

# Project Overview



## What is a Highway Corridor Plan?



A Corridor Plan is a long-range plan for a highway. The focus is on needed changes within the Right-of-Way (ROW), with consideration for adjacent and surrounding land uses.

Land uses and transportation are interconnected – decisions regarding either component can positively or negatively affect the other. Transportation corridor planning, including

highway corridor plans, intend to improve safety and create better connections among motorized and non-motorized transportation, land uses, and water, sewer, and utilities.

## Who is Leading the Planning Effort?



The Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization or MMPO, is leading this planning project. The MMPO is a Federally required regional transportation planning body that works in coordination

with local governmental organizations and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). An Advisory Committee, representing local public works, planners, the railroad, East

Missoula and Bonner Community Councils, parks and recreation, and others, provides diverse perspectives to guide the work. WGM Group, a Missoula consulting firm, is also assisting.



## Why is a Corridor Plan Needed?



A Corridor Plan is needed to address significant safety issues in the portion of Highway 200 from Van Buren Street to Tamarack Road, including:

- Congestion around Van Buren

- intersection and Eastgate
- Sight and safety issues at the railroad tunnel/I-90 intersection
- Poorly defined road edges and access points, no paths or sidewalks for bikes and pedestrians in East Missoula

- Seasonal congestion with river recreationists at ShaRon
- Incomplete bike and pedestrian connections along length of the corridor

## How is this Plan Different from Previous Plans?



While previous planning efforts have looked at potential changes to East Missoula and the rest of the Highway 200 Corridor Project Area, this project provides the detailed designs and concepts necessary to get a project funded.

1. Provides detailed design information for cost estimates, critical for funding eligibility, that is insufficient, outdated, or lacking in other existing reports. Cost estimates are a necessary piece in successfully obtaining funding.
2. Will have a formalized work

plan, identifying priorities and funding options, that will lead the way to real on-the-ground changes.

3. Is the necessary next step to ensure projects are ready for funding, when funding becomes available.
4. Follows a process that includes initial environmental analysis, development and consideration of alternatives, and robust public engagement that is recognized by MDT, which must approve highway projects.

This new plan also is different

because it specifically focuses on Highway 200 from Van Buren to Tamarack Road. The MMPO recognizes the East Missoula segment as a top priority, given the long history of needed improvements there. Including the Van Buren segment (west segment) and ShaRon-Rural segment (east segment) is important because they also directly or indirectly affect the East Missoula segment. It is also efficient and cost-effective to include them now, rather than addressing them later as separate plans.



## Why haven't Previous Plans and Studies Resulted in Changes?



Previous plans for East Missoula haven't been successful in creating change in large part because previous plans did not raise the East Missoula projects to a

sufficient competitive level for funding, particularly at the federal level where funding is becoming harder to obtain. This project will provide detail and formal process

to get the projects into regional long range planning documents that form the basis for federal transportation funding.

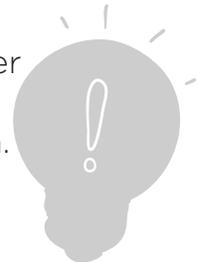
## Why Does this Plan Focus on Such a Narrow Corridor?



The focus of this plan is generally what is located within the ROW, which complies with MDT

standards for Corridor Plans. As a result, some suggestions to consider bike-pedestrian

connections that follow the river more closely or link to existing trails, are not a part of this plan.





## Why Include Portions of Highway 200 in Addition to East Missoula?



Major projects to the east and west have been in the planning stages for years and are interconnected to East Missoula issues, including:

- Connections to bike-pedestrian paths on either side of East Missoula
- Addressing safety-traffic concerns with seasonal river-floating

- Congestion and safety issues at Eastgate area near Van Buren
- Pedestrian crossings, transit, and parking issues on north side of Hwy 200 from Van Buren to I-90 interchange
- Missoula College development

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## How are Previous Plans and Studies Incorporated into this Effort?

From the start, previous plans and studies have been consulted for this plan. This project has worked to incorporate elements from these into the public involvement efforts. It was important to test public awareness and acceptance of previously suggested plans, given the age of some of these documents.

- East Missoula Corridor Vision and Redevelopment
- Missoula City and County Growth Policies
- Activate Missoula 2045 (Regional Long Range Transportation Plan
- Mountain Line Transit Plans
- East Missoula Road Safety Audit

That review was compiled into a report, “The Introductory Framework,” accessible on the MMPO website. The report summarizes the previous work and identifies gaps.

The next step was to compile a complete “Technical Report” of existing conditions, which also

incorporated information from previous reports.



A separate environmental document, that is referred to as “Pre-NEPA,” has also been prepared. It also incorporates information from existing plans. The environmental review is a typical element of Highway Corridor Plans because it provides initial information that can determine whether an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement may be required before on-the-ground projects can take place.

Existing reports and plans were also consulted prior to developing the design alternatives.

At the start of this project, a comprehensive review of transportation studies and other plans was completed to identify current or anticipated projects, and long-range goals for this area. A total of 16 reports were reviewed, including:

- Pedestrian and Bicycle Plans

