

Little Missouri River Crossing Project
Project # FHO-02-04(001)
PCN # 16970
Billings County, North Dakota
(same cover as shown in the Feb. 21 meeting)

Project Background and Description

The Federal Highway Administration, North Dakota Department of Transportation, and Billings County are working as joint lead agencies to conduct an EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) with the assistance of Kadmas, Lee & Jackson. The EIS will analyze a proposed new river crossing over the Little Missouri River in Billings County, North Dakota.

The project study area limits are the northern border of the Billings County line, western border of ND Highway 16, eastern border of US Highway 85, and southern border of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. National Park Service properties (Theodore Roosevelt National Park and the Elkhorn Ranch) are excluded from the project study area.

Environmental Impact Statement Process

The EIS will be developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, and the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), 40 CFR parts 1500 through 1508. In accordance with Section 6002 of Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), the Notice-of-Intent initiating the EIS process was published in the Federal Register, (Vol. 71 No. 197 page 60228) on October 12, 2006.

An EIS is a document that clearly documents the following items:

- The purpose and need for the project
- Consideration of a range of reasonable alternatives
- The affected environment
- The potential impacts resulting from the alternatives
- Compliance with other applicable environmental laws and executive orders
- The process used for development of the EIS
- Input received from agencies, interested parties, and the public

Tonight's Meeting

The EIS process will include numerous opportunities for federal, state, local, and tribal agencies; interested parties, and the general public to provide input on the project. This scoping meeting is the first in a series of at least three public meetings planned for this phase of the project. The purpose of this meeting is to solicit input regarding the purpose and need for the project as well as a range of reasonable alternatives. Subsequent meetings will focus on specific alternatives under consideration as well as potential impacts resulting from those alternatives.

Project Purpose and Need

The first step in the EIS process is to determine the purpose and need for the proposed project. Identification of the purpose and need is the most important part of the EIS process, because it explains why the project is necessary and worthwhile and what the project is intended to accomplish. The purpose and need lays out why the proposed action, with its inherent costs and environmental impacts, is being pursued. The purpose and need for a project may and should evolve and be refined as information is developed and more is learned about the project and the corridor. The purpose and need defines what can be considered reasonable, prudent, and practicable project alternatives and drives the process for consideration of alternatives, in depth analysis, and ultimate selection of a preferred alternative.

Within the project study area, there are currently 15 identified crossings of the Little Missouri River. However, all of these are private and/or seasonal crossings. There is a distance of approximately 85 highway miles (approximately 50 miles as the crow flies) between public, all weather crossings.

At this time, the lead agencies consider that a new crossing is needed over the Little Missouri River within the project study area to meet a variety of socioeconomic demands, such as emergency management services, industry, agriculture, and recreation.

At this time, the purpose of the project is to provide system linkage (connectivity) between ND Highway 16 and US Highway 85 within the project study area.

Your input is being solicited regarding the project purpose and need. Please feel free to join into the open discussion and/or provide written comments on the development of the purpose and need for this project.

Range of Alternatives

Once the project purpose and need are established, the next step in the EIS process is to identify a range of reasonable alternatives. Project alternatives must be developed to meet the project purpose and need at an acceptable cost and level of environmental impacts relative to the benefits that are expected to be derived from the project. All reasonable, prudent, and practicable alternatives must be rigorously explored and objectively evaluated.

For this project, the development of alternatives is in the very preliminary stages. Five zones have been identified for preliminary consideration of alternatives, as shown on the map on the following page. Specific alignments for a roadway and river crossing will be developed within these zones and presented to the public at a future meeting. At this time, the lead agencies are soliciting comments on the proposed zone concept and zone boundaries.

Insert range of alternatives map on this page

Project Milestones

The following milestones have been identified in the EIS process:

- Public Alternatives Workshop July-August 2007
- Draft EIS September 2007—October 2007
- Public Hearing January-February 2008
- Final EIS, Notice of Availability March-April 2008
- Record of Decision May-June 2008

Public Involvement

This is the first of at least three public meetings planned for the project. These meetings are intended to gather data and information from the public and provide periodic updates to the public on the progress of the EIS. Specifically, the purpose of today's meeting is to solicit participation from the public and interested parties regarding the purpose and need for the project and a range of reasonable alternatives.

We hope that this open house is informative and useful to you. Thank you for your interest in the proposed Little Missouri River Crossing project.

Please mail your comments to:

Jennifer Turnbow, Project Manager
128 Soo Line Drive
Bismarck, ND 58501
jennifer.turnbow@kljeng.com

Written statements will be included in the official transcript if received by March 26, 2007.

Coordination Plan

A Coordination Plan has been created to identify the process that will be used for public and agency participation in, and comment on, the EIS at varying levels of development. The Coordination Plan is available for public viewing at www.billingscountynd.gov and at the following locations:

Federal Highway Administration
1471 Interstate Loop
Bismarck, ND

Kadmas, Lee & Jackson
677 27th Avenue East
Dickinson, ND

Billings County Courthouse
495 4th Street
Medora, ND