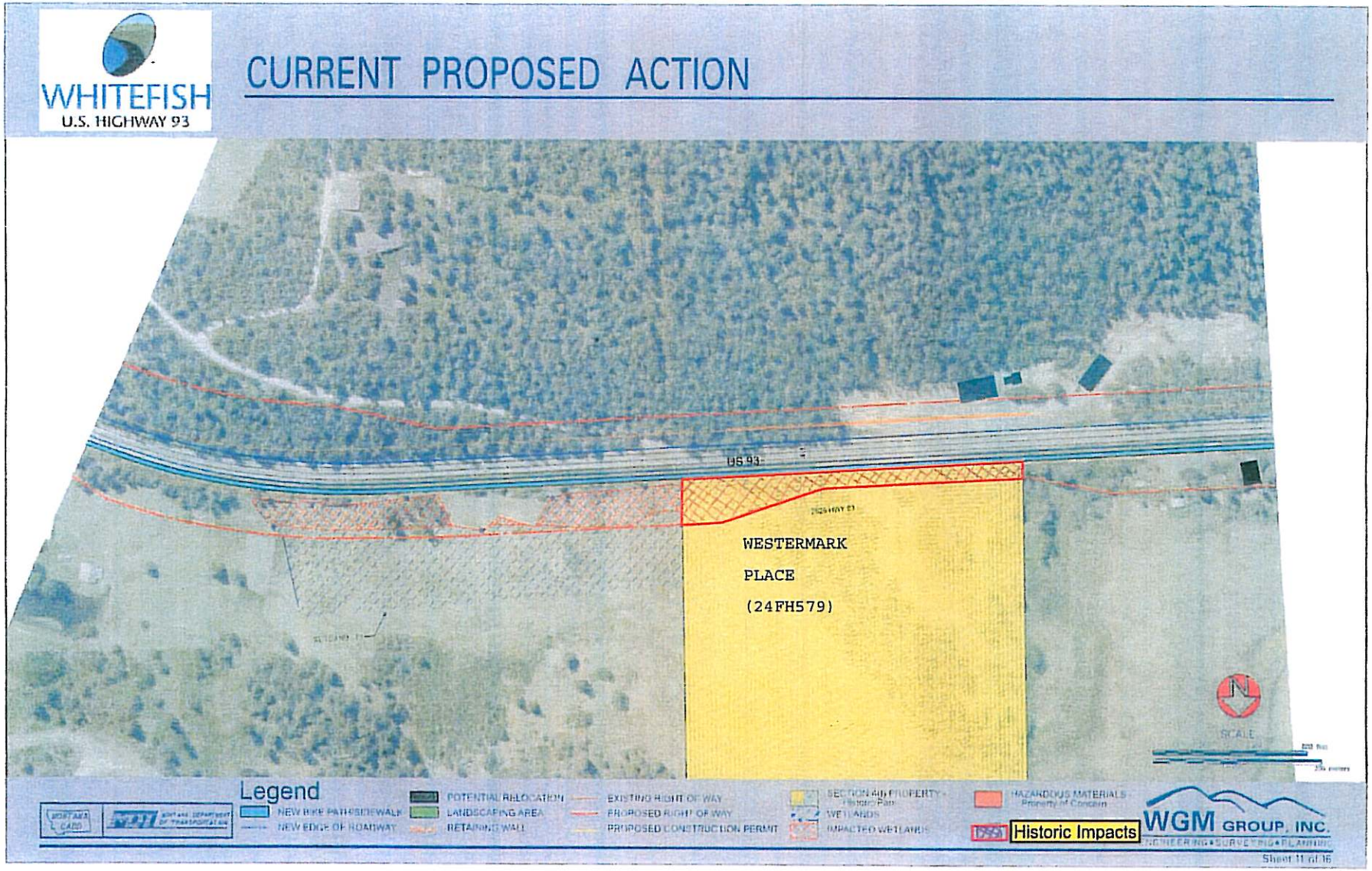


EXHIBITS FOR WHITEFISH - WEST SECTION 4(f) PROPERTIES; DE MINIMIS FINDING



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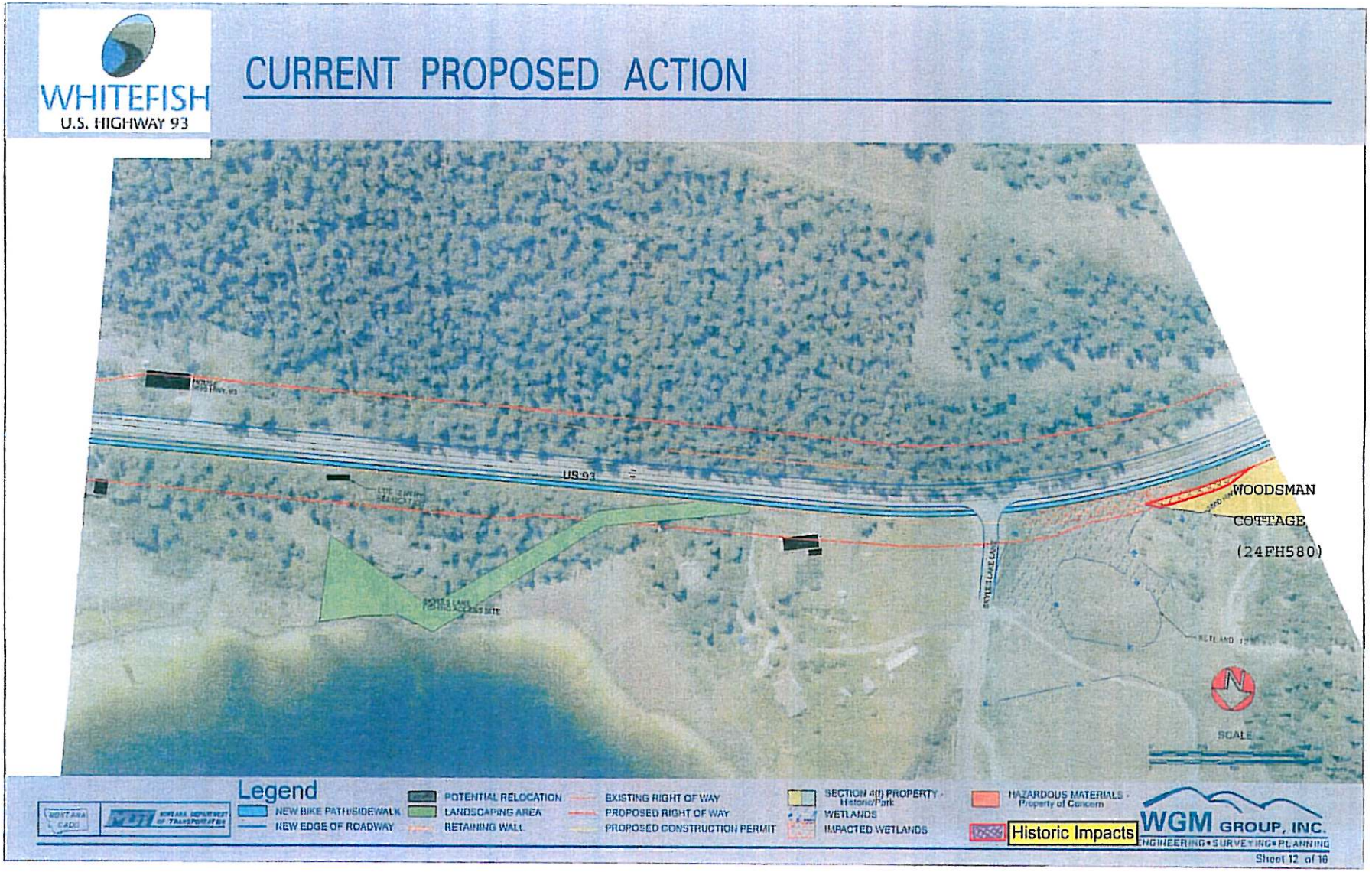
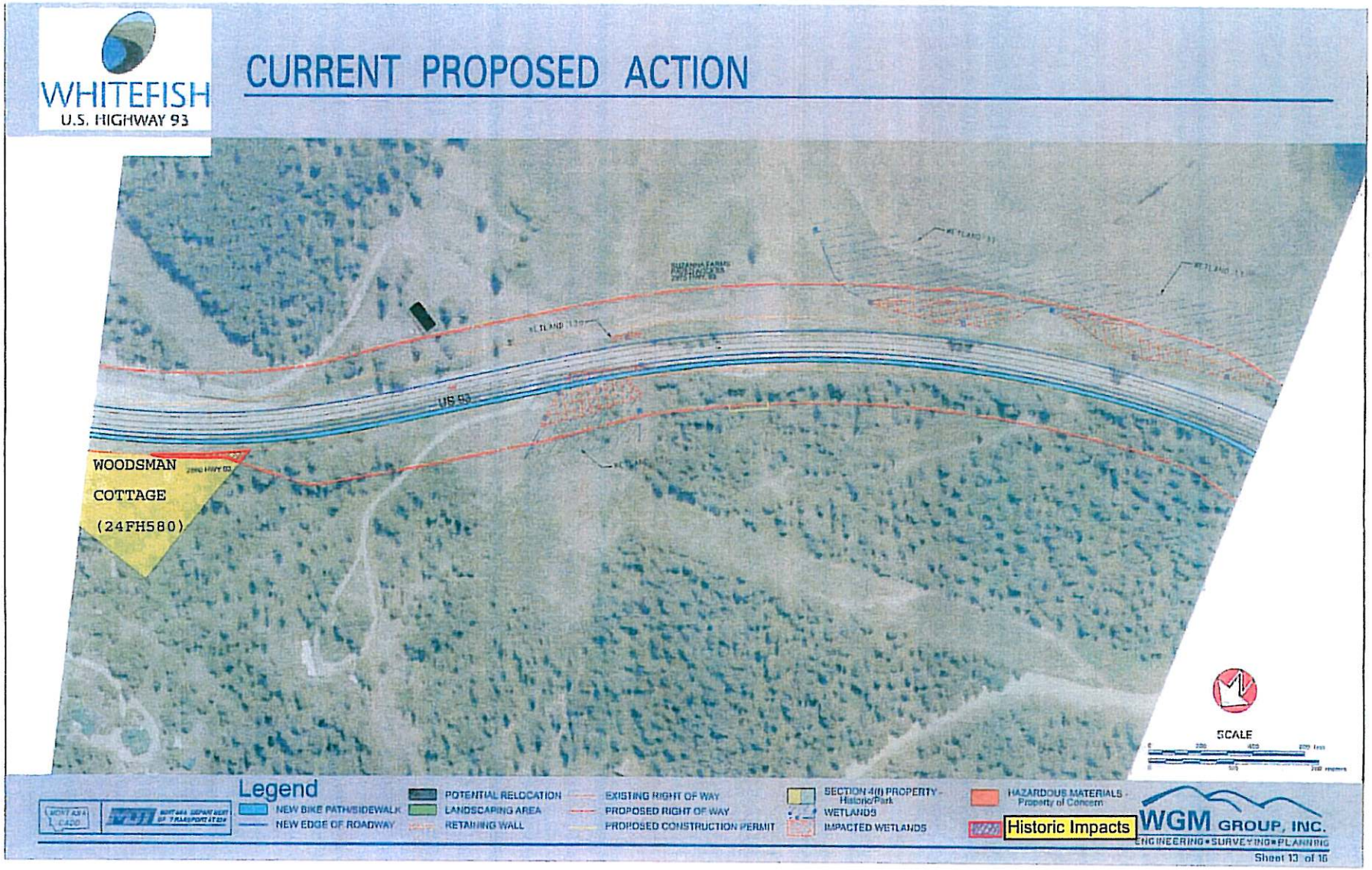


EXHIBITS FOR WHITEFISH - WEST SECTION 4(f) PROPERTIES; DE MINIMIS FINDING



serving you with pride

Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001

Jim Lynch, Director
Brian Schweitzer, Governor

200704060 9 - JOEF MDT WHITEFISH WEST (US HWY 93)

APR 06 2007

BY: SHPO

April 3, 2007

Mark Baumler, Ph.D.
State Historic Preservation Office
1410 8th Avenue
P O Box 201202
Helena, MT 59620-1202

CONCUR
MONTANA SHPO
DATE 10 Apr 07 SIGNED

Subject: NH-STPP 5-3(42)128
Whitefish – West
Control No. 2017

Dear Mark:

The above project has been around in one form or another since the early 1990s and was originally known as Somers – Whitefish [AES-STPP 0002(68)]. During that time, the design for East 2nd Street and US Highway 93 West has undergone several different revisions and permutations to reduce the impacts to the resources along the highway corridor. Most recently, in 2001, the MDT submitted a Determination of Effect to your office in regards to three historic properties along West 2nd Street in Whitefish. On May 15, 2001, your office concurred that, based on the preliminary design then, that the proposed project would have **No Adverse Effect** to the Hennessey Log Bungalow (24FH569), the Harlow House (24FH570), and the Midby Bungalow (24FH571). Prior to that, on July 15, 1994, your office concurred with our determination that the MDT's old Somers – Whitefish project would have **No Effect** to the Westermark Place (24FH579) and **No Adverse Effect** to the Patten Mattress Factory (24FH497) and the Woodsman Cottage (24FH580). All six of the above properties are now located within the Whitefish – West project.

As currently planned, the proposed Whitefish – West project would include widening the roadway from the existing 26-feet to 42-feet in the area encompassing the historic properties. This would include two 14-foot travel lanes and a 14-foot center turn lane. Also included are boulevards and sidewalks on both sides of the roadway. The existing centerline and alignment would be perpetuated. Additional R/W would be required for the sidewalks and boulevards. The addition of the sidewalks would introduce a feature that does not currently exist in proximity to the historic properties. While none of the six properties would be physically impacted by the proposed project, there would be a minor change to the setting of all six sites because of the sidewalks and boulevards. Even with the additional R/W, there would be **No Adverse Effect** to all the historic resources on this project.

Hennessey Log Bungalow (24FH569). Approximately 13-feet (1,001 square feet) of roadway frontage would be permanently incorporated into the highway R/W. A landscaped boulevard and new sidewalk would be included as part of the new wider roadway. Also included in the project is the installation of a 13-foot retaining wall. The wall is intended to minimize the impacts to the property caused by the road widening and the installation of the sidewalks. There

would be no physical encroachment on the residence that would result in any modifications or changes to its appearance. The landscaping around the residence would be perpetuated. In May 2001, we determined that the proposed project would have **No Adverse Effect** to the property. After reviewing the latest set of preliminary plans (Attachment 1), we believe that original determination is still valid.

Harlow House (24FH570). Approximately 13-feet (1,335 square feet) of roadway frontage would be permanently incorporated into the highway R/W. A landscaped boulevard and new sidewalk would be included as part of the new wider roadway. There would be no physical encroachment on the residence that would result in any modifications or changes to its appearance. The landscaping around the residence would be perpetuated. In May 2001, we determined that the proposed project would have **No Adverse Effect** to the property. After reviewing the latest set of preliminary plans (Attachment 2), we believe that original determination is still valid.

Midby Bungalow (24FH571). Approximately 13-feet (1,001 square feet) of roadway frontage would be permanently incorporated into the highway R/W. A landscaped boulevard and new sidewalk would be included as part of the new wider roadway. There would be no physical encroachment on the bungalow that would result in any modifications or changes to its appearance. The landscaping around the residence would be perpetuated. In May 2001, we determined that the proposed project would have **No Adverse Effect** to the property. Again, after reviewing the latest set of preliminary plans (Attachment 2), we believe that original determination is still valid.

Patten Mattress Factory (24FH497) consists of several features associated with the operation of a mattress factory in the early 20th century. The site is located west of Whitefish on US Highway 93. On July 15, 1994, your office concurred that the proposed old Somers-Whitefish project would have **No Adverse Effect** to the site. According to the latest preliminary plans (Attachment 3), approximately 872 square feet of additional R/W from the site and would be acquired and permanently incorporated into the highway R/W. The buildings are set well back from the roadway and there would be no physical changes or modifications caused to any of them by the project. The landscaping on the property would remain intact and there would be no significant change in the setting of the historic site. The existing centerline and alignment would be perpetuated. The property's approach access would be modified to accommodate the wider roadway, but it would not impact any of the historic buildings and work would be confined to the new R/W boundary. Based on a review of the preliminary plans and the project's scope, we believe the original 1994 Determination of **No Adverse Effect** still applies to this historic property.

Westermark Place (24FH579) consists of six features including a residence and five outbuildings. The site is located west of Whitefish on US Highway 93. On July 15, 1994, your office concurred that the proposed old Somers-Whitefish project would have **No Effect** to the site. According to the latest preliminary plans (Attachment 4), however, approximately 30-90 feet (29,881 square feet) of additional R/W from the site and would be acquired and permanently incorporated into the highway R/W along the US 93 frontage. The buildings are set well back from the roadway and there would be no physical changes or modifications caused to any of them by the project. The landscaping on the property would remain largely intact and there would be no significant change in the setting of the historic site. The existing centerline and

alignment would be perpetuated. The property's approach access would be modified to accommodate the wider roadway, but it would not impact any of the historic buildings and work would be confined to the new R/W boundary. Based on a review of the preliminary plans and the project's scope, we are amending our original Determination of No Effect to a **No Adverse Effect** for the Westermark Place. The characteristics that make the site eligible for listing on the National Register would remain intact, but the acquisition of additional R/W would cause a minor change to the setting of the property.

Woodsman Cottage (24FH580) consists of five features. The site is located west of Whitefish on US Highway 93. On July 15, 1994, your office concurred that the proposed old Somers-Whitefish project would have **No Adverse Effect** to the site. According to the latest preliminary plans (Attachments 5-6), approximately 6-13 feet (3,315 square feet) of additional R/W from the site and would be acquired and permanently incorporated into the highway R/W along the US 93 frontage. The buildings are set well back from the roadway and there would be no physical changes or modifications caused to any of them by the project. The landscaping on the property would remain intact and there would be no significant change in the setting of the historic site. The existing centerline and alignment would be perpetuated. The property's approach access would be modified to accommodate the wider roadway, but it would not impact any of the historic buildings and work would be confined to the new R/W boundary. Based on a review of the preliminary plans and the project's scope, we believe the original 1994 Determination of **No Adverse Effect** still applies to this historic property.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 444-6258.

Jon Axline, Historian
Environmental Services

Attachments

cc: Dwane Kailey, P.E., Missoula District Administrator
Tom Martin, P.E., Consultant Design
Bonnie Steg, Resources Section
Susan Kilcrease, Engineering Section

MASTER FILE COPY

Environmental Services
Montana Department of Transportation
Helena, Montana 59620-1001

Consultant Design				
Action	Info	Date 8/3/06 Routing	Attach	Initial
		Bureau Chief		
		Consultant plans Eng		
		Design Supervisor		
		CTEP Engineer		
		Jon Axline		
		WGM Group		
		Jeremy Keene		
		File		

Memorandum

To: Jean Riley, P.E., Chief
Environmental Services

From: Jon Axline, Historian Jon
Resources Section

Date: August 2, 2006

Subject: NH-STPP 5-3(42)128
Whitefish – West
Control No. 2017

When the original cultural resource survey was completed for this project in 1994, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with our determination that there were four individually eligible historic properties and twenty properties that would contribute to a potential historic district along West Second Street in Whitefish. On May 15, 2001, SHPO concurred with our finding that the number of historic properties along the West Second Avenue corridor was insufficient to qualify as an historic district (Attached). Consequently, the MDT had only four properties for which to assess impacts under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act in the Whitefish – West project area. They are: 118 West Second (Hennessey Log Bungalow/24FH569), 415 West Second (Harlow House/24FH570), the 427 West Second (Midby Bungalow/24FH571), and ~~205 Parkhill (~~the Whitefish Country Club Building/24FH573~~)~~. The remaining twenty properties are NOT individually eligible for the National Register and are NOT properties that need to be considered under Section 106 because no historic district exists on West Second Street. The SHPO, moreover, concurred with our determination that the proposed project would have **No Adverse Effect** to the four individually eligible historic properties.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to review the latest preliminary plans and cross-sections for the Whitefish – West project. It would appear from my review that there is no reason to change the original Determination of No Adverse Effect for those four historic properties. For 118 and 427 West Second Street the construction limits would be about the same as originally evaluated in 2001, while for 415 West Second Street the construction limits would be slightly expanded toward the historic residence, but not enough to cause an Adverse Effect to the property. Finally, at the Whitefish Country Club Building, the proposed construction impacts would be less than originally evaluated because of the addition of a retaining wall.

If you have any questions, please let me know. I can be reached in the cubicle next to your office or at 444-6258.

JAA:env

Attachment

cc: Dwane Kailey, P.E.
Tom Martin, P.E.
Bonnie Steg

20010514 JOSEF MDT

Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001

David A. Galt, Director
Judy Martz, Governor

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MAY 17 2001
ENVIRONMENTAL

May 8, 2001

MONTANA SHPO
DATE 15 May 2001 SIGNED

Dr. Mark Baumler
State Historic Preservation Office
1410 8th Avenue
P.O. Box 201202
Helena, MT 59620-1202

BY:

Subject: NH-STPP 5-3(42)128
Whitefish – West Project Amendments
Control No. 2017

Since our letter of March 30, 2001 regarding the above project, there have been some changes in the scope of the Whitefish – West project. A 45± foot roadway would be constructed from the existing Whitefish River Bridge to the intersection with Karrow Avenue. This would include a 14± center left-turn lane, two 14± foot driving lanes and two 2± gutters. In addition, two 5± boulevards and two 5± sidewalks would be constructed on either side of the roadway. The existing roadway is 26-feet wide. The widening would include the construction of the boulevards and sidewalks (there are currently none located along this segment of the existing roadway). The Whitefish River Bridge – Karrow Avenue segment includes three sites determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. They are: the Hennessey Log Bungalow (24FH569), the Harlow House (24FH570) and the Midby Bungalow (24FH571).

From Karrow Avenue to Lion Mountain Road a 43± roadway would be constructed. This includes a 21± driving surface, an 18± median and two 2± gutters. In addition, two 6± boulevards and two 5± sidewalks would be constructed on each side of the existing roadway. The existing roadway is 26-feet wide. The project would, therefore, include the widening the roadway 17± feet. Only one NRHP-eligible property is located on this section: the Whitefish Country Club (24FH573).

There are a total of 63 commercial and residential properties on West Second Street/U.S. Highway 93 from the Whitefish River Bridge west to the Whitefish city limits. Of those, only four were determined eligible for the NRHP (24FH569, 24FH570, 24FH571 and 24FH573). It was determined that another 20 properties would contribute to a potential historic district that also included residential properties on Baker and Spokane avenues. Because Baker and Spokane avenues have been dropped from the project, only 24 historic residential properties can realistically be considered for a potential historic district on this project. These sites constitute only 38% of the total number of properties located within the Area of Potential Effect for this project. The remaining 62% of the properties are either of historic age and determined not eligible or not contributing to a historic district in Whitefish or are not of historic age and therefore do not meet the NRHP criteria. Because less than half the properties are NRHP-eligible or contributing

to a potential district, West Second Street in Whitefish does not meet the criteria for listing as an historic district. This letter, therefore, concerns only the four sites determined NRHP-eligible.

Based on the proposed scope of the project, we have determined that it would have No Adverse Effect to 24FH569, 24FH570, 24FH571, and 24FH573. Although the roadway would be widened, it would not significantly encroach on the historic properties. The setting would be changed, but it would be partially mitigated by the construction of the landscaped boulevards on either side of the roadway. There would be no change in alignment of the existing roadway and the existing centerline would be perpetuated. The sites would retain the characteristics that make them eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The properties would not be isolated from their environments, nor would they be subject to neglect as a result of the project. The workmanship of the sites would remain intact and the features that make them eligible for the NRHP would not be disturbed. Because there would be a change to the setting of the properties we feel that photo-documentation of the neighborhood would be appropriate. Enclosed is an amended Memorandum of Agreement stating that the MDT will photo-document the neighborhood (streetscapes) and the effected properties before the project is let to contract and again after the project is completed. Please review the draft amendment to the MOA and return it to me with your comments.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 444-6258.

Jon Axline

Jon Axline, Historian
Environmental Services

Enclosure

cc: Gordon Stockstad, Resources Bureau

U.S.Department
of Transportation
Federal Highway
Administration

Montana Division

585 Shepard Way
Helena, MT 59601

August 1, 2007

In Reply Refer To:
HDA-MT

Dave Lanstrom, Regional Parks
Manager
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and
Parks
490 North Meridian
Kalispell, MT 59901

Subject: **De minimis Finding** for a portion of the Skyles Lake Fishing Access Site
Project Name: ~~Whitefish – West~~
Project Number: NH-STPP 5-3(42)128
Control No. 2017

Dear Mr. Lanstrom:

This letter is a follow up to the June 7, 2007, meeting between the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MT FWP) and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) regarding the land identified in the attached Exhibit A.

This land is necessary for the construction of the subject project and has been determined to be a public recreational area, therefore is provided protection under Section 4(f) of the 1966 Department of Transportation Act.

In August of 2005, Section 138 of Title 23 USC was amended under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Section 6009 of SAFETEA-LU provides legislative authority to address programs and projects with minor or 'de minimis' impacts on a Section 4(f) resource.

The result of the June 7, 2007, meeting was an agreement that the proposed project impacts would have no adverse effect to the activities, features and attributes of the recreational area. Based upon that meeting and the recommendation of MDT and my staff, I am hereby requesting your concurrence in a finding of de minimis impact to the Skyles Lake Fishing Access Site for the use of said land. Please sign and date as indicated below to confirm your concurrence.

AMERICAN
ECONOMY

If you have any question or need additional information, please contact Craig Genzlinger at (406) 449-5302 ext. 240.

Sincerely,

Kevin L. McLaury, P.E.
Division Administrator

Attachment

cc: Dwane Kailey, MDT Missoula District
Tom Martin, MDT Consultant Design
Dan Smith, MDT Environmental Services

File: NH-STPP 5-3(42)128 cg/lw

Concur:

Dave Lanstrom, Regional Parks Manager
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Date

WHITEFISH
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

CURRENT PROPOSED ACTION

Exhibit A

Legend

- NEW BIKE PATH/SIDEWALK
- NEW EDGE OF ROADWAY
- POTENTIAL RELOCATION
- LANDSCAPING AREA
- RETAINING WALL
- EXISTING RIGHT OF WAY
- PROPOSED RIGHT OF WAY
- PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION PERMIT
- SECTION 4(f) PROPERTY - Historic/Park
- WETLANDS
- IMPACTED WETLANDS
- HAZARDOUS MATERIALS - Property of Concern
- IMPACTED Section 4(f) Area

MONTANA CADD | MDT MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

WGM GROUP, INC.
ENGINEERING • SURVEYING • PLANNING

P.O. Box 158 • Whitefish, MT 59937 • (406) 863-2400 • Fax: (406) 863-2419

January 23, 2006

WGM Group, Inc.
Attn: Jeremy Keene
P.O. Box 16027
Missoula, MT 59808

Jeremy,

On behalf of the City of Whitefish, Department of Parks and Recreation, I would like to provide to you for your records my comments regarding the proposed mitigation plan for the impacted areas to parks and open space as a result of the future reconstruction project for Highway 93 West.

On December 12, 2006 you provided to me a response in regards to a number of questions our department had developed and submitted to you on November 11, 2006 in relationship to the impact from the "Project" The answers to those previously developed questions were satisfied in greater detail at a meeting that was held with you on December 23, 2006 at the Whitefish Parks office, as well as, additional issues that came about as a result of the discussion that also occurred at that meeting.

Item #1: Snow Removal. Engineers Response: Steve Herzog at the MDOT maintenance office in Kalispell indicated that snow is typically removed with a directional plow. MDOT works in cooperation with the City of Whitefish on snow removal. MDOT is careful and try's not to plow snow onto sidewalks or park areas. In heavy events, snow is hauled away.

Park staff comments: It is the park department's point of view that MDOT has not really been very careful with the placement of snow or the management of their snow removal machines and in the past this has caused considerable amount of damage to parks and open spaces with very little disregard to impact or taking responsibility. The City of Whitefish would like greater cooperation in the future and would like to be reimbursed by MDOT for all future damages.

Item #2: Irrigation Repairs. Engineers Response: The contractor for MDOT will be required to maintain and repair the irrigation system during construction.

Park staff comments: This is sufficient.

Item #3: Tree Removal. Engineers Response: MDOT contractors will be required to coordinate with the parks department when removing or replacing trees, or modifying the irrigation system.

Park staff comments: A tree removal and replacement plan must be reviewed and approved by the City's Tree Advisory Committee and the Park Board prior to any trees being removed and replanted.

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Item #4: Impact to Kay Beller Park. Engineers Response: The design uses retaining wall to avoid impacts to the park as much as possible, however a construction permit is required to reconstruct the driveway, a portion of the parking area, minor regarding along the base of the retaining wall, and a new storm drain line through the parking area to connect to an outfall near the river. MDOT's contractor will be required to fully restore the park to its existing condition.

Park staff comments: The ideas that were presented by the engineer to minimize the impact to the park and to address any reconstruction issues are satisfactory. Park staff did discuss the need for pedestrians to be able to cross over and back from the north side of the road across from Kay Beller Park in a safe manner. This could be done through the development of stairs on the north side of the bridge or to install some type of underpass at this location.

Item #5: Landscape Medians. Park staff comments: It is realized that the development of any landscape medians will eventually require on going regular maintenance by park staff. It will be important that the plan developed for this scenario will require as little maintenance as possible. Irrigation to these areas must be included in the planning process and above all else the parks department would like to be involved early on in the planning stage of this particular component of the project. Safety of the park maintenance workers while they are performing tasks in the median will be our primary concern.

Item #6: Storm Drain. Park staff comments: Park staff has determined the need to tie into the existing system with an upgrade to an outfall structure outside of Kay Beller Park.

Item #7: Golf Course Underpass. Park staff comments: Parks staff did not see a great conflict between golf carts and bicyclists/pedestrians using the underpass at the golf course.

I hope you find this letter acceptable both in content and format for your project development purposes. If you are need of additional information, please feel free to contact me by phone at 406-863-2471 or by e-mail at parksadm@cityofwhitefish.org

Sincerely,

Dan Keyes
WFP&R

December 15, 2006

Laura Jones Lofink
WGM Group, Inc.
P.O. Box 16027
Missoula, MT. 59808-6027

Whitefish Lake Golf Club Response To Plans For Alteration Of Adjoining US Highway 93

Dear Laura,

The Board of Directors of the Whitefish Lake Golf Club appreciates the opportunity to participate in planning for changes to the portion of Highway 93 that runs along and between our two (North and South) courses. Of special concern is the tunnel passage under the highway, intended to accommodate not only golf-related traffic but also pedestrian, jogger, and bicycle traffic from a path beside and under the highway.

This letter provides, at least for now, our comments on the undertaking.

The Tunnel Project

1. Nature Of Golf Course Tunnel Traffic.

The existing tunnel (approximately seven feet wide, six feet high, thirty-five feet long) under the highway connects the North Course, the pro shop, the parking lot, the maintenance shed, the golf cart garage, the bag room, and the restaurant to the South Course and the driving range. Daily traffic in the tunnel during the six and one-half month golf season, first in one direction and then back again, consists of 500 to 600 walking individuals, 300 to 400 golf cart trips, and about 30 maintenance vehicles. Also, on the days of our junior golf programs as many as 250 youngsters race through the tunnel.

Some of our maintenance vehicles are eight feet wide and, with roll bars, over seven feet tall. They are too large for the existing tunnel so, unfortunately, must cross from one side to the other on the highway itself.

Golf carts are a little over four feet wide and about five feet high.

2. First Choice – Two Tunnels.

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To ease congestion and reduce safety risks from two-way golf and non-golf traffic, there should be golf and non-golf tunnels under the highway.

A separate tunnel for use by non-golf pedestrians, joggers, and bikers could be located about 100 feet northwest of the existing tunnel. Grade conditions of the highway and surrounding land are favorable. The foot / bicycle path leading to the non-golf tunnel could pass over the golf tunnel and descend to the opening for the non-golf tunnel. Signage can be used to direct people to the proper tunnel, and the non-golf tunnel can be angled in a way to make its entry readily visible.

Without maintenance vehicle and golf cart traffic, the tunnel would have to be only eight or ten feet wide.

3. Second Choice – One Tunnel.

Although not in our opinion as safe or useful as the first choice, a single, large tunnel could be employed.

If only one tunnel is used, the heavy golf-related traffic will be supplemented by what is likely to be a large number of non-golf pedestrians, joggers, and bike riders; their presence not only will impede passage at times, but, more important, will result in collisions, injuries, and lawsuits against our club, the State, and possibly our city and your company. People in a single tunnel running, walking, riding bicycles, driving maintenance vehicles and golf carts, all moving at different speeds in different directions with different destinations, inevitably and frequently will collide with each other.

Such a tunnel, in order to serve all of the underground traffic and be wide enough to allow passage of maintenance vehicles, golf carts and bicycles on one side and foot traffic on the other, would have to be about 15 feet wide. There would have to be adequate signage to keep people and vehicles where they belong, and means for getting the non-golf people safely from and to their path as they enter and leave the tunnel.

4. Tunnel Height.

If two tunnels, the golf tunnel would have to be at least eight feet high to allow taller maintenance vehicles to pass through. The other tunnel should be essentially the same height to accommodate bicycle traffic.

If only one tunnel, it would have to be at least eight feet high and fifteen feet wide.

5. Installation Of Conduit.

Night lighting of the tunnels will be necessary, as well as wiring for golf course electrical equipment and communication systems. Therefore, conduit should be installed in the tunnels during construction.

6. Tunnel Construction and Location.

If two tunnels are used, we ask that the existing tunnel be closed and replaced by a new golf tunnel about 50 feet northwest in order to increase space around the driving range, practice green, and first tee of the South Course. The non-golf tunnel then could be another 50 feet to the northwest.

If only one tunnel is used, we also ask that it not be installed in the place of the existing tunnel, but about 50 feet northwest.

In either case, it is our understanding that the size requirements of our maintenance equipment will be met, and that the tunnel(s) will be fitted with conduit, signage, light fixtures, hardware, proper drainage, and attractive finish.

7. Composition Of Pedestrian / Bike Path.

As a safety consideration we suggest that the composition of the path change as it nears the entrance to the tunnel from either side. Speed bumps, colored surface, change in path material, or a stamped grid on the path might serve to slow cyclists as they approach the tunnel.

Other Topics

8. Highway 93 Right-of-Way On the Driving Range.

We learned recently that the highway right-of-way extends onto a small portion of our driving range, which adjoins the highway on the south side of the highway. Would it be possible to acquire ownership of the property, or of an easement for use of the property? We could, perhaps, purchase the property in fee or purchase an easement, or trade using other property. The land in question measures about twenty feet by one hundred feet and does not appear to serve any highway purpose.

9. Land and Water Conservation Funds.

As far as we know, Land and Water Conservation section 6(f) funds were not used for improvement of the North Course. The irrigation system was improved in the mid-1960's, with funds borrowed from the Bureau of Land Management. Going back

further, WPA assistance was obtained in the early 1930's for help in developing the North Course. If you believe that Land and Water Conservation section 6(f) funds were used by us at some particular time or for some particular purpose, please provide us with your information and we will investigate further.

To conclude, let me say that our meeting of December 13 with your engineer Jeremy Keene provided us with a lot of valuable information. He was extremely helpful in telling us how construction would progress, how it would affect our golf course operations, how we might protect our property in the course of construction, and what the project might look like when completed.

We thank you for considering our input and look forward to continuing our positive relationship as we move forward with these long overdue improvements.

Sincerely,

Terry Nelson

Terry Nelson, Secretary
Whitefish Lake Golf Club

APPENDIX E

CURRENT PROPOSED ACTION AND SCOPE OF WORK SUMMARY

US 93 Whitefish West
Summary of the
Current Proposed Action

February 2008

The following is a description of the current proposed action for the US 93 Whitefish West project. The design is based on the 1994 US 93 Somers to Whitefish West Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD), and was modified based on input from the Citizens Working Group, City of Whitefish, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Exhibits illustrating the current proposed action are attached.

Scope of Work
The proposed scope of work for the U.S. 93 Whitefish West project is to reconstruct and widen the existing highway in order improve the safety and operations for the traveling public. The work will include the following:

- bridge replacement
- clearing, grubbing, rock blasting, and grading
- storm drainage
- curb, gutter, and sidewalks
- bike/pedestrian path
- replacement of the golf course underpass
- asphalt paving
- signing and striping
- landscaping and irrigation
- entry sign at State Park Road
- raised medians
- lighting
- retaining wall, guardrail, fencing, and other miscellaneous items
- right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation
- limited access control

Project Location and Limits
The project begins in Whitefish on Second Street, 48 meters (160 feet) west of the Baker Street intersection. It extends westerly 8.3 kilometers (5.2 miles) to milepost 133, west of Twin Bridges Road.

Major Design Features
The Whitefish West project was developed according to the appropriate geometric design standards for urban and rural principal arterials (National Highway System). The portion of the project that was developed to urban standards was defined based on current development patterns and the City of Whitefish sewer and water service area, and extends to just west of Mountainside Drive. The remainder of the project was developed to rural standards.

Typical Sections
The design is a two-lane roadway with parking from Lupfer to the bridge and a three-lane roadway with curb and gutter including a two-way-left-turn-lane or raised median from the bridge to Mountainside Drive. The design is a two-lane road with raised

medians from Karrow to State Park Road. The design is a two-lane roadway with shoulders from Mountainside Drive to the end of the project. The design includes left and right turn lanes at appropriate intersections, and a truck-climbing lane for westbound traffic approaching Whitefish Hills Road. Typical sections are shown on the attached exhibits.

Horizontal Alignment

From the beginning of the project to State Park Road, the proposed horizontal alignment generally follows the existing centerline with minor shifts to best fit with the existing right of way and adjacent development. West of State Park Road, the alignment is shifted up to 25 meters (82 feet) from the existing centerline to meet the geometric design standards, minimize impacts to residences, businesses, wetlands, lakes, utilities, and to facilitate traffic control during construction.

Vertical Alignment

The proposed vertical alignment is adjusted to improve sight distance to the extent possible, while seeking to minimize impacts on adjacent development and maintain access to adjoining properties. This results in cuts and fills of up to 1.5 meters (5 feet) in from Lupfer to Mountainside Drive, and 8 meters (27 feet) west of Mountainside Drive.

Bridges and Retaining Walls

The Second Street Bridge over the Whitefish River will be replaced with a new bridge, including sidewalks on both sides and a provision for a future bike/pedestrian underpass. Retaining walls will be required at numerous locations to avoid impacts to adjacent properties. Aesthetic treatments will be considered in final design. If natural stone facing or other special treatments are desired, additional funding from the City may be required.

Bike/Pedestrian Facilities

Sidewalks are proposed on both sides of the roadway from Lupfer to Karrow Ave. Boulevards will be provided where feasible. A separated path is proposed on one side west of State Park Road. A new underpass is proposed at the Golf Course. A second underpass west of Skyles Lake will be considered, depending on the availability of funding.

Lighting

Street lighting is proposed between Lupfer and Mountainside Drive. Lighting will be designed to meet City of Whitefish lighting ordinances. Decorative lighting, or other special treatments, will be considered in final design, but may require additional funding from the City.

Landscaping and Irrigation

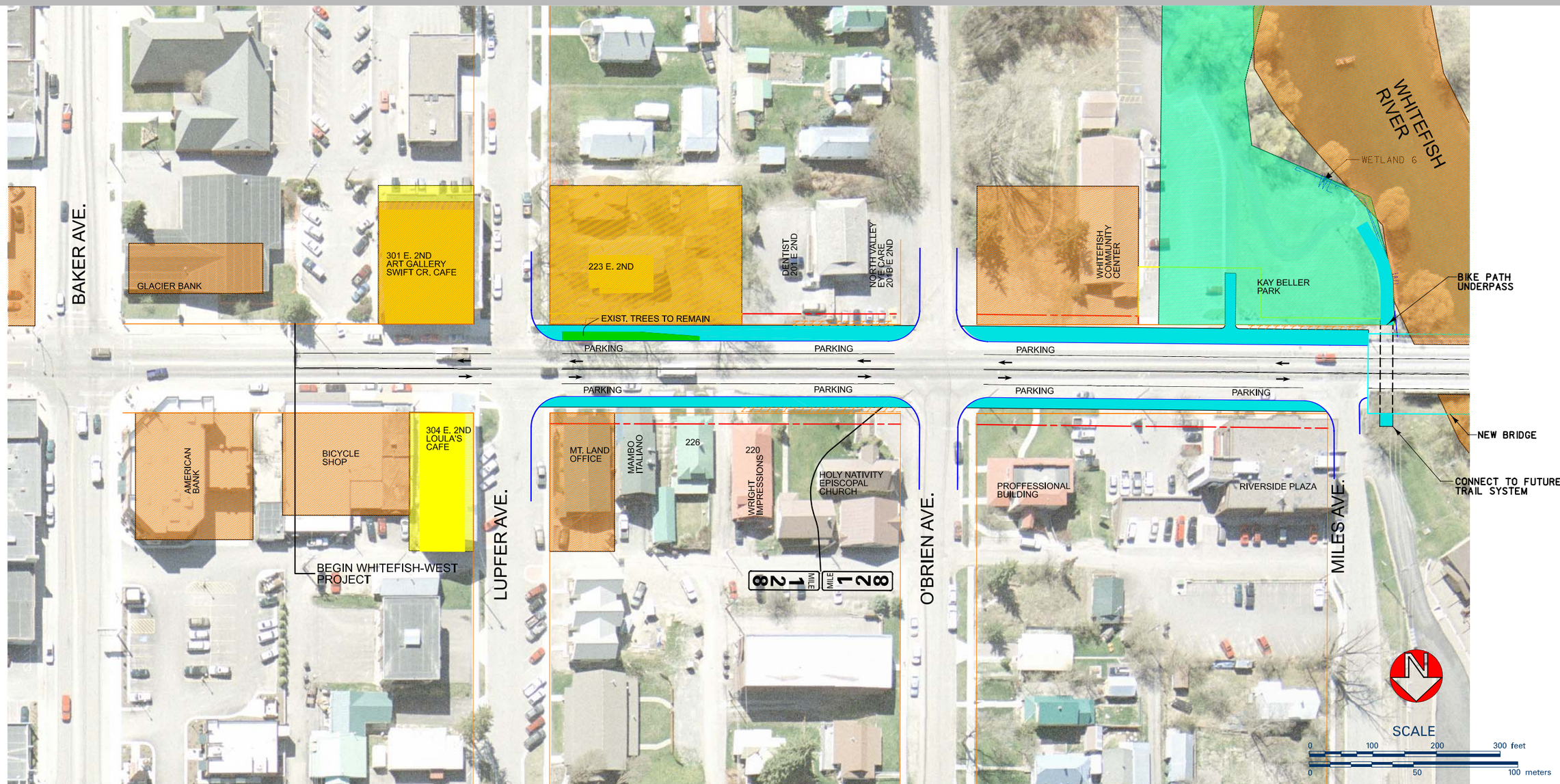
Landscaping and irrigation will be designed in coordination with the City Parks Department. A landscaped entry sign is proposed near State Park Road. Median and boulevard landscaping are also proposed. Maintenance will be the City's responsibility.

The major design features are the fundamental elements of the current proposed action. Specific design details will be incorporated into the final design.

WHITEFISH West
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

CURRENT PROPOSED ACTION

FEB. 2008



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Legend

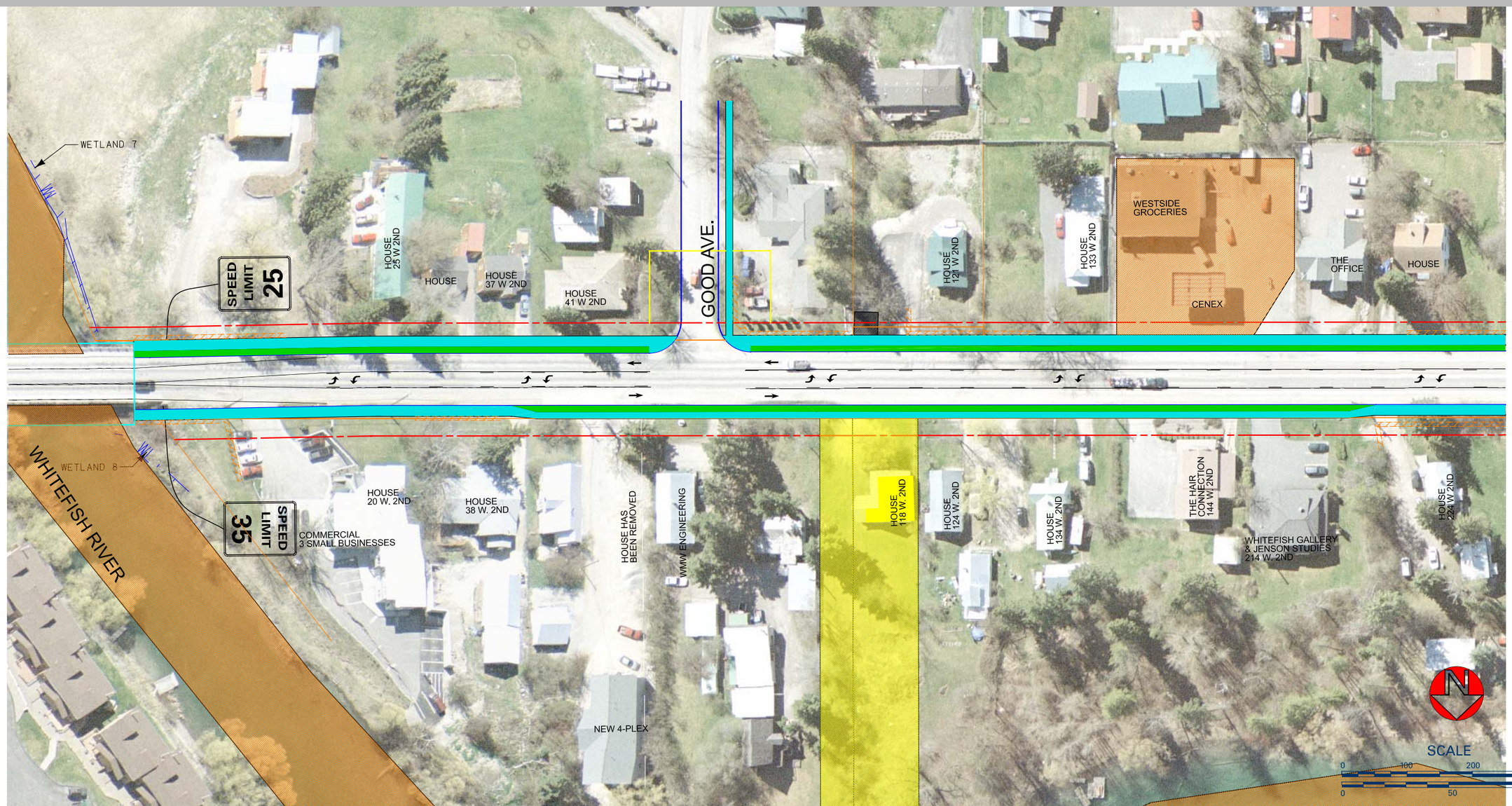
- NEW BIKE PATH/SIDEWALK
- NEW EDGE OF ROADWAY
- RAISED MEDIAN
- LANDSCAPE / BLVD AREA
- RETAINING WALL
- EXISTING RIGHT OF WAY
- PROPOSED RIGHT OF WAY
- PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION PERMIT
- IMPACTED STRUCTURE
- WETLANDS
- IMPACTED WETLANDS
- HAZARDOUS MATERIALS - Property of Concern
- HISTORICAL PROPERTY
- PARK / RECREATIONAL PROPERTY

WGM GROUP

WHITEFISH West
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

CURRENT PROPOSED ACTION

FEB. 2008



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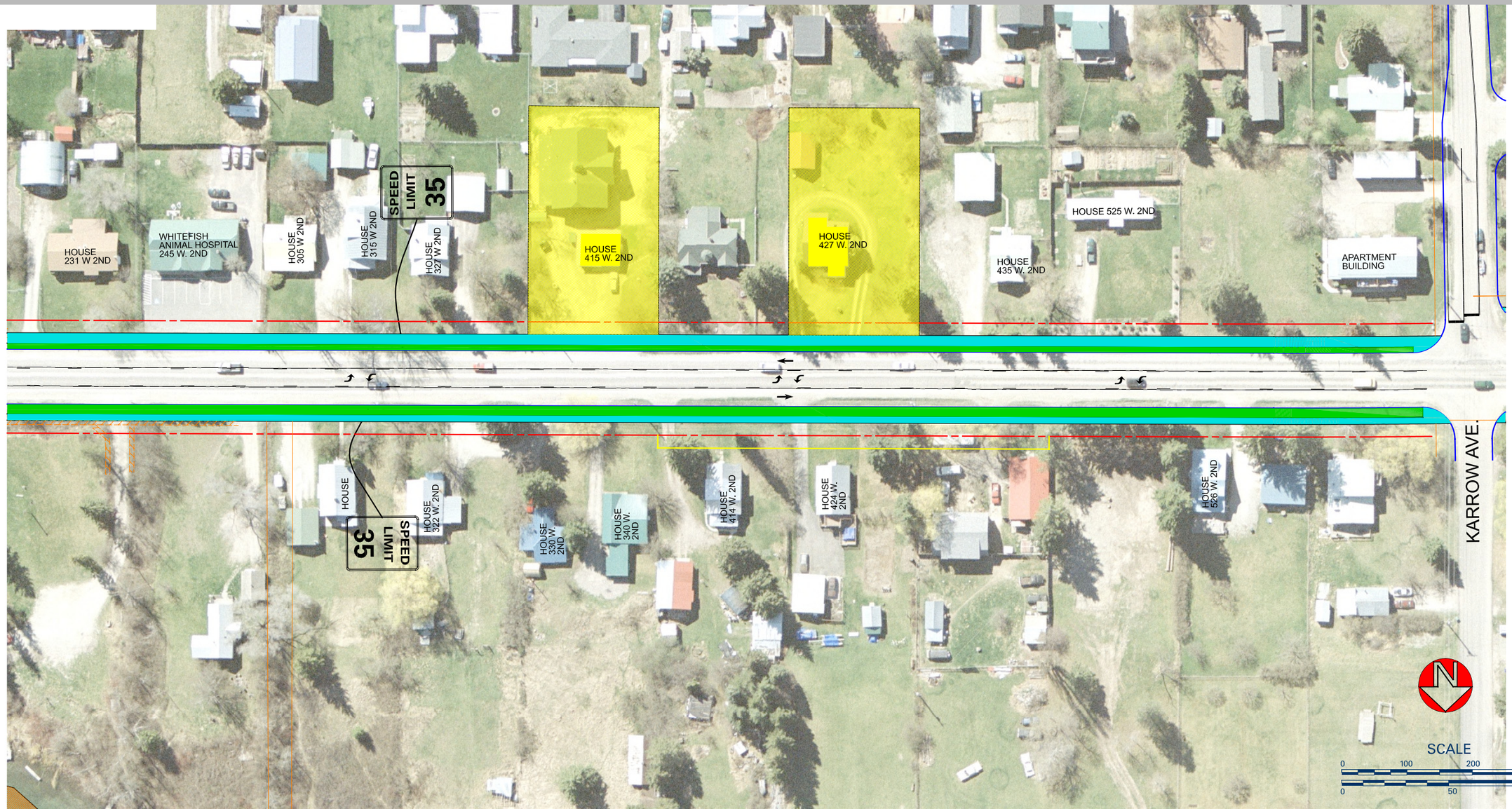
WGM GROUP

WHITEFISH West
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

CURRENT PROPOSED ACTION

FEB. 2008



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WGM GROUP

WHITEFISH West
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

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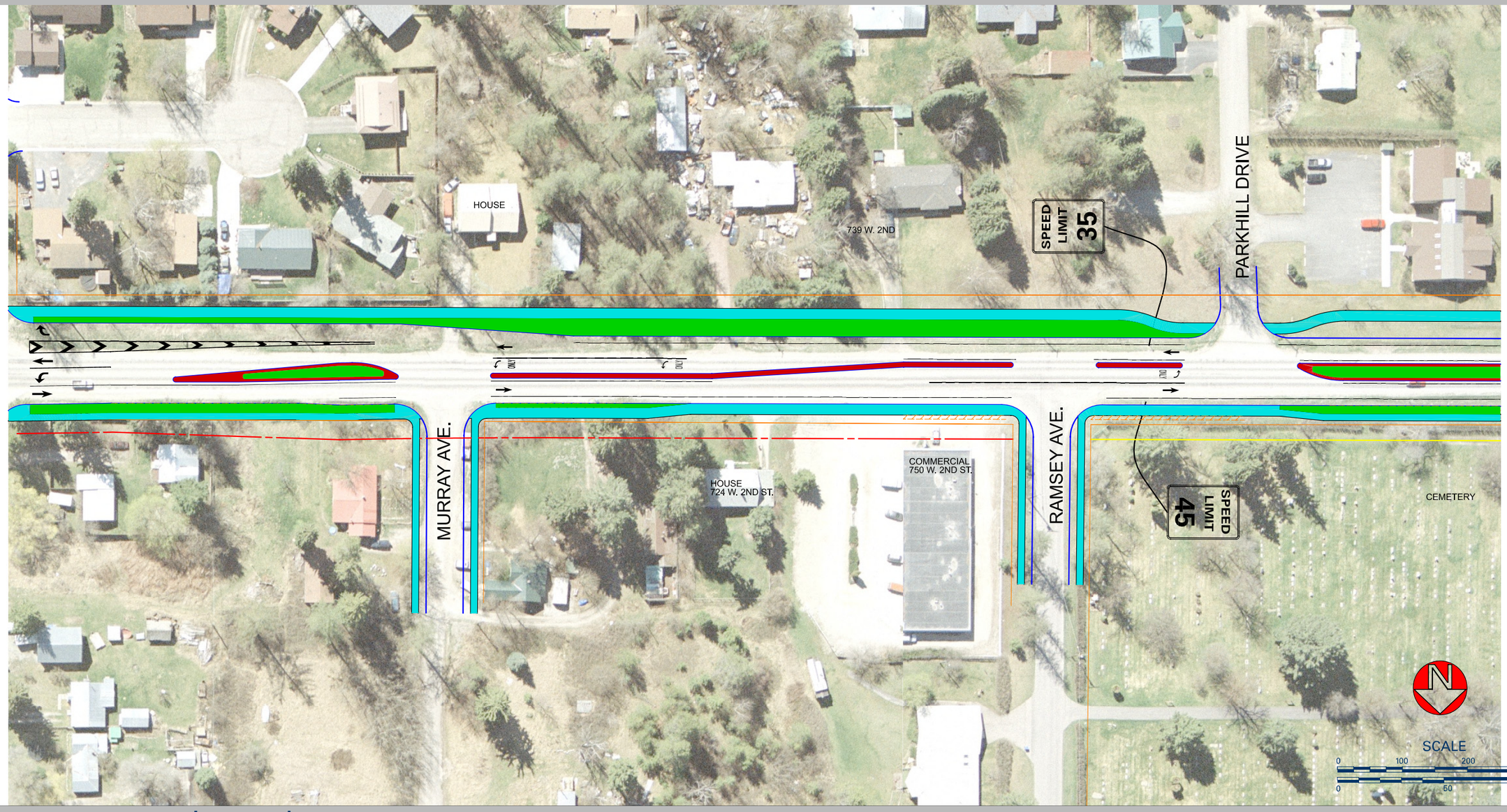

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U.S. HIGHWAY 93

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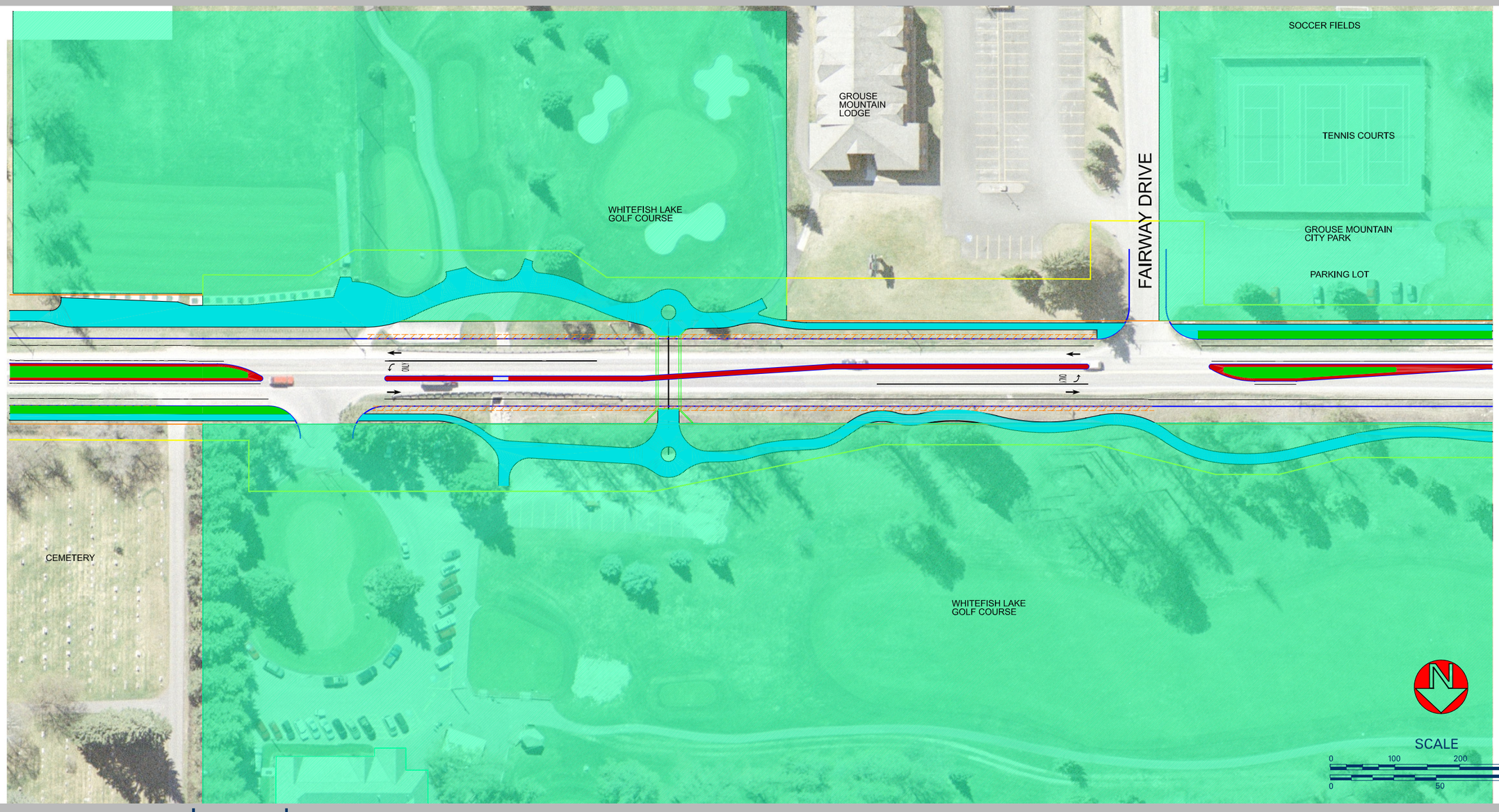

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WGM GROUP

WHITEFISH West
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

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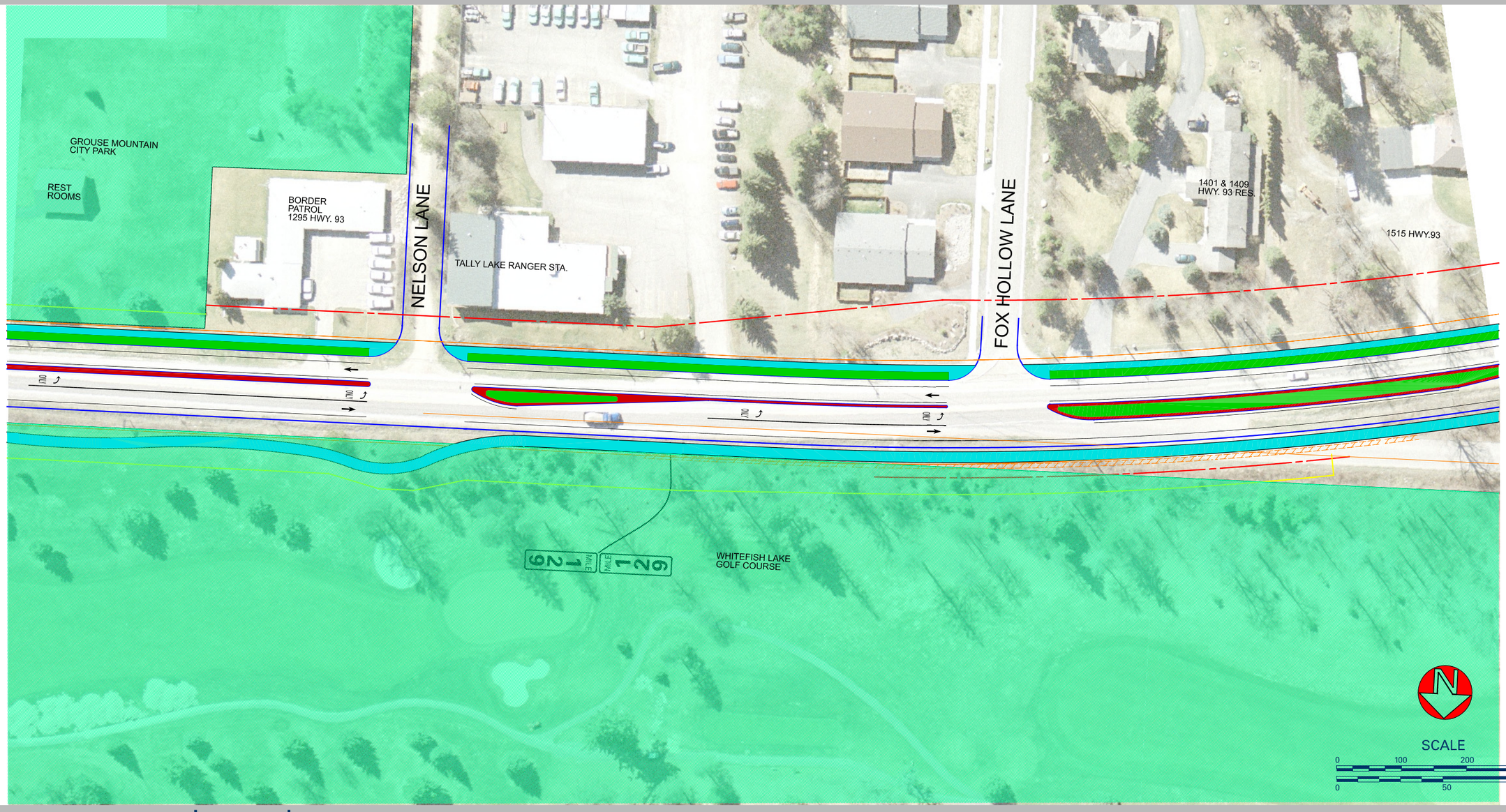

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U.S. HIGHWAY 93

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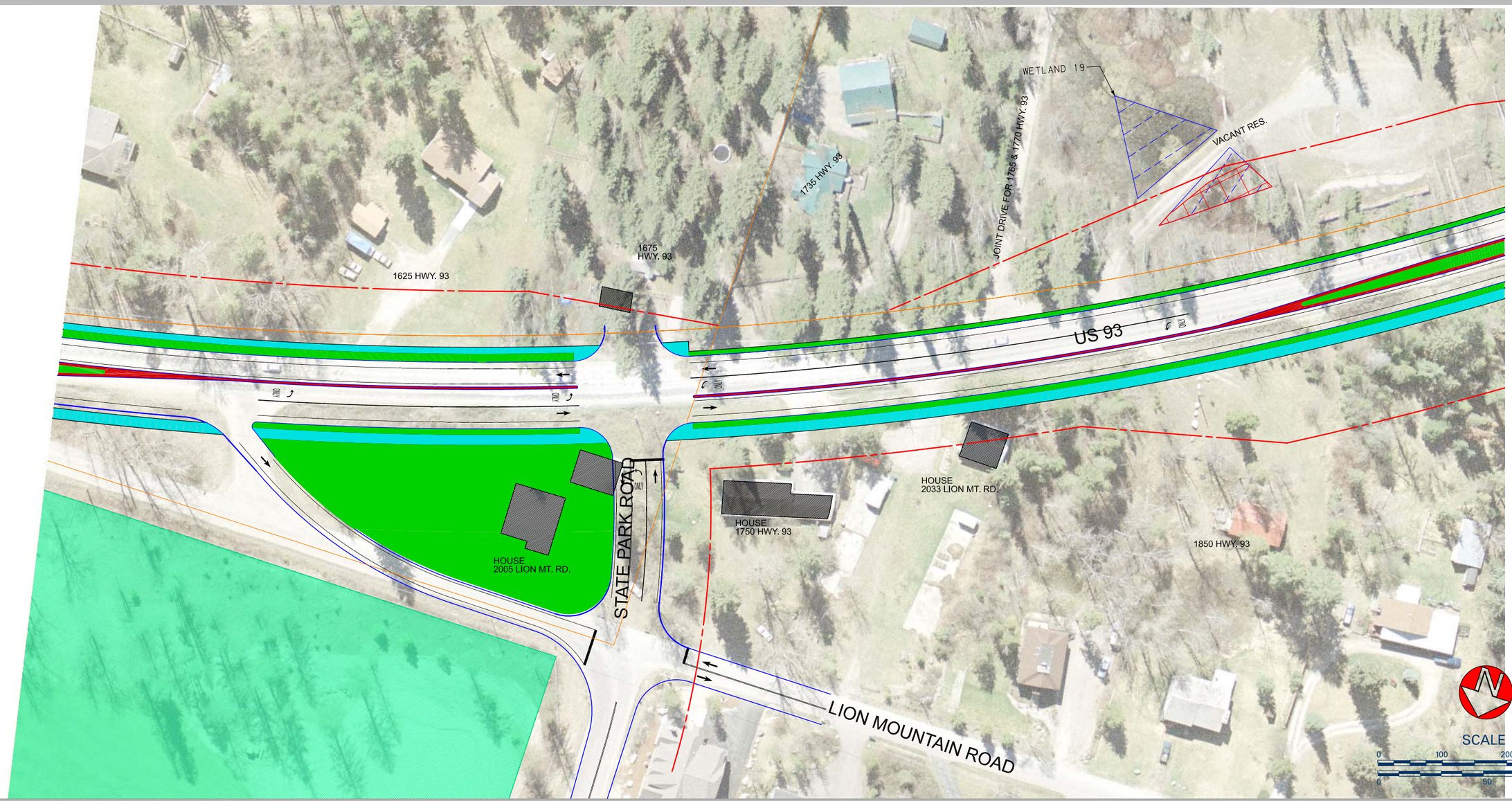

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U.S. HIGHWAY 93

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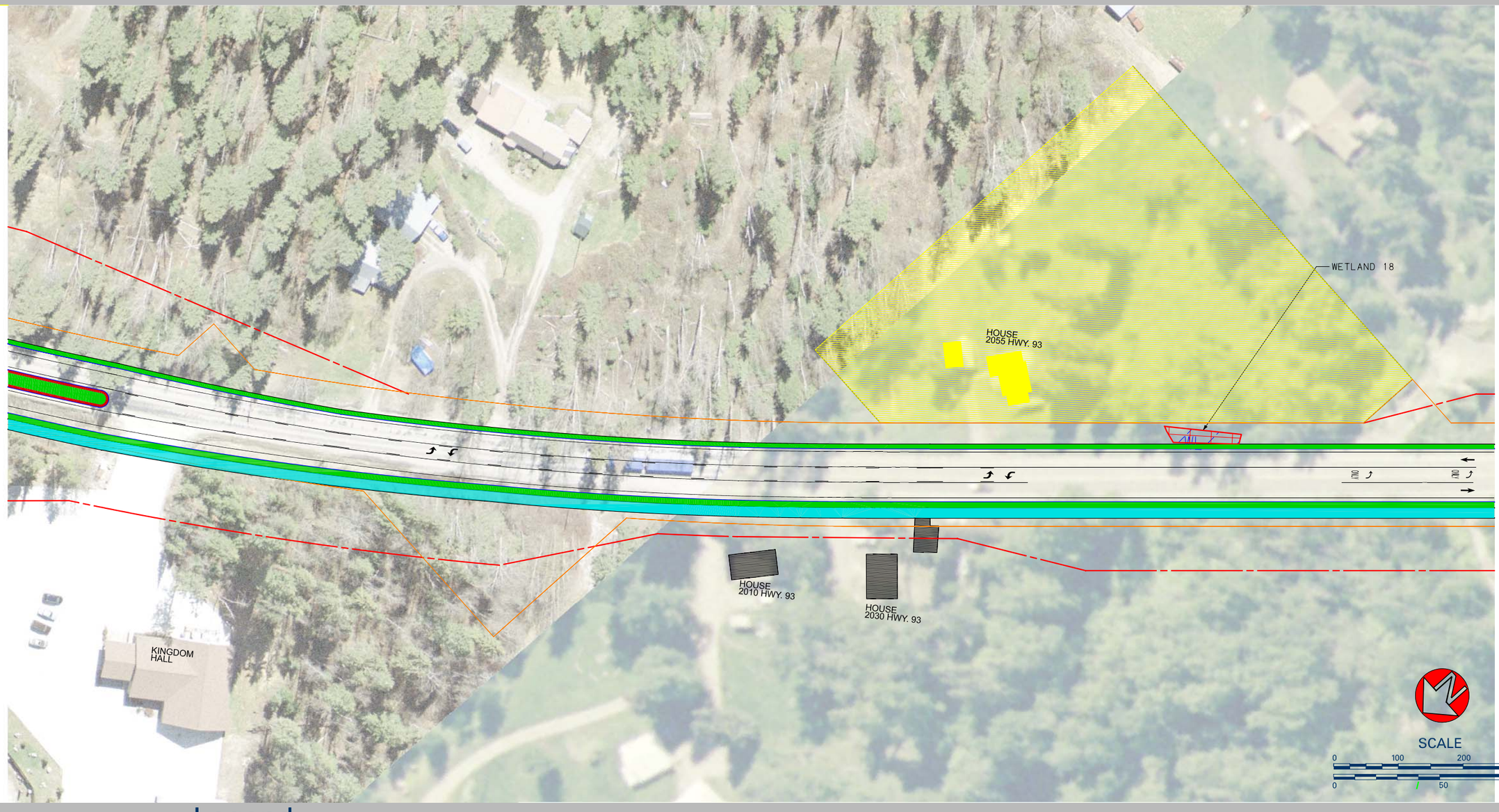

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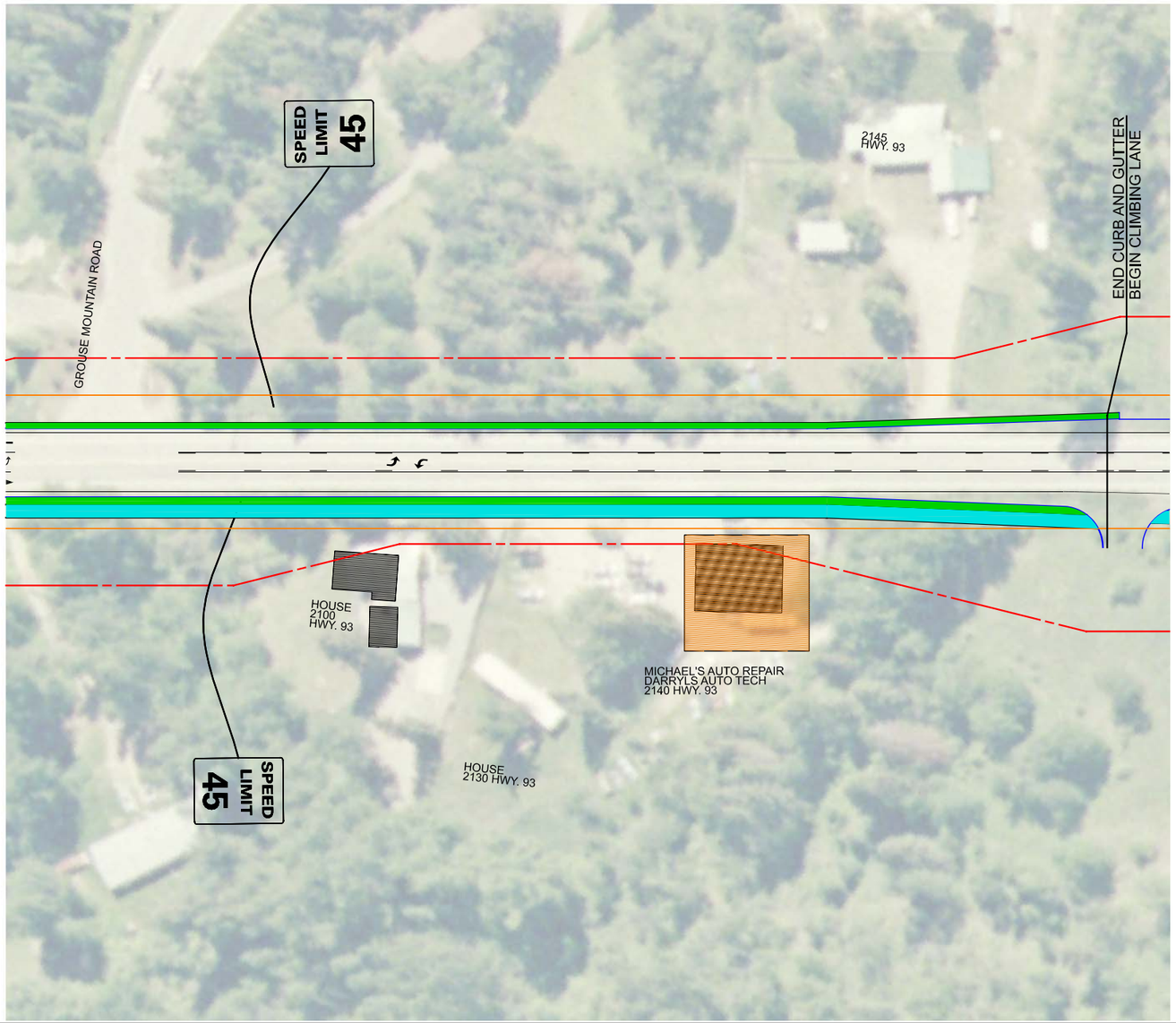

SCALE

0 100 200 300 feet

0 50 100 meters

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Legend

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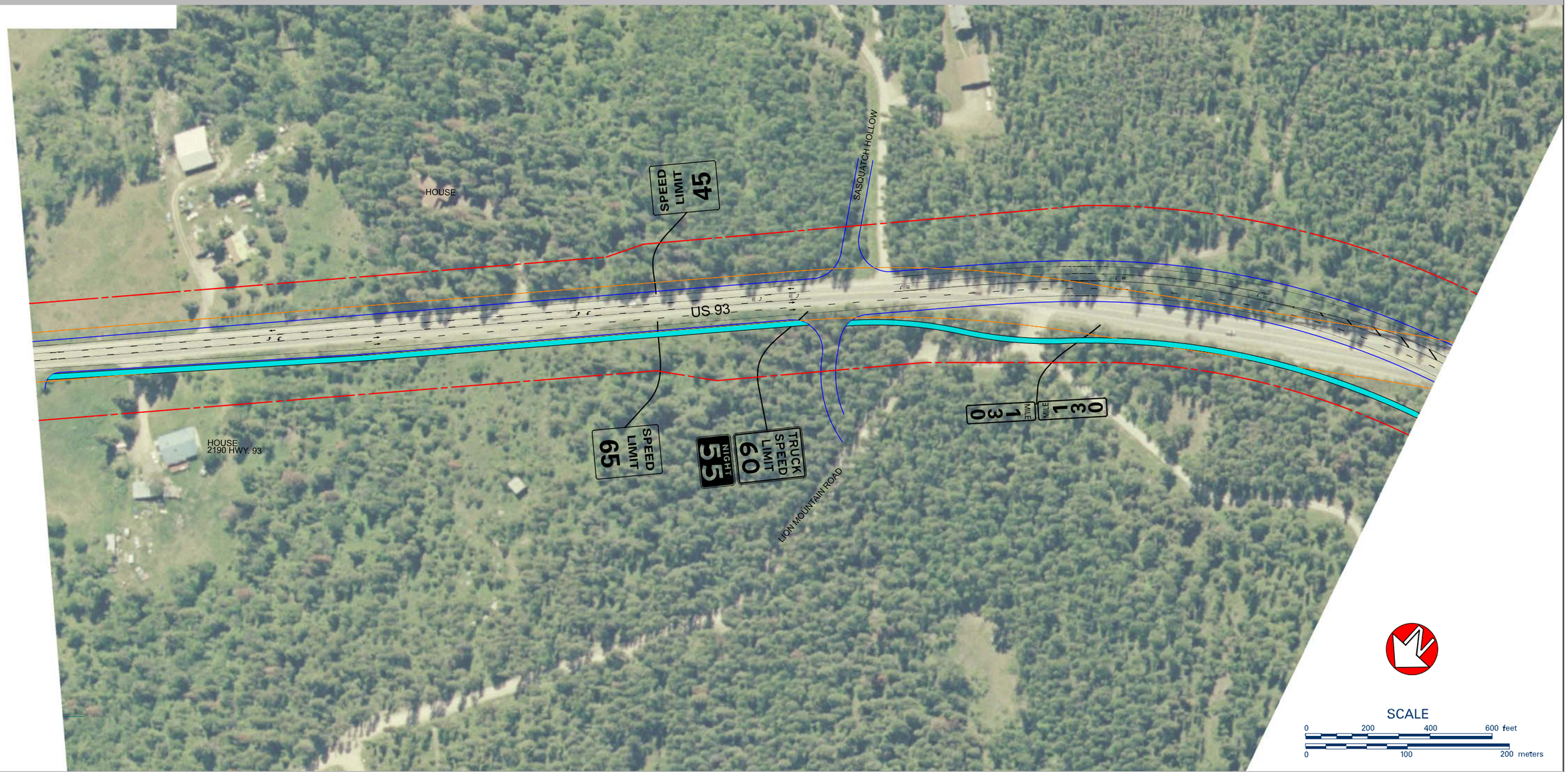
CURRENT PROPOSED ACTION

FEB. 2008



Montana Department of Transportation
MDT serving you with pride

Legend

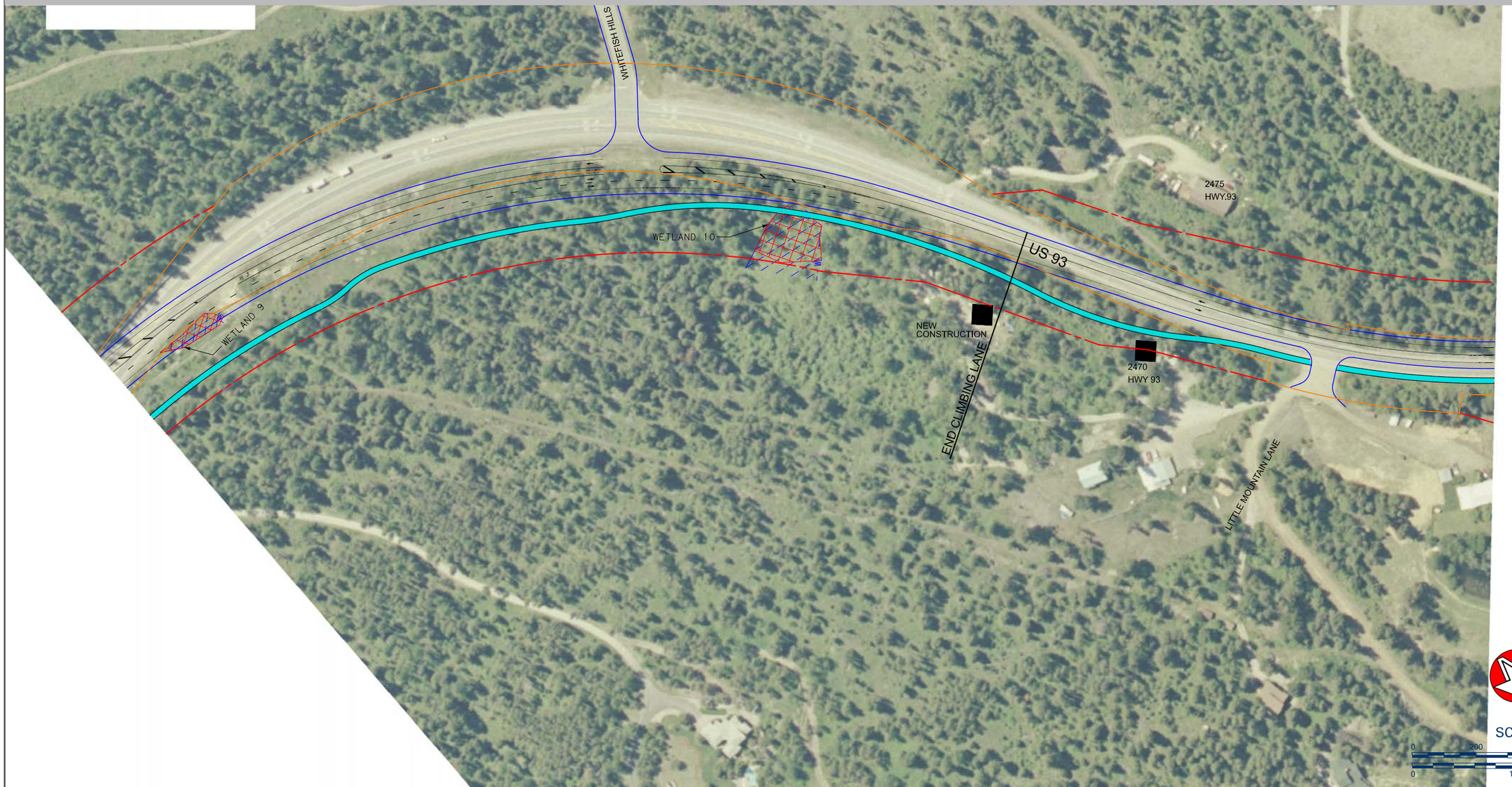
- NEW BIKE PATH/SIDEWALK
- NEW EDGE OF ROADWAY
- RAISED MEDIAN
- LANDSCAPE / BLVD AREA
- RETAINING WALL
- EXISTING RIGHT OF WAY
- PROPOSED RIGHT OF WAY
- PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION PERMIT
- IMPACTED STRUCTURE
- WETLANDS
- IMPACTED WETLANDS
- HAZARDOUS MATERIALS - Property of Concern
- HISTORICAL PROPERTY
- PARK / RECREATIONAL PROPERTY

WGM GROUP

WHITEFISH West
U.S. HIGHWAY 93

CURRENT PROPOSED ACTION

FEB. 2008



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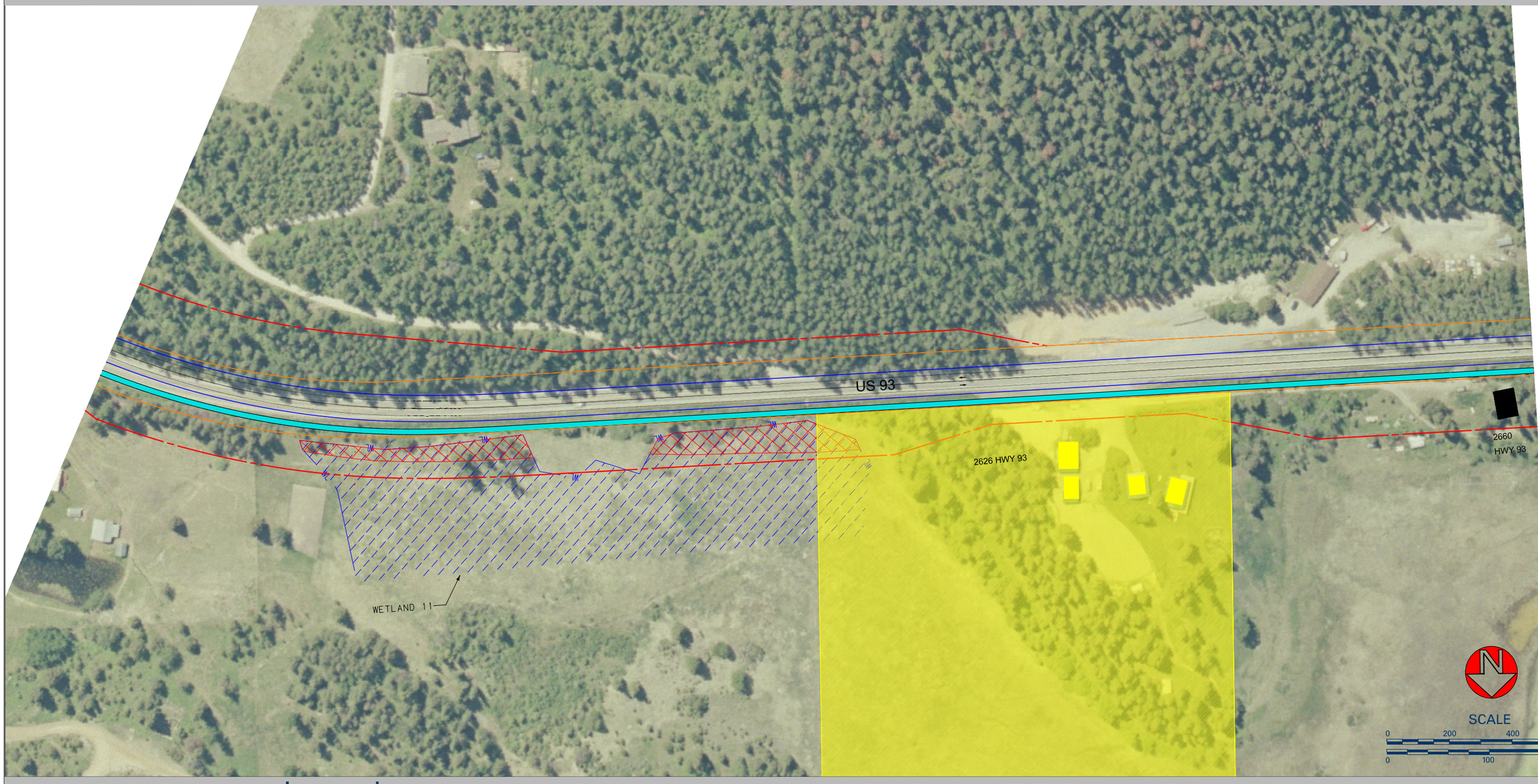

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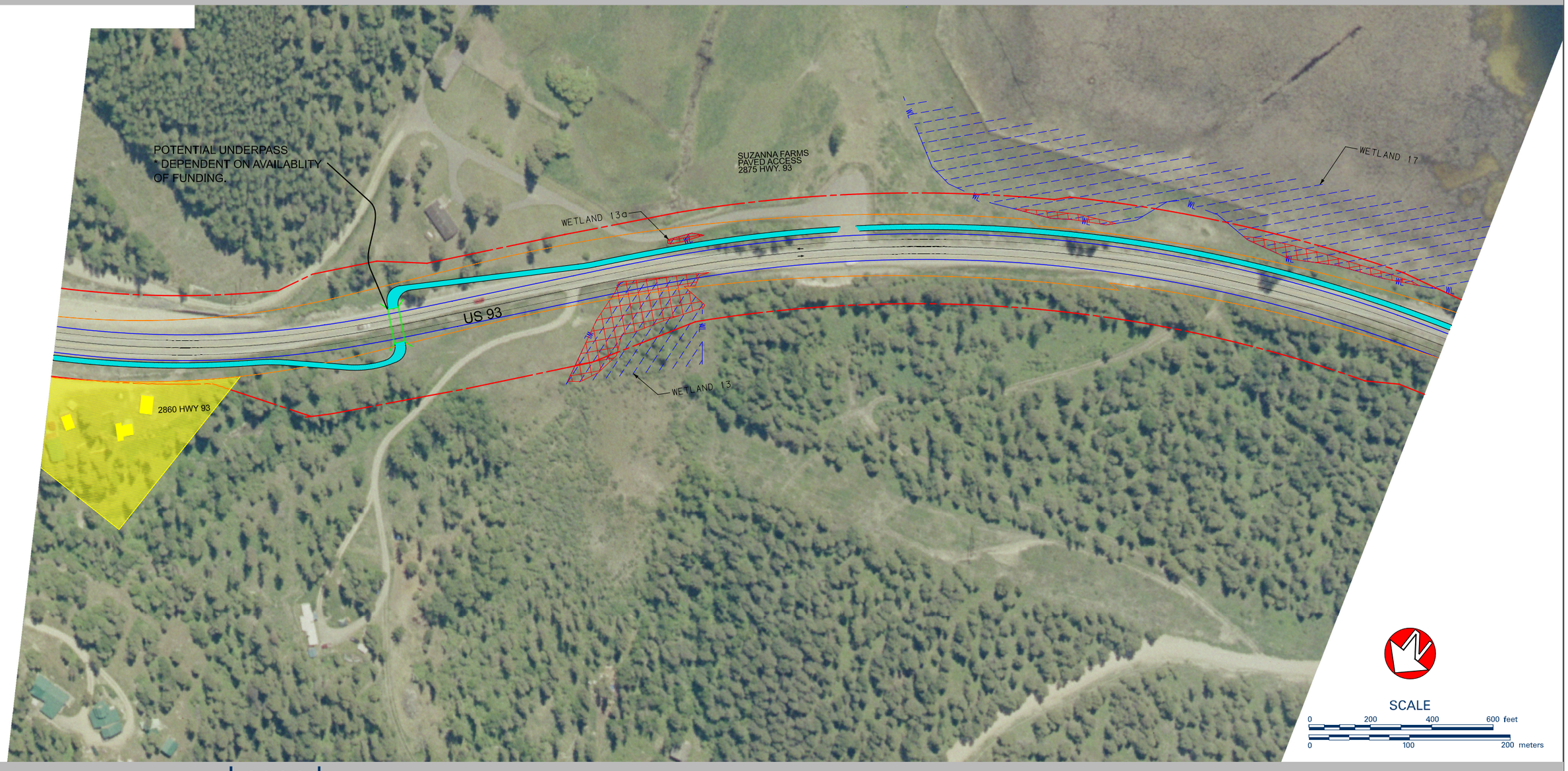

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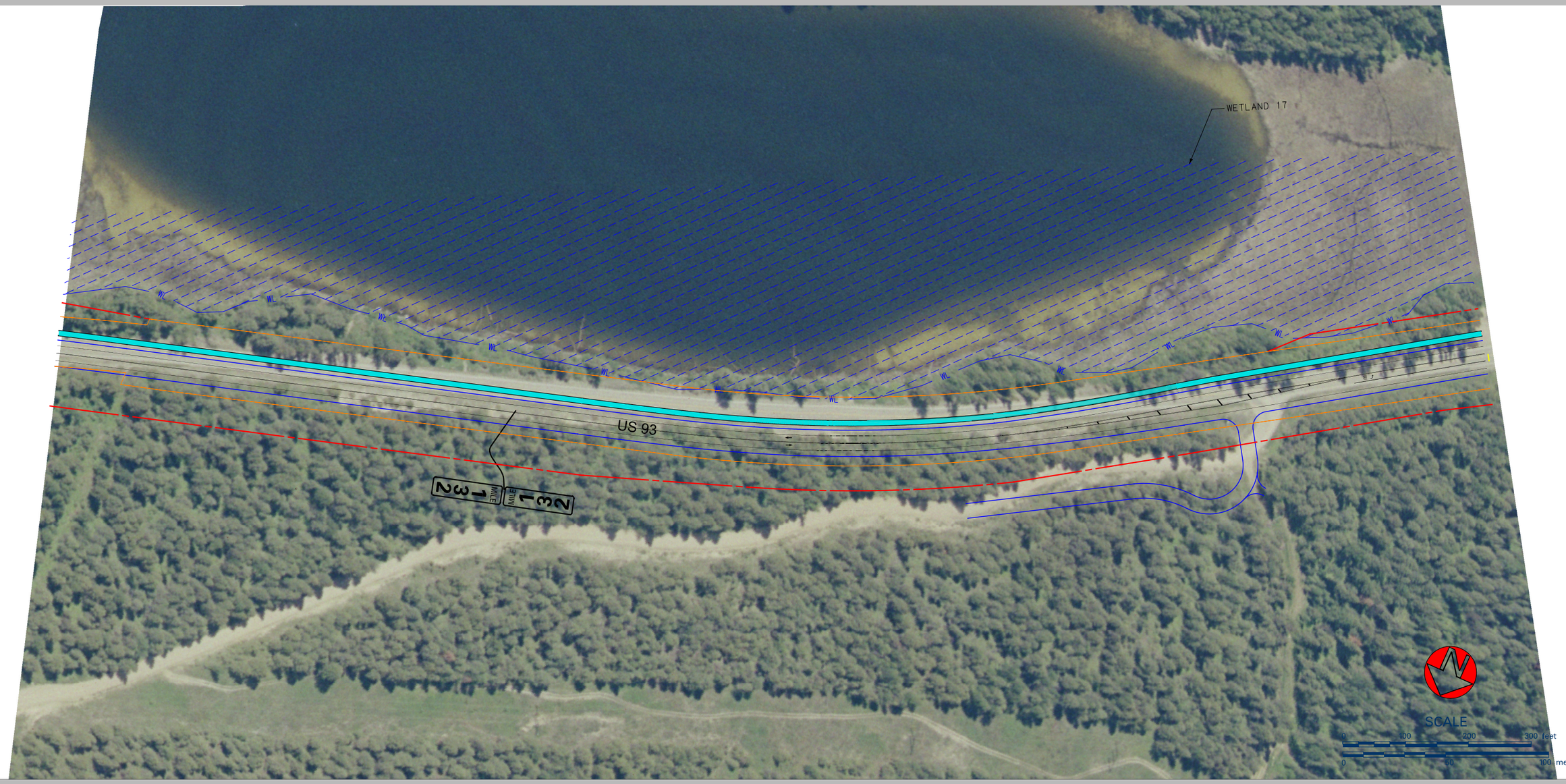

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CURRENT PROPOSED ACTION

FEB. 2008

SCALE
0 200 400 600 feet
0 100 200 meters

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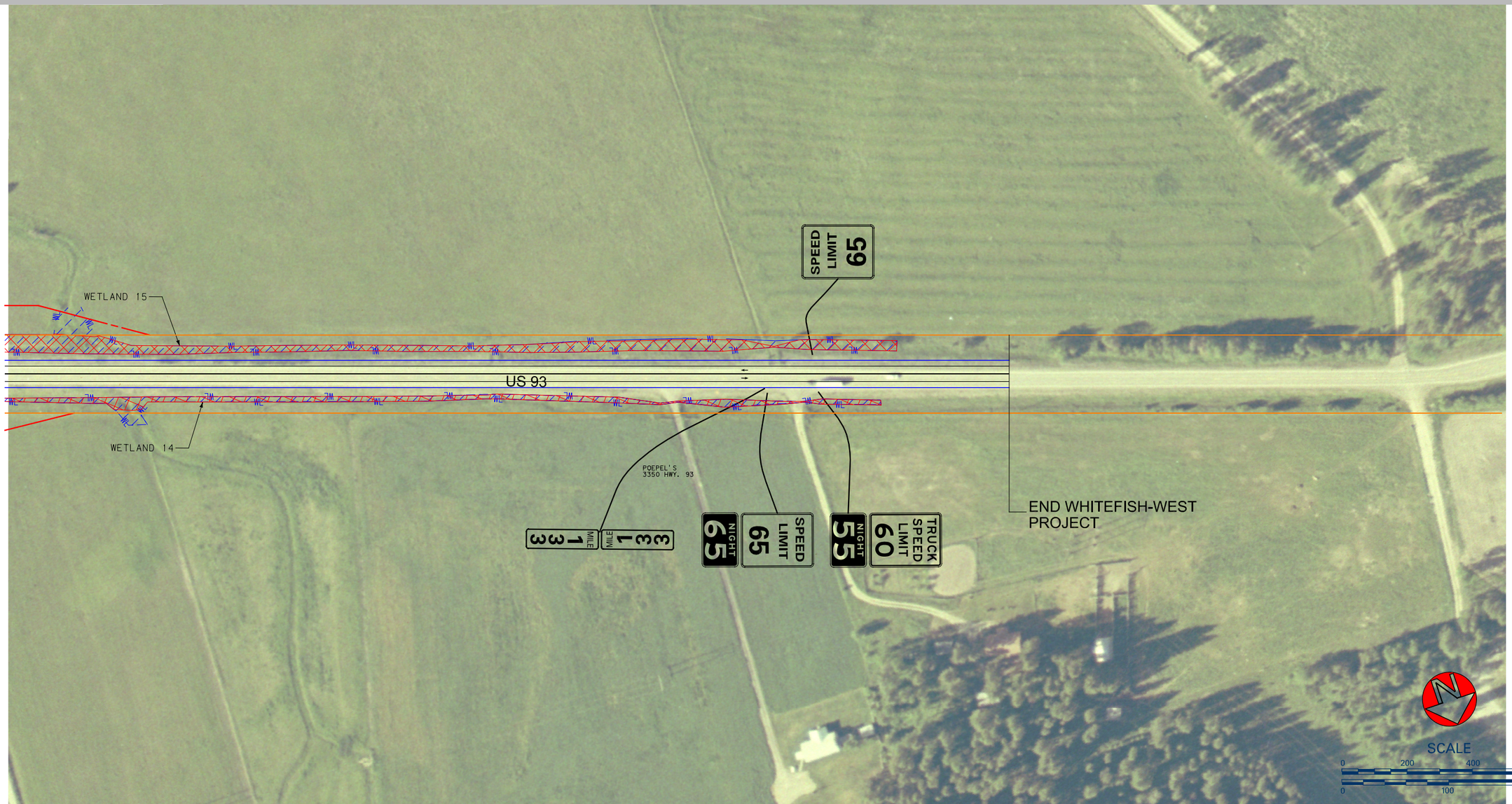

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