



02-04(001), PCN 16970

AUGUST 2015 NEWSLETTER

# LITTLE MISSOURI River Crossing





## Project History

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was initiated in 2006 by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) and Billings County for a proposed bridge over the Little Missouri River in conjunction with upgrading existing roadways and/or creating new roadways to connect east river and west river, from ND Highway 16 to US Highway 85, within the study area. The Federal Highway Administration published a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on October 12, 2006, to begin the EIS process.

Public meetings were held on the proposed project in March 2007 and July 2008. Based on public and agency comments received, the project study area was changed. The Federal Highway Administration published a revised NOI in the Federal Register on December 6, 2010, regarding the proposed changes to the study area; specifically, the north and south borders of the study area were bounded by the north and south units of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park such that the Park units were outside the study area, and the Elkhorn Ranch Unit of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park was also excluded from the study area. (The north study area border had previously been the Billings County line, and the south study area border had been Interstate 94. The east and west study area borders—U.S. Highway 85 and N.D. Highway 16—remained unchanged.)

Additional public meetings were held in June of 2012, at which proposed project alternatives were presented for public review and comment.

## Why is the proposed project needed?

The need for the proposed project is driven by inadequate system linkage within Billings County, specifically the lack of reliable river crossings, and increased traffic demands from the oil and gas industry. The study area spans the distance between the two existing crossings of the Little Missouri River, located on Interstate 94 and US Highway 85. The crossings are 70 highway miles apart. Historically, Billings County has seen a need for a new crossing of the Little Missouri River as early as the 1970s. The County documented concerns that roadways in the area were unreliable in inclement weather, which made them virtually impassable, while the ability to cross the river has had to be negotiated with landowners of private fords. The County also identified the need for a river crossing to meet socioeconomic demands within the area, such as industry development.

## PROJECT UPDATES:

### What has been happening with the project since the last public meetings in 2012?

Since the 2012 public meetings were held, field studies, surveys and additional alternative design have been completed. The field studies included wetland delineations, biological, botanical and cultural resource inventories. Impact analysis for the proposed alternatives has also been underway.

### Have the alternatives being considered changed?

Project alternatives presented to the public in 2012 included build Alternatives A, B, C, J, and K (including Options 1–3), and no-build Alternative L. Please see **Study Area Map on page 3**.

Several alternatives have been discarded from further analysis in the Draft EIS (DEIS), including Alternatives B, C, and J.

- ◆ Alternatives B and C, which would have connected Forest Highway 2/Bell Lake Road in Golden Valley County with Blacktail Road in Billings County, were highly controversial based on their location through the Elkhorn Ranchlands and Elkhorn Ranch/Greater Ranchlands National Historic District, as well as their proximity to the Elkhorn Ranch Unit of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Public and agency comments indicated concern over potential traffic, noise, viewshed, dust, and other proximity impacts to these properties resulting from Alternatives B and C. Billings County elected to eliminate Alternatives B and C from further consideration for these reasons.
- ◆ Alternative J was located in McKenzie County and would have connected Hay Draw Road with County Road 50. It has been determined that Billings County has no mechanism to fund a roadway and bridge project in McKenzie County, and McKenzie County has indicated it would not construct the project even if Alternative J were identified as preferred. Therefore, Alternative J has been removed from further consideration in the DEIS.

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Build Alternatives A and K, Options 1, 2 and 3, and no-build Alternative L, will be fully analyzed in the DEIS. Please see **Study Area Map–Alternative A on page 4** and **Study Area Map–Alternative K with Options on page 5**.

- ◆ Alternative A would connect Forest Highway 2/Bell Lake Road with Magpie Creek Road. Alternative A would be 11.3 miles long. It would closely follow an existing roadway alignment for approximately 10.2 miles, involving roadway upgrades and some minor realignments to meet minimum County design standards. Approximately 1.1 miles would be rerouted away from the existing roadway alignment, requiring new roadway construction. Alternative A would include the construction of an 850-foot, four-span bridge across the Little Missouri River.
- ◆ Alternative K would connect Bell Lake Road with East River Road. There are three options for the Alternative K alignment; all three options would follow the same alignment for the 4.9 miles beginning at Bell Lake Road and heading east.

- » Option 1 would be 8.7 miles long, with 6.0 miles following existing roadway alignments and 1.7 miles of new roadway construction. Option 1 would include a 600-foot, four-span bridge across the River.
- » Option 2 would be 8.9 miles long, with 6.6 miles following existing roadway alignments and 2.3 miles of new roadway construction. Option 2 would include an 800-foot, four-span bridge across the River.
- » Option 3 would be 10.8 miles long, with 8.8 miles following existing roadway alignments and 2.0 miles of new roadway construction. Option 3 would include a 600-foot, four-span bridge across the River.

## *What is the project schedule moving forward?*

It is anticipated that all field study reports will be submitted to the approving agencies in fall 2015. A DEIS is expected to be available for public viewing in 2016, with a public hearing scheduled approximately a month after the DEIS is available. Following the public comment period, a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will be prepared and made available for public review. Ultimately, FHWA will prepare a Record of Decision (ROD).

## COMMENTS/CONCERNS

### *Where can I find additional information?*

Additional information can be found on the project website, located at:  
[www.billingscountynnd.gov](http://www.billingscountynnd.gov).

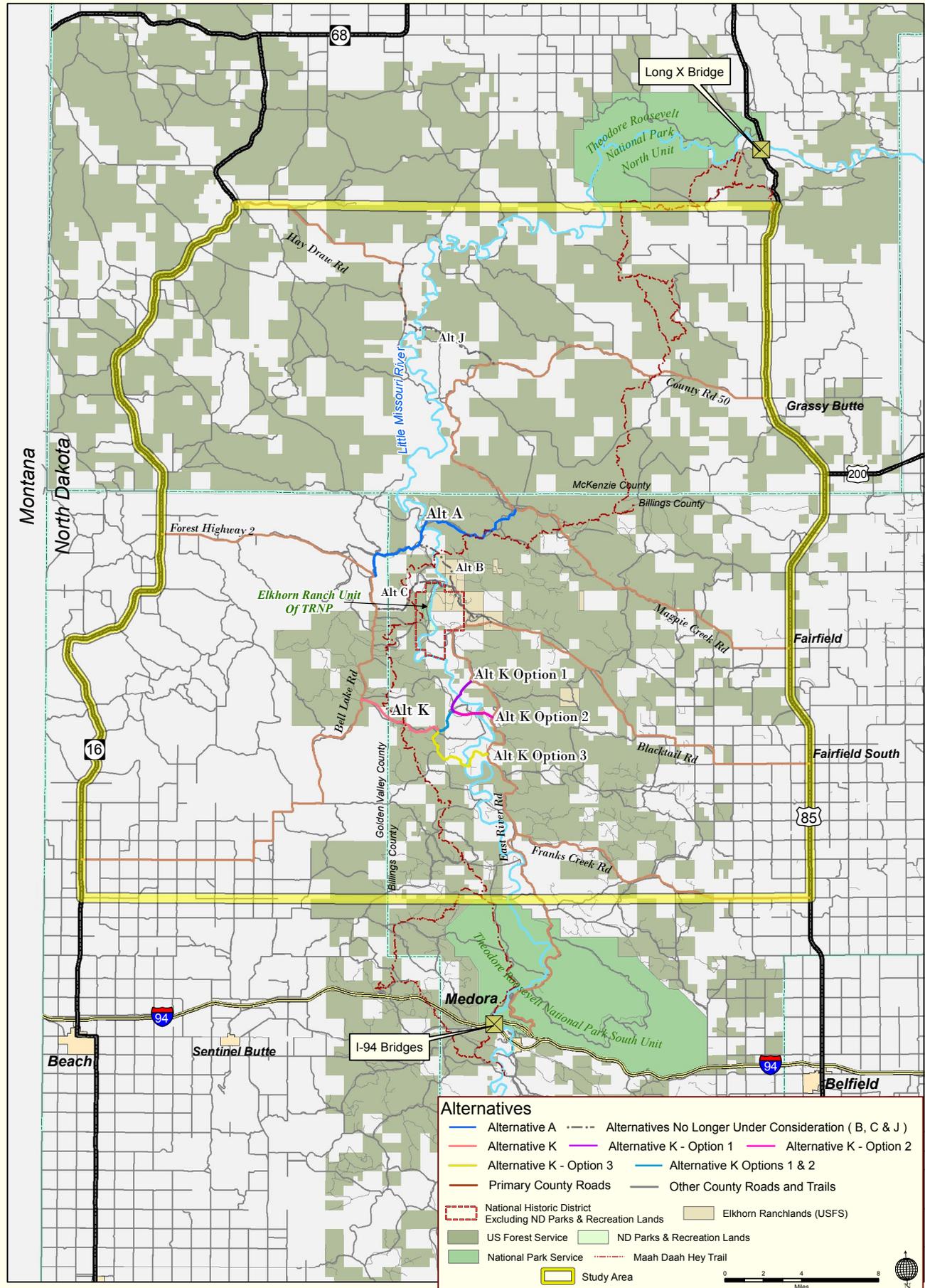
### *Who can I direct my concerns to?*

KLJ  
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## Study Area Map

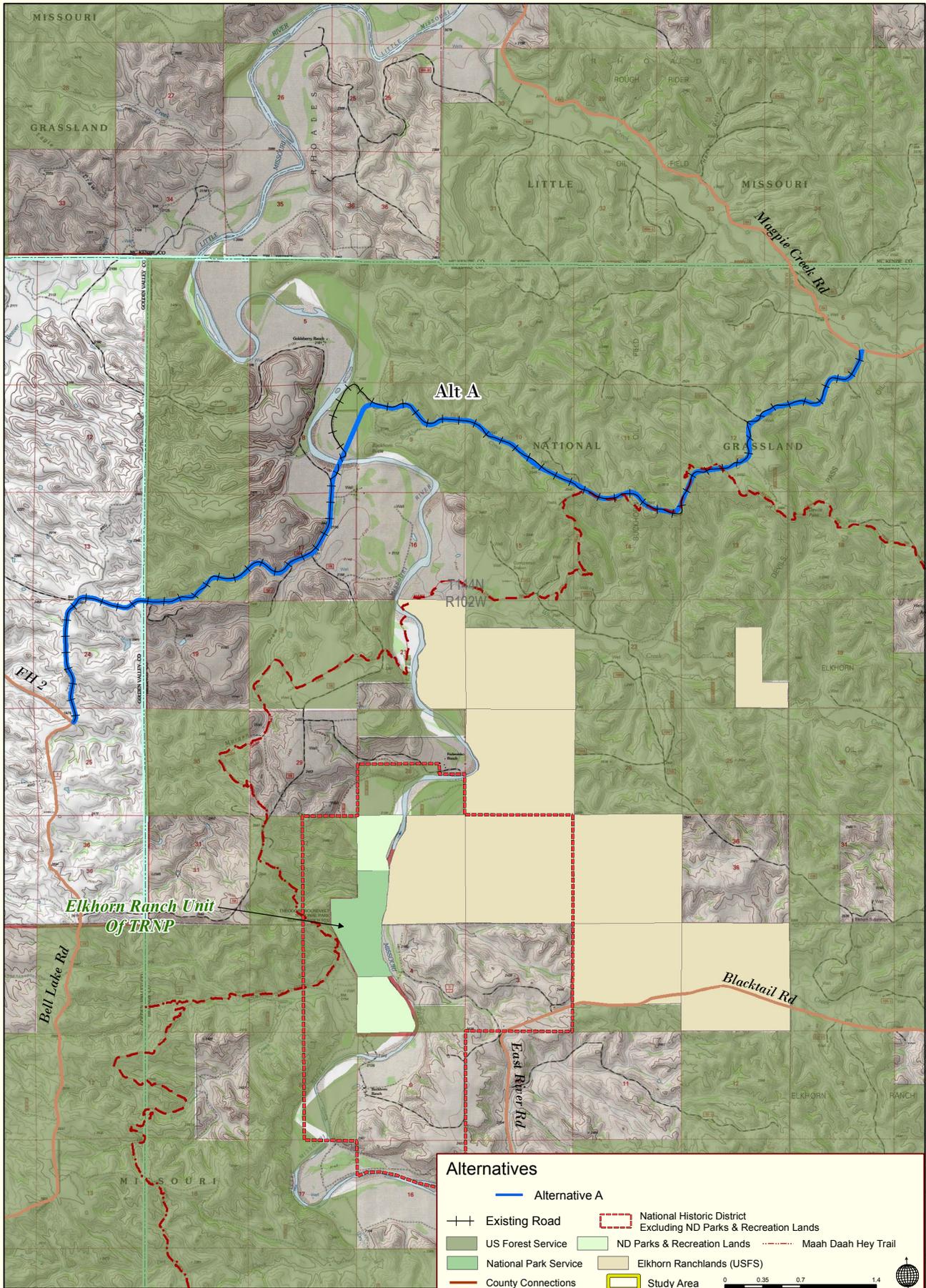


### Alternatives

- Alternative A
- Alternative K
- Alternative K - Option 1
- Alternative K - Option 2
- Alternative K - Option 3
- Alternative K Options 1 & 2
- Primary County Roads
- Other County Roads and Trails
- - - Alternatives No Longer Under Consideration ( B, C & J )
- ▭ National Historic District Excluding ND Parks & Recreation Lands
- ▭ US Forest Service
- ▭ National Park Service
- ▭ Elkhorn Ranchlands (USFS)
- ▭ ND Parks & Recreation Lands
- ▭ Maah Daah Hey Trail
- ▭ Study Area

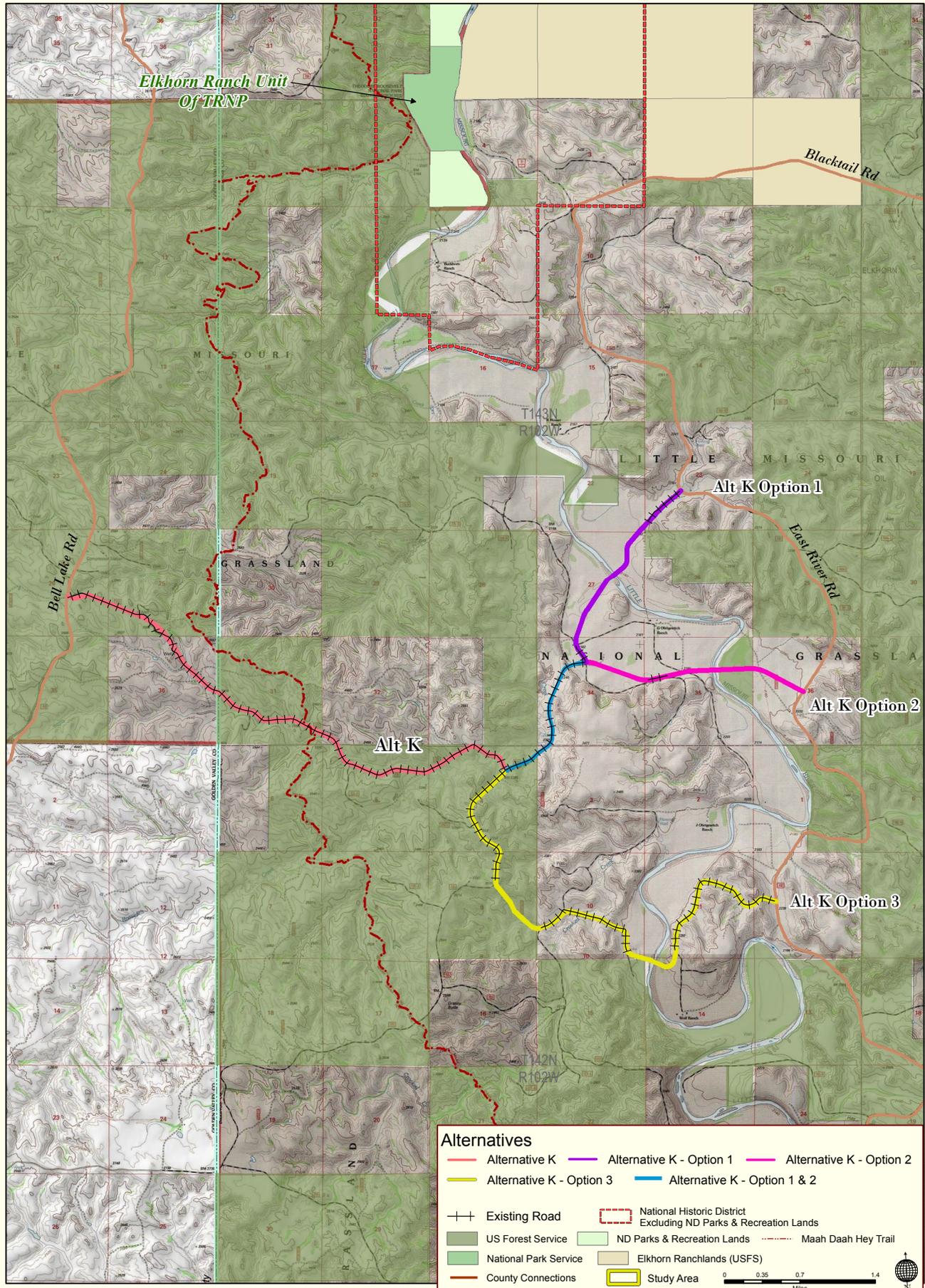
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## Study Area Map-Alternative A



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## Study Area Map - Alternative K with Options





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*See inside for important information on the purpose and need for the proposed project and updates that have occurred since the last public meeting.*