BILLINGS BYPASS EIS
NCPD 56(55)CN 4199

Issue No. 5 August 2011

## Public Input from October 2010 Open House

MDT received great input from attendees at the October 2010 public meeting. A summary of this meeting is available on the Public Meetings and Activities page of the project website at www.billingsbypass.com. Two issues in particular were on the minds of many in attendance:

**Q:** ***If the project stops at Old Hwy 312 instead of continuing to MT 3, how will it draw truck traffic off of Main Street and how will it impact traffic on Old Hwy 312?***

**A:** Approximately 85% of the truck traffic using the roadways through Billings is local and regional truck traffic. This project would provide an alternate route to serve that traffic. It is anticipated this alternate route would attract approximately 450 to 650 trucks per day that would otherwise travel on Main Street. It should be noted that not all of the traffic using the new road would access the facility via Old Hwy 312. Because the new road would also connect to other existing roads that intersect the proposed alignments, traffic would be distributed among the various connecting routes. The project team has evaluated the traffic volumes for the proposed alternatives to determine the improvements needed at each of the potential connection locations at Old Hwy 312. Potential impacts to traffic and safety will be evaluated and the results of the analysis will be presented in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). These and other potential impacts are considered to select the preferred alternative for the project.

**Q:** ***If one of the Mary Street alignments is selected, how can that road handle the additional traffic and how could residents along Mary Street access the road safely with traffic moving at 60 mph?***

**A:** The Mary Street alignment alternatives are located directly north of Mary Street. Similar to Rimrock Road west of 40th Street W, Mary Street would remain as a frontage road parallel to the new road. It is not anticipated that traffic on Mary Street would increase as a result of the project. Urban principal arterial design standards with a maximum design speed of 55 mph are proposed for this alignment alternative. Connections from Mary Street to the new road would be provided and designed to promote safe access. If the Five Mile Road Alignment alternative is selected, traffic would increase on Mary Street because drivers traveling to and from Billings Heights would use Mary Street to access the new river crossing. The Five Mile Road Alignment alternative would include improvements to Mary Street to safely accommodate the additional traffic. The specific improvements needed along Mary Street will be identified based on the traffic and safety analysis to be performed for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

*Old Highway 312*

*Looking west along Mary Street near Bitterroot Drive*

## Summary of Project Activities Since the October 2010 Newsletter

**October 2010**

- Met with the public to discuss the re-scoped project and get input on the revised purpose and need and draft conceptual alternatives.

**January 2011**

- Determined the road design standards and design criteria for the project alternatives.

**April 2011**

- Met with cooperating and participating agencies to get input on the impact assessment methodologies and range of alternatives.

**June 2011**

- Met with project stakeholders and the Billings Bypass Advisory Committee (BBAC) to present the results of the alternatives screening.
- Began field studies to collect data on existing conditions along the proposed alignments.

**August 2011**

- Updated the Level 3 alternatives screening results based on data collection from field surveys and preliminary FEMA floodplain delineation updates.
- Currently developing and screening newly suggested alignments from landowners on Mary Street – see website for more information on these alignments.

### Billings Website

We have recently updated the project website with new information on the purpose and need and the alternatives screening process. Please visit the website at **www.billingsbypass.com** for more information.

## Alternatives Development and Screening Process

After consideration of a wide range of alternatives, the project team identified four alternatives south of the Yellowstone River and five alternatives north of the Yellowstone River that would meet the project purpose and need and achieve the project design objectives. These alternatives (shown in purple on the map on page 3) were presented to the community and stakeholder groups in October 2010 and April 2011 respectively.

Based on the evaluation of these alternatives and the public input received to date, the project team has identified the preliminary alternatives that perform the best when measured against the transportation needs identified for the project. Each of the alternatives begins at the Johnson Lane interchange with I-90 and uses the same alignment north and east toward the Yellowstone River. North of the river, three corridors have been identified to complete the connection to Old Hwy 312 (shown in dashed yellow lines on the map).

These alternatives will be carried forward for detailed evaluation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

## Design Standards

National Highway System (NHS) standards were selected for this project to reflect the purpose and need for the project, which includes support of long-term planning for a future bypass that would connect between the interstate and other NHS routes. Because this project seeks to balance through mobility and local access needs, principal arterial standards will be used. The use of urban standards or rural standards will be applied based on the character of each corridor under consideration. The character of each corridor is defined by the land use, zoning, and the type and speed of connecting routes.

## Design Objectives

The following objectives serve as guidelines in the development of alternatives.

### Roadway Functionality

- Design for NHS Principal Arterial standards.
- Incorporate access control measures that balance through mobility and local access needs.
- Consider existing and future land use in a context sensitive manner.
- At a minimum, provide service-level interchanges at the interstate.
- Locate the western terminus of the route so that it supports a future connection to US 87 and MT 3.

### Safety Considerations

- Improve emergency access to the Billings Heights.
- Provide grade-separated railroad crossings.
- Improve or maintain safety on connecting routes.
- Meet MDT standards based on the projected traffic volumes and vehicle mix.

### Yellowstone River Crossing (for applicable alternatives)

- Minimize impacts to the Yellowstone River and floodplain to the extent practicable.
- Locate the river crossing to provide flexibility for future expansion of the bridge.

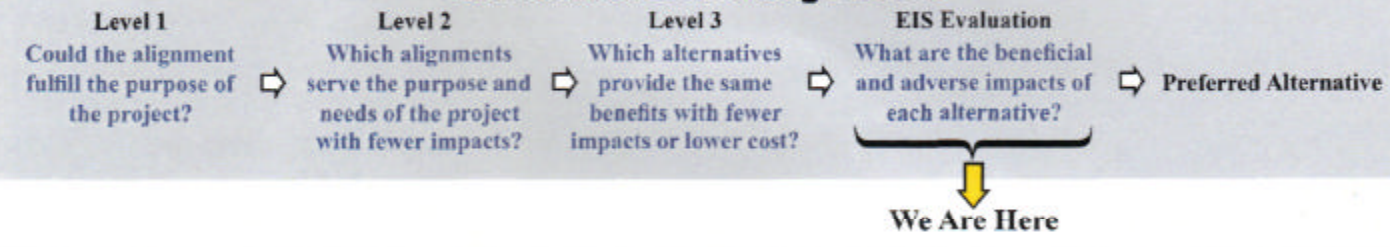
### Community and Environmental Considerations

- Maintain or improve traffic conditions in the eastern area of Billings.
- Accommodate crossings for planned bicycle/pedestrian routes documented in adopted local plans.
- Include pedestrian and bicycle facilities where appropriate along the proposed facility.
- Minimize social, environmental, and economic impacts to the extent practicable.

### Cost Considerations

- Allow for phased construction to accommodate funding availability.
- Limit the use of frontage roads to areas where they are essential.
- Minimize supporting infrastructure costs.

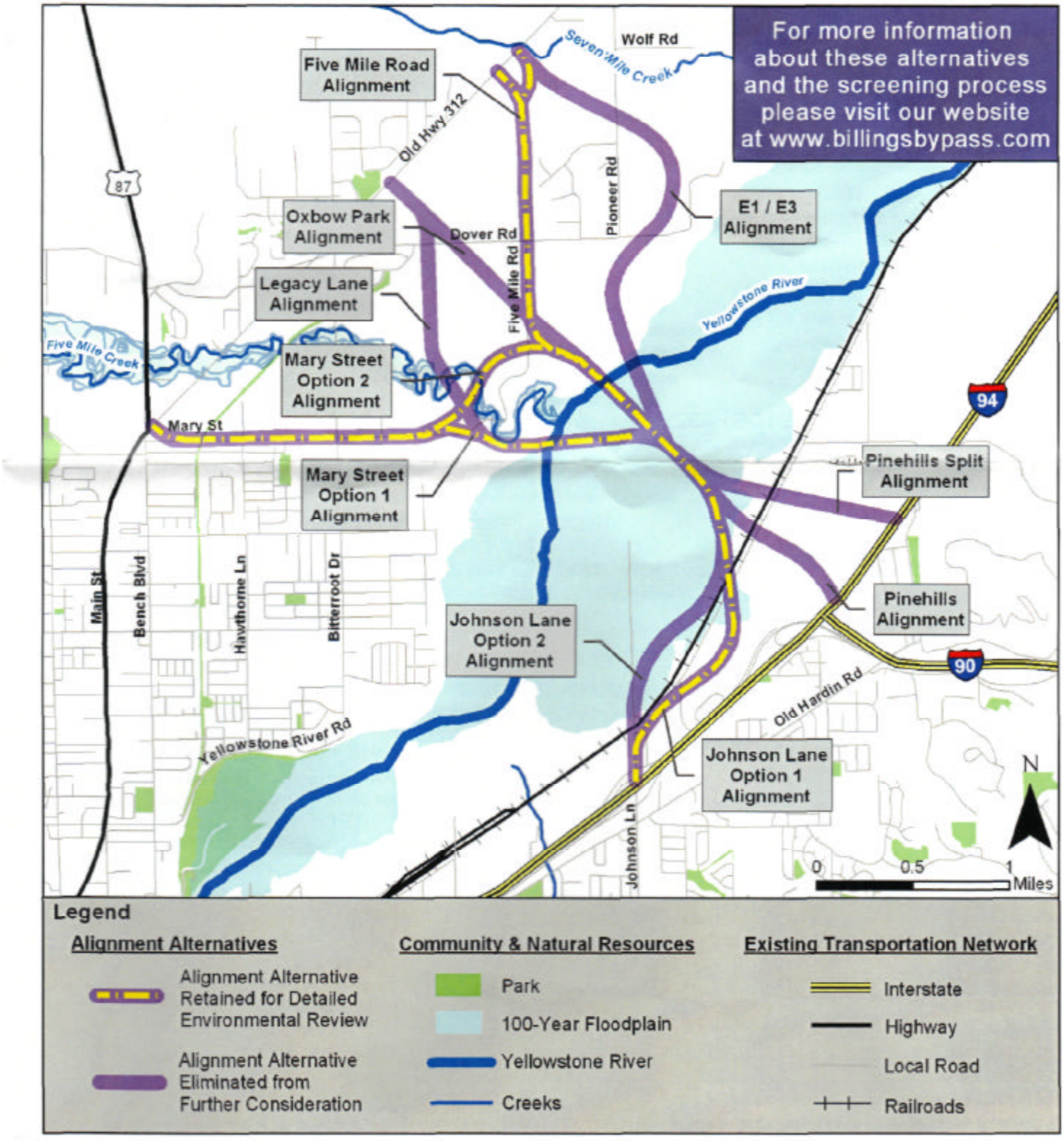
### Alternatives Screening Process



## Alternatives Identified for Evaluation in the DEIS

The preliminary alignments shown below in dashed yellow lines represent the alignments that best meet the purpose and needs and design objectives of the project. Based on the evaluation completed for the DEIS, MDT proposes to select one of the Mary Street alignments or the Five Mile Road Alignment as the primary corridor for the proposed new roadway. Regardless of which alignment is selected, traffic will use existing roadways to some extent to access the new river crossing. Therefore, the Mary Street alternatives include improvements along the Five Mile Road alignment to safely accommodate additional traffic. Likewise, the Five Mile Road alternative includes improvements along Mary Street to safely accommodate additional traffic.

Note: Two additional alignments recently suggested by the public are currently being screened in a manner consistent to that performed for other alternatives and are not pictured on this map. Please see the website for more information on these alignments.



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## Want to find out more?

Public input is critical to making sound transportation decisions for the Billings Bypass. Here are some ways to get involved:

- Visit the project website at www.billingsbypass.com to learn more about the project and submit your comments to the project team.
- Request a stakeholder meeting. Project team members are available to meet with groups that have a particular interest or concern about the project. Contact one of the project team members listed below to schedule a meeting.
- Individuals may contact one of the project team members listed below with questions or comments.

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## Next Steps

The following project activities ~~are~~ anticipated over the next year:

- Summer 2011 - Perform field surveys for resource studies and prepare technical reports
- Fall 2011 - Perform detailed impact evaluation for preliminary alternatives
- Winter 2011/2012 - Prepare the Draft EIS for cooperating and participating agency review
- Spring 2012 - Identify the preferred alternative

1,200 copies of this publication were produced at an approximate cost of $0.34 each for a total cost of $412.50. Alternative accessible formats of pertinent information will be provided on request. For further information, contact Mary Guse at 720-225-4608 or mrg@deainc.com. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592, or call Montana relay at 711.